## BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

#### THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

## THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

## **DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY**

# CHINA'S OUTWARD FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS: CASE STUDY CHINA - EUROPEAN UNION

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KEY WORDS: China, Foreign Direct Investment, Chinese Economy, OFDI, European Union

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The exceptional pace of development of the Chinese economy over the past 38 years, with the fastest sustained increase ever registered by a major economy, an almost 30 fold expansion of GDP, at an average GDP growth of 9.7% over the 1978-2015 period were the result of a series of economic reforms initiated in 1978 with the Open Door Policy. China's closed and centrally planned economy opened up through a step-by-step approach of trial and error, with a gradual implementation of proper development strategies and policies that led to a series of achievements, over the course of a single generation, such as becoming the world's second largest economy by nominal GDP (2010), largest exporter (2009), largest trading nation (2013), largest manufacturer (2010), largest holder of foreign-exchange reserves (2006), largest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) (2014) and third largest source of outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) (2013), driving analysts to speak of the *Chinese economic miracle*.

China's ongoing transition process, from a developing to an advanced economy, is steadily increasing it weight and footprint in the world economy, and OFDI has been, especially over the last fifteen years, at the forefront of China's development and internationalization.

Taking into consideration the unprecedented growth of the Chinese economy, the importance of outward foreign direct investment as a key growth factor for economic engagement and development, the Chinese government's desire, renewed in the 13<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2016-2020), to accelerate the Going Out Strategy, which encourages and guides outward investment, and the overall performance of Chinese investors, both public and private, in navigating the global economy and the EU market, stems the **motivation** for the present study, in order to deepen the understanding of the recent evolution of China as a global OFDI source and specifically the EU as a destination for Chinese investments.

#### 1.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general research objective of the present paper is to offer an assessment of the Chinese outward direct investment flows and the influence of the Chinese governmental policies on the OFDI evolution, both globally and with a special focus on the European Union, tracing the path of China's emergence as a global source of OFDI, since the beginning of the opening up policy in 1978, with the highlight on the period of OFDI accelerated development (2003-2014), by reviewing data published by MOFCOM and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The analysis of the Chinese OFDI flows is realized primarily from a Chinese perspective, utilizing, where available, data compiled and provided by Chinese institutions, in order to better clarify the position and determination of China's investors and policy-makers, and which should serve as a framework for understanding and development for the EU and its member states, for the better understanding of Chinese investments and the development of mutual relations.

#### 1.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

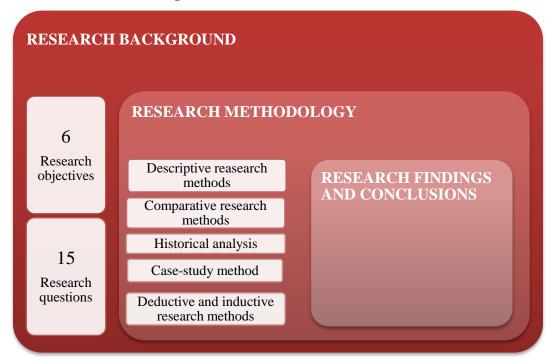
Considering the changing nature of the international direct investment flows and China's increasing participation in the global economy, not only does the theoretical study present challenges, but also sets forth requirements for the empirical research on foreign direct investment. According to Lumperdean (2008) on the methodology of economic scientific research in elaborating a dissertation, a fundamental step in academic research is the introduction of the research methods and techniques that allow for a rigorous thesis. For the present research, the following methods have been employed:

OFDI flows, which we tabulate, depict and describe, and which will be accompanied by visual aids, such as graphs, tables and figures, in order to gain a better understanding of the variation of data in time, and correlation between variables. The advantage of Descriptive research is that, while it can be useful for the analysis of multiple variables, it can also efficiently report on a single variable.

