



# Croatia and the Chinese “17+1” Cooperation Framework

Zvonimir Stopić

School of History, Capital Normal University, Beijing, PR China

z\_nanook@yahoo.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-8797-5745

**Key words:**

China; Croatia;  
17+1; Belt and  
Road Initiative;  
International  
Relations

**Abstract**

*Since the Pelješac bridge construction project was awarded to the Chinese company China Road and Bridge Cooperation (CRBC) in January 2018, the Sino-Croatian relations reached a new high point. Since then, and contrary to Croatia's past activity and interest, Croatia not only opted to more actively participate in the “17+1” cooperation framework, but even stepped forward by hosting the latest “17+1” summit, held in April 2019. The rekindled relations have since been, on the surface, bursting with possibilities regarding investment, exchanges of personnel, and cooperation on various levels. However, years of neglect, especially on the Croatian side, had created a situation in which Croatia is critically falling behind in experts, Chinese-speaking talents, and various aspects of knowledge needed to support this level of cooperation. Furthermore, judging by the press releases and the lack of clarifications from the Croatian government regarding the short-term decisions and the long-term direction the renewed Sino-Croatian friendship is taking, general understanding of how concepts such as the “17+1” or the Belt and Road Initiative actually reflect on Croatia with regards to their influence on the wider regional and global circumstances is also lacking. This paper analyses the width of the uneven approach China and Croatia are taking in the development of their relations and will attempt to address the issues and challenges that could arise from this unevenness.*

## Introduction

The “16+1”, or the “17+1” cooperation framework as it was renamed after the Greek Premier Alexis Tsipras recently announced Greece’s wish to join in, and the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) are today overlapping political and economic concepts the People’s Republic of China has been vigorously promoting during the administration of its current president Xi Jinping (习近平). While the BRI is designed to provide a global multidimensional framework for China to achieve stronger connections with Asia, Europe and Africa, the “17+1” concept is focused more on strengthening the relations between China and the seventeen countries of Europe’s East and Southeast.<sup>1</sup> Although initially started slightly earlier, the “17+1” eventually incorporated in the BRI, which has in recent years gained significant momentum. Croatia is one of the 17 countries selected by China. Its geographical position, long coast with several natural harbours, closeness to large European Union (EU) economies, multitude of appealing tourist destinations, as well as a relative good connectivity within the country does make it interesting for China on different levels.

However, despite all these traits, the potential for stronger ties between China and Croatia in recent past was continuously failed to be utilized. Although the relations suffered no serious incidents, and despite the principled interest from both sides, ever since the Croatia gained its independence the overall relations between China and Croatia remained still, even cold at times. Now, after the “China Road and Bridge Corporation” managed to outbid the “western” competition and began constructing the large (for Croatia) infrastructure “Pelješac bridge” project, the potential has been re-invented and the two countries have rekindled communication on a more substantial level. Still, despite the revised friendship, years of neglect, misunderstanding and discrepancies in political approach to their relations, created significant obstacles which threaten to jeopardize the further development of their relations.

In order to determine the dynamic of the relations Croatia and China are currently developing, this paper will map the recent

1 The 17 countries which belong to the “17+1” cooperation framework are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Greece.

relations between China and Croatia, analyse and present the differences with regards to the development to their relations, and will attempt to address some of the problems that have been steadily kindling underneath the “friendly relations” label. The overall analysis will focus more on the “17+1” cooperation framework than on the BRI, keeping in mind the complementary nature of both concepts to one another.

### **The Chinese Side of the “17+1” Cooperation Framework**

Ever since the BRI and “17+1” cooperation framework were announced in 2013 and 2012, respectively, these two concepts have steadily been growing in their importance, proportionally affecting not only the spheres of Chinese politics and economy, but also significantly influencing trends in social and natural sciences as well.<sup>2</sup> Trying to catch the wave of the development guidelines the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been introducing lately, many Chinese scientific institutions have already begun shifting their focus towards Central Asia and Central and Southeast Europe, searching for partners that will help them expand their understanding of the various political, social and scientific processes unique to those areas. In the past couple of years, Chinese institutions often used these two concepts, primarily because mentioning either significantly increases the chance to access state funded projects. Even though most scientists are not truly experts on the countries which lay along the “New Silk Road” or the Central, East and Southeast Europe, they are being stimulated by their Government to make connections and gather knowledge. In short, the Chinese Government has, for years now, been encouraging various Chinese institutions to divert their focus towards the parts of the world China is less familiar with. Thus slowly but steadily building a base upon which grander things might be built in the future. The 17 European countries, which include Croatia, do belong to that area. The question that follows is what are the results of the Chinese “shift in focus” so far, when it comes to the 17 region, Croatia and its surroundings?

2 Literature on BRI is growing by the day. See for example: Plevnik (2016); Musabelliu, M. (2017); Nolan, P. (2017); Kobeović, Ž, Kurtela, Ž, Vujičić, S. (2018); The State Council of the People’s Republic of China: Chronology of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, [online] 28 March 2015; Belt and Road News: Plan on Belt and Road Initiative, [online]; etc.

a) Institutions

Ever since the “17+1” cooperation framework and BRI were introduced, many Chinese institutions began looking toward that lesser known parts of Europe. As a result, older institutions, such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (中国社会科学院), Beijing Foreign Studies University (北京外国语大学), Peking University (北京大学), and some others, began expanding departments that were focused mostly on the area belonging to the former Soviet Union and European socialist countries, while many other institutions all around China began establishing their own “Central and East Europe” research centres of various sizes. Today, it is possible to identify 23 such institutions in China<sup>3</sup> The list of institutions is presented in the table below.

Name (Chinese)	Name (English)	City	Website
中国社会科学院 俄罗斯东欧中亚 研究所中东欧研 究室	Central and East Europe Department of the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies; Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Beijing	<a href="http://euroasia.cssn.cn/xswz/xswz_zdowz/">http://euroasia.cssn.cn/xswz/xswz_zdowz/</a>
中国社会科学院 欧洲研究所中东 欧研究室	Central and East Europe Department of the Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Beijing	<a href="https://china-cee.eu">https://china-cee.eu</a>
中国社会科学院 世界历史研究所 俄罗斯东欧史研 究室	Russia and East Europe Department of the Institute of World History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Beijing	<a href="http://iwh.cssn.cn/en/institution/201608/t20160801_3144681.html">http://iwh.cssn.cn/en/institution/201608/t20160801_3144681.html</a>
北京大学国际关 系学院中东欧研 究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Peking University	Beijing	<a href="http://www.sis.pku.edu.cn/index.htm">http://www.sis.pku.edu.cn/index.htm</a>

<sup>3</sup> Due to the size of China and the speed by which the centers, departments and institutes which we are about to introduce are opening, it is quite probable that at moment of the publishing of this paper the list has already become incomplete.

