

The research project **“Belt and Road Initiative the Developing World: the People’s Republic of China as a multilateral and normative power”** is a response to the ongoing discussions on China's growing role in international relations. After Xi Jinping took power, China’s foreign policy has become more assertive, and by promoting the “Chinese model” in developing countries has tried to secure China’s interests.

The project is divided into two significant parts: the first discusses the rationale of creating multilateral platforms by shaping collective historical narratives, and the second debates the particular Chinese actions in the selected developing countries. In the first part, based on analysis of the past stories of “intermediate zones,” the project touches the critical point of the historical continuity in China’s relations with the developing countries. It does so by referring to the historical narratives presented by China in the respective countries embodied into joint statements, documents like White Papers and leaders' speeches during the official visits. Based on the academic achievements of international relations researchers Robert Keohane, John Ruggie or Edward Halizak the project verifies and establish characteristics of China’s sponsored multilateralism in the Developing World. Moreover, the project emphasizes the importance of the relational theory in international politics recently developed by Qin Yaqing and Emilian Kavalski. In this context, the normative dimension of Chinese multilateralism is analysed based on the Beijing promotion of the "Chinese Model" understood here as the state-led experimentation by “gradualism”, “alongside autonomy” and “strong government”, selective cultural borrowing of foreign ideas, a pattern of implementing easy reforms first, and difficult ones later.

In the second part, based on the analysis of selected case studies, the project analyses the activities of China in selected countries of the formats mentioned above. In the case of ASEAN, these are the two countries of Myanmar and Thailand, in the case of Central and Eastern Europe it is Poland and Serbia, in the case of Africa, it is Kenya and South Africa and Latin America, Brazil and Chile. The case studies samples of eight selected countries were distinguished by factors as follows: participation or non-participation in the Belt and Road Summits of 2017 and 2019 respectively, having MoU with China on cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, being a member of multilateral body 10+1, 17+1, China-FOCAC and China-CELAC, being indexed by Fragile State Index (selected by two extremes positive and negative), and having close political relations with the United States.

The most important part of the research project tests the hypothesis: 1. along with the growing need for securing its interests by balancing the position of the West, China uses the non-liberal values and norms based on the post-colonial sentiments in China’s policy towards the Developing World and experiences of Chinese reform known as the China model, 2. the perception of the four areas: South East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa and South America as “intermediate zones” and “Developing World” makes China’s policies and actions conditional upon the “copy-paste” methods and do not recognise the complexity of the particular actors within the regions, 3. Chinese multilateralism with the “Developing World” fails to be understood as multilateralism in the Western theoretical narratives, but serves only for deepening and developing bilateral relations, 4. the relations developed by China with the selected countries are mainly based on the same model: extensive and often politically-driven credit lines (known as “debt-trap diplomacy”), cultivation of close personal relations with the local elites based on the Chinese concept of *guanxi* and by building relational interactions China makes cognitive platform for changes in norms by countries in the Developing World.

The research project is based on the methodology of qualitative research, including primarily text analysis, discourse analysis, in-depth interviews and media analysis in selected countries based on CAQDAS software. Particularly noteworthy are planned study visits in chosen countries and in-depth interviews with political and economic elites, journalists and representatives of diplomatic missions in China and third countries, including with particular regard to American embassies.

The results of the research will be published in international journals and other international publications. Also, it is planned to provide research results during special seminars in Beijing, Washington, Madrid, Lodz and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw. The whole project is an essential element in the global discussion on China’s current and future role as a normative power that through its multilateral activities tries to promote its norms and values based on Chinese culture and the political and economic system known as the "Chinese model" or “Beijing consensus”.