Cologne Center for Comparative Politics

University of Cologne

The collision of the spheres of influence of the EU and China
Analyzing voting patterns in the European Parliament

Master Thesis

Winter Semester 2025

Supervisor: Dr. Jens Wäckerle

Presented by

Darius Uzun

Registration number: 7335432

duzun@smail.uni-koeln.de

Cologne, the 06.04.2025

Abstract (260 wordcount)

This thesis attempts to determine if there has been measurable impact of a Chinese economic sphere of influence on the voting behavior of European Parliament (EP) MEPs. Research found instances resembling an appeasing stance towards the CCP when securing high-stakes infrastructure investments, trade deals and heightened FDI flows, especially through economic forums like the 17+1 mechanism. Some state actors allegedly extended these appeasement approaches to a degree where they compromised EU common policy towards China, prioritizing bilateral relations. While this phenomenon might have been observed at the state actor level, examining soft power influence on "direct" representatives makes an interesting case. Suspicions of direct influence through economic pressure, subversion and espionage have grown since Xi Jinping changed China's foreign policy, striving for China to evolve from a passive economic superpower to an active, assertive global geopolitical actor. While some qualitative research and journalistic evidence suggests causality between economic ties and cultural/political influence, quantitative confirmation is lacking. EP MEP voting behavior is tracked to (dis-)prove this alleged relationship. Findings conclude that CEEC as a group is too heterogeneous to show evidence of Chinese soft power influence in voting on China-sensitive issues. However, certain Member States from both CEE and non-CEEC region showed significant China-aligning voting behavior. Countries who were more economically engaged with China, displayed stronger China-aligning voting. Contextualizing the observations with the bloc voting behavior of the European Parliament's parties, showed strong bloc adhering voting behavior on votes that concerned China-sensitive issues. Regarding the CEEC, Greece and Hungary, as abundant qualitative evidence suggested beforehand, showed to be strongly China-aligning.

Keywords: european parliament, CCP, BRI, 17+1, Xi Jinping, CEE, CEEC, bloc voting, VoteWatchEU, EU foreign policy

Table of contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of abbreviations

AIIB Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

APP Adjusted Predicted Probability

BRI Belt and Road Initiative

CCP Chinese Communist Party

CEE Central and Eastern Europe Region

CEEC[1] Member of the Economic Initiative between the CEE and China

　　　　non-CEEC – non-Member of CEEC, but EU Member State

16+1 Economic Initiative between the CEE and China (founding state)

　　　　17+1 – (2019 Greece joined)

　　　　16+1 – (Lithuania left)

　　　　14+1 – (2022 Estonia, Latvia left)

　　　　13+1 – (2023, Czechia left)

CI Confucius Institute

ECSC European Coal and Steel Community

Council Council of the European Union

EC European Commission

EE Eastern Europe

EU MS European Union Member State

EU EE MS European Union Eastern European Member State

EU EE MEP European Union Eastern European Member of Parliament

EP European Parliament

---

[1] (Technically this means only Economic Initiative between the CEE and China, but in the following and for the purpose of making the abbreviation useful, this will refer to the 12 member states directly.)

EP MEP European Parliament Member of Parliament

EPG European Parliament Groups

ECR - European Conservatives and Reformists Party

EPP - European People's Party

Greens/EFA - Greens-European Free Alliance

ID - Identity and Democracy

NI - Non-attached MEPs (non-inscrits)

Renew - Renew Europe

S&D - Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

ETNC European Think-tank Network on China

FDI Foreign Direct Investments

HR/VP High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

MoA Memorandum of Agreement

MFA PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China

PP Predicted Probability

PRC People's Republic of Chinas

RCV Roll-Call Vote

TEU Treaty of the European Union

WWD Wolf Warrior Diplomacy

1. Introduction

Attempts at foreign interference and subversion within the European Parliament are not new, as Europeans have seen recently with the espionage scandal surrounding German AfD MEP Maximilian Krah (GBA, 2024). These cases might enjoy great attention in the media cycle, yet they remain exceptions, as foreign influence is more often exerted rather passively through soft power. Historically speaking, extending one's sphere of influence by subversion, sharp power or information warfare has not ended with the fall of the iron curtain but flourishes nowadays nonetheless — perhaps even more so. Especially within the last few years and in particular after the Russian full-scale invasion on Ukraine, Russia´s hard power has been demanding Europe's full attention. So, while the focus — understandably so — lies on Russia since 2014, another global player extended its reach continuously.

Through the turbulent decade of the 2010s, this emerging superpower significantly changed its foreign policy approach. With the transfer of power in Beijing to Xi Jinping as new paramount leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the old paradigm of Deng Xiaoping's: "lie low, abide your time and hide your strength" finally fell and gave space for the age of Xi'ism[2], with which came a new paradigm, the "Warrior Wolf Diplomacy" (WWD). Xi's rule was about to bring major changes to China's foreign policy — or rather from a more holistic viewpoint — a totally *new self-understanding of China's place in the world*. Part of this new agenda is a *historical and cultural re-figuration*, putting a great emphasis on China's historical role as a world shaping power, geopolitical and cultural wise. Under the concept of a *Chinese Dream,* the *golden ages of former Chinese dynasties* shall be revived, by demonstrating to the world that China forms a respectable counterweight to the US, both ideologically and geopolitically, being able to assume an assertive role in shaping the global order (Holbig, 2018; Ferdinand, 2016; Buckley, 2023; Liu, 2015).

One building block that shall cement China's global economic power concretely, is Xi Jinping's *Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),* which strives to revive the ancient *Silk Road,* a trade route that connected Far East Asia, through Central Asia, to Europe. With its ending points targeted at Europe's largest seaports: by total cargo: Rotterdam and by inland capacity: Duisburg (BMWK, 2024; Eurostat, 2020), the BRI contains large-scale infrastructure investments in highways, trailways and ports. While the project itself was launched in 2012, the sale of the

---

[2] See Appendix A for detailed elaboration on the CCP's history regarding its last three supreme leaders.

Port of Piraeus to China in 2008, is often viewed as China's opening move in establishing its infrastructural presence in Europe (Van der Putten et al., 2016).

In order to institutionalize its new long-term interest in Central and Eastern Europe, the CCP established an open economic forum called 16+1[3] in 2012, providing a platform for bilateral trade and infrastructural investment agreements between Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) and China (CEE plus China, hence CEEC)[4]. CEEC is by some observers seen as a *Central/- Eastern European branch of the BRI*, to cement a foothold in the region and use it as a transportation hub for trade further west (Kratz et al., 2016, pp. 1, 3; Vangeli, 2017; Kaczmarski & Jakóbowski, 2015, p. 5; Kavalski, 2018; Mitrović, 2022, p. 226).

According to some scholars, this 16+1 mechanism could have been created with the ulterior motive by the CCP, to bypass the EU as a supranational-economic power bloc and use their economic leverage to go into direct bilateral trade agreements, with the much weaker single nation-states (Seaman et al., 2015, p. 9; Grieger, 2016). European entities have been watching this development warily, fearing that this economic influence is followed by a cultural influence (Heath & Gray, 2018; Mitrović, 2019; SCMP, 2018; Ekman, 2018; Gabriel, 2017; Rajczyk, 2019, p.8 citing Cardenal et al., 2017). One point of evidence for this concern could be the emergence of Confucius Institutes (CIs) across Europe. These institutions have been the subject of speculation regarding their potential as instruments of propaganda aligned with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), with allegations suggesting the suppression (or revisionist approach) of discourse surrounding specific events such as the Tiananmen square massacre, the precarious situation of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the issue of Tibetan independence or the Chinese government's treatment of dissidents or Falun Gong members (Pan, 2013; Shambaugh, 2007; Löwisch, 2020; Keena, 2023; Rogers, 2019; Fulda, 2019). The far greater fear is, that this cultural soft power influence on a mid- to long term *fosters political change*, altering China's image in certain EU MS, possibly leading to them undermining the EU's common foreign policy strategy towards China (Seaman et al., 2015; Smith, 2017; Szijjártó, 2016; Emmott, 2016; Elmer, 2018; Chalmers & Emmott, 2021; Brunnstrom & Emmott, 2021).

---

[3] Hereinafter titled CEEC, as the other title changed, depending on its member count (16+1, 17+1, 14+1)
[4] CEEC consists of the EU side, of Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania as founding members. Greece joined as the twelfth member in 2019 (Greece outlying role will be elaborated on later), Lithuania left in 2021 after a great dispute with China, the other Baltics followed in 2022, and Czechia also froze its participation in 2023. CEEC is the name that is used in diplomatic contexts.

As for the reasons, why the CEEC nations might acted differently towards China — if they did — one prevalent hypothesis one could suggests, is that, as these post- eastern bloc countries (CEEC) are much *younger democracies* compared their non-CEEC counterparts and have not yet experienced the same amount political socialization and democratic consolidation, this makes them potentially more *flexible* in their understanding and implementation of values such as i.a.: civil liberties, constitutionalism, separation of power, universal human rights, press freedom, media pluralism, freedom of assembly, minority rights, electoral integrity (Rühlig et al., 2018, Ekiert, 2008, pp. 4-5; Malová & Dolný, 2008; Pridham, 2006).

1.1 Relevance of the Topic – The EU's point of view on the Situation

The issue cannot be analyzed further without touching upon the underlying precursor debate. There has been a divergence of opinion regarding the EU's self-understanding, since its first emergence from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). One side of the political spectrum has never seen the EU as more as it was at its birth — an economic power bloc, purely existing to extend the economic linkages and opportunities of the European nations, bundled as a supranational power bloc bringing economic prosperity to its members through unity. The other side believes the EU to be something greater, far overreaching its economic abilities. This faction wants the EU to be a geopolitical player, ambitious to uphold certain political and cultural values internally (like liberalism, democracy, freedom of press and expression, human rights), promote them in its periphery and even defend them within their foreign policy internationally. The basis for these common values lies within the formal birth of the modern EU, the Treaty of the European Union (TEU, 2012, Article 21):

> The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Following this, especially proponents of the larger European project, are looking warily at foreign influence on the EU's organs and its member states (MS). Naturally the EU itself has a sense of self-preservation and thereby has over time reacted to the reach of the Chinese

sphere of influence. Though, for the most part, a *cooperative diplomatic tone* was used when addressing China, the regime-change to Xi Jinping in 2012 and its consequences did not stay unnoticed in Europe. Xi's statements about the *Chinese Dream,* scholarly analyses of CCP white papers, as well as the leak of the infamous *Document No. 9*, which contains crucial parts of the ideological framework of Beijing's new leadership, made an impression on EU foreign policy analysts. *Document No. 9* describes seven challenges for the continued reign of the CCP, including warnings that "western values" might undermine CCP leadership and thereby must be rejected entirely, as liberalism in the realms of individual freedoms, journalism or religion might deteriorate the nations' spirit. (Shi-Kupfer et al., 2017; Chinafile, 2013; Taylor, 2019, pp. 43, 44).

This development prompted the EU to undergo its own paradigm shift, at least in their acknowledgement of China's interests. For instance, channels of communications attempting to promote human rights and democratic change existed for decades, through EU organs and singular MS, but their fading success, especially since 2012, was acknowledged and re-evaluated (AFET, 2015, p. 13; ECFR, 2016, p. 88; Maher, 2016, p. 964). The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini's whitepaper from 2019: "A new EU Strategy on China", which for the first time characterized China as a "systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance", symbolized the peak of this paradigm shift within the 2010s (EC & HR/VP, 2019).

1.2 Identified Research gap

The following question is raised for consideration: *If there was (is) Chinese soft power influence tied to economic incentives (in the form of Chinese high-stakes infrastructural investments and foreign direct investment (FDI), as seen through the framework of the 16+1 platform), being deployed in the region, should this not be measurable in quantitative terms as well?*

The incentives that are of economic nature: trade agreements, infrastructure investments and FDI flows, whether they have been executed, are being planned, or are anticipated for the future, as well as the soft power (cultural) influence that allegedly has been introduced within the framework that is the BRI project, should have left a significant impact.

Given the abundant journalistic discussion, substantial think tank research, scholarly interest, and the EU's attention about the alleged perceived issue, one might — and rightfully so — pose the question about the relevance or necessity of further research. However most,

if not all of this evidence, analyzed the issue from a *qualitative point of view*. Even qualitative comparative research appears to be lacking. Although CEEC research was conducted in the form of case studies, most are limited *to case comparisons* between only a few CEEC MS (N<5), lacking *CEEC-wide* studies. Quantitative observations seem especially lacking although offering the opportunity to enhance credibility to the alleged phenomenon. Some researchers suggested a concrete influence ("CEEC threat" scenario), however, leaving open whether there has been a greater mechanism at play, which could be exposed by quantitative observation.

One point of interest in possibly measuring this relationship could be the voting behavior of MEPs in the EP. If the phenomenon proves its existence, perhaps voting records can show whether it left a significant impact on the political stage of the EU. Thus, the attempt here is either to find a pattern and thereby strengthen the existing literature, or to find no such pattern — and in doing so, conclude that while the phenomenon may still exist for some countries, the CEEC format has, since its founding, been too heterogeneous to exhibit a solid and coherent pattern of China-alignment. Accordingly, the MEPs voting behavior will be the dependent variable (DV), the outcome, and its predictor, the independent variable (IV), will be the MEPs (non-) membership of a CEEC, while further controlling variables will be added later.

1.3 Research Question and Hypotheses

The research question is: *Did Chinese economic influence on the CEE region — through the CEEC format's economic incentives and associated soft power strategies — influence voting behavior on China-sensitive resolutions in the European Parliament?*

$H1_A$:*" CEEC EU MS MEPs, compared to their non-CEEC EU MS MEPs counterparts, demonstrated a significantly stronger tendency to align with China in China-sensitive EP votes."*

$H2_A$:*" CEEC EU MS MEP's alignment with China in China-sensitive EP votes, progressively increased following China's intensified engagement in the region, so as of 2012."*

$H3_A$:*" CEEC EU MS MEP's alignment with China in China-sensitive EP votes, was progressively stronger, the heavier their respective countries were engaged economically with China".*

1.4 Why analyze European Parliament data and not policymaking i.e., the decision-making of the Council of the European Union (the Council)?

The EU's legislative process is primarily shaped by two institutions: the European Parliament (EP), representing the EU's citizens, and the Council of the European Union (the Council), representing the governments of the member states. While both institutions share legislative authority in many areas, foreign policy remains largely in the hands of the Council.

Most of the votes analyzed in this thesis are non-binding in nature—resolutions, statements, or declarations that express political stances rather than enact legislative change. These votes, therefore, cannot be considered policymaking in a strict legal sense, but rather serve as *policy advisory* signals. In light of this, the following section offers a rationale for why EP voting behavior, despite its limited legislative weight in foreign affairs, still was preferred instead of the Council's legislature record regarding China-related rulings.

Reason 1: The citizens' vs. the governments' perception.

The EP representing the EU's citizens on the one side and the Council representing the EU MS' governments on the other side, makes an interesting comparison between the Chinese soft power influence, that potentially reached EU citizens, and the diplomatic or hard power directly channeled by the MS' governments. The respective MS' populations might have a quite different perceptions of China and its influence than their designated governments have, which is relevant here, as said soft power influence is the focus of analysis, and not national governmental actions and policymaking.

Reason 2: Governments are sporadic.

Within the expansion of the Chinese sphere of influence starting in 2012, governments within the CEE have changed quite a lot. Moreover, one could argue that governments might be more easily persuaded by foreign interests, while MEPs that are obliged to their parties' positions and their voters, could be more consistent in their positions, especially considering that they do not have to be part of the governing party in their home country, but could be in opposition at their time in the EP. Occasionally there might be a staunchly pro- (or anti-) China government that could massively skew the Council's decision-making, taken that legally binding foreign policy action requires unanimity, leading to reason three.

Reason 3: The Council's foreign policy action track record is very sparse.

While the EP has discussed issues that concern China, in very sensitive ways, many times, the Council has not, and even when it did, it was perhaps often unable to come to a decisive conclusion[5]. As the Council requires unanimity in crucial foreign policy issues, most *strongly worded* proposals coming from the EP do not even make it past the Council's approval. For the actual passed Council-related decisions within the last 20 years, only four concerning China and revolving around upholding EU principles, instead of being purely pragmatic economic decisions, have been identified (Table 17).

Reason 4: Measuring a (the) gradient of democratic socialization within the EU.

It has been theorized that a possible underlying causal mechanism for this assumption, could be that the lesser democratic socialization experienced by former Eastern Bloc nations, compared to other MS, may be of explanatory value for a difference in the voting records of CEEC and non-CEEC MEPs. Many of the CEEC MS have only been democracies short of 30 years (referencing 2012 as CEEC's founding year), while some non-CEEC ones have experienced democratic rule for double that time, since WW2. With this causal mechanism as a possibility in mind, analyzing MEPs (the EU citizens' representatives) voting behavior proves to be far more interesting than the political moves of governmental elites.

Reason 5: Control variables and diversity of opinions.

The European Party Group (EPG) may give insights into the real reasons why certain cohorts of MEPs are keen to align with China (or against it) within EP voting, whether patterns are observable, as well as general information about the EP's voting apparatus and bloc voting. Moreover, the EP represents a broader range of diversity in political opinions, as many EPGs are represented and can act according to the political ideology their voters prefer and are under less constant pressure to align with their governing cabinet's position. A minister, while in most cases also part of a political party, perhaps rather goes for a consensus-based and pragmatic problem-solving approach in the Council, which often means upholding the status quo. EP MEPs in contrast, have the potential to be more idealistic in their voting behavior, they can

---

[5] As the Council's minister meetings happen behind closed doors, information about failed Council decisions are not necessarily available to the public.

act more freely, as most voters do not constantly monitor their activities inside the EP, in contrast to national ministers.

2. Literature Review – State of Affairs

In the case presented, it is appropriate to divide the literature review into the analysis of (1) the *empirical context of the issues' content* and (2) the *theoretical and procedural functions of the EP*.

2.1 State of Affairs: Empirical Context

Especially since the BRI has been called into life, scholarly interests manifested around China's new self-understanding as a (pro-)active global actor, its rising competitive nature and the rivalry with the US: China being the competitor on the rise to become a counterweight to the US, while Russia has been degrading from a super- to a regional power. For a thorough understanding of this rather complex outcome, namely the CEEC, the background of certain political relations, agendas and policy making will be extendedly shined through, by analyzing: (1) the history of CEE, (2) Chinese leadership and China's rise since Mao, (3) the Wolf Warrior Diplomacy under Xi, China's new role in the global order and the BRI and finally (4) scholarly interest in the CCP's engagement in CEE – 17+1.

Understanding the historical context of CEEC countries is essential to grasp the IV's depth, particularly their democratic development, economic ties to China and the EU, and their unique historical trajectory. Equally important for understanding the evolving DV is China's political transformation under Xi Jinping's paradigm shift. This contextual background illuminates many core issues comprising the DV, including the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the One China Policy (governing relationships with Taiwan, Hong Kong & Tibet), China's economic status, its WTO accession appeal, and its treatment of dissidents (Table 14).

Lastly in the literature review, cumulative evidence suggesting the connection between economic incentives and a changing relationship towards China in various CEEC nations is presented. Acknowledging that think tank research is primarily *motivated by policy advisory goals*, whereas academic scholarship is driven by *methodological rigor and theoretical inquiry*, this literature review will be divided into two sections: peer-reviewed academic work and analyses produced by leading policy think tanks.

2.1.1 History of CEE

Shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain, former Eastern Bloc nations faced a vast power vacuum and quickly aligned themselves with the Western bloc, joining NATO and the EU, while their economies transitioned from planned to free markets[6]. However, in many cases this speed of transition outpaced democratic consolidation and led to comparative institutional instability and weaker democratic socialization, the most fatal evidence being arguably the Yugoslav wars. In retrospect, some of the EU's eastern enlargements have been seen as contributing factors for the struggle to keep up to the pace of democratic socialization and consolidation. The causality behind CEE EU nations being behind in this regard has been attributed to a range of factors, including rushed technocratic accession processes, weak civic engagement, persistent mistrust in political elites, underdeveloped civil societies, limited state capacity, and the externalization of political accountability. (Ekiert, 2008, pp. 4-5; Malová & Dolný, 2008; Pridham, 2006).

Later events, throughout the 2000s/2010s further deepened the divisions within the EU: (1) The 2008 financial crisis exposed flaws within the EU's accession mechanism, as Greece's addition to the Eurozone was deemed being rushed by the EU back in 2001, as their financial evaluation was labeled inadequate (Kotios et al., 2011); (2) Democratic backsliding in Hungary under Orbán and the erosion of the judicial branch in Poland have probed the EU's own internal ability to exert control over its MS, thereby calling its integrity into question (Blauberger & Fasone, 2022; Borbély, 2018, pp. i, 14); (3) The ongoing infighting, between especially the Eastern and Western MS, regarding the *Schengen area*, Dublin II and the handling of migration flows since 2015, highlighted deeper ideological divides in the understanding of political values (Krastev, 2017).

Some openly called for the EU to accept the supposedly already existing reality of a "Europe of multiple speeds" (*Kerneuropa*), which could *relieve slower* MS and allow for *others to enhance cohesion* in certain fields, such as foreign policy, which often require unanimity. Famous proponents there being e.g., Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel, Jean Claude van Juncker (Macron, 2017; Merkel, 2017; Juncker, 2017).

---

[6] See Appendix A for further elaboration on the special case that is Greece in the CEEC.

2.1.2 Chinese leadership and China's Rise since Mao

Throughout the 1990s, China maintained a passive *"non-interference"* foreign policy, actively pursuing its role as the world's preeminent manufacturing hub—an approach established by Deng Xiaoping, who prioritized internal stability, economic modernization, and attracting Western investment through a low international profile ("Lie low, hide your strength, abide your time"; Zhao, 2022; De Freitas, 2019, pp. 15, 17).

Under Jiang Zemin (1993–2003), this shifted slightly towards global economic integration and diplomatic engagement, notably marked by China's accession to the WTO in 2001 (Heath, 2016, pp. 165-166; Barfield, 2007, p. 101).

Subsequently, Hu Jintao's administration (2003–2013) introduced the *"Peaceful Rise"* doctrine, emphasizing China's benign intentions and promoting soft power globally, paving the way for deeper economic engagement that later facilitated Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (Li & Worm, 2009, p. 4; Li, 2019, p. 23).

2.1.3 China's Evolution Under Xi Jinping

2.1.3.1 Domestically: Xi's personality cult and centralization of power

Although personality cults were suppressed after the Mao-era, to keep the party above individuals, Xi Jinping successfully re-established a strong personal leadership cult around himself (Shirk, 2018), by promoting *"Xi Jinping Thought"* and abolishing presidential term limits (Poirier, 2021). Through extensive anti-corruption campaigns, Xi consolidated his executive and military power, effectively ending the collective leadership practiced since Deng Xiaoping (Gueorguiev, 2018). Central to Xi's vision is the *"Chinese Dream,"* emphasizing national rejuvenation and restoring China's status as a global power based on Confucian values distinct from Western philosophies (Carrai, 2020; Ambrogio, 2017). His policies have promoted a strong, CCP-aligned, Han-Chinese identity, aggressively suppressing pluralistic independence movements in Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Debata, 2022; Gill, 2022). Consequently, adherence to the "One-China Policy" has become essential domestically and internationally, closely tied to the retaliatory posturing of Xi's Wolf Warrior Diplomacy.

2.1.3.2 Wolf Warrior Diplomacy

The term "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy" (WWD), though unofficial, is widely recognized within Chinese diplomatic circles (Chen, 2023; Zhou, 2020). It originates from the patriotic Chinese blockbuster films *Wolf Warrior* and *Wolf Warrior II*, which portray nationalist themes of defending

China's interests against foreign threats (Zhu, 2020; Hu & Guan, 2021).

A defining feature of WWD is the immediate retaliatory response by Chinese diplomats to perceived violations of China's domestic or foreign policy principles, particularly concerning human rights criticisms, the situations in Tibet, Hong Kong, Taiwan, disputes along the Nine-Dash Line, and treatment of political dissidents. Criticism of the CCP is framed as an attack on the Chinese people, fueling nationalism and outrage towards critics (Sullivan & Wang, 2023, pp. 74-75, 82-84; Chen, 2023, pp. 144, 147-148). Central to WWD is the demand for *absolute adherence to the One-China Policy*, which can lead to "mutual respect" and "win-win cooperation."

This assertive diplomatic stance has directly impacted EP MEPs involved in China-sensitive (critical) resolutions, resulting in sanctions from China for alleged interference in its domestic affairs (MFA PRC, 2021; EP, 2021; Preiss, 2022). Unlike conventional diplomatic reciprocity, WWD uniquely prompts immediate economic retaliation even for relatively minor incidents, as exemplified by China's imposition of severe tariffs and economic sanctions on Australia following its call for an independent investigation into COVID-19's origins (Global Times, 2021; He & Feng, 2024; Gill, 2023). Table 18 gives a broad overview of multiple WWD related incidents.

2.1.3.3 BRI – Belt and Road Initiative

Launched in 2012 by Xi Jinping, the BRI represents his most prominent global project, showcasing China's newly assertive foreign policy. The operation has been ongoing ever since then, resulting in mixed feedback and success. Some observers voiced concerns regarding China's practice of *"debt diplomacy,"* alleging that China intentionally issues immense loans to countries unlikely to meet repayment schedules, subsequently coercing them into long-term leases or asset transfers—such as Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port, leased to China for 99 years (Carrai, 2018). Another example that led to some worry, was Greece's sale of the Port of Piraeus, where COSCO, a Chinese state-controlled company, predominantly employed mostly its own workforce, while the few Greek workers were employed under precarious subcontracted conditions rather than direct employment (Neilsson, 2019; Jackson et al., 2024).

2.1.3.4 Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Forex Accumulation and FDI

Xi supposedly introduced the AIIB in 2013 as his foreign affairs tool of choice to finance the BRI (Chen, 2014; Chen, 2020). Though presented as a multilateral development bank similar to the

World Bank or the IMF, China holds by far the largest shares and thereby vetoing power (26.6%), though admittedly in the IMF and the World Bank the US holds the most shares (veto power) with ~16% in both (De Jonge, 2017, IMF, 2025; BMZ, 2023). Thus, it was suspected that the founding of the AIIB, is an attempt to create a counterweight to the "Western-dominated" financial institutions (Qian et al., 2023; Tien at al., 2019), making it a geopolitical tool of the CCP to enhance its potential of becoming a global economic governance shaper (Chan, 2017). Apart from the geopolitical angle, AIIB managed to earn some reputability as a multilateral organization, as it attracted the likes of Germany, the UK, France, and Canada as members (Chin, 2019).

China is also the largest forex holder by volume, with 3,265 trillion USD, amassing 2,5x times of Japan's and 3,2 times of Switzerland's holdings (World Bank, 2024). Particularly BRI-participating countries are provided with high volume lending of their domestic currency, the Yuan, encouraging its global use[7] while reducing their USD reliance (Liu, 2020, p. 147-148; Liang, 2020, p. 6, 9). This latter tactic is mainly deployed in China's periphery and countries on the BRI: Central and Southeast Asia, as well as African countries, but in the EU and CEE, the more stable USD is still key (Lu, 2022, p. 1219).

2.1.3.5 Geostrategic developments under Xi

As for military presence and actual hard power maneuvers, the Xi regime, in stark contrast to its predecessors, exerts more assertiveness and does not shy away from verbal — as well as actual confrontations. Tensions — especially in the last years of the 2010s — have been on the rise in the South China Sea & the Spratly Islands in the context of the 9-Dash-Line; in the East China Sea with Japan; in the Malacca & Luzon Strait with Taiwan (also see AUKUS) (Dutton, 2011; Cuong et al., 2023); and on Bhutan's Doklam Plateau at the Indian border with India (Kaura, 2020). Xi only recently proclaimed that unification with Taiwan and Hong Kong is imperative, and no one will deny China this (Xi, 2024). The EU and the Biden administration formally supported Taiwan's independence as a democratic entity, but at the same time firmly adhered to the One China Policy (EP, 2024a; Kirby, 2023), hence the sensitive nature of many EP resolutions that speak about this apparent contradiction.

---

[7] Though the Yuan's global share in foreign exchange (~2%) does not yet make it a relevant counterweight to the USD (~57%) or the Euro [~20%) (IMF, 2024).

2.1.4 Scholarly interest in the CCP's engagement in CEE – 17+1

2.1.4.1 17+1 or China - CEEC- Cooperation

The 17+1 or China – CEEC – Cooperation was firstly launched in April 2012 in Warsaw by China, at that time with the title: "16+1 Cooperation Framework". The founding members included eleven EU MS: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and five non-EU MS: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Since then, Greece expanded the format to 17+1 in April 2019 joining at the 8th China-CEEC summit in Dubrovnik. Lithuania left in May 2021, Estonia and Latvia followed in August 2022, reducing the format to 14+1.

In its core the initiative forms an open economic platform, meeting annually in rotating membered countries, for establishing and strengthening diplomatic and economic relations between China and the CEE nations (China-CEEC Cooperation, 2021). The main objectives of the initiative are to seek large-scale investments and enhanced FDI flows within the region, formalizing trade relations, also in connection with the BRI (Xinhua, 2020). The format runs under the motto of "win-win cooperation", fostering *mutual beneficial relationships*, stimulating economic relations, but also nurturing cultural and academic exchanges through endeavors such as the creation of Confucius Institutes, exchange programs with universities and boosting the tourism industry (China-CEEC Cooperation, 2021; China Daily, 2024). CEEC's flagship projects include the Hungarian Serbian Budapest-Belgrade highway project, the Greek Chinese Harbor of Piraeus cooperation, or the Chinese-financed Croatian Pelješac Bridge (Table 15 provides further exemplary CEEC projects).

2.1.4.2 CEEC and its implications

While the initiative officially presents itself as a purely economically oriented trade forum, several observers interpret the CEEC as a strategically planned geopolitical maneuver by the CCP. Considering potential political motivations behind the format, three theoretical aspects that seem logical could be theorized:

(1) From a trade perspective, China might prefer bilateral agreements with numerous smaller nations rather than engaging collectively with the EU as a single entity, whose combined negotiating power would be significantly stronger.

(2) Conversely, individual CEEC nations may also perceive greater potential economic gains from direct bilateral investments and partnerships with China, rather than being bound

exclusively to EU-wide agreements, where they remain relatively minor participants. This dynamic creates an inherent power asymmetry, granting China considerable leverage while offering seemingly greater incentives to the CEEC countries individually.

(3) Lastly, it has been argued that increased Chinese investments might encourage certain CEEC states to politically align more closely with China or adopt more Eurosceptic stances. However, the causality here remains ambiguous: rather than investments reshape political values, it could also be that certain governments, possessing varying degrees of autocratic tendencies, find political alignment with China naturally easier than others do.

2.1.5 Academic research

Since the topic is one of crucial geopolitical sensitivity, to facilitate a nuanced and unbiased debate, it makes sense to differentiate here between scholarly research coming from unaligned sources, such as peer-reviewed academic journal articles and on the other hand think tank or governmental published research. While scholars may also be actively influenced by third parties (or subconsciously by some underlying affiliation), they should not have inherent biases, as think tank-employed researchers — who write within the scope of the geopolitical perspective of their designated financiers — possibly have. Accordingly, one finds that most notions, framing the Chinese engagement in the CEE *negatively*, stems more so from think tank reporting. Academic research seems to rather tackle the economic and less so the ideological dimension of CEEC, which appears to be of special interest to think tank/governmental research.

One of the most influential papers on the topic, Jonathan Holslag's *How China's New Silk Road Threatens European Trade*, stands out as the first to apply the concept of "offensive mercantilism" to China's expanding influence in the CEE region. His review of thirty actual CCP issued policy papers form the groundwork for analyzing the phenomenon, concluded that the "New Silk Road" indeed may be causing division within the EU. Allegedly China achieved this by deliberately exploiting already existing rifts within the EU, fostering economic dependencies — through bond buying and low-cost exports to the CEE region — undermining the EU's internal cohesion and attempts at building/upholding a coherent foreign policy stance towards China (Holslag, 2017, pp. 58).

Starting from there, the scholarly conclusions on this issue vary greatly. Bolstering on Holslag's finding of a Chinese "divide and conquer" scheme, Garlick (2019), claims that the

applied frameworks to analyze this alleged phenomenon, do not necessarily prove such a scheme. Thus presenting fourfold evidence for this claim: (1) no decisive political intent can be found; (2) the existence of coercion is not proven; (3) the situation is not a zero-sum game, as neither the EU nor the CEE necessarily lose while China wins; and (4) economic rationality is a stronger explanatory factor than geopolitical expansion, as evidence suggests all players to behave rationally, and being driven purely by economic incentives.

Back in 2014, just two years after the CEEC's founding, it was unclear whether a pattern in Chinese investments manifested, since investments back then were unevenly spread out (Jacoby, 2014). The time span of publications here matters, as the CEE's relationship to China changed significantly over time. Most scholars observe a split between CEEC members in the later years, as some members *entered a sobering phase*, feeling that the initiative did not contribute much if anything to their trade prospects, which showed most extreme with the Baltics who left the initiative. While Poland and the Czechia[8] changed their approach in the 2020s for geopolitical reasons, others tightened their relationship with China throughout the decade, namely Hungary and Greece.

Overall speaking, a *trend of disillusionment* is often ascribed to the CEEC after a few years, as Chinese exports to CEEC rose far more than CEEC imports to China (Matura, 2019, p. 4; Kowalski, 2022, pp. 55 –56, 68; Turcsányi, 2020, pp. 61 – 62, 68; Matura, 2021, pp. 78, 92 – 93, 99; Pencea, 2022, pp. 128, 133 –134). This trend accelerated especially in the last years of the 2010s, when the asymmetrical trade balance between China and the CEE became more and more apparent (Éltető & Szunomár, 2016; Pepermans, 2018; Cieślik, 2019; Brown, 2020; Matura, 2021, p. 168).

