# CHARLES UNIVERSITY

## FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of International Relations

## Dissertation thesis

2019                                                    Ivana Karásková

# CHARLES UNIVERSITY

## FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

## Institute of Political Studies

## Department of International Relations

**Ivana Karásková**

**BETWEEN POWER AND PERCEPTION**

**Analyzing China's Influence in International Relations**

Doctoral thesis

Prague 2019

Autor práce/ Author of the thesis:    Ivana Karásková

Vedoucí práce/ Thesis supervisor:   PhDr. Irah Kučerová, Ph.D.

Rok obhajoby /Year of defence:       2019

## References

KARÁSKOVÁ, IVANA. Between Power and Perception: Analyzing China's Influence in International Relations. Praha, 2019. 222 pp. Doctoral dissertation (Ph.D.) Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies. Thesis supervisor: PhDr. Irah Kučerová, Ph.D.

## Abstract

The doctoral thesis focuses on the People's Republic of China's influence in international relations. It follows two main research objectives, a theoretical and an empirical one. The first goal is to more firmly establish the concept of influence and distinguish it from power, the second is to analyze China's influence in the Czech Republic before, during and after the 'restart' of Czech-China relations in 2012.

The thesis rests on the idea of a conceptual 'filter' through which power (conceptualized as ability) passes on its way to becoming influence. As a result, the effects of policies implemented by an actor who aims to exert a power on another actor are co-dependent not only on its power, but also the perception of the actor which is being influenced. The thesis claims that in case of a significant distance (defined geographically or otherwise) between 'the sender' and 'the receiver', perception matters more as it has greater ability to amplify or decrease the effects of the sender's power - i.e. the influence. The latter objective aims at explaining the methods the People's Republic of China uses to impose its interests on others and the receivers' reactions to such efforts. The thesis uses a case study of the Czech Republic

as a country where China's influence is just getting established and maps Czech reactions to China's efforts through the analysis of its media discourse.

The thesis concludes that China is currently perceived with a lot of uncertainty and mistrust, stemming to a large degree from the difference between the Western liberal order and the authoritarian character of the Chinese regime understood as the foreign and alien 'Other'. The case study on China's mediatized image in the Czech Republic corroborates the claim that China has not been particularly successful in projecting its image abroad. While its capacities and capabilities are rising, its influence projected to distant countries and measured through the change of perception of local media is limited. The thesis demonstrates the resulting influence of China is indeed a result of mutual interplay between power and perception, not a direct translation of power itself.

## Abstrakt

Tato disertační práce se věnuje vlivu Čínské lidové republiky v mezinárodních vztazích. Má dva hlavní výzkumné cíle, jeden teoretický a druhý empirický. Prvním cílem je pevněji ukotvit koncept vlivu a odlišit jej od moci, druhým je analýza čínského vlivu v České republice před, během a po tzv. restartu česko-čínských vztahů, jenž proběhl v roce 2012.

Práce se opírá o myšlenku konceptuálního „filtru", jehož průchodem se moc (vymezená jako schopnost) mění ve vliv. Důsledky politik realizovaných aktérem, který usiluje o mocenské působení na jiného aktéra, jsou v tomto chápání závislé nejen na jeho moci, ale také na percepci ovlivňovaného

aktéra. Práce vychází z předpokladu, že v případě větší vzdálenosti (ať již geografické, či jinak koncipované) mezi ovlivňovatelem a ovlivňujícím je vnímání zásadní, jelikož může zesílit nebo naopak snížit výsledné působení moci - tedy vliv. Druhým cílem práce je potom přispět k vysvětlení metod, jež Čínská lidová republika používá k prosazování svých zájmů, a zmapovat reakce ostatních států na toto úsilí. Práce využívá případovou studii České republiky jako země, v níž Čína nově ustavuje svůj vliv, a mapuje české reakce na čínský vliv prostřednictvím analýzy mediálního diskurzu.

Výsledky práce ukazují, že Čína je v současné době vnímána s velkou nejistotou a nedůvěrou, která do značné míry vyplývá z rozdílu mezi západním liberálním řádem a autoritářským charakterem čínského režimu vnímaného jako cizí "druhý". Případová studie medializovaného obrazu Číny v České republice potvrzuje, že Čína zatím není v projekci svého obrazu v zahraničí obzvláště úspěšná. Zatímco její kapacity a schopnosti rostou, její vliv promítaný do vzdálených zemí a měřený změnou vnímání Číny ze strany místních médií je omezený. Práce ukázala, že výsledný vliv Číny je, v souladu s výše uvedenými předpoklady, výsledkem vzájemné souhry moci (na straně ovlivňujícího) a vnímání (na straně ovlivňovaného), nikoli přímým působení moci jako takové.

**Klíčová slova**

Čínská lidová republika - mediální analýza - moc - nastolování agendy - percepce - propaganda - veřejná diplomacie - vliv - mediální analýza

**Length of the work**

329,024 characters

**Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.

2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.

3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on August 5, 2019                                    Ivana Karásková

## Acknowledgements

The thesis benefited from numerous exchanges of views and hours of (often heated) debates in Europe, China and the United States. In shaping the initial idea of China's influence, I received very helpful comments from Dr. David Shambaugh (George Washington University), two "partners in crime" and colleagues from ChinfluenCE - Richard Q. Turcsányi (Palacký University) and Tamás Matura (Corvinus University) - and colleagues from the China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE) platform and European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE). In the course of writing, I interviewed a number of Czech and foreign scholars, politicians, diplomats, military and intelligence officers and civil servants who deal with China's rise and influence and, though I do not reveal their names, I would like to thank them for their generosity in spending their time and sharing with me their views and findings.

I would also like to thank two reviewers of the thesis for their careful reading and helpful and constructive comments on the earlier version of the manuscript.

Last, but certainly not least, my gratitude goes to my family, who dealt with my physical or mental absence during the writing and who supported me throughout my studies. I would like to thank especially my husband Tomáš for his humor, patience in responding to middle-of-the-night requests for debating China, and for his unfailing love and unwavering support.

During the course of doctoral studies, I met a number of personally and professionally inspiring people who in one way or another changed my perception and helped shaping the contours of this thesis. Responsibility for any errors or inaccuracies in the thesis is, of course, solely mine.

**Table of contents**

## Table of figures

**Introduction**

Few processes seem to be so obvious to predict as China's rise in international relations, and yet the fact seems to have generated an intriguing sense of surprise (e.g. Gill 2007; Kissinger 2012; Ross & Zhu 2008). After the long period of subjugation by foreign powers and subsequent internal turmoil, including the civil war and the upheavals of the first two and half decades of communist rule represented by Mao Zedong's experiments of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the People's Republic of China (PRC) opted for a more conventional approach to internal governance and international relations. Deng Xiaoping's open door policy led to increased foreign investment in especially east and southeast costal provinces and the permission of establishing private business companies. China became an export-oriented economy, linked to the international market, and a member of global trade institutions, such as the World Trade Organization. The Chinese state loosened its control over personal lives of its citizens and, unlike during the revolutionary zeal of Mao's era, ideology became of secondary importance. Deng's successors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, continued in the course set by Deng, following his foreign policy recommendation of 'keeping a low profile' in the international arena.

Given the size of the country, its population, economy and ensuing budgetary opportunities, it should have been obvious that the PRC is bound to reinstate itself as one of the world's prominent powers. The long-upheld policy of 'keeping a low profile' started to be challenged domestically and the current Chinese leadership headed by Xi Jinping has decided to use the window of strategic opportunity and has become more proactive in various ranges of

policies, including economic, foreign and security. Recent shifts in international politics and the global order together with the internal changes in Xi Jinping's China seem to have intensified the feeling that the country's rise may eventually end up with an attempt at establishing a hegemonic position for the country, at least in a broader regional setting, if not globally. Inevitably, China's rise has attracted much political, academic, journalistic and broadly public attention. The issue, which has long been debated among scholars, entered into the public, policy and journalistic discourses in a form of a label as 'an upcoming Asian/Chinese century' (e.g. Auslin 2017; Mahbubani 2008). The PRC has gradually become perceived through the prism of power politics, including attempts – alleged, at the least – to carve out spheres of influence in regions and countries hitherto regarded as a dominion of other great powers, most notably the United States. Such concerns primarily focus on East Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region, but through China's recently announced Belt and Road Initiative also cover further-flung territories like Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America or Europe. Through various instruments, starting with – but no longer limited to – economic relations, Beijing has established footholds all over the world, stirring a debate over what the motivation of this endeavor is, what goals China follows, to what extent it can succeed in promoting its foreign policy priorities and whether the transition of power will result in a hegemonic war (e.g. Allison 2018; Beckley 2018; Ikenberry 2014; Mead 2018; Mearsheimer 2006).

In an attempt to answer the question, Chinese activities abroad came under closer scrutiny. The 'go out' strategy, encouraging Chinese companies to invest oversees, had already been promoted by Hu Jintao, but re-invigorated

under the current leadership of Xi Jinping (e.g. China Policy 2017; Hanemann & Huotari 2015; Scissors 2015). Financial subsidies and political backing of the Chinese companies abroad led to an increased investment in various vistas all over the world, including the investment into building and updating infrastructure such as ports and railways. In some cases the inability of the investment receiving country to render the Chinese loans resulted in Chinese alleged takeover of the assets (the issue is, however, very unclear, as some scholars claim that the deals struck with Chinese companies are more complicated[1], a direct control is hard to prove and the debate itself is rather polarized; for debate on Hambantota port in Sri Lanka see e.g. Hillman 2018; for the port of Mombasa see Chinese and Kenyan official reactions in Mutethya 2018; for alleged takeover of Zambian International Airport see e.g. Chawe 2018). While China insisted that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which serves as an umbrella for the investment programs, is purely economic in its nature, the need for protecting Chinese assets and citizens abroad will – willingly or unwillingly – eventually require political and security recalibration on the side of Beijing. Simultaneously, investment into strategic ports, China's increased naval activity and advanced military and technology programs increased uneasiness among China's neighbors, most of them allies of the United States.

However, China has not limited its activities to the East Asian region as, in essence, the Belt and Road Initiative is a global endeavor. Thus China's growing *influence* has become not just a descriptor but one of the buzzwords of the ongoing academic, political and journalistic debates. In certain specific

---

[1] Debate at a closed door conference [Chatham House Rule applies] at Harvard University, Boston, April 2019. For new data on the process of assessment of the 'debt trap diplomacy' see Kratz, Feng & Wright 2019.

contexts, the connection has acquired an almost sinister meaning, as the Central European debate on the matter, provoked by strong pro-China rhetorics of the Czech President Miloš Zeman (detailed in Chapter 3) or Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (e.g. Vangeli 2018), demonstrates. It is all the more striking that the concept of influence, which has entered into such dense and widespread use, is actually, at least in academic terms, rather vaguely defined and undertheorized. While often understood as a phenomenon akin to a 'light' use of power (whose theorization is in itself far from unproblematic), it is nevertheless different from Nye's famous concept of soft power which essentially denotes the power of attraction (Nye 2004a). It is upon this creative dissonance between the apparent ubiquity and concurrent conceptual haziness that the main research puzzle of this thesis, focusing on China's influence, is founded.

**Research objectives**

This doctoral thesis has two main research objectives, one theoretical, and the other empirical. The first goal is to more firmly establish the concept of *influence* and distinguish it from *power* (in its various forms, hard or soft). While there are undoubtedly different possibilities of achieving this goal, the thesis rests on the idea of a conceptual 'filter' through which power (as ability) passes on its way to becoming influence. As a result, the effects of policies implemented by the actor who aims to influence another one are co-dependent on not only its power, but also the *perception* of the actor which is influenced.

In this scheme, elements of a state's power and its projection come under empirical scrutiny, but their impact is also conditioned by the distance of the receiver. The author claims that in case of a greater distance between 'the sender' and 'the receiver', perception matters more as it has greater ability to 'indirectly' amplify or decrease the influence of the sender who typically possess only a limited set of power-instruments to be used directly in a coercive or corruptive manner (the specific conditions under which such conditions apply are explained in Chapter 1).

Based on the conceptual foundations of the former, the latter objective aims at explaining the methods the actor (i.e. China) uses to impose its will, interests or preferences on the others, and the receiver's (i.e. the Czech Republic's) reactions to such efforts. The research will thus focus on two phenomena: The first is the capabilities of power projection at the PRC's disposal, with a special focus on their 'soft' components, such as public diplomacy and propaganda, as these can become effective also in contexts where the 'harder' aspects of power, such as military might or economic relations, are weak or not present at all. The second element will analyze China's influence from the 'receiver's' perspective, i.e. from the position of a country where such influence is about to be established. Given its recent experience, the core of the analysis will focus on the case of the (alleged) recent rise of China's influence in the Czech Republic. The case study will focus on the role of institutionalized *perception* that will be studied on the example of the Czech media discourse on China. The following scheme summarizes the main analytical framework of the thesis:

Figure 1: Research and analytical design - influence stemming from power capabilities filtered through mediatized perception

| (soft) power: | perception: | influence: |
|---|---|---|
| China's rise reflected in media and propaganda capabilities | image of China in Czech media | China's sway over the Czech Republic |
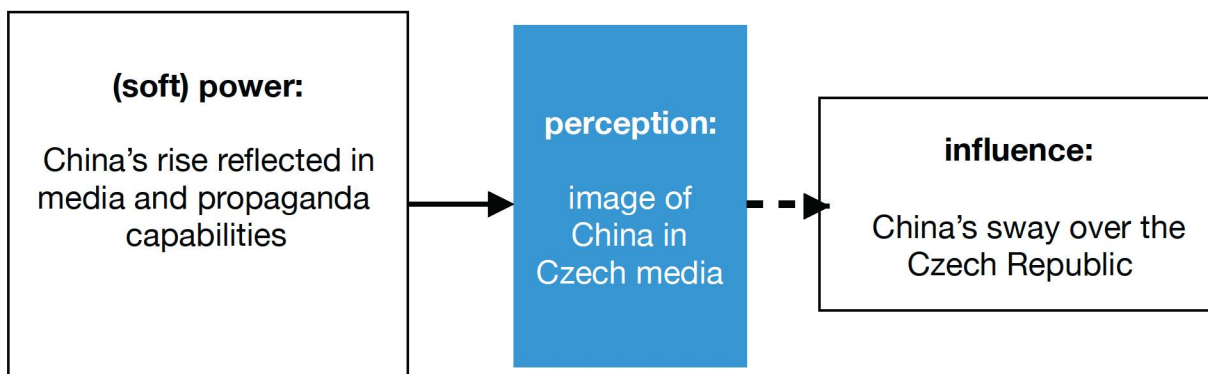
The storyline of the thesis binds together the theoretical narrative, splitting the concept of power between power capabilities and influence (effects of power), with perception as an enabling (or, if its effects are negative, restricting) condition that comes into effects in situations of a 'distant' or 'week' interactions which preclude a forceful and direct application of power instruments. Such a situation is reflected in the empirical case that links together the rise of China as a globally present power actor, with a specifically developed set of media and propaganda capabilities as major tools of its soft power, and the situation of the Czech Republic that has recently become a target of China's policies. 'Institutionalized perception', documented on the image of China in selected Czech media, serves as an intervening variable which transforms the effects of the PRC's power. The resulting analysis empirically proves the relevance of the analytical 'split' of power into the potential (capabilities) and effects (influence), with a key role for institutionalized (or mediatized) perception in the given political and strategic set-up. The desired result is a nuanced and critical assessment of both Beijing's contemporary capabilities of establishing international

influence, and the analysis of openness (or lack of it) towards the application of China's power abroad, with the Czech example providing valuable insights for further possible applications and broader generalization.

**Theoretical framework and methodology**

While the term influence is widely used (typically in word connections such as 'spheres of influence'), scholars focusing on influence correctly point out how poorly developed and, as a result, understood it actually is in academic practice. Moreover, many solutions which are offered to span the gap rest rather heavily on one-directional effect on the part of the influencing party. Equally, on a country-specific level, China and international relations scholars focus heavily on China's capacities and capabilities to project influence, i.e. its domestic policies and political, economic and military structure or its activities abroad. This unnecessarily denies the influenced party much of the agency which it would, in empirical terms, typically exhibit. Even in cases of substantial power imbalance, the result of the stronger actor's effort cannot be easily deduced from its capabilities, or even from their comparison with the capabilities of the other state. Of course, especially in confrontational situations such comparative assessment of power can be useful, but the analytical mechanism retains little of its advantage when applied on cases in which the relations between the actors are not based on mutual competition or enmity. It also fails in cases where the distance (be it geographical, strategic, cultural or other) between the influencer and the influenced is too wide. The question thus still remains open how to measure the effort of an actor attempting to establish its influence within a notionally (or relatively)

friendly setting – such as in the case of China's expansion of its scope of international operations.

To establish a category corresponding to an enabling condition on the part of an actor under the influence, the thesis will utilize the concept of perception. While the term was established in the theory of international relations by Robert Jervis in an effort to introduce the element of psychological frailty to the understanding of decision-making processes, the thesis will use the term in a decidedly de-psychologized manner, denoting a political and/or social openness (or a lack of it) vis-à-vis the influencer's goals and objectives, rather than the psychological (in)capabilities on the part of the decision-makers. As a result, influence is constructed in the thesis as a result of a mobilization of an effort to promote actor's interests, preferences, values etc. (i.e. power) sieved through the perception of such an effort on the part of the target of the policy.

The methodology will combine a historical assessment of China's evolving power capabilities, distinguishing between military might and economic power, and with a specific focus on the 'soft' aspects of power, such as public diplomacy and propaganda, and a combination of a qualitative (coding) and quantitative evaluation of a large sample of media outputs which represent the reception of the PRC and its policies in a given case (i.e. the Czech Republic in recent years). Besides the aforementioned conceptualization of influence, the dissection of the media outputs datasets represents a major and empirically unique academic contribution of the thesis.

Academic reflection of China's public (or, more specifically, media) image in other countries is, in general, not completely rare – especially in China itself. The analyses that have been conducted, however, are largely limited to

8

single-case studies or small-number media content analyses. Even more importantly, no such academic studies exist for the Czech Republic or, with a few exceptions, the region of Central and Eastern Europe. While the analysis is thus not novel in the sense of breaking a new thematic ground, it represents a first effort of a structured, in-depth mapping of China's media image in one of the Central and Eastern European countries which is habitually portrayed in Western media as 'traditionally pro-China' (e.g. Cerulus 2019). The analysis is rather unique in its scope, covering more than four dozen Czech media of different types. The author included both private and public media, 'alternative' sources of information and media with Chinese (co)ownership. The different types of media outlets ranged from dailies, weeklies with political and/or economic focus, TV and radio stations to news servers. The long period it analyzed (starting from 2010 and ending in mid-2017) is also rather unique in its scope and provides a useful tool of analyzing and assessing the changes the discourse on China underwent, as it covers the period before the official change of the Czech Republic's China policy, through the U-turn to the period of time when the new Czech China policy started to be opposed and criticized by several segments of Czech society.

The case study, a research of China's mediatized image in the Czech Republic, focused on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the discourse's transformation. It presupposed there was a rise in the amount of China-related outputs as the topic became increasingly prioritized in the political debate in the region. Accordingly, the research started with the presumption that the tone and form of discussing and reporting about China has undergone a shift towards increasingly positive coverage. The author

identified key, prevailing topics and their frequency, distribution across media outputs and relation vis-à-vis each other, providing a detailed knowledge of the discourse. The author also measured the 'sentiment' (neutral, negative or positive attitudes vis-à-vis China) of the opinions presented in the set of key themes, including possible variations between different media outlets.

Given the relative novelty of the issue as well as a need for clarification of perception, the author, through the course of the writing, conducted a number of interviews with Czech observers and policy makers (Members of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, staff from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defense, journalists, think tankers and academics) as well as stakeholders in the United States (Members of the US Congress, State Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, etc.), China (think tankers from government-affiliated institutions and academics) and observers from the EU and NATO. While most of the interviewees requested anonymity, the views expressed in the interviews shaped the author's understanding of the issue and, where possible, a quotation is used in the thesis.

Through its methodology this thesis attempts to present a more rigorous and systematic approach to the issue. The methodology designed for this thesis was already provided to colleagues in Slovakia, Poland and Hungary who conducted similar research. The collaboration resulted in an international project on China's image in Visegrád countries called ChinfluenCE and supported by a US-based foundation. A portion of the same methodology was also applied by colleagues in their attempt to map China's image and influence in Greece (Tonchev et. al 2018). The research results of the mapping of China's image in the Czech Republic were already mentioned in

a US Congress hearing (Benner & Wright 2018: 5), cited at the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission's 2018 Annual Report (USESRC 2018: 308), Reporters without Borders' report on vulnerability of media outlets (RSF 2019: 37), presented by the author at the European Parliament and quoted by European, US and Australian media. The rigorous methodology and academic grounding of the research, which is described in Chapter 3, contributed to broaden the understanding and discussion on the issue.

**Structure of the thesis**

The thesis starts with an outline of the challenges encountering the effort to define influence as a specific concept in the analysis of inter-state relations. Relying on established literature in the field, the thesis first outlines the debate about power in its various interpretations. In the next step, the concept of perception is introduced, starting from – but, as explained above, not relying on – Jervis's understanding of the term. The conceptual chapter concludes with a presentation of the relationship among power, perception and influence.

In Chapter 2, China is introduced as a rising power in the contemporary international system, with necessary references to the country's performance in the past. Specific attention is given to the PRC's instruments of power projection, especially their expansion in the context of a country's rapid development from an isolated entity ruled over by an enigmatic totalitarian ruler to a 'standardized' type of autocratic governance which proved to be hugely successful in the economic renovation of the country and,

subsequently, its transformation to an internationally recognized powerhouse. As a specific feature, the elements of public diplomacy and the role of propaganda are scrutinized.

Chapter 3 focuses first on the general issue of the perception of China's rise, including both political and academic narratives thereof. Special attention is paid to the media as conveyors and creators of the PRC's image, a crucial element in the country's perception. The core of the empirical analysis of the perception of China will then tackle the aforementioned Czech dataset.

The final part of the thesis evaluates the results of the empirical analysis of China's influence, thus contributing to the ongoing debate on this topic. It also attempts to draw more general conclusions concerning the specific conceptualization of influence for potential use in other cases or contexts.

## 1 Out of conceptual haziness: establishing influence as a theoretical and analytical concept

### 1.1 Power, influence, and the power of influence

One of the dominant stream of theorizing international relations revolves around the concept of power. Disillusioned from the perceived failure of the liberal emphasis on norms, institutions and public opinion in the inter-war period, Hans Morgenthau turned to „interest defined in terms of power" (Morgenthau 1948: 5) as the main explanation of politics in the international domain – and thus started the original school of the newly redefined field. In view of the first among his six principles of political realism,

power-infused interests are to be understood as one of the basic social laws, rooted in human nature, and thus universally applicable. Morgenthau was, of course, able to build not only on immediate predecessors, critical of the liberal inter-war prerogative and establishment (e.g. Carr 1939), but intrinsically on centuries-long tradition of power politics which, no matter how strongly denounced in the wake of World War I, apparently seemed ever-present. Not only from Morgenthau's perspective, the repeat of the systemic conflict in the form of World War II demonstrated the irrepressible nature of power politics and the folly of the effort to replace it with a liberal (norm- or institution-based) alternative. Despite the apparent liveliness of the idea and practice of international institutions, as demonstrated after World War II through the birth of the United Nations, international financial institutions or regional security organizations like NATO, the overarching reality of the new systemic contest, the Cold War, seemed to underline and vindicate Morgenthau's vision.

The tradition that Moreganthau started with the publication of *Politics Among Nations* has successfully continued until nowadays. While the subsequent reformulations of realism sometimes downplayed the central role of power in exchange for other concepts (such as international anarchy and thereby motivated, primarily defensive quest for security in Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*), the notion of power has become an irrevocable and major component of the realist canon. And while the realist interpretation of international politics has come under attack from several directions (most notably from the neoliberal and social constructivist theories), its common theme, that of states (or at least some states, like great powers) motivated for

their actions by a wish to achieve a more powerful position in the system, is hard to fully disprove in light of empirical knowledge of international politics.

And yet, the very concept that is conventionally treated as the heart of the realist theory is in fact so hazily defined that it almost amounts to an equivalent of a theoretical MacGuffin, the term popularized by Alfred Hitchcock as a description of an object that drives the plot while its proper nature or exact quality is never revealed. There are, of course, other theoretical approaches dealing with power from different perspectives than the realist tradition, e.g. Marxism (which links power to the ownership of the means of production), Gramscianism, certain streams of social constructivism, such as Campbell who regards foreign policy as a means of building and solidifying domestic power of political elites, or post-modernism which, building on thoughts of Michel Foucault's writing, analyzes power effect of language. However, as this thesis focuses on the original realist domain of state-to-state relations, it is the conceptual void in the heart of the realist paradigm which needs to be further dissected.

Morgenthau's own definition is characteristic in this regard: „Power may comprise anything that established and maintains the control of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships that serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls the other" (Morgenthau 1948: 13). While this original conceptualization is admirably broad (and apparently contains elements of soft power that was only 'discovered' forty years later by Joseph S. Nye), it is far from clear in explaining the basic nature of the phenomenon. While the definition tends towards a relational understanding („power covers all social relationships"), it is equally open to the understanding of power as a set of

capabilities („anything that established and maintains control of man over man"). While the former understanding points much more directly to the presumed nature of politics as specifically understood interactions, one could argue that it was the latter that power-related analysis of international relations has typically focused on (John Mearsheimer's famous article from the wake of the Cold War can be taken as a typical example, see Mearsheimer 1990). While many would agree with David Shambaugh (2014) that „capabilities, however, are but one measure of national and international power", their advantage stems directly from their measurable nature – as opposed to the conceptual but also empirical challenges to measuring power in the meaning of forcing or otherwise persuading the other side of doing what the actor wants. This is, after all, reflected in the materialist ontology that realism typically professes, as Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik note (Legro & Moravcsik 1999).

Problems of measurability of power understood as a relational effect are compounded by the lack of clarity on the role which the other side, i.e. 'the receiver' of a policy based on national interests defined in terms of power, is supposed to play. Is resistance against an actor to be subtracted from its power, as the relational understanding of power would imply? But would such an interpretation be in line with an established understanding of a balance of power? And what about the mechanism of balancing: do states balance against the relational power that has resulted from an interaction, or is the interaction the result of a confrontation of powers understood as a sum of capabilities?

The answer to these questions in the thesis is at the same time less ambitious and potentially more far-reaching than Stephano Guzzini's detailed

and deep critique of the conceptualization of power (Guzzini 1994). While Guzzini's quest seems to be motivated by a desire to probe the consistency and theoretical value of the concept, the author's goal is more modest: to choose from the two main conceptualizations of power (power as ability vs. power as effect in Guzzini's reformulation) the one more suitable for the subsequent empirical analysis of China's effects on the international environment and its components. In this, the thesis takes inspiration from David Shambaugh's recent conclusion that „a more significant indicator of power is influence – the ability to shape events and the actions of others (…) Capabilities that are not converted into actions toward achieving certain ends are not worth much. Their existence may have an impressive or deterrent effect, but it is the ability to influence the action of another or the outcome of an event that matters." (Shambaugh 2014). The emphasis in the assessment of his statement needs to be placed at the term „indicator of" from which it can be deduced that power and influence are not part of a single phenomenon.

The conceptual haziness which surrounds the definition of power similarly encompasses the conceptualization of influence. Ersoj (2018) correctly pointed out how poorly developed and, as a result, understood it actually is in academic practice: "In the lexicon of the discipline of international relations, influence is a ubiquitous word which is yet to be rigorously conceptualized, and it is a phenomenon in international politics which is yet to be extensively theorized" (Ersoj 2018: 51). It is rather striking that most studies use the concepts of power and influence as interchangeable categories or as self-evident (Murphy 2011; Ersoj 2018). Robert Dahl pointed to this discrepancy in *Modern Political Analysis:* "[a]lthough throughout history influence-terms

have been central to political analysis, most theorists seem to have assumed, as did Aristotle, that they needed no great elaboration, presumably because their meaning would be clear enough to men of common sense. Even Machiavelli, who was fascinated by the play of power, used a variety of undefined terms to describe and explain political life. (…) yet it is still true that different writers do not use influence-terms in the same way: one man's 'influence' is another man's 'power'" (Dahl 1970: 15–16).

Figure 2: Relation between power and influence
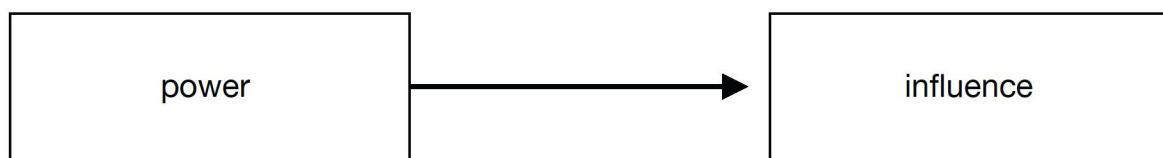


James Murphy distinguishes between power and influence when claiming "[p]ower is not an intentional kind of influence nor is influence necessarily a consequence of power. I can exert private mental powers that have no causal influence. But in practice, the more power I wield, the more influence I have, wanted or unwanted" (Murphy 2011: 90). He then focuses on the outcome – while influence can causally affect, exercise of power aims at achieving the change (Murphy 2011: 94).

Scheme above (Figure 2) shows a reductionist solution to the internal tension within the concept of power and inevitably opens a subsequent question: how is 'power' (understood as ability) translated into 'influence'? Shambaugh lists a number of „means by which nations use their capabilities to influence the actions of others and the course of events: attraction, persuasion, co-

optation, coercion, remuneration, inducement, or the threat or use of force" (Shambaugh 2014). Dahl uses the word influence throughout his works instead of power and in fact, in his later works with Bruce Stinebrickner, perceives power as one of seven manifestations of influence, which also include inducement, force, coercion, persuasion, manipulation, and authority (Dahl & Stinebrickner 2003: 38–43). While their approach is novel, it does not help adding the theoretical clarity as demonstrated when they give examples of ways the influence is exerted: "influence-wielders can employ rewards ('inducement') or sanctions or deprivations ('power'); use physical means such as lifting, pushing, or even shooting ('force') or the threat of force ('coercion', which is 'an extreme variant of power'" (cit. in Stinebrickner 2015: 196).

However, all the processes described by the aforementioned authors are one-sided actions. Shambaugh claims that „power and its exercise are […] intrinsically relational" (Shambaugh 2014), but they all center on the sender and thus do not describe a relationship. If we elaborate on yet another Morgenthau's concept, that of the balance of power (Morgethau 1948, chapter 11), and link it with the more limited understanding of power as ability, we would be logically prompted to conclude that influence can be understood as a result of a relational subtraction of the competing powers (power A – power B = influence of A over B).

Such a conclusion, if clearly imperfect, may yet provide some guidance for relationships among (near) equals – e.g. China and the United States – where influence can be at least partially seen as a result of mutual wrestling at diplomatic, political, military or intelligence levels. This image, however, does not sit well with Morgenthau's notion of „control of man over man": while

the relational aspect seems to be safeguarded, there clearly is no 'control' by one great power over the other in the sense Morgenthau suggests. But while such a conceptual problem arises in relations between great powers, the idea of power (or influence) as control is definitely not off the mark when we consider relations between the powerful towards the weak (or at least weaker), such as in the interaction between the People's Republic of China and the Czech Republic under scrutiny in this thesis. Such a situation warrants the image that Shambaugh's list of various means for the implementation of power implies – a power relationship between a 'sender' (i.e. the powerful actor) and the 'recipient' (the weaker party). From a perspective purely concentrating on power, the relational quality of such a situation is mostly (or strictly) one-sided, putting the applicability of the term yet again in question. It is, however, possible to conclude that interstate relationships can be roughly divided to more or less equal, where balance of power (or at least the mechanism of balancing) applies, and largely unequal, where 'sender-receiver' metaphor provides a better explanation for the processes entailed.

This conclusion seems to imply that power (as ability) translates into influence more or less directly in the category of largely unequal interstate relationships – which, however, does not always have to be the case. First of all, even notably weaker parties can balance the hugely stronger ones, as argued by Stephen Walt in *The Origin of Alliances* (1987). As a good example of the process we can use the case of Taiwan's relations with the US to counterbalance China's power. While this example brings us back to the core of realist thinking, it does not seem particularly helpful for many other cases. Specifically, when China's influence in countries like the Czech

Republic is taken into account, balancing (or, for that matter, bandwagoning) does not seem to be a particularly relevant concept. Unlike Taiwan, Vietnam or Japan, the Czech Republic does not act according to the logic dictating the mobilization of its own power resources to counter the PRC's power (or, even less so, the renouncement of such a mobilization due to a clear preponderance of the opponent, as the logic of bandwagoning would dictate). Why? In short, China is substantially far away in geographic, military, diplomatic, cultural, economic and basically any other terms. This assumption conforms both to Stephen Walt's emphasis on the role of geographic distance (e.g. Walt 1985: 10) in the functioning of power relations. If attempting to unpack the notion of 'distance', its nature becomes inevitably more complex. Most importantly, a multitude of factors apparently exist that can cause the notion of distance to contract, sometimes to the effect of eliminating it altogether. At the level of military hard power, the introduction of first aerial forces and, later and more significantly, ballistic and other missiles meant that the territory of the enemy became within reach in the scope of first hours, later minutes. Similar, though not as singularly dramatic effects can of course be reached by more 'conventional' means, such as establishing a web of bases (or, in the case of the United States, even regional headquarters) covering the globe, thus becoming 'at home' worldwide. In economic terms, the globalization and, perhaps more importantly, electronization of economic processes has also led to the 'cancelling' of distance (e.g. in the sense of being able to block or seize the opponent's assets digitally, through the proverbial click of a computer button). Globalization (e.g. Nye 2002) has also been effective in not necessarily bridging cultural differences but definitely in allowing those interested in

bringing their own cultural, ideological or other identitarian preferences close to global audiences (as e.g. the globally effective - though not inevitably efficient - propaganda of jihadist groups convincingly testifies).

Nye's definition and writings on soft power, however, do not seem to deal with a problem of how the distance effects recipient's attraction to soft power resources, such as culture, political values and foreign policy. This omission is identified by Craig Hayden, who sees distance (not in geographical, but ideational meaning) as a factor in attraction: "[a]ttraction, as a soft power behavior, would be an invitation to recognize a shared experience of being and perspective. Attraction is not persuasion per se, but resultant from representational acts that symbolize shared worlds" (Hayden 2012: 31). "Attraction," Hayden continues, "may be the product of ingrained historical and cultural perspectives that do not bend easily to purposive "soft power" interventions because attraction (and its opposite) likely has significant inertia. Alternatively, there may be active countervailing efforts to compete over credibility by other agents, making attraction even more difficult to leverage, let alone cultivate. It may be hard to use public diplomacy to enhance attraction, when another actor is aggressively enhancing its own image at the expense of yours" (Hayden 2012: 31). Hence, when assessing the relationship between China and the Czech Republic, we can safely claim that distance plays and continues to play a role at the many aforementioned levels, thus legitimizing the claim that their interaction has a substantively different quality as opposed to actors which are much more readily within China's power reach. That being said, China's influence (i.e. effective translation of its power into desired results in terms of Czech Republic's

behavior) is still an issue, as the review of Czech media discourse, presented further in the thesis, demonstrates.

While even in such situations of relatively weak connections the stronger actor can try to assert control through direct application of power instruments (as in the case of the PRC 'punishing' states for their allegedly anti-Chinese stances, such as hosting the Dalai Lama or awarding a Nobel Prize to a writer critical of the regime in Beijing), an intervening variable, mitigating the influence of the stronger actor, seems to be missing in the calculation. Such a variable would also serve the purpose of restoring agency on the part of the weaker side, which the purely power analysis seems to deny it. In other words, the element that is sought is an ability on the part of the weak(er) state, which can be relatively safe from the more drastic actions potentially taken against it by the strong actor (as e.g. the Czech Republic – being geographically distant vis-à-vis China and a member of the European Union and NATO), to filter the effects of the great power's power. The next two sub-chapters will argue that, especially in the context of soft power, such a filter can be identified in the process of perception.

## 1.2 Reconceptualizing perception

When Robert Jervis published *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* in 1976, he did more than just contribute to a more precise understanding of the practice of international politics and diplomacy. His volume, meticulously and methodologically crafted, served as a useful reminder that politics, domestic or international, is actually performed by

people. While this statement is completely banal from the empirical perspective, it had a revelatory character in relation to the prevailing theories of international relations of the time, be it (neo)realism or its neoliberal competitor. Jervis pointed out that politics is at least as much about human thinking (or a lack of it) and (mis)behavior as it is about processes, structures or institutions.

What Jervis (1976) introduced to the theory of international relations was a healthy dose of political psychology. In an apparent and effective effort not to necessarily disprove but at the very minimum challenge the notion of rational actorness, Jervis logically focused on failures, limitations, flaws and weak spots of humans involved in the decision-making process, i.e. members of the political elite, bureaucracy, security community, military services or intelligence agencies, in the international environment characterized with risk and uncertainty where wrong decisions can have fatal consequences. His astute observations paint a world intimately recognizable to anyone with direct experience in or access to politics: bad decisions are often made with limited information and under time pressure, historical analogies go awry due to the lack of reflection on their proper meaning and their relation to other events, differing perspectives and motivations result in misunderstandings, etc. If for nothing else, Jervis's effort needs to be praised for returning a human-centric perspective into the field fascinated by processes and structures.

Still, the psychological (or cognitive) focus which Jervis successfully applied seems to have obscured (and, as seems from the relative lack of academic outputs in this regard, effectively pre-empted) the broader applicability of the concept of perception. While the relevance of the psychological

understanding of perception is undeniable, the term offers broader interpretations. When metaphorical expressions like „the Czech Republic perceives the situation as a challenge to its interests" or „Beijing sees the action as a hostile attempt by a rival power" are used, they represent more than just figures of speech. They sum up a complex and diverse political and institutional processes through which policies, ideas and images of other actors are filtered, dissected, aggregated and eventually sedimented in what might be termed 'institutionalized perception', i.e. a formalized position or opinion on the part of a state and its bodies or the representatives of the community the state overarches, such as the media. Viewed from this position, what the state or its society say (or, more broadly, broadcast) reflects what they think about the outside world, including other actors. From this view, the fixation on misperception looses its allure, since it is more difficult to formulate the norm that should underpin 'institutionalized perception', compared to the psychological assessment of perception by an individual, and challenging to maintain that such a norm exists in the first place.

Critics of such a reconceptualization of perception might object that 'institutionalized perception' has actually been conceptualized long ago through an intersubjective construction of reality within the social constructivist theory of international relations. After all, when Wendt claims that „anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992) or Campbell documents the mechanism of identity formation through the practices of foreign policy (Campbell 1998), they apparently touch upon the same issue. Is, then, social constructivism a theoretical answer to the request for a 'filter' between the 'sender' of power and its 'recipient'? Not necessarily. From the

specific perspective of a search for a tool that would improve the understanding of the process which develops between a powerful actor and its 'target', social constructivism suffers from a reverse drawback that harms the purely realist explanation. Realism, working with relational understanding of power, effectively denies the agency to the weaker side. Social constructivism does the same to the powerful actor. For if we replace 'institutionalized perception' with 'intersubjective construction', we typically limit the process to the affected community (in this case, the weaker side like the Czech Republic). While such a move is, in general terms, perfectly legitimate and the contribution of social constructivism to the understanding of international politics is indisputable, it does not represent a helpful tool for the given situation.

For this reason, the thesis adopts a decidedly eclectic theoretical position. On the one hand, it adopts the realist-coined focus on power potential (transformed into specific capabilities – as explained below), accepting the core materialist assumptions it entails. However, already in connection to the concept of power, the ontology gets complicated with the inclusion of (and, indeed, emphasis on) Nye's expansion of the term to soft power. As Nye puts it, "soft power is socially constructed" and it "is a dance that requires partners" (Nye 2011: 84). While the latter is – ontologically speaking – not a major concern for the thesis, as it accepts a competing non-relational definition of power, the former represents an ontological challenge which, generally, allows for two solutions. One would suggest that even military and economic power can be understood as a social construction, at the very least in the sense that the application of the underlying material factors (military hardware, economic resources, territory et al.) is inevitably impacted by

norms, ideas, identities or values. While ontologically monolithic, the author of the thesis believes such a move deprives the realist-infused analysis of much of its strength that is, indeed, derived from the ability to reflect on the substantive value of material phenomena. For analytical reasons, the thesis thus adopts a stance that regards all components of power (military, economic, soft) as if they constituted a single category of factors, while acknowledging the underlying aforementioned ontological tensions. The reason for this decision is a presumption that all facets of power, in their specific ways and in mutual combination, act as a 'signal' from the 'sender' which travel through a 'filter' on the part of the 'receiver'. Whether materially based or socially constructed, the effects of power represent an external factor which is then acted upon by the state which the stronger party attempts to influence – validating the metaphor of a dance with two partners that Nye employs, but in specific conditions of a relationship between a great power and a small state over a substantive distance.

