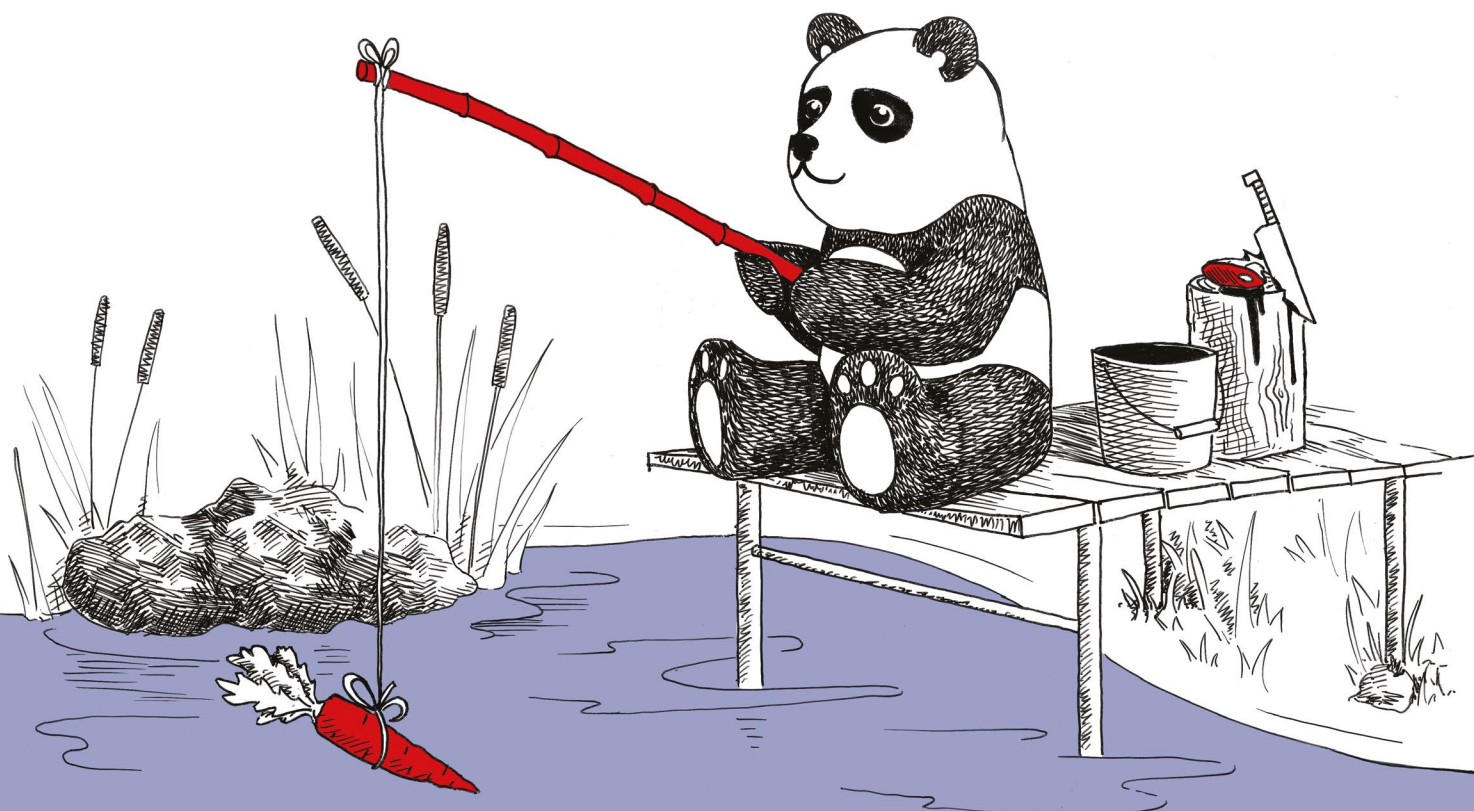


HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDERS

China's Sticks and Carrots in Central Europe: The Logic and Power of Chinese Influence

IVANA KARÁSKOVÁ, ALICJA BACHULSKA,
BARBARA KELEMEN, TAMÁS MATURA,
FILIP ŠEBOK, MATEJ ŠIMALČÍK



CHINA'S STICKS AND CARROTS IN CENTRAL EUROPE: THE LOGIC AND POWER OF CHINESE INFLUENCE

Handbook for stakeholders

June 2020

Editor – Ivana Karásková

Authors – Alicja Bachulska, Ivana Karásková, Barbara Kelemen, Tamás Matura, Filip Šebok, Matej Šimalčík

Citation – Karásková, I. et al. (2020). China's Sticks and Carrots in Central Europe: The Logic and Power of Chinese Influence - Handbook for Stakeholders. Prague, Czech Republic, Association for International Affairs (AMO).