Apart from the economic dimension, the supposed exertion of political influence did not go unnoticed in academic circles. Some non-CEEC EU entities perceived the CEEC's response to Chinese economic engagements as them "blindly stepping into the honeytrap"—a sentiment echoed by scholars through various analogous expressions[9]. Regarding the asymmetrical relationship between a large player (China) and a significantly smaller one (singular

---

[8] See Appendix A for further discussion on the cases of (1) Hungary and Greece and (2) Poland and Czechia.
[9] Different scholars used various analogies here for the CEE's engagement with China: "falling into the honey-trap", "trojan horse", "reverse Marco Polo effect" (as in, a one-sided exploration by China into the West (CEE) and not vice versa), "Faustian bargain" (as in, a short-term economic relief coming with political influence and loss of sovereignty or regulatory erosion on the flipside) or "shanghai effect" (as in, a "race to the bottom"), for what they anticipated to happen (Pepermans, 2018; Jakimów, 2019; Zeng, 2024; Duan et al., 2021).

CEEC MS each), Pepermans (2018), building upon Nye and Keohane's Power and Interdependence theories (Keohane & Nye, 1997), describes China's approach as "Hirschmannesque": China favors persuasion over coercion, employing a long-term strategy to position itself as a trustworthy partner through soft power, closely intertwined with its economic engagement.

In contrast to the CCP's "positive soft power" narrative (emphasizing *mutual respect*, *learning*, and fostering *win-win cooperation*), scholarly research also confirms the aforementioned phenomena of "negative soft power" in the region, which manifests in a deliberate presentation of oneself as a benevolent and civil actor, in stark contrast to the *violent and exploitative colonial histories* — and still present behavior — of Western nations (Lehman-Ludwig et al., 2023, p. 121, 132; Jakimów, 2019, pp. 374, 377; Ness, 1993, p. 195; Kowalski, 2017, pp. 2, 7).

Conversely, Western nation's support comes with conditions. For instance, expecting the country they are intensifying relations with to adopt their values (e.g., democratization, freedom of press, human rights, liberalism and so on), hence interference in one's domestic affairs. In contrast, China self-characterizes itself as solely economically-pragmatic, "non-interference" in domestic politics thus *serves as a key difference* to Western competitors. Its tradition of foreign affairs does not derive from *imperial domination*, they do not *lecture others on ideological matters* and *position themselves as the moral superior* through e.g. criticisms of human rights issues (Zhang, 2018; Pan & Du, 2015, p. 607; Hirono et al., 2019, pp. 574, 588; Grieger, 2018, p. 2).

Many ascribe this engagement at least partially to be a façade, to stand out as a viable alternative to Western partners. Firstly, empirical evidence provided so far and hereinafter demonstrates the exertion of political influence where China was economically involved, either through coercive (Wolf Warrior Diplomacy) or appeasing mechanics. Secondly, even internally in China there is a debate, whether the absolute "non-interference" doctrine is still tenable, or should make space for more proactive (Zheng, 2016; Zhang, 2017, pp. 436, 453), even hawkish foreign policy approaches[10].

2.1.6 Think Tank research

Most think tank published research takes a slightly different viewpoint than the academic one, as it views the CEEC initiative from a *geostrategic lens*, emphasizing the perspective of

---

[10] See Appendix A for further elaboration on the matter.

international power relations. Starting with the new self-understanding of China under Xi Jinping in stark comparison to Deng Xiaoping's handling of state affairs (Góralczyk, 2017, p. 154; Szczudlik, 2020, p. 57), they confirm the foreign affairs paradigm shift under Xi. More so than the academic research, they criticize the Chinese engagement in CEE regarding the format of CEEC itself and the alleged politico-cultural influence that came with it.

Think tank research identifies an inconsistency between *the way the format works in reality* and the way it *markets itself to the public.* Supposedly, the actual power dynamic of the format is *inherently, systemically asymmetrical*, deliberately put in place to favor China (Szczudlik, 2020, p. 54, Grieger, 2018, pp. 1-2, 4). It is a misconception that the format works in classical "multilateralism", nor through "bilateralism", but instead it employs a so-called "multilateral bilateralism". As with a multilateral system, all members would work together symbiotically on equal grounds with each other and in combination with China, and in a bilateral one, China would have singular independent relations with the CEEC as one bloc, so that the format only exists as a meeting ground.

Therefore, the CEEC is a supposedly a façade, for demonstrating willingness for leaving bilateralism behind and engaging in multilateralism, while in actuality it uses multilateral bilateralism (Karásková et al., 2020, p. 11; Szczudlik, 2020, p. 53; Mierzejewski, 2023, quoting Rudyak et al., 2021; Jakóbowski, 2018). Most CEEC's individually ratified Memorandums of Agreements (MoA) independently with China, making the platform itself appears to only be a prerogative to obtain China's economic attention.

The think tank research's lingering on the discussion about actual cultural influence arriving in CEEC, manifests in a multitude of ways. Soft power is inserted, aiming to enhance China's image in CEE on the long-term, by measures such as: media influence and cooperation, education and cultural initiatives: CIs, student exchange programs, local outreach: e.g. traditional Chinese medicine centers (Karásková et al., 2020; Dams et al. 2021; Tonchev, 2020, p.8; Cardenal et al., 2017, pp. 23, 145-149), which is easier to accomplish in the face of "weak civil societies" and "oligarchic influence" (Brattberg et al., 2021; Lucas, 2022, pp. 6-7, Lamond & Lucas, 2022, pp. 8, 17; Benner et al., 2018). Affirming the findings of the academic sphere, China attempts to expand into the CEE emphasizing the narration of their *common cultural heritage* that lies within their *(post-) communist history and ideology*, their *shared experiences*

from suppression by imperial/colonial powers, as well as *being ancient civilizations*[11].

This notion did not bear much fruit for the most part, as communist ideology is not popular in former eastern bloc nations nowadays[11].

The reports from the European Think-Tank Network on China (ETNC), a joint operation of multiple think tanks deeply investigating EU-China relations, form the biggest basis for in-depth analysis of Chinese influence within Europe (CEE), thus they have been highlighted within this chapter the most. Since 2015, they report annually in detail about EU-China relations from a holistic EU scope, but also deep dive into specific MS actions on a national scale.

Notably though, the *shift* between the *initial euphoria* towards CEEC and *the sobering up* in the later years, has also been highlighted in the think tank reporting (Szczudlik, 2020, Karásková et al., 2020, pp. 19-23; Bartsch & Wessling, 2023, p. 13). Across the board, interest groups have not been conclusive on the political impact of CEEC on CEE. Similar to the scholarly findings, they substantiate the apparent *trade imbalance* that exceedingly increased the import/- to export ratio in China's favor (Brattberg et al., 2021; Godement & Parello-Plesner, 2011; Grieger, 2018; Fox & Godement, 2009; Lucas, 2022). But while some — again this is more prevalent here as in the academic research — exacerbate the risks of the Chinese influence regarding this asymmetry (Benner et al., 2018; Szczudlik, 2020; Cardenal et al., 2017; Lamond & Lucas, 2022; Tonchev, 2020), others have been inconclusive whether a pattern of division within the EU emerged (is emerging), or the attempt of this has failed (Berzina-Cerenkova, 2023; Karásková et al., 2020; Grieger, 2018).

The "CEEC failed" side, gave the following reasons: China was not able to grasp the motivations of the respective CEE countries, as the CEE region is not as homogenous as it anticipated (Karásková et al., 2020, p. 7; Lo & Lucas, 2021, p. 6; Kratz et al., 2016, pp. 3, 5, as summarized from Long, 2016; Song & Feng, 2016) and the changing geopolitical landscape *prompted* many CEECs into *choosing a side* (as the case for Poland and Czechia).

Finally, there remains one reading of CEEC, namely that it has been successful, but in very subtle ways. For instance, tourism, the educational exchange programs, CIs, MoAs, and news partnerships apparently were the true success stories of CEEC (Karásková et al. 2020, pp. 23-26, 53; Seaman et al. 2015; Dams et al., 2021, pp. 8-10).

As a closing note, one must acknowledge that all academic and think tank research,

---

[11] See Appendix A for detailed overview of events where these notions were invoked.

mostly stayed vague with assigning causality to the reasons why Chinese soft power especially in the CEE resulted in success or failure, alluding here to their different historical backgrounds. While the ETNC whitepapers did discuss negative externalities from CEEC for the EU, they, for the most part, did not link this to a causal mechanism, as was written about in the introducing part of this thesis.

Considering this, the ambition cannot be to create a definitive causal link for this. Though initial speculations suggested a divergence in *political socialization and/or democratic consolidation* as reasons, this thesis will not be able to pinpoint this causality but keeps its focus on its main premise: the measurability of soft power through Chinese economic entanglement in EU countries within the EP.

2.2 State of affairs: Procedural and Theoretical Developments

This chapter will contain information about the EP's voting mechanism, the MEP's *bloc* voting *behavior* and an overview over important Council-related decisions related to China, which are essential to understand the dependent variable better.

2.2.1 The European Parliament's Voting Mechanism

As one of the two main legislative bodies of the EU together with the Council, the Parliament represents the citizens of the EU directly, while the Council represents the respective governments of the EU MS, through their respective ministers. The EP, based on degressive proportionality, usually consisted of several dozen MEPs for each country, counting 751 at max, falling back to 705 after the UK's departure. While Germany for instance has 96 seats, the three smallest MS: Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus only hold six each. The EPG's seats are proportionally linked to the votes the respective EPG receives, with mandates of five years, the duration of one parliamentary term.

The College of Commissioners, which is composed of the European Commission's Commissioners, submits proposals to the EP to vote on. Depending on the matter, either the EP votes on the issue alone, or the Council's agreement is needed as well[12].

These EP votes, those who are directly critical of Chinese (domestic and foreign) affairs, the *China-sensitive issues*, are analyzed in this thesis, as well as the authors that tabled these issues to the EP through their subcommittees. Finally, the debate contributions on these issues

---

[12] See Appendix A for a detailed differentiation of voting responsibilities between Council and EP.

that came up when they were discussed in the plenary sessions are analyzed as well.

The EP's plenary Roll-Call Votes (RCVs) have been collected, by the here employed VoteWatchEU dataset (Hix et al., 2022), which contains RCV data ranging from 2004 to 2022. RCVs ensure transparency and accountability in very important votes, as each MEP is called out individually to vote, thus observable for the whole plenary. These are often used for sensitive EU laws concerning trade, environmental policies or human rights, approval of international treaties or approval of the EC. The dataset differentiates only between simple and qualified majority, though this differentiation will be ignored. A MEP that has a tendency of exhibiting China-aligning (or evading) voting behavior, is expected to not discriminate between the kind of majority needed.

2.2.1.1 Bloc Voting Behavior in the European Parliament

While MEPs may have their own agenda when facing a vote, their judgement or even their own convictions might be strongly tied to the positions of their EPG, their affiliation with a certain political wing within it or to an internal (subcommittee) or an external special interest group (e.g. Lobby or NGO). Hence, the question arises, how corresponding literature evaluates the agenda of single MEPs and to what extent bloc voting plays a role in the EP.

As early as the 1980s, long before the formal formation of the EU, the concept of so-called "voting blocs" was developed (Fowler et al., 1983). Party alliance does topple national alliance, when it comes to the phenomenon of bloc voting (Fowler et al., 1983, p. 166; Bowler et al., 1999, p. 192; Hix et al., 2009, p. 821, 826). Findings from RCV observations showed that MEP's sovereign voting agency might be severely compromised by their allegiance to their respective EPG positions, rarely defecting the EPG's line (Carrubba & Gabel, 1999; Klüver & Spoon, 2015, p. 556, 560; Han, 2007, p. 485).

As for the procedural ways voting cohesion is encouraged, or even enforced, by the EPG, as there are multiple theoretical mechanism at play:

(1) *Guidance and Coordination on the Party-level* – Though not to be compared to an official "voting recommendation", the coordination meetings, some EPGs host, could be seen as efforts to ensure group cohesion when it comes to voting (Van der Klaauw, 2017, p. 51).

(2) *Whipping system* – Although *hard whipping* appears to not exist in the EP, *soft whipping measures* or initial incentives to encourage voting cohesion inside the EPGs have been theorized. Measures here could be authorization (leading the vote), socializing (with the MEPs

inside the party), appealing to duty of the designated dissenting MEPs or assigning rapporteur roles as reward (Van der Klaauw, 2017; Mühlbock, 2019, Faas, 2003, pp. 847-848). (3) *Transparency of the voting process* – Due to the transparent voting process, MEPs whose voting records misaligns with the parties' position, might be easily traceable, making them fear possible public scrutiny.

One should acknowledge that every given EP term includes a relevant number of non-attached MEPs (often named non-inscrits (NI)), introducing a level of volatility when it comes to voting behavior patterns, as they do not follow bloc voting behavior dictated by an EPG.

Most commonly, these MEPs are affiliated with a national party but not with an EPG. As for example, the German AfD who was part of the Identity and Democracy (ID) EPG but after its later excommunication stayed non-attached for a period of time (Powers, 2024). Others, for example UKIP, Golden Dawn, or the Five Star Movement, were all EPG-unaffiliated at some point in time. Traditionally these cases appear to be dominantly far-right, separatist or sceptic/protest (domestic) parties.

2.2.2 Council Track Record on China-related Issues

Although the Council track record due to lacking insights, was neglected in favor of an EP data analysis, giving an overview over the Council's relationship to Chinese affairs can nevertheless add nuance.

The following observation mainly considered direct Council decisions as well as some decisive EC implementation of said Council decisions. While there have been minor Council ruling EC-implementations like the Ceramics Anti-Dumping Measures (2011-2013), other ones as the Solar Panel Anti-Dumping Duties (2013-2018) brought the EU and China to the "brink of a trade war" (Goron, 2018).

Judging by Table 17 one finds that the Council mostly withheld from criticizing China from a *value-based view*, without packaging these critiques in an overall economics focused statement. Coincidentally, two of the few *value-based* rulings, happened after 2019, thus after the geopolitical relation to China changed in the last part of the 2020s. These few Council-related decisions are insufficient in order to observe any patterns of behavior, aside from the confirmatory finding that, with this issue as with other, the Council rather deals with *prag-matic, realpolitikal economical issues*, while the EP, who released many China-critical state-ments, represents *an idealistic value-based reading* on foreign affairs.

3. Research design

As previously mentioned, a substantial amount of qualitative research on the topic has already been conducted. Therefore, this thesis will fill the gap, by deploying a quantitative approach, searching for a pattern in a big population (n = ~900 unique MEPs per term)[17]. The phenomenon is not newly proposed, but an existing one, hence, allowing to reason deductively and in a confirmatory way, evaluating the qualitative evidence. Data will be analyzed longitudinally and comparatively, as it covers EP voting records from 2004-2022 across all 28 MS (including the UK).

3.1 Data

Independent Variable: The CEEC membership as the main IV here, serves as a great unit of observation, to analyze the phenomenon that is the Chinese' economic engagement in the CEE region. As the DV consists of EP voting data, only the CEEC MS are considered, which are as well EU MS. Satisfying the second hypothesis, terms will be analyzed individually. Regarding the third hypothesis, as not all EU CEEC MS received the exact same economic attention, a differentiation by level of economic involvement will be deployed later.

Dependent Variable: The DV in this analysis are the MEPs RCV voting records. The considered votes, critical of China's foreign and domestic policies, can be found in Table 14. The voting record data was retrieved from the open-source VoteWatchEU project, which collected EP voting data from 2004-2022, covering the start, mid phase, and latest situation of the CEEC.

The dataset provides the voting records for all MEPs in the EP terms 6,7,8 and the first two half of EP9, including domestic and EPG membership and country of origin, which are relevant for the control variable analysis. As the dataset covers EP6, EP7 & EP8 fully, however only the first half of EP9, due to the project being discontinued, six China-sensitive issues that have been voted on in the second half of EP9, July 2022- July 2024, have been identified and incorporated individually. The respective voting data was retrieved from the open source-based research project "HowTheyVote.eu", which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education (HowTheyVote.eu, 2024). Some issues had to go through multiple voting rounds before being adopted. In these cases, only the last voting round was considered. As nuances within amendments are not planned to be analyzed in this thesis, considering all voting rounds on the same issues would not provide additional value.

3.2 Issue Identification

Although it is hard to segment the respective China-sensitive issues into different dimensions, as most of them are inherently intertwined to some degree, an attempt to do so can be found in Table 14. Issues that concern the *value-based* realm, are among others those, which criticized China regarding violations on human rights, the situation in Xinjiang, Hong Kong or Tibet. The *geopolitics* categorized ones, mainly dealt with the EU's relationship to Taiwan in relation to — as well as isolated from — China, as well as the EU's direct relationship with China. Thirdly, the *economic dimension* concerned e.g. EU-China trade relations or disputes.

On the temporal axis, China-sensitive issues initially were of limited interest in EP6 (2004-2009) with seven issues only. While eight can be counted in EP7 (2009-2014), in EP8 (2014-2019) there were only six to be found and finally in EP9 (2019-2024), 20 issues have been voted on. The great cumulation of China-sensitive issues from 2019 ongoing, is most likely to be attributed to the exponentially rising attention of the EU on events such as the protests in Hong Kong, the contentious South China Sea situation, tensions with Taiwan and the Uyghurs situation in Xinjiang.

3.3 Operationalization

The IV will be binary coded: "0" = *MEP does come from non-CEEC* and "1" = *MEP does come from CEEC*. The voting choices are coded 0,1,2,3,4,5,6, which stands for the following respectively: "Not a MEP, at the time of the vote", "For", "Against", "Abstain", "Absent", "Motivated Absence". "0" could be delegates, visitors, observers attending the session, former MEPs that were freshly retired from their privileges or newly appointed ones yet not able to cast votes, thus they will be excluded (Politico, 2003). Since it is impossible to track MEPs' concrete absence behavior and only EPG attached MEPs are eventually asked to submit absence notes, the two absence choices are merged into one.

The DV will as well be binary, here being one of the two selected voting behavior benchmarks to probe the MEPs voting behavior: "For" voting on a China-sensitive issue (as the issues are critical towards China, a "For" vote means joining this critique) ("1") or not voting For ("0") and "Participating" in a China-sensitive issue vote ("1") or not participating ("0").

3.3.1 The Complementary Value of Observing Participation

Participation rates and "absence abuse" have been longstanding issues within the EP. The EP had to implement a rule, to force MEPs to attend at least half of all RCVs on three regular

plenary session days, otherwise cutting their daily subsistence allowance in half. Although strongly contested by the MEPs, the rule was implemented in 1998 (Watson, 1998).

Since the start of the VoteWatchEU project as of 2009, the very dataset that is employed here, transparency for EP activity rose and so did the MEP's attendance in the EP (Hix et al., 2012). The EP's absenteeism problem can perhaps mostly be explained by "Present, But Not Voting" (Font, 2020), meaning that MEPs do attend the sessions, but refrain from choosing an active voting option (For, Against, Abstain). Intriguingly the first descriptive analysis showing that "Absent" is chosen about 2,5 times more than "Abstain" (Table 2), which already speaks for the prevalence of absenteeism.

Nuance is added here when interjecting the issue of strategic absence. When facing clashing convictions of national party vs. EPG, MEPs rather not take the vote than visibly demonstrating dissent from one or the other (Font, 2020, p. 181). Combining this with *geopolitical sensitivity* (especially when superpowers are involved), could further strengthen the suggestion of strategic evasion, as particular "weaker nations" rather not take a vote and chose evasion in votes that may be critical of major players (Morse & Coggins, 2024). Strategic absenteeism and China-alignment has been a point of focus before, through dissection of MEP's voting behavior by country as well as by EPG affiliation (PSSI, 2023).

3.3.2 Term-based Observations

The data is observed in aggregated EP terms instead of analyzing it year by year, for threefold reason:

(1) The EP operates in five-year legislative cycles. This shapes the MEP's voting behavior, as their party alignments and bloc voting behavior, coalition-building, their (sub-)committee membership and legislative priorities stay — at least theoretically — relatively stable over one cycle.

(2) Bloc voting within one term is encouraged by whipping systems, party discipline and ideological conviction, as well as shared policy platforms existing within and outside the EP. Even non-attached MEPs are sent into the EP with the agenda they sold to their voters, thus incentivized to stay ideologically consistent.

(3) For the country-based constellations this approach is even more appropriate, as the allegedly influential Chinese economic incentives here are often long-term high-stakes critical infrastructure projects whose planning and development can take multiple years, hence

motivating *China-aligned* MEPs to stay in this alignment at least one term. Hence observing short-term fluctuations appears less relevant.

(4) In line with this reasoning, term-based observations could potentially drown random noise coming from short-term events such as diplomatic disputes (see warrior wolf diplomacy), which would flaw year to year observations.

3.4 First Level Analysis

Firstly, demographic details about the dataset's population, like MEP shares, overall voting trends and the EPGs voting behavior will be explored. For raw data comparisons throughout the analysis two voting behavior metrics are introduced, them being "For"-ratio, with is computed like this: (1) $"For" - ratio = For\ Votes/(For\ Votes + Against\ Votes + Abstain\ Votes)$, and an observation of the participation rate on a second order: (2) $Participation\ Rate = (Total\ Votes - Absent\ Votes)/Total\ Votes.$

Followingly, an initial broad comparison between the two groups CEEC vs. non-CEEC, their general voting behavior, temporal, and spatial distribution, as well as voting behavior by topic, will be conducted. Taken, that one is presented with two categorical variables, after looking at cross-tabulations, logarithmic regression (LR) to determine statistical significance is employed. If statistical significance is found, robust standard errors will assess for potential heteroskedasticity.

For further examination, the Rice Index (Rice, 1925) will give insights into the level of unity within groups. It calculates the absolute difference between the proportion of "Yes" and "No" votes multiplied by 100: $Rice\ Index = |\%Yes\ votes - \%No\ votes|$.

A score close to 100 indicates high cohesion inside the group (most voters voted the same), while close to 0 indicates low cohesion. Additionally, the Agreement Index (AI) (Hix et al., 2005), can demonstrate alignment in voting behavior between two separate groups (CEEC vs. non-CEEC). Its formula is: $AI_i = \frac{\max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\} - 1/2[(Y_i, N_i, A_i) - \max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\}]}{Y_i, N_i, A_i}$. A score close to 1 indicates complete cohesion and a score that would be closer to 0, would mean complete cohesion between them.

3.5 Second Level Analysis: In-group Segmentation

3.5.1 Voting behavior related - segmented groups

The next step would be observing CEEC MS' vs non-CEEC MS' voting behavior over all four terms, by looking at all 28 singular countries. From these, a true *China-friends group* will be built, consisting of the countries with the most China-aligning voting behavior, considering both voting metrics (alignment & evasion)[13]. The *China-friends group* will be tested for statistical divergence to the CEEC main group. The countries' trends over the terms will also be observed in a temporal visualization, showing their fluctuations over time.

3.5.2 Dimension Related - segmented groups

It would be intriguing to analyze, whether CEEC MEPs diverge in their voting behavior, in the different dimensions of China-sensitive issues, them being the *value-based*, the *economic* and the *geopolitical* one. For example, there could be a non-CEEC vs. CEEC divide, in *value-based* voting issues (e.g. human rights violations in China), while there is none, a less strong one, for the other two issue dimensions (*geopolitical*, *economical*).

3.5.3 Economical involvement - segmented groups

Here the FDI flows are put into consideration. Using a composite score, one combines information about FDI flows, as well as these flows projected on the country's GDP (Table 16). This follows an approach from one of the most influential Pan-European China focused research think tanks: Merics (Poggetti, 2021). Although instead of Poggetti's utilized data, here data from 2012-2024 is considered (same for the estimated GDP average over the years (World Bank, 2025), to ensure comparability with the underlying premise of the Chinese engagement as of the founding of CEEC (Rhodium, 2025). As in Poggetti's approach, Rhodium Group data is utilized, which is one of the most (if not the most) credible think tanks, researching Chinese FDI flows to Europe and thereby often cited by various EU institutions[14].

While solely analyzing FDI provides insights into economic impact analysis, putting FDI in relation to a country's GDP offers a more technical perspective on the CCP's strategic ambitions. Figure 7 highlights that a focus on "FDI scope" alone could paint a misleading picture, as

---

[13] Although evasion (participation rate) is only complementary to the "For"-ratio, preliminary analysis has shown, that in the country-based group comparisons, participation played a major role.

[14] Rhodium has been involved and cited by various EU entities, among many are the following: EP (INTA, AFET), ECA, Mario Draghi, EPRS and the ECB (Brinza et al., 2024; INTA, 2023; EC, 2024c; Al-Haschimi & Spital, 2024; Grieger, 2017; ECA, 2020; Draghi, 2024).

combining FDI volume with its relative impact on GDP significantly reshuffles the top performers. Based on FDI alone, Hungary, Greece, Poland, and Romania would make the top group. However, when accounting for GDP impact, Estonia (overperforming) and Croatia (normal level) replace the underperforming Poland and Romania. Another clear example of this discrepancy is the difference between Germany and Estonia: while Germany received €22.7 billion in Chinese FDI—vastly more than Estonia's €100 million—Estonia's FDI accounted for 4.27% of its GDP, compared to the 0.66% FDI/GDP for Germany (Poggetti, 2021).

The composite score attempts to reflect this dual dimension by accounting for both absolute investment and economic dependency. In doing so, it connects back to the earlier theoretical considerations of *asymmetrical power relations* between China and smaller CEEC Member States, as well as the argument that Chinese soft power has proven more effective in countries with *oligarchic tendencies* and *weaker civil societies*.

For the composite score ranking, the final group constellations are: (1) *High economic gain:* Poland, Hungary, Greece, Slovenia, (2) *Average economic gain:* Czechia, Romania, Estonia, Slovakia and (3) *Low economic gain:* Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Croatia (Table 16). Although actual FDI flows are more absolute, the proposition of some high-stakes infrastructure projects adds plausibility to the *high economic gain* constellation as it stands.

(1) Poland, being the largest CEEC economy, was of special interest to China with its variety of investment opportunities, among which are: telecommunication, transportation, and industrial parks. Relevant investments came from Huawei, TCL and ZTE. With the Rail Cargo Terminal in Łódź, China was presented with the most strategically relevant trainway chokepoint for BRI connectivity further West, as it is the primary sorting and redistribution hub for Chinese cargo. From there it forwards much of this cargo further into the EU (Kasonta, 2021; Wnukowski & Roules, 2023; GCR, 2016).

(2) Hungary, who — together with Greece — is well known for being one of the closest partners of China within the EU, is building the Budapest-Belgrade Railway, planning EV Battery Plants in CATL Debrecen (one of Europe's largest), as well as a high-speed railway and a joint University Campus (these last two stalled out) (Gizińska & Uznańska, 2024; Reuters, 2022)

(3) Greece, often ascribed as the initial spark for Chinese engagement in the CEE region with its selling of the harbor of Piraeus, was heavily involved with COSCO since 2008. Later on, a rail corridor, linking Piraeus to CEE (Hungary, Serbia) was proposed, as well as a Chinese-backed airport and investments in Greece's wind & solar energy were in the talks (Kotoulas,

2024; Koutantou, 2014; Xinhua, 2025).

(4) Slovenia, although being magnitudes smaller in GDP and FDI compared to the others, presents attractive opportunities to China. Being the first ex-Yugoslav nation to join the EU (2004) and the Euro (2007), it has a long-standing and stable EU single market integration and ties to Western European financial institutions. Its Adriatic Port of Koper's existing rail connectivity to CEE markets, makes it distinctly interesting to China. Further relevant cooperations and acquisitions include China's Hisense obtaining Slovenia's Gorenje, the establishment of the Bank of China in Ljubljana, the SinoVation Center Ljubljana and various Tourism development projects between the two (The Slovenia Times, 2016; Istenič Kotar, 2022; GMF, 2018; Nuno, 2024).

Conclusively, to all four of these *high economic gain* CEEC MS, specific crucial CEEC-related projects can be ascribed to (see also Table 15).

3.6 Third Level Analysis: Multiple Logistic Regression Model

Whether the thesis's premise lead analysis may show a significant relationship — or not, possibly control variables could be better predictors for China-alignment in EP voting. Taking research on the topic and the premise of the thesis into consideration one needs to control for Chinese FDI currents projected on the non-CEEC EU MS as well as for EPG affiliation.

Firstly, though, dismissed candidates for control variables will be presented who came up while hypothesizing, but were ultimately discarded for either theoretical reasons or while conducting actual analysis. This can help contextualize the overall research better and can provide clues to future research endeavors.

3.6.1 Dismissed Control Variables

(1) Eurosceptic control: While it appears plausible that Euroscepticism and China-alignment are somehow related, a closer look at Euroscepticism—measured by EU citizens' perception—shows that there is a very mixed and apparently inconsistent picture, as many different CEEC and non-CEEC MS showed Eurosceptic tendencies at some point in time (Pew Research Center, 2012, 2016). There might be a problem with Euroscepticism as a measure, stemming from logical inconsistency and temporal volatility, since it is heavily dependent on the respective current national situation and timeframe. While Euroscepticism in Southern EU Member States rather stems from grievances over austerity policies, in the CEE region it originates more from sovereignty concerns and distrust of EU elites (Biten et al., 2023; Csehi & Zgut, 2021),

with its temporal fluctuations deriving from the various crises the EU has faced over the last 15 years (e.g. Brexit, the 2008 financial crisis, the refugee crisis in 2015, EU reforms).

(2) EU membership timeline control: It has been speculated that CEECs, as younger democracies, are less politically socialized and democratically consolidated. From this, it is not far-fetched to assume that a MS' self-understanding as part of the EU might influence its ideological proximity to both the Union itself as well as to external actors such as China. However, when looking at the timeline of EU accession, this comparison appears rather meritless. For example, Greece joined in 1981 yet is arguably one of the most China-aligning EU MS. Croatia, joined lastly in 2013 (at the end of EP7), but preliminary research showed it to not being one of the least China-aligning, painting an inconsistent picture for these two alone. Between these two cases, only two additional accession waves remain: Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and the larger Eastern enlargement in 2004 — making this control appear rather unreliable.

(3) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Control: Exhibiting China-aligning voting behavior and ranking high on the CPI might similarly to the Eurosceptic control sound coherent, and there are some non-CEEC MS who ranked occasionally under CEEC MS in CPI (Italy, Malta, Cypress), but generalizing the rankings shows that, even over the last decade, the countries with the highest perceived corruption were also the most China aligning CEEC countries (Greece, Hungary). Combining the bottom ranked EU countries from 2012 (start of CEEC) with data from one decade later: 2023, shows Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Croatia at the bottom. Preliminary testing thus far already revealed stronger predictors of China-aligning CEEC subgroup constellations, hence CPI was dismissed. Still its noteworthy, that under the bottom 10 CPI ranked countries, only two non-CEEC MS (Italy, Portugal) remain. Similarly interesting, is finding the most China-aligning countries among the bottom five in CPI, to be Hungary and Greece (Transparency International, 2025).

(4) Public opinion control: Since the European Parliament is a directly elected body representing EU citizens, it could be assumed that public perceptions and values influence MEP voting behavior — making public opinion a plausible control variable. To test this assumption, CEEC subgroups were constructed based on research on citizens' perceptions of China. Suetyi and Yidong (2022) categorized CEEC MS using data from Eurobarometer and the Pew Research Center, forming four clusters: *"China-friendly"* (Romania, Croatia), *"China-neutral"* (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria), *"China-polarized"* (Poland, Slovakia), and *"China-skeptic"* (Czechia, Hungary, Slovenia). These groupings were derived from Eurobarometer survey data,

evaluating perceived quality of life, political influence, and economic performance of the EU and China, before and after China's engagement with the CEEC. However, one found while testing, that the resulting group dynamics were largely counterintuitive — the expected alignment based on sentiment (the groups' titles) did not correlate well with actual voting behavior. Thus, this control variable lacked explanatory power in the context of this study. Still, it remains acknowledged that alternative groupings based on different datasets may yield more predictive potential.

3.6.2 Selected Control Variables

Economic Influence Control: Although some Western European think tanks characterized CEEC MS as being particularly susceptible to China's influence, this narrative overlooks the fact that significant Chinese FDI flows also reached non-CEEC MS. If economic dependence on China *translates into soft power leverage* of the former over the latter, China-aligned voting behavior may not be limited to CEEC countries, but could also have manifested in certain non-CEEC MS with high exposure to Chinese FDI.

Conducting preliminary analyses disclosed that non-CEEC EU MS also — if not even more so — exacerbate China-aligning voting behavior on China-sensitive issues (Table 20 & Table 21). The same base data as for the CEEC group segmentation will be considered here, utilizing the same composite score computed out of FDI/GPD & total FDI (Table 16), focusing not only on the *economic impact* on the respective country, but also *China's strategic aim* and *how big the for the respective country dependency was*.

Applying the composite scoring here, creates the following *high economic gain non-CEEC* subgroup: the UK, Portugal, Malta and Finland. Again, contextualizing these four with qualitative evidence, suggests a reasonable group constellation:

(1) The UK is known for being a quite big attractor of venture capital from China in the EU (Kratz et al., 2024; British Business Bank, 2024). It has been heavily involved with China for decades, as their historical ties to Hong Kong go back centuries. Tourism, real estate and infrastructure projects such as and wind parks are among the contributors to this relationship (Li, 2014; Millard & Kerr, 2024)

(2) Malta's relationship to China is somewhat comparable to the Greek one, as they

firstly, intensely participate in the Golden Passport program[15] (similar to Cyprus') and secondly Chinese firms were heavily involved in Maltese port operations, making Malta an integral part of the BRI (Smits-Jacobs, 2023).

(3) Finland's largest trading partner in Asia historically speaking, has been China, since they collaborate on multiple fronts, such as clean energy, telecommunication and innovations, having an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation in place since 1986 (MFA PRC, 2024). Furthermore, Finland's geostrategic polar position holds supreme importance to the BRI (until the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Finland's NATO accession) (Puranen & Kopra, 2022).

(4) Portugal has, similar to the UK's former administration of Hong Kong, strong historic ties to China, dating back to their former administration of Macau. It was one of the few Southern European[16] enablers of the BRI, signing a Memorandum of Understanding and being involved in ports, energy grids, the insurance- and the media sector. In demarcation to Greece, Portugal does not express itself as an *open enabler,* put rather a *soft supporter* of China on the international stage (Le Corre, 2018; Roberts, 2015).

