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CHINA WATCH

Chinese communities in Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine

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THE CHINESE IN ROMANIA

THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN ROMANIA, THE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN BUCHAREST

The Community

The Chinese community in Romanian was, and probably still is, one of the biggest communities in Eastern Europe, second only to the one present in Hungary[1]. Although the exact number of Chinese in Romania has always been disputed, **the current official number is about 7600 legal residents[2],** making it the third biggest immigrant community after Moldovans and Turks, although the figures given by the members of the Chinese community themselves vary between 5000 and 20000 people, not all of them legal residents.

The highest number of Chinese in Romania was between 1989 and 1998, when members of the community estimate there were about 40-50.000 people, due to visa exemption for the so-called "ordinary passports for public affairs" (yin gong putong huzhao). However, most of those who entered Romanian in the 1990s used it as transit point and left for Western Europe or the US. After 2000, the numbers remained constant at an unofficial estimate of 10.000 people, until Romania's accession to the EU in 2007 which imposed new quality standards for goods, the economic crisis in 2008 and the tax authority, ANAF (National Agency for Fiscal Administration) controls in 2015 made some leave the country. The official figures also show a decrease in numbers during the COVID-19 pandemics.

According to Amy H. Liu (surveys 2015-2016), **almost half of the immigrants (54%) originate in the southeastern province of Zhejiang**, one of the most economically active Chinese provinces, ranked the fourth richest province in the country[3]. At the same time, this is a diverse community, with members coming also from the northeastern provinces or the southern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. Based on the survey, the image of the average Chinese immigrant is a

[1] Coming right behind the Chinese community in Hungary, the Romanian one is much smaller, probably even less than half of the Hungarian community which was also boosted by the residency bond program, closed in March 2017.

[2] 7636 Chinese residents in 2020, a significative decrease from 8459 residents in 2019, according to the General Inspectorate for Immigrations, see *Analiza activității Inspectoratului General pentru Imigrări în anul 2020* (*The Activity Report for 2020*) - http://igi.mai.gov.ro/sites/default/files/evaluarea_activitatii_in_anul_2020_final_3.pdf; or approximately 7600 residents in 2019, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, http://ro.mofcom.gov.cn/article/ddgk/20190/20190902897466.shtml

[3] Amy H. Liu, *The Chinese In the Black Sea Countries. The Communities in Bucharest, Sofia and Tbilisi*. EFOR Policy Brief 121, June 2021 https://expertforum.ro/the-chinese-in-the-black-sea-countries/

young male, in his late 30s, first generation of migrants, sometimes married, with children born in Romania. There is a very limited number of intercultural marriages, most Chinese men looking a wife either within the community or from China.

Many times, the marriage is arranged by the family members in China. One young Chinese man who came to Romania as a teenager, with his family, in mid-2000s, reported to us that it had been decided by his family he needed to marry a girl from China and that his grandmother was actively looking for a future wife. He was about 25 at the time of discussion, and he had to go to China every summer to meet the girls his grandmother selected. He did not mind his family looking for a wife, although he was in no rush to get married. After marriage, his wife was to come and live with him in Romania. It is to be noted that besides him and his much younger sister, born in Romania, no one in his family spoke Romanian, except a few words commonly used for business in the Red Dragon complex.

If in the 1990s, Romania was chosen as destination, albeit temporary, thanks to the visa exemption, after 2000, many newcomers arrived as family members. At the beginning they left Romania for Western Europe, but in the last decade quite a few of them either returned to China, attracted by the rapid economic development and because of the difficulty to get a Romanian residential permit, or moved to other continents.

One businessman in the **Red Dragon** said during an interview that his younger sister had left Romania for Africa (he did not specify where exactly in Africa); his sister used to be a teacher in China, but since their parents were already in Romania, they also decided to join them. They came on student-visas changed later into business-visas. She stayed here for a year, then moved to Africa for three years, trying to do business, but gave up and returned to China taking up her old job as a teacher. This is a typical trajectory of a diaspora family.

The Chinese community is found mainly in Bucharest, although there is a limited number of Chinese in other cities such as Timişoara, Constanţa, or Cluj. In Bucharest, their main business area is the Red Dragon Complex, in Colentina–Fundeni; there is another Chinatown in Afumaţi, less developed than the Red Dragon. Most of the community is involved in wholesale, but there are also some who opened restaurants, retail shops, tourist agencies, services (such as translation offices or document processing offices) and even real estate.

Just as in other parts of the world, the Chinese community lives relatively isolated from the rest of the local population. As first-generation immigrants, their language skills are basic, if at all, and it is not very easy to communicate with those around them, except from a few standard sentences related to work, or daily communication. Free access to Internet, on-line Chinese-language TV and **Chinese language newspapers in Romania – Lü Luo Huaren bao (Chinezii din Romania), Ouzhou qiao bao (Ziarul chinezii in lume), ori Ouzhou shibao (Stiri din Europa**, a Chinese newspaper first launched in France, with offices in Romania from September 2019) – only increases their isolation. Men are less isolated than women, as main earners of the family, doing business; women, especially the married ones, stay at home taking care of their children.

The language barrier, but also the daily habits, such as eating or shopping, make the Chinese live in close proximity to each other, and thus we can find a few clusters in the north-eastern part of Bucharest: Colentina (beautifully called in Chinese Gaoliangdi – The Sorghum Fields), Obor (Aobo'er), Drumul Găriı, which goes to the Red Dragon complex, or Afumaţi, where they also have gardens for growing Chinese vegetables. Some rent the places where they live, but there are also a lot of house owners.

Many Chinese families in Romania have more than one child. Some are born here, although it is not uncommon for the young pregnant wife to travel back home to her family, close to the time of delivery. The children are brought back after birth and raised in Romania. When it comes to raising children, there is no single pattern. Some families, where both parents work or already have a young child, bring their parents from China to help[4]. There are also cases when parents hire Romanian nannies to take care of the child and the child even lives with the nanny during the work-days, which creates a serious language problem.

There is no official Chinese school in Bucharest[5], so when it comes to schooling, the options are limited: either go a Romanian state

[4] In interviews, the older generation was asked if, once in Romania, they decide to remain here. Almost all reportd that their parents chose to return home, saying that they did not want to die abroad.

[5] There used to be a daycare center, something resembling to a kindergarten or primary school, but it was not legally opened as a school; apparently it was closed because of some problems with the teachers.

school, or to a private one. A significative number of Chinese pupils in Bucharest Cambridge School or the International School of Bucharest, (a Turkish school), where they teach Mandarin Chinese as mother-tongue, employ trained Chinese teachers and use the same Chinese language books as in mainland China. However, private schools are not everyone's choice because of the high tuition fees. Another option is sending the young child back to China, to his or her grandparents, during the primary school years[6].

At home, the parents speak mainly standard Mandarin Chinese to their children, while grandparents speak dialects. There are many instances when children act as interpreters for their parents in official situations, and there are also families where children understand Chinese but do not speak it, or at least not fluently – they are a reverse image of their parents speaking broken Romanian. Going to the Romanian school and speaking Chinese at home creates another problem for the young people: even if they speak Chinese fluently, **they cannot read or write** because writing requires a lot of practice, which they do not have. Also, their Chinese is rather limited to every day vocabulary and have difficulties understanding higher registers.

Place of origin and ethnic identity are two of the most important cohesive elements within the Chinese community, especially for the elder generation. The old mentality that people from the same geographic area are much closer and ready to help than those from other provinces was still prevalent amongst the elderly. For example, if they are originally from Zhejiang, they would ask another person from Zhejiang for help, rather than someone from the northeast. On the other hand the younger generation, who either came here as children or as young adults, the place of origin is more of an imagined community, in the sense that they might visit family there, business partners might be locals dues to connections, but when it comes to help, one might hear statements like "I would ask for help anyone who can help me" (in Red Dragon, interview, March 2018).

There could be two reasons for this. Firstly, the younger generation does not have roots in their place of origin, some of them might not even understand the local dialect; identity based on place of origin is replaced by identity belonging to the ethnic group when abroad. Secondly, many members of the Chinese community here are Christians, belonging to various Protestant groups[7]. It could be the case that for many of them, the feeling of belonging comes from

[6] Primary school in China consists of the first six years, followed by secondary school, grade 7 to grade 9, and high school from grade 10 to grade 12. Some children spend the whole primary cycle there, some only the first four years.

[7] In interviews, a person was asked if he goes to "church", using the Chinese word *jiaotang*, the equivalent of the Romanian word "biserică" (church). He corrected the phrasing saying he did not go to *jiaotang*, but to *jiaohui,* which is closer to "religious meeting" (adunare); then he used the two words as substitutes.

the memership in certain Christian group, where the place of origin has no importance whatsoever.

The Church

We do not know exactly if the members of the Chinese community in Romania adopted Christianity before arrving here, or after: there are some who accepted the faith in Romania, while others come from Christian families in China. (Someone are reportedly at the fourth generation) **The most active Chinese Christian church is The Bethlehem Baptist Christian Church, (Biserica Creştina Baptista Betleem, Boliheng huaren jidu jiaohui)[8].**

In 2018, the minister was a Canadian Chinese and the sermon was in Mandarin. The church started in 1996 with an American Chinese minister, they announced publicly the existence of the church in 2000 and officially registered as a Baptist church in 2008. In 2009, they purchased a plot of land close to the Red Dragon complex planning to build a church; the construction is yet to begin[9]. The conversion to Christianity happens sometimes when people simply go to attended the meetings and in time started believing, while other had problems and the church helped them.

The church is important not only as a place for worship, but also as a school. In 2018, there were about 130 children attending Saturday language classes at the Bethlehem Church, where they were taught mainly how to read and write in Chinese. At the time of the discussion (2018) there were eight classes, on different levels, with 15 to 17 children per class. The church is also involved in missionary work, for example spreading the gospel in the Rroma community in Bucharest or maintaining friendly relations with other Protestant churches in the country.

There is also a Chinese Buddhist temple somewhere in Colentina, but those interviewed could not tell much about it, besides that “it is a Taiwanese religious sect that includes everything, Sakiamuni, Maytreia, all.” People estimate that there were more Buddhists than Christians in the community.

When it comes to settling in Romania for good, opinions differ, depending on various factors, with family as one of the most important. People with children going to Romanian state schools and some knowledge of Romanian are less likely to leave Romania and move to another place. There are families where the wife got Romanian citizenship, while the husband remained Chinese because it was much more important for his business to be able to move freely between Romania and China[10]. Freedom of faith was another important factor for not returning to China, together with freedom of movement, information etc.

[8] A literal translation of the name in Chinese would be the Bethlehem Chinese Christian Church.

[9] Apparently, there is a Chinese Buddhist temple somewhere in Colentina, but those interviewed could not tell much about it, besides that “it is a Taiwanese religious sect that includes everything, Sakiamuni, Maytreia, all.” They admitted though that there were more Buddhists than Christians in the community.

[10] China does not allow dual citizenship.

The Newspapers

There is no doubt that the Internet is the main channel of information for the local community; the Chinese here can have access to any kind of Chinese websites. There are numerous apps which keep their users informed or in touch with their families elsewhere in the world; WeChat is extremely popular and ensures smooth communication with people in China.

There are some Chinese newspapers, both in print, online or as app, available to the Chinese community here. The most common ones are **Lü Luo Huaren bao (Chinezii din Romania), Ouzhou qiao bao (Ziarul chinezii in lume), and Ouzhou shibao (Nouvelles d'Europe)**. These newspapers are available in the Chinese grocery stores in the Red Dragon, where buyers can pick them for free.

Lü Luo Huaren bao (Chinezii din Romania) is the oldest newspaper in Mandarin, a weekly launched in 1999 targeting mainly the Chinese businesspeople[11]. The most popular one is Ouzhou qiao bao (Ziarul chinezii in lume) launched in 2000, which appears twice a month in Chinese, English and Romanian[12]. Ouzhou shibao (Stiri din Europa) is the newest one; it is a Chinese language newspaper with offices and local versions in Western Europe, which opened its Romanian office in September 2019 in the presence of the Chinese ambassador to Bucharest[13].

All the newspapers republish articles from the mainstream Chinese media, articles about Romania and international events. They function with very little staff, often less than 10 people, mainly Chinese, but also Romanians. Gao Jin, the owner of the Ouzhou qiao bao, mentioned in an interview that his newspaper also benefited from the voluntary work of the Chinese students in Romania because "everyone wants to contribute to the dissemination of the Chinese culture in Romania" (2019)[14].

Both Lü Luo Huaren bao and Ouzhou qiao bao collaborate closely with the Chinese mainland mass-media. Lü Luo Huaren bao had a partnership with the China Daily (Global Edition) and the Xinhua News Agency in Bucharest carries articles and photos made by these two newspapers.

Gao Jin is very open about his good relations with the Chinese Embassy and the Xinhua News

[11] We could not find any webpage of this newspaper, but there is a WeChat page which is active.

[12] Their website is available in Chinese and English. The owner, Gao Jin, told me that the newspaper was also published in Romanian and its website also mentions that in the *About us* section. (http://eurochinesedaily.com/class3.html). It is also stated that the newspaper is available in 20 countries in Europe.