- Comparative research methods, which allows for a systematic comparison of the
  particularities and generalities of Chinese OFDI flows in different regions/countries.
  The advantage of Comparative research is the fact that it allows for the analysis of a
  small number of variables, given a scarcity of data (Collier, 1993).
- O Historical research methods, in order to give an account of the Chinese ODFI flows, the institutions, directions and policies from an evolutionary perspective. The Historical research method will offer a needed insight into the cross-border movement of Chinese capital in the period of 1978-2014, with a highlight on the 2003-2014 period, which is the whiteness of the greatest influx of OFDI.
- Case study method, through a single-case design which focuses on the dynamics present in the specific situation of the Chinese OFDI flows to the EU, whose actuality and intrinsic importance make it appropriate for research.
- Inductive research methods, which allow for the drawing of conclusions about the general phenomenon of Chinese OFDI flows from the specific observations derived from the data and through the case study.
- O Deductive research methods, through which attempting to indentify the causal construction, from general trends and observations on Chinese OFDI flows to the specificity of the investments in the EU, and forming a logical research structure based on research objectives and questions.

From the research background conducted in the first part of the present thesis, we have established a series of six specific objectives for analysis, which led to a number of fifteen research questions which we answered under the framework provided by the methodology specific to the economic field of study, as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The research framework



(Source: Author's own compilation)

### 2. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In order to reach the aforementioned objectives and to answer the research questions investigating the Chinese global and EU-specific OFDI flows, the structure of the paper follows the subsequent lines:

- 1. the first chapter provides the research framework and the methodology, setting the foundation and guiding the direction of the research;
- 2. the second chapter offers an overview of the evolution of China's outward foreign direct investment, globally and with a closer look at the flows into the European Union, highlighting the trends and identifying the inflection points that contributed to the advancement of Chinese overseas investment;
- 3. the third chapter reviews the general legal framework for Chinese OFDI and follows its progression, highlighting the most important policies and guiding papers and their impact on outward FDI, it introduces the governmental influence on FDI and the main relevant governmental actors, and it identifies the policies governing the China-EU investment relations;
- 4. the fourth chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the geographic, sectoral, mode-ofentry and investor characteristic distribution of Chinese OFDI, allowing to gain a general perspective on China's footprint in the global investment scene and specifically in the European Union; the chapter also assesses the effect of China's OFDI policies on the global and EU-specific distribution of the OFDI flows;
- 5. the fifth and final chapter of the thesis summarizes the objectives of the study, introduces the limitations, contributions and directions for future research, and provides the perspectives for the future.

Figure 5.2. The summary of research objectives

## • We have defined the relevant terminology introduced the basic concepts •We have explored the research methodology and introduced the research framework •We have provided explanations on the data sources and the problems with data Objective 1 scarcity and reliability •We have provided a historic overview of China's OFDI flows, identifying a succession of three distinct periods and seven stages, and pinpointing the inflection and turning points in the evolution of the outward investment flows, globally and in Objective 2 the European Union •We have introduced the main political and administrative institutions involved in the formulation and implementation of china's OFDI policy. •We have traced the stages of evolution of China's OFDI policy Objective 3 •We have outlined the general legal framework of the China-EU relations. •We have explored the provisions of the EU policies on incoming investment and Chinese OFDI flows and the provisions of China's EU policy papers and investment guidance catalogues. •We have described the distribution of Chinese OFDI flows by geography, industry, mode of entry and investor mix. Objective 4 •We have assessed the effect of governmental OFDI policies and guidelines on the distribution of outward investment, through a comparison between the provisions of the investment guidance Catalogue and the data provided by MOFCOM. Objective 5 •We have outlined the general trends of development and the perspectives of the

(Source: Author's own compilation)

evolution of China's OFDI flows.