Name (Chinese)	Name (English)	City	Website
北京第二外国语学院中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Beijing International Studies University	Beijing	<a href="http://cee.bisu.edu.cn">http://cee.bisu.edu.cn</a>
浙江大学中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Zhejiang University	Hangzhou	<a href="http://www.zju.edu.cn">http://www.zju.edu.cn</a>
华东师范大学中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, East China Normal University	Shanghai	<a href="https://www.ecnu.edu.cn">https://www.ecnu.edu.cn</a>
北京语言大学中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Beijing Language and Culture University	Beijing	<a href="http://www.blcu.edu.cn/index.html">http://www.blcu.edu.cn/index.html</a>
北京交通大学中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Beijing Jiaotong University	Beijing	<a href="http://www.njtu.edu.cn">http://www.njtu.edu.cn</a>
上海对外经贸大学中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Shanghai University of International Business and Economics	Shanghai	<a href="http://eng.suibe.edu.cn">http://eng.suibe.edu.cn</a>
同济大学中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Tongji University	Shanghai	<a href="https://www.tongji.edu.cn">https://www.tongji.edu.cn</a>
广东外语外贸大学中东欧研究中心	Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies	Guangzhou	<a href="http://www.gdufs.edu.cn">http://www.gdufs.edu.cn</a>
北京外国语大学中东欧研究中心	Eastern Europe Research Center, Beijing Foreign Studies University	Beijing	<a href="http://www.bfsu.edu.cn/overview">http://www.bfsu.edu.cn/overview</a>

Name (Chinese)	Name (English)	City	Website
中央财经大学俄罗斯东欧中亚研究中心	Russian and Central and Eastern Europe Research Center, Central University of Finance and Economics	Beijing	< <a href="http://www.cufe.edu.cn">http://www.cufe.edu.cn</a> >
宁波中东欧国家合作研究院	Ningbo CEEC Cooperation Institute	Ningbo	< <a href="http://www.nb-ceec.org.cn">http://www.nb-ceec.org.cn</a> >
天津理工大学“一带一路”中东欧研究院	Belt and Road Central and East Europe Research Center, Tianjin University of Technology	Tianjin	< <a href="http://www.tjut.edu.cn">http://www.tjut.edu.cn</a> >
中欧陆家嘴国际金融研究院中东欧经济研究所	Central and Eastern Europe Economy Institute, CEIBS Lujiazui Institute of International Finance	Shanghai	< <a href="http://www.ljzfc.org/zh-hans/research/list/4">http://www.ljzfc.org/zh-hans/research/list/4</a> >
四川大学波兰与中东欧问题研究中心	Center for Polish, Central & Eastern European Studies, Sichuan University	Chengdu	< <a href="http://cpcees.scu.edu.cn">http://cpcees.scu.edu.cn</a> >
上海外国语大学俄罗斯东欧中亚学院	School of Russian and Eurasian Studies, Shanghai International Studies University	Shanghai	< <a href="http://www.sres.shisu.edu.cn">http://www.sres.shisu.edu.cn</a> >
首都师范大学文明区划研究中心	Center for Study of Civilizations (Southeast Europe Studies), Capital Normal University	Beijing	< <a href="http://history.cnu.edu.cn/kxyj/yjjg/128453.htm">http://history.cnu.edu.cn/kxyj/yjjg/128453.htm</a> >
北京外国语大学巴尔干地区研究中心	Balkan Region Research Center, Beijing Foreign Studies University	Beijing	< <a href="http://www.bfsu.edu.cn/overview">http://www.bfsu.edu.cn/overview</a> >
南京航空航天大学巴尔干地区研究中心	Balkan Region Research Center, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics	Nanjing	< <a href="http://www.nuaa.edu.cn">http://www.nuaa.edu.cn</a> >

Name (Chinese)	Name (English)	City	Website
西南财经大学中 东欧与巴尔干地 区研究中心	Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, Central and East Europe and Balkan Region Research Center	Chengdu	< <a href="https://www.swufe.edu.cn">https://www.swufe.edu.cn</a> >

Besides the various institutes and research centres mentioned above, more than 30 centres which are specialized in research of one of the 17 Central, East and Southeast European countries<sup>4</sup> exist in China today. Finally, alongside the growing number of institutions within China, China has also established a special “China-CEE Institute”, located in Budapest.<sup>5</sup>

It is worth taking into account that although the number of research centres and institutions that focus on the 17 countries in various ways is large and growing, most of them have been established within the past several years. At this stage, these research centres are usually not large and fully functional institutions with capabilities to produce large quantity of scientific papers, policy proposals, high quality analytical results and books, but rather consist of relatively small groups of people, most of whom are still in the stage of learning. At this moment, China does lack fully trained experts on the 17 area, but is also marching on to overturn this shortfall. Although still small, these research centres do attract young scholars, many of whom will no doubt choose to pursue their PhDs on various topics concerning countries from the 17 club and who will grow to be top-notch experts in their fields. Furthermore, some of these centres have also began programs through which young scholars can learn languages of the 17 countries, and familiarize themselves with various aspects of their history, culture, economy, politics, art, etc., while some universities, such as Beijing Foreign Language University or the Capital Normal University have already reached the final stage of organizing complete BA and MA study programs on “Balkan” or “Central and East Europe” area.

4 Information on universities, research centers, and institutes that are specialized in researching the 17 area are collected by the Capital Normal University’s professor and Center for Study of Civilization’s researcher Li Jianjun. See: Li Jianjun [李建军] (2019).

5 中国——中东欧研究院, [online]. Available at: <https://china-cee.eu> [accessed 1 August 2019].