13 Website http://www.oushinet.com; *Ambasadorul Jiang Yu a participat la ceremonia de deschidere a sediului ziarului 'Ştiri din Europa (oushinet.com)' din România* - http://www.chinaembassy.org.ro/rom/sgzcnew/sghdnew/t1695920.html .

[14] "Gao Jin the director of the *Ouzhou qiao bao* – Romania: The Chinese language forums in the world are the wind vane of the development of the Chinese mass-media", (in Chinese), at https://news.sina.com.cn/o/2019-10-09/doc-iicezzrr1082267.shtml .

Agency in Bucharest, with which he is in constant contact. The interview took place in 2018, during the protests in Piata Victoriei. When asked if the newspaper carried any articles about the protests, he smiled and said that they were trying to publish only positive articles about Romania, especially that his newspaper was available as an app on both Android and Apple devices and therefore could be read in China. Politics, he added, was not their main content, they only published articles related to very important political events – and yes, there were some articles about the protests, but written by them; instead published articles from the *Washington Post* and *Der Spiegel* about how the West should react to the protests. The main focus of the newspaper was business.

In brief, the Chinese language newspapers in Romania owned by the members of the Chinese community do not cross any red line and try to stay away from troubles by publishing only economic news and reports or articles in line with the Party policy. There are quite a few articles about how Romania and China can benefit from the New Belt an Road Initiative.

Just as the Confucius Institutes, the Chinese newspapers function as cultural bridges, Gao Jin said, with a fundamental difference: “the Confucius Institutes represent the country, we are ordinary people. The Confucius Institutes are funded by the state, who funds us; we use our own money.”

Confucius Institutes

There are **four Confucius Institutes (CI) in Romania, at Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, (opened in 2007), Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj (opened in 2009), Transilvania University, Braşov (opened in 2012), and the University of Bucharest (opened in 2013).** Except from the institute in Brasov, which is not very active, the other three are pretty busy. The institutes in Sibiu and Cluj are in fact the Chinese university departments there, although not officially. Most of the Chinese classes are taught by teachers and volunteers at the institute, on their premises, which very convenient for the universities, financially speaking, because the teachers and volunteers at the institute are paid by the Chinese. Such situations are common in Western countries too, but they are beginning to be regarded as a problem.

Chinese language was introduced at Transilvania University in Braşov after the opening of the institute, but the involvement of the CI in the department is currently minimal. Bucharest is different, because Chinese has been taught here since 1956, the department is well established and, except in the academic year 2020-2021, there has always been a native Chinese lecturer sent in accordance with the cultural agreement between Romania and China, paid by the University of Bucharest and npt under the umbrella of the CI.

2020 was a special year and because of the pandemic; after the last lecturer finished her tenure in summer 2020, there was nobody to replace her and it was the first time

when the Chinese department in Bucharest got some help from a CI teacher. The Chinese lecturer at the University of Bucharest teaches only language and shares the seminar with a Romanian teacher. The Romanian teacher introduces the grammar, words etc, while the Chinese is responsible with conversation and listening. The schedule is tight, there is little time for conversations unrelated to the textbook. What is more, the idea is to bring over monolingual lecturers, or with very little English, to force our students speak Chinese.

In theory the **Confucius Institutes are co-financed by the two partner universities**. All the CIs are founded by a local university and a Chinese partner university; for example, **the one in Bucharest is the result of the cooperation between the University of Bucharest and China University of Political Science and Law (CUPSL) in Beijing**. The Institutes have two directors, one Romanian and one Chinese. The budget is proposed annually, approved by the members of the Board (an equal number of members from both

universities) and sent for final approval further up in China.

The Chinese universities get extra funding for the CIs co-founded with foreign partners[15]. At the beginning, there is seed money from the Chinese side, while the local partner provides the space and utilities. The CIs also generate their own revenue by organizing Chinese language classes. Normally the financing should be split evenly between the Romanian and Chinese parts, but the reality is that co-funding means that the Chinese side finances the CIs, while the partner universities provide just logistics and in-kind support. The Chinese take into account the spending in the previous year when approving a new budget. For example, if in 2020 the CI had a budget of say 100.000 USD, but spent only 20.000 USD, the budget for 2021 will be reduced by the amount left unspent from the previous year.

The main role of the CIs in Romania is the popularization of the Chinese language and culture, and their main activity are Chinese language classes. All CI activities are free for the students enrolled at the local partner university. So far there hasn't been much controversy over the CIs activities in Romania because they were not involved in visible propaganda operations. Besides language classes, other activities consist in painting or calligraphy exhibitions, various artistic shows, Chinese local opera, tea ceremonies, lectures by scholars on various topics.

In Bucharest the IC has organized lectures on Chinese poetry, philosophy, language teaching, law[16]. It is also true that no one has tried to organize any event that would get the Chinese teaching staff into trouble, so there were no cases of the Confucius Institute cancelling any event they might see as sensitive.

In the current form of organization it would be quite difficult for a Confucius Institute to promote an overt political agenda. All the events involving the community are organized together with their Romanian partners, and the events themselves are generally related to the classical tradition which has much more appeal to the Romanian public than the modern one. One might say that language classes are the perfect channel for spreading a political message, and that would be true for an intermediate or advanced level.

However it is difficult to follow a political agenda when one has to teach pronunciation and self-introductions; on top of that, although the Chinese teachers speak English, and a few know some Romanian, their foreign language skills are not developed enough to engage in political conversations. The institutes do not organize any classes other than language, martial arts, calligraphy and tea ceremony; there are no

[15] The CUPSL had four Confucius Institutes, with Bangor University, UK; University of Bucharest, Romania; University of West Indies Barbados; University of Bergen, Norway.

[16] The lectures on Chinese law were organized with the Faculty of Law, on their premises.

literature, history, or philosophy classes in Bucharest.

In theory the curriculum at the university contains history classes, which in Sibiu and Cluj are taught by the teachers from the Confucius Institute. They should be held in Romanian, but since this is impossible for a Chinese teacher, they teach it in English. There is strong self-censorship: lecturers stay away sensitive topics to avoid problematic questions from the students. The level is anyway basic and the contemporary period is not covered (and so Mao Zedong or the events under Deng Xiaoping and Xi Jinping are not mentioned).

This is not to say that the CIs are totally without influence. Scholarships are important to a Chinese language student and the CIs are one of the main access points to China. There are a few ways one could get a scholarship: **state scholarships through the National Scholarship Agency (Agentia de Credite si Burse de Studii)[17]; directly at the university; through the EU programs; or through the Confucius Institute.**

The last are the least troublesome but come with some strings attached. First of all, to get a scholarship, one needs a language proficiency test (HSK)[18] of a certain level and with a good score. Depending on this, the applicant might get a semester, a year or even a postgraduate scholarship; the programs are either for language training, or MA programs for TCFL (Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language). Once in China, the students must attend all the cultural events organized by the university, such as visits, performances, lectures etc.

Although performing Romanian folk songs or Chinese martial arts might become tedious, students tend to avoid complaining too much about it. The selection by the CI in the host country is not the final one; **after being recommended by the institute, the applicant must be approved by the Ministry of Education in China, which generally is no problem.** The CIs, at least in Romania, do not function as, say, the Fulbright Commission, as there are no scholarships for young entrepreneurs or politicians; those programs are run directly by the Chinese Embassy[19].

There is no specific syllabus the CIs use in their language teaching. All the textbooks come from China,

[17] Depending on the year, they could vary from 10 up to 25 scholarships, for all levels, complete BA to PhD programs, or just a one-year language course, and all fields of study.

[18] HSK is similar to TOEFL or IELTS.

[19] For example, there are, or at least used to be before the pandemics, study and research programs for young sinologists, i.e. scholars or PhD students younger than 45. The programs are organized in different cities in China, at universities, generally over the summer, for about three weeks. The Visiting Programs for Young Sinologists consist of lectures by various Chinese scholars on topics ranging from economy, politics to culture and literature, visits to different museums and sites, debates and the inevitable cultural evening when the sinologists must perform either Chinese or their own country's dances, songs etc. These are basically propaganda visits, with little chance of doing research. The upside is that people meet scholars in their field of research and are able to have private dialogue. The embassy can also recommend students for scholarships, in any field of study.

but there is no specific textbook used by all the institutes. The goal of the language classes is passing the language proficiency test (HSK) – this is quantifiable so it becomes easy to assess the success rate of the language classes – and many teachers use specific material designed to simulate the exam.

All Chinese teachers and volunteers going abroad, no matter where, undergo a training period before their departure. Most likely this is about Chinese educational policy, the Party's policy, staying away from sensitive topics and events, and a full menu of "do and don't". All the Chinese language teachers at the University of Bucharest had very close relations with the embassy, and with the Chinese students in Romania.

The Chinese Embassy and the local community

There are not too many Chinese students in Romania. A good part of them are coming from within the Chinese community here, but many of those are enrolled as Romanian students since they are either Romanian citizens or permanent residents. Some are enrolled as Chinese, especially when they did not pass the entrance exams and the admission as an international student does not require a special exam. **According to a Ministry of Education Memorandum, there were 63 Chinese students in Romania in 2019-2020**[20], although the Chinese themselves put the numbers of students closer to 200, most of them in Bucharest and Cluj, at the University of Bucharest, Economic Studies Academy (ASE) and Babes-Bolyai University, studying computers, economy, philology, law or communication science. Most of them pay tuition fees, with an average of five scholarships a year, generally for students studying Romanian[21].

The Chinese students in Romania are organized in The Association of the Chinese Students in Romania (Luomanita Zhongguo liuxuesheng hui), The Friendship Association of the Chinese Teachers and Students in Romanian (Luomaniya Zhongguo lü Luo shi sheng lianyihui) and the Union of the Chinee Students and Scholars in Romania (Luomaniya Zhongguo xuesheng xuezhe lianhehui). All these association collaborate closely with the embassy and are employed as help at big events such as galas, receptions.[22]

[20] MEC, *Memorandum*, https://sgg.gov.ro/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MEMO-14.pdf

[21] Currently there are six universities offering Romanian language courses: Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing International Studies University, Xi'an International Studies University, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Hebei University of Economics and Business (in Shijiazhuang) and Sichuan International Studies University (in Chongqing).

[22] They might also get some funding from the embassy. Before Xi Jinping's drive to reduce spending on protocol, meals & gifts, the associations organized Spring Festival or National Day dinners at Chinese restaurants with help from the embassy and also invited students at the Chinese language departments. Events are still being organized, but at a much smaller scale and without outside participation.

It is likely that the Chinese students who are not members of the local community are much more under the control of the Chinese Embassy. The local Chinese students are probably less dependent on the embassy, living with their families, but this is not to say that there is no connection between the local community and the embassy. The embassy tries to secure the support of the local community for various events, for example the Beijing Olympics, the Belt and Road Initiative, the anniversary of 70 years or bilateral relations in 2019 etc.

Chinese business people too are organized in associations, many of them based on the place of origin, or in associations such as The Union of the Chinese in Romania (Luomaniya Huaqiao Huaren lianhehui), The Union of the of the Chinese Youth in Romania (Luomaniya Huaqiao Huaren qingnian lianhehui) etc. They are all present at events organized by the embassy, logistically sporting and/or financially sponsoring these events. When people are asked about their relations with the embassy, the answers are usually positive and cautious: relations were good, but not too close. The links are much closer between the embassy and the trading associations, but not at individual level. The relations between the ordinary members of the community and the embassy are mainly administrative and involved the consular office, especially for the Christian Chinese, who try to stay away from anything with political implications. There are also those who cultivate good relations with the members of the Consulate as part of their business, helping other Chinese getting various documents, changing their passports etc.

THE ATTITUDE OF ROMANIANS TOWARDS CHINA AND ITS GRAND NARRATIVES

There are no systematic studies about how Romanians perceive the grand Chinese narratives of economic success, the alternative model of governance, the issue of individual rights vs. social progress, and so on. Therefore we can report only a few conclusions drawn after discussions with the Romanian students enrolled in Chinese language degree programs, or those taking the optional course in Chinese politics at the University of Bucharest. Naturally the subjects are quite young (18-19), coming from all over the country and with different social backgrounds. Their attitude towards the Chinese way of doing things is fluctuant and contradictory.

The narrative of success

The story of economic success is the main story about China which caught the attention of the Romanian students. When asked in their first class to tell the first thing about China that crosses their mind, it is almost always “economy”, “trade”, “goods”, “business”. If asked to put these aside and think of something unrelated to the economy, they become silent. A few mention nature (thanks to documentaries on National Geographic or Animal Planet), or the classical China – tea, martial arts, calligraphy etc. Contemporary China is a blank page even for those who chose to study it for a career.

The image of a successful country does not change during the years of study, or after one or more years of scholarship to China. The most popular city for studies is Shanghai, in spite of the fact that many people on the street there do not speak Mandarin Chinese, but the Shanghai dialect, which is very different from the dialect they learn in school; plus, the costs of living are also very high there. The reasons behind this choice are mainly the level of development and the cosmopolitan nature of Shanghai. The second choice is the capital Beijing; there are few those who chose to go to cities like Xi'an, (the city of the Terra-Cotta Warriors, with over 10 million inhabitants), with an extremely rich cultural heritage but less cosmopolitanism and development.