Policy paper – To access the full policy paper, please refer to the electronic version which can be found online at www.mapinfluence.eu.

The publication was prepared within the project **MapInfluenCE** (previously known as ChinfluenCE), that maps China's influence in Central Europe, specifically Czechia, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. The project is designed and run by the Association for International Affairs (AMO), a Prague-based foreign policy think tank and NGO. The preparation of this paper was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Typesetting – Zdeňka Plocrová

Print – Vydavatelství KUFŘ, s.r.o. – tiskárna

ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (AMO)

Žitná 27/608

CZ 110 00 Praha 1

Tel.: +420 224 813 460

info@amo.cz

www.amo.cz

© AMO 2020

ISBN 978-80-87092-78-1 (print version)

ISBN 978-80-87092-77-4 (pdf version)

Introduction:

Research design and its scope

Ivana Karásková

Association for International Affairs (AMO)

As China rises, it has increasingly come to be perceived through the prism of power politics, including attempts to carve out spheres of influence. Such concerns have primarily focused on East Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region, but through China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) announced in 2013 also cover farther-flung territories like Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America or Europe.

In some of the regions, such as in Central Europe (CE), China is a newcomer and thus without an infrastructure which would allow it to pull the levers of direct power. CE may thus provide an interesting case study of the strategies and tactics China employs to establish its influence from scratch.

While China can certainly apply its power directly against Central Europe, the extent of its impact is limited due to the geographic distance of the countries and their geostrategic location (thus practically nullifying the possible use of China's military hard power), the relatively low level of mutual economic exchange (which limits the effects of possible economic sanctions) and, until recently, the narrow scope of political relations (which puts in doubt the impact of diplomatic sanctions). This study maps the tools China employed in order to gain influence. A special focus is given to 'soft' components of China's power, such as public diplomacy and propaganda, as these can become effective in contexts where the 'harder' aspects of power, such as military might or economic power, are weak or not present at all, as in the case of Central Europe.

This handbook for stakeholders represents a shortened version of the policy paper which systematically mapped China's influence in the region, focusing on a broad range of tools of China's traditional and public diplomacy and assessing their effectiveness. The main value of the publication rests in careful, rigorous research focused on the manifestation of China's diplomacy efforts over the period of the past fifteen years in four different countries in Central Europe. It builds on the knowledge and the network established through the MapInfluCE project,¹ designed and led by the Association for International Affairs (AMO) in Prague.

The study draws inspiration from Jarol B. Manheim's useful typology of relations.² Manheim distinguishes traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy by looking at the actors who engage in it.³ This study, however, modifies Manheim's approach and diverts from him as it focuses on paradiplomacy (diplomacy conducted at the sub-state level, such as by regions or municipalities) rather than on diplomat-to-diplomat relations as it sees them as belonging to the broader government-to-government type of relation. It enlarges the scope of the original framework by adding two types

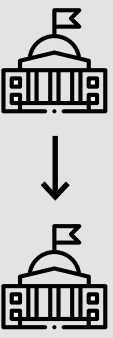

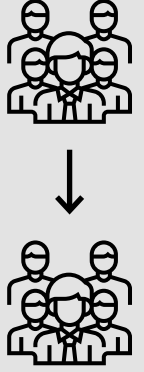
of relations (company-to-people and company-to-government) in a need to react to the diplomacy China has conducted via its state companies (e.g. CITIC, HSBC) or nominally private companies with strong relations to the Chinese government (e.g. Huawei). It also looks at the manifestations of the recent 'mask diplomacy' conducted by Beijing during the COVID-19 pandemics in Central Europe.

