

Mind the Gap: Analytical Challenges to Studying China's or Any Other Country's Influence

Abstract

China's rise in the global political economy has naturally invited considerable interest in and discussion on its international influence. Unfortunately, assertions advanced by pundits participating in this discourse have not usually been informed by important insights and caveats from social scientists. The typical reporting and analysis on China's influence can therefore suffer from being trite, shallow, and even misleading. In this lecture, Professor Chan will present cautionary remarks and illustrative examples suggesting that the determination of a country's influence abroad is far more challenging than the familiar claims we often encounter in the news media and even some scholarly publications. Concerns for making valid inference are no less apposite or compelling for studying China's international influence as for that of other countries. The analytical issues he raises in this lecture are thus generic and not peculiar to the study of China.