The of China among our youth is at best incomplete. This is not to say that China is not a powerful economy, or that it did not achieve remarkable results. However, many students ignore the urban – rural gap, or the east – west gap. Even when presented with images, facts and figures about these realities, they tend to preserve the initial opinions, mainly because their dealings with China, their trips there and most probably their Chinese friends are all concentrated in developed urban areas, making "the other China" easier to ignore. But it is not just the young students who have this perception bias: before the Covid-19 pandemics, most of the stories carried by the Romanian newspapers about China were positive and exclusively of economic nature, reinforcing this attitude.

The Covid-19 pandemics did not alter much the narrative of success. Romanian students in China felt safe and at the beginning even refused to return home, suggesting that in case of infection the doctors in China were much better prepared to care for them than those in Romania. The drastic measures took in Wuhan and the quick return to normal pre-pandemic life in cities like Shanghai or Beijing strengthened China's image as a country capable to solving all problems. On the other hand, no students really believe the official figures released by the government. The students eventually returned home, not without some regrets, many of them wishing they could go back to China for studies or for work.

In spite of the image of a totalitarian state compared with the democratic Taiwan, there are basically no students seeking to go and study in Taiwan. Apparently people in Romania know almost nothing about the island, except from that fact that it is under constant threat from the Mainland (the reasons are also rather unclear). In the specific case of our language students, the fact that Taiwan still uses traditional characters, instead of the simplified ones on the continental China, is also a big impediment.

Alternative form of governance

Young Romanian students do not seem to be interested in the political aspects of the life in China; many do not even know the name of the current Chinese president. They are rather puzzled by the local political scene and do not have informed opinions on political events in their own country, let alone China. More and more, in the last few years, one

can hear statements such as "**Life was much better in Ceausescu's time"** coming young adults at the age of 18, including those studying political sciences. It sounds like a clichee picked up from their grandparents or parents from less developed parts of Romania, faced with the reality of earning a living and raising a family. However a "vicarious nostalgia" for the times which were not experienced directly, ideologically motivated, cannot be ruled out either.

Interestingly enough, when we talk about China's authoritarian political system, they still underline the economic success, and brush away the sacrifices, or the restrictions the regime imposes on its people. Even when they are told about the Internet limitations, the strict control of the social media, the punitive measures against those who violate regulations, they still insist that there are many ways to bypass censorship. The impression of a regime less strict that described is strengthened during their studies in China, where foreign students live in isolated expat communities with little knowledge of real Chinese life. They always project themselves in the role of the winners, and benefits are always exceeding sacrifices. And for a visiting foreigner there is always the exit option: "we can always leave, if we can't stand it any longer".

Personal rights vs social development

When they talk about the Chines society and its accomplishments, the students are full of admiration. Seen from above and outside – even when studying in China, foreign students are still outside observers – they admire the well organized and modern urban spaces, but once they go deeper and get to know the measures taken by the regime to ensure its survival, or to get the masses behave in a desired way, they are less convinced of the superiority of the **Chinese model.**

This does not mean that they would not live there as expats. One of the most frightening aspects of the Chinese life is the lack of privacy. The idea that every movement, every tweet or message could be traced, that their young Chinese colleagues cannot trust their peers because some might inform on them, that they should be very careful to what they say and to whom they say, it becomes scary even for young and naïve Romanian visitors. The argument that all the high tech surveillance has made the Chinese society safer does not ring true, because they all consider

Romania a safe country without all these video cameras. The students agree with a stricter control and surveillance by the government as long as these do not impact upon their own lives; also, they judge this impact from a Romanian young adult's point of view, who enjoys freedoms of all kinds, and find it difficult to judge the situation from a Chinese perspective.

*With the contribution of **Mugur Zlotea**, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures*

THE CHINESE PRESENCE IN BULGARIA

In the modern context of globalization and free trade, the Black sea countries have become a strategically important region for the interest of the most powerful countries. Though it sounds like a cliché, China, Russia and the USA are trying to set a foot, respectively increase their influence, in the region, which can't be said to be a piece-of-cake-job. Their attempts may be positioned on a spectrum, as they vary from a suspiciously friendly to dangerously violent. The Black sea countries have a painful past of deadly conflicts between each other and no matter the nowadays peace, the communication between them and the global powers should be carried with a deeper understanding of the local socio-economic present.

Unlike China, Russia and the USA have a long lasting commercial, political and social relation with Bulgaria. Though China and Bulgaria have established their diplomatic relations back in 1949, their current interactions are mainly in the context of trading – import and export of goods, raw materials and culture. Compared to the neighbouring Balkan countries like Serbia or Republic of North Macedonia, direct Chinese investments in the country are almost non-existent. Yet, the growing interest of China to deepen its presence in Bulgaria through the influence of soft power and large-scale infrastructure projects is evident.

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY. COOPTION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ELITES AS INTERMEDIARIES OF INFLUENCE

Recently one of the biggest accusations against China coming from the West is the against-human-rights treatment of the Muslim Uyghur population in Xinjiang. Chinese government has officially started banning procedures against global brands (like Adidas and H&M for example) because of their expressed concerns on the Xinjiang cotton production and the labour scandals surrounding it. Chinese ban affected also several European deputies from entering the country after respective EU sanctions based on the same allegations of forced labour and tortures. "The EU had earlier accused Chinese officials of mass detentions of Muslim Uighurs and human rights abuses in Xinjiang and imposed its first sanctions against Beijing since an arms embargo in 1989 following the Tiananmen Square crackdown."

Amongst the sanctioned officials is the Bulgarian member of the European Parliament - Ilhan Kyuchuk, who is part of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and

Democrats for Europe (ALDE). As a Bulgarian politician, Ilhan Kyuchuk has always been a member of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms party (MRF). Since 2012 he is a President of its Youth Movement. MRF has always been considered as a representative of the Turkish Minority in Bulgaria, although in numerous situations the party has acted as a major proponent of the pro-Russian economic and political interests. Within the public narrative MRF is famous for being the political power which is always in charge, though this is rarely officialised.

The reason Ilhan Kyuchuk has been blacklisted along with other members of the European Parliament is that in 2019 the European Parliament awarded **ethnic-Uyghur economist Professor Ilham Tohti (serving currently a life imprisonment sentence in China) with Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.** The Bulgarian politician was one of the EU MPs who lobbied for Tohti's award. All of them were later sanctioned with a ban to enter China, Hong Kong, and China's special administrative region of Macao. Companies and organizations with connections to these EU politicians were also banned to operate in China.

According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry "members of the European Parliament Reinhard Butikofer, Michael Gahler, Raphael Glucksmann, Ilhan Kyuchyuk and Miriam Lexmann were among those who "severely harm China's sovereignty and interests and maliciously spread lies and disinformation." In an interview for Free Europe – Bulgaria Mr. Kyutchuk stated: "The EU High representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, must always set the question about the Uyghurs, on his meetings with Chinese representatives. The data we have tell us there is an attempt for erasure of the cultural and religious identity of this people."

How active is the Confucius Institute

Confucius Institutes are China's main tool to spread its cultural influence around the world. Set in South Korea in 2004, since then, Confucius Institute has grown to a main source of knowledge and language learning with its more than 500 institutions around the world.

Confucius institutes (CI) in the extended Black sea region:

- **Bulgaria - 2**
- **Georgia – 2**
- **Greece - 3**
- **Macedonia – 1**
- **Moldova - 1**
- **Romania - 4**
- **Russia – 19**
- **Serbia - 2**
- **Turkey - 4**
- **Ukraine – 7**

While in Canada, USA and some EU countries CIs are seen as propaganda tools, in Bulgaria more or less they are known for being places where you can learn more about modern day China.

In Bulgaria there are two CI's, located at the universities with the best Philology and Linguistics programs in the country: **Confucius Institute at Sofia's University**

“St. Kliment Ohridski”; and the **Confucius Institute at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tîrnovo**

Their main purpose is language learning. Both of the local foundations who are behind the Cis in Sofia and Veliko Tarnovo are headed by the rectors of the respective Universities.

Being the devil’s advocate for the sake of the argument, CI’s have been demonised as the main Chinese propaganda tool, but the main problem with this statement is the word choice. Just like Instituto Cervantes, British Council and Goethe-Institut, CI’s main purpose is to spread Chinese heritage and modern day culture through various ways – events, teaching of language and other culture related courses on topics like literature, music, cinema and, of course, the most problematic of them all – history. Spread of influence with soft power tools doesn’t automatically equal propaganda. Main reason for this labeling is the CI’s positioning in university campuses as this may influence the non-partisan educational process in them. Though China’s government is notable with imposing censorship and control over national media, there is a need for strong evidence for these kind of accusations.

According to GAO (U.S. Government Accountability Office) “School officials, researchers, and others described benefits and concerns related to Confucius Institutes, and suggested ways to improve the institutes. Some researchers and others have expressed concern that the presence of an institute could constrain campus activities and classroom content.

For example, several researchers stated that schools with Confucius Institutes might avoid hosting events on topics that could include criticism of China, such as Taiwan or Tibet, so as to not offend Chinese partners. However, school officials offered examples to illustrate that these various concerns did not apply to their institute.”

To this date CI at SU “**St. Kliment Ohridski” has been publishing a yearly magazine which includes articles in the field of Linguistics, Philology, Philosophy, History, Economy, Art and Literature.** Issue 4, out of 5, is the first one that has a whole section of articles dedicated to modern Chinese Economics and Politics. None of these articles is even slightly critical towards Chinese politics or mentioning some kind of social or economic problems in the country. The latter cannot be defined as a pure propaganda, but still it is at least a kind of a discursive washing. Most of them, according to the article's author, show the adaptability and flexibility that **the Chinese model of “market socialism”** has shown over the years, while the Western Neoliberalism has been going through severe turbulences like the 2008 Economic Crisis. Mentioned in the previous section scandal with the banned from entering the country European Parliament officials and deputies, shows the ruthless Chinese decision making towards anyone who criticize their local problems or politics. However, the CIs are not the place where to search for the injustice that China is blamed for practising.

In 2020 there was an online presentation of the documentary **"In the name of Confucius".** The presentation was popularised by the media Eurochicago.com which labels itself as an online portal of the Bulgarians abroad, which is produced in Chicago – the home of the biggest Bulgarian Diaspora with posts in Bulgarian, English and Russian. In Bulgaria the movie is released with the assistance of Friends of Tibet in Bulgaria as well as Falun Dafa.

The movie was streamed live on Facebook, but it had also had premieres in the Parliaments of Great Britain, Australia and Denmark. In the movie it is shown that the Chinese government spends nearly 10 billion dollars for the CI's maintenance and support. In another article about the institutes, more progressive Chinese citizens consider their funding a waste of the state's budget for unsuccessful soft power tools, while in China there are regions without schools.

Besides the CI, there is also a Chinese Cultural Center in the Bulgarian capital Sofia. It is 3 years old. Not a prominent propaganda tool, but it should be mentioned in the context of Chinese cultural presence in Bulgaria.

Open propaganda, including from the Chinese embassy and the diplomatic corps:

In 2020 the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) in cooperation with the European Council on Foreign Relations produced an interesting analysis showing Chinese efforts to strengthen and spread its cultural and economic presence on the Balkans. It is important to be noted that Bulgaria isn't viewed as a priority for China's media and commerce expansion, while Romania (EU member), Republic of North Macedonia (not EU member) and Serbia (not EU member) are way more desirable.

This survey presents some sort of a mapping of the Balkans and it shows how Bulgaria is in the periphery of Chinese interests. **The analysis called "Getting on the Radar": China's Rising Media Presence in South East Europe** , shows the growing expansion of Chinese media in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia.

The survey shows some long-lasted institutional relations between Bulgaria and China, such as:

• The state-owned **Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA) has a cooperation agreement with Xinhua,** and the Chinese partner is one of its major sources of information alongside Western and Russian news organizations;

• There are also **contractual cooperation relations established between the Chinese National Radio and the Bulgarian National Radio**, as well as the Chinese Central Television and the Bulgarian National Television that go back decades. For instance, Programme Hristo Botev of the Bulgarian National Radio has its separate cooperation agreement with CRI in the field of art.

• **The main institutional cooperation partner is the Union of Bulgarian Journalists (UBJ).**

UBJ and the All-China Journalists' Association (ACJA) have had cooperation agreements for over three decades. Both structures have been exchanging delegations for many years now. The last visit by the Chinese side was in March 2019 and included, among others, representatives from ACJA, a deputy editor of China Daily, the head of the online edition of People's Daily and the director of the Hamburg-based Europe Times. The UBJ and its Chinese counterparts organize annual study visits for Bulgarian journalists. On average, these delegations usually include 10 to 15 journalists from major media outlets.

Apart from these institutional partnerships, the main channels for Chinese influence, or better say the most popular Chinese or Chinese orientated media in Bulgaria are:

• China Radio International, popular on Facebook with its profile „Radio China – Радио Китай"

Official website: http://bulgarian.cri.cn/

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/CRI.Bulgarian

"China Today" („Китай днес"), weekly newspaper – **the media is established by two well-known to the public figures**. One of them is knowns for being active member of the **official pro-Russian movements in Bulgaria**; the other is famous for being a high ranked representative of the **Bulgarian ex-communist secret services,** who was acting like a journalist in the 90s of the XX c. and is currently a professor at UniBit – a state funded university, located in Sofa, with many of its graduates starting their careers in the State Agency for National Security. The newspaper often publishes translated articles from CRI and XINHUA News Agency (the official state-run press agency of the People's Republic of China.)