Coincidentally, all four opposed the highly contentious FDI screening Council proposition, which was enacted to shed light on FDI flows, especially coming from strategic competitor of the EU (Regulation 2019/452). The other hard opposers have been Cypress, Estonia, Greece, Hungary and Ireland, so three out of the four *High economic gain CEEC* group, making Slovenia the only out of the total eight which stayed neutral on this issue (Chan & Meunier, 2022). The final hypothesis for this first control variable shall therefore be:

C1$_A$: "*MEPs express China aligning voting behavior, based on the actual Chinese FDI flows to their country of origin, (here measured through a composite score), rather than their CEEC membership status".*

Bloc voting behavior control: As laid out before, EPG affiliation is a very strong predictor of voting behavior, generally outperforming nationality. Furthermore, following evidence of the last decade, it seems likely that the fringe parties demonstrated more China-aligning voting

---

[15] This refers to the citizenship-by-investment scheme, where some EU MS allow non-EU citizens to obtain citizenship via substantial financial investments like real estate, government bond, national development funds or business investments (Repečkaitė et al., 2024).

[16] Considering Spain and France never officially signed a MoU, Italy did only in 2019, withdrawing again in 2023 with Portugal still in it. Greece signed in August 2018, yet it has been integral 2008 predating the BRI in 2013.

behavior, as they are potentially more susceptible to soft power influence, than established parties, who likely are more institutionally consolidated (PSSI, 2023, pp. 4, 10, 37; Scicluna, 2024; Karásková, 2024). Examples to entertain this hypothetical could be the cases of isolationist parties such as the AfD (see Krah scandal).

Another case could be parties like UKIP, which form an appropriate example here, denying the EU the right to have its own foreign policy (as noticed during the analysis of the authors when reviewing debate contributions). Far left socialist and communist parties might feel rather sympathetic towards the CCP (example: BSW, Podemos), as of their ideological proximity. Anti-system parties (Rassemblement National) might as well be keen to dismiss criticizing autocratic entities, as they are inherently opposed to the democratic system.

Conclusively testing how the distinctly the EPGs' bloc voting behavior compares to the country-based voting behavior does make an interesting case, so that EPG affiliation will be added as the second control variable.

C2$_A$: *"MEPs China alignment in voting behavior is more related to their respective party affiliation, than their CEEC membership status."*

3.6.3 Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis Model

To analyze the impact of certain group memberships (IVs) on voting behavior, one uses a multiple logit model, comparing EPG-based with country-based groups. This unfolds in two iterations, the first one modeled again with the dependent variable of "For" voting on China-sensitive issues and then secondly will consider the dependent variable of "participation" in China-sensitive issues.

While Average Marginal Effects (AMEs) are often suitable for evaluating individual predictors, they proved insufficient in this context due to the nominal nature of group memberships, representing categorical differences rather than continuous slopes.

Predicted Probabilities (PP) are more suitable, as they only provide a ranking of group outcomes indicating how strong group membership influences the likelihood of voting "For" or to "participate". Odds Ratios (ORs) were used to further validate the PP results.

3.7 Analysis of the Authors

The analysis of the diverging voting behavior between CEEC and non-CEEC, if there is any, might prove to be insignificant and similarly the controls just be better predictors for the

insinuated relationship here. Still one other dimension, where one can tackle this issue, is analyzing *who tabled these China-sensitive issues* in the plenary sessions, thus the respective authors.

Obviously, it is significantly more impactful for an MEP to present an issue — as it indicates that the matter concerns them enough to take on the role of author in their subcommittee — than to simply cast a vote on it. Casting a vote is the least impactful political instrument. Suggesting amendments constitutes a form of action, but tabling an issue to the plenary goes beyond that — it means actively driving the agenda and represents the most impactful option available to MEPs.

Pursuing statistical significance here is futile, due to, firstly, case numbers being very low, providing only limiting interpretability even in case of robust significance. Secondly, multiple reasons exist, on why the distribution of (non-) CEEC MEPs might inherently be unequal for the subcommittees that tabled the China-sensitive issues within the last four terms. This is due to structural and institutional factors, such as: (1) late EU accession (2007 for Bulgaria & Romania, 2013 for Croatia), which limited CEEC MEPs' long-term influence; (2) smaller national seat allocations reduced overall CEEC representation in the EP; (3) internal selection processes within EPGs and committee hierarchies favor senior, more established (non-CEEC) MEPs, who benefited from longer institutional experience and stronger political networks.

Resultingly, non-CEEC MEPs have greater access to agenda-setting roles, influencing the distribution of authorship and debate participation in China-sensitive issues. It may still be interesting to observe whether the same findings from the vote data analysis can be confirmed here. This can be done either by comparing raw counts or by normalizing them to account for base group sizes — with the latter offering greater interpretability when comparing actual to expected outcomes, in relation to the voting behavior results.

The concrete analysis will differentiate between two main categories, the authors being the first one and the debaters within the issue's plenary discussion being the second. Those debaters are then further subcategorized by (1) debaters who voiced *support for the issue*, (2) debaters who *heavily opposed* it, and finally (3) *relativizing debate contributors*, who extensively derailed the core issue debate, by using their speaking time for unrelated topics or scrutinizing the resolution without openly opposing it.

The debate contributions have been manually assessed based on qualitative judgment without the use of a formalized coding scheme, as it is only to be understood as a

complementary addition to the voting behavior analysis. Clear *support*, as clear *opposition*, is obviously easy to categorize, making the categorization of *relativizing* contributions easy in the process.

Finally, although this data was collected, one must not ascribe definitive interpretive value to it, in the sense that the three categories cannot be weighed against each other. It might be the case that certain EPGs (or domestic party blocs inside them) foster a culture of debate, while others do not. Concretely: UK's UKIP has been labeled the "laziest party in the EP" (Nardelli, 2015) when it came to RCV attendance, yet one found exceptionally many plenary debate contributions by their MEPs, when analyzing the debate contributions.

4. Analysis

4.1 Surface Analysis: Demographics

Intriguingly the relative distribution of CEEC and non-CEEC MEPs stayed relatively constant over the four terms[17] (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1 - CEEC vs non-CEEC general distribution over EP6-EP9

Term	Group	Total MEPs	MEP share
EP6	CEEC	291	31%
	Non-CEEC	649	69%
EP7	CEEC	253	29.7%
	Non-CEEC	600	70.3%
EP8	CEEC	248	28.9%
	Non-CEEC	610	71.1%
EP9	CEEC	242	27.9%
	Non-CEEC	625	72.1%

Figure 1 - CEEC vs non-CEEC general distribution aggregated average

30.62% (771)
69.38% (1747)

Group
- CEEC
- Non-CEEC

---
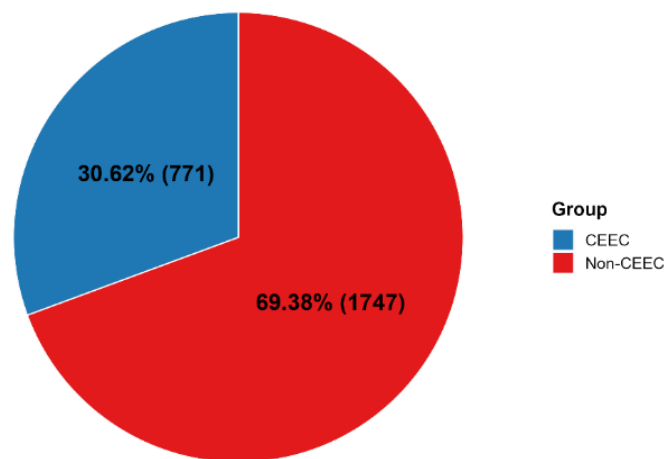
[17] The total exceeds 751 due to counting all individual MEPs rather than just the seats. See Appendix A for further elaboration on the seating distribution over the decades.

Figure 2 - CEEC MEPs by country
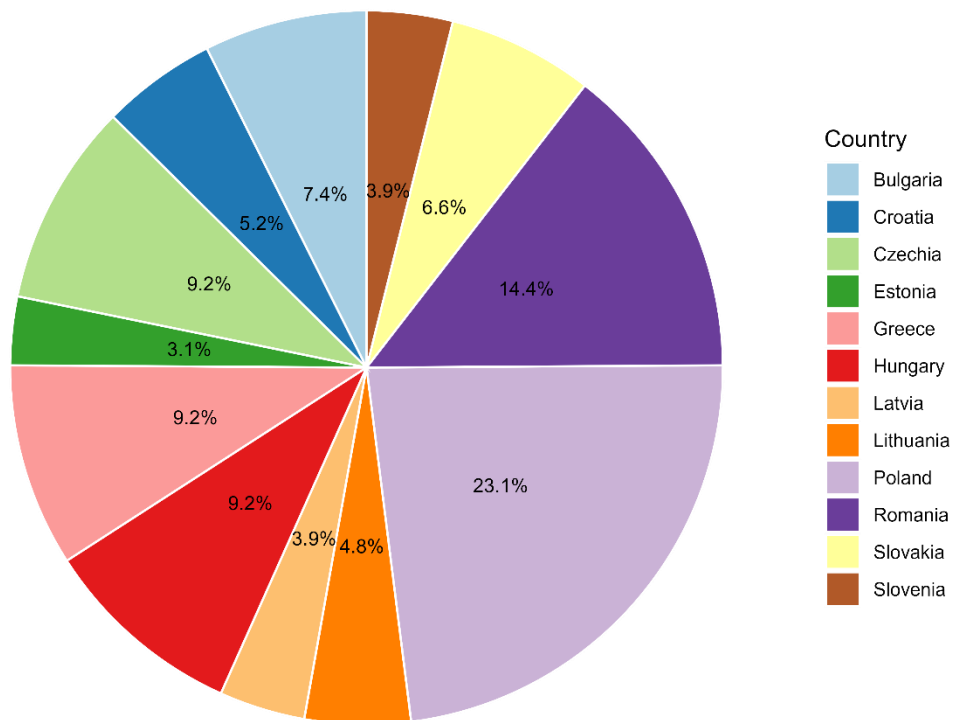
This is only a visual estimation for a first look of the relative distribution. Seats have changed over the years and are forthgoing not important, as only votes will be considered. This visualization considered the most recent distribution of seats after the 2024 EP election. Poland and Romania being comparatively very big with nearly 40% alone (or ~65 % together with Greece, Hungary and Czechia) and the whole smaller half of CEE only being below 8% each, speaks volumes to the variances of sizes in CEE (Figure 2).

4.1.1 General voting behavior for all RCVs EP6-EP9

Table 2 - General voting distribution on all issues by voting option

Voting Code	Voting Option	Total Count	Percentage
1	For	13,958,089	51.3%
2	Against	8,902,331	32.7%
3	Abstain	1,160,276	4.26%
4	Absent	3,194,040	11.7%
Total	Total Count %	27,214,736	100%

MEPs appear to have a rather positive attitude in their occupation in the EP (Table 2), as they voted „For" over 50% of all times, while "Abstain" & "Absent" together only accounted for ~15%. Intriguingly, absence (11,7%) is about 2,5 greater than abstain (4,26%).

4.1.2 Trends of the general voting behavior in RCVs EP6-EP9

Now taking the IV into consideration and again analyzing participation, the following picture emerges for voting behavior on all issues that have been voted on in EP6 to EP9 (Table 3). Although the EU experienced major fluctuations over the time from EP6-EP9 with the departure of the UK in EP9 (2020), Bulgaria and Romania arriving within EP6 (2007), Croatia in EP7 (2013), only marginal changes overall are apparent. Still, one must acknowledge that general participation grew over time within the last 15 years, especially since the latest installment saw a very high active participation rate with only shortly off 100 % participation. Participation rose stronger for non-CEEC throughout. The "For"- ratio paints an interesting picture, rising from EP6 to 7, then falling for both groups (sharper for CEEC) and then rising again towards EP9 (very similar rise for both).

Table 3 - CEEC vs non-CEEC on all issues by voting behavior metrics

Term	Group	Active Votes	Passive Votes	Total Votes	For Ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)	Δ Participation	Δ For Ratio
EP6	CEEC	1,049,828	247,822	1,297,650	58.3	80.9	/	/
	Non-CEEC	2,711,193	750,997	3,462,190	58.9	78.3	/	/
EP7	CEEC	1,277,784	246,740	1,524,524	62.7	83.8	+2.9	+4.4
	Non-CEEC	3,111,666	597,669	3,709,335	62.2	83.9	+5.6	+3.3
EP8	CEEC	1,956,811	296,797	2,253,608	52.8	86.8	+3.0	-9.9
	Non-CEEC	4,734,685	708,213	5,442,898	55.5	87.0	+3.1	-6.7
EP9	CEEC	2,899,918	127,581	3,027,499	56.7	95.8	+9.0	+3.9
	Non-CEEC	6,278,811	218,221	6,497,032	59.1	96.6	+9.6	+3.6

4.1.3 Trend of the general voting behavior in RCVs EP6-EP9 by EPGs

Table 4 presents the distribution of voting participation across the political spectrum. Considering both voting metrics, a clear pattern after a left/right spectrum, is not to be see, yet going only by "For"-ratio, there is a clear decline from left to right. The top two participators are the far-right ID as well as the Greens, while the NI MEPs and the Left make the bottom two participators. Then again does ID have the — and with a big distance — lowest "For"- ratio, while again the Greens have the highest one. The two biggest middle parties, the EPP and S&D, while relatively close in their participation rate, show a big gap of 10% when it comes to "For" ratio.

Table 4- EPGs on all issues by voting behavior metrics

EPG	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	For Ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
Greens/EFA	1,324,274	525,337	71,951	184,319	2,105,881	68.92	91.25
S&D	3,750,308	1,784,928	142,451	757,534	6,435,221	66.05	88.23
The Left	827,834	381,017	115,517	196,103	1,520,471	62.51	87.10
Renew	1,749,239	1,074,803	57,641	335,605	3,217,288	60.70	89.57
EPP	4,052,768	2,966,527	135,252	965,582	8,120,129	56.65	88.11
NI	491,594	385,161	151,307	191,211	1,219,273	47.82	84.32
ECR	753,884	827,232	177,214	207,065	1,965,395	42.88	89.46
ID	447,972	491,652	185,447	65,557	1,190,628	39.82	94.49

4.2 First Level Analysis: Voting Behavior in China-sensitive Issues
4.2.1 The Importance of China-sensitive Issues

 A first comparison shall demonstrate how interesting the voting engagement on China-sensitive issues is, in relation to *all issues in the dataset* that have been voted on in the four EP terms (Table 5). Firstly, the participation rate was lower (~15% less) as well was the "For"-ratio higher (~16-19% more) for all groups in China-sensitive issues, compared to all issues.

On a second level, one can observe, that CEEC voted marginally more "For" than non-CEEC (~1% difference) and participated marginally less (~0,2% difference) in China-sensitive

issues. Thirdly, comparing their voting metrics gaps for all issues, CEEC here had a ~2% lesser "For"-ratio, but also a ~0,5% higher participation.

Table 5- CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues vs all issues

Issue Type	Group	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	"For"-Ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
China-sensitive	CEEC	4,935	1,147	436	2,497	9,015	75.71	72.30
All Issues	CEEC	4,089,144	2,759,600	335,597	918,940	8,103,281	56.92	88.66
China-sensitive	Non-CEEC	11,390	2,621	1,185	5,743	20,939	74.95	72.57
All Issues	Non-CEEC	9,868,945	6,142,731	824,679	2,275,100	19,111,455	58.62	88.10
China-sensitive	EU	16,325	3,768	1,621	8,240	29,954	75.18	72.49
All Issues	EU	13,958,089	8,902,331	1,160,276	3,194,040	27,214,736	58.11	88.26

4.2.2 CEEC vs. non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues

Table 6 shows now the vote distribution on China-sensitive issues for CEEC vs non-CEEC for EP7-EP9 combined.

Table 6 - CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues for EP7-EP9

Term	Group	"For" Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	"For"-Ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
EP6	CEEC	723	67	97	607	1,494	81.51	59.37
	Non-CEEC	1,694	259	241	1,714	3,908	77.21	56.14
EP7–EP9	CEEC	9,696	2,362	944	4,029	17,031	74.57	76.34
	Non-CEEC	4,212	1,080	339	1,890	7,521	74.80	74.87

Computing a first logit model (M1) test whether these marginally differences in China-sensitive issue voting behavior matter, result in no significance (p>0,05), for both the "For"-ratio and the participation rate, indicating no statistically significant difference between the CEEC and the non-CEEC group.

Adding some nuance with a second logit model (M2) and only including EP7-EP9, as the alleged Chinese influence only started in 2012 (EP6: 2004-2009), gives again no significance for "For" voting (p=0.176), but robust significance for the participation (p=0.013). CEEC MEPS had 7,7 % lower odds to participate in China-sensitive issue votes in EP7-EP9.

Table 7 - Logistic Regression Models – CEEC vs non-CEEC on Voting & Participation (EP6–9 vs EP7–9)

	M1 (EP6 – EP9)		M2 (EP7 – EP9)	
	DV: "For" Voting	DV: Participation	DV: "For" Voting	DV: Participation
CEEC Group	0.014	-0.014	-0.038	-0.080
	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.032)
Observations	29954	29954	24552	24552
Robust SE (CEEC Group)	0.025	0.028	0.028	0.032
p-value (Robust)	0.581	0.630	0.176	0.013***

Note: . p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Note: HC0 robust standard errors were applied to account for potential heteroskedasticity

4.2.3 Rice and Agreement Index for CEEC vs. non-CEEC for China-sensitive issues

The Rice Index (Table 8) revealing the ingroup-divisiveness, shows CEEC throughout being marginally lower (more divisive), apart from EP6[18], in which the difference between them was, comparatively very big. Both groups' ingroup-cohesion dropped strongly from EP6 to EP7, then peaked at EP8 with 50,42 for CEEC and 52,84 for non-CEEC (value closest to 100) and again declined slightly towards EP9.

The agreement index shows that division between the two groups was highest in EP6, then fell to EP7, when it rose again a little to EP8 and had its greatest descent towards EP9 (~ 2x times greater than the other changes).

Table 8 - CEEC vs non-CEEC after Rice and Agreement Index for EP6-EP9

Term	Rice Index: CEEC	Rice Index: Non-CEEC	Agreement Index	Δ in Agreement Index
EP6	43.91	36.72	0.68	/
EP7	21.30	21.54	0.65	-0.03
EP8	50.42	52.84	0.66	0.01
EP9	46.86	49.29	0.60	-0.06
All Terms (EP7–EP9)	41.64	43.06	0.62	0.02

---

[18] For this and many subsequent analyses, EP7-9 data will be used, as EP6 remained largely unaffected by China's expanding influence (except for Greece). EP6 will be used as a point of reference in temporal visualizations.

4.2.4 EU on China-sensitive issues for "For"-ratio and participation over all terms

As the differences between the two groups appear subliminal, a new comparison is applied (Table 9). Considering the EU's voting behavior on China-sensitive issues, one finds that from EP6 to EP7, the "For"-ratio did go down (~2%), up again from EP7 to EP8 (~1%) and finally sharply down again to EP9 (~3.5%).

Participation fell distinctly from EP6 to EP7 (~19%), rose sharply from EP7 to EP8 (~45%) and grew slightly towards EP9 (~6%). Conclusively, the "For"-ratio has sunken, especially from EP8 to EP9, while participation rose strongly from EP7 to EP8, after its massive decline from EP 6 to EP7.

Table 9 - EU vs CEEC vs non-CEEC on China sensitive issues from EP6 to EP9

Term	Group	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	"For"-Ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
	CEEC	723	67	97	607	1,494	81.51	59.37
EP6	Non-CEEC	1,694	259	241	1,714	3,908	77.21	56.14
	EU	2,417	326	338	2,321	5,402	78.45	57.03
	CEEC	503	137	23	1,055	1,718	75.87	38.59
EP7	Non-CEEC	1,217	306	64	2,643	4,230	76.69	37.52
	EU	1,720	443	87	3,698	5,948	76.44	37.83
	CEEC	845	180	74	220	1,319	76.89	83.32
EP8	Non-CEEC	2,057	373	232	525	3,187	77.27	83.53
	EU	2,902	553	306	745	4,506	77.16	83.47
	CEEC	2,864	763	242	615	4,484	74.02	86.28
EP9	Non-CEEC	6,422	1,683	648	861	9,614	73.37	91.04
	EU	9,286	2,446	890	1,476	14,098	73.57	89.53

4.2.5 CEEC vs. non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues by both metrics over all terms

All the singular terms may be tested for conclusive differences in China-sensitive voting behavior between the two groups. The analysis shows in Table 9, "For"-ratio for EP6 and participation rate in EP9 having the strongest visibly divisions (~4,5% difference for both), as well does participation rate for EP6 shows a ~3% difference, serving as a leading indicator for their robust significance (Table 10). Although, the difference in "For"-voting in EP9 between them, is extreme subliminal (0,2%), it still produces robust significance.

Table 10 - CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues over the terms EP6-EP9

EP Term	Dependent Variable	Odds Ratio (Sig.)	Robust SE	Z value	p-value	N
EP6	Voting 'For'	1.23 ***	0.061	3.33	0.001	5402
EP6	Participation	1.14 *	0.062	2.14	0.032	
EP7	Voting 'For'	1.02	0.063	0.39	0.696	5948
EP7	Participation	1.05	0.059	0.77	0.439	
EP8	Voting 'For'	0.98	0.068	-0.31	0.760	7693
EP8	Participation	0.99	0.088	-0.17	0.865	
EP9	Voting 'For'	0.88 ***	0.038	-3.41	0.001	14098
EP9	Participation	0.62 ***	0.056	-8.54	0.000	

Note:* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Note: All models passed Chi² deviance tests ($p < 0.05$) for model fit, and results are based on robust standard errors (HC0).

4.3 Second Level Analysis: Group segmentations

4.3.1 Countries ranked by "For" ratio and participation rate in China-sensitive issues

Table 20 & Table 21 show all EU MS ranked by "For"-ratio in Table 20 and secondly in Table 21 by participation rate, showing how often they chose to support the China-sensitive (critical) resolutions and how often evasion was chosen. Only the votes from EP7 to EP9 are considered, then in the visualization EP6 will be displayed as well to emphasize the changes in voting be-havior.

This part reveals that the *very China-aligning* and the *rather China-critical* countries within voting behavior on China-sensitive issues, show significance (with only varying levels), while the countries *in the middle field mostly stay* insignificant.

Regarding outliers that could indicate a regional rift, no clear picture emerges here as two out of the five countries in the top ranking by "For"-ratio are CEEC, as well are there three out of five CEEC countries in the top ranking by most participation. The bottom five shows the exact same mixed picture, three out five CEEC MS are under the bottom five by "For"-ratio and two out of five CEEC MS are in the bottom five by participation rate.

The "For"-ratio only really declines faster in the lower half and then starkly falls for the last two: Cyprus and Greece. For the participation rate, apart from extreme outlier Croatia which exhibits strong participation, the decline is a little faster in the second half, again with a

sharp fall for the bottom two: Hungary and the UK. Hungary and Greece are the only ones, who rank bottom five going by both metrics.

4.3.1.1 Countries ranked by both voting behavior metrics in China-sensitive issues by term

Though these graphs (Figure 8 & Figure 9) clearly highlight certain outliers, it is important to emphasize that the statistical power—and thus the meaningful interpretability of these patterns—is severely limited due to the extremely small Ns, hindering strong deterministic conclusions. Still, describing the datapoints here does confirm some findings from the aggregated country data (Table 20 & Table 21).

"For"-ratio: France, Cyprus, Czechia and Portugal, that already ranked near the bottom in the aggregated data, have consistently been below the average over the whole time. Hungary and Greece, although located in the bottom five in both "For"- ratio and participation rate in the aggregated data, were only exceptionally low in the EP8 and EP9. Lithuania shows somewhat of a reverse development of that, a lower "For"-ratio for EP6 and EP7 and a higher one for EP8 and EP9. Poland started with a high "For"-ratio, which declined over EP7 to EP8, and rose again towards EP9.

As for extremely pronounced outliers, Cyprus for EP6 to EP7 (below average), the UK, the Netherlands could be named in EP7. Lithuania is below average in EP7 and EP8 and Greece, Malta and Estonia are above it. For EP8 and EP9, Greece, France and Cypress are below average. In EP9 Greece, Cypress and Hungary are below, and the UK above average. Notably, the UK only had voted on one last China-sensitive issue before they left the EP in early 2020.

As for the participation rate graph, Italy, Greece, Hungary and the UK show consistently low participation. Malta was overall low but peaked in EP8, while Croatia was high in EP7 and EP8 and then declined slightly towards EP9 (Croatia only joined in the last year of EP7). Outliers include Italy (below average) in EP6; Greece (below average) and Croatia (above average) in EP7; Ireland, Cyprus, and Hungary (below average) and Malta and Hungary (above average) in EP8; and Hungary and the UK (below average) in EP9.

4.3.2 Voting behavior-related group segmentation

Judging by the cross-country comparison it is apparently only suboptimal to build larger subgroups on diverging voting behavior. By "For"-ratio, Cyprus and Greece and by participation rate the UK and Hungary are the extreme (negative) outliers (Table 20 & Table 21). Combining both metrics only leaves Greece and Hungary, thus going forward, Greece-Hungary as a *small,*

hyper-China-aligning group will be carried on towards the multivariate regression.

This is due to two logical reasons: Firstly, the bottom two ranked ones in both voting metrics diverge so significantly from the average that they overshadow other candidates — the jump from these two is immense compared to others. Secondly, some countries diverge in only one voting behavior metric but not the other — for instance, the UK ranks lowest in participation rate but only falls into the lower middle field in the "For"-ratio. Even ascribing participation only, a complementary, lower status does not change this.

4.3.2.1 Greece-Hungary subgroup vs. CEEC and non-CEEC

Comparing the Greece-Hungary group to the voting behavior of CEEC and non-CEEC aggregated over the whole time (Table 22 & Table 23), one finds, that they indeed do diverge distinctly. They are robustly significantly distinct from CEEC on China-sensitive issue in all three terms and the aggregated terms EP7-EP9 on both voting metrics, apart from "For"-voting in EP7.

The charts (Figure 3 & Figure 4), shows that in EP6 and EP7, Greece-Hungary's "For"-ratio is higher than non-CEEC's, and only in EP8 and EP9 strongly fell below it. Greece-Hungary's participation rate shows a significant difference, as it is consistently far below CEEC and non-CEEC.

Figure 3 - Greece-Hungary vs CEEC and non-CEEC by "For"-ratio
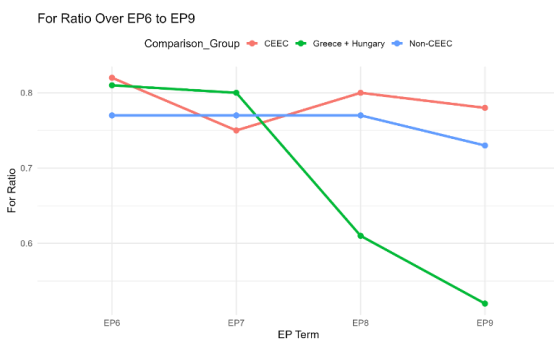
Figure 4 - - Greece-Hungary vs CEEC and non-CEEC by participation rate
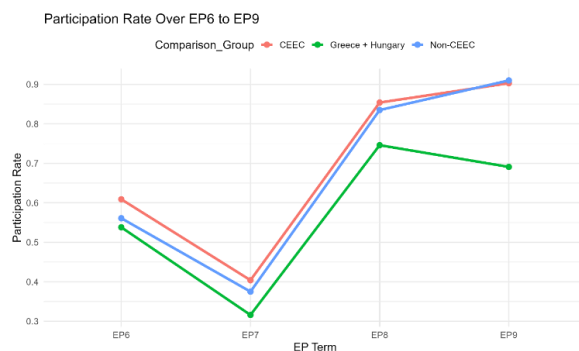
4.3.3 Dimension-related segmented groups

Table 15 shows the distinction of the different dimensions that have been introduced in chapter 3.5.2 and are now deployed within this comparison. Judging from the contingency table there are only negligible differences between the two groups' voting behaviors within the

three dimensions. Only the difference regarding the *geopolitics* China-sensitive issues, shows robust significance for participation rate (p<0,01) (Table 24 & Table 25).

4.3.3.1 Dimension-related segmented groups by term

According to Figure 5, the "For"-ratio differences of the *economics* dimension, appear negligible. For *geopolitics*, CEEC shows a higher "For"-ratio throughout, up until EP9 where it ends at the exact same spot as non-CEEC. Within the *value-based* issues, CEEC's voting behavior diverges sharply from EP7 ongoing, being far below non-CEEC in EP8 and then finishing slightly above them in EP9.

The participation rate patterns for *economics* seems similarly to the "For"-ratio rather trivial (Figure 6). Within the *geopolitics* dimension, both experience a moderate increase over the terms, with non-CEEC finishing above its counterpart in EP9. *Value-based* shows an extreme rise in both groups between EP7 and EP8, both almost quadrupling their value and then again, a moderate rise from EP8 towards EP9.

Conclusively, as both voting behaviors do not reveal scenarios of strongly dissenting (China-aligning or not -aligning) groups, they will be disregarded for coming analyses.

Figure 5 - CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues by dimension-segmented groups by "For"-ratio
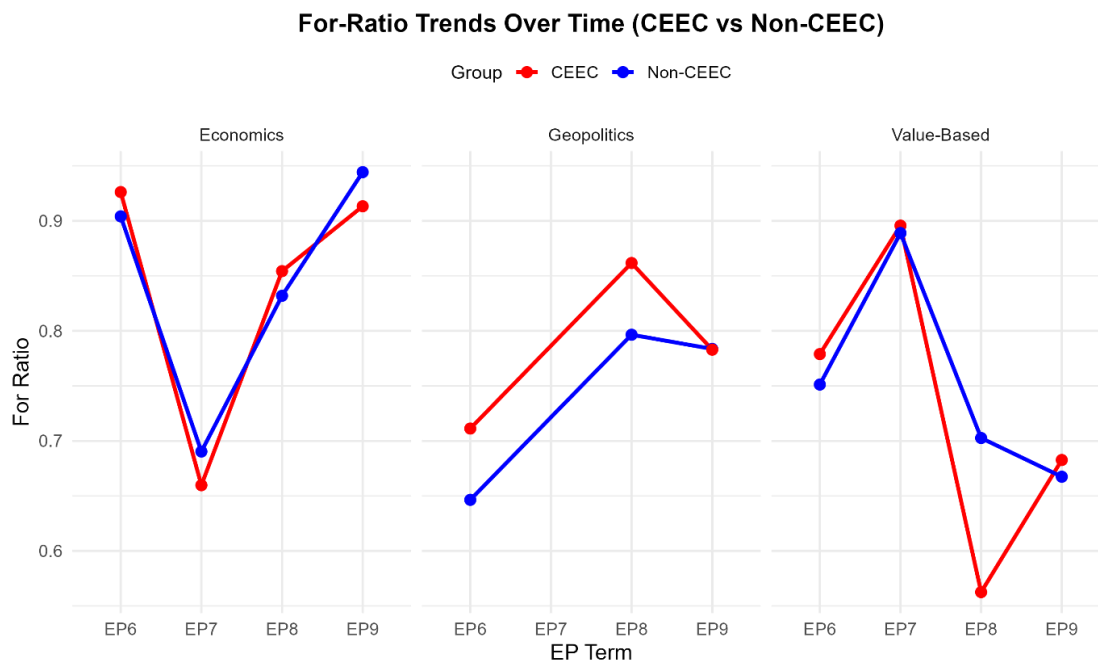
Figure 6 - CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues by dimension-segmented groups by participation rate
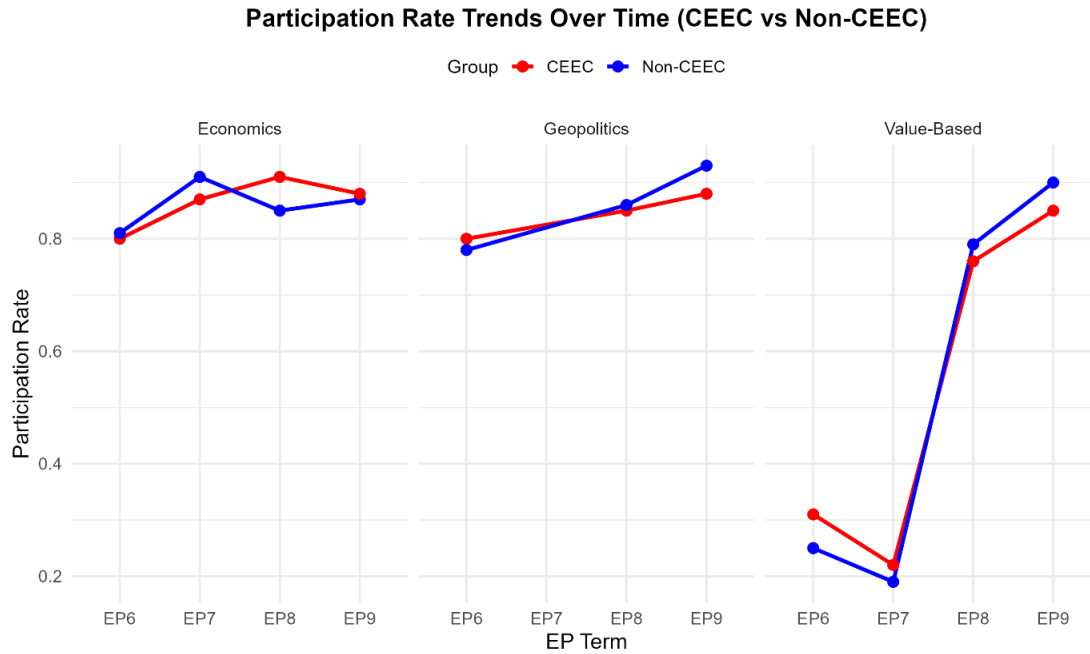
4.3.4 Economical involvement - segmented groups

Table 11 displays the economic involvement groups, showing that the participation rate and the "For"-ratio strongly diverge for the *High- and the low economic gain* groups to the CEEC group (~3% differences each). The groups from *High-* to *Low economic gain* consist of: (1) Poland, Hungary, Greece, Slovenia, (2) Czechia, Romania, Estonia, Slovakia and (3) Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Croatia.