Although there is still a long way to go, by spurring various research centres, supporting the creation of study programs on the 17 countries, educating experts and creating new talents, China is slowly but consistently “catching up” with Europe and the United States.

b) The Chinese approach to the research of the 16 club<sup>6</sup>

When we read Chinese scholars’ writings about the BRI and “16+1”, we can notice that Chinese scientific community is currently in a stage of discovery of the area. The papers that have been written discuss various aspects of the development of the 16 countries, often assessing the region as a whole, and making various comparisons between countries inside the 16 region. It is obvious from the works of Chinese scholars that economic and the political dimensions are of prime importance to them. Thus, the majority of papers written on the 16 countries mostly include various analysis of the Chinese political approach, Chinese investment in the 16 club, or the analysis of China’s trade with the selected 16.

Chinese scholars will, for example, often use the “16+1” high level meetings in Warsaw (2012), Bucharest (2013), Belgrade (2014), Suzhou (2015), Riga (2016), Budapest (2017) and Sofia (2018), as well as many other lower level meetings, as proofs of the uninterrupted continuity of the positive development in relations between China and the 16 club.<sup>7</sup> Quite often, the papers will mention that China and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have established or are soon planning to establish various “16+1 support mechanisms”, presented in the table below.

Name (English)	Name (Chinese)	Location
16+1 Agency for Tourism Promotion and Association of Enterprises	16+1旅游促进机构及企业联合会	Hungary

6 Since the introduction of Greece into the “16+1” cooperation framework is relatively recent, the papers reviewed for this research do not include Greece. Due to the same reason, the phrase “16+1”, and not “17+1” will be used in this part.

7 See: 穆正礼 [Mu Zhengli], 罗红玲 [Luo Hongling], 蓝玉茜 [Nam Yuksai], 魏佩玲 [Wei Peiling] (2017), p. 871; 于军 [Yu Jun] (2015), p. 112-115; Liu Zuokui (2017), pp. 20-21;

<b>Name (English)</b>	<b>Name (Chinese)</b>	<b>Location</b>
16+1 Association of Colleges and Universities	16+1高校联合会	
16+1 Contact Mechanism for Investment Promotion	16+1投资促进机构联系机制	Poland
16+1 Commercial Union	16+1联合商会	Poland and China
16+1 Association of Governors	16+1省州长联合会	Czech Republic
16+1 Association for Agriculture Promotion	16+1农业促进联合会	Bulgaria
16+1 Technology Transfer Center	16+1技术转移中心	Slovakia
16+1 Thinks Tanks Exchange and Cooperation Network	16+1智库交流与合作网络	China
16+1 Association for Transportation Infrastructure Cooperation	16+1交通基础设施合作联合会	Serbia
16+1 Association for Logistics Cooperation	16+1物流合作联合会	Latvia
16+1 Association for Forestry Cooperation	16+1林业合作联合会	Slovenia
16+1 Association for Health Cooperation	16+1卫生合作联合会	
16+1 Association for Arts Cooperation	16+1艺术合作联合会	
16+1 Association for Customs Cooperation	16+1海关合作联合会	
16+1 Association for Energy Cooperation	16+1能源合作联合会	Romania

Name (English)	Name (Chinese)	Location
16+1 Association for Maritime Cooperation	16+1海事合作会议	Poland
16+1 Coordination Center for Cultural Cooperation	16+1文化合作协调中心	Macedonia
16+1 Youth Development Center	16+1青年发展中心	Albania

\* Since not all actual locations of all the institutions have fully been agreed upon at the time of writing of this paper, there are a few empty places in the "location" column.

Furthermore, in the works of Chinese authors we can often find basic economic analysis which point to the increase of trade and investment. For example, total trade volume between China and the 16 club increased (roughly from \$4.3 billion in 2001 to \$55.1 billion in 2013 and \$58.65 billion in 2016), as well as that China's direct investment in the 16 club also increased (from about \$400 million in 2009 to nearly \$1.7 billion in 2014).<sup>8</sup>

Aside from the above, Chinese scholars are also quite interested in explaining the nature of China's political approach to the selected 16 countries, clarifying first that China, with the BRI, helps in "linking different political and economic systems, different stages of development, different resources and different civilizations of the Eurasian continent," while with the "16+1",<sup>9</sup> which falls under BRI, constructs a "new-type of international relations", which are based on "the principle of openness and inclusiveness, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation".<sup>10</sup> Looking more precisely at the "16+1" cooperation framework, Chinese scholars will further explain that in this part of Europe, China practices "multi-layered multilateralism", combining diverse cooperation on a regional level (China - 16 European countries), sub-regional levels (China - sub regional

8 穆正礼 [Mu Zhengli], 罗红玲 [Luo Hongling], 蓝玉茜 [Nam Yuksai], 魏佩玲 [Wei Peiling] (2017), pp. 872, 875; 刘作奎 [Liu Zuokui] (2016), p. 147; 于军 [Yu Jun] (2015), p. 115; 华红娟 [Hua Hongjun], 张海燕 [Hai Yangzhan] (2018), p. 31-32.

9 See: 于军 [Yu Jun] (2015), pp. 116-117.

10 See: Liu Zuokui (2017), p. 21. See also 胡勇 [Hu Yong] (2017), p. 7, who used the words of the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, stated during the 2nd "16+1" meeting in Bucharest in 2013, to reach the same conclusion. According to the Chinese Premier, in dealings with the Central and East European countries, China will adhere to the three following principles: the principle of equality, the principle of mutual benefit and win-win and the principle of common development.

groups), and on bilateral levels.<sup>11</sup> In a practical sense, China's multilateral mechanism building, no matter which part of the world it is practiced in, heavily relies on inter-regional cooperation, which is strongly based on the principles of respect of sovereignty and autonomous voluntary cooperation (decision making, planning, coordination, execution) without any kind of supranational coordinator.<sup>12</sup> The "16+1" cooperation framework is no exception. Furthermore, because of various differences in development between China and the selected 16 European countries, as well as because of developmental differences among those 16 themselves, the "16+1" cooperation framework can also be described as a specific type of south-south cooperation with north-south cooperation characteristics.<sup>13</sup>

### c) Issues?

Chinese scholars are not oblivious to the issues the "16+1" concept brings. Chinese scholars will be the first to admit that in the past China focused mostly on developed western countries, neglecting the rest - smaller and medium-sized developing countries. That tendency has created a large hole in China's understanding of the world, and leaving it without the much-needed talent.<sup>14</sup> In connection to this one, there is also a problem of the attractiveness of these newly discovered parts of the world. Chinese students, for example, who wish to study abroad, have, until now, always chosen developed western countries, and paid little attention to the 16 club. In 2014, there were 260,914 Chinese students studying in the United States, 90,245 in Australia, 86,204 in United Kingdom, 85,226 in Japan, 42,011 in Canada, 25,388 in France, 21,886 in Germany, and only 1,615 in the 16 countries altogether. In 2014 there were less than five Chinese students studying in Croatia.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Chinese scholars are aware of the EU's sceptical gaze over China's approach to the EU's east and southeast, the incompatibility of the loans offered by China and the countries' needs with the EU's financial and legal regulations, the irreparable trade asymmetry between China and the 16 countries,<sup>16</sup> the fact

11 See: Presentation given by Song Leilei (2019).

12 See: 张迎红 [Zhang Yinghong] (2017), pp. 15, 17-21.

13 See: 胡勇 [Hu Yong] (2017), pp. 3-5, 8, 14.

14 穆正礼 [Mu Zhengli], 罗红玲 [Luo Hongling], 蓝玉茜 [Nam Yuksai], 魏佩玲 [Wei Peiling] (2017), p. 880.