China today website

XINHUA News Agency website

Column in 24 Hours media, called "Обектив Китай" (Focus China)

The used sources are of Chinese origin and most of the information presented appears to be unedited and translated from the original. It often presents the speeches of the president and secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping.

Foreign-owned media controlled by individuals known to be close to China (ex CME/ProTV by Petr Kellner, the Czech oligarch; he is also pro-Kremlin)

The deceased earlier this year Petr Kellner's PPF group owns one of the biggest TV channels in Bulgaria – BTV Media Group as well as the mobile operator Telenor, which retains its name after the Norwegian company of the same name sold in 2018 to Kellner its business in Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Montenegro. Before buying BTV Media Group, Kellner tried to buy the other big private Bulgarian TV channel – NOVA, but the Commission for Protection of Competition cancelled the deal.

Social media activity in local languages

The Chinese ambassador Dong Xiaojun (Дун Сяодзюн) has been guest on various shows and TV-programmes, mainly in the beginning of Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020. Ambassador Xiaojun is not as publically active, for example, as the current US Ambassador Mustafa, nor is he trying to show anything more than distant politeness and respect towards the Bulgarian officials or journalists. Ambassador Mustafa is trying, and succeeding, to appear way more approachable and even close to the everyday life in Bulgaria. All these statements may be criticised for not taking into account the major cultural differences between China and the U.S., but nevertheless, one's ambassador behaviour and public appearance should be taken into account. Chinese Embassy is not taking, at least not evidently, measures to strengthen its presence in Bulgaria with various projects, unlike the U.S. Embassy. One explanation for this could be the very different approach China takes – more indirect, not in the spotlight and as some say "planning in the centuries, not years".

The big question is why Bulgaria, unlike the other Black sea countries seems to be neglected by China. One of the obvious answers is that Bulgaria is trying to appeal to two both extremes of the spectrum that international politics actually are. At the one extreme is the Western pro-Atlantic neoliberalism opposing the Eastern model which is far more state centered and controlling. Bulgaria is a member of the EU and NATO and as such, it belongs to a family of countries which share the democratic values of good governance, media freedom and pluralism.

On the other extreme comes the very geopolitical of the country – at the crossroad between Europe and Asia (it is an outside border of the EU) and its history – the long lasting complex relationships with Turkey and Russia. Being politically situated at the western end of the spectrum, Bulgaria is trying to balance between the global superpower, which leads to chaotic and spineless politics that satisfies no one – Bulgaria, China, Russia, the EU nor even the US. There is also a third possible explanation – the high level of corruption in Bulgaria, with which the Chinese trials to set a foot in the country faces with. Rumours claims that the latter was the reason for the failure of at least several serious Chinese intentions for investments in infrastructure, agriculture and energetics.

The Chinese Ambassador gives interviews mainly for online magazines and newspapers, such as:

- **Dong Xiaojun: The Partnership Perspectives before China and Bulgaria are bright** – the article is published in "24 hours", but the interview is given originally for China Radio International.

- **Series of meetings and interviews**

After the Covid-19 Pandemic spread in the beginning of 2020, the Ambassador had given several interviews which focus on the Chinese success in suppressing the virus spread and the vaccine development. Basically propaganda interview of Chinese success during the pandemic but he never

mentions the international scandals about China hiding crucial information about the spread of the virus or not letting WHO's scientists to conduct a proper field research in the country.

Interesting conclusions about China's media attitude towards the Balkans can be seen in the article: Beijing's megaphone: **The return of party propaganda in south-eastern Europe , by Vladimir Shopov**, published in the European Council on Foreign Relations : "Nowadays China is slowly but steadily building a multicomponent system of media- related partners in Eastern Europe countries, including Bulgaria. "The Local Chinese diaspora is also slowly entering the media sphere – as illustrated by the activities of Bulgarian businessman Zheng Zhong. He regularly appears on Bulgaria's main TV channels to provide a pro- Beijing take on Chinese affairs. His Council on Economic and Diplomatic Relations is focused on BRI-related work, providing a platform for publicity and a media presence."

Targeting the sub-national authorities: regions, municipalities

• **Ruse Municipali**ty: Application to be host for one of the national sports in China – dragon boating :

The Municipality of Ruse is acting on its strategy to strengthen bilateral ties with China. That is why the city will apply to host the national sport in China – dragon boating, as it is one of the nine sports of the International Canoe-Kayak Federation. Currently, team sports are gaining more and more popularity in the world, as they are suitable for team building, family outings or just an alternative contact with nature. The boats themselves, painted with symbols of Chinese culture, are also an attraction. The world championship is expected to take place in 2025.

• **Plovdiv Municipality:** Chinese ambassador visit Plovdiv (the second largest city in the country with strong developed commerce and industry):

During the talks, the mayor of Plovdiv Ivan Totev stressed that the city under the hills (Pplovdiv's nickname) enjoys great interest and visits by Chinese delegations, and the twinning with the city of Shenzhen signed in 2014 is a prerequisite for even better communication with the People's Republic of China. Towards the end of the meeting, Ambassador Xiaojun addressed Mayor Ivan Totev with the words: "You have every reason to be proud that Plovdiv is developing both culturally and economically. I am sure that Chinese tourists will say very good words and even more of them will come to visit it, because the city is beautiful." These words may be taken as a bigger promotion of Bulgaria as a tourist destination in China. It's a fact that the Chinese are the most numerous travellers in recent 5 years, surpassing the Germans. Chinese tourists consider European continent one big destination, which could and should be visited in a span of a week – a country per day. This is why the Ambassador's words can be taken more like a polite compliment, rather than a strategic alliance between the two countries for tourism development.

• **Burgas Municipality** has organized many events related to celebration of Chinese culture.

Most recent ones are Chinese New year festival (canceled due to Covid-19). The Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Beijing together with the Municipality of Burgas announces a children's drawing competition on the topic “Dreams of Europe and China.” The project is traditionally implemented every year since 2011. In 2018, Bulgaria, represented by Burgas, which is a sister city of the Chinese city of Yantai since 2004, received an invitation to participate.

Planning in 2016 for railway between China and Europe, as Burgas is one of the key cities - A large-scale project between China and Bulgaria was presented which, which would turn Burgas into the second logistics center for trade. In 2016 that was one of the biggest news for the city of Burgas as a Chinese delegation, led personally by the Deputy Mayor of Zhengzhou - Yanwei Hu, visited Burgas to finalize the details of the operation of the railway line between the two cities. The bilateral meeting on behalf of the Municipality of Burgas was attended by Deputy Mayor Krassimir Stoychev, Director of the Economy and Business Activities Directorate Ivelina Strateva and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Industrial Park Zlatina Georgieva. After that no information can be found about the project so it is considered to be unrealized.

• **Varna Municipality**: Throughout the years Varna has been visited multiple times by Chinese delegations to boost the investments on the Black sea coast, but the meetings haven’t been developed further to materialize to actual investments:

2012 - China expressed interest in investing in the Port of Varna, claiming that is ready to invest about 560 million euros .

2017 - A delegation from Varna's twinned Chinese city of Ningbo, led by Deputy Mayor Song Yueshun, met with Mayor Ivan Portnich. Ningbo is the city with the fourth largest port in the world.

2019 - China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) has signed a contract with Varna’s Port. The completion of the port of Varna is expected to significantly increase the level of modernization and cargo handling capacity of Bulgarian ports. This is actually the first signed contract after more than 7 yeast of Chinese visits, meetings and research.

Chinese construction company is investing 120 mln euros in the port of Varna.

• **Varna and Burgas**: The Chinese business delegation, led by Ning Jiji, Deputy Director of the National Development and Reform Company of China, met at the Euxinograd residence with Varna Mayor Ivan Portnich. Among the guests were representatives of the China Development Bank, heads of the Chinese International Railways, the state company for international water transport COSCO, the state company CCCC International, which deals with the construction of road infrastructure, diplomats

• **Bansko Municipality**: The Bansko Mayor’s meeting with Chinese delegation – the purpose of the visit is to explore the skiing tourism opportunities, the good

practices thereof and the trading with wood. Chinese delegation coming from Meizhou.

- Blagoevgrad Municipality: In 2014 the mayor met with Chinese delegation and the main interests were agriculture and export.

All of the above visits, with the exception of the one in Varna from 2019, are mainly informative and with minor diplomatic value, as almost none of the discussed projects has come into realization.

Delegations to China

• **July 2019**: The President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rumen Radev, together with a delegation of members of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industries had an official visit to China. The President's visit was focused on the prospects for increasing Chinese investments in Bulgaria and further promoting contacts between the countries. Both presidents – of China and the Republic of Bulgaria adopted in Beijing a declaration for lifting the bilateral relations to the level of strategic partnership. The set-up of a Chinese-Bulgarian Centre for Innovations was also negotiated.

•**April 2019:** A delegation of the Bulgarian State Agency on Archives headed by the President of the Agency, Assoc. Prof. Mihail Gruev, visited China. The visit is p art of a framework agreement between the archives agencies of both countries.

Mayors of Bulgarian municipalities visiting China:

The mayor of Targovishte led a Bulgarian delegation to China. Part of the delegation were also teachers and university professors. The visit was organized by the CI's office at the University in Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius".

The deputy mayor of Kazanlak visited China with a delegation of 7 other members of the municipal council. The purpose of the visit was participation in a festival called "Dialogue on Confucianism in the city of springs" through which a cultural exchange among the Confucianism and other cultures in the world could be achieved.

ECONOMY

The Bulgarian attitude towards Chinese interest to invest in the country is non-efficient for both sides, as it shows lack of political and economic strategy from Bulgarian side. Main vision of the ex-governments was vague and unfocused which led to numerous meetings and multiple projects which never really started. It is important to be noted that Bulgaria, as an independent country, would like to have a stronger and more stable relation to China, like Serbia for example. At least this is demonstrated on a discursive level by the local politicians.

Evidence for such a statement is that there are quite a few business relations between the Chinese Huawei and the Bulgarian telecommunications operators. "The Bulgarian Telecommunications Company, the largest telecom in the country and former fixed line monopoly, has established a strategic partnership with the Chinese firm in the field of cloud technologies. Also, Huawei's biggest

deal in Bulgaria was linked to the supply of Telenor's (the largest Bulgarian mobile operator) 4G equipment in 2014." However, being an EU member and a pro-Atlantic-country, Bulgaria has to follow the general European politics towards China, which at present are mainly critical.

In 2020, Bulgaria has joined other European countries (Romania, Greece, the Czech Republic, Poland, Sweden and others) in signing the set by Trump's administration **"Clean Network" coalition.**

The main goal of "Clean Network" is to prevent Huawei's influence and development of 5G infrastructure in various countries. "Washington believes Huawei poses a threat to its national security and that of its allies and that the Chinese technology company was using its technology to spy on behalf of China's government, a claim that Beijing says is driven by US commercial concerns." It will be naive to think that defending the national financial interests have not influenced the American decision to create this coalition. Especially when former President Trump's main international politics' agenda was to prevent China's massive global influence. Unlike the USA, Bulgaria and all the countries in South-eastern Europe, don't have the economic authority or military force to set the current international politics. Another main concern that led to treating China like the spy in the EU, is the country's strong cooperation with Russia and as we know modern day Russia isn't the most desirable ally when it comes to a certain country's global image.

As mentioned at the beginning, Bulgaria is in the periphery of China's interests in The Black Sea region. This is due not only to the country's small market, compared to other EU countries, but also to the historical heritage with the neighbouring countries and the complex relations thereof.

In 2019 the two countries celebrated 70 years since the establishment of the official diplomatic relations and this together with the visit of the Bulgarian President to China was seen as a boost in the relationship between Bulgaria and China. Also in this year, the China Constructions Banks has initiated research as to the opening of a branch in Bulgaria, but as of present this is also not completed.

According to National Statistical Institute's data the export and import to China for January-February period in 2020 and 2021 is:

- **In 2021 Bulgaria's export to China compared to 2020 has increased with 19.5%**
- **In 2021 China's import to Bulgaria compared to 2020 has increased with 8.7%.**

Investments, loans, other types of economic financing from China

Bulgarian Industrial Association (Българска стопанска камара): Bulgaria as a gateway to EU: The following message from BIA shows more the way Chinese commerce and industry perceive Bulgaria – as a door to the large EU market. Bulgaria itself is perhaps not so

important part in the puzzle of the Chinese interests, nevertheless, its strategic position can play a key role in navigating these interests and that role should not be underestimated.

Chinese participation in public infrastructure projects

● Minister Nankov discussed with Chinese investors the construction of key infrastructure projects in Bulgaria – A Chinese company has expressed interest in building large road infrastructure projects in Bulgaria on the basis of a public-private partnership. Among them are the construction of the highways Kalotina – Sofia, Ruse – Veliko Tarnovo and the tunnel under Shipka. The project was only discussed and it never developed further.

● Bulgarian business is still waiting for serious Chinese investments - An extended report from the Bulgarian National Radio, talking about the Bulgaria's ambition to become an investment-worthy country for China. Lack of Chinese infrastructure projects in Bulgaria is seen as a disadvantage of modern-day-economy and a missed opportunity.