This aforementioned filter is subsequently conceptualized as 'institutionalized perception'. The concept is inspired by Jervis's reflections of the role of cognitive 'filters' which modify the external 'signals' and thus have an impact on subsequent decision-making of the recipient. The thesis, however, does not directly utilize Jervis's ontology or method, but it finds essential the image of an intervening filter which enters into the process of interactions between political actors. Moreover, Jervis focuses specifically on perceptions and decision-making in situations of time-constraint, under stress or with limited information which is not the interest of the thesis. While he focuses on individual perceptions, the institutionalized or mediatized perceptions represent a set of norms, ideas and values of a collective environment in

which agenda setters operate (Czech experience with Communism, Václav Havel's legacy, Czech Republic's relations and perception of other great powers - EU, US, Russia, etc.). The level of analysis is thus higher than individual perceptions where agenda setters may hold personal perceptions, stemming from their personal experience (such as Babiš's negative business experience in China as noted on p. 153), but the thesis does not focus on them but on a macro-level of collective perceptions. The resulting concept of 'institutionalized perception' thus takes Jervis's image of a filter but translocates it from the level of individual cognition to the domain of intersubjective construction through mediatized discourse. The thesis works with a hypothesis that the role of a filter is primarily played by the intersubjectively constructed image of China via the media (to which individuals with their specific motivations and personal or social experiences contribute and thus shape it - some, e.g. president Zeman, evidently more intensely than others). Hence, for the purpose of the conducted analysis, the mediatized discourse is prioritized over the individual experience.

To sum up, influence is conceptualized in the thesis as being co-dependent on the 'sender's' power and the 'institutionalized perception' of the 'receiver'.

Figure 3: Relation among power, perception and influence
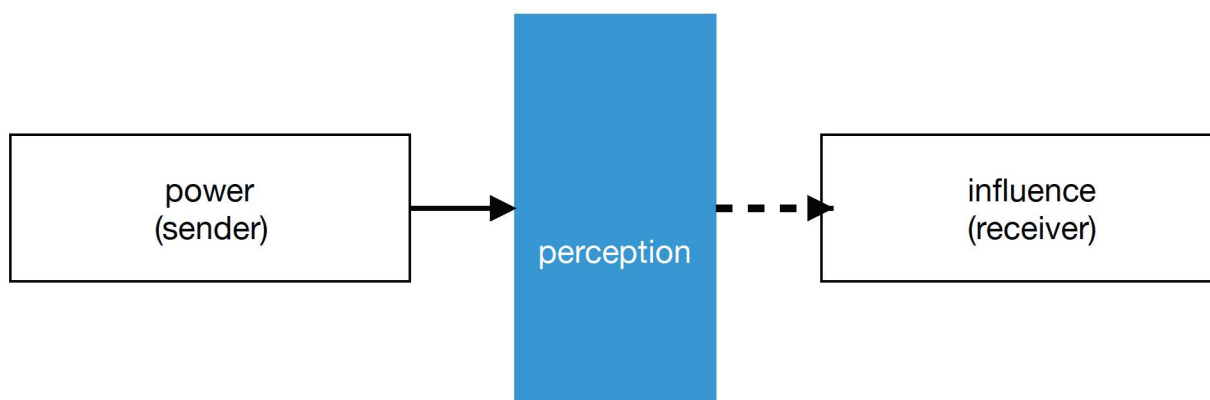
## 1.3 Influence and soft power: Perception as an enabling condition

As argued above, the role of 'institutionalized perception' as a 'filter' between the 'sender' and the 'receiver' of power impulses inevitably varies in different contexts. In a case of military or strategic immediacy (in relation to China, the situation of Taiwan once again offers itself as a useful example), the scope of perception to act as a filter between power and influence is limited as the maneuvering space for negotiable issues (e.g. how to perceive the other actor, how to react to its policies) is also limited by the dictate of necessity. In other words, in such a situation, the competency of the realist theory to provide an explanation for the behavior of the actors and to assess the resulting influence of the stronger actor significantly rises.

Figure 4: Relation among power, perception and influence based on different sender-receiver proximity (receiver close to the sender)
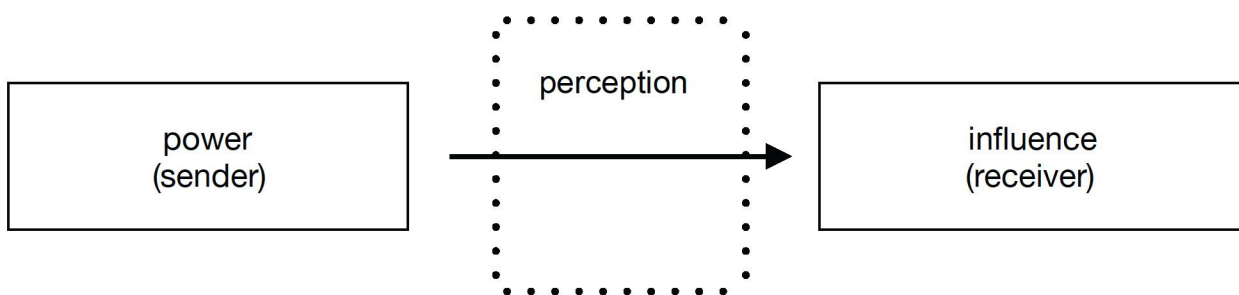


At the other end of the scale would be a hypothetical case of an actor without any connection to the 'sender', thus being able to freely construct its image without the underlying basis of incoming signals. Needless to say, in a highly

interconnected contemporary world such a situation seems – at least at its full extent – highly unlikely. Real-world examples would, as usual, provide a mix between the two extremes – i.e. a combination of direct effects of power (i.e. diplomatic sanctions applied by the PRC in return for 'anti-Chinese' behavior) and the scope for institutionalized perception to act as a 'transformer' in which the signals received from abroad are shaped by various domestic processes, reflecting the values, norms, interests and preferences of the given actor. As a result, the influence of the 'sender' over the 'receiver' may increase or diminish, hence not being directly proportional to its power – a crucial conceptual claim this thesis aims to investigate.

Figure 5: Relation among power, perception and influence based on different sender-receiver proximity (receiver distant from the sender)
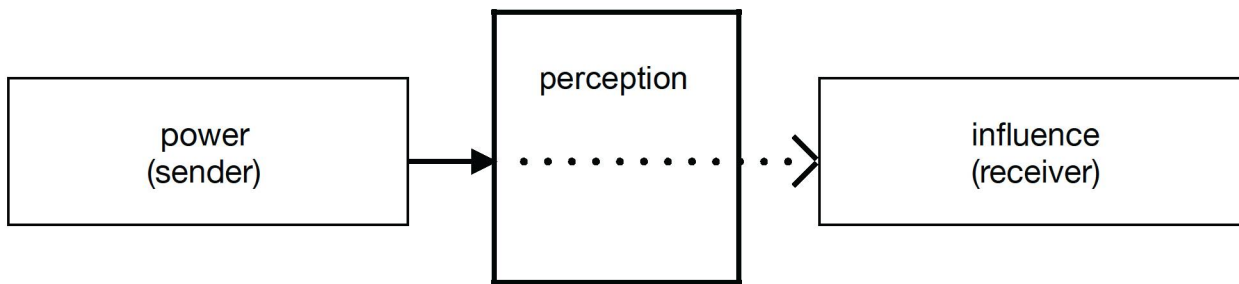


The difference in the role of institutionalized perception may not only stem from the distance between the actors concerned, but also from the type of power that is or is not applicable by the stronger party to manage their relationship. Nye defines soft power as an ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants (Nye 2004a). He summarizes that "[o]ne can affect other individuals' behavior in three main ways: by threatening coercion

29

("sticks"), by offering inducements or payments ("carrots"), and by making others want what one wants" (Nye & Wang 2009).

Instead on penalties ("sticks") or rewards ("carrots") Nye focuses on power as an ability to shift other actor's preferences (Nye 2008: 94). "[S]oft power means getting others to want the same outcomes you want" (Nye 2008: 103). In line with the focus of this thesis, he claims that it "is crucial to understand the target audience" (Nye 2008: 103) which perceives all incoming information through filters. In Nye's case, these filters are cultural. While his concept enriches the study of power and constitutes a useful addition to hard power seen as military and economic might, it cannot stand alone. In his attempt to conceptualize the relation between hard and soft varieties of power, Nye claims that soft power always stands in a conceptual relationship with hard power (Nye 2011). In reality, though, some resources can produce both hard and soft power, such as economy which "can produce important carrots for paying others, as well as a model of success that attracts others" (Nye 2008). Nye calls the nexus of soft and hard powers a 'smart power' and focuses on its relational character as it would be a "mistake to think of power the ability to affect others to obtain preferred outcomes  simply as 'power over' rather than 'power with' others" (Nye 2012: 155).

While attempts have been made to expand the scope of the types of power beyond Joseph Nye's definition (e.g. Walker & Ludwig 2017), his division of the phenomenon into military and economic hard power and soft power still inspires through its combination of complexity, clarity and simplicity. Besides specific processes of their application ("sticks" for military hard power, "carrots" for economic hard power, and attraction for soft power), the three composite aspects of power also differ in the extent to which they are at

direct disposal for the state. In his response to critics, Nye defends the various nonmaterial aspects of power rejecting a claim that "something is not a power resource unless you can drop it on a city or on your foot" (Nye 2008: 96). To partially contest his reply, however, it seems clear that military hard power is the one which is most fully controllable by the state. In other words, once the power potential in this domain is turned into capabilities, these are fully available for the state's disposal. Or almost fully – state access to the military capabilities may yet be complicated by external dependencies of political (alliances) or economic (foreign armaments) nature, or internal political or societal blocks (public opposition against a use of force).

Even factoring in such possible hurdles, military power thus seems as completely available to the state as practically possible. The same cannot be concluded about economic power. While certain elements (ability to impose sanctions or embargoes or to provide official development aid) are fully under state control, the bulk of the economy – with the exception of the situation in totalitarian or otherwise economically centralized regimes – remains outside the state's direct use. States of course can and do control and regulate their economies, and are often able to fruitfully utilize their size, dynamism or other special qualities. But states' direct disposition with the economy is still limited. In this regard, it is worth considering the economy as maybe more important as a source of attraction – and thus as a component of soft power. Indeed, in some cases, contemporary China included, the attraction of its economy can actually be the main source of soft power.

As Nye himself acknowledges, soft power is notably difficult for a state to harness in a targeted, controlled manner (Nye 2004a: 99). While some elements of attraction, such as the quality of institutions or governance in

general, are within the remit of the state's control, even these are not a typical component knowingly incorporated into foreign policy. Other elements, such as culture, seem even further from the state's direct control and utilization. In this regard, however, autocratic regimes like the PRC clearly differ from liberal democracies like the United States in maintaining (or at least attempting to do so) control over these sources of their image. As this thesis will further explore, China – as a specific combination of a relatively free economic system with strict state control over many other aspects of social life, including art, cinematography or literature – represents a conceptual challenge to the logic of decreasing utilization of the three main components of power. While not underestimating the scope of Beijing's control over the economic domain, it seems warranted to claim that China actually attempts to control the sources of its (cultural) soft power equally stringent as its economic capacities.

These conclusions are especially relevant for the design of analysis of China's influence in the Czech Republic, the empirical case presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis. While China certainly possesses instruments of direct application of its power capabilities against the Czech Republic, their extent is limited due to geographic distance and Czech Republic's geostrategic location (thus practically nullifying possible use of China's military hard power), relatively low level of mutual economic exchange (which limits the effects of possible economic sanctions) and, until recently, narrow scope of political relations (that puts in doubt the impact of diplomatic sanctions). Thus, when China recently intensified its presence in and relations with Europe, and specifically its Central and Eastern European part, it opened not only a new chapter in its diplomatic history, but also provided

an analytically attractive case of building influence in a region where it had not been present before, and thus without an infrastructure which would allow it to pull the levers of direct power instruments.

The thesis uses this opportunity to study an interaction between a globally active great power and a small state at the 'receiving' end of its policies. The subsequent analysis focuses first on the 'sender', i.e. China as a rising actor with multiple sources of power. Due to aforementioned limits of the PRC's reach to Central and Eastern Europe, special attention is paid to the instruments of public diplomacy and propaganda which are, by their nature, most easily deployable across the geographical, political and strategic distance. Chapter 3 of the thesis then shifts attention to the 'receiver' of China's power projection, the Czech Republic. The objective of this part is to explore to which extent the institutionalized perception, studied on the example of media discourse, has been conducive or rather obstructive to China's policies. As the analysis will show, far from being an enabler of the PRC's strategic goals, the perception on the part of the Czech society, as represented by and through the media, has so far acted as an obstacle to the intensification of Chinese influence. At the conceptual level, this finding justifies the conceptual decision to opt for ontological eclecticism in order to provide and assess agency on the part of both the 'sender' and the 'receiver'. As the thesis will conclude, the case of China-Czech Republic interaction does indeed confirm the logic of influence as a function of power filtered through perception.

## 2 The actor: analyzing rising China

### 2.1     Mapping China's rise[2]

Much of the contemporary discourse seems to indicate that China's rise[3] will inevitably lead to a conflict with the current hegemon. China is often portrayed as a dangerous would-be hegemon whose policies in various domains form a grand strategy for increasing its power position in the international system. Taking into account the basis of realist theories (e.g. Legro & Moravcsik 1999; Mearsheimer 1990; Morgenthau 1948; Waltz 1979), those inclined to see China's rise as a threat to the current hegemon and to the international system as such first and foremost look at China's position in international relations through the prism of power. For them, China appears to be a rationally calculating actor with a unified leadership, motivated primarily by security considerations to which economic goals are subordinated. Given China's growing power, stipulating its behavior according to this logic will inevitably lead to a conflict with other actors, including the current hegemon. A realist reaction to China's rise would be encirclement and containment of China (Mandelbaum 2019).

In contrast, a liberal view in international relations praises the interdependence of actors and their plurality not only of the international environment but also within the state. This calls into question the realist idea

---

[2] An earlier version of a part of this sub-chapter written by the author was published in Czech in Karásková, Ivana, Slavomír Horák, Jakub Kulhánek and Bohuslav Litera. *Rusko-čínské vztahy a EU: potenciál spolupráce a konfliktu* [*Russian-Chinese Relations and the EU: Potential for Cooperation and Conflict*], Praha: MatFyzPress, 2011.

[3] In this chapter, the term is used to describe the ascent of China in the international order and is clearly differentiated from an official term China's (peaceful) rise coined by the previous Chinese president Hu Jintao.

of 'grand strategy' and a unified masterplan that the whole state pursues. According to this view, security and economics are not in a hierarchical order, but it is clear that the economy and its complex interdependence have the potential to positively influence the security situation (Keohane & Nye 1977). A liberalist's preferred modus operandi to cope with China's rise would be an engagement.

He and Feng call the proponents of the former stream of thoughts on implications of the China's rise 'pessimists', while the latter are labeled as 'optimists'. They, however, observe a third category of IR theorists and China watchers, which can be perhaps described as 'undecided'. This camp claims that it is still impossible to decide on Chinese leadership's intentions and the reaction of the international system, thus the strategy the undecided camp would prefer is hedging, investing equally in two likely, yet opposite outcomes (He & Feng 2014: 169; Mandelbaum 2019).

All of the aforementioned approaches to deciphering the meaning and implications of China's rise are linear and determinist (Hu & Feng 2014). Moreover, they fail to take into account an important role of perception in international relations. Some (e.g. Nye 2005; Allison 2018) observe the danger of misperception and point to the so called 'Thucydides' trap', referring to his "warning more than two millennia ago that belief in the inevitability of conflict can become one of its main causes. Each side, believing it will end up at war with the other, makes reasonable military preparations that are read by the other side as confirmation of its worst fears" (Nye 2005: 13). The following sub-chapters thus intends to clarify the discourse on China's rise and its problems, on three distinct areas – the PRC's economic development, its growing military might and, most

importantly, the expanding scope of foreign policy initiatives launched by Chinese presidents Hu Jintao (1992-2012) and Xi Jinping (2012 onwards).

### 2.1.1 The roots of China's rise: economic and military hard power

During the past four decades, China's foreign policy and its perception of the international system have undergone dramatic changes. Until the initiation of reforms by Deng Xiaoping and his declaration of the open door policy in 1979, the country was more of a cautious observer than active shaper of the international affairs. Since then it has clearly and indisputably developed into a major player which is fully aware of its potential – and which regards its newfound power as a return to the place that China rightfully deserves and which had been denied to it by the international community for the past two centuries. As such, it also assumes that the other world leaders will show it respect (Li & Worm 2011). The 'rise' is, perhaps, not the best description of the process. A re-emergence, Nye claims, might be a better-suited concept as "by size and history the Middle Kingdom has long been a major power in East Asia. Technically and economically, China was the world's leader (though without global reach) from 500 to 1500. Only in the last half-millennium was it overtaken by Europe and America" (Nye 2005: 13).

Three main processes underline China's rise (or re-emergence): Deng Xiaoping's change of the course, growth of Chinese economic potential, and changes in the structure of the international system and the reflection of these processes by the Chinese leadership.

Owing to the sharp increase of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which for the most of the past three decades remained in a double-digit terms[4], China is now one of the world's largest economic centers (WB CN 2019a). In terms of GDP it is the world's second largest economy and the largest if measured in purchasing price parity (PPP) terms. The following key macro economic data serve as a background illustration of the principal trends.

Figure 6: China's GDP annual growth (%) in 1961-2018
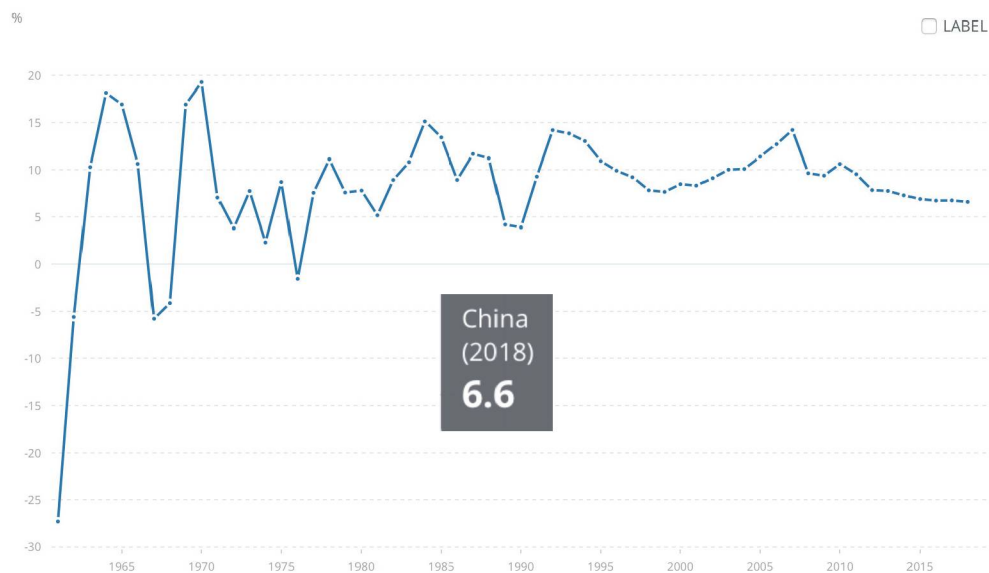


Source: WB 2019b

---

[4] The currently experienced slow-down of the Chinese economy started in 2012.

37

Figure 7: Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) in 1991-2018
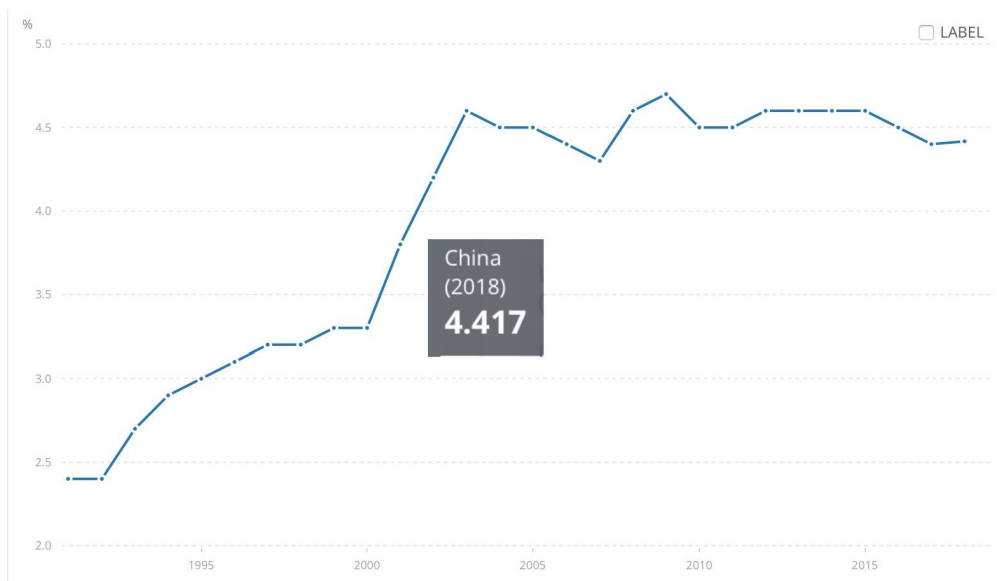


Source: WB 2019b

Figure 8: Inflation, consumer prices (annual %) in 1987-2018
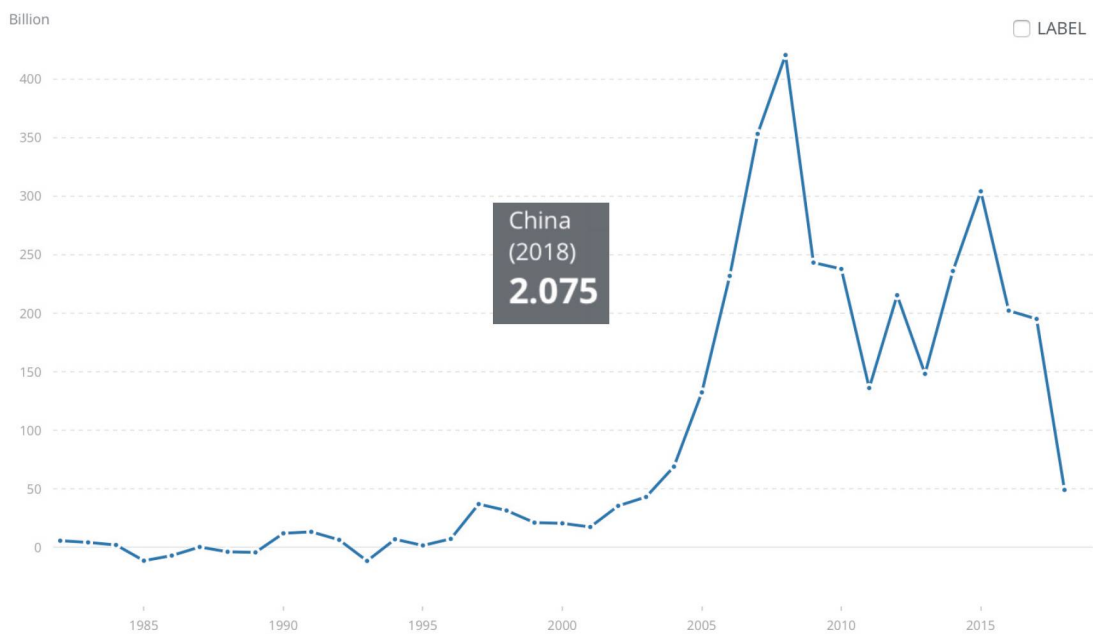


Source: WB 2019b

Figure 9: China's account balance (BoP, current US$) in 1982-2018
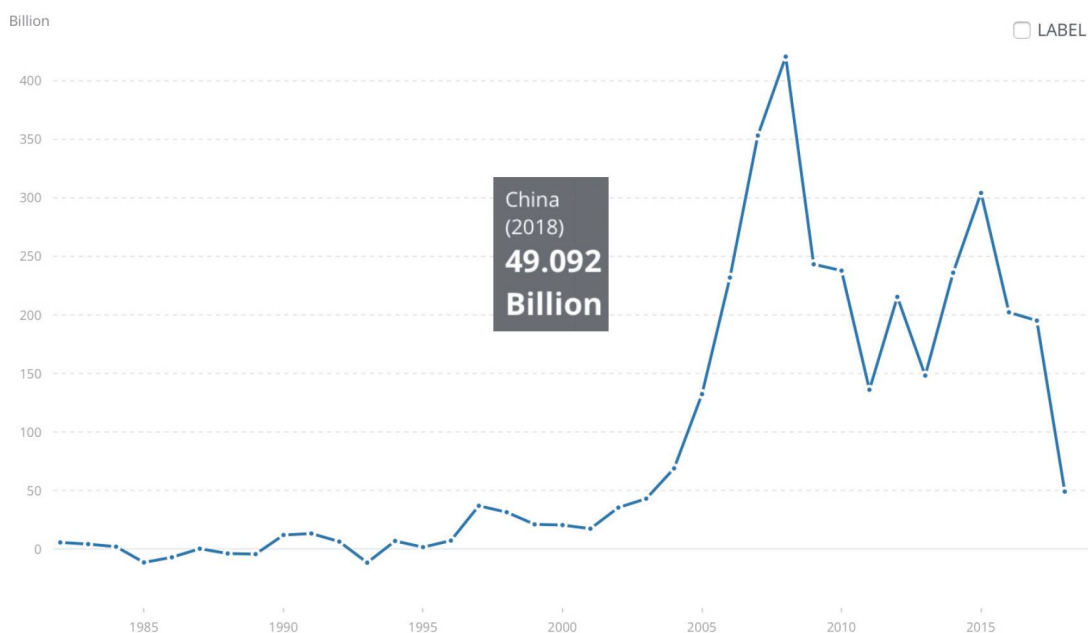


Source: WB 2019b

However, it is worth noticing that official Chinese statistical data and methods for their collection have been challenged and the question of adjustments of data was put on table (e.g. Holz 2006; Maddison 2007). Writings of Angus Maddison, who argues that official statistics should not be taken "sacrosanct" (Maddison 2006), provided a useful correction.

Figure 10: Examples of official and alternative estimates of Chinese GDP growth

TABLE 3

OFFICIAL AND ALTERNATIVE ESTIMATES OF CHINESE GDP GROWTH (ANNUAL AVERAGE COMPOUND GROWTH RATES)

|  | Official | Maddison | Wang and Meng |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1952–78 | 5.9 | 4.4 | 4.0 |
| 1978–97 | 9.8 | 7.5 | 7.9 |
| 1952–97 | 7.6 | 5.7 | 5.7 |

*Source*: Wang and Meng (2001) and Maddison (2003), updated as in Table 2.

Source: Maddision 2006: 123

Figure 11: Confrontation of China's official and Maddison's estimates of GDP level
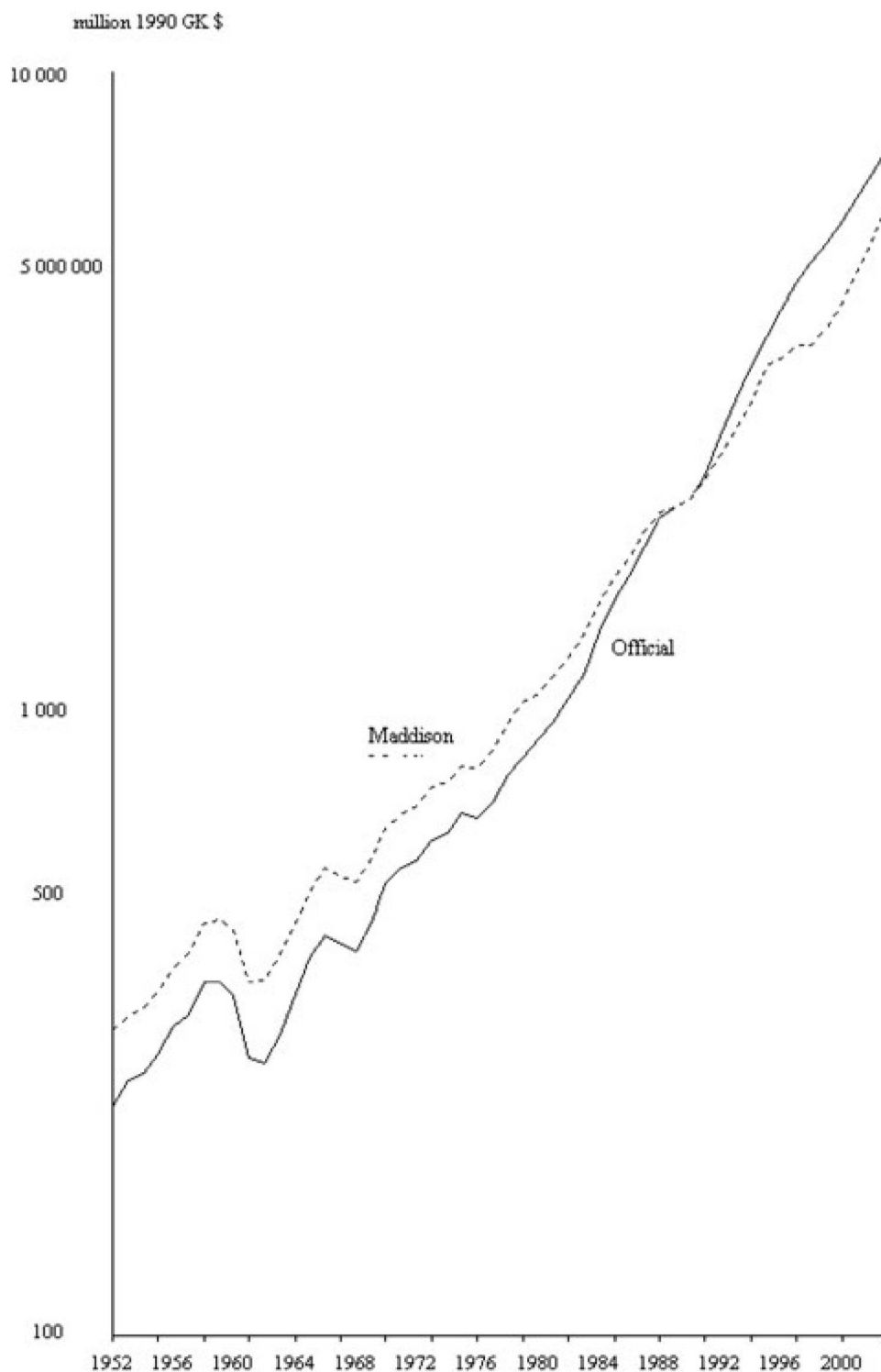


Figure 1. Confrontation of Official and Maddison Estimates of GDP Level, 1952–2003

Source: Maddision 2009: 427

Maddison argues that China's GDP level was actually higher than what the official statistics indicated. Maddison's revised data also shedded light on where China's economy historically stood and where it is most likely heading (e.g. Maddison 2007; Maddison 2008).

Figure 12: Worlds's growth of GDP by 2030 according to Maddison (2007)

Table 4.5. **Growth of GDP: the World and Major Regions, 1952–2030**

| | Levels in billion 1990 PPP dollars | | | | | Average annual rate of change | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1952 | 1978 | 1990 | 2003 | 2030 | 1990-2003 | 2003-2030 |
| Western Europe | 1 532 | 4 609 | 6 033 | 7 857 | 12 556 | 2.05 | 1.75 |
| United States | 1 625 | 4 090 | 5 803 | 8 431 | 16 662 | 2.91 | 2.56 |
| Other Western Offshoots | 196 | 611 | 862 | 1 277 | 2 414 | 3.07 | 2.39 |
| Japan | 202 | 1 446 | 2 321 | 2 699 | 3 488 | 1.17 | 0.95 |
| **"The Rich"** | **3 556** | **10 753** | **15 020** | **20 265** | **35 120** | **2.33** | **2.06** |
| Eastern Europe | 198 | 662 | 663 | 786 | 1 269 | 1.33 | 1.79 |
| Russia | 329 | 1 018 | 1 151 | 914 | 2 017 | -1.76 | 2.98 |
| Other former USSR | 217 | 697 | 837 | 638 | 1 222 | -2.17 | 2.43 |
| Latin America | 453 | 1 749 | 2 240 | 3 132 | 6 074 | 2.61 | 2.48 |
| China | 306 | 935 | 2 124 | 6 188 | 22 983 | 8.56 | 4.98 |
| India | 234 | 625 | 1 098 | 2 267 | 10 074 | 5.73 | 5.68 |
| Other Asia | 400 | 1 865 | 3 099 | 5 401 | 14 884 | 4.36 | 3.83 |
| Africa | 221 | 664 | 905 | 1 322 | 2 937 | 2.96 | 3.00 |
| **"The Rest"** | **2 357** | **8 216** | **12 117** | **20 649** | **61 460** | **4.19** | **4.12** |
| **World** | **5 913** | **18 969** | **27 136** | **40 913** | **96 580** | **3.21** | **3.23** |

Source: Maddison 2007: 102

Since opening up, Maddison writes, China experienced "large, once-for-all, gains in efficiency in agriculture, an explosive expansion of foreign trade and accelerated absorption of foreign technology through large-scale foreign direct investment. The opening to the world economy was a major driving force for economic growth. If Hong Kong is included, China is now the world's biggest exporter" (Maddison 2007: 13). He continues: "Catch-up will continue, but the pace of progress will slacken as China gets nearer to the technological frontier. Nevertheless, by 2030, the per capita GDP level should reach that of western Europe and Japan around 1990 (…) By 2030, it

will represent 23 per cent of the world economy, compared with less than 5 per cent in 1978" (Maddison 2007: 13-14).

Since the reforms the PRC managed to lift more than 850 million Chinese out of poverty (WB CN 2019a), which, among the intrinsic value of the fact, also adds greatly to the image of the Chinese economic model as successful and potentially inspiring for other developing nations (Yao 2005). China's economic growth continued without any significant rupture while its economic institutions and practices have kept transforming and its material economic basis has been rebuilt substantially (Naughton 2007: 4).

However, the rapid development also brought about numerous challenges, such as the income gap between southeast, central and western provinces of China, high level of environmental pollution, deficiencies in its financial and banking sectors, risks stemming from its export-based economy, high ratio of investment (and savings) to GDP, low ratio of consumption to GDP, etc. (WB CN 2019a; Maddison 2009; Shi et. al. 2017: 1097-1098). The Chinese leadership responded to these challenges in China's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), which promotes the development of services, tackles the issue of environmental sustainability and income gaps, and pledges China to increase energy efficiency (WB CN 2019a). According to the plan, China should grow by 6.5% annually – and current data indicate that the average growth rate is in accordance with the plan (IMF 2019).

After years of being the largest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI), in 2016, China became a net capital exporter (Zhou 2015). This shift is in line with the expansion of Chinese companies abroad (as exemplified by the 'go out strategy', declared in 1999): the strategy reinforces China's status as a country which no longer simply receives foreign investment, but exports more

abroad. Among other effects, as Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small note, the growing level of Chinese investment abroad (particularly from the start of the millennium) "has changed China's perception of its own interests" (Kleine-Ahlbrandt & Small 2008: 42). This geographical extension of the concept of economic national interests is related not only to investment, but also to more broadly conceived trade policy as China started to look with an increased interest to new markets in Asia, Africa and Latin America (e.g. China aims to increase the volume of its trade with Africa to US $400 billion by 2020, almost doubling it from US $210 billion in 2013, Singh 2016: 28).

The global financial crisis of 2007-2010 and subsequent impacts on China's exports as well as Chinese economy slow-down in 2012 resulted in a newly found interest at previously rather omitted regions and countries, including – among others – Central and Eastern Europe. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) announced by Xi Jinping in 2013[5] provides a complex economic, political and security answer to China's aptitude for new markets.

It is worth noticing that China's rapid economic growth remained stable even when the global system of international relations was going through major upheavals. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union brought about fundamental changes in the geopolitical reality of global politics and affected China and its interests. Instead of finding a place in the struggle between the two superpowers, China, like the rest of the world, found itself in a situation with a single dominant power, the United States. Although these changes represented a tough challenge for Chinese foreign policy, the net effect of these developments for the Chinese economy, which embraced the continuation and intensification of economic

---

[5] The concept is based on arguments from the Chinese security community to balance between maritime Asia and continental Eurasia strategies (e.g. Wang 2012).

globalization process, was positive. As a consequence of its internal economic reforms and the transformation of the international system, at the turn of the millennium, China found itself in a novel position of a superpower which could legitimately claim a place among the top players in world politics. Its politics during the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and global financial crisis which started in 2007, when China did not significantly devalue its currency and released a record-high 4 trillion RMB stimulus package, respectively, backed the image of China as a rising, yet responsible economic power (Goldstein 2003).

The rising economic power of the PRC, combined with its persisting fear of encirclement as well as its growing understanding of responsibilities connected to its newly acquired status of a great power (such as its increased participation in UN peace keeping operations, see below), resulted in an increase in its military spending. China has long had the largest standing armed forces in the world and, much like China's economic growth, its (official) military budget since 1997 sustained (with one exception) a double-digit growth which catapulted the PRC into the world's second position after the US when counted in dollars[6] (Matsumura 2016).

---

[6] But it clearly enabled China to spend even more on its military buildup if calculated in purchase power parity.

## Figure 13: 40 countries with the highest military expenditures in 2018

Spending figures and GDP are in US$, at current prices and exchange rates. Changes are in real terms, based on constant (2017) US$. Percentages below 10 are rounded to 1 decimal place; those over 10 are rounded to whole numbers. Figures and percentage shares may not add up to stated totals or subtotals due to the conventions of rounding.

| Rank 2018 | Rank 2017[a] | Country | Spending ($ b.), 2018 | Change (%), 2009–18 | Spending as a share of GDP (%)[b] 2018 | Spending as a share of GDP (%)[b] 2009 | World share (%), 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | United States | 649 | −17 | 3.2 | 4.6 | 36 |
| 2 | 2 | China | [250] | 83 | [1.9] | [2.1] | [14] |
| 3 | 3 | Saudi Arabia | [67.6] | 28 | [8.8] | 9.6 | [3.7] |
| 4 | 5 | India | 66.5 | 29 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 3.7 |
| 5 | 6 | France | 63.8 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 3.5 |
| **Subtotal top 5** | | | **1 097** | .. | .. | .. | **60** |
| 6 | 4 | Russia | 61.4 | 27 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.4 |
| 7 | 7 | United Kingdom | 50.0 | −17 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 2.7 |
| 8 | 9 | Germany | 49.5 | 9.0 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 2.7 |
| 9 | 8 | Japan | 46.6 | 2.3 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 2.6 |
| 10 | 10 | South Korea | 43.1 | 28 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| **Subtotal top 10** | | | **1 347** | .. | .. | .. | **74** |
| 11 | 13 | Italy | 27.8 | −14 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 1.5 |
| 12 | 11 | Brazil | 27.8 | 17 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| 13 | 12 | Australia | 26.7 | 21 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.5 |
| 14 | 14 | Canada | 21.6 | 12 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.2 |
| 15 | 15 | Turkey | 19.0 | 65 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 1.0 |
| **Subtotal top 15** | | | **1 470** | .. | .. | .. | **81** |
| 16 | 16 | Spain | 18.2 | −5.2 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.0 |
| 17 | 17 | Israel | 15.9 | −5.8 | 4.3 | 6.8 | 0.9 |
| 18 | 18 | Iran | 13.2 | −10 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 0.7 |
| 19 | 24 | Poland | 11.6 | 48 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 0.6 |
| 20 | 19 | Pakistan | 11.4 | 73 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 0.6 |
| 21 | 25 | Netherlands | 11.2 | −4.4 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 0.6 |
| 22 | 21 | Singapore | 10.8 | 13 | 3.1 | 3.9 | 0.6 |
| 23 | 20 | Taiwan | 10.7 | −2.9 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 0.6 |
| 24 | 23 | Colombia | 10.6 | 15 | 3.2 | 3.9 | 0.6 |
| 25 | 22 | Algeria | 9.6 | 85 | 5.3 | 3.8 | 0.5 |
| 26 | 26 | Indonesia | 7.4 | 99 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.4 |
| 27 | 29 | Kuwait | 7.3 | 39 | 5.1 | 4.0 | 0.4 |
| 28 | 30 | Norway | 7.1 | 23 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 0.4 |
| 29 | 31 | Thailand | 6.8 | 16 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 0.4 |
| 30 | 28 | Oman | [6.7] | 69 | [8.2] | [7.0] | [0.4] |
| 31 | 32 | Mexico | 6.6 | 36 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| 32 | 27 | Iraq | 6.3 | 58 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 0.3 |
| 33 | 33 | Sweden | 5.8 | 18 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| 34 | 35 | Chile | 5.6 | 25 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 0.3 |
| 35 | 37 | Viet Nam | 5.5 | 76 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 0.3 |
| 36 | 36 | Greece | 5.2 | −46 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 0.3 |
| 37 | 39 | Belgium | 5.0 | −12 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| 38 | 38 | Switzerland | 4.8 | 6.3 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.3 |
| 39 | 43 | Ukraine | 4.8 | 69 | 3.8 | [2.8] | 0.3 |
| 40 | 46 | Romania | 4.6 | 112 | 1.9 | 1.3 | 0.3 |
| **Subtotal top 40** | | | **1 683** | .. | .. | .. | **93** |
| **World** | | | **1 822** | **5.4** | **2.1** | **2.6** | **100** |

.. = data not available or not applicable; [ ] = SIPRI estimate; GDP = gross domestic product.