15 See: 孔寒冰 [Kong Hanbing], 韦冲霄 [Wei Chongxiao] (2017), pp. 22.

16 See: 刘作奎 [Liu Zuokui] (2016), pp. 149, 150.

that the Chinese Government presents the “16+1” cooperation framework and the BRI only in economic and rarely or never in political terms, China’s high inability to perceive all of the differences between the 16 countries which are now mostly unilateral being softly pushed into the new “economic region”,<sup>17</sup> as well as the fact that China still has trouble recognizing the countries’ special needs and coordinate those needs with its own.<sup>18</sup>

Still, no matter the pending issues, we cannot really find opinions among Chinese scholars which contradict the main line of the Chinese Government regarding the BRI and “16+1” in any way. The general feeling of all of the papers, as well as newspapers and other popular articles, is that the “16+1” is a valid idea which is developing rather smoothly, at its own pace, towards the “win-win” balance of relations.

However, in the end, one question still remains, which often bothers western scholars and observers quite a lot. If everything is going relatively smoothly, why is there a need to put all of those diverse countries in one heterogeneous loose economical region in the first place? Why is there a need to separate these 17 countries in any way from the rest of Europe, reminding them in the process constantly that they are somehow different from “developed” European countries? Why is there a need to push this kind of “multi-layered multilateral cooperation framework with south-south and north-south characteristics in this part of the Europe in the first place? The answer to these questions, for now, do not exceed China’s need to address and even somewhat simplify the geopolitical approach to the world outside of it.

### **The Croatian Side of the “17+1” Cooperation Framework**

Ever since Croatia became an independent and sovereign country, the relations between China and Croatia developed relatively slowly, with only a few individual short-lasting initiatives which attempted to surpass the standard classical and bleak “friendly” descriptor. China recognized Croatia on April 27, 1992, supported Croatian acceptance to the United Nations two months later, and on 13 May, 1992 the two countries

17 See: 孔寒冰 [Kong Hanbing], 韦冲霄 [Wei Chongxiao] (2017), pp. 15-20

18 See: 张迎红 [Zhang Yinghong] (2017), p. 22.

officially established diplomatic relations.<sup>19</sup> Croatia's first two presidents, Franjo Tuđman and Stjepan Mesić, took China more seriously. Their visits to China in 1993 and 2002, respectively, were an attempt to push the diplomatic, cultural and economic cooperation to a higher level. Croatia and China's closest moment occurred in May 2005, when in Beijing the Chinese and Croatian Premiers, Ivo Sanader and Wen Jiabao (温家宝), signed a Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Cooperation.<sup>20</sup> However, the relations between these two countries soon after hit a standstill, which lasted until the announcement of the "Pelješac bridge" construction project by the CRBC in January 2018. Despite several promising agreements being signed, the visit of China's President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) to Croatia in 2009, as well as the visits of Croatia's Presidents Ivo Josipović and Kolinda Grabar Kitarović to China in 2010 and 2016, respectively, passed without much significance. As Croatian researcher Ivica Bakota notes, Croatia's focus on entering the EU (in 2013), Croatian attempts to discern itself from the region, thus "escape" the "Balkan" label, tensions between Croatia and Serbia - a country that was at the time China's strongest ally in the region, the lack of experience in dealing with Chinese foreign policy initiatives and an overall lack of capacity to conduct comprehensive and engaging policies toward China were the main reasons for the lower activity in relations between the 2010 and 2016.<sup>21</sup> Significant changes came after Andrej Plenković became the new Croatian Premier in late 2016. During his term the bilateral interactions between China and Croatia doubled, more focus has been put on bilateral cooperation in economy and tourism. Finally, after offering better conditions, the CRBC became the main contractor for the "Pelješac bridge" construction project, and Croatia, for first time ever, expressed an active interest in the "16+1" cooperation framework. After Plenković's visit to China in November 2018, it was proposed that the new "16+1" summit be held in Croatia.<sup>22</sup> Following through on the announcement, the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited Croatia in April 2019, the "16+1" summit was successfully held in Dubrovnik, while China and Croatia signed ten new agreements covering agriculture, technology, railroad infrastructure, investment and banking.<sup>23</sup>

19 See: Baković (2005), p. 149; Plevnik, Mesić, Jurčić (2013), p. 228.

20 Plevnik, Mesić, Jurčić (2013), p. 231; Bković (2005), p. 151.

21 See: Bakota (2019), pp. 9-10.

22 See: Bakota (2019), p. 12.

23 The agreements include: (1) Protocol between the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture

## a) Underneath the surface: the Ministry of Foreign affairs and Croatian media

The “Pelješac bridge” construction project, the “16/17+1” summit in Dubrovnik, as well as the agreements signed between China and Croatia, pushed the Sino-Croatian relations to a new level. However, underneath the surface of this newly established hype on the Croatian side, we can find substantially large potholes in the “infrastructure” needed to sustain this level of cooperation. In the first part of this analysis, we have seen that the Chinese for years now, by building up the information network, gathering knowledge, helping scholars to improve their expertise regarding the European Southeast, have been preparing themselves to deal with Croatia and the rest of the 17 countries on a more substantial level. Their political policies are being followed by science and education. Croatia, on the other side, unfortunately, still shows no signs of such behavior.