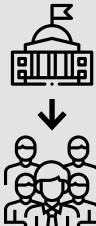
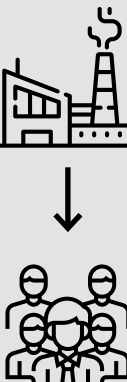
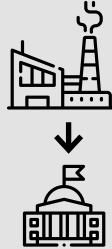
Of course, all countries engage in diplomacy and use similar means to promote their goals abroad. China, however, represents a rather special case where – unlike in democratic countries – all types of relations, including people-to-people relations, involve in one form or another the government, which allows the activity in the first place and may provide resources for it to be carried out. The Chinese government penetrates all relations, be it relations conducted on the sub-state level, the people-to-people level or Chinese companies' relations in foreign countries. Nevertheless, this study distinguishes among various types of relations based on the actors which engage in them. The distinction of various types of relations (below) reflects Chinese rhetoric, which differentiates (at least verbally and when in China's interests) between these relations. It also serves the analytical purpose of structuring the publication, allowing for comparison among four countries and enabling reaching more general conclusions. In several cases, such as the establishment of direct transport links between China and CE countries, the classification of the type of the relation in a particular country (e.g. belonging to government-to-government, paradiplomacy or company-to-people type of relations) is rather difficult to make. Similarly problematic were the negotiations over the lease of panda to CE countries. In order to adhere to the structure of the publication, the specific tool is included into the category which fits most of the described cases. Similarly the existence and activities of local interlocutors who (in reality or only allegedly) communicate on behalf of Chinese entities further complicates the attribution of a particular tool. The study discusses this issue and clearly marks where the tool was announced by a local interlocutor instead of the Chinese entity.

This study focuses on tools of China's traditional and public diplomacy which can be documented and evaluated using open source material and deliberately ignores similar or reciprocal actions taken by Central European countries in regard to China. The relations between China and Central European states are complex and reactive, e.g. China's decision to cancel the Czech musical ensembles' concerts in Beijing was closely linked to the Prague Mayor's statements and actions preceding the cancellation, however, the study focuses only on China's activities, providing thorough but not full account of the bilateral exchange. Moreover, some of the relations are closely tied to the 17+1 platform, thus making it hard to dissect bilateral and platform-based interactions.

The following table attempts to summarize different types of relations and examples of the tools which China uses to achieve its goals in Central Europe. 'Carrots' represent an inducement (the positive, appealing nature of diplomacy instruments which are yielded by China), while 'sticks' refer to coercion (the negative, punishing nature of the tools used against the local government/public).

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF TOOLS OF CHINA’S TRADITIONAL AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AS DOCUMENTED IN CENTRAL EUROPE⁴

type of relation	inducement (‘carrots’)	coercion (‘sticks’)
<p>GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → increased diplomatic exchange, high-level visits (President, Prime Minister, ministerial level) → (co)sponsored trips of politicians (invitations through e.g parliamentary friendship groups) → signing of high-level documents (e.g. strategic partnerships) → increased party-to-party relations → support in international forums (e.g. during the UN Secretary-General selection) → opening of direct transport links (for political reasons) → promises of China’s investment → “mask diplomacy” during coronavirus epidemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → shunning/ignorance of state representatives → cancellation of visits → limitation/freezing of diplomatic relations → halting of negotiations on economic cooperation → postponement of opening new/cancellation of already established direct transport links/ threat of rerouting direct transport links* → threat of economic retaliation against companies operating in China
<p>PARADIPLOMACY</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → cultivation of regional ties → promises of investment projects → (co)sponsored trips of regional/ municipal representatives to China → sister city agreements → panda diplomacy** → opening of transport links (based on provincial governments’ agreements) → “mask diplomacy” during coronavirus epidemic (sub-national level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → renunciation of sub-government documents (e.g. sister city agreements) → pressure applied on communal politicians (e.g. on disinviting Taiwan’s representatives or renaming public spaces to honor Tibetans) → denial of panda **
<p>PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms → spread of China-positive narrative (e.g. media cooperation in supplements, sharing content between Xinhua and local news agencies and NGOs, local language broadcasting by China Radio International) → (co)sponsored trips of non-governmental actors (e.g. journalists, NGOs, academics) → establishment of NGOs in the region → increased academic cooperation → sponsorship of cultural events → youth cooperation projects (e.g. Bridge for the Future, Chinese diaspora camps) → establishment and cooperation with friendship associations → use of Chinese diaspora → lower level “mask diplomacy” (e.g. between Chinese and CE universities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → cancellation of invitations to China → demonstrations orchestrated by Chinese Embassy/abuse of Chinese diaspora