All *economic gain groups* show significant differences to CEEC for both metrics (Table 12). Unlike the dimension-based or CEEC vs. non-CEEC models, the economic involvement models involve smaller, country-specific clusters and greater variance imbalance. To address this, Clustered SEs were applied to correct for intra-country correlation, and HC3 was used for a more conservative heteroskedasticity-robust estimation. Here mixed robustness is found for all economic gain groups, as they were HC3 robust, but not robust by Clustered SEs.

Table 11 - CEEC vs non-CEEC by economic involvement segmented groups

Group	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	"For"-ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
CEEC	4,212	1,080	339	1,890	7,521	74.80	74.87
Non-CEEC	9,696	2,362	944	4,029	17,031	74.57	76.34
High economic gain CEEC	1,793	510	172	979	3,454	72.44	71.66
Average economic gain CEEC	1,472	357	113	569	2,511	75.80	77.34
Low economic gain CEEC	947	213	54	342	1,556	78.01	78.02

Table 12 - CEEC vs non-CEEC by economic involvement segmented groups: Logistic Regression

Group	Dependent Variable	Coefficient	SE	z	p	Sig	N
High economic gain CEEC	"For" Voting	-0.307	0.047	-6.58	<0.001	***	7521
	Participation	-0.315	0.053	-5.91	<0.001	***	
Average economic gain CEEC	"For" Voting	0.160	0.049	3.24	0.00121	**	7521
	Participation	0.201	0.057	3.49	<0.001	***	
Low economic gain CEEC	"For" Voting	0.251	0.058	4.33	<0.001	***	7521
	Participation	0.218	0.068	3.21	0.00132	**	

Note: $p < 0.1$ '.', $p < 0.05$ '*', $p < 0.01$ '**', $p < 0.001$ '***'

Note: HC3 robust standard errors were additionally applied as conservative checks.

4.3.4.1 Economical involvement - segmented groups by term

Now looking into the specific temporal distribution of the "For"-ratio (Figure 10), the findings suggest that similarly to the aggregated data, only *average economic gain* is relatively close to (non-) CEEC. *High economic gain* shows a sharp decline till EP8, but a constant line to EP9, finishing below the other two. *Low economic gain* shows erratic behavior, falling sharply from EP6 to EP7, then rising sharply from EP7 to EP8, falling again and finishing above the other four with a wide gap.

For the participation rates there are only subtle differences. *High economic gain* finishes only in EP9 distinctly below the others, showing the least participation. *Low economic gain* finishes above the others together with non-CEEC, with the highest participation (Figure 11).

4.4 Third Level Analysis: Control Variables

4.4.1 Multiple LRM: Economic Weight Control and EPGs

A multiple logit model to face-off the China-aligning CEEC (non-CEEC) countries and their sub-groups against other potential predictors will be produced, by firstly isolating the strongest subgroup candidates. From the earlier stage, only the subgroups that have been modeled after voting behavior and economic involvement will be considered, as they proved to have the highest predictability for the DV.

Hence, a multivariate logistic regression is conducted with the following IVs: (1) CEEC, (2) Greece-Hungary (most China-aligning subgroup after voting behavior), (3) *High economic gain CEEC*: Poland, Greece, Hungary, Slovenia, (4) *High economic gain non-CEEC*: Finland, Malta, UK, Portugal, and (5) the EPGs: EPP, ECR, S&D, Greens/EFA, ID, NI, Renew and The Left[19].

Two DVs are inserted in two separate models: Model 1 with Voting "For" (1) vs. all other active voting options ("Against" and "Abstain" = 0), with "Absent" votes excluded; and Model: 2 with "Participation" (1) vs. "non-participation" (0), where participation includes any active vote ("For", "Against," or "Abstain").

4.4.1.1 Multiple LRM: Economic weight control and EPGs: contingency table

Table 26 shows the distribution of China-sensitive issues over the EP terms 7-9 for the chosen IVs. Immediately apparent is Greece-Hungary being distinctly below the other country-based groups in both voting metrics. Yet some of the EPGs, are even below some of the country-based groups (e.g. The Left has half the "For"-ratio of CEEC). A concrete left right divide is not visible: The Left has the lowest "For"-ratio overall (~35%), while one of the other left-wing parties: The Greens/EFA have the highest (~88%). Then again, does the far-right ID have the highest participation rate overall, but at the same time one of the lowest "For"-ratios.

4.4.1.2 Multiple LRM: Economic Weight Control and EPGs by term

For "For"-ratio one could differentiate between the ones which are consistently above 62,5%, thereby and the ones below this threshold (Figure 12). Starting from top to bottom, Greens/EFA and S&D have very similar paths, always being above (non-) CEEC (and most other EPGs). Then again, EPP, ECR and Renew could be grouped in one bloc, being quite similar in their trajectory as well and overtaking (non-) CEEC from EP7 ongoing — EPP & Renew being especially close to each other.

---

[19] See Appendix A for further information on the EPG operationalizations and their chosen reference category.

Regarding the EPGs below the 62,5% threshold, a third bloc emerges, as the NIs and the Left have a somewhat parallel trajectory from EP7 ongoing, even though the gap between them as of EP8 is greater than the gaps inside the other *EPG bloc pairs*. The Left hit the lowest point overall in EP7 and EP9. The most erratic behavior is exhibited by the ID group, with a sharp rise from EP6 to EP7, a sharp fall from EP7 to EP8 (lowest point overall) and then again, a sharp rise from EP8 to EP9.

Considering the country-based groups, Greece-Hungary shows the strongest diverge from all the other country-based groups from EP7 onwards.

The participation chart is less telling than the "For"-ratio one. Until EP8, all EPG curves are relatively close. Outstanding is Greece-Hungary's high absenteeism, as they are even below NI in EP7 to EP9. Just above them finishes *high economic gain CEEC*'s curve in EP9 (Figure 13).

4.4.1.3 Multiple Log Regression: Economic Weight Control & EPG's for "For"- voting

As the goal is to determine the greatest predictor for the DV across all groups, a ranking by impact is presented, orientated after the PP value (validated by ORs), with 1000 bootstrapping iterations applied for robustness checking. EP6 (2004-2009) is excluded in this comparison, and EPP serves as a reference group or baseline, represented as the zero point.

All groups but *High economic gain non-CEEC* and Renew show robust significance (Table 13). Looking at the significant IVs, Table 27 shows the predicted probabilities which rank by likelihood of voting "For" as follows: Greens/EFA (88%), S&D (85,2%) and *high economic gain CEEC* (84,9%) show the highest PP values here, while the NI (52,5%), ID (43,8%) and the Left (36,4%) are at the bottom, the last two having predicted likelihoods under 50%, thus they are more likely to vote *abstain* or *absent*. The ORs appear to support the top and bottom variables strengths here. So, the apparent bloc voting behavior of the Greens and S&D bloc at the top, and the Left, ID and NI bloc at the bottom, appears to be still very relevant here.

Table 13 - CEEC x country-based groups x EPGs by "For"-voting: Regression table

Variable	Estimate	Std Error	Z value	P value	Significance	N
(Intercept)	1.4646	0.0403	36.3177	0.0000	***	/
CEEC	-0.1603	0.0514	-3.1160	0.0018	**	7426
Greece-Hungary	-0.5975	0.1052	-5.6817	0.0000	***	1428
High economic gain CEEC	0.2380	0.0815	2.9217	0.0035	**	3400
High economic gain non CEEC	0.0499	0.0708	0.7047	0.4810		2288
ECR	-0.2305	0.0704	-3.2744	0.0011	**	2177
Greens/EFA	0.5254	0.0826	6.3638	0.0000	***	2151
ID	-1.7154	0.0672	-25.5278	0.0000	***	1533
NI	-1.3657	0.0809	-16.8917	0.0000	***	1212
Renew	-0.0111	0.0620	-0.1785	0.8583		3122
S&D	0.2843	0.0567	5.0180	0.0000	***	5507
The Left	-2.0226	0.0758	-26.6936	0.0000	***	1341

Note: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1

4.4.1.4 Multiple Log Regression: Economic Weight Control & EPGs for participation

For participation it looks slightly different, as all but CEEC, NI and S&D are robustly significant (Table 14). As for the significant ones, Table 28 shows now ID being associated with the strongest likelihood of participating overall (~88,9%), followed by the Greens (81,9%) as second, and Renew (80,5%) and Left (80%) just behind. The least predicted probability for participation comes from Greece-Hungary with 50,4%. *High economic gain non-CEEC* is also quite low, with only 64,2%, while its counterpart *high economic gain CEEC* is at 72,5% likelihood of participating. Again, ORs also give indication to support these results. Conclusively for both DVs' models, the ranking by predicted probabilities does look quite similar to what the respective raw data count wound indicates.

Table 14 - CEEC x country-based groups x EPGs by participation rate: Regression table

Variable	Estimate	Std Error	Z value	P value	Significance	N
(Intercept)	1.0475	0.0311	33.6866	0.0000	***	/
CEEC	0.0682	0.0439	1.5525	0.1205		7426
Greece-Hungary	-0.8822	0.0834	-10.5826	0.0000	***	1428
High economic gain CEEC	0.1627	0.0702	2.3180	0.0204	*	3400
High economic gain non CEEC	-0.4614	0.0503	-9.1763	0.0000	***	2288
ECR	0.2551	0.0609	4.1879	0.0000	***	2177
Greens/EFA	0.4615	0.0625	7.3838	0.0000	***	2151
ID	1.0314	0.0864	11.9430	0.0000	***	1533
NI	-0.0489	0.0704	-0.6951	0.4870		1212
Renew	0.3698	0.0528	6.9972	0.0000	***	3122
S&D	0.0463	0.0414	1.1187	0.2632		5507
The Left	0.3362	0.0718	4.6801	0.0000	***	1341

Note: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1

4.6 Analysis of the Authors

Examining the contingency table, (Table 29) reveals 1549 total authors and 1138 debaters for all terms, while one counts 1457 authors (825 non-CEEC, 632 CEEC), 1019 debaters with 919 supporting, 34 relativizing, 66 opposing when isolating to EP7-EP9 (Table 30). On average per China-sensitive issue, there have been ~20 debaters in EP6, ~36 in EP7, ~ 65 in EP8, ~16 in EP9, while counting by *issue dimension*, there were ~72 debaters on *economics*, ~34 on *geopolitics* and ~ 11 on *value-based* related issues.

A normalization will be conducted by putting the respective sub-populations' actual counts in perspective with an expected count, a *Proportional Count Index (PCI)* which adjusts for each group's seat share in the EP.

Projecting the authorship over the four terms shows that after EP6, CEEC and non-CEEC switched places and the former started (over-) outperforming the latter (Figure 14). Analyzing the summarized data from EP7-EP9 (as well as the temporal development), it becomes clear that apart from *relativizing* and *opposing* debate contributions, CEEC is outperforming non-

CEEC in authorship and *supporting* debate contributions. It had fewer *opposing* contributions, but interestingly more *relativizing* ones than non-CEEC (Figure 15 & Figure 16).

Moving on to the EPGs, which are also normalized in relation to their seat size, it shows that the authorship only rose relevantly for ECR, EPP & Renew[20] (Figure 17). Overlooking the whole EP7-EP9 era, S&D and Renew massively overperformed, Greens and EPP overperformed only shortly, while ECR and especially ID as well as the Left starkly underperformed (Figure 18). For the debates, EPP, Renew and Greens did not have any opposing debate contributions. S&D showed strong overperformance for *supporting* contributions. S&D and the Left were strongly overperforming in *relativizing* contributions, the Left and ID overperformed heavily for *opposing* debate contributions (Figure 19).

Glancing over the three country-based groups (Figure 20), whose PCI orientated itself after the average expected authors and debate contributions of their share of seats in the EP, Greece-Hungary exposed massive underperformance in authorship over the four terms.

Parallelly did both *high economic gain* groups stay very close to each other in their trajectory till EP8 (moderately underperforming) and only heavily diverge from there on out. *High economic gain non-CEEC* starkly underperformed in authorship and its trendline ended close to Greece-Hungary's, while *high economic gain CEEC* nearly reached its expected performance in EP9. This is the opposite development of how the two groups behaved in the voting data for the same time frame (Figure 12 & Figure 13), where *high economic gain CEEC* showed more alignment and more evasion as its counterpart.

Observing the overall EP7-EP9 data (Figure 21), gives away the strongest overperformances by *high economic gain non-CEEC* for *opposing* and Greece-Hungary for *relativizing* debate contributions. All three underperformed in authorship, as *high economic gain CEEC* nearly performed as expected, *high economic gain non-CEEC* underperformed moderately, and Greece-Hungary underperformed strongly.

The debate trends illustrate a more nuanced picture (Figure 22). Going by *supporting* contributions, all three are not relevantly different. Meanwhile *relativizing* debate contributions exhibit a strong spike for Greece-Hungary in EP8, a somewhat constant decline from over- to underperformance for *high economic gain non-CEEC* and a relatively stable, slight underperformance, for *high economic gain CEEC*. *High economic gain CEEC's* trajectory looks similar

---

[20] NIs are added for complementary reasons, but they cannot really be compared fairly to the EPGs, as EPGs have far more institutionalized power within subcommittees, which influences authorship (Powers, 2024).

for *opposing* debate contributions, Greece-Hungary shows the same spike in EP8 as for *relativizing,* and *high economic gain non-CEEC* shows the highest performance for EP7-EP9.

5. Findings

5.1 Surface Analysis: Demographics

As for the general distribution of MEPs, the relatively strong decline in CEEC MEPs, although explainable (Appendix A: Note 20), seems intriguing (Table 1).

Supporting evidence for laying the focus on China-sensitive issues within EP voting, is the finding from Table 5, showing China-sensitive issues apparently enjoying much more salience compared to the overall issues that have been voted on in the EP. Even more nuanced, while China sensitive issues were *more relevant* for CEEC in the sense that they voted "For" more often (China-critical stance) as in all issues that have been voted on, at the same time they also *rarer chose taking a clear stance* (participation) in China-sensitive issues, as they did in all issues (~15% difference in both scenarios). Though non-CEEC showed the same behavior, the discrepancy between China-sensitive issues and all issues was slightly less pronounced for them.

This does not appear to be an issue of general attendance but rather a specific one as it is narrowed down to these very specific votes. Considering the theory that absenteeism is — especially, by "weak states" — *used when facing conflict of interest* or geopolitically sensitive issues, the lower participation could be logically consistent and theoretically grounded (Morse & Coggins, 2024). Table 4, is initially indicative of the interesting functioning of the fringe parties, as ID has an extreme high attendance but also an extreme low "For"-ratio, while the Left has a participation rate almost as low as the non-attached MEPs, but a higher "For"-ratio than some establishment centrist parties such as EPP or Renew.

5.2 First Level Analysis: Voting Behavior in the China-sensitive Issues

Finding robust significance for a difference in participation between the CEEC and non-CEEC groups, after limiting the observation data to EP7-EP9, thus excluding the pre-Xi/BRI/CEEC era, does give initial support to investigate further (Table 7).

Adding the Rice and Agreement Indices here even allowed a little more in-depth consideration (Table 8), as apart from EP6, the decline of the Agreement Index value could be indicative of China-sensitive issues being more of a divider between the two groups in the latter stages of the Chinese engagement in CEEC. Judging by the Rice Index, apparently CEEC

was internally less cohesive on China-sensitive issues than was non-CEEC, indicating here firstly that CEEC might *not be that homogenous as a group*.

Projecting CEEC's & non-CEEC's voting behavior on a temporal axis bolsters the Agreement and Rice indices' observations but seemingly weakens the second hypothesis. There is only significance in 4 out of the 8 logit models (Table 10), namely both voting metrics for EP6 and EP9, as well was only significance for the participation rate in the overall CEEC vs non-CEEC face-off (Table 7), showing that *no definitive statistically significant pattern* of growing China-friendliness could be proven. Also, considering that participation is only seen as complementary to "For"-voting, and that two out of the four significant regressions were in EP6 — hence before Chinese engagement — the only tenable difference could be found in EP9, which is on its own an interesting finding.

Still, talking about general EU-wide effects (Table 9), the Chinese engagement did not go unnoticed, as participation in China-sensitive issues plummeted starkly from EP6 to EP7 and then rose up just as strongly till EP8. This could be read as being indicative of an initial hesitance to choose a clear stance regarding China in the early 2010s in stark contrast to the end of the decade, when the geopolitical implications of Xi's new foreign policy began to erode China's initial friendly image, fostered by the "Peaceful Rise" doctrine. "For"-ratio only relevantly declined towards EP9, reinforcing the apparent importance of EP9 here. Conclusively though, this *general Chinese influence* did apparently not discriminate between CEEC and non-CEEC.

5.3 Second Level Analysis: Cross-Country Comparison

Isolating China-alignment and evasion for singular EU MS (Table 20 & Table 21), shows Greece and Hungary being the least participants, as well as least in "For"-ratio, fitting to the congruent picture that has emerged through many instances, pointing these two out as the closest China-aligning EU MS by far[21]. Finding approximately the same number of CEEC and non-CEEC MS in the top and bottom five for both voting metrics, speaks for a *broad variance in both groups*.

Looking at cases that demonstrate CEEC's apparent heterogeneity, one example could be Croatia, which is anything but one of China's greatest critics, ranking in the lower half of the "For"-ratio, yet holding the top spot in participation. Croatia's case is perhaps explainable by

---

[21] Here is referred to multiple instances in which Greece and or Hungary directly hindered a coherent EU policy stance towards China (Seaman et al., 2015; Smith, 2017; Szijjártó, 2016; Emmott, 2016; Elmer, 2018; Chalmers & Emmott, 2021; Brunnstrom & Emmott, 2021; Chan & Meunier, 2022).

its recent addition to the EP, thus their heightened interest in participating in the parliamentary process. Similarly, Poland has been at times deeply engaged with China, yet they are positioned in the upper third by both metrics. Perhaps Poland regards an economic entanglement and a critical stance on these China-sensitive issues not as being mutually exclusive. The traditionally known human rights advocates, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, are surprisingly found in the lower halves or even thirds by both metrics[22].

Observing the *EU's big three* (pre- and post- Brexit), showed France to be very low by "For"-ratio, while the UK was last by participation as well as in the lower third by "For"-ratio. Italy was bottom four by participation, but also did it have a high "For"-ratio, while Germany, as the only one out of the three, placed itself in the middle for both metrics.

Surprisingly within the "For"-ratio, Slovenia placed first, Finland second and Poland fifth, although all three have been heavily economically involved with China, being part of the *high economic gain* groups. (Going by participation, Slovenia placed sixth, Poland ninth and Finland on place 20). The UK and Malta rank low after both metrics, as they are also both part of the *high economic gain* group.

Thus, from the *high economic gain CEEC* group, two out five placed counterintuitively to what their actual economical entanglement with China would have suggested (Slovenia, Poland), while for the *high economic gain non-CEEC* group, there is one out of four showing this behavior (Finland). This indicates that China-aligning voting behavior and (high) economic involvement with China do not necessarily have to be strongly intertwined.

Looking at the countries' voting behavior over the terms, one must abstain from deterministic conclusions, as the temporal data heavily limits interpretation due to inconsistency in national government China-policy between legislature periods as well as small Ns overall.

Yet some countries' trajectories over the time frame do look intriguing (Figure 8). For example, does Lithuania's trendline seem to also fit to its real-life relationship with China, firstly searching closeness within CEEC, then the sobering phase of realization and finally the complete break up in the 2020s. Thus, perhaps this temporal and country specific observation could be touched upon again in future research.

Moving on to the *dimension segmentation*, one finds that the regional groups only differ relevantly, in the *geopolitical* China-sensitive issues, which could be seen as a

---

[22] See Appendix A for deeper elaboration on why these are traditionally known for their human rights defense.

reinforcement to the thesis' premise, but also — considering there is no statistical difference for the other two issues — seen as a futile comparison (Table 24 & Table 25). Still, these issues are very contentious, as they dealt with highly sensitive resolutions that were at times critical of the *One China Policy*. Combining this with the fact that the regions differed in participation rate only, it could be read as being supportive of the research that analyzed strategic evasion (PSSI, 2023; Morse & Coggins, 2024).

Regarding the *value-based* issues in Figure 5, the CEEC's stronger plummet in "For"-ratio, could potentially be indicative for the impact of the Chinese economic engagement initially leading to more China-aligning behavior for CEEC than it did for non-CEEC. Further could the extreme spike in participation for *value-based issues* for both groups from EP7 to EP8, potentially explain the EP's heightened awareness for human rights issues in Chinese domestic affairs under Xi (Figure 6).

The *economic gain segmentation* produces clearer relationships, as the real-life economical involvement with China apparently holds some predictive value for diverging voting behavior. The diverging of the *High- and Low economic gain groups* from CEEC and non-CEEC, with a ~5% difference in both voting metrics underscores this (Table 11).

Then again, does the non-robustness by clustered SEs indicate strong in-group differences, which is perhaps explainable through the diverge in voting behavior between Slovenia and Poland on the one side and Greece and Hungary on the other side, and could be seen as another indicator of CEEC's strong heterogeneity (Table 12). Economic involvement appears to not be completely deterministic, yet it arguably does play a role for voting on China-sensitive issues. The utilization of absenteeism — if insinuated to exist here — beginning only from EP8 to 9, makes for an interesting case for future in-depth analysis (Figure 11).

5.4 Third Level Analysis: Control Variables

Interestingly, judging by the contingency table, *high economic gain CEEC* has a 5% lower "For"-ratio than *high economic gain non-CEEC*, although at the same time a 4% higher participation rate, which could indicate that absenteeism is a prominent issue for certain CEEC and non-CEEC countries alike.

One finds strong confirmatory evidence for the EP's bloc voting domination, as the *human rights affiliated* (S&D, Greens), the center (ECR, EPP, Renew) and the fringe party the Left together with the non-attached MEPs (NI), demonstrate relatively temporal consistent and

cohesive voting blocs (Figure 12 & Figure 13). Although the NIs are not bound to parties (or especially because of that), one could assume their political ideology to be on the fringes.

This suggestion is further validated by the results of the multiple logistic regression, highlighting the *strongly negative influences* of the fringe entities (NI (52,5%), ID (43,8%) and the Left (36,4%) when it came to "For"-voting on China-sensitive issues, as well as on the other side, the *positive influence* that came from the Greens (88%) and S&D (85,2%) (Table 13 & Table 27). Greece-Hungary does show a lesser likelihood for "For"-voting (73,3%) than *high economic gain CEEC* (84,9%). In this comparison, the EPGs, through bloc voting behavior, appear to dominate the country-based groups.

Considering participation rate model, there were *distinctly lesser participation rates* by the country-based groups (Table 14 & Table 28), as Greece-Hungary exhibits the lowest predicted probability to participate (50,4%). *High economic gain non-CEEC* also shows here a starkly lower likelihood of participation (64,2%), than its CEEC counterpart does (72,5%).

Conclusively the EPGs (bloc voting behavior) seemed to dominate China-sensitive voting behavior going by "For"-ratio, having the IVs with the highest as well as with the lowest likelihoods of voting "For". Going by participation, the country-based groups showed strong negative influences, potentially strengthening scholarly evidence, ascribing well-functioning whipping mechanisms to the EP, as only NIs show participation rates as low as the country-based groups (although they were not robust). Furthermore, the far-right ID shows interesting behavior, with high participation combined with low "For" voting, as well as their erratic temporal trends over the four terms, making it an interesting in-depth future research case.

5.5 Analysis of the Authors

The apparent inconsistency that CEEC only outperformed non-CEEC in *relativizing* debate contributions, although it was more *supportive* as well as it did overperform in authorship, is interesting and could indicate that only few MEPs, national party affiliations inside the EPG or specific issues, are being responsible for this anomaly (Figure 15). Yet again, as deterministic statements about the analysis of the author should be avoided due to small Ns and lack of significance, a more cautious yet still valid observation would be to acknowledge the CEEC's strong overperformance — which paints a different picture than the voting analysis did.

The bloc voting behavior trends for the EPGs are reinforced by their author and debate contributions. Renew provided an extreme overperforming number of authors, as well did

S&Ds, the Greens and EPP supply more than expected authors for these China-sensitive issues, which aligns closely with the designated China testimonials of these EPGs (Stec, 2024) (Figure 18). Similarly does the distinct underperformance of the fringes (the Left and ID) fit the found evidence (Stec, 2024)[23]. Just as CEEC's surprising overperforming in *relativizing* debate contributions, does S&D's great overperformance in *relativizing* debate contributions seem unexpected (Figure 18). Experiences from performing the analysis showed that these often stemmed from a few *national party blocs* or individuals within the EPGs, which are apparently highly policy cohesive. For example, many of the relativizing and opposing contributions came from the Irish Independents 4 Change, the Portuguese PCP or the Spanish parties Podemos and United Left, which perhaps partially explains the Left's exceptional overperformance in this regard.

Assessing the development of authorship over time for the *high economic gain* groups, highlights the interesting regional divide between them, from EP8 to EP9 (Figure 20). The overall authorship findings strengthen what voting data already discovered, namely Greece-Hungary apparently being the least China-critical group, followed by *high economic gain non-CEEC*, while *high economic gain CEEC* almost reached its expected rate of author supply (Figure 21). Then again does *high economic gain non-CEEC's* major overperformance in *opposing* debate contributions, which was especially prevalent in EP7 to EP8, ask for a deeper dive (Figure 22).

Concluding the analysis of the authors, one can summarize that while some of the PCI-adjusted findings did support the voting data driven observations, others did not, highlighting the inherent limitations of comparing small-N raw data (even when normalized) to large-N quantitatively analyzed data. Yet, general trends appear to be confirmable through the analysis of the authors. Furthermore, the debate contribution data makes a compelling case for a deeper dive into MEP-specific behavior, as many of these contributions often stemmed from a few highly outspoken individuals with apparent strong convictions, such as Mick Wallace and Clare Daly.

---

[23] The NIs have to be excluded from this evaluation, as they are not part of an EPG, they are limited in many regards with their options for action in the EP's subcommittees and the Conference of Presidents (Powers, 2024).

6. Discussion

6.1 Main findings

Reflecting upon Hypothesis I, one can say that the voting behavior on China-sensitive issues within EP7 to EP9 *does not indicate that a clear divide* between CEEC and non-CEEC is substantially visible. Rather CEEC appears to be a quite heterogeneous group, with no clear coherent China-aligning voting behavior patterns. Various CEEC as well as non-CEEC EU MS appear to exhibit China-aligning voting behavior patterns.

Although one major concern of some Western-associated think tanks, as well as academia was, that CEEC might have the potential to draw a wedge between a coherent EU-China policy approach, many non-CEEC EU MS apparently already did not adhere to this approach with full efforts — if at all. The latest major China-related yet highly contentious decision by the EC — following a Council mandate to impose broad tariffs on Chinese EVs — yet again exposed this divide among the member states, a divide which did not align with the CEEC/non-CEEC distinction[24].

Disregarding the CEEC as a coherent susceptible bloc, there does appear to exist a pair of *China-friends,* which are Greece and Hungary. They clearly exhibited a strong relationship between their economic and political engagement with China and the voting behavior of their MEPs displaying China-alignment in China-sensitive issues since the start of said engagement, namely the early 2010s. Notable mentions of non-CEEC MS displaying China-aligning voting behavior could be the UK, France and Cyprus.

Furthermore, that the *high economic gain CEEC* group, as well as the *low economic gain CEEC* group showed significant differences in both voting metrics to the overall CEEC group, gives indication that hypothesis II is supported: MEPs exhibited more China-aligning voting behavior in China sensitive issues, when their country of origin was heavier economically involved with China. This was staunchly obvious for Greece and Hungary, but to a lesser degree also for the *high economic gain non-CEEC group*, and especially for the UK and Malta, judging by their evasive and aligning behavior.

Hypothesis III shown to be hard to outright substantiate or disprove, for twofold

---

[24] Regarding the EV tariff voting, opposing MS were Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Malta, Sweden, while support came from: France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Czechia and the 17 other MS were neutral.
Another example here could also be the FDI screening mechanism rule (Regulation 2019/452).

reasons: (1) Firstly, the CEE region experience *not a static, but quite dynamic relationship* with the CEEC format, from *initial euphoria*, through a *sobering period of disillusionment* towards a *changing geopolitical landscape* as (a) Russia's full-scale invasion on Ukraine started in 2022 and many CEEC MS were (openly) displeased with China's stance towards it and (b) rising tensions in China's domestic affairs and periphery (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South China Sea, Xinjiang) worried EU entities and; (2) secondly, national governments went through many shifts, changing their perspective on China relations.

6.2 Limitations & Further Research

Hypothesis II is somewhat limited by its premise. There could be multiple *high economic gain* group constellations for both regions, yet this relationship perhaps cannot ever represent a perfect relationship. The actual economic involvement does not translate directly and perfectly into (aligning and/or evasive) voting behavior. For example, Croatia or Czechia, judging by their voting behavior on China-sensitive issues were distinctly more China-aligning than Poland and Slovenia, yet the latter had higher economic engagement than Czechia and Croatia. As previously stated, not only actual FDI flows can result in China-aligning voting behavior, but also operations and projects that where only planned or theorized and never executed could have had this potential.

Therefore, it remains the case, that going through different economic entanglement group constellations, perhaps taking other perimeters as FDI flows into consideration, such as observing concrete CEEC projects, could add additional value to this analysis.

Building on the insights regarding hypothesis III, it might be interesting to code MEPs according to whether they are currently in government or in opposition in their home countries, and/or which national party they belong to. Perhaps they change their stance on China, depending on whether they are in government or in opposition in their countries of designation. Specific national parties could also be responsible for strongly China-aligning or China-critical behavior.

This might be limited due to the small number of cases of 42 China-sensitive voting issues from 2004 to 2024, but perhaps *before and after effects* following certain events, such as the Covid-19 outbreak or the Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2022, could show that public perception does play a deciding role for MEPs when engaging in China-sensitive issue voting.

Furthermore, it could be interesting to cross-confirm the insights found here, with

voting behavior on China-sensitive issues, in other international organizations, for example the United Nations General Assembly.

7.0 References

AFET [European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs]. (2015*). Report on EU relations with China (2015/2003(INI))* [Report]. European Parliament. https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/en/procedure-file?reference=2015/2003(INI)

Al-Haschimi, A., & Spital, T. (2024). The evolution of China's growth model: Challenges and long-term growth prospects. Economic Bulletin Articles, 5.

Ambrogio, S. (2017). Moral education and ideology: The revival of Confucian values and the harmonious shaping of the new Chinese man. *Asian Studies, 5*(2), 113–135. https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2017.5.2.113-135

Association of the Luxembourg Fund Industry (ALFI). [Report] (2015). *Luxembourg – your bridge between China and Europe*. https://www.alfi.lu/getattachment/d8d3518f-3ac3-4ed6-8c05-e0cdf5b8310c/app_data-import-alfi-luxembourg-your-bridge-between-china-and-europe.pdf

Australian Associated Press. (2020, May 18). Australia 'deeply disappointed' after China imposes 80% tariff on barley imports. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/19/australia-deeply-disappointed-after-china-imposes-80-tariff-on-barley-imports

Bali, E. (2022, October 30). In Greece's largest port of Piraeus, China is the boss. DW. https://www.dw.com/en/greece-in-the-port-of-piraeus-china-is-the-boss/a-63581221

Balmas, P. (2022). *China's financial spaces in Europe: The politics of the Belt and Road Initiative in the EU* (Doctoral dissertation). LUISS Guido Carli University. https://orbilu.uni.lu/bitstream/10993/53930/1/PHD%20DISSERTATION%20PAOLO%20BALMAS%20-%2014%20SEPT%202022%20-%20CHINAS%20FINANCIAL%20SPACES%20IN%20EUROPE.pdf

Barfield, C. (2007). The Dragon Stirs: China's Trade Policy for Asia - and the World. Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Law, 24(1), 93–120.

Bartsch, B., & Wessling, C. (Eds.). (2023). *From a China strategy to no strategy at all: Exploring the diversity of European approaches*. [Report]. European Think-tank Network on

China (ETNC). https://merics.org/en/report/china-strategy-no-strategy-all-exploring-diversity-european-approaches

Benner, T., Gaspers, J., Ohlberg, M., Poggetti, L., & Shi-Kupfer, K. (2018). *Authoritarian advance. Responding to China's Growing Political Influence in Europe.* Global Public Policy Institute/Merics. https://www.chinazentren.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/GPPi_MERICS_Authoritarian_Advance_2018_0.pdf

Berzina-Cerenkova, U. A. (2023, December 21). *Central and eastern europe in relation to china's strategic space: The fizzling out of a ten-year campaign - mapping china's strategic space.* The National Bureau of Asian Research. https://strategicspace.nbr.org/central-and-eastern-europe-in-relation-to-chinas-strategic-space-the-fizzling-out-of-a-ten-year-campaign/

Bijak, J., Czaika, M., & Wiśniowski, A. (2020). *Intra-EU migration 2010–2020: Drivers, patterns and forecasting trends* (QuantMig Deliverable 4.2) [Project deliverable]. European Commission, Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. https://www.quantmig.eu/res/files/QuantMig_Deliverable%204.2%20v1.1Final.pdf

Biten, M., Kuhn, T., & Van Der Brug, W. (2023). How does fiscal austerity affect trust in the European Union? Analyzing the role of responsibility attribution. Journal of European Public Policy, 30(6), 1033–1050. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2022.2060282

Blauberger, M., & Fasone, C. (2022). Comparing processes of democratic backsliding in post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe: The legacy of the past and the weaknesses of the EU's approach (Master's thesis). University of Salzburg.

BMWK. (2024). New container terminal in the Port of Duisburg is trialling climate-neutral operations. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from https://www.energieforschung.de/en/home/news/2024/new-container-terminal-in-the-port-of-duisburg-is-trialling-climate-neutral-operations

BMZ [Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development]. (2023, March 20). *World Bank Group*. https://www.bmz.de/en/ministry/international-organisations/world-bank-group#:~:text=The%20Spring%20Meetings%20and%20Annual,and%20traditionally%20appoints%20the%20President.

Borbély, R. (2018). Back to the past: Backsliding in Poland and Hungary and the future pro
spects of the European Union [Master's thesis, Central European University]. CEU eTD
Collection. https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2018/borbely_reka.pdf

Bowler, S., Farrell, D. M., Katz, R. S., & European Consortium for Political Research (Eds.).
(1999). Party discipline and parliamentary government. Ohio State University Press.