Even if we start from the top, we stumble upon issues and inconsistencies quickly. In the “Yearly plan of the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs for 2019”, China is mentioned only once, in the section which addresses the exchange with the countries of Asia and Oceania. Crammed in the same box with the Ministry’s plan to arrange a visit to Japan, China is mentioned in connection to the “China+16 summit in Croatia”.<sup>24</sup> The issue is not that China is mentioned only once, but that from this single entry to the yearly plan, along with no other mention of China in any of the other documents, it is impossible to read out Croatia’s long term plan of any kind

and China Customs which is to ease up the milk export to China, (2) memorandum of understanding and (3) cooperation agreement on education and training in industry, innovation and technology between the Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society and Huawei, (4) financial agreement between the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Chinese Development Bank, (5) cooperation memorandum between the Croatian Railroads Infrastructure and CRBC on the cooperation within the Rijeka-Zagreb railroad project, (6) memorandum of understanding between the Croatian Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts and Chinese Ministry of trade on the creation of a joint working group for cooperation regarding investment, (7) Memorandum of understanding between the Croatian Ministry of Tourism and Chinese Ministries of Culture and Tourism, (8) Memorandum of understanding between the Croatian Railroads Infrastructure and China Railway Eryuan Engineering Group on joint establishment of the intermodal traffic corridor, (9) Memorandum of understanding between the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education and Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology on joint funding of research projects, (10) Memorandum of understanding between the Croatian Central State Office for Sport and Chinese Central Bureau for Sport. See among other similar news: Večernji list: Potpisujemo 10 sporazuma s Kinom. [online] 10 April 2019.

24 See: *Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Republic of Croatia: Godišnji plan Ministarstva vanjskih i europskih poslova za 2019*, [online].

regarding China. There are no defined policies, no policy proposals, no obvious strategic plans, analysis, no signs of any kind of any long term planning whatsoever.

As far as Croatian media reporting on China goes, there are also problems, to say the least. There was a lot of coverage of the “17+1” summit in Dubrovnik, but very few follow-ups. Croatian newspapers still treat news from China, or from the Far East in general, as news of secondary importance. There is no investigative journalism of any kind that follows any topic from that part of the world, no editorials, or opinions. Even major news, which are usually copied from CNN or BBC, are almost never followed up or developed in any way. There are very few exceptions, but only when a direct connection is made, such as in the case of Chinese delegation’s visit, which the Croatian government was hoping could save the faltered “3. Maj shipyard” or the announcement of a new possible investment from China.<sup>25</sup> However, even news such as these are not abundant with succinct information and are usually repetitive in nature.

Unfortunately, signals coming from the Croatian Government or Croatian press do not allow us to read out what the official or the unofficial position of Croatia toward China or the “17+1” cooperation framework actually is. Outside of the simplified and much too general adjective “friendly”. The problem is even larger when we realize that it is next to impossible to attempt to predict where Croatia will stand concerning the “friendship” with China in five, ten, twenty or more years.

b) Universities, research centres, think tanks, institutes

The picture painted by Croatian political institutions and media is only the reflection of the situation in science and education. Besides the Sinology “free study” of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb, the issues of which we will address shortly, not a single Croatian university or school, state owned or private, can boast that it can offer its students any kind of lectures on China. The Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb, where we would attempt

25 See: *Večernji list: Kinezi došli u 3. maj: 'Reakcije su vrlo pozitivne'*, [online] 20 April 2019; *Poslovni dnevnik: Horvat priznao: Kinezi ne misle ulagati ni u Uljanik ni 3. maj*, [online] 21 May 2019; *Večernji list: Jiang Yu - Hrvatska ima više jedinstvenih prednosti*, [online] 12 May 2019.

to search for something like that as a first step, for example, has a variety of lectures on the Foreign policy of the United States, Political Economy of the EU, Political system of the EU, but nothing on China. Today, not a single place exists in Croatia where students can learn anything on Chinese foreign affairs, politics, economy, political changes, modern society, etc.<sup>26</sup>

The above mentioned Sinology “free study”, named as such because it has for the past fifteen years failed to incorporate enough Ph.D. level talents into its ranks to become an accredited functional department, is mostly focused only on “classical” China and language. For the time being, to sustain itself even on the current level, it still uses help from professors from the University of Ljubljana for various lectures. However, years of neglect and its inability to expand more towards topics that deal with modern China have resulted in the Croatian sinology free study’s failure to motivate students to finish the study course and even attract new students. Generally speaking, for years now the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb University, together with the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education proved to be genuinely uninterested in expanding the “Sinology free study” into a fully functional department for reasons unknown.<sup>27</sup>

The analysis of research centres, think tanks or institutions which more or less specifically deal with China is even shorter. Because besides the privately managed “Goeconomic Forum”, led more or less singlehandedly by dr. Jasna Plevnik, there are none.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, aside from a few “memorandums of understanding” there are almost no initiatives or firm plans to actually fund or form one.

The only institution in Croatia today that deals with China consistently is the Confucius institute at University of Zagreb, which far too often serves as a convenient excuse why there is no need to upgrade the “Sinology free study”, incorporate a lecture or two on China in at least one of Croatia’s universities,

26 The only exception to this will probably be the privately-owned Zagreb School of Economic and Management (ZSEM) which is in the following year preparing to start lectures on Chinese Foreign Affairs and General Chinese Studies.

27 Currently the Sinology “free study” is going through a process of reaccreditation. The current goal of this reaccreditation is not the creation of an appealing, independent and universal study of China, but the fusion of the Sinology with the Japanese studies into a new joint study.

28 See: Geoekonoski forum [online]. Available at: <http://www.goeconomic-forum.com/en/> [accessed 1 August 2019].

or to open a single independent research centre on China and/or the Far East. The excuse is paradoxical in nature because the Confucius institute belongs to a larger Hanban (汉办) institution, which itself is a direct extension of the Chinese Ministry of Education. Except for Croatian staff, the Confucius institute is financed by China. It focuses on language and culture, and was never designed to be to be an institution for free sharing of knowledge on China or open discussions. In short, the Confucius institute's primary purpose is to promote a very specific vision of China, and cannot in any circumstances be considered to be the base institution upon which independent scientific approach can be envisioned.