<p>GOVERNMENT-TO-PEOPLE</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → China's government scholarships → content co-created by Chinese state representatives in local media (e.g. ambassador's op-eds, increased presence of Chinese state entities on social media, cooperation with local social media influencers, etc.) → "mask diplomacy" (e.g. conducted by Chinese Embassy involving Chinese diaspora) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → critical ambassador's op-eds
<p>COMPANY-TO-PEOPLE</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → sponsorship of events (cultural, sport, academic, etc.) → advertorials (paid op-eds promoting the company or its views) → sponsorship of think tank analyses promoting company's interests (e.g. on costs of excluding Huawei from 5G) → company's sponsorship of establishment and operation of Confucius Institutes (e.g. Wanhua-Borsodchem) → rewards connected to winning students' competition (Huawei's Seeds for the Future program) → company-to-academia cooperation (e.g. Huawei Authorized Information and Network Academy in Poland, Huawei-Slovak Academy of Science joint research) → media acquisition to control local media's China coverage → acquisition of local sports teams → "mask diplomacy" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → threat of divestment (e.g. from a local sport team)*
<p>COMPANY-TO-GOVERNMENT/ COMPANY-TO-SUB-STATE LEVEL ENTITIES</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → "mask diplomacy" (company donations of protective equipment to municipalities, regions or national healthcare centers) → establishment of company regional center (provider of employment and taxpayer) → strategic partnership between Chinese companies and CE governments (e.g. Huawei, BorsodChem, Yanfeng, Bank of China or Wescast-Bohong in Hungary) 	

Source: authors' own compilation

*Threats conveyed by Central European interlocutors, not Chinese state entities.

** Panda diplomacy may belong to paradiplomacy, government-to-people relations or government-to-government type of relations (based on the actors involved). The authors decided to place panda diplomacy to the paradiplomacy section based on the experience of Poland, despite the fact that in the Czech case, the Chinese side insisted on the initial round of negotiations of the lease of panda being conducted at the highest possible level (e.g. heads of the state or heads of the government).

Conclusions

China does not use a 'one size fits all' approach in Central Europe. Our research shows that while China's goal of establishing a friendly (or at least friendlier) environment and a strategy to achieve it are similar in all four countries, its tactics differ in reaction to the local political climate, geopolitical standing and level of interactions. From the open source materials it seems that in Hungary China uses exclusively 'carrots' without the need to apply 'sticks'. In Poland it employs mainly 'carrots', while in Czechia, which represents a state with a tradition of opposing China, it uses a mixture of 'carrots' with a recent increase in the use of 'sticks'. For specific reasons, in Slovakia, China's influence is muted to a level where the notion of 'carrots' and 'sticks' applies only in a limited way as Beijing continues to remain on the sidelines of the country's foreign interests. Thus, it could be argued that it is not only China's intentions, but also the Central European states' and their political and economic elites' interest in attracting China's attention which is helping to provide openings for Chinese influence to enter and thrive in the region.

China is active in all researched domains of relations, though the level of activity varies. In all four countries, China has been increasingly active on the government-to-government level since 2000s. This level of interaction (including party-to-party diplomacy) was also the first one to emerge. The research shows that China's tactics tend towards employing 'carrots' as the first option in establishing itself in the region. The use of 'sticks' is predominantly linked to the question of China's sovereignty. In all documented instances, China's harsh reactions came after official actions (at either governmental or sub-governmental levels or both) related to Tibet or Taiwan (e.g. meeting with the Dalai Lama, renunciation of an article in the Prague-Beijing sister city agreement acknowledging Taiwan being a part of China, etc.). At the time of the writing of this study, 'sticks' have not been documented in connection with the Huawei case.

The case of Prague-Beijing sister city agreement reveals this tactics in greater detail. In this specific case, China signaled its use of 'sticks' before it implemented them in order to influence its challenger to budge. The effectiveness of 'sticks' depends on China's credibility to wield them and the potential damage they can cause to the other country. In the case of Central Europe with its (still) limited bilateral trade exchange, dominant orientation to the European Union's internal market and – with the exception of Hungary – few political goals for which it would strive to obtain China's backing in the international arena, the damage would be rather small.

Curiously, while the use of 'sticks' has been already visible in a number of domains (e.g. government-to-government, people-to-people relations), they have, so far, not been applied in economic relations. This could be explained by a relatively modest economic exchange between China and Central European countries and a strong potential for the measure to backfire and negatively affect Chinese companies. Even in Hungary,

China's economic presence is still limited in comparison to the importance of the EU and the US. The EU member countries are also far more important investors.

Our research shows that, perhaps surprisingly, 'sticks' seem less likely to be used as a follow-up to a critique of the Chinese human rights record, especially if the words are not accompanied with deeds and if the critique is in line with the position of the European Union. While official reactions from Chinese embassies almost inevitably follow, the critique itself does not seem to affect economic relations. In this case, political and economic relations seem to follow a different rationale.