Objective 6

#### 3. LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 3. 1. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The Chinese outward direct investment is a new phenomenon that has begun to grab global attention in the last decade and a half, and consequently it has been investigated and researched only recently, so extensive and exhaustive investigation and analysis is yet to be conducted. By comparison, the phenomenon of inward foreign direct investment in China has preceded by more than a decade the take-off of Chinese OFDI, and consequently has been researched and analyzed more rigorously and for a longer period of time, allowing for a more solid foundation for future research.

Besides the low but increasing number of literature available, one of the limitations of the current research stems from the problem with the data available, as presented in section 1.4. The lack of available data, and the lack of reliability of published data, especially of Chinese sources which were the focus of the research, made it difficult for analyzing the Chinese OFDI flows.

Another limitation, due to the scale of the paper, is the focus solely on OFDI flows, without taking into consideration OFDI stock. The scale of the paper also did not allow for a member states' perspective on the Chinese FDI flows. While detailed in the investigation of the geographical and sectoral distribution of Chinese investments, at a policy level and when detailing the investor mix and distribution of OFDI by mode of entry, we look at the EU as a whole, leaving out the particularities and characteristics to investment distribution by member state.

#### 3.2. CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While taking into consideration the limitations of the current research, the contributions brought on the study and understanding of Chinese outward foreign direct investment flows are fourfold:

- Offering a comprehensive account of the evolution of Chinese OFDI, both from a
  historical standpoint and through an overview of the progression of the regulatory
  framework for outward investment, in China and in the EU, providing a broad base for
  future research:
- 2. Providing a picture of the recent evolution of the global and EU distribution of Chinese OFDI flows, and observing the trends of investment, including, for an accurate comparison, the analysis of the geographic distribution of Chinese investments, with and without the inclusion of OFCs and tax heavens.
- 3. Analyzing materials issued by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and other relevant institutional actors involved in the formulation, implementation and guidance of China's OFDI policy. Materials such as the Foreign Investment Guidance Catalogues, according to our research, have not been previously translated from Chinese and included in studies on the subject;
- 4. Investigating the role of the governmental policies on China's OFDI flows, by conducting a comparison between the official investment guidance documents and the actual distribution of Chinese outward direct investment flows.

After taking into consideration the limitations and contributions of the current research, in the future we would like to undertake the analysis of Chinese OFDI by including OFDI stock, and by using alternative data sources, as a solution to the problems that associate with MOFCOM data. A future focus could also use a case study on a single EU member state, possibly using the current research framework to investigate Chinese OFDI flows in Romania, as well as investigating a comparative approach of Chinese OFDI in the EU versus the USA, an important destination for Chinese investments. A further look into the effects of Chinese OFDI on both host and home economies is warranted and will be a subject of future study.

#### 3.3. CONCLUSIONS

The present research, entitled Evolution, directions and the role of governmental policies in China's outward foreign direct investment flows: case study on the European Union was motivated by the need to deepen the understanding of the recent evolution of China as a global OFDI source and specifically the EU as a destination for Chinese investments. Throughout the research, we have conducted an assessment of China's outward direct investment flows and the influence of the Chinese governmental policies on the OFDI progression, indentifying their evolutionary rather than the revolutionary characteristics.

The timeline of the analysis has been contained to the period beginning with the opening up policy of 1978, insisting on the period of condensed OFDI growth, between 2003 and 2014, even 2015 where the data was available. Through the review of Chinese data sources, policy papers and guidance Catalogues, we have attempted to offer the Chinese perspective on the progression of OFDI flows, while also including UNCTAD data for reference and the EU legal framework and policy papers for a two-sided frame of reference.

Having summarized the series of six research objectives set forth in the beginning of the research, taking into account the limitations of the study and presenting the contributions and the future directions of study, we conclude the thesis with the understanding that outward foreign direct investment has been taking a leading position in China's development and internationalization and has been instrumental in China's increasing weight in the global economy, and that Chinese OFDI has challenged and driven the Sino-EU relation from the rhetoric of political speeches to the commitments the BIT under negotiation will entail, towards a closer and more inter-dependent collaboration.

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