c) Researching China: books, papers, PhDs

Following the lack of institutional direction of the research of China or the Far East, it is not surprising to discover that independent research regarding China is almost non-existent. Croatian knowledge on China is mostly drawn from the translations of the world's bestsellers on China, such as the Jaques Gernet's "Ancient China from the beginnings to the Empire", Edward L. Shaughnessy's "Ancient China", Jonathan Fenby's "Modern China", Frederick William Engdahl's "Target - China", or Michael Pillsbury's "The Hundred Year Marathon", to mention only the most important ones.<sup>29</sup> Croatians themselves write very little. Actually, until today only six books worth mentioning on China were written by Croatians. These are (1) a large comprehensive, very informative but somewhat out-dated overview of Chinese history and culture written by Ivo Dragičević: "China: From Heavenly Kingdom until today" (2008), (2) memoirs and collections of journalist Dara Janeković "Black As and two Doves" (2003), (3) the informative overview of Chinese art edited by Dora Baras and Srećko Horvat: Art dossier: Kina 1949-2009 (2009), (4) the unfinished book on Chinese culture written by the Croatian sinologist Branko Merlin: "The Unfulfilled China" (2012), (5) a publication of a first Croatian Ph.D. in sinology by Ivana Buljan: "Strategies for Maintaining Power: Power and Nature in Chapters 18-21 of the premodern

29 See: Gernet, J. (2008). *Drevna Kina: od prvih početaka do Carstva*. Zagreb: Jesenski Turk. (Prijevod s francuskog: *La Chine ancienne*); Shaughnessy, E. L. (2008). *Drevna Kina*. Zagreb: Planeta Marketing Institucional. (Prijevod s engleskog: *A Short History of Ancient China*); Fenby, J. (2008). *Povijest suvremene Kine: propast i uzdizanje velike sile, 1850-2008*. Zagreb: Sandorf. (Prijevod s engleskog: *History of modern China*); Engdahl, F. W. (2014). *Uništite Kinu: što Washington čini da ograniči utjecaj Kine u svijetu*. Zagreb: Profil; Pillsbury, M. (2018). *Stogodišnji maraton: tajni plan Kine kako da nadmaši Sjedinjene Države i postane glavna svjetska supersila*. Zagreb: Profil, 2018.

Chinese text *Luxuriant Gems in Spring and Autumn*” (2020), and (6) the only noteworthy attempt to analyze the relation between Croatia, Croatia’s neighbourhood and China, written by Jasna Plevnik, Stjepan Mesić and Ljubo Jurčić: “China on the Balkans” (2013). Unfortunately for the last title, it was published just moments before the “17+1” and BRI initiatives were launched, making it miss the latest political trends.<sup>30</sup>

Just as not writing books, Croatians are not writing research papers or making analysis of any kind on China either. Besides the research papers quoted by this analysis or the several papers written by the authors mentioned by this analysis, the original works on China is almost impossible to find. Even when they are found, they mostly only touch the surface of the issues regarding China, never actually attempting to start a systematic, long-term and in-depth analysis of some phenomenon. Unlike Chinese scholars, the number of which is growing steadily, Croatians aren’t trying to define Croatia’s role in the “17+1” nor are they trying to assess the plans Chinese have with Croatia and it’s neighbourhood, let alone detect the fine changes of the balance of power in the region brought on by the growing Chinese presence in the region. Similarly to science papers, student work is also almost non-existent. Although it is possible to find rare exceptions in the form of student papers and master thesis, driven usually only by a personal wish to acquire knowledge, the lack of lectures on China, high-level science papers or experts who could help cultivate new talent, it is not surprising to discover that currently not a single Ph.D. on China in social sciences and humanities is being done within any Croatian institution.

### **Croatia’s understanding of China between two poles**

The enthusiasm over Chinese advance into the rest of the world was described by the Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan (王岐山) on 23 January, 2019 during the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos. After yet another reminder of the “5,000 years of uninterrupted Chinese civilization”, China’s victimization by foreign aggression, and the CCP’s success in liberating the Chinese people and creating a strong and independent country, which can boast with a remarkably rapid

30 For a more comprehensive overview of publishing in Croatia and China see: Stopić (2017).

economic development, the Chinese Vice President eloquently explained how China perceives its role in the world. While on the one hand, China is a strong adversary to the development imbalances, international trade and investment barriers, unilateralism, protectionism and populism, on the other hand it is also a strong supporter of globalization, “opening-up across the board, advance international cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative, upgrade an open world economy, and work for a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, equity, justice and win-win cooperation under the principle of consultation and cooperation for shared benefit.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he reminded the audience that “China remains committed to building world peace, promoting global growth and upholding the international order,” as well as that all mankind should “uphold multilateralism, engage in extensive dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect and mutual trust, and jointly build a system of rules for technology and new international cooperation framework featuring peace, security, democracy, transparency, inclusiveness and mutual benefit, so that all people can gain from technological innovation.”<sup>32</sup>

On the very next day, George Soros, who this time decided to focus solely on China, held a speech in a somewhat different intonation. Radically different, to be exact. Holding no restraints, Soros spoke of “mortal danger facing open societies from the instruments of control that machine learning and artificial intelligence can put in the hands of repressive regimes”.<sup>33</sup> He spoke of the dangers of the totalitarian control of Xi Jinping’s People’s Republic. In short, Soros criticized the practice of the CCP in China to use machine learning and artificial intelligence to achieve an unprecedented level of control over people and eliminate the very idea of the “open society”.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, such practices, further supported by Chinese wealth and technical capability, as Soros believes, raise a serious question mark over China’s level of involvement in the institutions of

31 See: Xinhua Net: Full text of Chinese vice president’s speech at 2019 WEF annual meeting, [online] 24 January 2019.

32 See: Ibid.

33 See: George Soros: Remarks delivered at the World Economic Forum, [online] 24 January 2019.

34 By the “open society” Soros refers to a “society in which the rule of law prevails as opposed to rule by a single individual and where the role of the state is to protect human rights and individual freedom.” See: Ibid.

global governance.<sup>35</sup> The main focus of Soros' criticism hits the very core of the Wang Qishan's address, undermining the foundations Wang's concept of "win-win" and "open world economy". In conclusion, Soros advocated for a harder crackdown on Chinese main developers of 5G, namely ZTE and Huawei, by the United States, because Chinese current practices represent a "threat to the freedom of the internet" and the "unacceptable security risk for the rest of the world".<sup>36</sup> As the development of events soon showed, the United States followed the path proposed by Soros almost to the letter.<sup>37</sup>

In this example, which we used only to present how wide the stretch is between the different positions on China today, we can see that Wang Qishan and Soros represent two directly opposed world-views filled by contradicting sets of values. The truth for one is the outright threat for the other. The truth for the other is exaggeration and the twisting of facts for the first. Once we go back to the "17+1" and BRI discussion and include Croatia, the questions we can now ask are: 1) where between these two poles is Croatia placed? 2) How does Croatia see itself between the China-United States-EU political and economic dialogue? 3) Where does Croatia see itself regarding China in the future? 4) How does Croatia plan to continue developing its cooperation with Huawei in these new circumstances which are surrounding the company? 5) Finally, how can Croatia's (and Slovenia's) role in the "17+1" cooperation framework and the BRI be defined now that Italy joined the BRI and offered several ports and a substantial infrastructure and investment background with which the two smaller neighbouring countries cannot compete?<sup>38</sup>

Before we show Croatia's answers to these questions we will first emphasize the conclusions we've drawn from the analysis of the Sino-Croatian background.

