

Abstract

This thesis examines the intricate interplay between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and subversive Chinese influence operations via the theoretical prism of realist constructivism. Its aim is to support current political science research efforts of bridging a knowledge gap regarding modern tactics and mediums of influence operations. To investigate the presence of subliminal Chinese influence mechanics within the structures of the BRI, a comparative case study for Vietnam and Pakistan was conducted. To comprehensively answer the research questions of this work, two qualitative methods of analysis were combined within the respective case studies. The analytical results indicate that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) applies different methods of overt or clandestine forms of subversion to undermine the geopolitical power of Vietnam and Pakistan. The findings suggest that the CCP achieves this goal mainly with the help of its United Front Work Department (UFWD), which manipulates narratives, coopts international researchers, and recruits informants or other agents of influence. The results of this thesis contribute to the consolidation of the knowledge that Beijing has the ability and intention to instrumentalise the BRI as a medium for the implementation of subliminal influence operations abroad, and that analogue forms of Soviet-era subversion still play an important role today.