[a] Rankings for 2017 are based on updated military expenditure figures in the current edition of the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. They may therefore differ from the rankings for 2017 given in *SIPRI Yearbook 2018* and in other SIPRI publications in 2018.

[b] The figures for military expenditure as a share of GDP are based on estimates of 2018 GDP from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook and International Financial Statistics databases.

*Sources*: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Apr. 2019; International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, Oct. 2018; and International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics Database, Sep. 2018.

Source: Tian et al. 2019

The real numbers are hard to determine (on the discussion and alternative measurement see e.g. Robertson & Sin 2015), as China does not disclose budgets for its paramilitary and reserve forces or arms imports, and the budget also does not account for state subsidies to China's military-industrial complex or earnings from People's Liberation Army's-operated business (Bitzinger 2011: 9). Still, "as long as China's economy does grow, its military power will likely increase," points out Nye, "thus making China appear more dangerous to its neighbors and complicating America's commitments in Asia" (Nye 2005: 13).

During the Cold War and shortly after its end China acquired weapons mostly from Russia or the post-Soviet space (e.g. Ukraine). However, at the turn of the century it started to focus on indigenous design and production (Bitzinger 2011: 10). China's pace of building advanced weapons is astonishing and it encompasses both modernization of traditional military (ground forces, airfare and navy), but also increased capacities and capabilities in hybrid warfare and space military technologies. In 2014 David Shambaugh argued that "Chinese military forces still possess no conventional global power-projection capabilities. China has no bases abroad, no long-range logistics or communications lines, and rudimentary global satellite coverage" (Shambaugh 2014). In just five years, China seems to have addressed these issues. In 2012 China commissioned its first aircraft carrier *Liaoning*. It was originally a Soviet aircraft carrier known as *Varyag*, which China acquired from Ukraine and modernized. The carrier was combat-ready at the end of 2016 (Hurst 2017) and, according of the latest US Department of Defense's Annual Report, is "likely to join the fleet in 2019" (USDD 2019:

35). Moreover, in 2018, China it is believed to start the construction of its second aircraft carrier (USDD 2019: 37).

In the militarization of space domain, China successfully executed its test of anti-satellite weapon in 2007, and according to the report released by the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) develops jamming and cyberspace capabilities, directed energy weapons, on-orbit capabilities, and ground-based anti-satellite missiles (DIA 2019). The Department of Defense Annual Report claims that China continues to expand "space surveillance capabilities, which can monitor objects across the globe and in space and enable counterspace actions" (DoD 2019: 56).   China already launched a quantum satellite in 2016 and as a first nation established a quantum network and teleported a photon (MIT Technology Review 2017). In many instances, China's military benefited from its connection to government-sponsored research programs. Links with commercial IT industry also helped as "much of the hardware and skill base for conducting information warfare is dual-use in nature" (Bitzinger 2011: 13).

As for its army, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is in fact not a national army but an army subordinated to the Chinese Communist Party (both in legal documents as well as in practical organizational structure). Its purpose to defend the party (which is a synonym for the state) is thus given. Huotari et al. argue that China's posture is strongly conditioned by the China's leadership's concerns over the regime security (Huotari et al. 2017: 23). The official line claims that the modernization of PLA is driven by the need to build "a strong national defense and powerful armed forces" to serve as "a security guarantee for China's peaceful development" in order "to realize the Chinese Dream of great national rejuvenation" (SCIO 2015). In accordance with the

building of a "moderately prosperous society" by 2021 and "modern socialist country" by 2049, China stresses in its strategy that a period of strategic opportunity for economic growth shall not be jeopardized by conflict (SCIO 2015). Learning from the precedents of the break-ups of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, Chinese leadership focuses on sovereignty and territorial integrity, including (what Beijing perceive as) 'restless provinces' of Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan.

While it is useful to keep in mind that the Chinese military lacks a recently acquired direct war experience, as it fought its last war in 1979, it is nevertheless important to note that its involvement oversees and the experience stemming from it has been growing gradually since 1990. China's oversees-oriented posture comes with an increasing understanding of its geographically more broadly defined national interests as well as from its perception of insecurity. The unresolved status of Taiwan and territorial disputes over Senkaku Islands/Diaoyu increased uneasiness with which the neighboring countries perceived China's military buildup. China's reclaiming of several atolls and islets in the South China Sea, build up of artificial islands and a subsequent militarization of them heightened the tensions not only with the Asian neighbors, but also the US. Moreover, since 2011, Chinese airfare and navy have been increasingly involved in a number of evacuation operations. While in 2011 China evacuated 35 Chinese nationals from Libya, in Yemen in 2015 its military helped evacuate over 600 Chinese citizens and 279 foreign nationals, showing China's growing commitment to protecting its overseas assets (Hurst 2017: 29). It is also worth mentioning that since 2008 China has conducted anti-piracy missions at the coast of Somalia.

The PRC started to acquire and lease ports around the Indian Ocean (such as Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Gwadar in Pakistan, Sittwe in Bangladesh, etc.). The move has been understood by some Western scholars as China's attempt to protect its sea lanes of communication (on the purpose and functionality of these bases see e.g. Brewster 2017; on China's Maritime Silk Road and the role of ports see e.g. Len 2015).[7] In August 2017, China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti (USDD 2018), in a move which resulted in Japan's announcement that it would not only stay in Djibouti despite the decline of piracy (an official reason explaining the Japan's Self-Defense Forces' involvement in the area), but it would expand the base to counter China (Fujiwara 2018).

An increased cooperation with Russia could be also observed since mid-2010s, through continuous arms sales as well as joint military exercises. In 2015 Chinese and Russian navies conducted exercise in the Mediterranean Sea. Another joint military exercise, in 2018, – which included 300,000 Russian soldiers (one third of the Russian army) – conveyed a clear message to international observers that China is a valuable partner for some (Zhou 2018).

Since 1990 China has also increased its participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Hurst counts over 30,000 Chinese peacekeepers in more than thirty peacekeeping missions around the world since the end of the Cold War (Hurst 2017). Chinese military supported contingents in e.g. East Timor, Congo, and the Middle East (Ding 2010: 270-271). Regarding China's attitude to military peace operations, a substantial change came during the

---

[7] The China's alleged naval strategy is known in literature as the 'String of Pearls'. The term was coined in 2005 by the US Department of Defense's contractor Booz-Allen-Hamilton in a a report titled *Energy Futures in Asia*.

Hu's administration. Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small claim in their study that "discussions in Beijing have shifted from the question of how to defend the principles of non-interference to a debate on the terms under which intervention is justified" (Kleine-Ahlbrandt & Small 2008: 39). The same conclusion is also reached by other studies, which generally mention China's increasing participation in oversees operations (ICG 2009; Pang 2009; Yin 2007). But China is also increasingly active in its military diplomacy, assumes a role in regional security frameworks and increased its visibility in conflict prevention and mediation (Huotari et al. 2017).

From the perspective of China's increased global economic and military engagement, China's rise seems not only as a label, but as a descriptor of the already visible trend.

## 2.1.2 Towards a global power? Recent foreign policy visions and initiatives

As regards foreign policy initiatives, China, for historical reasons, views international relations as relations between unequal parties, where states are measured in terms of their relative rather than absolute power. With the end of the Cold War, China's foreign policy ceased to advocate and sponsor radical Maoism, instead adopting a pragmatic approach (Ding 2010) as educated technocrats entered top echelons of Chinese politics. After the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Mongolia and the Soviet Union, assuring the survival of the regime became the fundamental priority for the

Chinese leadership (for strategies the regime uses to ensure its survival see e.g. Dickson 2016). Some outside observers even argued that in China there has been no alternative to the communist regime and its collapse would lead to fragmentation and chaos in the country (Sutter 2005: 58). Even until today the fate of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is largely dependent on attaining good results in two areas – assuring domestic political stability and territorial unity (including preventing 'secession' of Taiwan) and assuring the continuous economic well-being of its people (Dickinson 2016). Chinese foreign policy has been therefore aimed at supporting market stability, preventing trade wars, removing barriers in mutual trade and supporting access into foreign markets. China has intentionally striven to become a part of the international economic system and to profit from economic interdependence on a global scale (entering into foreign markets and limiting the opening-up of its own domestic market, acquiring foreign companies, establishing joint ventures, forcing foreign technology transfers, etc.). Foreign policy is thus wholly subordinate to these domestic economic and political goals (SCIO 2005).

Officially-claimed priorities of Chinese foreign policy include "to preserve China's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, create a favorable international environment for China's reform and opening up and modernization construction, maintain world peace and propel common development" (MFA PRC 2003). During the 1990s, China began to forge relations with its neighbors, defining them on a new level of partnerships. The aim was partly to facilitate economic and security-related cooperation with neighboring countries, as well as to provide an insurance against what China perceived as a dangerous emergence of a front of regional allies of the US in

Asia, or, in its understanding, a US policy of China's encirclement. Thus, since 1991 it concentrated on settling border disputes with its neighbors (including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Russia, Tajikistan and Vietnam), often on terms that were not particularly advantageous for China (Gill & Huang 2006: 22).

China's main strategic focus – unlike the focus of the United States – is a regional situation near to its borders (regarding North Korea, Taiwan and Japan), although its foreign policy agenda has already started taking on a global nature. However, not all countries receive the same degree of attention. Su differentiates between four degrees of Chinese foreign-political partnership (Su 2009). The first are "friendly cooperative relations", which include all relations China has established with countries since the early 1990s. Almost immediately after the end of the Cold War, China began to establish this type of relations with neighboring countries (the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Burma and Mongolia), and later extended the list to include other, geographically more remote, nations (Australia, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Yugoslavia, Italy, etc.). The second type of relations involves "good-neighborly partnership" for nations sharing borders with China and relations based on "friendship and cooperation" for all other countries. Since the 1990s, PRC has established this type of relations with neighboring Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal and certain ASEAN countries (Su 2009: 38) as well as with Poland, Uzbekistan, Jamaica and Fiji. China arguably favors this type of relations with countries it considers to be of a greater geopolitical importance. "Comprehensive partnership relations" constitute the third type of bilateral relations China forges and the concept relates to the key players in regions. This type of partnership is intended to reflect the coordination

between both countries in a wide range of matters, from political partnership to economic, security and cultural cooperation. By 2008 a number of medium-sized players on the international scene had established complex partnerships with China, all of which – at least according to China – have considerable influence in the region (these countries include, for example, Chile, Peru, Ethiopia, Romania and South Korea). The third type of partnership can also be understood as a precursor to the last type – the "strategic partnership". Chinese foreign policy perceives this type as the highest and most important category of relations with other countries. China established its first strategic partnership in November 1993 on a visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Brazil. Other states and organizations which have established this type of partnership with China include, for example, the EU, ASEAN, India, Brazil, Japan or Mexico. Even strategic partnership can differ in adjectives attached to describe the character of the relation. Thus China has established "complex strategic partnerships" with countries in Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Great Britain and France), while relations with Germany are referred to as a "strategic partnership with global responsibility" (Su 2009: 39). It should, however, be noted that although Chinese diplomacy treats relations with countries in a hierarchical manner (and in many cases it is disputable what factors the hierarchization is based on), even the strategic partnerships with different countries do not carry the same weight. In Europe, China focuses mainly on Germany, France and - so far - the United Kingdom, seen as three most influential players within the European Union. In the Middle East and Africa, the countries perceived as the most geopolitically important include Iran,

Egypt and South Africa, which attract most of the interest of the Chinese diplomacy.

A special category of relations forms ties to the United States, which established a strategic partnership with China in 1997. Beijing sees the US as a hegemon and the main point of reference in its foreign policy-making. Ferdinand notes that "at least since President Nixon's visit to China in 1972, the United States has occupied the most prominent place in Chinese foreign policy. Whether it was as a partner in confronting the Soviet Union, or subsequently as the sole superpower, the US has dominated Chinese foreign policy thinking" (Ferdinand 2007: 842). Even after the end of the Cold War, Chinese foreign policy oriented itself towards the US as a power which could thwart Chinese efforts to integrate itself into the existing world order, and focused on gaining a reputation as a responsible player which strives to manage its (primarily economic) rise to power (Goldstein 2005). Relations with the US are also crucial due to the American security guarantee given to Taiwan.[8] The Chinese leaders are aware that any resolution of the Taiwanese question would – in one form or another – involve the United States and, in a case of a military confrontation, draw into the battlefield US Asian allies, which signed the mutual defense treaties, such as Japan, South Korea, Australia or Philippines.

Chinese leadership was relieved to find out that the American anti-terrorist campaign moved China down a few pegs as regards to security threats to America,[9] though trough the campaign in Afghanistan, the US forces were deployed on the borders with China. China has responded to the perceived

---

[8] *Taiwan Relations Act* sponsored and approved by the US Congress in 1979 gives a security guarantee to the island and enables the US supply it with weapons of a "defensive" character.

[9] Author's interviews at the China Institute of International Studies, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs-affiliated think tank, June 2009.

encirclement by the US with an effort to create a multipolar arrangement resembling the concert of great powers (Zhao 2008). Since the 'third generation' of Chinese leaders led by Jiang Zemin (Chinese president in 1992-2002), the Chinese leadership made more frequent reference to multilateralism and the weakening of alliance system. As Robinson argues any disputes in Asia will require action on an ad hoc basis by four regional centers – the US, China, Japan, and Russia – and without these nations there can be no solution to the issues of the Korean reunification, the North Korean nuclear program, or the Taiwan Strait issue (Robinson 1997).

Washington's response to the China's growing rhetoric relating to multilateralism was to involve China in the current system to the extent at which China itself would begin to take an active interest in upholding it. A statement by the former US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick in 2005, where he called upon China to become a 'responsible stakeholder 'in the international system, could be interpreted this way (Zoellick 2005). The United States practically called upon China to co-manage global affairs. The European Union has responded in a similar way as the European Commission's policy paper from 2006 devoted to China is eloquently entitled *EU-China: closer partners, growing responsibilities.* According to Chen Zhimin, these examples illustrate that "developed countries are trying to exploit the growing power and influence of China to strengthen the existing international system" (Chen 2009: 19). In a short-term, the pragmatic policy seemed to have paid off, as during the Hu Jintao's term there were no major or lasting disagreements. Washington curbed the activities of the Taiwan's President Chen Shuibian in his second term in the office, when he increasingly advocated a policy which was seen as a preparation to declare

the island's independence (e.g. the proposal on holding a referendum on Taiwan joining the UN in 2008).

An increase in Chinese diplomatic activity regarding bilateral relations followed China's changing attitude to international organizations. While Mao perceived them with suspicion, his successor Deng Xiaoping approached international organizations with pragmatism. After China started pursuing its opening up policy, it not only increasingly joined, but also increased its activities in international organizations (Kent 2007). In 1980, China regained its membership in International Monetary Fund and World Bank, joined Asian Development Bank in 1986 and World Trade Organization in 2001 (Xie 2011). China's domestic development benefited from the accession to the international economic and financial institutions and through it also an access to financial aid and technological assistance. Moreover, Beijing started to change its previously negative and shy position on other, politics-focused international organizations – in 1988 China joined UN Peace Keeping Special Committee and, later on, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, supported intervention under Article VII of the Charter. In 1991 China became a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and in 1997, together with Japan and South Korea, it joined ASEAN (on the basis of the ASEAN+3 platform), East Asia Summit in 2005, and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-plus in 2010. A Free Trade Agreement between ASEAN and China was signed in 2002. China was also active in its immediate neighborhood, obtaining dialogue partner status at the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation and the Pacific Islands Forum in 2000, the South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation in 2005, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group in 2012 (Scott 2015: 253). Since 1998 it has

been involved in political dialogue with the European Union and in 2002 showed interest in talks with NATO. The process of integration into the Washington consensus continued to the extend that, while in 1996 China was a part of 70% of organizations where the US had a membership, in 2003, the number rose to 91.11% (Xie 2011: 88).

China also started to create its own loose region-focused groups, such as Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000 and the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum in 2004, and organizations, a move responding both to its foreign policy goals as well as to the criticism of the United States accusing China of a 'free riding' on the international system guaranteed by the US (e.g. Barack Obama in Friedman 2014). In 2001 it initiated a foundation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), aiming at fighting the 'three evils' (separatism, terrorism, extremism) and including Russia and Central Asian states but excluding the United States. China, however, found a real aptitude for founding of international organizations with the current Chinese president Xi Jinping. After he entered office, China established Belt and Road Initiative or New Silk Road (though its foundations were already laid by Xi's predecessor Hu Jintao) and 16+1 format, a platform for facilitating relations between 16 Central and Eastern European countries and China. For funding of its initiatives it also created financial institutions, such as Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2014 or 16+1 fund launched in 2016.

On one hand, China's accession to the international organizations was internationally met with optimism, based on an assumption that through more integration into the international system, China would socialize and shape its behavior according to international norms and principles (Ding 2008; Lai 2018; Suzuki 2009). China's post-1989 policy could be seen as less

confrontational, more sophisticated, confident and constructive in its handling of regional and global matters as China focused on forging bilateral relations and accession to international treaties. The aim of this change in China's diplomacy was to free itself from the isolation it found itself in as a response to the massacre of students in Tiananmen Square in 1989, to improve its image and protect and support key economic interests. But some authors argue that it was just a disguise that masked China's intentions to change the Washington consensus to Beijing consensus[10]. Nathan and Ross observe that of all the large nations, China has always had the largest freedom to maneuver, change sides and implement foreign policy while rationally following its national interests (Nathan & Ross 1997: 14).

Not only were China's international actions under the scrutiny of its international peers, its domestic political development was watched closely and an initial optimism was replaced by a more skeptical approach starting in 2012, when the current Chinese president Xi Jinping took office. His predecessor Hu Jintao initially focused on domestic problems which could in the long term endanger the legitimacy of the CCP – fighting corruption amongst senior officials and provincial leaders (including shifting power from the provinces to the centre) and narrowing the income gap between the richer southeastern and poorer central and western provinces. Both these policies (including a number of controversial issues, such as acknowledgement that the party needs to be brought up to date and get rid of corruption) made him popular among Chinese ordinary citizens (Gill 2017).

---

[10] The term was coined by Joshua Cooper Ramo of the Goldman Sachs in his report *Beijing Consensus* published in 2004. Thus the term itself was neither coined in China nor was it generally accepted by all Chinese scholars (Suzuki 2009: 787), or used by Chinese leaders (Gill & Huang 2006: 20; Kivimäki 2014).

Also with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, for a long time, the Chinese foreign policy lost an unpredictable leader as the source of all decision-making. Starting with Deng Xiaoping, decisions were increasingly taken through debate and collective leadership and were the result of the interests of different factions (Li 2005). Thanks to this, Chinese foreign policy seemed more transparent and free of radical Maoism, which was replaced at home and abroad with a more pragmatic approach. From 1978, unlike criticism of failures in domestic policy, no foreign principle was revised or rejected in country's foreign policy (Wang 1994), which contributed to a relative predictability of China's actions in the international arena. In official rhetorics, Chinese diplomacy continued to be based on three cornerstones: Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, as defined in 1955 at the Bandung Conference, reference to Chinese foreign policy in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China[11] and a raft of recommendations issued by Chinese leaders and published in the official press or deduced from their speeches. Thanks to this (and thanks to the consistent rhetoric of Chinese diplomats), Chinese foreign policy was often perceived as coherent and unchanging, although in practice these principles were not always rigidly upheld.[12]

While the first two categories – the principles of the Panchsheel and the Constitution of the PRC – have served as the general guideline for Chinese foreign policy, the directions outlined in speeches made by Chinese leaders represent a more topical and flexible vision of Chinese politics. The most

---

[11] In the section devoted to foreign policy: "China consistently opposes imperialism, hegemony and colonialism, works to strengthen unity with the peoples of other countries, supports oppressed nations and developing countries in their struggle to secure and maintain independence and develop their national economies, and strives to ensure world peace and promote human development." (NPC 2004).

[12] Author's interviews with Chinese scholars from universities and government think tanks (China Institute of International Studies, Fudan University, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, etc.) in December 2008, April, May and June 2009.

important aspects of Chinese foreign policy were, until 2012, based on the principles allegedly defined by Deng Xiaoping (Ferdinand 2007). Deng recommended refraining from aggressive action and 'keeping a low profile' in China's foreign policy (*taoguang yanghui)*. The 24 character strategy included observing worldwide events, standing strong, approaching difficulties with confidence, keeping a low profile, and never taking the leading role (Gonçalves 3). In practice China was advised by Deng not to provoke the great powers. Another terms, 'peaceful rise' (*heping jueqi)* or 'peaceful development' (*heping fazhan*), were coined by Hu Jintao in 2003, together with the associated concept of 'harmonious world' (see below), and intended to highlight China as a responsible and non-threatening player in the international system. The concept of 'peaceful development' is rather vague, but a look at the speech of Hu Jintao's advisor Zheng Bijian at Bo'ao International Roundtable in 2005 offers a clarification. Zheng, comparing China to Germany before World War I and II, claims that China will take a different path. China will not "embark on the beaten track of cold-war confrontation and rivalry for domination which was the feature of the post-war period. We are able to transcend both the old road of fighting for resources, an inevitable consequence of old-style industrialization and the cold-war mentality of rejecting peace, development and cooperation on account of ideological differences. We have bravely adopted the reform and open-door policy, and that means we will, in the process of participating in, rather than divorcing ourselves from economic globalization, learn and benefit from the fruits of human civilization and independently build Chinese-style socialism and gradually realize our goal of peaceful rise" (Zheng 2005: 4). In the same speech, however, he admits that it "is a fundamental strategic choice for

China's modernization drive" and that "there is no other alternative" (Zheng 2005: 7).

Suettinger urges the reader to remember that the term 'peaceful rise' was first used as a propaganda slogan primarily intended to reassure neighboring states concerned about China's economic and military boom (Suettinger 2004). Scott agrees with Suettinger, pointing out that the diplomatic rhetoric from the end of the Cold War to Xi Jinping's assent to the leadership position was "descriptive-objective, aspirational-subjective, and, above all, instrumental" (Scott 2015: 250). He sees China as haunted by a prospect of US encirclement and reacting to the China threat theory by its own set of measures in order to counter unfavorable sentiments and to buy time. Chinese media admitted openly that the term is 'all about soft power' and 'the peaceful rise of China is the most favorable counterblow at the theory of 'China threat' (cit. in Scott 2015: 256).

The term 'peaceful rise', however, was abandoned after a few months in use due to the negative connotations of rise it implied and 'peaceful development' was used ever since. Scott notes that the change of the name is a mere window dressing and claims that the reason why the Chinese leadership decided for the change reflects China's growing sensitivity towards its international audience (Scott 2015). From 2002-2003, when Hu Jintao came to power, he began to advocate the theory of 'peaceful rise' or 'development' as a new framework concept for Chinese foreign policy and the Chinese perception of international system. As Chen Zhimin points out, "China's foreign policy has become much more proactive and internationalist, which strongly inspired China to undertake greater international responsibility" (Chen 2009: 17). At least at the official level, China saw the

prevailing international order as an opportunity to develop and promote its own interests, and not as a barrier to them. Hu also coined a term 'harmonious world' (*hexie shijie*) in 2005 as a part of his foreign policy charm offensive[13]. The emphasis on harmony refers to the Chinese ancient philosophers' thinking on the role of a ruler and the art of governance over his subjects[14]. As Ding explains, "ancient Chinese philosophies believed that human nature was not evil; morality and law could form the basis for relations among states; and peaceful and cooperative relations among states were possible" (Ding 2008: 196). A traditional view based on Confucianism perceived the ruler as a moral authority that rules over its subjects by means of virtue and positive example, rather than by application of coercive measures. Hu's concept of harmony or 'harmonious world' is thus both connected to the traditional Chinese philosophy as well as to the West's concept and understanding of soft power. Hu advocated for multilateralism (with the UN playing an irreplaceable role in ensuring global security), settlement of international disputes trough consultations and negotiations, mutually beneficial cooperation while shouldering a greater responsibility for universal, coordinated and balanced development in the world, and inclusiveness, where all civilizations coexist harmoniously and accommodate each other (Hu 2005).

Ding attributes Hu's emphasis on harmony to a rational choice made by the Chinese leadership in a situation where its other sources of power (economic and military) where at best equal or even weaker in comparison to other major powers (Ding 2008). Scott finds different explanation based on

---

[13] The term was first introduced to the international audience at Hu's speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 2005.

[14] The traditional philosophy does not, interestingly, limit the application of harmony to any geographical boundaries as it assumes that harmony encompass 'all under the Heaven' (*tian xia*).

Chinese leadership's domestic priorities. While the Chinese state claimed to be building a 'harmonious society' inside China and a 'harmonious world' outside, Scott concludes that in practice both strands were meant to help the Chinese communist regime to survive (Scott 2015: 258). He also notes that the concept of the 'harmonious world' differed from the western understanding in one point – it did not include universal standards of human rights, a position that damaged China's international image (Scott 2015: 259).

While Jiang's administration focused primarily on bringing the country out of its international isolation after the massacre in Tiananmen Square and generally kept to its earlier 'keep low profile' concept, Hu's foreign policy seemed more assertive and nationalistic. Jiang's administration focused on maintaining good relations with the US and, with the exception of the missile crisis in 1996 and 1997 in the Taiwan Strait and the crisis regarding the American EP-3 reconnaissance plane shot down in 2001, Sino-American relations were relatively unproblematic throughout his reign. During the Bush era, bilateral relations improved even further (unlike the consequences of criticism of the Clinton administration over human rights violations in China).[15] On the side of Chinese scholars, this is also partly down to the conviction that the American war against terrorism reduced pressure on China and forced US to find allies.

In foreign policy Hu adopted Jiang's system of small leading groups[16], enabling him to retain the main role in the formulation of key aspects of foreign policy, such as policies concerning Taiwan. In general, Hu continued

[15] Both presidents entered election campaigns with attitudes that were not too favorable towards China. Bill Clinton criticized China for its human rights record, while in his election campaign George W. Bush described China as an obvious strategic rival. Nevertheless, in practice both administrations maintained more or less conflict-free relations with China.

[16] Leading small groups (LSG) are formal bodies set up by the central government and chaired mostly by the relevant ministers.

on from the previous pragmatic style of Chinese diplomacy, which was not based primarily on ideology but followed Chinese national interests. However, as Zhao points out, China was learning how to secure its interests abroad while downplaying its aspirations as a rising global superpower (Zhao 2008). At this point, it is perhaps worth pointing to a lasting China's frustration caused by 'century of humiliation'[17] from Western powers and the inherent suspicion concerning the motives of the West. From the prism of this conviction, the United States does not want to allow China to grow to a position in which it could pose an economic and political threat to American dominance. A critique (ranging from criticism of China's human rights record, through protests against its actions in Tibet and Xinjiang, to condemnation of China's cooperation with undemocratic regimes or skepticism regarding Chinese activities aimed at securing energy resources in Asia and Africa) is often perceived through this conviction.

Though China seemed to 'keep low profile' while integrating into the US-led international order, its other activities abroad seemed to question Chinese foreign policy direction. China cooperated with regimes perceived by the West as problematic, or countries whose domestic or foreign activities diverge considerably from the accepted norms. Examples include China's close ties to Iran, Sudan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. In their study Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small explore the question of how much China strived to modify its behavior regarding these countries in order to bring it into line with the western approach. They found some changes in Chinese policy, as demonstrated in cases of Sudan or North Korea, where China tried to use its influence to change their behavior. However, it was evident that the process

---

[17] The century of humiliation is counted from the end of the Opium Wars to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

of shaping Chinese policy to conform to the 'standard' stance adopted by the countries of the Euro-Atlantic community was hampered by obstacles such as the interests of major players in Chinese economy (e.g. oil companies or arms exporters) (Kleine-Ahlbrandt & Small 2008: 38-56). The study correctly pointed out to the fact that China during Hu Jintao's era was not a monolithic actor whose domestic as well as foreign policy would be directed from one center without an opposition or without the need to accommodate various players.

While China's willingness to limit the worst excesses on the part of countries such as North Korea or Zimbabwe implied the gradual acceptance of the concept of multilateralism, by creating a network of solid alliances with these countries China send out the signal that it viewed multipolarity in the traditional, realpolitik sense and that it was trying to create its own sphere of influence on a global scale. Scott observes that both Chinese academic and policy journals from the turn of the century showed a gradual decline in discussion of multipolarity and a dramatic increase in advocacy for multilateralism, and he deduces that a stress on multilateralism was instrumental as it aimed at reducing the fear of Chinese unilateral actions in the international arena and served to "reassure the international system of China's willingness to co-operate on a regular basis over international issues" (Scott 2015: 252-253).

A continuous questioning and a suspicion over China's motivation is seen by Chinese scholars as well as practitioners as a bias imposed on China from the western powers. However, perhaps the problem does not lie in (or only in) the bias on the side of foreign policy-makers and scholars. Chinese leadership's emphasis on moralizing in foreign policy, which is often seen by

foreign partners as mere propaganda or an attempt to disguise the nation's true intentions, could be genuine as some argue that morals in politics are a peculiarity of Chinese political culture, while norms and concepts of rights are much less important in Chinese society than they are in western culture (Ding 2010; Wang 1994). Scott, however, comes again with a different view as he notes that "the danger for China is that a Sino-centric sense of superiority and self-righteousness deafens the government to what others perceive and think about China" (Scott 2015: 261). It is in a startling contrast with Lai's argument that Chinese leadership occasionally takes decision not to use harsh economic coercive measures in bilateral relations in order to uphold the image of China as a peace-loving country (Lai 2018). The same claim is made by Ingrid d'Hooghe who argues that in order to uphold a positive image, Beijing sometimes acknowledges the critique and signals its willingness to address the problem (d'Hooghe 2007: 14). The discrepancy between Chinese rhetoric and China's policies abroad puzzles both academics and practitioners and leads to a 'credibility gap' between words and deeds (d'Hooghe 2007; Scott 2015: 261). In order to explain the difference between Chinese leadership rhetoric and China's actions, Lai points out to different hierarchy of priorities, arguing that the discourse on 'peaceful rise' is a long-term and fundamental goal of China, while the coercive measures, which she studies using the examples of Chinese economic sanctions, are meant to reach immediate policy objectives (Lai 2018: 174).

A questioning and a suspicion over China's motives during the Hu Jintao's leadership occurred again with the leadership change in 2012. While the 'fourth generation' of leaders, represented by Hu, was dependent on the

external political situation and tended to react to changes in the system rather than to actually initiate them, a visible change of China's both domestic and foreign policies came with the 'fifth generation' represented by Xi Jinping (2012 onwards). Since the end of the Cold War, Chinese foreign policy did not play a proactive role but continued in the pre-1989 practice of keeping a close eye on the steps taken by great powers and modifying its policies accordingly. When Xi Jinping entered the office, he redefined most of the foreign policy principles as well as Chinese foreign policy practice and set a completely new, ambitious course for China following its 'China dream for rejuvenation of the nation' (*Zhongguo meng*, 中国梦). The 19th Party Congress report further clarified that the dream is to be achieved through a "great struggle" (with opposing forces), a "great project" (party building), and a "great cause" (socialism with Chinese characteristics) (Party Congress Report 2017). The party building is, however, seen as crucial and if it fails, so fails the Chinese dream of rejuvenation. "The party", sums up Jessica Batke, "is the prerequisite for any success" (Batke 2017: 2).

The concept of 'China dream' sets two goals for the country: (1) doubling of 2010 GDP and per capita income and building a moderately well-being society by 2021, which coincides with the one hundred anniversary of establishment of the Chinese Communist Party, and (2) a transformation of China into a modern socialist country by 2049, which will mark one hundred anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China. If China achieves these goals, "China's influence on the political and economic landscape in Asia as well as around the globe will certainly increase dramatically" (Aoyama 2016: 4). Aoyama claims that the strategy rests on three principles which could be seen as foreign policy objectives: first, to

maintain stability in Sino-American relations, second, to increase influence and create a sphere of influence, third, not to compromise on core interests (Aoyama 2016: 4).

While the 'China dream' sets goals for China, an external representation of the policy constitutes the One Belt One Road (*yi dai yi lu),* or Silk Road or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as it is currently known. It started gradually as in 2013 Xi Jinping announced the idea of an economic belt in Kazakstan and maritime road in Indonesia. A year later, China announced the establishment of the New Silk Road fund at the APEC meeting, and in 2015 finally the merged concept of both economic and maritime Silk Road – One Belt One Road concept – was presented. Six land corridors and two maritime corridors were selected, connecting China with Asia, Europe and Africa. For the financial support of the initiative, China established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2014. The founding 57 members of the institution with headquarters in Beijing included United Kingdom, Germany, South Korea, Austria or Poland.

Some see the establishment of BRI directly connected to influence, though, what constitutes an influence or how China aims at yielding it, is never elaborated on. "To put it directly, China is aiming to create an economic and political sphere of influence in the Eurasian continent" (Aoyama 2016: 7). Huotari et al. see it also through this prism, claiming that "the Chinese government is today at least partly willing to enter into direct competition for influence, if necessary including confrontation with other major powers" (Huotari et al. 2017: 29).

Though this new course that China took is habitually attributed to the persona of Xi Jinping, many of the currently visible and debated changes in Chinese

foreign, economic, military and domestic policies were built on foundations laid by his predecessor's administration and advisors. In foreign policy, the announcement of BRI was directly built on and further consolidated already existing Chinese activities. For instance, China and (by then[18]) 16 Central and Eastern European countries established China-CEECs Summits, or what started to be known as 16+1, already in 2012, based on Hu's vision and initiative. More region-focused platform for cooperation include China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, founded in 2004, and China-GCC Strategic Dialogue, which was established in 2010, or Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which firstly convened in Beijing in 2006. Road and Belt Initiative thus represents an attempt to integrate previous initiatives, give them shape and focus as it is, ultimately, a global strategy (Aoyama 2016).

However, where Xi's predecessors followed a policy of 'keeping a low profile', Xi denounced the low profile policy and his administration acts with more urgency, taking initiative and revising long-established principles, such as the principles of non-interference and non-alignment (Huotari et al. 2017: 27). Xi called for a 'new type of great power relations' (*xin xing daguo guanxi),* which seems to indicate that China is willing to openly project itself as the great power (Scott 2015). Huotari and others observe a shift in practical policy towards being harder on hard issues (which deal with core interests, such as territorial integrity) and softer on soft issues, focusing on international cooperation and remunerating behavior which is in China's interest (Huotari et al. 2017: 29).

The Belt and Road Initiative can puzzle observers, both academics and practicians, outside of China as no detail and concrete definition has been

---

[18] Since Greece joined the format in 2019, the platform is now referred to as 17+1 (though some scholars still use previously established label of 16+1 which creates confusion).

provided by the Chinese government. The problem might stem from a different approach to foreign policy formulation, as most of the Chinese principles are opaque and vague and the practical policy is done by "crossing the river by groping for stepping-stones"[19]. Some authors claim that the establishment of the Belt and Road Initiative was not a grand charm offensive, but stemmed from increasing amount of problems China faced both domestically and abroad (Aoyama 2016). As China sensed that the likelihood of a naval military conflict with the US increased with the US pivot to Asia[20] and with the development of territorial disputes, it started to look westwards, where it sensed a strategic vacuum after the US started its withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan (Wang 2012). New markets of both neighboring regions as well as more distant vistas constituted an opportunity for boosting China's slowing economy and exporting China's overproduction.

Xi Jinping is often portrayed as a game changer in foreign, but also in domestic policies (e.g. Gill 2017). He amassed a power unparalleled to his predecessor Hu as, in 2016, he was elevated and pronounced by the party as a 'core', which in theory does not give extra powers (Buckley 2016), but in reality depicts the place in hierarchy. In 2018, the National People's Congress (NPC) also approved his plan to restructure the state apparatus, giving more powers to the CCP. While the smooth transition of power and a check against a potential extravagancy (i.e. personality cult) of Chinese leaders were ensured by ten year presidency limit, NPC removed the limit in 2018, thus in theory allowing Xi Jinping to stay in power indefinitely. A CCP

---

[19] The saying is attributed to Deng Xiaoping and rather nicely describes that while China sets the goal, the practical realization is done through testing the waters and finding a best solution under way. I owe the observation to Prof. Dominik Mierzejewski, University of Lodz, Poland (private conversation, Sofia, July 2018).

[20] The strategy was later rebranded by the US Department of State to 'rebalancing strategy'.

norm, setting an age limit for Chinese leaders at 68, was also infringed as one of the Politburo members Wang Qishan already reached 70 years, and Xi Jinping will be 69 years old when his term ends in 2022. The above mentioned changes not only depicts Xi's position within the system, but also decreased predictability of leadership change. Xi Jinping did not nominate to the Politburo anyone who would be young enough (if the norm is to be adhere) to be his successor after 2022. In his fight against real or perceived corruption through investigations led by the empowered Central Disciplinary Commission, he managed to get rid of most of potential opponents (Gill 2017).

During this transitional period, management of the population came under scrutiny. China focused on nationalist/patriotic education and propaganda and online and offline surveillance, as it introduced the Social Credit System and established 're-education' camps in Muslims inhabited Xinjiang province. Once again, the ideational roots of the population management could be found in speeches of Hu's advisor and a former vice president of the Central Party School Zheng Bijian as far as in 2005. "New problems China is encountering include simultaneous appearance of economic vitality and disorders, efficiency and lack of balance. Facing these paradoxes, China's leadership is focused on building a social network that links government control mechanisms with social coordination mechanisms, complement government administrative functions with social self-regulating functions, and fuse government management forces with social adjustment forces," he claims. Then he continues: "[m]echanisms are being built to facilitate movement of people, rationally regulate interests, provide stable social security and defuse crises with efficiency. Also, the level of scientific

governance, democratic governance and rule of law is being enhanced and a harmonious society is gradually taking shape" (Zheng 2005: 4). Even more telling is his use of words on modernization of China which should take place by the mid-21st century: "it means that the country will have rid itself of the "underdeveloped" status and advanced into the rank of medium-level developed countries. It means rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and peaceful rise of the country" (Zheng 2005: 5).

Obviously, the general question for the future is to what extent the Chinese rise to power is manageable by China itself as well as by the system it is part of. Ding even considers it the most important and controversial issue in the current field of international relations (Ding 2010). For the past three decades, China has rapidly changed to an extent which created a state of uncertainty and insecurity among China scholars and in parallel also among foreign policy practitioners. It is increasingly difficult to predict China's future as statements and assumptions, which seemed as a conventional wisdom few years back, have been shaken to the core and reformulated often to their exact opposite.

John Ikenberry outlines two possible scenarios, which can be, once again, described as realist and liberal (Ikenberry 2008). A realist view sees China as starting to use its growing power to influence the rules and institutions of the international system so they better serve its interests. A rising power is understood as a revisionist power, which will disrupt the international system and thus pose a threat to the hegemon, which will counter, resulting in an unavoidable conflict (Mearsheimer 2006), as attempts to balance of power have often in history led to a war. On the other hand, the liberal theory assumes the continuation of China's gradual, deepening involvement in the

existing world order as shaped after the World War II. Shambaugh calls China a 'paper tiger of the 21st century' and sees its foreign policy as a mere theatrical show lacking substance. He points out to that many indicators "are quantitatively impressive, but they are not qualitatively so. It is the lack of qualitative power that translates into China's lack of real influence" (Shambaugh 2014).