Brattberg, E., Corre, P. L., Stronski, P., & Waal, T. de. (2021). *China's Influence in Southeastern,
Central, and Eastern Europe: Vulnerabilities and Resilience in Four Countries*.
https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1850256/chinas-influence-in-southeastern-cen
tral-and-eastern-europe/2597107/

Brinza, A., Bērziņa-Čerenkova, U. A., Le Corre, P., Seaman, J., Turcsányi, R., & Vladisavljev, S.
(2024). *EU-China relations: De-risking or decoupling – The future of the EU strategy
towards China* (PE 754.446). [Report]. European Parliament, Directorate-General for
External   Policies.   https://www.europarl.europa.eu/Reg
Data/etudes/STUD/2024/754446/EXPO_STU(2024)754446_EN.pdf

British Business Bank. (2024, July 11). UK now third-largest venture capital market in the world
with biggest increase in share of global investment [Press release]. Retrieved March 20,
2025, from https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/news-and-events/news/uk-now-
third-largest-venture-capital-market-world-biggest-increase-share-global-investment

Brown, R. C. (2020). China's BRI in Central Eastern European Countries: "17+1" Connectivity,
Divisiveness, Or Pathway to EU-CHINA FTA? San Diego International Law Journal, 22(1),
1–40.

Brunnstrom, D., & Emmott, R. (2021, March 23). West sanctions China over Xinjiang abuses,
Beijing hits back at EU. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/china/west-sanc
tions-china-over-xinjiang-abuses-beijing-hits-back-eu-2021-03-22/

Buckley, C. (2023, November 13). Behind Public Assurances, Xi Jinping Has Spread Grim Views
on U.S. The New York Times.
https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/13/world/asia/china-xi-asia-pacific-summit.html

Campbell, C., & Salidjanova, N. (2016). South China Sea Arbitration Ruling: What Happened
and What's Next?. [Issue brief]. US-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Issue%20Brief_South%20China%20Sea%20Arbitration%20Ruling%20What%20Happened%20and%20What%27s%20Next071216.pdf

Cardenal, J. P., Kucharczyk, J., Mesežnikov, G., & Pleschová, G. (Eds.). (2017). *Sharp power: Rising authoritarian influence.* International Forum for Democratic Studies, National Endowment for Democracy. https://www.ned.org/sharp-power-rising-authoritarian-influence-forum-report/

Carrai, M. A. (2018). China's Malleable Sovereignty along the Belt and Road Initiative: The Case of the 99-Year Chinese Lease of Hambantota Port Around the World on One Belt, One Road: Foreign Capital Competition, Human Rights, and Development in the Twenty-First Century. *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics, 51(4),* 1061–1100.

Carrai, M. A. (2020). Chinese Political Nostalgia and Xi Jinping's Dream of Great Rejuvenation. International Journal of Asian Studies, 18(1), 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479591420000406

Carrubba, C., & Gabel, M. (1999, June 2–5). *Roll-call votes and party discipline in the European Parliament: Reconsidering MEP voting behavior* [Conference paper]. 6th Biennial Conference of the European Union Studies Association (EUSA), Pittsburgh, PA, United States. http://aei.pitt.edu/id/eprint/2239

Chalmers, J., Emmott, R. (2021, April 16). Hungary blocks EU statement criticising China over Hong Kong, diplomats say. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hungary-blocks-eu-statement-criticising-china-over-hong-kong-diplomats-say-2021-04-16/

Chan, L.-H. (2017). Soft balancing against the US 'pivot to Asia': China's geostrategic rationale for establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Australian Journal of International Affairs, 71(6), 568–590. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2017.1357679

Chan, Z. T., & Meunier, S. (2022). Behind the screen: Understanding national support for a foreign investment screening mechanism in the European Union. The Review of International Organizations, 17(3), 513–541. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-021-09436-y

Chang, I.-J. (2020, January 29). *Taiwan's Pacific stronghold in Palau. Global Taiwan Brief, 5(2).* Global Taiwan Institute. https://globaltaiwan.org/2020/01/taiwans-pacific-strong hold-in-palau/

Chen, D. (2014, November 10). China's 'Marshall Plan' Is Much More. The Diplomat. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from https://thediplomat.com/2014/11/chinas-marshall-plan-is-much-more/

Chen, I. T. (2020). China's status deficit and the debut of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Pacific Review, 33(5), 697–727. https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1577291

Chen, K. A. (2023). Digital nationalism: How do the Chinese diplomats and digital public view "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy? Global Media and China, 8(2), 138–154. https://doi.org/10.1177/20594364231171785

China-CEEC Cooperation [Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries]. (2021, December 28). *About Us*. http://www.china-ceec.org/eng/jj/zyjz/202112/t20211228_10476286.htm

China Daily. (2024, May 24). *CEEC, China partnership continues to prove mutually beneficial*. The State Council – The People's Republic of China. https://eng lish.www.gov.cn/news/202405/24/content_WS664ffa15c6d0868f4e8e76b0.html

China Energy Investment Corporation. (2024, April 30). *China Energy Investment Corporation held the Greece session under its "Gen Z Energy Tour China-Europe"*. https://www.ceic.com/gjnyjtwwEn/xwzx/202404/6563a5a8ebb94036b057d733e379 6921.shtml

Chin, G. T. (2019). *The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – New multilateralism: Early de velopment, innovation, and future agendas. Global Policy, 10(4),* 569–578. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12767

Chinese Embassy in Sweden [Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Sweden]. (2018, September 15). *The Chinese Embassy Spokesperson's remarks on the brutal abuse of Chinese tourists by Swedish police*. http://se.china-em bassy.gov.cn/eng/sgxw/201809/t20180915_2813527.htm

Cieślik, E. (2019). Towards more (un) balanced trade. Production linkages between China and the Visegrad countries: country-level and sector-level analysis. *European Planning Studies, 27(8),* 1523-1541.

Council [Council of the European Union]. (2009). Council Regulation (EC) No 91/2009 of 26 January 2009 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional duty imposed on imports of certain iron or steel fasteners originating in the People's Republic of China. *Official Journal of the European Union, L 29, 1–34.* https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009R0091

Council [Council of the European Union]. (2013, November 21). Remarks by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy following the 16th EU-China summit (EUCO 241/13, PRESSE 495, PR PCE 216). https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/25920/139661.pdf

Council [Council of the European Union]. (2015, June 29). EU-China Summit joint statement. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23732/150629-eu-china-summit-joint-statement-final.pdf

Council [Council of the European Union]. (2018, July 16). Council conclusions on EU-China relations. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36165/final-eu-cn-joint-statement-consolidated-text-with-climate-change-clean-energy-annex.pdf

Council [Council of the European Union]. (2020, July 24). Council conclusions on Hong Kong. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9872-2020-REV-1/en/pdf

Council [Council of the European Union]. (2021, March 22). Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/481 of 22 March 2021 amending Decision (CFSP) 2020/1999 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses. Official Journal of the European Union, L 99I, 25–36. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021D0481

Csehi, R., & Zgut, E. (2021). "We won't let Brussels dictate us": Eurosceptic populism in Hungary and Poland. *European Politics and Society, 22(1),* 53–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2020.1717064

Cuong, T. P., & Tai, V. P. (2023). The role of the AUKUS alliance in counterbalancing China. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation, 4(1), 51-58.

Curic, A., & Kálmán, A. (2021, December 28). *From Budapest to Belgrade: A railway line in creases Chinese influence in the Balkans. Investigate Europe*. https://www.investigate-europe.eu/posts/from-budapest-to-belgrade-a-railway-line-increases-chinese-influ ence-in-the-balkans

Dams, T., Martin, X., & Kranenburg, V. (Eds.). (2021). *China's soft power in Europe: Falling on hard times*. European Think-tank Network on China (ETNC). https://www.clingen dael.org/publication/chinas-soft-power-europe-falling-hard-times

De Freitas, M. V. (2019, May). *Reform and opening-up: Chinese lessons to the world* (Policy Paper PP-19/05). Policy Center for the New South. https://www.policycenter.ma/pub lications/reform-and-opening-chinese-lessons-world

De Jonge, A. (2017). Perspectives on the emerging role of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. *International Affairs, 93(5), 1061-1084.*

Debata, M. R. (2022). Chinese Assimilationist Policies in Xinjiang: From Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping. *International Studies, 59(3), 199-211.*

Dębiec, K., & Jakóbowski, J. (2021, February 2). *China excluded from a Czech nuclear tender*. *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW).* https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/anal yses/2021-02-02/china-excluded-a-czech-nuclear-tender

Diaz, A., & Zhang, S. (2017, April 7). Angered by U.S. anti-missile system, China takes economic revenge. CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-retaliates-south-korea-us-thaad-missile-defense-lotte-and-k-pop/

ChinaFile. (2013, November 8). *Document 9: A ChinaFile translation*. https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation

Draghi, M. (2024). *The future of European Competitiveness: In-depth analysis and recommend dations.* European Commission.

Duan, C., Zhou, Y., Shen, D., Lin, S., Gong, W., Popp, J., & Oláh, J. (2021). The misunderstanding of China's investment, and a clarification:"faustian bargain" or "good bargain"? On the OFDI data of Central and Eastern Europe. *Sustainability, 13(18),* 10281.

Duan, X., & Liu, Y. (2023, September 22). The rise and fall of China's wolf warrior diplomacy. The Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/the-rise-and-fall-of-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/

Dutton, P. (2011). *Three disputes and three objectives: China and the South China Sea*. *Naval War College Review, 64(4),* 42-67.

EC [European Commission]. (2013). Commission Regulation (EU) No 513/2013 of 4 June 2013 imposing a provisional anti-dumping duty on imports of solar panels originating in or consigned from the People's Republic of China. Official Journal of the European Union, L152, 5–47. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R0513

EC [European Commission.] (2021). Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2126 of 29 September 2021 amending the Annex to Regulation (EU) 2019/452 establishing a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the Union. Official Journal of the European Union, L 430, 1–3. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R2126

European Commission. (2023, August 8). Commission implementing regulation (EU) 2023/1617 of 8 August 2023 amending Commission implementing regulation (EU) 2021/2011 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of optical fibre cables originating in the People's Republic of China. Official Journal of the European Union, L 199, 34–47. http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2023/1617/oj

EC [European Commission]. (2024a, October 29). EU imposes duties on unfairly subsidized electric vehicles from China while discussions on price undertakings continue [Press release]. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_5589

EC [European Commission]. (2024b, December 16). EU adopts 15th sanctions package against Russia for its continued illegal war against Ukraine [Press release]. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_6430

EC [European Commission]. (2024c, November 22). *High-Level Forum on Global Non-Market Overcapacity: Advancing Sustainable Competitiveness, Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity* [Conference agenda]. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/926e0473-7184-47a5-9216-f9f4986aee8d_en?filename=IDEA_Global%20Forum%20Overcapacity_AGENDA_22.11.2024_241119%202.pdf&prefLang=fr

EC & HR/VP [European Commission & High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy]. (2019, March 12). EU-China – A strategic outlook. https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2019-03/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf

ECA [European Court of Auditors]. (2020). The EU's response to China's state-driven investment strategy. https://www.eca.europa.eu/lists/ecadocuments/rw20_03/rw_eu_response_to_china_en.pdf

ECFR [European Council on Foreign Relations]. (2016). *European foreign policy scorecard 2016*. https://ecfr.eu/archive/page/-/ECFR157_SCORECARD_2016.pdf

Ekiert, G. (2008). Dilemmas of Europeanization: Eastern and Central Europe after the EU enlargement. *Acta Slavica Iaponica, (25),* 1-28.

Ekman, A. (2018, January 8). *Macron in China: "The new Silk Road cannot be one-way".* Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri). https://www.ifri.org/en/macron-china-new-silk-road-cannot-be-one-way

Elmer, K. (2018, April 20). EU presents (nearly) united front against China's 'unfair' Belt and Road Initiative. *South China Morning Post*. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2142698/eu-presents-nearly-united-front-against-chinas-unfair

Elmer, K., & Wu, W. (2019, December 10). China cancels trade visit to Sweden over detained bookseller Gui Minhai's free speech prize. South China Morning Post. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3041486/china-cancels-trade-visit-sweden-over-detained-bookseller-gui

Éltető, A., & Szunomár, Á. (2016). Chinese investment and trade – strengthening ties with Central and Eastern Europe. *International Journal of Business and Management, 4(1),* 24–48. https://doi.org/10.20472/BM.2016.4.1.002

Emmott, R. (2016, July 15). EU's statement on South China Sea reflects divisions. *Reuters*. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from https://www.reuters.com/article/world/eus-state ment-on-south-china-sea-reflects-divisions-idUSKCN0ZV1TS/

EP [European Parliament]. (2021). MEPs sanctioned by China. https://www.europarl.eu ropa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0255_EN.html

EP [European Parliament]. (2024a). Joint motion for a resolution on the misinterpretation of UN resolution 2758 by the People's Republic of China and its continuous military provo cations around Taiwan (No. 2024/2891(RSP)). European Parliament. https://www.eu roparl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0030_EN.html

EP [European Parliament]. (2024b, April). *The Treaty of Lisbon*. Fact Sheets on the European Union. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/5/the-treaty-of-lisbon

Eurostat [Statistical Office of the European Union]. (2020, April 2). *Rotterdam: The largest freight port in the EU. Products Eurostat News*. https://ec.europa.eu/euro stat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20200402-2

Faas, T. (2003). To defect or not to defect? National, institutional and party group pressures on MEPs and their consequences for party group cohesion in the European Parlia ment. *European journal of political research*, *42(6),* 841-866.

Ferdinand, P. (2016). Westward ho—the China dream and 'one belt, one road': Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping. *International Affairs, 92(4),* 941-957.

Font, N. (2020). Competing principals and non-vote decisions in the European Parliament. *Parliamentary Affairs, 73(1),* 166-185.

Fowler, L. L., Polhuis, P. L., & Paine, S. C. (1983). Changing patterns of voting strength in the European Parliament. *Comparative Politics, 15(2),* 159-175.

Fox, J., & Godement, F. (2009). A power audit of EU-China relations. European Council on Foreign Relations. [Report] https://ecfr.eu/publication/a_power_audit_of_eu_china_relations

Freedom House. (2025). *Countries and Territories*. https://freedomhouse.org/ countries/freedom-world/scores?sort=desc&order=Total%20Score%20and%20Status

Freeport of Riga Authority. (2016, May 16). *In the framework of 16+1 format event Chinese businessmen visited the Freeport of Riga and met representatives of the port enterprises*. https://rop.lv/en/news/framework-161-format-event-chinese-businessmen-visited-freeport-riga-and-met-representatives

Fulda, A. (2019, October 15). Chinese propaganda has no place on campus. *Foreign Policy*. https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/15/confucius-institute-chinese-propaganda-campus-communist-party-censorship/

Gabriel, S. (2017). *Rede von Außenminister Sigmar Gabriel bei der Botschafterkonferenz* [Speech by Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel at the Ambassadors' Conference]. Bundesregierung. https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/975954/781396/de88831a7350c43ac64f368d4ed61be1/91-1-bmaa-botschafterkonferenz-data.pdf

Gallop, P., & Ciuta, I. (2019, April 9). Chinese-financed coal projects in Southeast Europe: A real and immediate threat to the EU's decarbonisation efforts. *CEE Bankwatch Network*. https://bankwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/China-Balkans-briefing.pdf

Garcia, R. J., & Nguyen, T. N. G. (2023). Market integration through smuggling. *Journal of Economic Integration, 38(1),* 93-114.

Garlick, J. (2019). China's economic diplomacy in Central and Eastern Europe: A case of offensive mercantilism?. *Europe-Asia Studies, 71(8),* 1390-1414.

GBA [Generalbundesanwalt]. (2024). Durchsuchung wegen Anfangsverdachts der Bestechlichkeit gegen MdEP Krah [Press release]. Der Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof. https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/Pressemitteilung-vom-07-05-2024-2.html

GCR [Global Construction Review]. (2016, August 9). China's Polish park heralds new era of Silk Road commerce. https://www.globalconstructionreview.com/chinas-polish-park-heralds-new-era-silk-road-commerce/

Gill, B. (2022). *Daring to struggle: China's global ambitions under Xi Jinping*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197545645.001.0001

Gill, B. (2023). Explaining the Troubled Australia-China Relationship. *China Review, 23(1),* 243-275.

Gijs, C. (2022, August 5). China sanctions Nancy Pelosi over 'egregious' Taiwan trip. *POLITICO.* https://www.politico.eu/article/china-nancy-pelosi-taiwan-sanctions-over-provocative-trip/

Gizińska, I., & Uznańska, P. (2024, April 12). *China's European bridgehead: Hungary's danger ous relationship with Beijing* (OSW Commentary No. 590). Centre for Eastern Studies. https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2024-04-12/chinas-euro pean-bridgehead-hungarys-dangerous-relationship

Global Times. (2021, March 1). EU China policies influenced by transatlantic alliance with US: experts. *Global Times.* https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202103/1217190.shtml

GMF [German Marshall Fund]. (2018). *China uses state-owned Hisense's purchase of appliance giant Gorenje to exert influence in Slovenia.* https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/ incident/china-uses-state-owned-hisenses-purchase-of-appliance-giant-gorenje-to-exert-influence-in-slovenia/

Godement, F., & Parello-Plesner, J. (2011). *The scramble for Europe: China's investment in Europe and its strategic implications*. European Council on Foreign Relations. https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_scramble_for_europe/

Godement, F., & Vasselier, A. (2017). *China at the gates: A new power audit of EU-China relations (ECFR/239).* European Council on Foreign Relations. https://ecfr.eu/publica tion/china_at_the_gates_a_new_power_audit_of_eu_china_relations/

Góralczyk, B. (2017). China's interests in Central and Eastern Europe: enter the dragon. *European View, 16(1),* 153-162.

Goron, C. (2018). Fighting against climate change and for fair trade: finding the EU's interest in the solar panels dispute with China. *China-EU Law Journal*, *6*(1), 103-125.

Grieger, G. (2016). *One Belt, One Road (OBOR): China's regional integration initiative* [Briefing]. European Parliamentary Research Service. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2016)586608

Grieger, G. (2017, May). *Foreign direct investment screening: A debate in light of China-EU FDI flows* (EPRS Briefing No. PE 603.941). European Parliamentary Research Service. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2017)603941

Grieger, G. (2018). *China, the 16+1 format and the EU* [Briefing]. European Parliamentary Research Service. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2018)625173

Gueorguiev, D. D. (2018). Dictator's Shadow. Chinese Elite Politics Under Xi Jinping. *China Perspectives, 2018(2018/1-2),* 17-26.

Han, J. H. (2007). Analysing roll calls of the European Parliament: A Bayesian application. *European Union Politics, 8(4),* 479-507.

He, K., & Feng, H. (2024). IR Theory and Australia's Policy Change Towards China, 2017–2022: An Introduction Essay. *Journal of Contemporary China, 1-17.*

Heath, R., & Gray, A. (2018, July 27). Johannes Hahn: Beware Chinese Trojan horses in the Balkans, EU warns. *Politico*. https://www.politico.eu/article/johannes-hahn-beware-chinese-trojan-horses-in-the-balkans-eu-warns-enlargement-politico-podcast/

Heath, T. R. (2016). China's evolving approach to economic diplomacy. *Asia Policy, 22(1),* 157-191.

Hirono, M., Jiang, Y., & Lanteigne, M. (2019). China's new roles and behaviour in conflict-affected regions: Reconsidering non-interference and non-intervention. *The China Quarterly, 239,* 573-593.

Hix, S., Frantescu, D., Hagemann, S., & Noury, A. (2022). *VoteWatch Europe dataset* [Data set]. European University Institute, Department of Political and Social Sciences. https://hdl.handle.net/1814/74918

Hix, S., Hagemann, S., & Frantescu, D. (2012). Effects of Transparency on Behaviour in the European Parliament. *Political Science and Political Economy Working Paper, (7).*

Hix, S., Noury, A., & Roland, G. (2005). Power to the parties: Cohesion and competition in the European Parliament, 1979–2001. *British Journal of Political Science, 35(2),* 209–234. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123405000128

Hix, S., Noury, A., & Roland, G. (2009). Voting patterns and alliance formation in the European Parliament. *Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences*, *364*(1518), 821–831. https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2008.0263

Holbig, H. (2018). China after reform: the ideological, constitutional, and organisational makings of a new era. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, 47(3),* 187-207.

Holslag, J. (2017). How China's new silk road threatens European trade. *The International Spectator, 52(1),* 46-60.

HowTheyVote.eu. (2024). HowTheyVote.eu – Voting data for the European Parliament [Dataset modified by author for selected China-sensitive votes and harmonized formatting]. Retrieved from https://howtheyvote.eu

Hu, T., & Guan, T. (2021). "Man-as-nation": Representations of masculinity and nationalism in Wu Jing's Wolf Warrior II. *Sage Open, 11(3).*

IMF [International Monetary Fund]. (2024, January 2). *Global FX reserves increased by 3.1 percent in 2024Q3.* IMF Data. https://betadata.imf.org/en/news/122024%20global%20fx%20reserves%20increased%20by%2031%20percent%20in%202024q3

IMF [International Monetary Fund]. (2025). *IMF members' quotas and voting power, and IMF board of governors*. Retrieved March 30, 2025, from https://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/memdir/members.aspx

INTA [European Parliament, Committee on International Trade]. (2023, October 24). Public hearing on European economic security: Speakers' bios. Brussels. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/276727/Hearing-European%20economic%20security-Speakers%20Bios-24Oct23.pdf

Ismail, R. I. J., & Aryodiguno, H. (2022). CHINA'S WOLF WARRIOR DIPLOMACY AND THE RELATIONS WITH REPUBLIC OF KOREA (2015-2020). *Journal Asia Pacific Studies, 6(1),* 32-46.

Istenič Kotar, S. (2022, August 10). Chinese influence in Slovenia. Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA). https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/chinese-influence-in-slovenia/

Jackson, K., Li, J., & Masino, S. (2024). COSCO and the privatisation of Piraeus port: A tale of three piers. *European Journal of Industrial Relations, 0(0)*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09596801241292044

Jacoby, W. (2014). Different cases, different faces: Chinese investment in Central and Eastern Europe. *Asia Europe Journal, 12,* 199-214.

Jakimów, M. (2019). Desecuritisation as a soft power strategy: the Belt and Road Initiative, European fragmentation and China's normative influence in Central-Eastern Europe. *Asia Europe Journal, 17(4),* 369-385.

Jakóbowski, J. (2018). Chinese-led regional multilateralism in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America: 16+ 1, FOCAC, and CCF. *Journal of Contemporary China, 27(113),* 659-673.

Jakubowski, A., Komornicki, T., Kowalczyk, K., & Miszczuk, A. (2020). Poland as a hub of the Silk Road Economic Belt: is the narrative of opportunity supported by developments on the ground?. *Asia Europe Journal*, *18*(3), 367-396.

Jerdén, B., & Bohman, V. (2019). *China's propaganda campaign in Sweden*, 2018–2019 (UI Brief No. 4). The Swedish Institute of International Affairs. https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/ui-publications/2019/ui-brief-no.-4-2019.pdf

Jukic, L. I. (2021, September 20). After Pelješac, China and Croatia eye a new bridge project. China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe. https://chinaobservers.eu/after-peljesac-china-and-croatia-eye-a-new-bridge-project/

Juncker, J.-C. (2017). *White paper on the future of Europe: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025 (COM(2017)2025).* European Commission. https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf

Kaczmarski, M., & Jakóbowski, J. (2015). China on Central-Eastern Europe:'16+ 1'as seen from Beijing. *OSW The Centre for Eastern Studies*. https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/pub likacje/osw-commentary/2015-04-14/china-central-eastern-europe-161-seen-beijing

Karásková, I. (2022, April 22). *How China lost Central and Eastern Europe*. Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS). https://merics.org/en/comment/how-china-lost-central-and-eastern-europe#:~:text=These%20expectations%2C%20how ever%2C%20have%20not,added%20sectors

Karásková, I. (2024, December 4). Marriage of convenience: How the European far right and far left converged on China. *The Diplomat*. https://thediplomat.com/2024/12/mar riage-of-convenience-how-the-european-far-right-and-far-left-converged-on-china/

Karásková, I., Bachulska, A., Szunomár, Á., & Vladisavljev, S. (Eds.). (2020*). Empty shell no more: China's growing footprint in Central and Eastern Europe*. Association for International Affairs (AMO). https://chinaobservers.eu/wp-content/up loads/2020/04/CHOICE_Empty-shell-no-more.pdf

Kasonta, A. (2021, July 20). If Poland is China's gate to Europe, Lodz is its heart. *Asia Times*. https://asiatimes.com/2021/07/if-poland-is-chinas-gate-to-europe-lodz-is-its-heart/

Kaura, V. (2020). India's relations with China from the Doklam crisis to the Galwan tragedy. *India Quarterly, 76(4),* 501-518.

Kavalski, E. (2018). China's belt and road initiative in central and Eastern Europe. *Asian International Studies Review, 19(2),* 13-31.

Keena, C. (2023, December 6). Uighur activist calls for closure of Confucius Institute at UCD. *The Irish Times.* https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2023/12/06/uighur-activist-calls-for-closure-of-confucius-institute-at-ucd/

Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (1997). Power and interdependence (3rd ed.). Longman.

Kirby, J. (2023, December 20). *Press gaggle by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and NSC Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby* [Press briefing transcript]. The White House. https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/press-brief

ings/2023/12/20/press-gaggle-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-and-nsc-coordi nator-for-strategic-communications-john-kirby/

Klüver, H., & Spoon, J. J. (2015). Bringing salience back in: Explaining voting defection in the European Parliament. *Party Politics, 21(4),* 553-564.

Kotios, A., Pavlidis, G., & Galanos, G. (2011). Greece and the Euro: The chronicle of an expected collapse. *Intereconomics, 46(5),* 263–269. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10272-011-0390-7

Kotoulas, I. E. (2024, September). The Port of Piraeus as a model of Greek-Chinese cooperation. *China-CEE Institute*. https://china-cee.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024er09_Greece.pdf

Koutantou, A. (2014, February 27). Greece has sole China-backed bid for former Athens airport site. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/business/greece-has-sole-china-backed-bid-for-former-athens-airport-site-idUSBREA1Q27E/

Kowalski, B. (2017). China's foreign policy towards Central and Eastern Europe: The "16+ 1" format in the South–South cooperation perspective. Cases of the Czech Republic and Hungary. *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies, 1(1),* 1-16.

Kowalski, B. (2022). Central and eastern Europe, China's core interests, and the limits of rela tional politics: lessons from the Czech Republic in the 2010s. *East European Politics and Societies, 36(01),* 51-74.

Krastev, I. (2017). The refugee crisis and the return of the east-west divide in Europe. *Slavic Review, 76(2),* 291-296.

Kratz, A., Szczudlik, J., & Pavlicevic, D. (2016). *China's investment in influence: the future of 16+ 1 cooperation.* European Council on Foreign Relations. https://ecfr.eu/publica tion/chinas_investment_in_influence_the_future_of_161_cooperation7204/

Kratz, A., Zenglein, M. J., Brown, A., Sebastian, G., & Meyer, A. (2024). *Dwindling investments become more concentrated–Chinese FDI in Europe: 2023 Update.* MERICS Report, 6. https://merics.org/en/report/dwindling-investments-become-more-concentrated-chinese-fdi-europe-2023-update

Kuo, L. (2018, September 17). China accuses Sweden of violating human rights over treatment of tourists. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/17/china-accuses-sweden-of-violating-human-rights-over-treatment-of-tourists

Lamond, J., & Lucas, E. (2022, September 21). *Getting ahead of the curve: Chinese influence in Central and Eastern Europe.* Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA). https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/getting-ahead-of-the-curve-chinese-influence-in-central-and-eastern-europe/

Lau, S., & Momtaz, R. (2021, November 21). China downgrades Lithuania's diplomatic status over Taiwan row. *POLITICO*. https://www.politico.eu/article/china-downgrades-diplomatic-relations-with-lithuania-over-taiwan-representative-office/

Le Corre, P. (2018). This is China's Plan to Dominate Southern Europe. *National Interest*. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/chinas-plan-dominate-southern-europe-34697

Lehman-Ludwig, A., Burke, A., Ambler, D., & Schroeder, R. (2023). Chinese Anti-Westernism on social media. *Global Media and China, 8(2),* 119-137.

Li, K. (2014, June 18). *Keynote address by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang*. Chatham House. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20140624ChinesePremierLi.pdf

Li, M. 2019. China's Foreign Policy in Xi's Era: Change and Continuity. UP-Center for Integrative and Development Studies.

Li, X., & Worm, V. (2009). Building China's soft power for a peaceful rise. *Journal of Chinese Political Science, 16,* 69-89.

Liang, Y. (2020). RMB internationalization and financing belt-road initiative: An MMT perspective. *The Chinese Economy, 53(4),* 317-328.

Liu, J. (2020). *The "Belt and Road Initiative" and China's grand strategy making: How China transforms itself into the "Center of Production and Trade" and a "NormMaker"* [Doctoral dissertation, King's College London]. King's College London Research Portal. https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/139879174/2020_Liu_Junzhi_1636065_ethesis.pdf

Liu, M. (2015). *The China dream: Great power thinking and strategic posture in the post-American era* (J. Gartner & D. Dix, Eds.; H. McAdams, Design). CN Times Books.

Löwisch, M. (2020). *Die Bundesregierung zu den Konfuzius-Instituten*. Ordnung der Wissenschaft. https://ordnungderwissenschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/08_Loewisch.pdf

Lu, K. (2022, March). *RMB Internationalization Based on the Perspective of the Belt and Road*. In 2022 7th International Conference on Financial Innovation and Economic Development (ICFIED 2022) (pp. 1219-1224). Atlantis Press.

Lucas, E. (2022, August 2). *Chinese influence in Central and Eastern Europe. Center for European Policy Analysis* (CEPA). https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/chinese-influence-in-central-and-eastern-europe/

Lo, B., & Lucas, E. (2021). *Partnership without Substance: Sino-Russian Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*. Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA). https://cepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Russia-China-Partnership-5.7.21.pdf

Luxembourg for Finance. (2021). *China Business*. https://www.luxembourgforfinance.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/LFF_BROCH_RENMINBI_2021.pdf

Luxembourg for Finance. (2024). *Renminbi business: China's bridge to Europe and the world*. https://www.luxembourgforfinance.com/en/financial-centre/renminbi-business/

Macron, E. (2017, September 26). Initiative pour l'Europe: Discours d'Emmanuel Macron pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique [Speech transcript]. Élysée. https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/president-macron-gives-speech-on-new-initiative-for-europe

Maher, R. (2016). The elusive EU-China strategic partnership. *International Affairs, 92(4),* 959-976.

Malová, D., & Dolný, B. (2008). The eastern enlargement of the European Union: Challenges to democracy?. *Human Affairs, 18(1),* 67-80.

Matura, T. (2019). China–CEE trade, investment and politics. *Europe-Asia Studies, 71(3),* 388-407.

Matura, T. A. (2021). *Trade, Investment and Politics between China and Central and Eastern Europe Economic Necessity or a Trojan Horse?* (Doctoral dissertation, Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem).

MFA PRC [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China]. (2021, March 22). Foreign Ministry spokesperson announces sanctions on relevant EU entities and personnel. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202103/t20210322_9191404.shtml

MFA PRC [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China]. (2024). China and Finland: A future-oriented new-type cooperative partnership. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3265_665445/3286_664530/

Merkel, A. (2017, March 6). *An EU with different speeds* [Speech transcript]. Bundesregierung. https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/service/archive/archive/an-eu-with-different-speeds-479492

Mierzejewski, D., Kowalski, B., & Jura, J. (2023). The Domestic mechanisms of China's vertical multilateralism: the FOCAC and the 16+ 1 format case studies. *Journal of Contemporary China, 32(142),* 652-668.

Millard, R., & Kerr, S. (2024, November 26). Scots stand firm on Chinese wind turbine factory despite 'hostile state' fears. *Financial Times*. https://www.ft.com/content/5ce7959b-a50d-4125-a670-4411cb8a69c0

Mitrović, D. (2019). Six Years of'16+ 1'Framework of Cooperation–in Between EU, Expectations and Limitations 1. *Global Economic Observer, 7(1),* 205-214.

Mitrović, D. (2022). EU–China—Failed Prospects of Win–Win Partnership. *China and the Belt and Road Initiative: Trade Relationships, Business Opportunities and Political Impacts*, 213-236.

Morse, J. C., & Coggins, B. (2024). Your silence speaks volumes: Weak states and strategic absence in the UN General Assembly. *The Review of International Organizations, 19(3),* 515-544.

Mühlböck, M. (2019, October 30). Voting in European Union Politics. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.* https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/ acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1073

Nardelli, A. (2015, June 11). Ukip is Europe's laziest party, researchers reveal. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/datablog/2015/jun/11/ukip-europe-laziest-party-parliament

Neilsson, B. (2019). Precarious in Piraeus: On the making of labour insecurity in a port conces sion. *Globalizations, 16(4),* 559–574. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1463755

Nuno, A. (2024, January 29). *On the right side of the tracks: Slovenia builds second railway track to improve access to Koper port to cut emissions and boost trade*. European In vestment Bank. https://www.eib.org/en/stories/slovenia-second-railway-koper-emis sions-port

Pan, S. Y. (2013). Confucius Institute project: China's cultural diplomacy and soft power project tion. *Asian Education and Development Studies, 2(1),* 22-33.

Pan, Z., & Du, P. (2015). The logic of contingency in China's insistence on the non-interference principle. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences, 8,* 597-615.

Pencea, S. (2022). *Unwary dreams, rude awakenings: BRI in the developing world and emerging Europe. In China and the Belt and Road Initiative* (pp. 111–144). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-86122-3_6

Pepermans, A. (2018). China's 16+ 1 and Belt and Road Initiative in Central and Eastern Europe: economic and political influence at a cheap price. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, 26(2-3),* 181-203.