There may be, however, a few recorded exceptions, when it seems that China blocked or halted economic deals in connection to 'sensitive issues' such as Tibet or Taiwan (yet, the list does not include human rights issues). China is said to block impending economic deals when a Chinese investor allegedly lost interest in Slovakia after then President Kiska met with the Dalai Lama⁵ or when a deal concerning Czech airplanes was allegedly halted due to a planned trip of the President of the Czech Senate to Taiwan⁶. Though both cases touch upon Tibet or Taiwan issues, the problematic nature of these kind of 'sticks' is the questionable probability of the deals having materialized in the first place, and also the fact that in both cases the 'sticks' were announced by local politicians rather than Chinese side.⁷

Also, the means of coercion have not been limited to retaliation in the same domain where the 'offense' came from, i.e. the level of government-to-government relations. China tends to retaliate in a number of other domains.⁸ This finding supports the claim that the Chinese government influences all aspects of foreign relations (including e.g. those at the people-to-people or company-to-people level).

The evaluation of 'sticks' yielded by China is complicated by the existence and activities of local political proxies. It leads to a principal-agent problem, when domestic figures are one of the driving forces through which China's influence is exercised in the country and who also effectively shape China's image. It is thus not exclusively China's actions which lead to China's public diplomacy 'achievements' or 'failures'. The activities of domestic players deserve equal scrutiny in the effort to describe and critically assess the impacts of China's 'sticks' and 'carrots'.

Indeed, some threats were communicated by local actors, not China itself (e.g. when the Czech President Miloš Zeman announced China's probable retaliation against the main Czech airport and divestment from Slavia soccer club). So, at least hypothetically, we cannot rule out an option that some threats might have been the result of the positioning of domestic political actors rather than a true representation of China's intentions. Yet other threats were communicated by the same proxies on behalf of the Chinese Embassy, as shown in the case of a letter sent from the embassy to the late President of the Czech Senate to prevent him from visiting Taiwan. The letter was handed over by the Office of the Czech President. In this case, Beijing used a threat of potential detriment caused to local Czech companies operating in China if the visit was not canceled. The tactics was based on the assumption that the proxies themselves would make sure the Senate President would refrain from any action seen as provoking China.

It is also notable, in case of Czechia, that some 'carrots' in the form of public expectations surrounding Chinese investment (including specific numbers) were announced again by the Czech political interlocutors. Perhaps paradoxically, local interlocutors

largely contributed to the backlash against China by selling an unrealistic vision of a substantial upgrade of economic ties that Beijing could not (or did not want to) deliver upon. Still other forms of ‘carrots’ were clearly offered and promoted by China, sometimes through its International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party, that has been active in party-to-party and people-to-people relations, cultivating senior as well as upcoming politicians of both leading and opposition parties.

Similarly to the situation in Czechia, one of the sources of China’s influence in Hungary is the proactive eagerness on the part of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Perhaps surprisingly, members of the ruling party Fidesz used to be fierce opponents of China for decades, while other mainstream parties in the parliament show a much more cautious or even hostile approach towards China.⁹ Research interviews have bolstered these findings.¹⁰ Three possible explanations emerge. First, despite all the disappointments over the past nine years, PM Orbán still believes in the potential of Chinese investment especially against the impending decrease of EU structural funds. Second, Orbán enjoys close relations to Beijing as it offers him leverage at the EU level and potential political support from another illiberal state. Third, cooperation with Chinese companies creates business opportunities for Hungarian interest groups close to the government, as the examples of the reconstruction of the Budapest-Belgrade railway and the golden visa program show. Either way, the political proximity of Orbán’s government to Beijing will likely remain the reality for the years to come.

Our research also shows that China has become active at a sub-governmental level, establishing and increasing the number of partnerships with regions and municipalities. In this domain its activities have gone largely unnoticed by the local China watching communities and journalists.

In general, people-to-people interactions have been the most dynamically evolving – but not necessarily widely enough publicized and researched – component of China’s activity in the Visegrád countries. Academic exchange has developed bilaterally as well as multilaterally in different formats and local non-profit and non-governmental organizations have maintained communication with different Chinese organizations (which should, however, not be called their “counterparts”, given the discrepancies in terms of their workings and roles in PRC’s political system). Confucius Institutes have also grown in number despite international criticism related to their possible impact on enabling and shaping uncritical China-related academic debates.