In the same time the article gives the point of view of the commercial representative of the Chinese province of Hebei, who has finished Bulgarian Philology, who explains the majour advantages of Bulgaria as a proper place for the Chinese investments. First in the list are the cheap prices in Bulgaria, and the good quality of the local products. The problems are related to lack of direct flights between the two countries, no good options for project funding, too much bureaucracy.

● Relations between China and Bulgaria – the path of dubious political competence This is an article published in an online media known for being critical to the political establishment in Bulgaria. It describes the almost negligible Chinese investments in the country such as a total of 133 million euros between 2006 and 2016. There are almost no real Chinese investors in Bulgaria except for the small Chinese participation in a company producing climbing walls and all elements related to that, a small plant near Dobrich, and several parks with small photovoltaic capacities, which are not more than 10-15% of the photovoltaic capacities in the country. The article hints that the Chinese interests are meeting the Bulgarian political demagogy and that can be an obstacle to large scale investments here. A description is provided about the merciless Chinese methods of investing in other countries' gigantic projects and then making them pay back for credit lent by China. At the end, a conclusion is made that the Chinese think in a pragmatic way and China does not make presents to anyone, nor does it act out of philanthropic or altruistic purposes. China's strategy is to divide Europe and invest in potentially strategic sectors such as ports and electricity infrastructure.

● China will invest in Bulgaria's road infrastructure – Back in 2014, it was said that Bulgaria will be included in the program for financing infrastructure and transport projects of the Chinese Eximbank, after a cooperation

agreement was signed with the Bulgarian Development Bank. The 10 billion USD program was earmarked for investment in Central and Eastern Europe.

Despite all these efforts, none of the mentioned projects are realized. The only exception is the future expansion of Varna Port, which will be worth 120 million euros and hasn't started yet. All other initiated projects as well as constant visits between the two countries resulted in nothing more than uncompleted promises.

The purchasing of land (directly, indirectly) by Chinese individuals and entities

● 2011 – China has entered the market of agricultural land in Bulgaria. The state-owned Tianjin Agribusiness Company leased 20,000 decares - this was labelled as the second largest Chinese investment in Bulgaria with a perspective to be increased.

● 2014 – The same Chinese company bought 30,000 decares of fields in 45 villages in southern Bulgaria from the private fund Omega Agro . The Bulgarian lawyer of the Chinese side commented the deal: "A Chinese company, registered in Bulgaria bought the assets of Omega Agro, but you understand that the land is still Bulgarian. The land could not be put in a pocket and exported to China."

According to the source:https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/

● Chinese Investments & Contracts in Bulgaria start in 2009 with the investment of 120 million USD in Transport Sector;

● Until 2012 there were no noted investments. For that year China has invested 210 million USD;

● Until 2019 there are no noted investments. For that year China has invested 130 million USD.

Society- Chinese immigration in the country

There isn't official public data of the number of Chinese citizens/immigrants residing in Bulgaria. According to unconfirmed information from the Chinese Embassy and media publications, the Chinese residents in Bulgaria are around 2-3000. This information however is from 2017 and there is no recent one. Another unofficial statistic was collected back in 2007 by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, and it showed that at that time the Chinese immigrants in the country were around 5 000. One reason for not collecting such statistics in an official way is that it is considered discriminatory.

Chinese students in local universities

There isn't official public information about Chinese students in Bulgaria, provided by the Ministry of Education or National Statistical Institute. According to research of the EU – National Report from the Republic of Bulgaria for EMN study on Immigration of International Students to the EU, between 2006-2011, 82 Chinese students had studied in Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. Recently there are some attempts of the National Musical Academy in Sofia to open its

foors for Chinese students, but due to the covid-19 2020, the efforts are postponed.

Tourism as a socio-economic linkage

The Unified statistics for touristic information does not have a breakdown of nationality of tourist as it shows only Bulgarian and foreign tourists. However, in an interview from 2019 the Executive director of one of the largest touristic companies in China “Ctrip Corporation” explained that the interest of Chinese tourists for Bulgaria is increasing and for the first half of 2019 that increase was with 500% on an annual basis. The average Chinese tourist is spending about 7 days in the country. Unfortunately, the National Statistical Institute doesn’t provide information about the number of Bulgarians who visited China and vice versa. Back in 2017 the former Minister of Tourism said that Bulgaria has been visited by nearly 19 000 Chinese tourists.

In Bulgaria, is China acting as an alternative to the Russian influence, or as a complement to it?

An article in the Bulgarian section of Deutche Welle called What are we for China? presents a nuanced view on Russia’s and China’s attempts to influence the Black Sea regions. Unlike Russia, famous for aggressive physical influence and hack attacks, China’s strategy is much more peaceful and clever. Though **fake news and ultimatums can be useful mechanisms for destabilization**, China is trying to present itself in the Black Sea region as almost an alternative to the EU, as a friendly country, ready to invest in infrastructure, buildings and culture. This is a simplistic view on the public image of Russia and China, though both are known for media censorship and strong political influence. Bulgaria’s attitude to China is marked by a certain duality – the country needs more investments, but as a part of the EU we have to adhere to certain rules and protect the EU values which are not necessarily the Chinese ones.

The Chinese-Bulgarian relations are traditionally positive and have a long history. Bulgaria is one of the first countries that have established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. An interesting fact is that even the cars of the Bulgarian diplomatic mission in Beijing back in the times of socialism had number 001 as opposed to the ones of the Soviet Union – 002.

Of course those traditions of friendship and positivism between the two countries have evolved in more recent times and the question is where are they now and where are they heading to and how the direction of the relations between the two countries affects the economic activities and Chinese investments in Bulgaria.The relations between China and Bulgaria are a topic of many forums. The matter is of great interest for experts in international relations, politics, economy and many other areas.

One of the most recent discussions titled “The Balkans in the strategic vision of China” was

held online in November 2020 and as organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The panellists discussed the economic climate for Chinese investments in Bulgaria, the different aspects in the relations between the two countries and the presence of China in the region. A representative from the Institute of Historic Researches by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, stated that China is a country of stable policy of strong economic growth and openness and predictability towards their potential partners. The process of making the economy more and more open and accepting of a growing number of potential partners has continued for decades. China has put an emphasis on developing the sectors of new technologies, green energy and new energy sources, the cultural and educational links and agriculture.

Multiple other participants in the same discussion, raised concerns that China's interest in investing in countries in Central and Eastern Europe is a sign for their will to have bigger influence in Europe. Many analysis points in that direction too. A point made was that large part of the Chinese projects in Eastern Europe do not ever come to realization. The promises for big investments remain unkept and are in fact a tool for influence in the political process and in the governmental decisions.

Throughout the years, there have been many forums, which have come to agreements that the investments and business ventures between representatives from both countries should be encouraged. An example for such a platform is the Association for the Promotion of Agricultural Cooperation between China and the Central and Eastern European countries. A part of this initiative is the 17+1 e-Commerce Logistics Hub and Pavilion for Agricultural and other Products in Trakia (Thrace) economic zone and the online platform 16Plus1Cloud. This is a platform that does not "trade" electronically but consolidates producers – it is a digital logistics hub for agricultural and other products from Central and Eastern Europe and China.

The Association for the Promotion of Agricultural Cooperation between China and the Central and Eastern European countries is formed by a subsidy from the state budget of the Republic of Bulgaria through the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forest of the Republic of Bulgaria, own-source revenues and donations.

An example for a Chinese investment in the agricultural field is the fodder factory of the ChinaTianJin Tianshinong Farming Technology CO. LTD company near Dobrich. The project was started back in 2016 with the promise to open 50 new work positions and to produce 300 000 tons of fodder yearly. However, in 2020 the factory has not been operating due to the pandemic and the hired workers were only 13.

Another project that would improve the investment conditions and would lead to more joint ventures is the Center for Innovations in Sofia. This is an initiative of the Bulgarian President Rumen Radev. In 2020 both sides have agreed to work towards the development of the Center in two key areas - IT and human health solutions. The Sofia University has

agreed on providing the side for the Center.

It's interesting to mention the fact that Serbia, a similar size and population neighbour country, has attracted a significantly bigger amount of direct Chinese investments than Bulgaria - 9,66 billion euro versus 130 million between 2013 and 2019. The explanation of that is not simple but could be found in the fact that Bulgaria is a EU member as opposed to Serbia. The strict European regulations when it comes to third parties investors and the more complex policy of the Union towards China in recent times make it harder for small member states like Bulgaria to be as free in negotiations as non-members. In fact, Serbia has attracted more Chinese investments than any other country in the region.

There are many factors that have an influence on the Chinese investments in Bulgaria.

When we look at the relations between China and Bulgaria, we should be taking into account the collective foreign politics of the EU. The tensions between the super powers, like China and the USA, ae also influencing negatively the relations between the EU and China. A big issue for the western world is the violation of human rights. There is also rising tension on the technological field and more specifically the development of 5G networks.

In conclusion, the Chinese-Bulgarian relations are highly influenced by factors of the global politics. The traditionally good cooperation is the groundwork for many forums, discussions, strategic documents and there is a general agreement that the two countries have interest in working together.

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THE CHINESE INFLUENCE IN UKRAINE

Politics

Champions of cooperation with China among decision-makers

The current set of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Friendship Group with China was approved on 12 October 2020; more than a year after the new Parliament had been inaugurated. This, on the one hand, demonstrated a non-priority of the Chinese direction for the members of the Verkhovna Rada, as the first organizational meeting was in March 2020. On the other hand, this parliamentary group is one of the biggest and comprises of 175 MPs (from 420 of total). There are three co-chairs: Hryhoriy Surkis, representing a pro-Russian political party "Opposition Platform – For life", and two representatives of the presidential party "Servant of the People", Oleksandr Trukhin and Pavlo Khalimon.

Hryhoriy Surkis is an oligarch, long-time vice-president of the UEFA (2013-2019), and what has never been too much publicized, a president of the NGO "Society China-Ukraine", that was established in 1994.

The society does not have a website, but has few influential members. Pavlo Khalimon, previously has been involved in participated in the ceremony of masks transfer from the Chinese National Corporation of Machine Industry (CCEC) to the State Food and Grain Corporation of Ukraine, where he talked about strategic partnership between Ukraine and China.[23] Oleksandr Trukhin, a former businessman in agro-sector and chemical industry, an MP elected in majoritarian constituency in Dnipro.

In addition to this, in December 2019, Parliamentary Interfraction Unity "One Belt-One Road" was established.[24] It is also chaired by two MPs from the pro-Russian "Opposition Platform – for Life" V. Chorny and O. Koltunovych, and comprises of just 6 MPs (3 from Opposition Platform – For Life", 2 from the Servant of the People (including one that get intoscandalby openly supporting Belarusian President Lukashenkoand visiting him in Minsk after sanctions applied in 2021), and 1 from MP's group "Dovira").

Both groups are regularly emphasizing strategic partnership and good relations with China, organizing discussions. Within the last few years it is noticeable that pro-Russian political parties have closer relations with Chinese entities and promote their

[23] https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-economy/3011733-derzavnij-zernovij-korporacii-peredali-z-kitau-zasobi-individualnogo-zahistu.html

[24] https://www.unian.ua/politics/10799642-u-vr-stvoreno-tri-novih-deputatskih-ob-yednannya.html

narratives, however, the question remain whether it is a Chinese influence or their own adherence with the anti-Western ideas, when China seen as a natural partner. For example, on **March 12, 2021, Parliamentary Interfraction Unity "One Belt-One Road"** organized a meeting with the Ambassador of China to Ukraine where its members emphasized that Ukrainian Parliament joined "One Belt-One Road" initiative due to thework of the political party "Opposition Platform -For Life"[25].

Party-to-Party diplomacy (done via the International Liaison Department but also via the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries). Not all meetings taking place means that the person or party has been corrupted by Chinese interests, but these meetings can be useful starting point for what leads to pursue. To check:

As for now, there is no formal party-to-party cooperation between the Ukrainian politician parties and Chinese Communist Party. In 2011, an Agreement between the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of China was signed. However, this political party of the former President Yanukovych does not exist anymore. One of its successors – Opposition Platform – For Life is seen in more active dialogue with Chinese representatives comparing to others, but without formal formats of cooperation.

In February 2020, members of the Ukrainian Parliament from the Interfraction group "OBOR" issued a Statement to the Representatives of the National People's Congress of China, saying among others: **"Resolve actions of the Chinese authorities, its unprecedented openness in front of the international community, stunning pace of construction of the specialized hospitals, that aimed to resolve the problem – all this commands respect and support"**.[26] Within the last year this group had the biggest amount of interactions with the Chinese counterparts.

There are no Ukrainian top-politicians or diplomats who have been involved in Chinese companies. However, former diplomats are joining Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and becoming their representatives in China, or becoming active in Ukraine-Chinese business councils and associations from the Ukrainian side.

Since 2015, there have not been active trips of the Ukrainian politicians to China. The biggest amount of interactions and high-level visits of the active and former top-level politicians have been observed around 2010-2013. In 2018 a big delegation, that included members of the parliament, representatives of the Ministry of Culture, journalists, academics in cultural and religious studies (more than 30 people),

[25]https://zagittya.com.ua/ua/news/novosti/viktor_chernyj_u_parlamentskogo_obedinenija__odin_pojas_odin_put__est_buduschee_dlja_sotrudnichestva_i_razvitija_.html

[26]https://sinologist.com.ua/zvernennya-mizhfraktsijnogo-deputatskogo-ob-yednannya-odyn-poyas-odyn-shlyah-deputativ-vsekytajskyh-zboriv-narodnyh-predstavnykiv/

visited Tibet on the invitation of the Chinese Embassy in Ukraine.[27]This study visit has been organized and promoted by the Chinese Embassy. In addition to this before pandemic representatives of local authorities from different regions attended numerous events in China, mostly for participation in fairs and exhibitions.