35 See: Ibid.

36 See: Ibid.

37 Meng Wanzhou (孟晚舟), the deputy chairwoman and CFO of Huawei, was arrested in Canada in December 2018, before Soros' speech. Meng Wanzhou's case was an opening incident for the "crack down" on Huawei. Since then, Huawei has been continuously pressured by the United States Government and the media. The latest development, one which will damage Huawei financially occurred just about two months after Soros' speech. On 19 May, 2019, following Trump's blacklisting of Huawei, Google "suspended business with Huawei that requires the transfer of hardware, software and technical services except those publicly available via open source licensing." See: Reuters: Exclusive: Google suspends some business with Huawei after Trump blacklist - source, [online] 19 May 2019.

38 See: BBC News: Italy joins China's New Silk Road project, [online] 23 March 2019.

## Conclusions: answers to the questions

From the given analysis, the first conclusion we can draw is that at this particular moment there is a concerning difference in the intellectual resources China and Croatia are using for the support of this level of Sino-Croatian relations. While China is steadily building and expanding the base of experts and hubs of knowledge on the 17 region and Croatia, Croatia is not only not trying to keep up, it is failing even to recognize this phenomenon. As we have pointed out, Croatians today are not reading about China, there are no lectures where they can learn something about China, they are not writing about China. Croatians do not know what is going on with China or in China, and are almost clueless about what Chinese plans with the 17 region, which includes Croatia, actually are. To make things even more absurd, since Croatian institutions for years have been failing to absorb talent educated in China and for dealing with China, even the Chinese-speaking Croatians in Croatia are ridiculously difficult to find. On the other side, China not only cultivates their own talent, but is also, by offering various jobs and opportunities, absorbing talent from Croatia.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Chinese centres, institutes and research groups mentioned before also function as information gathering hubs. They follow and analyse various information which come from the "17+1" region with great interest. It is also important to understand that the work of these centres does not go unnoticed by the more authoritative Chinese government institutions such as ministries or large state owned media powerhouses. This information is further used, if nothing else, for the creation of news or fine adjustment to the policies China is developing toward the 17 region. Croatia, on the other side, has no mechanism such as that of any kind, nor does it have any plans to develop one.

There are a few positive examples, however, we should turn to. Besides the already mentioned Goeconomic forum which is trying to push the knowledge about contemporary China into Croatian scientific and public opinion spheres, there is also the Chinese-Croatian International Research Center for Ecology and Nature Protection, established in May 2014. This centre was established as a connection point between the Jiuzhai Valley National Nature Reserve Management Bureau (中国九寨沟国家级自然保护区管理局) and the Chengdu Institute

of Biology of Chinese Academy of Sciences (中国科学院成都生物研究所) on the Chinese side, and the University of Zagreb and Plitvice Lakes National Park on the Croatian side. The centre has since its establishment functioned on a very satisfactory level, enabling multiple exchanges, extensive mutual talent training, implementation of comparative research, and new discoveries.<sup>39</sup> Several other projects have also been completed successfully in the fields of biology, physics, engineering, agriculture, medicine, law, kinesiology, etc., but this Center's results today stand as top examples of successful long-term cooperation, and should be looked upon as a model for social sciences and humanities.

However, when everything is taken into account, it is very much clear that at the moment China is learning, while Croatia isn't. China is adjusting, while Croatia is standing still. This phenomenon looks even more troubling if we compare Croatia with its neighbouring countries. Serbia,<sup>40</sup> Slovenia,<sup>41</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>42</sup> Hungary,<sup>43</sup> Austria<sup>44</sup> and Italy<sup>45</sup> all have a developed, active and fully functional sinology or Chinese studies departments which are producing high level experts on China year after year. Croatia, in comparison, is drastically lagging behind. Therefore, if we go back to the five questions we prompted before, the ones that address the validity and the geopolitical consequences of some of the choices Croatia made in its redefined relations with China, as well as those that target the long-term nature of that relation, and asked the Croatians' answer to them, we would unfortunately be gravely disappointed. For answers, no matter if we try to read them out from Croatia's political, media

- 39 Data available from presentations prepared by prof. Anđelka Plenković-Moraj Faculty of Science, Department of Biology, University of Zagreb and prof. Mario Cifrek, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb.
- 40 Sinology department within the Oriental studies of Faculty of Philology of University of Belgrade, [online]. Available at: <http://www.fil.bg.ac.rs> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- 41 Sinology department of the Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts, [online]. Available at: [http://as.ff.uni-lj.si/studij/studij/studij\\_v\\_tujini\\_stipendije/sinologija](http://as.ff.uni-lj.si/studij/studij/studij_v_tujini_stipendije/sinologija) [accessed 1 August 2019].
- 42 Sinology department of Faculty of Arts at the University of East Sarajevo, [online]. Available at: <http://ff.ues.rs.ba/index.php/dr/sin-l-gi/dri> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- 43 Chinese Studies within the Oriental studies of the Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University, [online]. Available at: <https://www.elte.hu/en/faculties/humanities> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- 44 Sinology studies within the Department of East-Asian Studies of the University of Vienna, [online]. Available at: <https://ostasien.univie.ac.at> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- 45 Sinology department of the Language, Culture and Society of Asia and Mediterranean Africa studies of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, [online]. Available at: <https://www.unive.it/pag/28322/> [accessed 1 August 2019].

or scientific spheres, are the same. Simple, but dangerous: “we don't know”.

