

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

(financially supported by the European Commission)

Mass Communication and EU-China Relations

Thursday & Friday, 3-4 April, 2014

EU Committee of the Regions, 99-101 Rue Belliard, 1040 Brussels



PAPER ABSTRACTS

PANEL ONE: THE IMPACT OF MASS COMMUNICATION ON EU-CHINA RELATIONS

Dr Cristian NITOIU

Abstract: *“China and its relations with the EU in transnational media: An analysis of transnational media reporting in the second half of 2013”*

During the last years China has been more and more present in debates in media across Europe. Media have mirrored here the way in which relations between China, the EU and its Member States have increased in various policy areas: ranging from trade and international development to global climate change policy.

This paper seeks to explore the way in which China and its relationship with the EU (and its Member States) has been presented in European transnational publications in the second half of 2013. The analysis includes two newspapers and one online publication: the Financial Times, the European Voice and the EUObserver.com – which has a similar readership and coverage to the other two publications. None of these publications can be considered to be truly a ‘European newspaper’ because they do not aim to direct their discourse towards the general public living in the member states. However, these publications can be thought of as ‘European wide’ or transnational media because their discourse usually transcends the boundaries of



nation states and is almost never solely concerned with covering domestic politics within a single Member State. The case of transnational media differs from that of media based in the EU's Member States in the fact that the 'Brussels bubble' infuses transnational journalists with a sense of optimism regarding European integration and the EU's ability and duty to shape events in the international arena.

Ms Margaretha Hendrika Maria VAN PINXTEREN

Abstract: "European Journalists in China: Caught Between A Rock And A Hard Place"

More and more, policymakers in Europe express the view that European journalists are biased towards China. They are seen as hindering rather than helping to promote better relations and more understanding between China and the EU. Policymakers tend to see journalists as playing into hidden fears and prejudices about China in Europe and as not playing a positive role in promoting understanding of the tremendous transformation China is going through.

On the Chinese side, European journalists seem to have disappointed their hosts as well. They have been welcomed to China in the hope that their reporting would naturally become more positive if they lived in China over an extended period of time. This hope, however, has greatly diminished, especially after the Tibetan riots in March 2008. Foreign reporting was portrayed as bad, biased and sloppy in the Chinese media. Since 2008, foreign journalists have become less rather than more welcome in China both on the state and the non-state level.

The questions most often asked are: to what degree is the criticism on European correspondents correct? Has a possible negative bias increased in recent years, and if so, based on what? These are important questions that definitely deserve more research.

These questions, however, overlook the fact that changing opinions about European reporting on China are largely based on developments outside of the realm of journalism itself. If we do not look at these outside developments, we will not be able to fully grasp the reasons behind the shift in opinion about China-reporting in recent years.

Ms MAO Xi

Abstract: "Al Jazeera and Xinhua, the Emerging Voices?- Brussels' International Journalists' Credibility towards International News Source Organisations"

As credibility is a key concern for the media organisations competing to influence a public policy, their credibility to international journalists as information sources can be critical to whether they can achieve their communication goals, for the journalists do view some sources as more credible than others and tend to use that categorisation in selecting news stories (Yoon, 2005).



For a long time, international journalists have tended to use the dominant agencies closer to the Anglo-American standard. The emerging of regional voices like Al Jazeera and Xinhua has provided alternative choices for the international journalist community. They offer the options or even force the world to think with Asian Values, African Values or Arab Values of universal /global issues. By doing that, they win the respect for their authorities which are distorted or mal-pictures in the mainstream western media. But this might not necessarily change the international journalists' everyday journalistic practice, the question remains whether those upcoming regional voices are challenges to the mainstream news source organizations(Xin, 2010)? Nine major international news source organizations –AFP, Al Jazeera, AP, BBC, Bloomberg, CNN, Fox, Reuters, Xinhua– who offer news services in English are selected to test their source credibility among 37 respondents in Brussels through in-depth interviews from October 2011 to February 2012.

Prof LI Zhuyu & Prof SHI Jian

Abstract: “The Uneasy Future of the European Union and China-EU Relations”

From previous researches on Chinese people's perception of the EU, some main features have come to the fore. To start with, Chinese people acquire their knowledge of the EU primarily from the media, and this renders it difficult for them to fully understand its operational mechanisms. Secondly, the Chinese image of the EU is rather positive (Zhou, Dong 2008). Finally, albeit overall positive, Chinese people's perception of the EU has undergone a noticeable transformation recently due to the 'perception imbalance' and 'perception deficit' which can sometimes lead to negative impressions, especially during trading disputes. Impressions such as that Europeans are arrogant and discriminating against China then result in the diminution of confidence and enthusiasm of Chinese public for the EU (Tang 2010).

