

NATO

MANAGING CHINA'S INFLUENCE OVER THE EURO-ATLANTIC REGION



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1. Welcome Letter

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is our utmost honour to invite you to The European International Model United Nations Conference 2022, taking place in a city very close to the heart of the international system; the Hague. In this Council, you will be exploring a committee that has been extremely active during these past months and has seen a renaissance in its purpose, goals, and need for Europe, the Atlantic, and beyond. The North Atlantic Treaty Alliance should, therefore, not be seen as simple military cooperation between its member state but as a political project too, one that has gone beyond the old adage of "keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down", as Lord Ismay, the first Secretary-General of NATO, said.

Within this Council and during the conference, you will learn a wide range of different soft skills and expand your knowledge of both NATO as an organisation and the topic of international security in our modern world. We purposefully did not put the Russo-Ukraine War on the agenda this year, both in respect of the difficult situations in which some delegates might find themselves and the sensitivities around the topic but also due to the fact that NATO aims to shape a large range of security threats that face us, with the climate crisis and China's rise to a global hegemon being two major issues that will continue to affect our world well into the future.

Throughout the conference, our chairs will always be available to help the delegates, and you should always feel free to reach out if you need assistance or suggestion on where to start your research and proposals. We cannot do this for you! But, with this guide, we aim to create a starting point for your preparation and begin your adventure that will be TEIMUN 2022 – the NATO Council.

Yours Sincerely,

The TEIMUN 2022 NATO Chairs

2. Introduction to the Topic

China's rise to global superpower-dom marks a seismic change in international relations. As China becomes more economically and militarily significant, it calls into question Western values of democracy and global order¹. NATO is confronted by these changes and the importance of finding ways to deal with challenges that China might pose, both locally and globally. China has changed much in the past 5 years, shifting to rhetoric where it predicts the end of the America-led Western liberal world order in favour of a realist power-based system, with power players like Russia and China maintaining spheres of influence over Europe and Asia².

This shift is being reflected in NATO's policies. In 2019, Jens Stoltenberg stated that China does not share NATO values and that their use of technology and the Internet to surveil their own people is unlike any seen before; he too argued for a stronger policy on China. However, as will be stated later as well, NATO is woefully behind on dealing with the Asiatic superpower. For many decades the general view on China has been that while it remains an authoritarian state, it shared many common goals with NATO: counter-piracy, crisis management, decreasing the number of weapons of mass destruction, and cybersecurity³. However, its new rivalry with the United States and human rights abuses in Hong Kong and Xinjiang have shown opposition to NATO's ideals and put China's foreign policy on the NATO agenda.

China is a multilevel issue, as many NATO members share a close trading relationship with the superpower. It has many economic and strategic partnerships across Asia, Africa and Europe, most notably the Belt and Road Initiative⁴. It also has proliferated its military and has shown a lean toward Russia with collaborative military drills; China has also demonstrated tacit support for Russia following its invasion of Ukraine⁵. According to the Economist, the results of the war in Ukraine will inform how China will approach the world going forward, especially the US and NATO⁶. Finally, China has spent the last few decades building a network of sharp power, which manifests as veiled economic threats, bullying, and underhanded propaganda.

¹ Kaim and Stanzel, "The rise of China and NATO's new strategic concept", NATO Defense College, 2022.

² Layne, "The US-China power shift and the end of Pax Americana", 2018.

³ Kaim and Stanzel, "The rise of China and NATO's new strategic concept", NATO Defense College, 2022.

⁴ NATO, "NATO 2030: United for a New Era", 2020

⁵ Economist, "The war in Ukraine will determine how China sees the world", The Economist, 2022.

⁶ *ibid.*

During this conference, the NATO council is asked to produce a resolution which will touch on these core issues related to the Asian hegemon. Consider how your member country sees China and how it wishes to approach these topics.

3. Problem specification

As the quote attributed to Napoleon goes: “Let China sleep for when she wakes, she will shake the world”.⁷ China’s ascent to the role of a superpower poses a unique challenge to the global community due to its authoritarian worldview and territorial and economic ambitions⁸. For a long time, not considered a threat to security, but a shift in China’s policies towards foreign relations with the West and Russia and their growing economic influence has brought it back under NATO purview. As the Alliance leaders declared in the 2019 summit: “for the first time in NATO’s history, we will sit down with the NATO Leaders and address the rise of China”⁹.