For most of the post-Mao China's foreign policy actions, the liberalist assumptions seems to prevail, while the recent development from 2012 points to the realist understanding of China's moves.

## 2.2 A shield or a sword? Contemplating China's soft power

Returning to Nye's classification of power as hard, consisting of economic power and military might, and soft, seen as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments" (Nye 2004a), this sub-chapter aims at exploring China's understanding and use of soft power in its power projection. Joseph Nye classifies soft power resources as culture, political values and foreign policy. As China has risen economically, its economy started to be seen as an important source of attraction (Nye 2006). But it also embraced soft power resources and as Cho and Jeong argue, "beyond economic growth, China, by advertising Chinese values and publicizing its culture, has risen as a potential competitor to the United States in the Asian region" (Cho & Jeong 2008: 453). Moreover, while assessments of whether China's rise poses a threat to the current hegemon and the international order tend to focus on economic development and rising military

power, without taking into account Beijing's instruments of soft power projection, the analysis can hardly be complete (Ding 2010).

China embraced Nye's concept of soft power with a great degree of enthusiasm as early as the beginning of 1990s. However, in its framing of the concept it has diverged from Nye's formulation (see e.g. Callahan 2015; Cho & Jeong 2008; Edney 2012; Wang & Lu 2008; Zhao 2015). Put simply, China adjusted the concept to make it compatible with its existing approach to propaganda (Edney 2012, for propaganda see chapter 2.3). China understands soft power as a tool which mitigates the risks of a confrontation with other great powers. With the rising importance of media, both traditional and social, which convey images of countries and nations, soft power started to rise in relevance along with other key types of power, such as economic and military. Winning 'hearts and minds' of foreign nations became an imperative for China as it continued to move higher in the international pecking order. As Liu Yunshan (China's propaganda director in 2009) wrote: "It has become an urgent strategic task for us to make our communication capability match our international status. (..) In this modern era, who gains the advanced communication skills, the powerful communication capability and whose culture and value is more widely spread is able to more effectively influence the world" (cit. in Barboza 2009).

While Nye focused on positive aspects of the soft power (attractiveness rather than coercion), Chinese conceptualization of soft power instead focuses on the negative aspects and China imposes it more often in domestic rather than foreign policy (Callahan 2015). Chinese scholars and leadership have been aware of the role US soft power played in the collapse of communist regimes in 1989, observed with unease the so-called 'color

revolutions' (Wilson 2009), and used the lessons learnt to shield its own population from Western influence while promoting socialist values-oriented education (Callahan 2015). China thus sees soft power through the prism of its domestic needs for development and nation building, and in a more broad sense beyond country's ability to influence others, but also to the ability to generate compliance in a society (Callahan 2015; Cho & Jeong 2008; Edney 2016; Wang & Lu 2008). An emphasis is thus put on national unity and identity which can be promoted by soft power resources, such as national language or education.

Wang and Lu observe that Chinese diversion from the Nye's soft power concept rests (or rather rested in past tense, as the author argues below) also in different emphasis and understanding of the attributes of the soft power resources. While Nye focused on contemporary American culture, Chinese discussion on soft power highlighted traditional culture. Moreover, Nye wrote about US political values, while the original Chinese discourse highlighted the attractiveness of Chinese economic model (Wang & Lu 2008). While this observation might have been true in 2008, China currently uses its modern culture as a resource of soft power and reconsidered previously held assumption that the Chinese political model is not applicable abroad (see below).

As well as in its manifestation in domestic environment, China's soft power is also rather reactive in international relations. Wang and Lu argue that China's soft power resources, be it its culture, political values or foreign policy, promise "to counter-balance the self-centered value system of the West and offers an attractive alternative to the confrontational approach to the world that has come to characterize Western, especially American,

75

diplomacy" (Wang & Lu 2008: 428). Timo Kivimäki comes with different understanding of the Chinese approach to the soft power, claiming that China is not trying to sell "Chinese way", but to sell "cooperation with China" (Kivimäki 2014: 430). Thus China's goal as well as evaluation of whether China is or is not successful in using its soft power should not be judged using the US (or Western) lens. His view is in stark contrast to Callahan's claim that China perceives its soft power as a tool in a "global soft power battle that will produce clear winners and losers in a life-or-death zero-sum struggle" (Callahan 2015: 225).

China studies the American use of soft power, learns from it, but its focus is apparently different than to (only) compete with the US. It focuses on providing a remedy and correction of (what it sees as) China's negative image abroad. How a positive image should look like is, however, less clear (Hartig 2018: 60). But the image which is projected to the outside, could be broadly summed up as "China as a trustworthy, cooperative, peace-loving, developing country that takes good care of its enormous population; a China that is building a 'harmonious society' at home and contributing to a peaceful and 'harmonious world' as a responsible player in international affairs" (d'Hooge 2007: 3). Loh coins a term 'defensive soft power' and argues that Chinese soft power is reactionary and defensive in nature (Loh 2017: 121). Wasserman points out that the use of soft power is not adequate in describing, for instance, China's media activities (Wasserman 2016: 9), and some propose to use a new term 'sharp power' to describe techniques of China's soft power projected abroad (Walker & Ludwig 2017).

Review of the literature on the Chinese debate on soft power reveals again a trend to picture the US reactions to Chinese soft power rise through the prism

of China threat theory. According to Chinese authors, the Western debate on tackling rising China's soft power stems either from misunderstanding China or equals a conspiracy led by the US to slow down Chinese development (for the debates see Callahan 2015; Cho & Jeong 2008; Wang & Lu 2008).

The attractiveness of Chinese culture, political values and foreign policy actions, where others see them as legitimate and having moral authority (Nye 2008: 95), has changed over the course of the time. In 2004 Nye argued that despite China's cultural appeal, its soft power resources do not attract others – in comparison to the soft power resources yielded by the US or Europe – due to the flaws of the Chinese regime such as the lack of freedom and corruption (Nye 2004b). Later on the claim was made by various authors again, listing corruption, inequality, lack of democracy, human rights and the rule of law as main obstacles to channel Chinese soft power (Ding 2008; Nye & Wang 2009). Other skeptics pointed out China's lack of modern cultural appeal (in contrast to some attractiveness of its cultural heritage), arguing that China's art, film, literature or education are unknown outside of China and do not set the global trends (Shambaugh 2014). Equally, China's model in economy and politics was also perceived as hardly reputable and thus unfit to serve as an export article.

A couple of years forward, China's modern culture has started to be globally recognized. In 2012 Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to Mo Yan, a Chinese writer who resides in China and does not belong to either Chinese diaspora or the stream of Chinese literati persecuted by the Chinese regime. Similarly, Chinese author Liu Cixin received the Hugo Award for the world's best science fiction *Three-body Problem* in 2015. China as an international player has been increasingly pictured in Hollywood blockbusters. It is worth

noticing that movies which depict China tend to portray it as a militarily and scientifically advanced country, or, on top of that, a savior of the main character or the whole mankind (in e.g. *Arrival, Martian*; Kokas' *Hollywood Made in China* (2017) serves as a representative study on China's increased attractiveness for Hollywood).

The premise of the uniqueness of Chinese model, and a concurring assumption that it cannot be exported abroad, was shattered by Xi Jinping in 2018. In his address to the National People's Congress he claimed that China is offering to the world a "new type of political party system" which represents "a great contribution to political civilization of humanity" (Xinhua 2018). In the same year, Wang Xiaohong from the Central Institute of Socialism, wrote "some people lacking self-confidence always use Western political theories to criticize China's political party system." He continues to claim that Western political systems are associated, among other things, with fractured societies, inefficient government, and "endless power transitions and social chaos" as in the countries of the former Soviet Union, and in North Africa after the Arab Spring. "The new type of political party system has overcome all sorts of problems that the old [one] can't overcome" (cit. in Huang 2018).

Moreover, as Wang and Lu observe, Chinese discourse incorporates also technology and science into not only the resources of hard power, but also soft power (Wang & Lu 2008: 430). The attractiveness of the US, Chinese scholars believe, lies also in its technological and innovation superiority. When subscribing to this enlarged concept of soft power including innovations and technological breakthroughs, it would be a subject of the debate whether China recently closed the gap with the US if not surpassed it

already. The development of advanced 5G networks, test of the quantum computing technology, landing at the other side of the Moon, or gene editing using the CRISPER technology, which led to the birth of the first genetically modified twins, represent just some of the China's recent scientific achievements.

Finally, China's foreign policy actions are arguably equally growing in attractiveness. When China announced the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with the aim to financially support Belt and Road Initiative, 57 countries expressed their willingness to be founding members, including US allies such as the United Kingdom[21], Australia or South Korea. Nye and Wang observe a growing appeal in some parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America of the so-called 'Beijing consensus' pointing out that "authoritarian government plus a market economy has become more popular than the previously dominant "Washington consensus" of market economics with democratic government" (Nye & Wang 2009: 19). While the situation might have changed in recent months with the reporting of potential debt traps and countries expressing their dissatisfaction with China's failure to deliver on its promises, none of the countries which joined China-led initiatives or institutions have announced it would withdraw from it. Despite China's image being effected by these developments, another China's actions might have boosted it. In 2017 Trump's administration announced the US would withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). China, on the other hand, pledged to adhere to climate change deals and – in Xi Jinping's

---

[21] United Kingdom, for example, was later on publicly criticized for the move by the US administration.

speech defending globalization at the World Economic Forum in Davos – posed as a responsible great power (Anderson 2017).

In this respect, an interesting question arises on the interplay between soft power of China and the US. Or, more specifically, how much Chinese soft power per se is attractive and to what extend the welcoming attitude towards China's initiatives is driven by a disappointment with Western political system and/or the US foreign policy. Nye and Wang claim that US' and China's soft powers are "reinforcing each other in some issue areas and contradicting each other in others" (Nye & Wang 2009: 20). They continue that the interplay, however, should not be seen as a mere competition, but a more complex sum of cooperative and competitive forces (Nye & Wang 2009: 22).

It is perhaps worth reminding, that the Chinese soft power discourse – taking as a source of today's country values the traditional Chinese values (such as peace and harmony) – is based on romanticized idea of imperial China benevolence towards outsiders and pushes in front a concept of inclusiveness (Callahan 2015). The concept, however, has some flaws as it is not in accord with Chinese empire history of dealings with its 'barbarian' neighbors. Cohen argues that for instance victimization of China (referring to the 'century of humiliation') serves "to justify [China's] irresponsible behavior in contemporary affairs" (Cohen 2007: 683). According to him "in the creation of their empire, the Chinese were no less arrogant, no less ruthless, than the Europeans, Japanese, or Americans in the creation of theirs" (Cohen 2007: 683). The statement leads him into conclusion that China as a future superpower will not act differently from other great powers.

## 2.3 Public diplomacy and propaganda as tools of China's external influence

This sub-chapter deals with China's external influence and image-building practices abroad and omits an interesting debate on China's internal image-building through control of state media (e.g. Wang 2003), social media (e.g. Bolsover & Howard 2018; for 'digital authoritarianism' see e.g. Creemers 2017) or propaganda targeted to the domestic audience (e.g. Shambaugh 2007). It also excludes analysis of China's 'three warfares' (i.e. public opinion warfare, psychological warfare and legal warfare) used by the People's Liberation Army for the author agrees with Peter Mattis in his call to look at the CCP rather then PLA for analysis of China's influence (Mattis 2018), nor it dwells on United Front work which seeks to extract political influence abroad (more on United Front e.g. Gill & Schreer 2018). The main and streamlined focus of the sub-chapter is on mediatized public diplomacy and propaganda as tools of shaping China's image abroad.

Before exploring Chinese external propaganda tools, the author finds necessary to first distinguish among soft power, public diplomacy and propaganda. Nye sees the public diplomacy as an instrument that mobilizes soft power resources (such as culture, values or foreign policy practices) to attract foreign public (Nye 2008: 95). But if the content of country's soft power resources is not attractive, he warns, it cannot produce soft power. Attractiveness of the content of the resources is what matters in successful public diplomacy. While soft power may exist without a conscious effort of a given country, public diplomacy is the conscious act of communicating with foreign public (Rawnsley 2012: 123). It is the act of one country to influence

opinion of another country for the purpose of changing the target nation's foreign policy to be favorable to the first country (Cheng et al. 2016). Public diplomacy is a rather broad concept encompassing cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy or international broadcasting.

Jarol B. Manheim (1994) distinguishes traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy by looking at actors who engage in it. He outlines four types of relations: (1) government-to-government, (2) diplomat-to-diplomat, (3) people-to-people and (4) government-to-people (Manheim 1994: 3), claiming that the former two forms represent traditional diplomacy while the remaining pair can be conceptualized as people (public) diplomacy (because they relate to the public). However, how the public is defined and involved is less clear. Moreover, in case of the people-to-people type of relations, it could be argued that all types of diplomacy involve - especially in a situation where a non-democratic actor takes part - in one form or another the government which allows the activity in the first place and may provide resources for it to be carried out.

The focus of this study lies in mediatized public diplomacy seen as an attempt by governments to exert as much control as possible over the framing of their country (Entman 2007: 89). The goal is to cultivate the positive image of a foreign country and promote a favorable interpretation of its foreign policy. The perception change happens in the process of sending information by the sender (influencing country) to the recipient (influenced country) through a diverse range of instruments such as advertising, sponsored media supplements or content generated by foreign state-sponsored media.

(Mediatized) public diplomacy differs from propaganda, but the literature suggests that the debate on what exactly constitutes the difference is far from over. Both assume the existence of government-sponsored and to various extend manipulative initiatives. General approaches to define propaganda either focus on the process or on the propagandist (for the debate see e.g. Jowett & O'Donnell 2012; Tutui 2017). Zaharna distinguishes between public diplomacy and propaganda using the circumstances under which the first or the latter is applied by governments (peace/war) and character of the process (open/covert; win-win or win-loose). She defines propaganda as a tool which "deliberately manipulates the communication through a variety of techniques so that some aspect is hidden from the audience and the audience feels compelled to accept the message. With coercion as the goal, information control and deception are key to effective propaganda" (Zaharna 2004: 4). To differentiate, she sees public diplomacy as "open public communication in a global communication arena. Because the audience is free to accept or not accept the message, persuasion through coercion or control is not applicable" (Zaharna 2004: 4). For her, credibility is the key feature of effective public diplomacy.

After reviewing the literature written on the subject, the author leans towards agreeing with Zaharna that the key feature enabling to distinguish between propaganda and public diplomacy is the credibility, or reputation of the source. Labeling something as propaganda can lead to decrease in credibility of not only the information, but also the source. For instance, Lee and Hao go as far as equaling literally entire China's soft power with propaganda. For them China's soft power is a party propaganda in disguise, driven by the purpose of strengthening China's authoritarian regime (Lee & Hao 2018:

869). This effectively discredits all China's soft power resources and efforts to promote even the most benign aspects of Chinese culture.

The conceptual haze with which public diplomacy and propaganda coexist besides each other or are treated as interchangeable concepts is further complicated in China's case by different understanding and use of the word propaganda in East and West. Unlike in the Western (or, in the author's case, Eastern European) context where the word carries negative connotations, Chinese Communist Party sees propaganda (*xuanchuan*) as a proactive tool in educating and shaping opinions (Shambaugh 2007: 29), thus contributing to the creation of 'harmonious society'. The different use of the word thus complicates understanding of the issue as various authors do not claim from which position they study the subject. In this chapter, the author decidedly uses the word propaganda without a bias and in accordance with the logic in which the word is used in Chinese language.

China's propaganda machinery is part of a broader system of control administered by the CCP. It encompasses all facets of Chinese society, from education and military to oversight over press, news agencies, cultural activities, online media, etc. Since 1980s the Chinese leadership started to distinguish between internal and external propaganda (Shambaugh 2007), realizing a growing need to educate the outside world about China and to engage in positive international image building. While in the previous pre-Cold War era propaganda focused on ideology and promotion of China as a revolutionary, current propaganda is more subtle and uses a variety of tools. However, the historical baggage still influence the Chinese perception of the role of propaganda. Tsai sees China's external propaganda as being heavily influenced by the mentality of the Cold War. According to him, China is

caught in perception of continuous struggle with enemies and thus attempts "to establish an international united front with a view to boosting the CCP's right of discourse in the international arena and weakening anti-China forces in the West" (Tsai 2017: 203). Shambaugh lists four critical missions of the Chinese external propaganda: "(1) to tell China's story to the world, publicize Chinese government policies and perspectives, and promote Chinese culture abroad; (2) to counter what is perceived to be hostile foreign propaganda (such as China threat theory); (3) countering Taiwan independence proclivities and promoting unification; and (4) propagating China's foreign policy" (Shambaugh 2007: 48-49).

The hierarchy of the party foreign propaganda starts with the Foreign Propaganda Leading Small Group on the top about which not much is publicly known. Below lays the CCP Central Propaganda Department which oversees the work of State Council Information Office (SCIO). The State Council Information Office's main function is "to propel domestic media further along the path of introducing China to the international community". It also "holds press conferences regarding major national policies (..) helps foreign journalists to cover China, as well as carries out exchanges with governments and media outlets from across the globe" (SCIO website). However, the external propaganda work is carried out not only through State Council Information Office, but, as noted above, also through various other channels depending on the issue and targeted audience, e.g. Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Confucius Institutes, etc. (Edney 2016). But in sum, both domestic and international image-building processes are overseen by the propaganda machinery with tight links to the party.

Inside of China, public diplomacy tools include e.g. white papers, articles, websites and press conferences (d'Hooghe 2007: 14) where policies are described and explained. Apart from the explanatory approach, China sometimes counter-attacks or asks for patience, highlighting China's developing nation status (d'Hooghe 2007:14).

The external propaganda in practice uses a variety of tools ranging from sponsored trips of journalists, academics and politicians to China, placing op-eds to foreign media, sponsoring supplements conveying China's views in foreign media, etc. The focus groups are both foreign elites as well as general public.

Based on Manheim's useful typology of relations (p. 82), the following table (Figure 14) attempts to summarize different types of relations and examples of the tools which China uses to achieve its public diplomacy goals. "Carrots" represent a positive, appealing nature of public diplomacy instruments which can be yielded by China, while "sticks" refer to the negative, punishing nature of the tools used against the local government/public.

Figure 14: Examples of public diplomacy tools based on Manheim's division of types of relations

| type of relation | "carrots" | "sticks" |
|---|---|---|
| Government-to-government | increased diplomatic exchange, high-level visits (president, prime minister, ministerial level), high-level documents (strategic partnerships, capital cities agreements, etc.), investment, foreign aid | limitation/freezing of diplomatic relations, ignorance of state representatives, renunciation of documents, sanctions |
| Diplomat-to-diplomat | cultivation of ties (extra meetings, expansion of the scope of discussed topics) | shunning/ignorance |
| People-to-people | "panda diplomacy", Confucius Institutes, input in local media (authorship, acquisition, media cooperation in supplements), cultural events, international broadcast | consumer boycotts, protests in front of foreign embassies |
| Government-to-people | visa waiver, diaspora diplomacy, government scholarships | visa obstructions, diaspora "abuse", cutting of academic/ scientific cooperation support (travel) |

The tools of public diplomacy are manifold and the table does not attempt to list all possibilities. The means used in the first two types of relations, which Manheim regards as traditional diplomacy (Manheim 1994: 3), are rather straightforward. In China's case, the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative led to an increase of China's presidential state visits (see e.g. Boon & Ardy 2017; LAT 2015) and the investment and aid provided to foreign countries (e.g. Chen & Lin 2018; Boon & Ardy 2017; Hameiri 2015). Even before BRI, during the "checkbook diplomacy" era, a period of time when China competed for diplomatic recognition with Taiwan, it used investment as a means of government-to-government relations (e.g.: Atkinson 2010). On the other hand, China is not unfamiliar with using unilateral sanctions (e.g. Reilly 2012), as demonstrated on e.g. the case of sanctions of Norwegian exports of salmon after the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Liu Xiaobo in

2010 (e.g. Lewis 2011; Bos 2016). China also diplomatically shunned Estonia after its representatives met with Dalai Lama in 2011, deciding to "freeze high-level political ties with Estonia – with no higher state visits taking place between China and Estonia during the next three years" (Scott 2018: 30).

The tools in the remaining two types of relation (people-to-people and government-to-people) represent a wide array of possible tools yielded by China. Panda diplomacy refers to China's practice of leasing the attractive animal to selected countries (for the role of giant pandas in China's diplomacy see Hartig 2013). On the other side of the spectrum of tool stands for instance public boycott. As Reilly reminds the reader, "Chinese public is also part of the sanctions game. Chinese officials often encourage consumer boycotts. This occurred in 2005 against Japanese goods when Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Japan (…), and again in 2008 against Carrefour, the French-owned retail chain, following protests along the Olympic torch relay in Paris that criticized China's policies in Tibet and its human rights policies. Chinese leaders exploit public anger to such events in order to gain diplomatic leverage. Propaganda and selective media reports feed nationalist sentiment, which allows diplomats to claim that a certain action has hurt the feelings of the Chinese people and should be reversed. This calibrated strategy is a key tool in Beijing's use of public opinion in its foreign policy." (Reilly 2012: 122).

A specific example of a tool in people-to-people relations is represented by Confucius Institutes which China started to establish in 2004. By 2017 China established 525 Confucius Institutes and 1,113 smaller Confucius Classrooms (established at high schools but also at universities and associated with Confucius Institutes) in 146 countries (cit. in Hartig 2018).

While some see Confucius Institutes as means of cultural diplomacy (similar to Alliance Francais, British Council or Goethe Institute), other link it directly to the PRC's external propaganda. Confucius Institutes are quite often accused of spying on Chinese diaspora or spreading China's propaganda. Hartig, basing it on a large-scale analysis of Confucius Institutes' reports, claims that the institutes are political actors who present a positive narrative of China to international audiences leaving out what is perceived by Chinese regime as negative or sensitive issues (Hartig 2018). "Although any country needs to find a delicate balance between its multiple "realities" (governments tend to highlight positive aspects while critics tend to highlight negative ones), this balance is especially hard to find for Confucius Institutes. This, however, is not so much a flaw in the Institutes themselves, but in the authoritarian political system behind them" (Hartig 2018: 715).

Similarly to Confucius Institutes, which tell China story to the outside world, the China-established and funded international media help in shaping the image of the country abroad. Xinhua News Agency represents the major source of official information broadcasted abroad, others include China Radio International (CRI), China Daily, Global Times, China Central Television (CCTV)/ China Global Television Network (CGTN). Xinhua has about 170 foreign bureaus, CRI 70 overseas affiliate stations, 18 online radio programs, and broadcasts in 61 languages while CCTV has 70 foreign bureaus in 171 countries (cit. in Gill & Schreer 2018: 159). The 'go out' strategy of these outlets is not only directed by a business logic (increasing competition for finances and prestige in China itself), but they also fulfill a statist mission (Zhao 2013: 23). However, the alleged tight links between the state and the private sector create a problem of institutional credibility. The narrative which

currently revolves around Huawei's links to the state and the provisions of the New Security Law adopted in 2017, which direct all Chinese nationals and companies to cooperate with Chinese state security if requested, further highlighted the problem of party-state leverage over not only state-owned but also seemingly private companies. China-funded international media thus face a problem of credibility which is not necessarily based on quality of their outputs, but on the character of China's regime. The credibility gap decreases the power of China's international media's persuasiveness and attractiveness.

To overcome the problem of credibility gap, China has increasingly employed a strategy which can be literally translated as "borrow a boat to go to sea" (*jian chuan chu hai*). It aims at identifying outlets which can carry messages on behalf of China through acquisition of foreign media, co-ownership (both holding a controlling or a below a controlling level share) and forming partnerships through content sharing (Sun 2015: 408). As for the direct purchases of foreign media, the extend is not easy to asses as data on ownership structures are incomplete. In 2015, Reuters carried an article claiming that it uncovered 33 radio stations in 14 countries that broadcasted China-friendly news (Qing & Shiffman 2015). The article and subsequent calls for investigation of these radio stations operating in the United States show that media are increasingly seen as strategic assets – not in economic, but in political sense. Already in 2010, the acquisition of US weekly *Newsweek* by Chinese companies was blocked and the outlet was later sold to an American tycoon for a nominal amount of just a single dollar (Zhao 2013: 25), citing security risks associated with the outlet being sold to Chinese investors. A similar logic lays behind the decision of the European

Union to include media into the newly established EU investment screening mechanism[22].

The real impact of China's mediatized public diplomacy, which is central to this thesis, is hard to assess as it depends not only on effectivity of tools that China employs, but also on the message it sends. As Nye reminds, "actions speak louder than words" and "policies that appear as narrowly self-serving or arrogantly presented are likely to prohibit rather than produce soft power" (Nye 2008: 102). It is thus necessary not only to examine the sender's capacities and capabilities, but also the message itself, the audience and its reactions. If the message is not in accordance with the country's promoted political values, the credibility of the country is questioned by the international audience. As Nye reminds the reader, "the best propaganda is not propaganda" (Nye 2012: 152).

On many occasions, China's domestic behavior has negatively affected China's image abroad and limited its soft power. Wasserman, for instance, questions the impact of Chinese state-owned media operating in Africa on South African press. Based on interviews with South African journalists, he claims that they either do not consume Chinese media or they reject Chinese perspective on news events (Wasserman 2016: 18). While China may not be successful in one country, it may be, however, more successful in conveying messages to the Chinese diaspora, as the diaspora consumes China-generated content and serves as its biggest international audience (Sun 2015: 411). As study conducted by Wei, Lo and Golan shows, China is rather successful in using the negative coverage of China in foreign media to its

---

[22] In the Czech Republic, the debate on whether investment to media from investors based outside of the EU should or should not be mandatorily screened is ongoing.

advantage domestically. The study shows a correlation between a belief in negative foreign coverage of China and Chinese publics' attitude to the state-sponsored external propaganda work, as a perception of foreign media portraying China in a negative way increases Chinese public support for its government's actions to remedy the image (Wei, Lo & Golan 2017). In other words, the negative image of China helps propel Chinese state propaganda, both external as well as internal. Similarly, a believe in the 'humiliation' of China from foreign powers during 19th and 20th century is utilized by the patriotic education. Callahan finds out that the aim of the state apparatus is not to educate public, as was the case in the past, but to create an enemy and redirect any potential protest against the government to 'the Other' (Callahan 2015).

When focusing on the issue of China's external propaganda techniques, scholars tend to look at China's domestic capabilities and capacities and power projection. Only a minority of scholarship deals with efficiency of the propaganda and its real impacts on a targeted nation's views. As Nye reminds the reader, "the effectiveness of public diplomacy is measured by minds changed (as shown in interviews or polls), not dollars spent or slick production packages" (Nye 2008: 101). Moreover, it is not only the question of *how many* minds are changed, but *which* minds are changed. In words of Wang and Lu it "depends on who in the target country find it attractive (e.g. elite or general public) and how much they control policy making (e.g. the degree of checks and balances)" (Wang & Lu 2008: 446).

The elements of soft power (attraction and persuasion) are socially constructed (Nye 2012: 153) and what the audience think is as important as what the influencer wants. The influence happens in the process of the

message being sent by the 'sender' and a message being received, i.e. consumed by the audience in a foreign country. The following chapter focuses on the 'receiver' as an essential component of the influencing process. On the case study of China's mediatized image in the Czech Republic it aims at investigating the effectiveness of China's external propaganda tools.

## 3 The audience: international perception of China

## 3. 1 Between the panda and the dragon: external narratives of China's rise

Proponents of the critical stream in social sciences and the theory of international relations have long pointed to the discursive, linguistic level of social interaction as a determining factor shaping (international) politics (e.g. Ashley 1989; Derrida 1981; Foucault 1994; Onuf 1989; Wendt 1999). More to the point, critical thinkers from Antonio Gramsci onwards have emphasized how the domination of political and social discourse contributes to and helps maintain social hegemony (Overbeek 2000). It was Gramsci himself who asserted a specific role of intellectuals in the discourse and their key legitimating role for the ruling classes. In other words, "seeking hegemony is a matter of seeking to universalize particular meanings in the service of achieving and maintaining dominance" (Faiclough 2003: 58). This claim can be further linked to Campbell's hypothesis on 'the Other' as the key component in the construction and maintenance of the state's identity (Campbell 1998).

These assertions offer a clear general guideline for analyzing the issue of China's rise in external narratives. When we transpose the (neo)Gramscian idea, which extends the notion of hegemony into the realm of the discourse, into international politics, we can make an assumption that the mainstream discourse will be dominated by opinions conforming to the prevailing attitudes and needs of the current global hegemon, the United States. Secondly, reverting to Campbell's notion of 'the Other', a hypothesis can be formulated

that within the dominant discourse, China will be routinely portrayed in a negative light, as a force threatening the established international order and its basic tenets, including habitual references to its internal constitution which stands in direct opposition to the established – internal and international – norms as formulated by the West. Given the history of the Cold War and the specific narratives it provoked on both sides of the conflict, it is understandable that the debate about China's rise is to some extent influenced by ideological baggage. Perception of China thus cannot avoid, and in reality almost inevitably stems from, the existence of an authoritarian, communist regime in the People's Republic of China or, more specifically, from the construction of its 'Otherness' to and by the West.

The special place of China in public discourse and imagination about the future of international relations is not a complete novelty. Various Chinese as well as foreign authors focus on the evolution of China's image, noting a number of periods when the West's perception of China fluctuated between positive, neutral and negative. Isaacs (1958) categorizes the West's perceptions of China into several periods as the (1) Age of Respect (18th century), (2) Age of Contempt (1840-1905); (3) Age of Benevolence (1905-1937); (4) Age of Admiration (1937-1944); (5) Age of Disenchantment (1944-1949); and (6) Age of Hostility (1949-1957). In each of the periods, China's image in the West was influenced by international events and understood through the prism of West's interests. Later researchers added (7) Age of Hostility (1949-1972); (8) Second Age of Admiration (1972-1977); (8) Second Age of Disenchantment (1977-1980); and (9) the Second Age of Benevolence (1980-1989) (see Mosher 1990) and (10) Third Age of Disenchantment (1989-2001) and (11) Age of Uncertainty (2001 onwards)

(see Cao 2014). Qing Cao argues that "China's image has oscillated with each swing of the global relationship change" (Cao 2014: 3). The fluctuation of modern China's image between fascination and fear is intricately linked to its political ideology. With the establishment of the communist regime, "a civilisation veiled in cultural mystique acquired a new veneer of an alien ideological enemy. Communist China invoked a fresh fear of the spread of the 'red peril', alongside a vision of a romanticized socialist utopia" (Cao 2014: 3). The negative perception of China is thus linked to the ideology of the ruling party as a reoccurring theme.

However, later authors argue that post-9/11 China started to be seen through a variety of other topics, representing West's diversified interests, such as environmental pollution (Xiang 2013) or energy security (Karásková 2019). A case study on China's and India's images found in academic production on oil diplomacy showed a disproportionate attention devoted by academics to China's, in comparison to India's, efforts to secure energy supplies. Moreover, security concerns (China's links to the states which are perceived by the West as pariahs of the international system) and human rights violations influenced academic articles on a seemingly unrelated topic (Karásková 2019).

Even Chinese behavior in economic domain is often judged against and framed within its human rights records, leading to presenting China in a dichotomy, as both an economic opportunity as well as a political and security threat. A visual representation of the dichotomy can be found both in academic, political as well as in artistic discourse (e.g. covers of magazines, comics, etc.), where China's nonthreatening character is (stereo)typically represented by an image of a panda, while the security concerns are

conveyed through the image of a dragon, evoking a deeply rooted sense of danger as the dragon in Western legends and fairytales (as opposed to their Chinese counterparts) epitomizes a disruptive, threatening, or even deadly force. The panda-dragon dichotomy offers not only a handy visual shortcut, readily available for various agents in the public discourse, but essentially erects a scale against which the perceptual picture of China can be – and habitually has been – measured (Cao 2014).

## 3.2 Media as agenda setters of the discourse on China

What people know about the world is largely determined by what the media report about it (Lippmann 1922). This assertion, ever more relevant today than the century ago when Lippmann formulated it, gives media the power over the construction of images by the public, especially on issues which the general population has little knowledge of or lack direct personal experience with, leading to a media-dependency on topics which are remote (Adoni & Mane 1984). Image refers to "the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others" (Dichter 1985: 75) . If the entity is a country, than national image is a sum of beliefs and assumptions one has about a nation or, in other words, "the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people" (Kunczik 1997: 46).

Moreover, what media depicts as important tends to enter into the public discourse (McCombs & Shaw 1972) and vise-versa (Cobb & Elder 1971),

creating an interplay between media and the public and setting an agenda for both. The world according to Lippmann is "out of reach, out of sight, out of mind" and media do not reflect the reality, but shape it (Lippmann 1922). In doing so they construct a different social reality. How the shaping of the social reality through media takes place has been a long time focus of agenda setting theory which "has become in less than half a century one of the most refined media effects theory" (Corbu & Hosu 2017: 12). What used to be a rather homogenous theory has developed into various forms, such as first-level and second-level agenda setting and framing, and distinguished from agenda building. The first-level agenda setting focuses on a transfer of the salience of objects, in other words *what* is considered relevant, and how the selection of objects is transferred to another agenda (saliency transfer from e.g. media agenda to public agenda and vice-versa). As McCombs and Shaw, who studied the effect of media on political campaign's outcome, argue: "Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position" (McCombs & Shaw 1972). Or, in Cohen's famous words, media "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*" (Cohen 1963: 13).

The theory was further developed adding a research focus on the salience of the attributes associated with objects. The research on second-level agenda setting suggests that agenda setters play a role not only in influencing what to think about but in shifting opinions by telling stakeholders *how* to think about issues (e.g. Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004). As a result, agenda setting is understood as "a process that can affect both what to think about and how to

think about it" (McCombs & Shaw 1993: 63). Closely connected to the second-level agenda setting is the concept of framing which indicates that agenda setters tend to highlight certain features of the objects of their discourse, while simultaneously ignoring other aspects in order to help the audience understand the issue (Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004). "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described," points out Entman (Entman 1993: 52). An extension to the theory of agenda setting is the concept of agenda building, which looks at the interplay between sources and their effect(s) on the promotion of salience of objects.

For the study of China's image abroad, and thus for the successful projection of China's influence outside its frontiers, the use of first and second-level agenda setting represents well-established and long-developed practice. The second-level agenda setting, which enables to trace affective attributes (negative, positive or neutral tone of the reporting), seems especially promising in this context.

Academic reflection of China's public (or, more specifically, media) image is, in general, not completely rare – especially in China itself. As Tao Xie and Benjamin I. Page argue, "national image has become arguably the fastest-growing research field in Chinese academia" (Xie & Page 2013). Studies by Chinese scholars indicate that foreign media tend to be selective in their coverage of China. As Wang Qiu, a member of China's legislature and the head of state-owned broadcaster China National Radio, noted, "sixty percent of all mainstream Western media reports smear China" (cit. in Allen-

Ebrahimian 2016). As Xie and Page observe, "to some Chinese scholars, the coverage of China by foreign – particularly Western – media is so biased and distorted that it amounts to a concerted effort to 'demonize' China" (Xie & Page 2013: 855). Similarly, Xiang notes that after 1989 the West entered the "demonization period" and claims that the media in the West "present a systematically and maliciously distorted account of Chinese realities" with traditional international mainstream media not shouldering "the responsibility of communicating an objective and real China to the world" (Xiang 2013: 255). According to Stone and Xiao, the "rise of anti-China coverage led to a claim that Western media anointed China a new enemy in place of the USSR" (Stone & Xiao 2007). The authors also state that China received significantly more coverage than any other country in the world in the post-Cold War era.

It is perhaps worth noting that while the grievances expressed by the Chinese scholars might not all be necessarily imaginary, it is at least equally far from sure they are a result of any real or perceived 'demonization efforts' on the part of countries purposely bashing China. As Cheng, Golan and Kiousis observe, "the majority of nations around the world are not frequently covered in news, and when they are, that coverage tends to be negative" (Cheng, Golan & Kiousis 2016: 747), which is in line with a more general observation that negative, rather than positive, news serves as a better attractor of the audience attention in almost any media realm. As Steven Pinker recently put it: "Whether or not the world is really getting worse, the nature of news will interact with the nature of cognition to make us think that it is" (Pikner 2018: 40). The variables which determine whether a country is going to be covered in media could be of various types and may

include its geographic location, position within the international system, etc. (for references see Cheng, Golan & Kiousis 2016). Generally speaking, "the more politically powerful a nation is, the more media attention that country receives" (Besova & Cooley 2009: 222) – and, as claimed above, the likelihood that such image will not be especially flattering, is relatively high.

Moreover, the acceptance of the image of a country depends to a large extent on preexisting stereotypes and their force. Wang assesses the probability of one country's (in his case study American) population to change its perception of another country (China) as follows: while it is highly likely that people will accept a negative image of a rival country if the image is consistent with existing images of that country, it is highly unlikely that they will accept positive image if it contradicts existing image of the country (Wang 2003: 60). In other words, "while it is easy to maintain an old negative image or to gain a new negative image, it is extremely difficult to build a new positive image" (Wang 2003: 61). A clear correlation regarding the media coverage and public perception of a given country has been found in work of Wanta, Golan and Lee. They claim that the more negative coverage a nation receive, the more likely the public will perceive negatively the nation (Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004).

The increasing body of literature and growing attention paid to the issue of China's image reflect the country's growing focus on soft power resources, such as public diplomacy and propaganda, of which media are part. China's leadership (and Chinese academia propelled by an increase in available funds) started researching tools of propaganda and public diplomacy (as described in Chapter 2). As Wang and Zhou eloquently put it, since "China has never been so close to the center of the world stage as a leading player,

it requires the Chinese, both the leading and the ruled, to adopt a global perspective and grasp the underlying trend of the era in order to be aware of where China stands in view of the vicissitudes of global powers" (Wang & Zhou 2017).

A growing body of literature not only looks at China's image in the international arena, but also examines the perception of China and its leadership inside the country (Loh 2017; Wang 2003; Wei 2012). It is worth noticing that studies which compared China's image abroad and the one constructed by national media for the Chinese population found vast differences. A quantitative content analysis of two official series — the Peking Review (later renamed Beijing Review) and the Government Work Reports – from 1958 to 2002 revealed that China's government portrayed China in international affairs as a peace-loving country, victim of foreign aggression, socialist country, bastion of revolution, anti-hegemonic force, developing country, major power, international cooperator, and autonomous actor (Wang 2003). This image, however, was not shared by American audience who regard China as a militant obstructive force, a power which victimizes its neighboring countries and an authoritarian state (Wang 2003) – clearly messages that were neither sent nor welcome by the Chinese government.

Chinese scholars also use the analysis of social media content. Wu et. al. for example found an interesting case of an agenda-uptake, a process where social media and their users influenced the agenda of Chinese print, disrupting the image of Chinese agenda setting as a one-sided process dominated by traditional mainstream media (Wu et. al 2013). Xiang (2013) on the other side looks at social media content and reporting on China generated on English-language platforms. By studying content produced by

Facebook, Twitter and Youtube on China, he finds out that the image of China as a cultural, economic and technological powerhouse at these platforms is more positive then the image which is transmitted by the traditional, mainstream media to international audience. However, in other areas he claims the international social media replicate "stereotyped Chinese social, political, religious and ethnic images" from international mainstream media (Xiang 2013: 257).

Even beyond the confines of Chinese academia, the image of China in other countries is not ignored. Alongside literature focusing on China's influence in the world, these studies represent a logical response to a more frequent presence of China not only in the international space but also in various states that compose it. Articles have been published that focus on China's image in a specific political domain (Kopra 2012 on climate change; Han & Wang 2015 on China's national image connected to Made in China label), or indeed on a specific country (e.g. Heiduk 2014 on China's image in Germany; Liss 2003 on China's image in American print; Jayachandran 2016 on China in Indian media) or a whole region (e.g. Ospina Estupinan 2017 for study on China's image in Latin American press) or on one of China's initiatives (e.g. Zhang & Wu 2017 on media representation of the Belt and Road Initiative in China and United Kingdom), most of them, however, with a relatively limited number of media in vogue or over a rather short period of time (weeks and months). Some studies do not focus on media content analysis but rather research China's image abroad using data from surveys and polls (e.g. Xie & Page 2013; Lee & Hao 2018 on South Koreans views of China) or use the media content analysis and surveys in the same time (e.g. Besova & Cooley 2009).