When it comes to government-to-people cooperation over the past fifteen years, Chinese presence in Central Europe has expanded through various means, such as promotion of government-sponsored scholarships, cooperation with local media and individual journalists or social media influencers as well as promotion of China-related official merchandise. Especially with the COVID-19 epidemic, the increase in China’s activities which attempt to influence local media and also target the Chinese diaspora is worth noticing. Even before the coronavirus epidemic, Chinese embassies attempted to shape the public and media discourse on issues related to China and its declared core interests. With the exception of Hungary, where the Chinese Embassy does not feel an urge to deal with the local media and where the public discourse is seen as already positive on China, the Chinese embassies in the remaining Central European countries combined rather fringe media outlets with attempts to increase their presence in mainstream ones. This media cooperation in the form of supplements,

content sharing agreements and the increased presence of China Radio International broadcasting in local languages contributed to shape China's image. Nonetheless it is important to point out that despite numerous attempts by the Chinese entities, their media reach is still limited and receives a significant pushback from journalists, especially in Czechia and Slovakia.

In the case of Chinese companies' relations, Chinese firms seem mostly active in Poland and Hungary, while in Czechia, where the CEFC scandal negatively affected the perception of Chinese investments and the reputation of other Chinese firms, companies seem not to publicly invest in an attempt to improve China's image. However, the recent case of Huawei sponsoring an analysis on alleged costs Czechia would bear if excluding the company from 5G networks may represent a new turning point.

Finally, the relations between the Central Europe and China do not exist in a vacuum, as relations between China and the other powers, specifically the EU and the US, influence the overall context. The influence of the Sino-American rivalry is perhaps most visible in the case of Poland. Some elements of coercion became visible at the level of political declarations when Sino-Polish ties started to be influenced by the general deterioration of ties between Beijing and Washington. As Poland has enjoyed very close ties with the US, Sino-American strategic rivalry has impacted certain forms of cooperation between Warsaw and Beijing, most notably in terms of limiting Huawei's potential involvement in the creation of Polish 5G networks, which has met with criticism from the Chinese side.

However, unlike in the Czech case, China has mostly refrained from using sticks (or a threat thereof) in its relations with Poland when bilateral ties were strained. Perhaps, Warsaw's close ties with Washington serve as a factor deterring Beijing from using sticks against Poland. On the other hand, the actual scope of Sino-Polish cooperation remains so limited that even if Beijing wanted to use specific measures against Warsaw, they would hardly harm Poland in a significant way.

Recommendations

The set of recommendations for the Visegrád countries is rather straightforward:

First, after the coronavirus epidemic, the European Union should initiate information and PR campaigns across Europe to make its citizens aware of the benefits of the EU, its values and its economic might. As the major part of Chinese influence springs from its perceived economic superiority and promises of economic benefits, it is fundamentally important to increase the self-awareness and self-esteem of Europeans. More intensive and smart strategic communication should also target Hungary and remind it of economic reality.

Second, higher levels of transparency should be employed in all fields of relations with China. In the specific case of Sino-Hungarian relations a special emphasis should be placed on transparency in investment, loans and public procurement issues. The European Union should scrutinize business transactions between the Hungarian and Chinese state to eliminate even the slightest chances of misconduct.

Third, the four Central European countries need to recalibrate their approach to China to make their objectives more realistic, yet not opportunistic, while also taking into account the structural and political barriers that have become evident in bilateral as well as multilateral relations in recent years. This should also be achieved through joint EU-wide efforts to ensure a greater impact and increase in European bargaining power vis-à-vis China. Central European countries should also be more active within the 17+1 platform, and push for common EU interests thus mitigating the asymmetry advantage China has over 17+1 as well as smaller EU member states.

Fourth, due to a low economic dependence on China, Central European countries should not be afraid to engage in critical discussions, including those on human rights issues, without the fear of experiencing high economic costs. Moreover, by including human rights in the conversations with China, the countries can showcase their commitment to global norms and values.

Fifth, Czechia, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia should conduct an audit of their relations with China to evaluate the role of individual government agencies and the effectiveness of their policies towards China. After the audit, the countries should come up with their own coherent China strategies which will contain clear and measurable objectives and specify the means to achieve these objectives. Countries' China strategies should be aware of both the economic and political realities of China, including its human rights track record.