But what has prompted this change of policy for NATO? For almost seven decades of its existence, China has shared a lukewarm relationship with the Alliance, trending from a mutual interest in opposing the Soviet Union to China’s opposition to the expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe. The relations, however, remained positive for the majority of the two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union; in 2013, NATO secretary-general Anders Rasmussen claimed that: “we do not consider China to be a direct threat to NATO allies”¹⁰ and suggested a push to strengthen dialogue between NATO and China.

China has, however, shifted from this neutral position into the position of a multi-layered security challenge for the Alliance. The first aspect of this is the growth of its military; China has developed its military with a spectrum of modern warfare capabilities, such as long-range missiles or nuclear submarines.

Another challenge comes in the form of economic trade and infrastructure. Thanks to its economic initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, China has pushed its economic influence much beyond its borders. In the NATO 2030 report, NATO has said these initiatives could “have bearings upon communications and interoperability”, suggesting China’s influence over ports and other infrastructure within Allied borders could pose a security risk.

⁷ Ochab, “Let China sleep for when she wakes, she will shake the world”, 2021.

⁸ NATO, “NATO 2030: United for a New Era”, 2020.

⁹ Micheals, “A very different kind of challenge”? NATO’s prioritisation of China in historical perspective”, *International Relations*, 2021

¹⁰ Rasmussen, “NATO and Japan – natural partners”, delivered in 2013.

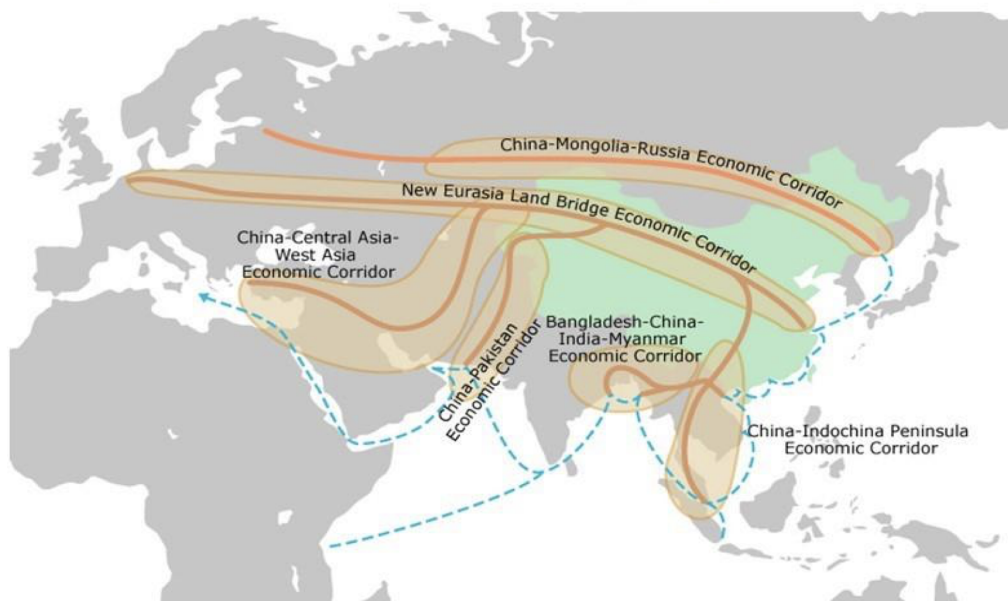
As can be seen, China's growth and foreign policy have shifted in the last decade. Moving away from an isolationist mentality, China now views itself in a position to dominate foreign policy both within the Asia-Pacific region and worldwide. China, as of now, does not share the moral values of the NATO alliance due to its human rights abuses and repressive regime¹¹. It is imperative for NATO to create a clear plan for dealing with the security challenges posed by China not only as a rival but as a vital partner.

4. QARMAS

4.1 QARMA 1: How will NATO address China's growing influence in the North Atlantic region?

China's influence in the North Atlantic region is to be understood in the language of primarily business and infrastructure. In 2013, China's President Xi Jinping introduced the ambitious infrastructure programme "The Belt and Road Initiative", a series of investments of trillions of dollars into ports, roads and pipelines, linking the rest of Europe and Asia to China. According to a 2020 Strategic Report by the NATO Economics and Security Committee (2020), the extent of China's ambitions for the project are not entirely clear. The project will have a lasting impact on the global geopolitical landscape. It is also important to understand that the BRI is a link between three initiatives: the Silk Road Economic Belt, the Maritime Silk Road and the Digital Silk Road.