Pew Research Center. (2012, May 29). *European unity on the rocks: Greeks and Germans at polar opposites*. Pew Global Attitudes Project. https://www.pewre search.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2012/05/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Pro ject-European-Crisis-Report-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-May-29-2012.pdf

Pew Research Center. (2016, June 7). *Euroskepticism beyond Brexit: Significant opposition in key European countries to an ever closer EU*. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/06/Pew-Research-Center-Brexit-Report-FINAL-June-7-2016.pdf

Poggetti, L. (2021). *EU-China mappings: Interactions between the EU and China on key issues. Mercator Institute for China Studies.* https://merics. org/de/kurzanalyse/eu-china-mappings-interactions-between-eu-and-china-key-issues

Poirier, C. (2021). Xi Jinping thought. Institute for Security & Development Policy. [Issue brief]. https://isdp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Xi-Jinping-Thought-Xis-Struggle-Against-Political-Decline-IB-11.11.2021.pdf

Politico. (2003, November 26). Observer MEPs threaten to stand down at next year's elections. *Politico*. https://www.politico.eu/article/observer-meps-threaten-to-stand-down-at-next- years-elections/

Port Strategy. (2019, April 24). *China secures Bulgaria foothold*. https://www.portstrategy.com/news101/world/europe/china-secures-bulgaria-foothold

Powers, C. (2024, July 12). What does it mean to be non-inscrit? *Euractiv*. https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/the-brief-what-does-it-mean-to-be-non-inscrit/

Preiss, I. (2022, May 2). A year after they were sanctioned by China, these MEPs tell us how their lives have been impacted. *The Parliament Magazine*. https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/a-year-after-they-were-sanctioned-by-china-these-meps-tell-us-how-their-lives-have-been-impacted

Pridham, G. (2006). Assessing democratic consolidation in Central & Eastern Europe: The European dimension. *Acta Politica, 41,* 342-369.

PSSI [Prague Security Studies Institute]. (2023). *MEPs from Central Europe: A bulwark against authoritarianism.* Prague Security Studies Institute. https://www.pssi.cz/download//docs/11141_meps-from-central-europe-a-bulwark-against-authoritarianism.pdf

Puranen, M., & Kopra, S. (2022). Finland and the demise of China's Polar Silk Road. *China Brief, 22(24),* 9-14.

Qian, J., Vreeland, J. R., & Zhao, J. (2023). The impact of China's AIIB on the World Bank. *International Organization, 77(1),* 217-237.

Rajczyk, R. (2019). *China's influence in Balkans and Central and Eastern Europe* [Special Report]. Warsaw Institute. https://warsawinstitute.org/chinas-influence-balkans-central-eastern-europe/

Rakštytė, A. (2021, August 26). *How can the Baltic states support 5G security through transatlantic cooperation?* Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA). https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/how-can-the-baltic-states-support-5g-security-through-transatlantic-cooperation/

Repečkaitė, D., & Caruana Galizia, M. (2024). *Malta's golden visas: What problem are they solving and who benefits?* The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation. https://www.daphne.foundation/documents/reports/malta-golden-visas-who-benefits.pdf

Reuters. (2018, July 9). Bulgaria signs deal with China's CNNC for nuclear power project. *Reuters.* https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bulgaria-nuclear-china-idUSKBN1JZ1OE

Reuters. (2022, August 12). China's CATL to build $7.6 bln Hungary battery plant to supply Mercedes, BMW. *Reuters.* https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/chinas-catl-build-new-756-bln-battery-plant-hungary-2022-08-12/

Rice, S. A. (1925). The Behavior of Legislative Groups: A Method of Measurement. *Political Science Quarterly*, *40*(1), 60–72. https://doi.org/10.2307/2142407

Roberts, A. (2015, December 1). Chinese enterprises pump billions into Portuguese companies. Financial Times. https://www.ft.com/content/49d8145c-8489-11e5-8095-ed1a37d1e096

Rogers, B. (2019, April 26). *Propaganda in the name of Confucius*. Central Tibetan Administration. https://tibet.net/propaganda-in-the-name-of-confucius/

Rhodium Group. (2025). *China Cross-Border Monitor*. https://cbm.rhg.com/

Rudyak, M., Oud, M., Drinhausen, K., Bandurski, D., & Hellström, J. (2021). *The Decoding China Dictionary*. Edited by Malin Oud and Katja Drinhausen. Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. https://rwi.lu.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Decoding-China-Publication_FINAL.pdf

Rühlig, Tim & Jerdén, Björn & Putten, Frans-Paul & Seaman, John & Otero-Iglesias, Miguel & Ekman, Alice & Oehler-Sincai, Iulia. (2018). Political values in Europe-China relations A report by the European Think-tank Network on China (ETNC). https://merics.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/190108_ETNC_report_2018_updated_2019.pdf

Sacks, D. (2021, July 6). *What Xi Jinping's major speech means for Taiwan.* Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/blog/what-xi-jinpings-major-speech-means-taiwan

Sanz, I. (2014, February 11). Tibetan monk decries China pressure on Spain in rights case. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/world/tibetan-monk-decries-china-pressure-on-spain-in-rights-case-idUSDEEA1A0EE/

SCMP [South China Morning Post]. (2018, February 22). Merkel warns against China's influence in Balkans. *SCMP*. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2134214/merkel- warns-against-chinas-influence-balkans

Scicluna, N. (2024, August 15). Taking stock of the European Parliamentary elections for the future of EU-China relations. EuropeNow. Council for European Studies. https://www.europenowjournal.org/2024/08/15/taking-stock-of-the-european-parliamentary-elections-for-the-future-of-eu-china-relations/

Seaman, J., & Ekman, A. (2015). *Mapping Europe-China Relations A Bottom-Up Approach*. A Report of the European Think-tank Network on China ETNC. https://media.realinstitutoelcano.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/etnc-web-final.pdf

China-CEEC Secretariat [Secretariat for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries]. (2017, November 15). *Klaipeda Container Terminal to work with China's Cosco Shipping – media.* http://www.china-ceec.org/eng/zjzdo_1/201711/t20171115_6585088.htm

Shambaugh, D. (2007). China's propaganda system: Institutions, processes and efficacy. *The China Journal, (57),* 25-58.

Shi-Kupfer, K., Ohlberg, M., Lang, S., & Lang, B. (2017). *Ideas and ideologies competing for China's political future (MERICS Papers on China No. 5)*. Mercator Institute for China Studies. https://merics.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/171004_MPOC_05_Ideologies_0_web_1.pdf

Shirk, S. L. (2018). China in Xi's" new era": The return to personalistic rule. *Journal of democracy, 29(2),* 22-36.

Smith, H. (2017, June 18). Greece blocks EU's criticism at UN of China's human rights record. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/18/greece-eu-criticism-un-china-human-rights-record

Smit-Jacobs, K. (2023). *Chinese strategic interests in European ports. European Parliamentary Research Service,* EPRS,(February 2023), en http://europarl. europa. eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/739367/EPRS_ATA.

Stec, G. (2024, April 25). *European Parliament elections: How do EP parties see China? In MERICS China Europe 360°* (April 2024 Issue). Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS). https://merics.org/en/merics-briefs/european-parliament-elections-how-do-ep-parties-see-china

Suetyi, L., & Yidong, C. (2022). Mapping perception of China in Central and Eastern Europe. *Asia Europe Journal, 20(3),* 305-327.

Sullivan, J., & Wang, W. (2023). China's "wolf warrior diplomacy": The interaction of formal diplomacy and cyber-nationalism. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, 52(1),* 68-88.

Szczudlik, J. (2020). China-led multilateralism: *The case of the 17+1 format.* In N. Rolland (Ed.), An emerging China-centric order: China's vision for a new world order in practice (pp. 49–68). The National Bureau of Asian Research. https://www.nbr.org/publication/an-emerging-china-centric-order/

Szijjártó, P. (2016, June 9). *It is in Hungary's interests for China to be afforded market economy status.* Hungarian Government. https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-for

eign-affairs-and-trade/news/it-is-in-hungary-s-interests-for-china-to-be-afforded-mar
ket-economy-status

Taylor, M. R. (2019). Seeking common ground: Assessing the practical implementation of the
EU's normative power in EU-China dialogues (Doctoral dissertation, University of Bath).
https://purehost.bath.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/191975115/TAYLOR_The
sis_MRT_CORRECTIONS_Final.pdf

TCL. (2018, September 3). *TCL announces new research & development center in Poland*.
https://www.tcl.com/global/en/news/tcl-announces-news-research-development-
center-in-poland

TEU [European Union]. (2012). Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union. Official
Journal of the European Union, C 326/13. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-con
tent/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012M/TXT

The Slovenia Times. (2016, February 4). China and Slovenia – Building a firm foundation for
economic cooperation. https://sloveniatimes.com/10252/china-and-slovenia-build
ing-a-firm-foundation-for-economic-cooperation

Tien, N. H., Do, P. C., Phong, V. T., Van Thuong, P., & Van Dung, H. (2019). AIIB as a Challenger
for IMF and WB. *American International Journal of Business Management (AIJBM),
2(10),* 62-68.

Tonchev, P. (2020). *China's Soft Power in Southeast Europe*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/16005.pdf

Transparency International. (2025, February 11). *Corruption Perceptions Index.*
https://www.transparency.org/en/

Traynor, I. (2008, November 27). China cancels EU summit over Dalai Lama visit. *The Guardian*.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/27/china-dalai-lama-nicholas-sarkozy

Turcsányi, R. Q. (2020). China and the frustrated region: Central and Eastern Europe's repeating
troubles with great powers. *China Report, 56(1), 60-*77.

Valinsky, J. (2019, October 11). How one tweet snowballed into the NBA's worst nightmare. *CNN Business*. https://edition.cnn.com/2019/10/09/business/nba-china-hong-kong-explainer/index.html

Van der Klaauw, J. (2017). *Whipping in the European Parliament* (Master's thesis). Erasmus University Rotterdam. https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/37190/Whipping-in-the-European-Parliament-Jamie-van-der-Klaauw-Master-Thesis-Revised-.pdf

Van der Putten, F. P., Montesano, F. S., van de Ven, J., & Ham, P. (2016). T*he Geopolitical Rele vance of Piraeus and China's New Silk Road for Southeast Europe and Turkey*. Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations. https://www.clingen dael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Report_the%20geopolitical_relevance_of_Pi raeus_and_China%27s_New_Silk_Road.pdf

Ness, P. (1993). 8. China as a Third World State: Foreign Policy and Official National Identity. In L. Dittmer & S. Kim (Ed.), *China's Quest for National Identity* (pp. 194-214). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501723773-010

Vangeli, A. (2017). China's engagement with the sixteen countries of central, East and South east Europe under the belt and road initiative. *China & World Economy, 25(5),* 101-124.

Waisová, Š. (2024). THE END OF A PARTNERSHIP AND COOOPERATION. HOW SINO-RUSSIAN PARTNERSHIP RUINED PERCEPTION OF CHINA IN CENTRAL EUROPE. *Revista UNISCI, (66).*

Watson, R. (1998, February 25). MEPs attack new attendance rules. POLITICO. https://www.politico.eu/article/meps-attack-new-attendance-rules/

Weiss, J. C. (2019). How hawkish is the Chinese public? Another look at "rising nationalism" and Chinese foreign policy. *Journal of Contemporary China, 28(119),* 679-695.

Wintour, P. (2021, March 26). China imposes sanctions on UK MPs, lawyers and academic in Xinjiang row. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguard ian.com/world/2021/mar/26/china-sanctions-uk-businesses-mps-and-lawyers-in-xin jiang-row

WNN [World Nuclear News]. (2020, July 16). R*omania restarts approach to new Cernavoda units.* World Nuclear Association. https://world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Romania-restarts-approach-to-new-Cernavoda-units

Wnukowski, M. S., & Roules, D. F. (2023, January). *Will Poland remain an attractive place for Chinese investment?* Squire Patton Boggs LLP. https://www.squirepattonboggs.com/en/insights/publications/2023/01/will-poland-remain-an-attractive-place-for-chinese-investment

World Bank. (2024). *Total reserves minus gold (current US$) – China, 2023*. International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics and data files. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FI.RES.XGLD.CD?locations=CN

World Bank. (2025). https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/api

Xi, J. (2024, December 31). *Full text of President Xi Jinping's 2025 New Year message*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/zyxw/202412/t20241231_11524948.html

Xinhua (2020, December 7). *Spotlight: BRI projects play important role in helping recover CEECs' economy amid pandemic.* Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries. http://www.china-ceec.org/eng/zdogjhz_1/202012/t20201209_6566853.htm

Xinhua. (2024, December 8). Partnership with Chinese powers success at Croatia's largest wind farm. *Global Times*. https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202412/1324584.shtml

Xinhua. (2025, January 26). China-Greece wind power collaboration boosts renewable energy transition. *China Daily*. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202501/26/WS67959fd8a310a2ab06ea95d9.html

Young, A. (2023). *"We Chinese": The emergence of transnational social governance in the Chinese diaspora in Australia*. [Doctoral Thesis, The University of Western Australia].

Yuan, S. (2023) Tracing China's diplomatic transition to wolf warrior diplomacy and its implications. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 10, 837. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02367-6

Zeng, Y. (2024). Riding the Trojan Horse? EU Accession and Chinese Investment in CEE Countries. *Journal of Contemporary China, 33(147),* 486-501.

Zhang, F. (2017). Chinese thinking on the South China Sea and the future of regional security. *Political Science Quarterly, 132(3),* 435–466. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48585401

Zhang, H. (2018, August 20). *The case for Chinese aid: Why it complements, not displaces, Western aid.* Kennedy School Review. https://studentreview.hks.harvard.edu/the-case-for-chinese-aid-why-it-complements-not-displaces-western-aid/

Zhao, S. (2022). *The dragon roars back: Transformational leaders and dynamics of Chinese foreign policy.* Stanford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503634152

Zheng, C. (2016). China debates the non-interference principle. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics, 9(3),* 349-374.

Zhou, C. (2020, December 5). We're not Wolf Warriors, we're only standing up for China, says senior official. *South China Morning Post.* https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3112733/were-not-wolf-warriors-were-only-standing-china-says-senior

Zhou, T. (2024, May 17). Inheriting indissoluble bond between China and Hungary, continuing the tale of friendship. *People's Daily Online*. http://en.people.cn/n3/2024/0517/c98649-20171119.html

Zhu, Z. (2020, May 14). *Interpreting China's 'Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy'*. Pacific Forum. https://pacforum.org/publications/pacnet-26-interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Explanatory Notes

2. Notably there were paramount leaders between the two: Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, but both (the former more so than the latter) still adhered to Xiaoping's foreign policy paradigm with certain deviations that will be explored continuatively. Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy mantra stems from his "24-Character Strategy" (Zhao, 2022). Compared to that, the "Warrior Wolf Diplomacy" (Zhu, 2020) is not an officially communicated term, though its existence has been acknowledged by Chinese diplomats (Chen, 2023).

6. One must acknowledge that Greece is a special outlier here, as there are many things rendering it majorly different to the EU CEEC MS. Often rather associated with the concept of PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain) than CEEC, as its perhaps is rather thought of as a Southern rather than Eastern European country, Greece is not a post-eastern bloc state. Post-WW2 it was under the Truman Doctrine's protection. It is not a Slavic nation, and it is the oldest EU MS out of the CEEC. Then again, as for similarities with the other CEEC, it also is a young democracy compared to Western/Northern Europe (1974) and the selling of the harbor of Piraeus even predated the CEEC by four years.

8. While for Hungary and Greece such a statement can be made throughout the decade (this will be supported throughout the study), Poland and Czechia are more special. They both had high expectations going into the initiative and welcomed Chinese investments with openly for quite some time, but the geopolitical landscape changed (especially the Russian invasion in 2022), incentivizing them to distance themselves progressively from the initiative (Waisová, 2024; Karásková, 2022; Jakubowski et al., 2020).

10. Alluding to the phenomenon of the "cybernationalist" on the one hand, as China's Gen Z is found to be rather hawkish when engaging with criticism on China (Chen, 2023; Weiss, 2019) and on the other hand, Xi's changing tone towards Hong Kong & Taiwan, concretely, Xi saying that the unification of both each with China is absolutely imperative and "cannot be passed down from generation to generation anymore" (Sacks, 2021).

11. These three notions have been invoked by the CCP on multiple occasions: (1) *Communist heritage* (Berzina-Cerenkova, 2023, p.8; Godement & Vasselier, 2017, pp., 15, 118; Karásková et al., 2020; Lo & Lucas, 2021, p.16); (2) *Ancient civilizations*: This route has being taken for the communication with Greece (Dams et al., 2021, pp. 43-45; Tonchev, 2020, p. 12) and Hungary, with which China allegedly share cultural customs (Zhou, 2024); (3) *Shared history of suffering under colonial/imperialism* (Seaman et al., 2015, p. 11, 53; Szczudlik, 2020, pp. 57, 61-62).

12. Without the Council's approval the EP may vote on its own initiative resolutions, approve or reject the EC, censure motions against the EC and parliament's internal rules and budgetary control. The Council's approval is needed for most EU laws, budgetary decisions, trade agreements and international treaties as well as rule of law and democratic oversight.

And the Council alone may decide on common foreign & security policies, certain taxation, social security, certain economic policies as well as EU treaty amendments (TEU, 2012).

17. The following reasons could potentially be responsible for CEEC MS seats not rising, but rather slightly declining over time: (1) Lisbon Treaty capping the seats to 751; (2) combined with the UK's departure, which did not let CEEC expand much, as only 27 out of 73 seats were reallocated, of which CEEC only got 5 (EP, 2024b); (3) CEECs could theoretically have lost seats due to degressive proportionality, especially considering that CEECs' populations suffered losses from emigration mostly to non-CEEC MS (Bijak, et al. 2020); (4) many CEECs are smaller overall and thus they have smaller political landscapes, but like other nations, they also experience national party fragmentation, which makes it hard to secure seats as electoral thresholds are harder to reach for them.

19. (a) Correspondingly, the reference category (0) for each of the country-based groups is non-membership in the designated group. For the EPGs, EPP serves as the reference category. As the largest, centrist, and historically most stable group in the EP, EPP is known for its predictable, institutionally driven decision-making and aversion to radical positions. This makes it the most suitable benchmark for evaluating the performance of other EPGs.

(b) Three EPGs (EFDD, UEN & IND./Dem. Group) have been omitted for threefold reasons: (1) They didn't exist through all terms (UEN/IND./DEM. Group only in EP6, EFDD only EP6 and EP7), hence they didn't play a relevant role for the LRM; (2) after conducting initial analysis, it was found that their MEPs scattered all over the other EPGs, making their logical political consistency untraceable, as for example EFDD splittered into ID, Greens, EPP & Renew and only ~30% can be traced definitely to EPP; (3) they all suffered from great dropout/swap rates (e.g. Ind./Dem. Group was UKIP dominated and suffered a 89% dropout rate post EP8).

22. The Nordics, as well as the Netherlands are often referred to as countries feeling strongly about human rights and this notion can be supported by many metrics and their historical relationship to the issue (Freedom House, 2025). They are hosts to the various human rights related institutions such as: Civil Rights Defenders, Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Danish Institute for Human Rights, DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture, Netherlands Helsinki Committee, International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) and of course the ICJ. Furthermore, did they grant the Nobel peace prize to Liu Xiaobo and the Tucholsky Prize to Gui Minhai Prize, both staunch CCP critics.

8.2 Appendix B: Explanatory Tables

Term	Issue ID	Issue Description	Dimension
EP6	EP6_Issue_104	Tibet (case of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche)	Value-Based
	EP6_Issue_1972	EU-China relations	Geopolitics
	EP6_Issue_5541	50th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising and dialogue between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government	Value-Based
	EP6_Issue_3130	Dangerous toys made in China	Economics
	EP6_Issue_2468	Dialogue between the Chinese government and envoys of the Dalai Lama	Value-Based
	EP6_Issue_5272	Trade and economic relations with China	Economics
	EP6_Issue_4574	Situation in China after the earthquake and before the Olympic Games	Geopolitics
EP7	EP7_Issue_315	Motions for resolutions - Human Rights violations in China, notably the case of Liu Xiaobo	Value-Based
	EP7_Issue_263	China: Minority rights and application of the death penalty	Value-Based
	EP7_Issue_1559	Situation and cultural heritage in Kashgar (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China)	Value-Based
	EP7_Issue_1223	Tibet: Plans to make Chinese the main language of instruction	Value-Based
	EP7_Issue_1664	The case of Ai Weiwei in China	Value-Based
	EP7_Issue_3080	Forced abortion scandal in China	Value-Based
	EP7_Issue_2897	EU and China: unbalanced trade?	Economics
	EP7_Issue_4775	EU-China negotiations for a bilateral investment agreement	Economics
EP8	EP8_Issue_3280	China's market economy status (Motion by EFDD)	Economics
	EP8_Issue_10233	China, notably the situation of religious and ethnic minorities	Value-Based
	EP8_Issue_2652	The case of the missing book publishers in Hong Kong	Value-Based
	EP8_Issue_6358	Hong Kong, 20 years after handover	Geopolitics
	EP8_Issue_7681	State of EU-China relations	Geopolitics
	EP8_Issue_2419	EU-China relations	Geopolitics
EP9	EP9_Issue_515	Situation of the Uyghur in China (China-cables)	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_9798	A new EU-China strategy	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_12968	Reports of continued organ harvesting in China	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_10250	EU-Taiwan political relations and cooperation	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_11287	Violations of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_1800	The PRC national security law for Hong Kong and the need for the EU to defend Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_6091	The crackdown on the democratic opposition in Hong Kong	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_9688	Hong Kong, notably the case of Apple Daily	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_5562	Forced labour and the situation of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_13416	The human rights situation in Xinjiang, including the Xinjiang police files	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_8650	Chinese countersanctions on EU entities and MEPs and MPs	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_11119	Forced labour in the Linglong factory and environmental protests in Serbia	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_5578	Connectivity and EU-Asia relations	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_12066	Foreign interference in all democratic processes in the EU	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_13460	Resolution on the situation in the Strait of Taiwan	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_13461	Resolution on the deterioration of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong, notably the case of Jimmy Lai	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_13462	The implications of Chinese fishing operations on EU fisheries and the way forward	Economics
	EP9_Issue_13463	EU-China relations	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_13464	The abduction of Tibetan children and forced assimilation practices through Chinese boarding schools in Tibet	Value-Based
	EP9_Issue_13465	The security and defence implications of China influence on critical infrastructure in the European Union	Geopolitics
These only in the analysis of the authors	EP9_Issue_13466	People's Republic of China's misinterpretation of the UN resolution 2758 and its continuous military provocations around Taiwan	Geopolitics
	EP9_Issue_13467	Hong Kong, notably the cases of Jimmy Lai and the 45 activists recently convicted under the application of national security law	Value-Based
TOTAL:	all issues: 41	EP6: 7, EP7: 8, EP8: 6; EP9: 20; Value-Based: 21; Geopolitics: 14; Economics: 6	
Note: All issues here can be found within the datasets (VoteWatchEU, HowTheyVote) or on the EP's website.			

Table 15 - China-sensitive issue list

Table 16 - CEEC exemplary projects

Country	Project Name	Sector	Status	Investment Value	Chinese Partners	References
Bulgaria	Belene Nuclear Power Plant	Energy	Planned/Suspended	~€10 billion	China National Nuclear Corporation	(Reuters, 2018)
Bulgaria	Varna Port	Transportation	Planned	~€120 million	China Merchants Group	(Port Strategy, 2019)
Croatia	Pelješac Bridge	Transportation	Completed (2022)	~€420 million	China Road and Bridge Corporation	(Jukic, 2021)
Croatia	Wind Farm Senj	Energy	Completed (2021)	~€180 million	Norinco International Cooperation	(Xinhua, 2024)
Czechia	Dukovany Nuclear Power Plant expansion	Energy	Planned (Chinese companies excluded)	~€6 billion	Previously CNNC/CGN	(Dębiec & Jakóbowski, 2021)
Estonia	Tallinn Smart City Project	Technology	Planned (before withdrawal)	~€40 million	Huawei	(Rakštytė, 2021)
Greece	Port of Piraeus	Transportation	Completed (Acquisition)	~€1.5 billion	COSCO Shipping	(Bali, 2022)
Greece	Renewable Energy Projects	Energy	Various stages	~€1.5 billion	China Three Gorges Corporation	(China Energy Investment Corporation, 2024)
Hungary	Budapest-Belgrade Railway	Transportation	Under Construction	~€2.1 billion	China Railway Group	(Curic & Kálmán, 2021)
Hungary	Huawei European Supply Center	Technology	Completed	~€150 million	Huawei	(Gizińska & Uznańska, 2024)
Latvia	Riga Port Terminal	Transportation	Planned (before withdrawal)	~€80 million	China Merchants Port Holdings	(Freeport of Riga Authority, 2016)
Lithuania	Klaipeda Container Terminal (before withdrawal)	Transportation	Planned	~€100 million	COSCO (expressed interest)	(China-CEEC Secretariat , 2017)
Poland	TCL Research Europe (R&D Center)	Technology	Completed	~€580 million	TCL Corporation	(TCL, 2018)
Romania	Cernavodă Nuclear Power Plant (Units 3 & 4)	Energy	Planned (Agreement canceled in 2020)	~€7 billion	China General Nuclear Power Group (CGN)	(WNN, 2020)
Romania	Rovinari Power Plant	Energy	Planned (Stalled)	~€1 billion	China Huadian Engineering	(Gallop & Ciuta, 2019)
Slovenia	Port of Koper expansion	Transportation	Planned	~€250 million	China Communications Construction Company	(Istenič Kotar, 2022)
Slovenia	Hisense overtaking Gorenje	Household Appliances	Completed	~€ 330 million	China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation	(GMF, 2018)

Table 17 - Composite scores

Rank	Country	FDI (€B)	GDP (€B)	FDI/GDP (%)	Norm FDI	Norm FDI/GDP	Composite Score	Rank	Country	FDI (€B)	GDP (€B)	FDI/GDP (%)	Norm FDI	Norm FDI/GDP	Composite Score
1	Hungary	5.300	154.99	3.42	1.000	1.000	1.000	1	Malta	1.50	13.86	10.822	0.013	1.000	0.605
2	Greece	4.800	219.08	2.19	0.905	0.631	0.741	2	UK	93.80	2891.62	3.244	1.000	0.274	0.564
3	Slovenia	1.500	53.85	2.78	0.281	0.769	0.481	3	Finland	16.40	266.12	6.163	0.173	0.534	0.401
4	Poland	4.400	591.15	0.74	0.829	0.195	0.449	4	Portugal	9.20	228.57	4.025	0.096	0.349	0.248
5	Czechia	2.300	242.91	0.95	0.431	0.258	0.327	5	Germany	39.00	3806.06	1.025	0.414	0.062	0.203
6	Romania	1.800	240.29	0.75	0.336	0.198	0.253	6	Netherlands	20.30	902.36	2.500	0.214	0.179	0.193
7	Estonia	0.403	30.21	1.33	0.070	0.391	0.221	7	Ireland	9.80	398.45	2.460	0.102	0.200	0.160
8	Slovakia	0.840	104.89	0.80	0.152	0.205	0.192	8	Sweden	10.70	554.66	1.929	0.112	0.148	0.134
9	Croatia	0.540	61.56	0.88	0.096	0.234	0.164	9	France	22.70	2,603.00	0.872	0.240	0.047	0.124
10	Bulgaria	0.480	68.25	0.70	0.087	0.182	0.144	10	Italy	17.10	1,901.96	0.900	0.180	0.050	0.102
11	Lithuania	0.148	55.84	0.26	0.022	0.051	0.035	11	Spain	10.80	1,313.35	0.822	0.113	0.042	0.070
12	Latvia	0.030	34.52	0.09	0.000	0.000	0.000	12	Belgium	6.00	539.10	1.113	0.061	0.070	0.067
								13	Cyprus	0.27	25.60	1.055	0.000	0.0644	0.039
								14	Austria	1.7	444.5	0.383	0.015	0.000	0.061
								15	Denmark	1.4	359.00	0.390	0.012	0.001	0.005
								16	Luxembourg*	5.9	71.90	8.206	0.0476	0.7386	0.324

Note: Luxembourg, although hypothetically scoring a very high composite score has been excluded from the analysis, as it is the preeminent financial hub and recipient of Chinese ("phantom") FDI which then is mostly redistributed and not to be understood as actual investments into Luxembourgian infrastructure or companies (Balmas, 2022; Luxembourg for Finance, 2021, 2024; Association of the Luxembourg Fund Industry, 2015)

Note: $Normalized\ FDI = \frac{FDI_i - FDI_{min}}{FDI_{max} - FDI_{min}}$; $Normalized\ FDI\ on\ GDP = (\left(\frac{FDI}{GDP}\right)_i - \left(\frac{FDI}{GDP}\right)_{min}) / (\left(\frac{FDI}{GDP}\right)_{max} - \left(\frac{FDI}{GDP}\right)_{min})$; $Composite\ Score = (0,6\ x\ Normalized\ FDI/GDP) + (0,4\ x\ Normalized\ FDI)$

Note: "FDI-to-GDP" and "FDI Value" reflect Chinese FDI as a share of GDP and in absolute terms (EUR bn), respectively. Both are min-max normalized for comparability across countries.

Date	Topic & Content	Nature & Tone	Type
26.01.2009	Council Regulation (EC) No 91/2009 of 26 January 2009 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of certain iron or steel fasteners originating in the People's Republic of China (Council, 2009).	Firm trade defense measure with a strong protectionist tone	Formal decision
04.06.2013	EU imposes provisional anti-dumping tariffs on Chinese solar panels (EC, 2013)	Factual, procedural, assertive	EC implementing Council decision
21.10.2013	EUCO 241/13 – 16th EU-China Summit; focus on investment and transparency agreements; human rights and minority protection mentioned (Council, 2013)	Pragmatic economic agreement, mild value-based critique	Summit statement
29.06.2015	EU-China Summit Joint Statement; (Council, 2015).	Constructive and cooperative tone with a strong economic and strategic focus; milder than 2013	Diplomatic statement
28-29.06.2018	Joint statement of the 20th EU-China Summit; Economic balance; BRI; level playing field; steel overcapacity and market distortions; climate change; human rights and rule of law (Council, 2018).	Pragmatic, with mild critique	Joint statement
12.05.2019	Council & HR/VP EU-China strategy whitepaper; paradigm shift: cooperation/negotiation partner; economic competitor; systemic rival (EC & HR/VP, 2019).	Strategic, assertive with stronger critique	HR/VP & EC action recommendations
24.06.2020	Council Conclusions on Hong Kong; Human rights concerns, Hong Kong situation as a stress factor for EU – China relations (Council, 2020).	Predominantly concerning tone, critical	Statements
22.03.2021	Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/481 of 22 March 2021 amending Decision (CFSP) 2020/1999 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses (Council, 2021)	Decisive human rights-focused sanctions, strong condemnatory tone	Formal decision
29.09.2021	EC DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2021/2126 of 29 September 2021 amending the Annex to Regulation (EU) 2019/452 of the EP and of the Council establishing a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the Union (EC, 2021)	Formal, administrative, protective of EU interests	EC implementing Council decision
08.08.2023	Imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of optical fiber cables originating in the PRC (EC, 2023)	Firm trade defense measure with a strong protectionist tone	EC implementing Council decision
Oct. 2024	Tariffs on Chinese EVs (EC, 2024a)	Assertive trade defense measure with a protectionist and strategic tone	EC implementing Council decision
Dec. 2024	EU Imposes Sanctions on Chinese Entities Supporting Russia (EC, 2024b)	Expanded sanctions package, with a strong punitive and geopolitical tone	EC implementing Council decision

Note: Not all of these are not necessarily direct Council ruled decisions, but most are based on Council rulings which are carried out by the Commission.