Representative work include Tao Xie's and Benjamin I. Page's study on nation image using data from Pew Research Center which links favorable views on China to countries' economic indicators and interestingly finds out that "poor or developing countries are much more likely to have a favorable image of China than publics in economically advanced countries" (Xie & Page 2013). It points out the claim that though China strives to create a positive image of itself in the eyes of foreign public using a variety of tools, what matters is whether the image is successfully consumed by the local audience. Wasserman reminds here that "global communication is received, engaged with, and interpreted in localities. Although Chinese media may be a potentially useful vehicle to disseminate Chinese perspectives to global audiences, the messages carried by these media cannot be assumed to have a direct effect on local audiences – à la injection by hypodermic needle" (Wasserman 2016: 18).

## 3.3 Czech media discourse on China: between agency and structural conditions[23]

China has become an increasingly important topic of the political, media and broader public discourse in the Czech Republic. The trend can be traced back to 2012 and 2013, to the speech of then Prime Minister Petr Nečas

---

where he announced a shifting attitude of his government to China, and to the election of Miloš Zeman for Czech President in the first direct election of the head of state. However, even before these events the Czech political discourse, which had been firmly rooted in the normative underpinning of Czech foreign policy, a legacy of Václav Havel's founding contribution to post-communist statehood, started being penetrated by pro-China rhetorics that opened way for a more welcoming attitude towards China.

The global financial crisis and the shifts in international politics and the global order have undeniably contributed to these developments. As many have noted (e.g. Chau & Kane 2014; Ross & Zhu 2008; Rudolph & Szonyi 2018; Shambaugh 2013) and as was described in Chapter 2, over the past ten years, the People's Republic of China has become an international power to be reckoned with. After a series of his predecessors, who had mostly adhered to Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy principle of 'keeping a low profile', Xi Jinping has gradually become much more explicit in demonstrating and wielding China's power. Some of the initiatives, like 16+1, may have been founded before Xi assumed the supreme position in the Chinese political system, but others, most importantly the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), were fully of his making. Generally speaking, the PRC's more visible stance in international politics under Xi raised Beijing's profile across various regions, including Central Europe and the Czech Republic as its part.

This chapter investigates how the aforementioned Chinese activities contributed to the construction of China's image in an environment which did not have much of the previous experience with China's power. It turns to the analysis of China's image in the Czech media as a useful tool for 'measuring'

the perception of China and Czech reactions to China's influence. The chapter starts with a brief survey of the formative moments in Czech-China relations and the Czech Republic's China policy. It then presents the conceptual framework and research design of media analysis, undertaken with the aim of empirically and in detail document the development of the China's image in media in the Czech Republic since 2010. A reflection of the results of the analysis is then presented and final conclusions regarding the influence reached.

### 3.3.1 Rising China and the Czech China Discourse

The Czech Republic started its independent existence in international politics under the strong influence of its first President Václav Havel's ideal of normative underpinning in foreign policy, based on a critical reflection of the experience with totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century. From this perspective, China was long regarded as a problematic actor. Economic relations with China prior to and shortly after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 were limited as a result of the ideological drift between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China during the Cold War.

While both countries belonged to the camp of socialist countries, after the Sino-Soviet split China was perceived by Czechoslovakia as an ideological enemy. This approach resulted in a very limited coverage of China by Czech sinologists, as majority of them rather focused on 'safe issues' as literature, language or ancient history (Fürst 2005: 24). A similar approach was adopted

by sinologists in other Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. After 1989, both the post-Communist countries as well as China started to build their relations with this historical baggage and without previously established links or a detail knowledge of the political processes of the other side.

While open hostility to China was rare in the Czech Republic after 1989, Havel met frequently with Dalai Lama and pursued a deliberate policy of political and economic ignorance of China. The discourse on China at the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (PSSI 2018) followed the same pattern. When the Czech Parliament started its independent existence in 1993 (after the break-up of Czechoslovakia), it looked at China through the prism of politically constructed dichotomy of morally bad and good (Karásková, Bajerová & Matura 2019), with China clearly in the former category. While China was not debated much[24] at the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (CoD) in 1990s – in comparison to other regional or global powers or the European Union – it was hardly ever referred to in a positive manner. The debate started to change slowly during Václav Klaus' government which, during the slow-down of the Czech economy in 1996-1998, started to look at China as a potential export market (Karásková, Bajerová & Matura 2019: 10). The theme took hold and reoccurred on an on-and-off basis during all subsequent governments, providing a discursive alternative to the human rights-infused political agenda and forming a basis of a later more pronounced dichotomy in Czech parliamentarians' approach to China. Still, after accessing the European Union in 2004, the Czech Republic represented the most critical

---

[24] When China was debated by Members of the Parliament, it was rather used as an example of a general trend or was brought up in a set of other actors (Karásková, Bajerová & Matura 2019).

voice in the Union on economic and political relations with the People's Republic of China (Fox & Godément 2009), despite some Czech businessmen's or politicians' favorable view of opportunities of the Chinese market.

A narrative which looked at China as a potential economic opportunity reoccured in times of Czech economy's slow-downs and was most notably expressed during and after the global financial crisis. It was during the government of Petr Nečas from the Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS) when the discourse in the Czech Republic started to visibly swing towards a more positive account on China (Karásková, Bajerová & Matura 2019: 11). The Prime Minister's speech against 'dalailamism'[25] represented the first account of a politician in the Czech government who pushed for the intensification of bilateral relations with China while in the same time suggesting giving up human rights concerns which had been regularly expressed by the Czech foreign policy. The gradual move towards favoring economic agenda in Czech relations with China was completed by the government of Bohuslav Sobotka (2014-2017) which redefined the Czech foreign policy agenda on the matter (Karásková, Bajerová & Matura 2019: 11) and verbally[26] abandoned the policy of human rights promotion in favor to better its economic relations with China.

The trend was further reinforced by the election of Miloš Zeman as the Czech President in 2013. Zeman has spoken frequently and favorably on China issues - in October 2014, Zeman occurred on Chinese CCTV where he said

---

[25] Nečas created the neologism in his speech to businessmen at a trade fair in Brno where he argued that the support of the Tibetan spiritual leader "could jeopardize relations with China, Czech Republic's strategic export partner" (cit. in ČT24 2012).

[26] In practice the Czech foreign policy on China still adheres to human rights promotion, though in less visible and pronounced way. Interviews with Czech diplomats [anonymity requested], Prague, autumn 2017 and winter 2018.

that China could help teach the Czech Republic to "stabilize the society" (video no longer available, cit. in e.g. novinky.cz 2014). The notion led to criticism from both the political opposition and the Czech media. Hynek Kmoníček, former director of Zeman's foreign policy office and current ambassador in Washington, explained Zeman's pro-China rhetorics as a calculated strategy used for promoting Czech economic interests. He argued that, unlike big states whose representatives get invited to China due to their country's importance, the Czech Republic needs to have a "particularity, something where it is able and willing to go the extra mile to ensure reciprocity" (DVTV 2016). In September 2015, Zeman travelled to Beijing again, this time to commemorate the sixty's anniversary of the end of World War II in Asia, as the only head of the state from the European Union and despite the criticism from Western statesmen, Czech political opposition and media. The visit made a favorable impression on the hosts and in return Zeman asked Xi Jinping to visit Prague (Radiožurnál 2015). The historically first visit of the Chinese head of the state to the Czech Republic took place in March 2016. Preceding the visit, President Miloš Zeman gave an interview to CCTV where he claimed that the Czech-Chinese relations underwent 'a restart', based on the fact that the new government was no longer subservient of the interests of the United States and the European Union but followed a new independent policy (CCTV 2016). While both sides signed a strategic partnership, the visit came to be known for the clashes between Chinese citizens welcoming Xi and pro-Tibet (mainly Czech) protesters, and a harsh treatment of the later group by the Czech police (e.g. Mikoláš 2016; Pražský hrad 2016).

The narratives which occurred in media between 2012 and 2016 focused on notions of economic opportunities for the Czech companies in China's market. Through Zeman's speech to CCTV in 2014 regarding the stabilization of Czech society according to China's model, China also became portrayed not only as a business opportunity, but even as a normative model. However, the media research and mapping of Zeman's proclamations on China reveal that his positive view of China was not directed exclusively to the Chinese audience. Using the discourse of economic profitability, Zeman and a part of the Czech political and economic elite started promoting not only opportunities for Czech businessmen in China but also Chinese investment in the Czech Republic – a move which followed similar foreign policy U-turns exhibited by other EU member states (Fox & Godement 2009; Rühlig et al. 2018). As a component of the whole process, these protagonists have undeniably, openly but – as will be demonstrated below – not fully successfully strived for a categorical improvement of Beijing's picture in the Czech public discourse.

Xi Jinping's visit to Prague in 2016 and the controversies surrounding its handling (included the use of the Czech police against pro-Tibet demonstrators) arguably turn the attention on China issue in the Czech Republic beyond the realm confined of Czech China scholars. The visit more than tripled the number of instances China was mentioned at the Chamber of Deputies (Karásková, Bajerová & Matura 2019: 11) and led to a sharp increase in coverage on and reporting of China issue by the Czech media (Karásková et. al 2018: 7). In most of the cases, the mentions on China were critical. As a result of the heightened attention by the Czech media and an impression that China grew closer, for the first time, the parliamentarians

started to perceive it not as a mere point of reference, but as a topic in its own right.

In 2015 the Chinese allegedly private company China Energy Company Limited (CEFC) announced its interest to found its headquarters in Prague. During its shopping spree in 2015, it acquired a stake in the airline company Travel Service (which co-owns the national carrier Czech Airlines) and invested in e.g. soccer club, retail, brewery and media company Empresa Media. Its chairman Ye Jianming, a Chinese national, was appointed Zeman's China advisor (a rather unprecedented move given the level of the access Ye was assumably granted and given the context of the Czech Republic being an EU and NATO member state). Zeman told Týden (one of the outlets co-owned by the Chinese company): "Czech Republic could be a kind of a secure heaven for the Chinese investment expansion. Every ship needs a harbor where it can return to and which does not endanger it. And given the Czech Republic's attitude towards China, which is much more accommodating than that of some other European Union countries, I think that the Czech Republic could be such an unsinkable aircraft carrier of Chinese investment expansion" (Soukup 2016).

In 2016, following a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister for Science, Research and Innovation Pavel Bělobrádek, Minister of Culture Daniel Herman and Minister of the Czech Republic's Government for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation Jiří Dienstbier with Dalai Lama, the President Miloš Zeman and three other constitutionally most high raking representatives of the Czech state published a joint statement in which they distanced themselves from these ministers' actions (Pražský hrad 2016). In the strongly worded statement, they expressed their respect for China's

territorial integrity. As it later turned out, the statement was preceded by a visit of China's Ambassador Ma Keqing at the Prague Castle, the seat of the Czech President (Lazarová 2016).

The statement, in turn, provoked counter-reactions as 50 Members of the Parliament of the Czech Republic met with the Dalai Lama the following day at the premises of the Senate. Then Minister of Finance (and the current Prime Minister) Andrej Babiš, despite his previous caution and silence on the issue, openly questioned economic rationality of promoting deeper relations with China.

Major Czech universities and municipalities reacted by flying Tibetan flags. As an ugly coda to the whole affair, President Zeman allegedly withdrew Jiří Brady, a noted Holocaust survivor and uncle of then Minister of Culture Herman, one of those who met with the Dalai Lama, from the list of nominees for the highest state order[27].

The activities of the Chinese espionage in the Czech Republic have been reported by the civil counterintelligence service (*Bezpečnostní informační služba, BIS*) repeatedly, however, a considerable shift came in 2012. As the annual reports show the tone shifted and increased warnings have been issued regarding the allegedly increased assertiveness of Chinese intelligence services. The 2011 annual report describes Chinese activities as not crossing the boundaries of usual Chinese diplomatic behavior, however, since 2012 (the year of the Czech U-turn in its foreign policy to China), the BIS has warned against military and civil espionage, Huawei and ZTE products and disloyalty and collaboration shown by various Czech citizens (BIS 2011; BIS 2012; BIS 2016; BIS 2017).

---

[27] Interview with Daniel Herman, ex-Minister of Culture, 2017 [date and place anonymized].

In 2017 the Chinese CEFC company, which was portrayed as a vanguard of future Chinese investment to the Czech Republic, was rumored to be near the bankruptcy and subsequently had to be bailed out be the Chinese state-owned CITIC group[28]. Ye Jianming, the chairmen of CEFC, disappeared in China and has been questioned by Chinese authorities in connection to a Ponzi scheme the company was allegedly built on (Ji & Han 2018). The fiasco with CEFC was followed by another blow as at end of 2018 the Czech National Cyber and Information Security Agency (NÚKIB) issued a warning regarding the use of Huawei products in Czech critical infrastructure, including 5G networks. The security concerns of the Czech agency echoed the suspicion on Chinese state intentions in the United States and several European countries. Zeman commented critically on the move of NÚKIB, downplaying the security concerns and claiming that the warning is a part of US-China economic competition (ČTK 2019b).

As mentioned above, Zeman positioned himself as the person who made the transformation of Czech-China relations one of his grand foreign policy goals. Beyond mere proclamations, he appointed a Chinese national Ye Jianming, a deposed chairman of CEFC with alleged links to the Chinese state and even by some to its military intelligence (CDT 2018), his special economic advisor on China, and was instrumental in redefining Czech-China relations. Unlike a steadily critical Czech media discourse on China, which is to be covered in a greater detail, the Czech political debate on the issue shifted from one extreme to another. As reflected in the speeches at the Chamber of Deputies, Czech parliamentarians made a full ideational circle: starting with a rather critical stance on China in 1990s towards a period of a honeymoon and

---

[28] In 2017 the Chinese state-owned CITIC group announced that it would bail out CEFC. The bail out was completed in March 2019 (ČTK 2019a).

heightened expectations regarding a potential influx of Chinese investment to seeing China once again as a problematic actor. This time, however, the political discourse is not akin to the debate at the beginning of 1990s, as the debate grew more diverse, intense and informed (Karásková, Bajerová & Matura 2019).

As was noted above, China is a relative newcomer to the region and as such could not utilize previously established links or knowledge of the local language and politics. However, it has been using a variety of tools in order to increase its visibility and establish its positive image in the Czech Republic. The following table utilizes the concept outlined in Chapter 2.3 and applies it to the Czech Republic.

Figure 15: Cases of applying different public diplomacy tools in the Czech context (based on Manheim's division of the types of relations)

| type of relation | "carrots" | "sticks" |
|---|---|---|
| Government-to-government | Xi Jinping's visit to Prague (2016), Strategic Partnership (2016), Prague-Beijing sister-city agreement (2019), expectation of investment | protests agains the reception of the Dalai Lama by members of the Czech government (2016), protests against renunciation of Prague-Beijing sister-city agreement (2019) |
| Diplomat-to-diplomat | cultivation of ties (extra meetings within 16+1 format) | freezing of communication following handling of Huawai's case (2018/2019) |
| People-to-people | establishment of Confucius Institutes, media content cooperation (outlet acquisition, cooperation in supplements), sponsoring Chinese New Year celebrations, international broadcast | denial of panda |
| Government-to-people | increase in government scholarships | diaspora "abuse" during Xi's visit (2016) |

As described above, the Chinese president visited the Czech Republic (for the first time in the country's independent history) in 2016, based on the change of Czech foreign policy towards China and after Czechia had announced the 'restart' of mutual relations.[29] The event was preceded by meetings of prime ministers within the format of 16+1, of which the Czech Republic had been a part since its inception in 2012.

A sister-city agreement between Prague and Beijing represents the first high-level document signed in February 2016, followed by a declaration of strategic partnership, signed during Xi's visit in Prague. While the latter document did not spark much controversy among the public, the former was criticized by political opposition as well as the media due to a contested political clause regarding One-China Policy (e.g. Johnstone 2016). The

---

[29] While the Czech high-level delegation visited China a couple of times since 1989 (e.g. prime ministers Marián Čalfa in 1991, Václav Klaus in 1994, Miloš Zeman in 1999; president Václav Klaus in 2004, etc.), Chinese side ignored Czech invitation from the end of 1990s (Fürst 2004: 3).

sister-city agreement has been, at the time of the writing of this thesis, under revision as the new mayor of Prague, Zdeněk Hřib (Pirate party), proclaimed that high politics should not be a part of municipal-level negotiations as municipalities should cooperate on other issues, such as cultural exchange. The renunciation of the document from the Czech side as well as the flying of Tibetan flag at the Prague city hall, commemorating the Tibetan uprising in 1959, and Hřib's visit to Taiwan resulted in the cancellation of the Prague Philharmonia concerts by the Chinese side and rather rough exchange of views in the media (iRozhlas.cz 2019). The Guardian carried an interesting assessment of the situation by Jiří Pehe, the director of New York University in Prague: "[e]veryone in this country knows that when you support Taiwan and Tibet, you're saying exactly what Havel used to say (…) This was intentional on the part of the Pirate party as soon as he took over Prague. They are saying that the Czech Republic has a special history of fighting against communism and you should respect it" (cit. in Tait 2019).

The restart of Czech-Chinese relations provoked a rise of proclamations and subsequent expectations regarding an influx of future Chinese investment. However, apart from the investment coming via CEFC, which, paradoxically, had to be bailed out by the state-owned company CITIC later on, the actual investment was minimal. Moreover, the economic data shows that while exports to China has risen over the past years, so have the imports from the PRC, resulting in continuation of trade deficit on the Czech side (e.g. Garlick 2015; BusinessInfo 2019; ČT24 2019).

On diplomat-to-diplomat level, Czech diplomats[30] positively evaluate the 16+1 format which led to increased possibilities for diplomatic exchange.

---

[30] Author's interviews with diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic, [anonymity requested], winter 2018 [place and date anonymized].

They argue that as the Czech Republic is a small state, the format increased Czech visibility on China's diplomatic radar. As Fürst opines, the "[a]genda increased during the last two years of 1+16 existence in the form of high-level meetings (summits of prime ministers), towards ministerial, regional, expert, non-governmental, scientific-academic and cultural spheres; the Chinese side organizes [and] directs all of these and finances most of it" (Fürst 4: 2015).

However, the government-to-government and diplomat-to-diplomat relations occasionally become sour as the case of a ruffle between the Chinese embassy and Czech prime minister revolving around the issue of Huawei demonstrated. As the Czech NÚKIB (covered above) issued its warning against Huawei at the end of 2018, prime minister Babiš reacted by ordering a security audit related to Huawei products at all ministries. After a closed-door meeting with Babiš, which was demanded by the Chinese ambassador to Prague, the Chinese embassy issued a statement on Facebook (in itself, an interesting choice of a platform) giving an impression that Babiš changed his position on Huawei (Chinese embassy in Prague 2018). In a reaction to the embassy's statement, Babiš called Chinese ambassador "a liar" in the Czech TV (ČT 24 2019b). The issue influenced diplomatic communication for subsequent weeks.

The biggest change after the 'restart' could be detected at the level of people-to-people relations. These include sponsoring Chinese cultural events, such as celebrations of the Chinese Lunar New Year which started after the shift in Czech foreign policy in 2012/2013. While China established its first Confucius Institute in the country not in the capital city (as the offer to host the institute was declined by Charles University in Prague), but at Palacký

University in Olomouc already in 2007, efforts to establish other centers were, until recently, unsuccessful. In 2018, the second Confucius Institute was opened in Prague, where it resides at the premises of the private University of Finance and Administration (*Vysoká škola finanční a správní*). The move was roundly criticized in Czech media (e.g. Ševela 2018). Around 2016, China also started forging relations with local media by running a reprint of Chinese media content in Czech print and by publishing joint issues in the Czech Republic. Czech media which carried Chinese media's supplements or content include *Literární noviny* or *Právo*. China also started sponsoring trips of local agenda setters (politicians, journalists, academics - for sponsored trips for the Members of the Parliament see e.g. iRozhlas.cz 2018) to China and buying stakes in media outlets, as the case of Empresa Media (below) demonstrates. Moreover, Czech version of China radio International (CRI) has been broadcasting in Czech language since 1968. Since 2003 it runs Czech language content also on its website.

One of the blows to the people-to-people component of public diplomacy, however, is represented by an unsuccessful bid of the Czech side for a panda. The Czech diplomacy was not successful in securing a panda for the Prague zoo, even though the Prague city hall released the required funding and a new pavilion for the species was eventually build (ČT 24 2017; iDnes 2018a). As some[31] suggested criteria for receiving pandas were multifold.

While it is acknowledged in academic circles that contacts between Chinese universities and their Czech counterparts as well as the number of scholarships awarded to Czech citizens increased substantially over the

---

[31] One civil servant observed: "We tried but other countries tried harder. Namely Denmark. And one panda to this region is apparently enough." Authors's interview with a civil servant [anonymity requested], winter 2018 [place and date anonymized].

couple of years, it is, nevertheless, difficult to back the claim with statistics as there are numerous channels for cooperation and limited access to aggregated data (e.g. scholarships are provided based on inter-governmental, inter-university and inter-faculty agreements, others, such as China Scholarship Council scholarships, are directly administered via the Chinese embassy's channels, etc.).

An example of negative means used in government-to-people relation could be the "abuse" of the Chinese diaspora, which welcome Xi Jinping in Prague and clashed with pro-Tibet protesters. Czech online news server iDnes.cz carried an article claiming that the Chinese embassy helped organizing the welcome, including contacting Chinese expatriate associations in the Czech Republic before the visit and enabling distribution of free food for 'welcomers' during the event (Ferebauer & Janouš 2016).

To sum up, while China's public diplomacy in the Czech Republic increased after the 'restart' of Czech-China relations, its effects aimed at promoting positive image of China on the Czech population (be it political elites or the general public) may be limited.

### 3.3.2 Czech media landscape

Hallin and Mancini (2004) differentiate between three media systems, stemming from their proclivity to politics, as (1) Mediterranean (polarized pluralist) model, (2) North/Central Europe (democratic corporatist) model and (3) North Atlantic (liberal) model, based on the criteria of the development of media market, parallelism between political and media systems,

professionalism or culture of journalism and a character and a degree of state intervention into the media system (Hallin & Mancini 2004).

The first model, geographically placed by authors in Southern Europe, describes a situation in relatively lately democratized countries with underdeveloped liberal institutions and high proclivity to clientelism. The professionalization of journalists is low and the media tend to reflect the polarization of the society and politics. The state intervenes in and often owns and regulates the media outlets. The political parallelism (i.e. the scope and character of the links between media and political actors) is high. The second model, placed by Hallin and Mancini in North and Central Europe, occurs in democracies with a strong welfare state tradition and developed civil society, freedom of press and highly professionalized journalism. Media openly represent various political and societal groups enabling access to a plurality of views. The state may intervene into the system (e.g. in form of subsidies), however, the principle of freedom of the press is adhered to. The last model, placed in the North Atlantic area (including e.g. United States, United Kingdom and Ireland), is characterized by a liberal role of the state and financially independent commercial media (Hallin & Mancini 2004).

When describing the media environment, Czech researchers complain about the scarcity of data which would allow them to precisely determine the position of the Czech media system in a comparative framework introduced by Hallin and Mancini (e.g. Jirák & Trampota 2008; Rabitsch Adamčíková 2015). Historically, during the late-Habsburg monarchy and before the World War II, the Czech media system evolved towards the democratic corporatist (North/Central European) model. The development was, however, interrupted by World War II and later the establishment of Communist Czechoslovakia

(Pehe 2010). Thus some authors describe current media systems of post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, of which the Czech Republic is part, as polarized pluralist (Mediterranean). Karol Jakubowicz writes with a doze of sarcasm: "[t]hus, we may have found a place on the map for post-communist media systems. Contrary to what an encyclopedia may tell you, post-communist countries appear to be located — figuratively at least — around the Mediterranean, and on both its sides, too, as some of them are politically closer to North African regimes than to any Southern European country" (cit. in Jakubowicz & Sükösd 2008). Jiří Pehe (2010) agrees with the location, as well as Jitka Rabitsch Adamčíková, who, however, traces irregularities in some criteria, thus she claims that the Czech media system lies in the middle between liberal and democratic corporatist systems, as the transformation of the Czech media system, which started in 1989, has not been concluded yet (Rabitsch Adamčíková 2015).

The Mediterranean system is characterized by political parallelism, i.e. a strong interconnection between media and political actors. Indeed, political parallelism could be traced in Czech media system. Jan Křeček finds parallels between media systems in Southern Europe and Eastern Europe in what he calls 'berlusconization'. He observes "a development towards significant opinion-based, politically driven print, where media resources are pronouncedly controlled by a handful of owners which use them for political/ business purposes" (Křeček 2013: 68). He also claims (though without providing an evidence) that most of the mainstream news media lean towards political right (as well as the journalists themselves), resulting in bias towards politicians on the left side of the political spectrum and a lack of external pluralism of the Czech media scene (Křeček 2013: 71).

As the thesis deals with a position of various media and agenda setters on China issue, a brief survey of the political parallelism seems worthwhile. It has to be noted, however, that data-based analysis of leaning of Czech media towards any political party are rudimentary and political orientation of media outlets has to be deduced from (scarce) analyses of their audience. One of the few examples of data gathered on print readership is a survey conducted by MediaGuru in 2013, i.e. the year when then member of Parliament and leader of the ANO movement, later minister of finance and currently prime minister Andrej Babiš bought a media house, which publishes print with a significant amount of readership. According to the survey, mainstream tabloids (*Blesk* and *Aha!*) were mostly read by an audience with centrist political orientation, while mainstream print's (including *MF Dnes*, *Lidové noviny*) readers identified themselves as voters of centrist to right-wing parties. A daily *Hospodářské noviny* had the highest number of readers who identified themselves with the political right. On the other, leftist side of the political spectrum, stood readers of the daily *Právo* (MediaGuru 2013). While the Czech media have not claimed their political affiliation, the only daily which has publicly known organizational links with a political party is *Haló noviny*, a daily of the Czech Communist party.

In accordance with a polarized pluralist (Mediterranean) model, Czech print could be characterized by just a handful of owners - mostly Czech businessmen and several foreign publishing houses.[32] From the focus of the thesis, the most prominent case is prime minister Babiš's ownership[33] of the

[32] For a visual, yet perhaps dated, summary of ownership of Czech media see MediaGuru. Infografika: Aktualizovaná mapa vlastníků médií. March 29, 2016. https://www.mediaguru.cz/clanky/2016/03/infografika-aktualizovana-mapa-vlastniku-medii/

[33] It should be noted that Andrej Babiš denies ownership of the media and refuses that he is in a conflict of interest (as members of the Parliament or the government cannot own media outlets). He claims he transferred media into a trust (lidovky.cz 2018). However, he was recently fined based on charges of the conflict of interest regarding the aforementioned media (iRozhlas.cz 2019).

MAFRA publishing house, which issues some of the most read print, such as *MF Dnes*, *Lidové noviny* and their internet versions *www.idnes.cz* and *www.lidovky.cz* (MediaGuru 2016). While cases of intervening into reporting on China have not been recorded, cases of meddling into reporting and using MAFRA's media against Babiš's political opponents were documented in a rather detailed manner (e.g. di Roma 2017; Pšenička & Ťopek 2017). Another businessman Zdeněk Bakala owns (through a company Economia a.s.) the daily *Hospodářské noviny*, weeklies *Ekonom* and *Respekt* and online news server *www.aktualne.cz*. While Bakala does not seem inclined to enter the politics, he financially supported three political parties on a right-wing side of the political spectrum in 2010 (iDnes.cz 2010). In 2013 he also donated 2 million CZK to Karel Schwarzenberg, an unsuccessful presidential candidate against Miloš Zeman (iDnes.cz 2013).

Tabloids *Blesk* and *Aha!* are owned by tycoons Daniel Křetínský and Pavel Tkáč (MediaGuru 2016). The allegedly left-leaning *Právo* is owned by Zdeněk Porybný and Ivo Lukačovič (MediaGuru 2016). For the purpose of this thesis, it is worth mentioning Jaroslav Soukup, who sold a part of his Empresa Media to a Chinese company CEFC (detailed in Chapter 3.3.4), and a company CME which owns *TV NOVA*, the most watched private television in the Czech Republic (MediaGuru 2016). The company is rumored to be singled out for acquisition by Petr Kellner (e.g. Břešťan 2019; Neumann 2019), who has a substantial business in China (detailed in Chapter 3.3.4).

As the cursory review of the most prominent cases of Czech print and TV ownership illustrates, links between political actors and media do exist in the Czech Republic. The state-owned media (TV and radio stations) are regulated by the state laws which stipulate their function as providers of

objective, certified, balanced and all-round information for independent option-making (Laws No. 483/1991 Sb., 484/1991 Sb.). However, the Czech TV is habitually accused of leaning into one or another side by different political groups, including the President Miloš Zeman (e.g. iDnes.cz 2018b; Buchert 2018; versus quarterly analyses of state-media broadcasting at ceskatelevize.cz 2019).

The thesis is based on the idea of 'institutionalized perception' constructed and perpetuated by media as a 'filter' which molds a power impulse. However, in a complex and interconnected reality, such perception necessarily represents just one element in a wider array of impulses that shape the reaction of the 'receiver'. Other aspects include an interplay between the media and politics (or, in more concrete terms, various politicians, e.g. the already hinted-upon Zeman's critical approach to media and journalists in general which provokes reactions), bureaucratic politics (such as competing views on China between the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), political culture, party system, etc. However, to construct a detailed model or a pathway of all impulses which shape the ultimate reaction of the 'receiver' would require extensive additional research and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Literature on mediatization works with an assumption that politicians subscribe to the media logic under various conditions and with various motivations. Zeman's critical approach to media and attacks on journalists might work as a prohibitive element in his promotion of Chinese investment. Bromesson and Ekengren (2017), who look at mediatization of foreign policy in a situation leading to humanitarian interventions, suggest that in certain

conditions, foreign policy logic prevails. "The policies of a state employing a foreign policy role governed by political logic can instead be expected to be based on programs that are rooted in ideological beliefs or shared principles" (Bromesson & Ekengren 2017: 682). Further research would be needed to clarify the mechanism under which media or political logics prevail in case of China's emergence in Czech discourse after 2012.

It could also be argued that the mainstream Czech media discourse has not, in fact, underwent in regard to China a significant change pre- and post-1989. State-owned Communist media which portrayed China as an ideological enemy during the Cold War were replaced by independent state-owned and privately-owned media which were equally China-skeptical, though the discourse was based this time on critique of human-rights abuses and Communism. Lately proclaimed security considerations (regarding Huawei) thus stayed in line with already established discourse on China.

### 3.3.3 Assessing China's Image: Research Design and Methodology

The following case study on China's image in the Czech Republic represents the first attempt at a structured, in-depth analysis of China's media image, as no such academic studies previously existed for the Czech Republic. The case study also contributes to the understanding of the formation of China's media image in a broader context of Central and Eastern Europe where the reflection of the issue is a relative novelty. Few notable exceptions represent an article by Jarosław Jura and Kaja Kałużyńska on China's image in Poland

(Jura & Kałużyńska 2016) and recent work by Anna Rudakowska on the same country (Rudakowska 2017).

Through its methodology, explained below, the case study also attempts to present a more rigorous and systematic approach to the issue. The author used media content analysis as a tool for capturing and assessing the evolution of China's image in the Czech Republic. The analysis uses a concept of agenda setting. Studies of agenda setting focus on the transfer of salience of objects (first-level agenda setting) and attributes (second-level agenda setting). The first-level agenda setting research studies the transfer of the salience of issues, in other words *what* media consider relevant and worth reporting, while the second-level agenda setting focuses on *how* media report about the given issue. The following case study deals with both first and second-level agenda setting. It looks closely not only on whether China within the Czech media discourse was represented during the research period evenly and what topics were chosen by Czech media to cover in connection to China, but also how the Czech media reflected the issue.

In order to understand the transformation of the Czech discourse on China, the author executed an analysis of Czech media mapping the period of 2010 till mid-2017, thus including the time prior, during and after the official Czech foreign policy U-turn towards China in 2012/2013.

To determine the shifts in China's image in the Czech Republic, the author analyzed 1,257 Czech media outputs dealing with China in connection to economic and/or political issues. For the analysis, 42 media outlets which were most widely read, listened to, watched or followed – dailies, weeklies with a political or economic focus, radio and TV stations and news servers, focusing on mainstream media but included the alternatives as a useful

control variable – were selected. The dataset included both public and privately-owned media outlets, including those (co)owned by Chinese company CEFC/CITIC. In each text, its polarity vis-à-vis China was coded (evaluated as positive, neutral, or negative). The results of the research reveal rising interest in the PRC in the Czech Republic, following the pro-China push by part of the Czech elites, including the President. On the other hand, most of the analyzed media outlets have preserved their rather reserved position towards this issue, highlighting a divide between elite policies and media reflection thereof.

In case of newspapers, the inclusion to the dataset was based on the number of readers, not the number of prints, as the number of readers (which is usually higher than the number of prints itself) better reflects the spread of the agenda in vogue among the audience. Newspapers also included their supplements. To ensure that the composition of the set remained constant throughout the whole period, the popularity of the media was checked every quarter of the year, i.e. from 2010 (Q1-Q4) to 2017 (Q1 and Q2), using data from Media Projekt, an online, quarterly-published list of the most read printed media, based on interviews with a randomly selected pool of respondents. The six most widely read newspapers in the period from 2010 to 2017 were *Blesk*, *MF Dnes*, *Právo*, *Aha!*, *Lidové noviny* and *Hospodářské noviny*. Additionally, the author included *Haló Noviny* to the set as a control variable. Though the number of its readers is relatively marginal (the smallest of all Czech national newspapers), *Haló noviny* is linked to the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* – KSČM) and as such was expected to view the issue from a specific angle.

Weekly magazines with an economic and/or political focus represented the second source of media outlets subjected to the analysis. The magazines were selected using the same criteria as defined for the national newspapers (i.e. popularity among the readers measured by Media Projekt). Special attention was paid to the magazines *Týden* and *Instinkt* (regardless of their popularity among readers), which were co-owned by Empresa Media, a publishing house that has been partially owned by CEFC from September 2015. In the Czech Republic, the composition of the set of most widely read weekly magazines kept changing significantly within the period in vogue. Some of the magazines perished, some lost their popularity among readers and some were newly established. The dataset thus included altogether eleven magazines (*Ekonom*, *Euro*, *Eurozpravodaj*, *Nový Profit/Profit*, *Forbes*, *Týden*, *Respekt*, *Reflex*, *Týdeník Květy*, *Téma).*

The third source of media outputs was represented by TV stations with a nation-wide reach. The outlets were selected based on their annual share, using publicly available data published by the Association of TV Organizations (*Asociace televizních organizací, ATO*). Three major TV groups were selected and from those the relevant channels (excluding channels focusing on e.g. art and sport) were analyzed. More concretely, they included the most viewed news channels of Česká televize (ČT), a public service broadcaster, (*ČT1*, *ČT2*, *ČT24*), Nova Group (CME Media – *TV Nova*) and Prima Group (*TV Prima*). A special focus was paid to *TV Barrandov*. Though its share is relatively modest, the television is a part of Empresa Media, a group that has been partially owned by CEFC from September 2015. TV Barrandov has also enjoyed a rather peculiar relation with President Miloš Zeman, who grants exclusive interviews to the television

on a weekly basis. Additionally, a popular investigative online TV *DVTV,* a project run from 2014 that frequently covers China-related topics, was included as a control variable. Given the fact that a significant proportion of the Czech population (63% in the first quarter in 2017, cit. in Vaníčková 2015 and Mediahub 2017) listens to a radio broadcast on a daily basis, radio broadcasting stations with nation-wide reach were also included to the media content analysis, focusing on national radio, a public service broadcaster, and private radios that cover news, have their own interview program(s) and the largest share. To determine the share of listeners, the author used data from Radio Projekt, a quarterly-published list of most listened radio broadcasts conceived on interviews with a randomly selected pool of respondents. Apart from the programs of the national public broadcaster Český rozhlas (*Radiožurnál, Český rozhlas 6, Rádio Česko, Plus, Dvojka*), the analysis covered three most listened private radio stations – *Rádio Impuls, Evropa 2, Frekvence 1.*

Online versions of printed media and information gathered on servers providing news and their own journalism constituted the last source for media content analysis. Ten sources were selected based on their popularity among netizens, as measured by NetMonitor, a project that counts a number of unique accesses to different websites and links the data to sociodemographic characteristics of their visitors. Analysis of online news servers covered *www.novinky.cz, www.idnes.cz, www.aktualne.cz* (without the content provided by DVTV, which was covered in the nation-wide TV broadcasting section), *www.tn.cz, www.blesk.cz, www.denik.cz, www.lidovky.cz, www.ihned.cz* and *www.eurozpravy.cz.* Special attention was given to the online news server *www.parlamentnilisty.cz*, one of the 'alternative' outlets

which tends to publish a controversial content (allegedly without any censorship).

As noted above, the selection of media outlets was based on their popularity among Czech audience. The design was intentionally broad in order to 'catch' all media which have a potential to influence the discourse (the nation-wide reach of the media). The thesis does not have an ambition of further analyzing the readership (e.g. age, gender, household income, etc.) as the data are - to the author's knowledge - rudimentary and not gathered in a systematic way. Instead, the thesis focuses on a discourse on China and the role played by the agenda setters in constructing China's image in the Czech Republic. The focus of the thesis is thus on the process of the functioning of 'institutionalized perception' as constructed and conveyed by media. The author, however, is interested in question of what role (if any) the owners of the media outlet play in resulting media coverage of China.

Within the first-level agenda setting research, the author looked at issues which were chosen to be reported by the Czech media in connection to China within the analyzed period. The pre-selected media outlets were searched for China-related agenda using Newton Media Search, a database of all major Czech media covering their outputs, including TV and radio transcripts, since 1996. To further limit the scope and increase the relevance of outputs, additional filters (combination of the words politic(s) and economic(s), in Czech search string "čín* AND politi* OR economi*" (with asterisks enabling a search of words with the same stem) were applied. As Newton Media Search did not enable to easily filter in sub-sources (e.g. sections in prints), an additional check of the search outcomes and elimination of irrelevant results had to be performed manually. A text which

provided an answer to the question of "how is China depicted in media" or "how does the author reflect on China" was considered relevant no matter how many times China was mentioned in it. On the contrary, irrelevant, and thus discharged, articles were texts that, while containing the searched phrase, did not focus on China (i.e. constituting searching tool's error) or did not provide any clue on the question of "how is China depicted in media" or "how does the actor reflect on China" (e.g. articles which listed China among other countries while not providing any subjective view of the country such as "the company started its business in Brazil, Russia and China"). A text which did not deal primarily with China, yet where the author still used China as an example illustrating his/her opinion (e.g. an article dealing with an authoritative regime in Africa where but in one sentence the author diverts his/her attention and continues that "there is an abuse of human rights among prisoners, similar to the situation in China") was considered relevant. Also texts that covered different section than news and commentaries, yet still reflected generally on China or provided a view of China by the author or media outlet (i.e. "Chinese athletes won because the state supplied them with the doping") were considered relevant to the China's image created by the given media outlet.

The application of the search string resulted in establishing of a dataset of 1,257 texts dealing with China in relation to politics and/or economics. The unit of analysis for this case study was an individual text (i.e. article in case of print and online production, or a transcript of radio or TV program). The set of media outputs was then subjected to a multi-stage analysis. The research focused on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the discourse's transformation. Each text was coded for the issue, an affective attribute and

for agenda setter(s). It presupposed there was a rise in the amount of China-related outputs as the topic became increasingly prioritized[34] in the political debate in the Czech Republic. The hypothesis built on the assumption that media attention is "an important element of the political system because it signals the priorities of lawmakers to members of the public, and the priorities of the public to lawmakers" (Atkinson, Lovett & Baumgartner 2014: 356). Accordingly, the research started with the assumption that the tone and form of discussing and reporting about China has undergone a shift towards increasingly positive coverage. Regarding the agenda setters, the author formulated a hypothesis that the agenda setting function is mainly executed by journalists and politicians.

In the next phase of the research, key, prevailing topics were identified and their frequency, distribution across media outputs as well as relation vis-à-vis each other were measured, providing a detailed knowledge of the discourse. Themes were not artificially selected by the author at the beginning of coding, they emerged during the coding process, essentially rising up from the discourse. This approach prevented the author from influencing the analysis of the discourse by focusing on 'favored' topics while missing other themes. The themes provided an instrument for 'measuring' the depth of the discourse and details that are considered a common knowledge by agenda setters. As, for instance, Wanta, Golan and Lee observe, media tend to prioritize certain aspects of objects (themes) while ignoring other (Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004).