## Bibliography

- Bakota, I., 2019. A “New Stage” in Sino-Croatian Relations? Unpublished paper.
- Baković, O. Croatian-Chinese Relations on the Eve of Croatia's Accession to the European Union. *Croatian International Relations Review*, July-December 2005, pp. 147-156.
- BBC News: Italy joins China's New Silk Road project, [online] 23 March 2019. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47679760> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Belt and Road News: Plan on Belt and Road Initiative, [online]. Available at: <https://www.beltandroad.news/official-plan-of-bri/> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- George Soros: Remarks delivered at the World Economic Forum, [online] 24 January 2019. Available at: <https://www.georgesoros.com/2019/01/24/remarks-delivered-at-the-world-economic-forum-2/> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Kobeović, Ž, Kurtela, Ž, Vujičić, S., 2018. The Maritime Silk Road and China's Belt and Road Initiative. *Naše More*, 65(2), pp. 113-122.
- Li, Jianjun [李建军] 2019. Balkan studies in China: Creating new perspectives. Unpublished paper.
- Liu, Zuokui, 2017. China-CEEC Cooperation: China's Building of a New Type of International Relations. *CIRR*, XXIII(78), 19-34.
- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Republic of Croatia: Godišnji plan Ministarstva vanjskih i europskih poslova za 2019, [online]. Available at: <http://www.mvep.hr/files/file/2019/190116-5ciljevi-po-ustrojstvenim-jedinicama-za-2019.pdf> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Musabelliu, M., 2017. China's Belt and Road Initiative Extension to Central and Eastern European Countries - Sixteen Nations, Five Summits, Many Challenges. *CIRR*, XXIII(78), 57-76.
- Nolan, P., 2017. State, Market and Infrastructure: The New Silk Road. *CIRR*, XXIII(78), 7-18.
- Plevnik, J., Mesić, S., Jurčić, Lj., 2013. *Kina na Balkanu* [China on the Balkans]. Plejada, Zagreb: 2013.
- Plevnik, J., 2016, *The “Belt and Road” Initiative and its implications for Southeast Europe*. Center for International Relations and

- Sustainable Development (CIRSD), Belgrade, Serbia.
- Poslovni dnevnik: Horvat priznao: Kinezi ne misle ulagati ni u Uljanik ni 3. maj, [online] 21 May 2019. Available at: <http://www.poslovni.hr/hrvatska/horvat-priznao-kinezi-ne-misle-ulagati-ni-u-uljanik-ni-3-maj-354633> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Reuters: Exclusive: Google suspends some business with Huawei after Trump blacklist - source, [online] 19 May 2019. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-huawei-tech-alphabet-exclusive/exclusive-google-suspends-some-business-with-huawei-after-trump-blacklist-source-idUSKCN1SP0NB> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Song, Leilei., 2019. "China's Multilayered Multilateralism: a case study of China and Central and Eastern Europe Cooperation Framework. Conference presentation, Libertas International University, 25 March 2019.
- Stopić, Z., 2017. Pisani odnosi s NR Kinom: Što su, kako i kada Kinezi pisali o Jugoslaviji i Hrvatskoj. *Historijski Zbornik*, LXX(1), 137-158.
- The State Council of the People's Republic of China: Chronology of China's Belt and Road Initiative, [online] 28 March 2015. Available at: [http://english.gov.cn/news/top\\_news/2015/04/20/content\\_281475092566326.htm](http://english.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/04/20/content_281475092566326.htm) [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Večernji list: Potpisujemo 10 sporazuma s Kinom, [online] 10 April 2019. Available at: <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/potpisujemo-10-sporazuma-s-kinezima-1312253> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Večernji list: Kinezi došli u 3.maj: 'Reakcije su vrlo pozitivne', [online] 20 April 2019. Available at: <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/kinezi-dosli-u-3-maj-prezentacija-brodogradlista-i-kapaciteta-1316451> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Večernj list: Jiang Yu - Hrvatska ima više jedinstvenih prednosti, [online] 12 May 2019. Available at: <https://www.vecernji.hr/biznis/jiang-yu-hrvatska-ima-vise-jedinstvenih-prednosti-1325534> [accessed 1 August 2019].
- Xinhua Net: Full text of Chinese vice president's speech at 2019 WEF annual meeting, [online] 24 January 2019. Available at: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-01/24/c\\_137771279.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-01/24/c_137771279.htm) [accessed 1 August 2019].
- 胡勇 [Hu Yong] «南南合作视野下的中国-中东欧国家合作» [China-CEE countries cooperation from the south-south cooperation perspective] 《社会科学》2017年第10期, 3-14页.
- 华红娟 [Hua Hongjun], 张海燕 [Hai Yangzhan] «“一带一路”

- 框架下中国与中东欧国家“精准合作”研究》[The “precise cooperation” of China and the CEE under the frame of “One Belt One Road”]《国际经济合作》2018年第02期, 31-36页.
- 孔寒冰 [Kong Hanbing], 韦冲霄 [Wei Chongxiao]《中国与中东欧国家“16+1”合作机制的若干问题探讨》[Several discussions on the issues of the China-CEE “16+1” cooperation framework]《社会科学》2017年第11期,14-23页.
- 刘作奎 [Liu Zuokui]《“一带一路”倡议背景下的“16+1合作”》[“16+1” in the background of the One Belt One Road]《当代世界与社会主义》2016年第3期, 144-152页.
- 穆正礼 [Mu Zhengli], 罗红玲 [Luo Hongling], 蓝玉茜 [Nam Yuksai], 魏珮玲 [Wei Peiling]《“一带一路”背景下的人才需求及人才培养模式——基于中国—中东欧国家合作大数据的分析报告》[Talents demand and talent training model under the background of “the belt and road”——An analysis report based on big data of cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries]《海外华文教育》[Overseas Chinese Education] 2017年第7期 (总第90期), 869—892页.
- 秦波 (Qing Bo), 吴圣 (Wu Sheng), 梁丹辉 (Liang Danhui)《中国与中东欧农业合作研究现状及展望》[Current situation and prospects of the agricultural cooperation between China and the CEE]《农业展望》2016年第12期, 76-80页
- 于军 [Yu Jun]《中国—中东欧国家合作机制现状与完善路径》[Current China-CEE cooperation mechanisms and the methods of their improvement]《国际问题研究》2015年第2期, 112-126页.
- 张迎红 [Zhang Yinghong]《地区间主义视角下“16+1合作”的运行模式浅析》[A brief analysis of the working model of the “16+1 Cooperation” from the perspective of inter-regionalism]《社会科学》2017年第10期, 15-25页.