The Belt and Road Initiative: Six Economic Corridors Spanning Asia, Europe and Africa



¹¹ Stoltenberg, "Speech", delivered in 2021.

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road are both infrastructure projects meant to create economic corridors from China to Eurasia and Africa¹². These initiatives also include various non-material elements, loans or trade deals and establishing economic zones for investment. They also include efforts for interpersonal links, such as scholarships at Chinese universities or various media initiatives, meant to create further linkage between partner countries and China¹³. For example, China promotes their own businesses within partner countries to provide a wider market share and promote soft power abroad.

The Digital Silk Road is the most recent initiative, focused largely on the technological sector and driven by Chinese technological companies¹⁴. The aim seems to be to push China into the lead in various high-tech fields, promoting them as the “standard-setters” within the technological sphere. This initiative is particularly worrying because of China’s track record of using technology for domestic surveillance and espionage and a collection of a multitude of data. An interesting note is the DSR’s implication for space policy, where China has both military and economic ambitions.

Within the North-Atlantic neighbourhood, China has fostered several projects in the Mediterranean and across Europe, reaching as far as Belgium and the Netherlands¹⁵. In 2021, three-quarters of EU member states counted themselves as members, which key investments like the Port of Piraeus in Greece or the Budapest-Belgrade highway¹⁶. China also has investments in many Eastern European countries, several of which are candidates for EU membership¹⁷. These investments gained China’s influence on policy in the region, with several EU states resisting a ban on the network provider Huawei as well as conflicts about the bloc’s approach towards its relationship with China¹⁸. This tension between the bloc’s view of China as a strategic partner over a threat is also a part of the tension between the US and the EU, which could become a fault line in the Alliance itself¹⁹.

¹² OECD, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance”, 2020

¹³ OECD, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance”, 2020

¹⁴ OECD, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance”, 2020

¹⁵ *ibid*

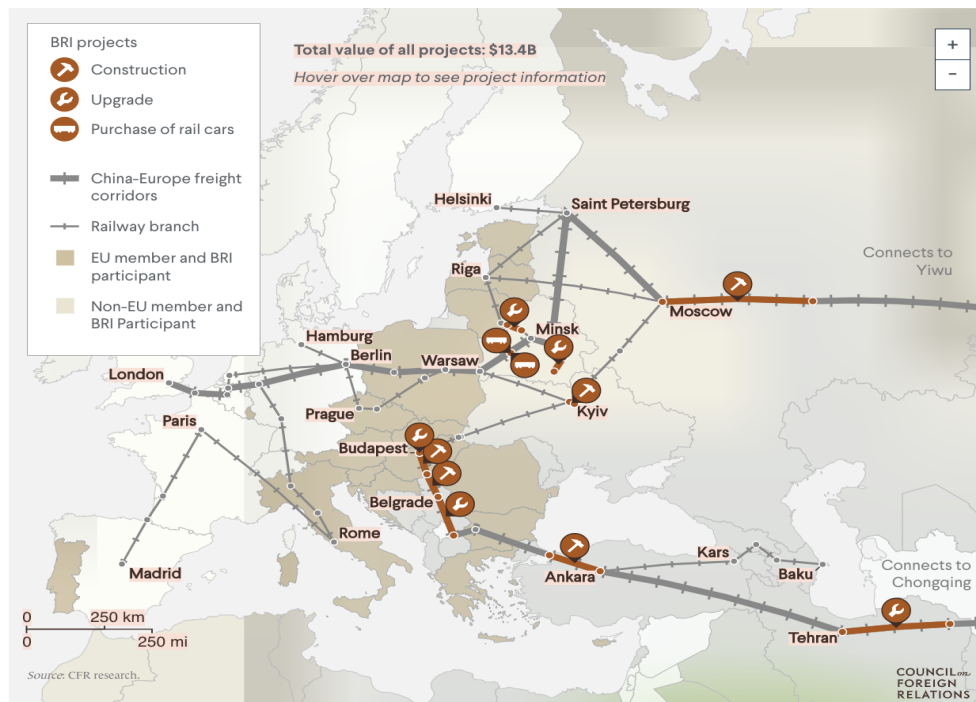
¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ Tybring-Giedde, “China’s Belt and Road: A Strategic and Economic Assessment”, 2020

China's growing economic influence in the North Atlantic region is a key concern for



the Alliance, as it affects both military and policy interests. There are concerns about the possible use of infrastructure and digitalisation projects for surveillance by the Chinese state, as well as debt traps or corruption. The BRI remains a powerful economic force for the CCP; hence, forming a united foreign policy on Chinese business practices between the Allies is a goal the Alliance must strive towards.

