

геополітичні амбіції Китаю, його економічні інтереси та військово-стратегічні розрахунки. Подальші дослідження мають зосередитися на контент-аналізі публікацій для ідентифікації панівних наративних фреймів і аналізі еволюції позиції Китаю в разі завершення активної фази конфлікту.

Література:

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE GLOBAL COMMUNICATION OF THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IMAGE OF CHINESE ENTERPRISES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Key words: Chinese enterprises, corporate social responsibility, Central and Eastern Europe.

In recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a voluntary corporate practice into a critical component of transnational enterprise strategy [14]. This evolution is especially salient for Chinese

enterprises operating abroad under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a central pillar of China's global engagement policy [11]. As the BRI advances into its second decade, the global communication of CSR image has emerged as a crucial factor shaping the legitimacy, reception, and sustainability of Chinese business operations overseas [13].

Among the diverse regions involved in the BRI, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – comprising both European Union (EU) member states and non-EU countries – occupies a unique and strategically significant position. CEE is a geopolitical term encompassing the countries in Northeast Europe (primarily the Baltics), Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Europe (primarily the Balkans), usually meaning former communist states from the Eastern Bloc and Warsaw Pact in Europe, as well as from former Yugoslavia. CEE countries that have signed Memoranda of Understanding with China under the “17+1” mechanism (now 14+1) are characterized by heterogeneous economic profiles, diverse historical relationships with China, and varying degrees of political and public receptiveness toward Chinese capital and influence [12].

The growing presence of Chinese enterprises in infrastructure, energy, telecommunications, and manufacturing sectors across CEE has generated intense interest not only in economic outcomes but also in the sociocultural implications of these engagements. In CEE countries, where public opinion is often shaped by post-socialist transitions, Euro-Atlantic affiliations, and evolving perceptions of China, the effective global communication of CSR image is not merely a technical matter – it is deeply embedded in political narratives and normative expectations [18]. From a background perspective, Chinese investments in CEE have brought not only capital and technology but also scrutiny from media, civil society, and governmental institutions regarding environmental standards, labor rights, transparency, and social contributions. In this complex landscape, the CSR image of Chinese enterprises functions as a soft power asset that can shape perceptions, build trust, and facilitate smoother cooperation. For Chinese companies to be seen not only as economic actors but also as responsible, ethical, and community-oriented partners, effective CSR communication is essential [17].

In an era of heightened geopolitical tensions, information asymmetries, and contested narratives, the ability of Chinese enterprises to project a positive CSR image abroad is both a strategic imperative and a communicative challenge [15].

The main **aim** is to examine the key factors that influence the global communication of the CSR image of Chinese enterprises operating in CEE under the framework of the BRI. As CSR communication constitutes a vital dimension of transnational corporate reputation and stakeholder engagement, it is crucial to understand how these messages are constructed, disseminated,

and interpreted in specific regional contexts [16]. Hence, the following case studies focusing on CEE illustrate both successes and challenges faced by Chinese enterprises in these European countries under the BRI.

