

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.