

Abstract

The impacts of populism have become the spotlight of political research in Europe. However, in the foreign policy field, the impacts of populism still remain insufficiently explored. This study compares two iconic populism cases: Hungary and Poland and their policies vis-a-vis interaction with the PRC. Firstly, this thesis will investigate the concept of Populism foreign policy and how current literature categorizes the types of foreign policies formulated by populist governments. It will then continue with the examinations of the history of China policies in Hungary and Poland. With the empirical records of their China policies, this thesis aims to illustrate the mechanisms of the formation of China Policies in these two cases with the Process Tracing method to establish causal relations between key elements and policy formulation, thus identifying the driving forces behind the populist foreign policies.

With the employment of case study and process tracing methods, this thesis discerns various elements and their relevance to the formation of China policies in populist nations and explains the difference between ideologically similar parties. The analysis of this research affirms that the Hungarian clientelist network and the Chinese investment projects, the diversification of Hungarian economic dependence, and the departure from traditional allies all contribute to the Sinophile policies adopted by the Fidesz government. In the Polish case, the economic benefits brought by bilateral cooperation with China were the reason it sought Sino-polish cooperation in the first place. There are indeed certain degrees of clientelism in Poland. However, the limited influence of its clientelist network on China issues and the perception of China as a consequential geopolitical actor hindered the deeper cooperation with the PRC. The geopolitical perspectives and influence of clientelism resulted in the difference between the populist governments in Hungary and Poland.

Key Words: Populism, Foreign Policy Analysis, China, Hungary, Poland, CEE.