Sixth, the Visegrád countries should avoid assisting the CCP in creating alternative platforms for conducting party diplomacy, thus avoiding regular government-level channels. Such efforts assist in bolstering CCP legitimacy and undermine the integrity and coherence of the respective governments' foreign policies.

Seventh, the trend of former politicians finding employment as pro-China lobbyists, salient especially in Czechia, is worrisome. The revolving-doors rules should

be reviewed to limit the potential for misuse of former politicians' political access and networks for the gain of foreign powers.

Eighth, many of the activities at the sub-national level have gone unnoticed by the media and China watching local communities. With varying levels of success, municipalities and self-governing regions rely on activities which in turn serve to legitimize the CCP and its cadres domestically. The guidelines for paradiplomacy which would provide an overview of (un)suitable approaches towards China for local and regional governments would complement the countries' overall China strategies.

Ninth, support for independent journalism is crucial in raising public awareness of the potential benefits, risks and side effects of cooperation with China. The Czech case, with the highest number of documented cases enabling conclusions to be reached on the Chinese modus operandi in employing 'sticks' and 'carrots' and detailed coverage of proxies' involvement in spreading Chinese influence, can serve as an inspiration.

Tenth, despite China's current media strategy being unsuccessful, the four Visegrád countries should stay vigilant as this influence could augment in the future in the case of Chinese investment in the media sector. It is thus crucial (not only because of Chinese investment, but because of other malign actors as well) to keep considering media as a strategic asset and to subject it to national investment screening mechanisms.

Finally, with the exception of Czechia, the academic cooperation between Visegrád countries and China goes largely unnoticed. Central European governments should support the education of their home-grown China experts, otherwise universities will be pushed to rely on Chinese financing of China-focused subjects thus opening future generations of governmental China experts to undue Chinese influence. Universities need to undertake increased due diligence when dealing with Chinese entities while also taking into account possible linkage of Chinese companies to the military and CCP. Moreover, as the case of Slovakia shows, there has been cooperation in the field of research and development, occasionally intersecting with the official governmental level, going unnoticed. The 17+1 Virtual Technology Transfer Center or the China-CEEC Blockchain Center of Excellence, initiated by the Slovak private sector, serve as a useful example.

Authors



Alicja Bachulska is a China analyst at Asia Research Center, War Studies University in Warsaw, Poland. She is also a Ph.D. candidate at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Graduate School for Social Research (GSSR).



Ivana Karásková, Ph.D., is a Founder and Project Leader of MapInflu-
enCE and China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE)
projects and a Research Fellow at Association for International Affairs
(AMO), Czechia.



Barbara Kelemen is a Research Fellow at Central European Institute
of Asian Studies (CEIAS), Slovakia, and a Research Associate at Risk
Advisory Group (TRAG), United Kingdom.



Tamás Matura, dr. jur., is an Assistant Professor at Corvinus Uni-
versity of Budapest and the founding President of the Central and
Eastern European Center for Asian Studies, Hungary.



Filip Šebok is a Research Fellow and Project Manager of China Ob-
servers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE) at Association for
International Affairs (AMO), Czechia.



Matej Šimalčík is an Executive Director at Central European Institute
of Asian Studies (CEIAS) in Bratislava, Slovakia.

About MapInfluenCE

The publication was prepared within the MapInfluenCE (previously known as ChinfluenCE) project, which maps China's influence in Central Europe, specifically Czechia, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia.

The internationally acclaimed project has utilized various tools such as media analysis to uncover who shapes China discourse in the Visegrád countries and why, the mapping of agenda-setters to reveal links between pro-China businessmen and local political elites, an analysis of changes in political parties' positions on China in the Czech and Hungarian Parliaments during the past 30 years, etc.

Through a variety of outputs (media articles, interviews, research reports, open as well as closed door events and briefings of stakeholders), MapInfluenCE broadens and shapes expert as well as public debates on China's influence and activities in the region of Central Europe. MapInfluenCE findings were widely quoted in European, US and Australian press, mentioned in e.g. the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission's 2018 Annual Report or the Reporters without Borders' report on the vulnerability of media, and presented at the European Parliament or to a delegation of US Congressmen and Senators. The original approach of MapInfluenCE set the tone and inspired journalists, think tankers and NGOs both within and outside of the region, who later conducted similar analyses on the media image of China and agenda-setting, drawing on the project's methodology and techniques.