Business Councils

Several joint councils are in charge of the bilateral relations. They are both formal governmental structures and associations established by business with involvement of former diplomats. **At the governmental level,** it is a Commission on Cooperation between the Governments of Ukraine and China, chaired from the Ukrainian side by the Vice-Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Cooperation. It was established in 2011, and According to the bilateral agreement it main tasks are analysis of cooperation; proposals development for actions; projects coordination in trade, economy, science, cultural, space, agro and educational spheres; facilitation to business and other legal entities in cooperation in above mentioned spheres[28]. It should meet each two years. In December 2020, the Fourth Meeting of the Commission on Cooperation between the Governments of Ukraine and China took place in the video conference format due to the pandemic.

At the business level, there are numerous entities with different level of activities. All of them were much more active before the pandemic. They are usually in close contacts with the foreign missions of Ukraine abroad and with the Chamber of Commerce.

The Joint Ukrainian-Chinese Business Council (UCBC) was founded in 2010, based on bilateral agreement between the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.[29] It unites around 100 enterprises. From the Ukrainian side, there are two founders - Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Association of Ukraine-China Cooperation. Currently it is chaired by the former Ukraine's Ambassador to China Igor Litvin.

Association of Ukraine-China Cooperation[30] was created in 2008. Founded by numerous commercial companies, it has a status of the non-governmental organization. By itself, it is a founder of the Association of Business Cooperation of Ukraine and ASEAN states (established in 2011).

Association of Ukraine-China Strategic Partnership was founded in 2017, and is currently chaired by the former Ukraine's Ambassador to China Igor Litvin. **Ukrainian Association Belt and Road** was established in 2011 (previously known as Silk Road Association of Ukraine "Silk Link"[31]). Among other activities, in 2016 they organized a first Ukrainian Silk Road

[27]http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=245370628
[28]https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/156_079#Text
[29] https://ucbc.org.ua/
[30]https://aucc.org.ua/
[31]http://silklink.org/en/home/

Forum, that was attended by the President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko[32].

Chinese Commerce Association[33] was established in 2015 with the support of the Chinese Government and is a non-governmentaland non-profit association of Chinese and Ukrainian companies with Chinese capital. This organization leadership for 90% comprises of Chinese nationals. What is interesting that most of these organizations have same people in their top leadership and among founders. The goals are very similar - establishing business contacts, facilitate business activities, and investments.

Cultural diplomacy. The cultural cooperation between two states are happening on bilateral basis, and includes both Ukrainian visits, performances, etc. in China, and Chinese festivals, fairs, competitions in Ukraine. Most of the events are happening with active involvement of the Chinese diplomatic missions. NGO "Society China – Ukraine" was active back in early 2010s, when for example organized Ukrainian Cultural Days in Shanghai in commemoration of the 20 anniversary of diplomatic relations establishment. It was organized together with General Consulate of Ukraine in Shanghai and Shanghai People Society for Friendship with Foreign States.[34] In general, they have been actively visiting China both with cultural and economic purposes[35]. It is important to mention that the Honorary President of the "Society Ukraine-China" is the first President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk.

There are two topics that always attract negative reaction of the Chinese official representatives – Falun Gong and Hong Kong. The Chinese diplomatic missions usually painfully perceive attempts of the Falun Gong group to organize their performances in different cities of Ukraine. Many of the concerts and exhibitions for the last ten years have been cancelled due to their insistence.

In January 2020, Ukrainian initiative "Free Hong Kong" issued a statement accusing the Chinese Embassy in Kyiv that they requested from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Kyiv City Council to prohibit the exhibition organized by the "Free Hong Kong" about the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity and protests in Hong Kong and their parallels.[36] In their letter to the MFA, the Chinese Embassy called an organization of such an exhibition **"an interference in the domestic affairs of China".**

At the same time, there are cases where it is difficult to prove any official involvement. One of the recent cases of open pressure to the

[32]https://sinologist.com.ua/silk-link-partnerstvo-zaradi-majbutnogo/
[33] http://www.cca.com.ua/
[34]https://shanghai.mfa.gov.ua/news/1846-dialog-kulyturklyuch-do-vzajemorozuminnya-ta-dovirimizh-ukrajinoju-ta-kitajem

[35]https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/430824-delegatsya_tovaristva_ukrana_kitay_na_chol_z_pochesnim_prezidentom_leondom_kravchukom_pribula_do_kitayu_z_vzitom_536738.html
[36]https://www.facebook.com/ufhkc/posts/1046903695659252/

academic that decided to criticize China happened in December 2020. A well-known sinologist Yurii Poita was expelled from Ukrainian Association of Sinologists, a member of which he had been since 2016. Officially the Association published a statement, in which among others named the following reasoning –"inappropriate level of qualification" and "public statement against development of Ukraine-China strategic partnership"[37] (This statement later was deleted from the website of the Association, after it called significant disapproval among experts). Yurii Poita himself connected this expel with his interview to BBC, where he emphasized that Ukraine in relations with China first of all should come from the Ukrainian interests and to check carefully all investment.[38] Interestingly, despite the scandal caused by the expulsion of Yuri Poita from the Association on April 27, 2021 the MFA of Ukraine signed MoU with the Association whereas the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba emphasized that such cooperation will result in strengthening of the institutional capacities of the Ministry.[39]

Confucius Institutes

Confucius Institutes have been working in Ukraine since 2007. In 2021,there are following Confucius Institute Centers in Ukraine – Kyiv National University, Kyiv National Linguistic University,[40] Kharkiv National University,[41] South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University (Odesa),[42] National Shipyard University (Mykolaiv). Vinnitsa National Technical University has the latest center, opened in October 2020. Institute in Lugansk National University (currently in Starobilsk) had been active before the occupation of Lugansk, but is not seen in the evacuated university. By the results of 2020, Chinese International Educational Fund defines Kharkiv National University Confucius Institute among 30 best centers in the world - naming Excellent Chinese Testing Center[43].

In addition to the Institutes, there are also number of Confucius classes opened in different high schools and universities of Ukraine under the auspices of the Confucius Institutes in their region. Often they are opened with the facilitation of the Chinese Embassy (see for example Kyiv Grinchenko University opening)[44]. In June 2019, with the support of the Confucius Institute Headquarters and Central Musical Academy, Confucius Music Center was opened in the Tchaikovsky Musical Academy in Kyiv[45]. It is planned to become a center of opera music and of the study of the Chinese music.

[37]https://sinologist.com.ua/pojtu-yu-v-vyklyucheno-zi-skladu-asotsiatsiyi/
[38]http://uaprom.info/digest/24254-vidkritij-list-shho-iz-ukrayinskim-kitayeznavstvom.html
[39] https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ministerstvo-zakordonnih-sprav-uklalo-memorandum-pro-spivpracyu-z-ukrayinskoyu-asociaciyeyu-kitayeznavciv
[40]https://www.facebook.com/knlukongzixueyuan/
[41]http://confucius.univer.kharkov.ua/
[42]https://confucius-pdpu.com.ua/
[43]http://confucius.univer.kharkov.ua/23-12-2020
[44]https://if.kubg.edu.ua/struktura/2011-06-23-12-44-46/2015-08-31-08-37-29/klas-konfutsiia.html
[45]https://knmau.com.ua/muzichnij-tsentr-konfutsiya/

There are also several Chinese language centers in other universities (Odesa National University, Precarpathian National University), which are not formally part of the Confucius Institute network, but may have close contacts and collaboration with one of the local centers. In 2013, it was a plan to open Confucius Institute in Precarpathian National University. The primary activities of the Confucius Institutes in Ukraine are connected with the educational sphere. First of all, language courses, and related with them cultural studies. They also provide scholarships to study in the Chinese Universities, organize exhibitions, and involved in creating "Confucius Classes" at the Ukrainian high schools. They also facilitate participation of students in winter or summer camps in China.
For example, Confucius Institute at South-Ukrainian Pedagogical University annually organize a festival "Ukraine-China Spring".[46]Kyiv Linguistic University's Instituteorganizes exhibition of the Chinese art, master-classes of art, crafts and cuisine, etc.[47]

In 2017, the Alumni Association of the Confucius Institute of the South-Ukrainian National Pedagogical University and Kharbin Engineer University was established in the framework of the partnership agreements between these two universities.[48]

Still in 2020-2021 centers were not very active due to the pandemic and closed Universities, so they concentrated their activities on language classes, exams, and small competitions (poetry, translation, essays, etc.).

Open propaganda, including from the Chinese embassy / diplomatic corps ("wolf warriors") Chinese state media is not active in Ukraine. The biggest information agencies, TV and newspapers do not have Ukrainian website, and mostly present in Russian. None of them gets the interest from the public, except of those specialized in the topic. CRI – China International Radio[49] is the only having Ukrainian version of the website.

Some media considers Chinese Embassy website influential, but it is outdated, and the last year news has not been properly updated. However, the Embassy is much more active in the social networks, such as Facebook[50] and Instagram, (where they have about 1500 subscribers), and Twitter with as few as 280 followers. Ambassador has been active in media in 2020, mostly trying to overcome a negative impact of COVID-19 to the image of China, talking about efforts to overcome the health crisis, to repair economy, and about very intense economic relations between two states. At the same time, the Embassy was not witnessed in promoting Chinese vaccine SinoVac, bought by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine through the private company.

[46]https://confucius-pdpu.com.ua/
[47]https://sinologist.com.ua/institut-konfutsiya-rushnik-na-yakomu-r
[48]https://confucius-pdpu.com.ua

[49]http://ukrainian.cri.cn/
[50]htt
https://www.2000.ua/ps://www.facebook.com/chinaembua

General Consulate of China in Odessa is quite active, including publishing news about "Chinese way" of fighting COVID-19[51]. However, it looks that its main target is Chinese nationals in Odessa region.

At the same time, some experts consider that the biggest information influence happening not directly but through sponsored proxies. One of which is Ukrainian Association of Sinologists,[52] that is publishing a magazine "Ukraine-China". This magazine is very complimentary about China, its type of government, political and economic development. The articles that appeared there in 2020, lacked any possible criticism about Chinese way to fight COVID-19, but praised that China managed to control pandemic because of its style of governance. Considering the fact that leadership of this Association are well-known Ukrainian experts they are regularly invited to comment China and related issues in media.

Also, the news from China in Ukrainian are actively promoted by Association biweekly digests, and by the Association of Ukraine-China Cooperation at their Facebook.[53] Three pro-Russian TV channels (112, ZIK, News One) that have been closed in 2021 due to the sanctions, used to present in more favorable for China news, especially when they coincided with their anti-Western views. There you could find commenters talking about Chinese way of economy development, necessity for close cooperation with China, about Chinese way of opposing "Western dominance". However, this favorable coverage could not be characterized by Chinese influence, but by the coincidence of views.

Weekly newspaper "2000"[54] is also named by media experts ast hat one publishing big pro-Chinese articles, and more often than others, articles of the Chinese Ambassador[55]. While being popular in the past, now this media is not among leading information outlets. In 2015, Xinwei Group established in Ukraine Center for Contemporary China "Tianxia Link" that aimed to have analytical work, establishing contacts with authorities, including local one, facilitate the trade relations, organize conferences, etc.[56] However, as most of such organizations it has not been active in 2020.

Sub-national authorities: regions, municipalities

There is a deficit of data regarding the contacts organized via the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. The information published on its website refers mostly to the meetings with the Ukrainian diplomats and mentions big international events, without specifying participants from Ukraine. More information can be found on the web-resources of the Ukrainian

[51]http://odessa.chineseconsulate.org/rus/
[52]https://sinologist.com.ua/category/publication/journal/
[53]https://www.facebook.com/aucc.org.ua/
[54] https://www.2000.ua/
[55]https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/information-influence-media-prc-china-ukraine/31073783.html
[56]http://www.tianxia.link/uk/1-ukraine-china

MFA[57] and Ukrainian local authorities. The MFA of Ukraine reminds that the legal stock of Ukraine-China interregional cooperation comprises 91 documents (bilateral agreements, memoranda, and protocols on cooperation), which regulate the establishment of friendly and sister relations on the pattern levels as region-to-province, city-to-city, region-to-city, city-to-province. The Embassy of Ukraine to the People's Republic of China also provides information about the visits of the delegations from Ukraine to China in 2017.

In January 2017, the delegation of Vinnytsia oblast headed by Andrii Gyzhko, First Deputy Oblast Administration Chairman paid the working visit to China. The meeting with the authorities of Ningbo, Zhejiang province, was organized during the visit. The negotiations covered the supply of agricultural products such as grains, sunflower oil, poultry meat, dried milk. There were also discussions on the prospective cooperation in the field of alternative energy.

In March 2017, the delegation of the Kyiv city state administration visited Beijing and had meetings with representatives of the Beijing office of protection of monuments of cultural heritage and National Theatre of China.