Table 1

CEE Case Studies

<p>1. BYD's Electric Vehicle Plant in Hungary [2, 6]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time and Place: Announced in 2023, located in Szeged, southern Hungary. Construction started in 2024. – Disposition: A major investment by China's leading electric vehicle manufacturer aimed at producing passenger vehicles for the EU market. – Main Problem: Environmental and labor concerns; potential political tension within EU over industrial competition. – Solution: BYD emphasized green energy, local employment, and alignment with EU environmental regulations. CSR messaging focused on innovation and sustainability. – Outcome: Generally positive local reception, enhanced by Hungarian government's support. The plant was framed as a win for regional economic development and green transition, although broader EU skepticism about Chinese industrial activities remains.
<p>2. China National Electric Engineering Company's (CNEEC) Kostolac Power Plant Project in Serbia [5, 10]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time and Place: Phase B construction started in 2017 and was completed in 2024, near the town of Kostolac, Serbia. – Disposition: Expansion of an existing coal-fired power plant financed by China. – Main Problem: Environmental concerns due to the coal-based energy production; scrutiny from EU and local NGOs regarding pollution and compliance with EU environmental standards. – Solution: Modernization components included emission control technologies and some environmental mitigation efforts. Framed by CNEEC and Serbian officials as critical to energy security. – Outcome: Project completed, but CSR image mixed – praised for infrastructure development and job creation, yet criticized for environmental and transparency issues.
<p>3. China National Electric Engineering Company's (CNEEC) Modernization of the Smederevo Steel Plant in Serbia [1, 9]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time and Place: Acquisition and modernization began in 2016; located in Smederevo, Serbia. – Disposition: A previously unprofitable state-owned steel plant was revitalized by Chinese investment and technical management. – Main Problem: Labor disputes, workplace safety concerns, and environmental complaints from local communities and NGOs. – Solution: Some CSR measures were introduced, such as local hiring and production modernization. Emphasis on economic recovery and employment stability.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Outcome: Significant job retention and local economic revival, though CSR performance remains questioned, especially in terms of labor practices and community engagement.
<p>4. China Road and Bridge Corporation's (CRBC) Pelješac Bridge Project in Croatia [4, 7]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time and Place: Contract awarded in 2018; completed in 2022. Connects mainland Croatia with the Pelješac Peninsula, bypassing a Bosnian border detour. – Disposition: A landmark case of a Chinese firm executing an EU-financed project. – Main Problem: Geopolitical controversy over a non-EU Chinese contractor receiving EU funding; concerns about quality, transparency, and adherence to EU standards. – Solution: CRBC highlighted compliance with EU procurement rules, safety standards, and local subcontracting. Public communication emphasized unity, connectivity, and technical excellence. – Outcome: Project completed on time and broadly celebrated in Croatia. Improved CRBC's image in the EU, though still discussed in geopolitical terms. Strong positive CSR visibility due to successful execution and infrastructure value.
<p>5. China Road and Bridge Corporation's (CRBC) Construction of the Bar-Boljare Highway in Montenegro [3, 8]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time and Place: Initiated in 2015; first section completed in 2022. Located in mountainous northern Montenegro. – Disposition: A high-cost, high-risk infrastructure project funded and constructed by China. – Main Problem: Mounting debt burden for Montenegro, opaque contract terms, environmental concerns, and allegations of working conditions. – Solution: CRBC stressed the engineering difficulty and national significance of the highway. Montenegrin authorities framed it as strategic connectivity infrastructure. – Outcome: Partial completion with mixed public opinion. While improving mobility in underdeveloped areas, CSR image hampered by financial and environmental critiques, including EU concern over potential "debt diplomacy."

Conclusion

Main Question: *What are the key factors that influence the global communication of the CSR image of Chinese enterprises in CEE under the BRI?*

The key influencing factors include the strategic content and framing of CSR messages by Chinese firms, the role of host country media in shaping public perceptions, the engagement of local stakeholders such as NGOs and governments, and the firms' ability to align CSR practices with European regulatory and cultural expectations. These elements jointly determine the effectiveness and credibility of CSR communication across borders.

Subquestion 1: *How do Chinese enterprises formulate and communicate their CSR narratives in CEE countries?*

Chinese enterprises primarily use corporate reports, official websites, media interviews, and sponsored content to communicate CSR narratives. These narratives often emphasize infrastructure development, job creation, environmental stewardship, and cultural exchange. However, they tend to follow a top-down model of communication and may lack localized cultural resonance or transparency in reporting.

Subquestion 2: *How is the CSR image of Chinese enterprises represented and interpreted by local media and public discourse in CEE countries?*

Media representation varies across countries but is often influenced by national political orientations and attitudes toward China. In some CEE countries, media coverage is relatively neutral or even positive, highlighting economic benefits. In others, particularly EU member states, media may adopt a more critical tone, emphasizing transparency, labor rights, or environmental concerns. Public discourse often mirrors these narratives, shaped further by historical and geopolitical context.

Subquestion 3: *What roles do local stakeholders play in shaping the perception and effectiveness of CSR communication?*

Local governments influence CSR communication through regulatory frameworks and public endorsements. NGOs often act as watchdogs, criticizing or legitimizing CSR efforts. Local communities assess CSR based on tangible benefits, such as employment or community engagement, while consumers respond through brand perception and purchasing behavior. Collectively, these actors serve as interpreters, validators, or critics of CSR narratives.

Subquestion 4: *What challenges and opportunities do Chinese enterprises face in aligning their CSR strategies with local expectations and European normative standards?*

Challenges include limited familiarity with local regulatory environments, cultural communication mismatches, and skepticism toward state-linked enterprises. Opportunities arise from increasing demand for sustainable development, availability of European CSR benchmarks, and the openness of some CEE countries to Chinese investment. Alignment with EU-level sustainability goals and active community involvement can enhance CSR credibility.

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