The international team has published more than 20 policy and briefing papers in five different languages (English, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, and Slovak), authored articles or were quoted in numerous local as well as international media including Financial Times, Wall Street Journal, China Digital Times, Sydney Morning Herald, Politico Brussels Influence, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Diplomat, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Le Temps, Radio Free Europe, etc.

MapInfluenCE is designed for and run by the Association for International Affairs (AMO), a Prague-based foreign policy think tank and NGO.

FOLLOW US!



www.mapinfluence.eu

#MapinfluenCE

About AMO

Association for International Affairs is a non-governmental non-profit organization founded in 1997. The mission of AMO has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of international affairs through a broad range of educational and research activities. Thanks to its activities in the Czech Republic and abroad and 20-year tradition, AMO has established itself as the Czech leading independent institution in the field of international relations and foreign policy.





IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS AMO STRIVES TO:

- formulate and publish briefing, research and policy papers;
- arrange international conferences, expert seminars, roundtables, public debates;
- organize educational projects;
- present critical assessments and comments on current events for local and international press;
- create vital conditions for growth of a new expert generation;
- support interest in international relations in the wider public domain;
- cooperate with like-minded local and international institutions.

AMO RESEARCH CENTER

The Research Center of the Association for International Affairs is a leading Czech think-tank, which is not bound to any political party or ideology. With its activities, it supports an active approach to foreign policy, provides an independent analysis of current political issues and encourages expert and public debate on related topics. The main goal of the Research Center is systematic observation, analysis and commentary on international affairs with special focus on Czech foreign policy.

FOLLOW US!

-  www.facebook.com/AMO.cz
-  www.twitter.com/AMO_cz
-  www.youtube.com/AMOcz
-  www.instagram.com/AMO.cz

Footnotes

- 1 The project has been known as ChinfluenCE in 2017-2020. For the project website visit www.mapinfluence.eu
- 2 Jarol B. Manheim, *Strategic Public Diplomacy and American Foreign Policy: The Evolution of Influence* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- 3 Manheim outlines four types of relations: (1) government-to-government, (2) diplomat-to-diplomat, (3) people-to-people and (4) government-to-people, 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.
- 4 The table documents known examples of 'sticks' and 'carrots' in the region. It is by no means an exhaustive list which would summarize all kinds of tools yielded by China. China has been known to use other means globally (such as foreign aid, harassment of scholars, using student organizations to influence academia, consumer boycotts etc.) which have not been (perhaps yet) documented in the region.
- 5 "“Už pocitujeme dôsledky stretnutia Kisku s dalajlámom”, tvrdí Fico. Veľký investor sa odmlčal”, *Hospodárske noviny*, October 23, 2016, <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/847702-uz-pocitujeme-dosledky-stretnutia-kisku-s-dalajlamom-tvrdi-fico-velky-investor-sa-odmlcal>.
- 6 Jakub Zelenka, Lukáš Prchal, “Zeman a Vondráček lobbovali za letadla z Kunovic marně. Čína obchod blokuje kvůli Kuberovi, tvrdí Hrad”, *Deník N*, January 2, 2020, <https://denikn.cz/261967/zeman-a-vondracek-lobbovali-za-letadla-z-kunovic-marne-cina-obchod-blokuje-kvuli-kuberovi-tvrdi-hrad/>.
- 7 Slovak exports to China were not impacted by the meeting and Prime Minister Fico never specified which purported investment plans fell through, leading to a possible conclusion that publicizing the whole issue may have been the result of Fico's domestic positioning. Also Zeman's claims regarding the halting of the deal concerning Czech airplanes were met with skepticism.
- 8 The case of terminating the sister city agreement between Prague and Beijing illustrates it rather nicely. The Prague Mayor criticized the article in the sister city agreement based on it naming Taiwan a part of China. The termination of the agreement resulted in China's cancelling concerts of Czech orchestras and (according to Czech politicians) threatening to withdraw financially from Slavia Prague soccer club and divert planes from Prague airport to Croatia.
- 9 Ivana Karásková, Alžběta Bajerová, Tamás Matura. *Images of China in the Czech and Hungarian Parliaments*. Prague: Association for International Affairs (AMO), 2019. http://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AMO_Images-of-China-in-the-Czech-and-Hungarian-Parliaments.pdf.
- 10 Matej Šimalčík, Alžběta Bajerová, Ivana Karásková, Tamás Matura, Agnieszka Ostrowska and Bruno Surdel, *Perception of China among V4 Political Elites*. Bratislava: CEIAS, 2019. https://ceias.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/V4-views-of-China_paper_FINAL-1.pdf.