This paper reports findings of a survey among 641 college students from major universities in Chengdu on their perception of the EU. The paper comes to the conclusion that although the China-EU relation especially the economic cooperation continue to develop, Chinese people's knowledge about the EU has relatively been influenced by factors such as the European sovereign debt crisis. The interviewees tend to be suspicious and uncertain about the role the EU will play in international arena.



PANEL TWO: THE EU IN THE EYES OF THE CHINESE PUBLIC

Prof Martin HOLLAND

Abstract: “The Evolution of EU perceptions in China 2006-2012 : decision-makers, elites, news media and general public” (co-authored with Natalia Chaban, University of Canterbury, New Zealand & Suetyi Lai Tsinghua University, China)

Research of external images of the European Union (EU) has become a popular topic in the recent decade. Several research projects have successfully identified how the EU was perceived by its external partners, especially those in the Asia-Pacific. This paper will take the existing research further by addressing two novel perspectives – (1) how EU external images change over time and (2) how these changing frames of the EU existing in differing discourses (decision-makers, elite, media and general public) interact with each other. Entman's ‘cascade activation’ theory (2003, 2004) is used as a theoretical model for this investigation. Advancing the theory, our paper will consider the peculiarities of the model in a non-Western media environment. Our empirical focus is on the EU's external perceptions in China - the EU's strategic partner and the biggest source of import. Thus, this paper explores how the framing of actions of the EU evolves across time and across different levels of the society in China.

Data for this paper comes from the transnational comparative project “The EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific”. The media, elite and public opinion data came from the two phases of the project – 2006-2007 and 2011-2012. This original dataset comprises 1,988 news items collected in the twelve months of 2006 and 1 341 news items collected in the first six months of 2011; 400 public survey respondents in 2007 and 1,009 respondents in 2012; as well as 31 and 60 face-to-face semi-structured elite interviews conducted in 2007 and 2011 respectively. The monitored news outlets include leading news sources in terms of readership, reputation as well as relevancy to the central government (People's Daily, China Daily, International Finance News, CCTV). The interviewed elite included national-level decision-makers from political, business, civil society and media sectors.

Prof DING Chun

Abstract: “Chinese Scholars’ Perspectives on the European Sovereign Debt Crisis”

By using research methods of literature interpretation and statistics analysis, the present paper summarises the perspective of Chinese scholars on the European sovereign debt crisis. The paper focuses on selected key articles published in Chinese core journals from 2010 to 2013, and classifies and statistically analyses their core views on the causes and the governance of the European sovereign debt crisis, its influence on EU-China relations, and the series of suggested countermeasures by China.

Dr Valeria VARRIANO

Abstract: “The EU in the Two Billion Eyes”

Thanks to Nixon’s visit to China in 1974, TV broadcast images coming from abroad and the world entered the Chinese houses, first through the objectivity of the news, then through the daily life of the TV series. These narrative spaces offer a metaphorical presentation of reality, substituting the function of rites in non-industrial societies. TV narrations become symbolic fields and build their stories in order to supply answers to the anxieties and ambiguities of the modern society (Turner 2000). These forms of social meta-comments represent a story told by a group to themselves and on themselves, a moment where people recollect an experience, making it easier to read and, at the same time, creating a space for critical reflexion on reality.

Moreover, as Sheldon Lu (2000:29) wrote: “We need not treat these texts as national allegories but, rather, as images of imagined national identity in the paradoxically transnational postmodern hyper reality. Transnational flows of capital, images, and people between China and the world have opened up new avenues for inventing nationhood and creating self-understanding”.

We want to understand what Europe is today for Chinese, having a look inside these cultural productions. This paper wants to describe the ‘TV European man’, analysing two types of television products: the TV series about the comparison between the Chinese and non-Chinese culture within family dynamics, and others which tell stories of migrants coming to Europe.