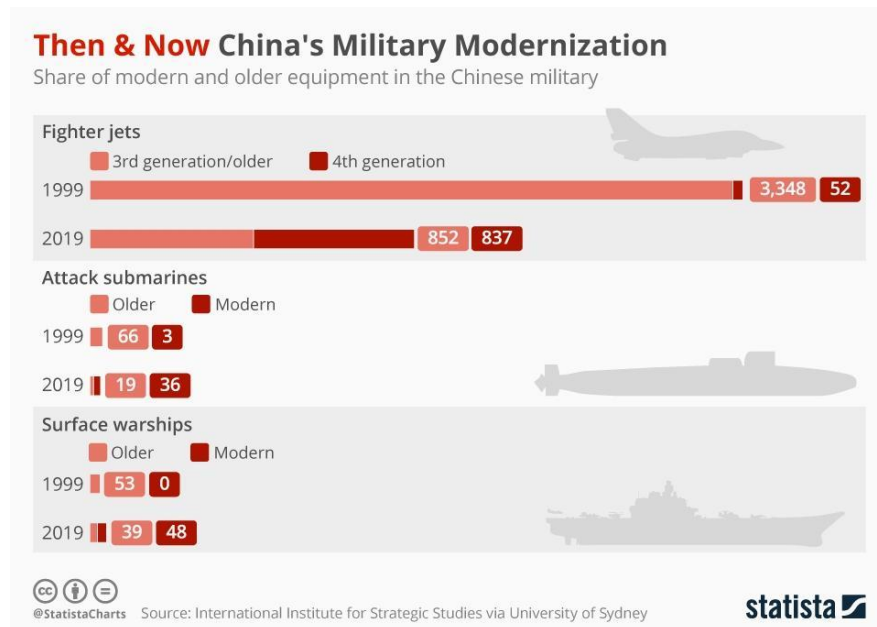
4.2 QARMA 2: What policy will NATO seek to employ regarding China's military growth?

As a growing world power, China's military growth has become more of a talking point, especially for Allies and Global Partners invested in the Indo-Pacific region. In a communiqué from Brussels in 2021, NATO labelled China as a possible challenge, stating the country's "ambitious and assertive behaviour", especially in relation to their plans to expand their military ²⁰. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has experienced a strong surge in development since the fall of the Soviet Union but most notably under Xi Jinping, the current party leader, who has placed military modernisation as a priority and has linked it to his goals for China as a prosperous and powerful nation. In 2017, Mr. Xi presented his goals for the PLA:

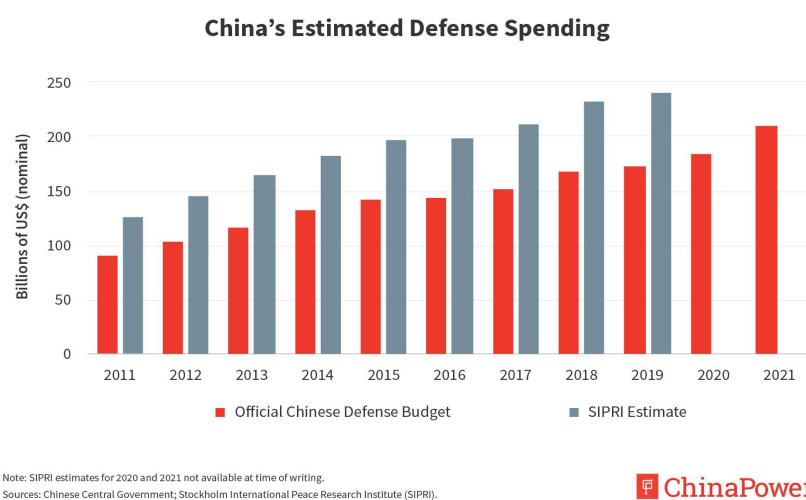
1. Achieve mechanisation of their armed forces and strive towards a "networked" army by 2020

²⁰ NATO, "Brussels Summit Communiqué", 2021.

2. Achieve full modernisation by 2035
3. Attain a “world-class” military 2049



Notably, the aims of the Chinese Communist Party are somewhat vague. Their military ambitions are presented as purely defensive; the objective is to protect Chinese sovereign interests. This approach is dubbed as “active defence” against a “strong enemy” (a possible reference to the US) and to support and promote their power locally and globally²¹. Chinese military spending has reflected these aims, with their military expenditure increasing



²¹ US Department of Defense, “Military and Security Developments involving the People’s Republic of China”, 2021.

by 85 percent between 2009 and 2019.²² Notably, the budget itself does not account for all the spending on the military, as according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2021), Chinese spending is realistically around 240 billion over its 185 billion budget.