*Table 18- Council related China-sensitive rulings*

Table 19 - Wolf Warrior Diplomacy exemplary incidents

Date	Entity	Event/Trigger	Wolf Warrior Diplomacy Reaction	Retaliatory Action	Source
2020	Australia	COVID-19 pandemic origins: Criticism of China's handling and lack of transparency.	Chinese diplomats globally accused countries like Australia and the U.S. of "politicizing the virus" and spreading "lies."	China imposed an 80% tariff on Australian barley and banned beef imports from key Australian suppliers.	(Duan & Liu, 2023; Australian Associated Press, 2020)
2021	Lithuania	Lithuania allowing Taiwan to open a de facto embassy.	Chinese Foreign Ministry condemned Lithuania for violating the "One China" principle.	China downgraded diplomatic relations with Lithuania and blocked Lithuanian exports from entering Chinese markets.	(Lau & Momtaz, 2021)
2019	NBA	NBA executive Daryl Morey's tweet supporting Hong Kong protests.	Chinese state media and officials demanded apologies, warning of severe consequences.	NBA games and merchandise were boycotted in China, and partnerships with the league were temporarily suspended.	(Valinsky, 2019)
2020-2021	UK	Criticism from the UK regarding Hong Kong's national security law.	China accused the UK of "colonial mentality" and claimed interference in its domestic affairs.	China imposed sanctions on British MPs and banned several UK entities from engaging with China.	(Wintour, 2021)
2017	SK	South Korea's deployment of the THAAD missile defense system.	Chinese officials publicly criticized South Korea for undermining regional stability.	Economic retaliation included boycotting South Korean products, halting tourism, and blocking cultural exchanges. Officials beseeched citizens to boycott korean products systematically	(Diaz & Zhang 2017; Yuan, 2023; Ismail & Aryodiguno, 2022)
2022	USA	Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.	Strong condemnation from China, warning of "serious consequences" for U.S.-Taiwan relations.	China conducted large-scale military drills around Taiwan and imposed sanctions on Pelosi and her immediate family.	(Gijs, 2022)
2017	Spain	Spanish human rights organizations investigated genocide allegations in Tibet.	Strong condemnation from China, claiming interference in internal affairs.	Warnings of diplomatic consequences and limited cultural exchanges with Spain.	(Sanz, 2014)
2019	Sweden	Sweden awarded Gui Minhai, a Chinese Swedish publisher critical of China, the Tucholsky prize.	Chinese ambassador to Sweden labeled the decision as "hostile" and issued warnings of serious consequences.	Trade meetings were canceled, and Chinese tourists were discouraged from visiting Sweden.	(Elmer & Wu, 2019)
2010	Norway	Norway awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese dissident.	China suspended diplomatic ties with Norway, labeling the award a direct insult to its sovereignty.	China banned Norwegian salmon imports and froze trade talks for several years.	(Garcia & Ngyuen, 2023)
2008	France	French President Nicolas Sarkozy met with the Dalai Lama.	China condemned the meeting as interference in its internal affairs.	China canceled a major EU-China summit and temporarily froze diplomatic exchanges with France.	(Traynor, 2008)
2012	Philippines	Philippines' initiation of arbitration over South China Sea disputes.	Chinese state media accused the Philippines of "illegal occupation" and warned of consequences.	China imposed import restrictions on Philippine bananas and other fruits, causing significant economic losses.	(Campbell & Salidjanova, 2016)
2020	Palau	Palau refusal to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan.	China expressed discontent over Palau's diplomatic stance.	Tourism ban affecting the tourism sector.	(Chang, 2020)
2018	Sweden	Sweden alleged mistreatment of Chinese family, when removed from hostel by Swedish police	Chinese embassy to Sweden, calls for immediate apology, says their lives have been endangered and they have been deprived of basic human rights	Chinese embassy issues travel warning.	(Kuo, 2018; Chinese Embassy in Sweden, 2018; Jerdén & Bohman, 2019)

Figure 7 - Chinese FDI to the EU 2000-2019 (Poggetti, 2021)

Western Europe and Scandinavia are the main recipients of Chinese investment
Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the EU, 2000–2019

97
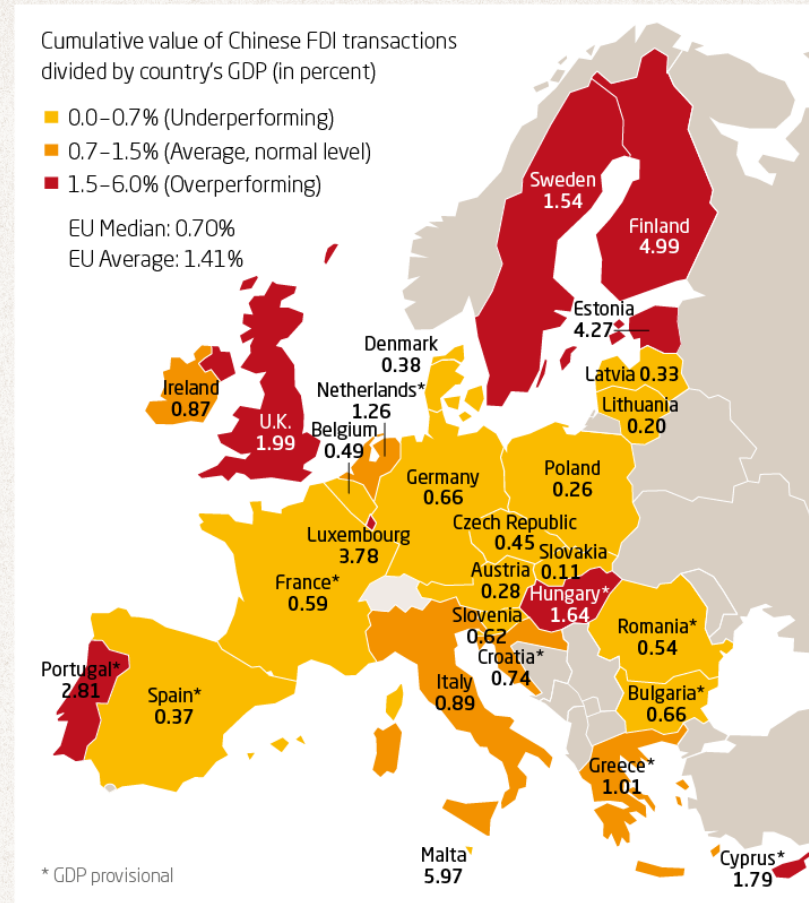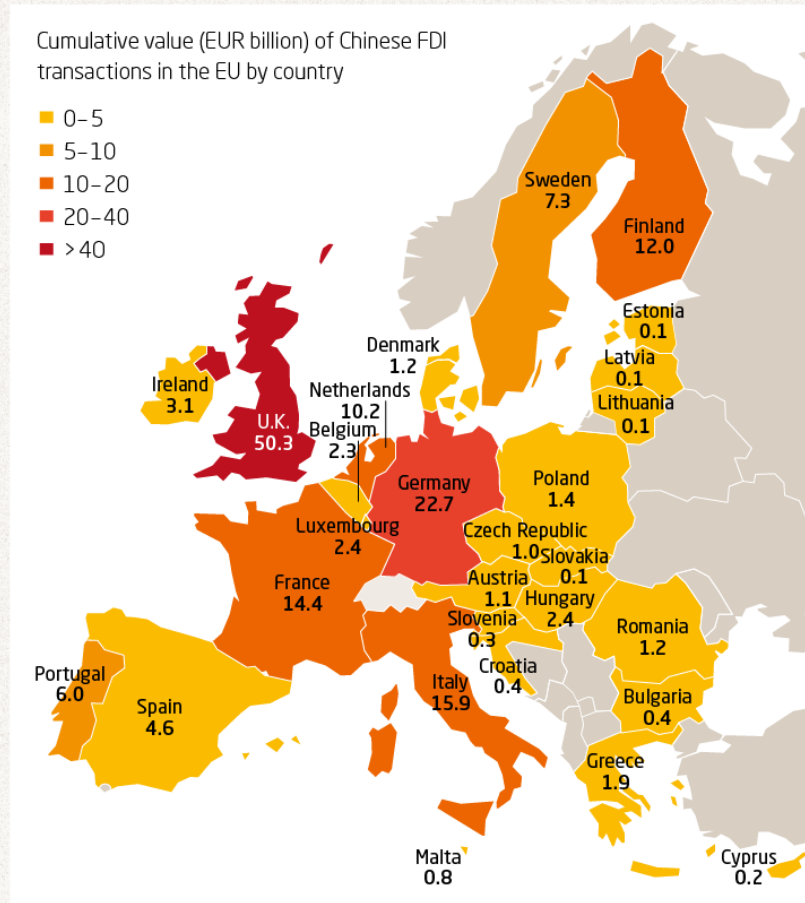
8.3 Appendix C: Supplementary Material

Table 20 - Countries ranked after China-sensitive voting behavior - sorted after "For"-ratio

Country	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	"For"-Ratio (%)	For Ratio p-value	"For"-ratio Significance	Participation Rate (%)	Participation p-value	Participation Significance	N
Slovenia	202	34	5	74	315	83.82	0.0025	**	76.51	0.1252		241
Finland	335	60	10	157	562	82.72	0.0006	***	72.06	0.8575		405
Luxembourg	151	33	1	61	246	81.62	0.0521		75.20	0.3782		185
Sweden	500	88	28	206	822	81.17	0.0007	***	74.94	0.1254		616
Poland	1,312	264	43	503	2,122	81.04	0.0000	***	76.30	0.0001	***	1619
Italy	1,730	302	103	947	3,082	81.03	0.0000	***	69.27	0.0001	***	2135
Romania	761	145	39	358	1,303	80.53	0.0002	***	72.52	1.0000		945
Lithuania	277	50	18	128	473	80.29	0.0328	*	72.94	0.8678		345
Bulgaria	385	75	21	190	671	80.04	0.0158	*	71.68	0.6709		481
Estonia	161	28	13	57	259	79.70	0.1597		77.99	0.0558		202
Denmark	322	54	29	154	559	79.51	0.0503		72.45	1.0000		405
Belgium	533	100	45	212	890	78.61	0.0430	*	76.18	0.0152	*	678
Latvia	187	44	10	96	337	77.59	0.4283		71.51	0.7331		241
Germany	2,240	503	190	1,034	3,967	76.37	0.1413		73.93	0.0435	*	2933
Spain	1,324	308	109	538	2,279	76.05	0.4185		76.39	0.0000	***	1741
Austria	451	93	50	161	755	75.93	0.7097		78.68	0.0002	***	594
Slovakia	327	74	30	123	554	75.87	0.7833		77.80	0.0060	**	431
United Kingdom	631	129	93	780	1,633	73.97	0.4372		52.24	0.0000	***	853
Croatia	215	51	26	26	318	73.63	0.5850		91.82	0.0000	***	292
Netherlands	630	186	49	263	1,128	72.83	0.1187		76.68	0.0018	**	865
Malta	119	28	17	70	234	72.56	0.4923		70.09	0.4527		164
Portugal	477	137	55	220	889	71.30	0.0226	*	75.25	0.0708		669
Ireland	268	84	31	125	508	69.97	0.0214	*	75.39	0.1570		383
Czechia	460	135	69	226	890	69.28	0.0005	***	74.61	0.1689		664
Hungary	322	117	40	410	889	67.22	0.0001	***	53.88	0.0000	***	479
France	1,578	460	358	743	3,139	65.86	0.0000	***	76.33	0.0000	***	2396
Cyprus	101	56	17	72	246	58.05	0.0000	***	70.73	0.5847		174
Greece	326	130	122	306	884	56.40	0.0000	***	65.38	0.0000	***	578

Note: Significance levels are based on two-sided binomial proportion tests comparing each country's value to the overall EU-wide average.

Table 21 - Countries ranked after China-sensitive voting behavior - sorted after participation rate

Country	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	"For"-Ratio (%)	For Ratio p-value	"For"-ratio Significance	Participation Rate (%)	Participation p-value	Participation Significance	N
Croatia	215	51	26	26	318	73.63	0.5850		91.82	0.0000	***	318
Austria	451	93	50	161	755	75.93	0.7097		78.68	0.0002	***	755
Estonia	161	28	13	57	259	79.70	0.1597		77.99	0.0558		259
Slovakia	327	74	30	123	554	75.87	0.7833		77.80	0.0060	**	554
Netherlands	630	186	49	263	1,128	72.83	0.1187		76.68	0.0018	**	1128
Slovenia	202	34	5	74	315	83.82	0.0025	**	76.51	0.1252		554
Spain	1,324	308	109	538	2,279	76.05	0.4185		76.39	0.0000	***	2279
France	1,578	460	358	743	3,139	65.86	0.0000	***	76.33	0.0000	***	3139
Poland	1,312	264	43	503	2,122	81.04	0.0000	***	76.30	0.0001	***	2122
Belgium	533	100	45	212	890	78.61	0.0430	*	76.18	0.0152	*	890
Ireland	268	84	31	125	508	69.97	0.0214	*	75.39	0.1570		508
Portugal	477	137	55	220	889	71.30	0.0226	*	75.25	0.0708		889
Luxembourg	151	33	1	61	246	81.62	0.0521		75.20	0.3782		246
Sweden	500	88	28	206	822	81.17	0.0007	***	74.94	0.1254		822
Czechia	460	135	69	226	890	69.28	0.0005	***	74.61	0.1689		890
Germany	2,240	503	190	1,034	3,967	76.37	0.1413		73.93	0.0435	*	3967
Lithuania	277	50	18	128	473	80.29	0.0328	*	72.94	0.8678		473
Romania	761	145	39	358	1,303	80.53	0.0002	***	72.52	1.0000		1303
Denmark	322	54	29	154	559	79.51	0.0503		72.45	1.0000		559
Finland	335	60	10	157	562	82.72	0.0006	***	72.06	0.8575		562
Bulgaria	385	75	21	190	671	80.04	0.0158	*	71.68	0.6709		671
Latvia	187	44	10	96	337	77.59	0.4283		71.51	0.7331		337
Cyprus	101	56	17	72	246	58.05	0.0000	***	70.73	0.5847		246
Malta	119	28	17	70	234	72.56	0.4923		70.09	0.4527		234
Italy	1,730	302	103	947	3,082	81.03	0.0000	***	69.27	0.0001	***	3082
Greece	326	130	122	306	884	56.40	0.0000	***	65.38	0.0000	***	884
Hungary	322	117	40	410	889	67.22	0.0001	***	53.88	0.0000	***	889
United Kingdom	631	129	93	780	1,633	73.97	0.4372		52.24	0.0000	***	1633

Note: Significance levels are based on two-sided binomial proportion tests comparing each country's value to the overall EU-wide average.

For Ratio Over EP Terms by Country (Corrected Averages)

100

Figure 9 - Countries by China-sensitive issues by participation rate

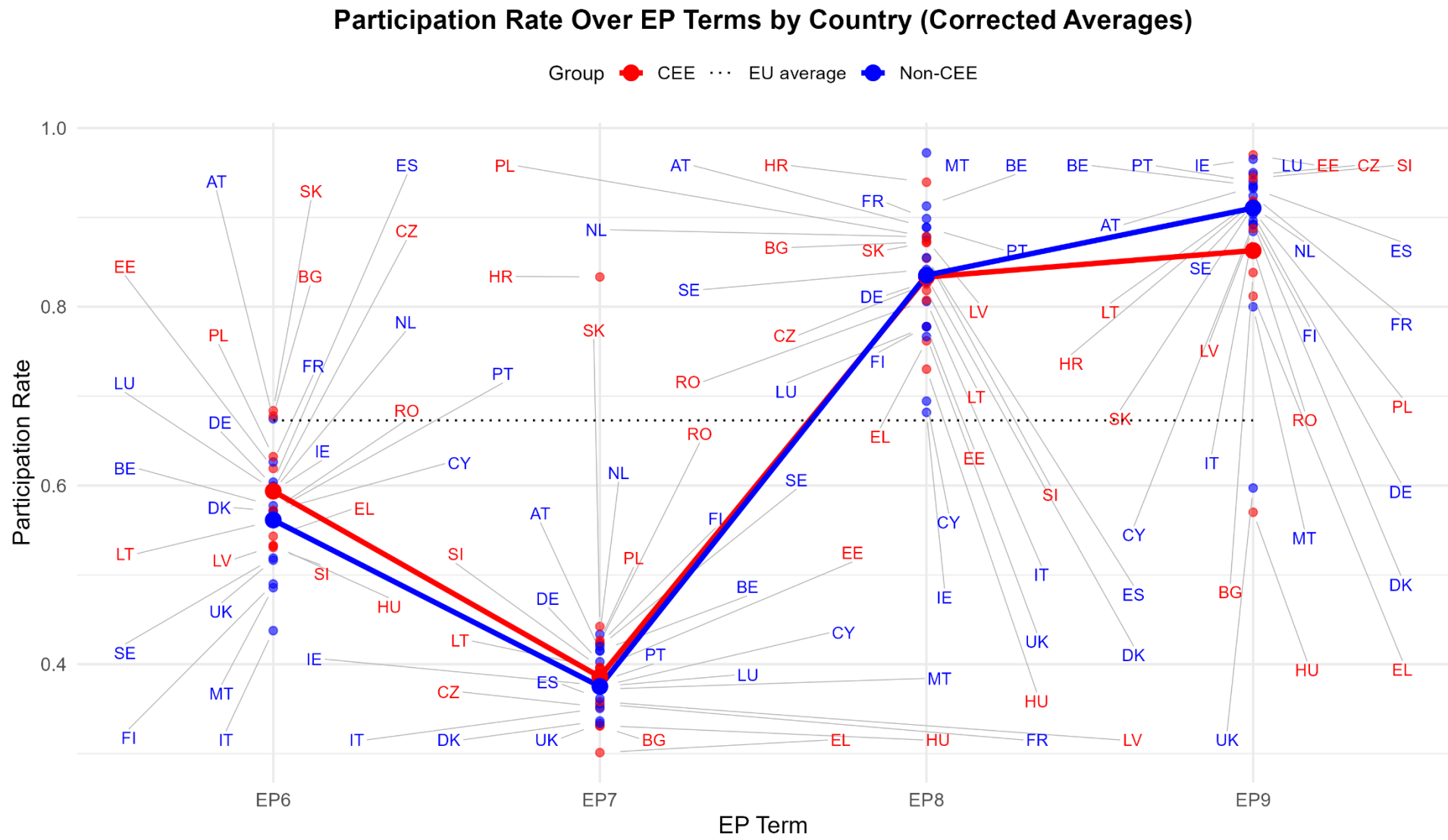Participation Rate Over EP Terms by Country (Corrected Averages)

Table 22 - CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues over EP6-EP9

EP Term	Group	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	For Ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
EP6	CEEC	580	48	82	455	1,165	81.69	60.94
	Greece-Hungary	143	19	15	152	329	80.79	53.80
	Non-CEEC	1,694	259	241	1,714	3,908	77.21	56.14
EP7	CEEC	414	116	22	815	1,367	75.00	40.38
	Greece-Hungary	89	21	1	240	351	80.18	31.62
	Non-CEEC	1,217	306	64	2,643	4,230	76.69	37.52
EP8	CEEC	730	135	46	156	1,067	80.13	85.38
	Greece-Hungary	115	45	28	64	252	61.17	74.60
	Non-CEEC	2,057	373	232	525	3,187	77.27	83.53
EP9	CEEC	2,563	601	124	355	3,643	77.95	90.26
	Greece-Hungary	301	162	118	260	841	51.81	69.08
	Non-CEEC	6,422	1,683	648	861	9,614	73.37	91.04
Overall (EP7–EP9)	CEEC	3,707	852	192	1,326	6,077	78.03	78.18
	Greece-Hungary	505	228	147	564	1,444	57.39	60.94
	Non-CEEC	9,696	2,362	944	4,029	17,031	74.57	76.34

Table 23 - CEEC vs Greece-Hungary on China-sensitive issues over EP7-EP9: Logarithmic Regression

Term	Dependent Variable	Coefficient	SE	Z	p-value	Significance	N
EP7	"For" Vote	-0.246	0.136	-1.81	0.0709	.	663
EP7	Participation	-0.381	0.127	-2.99	0.00275	**	1718
EP8	"For" Vote	-0.948	0.143	-6.64	<0.001	***	1099
EP8	Participation	-0.687	0.169	-4.07	<0.001	***	1319
EP9	"For" Vote	-1.449	0.081	-17.98	<0.001	***	3869
EP9	Participation	-1.422	0.093	-15.25	<0.001	***	4484
EP7-EP9	"For" Vote	-1.068	0.061	-17.46	<0.001	***	5631
EP7-EP9	Participation	-0.831	0.062	-13.35	<0.001	***	7521

Note:. p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Note: HC1 robust standard errors were applied to account for potential heteroskedasticity and small sample bias due to unequal group sizes between CEEC and the Greece-Hungary subgroup.

Table 24- CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues by dimension segmented groups

Dimension	Group	For Votes	Against Votes	Abstain Votes	Absent Votes	Total Votes	"For"-ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
/	CEEC	4,212	1,080	339	1,890	7,521	74.80	74.87
/	Non-CEEC	9,696	2,362	944	4,029	17,031	74.57	76.34
Economics	CEEC	603	138	39	105	885	77.31	88.14
Economics	Non-CEEC	1,439	309	92	243	2,083	78.21	88.33
Geopolitics	CEEC	1,874	310	153	341	2,678	80.19	87.27
Geopolitics	Non-CEEC	4,231	694	452	518	5,895	78.69	91.21
Value-Based	CEEC	1,735	632	147	1,444	3,958	69.01	63.52
Value-Based	Non-CEEC	4,026	1,359	400	3,268	9,053	69.59	63.90

Table 25- CEEC vs non-CEEC on China-sensitive issues by dimension segmented groups: Logistic Regression

Dimension	Dependent Variable	Coefficient	SE	z	p	Significance	N
Value-Based	For Vote	-0.026	0.038	-0.67	0.502		8976
Value-Based	Participation	-0.017	0.040	-0.42	0.675		
Geopolitics	For Vote	-0.087	0.051	-1.70	0.089	.	8570
Geopolitics	Participation	-0.415	0.074	-5.61	<0.001	***	
Economics	For Vote	-0.044	0.086	-0.51	0.61		2968
Economics	Participation	-0.019	0.124	-0.15	0.878		

Note: . p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Note: *HC1 robust standard errors were applied to account for potential heteroskedasticity in model residuals.
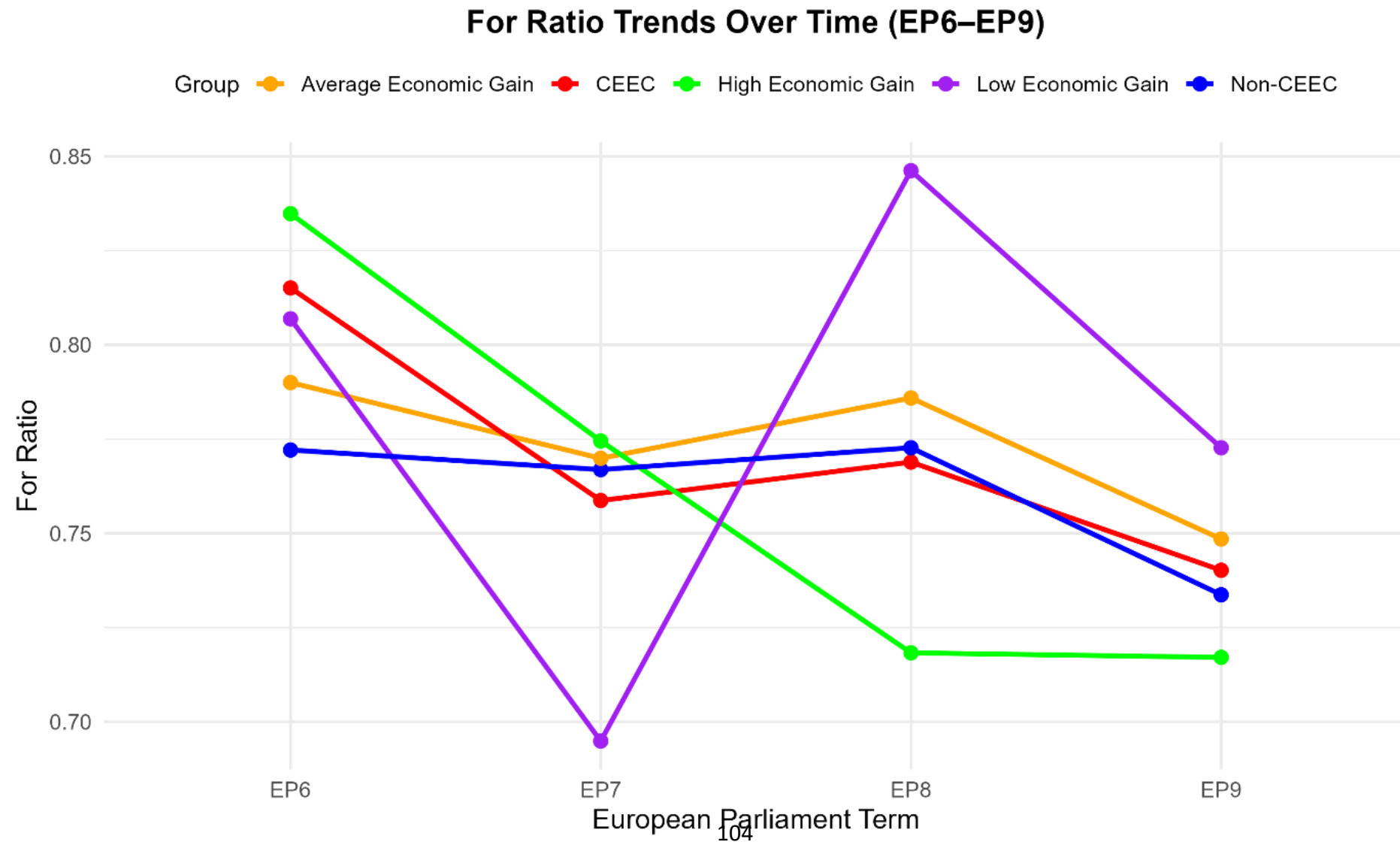
Figure 11- CEEC vs non-CEEC by economic involvement segmented groups over the terms by participation rate
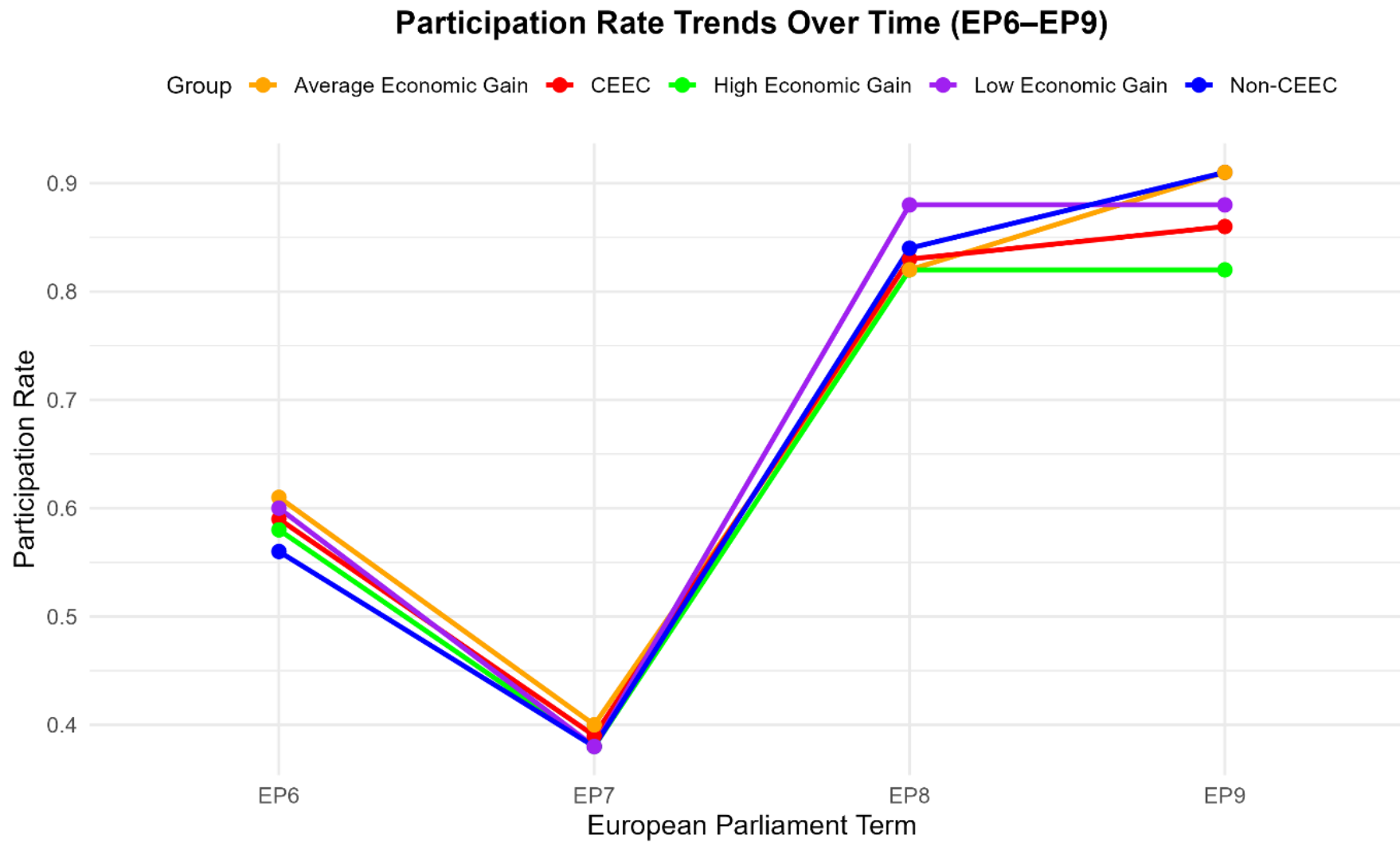
Table 26 - CEEC x country-based groups x EPGs: Contingency table

Group	For	Against	Abstain	Absent	Total Votes	"For"-ratio (%)	Participation Rate (%)
CEEC	4,192	1,070	332	1,832	7,426	74,94	75,33
Non-CEEC	9,568	2,316	886	3,865	16,635	74,93	76,77
Greece-Hungary	502	228	147	551	1,428	57,24	61,41
High economic gain CEEC	1,783	505	171	941	3,400	72,51	72,32
High economic gain non-CEEC	1,213	259	86	730	2,288	77,86	68,09
EPG: ECR	1,321	280	106	470	2,177	77,39	78,41
EPG: EPP	4,058	936	53	1,843	6,890	80,40	73,25
EPG: Greens/EFA	1,534	201	11	405	2,151	87,86	81,17
EPG: ID	594	365	402	172	1,533	43,64	88,78
EPG: NI	396	259	164	393	1,212	48,35	67,57
EPG: Renew	2,003	478	15	626	3,122	80,25	79,95
EPG: S&D	3,420	535	87	1,465	5,507	84,61	73,40
EPG: The Left	362	304	370	305	1,341	34,94	77,26
EPG: Unassigned	72	28	10	18	128	65,45	85,94

Note: A total of 128 votes could not be assigned to any group due to irrecoverable missing values.

For Ratio Across EP Terms (China-Sensitive Issues)
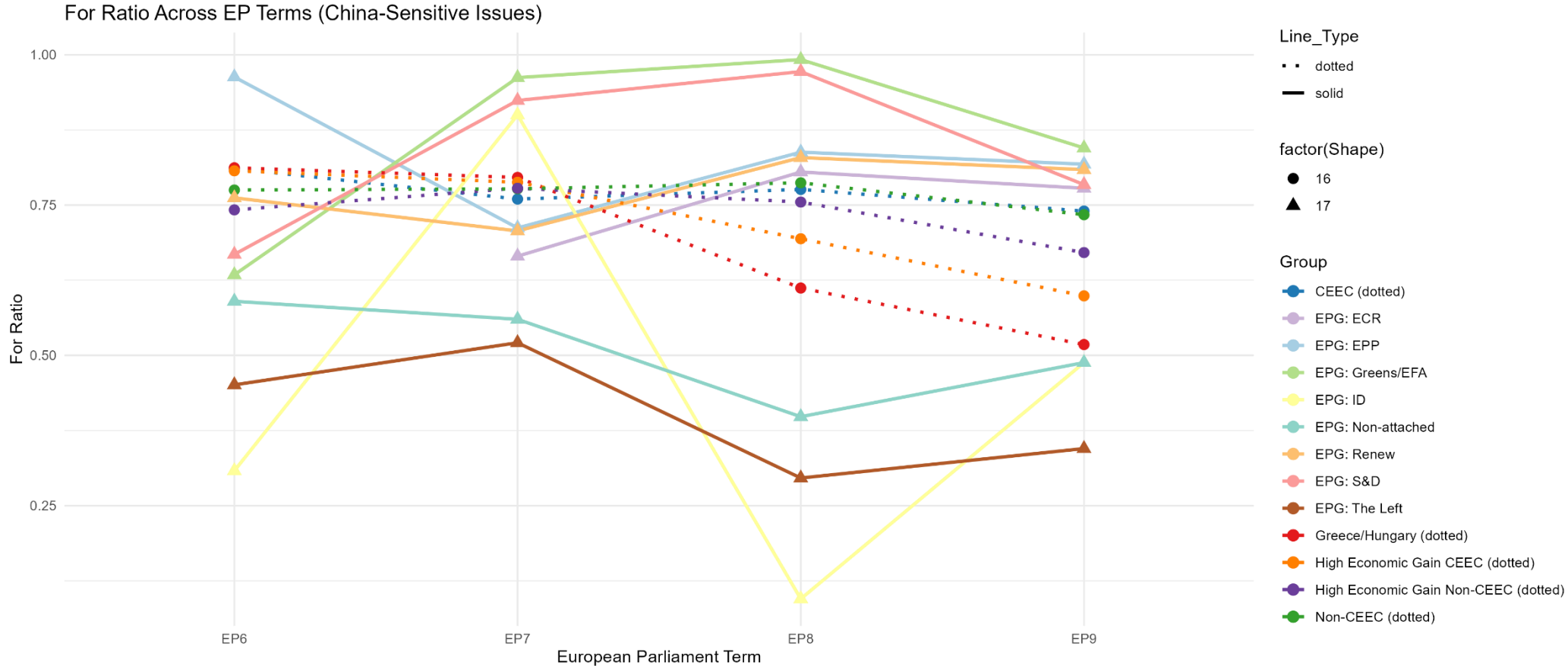
Table 27 - CEEC x country-based groups x EPGs: Logistic regression extended table by "For"- voting

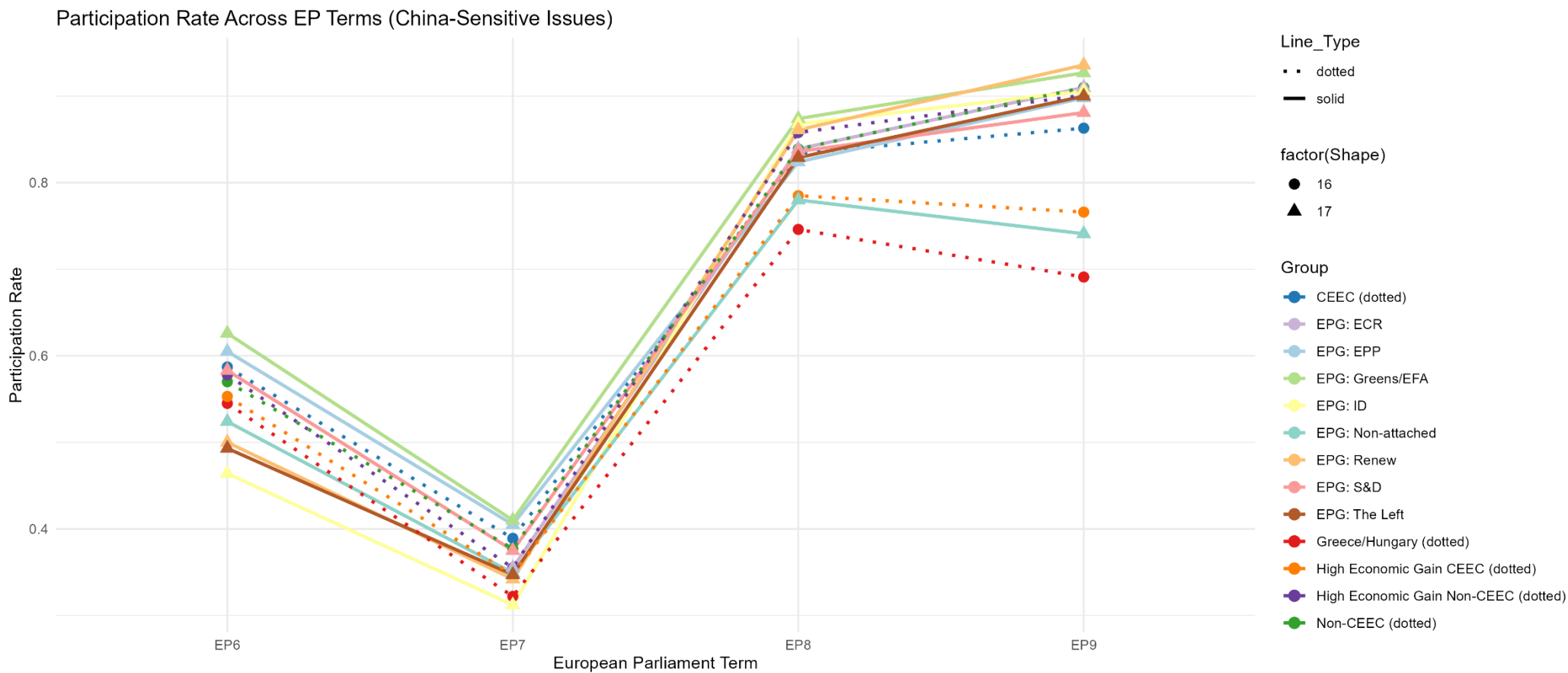| Variable	OR	OR 95% CI Lower	OR 95% CI Upper	Standard-ized Beta	AME	AME 95% CI Lower	AME 95% CI Upper	Boot CI Lower	Boot CI Up-per	Robustness	PP
(Intercept)	4.326	3.999	4.684	/	/	/	/	4.004	4.688	Baseline	/
CEEC	0.852	0.770	0.943	-0.074	-0.0971	-0.1306	-0.0637	0.773	0.941	Robust	0.755
Greece-Hungary	0.550	0.448	0.676	-0.128	0.0387	0.0127	0.0646	0.457	0.666	Robust	0.733
High economic gain CEEC	1.269	1.082	1.490	0.081	0.0081	-0.0144	0.0307	1.087	1.481	Robust	0.849
High economic gain non CEEC	1.051	0.916	1.209	0.014	-0.0386	-0.0625	-0.0147	0.915	1.204	Not Robust	0.820
ECR	0.794	0.692	0.912	-0.231	0.0695	0.0501	0.0889	0.704	0.912	Robust	0.775
Greens/EFA	1.691	1.441	1.992	0.525	-0.3772	-0.4063	-0.3481	1.446	1.972	Robust	0.880
ID	0.180	0.158	0.205	-1.715	-0.2906	-0.3278	-0.2535	0.158	0.209	Robust	0.438
NI	0.255	0.218	0.299	-1.366	-0.0017	-0.0208	0.0174	0.218	0.302	Robust	0.525
Renew	0.989	0.876	1.117	-0.011	0.0407	0.0250	0.0564	0.879	1.119	Not Robust	0.811
S&D	1.329	1.190	1.485	0.284	-0.4500	-0.4817	-0.4182	1.197	1.485	Robust	0.852
The Left	0.132	0.114	0.153	-2.023	-0.4500	-0.4817	-0.4182	0.114	0.153	Robust	0.364

Note: Robustness interpretation based on bootstrapped OR 95% CI exclusion of one.