As much as 94 themes were recorded, some of them counted exactly as expressed (e.g. 'dalailamism', 'authoritarian regime'), others representing a

---

[34] For the mechanism of prioritizing of message based on journalists' and editors' perceptions of its 'closeness' to readers see e.g. McQuail 2010.

larger group of words that together constituted a logical category (e.g. Chinese domestic problems, world politics, etc.) The themes were subsequently reassessed through the perspective of more general 'discursive clouds', i.e. proposed and gradually sedimented links between key topics (or parts thereof) that establish habitual images with a power to shape the public discourse (e.g. 'dalailamism' as a negative image of a human rights 'ideology' which supposedly prevents more intensive development of Czech-China economic relations). An important part of this analytical stage included an identification of the frames which were used by media to transfer information about China to the audience. The key question corresponding to this point of the analysis asked what the media consider important in relation to China.

The second-level agenda setting research of China's image in Czech media focused on affective attributes found in the texts. Affective attributes represent an overall tone of the media coverage, a sentiment attached to and influencing the text and used by journalists to frame an event. Coding of the sentiment was done on a three-points Likert-type scale – the sentiment could be either neutral, negative or positive (the same approach, working with either three or five scale, was used in studies conducted on the issue of China's image in media such as Peng 2004; Ospina Estupinan 2017; Wei 2012). The author measured the sentiment (neutral, negative or positive attitudes vis-à-vis China) of the opinions presented in the set of key themes, including possible variations between different media outlets. Each text received only one sentiment value.

Based on the understanding of language as a complex process where words can carry different meanings and where the proximity to other words can radically change this meaning (e.g. "great" can carry a positive connotation,

133

however, if used in a proximity with another word, the meaning might change to exactly the opposite, as in for instance "great pain"), the author relied on an overall context in which the words were used. The decision on coding the text as being either positive, neutral or negative to China thus derived from the overall context of the text, following the approach of "speculation of a common-sense kind on the likely impression made on an average audience" (McQuail 1992: 227). The author did not pay attention to the objectivity of articles or correctness of the facts mentioned in them. The article was considered positive or negative, if the overall tone of the article was such. It must have been clearly seen from the context that the author of the text or the media outlet had a stance regarding China (e.g.: "our President collaborates with a totalitarian regime that oppresses its own citizens"). The text was not considered positive or negative if the positive or negative opinion was attributed to another source or if the article provided both negative and positive view or explanation of China's behavior. If the text carried both positive and negative views, it was coded as sending a neutral sentiment to the recipient of the message, i.e. the audience.

Fourth, the author recorded phrases used within the discourse. A phrase was understood as a group of words with a special idiomatic meaning. A phrase simplifies a broader argument or serves as a catchy label to promote an idea in a discourse (e.g. Czechia is a 'guberniya of China', etc.). Key question the author asked was: Who provides phrases to the discourse and how does the phrase circulate? How powerful are the phrases (or the 'phrase setters') within the discourse?

Finally, the author focused on agenda setters, defined as entities who influence the debate by setting the themes and the tone of the agenda of the

Czech media discourse on China. Agenda setters were understood as actors who either authored or co-authored a text or were cited by the outlet in connection to China. The list of the agenda setters encompassed 1143 entities, including both individuals as well as institutional actors (companies, ministries, etc.). The majority of agenda setters, however, entered the discourse during the covered period of six and half years only once or two times. For the reason of easy processing of the dataset as well as for the visualization purposes, the author excluded institutional agenda setters (e.g. PPF, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CEFC, etc.), which did not allow for an easy attribution of a sentiment, and also those agenda setters who were present at the dataset less than three times. Thus the inclusion of agenda setters who entered the discourse more often was based on author's decision reflecting the need to manage a large dataset in an efficient way and not on her preference of any given agenda setter. The new, limited agenda setters dataset included 164 persons who mostly contributed to the Czech media discourse on China. The author then searched within the media dataset for exact contribution (an authored or co-authored text or a quotation) of each agenda setter to the discourse and coded the agenda setter's specific intervention as either neutral, negative or positive, using the same scale and method of evaluating the content as established in the previous phase. While during the media analysis each text was treated as a single unit which carried an aggregated sentiment, the coding of a specific contribution of an agenda setter allowed for a more precise and person-attributed mapping of the discourse.

The list of agenda setters including their sentiments as pronounced in media was then arranged into the table based on the number of occurrences of

agenda setters, showing the differences in media exposition and articulated positions regarding China through media among various agenda setters.

At the third stage of the analysis, the author sorted agenda setters into the groups based on their profession (journalists, politicians, businessmen, academia, civil service and others). If needed, an additional search from the public databases was performed to decide on agenda setter's position, especially when the agenda setter fitted into more than one category. The prevailing profession in the time of his/her intervention in the media was selected in case of multitude professional positions held at the same time. The analysis of agenda setters based on the profession revealed different group's representation and influence within the media discourse as well as differences in perceptions and attitudes on China.

The deficiency of the used methodology regards the validity of the sampling process. The use of online databases for searching for media outputs is an established practice in media discourse analysis. The search engine Newton Media Search was selected due to the possibility of using one single search algorithm for all analyzed media outlets. If the search was performed by using the search tools available for e.g. online media, each search would be influenced by different structure of the website and different searching process. The uniformity of the search using Newton Media Search database was considered a methodological advantage. However, not knowing the search algorithm construction (as the Newton Media Search is a commercial product) may create a risk of retrieve errors stemming from either the fact that some media or some outputs may not be, in fact, included, or the semantic validity. During the analysis of search result, the author, indeed, discovered deficiencies of the search algorithm used by the Newton Media

Search. About 30% of search results had to be, in fact, rejected as irrelevant. The deficiency stem from the way of how the search system approaches Czech language, converting graphemes with diacritical mark to the graphemes without it (omitting the glyph which is added to the letter), e.g. č was converted to c, í was converted to i. It also added to the search stem (i.e. čín) prefixes and suffices, resulting in showing articles containing irrelevant words (such as činy, zločiny, přečiny, etc.). The irrelevant articles had to be filtered manually. The author also suspects that some articles may not be included to the dataset even when the media outlet which carried the text was included into the search. At least in one instance the author discovered that an interview run by the DVTV outlet, which was included to the search, was not showing on the list of search results. The number of the texts, which were not displayed, is, however, impossible to determine without the detail knowledge of the structure of the searching process of the Newton Media Search.

### 3.3.4 Whose Discourse? What China? Analyzing the Data

The analysis revealed that the number of texts on China in Czech media outlets rose steadily with the intensification of Czech-Chinese bilateral relations. However, a closer look at the topics and major focus of the texts revealed that the rise of media outputs reporting on China by almost 250% resulted almost entirely from the embedding of Chinese topics in Czech domestic politics. The expansion of coverage correlates with years

that brought about changes in Czech foreign policy towards China. This is clearly evident in reactions to the statements and activities of President Miloš Zeman. This trend culminated in 2016 in response to the official visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to the Czech Republic, the Prague stay of the Dalai Lama and his meeting with the Minister of Culture, Daniel Herman, and the subsequent proclamation on Czech adherence to the One-China Policy, signed by four constitutionally highest ranking representatives of the Czech Republic.

Figure 16: Quantity of articles on China in relation to economics or politics published in the Czech Republic across the period[35]
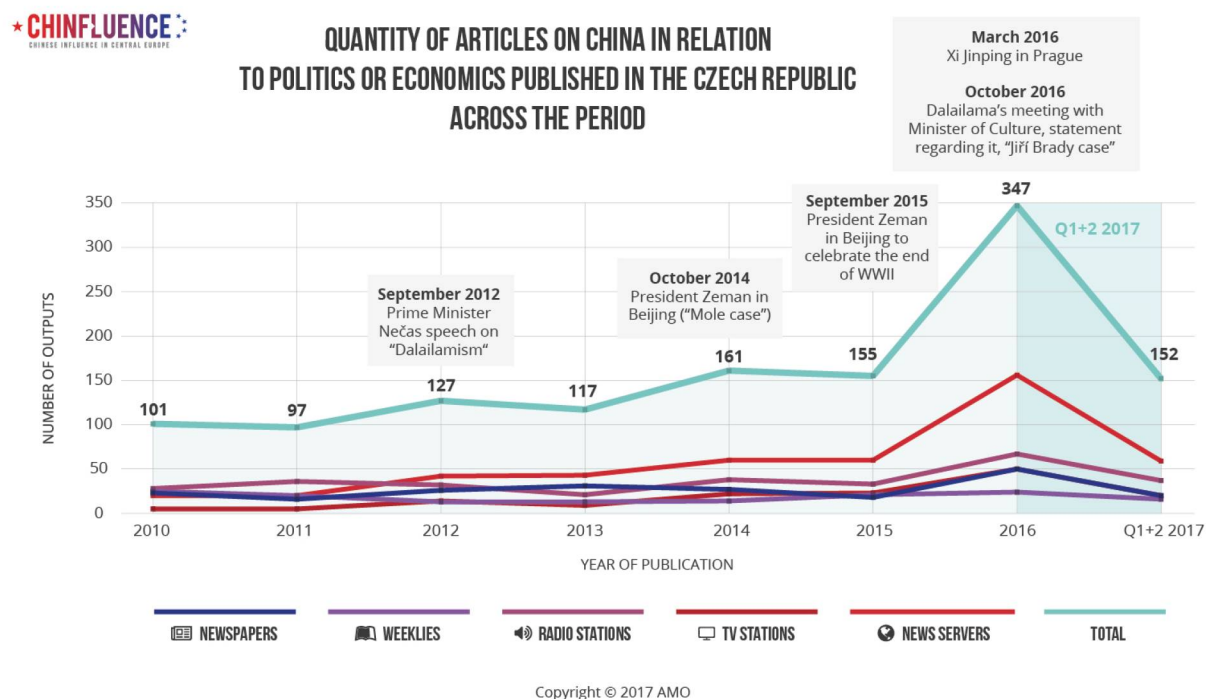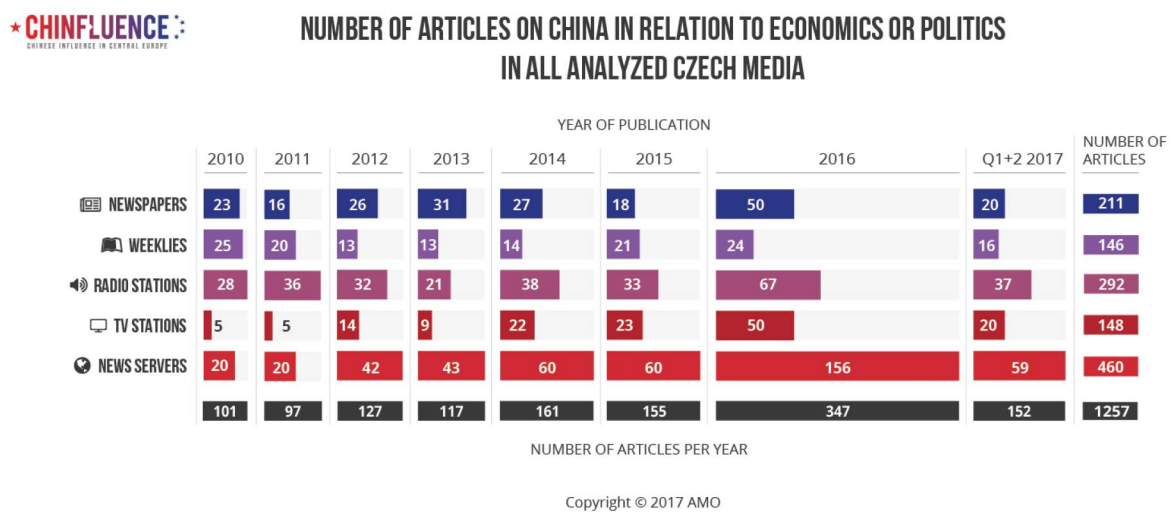


Source: www.chinfluence.eu

---

[35] All graphs included to Chapter 3 are reprinted based on a written agreement between the author and the copyright holder, the Association for International Affairs (AMO).

The increasing attention toward China-related political and economic topics has been confirmed across a range of different media sources.

Figure 17: Number of articles on China in relation to economics or politics in all analyzed Czech media



## NUMBER OF ARTICLES ON CHINA IN RELATION TO ECONOMICS OR POLITICS IN ALL ANALYZED CZECH MEDIA

YEAR OF PUBLICATION

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Q1+2 2017 | NUMBER OF ARTICLES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 📖 NEWSPAPERS | 23 | 16 | 26 | 31 | 27 | 18 | 50 | 20 | 211 |
| 📕 WEEKLIES | 25 | 20 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 21 | 24 | 16 | 146 |
| 🔊 RADIO STATIONS | 28 | 36 | 32 | 21 | 38 | 33 | 67 | 37 | 292 |
| 🖥 TV STATIONS | 5 | 5 | 14 | 9 | 22 | 23 | 50 | 20 | 148 |
| 🌐 NEWS SERVERS | 20 | 20 | 42 | 43 | 60 | 60 | 156 | 59 | 460 |
| | 101 | 97 | 127 | 117 | 161 | 155 | 347 | 152 | 1257 |

NUMBER OF ARTICLES PER YEAR

Copyright © 2017 AMO

Source: www.chinfluence.eu

While the overall amount underlines the intensification of Czech-China relations, a closer look is needed to evaluate the impact this shift made on the perception of the PRC and its policies. Interestingly, the overall sentiment of the combined political-economic reporting and commentary on China has been clearly polarized across the analyzed period. The image of China in the Czech media over the period in vogue was mostly neutral or negative, with only 14% of the analyzed media outputs inclined to view China positively.

Figure 18: Image of China in all analyzed Czech media[36]

## IMAGE OF CHINA - ALL ANALYZED CZECH MEDIA

POSITIVE

14 %

NEGATIVE

41 %

45 %

NEUTRAL

★ CHINFLUENCE ∴
CHINESE INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE
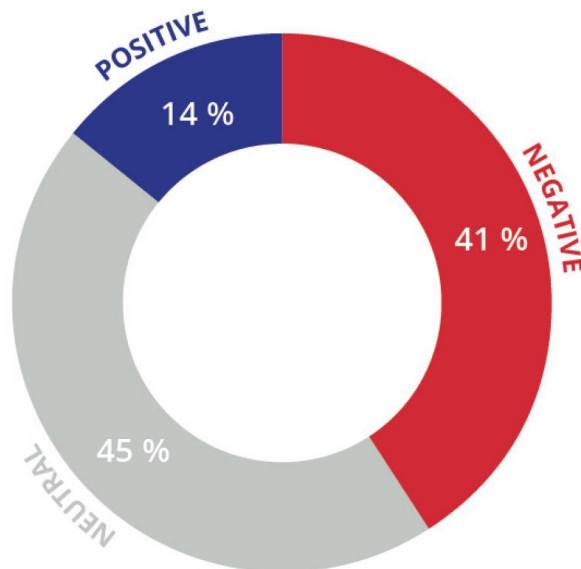
Copyright © 2017 AMO

Source: www.chinfluence.eu

Throughout the researched period, it seems that the media served as a skeptical antidote to the promotion of closer Czech-Chinese relations. When focusing on the media outlets without control variables[37] the position becomes stronger still, with just 10% of positive accounts and close to 50% negative occurrences.

---

[36] For detailed insight into the situation in specific types of media and more graphs see http://www.chinfluence.eu/media-analysis/

[37] The media that did not fulfill the criteria for being the most followed, i.e. Hlídací pes, DVTV, TV Barrandov, Týden and communist daily Haló noviny.

Figure 19: Image of China – all analyzed Czech media without Communist and alternative media



IMAGE OF CHINA - ALL ANALYZED CZECH MEDIA
WITHOUT COMMUNIST AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

POSITIVE
10 %

NEGATIVE
45 %

NEUTRAL
45 %

★CHINFLUENCE∷
CHINESE INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE
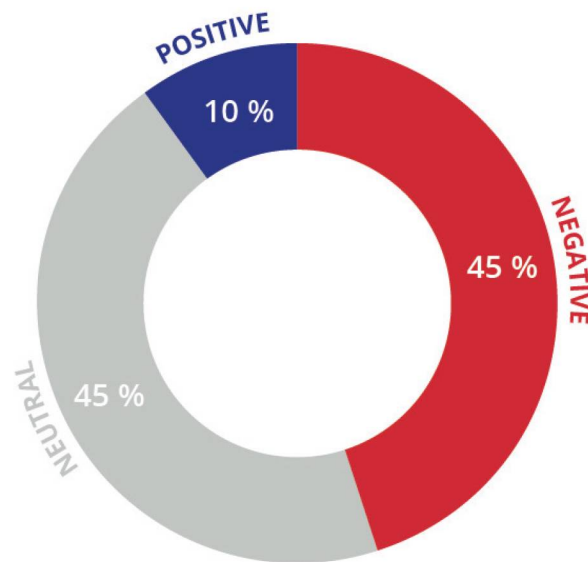
Copyright © 2017 AMO

Source: www.chinfluence.eu

What is even more telling is that the overall polarity of the analyzed outputs did not evolve significantly over the researched period (2010 till mid-2017).

On the cases of the magazine *Týden* and *TV Barrandov*, it is evident that the ownership by the Chinese company CEFC led to an exclusively positive coverage of China. From the moment the company entered the media, the negative as well as neutral reporting disappeared.

Figure 20: Image of China in Czech national TV stations



IMAGE OF CHINA IN CZECH NATIONAL TV STATIONS

The analysis covered TV stations which had the largest audience in the period 2010-2017. TV Barrandov and DVTV did not meet the criteria, yet they were added as a control sample due to the Chinese ownership of the station (TV Barrandov) or a specific format of broadcasting (DVTV).

Copyright © 2017 AMO
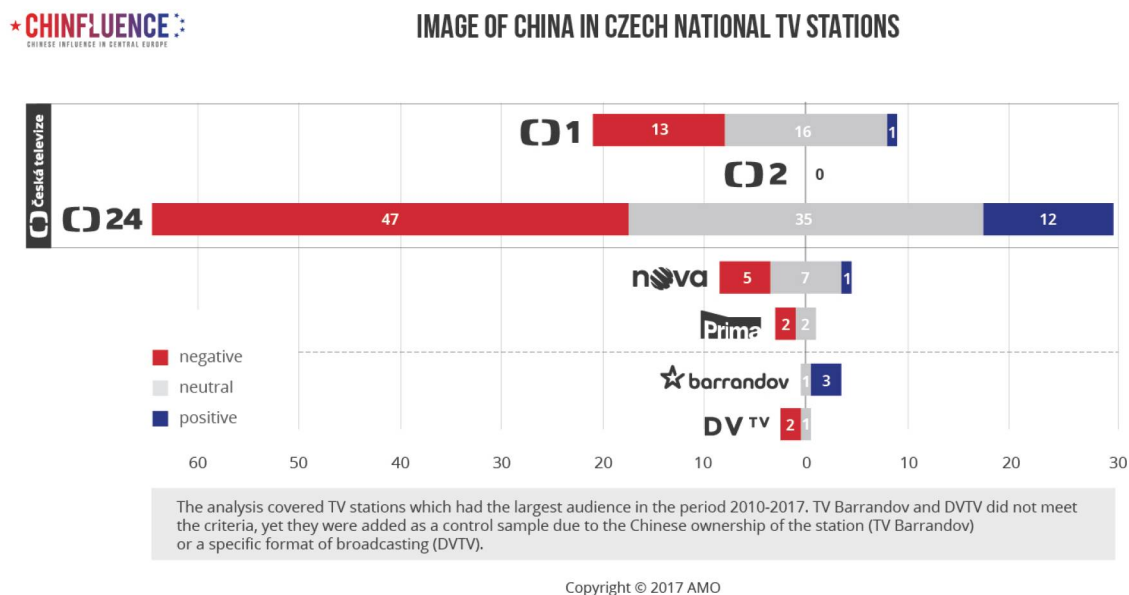
Source: www.chinfluence.eu

The analysis does not provide sufficient information as for the reasons of the change – it could be equally speculated that the Chinese investor demanded the change in reporting, as well as that the Czech co-owner did not want to jeopardize the investment by continuing in the nonpositive coverage of China. However, it was not only the tone of the reporting that changed, but also the composition of the covered topics (most significantly seen on the case of *TV Barrandov*) that altered after the acquisition of the media outlet by the Chinese company. In the whole dataset of 1,257 texts, the keywords Belt and Road Initiative (New Silk Road) were represented only 23 times during the covered six and half years. None of the mention was made in analyzed dailies. The weeklies carried one article on the BRI in *Týden* (with a positive coding), radio stations reported about it 6 times (zero positive coding, 4 neutral and 2 negative coding), TV stations 5 times (2 neutral, 2 positive, 1

negative) and online news servers reported about the BRI 11 times (5 times neutral, 3 times positive and 3 times negative). The following table shows the distribution of texts in various media.

Figure 21: Polarity of texts on Belt and Road Initiative (New Silk Road) in Czech media in 2010-6/2017

| | neutral | positive | negative |
|---|---|---|---|
| dailies | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| weeklies | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| radio stations | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| TV stations | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| online news servers | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| total | 11 | 6 | 6 |

Source: Author's own calculations

The texts which were coded as positive were published exclusively in media with Chinese ownership after the acquisition of the media outlet by CEFC in 2015, or in 'alternative media'. The positively coded article in weeklies was published by *Týden*, two positive mentions in TV stations were carried by *TV Barrandov* and 3 positively coded articles were published by *Parlamentní listy*.

Variations in other media based on their ownership (as discussed in Chapter 3.3.2) were not found. However, it has to be emphasized (as was previously elaborated on), that data on political leaning of the media outlets are rudimentary and their political orientations have to be deduced from data

gathered (non-systematically) on their readers' proclaimed political preference. It could be hypothesized (though not backed with an evidence) that none of the private owners (except for the Chinese company) had a direct interest in influencing the discourse against an established anti-Communist narrative.

Despite public promises of future Chinese investment, the image of China in Czech media seems polarized and significantly negative. When put into comparison with data gathered in Slovakia, Hungary and Poland (under the same methodology designed by the author), the peculiarity of the Czech media discourse on China becomes even more visible. Under the project ChinfluenCE, data from other V4 countries were analyzed – however, it has to be noted that the scale of the analysis and also the time period differed. In the case of Slovak, Hungarian and Polish media, the number of analyzed media outlet was lower (25 in case of Slovakia, 15 in case of Hungary and 19 in case of Poland), and in the case of Polish media, the mapping period was one year longer (from 2010 to mid-2018). However, from all three media discourses, the Czech media coverage of China was by far the most negative. Slovak media perception of China was predominantly neutral (68%) with the second most negative perception after the Czech case (26% negative) (see Karásková et. al 2018: 27-36). Hungarian media saw China even more neutrally (86%) with only 9% of texts coded as negative (Karásková et. al 2018: 19-27). Polish media exhibited the most favorable view on China, carrying 39% of texts coded as positive, 58% as neutral and only 3% as negative (Ostrowska 2019). The Czech case with its 41% of texts being coded as negative clearly stands out from the reporting on China by media in other Visegrád countries. In other words, open promotion of China

by Czech agenda setters was rare, and this finding holds throughout the period in vogue. However, in hardline leftist media (*Haló noviny*) or media with a Chinese (co)owner, the image of China was distinctly more positive.

Czech media also started to exhibit a tendency to portray China as a direct opposite to the values and preferences of the Czech Republic. This process of 'othering' of China gradually sifts into outputs that, ostensibly, do not contain any link to the country (e.g. articles on alleged 'censorship' on the Czech internet). A similar process of othering in media is found for instance by Wang, who studied different representations of 'China dream' in US and Chinese media (Wang 2016).

Regarding the prevalence of the topics, Czech media paid most attention to Chinese economic and political relations with other countries and organizations (United States, Russian Federation, European Union, India, Japan, etc.) – a logical reflection of journalists on the position China has gradually risen to.

Figure 22: Visual representation of topics in articles on China in relation to economics or politics in all analyzed Czech media (2010-6/2017)



REPRESENTATION OF TOPICS IN ARTICLES ON CHINA IN RELATION TO ECONOMICS OR POLITICS IN ALL ANALYZED CZECH MEDIA (2010-6/2017)

Copyright © 2017 AMO

Source: www.chinfluence.eu

However, human rights, including general information on abuses and violation of minorities' rights, the death penalty, detention of dissent and organ harvesting, were the second most important category of topics covered by the Czech media, proving that journalists did not subscribe to the alleged trade-off between human rights issues and economic benefits, advocated as necessary by a part of the Czech political and economic elites. The human rights mantra, however, did not go beyond stating the notoriously known and in various cases the issue was artificially, perhaps reflexively, attached to articles that dealt with seemingly unrelated topics. Communism, authoritarianism and censorship followed in frequency, revealing the

importance of the issue to Czech journalists and Czech society in general which might have not yet digested its own Communist past.

The representation of the topics that media covered most in relations to China in the analyzed period to a large extend explains the polarity of the Czech discourse, i.e. the fact that the Czech discourse is by far the most negative in comparison to Slovak, Hungarian and Polish media discourses that were analyzed under the same methodology. The Hungarian, Slovak and Polish media discourses focused predominantly on economic issues, covering topics such as economic growth, economic policy, Chinese market, economic relations, trade, Belt and Road Initiative (the most frequent focus of Polish media) and export[38]. All these topics were covered in a neutral way by media in Visegrád countries. Topics like human rights, communism, Tibet, etc. were also covered by all media, but only the Czech media emphasized them. The choice of topics then influenced the tone of the reporting and let to higher incidence of negative coverage by the Czech media which focused on themes carrying negative connotations. It could be claimed that the reason why the Czech media preferred these topics lay in different domestic situation. While all four Visegrád countries started as post-Communist states after 1989, the emphasis on value-based foreign policy eventually faded away. The Czech Republic underwent a similar experience. However, the fade-out was accompanied by a similarly strong push to keep the legacy of Václav Havel as adopted by some Czech parliamentary political parties' stances complementing their traditionally anti-communist and pro-European leaning (such as *Občanské fórum* – Civic Forum, OF; TOP 09, Green Party, etc.).

---

[38] For the visualization of topics preferred by Slovak, Hungarian and Polish media, please see different chapters at http://www.chinfluence.eu/media-analysis/

While the prevalence of the above-mentioned categories remained constant in the studied period, notions of Tibet, though it scored in frequency, fluctuated in time, culminating in 2016 when the Chinese president Xi Jinping and Dalai Lama both visited Prague.

Figure 23: Number of appearances of Tibet and Taiwan issues in articles on China in relation to economics or politics in all analyzed Czech media (2010-6/2017)
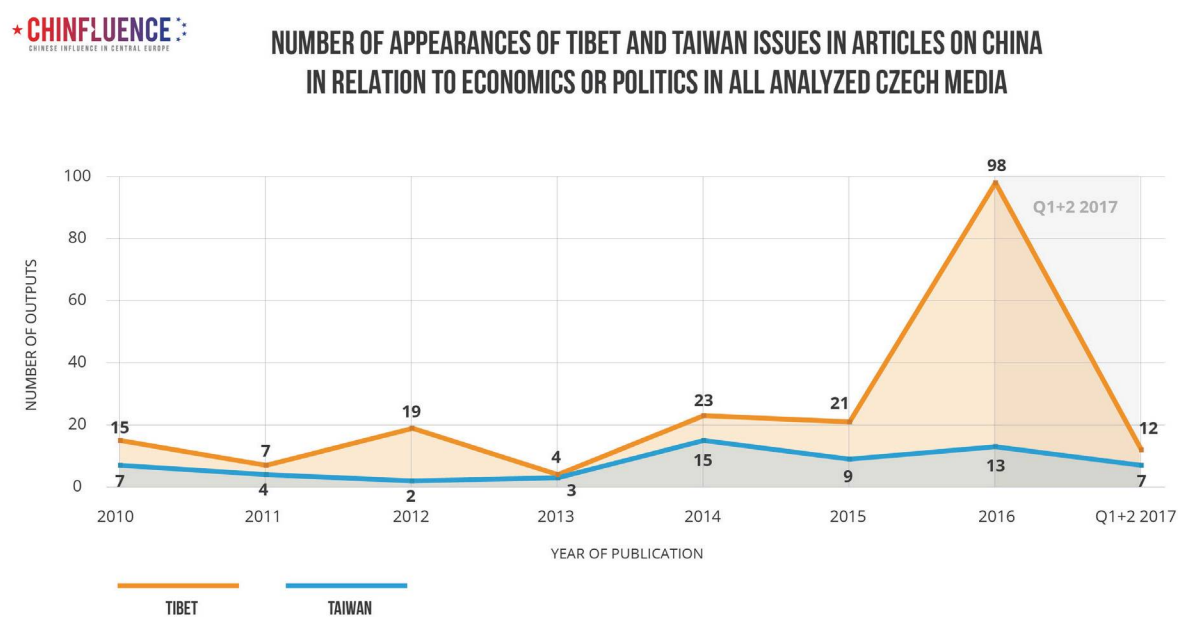


Source: www.chinfluence.eu

A counter-narrative in which Tibet was presented as having been liberated by the People's Liberation Army in 1959, saved from theocracy that supported slavery and feudalism and from Dalai Lamas who punished disobedient subjects with 'cutting off hands and poking eyes out', was spread in the

148

Czech media landscape by President Zeman, Miloslav Ransdorf, then Communist member of the European Parliament, journalists in the Communist daily *Haló noviny*, alternative media and the Chinese official propaganda apparatus represented by the Chinese embassy. Interestingly, the issue of strategic position and economic and political relations with Taiwan were – in comparison to the Tibet issue – largely marginalized though Taiwan and the Czech Republic share a similar history of transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy, an experience of living on the edge of immediate influence of a neighboring great power and, on top of that, Taiwan is one of the three most important Asian investors in the Czech Republic (BusinessInfo 2018).

Finally, on the key words it can be demonstrated that the Czech debate on China is mostly driven by the domestic politics and as such is highly politicized and stereotyped. The media often did not inform about China as such, i.e. its domestic politics or social issues. In all these topics, the Czech public is relegated to a minimum of information, mostly imported from foreign news agencies or English-speaking media sources.

The analysis then focused on the agenda setters of the Czech media discourse on China.

The composition of agenda setters of the Czech media discourse reveals that it is journalists themselves who mostly create and shape media discourse on China in the Czech Republic. Their position as influencers of the media discourse is further reinforced as they not only author most of the texts, but they also determine which topics and the aspects thereof will be selected by media. Journalists themselves, more often then not, influence the composition of the views which are to be represented in the text or in the TV

149

or radio program by selecting and promoting holders of these views. Thus journalists serve not only as creators of the content but also frame the debate by an extend which is unparalleled among other agenda setting groups.

Figure 24: Agenda setters by profession
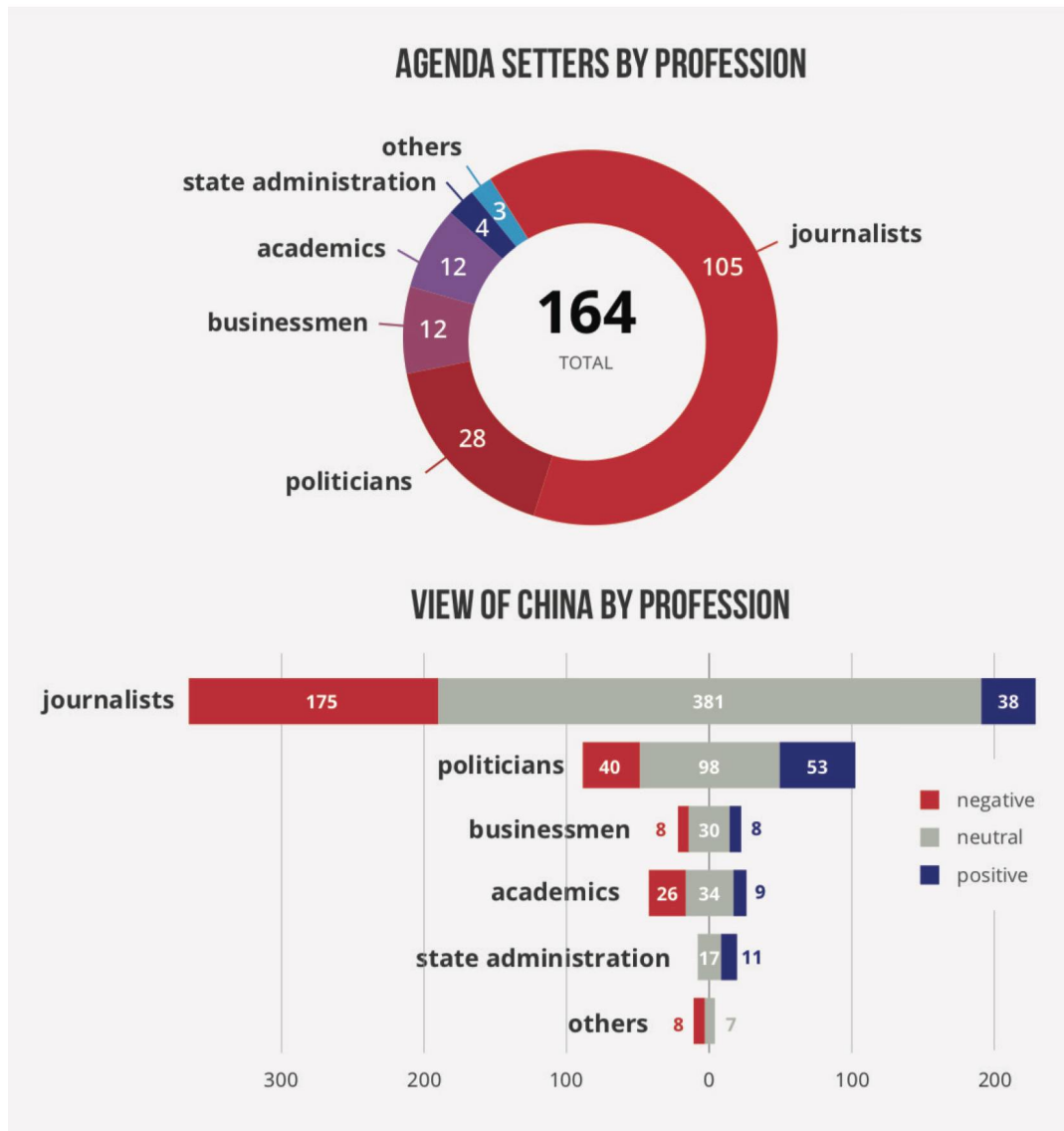


Source: www.chinfluence.eu

Figure 25: Sentiment of Czech agenda setters regarding China (cumulative data for groups of professions) based on media analysis from 2010 till 6/2017

| profession | positive mentions | % | neutral mentions | % | negative mentions | % | mentions altogether |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| journalists | 36 | 6 % | 381 | 64 % | 175 | 30 % | 592 |
| politicians | 53 | 28 % | 98 | 51 % | 40 | 21 % | 191 |
| academics | 9 | 13 % | 34 | 49 % | 26 | 38 % | 69 |
| businessmen | 8 | 17 % | 30 | 65 % | 8 | 17 % | 46 |
| civil service | 11 | 39 % | 17 | 61 % | 0 | 0 | 28 |
| others | 0 | 0 % | 7 | 47 % | 8 | 53 % | 15 |

Source: Author's own calculations

When journalists are sorted based on the type of the ownership of the media (publicly vs. privately owned), the groups divide almost evenly (48 journalists working for the public broadcasters and 55 journalists working for the privately owned media). What is much more interesting is that their views regarding China do not differ significantly as the Table 3 shows.

Figure 26: Sentiment of Czech journalists regarding China based on media analysis from 2010 till 6/2017

| profession | positive mentions | % | neutral mentions | % | negative mentions | % | mentions altogether |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| journalists (all) | 36 | 6 % | 381 | 64 % | 175 | 30 % | 592 |
| in public media | 18 | 6 % | 210 | 66 % | 89 | 28 % | 317 |
| in privately owned media | 18 | 7 % | 171 | 62 % | 86 | 31 % | 275 |
| *Parlamentní listy* | 9 | 21 % | 31 | 74 % | 2 | 5 % | 42 |

Source: Author's own calculations

Approximately the same percentage of positive, neutral and negative views is held by journalists working both in public media as well as in privately owned media. The staggering difference can, however, be found when looking at one of the 'alternative sources of information' (in this analysis, online news server *Parlamentní listy).* The percentage of positive texts on China is significantly higher (21%) while the percentage of texts criticizing China is rather low compared to the average value (only 5%).

Second biggest group of Czech agenda setters found through the media discourse analysis are politicians. Nothing could be easier than to personify the push for a China-friendly turn in Czech foreign policy with the current – and recently reelected – Czech President Miloš Zeman. Indeed, detailed analysis of the agenda setters on China policy in the Czech media discourse largely corroborates this assumption. Miloš Zeman is singularly the most vocal pro-Chinese voice in the analyzed Czech media discourse as he was quoted on the issue by media 47 times (30 times was his quote coded as positive, 17 times as neutral with zero negative mentions of China). Thanks to his position he can also be considered the most influential Czech agenda setter, but he is hardly isolated in his efforts to 'restart the Czech-Chinese relations'. An analysis of politicians who actively spoke in the media during the covered period reveals that some of them condone the orientation of Czech foreign policy towards seeking better economic relations with China. When treated as representatives of political parties rather than as individual politicians, it could be deduced that most of the parties exhibit more or less nuanced affinity towards China in their media occurrences. This includes the right-wing Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana – ODS*); after all, it was this party's prime minister, Petr Nečas, who commenced the

attack against the prominence of human rights in Czech foreign policy by mocking 'dalailamism' as harmful for economic diplomacy as early as 2012. Both established left-wing parties (Czech Social Democratic Party, *Česká strana sociálně demokratická – ČSSD*; and Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia – *Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM*) as well as new formations, such as the Party of Citizens' Rights (*Strana práv občanů/ Zemanovci – SPO/SPOZ*) have held positive views of China, at least in the analyzed media discourse. It is telling that representatives of these parties have uttered practically no negative opinions of the PRC in their media occurrences. ANO party of the current prime minister Andrej Babiš was rather silent on the issue, with the exception of Babiš himself once criticizing China's approach to intellectual property rights, a claim rooted in his own negative business experience (Pergner 2016).

Only the Christian Democrats (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová – KDU-ČSL*), TOP 09 and Mayors and Independents (*Starostové a Nezávislí – STAN*) exhibited aggregately negative stances towards China during the researched period.[39]

The positive turn in the preferences of Czech political parties is especially interesting since it cannot be easily foretold by looking into their program documents which are either silent or vague about the issue. Apparently, the pro-Chinese turn in Czech foreign policy coincides with a larger societal problem of disillusionment with Western values and policies. While the research covered the period from 2010 till mid-2017, general roots of the discontent might be situated as back as 2008. In this year, the Western world suffered the shock of the financial crisis while China celebrated its triumph as

---

[39] TOP 09 was the only one whose mediatized stances were in majority negative – in the other two parties, neutral occurrences actually prevailed.

a successful organizer of summer Olympic games. Suddenly, the previously triumphant (post-Cold War) or at least resilient (post-9/11) West looked vulnerable, confused and fragile while the PRC exuded vigor and continuing economic dynamism. Looking for a hidden psychological moment that prompted some politicians to look towards the East, this juxtaposition could mark a turning point. The 16+1 and Belt and Road Initiatives, originally unveiled by Xi Jinping in 2012 and 2013 respectively, formally underlined the new Chinese international assertiveness, and for those inclined towards pro-Beijing stances created a strategic vehicle to streamline their effort.

In this respect, the Social Democrats deserve a special attention. Various sources[40] inform that party links with the Chinese Communist Party had been allegedly established and nurtured even before the recent foreign policy turn, personally guaranteed by politicians like Jan Hamáček, past chairman and former vice-chairman of the Chamber of Deputies. More importantly, ČSSD has become something like a 'breeding centre' for politicians and entrepreneurs (and the combination thereof) who are connected to the current pro-China policy. This group includes not only President Zeman, once a chairman of and prime minster for ČSSD, but also people like Jan Kohout, a career diplomat turned social democratic politician who became Zeman's advisor on China in 2014 and founded the New Silk Road Institute Prague a year later. Other influential names include Jan Birke, a member of the Parliament as well as regional and municipal assemblies and the current party head of Social Democrats in the region of Hradec Králové. Birke's ties are not limited to the political domain – in 2010 he was instrumental in

---

[40] Interview with a journalist covering foreign policy [anonymity requested], November 2017; interview with a source [anonymity requested] from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2017; and e.g. Hlídací pes 2017.

helping PPF[41] Group get a license for their Home Credit company in China. PPF has been active in China since 2007 and in 2010 it received a local license for consumer credit services. While an important breakthrough (PPF 2010: 69-70), it was just a first step. The final goal, a nation-wide license for consumer credit services, took another four years to achieve. It is between these four years that the Czech Republic's turn towards China was initiated. Much remains hypothetical, but to write off the timing as mere coincidence defies credulity.