One of the key areas of concern for NATO is the growth of China's nuclear arsenal. According to a speech delivered by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg in late 2021, China is proliferating its number of nuclear warheads and delivery systems, unchecked and with no real transparency. According to the US DoD (Department of Defense) 2021 Report, China intends to raise its number of warheads from 350 to 700 by 2027. China still holds its "no first use policy", which promises never to use nuclear weapons first or to threaten other their use against non-nuclear states or regions; the CCP reiterated this pledge in 2019²³. While this policy does seem to remain a baseline for its use and development of nuclear arms, this remains an important aspect of NATO's approach toward China's military.

Another important aspect is China's growing relationship with Russia. China and Russia hold a specific military partnership, marked by regular drills between the two armies in various locations, including the North Atlantic region. According to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, these drills are meant to signal a sense of partnership between the nations in the face of deteriorating relationships with Washington. Further explored in the following QARMA, NATO must form a comprehensive stance towards the growing closeness between the two nations as both pose structural risks to both the Alliance and global stability.

To conclude, China's military growth is projected to continue toward its goal of modernisation and projecting power both locally and abroad. With China's growing anti-US rhetoric, their military prowess must be considered when discussing policies and approaches to the issue as a whole.

4.3 QARMA 3: How should NATO respond to China's changing foreign policy?

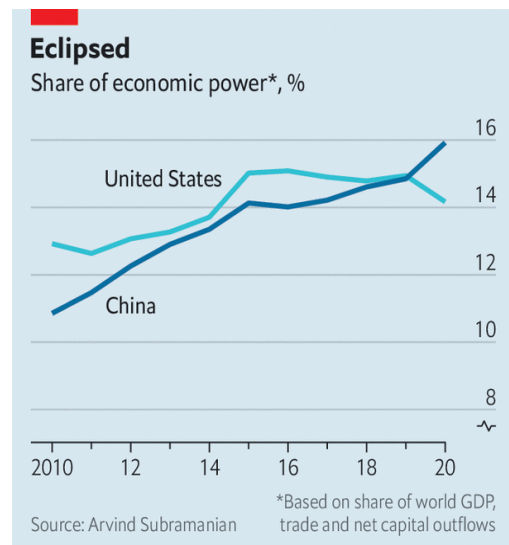
One of the most important developments in the China-NATO relationship is the shift in China's foreign policy. For many years a "risk-averse bully"²⁴, China has become bolder when dealing with both Europe and NATO. At a bilateral meeting in Alaska, the Chinese foreign policy chief lectured US diplomats on the failings of their democracy; then, China

²² Tian, et.al, "Trends in world military expenditure", 2019.

²³ Congressional Research Service, "China's Military: The People's Liberation Army (PLA)", 2021.

²⁴ The Economist, "China is betting that the West is in irreversible decline", 2021.

sanctioned a series of Western officials and academics over the West's response to the human rights abuses in Xinjiang.



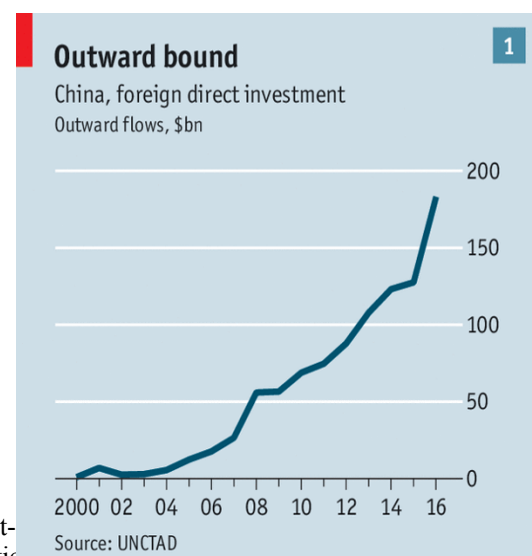
The Economist

Xi Jinping declared that “the East is rising and the West is declining” amid other statements declaring the US as its main competitor and rival.²⁵ This changing approach shows China's desire to rise to world influence, especially post-Covid. In this QARMA, we shall discuss several aspects of Chinese foreign policy that are key to forming a unified approach.