Note: To address potential multicollinearity, as CEEC contains some of the countries that are already in the other country-based groups, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) testing was conducted, confirming that none of the groups included exhibit critical multicollinearity issues.

Table 28 - CEEC x country-based groups x EPGs by participation rate: Extended table

Variable	OR	OR 95% CI Lower	OR 95% CI Upper	Stand-ardized Beta	AME	AME 95% CI Lower	AME 95% CI Upper	Boot CI Lower	Boot CI Upper	Robust-ness	PP
(Intercept)	2.851	2.683	3.030	/	/	/	/	2.688	3.036	Baseline	/
CEEC	1.071	0.983	1.167	0.032	0.0121	-0.0032	0.0273	0.981	1.165	Partially Robust	0.621
Greece-Hungary	0.414	0.351	0.487	-0.209	-0.1561	-0.1848	-0.1274	0.352	0.487	Robust	0.504
High economic gain CEEC	1.177	1.026	1.351	0.057	0.0288	0.0045	0.0531	1.033	1.363	Robust	0.725
High economic gain non CEEC	0.630	0.571	0.696	-0.135	-0.0816	-0.0990	-0.0643	0.577	0.696	Robust	0.642
ECR	1.291	1.146	1.455	0.255	0.0470	0.0258	0.0682	1.156	1.457	Robust	0.786
Greens/EFA	1.587	1.405	1.795	0.462	0.0806	0.0607	0.1006	1.398	1.806	Robust	0.819
ID	2.805	2.375	3.332	1.031	0.1534	0.1337	0.1732	2.395	3.341	Robust	0.889
NI	0.952	0.830	1.094	-0.049	-0.0097	-0.0372	0.0178	0.837	1.091	Not Ro-bust	0.731
Renew	1.447	1.306	1.606	0.370	0.0662	0.0484	0.0840	1.304	1.608	Robust	0.805
S&D	1.047	0.966	1.136	0.046	0.0090	-0.0067	0.0247	0.969	1.141	Partially Robust	0.749
The Left	1.400	1.217	1.613	0.336	0.0607	0.0368	0.0846	1.213	1.608	Robust	0.800

Note: Robustness interpretation based on bootstrapped OR 95% CI exclusion of 1.

Note: To address potential multicollinearity, as CEEC contains some of the countries that are already in the other country-based groups, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) testing was conducted, confirming that none of the groups included exhibit critical multicollinearity issues.

Table 29 – Author analysis: Contingency table EP6-EP9

Category	Group	Supporting (%)	Relativizing (%)	Opposing (%)	Debaters Total	Authors (%)
CEEC	Non-CEEC	660 (87.6%)	33 (4.4%)	60 (8%)	753	900 (58.1%)
	CEEC	362 (94%)	13 (3.4%)	10 (2.6%)	385	650 (41.9%)
Country	Germany	84 (90.3%)	5 (5.4%)	4 (4.3%)	93	177 (11.4%)
	Poland	69 (97.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.8%)	71	180 (11.6%)
	Italy	109 (94.8%)	3 (2.6%)	3 (2.6%)	115	134 (8.6%)
	Spain	79 (84%)	4 (4.3%)	11 (11.7%)	94	105 (6.8%)
	France	84 (86.6%)	4 (4.1%)	9 (9.3%)	97	91 (5.9%)
	Romania	47 (90.4%)	5 (9.6%)	0 (0%)	52	94 (6.1%)
	Belgium	40 (90.9%)	3 (6.8%)	1 (2.3%)	44	94 (6.1%)
	Portugal	59 (84.3%)	2 (2.9%)	9 (12.9%)	70	48 (3.1%)
	Czechia	37 (97.4%)	1 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	38	78 (5.0%)
	UK	53 (74.6%)	8 (11.3%)	10 (14.1%)	71	38 (2.5%)
	Slovakia	37 (94.9%)	0 (0%)	2 (5.1%)	39	62 (4.0%)
	Lithuania	38 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	38	56 (3.6%)
	Sweden	23 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23	56 (3.6%)
	Netherlands	25 (96.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.8%)	26	52 (3.4%)
	Croatia	27 (90%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	30	31 (2.0%)
	Bulgaria	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14	41 (0.8%)
	Ireland	30 (73.2%)	0 (0%)	11 (26.8%)	41	14 (0.9%)
	Hungary	37 (88.1%)	3 (7.1%)	2 (4.8%)	42	12 (0.8%)
	Finland	16 (94.1%)	1 (5.9%)	0 (0%)	17	32 (2.1%)
	Austria	24 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	24	22 (1.4%)
	Latvia	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	11	32 (2.1%)
	Estonia	16 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16	26 (1.7%)
	Slovenia	12 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12	26 (1.7%)
	Greece	18 (81.8%)	1 (4.5%)	3 (13.6%)	22	12 (0.8%)
	Denmark	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10	8 (0.5%)
	Luxembourg	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6	12 (0.8%)
	Czechia*	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5	10 (0.4%)

Category	Group	Supporting (%)	Relativizing (%)	Opposing (%)	Debaters Total	Authors (%)
	Cyprus	3 (50%)	2 (33.3%)	1 (16.7%)	6	6 (0.4%)
	Malta	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	11	1 (0.1%)
EPG	EPP	361 (98.6%)	4 (1.1%)	1 (0.3%)	366	488 (31.5%)
	Renew	116 (98.3%)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0%)	118	425 (27.4%)
	S&D	230 (93.1%)	15 (6.1%)	2 (0.8%)	247	172 (11.1%)
	ECR	101 (95.3%)	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.8%)	106	275 (17.7%)
	Greens/Verts	62 (98.4%)	1 (1.6%)	0 (0%)	63	128 (8.3%)
	The Left	51 (52%)	12 (12.2%)	35 (35.7%)	98	23 (1.5%)
	ID	64 (72.7%)	5 (5.7%)	19 (21.6%)	88	25 (1.6%)
	NI	37 (71.2%)	6 (11.5%)	9 (17.3%)	52	14 (0.9%)

Note: Percentages in parentheses indicate proportion within Debaters or MEPs total.

Note: A minor data assignment issue resulted in 5 supporting debaters and 10 authors from the Czechia being assigned wrongly, separately from the main group (32 supporting, 1 relativizing debaters, and 78 authors). As this duplication represents less than 1% of the total dataset, subsequent analyses employed normalization scales rather than absolute counts, hence interpretability is not as deterministic as with voting data, the impact on findings will be suggested as negligible.

Table 30 - Author analysis: Contingency table EP7-EP9

Category	Group	Supporting (%)	Relativizing (%)	Opposing (%)	Debaters Total	Authors (%)
CEEC	Non-CEEC	594 (88.1%)	23 (3.4%)	57 (8.5%)	674	825 (56.6%)
	CEEC	325 (94.2%)	11 (3.2%)	9 (2.6%)	345	632 (43.4%)
Country	Germany	72 (88.9%)	5 (6.2%)	4 (4.9%)	81	160 (11.0%)
	Poland	55 (96.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.5%)	57	169 (11.6%)
	Italy	101 (96.2%)	2 (1.9%)	2 (1.9%)	105	116 (8.0%)
	Spain	77 (85.6%)	3 (3.3%)	10 (11.1%)	90	100 (6.9%)
	France	79 (86.8%)	4 (4.4%)	8 (8.8%)	91	88 (6.0%)
	Romania	44 (91.7%)	4 (8.3%)	0 (0%)	48	94 (6.5%)
	Belgium	34 (91.9%)	2 (5.4%)	1 (2.7%)	37	90 (6.2%)
	Portugal	54 (84.4%)	1 (1.6%)	9 (14.1%)	64	48 (3.3%)
	Czechia	32 (97%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	33	78 (5.4%)
	Slovakia	34 (94.4%)	0 (0%)	2 (5.6%)	36	62 (4.3%)
	Lithuania	33 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	33	53 (3.6%)
	UK	40 (75.5%)	3 (5.7%)	10 (18.9%)	53	28 (1.9%)
	Sweden	19 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19	52 (3.6%)
	Netherlands	22 (95.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.3%)	23	47 (3.2%)
	Croatia	27 (90%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	30	31 (2.1%)
	Bulgaria	13 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13	41 (2.8%)
	Ireland	28 (71.8%)	0 (0%)	11 (28.2%)	39	14 (1.0%)
	Hungary	34 (91.9%)	2 (5.4%)	1 (2.7%)	37	12 (0.8%)
	Finland	16 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16	30 (2.1%)
	Latvia	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	10	31 (2.1%)
	Estonia	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15	25 (1.7%)
	Austria	20 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20	17 (1.2%)
	Slovenia	12 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12	25 (1.7%)
	Greece	17 (81%)	1 (4.8%)	3 (14.3%)	21	11 (0.8%)
	Luxembourg	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6	12 (0.8%)
	Denmark	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9	8 (0.5%)

Category	Group	Supporting (%)	Relativizing (%)	Opposing (%)	Debaters Total	Authors (%)
	Czechia*	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5	10 (0.7%)
	Malta	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	11	1 (0.1%)
	Cyprus	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	5	4 (0.3%)
	EPP	326 (99.7%)	1 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	327	460 (31.6%)
	Renew	104 (99%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	105	408 (28.0%)
	S&D	207 (95.4%)	9 (4.1%)	1 (0.5%)	217	164 (11.3%)
	ECR	91 (94.8%)	1 (1%)	4 (4.2%)	96	259 (17.8%)
	Greens/Verts	51 (98.1%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	52	109 (7.5%)
EPG	ID	61 (71.8%)	5 (5.9%)	19 (22.4%)	85	25 (1.7%)
	The Left	45 (50%)	11 (12.2%)	34 (37.8%)	90	18 (1.2%)
	NI	34 (72.3%)	5 (10.6%)	8 (17%)	47	14 (1.0%)
	High economic gain CEEC	67 (97.1%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.9%)	69	194 (13.3%)
	High economic gain non-CEEC	120 (83.3%)	5 (3.5%)	19 (13.2%)	144	107 (7.3%)
	Greece-Hungary	51 (87.9%)	3 (5.2%)	4 (6.9%)	58	23 (1.6%)

Note: Percentages in parentheses indicate proportion within Debaters or MEPs total. Data includes EP terms 7–9 only.

*Note: A minor data assignment issue resulted in 5 supporting debaters and 10 authors from the Czechia being assigned wrongly, separately from the main group (32 supporting, 1 relativizing debaters, and 78 authors). As this duplication represents less than 1% of the total dataset, subsequent analyses employed normalization scales rather than absolute counts, hence interpretability is not as deterministic as with voting data, the impact on findings will be suggested as negligible

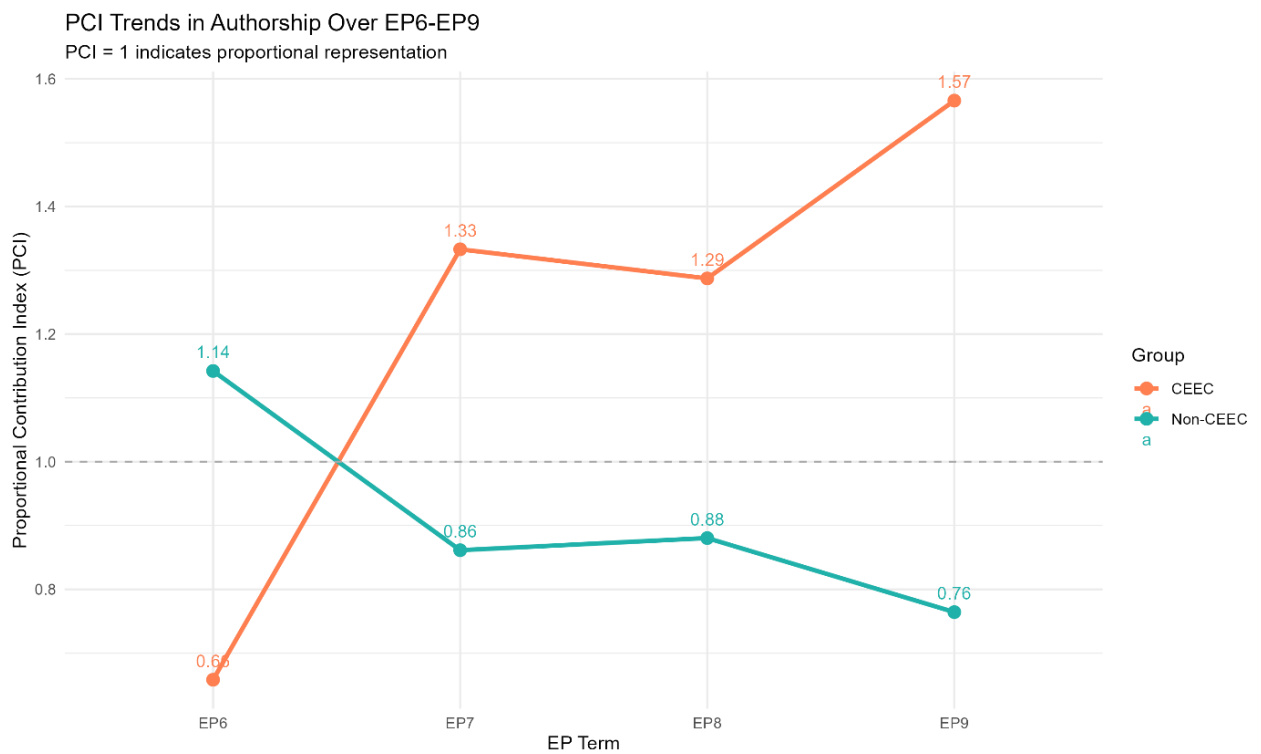*Figure 14- Author analysis: CEEC vs non-CEEC by authorship development*

PCI Trends in Authorship Over EP6-EP9
PCI = 1 indicates proportional representation

Figure 15- Author analysis: CEEC vs non-CEEC by authorship and debate contributions

Proportional Contribution Index (PCI) by Role
PCI = Actual contribution / Expected contribution based on group size

PCI = 1: Proportional representation

Figure 16- Author analysis: CEEC vs non-CEEC by debate contributions development

PCI Trends in Debate Roles (EP6-EP9)

PCI = Actual contribution / Expected contribution based on group size
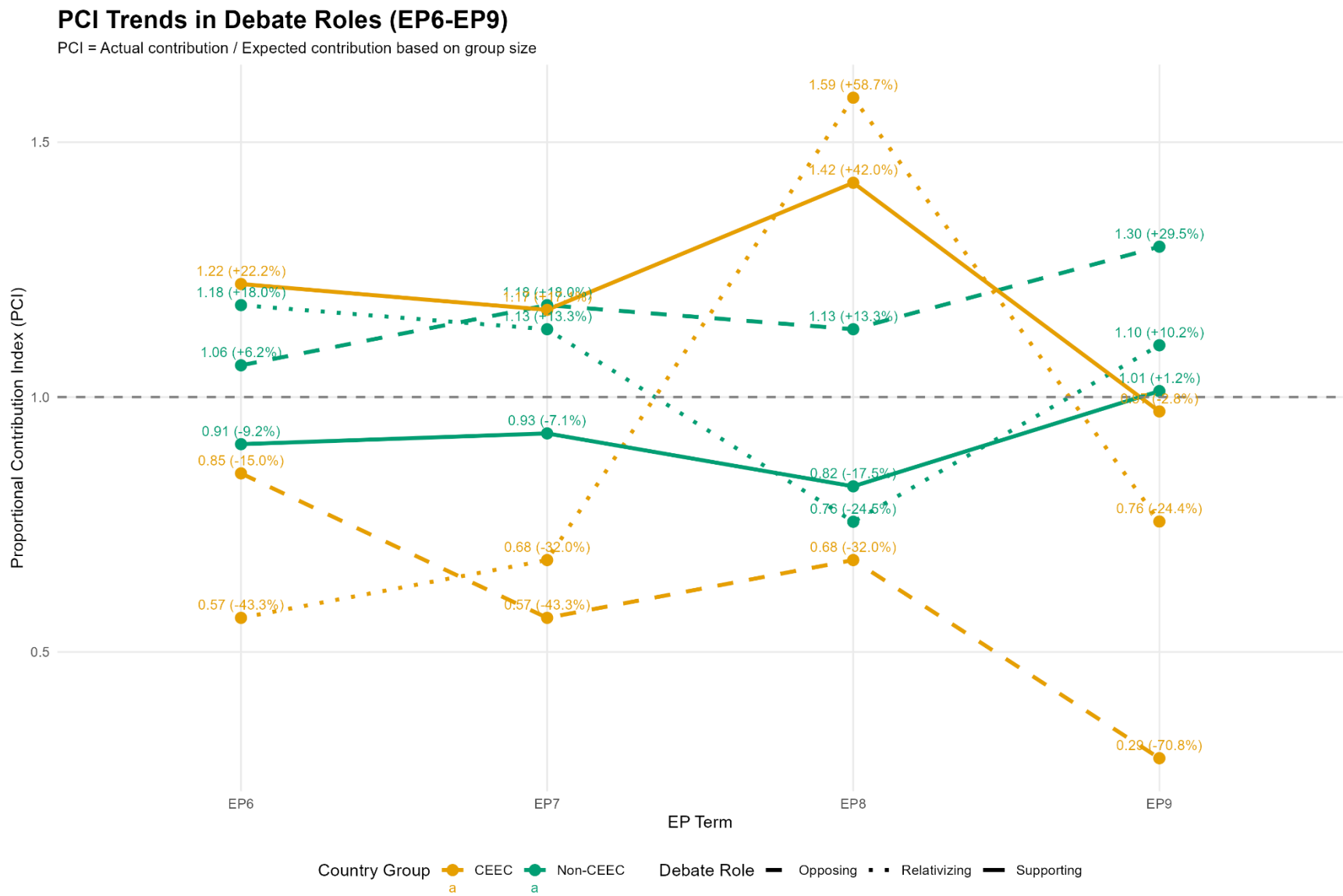
Figure 17- Author analysis: EPGs by authorship development

Normalized Authorship Trends by EPG (EP6-EP9)
Accounting for Group Size and Proportional Contribution
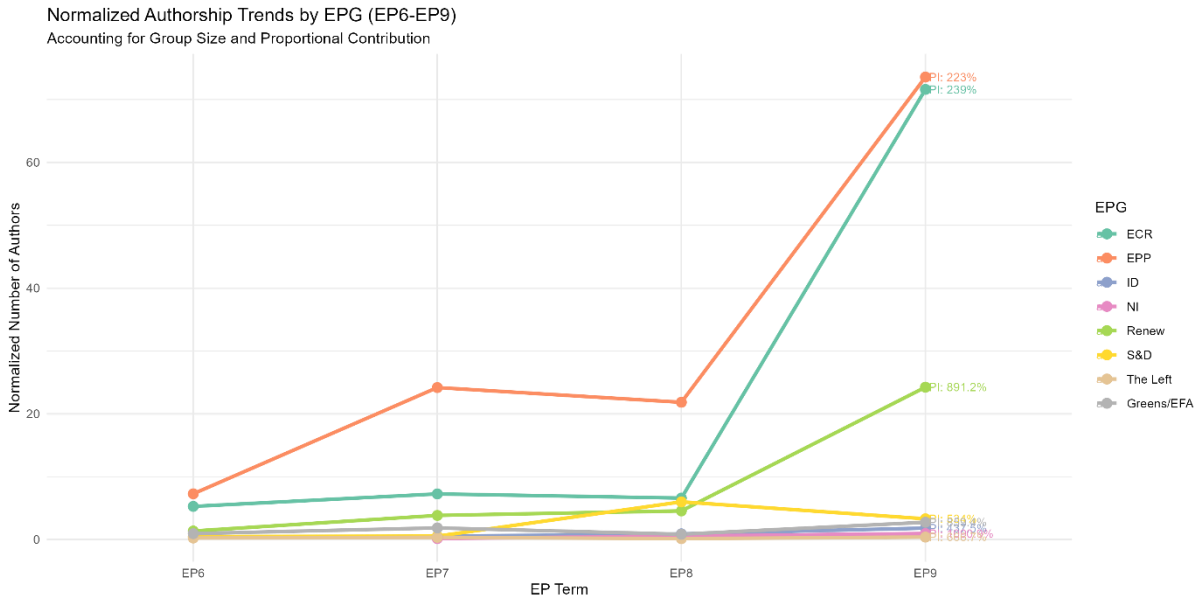
Figure 18- Author analysis: EPGs by authorship and debate contributions

Authorship Contribution by EPG
Expected vs Actual Authorship with Proportional Index
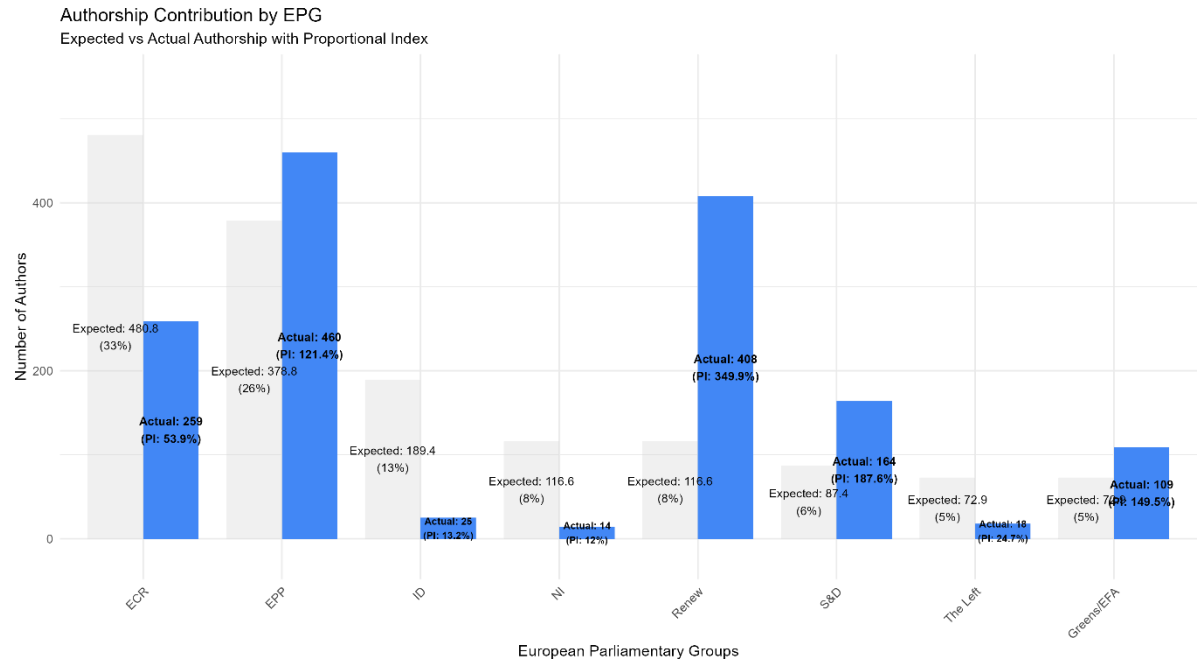
Figure 19- Author analysis: EPGs by authorship and debate contributions

Proportional Contribution Index (PCI) for Debate Roles by EPG

PCI = Actual contribution / Expected contribution based on group size | PCI = 1: Proportional representation

Authorship PCI Trends by Country Group

PCI = 1 indicates proportional representation

Country Group Performance Across Roles

PCI = 1 indicates proportional representation
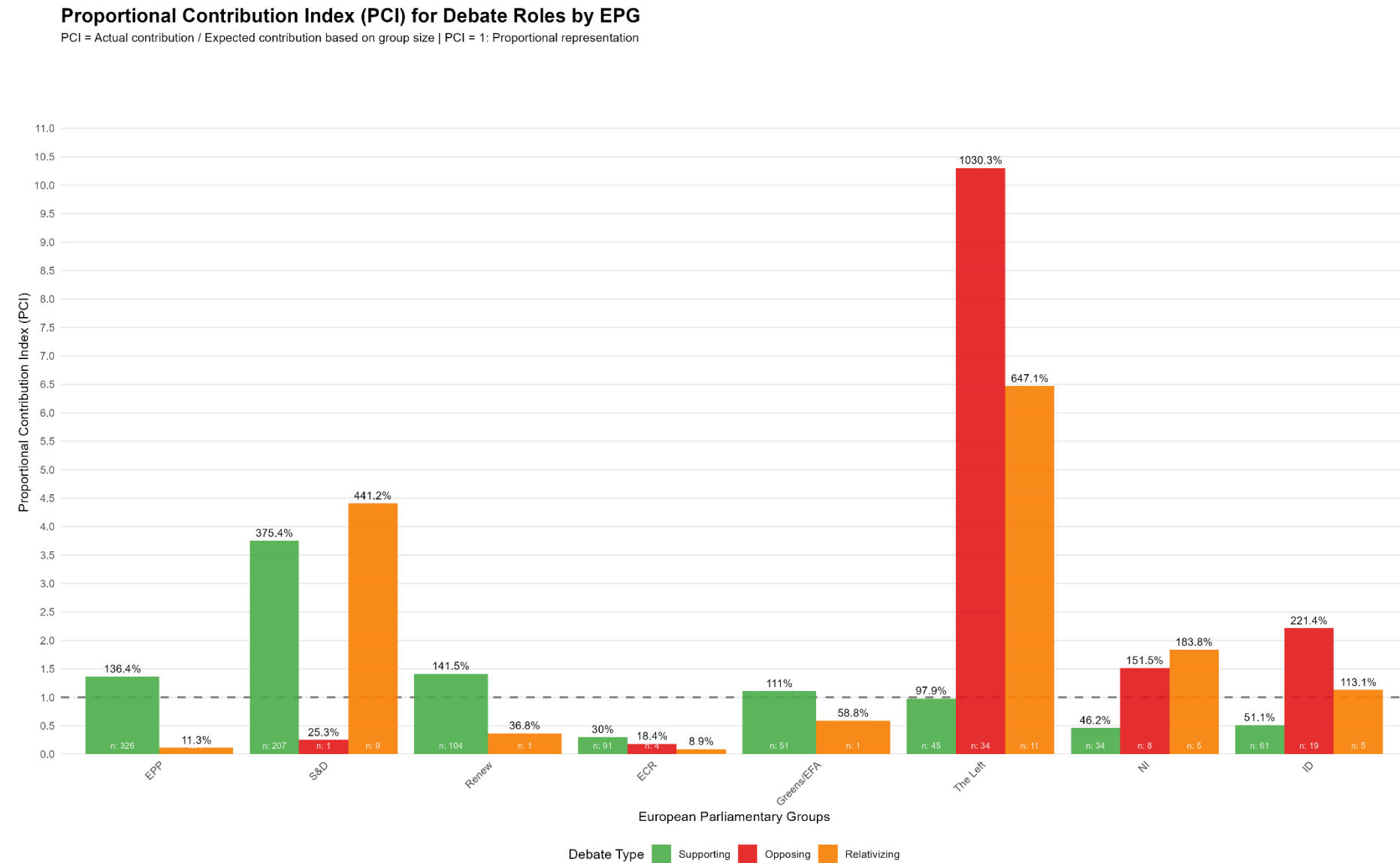
Figure 22 - Author analysis: country-based groups by debate contributions development

Debate Position PCI Trends by Country Group and Type
PCI = 1 indicates proportional representation
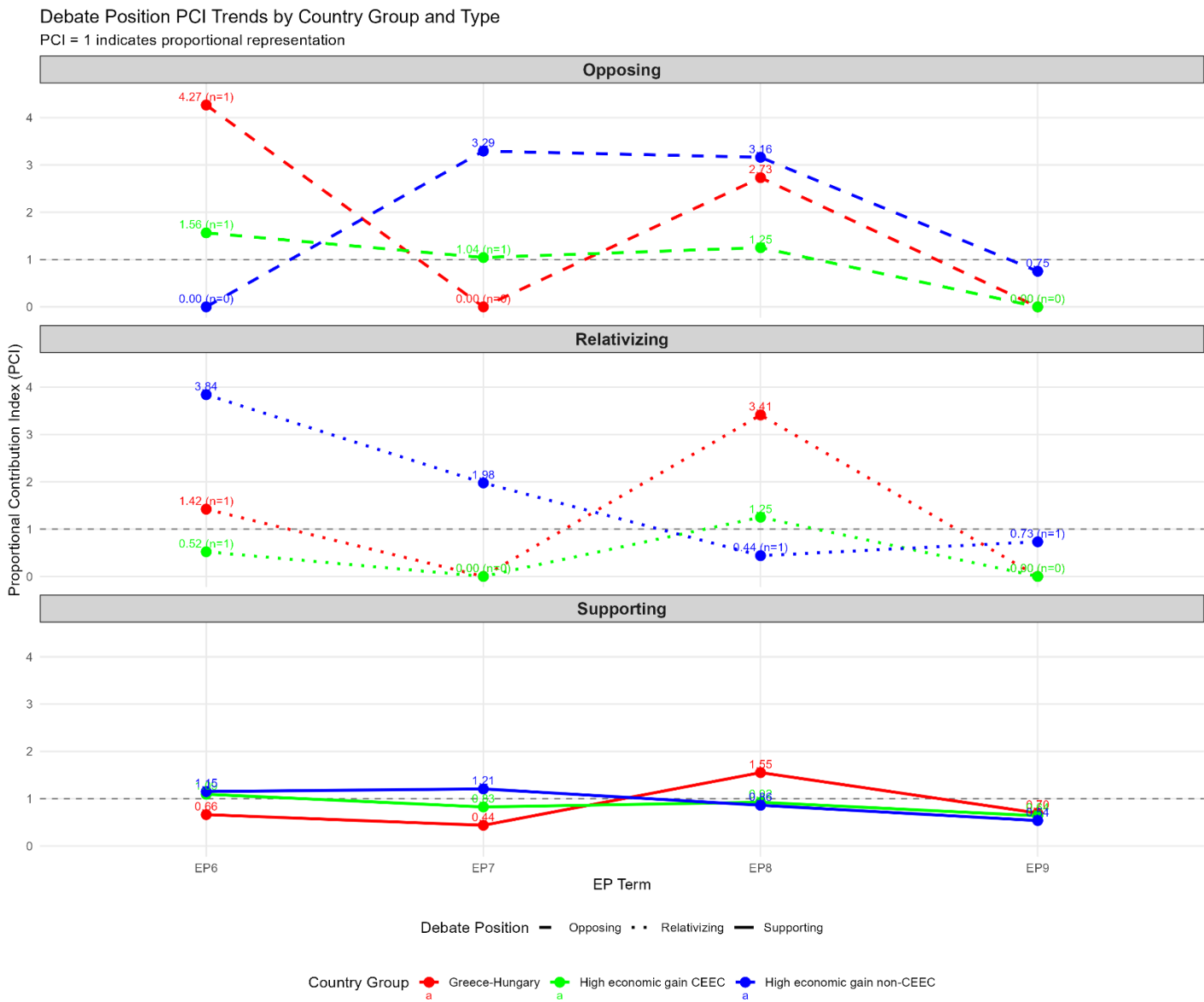
8.4 Appendix D: List of Tools and Resources Used

Software:

- R Version 4.4.1 (2024-06-14)
- R-Studio Version 2024.09.1+394 "Cranberry Hibiscus"
- Microsoft Word

Key R packages:

- *flextable, sandwich, margins, boot, ggplot2, dplyr, ggrepel, readxl, tidyr, lmtest, lm.beta*

Datasets used:

- HowTheyVote.org
- VoteWatchEU *dataset* (Hix, Frantescu, Hagemann, & Noury, 2022)