The third most represented category of agenda setters were academics who constituted in aggravated numbers the most China-skeptical group (with 38% negative mentions on China). Together with journalists they also represented the group which was the least positive on China among the agenda setters. The relatively low number of China experts (compared to journalists and politicians) who author texts or are interviewed by media does not correspond with (political) proclamations of the importance of the issue and Sino-Czech rapprochement. The trend has been, however, observed by researchers in Hungary and Slovakia (Karásková et al. 2018) as well as in Poland (Ostrowska 2019).

The analysis revealed that the fourth most active group of agenda setters were businessmen. But apparently not all of them search for media exposure, as the number of businessmen in the dataset is lower than expected and is on par with the number of China experts from academia and think tanks. Also the most notorious politico-economic entrepreneurs (such

---

[41] PPF was founded in 1991 in the Czech Republic as an investment fund which participated in the privatization after 1989. The company invests in banking and financial services, telecommunications, real estate, mechanical engineering, biotechnology and insurance. PPF currently operates in Europe, Asia and North America, owning assets worth over EUR 45 billion (PPF 2019). Petr Kellner is the company's founder and majority shareholder.

as Jaroslav Tvrdík) were not present in the dataset. As the data showed, businessmen addressed China issue in media in a rather neutral way and their ratio of positive and negative mentions of China was rather balanced (17% in both positive and negative mentions).

Jaroslav Tvrdík, perhaps, deserves a special attention in this respect as he became an epitome for a new breed of a political entrepreneur. Hailing from a career officer, after 2001 he quickly became an influential member of the Social Democratic Party, exchanging several roles from defense minister through election manager to a party chairman's advisor. In 2012 he took over the Czech China Chamber of Collaboration (*Smíšená česko čínská komora vzájemné spolupráce*) and three years later became a deputy chairman of the board of directors of CEFC (Europe). Tvrdík hooked into CEFC other former high-profile Czech politicians – among them Štefan Füle, former minister of the Czech government (and before that Tvrdík's deputy at the ministry of defence), ambassador to NATO and EU commissioner, who at the time of writing the thesis has been a member of the company's supervisory board. He also brought to the company Marcela Hrdá, a former director for transformation of Czech Airlines (a job executed under Mr. Tvrdík when he was a President there in 2003-2006), chair of the board of directors in Empresa Media and also an advisor of the minister of interior Milan Chovanec (ČSSD). Another figure that catches attention is Tomáš Bůzek, a former spokesperson of CEFC and now a member of its board of directors, who before (and since the public records did not prove otherwise, perhaps even simultaneously) served as a media advisor for the minister of health Svatopluk Němeček (ČSSD) and briefly as an assistant to Jan Birke mentioned above.

Civil service personal constitutes the last category of agenda setters who mentions either positive (39%) or neutral (61%) aspects of China or Sino-Czech bilateral relations, a position that largely stems from the nature of their work.

To sum up, the mapping of Czech media's perception of China reveals that the image of China is constructed through political, ideological or more broadly normative lenses that are largely parochial and unrelated to China as an international actor, and the number of agenda setters is rather limited.


### 3.3.5 Triangulation of the discourse analysis against public opinion polls

The previous chapter offered a rigorous media discourse analysis regarding China's image. Following graphs from polls and surveys confirm the thesis's claim that despite efforts of various political and economic actors, the image of China among the Czech population remains negative. However, it has to be noted that in the case of Central and Eastern European countries' views on China, there are just few polls and surveys to utilize. While bigger countries in the region, such as Poland or Romania, are regularly included into e.g. Pew Research, the Czech Republic has been a target of international China-oriented surveys and polls less often. Moreover, different surveys may use different methodology for gathering responses.

The Pew Research Center conducted polls regarding China in the Czech Republic in 2007 and 2013. While the survey may not have reflected the 'restart' (and especially its impact) in Czech-China relations, it, however, shows same negativism on China which was observed by John Fox and Francois Godement in their analysis of EU member states' attitude towards

China in 2009 (Fox & Godement 2009). From the European countries, where the poll was conducted, only Italian respondents showed more negative attitude towards China (61%) than the Czechs (58%).

Figure 27: Views of China by Pew Research Center[42] (2007)
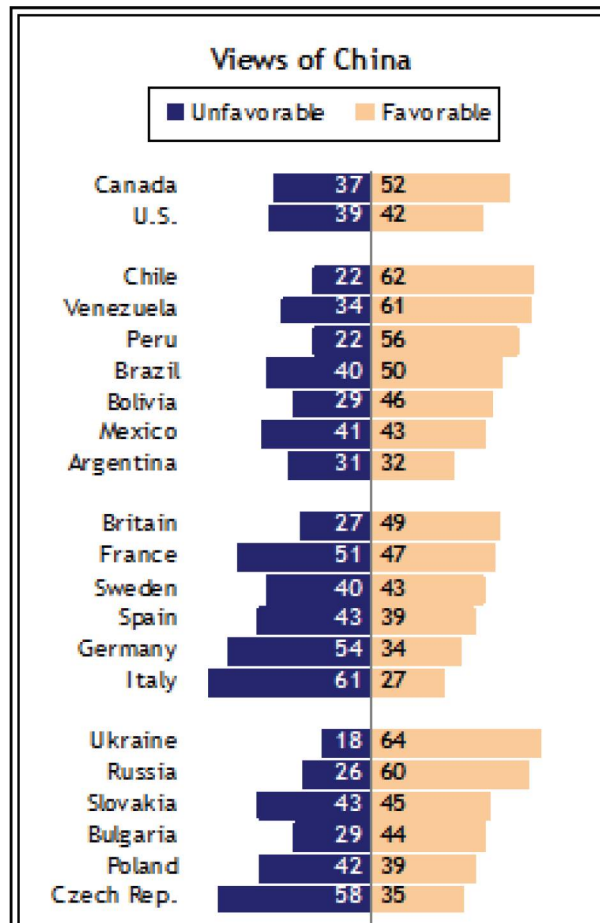


Source: Pew Research 2007 (graph cropped)

Six years later, the Pew Research Center carried out another poll regarding China and the US in the Czech Republic, showing that the favorable view of China did not fluctuate significantly from the previous poll in 2007 (it might even be concluded, that the favorable view declined, though the difference in data between 2007 and 2013 is tiny).

---

[42] The graph was cropped after the mention of the Czech Republic to fit the page of the thesis.

Figure 28: China favorability as measured by Pew Research Center (2013)

**China Favorability Largely Unchanged from 2007**

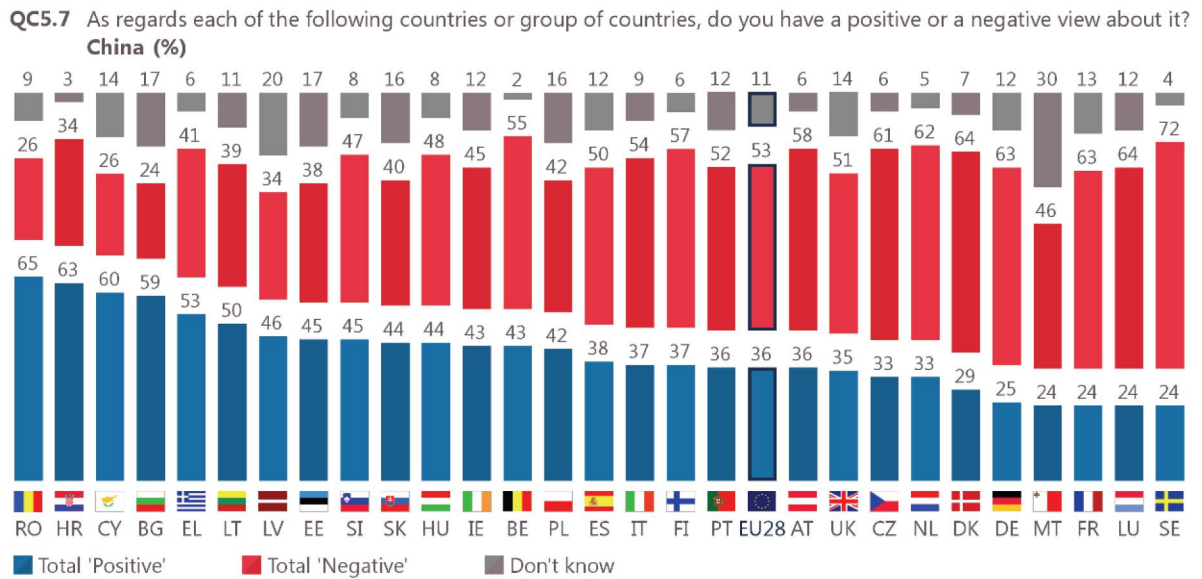| | 2007 % | 2008 % | 2009 % | 2010 % | 2011 % | 2012 % | 2013 % | 07–13 Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U.S. | 42 | 39 | 50 | 49 | 51 | 40 | 37 | −5 |
| Canada | 52 | -- | 53 | -- | -- | -- | 43 | −9 |
| Spain | 39 | 31 | 40 | 47 | 55 | 49 | 48 | +9 |
| Poland | 39 | 33 | 43 | 46 | 51 | 50 | 43 | +4 |
| Russia | 60 | 60 | 58 | 60 | 63 | 62 | 62 | +2 |
| Italy | 27 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 30 | 28 | +1 |
| Britain | 49 | 47 | 52 | 46 | 59 | 49 | 48 | −1 |
| Czech Rep. | 35 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 33 | 34 | −1 |
| France | 47 | 28 | 41 | 41 | 51 | 40 | 42 | −5 |
| Germany | 34 | 26 | 29 | 30 | 34 | 29 | 28 | −6 |
| Greece | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 56 | 59 | -- |
| Lebanon | 46 | 50 | 53 | 56 | 59 | 59 | 56 | +10 |
| Turkey | 25 | 24 | 16 | 20 | 18 | 22 | 27 | +2 |
| Palest. ter. | 46 | -- | 43 | -- | 62 | -- | 47 | +1 |
| Jordan | 46 | 44 | 50 | 53 | 44 | 47 | 40 | −6 |
| Israel | 45 | -- | 56 | -- | 49 | -- | 38 | −7 |
| Egypt | 65 | 59 | 52 | 52 | 57 | 52 | 45 | −20 |
| Tunisia | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 69 | 63 | -- |
| Indonesia | 65 | 58 | 59 | 58 | 67 | -- | 70 | +5 |
| Pakistan | 79 | 76 | 84 | 85 | 82 | 85 | 81 | +2 |
| Malaysia | 83 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 81 | −2 |
| S. Korea | 52 | 48 | 41 | 38 | -- | -- | 46 | −6 |
| Japan | 29 | 14 | 26 | 26 | 34 | 15 | 5 | −24 |
| Australia | -- | 52 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 58 | -- |
| Philippines | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 48 | -- |
| Argentina | 32 | 34 | 42 | 45 | -- | -- | 54 | +22 |
| Mexico | 43 | 38 | 39 | 39 | 39 | 40 | 45 | +2 |
| Chile | 62 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 62 | 0 |
| Venezuela | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 71 | -- |
| Brazil | -- | -- | -- | 52 | 49 | 50 | 65 | -- |
| Bolivia | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 58 | -- |
| El Salvador | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 52 | -- |
| Uganda | 45 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 59 | +14 |
| Kenya | 81 | -- | 73 | 86 | 71 | -- | 78 | −3 |
| Ghana | 75 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 67 | −8 |
| Senegal | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 77 | -- |
| Nigeria | -- | -- | -- | 76 | -- | -- | 76 | -- |
| S. Africa | -- | 37 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 48 | -- |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q9c.

Source: Pew Research 2013

The more recent Eurobarometr survey shows data on EU member states' views of China in 2018. Among Central and Eastern European countries, the Czech Republic exhibits the most negative attitude towards China (61% of respondents proclaimed to have a negative view of China, while 33%

expressed positive view). The poll also shows a polarization of views, as only a minority of respondents (6%) did not know or did not want to chose between positive and negative response.

Figure 29: Views of China among member states of the European Union by Eurobarometr (2018)



**QC5.7** As regards each of the following countries or group of countries, do you have a positive or a negative view about it?
**China (%)**

| | RO | HR | CY | BG | EL | LT | LV | EE | SI | SK | HU | IE | BE | PL | ES | IT | FI | PT | EU28 | AT | UK | CZ | NL | DK | DE | MT | FR | LU | SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Don't know | 9 | 3 | 14 | 17 | 6 | 11 | 20 | 17 | 8 | 16 | 8 | 12 | 2 | 16 | 12 | 9 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 6 | 14 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 12 | 30 | 13 | 12 | 4 |
| Total 'Negative' | 26 | 34 | 26 | 24 | 41 | 39 | 34 | 38 | 47 | 40 | 48 | 45 | 55 | 42 | 50 | 54 | 57 | 52 | 53 | 58 | 51 | 61 | 62 | 64 | 63 | 46 | 63 | 64 | 72 |
| Total 'Positive' | 65 | 63 | 60 | 59 | 53 | 50 | 46 | 45 | 45 | 44 | 44 | 43 | 43 | 42 | 38 | 37 | 37 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 33 | 33 | 29 | 25 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |

■ Total 'Positive'   ■ Total 'Negative'   ■ Don't know

Source: Eurobarometr 79: 2018

To the author's knowledge, the only original (yet very limited) Czech survey on China was conducted on March 28, 2016, just before the state visit of Xi Jinping in Prague. The research was commissioned by the Czech Radio and conducted by Median, a respected survey provider. Five questions from the survey are reproduced below.

Figure 30: Opinion survey on China in the Czech Republic by Median (2016)

| | strongly agree | agree | disagree | strongly disagree | do not know/do not have an opinion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Chinese investment can jeopardize traditional Czech business.** | 34 | 33 | 20 | 8 | 5 |
| **China is a great power like any other power, its investment is the same as any other power's investment.** | 21 | 38 | 24 | 10 | 7 |
| **China focuses on cheap production - its investment will lead to an increase in badly paid jobs.** | 26 | 32 | 25 | 11 | 6 |
| **Thanks to its investment, China has gained economic influence in the Czech Republic and can even influence politics.** | 23 | 29 | 25 | 16 | 7 |
| **We should not criticize human rights abuses in China in order not to lose the investment.** | 9 | 19 | 28 | 36 | 8 |

Source: iRozhlas.cz 2016 (author's translation and visualization of the survey)

The responses show a general uneasiness and a lack of illusions regarding great powers' behavior (question 2). Three other questions dealt with the effects of China's (rather imaginary) investment. Majority of respondents felt that China's investment could endanger traditional Czech business and create low-income jobs. 52% of respondents (versus 41%) agreed with the statement that China's economic leverage gained through its investment could result in influencing Czech politics. The last question, which is a bit tricky to interpret, dealt with the dichotomy between economic diplomacy and human rights. It could be argued that 64% of respondents (versus 28%) thought that the Czech Republic should continue in criticizing human rights abuses in China regardless the potential effects on Chinese investment in the

country. This interpretation was favored by the Czech Radio which commissioned the survey. It could be, however, equally argued that the respondents did not believe that promotion of economic diplomacy and human rights are mutually exclusive.

Finally, a survey conducted by Chen and Hao (2019) on Czech university students' attitude towards China showed once again a polarity in views. Moreover, the authors included to their survey question on sources of their respondents' knowledge of China. The following graph reveals that the respondents rely on media (traditional as well as social) and less on personal knowledge of the issue.

Figure 31: Sources of information from Chen & Hao's survey of Czech university students' attitude towards China (2019)
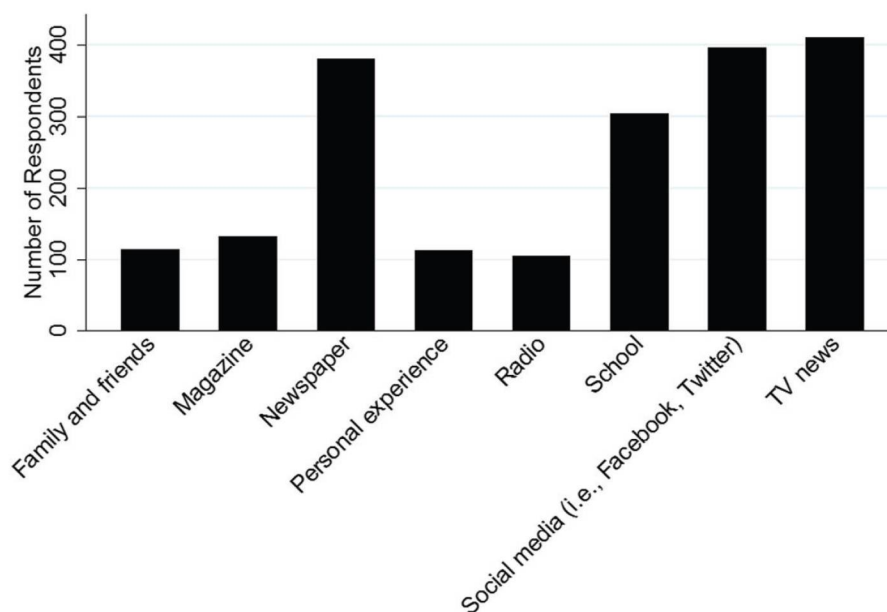


**Fig. 3** Sources of knowledge about China

Source: Chen & Hao 2019: 8

The authors conclude "[i]n fact, lack of knowledge is not a source of only "positively biased" views towards Japan, it is also a source of "negatively biased" views towards China. After all, geographically and culturally, the Czech Republic is far from these Asian countries. As noted previously, the reference point for making judgment on China and Japan can thus only be drawn from information fed to the Czech audience. In this context, the "neutral-but-leaning-towards-negative" views of China are nurtured by the China-bashing Czech media. The Czech media's discourse is embedded in the broader discourse of most liberal western democracies that is suspicious of China's handling of its human rights and minority rights issues" (Chen & Hao 2019: 17).

The aforementioned surveys and polls from 2007, 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2019 show prevailing and steady critical view of China by the Czech population. Given the fact that the size of the Chinese diaspora in the Czech Republic is very limited[43], contacts between Czech and Chinese nationals are rudimentary. Moreover, due to historic, language, cultural and geographic distances, the Czech public lacks direct experience with China. The data from the polls thus reinforce the thesis's claim, that the Czech public's attitude towards China is influenced by 'institutionalized perception' constructed and perpetuated by media.

---

[43] As of June 30, 2019, 7,601 Chinese held either permanent or temporary residency permit in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Interior 2019).

## Conclusion: China's influence revisited

As explained in the opening passages of the thesis, the research focused on two phenomena which, however ubiquitous, often remain shrouded in a haze of unproven assumptions, pre-accepted understandings or forgone conclusions. One of the two is China itself. For a country which has become so deeply embedded into the political stratosphere as well as mundane everydayness of the present era (as represented by the sheer impossibility to miss the „Made in China" label present on practically every component of our material reality), the country still puzzles its political partners as well as academic observers. The opaque characteristics of the PRC's regime provoke historical analogies to equally inscrutable challenges faced by pre-1989 Sovietology – sometimes underlined further by a 'clash of civilizations' mentality which notes the otherness of not just the Chinese regime but also the broader society it, however imperfectly, represents. At the same moment, the country's relative economic openness prevents an easy rerun of previously tried anti-Soviet strategies, such as containment. „What to do about China" seems to have become one of the key questions in Euro-Atlantic policy-making circles over the past several years.

The question directly leads to the second phenomenon the thesis attempted to dissect – influence. While, as was illustrated, habitually used in not only political but also academic circles, the term has so far been rather imperfectly defined, especially in relation to power. The first chapter demonstrated that part of the problem stems from the inner tensions of the concept of power itself, strained between the implications of 'abilities' and 'effects'. While even in broader societal terms, influence has clearly been ascending as a concept

and phenomenon (as the recently born profession of an influencer aptly demonstrates), this has not necessarily helped clarify the conceptual and theoretical challenges ingrained in the term.

Starting from this twin befuddlement, the thesis sought to improve understanding of both the conceptualization of influence and the country to which this term has often been related in recent years. Finally, through the introduction of 'institutionalized perception', the analysis attempted to grant agency to the markedly weaker parties in apparently lop-sided interstate relationships – such as the one developing over the past several years between China and the Czech Republic.


**Consuming China's power: influence through perception**


The rise of China aptly demonstrates the deep embedding of the realist hierarchization of policies, with security and defense aspects occupying the top of the agenda. Chinese economic growth has long attracted attention, but it was only after the country cast aside Deng's advice of 'keeping a low profile' and commenced asserting itself more forcefully in the international arena, that 'China's rise' started attracting wide-scale negative attention from audiences in its possible economic partners and, suddenly, strategic competitors like the United States or Europe. No longer just a welcome factory of the world, the PRC has apparently turned into a much more sinister phenomenon.

In academic terms too, the power ascent of China provoked a number of questions focusing on both China's current and future aspirations as well as

possible implications for the international system. The debate, led by and among China scholars, has fluctuated between voices promoting the idea of China's accommodation by and integration into the current international order, and those seeing China as a revisionist power which aims at dismantling and recreating the said order to benefit its own, categorically different goals and interests. Both the literature review and the author's interviews with Czech and US policy makers on the subject indicate, however, that the political debate since 2012 has been shifting towards strongly advocating for the latter.

Unlike the United States, the European countries (the Czech Republic included) – due to their geopolitical location – have not perceived the rising military might of People's Republic of China as a primary threat. Given China's economic clout, what has mattered most has been its economic power and leverage – at least until recently. The third type of power, soft power, has, however, been increasing in its relevance as some member states of the European Union and NATO started to turn to China, more or less indicating that it can serve as an economic alternative (the Czech Republic, Italy, Greece, etc.) or even political inspiration (e.g. Hungary).

China is currently perceived with a lot of uncertainty and mistrust, stemming to a large degree – but not exclusively – from the difference between the Western liberal order (both domestically and in the international domain) and the authoritarian character of the Chinese regime understood as the foreign and alien 'Other'. The discourse among foreign scholars as well as practitioners who were interviewed for this thesis revolve around two key topics: time and intent. Most observers tend to distinguish between pre- and post-Xi Jinping China, arguing that a fundamental change in China's foreign

policy occurred with the ascension to power by the current Chinese leader in 2012. The second debate tackles the issue of China's intentions, attempting to answer the question of whether China always harbored the ambition of challenging the West and only hid it until very recently, or whether China (for various reasons) decided to dramatically change its course in recent years. Implicitly, both questions focus on the big, yet hardly openly acknowledged problem – did we get China wrong from the very beginning? And if so, do we understand it better now?

Strangely enough, China observers do not seem to take into consideration the possibility that a major variable which changed could be their own perception. While the material basis for the perception shift has been indispensable (e.g. harsher treatment of non-Han population in Xinjiang which has recently tainted China's image abroad, or at least in the West), the actions of China under Xi Jinping can hardly account for the full scope of the shift in perception. Moreover, China's maneuvering has to be put into the context of other powers' actions, such as Barack Obama's pivot to Asia announced in 2012 or manifestations of the US foreign and security policies linked to the US alliance system in Asia under Bill Clinton's and George W. Bush's administrations. While the former clearly forestalled Xi's assent, the latter contributed to China's real or perceived sense of its own insecurity and encirclement by the US and its allies.

In the words of Joseph Nye, perceptions matter. Given potentially severe consequences of misperception, the understanding of what constitutes our knowledge of China and how to increase confidence among two competing actors in international arena seems crucial. The US and its allies and China are currently caught in a spiral of mostly negative actions and reactions.

While China's actions, seen from the prism of China threat theory, can fuel mistrust on the US side, the negative image abroad helps the Chinese leadership in maintaining and tightening internal control. But in driving on anti-West sentiment, China risks forming the very issues which the West seems to attribute to it and criticize, such as exorbitant nationalism and international assertiveness.

Such concerns could be easily brushed off by the contemporary PRC's leadership – until it realizes, as the analysis has proven, that the bad image, stemming from the processes which Beijing traditionally considers its sovereign internal affairs, has a profound influence on the perception of the country abroad. And while such perception may not play a decisive role in countries that focus on the imminent components of China's hard power (as the country's neighbors like Taiwan or Japan typically do), they do matter immensely in contexts where the Chinese presence is new, weak and coming from afar.

The case study on China's mediatized image in the Czech Republic largely corroborates the claim that China has not been (perhaps so far) particularly successful in shaping its image abroad. Apparently, China's capacities and capabilities are rising, but its influence projected to distant countries and measured through the change of perception by local media is limited. The study showed that perception is difficult to rein as it could be influenced by factors which do not need to be directly connected to the influencer – such as an anti-communist leaning of the Czech media. On the other hand, a perceptive and sensitive actor (which the PRC does not seem strongly inclined to become) could utilize the feedback loop, based on the reflection of the negative perception, and recalibrate its messaging accordingly.

In order to build a more positive image in the Czech Republic, China used a variety of tools, including sponsoring Chinese cultural events, founding Confucius Institutes, forging relations with local media (exchange of content), sponsoring trips of local agenda setters to China and buying stakes in media outlets. While these actions certainly provided an overall context, the shifts which the thesis records and reflects where mostly produced by various Czech politicians and business leaders with an interest in promoting stronger Czech-China economic and/or political relations. Interestingly, while the intensity of the focus on China has translated into an increase of media attention, the positive presentation of the partnership with Beijing by various political actors has not been mirrored by the prevailing media sentiment (with an exception of cases where media ownership transferred into the hand of Chinese companies/state). While this finding documents a degree of resilience among mainstream Czech media, it also contains a more problematic element: the fact that China's image in the Czech Republic's discourse is not in fact formed by Beijing's policies and activities, but rather political and ideological preferences of the Czech making. In short, China's image may, in the extreme, have relatively little in common with the country itself – thus, crucially, underlining the importance of studying image as a result of mutual interplay between power and perception, not a direct effect of power itself.

The findings of the case study contribute to the understanding of agenda setting regarding China's image as well as the processes more generally observed in Czech media. The analysis established a firm empirical base for claims concerning China's image in the Czech public discourse – claims which are habitually (and, typically, strongly) presented but often lack

substantiated argumentation to support them. The scope of analyzed media outputs was exceptional not only in the Czech Republic but, judged by available comparison with existing academic reflection on the issue, also in the European context.

Analytical findings resulting from the review of the empirical material reveal that the image of China in the Czech media is constructed through political, ideological or more broadly normative lenses that are largely parochial and unrelated to China as a an international actor. The Czech media discourse on China is polarized[44] and media generally show a tendency to report on China using two frames, political and economic, with different sentiments attached to each of them. While the coverage of China focusing on economy was mostly neutral, the coverage of China's politics and policies was rather negative. The findings are in accordance with what other scholars focusing on China's image as conveyed by media reported. Peng observes that the US media considered as salient three news frames – the political frame, the ideological frame, and the economic frame, with the two first frames being predominantly negative (Peng 2004). In the Czech case, the political merges with the ideological frame. The aggregate prevailing negative view on China is to a greater than a lesser degree connected to China's communist ideology. Ospina Estupinan reaches a rather similar conclusion from the analysis of Latin American print and offers an explanation that "the negative representations result from rooted stereotypes of the PRC, and fear of communism. These "fear frames" could be understood (based on a propaganda model) as a way to serve interest of those behind the editorial

---

[44] It can be argued that a polarization of the China discourse is not a Czech speciality. Similar polarization (though not backed by empirical data from a media discourse analysis) was found in Serbia by Dragan Pavlićević (see Pavlićević 2018).

news and also a way to build identity" (Ospina Estupinan 2017). The argument for the identity building can be extrapolated with some validity to the Czech case as it could be argued that the Czech society, of which media are part, still struggles with its communist past.

The number of agenda setters influencing the Czech media discourse on China is relatively small and the most influencing actors are journalists together with politicians. Access of scholars to the media is limited. This, together with the fact that only a handful of Czech public media place their own reporters in China, results in a situation where the majority of reporting is taken over from foreign media agencies and outlets, produced mostly in English. Ospina Estupinan finds the same information dependency on European and US media's reporting on China in Latin American print (Ospina Estupinan 2017). A study on inter-media agenda setting between Czech media and English language sources may shed more light on the process.

Even the outlets which have their own correspondents in China (i.e. Czech Television and Czech Radio) may be relegated to foreign language sources as an access to other sources in China is limited by the Chinese state authorities and further complicated by language barrier between journalists and their local sources. Moreover, the process is complicated by an expectation gap between correspondents and their editors in Prague who influence the selection of topics and the tone of reporting (Schwarzová 2017).

The analysis also revealed that, interestingly, the push of a segment of the Czech political and economic elite to elevate the PRC to the position of a new strategic partner (and, essentially, to normalize the Chinese political regime), has met resistance on the part of mainstream media. Paradoxically, the incessant promotion of better relations with Beijing by the Czech

President Miloš Zeman, his political allies and related business circles, has led to a novel situation in which China started being constructed as the normative 'Other' for the Czech society. At least from this perspective, the effort to improve the quality and expand the scope of Czech-China relations has not been successful – and leads to a tentative but inescapable conclusion that a more measured and nuanced approach might have secured the goal more safely and sustainably.

Regarding the manifestation of the Chinese influence, the case study revealed that once the media is acquired by a Chinese company (regardless of its formal status as state or privately owned), the tone as well as the topical focus of reporting on China radically changes. The media which were acquired in the Czech Republic by the nominally private CEFC (and subsequently taken over by the Chinese state-owned CITIC) started to report on China in an exclusively positive manner. The coverage included topics which were previously omitted from the given media discourse, such as 16+1 or Belt and Road Initiative. To the author's knowledge, the finding represents a first case of evidence of Chinese influence over a media outlet which was obtained through a media discourse analysis, however, the number of texts which confirm the deviation is still rather small and a longitudinal or international study on the issue can provide further information on the process.

To summarize, in the case of a 'weak' relationship between the 'sender' of power and its 'recipient', perception can and apparently does play a decisive role. This conclusion strongly reinforces the conceptual agency provided by the eclectic theoretical framework of the thesis, which proved useful in demonstrating the shortcomings of deducing the scope of influence from an

exclusive look on an actor's power capabilities. At the same time, since the 'institutionalized perception' is in itself a process undergoing shifts, changes and developments, a shrewd outside power seeking influence should not necessarily find it too difficult to target the sources of discontent with its behavior and image. As the case study has revealed, such direct strategies could easily work – the 'purification' of the PRC's image in the media co-owned by a Chinese company demonstrates that rather starkly. Hence, the agency exhibited by the 'recipient' of an influence-increasing campaign is only as strong as the actor's ability of and resilience in maintaining it. The case of the Czech Republic serves as a reminder that perception is, after all, just a catalyst.

**State (of the) influence beyond China**

The thesis introduced a concept of influence which it sees as power that is yielded by the 'sender', sieved through the filter represented by perception on the side of the 'recipient', where the perception is understood as an institutionalized process (exemplified in the conducted case study by the media), not a set of cognitive biases conceptualized by Robert Jervis. The stress on perception and its role in evaluating the impact of power on a recipient actor, conceptualized as influence, opens a way for possible broadening of the research field.

The concept of the influence and the role perception plays in it could be expanded both externally and internally. The thesis worked with the hypothesis that in substantially unequal relationships over significant

'distance', the situation is not defined by power vs. power, but by a one-way stream of power effects which are, however, filtered through institutionalized perception. Thus the research could be replicated on other powers, such as Russia, and their influence abroad. The Czech Republic might serve here as a useful laboratory, since both Chinese and Russian influence can be traced here. However, unlike in the case of China, Russian influence may not be so much effected by the perception (given the relative proximity of Russia to the country - be it geographical or cultural distance or shared history). The research could be also applied on China's engagement with other countries as the PRC is in a specific position of an outsider without an established foothold in, at least, certain regions, such as in Latin America or Central and Eastern Europe (this trait perhaps makes it unique among other great powers).

The thesis studied a role of perception in influence and concludes with the claim that perception can serve as both a strategic enabler and an impediment to the strong state's influence. Future studies could thus focus on developing the feedback loop between perception and the resulting influence, and reactions thereto by the strong actor. This would lead to the processual analysis of the 'spiral' of power effects, perhaps directly targeting the components of the 'filter' (i.e. political elites, media, institutions like political parties, etc.). Finally, the scope of the case study (China's perception through media mapping) and its methodology opens a way for replication in other countries (and on other states, such as Russia), potentially leading to interesting and stimulating comparative results.

The theoretical chapter of this thesis claimed that the story of the theory of international relations had started with the concept of power. The analysis

performed after various extensions of this claim proved that the transformation of power into influence can be a complex, indirect process. And yet, despite the aforementioned qualifications, the rise of China has demonstrated how important power still is. Once the PRC achieved control over a critical amount of power capabilities, its position in the system and reflection thereof have been transformed, perhaps irrevocably. Much will depend on the ways in which China wields its newfound strength, and how the others will react to it. The processes involved are, as was described, much more complex than the reductionist realist account would claim. This can give some credence to an optimistic wish that China's rise will not prove right Mearsheimer's notion of the tragedy of great power politics, but will instead result in a peaceful, mutually beneficial transformation of the global order short of outbursts of violence. To wish for more could be naive; to hope for less should not be an option.

## Bibliography

Adoni, Hanna, and Sherrill Mane. "Media and the Social Construction of Reality: Toward an Integration of Theory and Research." *Communication Research* 11, no. 3 (1984): 323-340.

Allen-Ebrahimian, Bethany. "How China won the war against Western media." *Foreign Policy,* March 4, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/04/ china-won-war-western-media-censorship- propaganda-communist-party/.

Allison, Graham. *Osudová past: Spojené státy versus Čína a Thúkýdidovo poučení z dějin* [Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?]. Praha: Prostor, 2018.

Anderson, Jenny. "Xi Jinping rebuked Donald Trump, positioning himself as champion of globalization." *Quartz*, January 1, 2017, https://qz.com/886917/ davos-xi-jinping-rebuked-donald-trump-positioning-himself-as-champion-of- globalization/.

Aoyama, Rumi. ""One Belt, One Road": China's New Global Strategy." *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 5, no. 2 (2016): 3-22.

Ashley, Richard. "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism and War". In *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics (Issues in World Politics),* edited by James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, 259-320. New York: Lexington Books, 1989.

Atkinson, Joel. China-Taiwan diplomatic competition and the Pacific Islands, *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 4 (2010): 407-427.

Atkinson, Mary Layton, John Lovett and Frank R. Baumgartner. "Measuring the Media Agenda." *Political Communication*, no. 31 (2014): 355-380.

Auslin, Micheal, R. *The End of the Asian Century: War, Stagnation, and the Risks to the World's Most Dynamic Region.* Yale, US: Yale University Press, 2017.

Barboza, David. "News Media Run by China Look Abroad for Growth." *New York Times*, January 14, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/15/business/worldbusiness/15tele.html.

Batke, Jessica. "Party All the Time: Governance and Society in the New Era." *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 55 (2018): 1-10.

Beckley, Michael. "Stop Obsessing About China: Why Beijing Will Not Imperil U.S. Hegemony." *Foreign Affairs*, September 21, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-09-21/stop-obsessing-about-china.

Benner, Thorsten, and Thomas Wright. "Testimony to U.S. China Economic and Security Review Commission, Hearing on: "China's relations with U.S. allies and partners in Europe and the Asia Pacific". April 5, 2018, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/USCC%20Hearing_Thorsten%20Benner%20and%20Thomas%20Wright_Written%20Statement_April%205%2C%202018.pdf.

Besova, Asya A. and Skye Chance Cooley. "Foreign News and Public Opinion: Attribute Agenda-Setting Theory Revisited." *ECQUID NOVI* 30, no. 2 (2009): 219-242.

BIS [Bezpečnostní informační služba, Security Information Service]. "Výroční zpráva bezpečnostní informační služby 2011." August 22, 2012, https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocni-zpravy/2011-vz-cz.pdf.

BIS [Bezpečnostní informační služba, Security Information Service]. "Výroční zpráva bezpečnostní informační služby 2012." November 7, 2013, https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocni-zpravy/2012-vz-cz.pdf.

BIS [Bezpečnostní informační služba, Security Information Service]. "Výroční zpráva bezpečnostní informační služby 2016." October 24, 2017, https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocni-zpravy/2016-vz-cz.pdf.

BIS [Bezpečnostní informační služba, Security Information Service]. "Výroční zpráva bezpečnostní informační služby 2017." December 3, 2018, https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocni-zpravy/2017-vz-cz.pdf.

Bitzinger, Richard. "Modernising China's Military, 1997-2012." *China Perspectives*, no.4 (2011): 7-1.

Bolsover, Gillian and Philip Howard. "Chinese computational propaganda: automation, algorithms and the manipulation of information about Chinese politics on Twitter and Weibo." *Information, Communication & Society* (2018).

Boon, Hoo Tiang, and Charles Ardy. "China and Lilliputians: Small States in a Big Power's Evolving Foreign Policy." *Asian Security* 13, no. 2 (2017), 116-131.

Bos, Lieke. "Norway-China Relations 'Unfrozen'." *The Diplomat*, December 21, 2016, https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/norway-china-relations-unfrozen/.

Brewster, David. "Silk Roads and Strings of Pearls: The Strategic Geography of China's New Pathways in the Indian Ocean." *Geopolitics* 22, no. 2 (2017): 269-291.

Brommesson, Douglas, and Ann-Marie Ekengren. *The Mediatization of Foreign Policy, Political Decision-Making and Humanitarian Intervention*. Palgrave Macmillan US. Kindle Edition.

Břešťan, Robert. "Kdo koupí TV Nova. Nabídku prý podali tři zájemci, jedním z nich má být Kellner." *Hlídací pes*, June 5, 2019, https://hlidacipes.org/kdo-koupi-tv-nova-nabidku-pry-podali-tri-zajemci-jednim-z-nich-ma-byt-kellner/.

Buchert, Viliam. "ČT si může za kritiku často sama, v mnohém nestranná rozhodně není. Komentář Viliama Bucherta". *Info.cz*, March 17, 2018, https://www.info.cz/nazory/ct-si-muze-za-kritiku-casto-sama-v-mnohem-nestranna-rozhodne-neni-komentar-viliama-bucherta-26137.html.

Buckley, Chris. "China's Communist Party Declares Xi Jinping 'Core' Leader." *The New York Times*, October 27, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/28/world/asia/xi-jinping-china.html.

BusinessInfo. "Čína: Obchodní a ekonomická spolupráce s ČR." May 25, 2019, https://www.businessinfo.cz/cs/clanky/cina-obchodni-a-ekonomicka-spoluprace-s-cr-19054.html.

BusinessInfo. "Tchaj-wan: Obchodní a ekonomická spolupráce s ČR."
September 14, 2018, https://www.businessinfo.cz/cs/clanky/tchaj-wan-
obchodni-a-ekonomicka-spoluprace-s-cr-18116.html.

Callahan, William A. "Identity and Security in China: The Negative Soft Power
of the China Dream." *Politics* 35, no. 3-4 (2015): 216-229.

Campbell, David. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the
Politics of Identity*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998.

Cao, Qing. *China Under Western Gaze: Representing China In The British
Television Documentaries 1980-2000*. Singapore: World Scientific, 2014.

Carr, Edward. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the
Study of International Relations*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1939.

CCTV. "Czech President Milos Zeman on ties." March 26, 2016, https://
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PflK1aUEgTM.

CDT [China Digital Times]. "Martin Hála on CEFC and CCP Influence in
Eastern Europe. Interview for China Digital Times." 2018, https://
chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/02/martin-hala-cefc-ccp-influence-eastern-
europe/.

Cerulus, Lawrence. "How Europe is Resisting Trump on Huawei." *Politico*, February 22, 2019, https://www.politico.eu/article/huwaei-donald-trump-china-how-europe-is-resisting-trump-on-huawei/.

ceskatelevize.cz. "Analýza zpravodajství a publicistiky" [Analysis of news and commentaries]. https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/sledovanost-a-data-o-vysilani/analyza-zpravodajstvi-a-publicistiky/

Chau, Donovan C., and Thomas M. Kane, eds. *China and International Security: History, Strategy and 21st-Century Politics.* Santa Barbara, US: Praeger, 2014.

Chawe, Michael. "Why China dominates the Zambian discourse." *Business Daily*, September 18, 2018, https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/news/world/Why-China-dominates-the-Zambian-discourse/4259366-4765276-qt2p8n/index.html.