China's nature as an economic bully is not new. It has employed “sharp power” for a while when dealing with other nations. Sharp power, a term

coined by the think-tank National Endowment for Democracy, refers to the manipulation and co-opting of culture, media, and education to promote their influence abroad²⁶. A known example of this tactic from China happened in Australia in 2017 when a lawmaker was forced to resign after revealing that he took money from Chinese officials and promoted their viewpoints²⁷. Australia and New Zealand both found evidence of widespread meddling, including MPs being linked to Chinese “spy colleges” or massive donations from Chinese firms. In the QARMA about China's economic influence, we saw this type of influence in Europe, where countries like Hungary pushed against sanctions on China while receiving infrastructure loans.

It also applies to the world outside politics; China pushed for self-censorship on topics such as the Tiananmen Square protests or the Uighur minority in Xinjiang. China also targets universities with the Confucius Institutes supplying Chinese language courses or China studies programs. The government also creates a variety of programs for Chinese students abroad, which are meant to provide support in settling in;



²⁵ Buckley, C., “The East Is Rising”: Xi Maps Out China's Post-

²⁶ The Economist, “How China's “sharp power” is muting criticism

²⁷ The Economist, “What to do about China's sharp power”, 2017

Economist.com

however, they also keep surveillance on the actions of the students and faculty. This also applies to the firms owned by China, such as TikTok, which was found to be censoring videos with topics such as Tiananmen Square or the Falun Gong people²⁸. Fundamentally, the complex part comes with persecuting this behaviour since it is often very hard to persecute; those involved will often deny any malpractice. This is even harder with companies with direct ties to Beijing.

At the conference, we would like you to examine how China might be exercising this sharp power and how NATO should address the security concerns tied to its use. It is important to understand both what China assumes its role in the world is, how it aims to achieve this vision and how that interlocks with the various topics discussed in this study guide. Consider how a BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) investment may tie into Chinese political interests in your country or others in the North Atlantic region. China has grown into a complicated and multifaceted nation that presents challenges and opportunities, and it must hence be understood from various perspectives.

²⁸ Hern, Alex, “Revealed: how TikTok censors videos that do not please Beijing”, Guardian, 2019.

5. Further reading

For further reading on this topic, consider doing research in several layers. The first is understanding your country's relationship with China and how it might affect your approach to formulating a strategy. This is particularly useful if your country has a more significant economic or diplomatic tie to China or if it's antagonistic, like Lithuania. An important element to consider is recency; China has become more authoritarian and dominant in the last couple of years, so some older sources might not be accurate. Even recent events, like the invasion of Ukraine, may sway your nation's view, as China has been reluctant to condemn the attack.

Consider these sources as examples:

- <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-economic-coercion-lessons-lithuania>
- <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-xi-jinping-eastern-europe-trade-agriculture-strategy-gets-the-cold-shoulder/>

Another aspect to study in-depth is the actual individual QARMAs. The study guide does cover the basics and some details, but remember to take a closer look and read the documents cited in those individual sections. We would highly recommend reading the OECD report on the Belt and Road Initiative; it covers the topic quite well and provides a great baseline for understanding China's economic strategy. This also follows the Economist articles, especially the ones about soft power. From this point on, consider researching how China aims to develop these initiatives in a post-COVID world and link it back to your country's relationship with China's sharp power and economic influence.

- OECD report here:
www.oecd.org/finance/Chinas-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-in-the-global-trade-investment-and-finance-landscape.pdf.
- NATO on the topic here:
www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=/sites/default/files/2020-11/033%20ESC%2020%20E%20rev.1%20fin%20-%20CHINA%20BRI%20A%20STRATEGIC%20AND%20ECONOMIC%20ASSESSMENT.pdf

- Economist article here:
www.economist.com/briefing/2017/12/14/how-chinas-sharp-power-is-muting-criticism-abroad.

Finally, we'll list a couple of sources that the authors of this guide found particularly great at capturing the complexities of China's relationship with NATO. From an international relations standpoint, China is rising as a hegemonic threat to the US; a challenger for global dominance and influence. Considering how this view of China as a threat might cause certain misevaluations to happen is captured in the Centre for Strategic Decisions Research (CSDR) paper. Also, the NATO strategic report in the introduction is a valuable resource to start from when learning about the NATO-China relationship

- CSDR paper:
<http://www.csdrr.org/2022%20EventsNATOChina%20Relations%2001032021.pdf>
- NATO paper: <https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1659>

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