In November 2017, during the Ninth session of the trade Fair of Chinese investment abroad (COIFAIR-2017) representatives of the Vinnytsia and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts and Kharkiv and Kyiv presented the economic and investment potential in their regions.

In December 2017 at the invitation of the head of Lviv regional oblast administration carried out a visit to Lviv representative the delegation of the Sichuan province. During the visit, the parties signed an Agreement on cooperation between the Lviv regional state administration and People's Government of Sichuan province (China).

In April 2018, the Chairman of the Sumy regional state administration, Mr.M.Klochko visited Sichuan province to discuss issues of economic cooperation between the regions.The local web-sites focus on the visits of the Chinese delegations to Ukraine.

Back in June 2016 Cooperation agreement between Kharkiv oblast in Ukraine and Heilongjiang province in China was signed.[58] The document focused on trade, economic, scientific and cultural cooperation. The document was signed during the visit of the delegation of Kharkiv oblast administration to Harbin for attending 6th Harbin technical conference.

In September 2016 Khmelnytsk oblast state administration shared information[59] about the meeting

[57] https://china.mfa.gov.ua/en/partnership/188-mizhregionalyne-spivrobitnictvo-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-kitajem

[58] https://kharkivoda.gov.ua/news/81314

[59] https://km-oblrada.gov.ua/kitajski-pidpriyemci-gotovi-spivpracyuvati-u-galuzi-mashinobuduvannya/

with the advisor to the President of Chinese association of the machinery producers. During the meeting the interest in cooperation in the field of machinery building was emphasized by the parties. The oblasts leadership underlined cooperation with Hebei province since 1997.

In May 2017 Lviv and Chengdu signed sister city agreement and December same year delegation from Sichuan province visited Lviv oblast and met with its leadership.[60] In August 2018 Lviv oblast administration released the news about the visit of the delegation from Gansu province.[61] The parties signed the Agreement on interregional cooperation between the Lviv oblast state administration and Gansu province. Later on, in 2019 the delegation from Jiangsu also visited Lviv.[62] The issues of common interests are mostly cooperation in the field of agriculture, tourism and educational projects.

In 2018 the sister city agreement between Sumy city and Xinxiang city (Henan province) was signed. Oblast also boasts enhanced cooperation with Guizhou province.[63]Certain local councils' representatives are engaged via the mechanisms of Silk Road Urban Alliance and Belt and Road Local Cooperation. For example, the local leaders from Korosten (one of the important Ukrainian train hubs) participated in the latter format in 2019 benefiting from Korosten's status of sister city with Hangzhou.[64]

The recent noticed contacts between the representatives of local governments and Chinese business were noticed in Odessa region. In 2019 the delegation from. In February 2021 the Head of the Odessa oblast administration Sergiy Hrynyvetskyy met with the leaders of the Ukraine-China cooperation association.[65] Although the participants of the meeting were Ukrainians they highlighted their systemic cooperation with the Chinese investors, whereas Sergiy Hrynyvetskyy highlighted that back in 2000 Odessa oblast signed cooperation agreement with the Chinese Fujian Province headed by Xi Jinping at that time. Generalizing, the interregional cooperation including the establishment of friendly and sister relations on levels of region-to-province, city-to-city, region-to-city, city-to-province was rather active until 2020. The key issues of cooperation mostly correspond with the economic interests of China in Ukraine and Ukraine in China.

The Economy

[60] https://lanhua-ua.org/lvivska-oblast-nalahodzhuje-kontakty-z-provintsijeyu-sychuan/
[61] https://loda.gov.ua/news?id=38149
[62] https://loda.gov.ua/news?id=46039
[63] https://sorada.gov.ua/actual/actual/19711-tetjana-golovko-my-zatsikavleni-u-rozvytku-dvostoronnogo-spivrobitnytstva-z-kytajem.html

[64] http://korosten-rada.gov.ua/news/novini-mista/korosten-i-hanchzhou-(kitay)-mista- pobratimi.html

[65] https://oda.odessa.gov.ua/hoch-skilky- jdy-na-zahid-vse-odno-pryjdesh-na-shid-v- oblasnij-administracziyi-vidbulasya-zustrich-z-predstavnykamy-asocziacziyi-ukrayinsko-kytajskogo-spivrobitnycztva/

China gradually becomes the key trade partner of Ukraine. The export of goods to China is constantly growing. The import is also growing notwithstanding permanent negative trade balance.

According to the State's Statistics Service of Ukraine in the last two years China was top 1 export destination for the Ukrainian goods as well as top 1 importer to Ukraine. The Chinese share in the foreign trade of Ukraine has been growing from 2,07% in 2005 to 14,45% in 2020. Chinese share in imports to Ukraine has grown from 5,01% in 2005 to 14,45% in 2020. The only entity that exceeds Chinese share in Ukrainian exports and imports is the EU. It's worth mentioning that the share of Russia in Ukrainian exports during the same period of time has decreased from 21,86% in 2005 to 5,5% in 2020. We may assume that the growth of the Chinese share is the result of reorientation from the Russian market. As one of the key trade partners of Ukraine, China substitutes Russia in many fields.

Table 1. Top-5 exports to China from Ukraine in 2011-2020

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Ores, slag and ash (76%)	Ores, slag and ash (80,5%)	Ores, slag and ash (64,9%)	Ores, slag and ash (60,1%)	Ores, slag and ash (40,2%)	Ores, slag and ash (34,7%)	Ores, slag and ash (36%)	Ores, slag and ash (29,7%)	Ores, slag and ash (32,8%)	Ores, slag and ash (35,2%)
Organic chemical compounds (7,5%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (4%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (16%)	Grain crops (13,8%)	Grain crops (28,2%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (28,8%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (25,1%)	Grain crops (25,1%)	Grain crops (23,9%)	Grain crops (26,1%)
Vegetable and animal oils and fats (4,3%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (3,5%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (7,4%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (13,6%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (22,2%)	Grain crops (25,3%)	Grain crops (21,9%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (19,4%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (20,6%)	Vegetable and animal oils and fats (15,7%)
Inorganic chemical compounds (2,4%)	Organic chemical compounds (2,5%)	Wood and wood products (3,1%)	Wood and wood products (3,7%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (2,9%)	Wood and wood products (2,6%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (7,9%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (9%)	Residues and waste from the food industries (7,6%)	Ferrous metals (8,6%)
Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (2%)	Wood and wood products (2%)	Vessels (1,9%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (3,6%)	Wood and wood products (2%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (2,3%)	Electric machinery (2%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (6,5%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (4,9%)	Residues and waste from the food industries (6,9%)

Table 2. Top-5 exports from China to Ukraine in 2011-2020									
2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Electric machinery (27,3%)	Electric machinery (25,4%)	Electric machinery (23,5%)	Electric machinery (20,6%)	Electric machinery (23%)	Electric machinery (24,7%)	Electric machinery (26,4%)	Electric machinery (29,1%)	Electric machinery (34,6%)	Electric machinery (26,8%)
Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (12,1%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (10,9%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (12,1%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (14,7%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (15,5%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (17,4%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (19,1%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (18,7%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (16,8%)	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery (18,2%)
Plastics, polymeric materials (6,9%)	Shoes (7,7%)	Shoes (7,6%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (7%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (6,3%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (5,7%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (5%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (4,6%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (3,8%)	Means of land transport other than rail (4,1%)
Means of land transport other than rail (3,8%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (5,7%)	Ferrous metals (6,1%)	Shoes (4,9%)	Organic chemical compounds (4%)	Ferrous metals (3,8%)	Ferrous metals (4,1%)	Means of land transport other than rail (3,5%)	Means of land transport other than rail (3,4%)	Optical instruments and photographic equipment (3,7%)
Shoes (3,4%)	Clothing and clothing accessories, textile (4,4%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (6%)	Ferrous metals (4,1%)	Shoes (3,7%)	Organic chemical compounds (3,7%)	Organic chemical compounds (3,3%)	Ferrous metals (3,4%)	Toys (3%)	Plastics, polymeric materials (3,3%)

Ukrainian exports to China mostly include raw materials: ores, ferrous metals, cereals, fats and oils. In 2020 the share of these materials reached 80%. There are certain changes in the composition of the exports basket. If ten years ago it was mostly ores then nowadays cereals, fats and oil prevail.

The Chinese imports to Ukraine differ significantly. In 2020 it mostly includes electric machinery, nuclear reactors, boilers and machinery but is not limited to that. The below tables show top 5 products exported to China from Ukraine and top 5 products imported from China to Ukraine. The trade balance between the countries it has been always negative for Ukraine.

Back in 2014 there were high expectations regarding the investment possibilities which could have been boosted by China. According to the assessment of the Financial Times[66] of the estimated $19bn in investments and loans announced since November, $8bn was destined for Ukraine. In addition, most of a further $10.9bn for Romania, $783m for Macedonia, $507m for Hungary and $306m for Serbia was in the form of Chinese investment and loan pledges. Chinese companies focus mainly on large infrastructure projects in Ukraine, such as railways, ports,

[66] https://www.ft.com/content/d3f12c41-ccbd-3595-8002-d90c308e643b

roads, etc. Ukraine expected that its location at the gate of the EU, defense industry and agricultural potential, as well as the other fields of cooperation may attract big Chinese investors. However, fears regarding Chinese lending practices which are often accompanied by a hidden debt, on the one hand, as well as Ukraine's unfavorable business climate, on the other hand resulted in low dynamics in this field. Chinese direct investment in Ukraine does not match the expanding bilateral trade.[67]

Chinese participation in public infrastructure projects

There are both success stories and failures in the field of Sino-Ukrainian infrastructure cooperation. For example, back in 2013 China National Complete Engineering Corporation was selected as the main contractor to build a high-speed railway connecting Kyiv and Kyiv Boryspil International Airport, for about USD 375 million.[68] The construction was scheduled to begin in May of 2013. However, the project was stalled following corruption scandals.

Besides, in July 2017 China Road and Bridge Corporation, a construction company, signed a memorandum of co-operation to build a road between the port cities of Odessa and Nikolaev, in November Vitali Klitschko, the mayor of Kiev, Ukraine's capital, signed a co-operation agreement with two Chinese companies to build a fourth metro line for USD 2 billion. This was followed by news in late 2018 that CRIG has reportedly concluded a preliminary feasibility study for the project. Chinese lenders will fund 85% of the project's cost, which will reportedly begin after the completion of the Podilsko-Voskresensky Bridge and will last for 60 months.[69]

In January 2018 China Harbour Engineering Company, a contractor, announced that it had finished works to deepen the Yuzhny international sea port, Ukraine's biggest commercial port, for USD 38 million.

In February China National Complete Engineering Corporation, a contractor for infrastructure projects, was named as the main contractor to build a high-speed railway connecting Kiev and Kiev's Boryspil international airport, for about USD 400 million (partly financed through a credit agreement secured with China's Export-Import bank).[70]

Also on July 15, 2020 Ukraine and China signed intergovernmental Memorandum envisages the cooperation in the following areas: developing inland waterways; forming mutually beneficial logistics solutions for the trade between Ukraine and China, identification of technical barriers and other obstacles related to transportation between Ukraine and China; attracting investments, technologies and best practices for implementing

[67] https://erainstitute.org/chinese-investments-in-ukraine/
[68] https://news.finance.ua/ua/news/-/300888/povitryanyj-ekspres-do-boryspolya-buduvatymut-kytajtsi-majzhe-za-400-mln
[69] https://www.trade.gov/knowledge-product/ukraine-infrastructure
[70] http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx

infrastructure projects on inland waterways in Ukraine etc.[71]

According to the National Bank of Ukraine, as of of September 30, 2020, $75.7 million of direct investments from China were attracted to the Ukrainian economy (since the beginning of the year, this figure has decreased by $ 6.2 million). Mainly Chinese investments are made in: Ukrainian industry - 43.5%; agriculture, forestry and fisheries - 12.3%; wholesale and retail trade, repair of vehicles - 10.2%; professional, scientific and technical activities - 19.7%; real estate transactions - 3.6%; transport, warehousing, postal and courier activities - 3.4%; construction - 3.4%, etc.[72]

The purchasing of land (directly, indirectly) by Chinese individuals and entities

The key field of the bilateral economic relations is the agricultural sector. Back in the autumn 2012 both countries signed a deal, which stipulated that Ukraine would export 300 million tons of grain each year to China over a period of 15 years, in exchange for more than USD 3 billion in loans.[73] Also in 2012, Ukraine and China signed a USD 28 billion contract under which Ukraine would supply agricultural products to China in exchange for the purchase of Chinese fertilisers and agricultural equipment. The land was supposed to be used for growing crops and raising pigs and would eventually rise to 3 million hectares.[74]

According to the South China Morning Post, under a 50-year plan signed between China's Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps and Ukrainian agricultural firm KSG Agro, the Ukraine was to provide China with at least 100,000 hectares of farmland in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region.[75]

China's COFCO (China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation), has two assets in Ukraine. The first is. It is a sunflower seed processing complex with a daily crushing capacity of 1,500 metric tons and storage capacity of 180,000 metric tons located in Mariupol. The second facility is Mykolaiv grain port terminal, which boasts a transhipment capacity of 2.5 million tons per year and storage capacity of 125,000 tons.[76]

However, according to a landmark law passed by the Ukrainian parliament in 2020, foreign persons and entities are expressly prohibited by the Moratorium Reform Law from acquiring agricultural land, interests in companies owning such land (other than banks that, as noted above, can only own agricultural land recovered as collateral), and land shares. Crucially, under this

[71] https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/3064094-ukraine-china-to-cooperate-on-developing-inland-waterways-infrastructure.html

[72] https://china.mfa.gov.ua/en/partnership/186-torgovelyno-jekonomichne-spivrobitnictvo-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-kitajem/investment-cooperation

[73] www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/updates/LSE-IDEAS-Banking-on-Beijing.pdf

[74] https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/why-china-is-interested-in-ukraine/

[75] https://www.globalconstructionreview.com/news/china-buy-land-and-build-farms-ukraine/

[76] https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/why-china-is-interested-in-ukraine/

new legislation, restrictions on foreign investment can only be canceled by a national referendum.[77] Therefore the risks of acquiring Ukrainian land by Chinese as well as any other investors is exaggerated at the moment.