Chen, Maggie Xiaoyang, and Chuanhao Lin. *Foreign Investment across the Belt and Road Patterns, Determinants and Effects*. World Bank, October 2018.

Chen, Yu-wen, and Yufan Hao. "Czech perceptions of the rise of China: a survey among university students." *Asia Europe Journal*, 2019: 1-19. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10308-019-00542-6#citeas.

Chen, Zhimin. "International responsibility and China's Foreign Policy". 7-28.
In *China's Shift: Global Strategy of a Rising* Power, edited by Masafumi Iida.
Tokyo, Japan: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2009.

Cheng, Zhuqing, Guy J. Golan, and Spiro Kiousis. "The Second-level
Agenda-building Function of the Xinhua Agency, Examining the role of
government-sponsored news in mediated public diplomacy." *Journalism
Practice* 10, no. 6 (2016): 744-762.

China Policy. *China Going Global: between ambition and capacity*. Beijing,
April 2017.

Chinese embassy in Prague. "Předseda vlády ČR Andrej Babiš se setkal s
velvyslancem Zhangem Jianminem." Facebook, December 24, 2018. https://
www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html.

Cho, Young Nam, and Jong Ho Jeong. "China's Soft Power, Discussions,
Resources, and Prospects." *Asian Survey* 48, no. 3 (2008): 453-472.

Cobb, Roger W., and Charles Elder. "The politics of agenda-building: An
alternative perspective for modern democratic theory." *Journal of Politics* 33,
no. 4 (1971): 892-915.

Cohen, Bernard C. *The Press and Foreign Policy.* Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1963.


Cohen, Warren I. "China's rise in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 4-5 (2007): 683-704.


Creemers, Rogier. "Cyber China: Upgrading Propaganda, Public Opinion Work and Social Management for the Twenty-First Century." *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 103 (2017): 85-100.


ČT 24 [Czech Television 24]. "„Je to lež a nesmysl." Babiš odmítl čínské prohlášení o společné schůzce k Huawei." January 1, 2019b, https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/2697848-spor-o-huawei-pokracuje-podle-babise-cinsky-velvyslanec-o-spolecne-schuzce-lhal.


ČT 24 [Czech Television 24]. "Nečas: Podpora dalajlamismu škodí českému exportu". September 10, 2012, https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/1147149-necas-podpora-dalajlamismu-skodi-ceskemu-exportu.


ČT 24 [Czech Television 24]. "Obchod s Čínou v uplynulých letech rychle rostl. A s ním i záporné saldo Česka." April 24, 2019a, https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/ekonomika/2795546-obchod-s-cinou-v-uplynulych-letech-rychle-rostl-a-s-nim-i-zaporne-saldo-ceska.

ČT 24 [Czech Television 24]. "Pražská zoo představila nové pavilony pro pandy i lední medvědy". June 8, 2017. https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/veda/2145216-prazska-zoo-predstavila-nove-pavilony-pro-pandy-i-ledni-medvedy.

ČTK [Czech News Agency]. "Čínská CITIC Group dokončila akvizici CEFC Europe." *České noviny*, April 4, 2019a, https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/cinska-citic-group-dokoncila-akvizici-cefc-europe/1741372.

ČTK [Czech News Agency]. "Kybernetický úřad jsou také čučkaři, čínská odveta se dotkne Škody a PPF, prohlásil Zeman. Takové informace nemáme, reaguje Babiš." *iHNed.cz*, January 10, 2019b, https://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-66426290-cina-kvuli-varovani-pred-technologiemi-huawei-chysta-vuci-cesku-odvetna-opatreni-rekl-zeman-dotknou-se-pry-skody-auto-a-ppf.

D'Hooghe, Ingrid. "The Rise of China's Public Diplomacy." *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers* No. 12, 2007: 1-39.

Dahl, Robert, and Bruce Stinebrickner. *Modern political analysis*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.

Dahl, Robert. *Modern Political Analysis.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981.

DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency]. *Challenges to Security in Space,* January 2019.

Dichter, Ernest. "What's in an image?" *The Journal of Consumer Marketing* 2, no. 1 (1985): 75-79.

Dickson, Bruce J. The Survival Strategy of the Chinese Communist Party, *The Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2016): 27-44.

Ding, Sheng. "Analyzing Rising Power from the Perspective of Soft Power: a new look at China's rise to the status quo power." *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 64 (2010): 255-272.

Ding, Sheng. "To Build A "Harmonious World": China's Soft Power Wielding in the Global South." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 13, no. 2 (2008): 193-213.

di Roma, Clément. "New Czech PM Andrej Babis, Billionaire and Media Mogul." *New Federalist*, October 23, 2017, https://www.thenewfederalist.eu/ new-czech-pm-andrej-babis-billionaire-and-media-mogul.

DVTV. "Kmoníček: Státy EU nám chtěly zabránit získat čínské investice, Čína předefinovala slovo komunista." Interview by Martin Veselovský, April 1, 2016, https://video.aktualne.cz/dvtv/kmonicek-cina-zcela-predefinovala-obsah-slova-komunista-komu/r~157b2d04f76911e5a652002590604f2e/.

Edney, Kingsled. "Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System." *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 78 (2012): 899–914.

Entman, Robert M. "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power." *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 163-173.

Entman, Robert M. "Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51-58.

Ersoj, Eyüp. "Conceptual Cultivation and Homegrown Theorizing: The Case of/for the Concept of Influence." *All Azimuth* 7, no. 2 (2018): 47-64.

Eurobarometr. *Future of Europe*. Special Report 479. Brussels: European Commission, November 2018. https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2217.

Fairclough, Norman. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Ferdinand, Peter. "Sunset, sunrise: China and Russia construct a new relationship." *International Affairs* 83, no. 5 (2007): 841-867.

Ferebauer, Václav, and Václav Janouš. "Číňané zopakovali akci z Londýna. Hlavu státu zdravili organizovaní vítači." *iDnes.cz*, March 30, 2016, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/cina-navsteva-cinskeho-prezidenta-vitaci-cinska-ambasada.A160329_142040_domaci_fer.

Foucault, Michel. *Diskurs, autor, genealogie*. Praha: Svoboda, 1994.

Fox, John, and Francois Godement. *A Power Audit of EU-China Relations.* European Council on Foreign Relations, April 2009, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR12_-_A_POWER_AUDIT_OF_EU-CHINA_RELATIONS.pdf.

Friedman, Thomas L. "Obama on the World." *New York Times*, August 9, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/09/opinion/president-obama-thomas-l-friedman-iraq-and-world-affairs.html.

Fujiwara, Shinichi. "Japan to expand SDF base in Djibouti in part to counter China." *Asahi Shinbun*, November 15, 2018, http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201811150063.html.

Fürst, Rudolf. *Česko-čínské vztahy: od bezradnosti k aktivní politice.* Policy Paper. Prague: Institute of International Relations (ÚMV), 2004.

Fürst, Rudolf. "Politické vnímání Číny v Čechách: mezi věcností a nevěcností, orientalismem a okcidentalismem." *Mezinárodní vztahy* 3, 2005: 24-43.

Fürst, Rudolf. *Čína znovu objevuje bývalou východní Evropu: Důvod k radosti či obavám?* Policy Paper. Prague: Institute of International Relations (ÚMV), 2015.

Garlick, Jeremy. "China's Trade with Central and Eastern European EU Members: An Analysis of Eurostat Data, 2004-2014." *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia* 23, no. 4 (2015): 3-22.

Gill, Bates. China's future under Xi Jinping: challenges ahead, *Political Science* 69, no. 1 (2017): 1-15.

Gill, Bates. *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007.

Gill, Bates, and Benjamin Schreer. "Countering China's "United Front"." *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2018): 155-170.

Gill, Bates, and Yanzhong Huang. "Sources and limits of Chinese 'soft power'." *Survival* 48, no. 2 (2006): 17-36.

Goldstein, Avery. "An emerging China's emerging grand strategy." 55-106. In *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, edited by G. J. Ikenberry and M. Mastanduno. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Goldstein, Avery. *Rising to the challenge: China's grand strategy and international society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.

Gonçalves, Arnaldo. *Foreign Policy of People's Republic of China under Deng, Jiang and Hu: a conservative trend*. Working paper nº 60, Centro Argentino de Estudios Internationales (CAEI), undated.

Guzzini, Stefano. "Power Analysis as a Critique of Power Politics: Understanding Power and Governance in The Second Gulf War." PhD thesis. European University Institute, 1994, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/45672871.pdf.

Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Hameiri, Shahar. China's 'charm offensive' in the Pacific and Australia's regional order. *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 5 (2015): 631-654.

Han, Gang (Kevin), and Xiuli Wang. "From Product-Country Image to National Image: "Made In China" and Integrated Valence Framing Effects." *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 9, 2015: 62–77.

Hanemann, Thilo, and Mikko Huotari. *Preparing for a New Era of Chinese Capital. Chinese FDI in Europe and Germany*. Mercator Institute for China Studies and Rhodium Group, June 2015, https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/COFDI_2015_EN.pdf.

Hartig, Falk. "China's Global Image Management: Paper Cutting and the Omission of Politics." *Asian Studies Review* 42, no. 4 (2018): 701-720.

Hartig, Falk. "Panda Diplomacy: The Cutest Part of China's Public Diplomacy." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 8, no. 1 (2013): 49-78.

Hayden, Craig. *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts*. New York, US: Lexington Books, 2012.

He, Kai and Huiyun Feng. "China's Bargaining Strategies for a Peaceful Rise: Successes and Challenges." *Asian Security* 10, no. 2 (2014): 168-187.

Heiduk, Felix. "Conflicting Images? Germany and the Rise of China." *German Politics* 23, no. 1-2 (2014): 118–133.

Hillman, Jonathan E. *Game of Loans: How China Bought Hambantota*. CSIS Brief, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2, 2018, https:// csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/ 180717_Hillman_GameofLoans.pdf.

Hlídací pes. "Česko-čínská družba jako tajná pošta. Proč Hamáček tají jednání s čínskými komunisty?" July 18, 2017, https://hlidacipes.org/cesko-cinska-druzba-jako-ticha-posta-proc-hamacek-taji-jednani-cinskymi-komunisty/.

Holz, Carsten A. "China's Reform Period Economic Growth: How Reliable Are Angus Maddison's Estimates?" *Review of Income and Wealth* 52,  no. 1 (2006): 85-119.

Hu, Jintao. "Build Towards a Harmonious World of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity." Statement at the United Nations Summit. New York, September 15, 2005, https://www.un.org/webcast/summit2005/statements15/ china050915eng.pdf

Huang, Zheping. "Xi Jinping says China's authoritarian system can be a model for the world." *Quartz*, March 9, 2018, https://qz.com/1225347/xi-jinping-says-chinas-one-party-authoritarian-system-can-be-a-model-for-the-world/.

Huotari, Mikko, Jan Gaspers, Thomas Eder, Helena Legarda and Sabine Mokry. *China's Emergence as a Global Security Actor: Strategies for Europe*. MERICS, July 2017.

ICG [International Crisis Group]. "China's Growing Role in UN Peacekeeping." *Asia Report* 166, April 17, 2009.

iDnes.cz. "Bakala daroval před volbami pravici přes 28 milionů, ČSSD se zlobí". June 2, 2010, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/bakala-daroval-pred-volbami-pravici-pres-28-milionu-cssd-se-zlobi.A100602_172122_domaci_cem.

iDnes.cz. "Bakala poslal Schwarzenbergovi dva miliony na zaplacení kampaně". March 1, 2013. https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/financovani-kampane-karla-schwarzenberga.A130301_152106_domaci_brm.

iDnes.cz. "Obsah České televize je smrdutý koktejl, kritizoval Zeman." September 13, 2018b, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/zeman-soukup-tv-barrandov-tyden-s-prezidentem.A180913_213145_domaci_kuce.

iDnes.cz. "Pandy nebudou. Zeman si o ně neřekl a Praha je nechce, oznámil šéf zoo." November 28, 2018a. https://www.idnes.cz/praha/zpravy/reditel-zoo-miroslav-bobek-pandy-v-zoo-praha-nebudou-zeman-nepozadal.A181128_174027_praha-zpravy_rsr.

Ikenberry, John G. "From Hegemony to the Balance of Power: The Rise of China and American Grand Strategy in East Asia." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 23, no. 2 (2014): 41–63.

Ikenberry, John G. "The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?" *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 1 (2008).

IMF [International Monetary Fund]. People's Republic of China. Accessed April 1, 2019. https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/CHN#data.

iRozhlas.cz. "Babiš má stále vliv na média ve svěřenském fondu, píše černošický úřad v rozhodnutí o střetu zájmů." March 11, 2019, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/andrej-babis-premier-sverenecky-fond-lidove-noviny-mf-dnes-media-rozhodnuti_1903111952_dok.

iRozhlas.cz. *"Češi nechtějí upřednostnit čínské investice před ochranou lidských práv, ukázal průzkum pro ČRo".* March 28, 2016, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/cesi-nechteji-uprednostnit-cinske-investice-pred-ochranou-lidskych-prav-ukazal-pruzkum-pro-cro_201603280843_mvydrova.

iRozhlas.cz. ",Existuje pouze jedna Čína.' Po ministerstvu zahraničí kritizuje primátora Hřiba i čínská ambasáda." July 27, 2019, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zdenek-hrib-cina-ambasada-tchajwan-peking-prohlaseni-ministerstvo_1907271105_lac.

iRozhlas.cz. "Sněmovní výbor nepodpořil cestu poslanců do Číny. Jedeme tam na osobní pozvání, říká Filip (KSČM)." August 10, 2018, https://plus.rozhlas.cz/snemovni-vybor-nepodporil-cestu-poslancu-do-ciny-jedeme-tam-na-osobni-pozvani-7585835.

Isaacs, Harold R. *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India.* New York: John Day, 1958.

Jakubowicz, Karol, and Miklós Sükösd. *"*Twelve Concepts Regarding Media System Evolution and Democratization in Post-communist Societies." In *Finding the Right Place on the Map: Central and Eastern European Media Change in a Global Perspective,* edited by Karol Jakubowicz and Miklós Sükösd, 9-40. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2008.

Jayachandran, Jesna. "Reporting Diplomacy: China in Indian Media." *Asian Politics & Policy* 8, no. 3 (2016): 514-520.

Jervis, Robert. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics.* Princeton, USA: University Press, 1976.

Jirák, Jan, and Tomáš Trampota. O vztahu médií a politiky v komparativní perspektivě. In *Systémy médií v postmoderním světě: Tři modely médií a politiky,* prefece to book by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, 9-23. Praha: Portál, 2008.

Ji Tianqin and Han Wei. "In Depth: Investigation Casts Shadow on Rosneft's China Investor CEFC." *Caixin*, March 1, 2018, https://www.caixinglobal.com/2018-03-01/investigation-casts-shadow-on-rising-oil-star-101215272.html.

Jowett, Garth S. and Victoria O'Donnell. *Propaganda and Persuasion*. London, UK: Sage Publications, 2012.

Jura, Jarosław, and Kaja Kałużyńska. "Transformation of the Dragon – China's Image in the Polish Media." In *China - Central and Eastern Europe Cross-Cultural Dialogue Society, Business and Education in Transition*, edited by Joanna Wardęga, 121-140. Jagellonian University Press, 2016.

Karásková, Ivana, Alžběta Bajerová, and Tamás Matura. *Images of China in the Czech and Hungarian Parliaments.* Policy paper 02. Association for International Affairs (AMO), March 2019, http://www.chinfluence.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AMO_Panda-huggers-or-dragon-slayers-1.pdf.

Karásková, Ivana, Slavomír Horák, Jakub Kulhánek and Bohuslav Litera. *Rusko-čínské vztahy a EU: potential spolupráce a konfliktu* [Russian-Chinese Relations and the EU: Potential for Cooperation and Conflict]. Praha: MatFyzPress, 2011.

Karásková, Ivana, Tamás Matura, Richard Q. Turcsányi, and Matej Šimalčík. *Central Europe for Sale: The Politics of China's Influence.* Policy Paper 03. Association for International Affairs (AMO)*, 2018: 1-38.

Karásková, Ivana. "China, India and Energy Security: Academic Discourse and the Construction of China's Rise." Unpublished manuscript, 2019.

Kent, Ann. *Beyond Compliance: China, International Organizations, and Global Security*. Stanford, US: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Keohane, Robert and Joseph Nye, Jr. *Power and Interdependence: World politics in Transition*. Boston: Little Brown, 1977.

Kissinger, Henry. *On China.* Penguin Books, 2012.

Kivimäki, Timo. "Soft Power and Global Governance with Chinese Characteristics." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, no. 4 (2014): 421–447.

Kleine-Ahlbrandt, Stephanie, and Andrew Small. "China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy: Is Beijing Parting with Pariahs?" *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 1 (2008).

Kokas, Aynne. *Hollywood Made in China.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017.

Kopra, Sanna. "A Responsible Developing Country: China's National Image Building and International Negotiations on Climate." *Quarterly Journal of Chinese Studies* 1, no. 3 (2012): 121-137.

Kratz, Agatha, Allen Feng, and Logan Wright. "New Data on the "Debt Trap" Question." Rhodium Group, April 29, 2019, https://rhg.com/research/new-data-on-the-debt-trap-question/.

Křeček, Jan. *Politická komunikace. Od res publica po public relations* [Political Communication. From Res Publica to Public Relations]. Prague: Grada Publishing, 2013.

Kunczik, Michael. *Images of nations and international public relations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997.

Lai, Christina. "Acting one way and talking another: China's coercive economic diplomacy in East Asia and beyond." *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 2 (2018): 169-187.

Lazarová, Daniela. "Chinese Ambassador Met with President's Chief Foreign Affairs Advisor in Connection with Dalai Lama's Visit." *Czech Radio*, October 20, 2016, http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/chinese-ambassador-met-with-Presidents-chief-foreign-affairs-adviser-in-connection-with-dalai-lamas-visit.

Lee, Min-gyu, and Yufan Hao. "China's Unsuccessful Charm Offensive: How South Koreans have Viewed the Rise of China Over the Past Decade." *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 114 (2018): 867-886.

Legro, Jeffrey W., and Andrew Moravcsik. "Is Anybody Still a Realist?" *International Security* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 5-55.

Len, Christopher. "China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, Energy Security and SLOC Access." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 11, no. 1 (2015): 1-18.

Lewis, Mark. "Norway's salmon rot as China takes revenge for dissident's Nobel Prize." *The Independent*, October 6, 2011, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/norways-salmon-rot-as-china-takes-revenge-for-dissidents-nobel-prize-2366167.html.

Li, Cheng. "The New Bipartisanship within the Chinese Communist Party." *Orbis* 49, no. 3 (2005): 387-400.

lidovky.cz. "Babiš dál ovládá média, tvrdí Transparency International. Oznámila podezření z přestupku." August 3, 2018, https://www.lidovky.cz/ domov/babis-dal-ovlada-media-tvrdi-transparency-international-oznamila- podezreni-z-prestupku.A180803_080908_ln_domov_form.

Li, Xin, and Verner Worm. "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, no. 1 (Mar2011): 69-89.

Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion.* New York, USA: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922.

Liss, Alexander. "Images of China in the American Print Media: a survey from 2000 to 2002." *Journal of Contemporary China* 12, no. 35 (2003): 299–318.

Loh, Dylan. "Defending China's National Image and 'Defensive Soft Power': the Case of Hong Kong's 'Umbrella Revolution'." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 22, 2017: 117-134.

LAT [Los Angeles Times]. *"China's president is the country's most-traveled leader since Communism -- and maybe the strongest".* December 25, 2015. https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-china-president-travel-20151225- story.html.

Maddison, Angus. *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run. Second Edition, Revised and Updated: 960-2030 AD.* Development Center of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2007.

Maddison, Angus. "Do Official Statistics Exaggerate China's GDP Growth? A Reply to Carsten Holz." *Review of Income and Wealth Series* 52, no. 1 (2006): 121-126.

Maddison, Angus. "Measuring the Economic Performance of Transition Economies: Some Lessons from Chinese Experience". *Review of Income and Wealth Series* 55, no. 1 (2009): 423-441.

Mahbubani, Kishore. *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East.* PublicAffairs, 2008.

Mandelbaum, Michael. "The New Containment. Handling Russia, China and Iran." *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 2 (March/April 2019): 123-131.

Manhaim, Jarol B. *Strategic Public Diplomacy and American Foreign Policy: The Evolution of Influence.* Oxford,UK: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Matsumura, Masahiro. "China's Overrated Military Capabilities and Its Image Manipulation: A Japanese Perspective on the State of the South China Sea." *Issues & Studies: A Social Science Quarterly on China, Taiwan, and East Asian Affairs* 52, no. 3 (September 2016).

Mattis, Peter. "China's 'Three Warfares' in Perspective." *War on the Rocks*, January 30, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/.

McCombs, Maxwell E. and Donal L. Shaw. "The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Research: Twenty-FiveYears in the Marketplace of Ideas." J*ournal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (1993): 58-67.

McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 176-187.

McQuail, Denis. *McQuail's Theory of Mass Communication.* SAGE Publications, 2010.

McQuail, Denis. *Media performance: Mass communication and the public interest*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992.

Mead, Walter Russell. "Left and Right Agree: Get Tough on China." *Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2018, https://www.wsj.com/articles/left-and-right-agree-get-tough-on-china-1515458432.

Mearheimer, John. "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War." *International Security* 15, Summer 1990: 5-56.

Mearsheimer, John J. "China's Unpeaceful Rise." *Current History 105, no. 690 (Apr 2006): 160-162.*

Mediahub. "Poslechovost rádií: Impuls stále vede, nejvíc rostl ČRo Plus." May 3, 2017, https://mediahub.cz/media/954224-poslechovost.

MediaGuru. "Infografika: Aktualizovaná mapa vlastníků médií". March 29, 2016, https://www.mediaguru.cz/clanky/2016/03/infografika-aktualizovana-mapa-vlastniku-medii/.

MediaGuru. "Změní Babiš politickou mapu českých deníků?" June 28, 2013, https://www.mediaguru.cz/clanky/2013/06/zmeni-babis-politickou-mapu-ceskych-deniku/.

MFA PRC [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China]. "Independent Foreign Policy of Peace". September 19, 2003, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/zcyjs_663346/xgxw_663348/t24942.shtml.

Mikoláš, Robert. "Čína a Česká republika jsou strategickými partnery, dohodu podepsali na Hradě prezidenti." March 29, 2016. https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/cina-a-ceska-republika-jsou-strategickymi-partnery-dohodu-podepsali-na-hrade-prezidenti_201603291306_mhromadka.

Ministry of Interior. "Cizinci s povoleným pobytem [Foreigners with permitted stay]." June 30, 2019, https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/cizinci-s-povolenym-pobytem.aspx.

MIT Technology Review. "First Object Teleported from Earth to Orbit." July 10, 2017, https://www.technologyreview.com/s/608252/first-object-teleported-from-earth-to-orbit/.

Morgenthau, Hans. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace.* New York, US: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.

Mosher, Steven W. *China Misperceived: American Illusions and Chinese Reality*. New York: Basic Books, 1990.

Murphy, James Bernard. "Perspectives on power." *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (2011): 87-103.

Mutethya, Edith. "Kenya, China dismiss claims on Mombasa port 'takeover'."*China Daily*, December 29, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201812/29/WS5c2766b2a310d91214051c20.html.

Nathan, Andew J. and Robert Ross. *Great Wall and Empty Fortress.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.

Naughton, Barry. *The Chinese Economy: Transition and Growth.* Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2007.

Neumann, Ondřej. "Ondřej Neumann: Petr Kellner v Nově? Proč by to nebyla dobrá zpráva." *Hlídací pes*, July 29, 2019, https://hlidacipes.org/ondrej-neumann-petr-kellner-v-nove-proc-by-to-nebyla-dobra-zprava/.

novinky.cz. "Chci se poučit, jak se stabilizuje společnost, řekl Zeman v čínské televizi." October 30, 2014, https://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/svet/352107-chci-se-poucit-jak-se-stabilizuje-spolecnost-rekl-zeman-v-cinske-televizi.html.

NPC [National People's Congress]. *Constitution of the People's Republic of China,* 2004, http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm.

Nye, Joseph S., Jr. "China and soft power." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 19, no. 2 (2012): 151-155.

Nye, Joseph S. Jr. "China's "Peaceful Rise"?" In *China's Peaceful Rise and New Role of Asia*, by Zheng Bijian, Jérôme Monod, Miniya Chatterji, Joseph S. Nye, Josef S. Jr., and Wu Jianmin, 13-14. Les Cahiers du débat, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, May 2005.

Nye, Joseph S. "Globalism Versus Globalization What are the different spheres of globalism — and how are they affected by globalization?" *The Globalist,* April 15, 2002, https://www.theglobalist.com/globalism-versus-globalization/.

Nye, Joseph S., Jr. *Power in the Global Information Age: From Realism to Globalization.* Oxon: Routledge, 2004a.

Nye, Joseph S. Jr. "Public diplomacy and soft power." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, (2008): 94-108.

Nye, Joseph, S., Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.* New York: PublicAffairs, 2004b.

Nye, Joseph, S., Jr. *The Future of Power.* New York: PublicAffairs, 2011.

Nye, Joseph S. Jr. "Think again: soft power." *Foreign Policy*, February 23, 2006.

Onuf, Nicholas. *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989.

Ospina Estupinan, Jhon Deyby. "The coverage of China in the Latin American Press: Media framing study." *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 4, no. 1287319 (2017): 1-16.

Ostrowska, Agnieszka. *Great Expectations: China's Image in Polish Mainstream Media and Among Elites*. Analysis 6. Warsaw: Center for International Relations, 2019: 1-31.

Overbeek, Henk. "Transnational historical materialism. Theories of transnational class formation and world order". 168-183. In *Global Political Economy. Contemporary Theories,* edited by Ronen Palan. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2000.

Pang, Zhongying. "China's Non-Intervention Question." *Global Responsibility to Protect, no.* 1 (2009): 237-252.

Pavlićević, Dragan. "'China Threat' and 'China Opportunity': Politics of Dreams and Fears in China-Central and Eastern European Relations." *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 113 (2018): 688-702.

Pehe, Jiří. "Proč patří česká média do Středomoří." *Deník Referendum*, April 26, 2010, http://www.pehe.cz/zapisnik/proc-patri-ceska-media-do-stredomori.

Pew Research. *America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's*. Pew Research Center, July 18, 2013, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2013/07/18/chapter-3-attitudes-toward-china/.

Pew Research. *Global Unease with Major World Powers*. Pew Research Center, 2007, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2007/06/27/chapter-3-views-of-china-and-its-increasing-influence/.

Pinker, Steven. *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress.* New York: Viking, 2018.

PPF. *PPF Annual Report*, 2010.

PPF. Website of the company, 2019. https://www.ppf.eu/en/overview#content-slide

Pražský hrad [Prague Castle]. "Společné prohlášení nejvyšších ústavních činitelů České republiky [Joint Statement of Constitutionally Highest-ranking Representatives of the Czech Republic]." October 18, 2016, https://www.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/spolecne-prohlaseni-nejvyssich-ustavnich-cinitelu-ceske-republiky-12953.

Pražský hrad [Prague Castle]. "Společné prohlášení o navázání strategického partnerství mezi Českou republikou a Čínskou lidovou republikou. [Joint statement on establishing strategic partnership between the Czech Republic and People's Republic of China]." March 29, 2016, https://www.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/spolecne-prohlaseni-o-navazani-strategickeho-partnerstvi-mezi-ceskou-republikou-a-cinskou-lidovou-republikou-1-12559.

PSSI [Prague Security Studies Institute]. *Léta 2004-2006, krátké jaro česko-čínských vztahů*, 2018, http://www.pssi.cz/download/docs/503_leta-2004-2006-kratke-jaro-cesko-cinskych-vztahu.pdf.

Pšenička, Jiří, and Martin Ťopek. "Tajná nahrávka naznačuje, že Babiš manipuluje s médii. O místo kvůli ní přišel už jeden redaktor." *iHNed.cz*, May 3, 2017, https://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-65717170-nahravka-udajne-usvedcuje-babise-z-manipulace-s-medii-o-misto-kvuli-ni-prisel-uz-jeden-redaktor.

Qing, Koh Gui, and John Shiffman. "Beijing's covert radio network airs China-friendly news across Washington, and the world." *Reuters*, November 2, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-radio/

Rabitsch Adamčíková, Jitka. "Politický paralelismus mediálních obsahů" [Political paralellism of media contents]. MA thesis, Charles University, Prague, 2015.

Radiožurnál. "Čínský prezident přijal Zemanovo pozvání ke státní návštěvě České republiky." September 4, 2015, https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/cinsky-prezident-prijal-zemanovo-pozvani-ke-statni-navsteve-ceske-republiky-7185850.

Rawnsley, Gary. "Approaches to soft power and public diplomacy in China and Taiwan." *Journal of International Communication* 18, no. 2 (2012): 121-135.

Reilly, James. "China's Unilateral Sanctions." *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): 121-133.

Robertson, Peter E., and Adrian Sin. "Measuring Hard Power: China's Economic Growth and Military Capacity." *Defence and Peace Economics* 28, no. 1 (2017): 91-111.

Ross, Robert S., and Zhu Feng, eds. *China's Ascent: Power, Security and the Future of International Politics.* Ithaca, US: Cornell University Press, 2008.

RSF [Reporters without Borders]. *China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order.* March 22, 2019: 1-52.

Rudakowska, Anna. "China in the eyes of Poles: the construction of identity in press." Conference paper presented at EISA conference, Prague, 2017.

Rudolph, Jennifer, and Michael Szonyi, eds. *China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power.* Boston, US: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Rühlig, Tim Nicholas, Björn Jerdén, Frans-Paul van der Putten, John Seaman, Miguel Otero-Iglesias, and Alice Ekman, eds. *Political values in Europe-China relations.* European Think-tank Network on China (ETNC), December 2018.

Schwarzová, Klára. "Rozdíly v reportážích České televize referujících o Číně po výměně zahraničních zpravodajů." MA thesis, Univerzita Palackého, Olomouc, 2017.

SCIO [State Council Information Office]. *China's Military Strategy.* White Paper, May 27, 2015, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2015/05/27/ content_281475115610833.htm.

SCIO [State Council Information Office]. Website, http://english.scio.gov.cn/ aboutscio/index.htm.

SCIO [State Council Information Office]. *White Paper China's Peaceful Development Road*, December, 22, 2005.

Scissors, Derek. *China's investment in the world increasing, not soaring.* American Enterprise Institute, July 2015, https:// www.aei.org/publication/ chinas-investment-in-the-world-increasing-not-soaring/.

Scott, David. "China and the Baltic States: strategic challenges and security dilemmas for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia." *Journal on Baltic Security* 4, no. 1 (2018): 25–37.

Scott, David. "China's Public Diplomacy Rhetoric, 1990–2012: Pragmatic Image-Crafting." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 26, no. 2 (2015): 249-265.

Shambaugh, David. "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy." *The China Journal*, 57 (2007): 25-58.

Shambaugh, David. "The Illusion of Chinese Power." Op-ed, Brookings

Institution, June 25, 2014, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-illusion-of-

chinese-power/.


Shambaugh, David. *China Goes Global: The Partial Power.* London, UK:

Oxford University Press, 2013.


Singh, Antara Ghosal. "China's soft power projection across the oceans."

*Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 12, 1

(2016): 25-37.


Tian, Nan, Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Pieter D. Wezeman, and

Siemon T. Wezeman. *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2018.* SIPRI Fact

Sheet, April 2019, https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/

fs_1904_milex_2018_0.pdf.


Soukup, Jaromír. "Zeman: Čína je pro exportéry nenasycený trh." *Týden*,

March 28, 2016, https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/politika/zeman-cina-je-

pro-exportery-nenasyceny-trh_377377.html.


Stinebrickner, Bruce. "Robert A. Dahl and the essentials of *Modern Political

Analysis*: politics, influence, power, and polyarchy." *Journal of Political Power*

8, 2 (2015): 189-207.

Stone, Gerald C., and Zhiwen Xiao. "Anointing a new enemy: The rise of anti-China coverage after the USSR's demise." *The International Communication Gazette* 69, no. 1 (2007): 91-108.

Su, Hao. "Harmonious World: The Conceived International Order in the Framework of China's Foreign Affairs." In *China's Shift - Global Strategy of the Rising Power,* edited by Masufami Iida, 29-56. Tokyo, Japan: The National Institute of Defense Studies, 2009.

Suettinger, Robert L. "The Rise and Descent of "Peaceful Rise"". *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 12 (2004): 1-10.

Sun, Wanning. "Slow boat from China: public discourses behind the 'going global' media policy." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no. 4 (2015): 400-418.

Sutter, Robert G. "Recent Chinese Domestic and Foreign Policies and Priorities." In *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils,* edited by Robert G. Sutter. Lanham-Boulder- New York-Toronto-Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005.

Suzuki, Shogo. "Chinese Soft Power, Insecurity Studies, Myopia and Fantasy." *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2009): 779-793.

Ševela, Vladimír. "Češi nás budou milovat. V Praze vzniká druhá tuzemská pobočka čínského Konfuciova institutu, před kterým varuje FBI i BIS." *iHNed.cz*, December 14, 2018, https://ego.ihned.cz/c1-66387440-cesi-nas-budou-milovat-v-praze-vznika-druha-pobocka-cinskeho-konfuciova-institu-pred-kterym-varuje-fbi-i-bis.

Tait, Robert. "Zdeněk Hřib: the Czech mayor who defied China." *The Guardian*, July 3, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/jul/03/zdenek-hrib-the-czech-mayor-who-defied-china-taiwan.

Tonchev, Plamen, Angelos Bentis, Caroline Carulas, Chris Mihalaris, and George Papoutsas. *China's Image in Greece 2008-2018.* Institute for International Economic Relations, October 2018, http://idos.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/China-Image-in-Greece_9-10-2018.pdf.

Tsai, Wen-Hsuan. "Enabling China's Voice to Be Heard by the World, Ideas and Operations of the Chinese Communist Party's External Propaganda System." *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no. 3-4 (2017): 203–213.

Tutui, Viorel. "Some Reflections Concerning the Problem of Defining Propaganda." Argumentum: *Journal the Seminar of Discursive Logic, Argumentation Theory & Rhetoric* 15, no. 2 (2017): 110-125.

USDD [US Department of Defense]. *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018.* Annual Report to the Congress. https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF.

USDD [US Department of Defense]. *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019. Annual Report to Congress.* Washington, US: Department of Defense, 2019.

USESRC [US-China Economic and Security Review Commission]. *2018 Annual Report,* November 14, 2018, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Annual_Report/Chapters/Chapter%203%20Section%202-%20China%27s%20Relations%20with%20U.S.%20Allies%20and%20Partners_0.pdf.

Vangeli, Anastas. "Global China and Symbolic Power: The Case of 16 + 1 Cooperation." *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 113 (2018): 674-687.

Vaníčková, Lucie. "Radio projekt: Nejposlouchanější stanicí v ČR je stále Rádio Impuls." *Marketing&Media*, February 4, 2015, https://mam.cz/media-radio/c1-63483360-radio-projekt-nejposlouchanejsi-stanici-v-cr-je-stale-radio-impuls.

Walker, Christopher, and Jessica Ludwig. "The Meaning of Sharp Power, How Authoritarian States Project Influence." *Foreign Affairs*, November 16, 2017, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-11-16/meaning-sharp-power.

Walt, Stephen M. Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power. *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-43.

Walt, Stephen M. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Wang, Hongying, and Lu Yeh-Chung. "The Conception of Soft Power and its Policy Implications: a comparative study of China and Taiwan." *Journal of Contemporary China* 17, no. 56 (2008): 425-447.

Wang, Hongying. "National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy." *China: An International Journal* 1, no. 1 (2003): 46–72.

Wang, Jiayu. "Narrative mediatisation of the "Chinese Dream" in Chinese and American media." *Journal of Language and Politics* 15, no. 1 (2016): 45–62.

Wang, Jisi. "International Relations Theory and the Study of Chinese Foreign Policy: A Chinese Perspective." 481-505. In *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice,* edited by Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh, eds. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Wang, Jisi. "Toward West: China's Geostrategic Rebalance." *Global Time*, October 17, 2012, http://opinion.huanqiu. com/opinion_world/ 2012-10/3193760.html.

Wang, Li, and Dongchen Zhou. "Xi's Dimensions for Reshaping China's Global Image." *Diplomatic Insight* 10, no. 9 (2017): 8-9.

Wanta, Wane, Guy Golan, and Cheolhan Lee. "Agenda setting and international news: Media influence on public perceptions of foreign nations." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, 2004: 364–377.

Wasserman, Herman. "China's "soft power" and its influence on editorial agendas in South Africa." *Chinese Journal of Communication* 9, no. 1 (2016): 8-20.

WB [World Bank]. Country based data. Accessed June 30, 2019b. www.data.worldbank.org

WB CN [World Bank in China]. Accessed April 1, 2019a. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview.

Wei, Chen. "The Image of China in Hong Kong Media: Content Analysis of the Coverage in three Hong Kong Newspapers." *China Media Research* 8, no. 3 (2012): 65-71.

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power." *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391-425.

Wendt, Alexander. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Wilson, Jeanne L. Coloured Revolutions: The View from Moscow and Beijing, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 2-3 (2009): 369-395.

Wu, Yanfang, David Atkin, Yi Mou, Carolyn A. Lin, and T. Y. Lau. "Agenda setting and micro-blog use." *The Journal of Social Media in Society* 2, no. 2 (2013): 8-25.

Xiang, Debao. "China's image on international English language social media." *The Journal of International Communication* 19, no. 2 (2013): 252-271.

Xie, Tao, and Benjamin I. Page. "What Affects China's National Image? A cross-national study of public opinion." *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 83 (2013): 850–867.

Xie, Zhihai. "The Rise of China and Its Growing Role in International Organizations." *ICCS Journal of Modern Chinese Studies* 4, no. 1 (2011): 85-96.

Xinhua. "China's party system is great contribution to political civilization: Xi." March 5, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/05/ c_137015955.htm.

Yao, Shujie. *Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Poverty Reduction in Contemporary China*. London, UK: Routledge, 2005.

Zaharna, Rhonda S. "From Propaganda to Public Diplomacy In the Information Age." (draft). In *War, Media, and Propaganda: A Global Perspective,* edited by Nancy Snow and Yahya Kamalipour, 1-5. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/ 266219282_From_Propaganda_to_Public_Diplomacy_In_the_Information_A ge.

Zanardi, Claude. "China's soft power with Chinese characteristics: the cases of Confucius Institutes and Chinese naval diplomacy." *Journal of Political Power* 9, no. 3 (2016): 431-447.

Zhang, Lejin, and Doreen Wu. "Media Representations of China: A Comparison of China Daily and Financial Times Reporting on the Belt and Road Initiative." *Critical Arts* 31, no. 6 (2017): 29-43.

Zhao, Suisheng. "Chinese Foreign Policy in Hu's Second Term: Coping with Political Transition Abroad." Foreign Policy Research Institute paper. May 10, 2008, http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20080510.zhao.chineseforeignpolicyhu.html.

Zhao, Yuezhi. "China's Quest for "Soft Power": Imperatives, Impediments and Irreconcilable Tensions?" *Javnost - The Public* 20, no. 4 (2013): 17-29.

Zheng, Bijian. "China's Peaceful Rise and New Role of Asia." Keynote Speech at Bo'ao International Roundtable (Hainan, P.R. China). In *China's Peaceful Rise and New Role of Asia*, by Zheng Bijian, Jérôme Monod, Miniya Chatterji, Joseph S. Nye and Wu Jianmin, 3-7. Les Cahiers du débat, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, May 2005.

Zhou, Bo. "Why China-Russia military exercises should provoke soul-searching in the West." *South China Morning Post*, September 18, 2018, https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/united-states/article/2164632/why-china-russia-military-exercises-should.

Zhou, Xiaoyan. "World Factory to World Investor." *Beijing Review* 58, no. 8 (2015): 14-17.

Zoellick, Robert. "Whither China? From Membership to Responsibility." Remarks to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, September 21, 2005, New York, https://www.ncuscr.org/sites/default/files/migration/ Zoellick_remarks_notes06_winter_spring.pdf.

**Databases**

Asociace televizních organizací (ATO), http://www.ato.cz.

Media projekt, http://www.unievydavatelu.cz/cs/unie_vydavatelu/ medialni_data/vyzkum_ctenosti.

NetMonitor, http://www.netmonitor.cz.

Newton Media Search, https://mediasearch.newtonmedia.eu/login.php? r=%2Findex.php&m=-10.

Radio projekt, http://www.median.eu/cs/medialni-vyzkumy/.