Chinese participation in key strategic sectors: (1) energy; (2) water-sewage; (3) IT-communications; the 5G affair

There is a noticeable bilateral interest in implementing joint investment Chinese-Ukrainian projects, establishing joint factories for the production of equipment and materials for renewable energy facilities, and creating financing mechanisms for clean energy projects.[78] Reportedly, the Chinese company wants to capitalise on the wind coming off the Azov and to build a 500-megawatt wind farm.[79] Besides, 'Naftogaz Ukraine' got a USD 3.6 billion credit from the National Development Bank of China and the CNBM Company owns several solar power plants in the Odessa region, with the whole investment worth USD 1 billion.[80] Among the recent developments, PowerChina agreed to construct an 800 MW wind power plant in Ukraine's troubled Donetsk region with local partners. It would be the biggest onshore unit of its kind in Europe. The wind park is planned to be built in Donetsk in southeast Ukraine, in the districts of Manush and Nikolske, or Nikolsky. Participants at the signing ceremony estimated it would be worth at least USD 1 billion (EUR 860 million).[81]

Also, back in 2019 Chinese telecom company Huawei was ready to provide the Ukrainian government with a draft plan for the development of broadband communications.[82] On October 15, 2020, Ukraine's State Service for Special Communications and Information Protection signed a memorandum of understanding with Huawei on cooperation in the areas of cybersecurity and cyber defense. According to the joint press release, the proposed cooperation aimed to strengthen Ukraine's state defense against cyber threats, create a channel for information exchange, and provide advanced training for personnel in cybersecurity and communications.

The Chinese provider was also chosen as the winner of the tender for the installation of a 4G network in Kyiv's subway.[83] The move caused criticism from the Western partners of Ukraine though. The American partners even hinted that the United States is ready to give Ukraine money if it refuses to use the equipment produced by Huawei to build the core of its fifth-

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77 https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ban-on-farmland-sales-to-foreigners-risks-starving-ukraine-of-investment/

78 www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/china-ukraine-to-deepen-cooperation-in-renewable-energy-117111800066_1.html

79 www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/with-russia-on-the-sidelines-china-moves-aggressively-into-ukraine

80 www.newropeans-magazine.org/en/2017/03/29/is-china-a-ukrainian-ally/

81 https://balkangreenenergynews.com/china-to-build-europes-biggest-onshore-wind-park-in-ukraine/

82 https://asiatimes.com/2019/11/huawei-poised-to-boost-ukraine-broadband/

83 https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/huawei-and-ukraines-cybersecurity-narrowing-space-kyiv-negotiate

generation, or 5G, networks. The U.S. expressed its readiness to cover the price difference between the Chinese equipment and more expensive U.S. or European hardware.[84]

Threats with sanctions by China against the state due to policies or statements deemed "hostile"

The tensions between the United States and China resulted in one major scandal that resulted in displeasure of the Chinese authorities and demands of compensation from Chinese investors. The case is related to the attempts of the Chinese aviation industry investment company Skyrizon to acquire stakes in Motor Sich, Ukrainian aircraft engine manufacturer. Ukrainian antitrust authorities first delayed the deal and afterwards allegedly under the pressure of the American administration applied sanctions on the Chinese investors.[85] The unprecedented sanctions triggered a diplomatic protest note and a strongly worded press statement from the Chinese foreign ministry.[86] Chinese investors also demand USD 3.6 billion compensation from Ukrainian Motor Sich.[87]

Chinese immigration in the country: numbers, profile of immigrants

There is little official data regarding the Chinese Diaspora in Ukraine. Definitely there are no Chinatowns. The biggest group of the Chinese immigrants live in Odessa region and many of them work at "7th kilometer" market. There are also groups which live in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Lviv.

The migrant from China's mainland arguably are influenced by the Chinese media discourse whereas those originating from Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan rather oppose Chinese state policies (although these group constitute the minority of the Chinese Diaspora).[88] Chinese Diaspora in Ukraine is an official NGO and has ex-President of Ukraine Victror Yushchenko as one of its advisors.

So far there are no signs of instrumentalizing Chinese Diaspora for lobbying Chinese interests in Ukraine. Some slight attempts of strengthening United Front efforts in this regard were noticed only with regard to Hong Kong crisis.

SOCIETY

[84] https://www.kyivpost.com/technology/us-to-give-ukraine-money-to-ditch-huawei-as-5g-equipment-supplier.html
[85] https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-china-sanctions-idUSS8N2FD04S
[86] https://jamestown.org/program/ukraines-china-policy-a-not-so-delicate-balance/
[87] https://www.defenseworld.net/news/29004/Chinese_Investors_Seek_3_6_Billion_Compensation_from_Ukrainian_Moto_Sich#.YKTL4qgzY2w
[88] https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/ukrajinsjkyj-chajna-taun-shho-varto-znaty-pro-kytajsjku-diasporu-v-ukrajini/31151239.html

Chinese students who entered Ukrainian Univesities

(the table includes only those universities and specialization were at least 20 students from China study and covers 2017-2020 period)

The year of entering the University	The name of the University	Specialization	Number of students
2020	National Aerospace Zhukovskyy University "Kharkiv Aviation Institute"	Aviation and space-rocket machinery	27
2020	Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University	Philology	56
2020	«South-Ukrainian National Pedagogical Ushynskyy University »	Secondary education	30
2020	National Ship-Bulding Admiral Makarov University	Ship-building	74
2020	Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design	Design	82
2020	Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design	Chemical technologies and engineering	76
2020	Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design	Bio-technologies and bio-engineering	79
2020	Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design	Pharmacy, industrial pharmacy	19
2020	"National Ship-Bulding Admiral Makarov University" Ship-Builders College	Computer Science	46
2019	National Aerospace Zhukovskyy University "Kharkiv Aviation Institute"	Aviation and space-rocket machinery	64
2019	Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University	Philology	33
2019	Kharkiv National Pedgogical Skovoroda University	Secondary education	33
2019	«South-Ukrainian National Pedagogical Ushynskyy University »	Secondary education	20
2019	National Ship-Bulding Admiral Makarov University	Ship-building	79
2019	Sumy National Agricultural University	Management	32
2019	National Aviation University	Aviation transport	26
2019	National Pedagogical Dragomanov University	Music Art	43
2019	Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design	Design	75
2019	Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design	Chemical technologies and engineering	75
2019	Kyiv National Linguistics University	Philology	28
2019	"National Ship-Bulding Admiral Makarov University" Ship-Builders College	Computer Science	69
2018	National Ship-Bulding Admiral Makarov University	Ship-building	77
2018	Kyiv National Linguistics University	Philology	26
2018	"National Ship-Bulding Admiral Makarov University" Ship-Builders College	Computer Science	60
2017	National Ship-Bulding Admiral Makarov University	Ship-building	69

Chinese students in local universities

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine in January 2021 there were 3232 Chinese students in Ukraine. This figure does not include PhD students, clinical residents and academic mobility programs participants.

The Chinese nationals study different programs. The Universities with the highest number of Chinese students with their most-popular specializations and years of entering the University are reflected in the Table above.

There is a higher demand for scientific specializations, in particular in the field of ship-building and computer science, aviation and space-rocket machinery but also for the specialization in chemical and biochemical technologies, agriculture.

Tourism as a socio-economic linkage

In 2020 Ukraine introduced a temporary visa-free travel regime for Chinese tourists from August 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021 to improve conditions for tourism development. In 2021 the same regime was applied for the period from April 1 till September 30.[89]

The number of Chinese nationals remains relatively low though. According to State Border Guard Service of Ukraine during 2016-2021 169,2 thousand Chinese nationals crossed the borders of Ukraine: 23,7 thousand in 2016, 35,3 thousand in 2017, 46,1 thousand in 2018, 48 thousand in 2019, 13,7 thousand in 2020 and 2,4 thousand in a first quarter of 2021. The main reasons for entering the country were private trips.

Chinese language media

None of the Ukrainian media has Chinese investment or ownership. The biggest Chinese media also does not have Ukrainian language websites, except of the Chinese International Radio (see above), so Ukrainian population or journalists can get information only from the Russian-language pages. Experts consider that most of the Chinese state agencies and media receive information from the diplomats, who part-time serve as media representatives.[90]

Attitudes towards China in Ukrainian society:

The latest sociological survey (December 2020) demonstrated that only 4% of Ukrainians consider China as a biggest ally of Ukraine[91]. In December 2020, Gallup conducted a survey in different countries including Ukraine, asking about which countries would be superpowers in the future. Ukrainian results demonstrated that 55% of Ukrainians answered positively that

[89] https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-ukrayini-zaprovadiv-timchasovij-bezvizovij-rezhim-67313

[90] https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/information-influence-media-prc-china-ukraine/31073783.html

[91] https://dif.org.ua/article/yaki-inozemni-derzhavi-e-naybilshimi-soyuznikami-ukraini-na-dumku-gromadyan

China will be a superpower in 2030.[92]

According to the sociological survey in October 2020, around 1/3 of Ukrainians were ready to believe that COVID-19 is a biological weapon developed in Chinese laboratories (same amount that believed these labs are American)[93].

In February-March 2020, some media reports suggested a subjective decrease in favorable attitude towards Chinese nationals[94] in Ukraine and China due to the pandemic development and existed fears, but this was a short-term perception that was not stable and overwhelming. At the same time, a sociological survey in 2018 about interethnic prejudice in Ukraine demonstrated that Ukrainians were ready to accept Chinese only as visitors to Ukraine and those who may live there (5,29 – where 1 is a member of the family and 7 is not allowing entering Ukraine).[95]

Ukraine's participation in Chinese initiatives

Some of the Ukrainian politicians considered joining China-led initiatives e.g. the 17+1 format – sub-regional group that brought together China and seventeen Central and Eastern European countries, consisting of twelve EU Member States and five EU candidate countries. In 2016, the influential First Vice Speaker of the Parliament of Ukraine Iryna Gerashchenko suggested that it is very important for Ukraine to join the format and to become a full member of the Silk Road project.[96]

Another option considered by the Ukrainian side was joining 17+1 in the capacity of observer following the Belorussian example. However, the Chinese approach was less enthusiastic. Later on, Chinese approach has changed slightly. In 2021 the Ambassador of China to Ukraine Fan Xiangrong assured the Ukrainian counterparts that China does not exclude Ukrainian participation in the 17+1 Initiative.[97] However, bearing in mind the growing Sino-American competition in the region and failure of the last 17+1 summit in 2020[98] it seems that the appetite of Ukrainian side is getting lower.

Regarding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Ukraine abstained from joining this institution because of the strong opposition to the initiative by the United States who is the key security ally of Ukraine and cautious position of the EU which is Ukrainian second-largest trade partner.

The Chinese Government also proposed Ukraine to apply for a loan from its USD 40 billion Silk Road Fund for financing the infrastructure plans falling within China–Ukraine–European Union (EU) rail and ferry

[92] https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3206915-ponad-65-ukrainciv-ne-virat-so-rosia-bude-nadderzavou.html
[93] https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/695552.html
[94] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1043326572712785
[95] http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=793&page=2
[96] www.china-ceec.org/eng/zdogjhz_1/t1414332.htm
[97] https://silkbridge.info/kitaj-dopuskaet-ukrainy-k-formatu-17-1/
[98] https://chinaobservers.eu/has-xi-jinping-just-presided-over-the-last-171-summit/

scheme.[99] The proposal was voiced back in August 2016.[100] However, since that time, there have been no success stories related to the projects funded through this initiative.

China recognized Ukraine as an independent state on December 27, 1991 and the diplomatic relations were established on January 4, 1992. Since that time and up to the current moment, China consistently supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity - it never recognized annexation of Crimea - whereas Ukraine in a reciprocity manner is committed to the "One China" policy.

President Zelenskyy publicly emphasized that he did not perceive China as a geopolitical threat arguing that "we don't feel that in Ukraine" and welcomed and said that he welcomed both American and Chinese investments.[101]

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[99] WWW.ATIMES.COM/UKRAINE-STRIVES-TO-CARVE-OUT-A-ROLE-IN-CHINAS-SILK-ROAD-STRATEGY

[100] http://business-in-ukraine.online/china-offers-ukraine-to-use-the-silk-road-fund-for-infrastructure/

[101] https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/intervyu-prezidenta-ukrayini-programi-axios-sho-vihodit-na-p-66313