Ms TAN Xuan & Ms CHENG Shican

Abstract: "Mass Communication and China in the eyes of the European public" (co-authored by Ms TAN Xuan and Ms CHENG Shican)

The presentation primarily pays attention to the asymmetric and one-sided structure in the current European mass communication on China but also takes note of the changing picture of narratives in relation to the 'China Story' reporting of European journalists.

Firstly, the paper examines the overall views of current EU public perceptions on China based on the working experience of the authors at Chinese news agency. The views will be illustrated by case studies focused on the European perceptions of the waves of Chinese investment in Europe. An analysis of headlines of several European journals and magazines is introduced and compared to similar phenomena of Chinese investments in Africa. The analysis is supported by the reporting experiences of the authors related to Chinese enterprises and investments in Europe. Moreover, the authors share some observations from a survey on the attitudes of European journalists concerning the increasing demand of Chinese reporting in the EU. Lastly, the paper questions China's awareness of its own global image by looking at a research project, which is fruit of the cooperation between an European NGO and Renmin University of China.

Dr Byung-Cheol KIM

Abstract: "'China Dream' in the Eyes of Europeans Living in Beijing"

The purpose of this study is to examine the image of the 'China Dream', which means "great renewal of the Chinese nation", Europeans living in Beijing, China, have and whether differences in perceptions exist according to the period of staying in Beijing. Further this study attempts to compare the images of the 'China Dream' in the eyes of Europeans with that of the Chinese. This study used the semantic differential scale that consists of 50 adjectives. The data was collected from 50 adult Europeans staying in Beijing and 50 adult Chinese in Beijing. The research method is summarised as follows: 100 affective words (adjective phrases) expressing affective attitudes of political slogan were selected from literature on a random sampling basis, those were then reduced to 50, and were systematised by an affective evaluating scale with 7 categories of meaning. The area for evaluation was limited to adult Europeans mostly living at Haidian District, Beijing. The Europeans' understanding of the 'China Dream' is relatively low, showing less than 50% know about to concept, whereas the majority of Chinese people know about it. However, overall 'China Dream' is positively recognised by both European and Chinese people in Beijing. In addition, the result of the correspondence analysis shows that



the difference in the perceptions among Europeans in Beijing is a function of their period of stay in Beijing.

Mr Dorian MALOVIC

Abstract: "Covering China: How Exciting a Headache!"

China is a big country with a huge population and a very long history. China is so different, so special, so impenetrable that no foreigner is able to understand it... China is out of reach! All countries in the world are unique but some countries are more unique than the others. Partly right, partly wrong ? Who knows? But that's the root of the contradiction and the misunderstanding with China.

As a journalist covering China one is like a bridge between the two universes, trying to understand one riverside and then explain the reality you witnessed to the other side. This might sound easy, but because China is China and Europe is Europe, each with a specific vision on the other, the journalist is trapped in a double contradiction. First, one has to fight against the long and deeply rooted clichés about China (opaque, empire, face, communist...), then explain the reality as one sees it and finally one needs to pray to be trusted by one's listeners or readers, hoping they get a new vision of China. Knowing that a complete vision of China is nearly impossible, one is trapped and ideology is around the corner.

Second, the Chinese side is dying to read or listen to the most beautiful and positive stories about their country. That is what they call 'objectivity' of the foreign press. And when they read critical opinions on China they feel offended. People do not like China because the "foreign journalists do not give an 'objective' vision of the country". For a fair vision you need transparency which is hard to obtain when it comes to specific topics in China. Politics is around the corner.

To deal with these contradictions, once one knows and understands them, is better than to fight against them. China should be taken as it is and not as we would like it to be. Transparency is needed to build trust. A lot has been achieved since the 80's but there is still a long way to go.



PANEL FOUR: THE MULTIMEDIA ERA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHINA AND THE EU

Ms. Mireia PAULO-NOGUERA

Abstract: “The Role of e-Governance in Europe’s Image of the Chinese Communist Party”

The purpose of this paper is to examine official Chinese websites in the framework of e-Governance in order to understand the opportunities that such a communication tool could bring to improve the European audiences’ trust and image of the Central Chinese Government. The research hypothesis is that better accessibility and high-quality information as well as e-services will improve the level of trust among European citizens towards the Chinese Government. This author undertook an empirical examination of the way in which official Chinese websites are accessed and perceived among European users. The sample group consists of respondents with a relation to China (study, business, research, tourism, civil services). The data was collected using an online survey. The sample totalled 143 respondents. The research revealed that European audiences find a correlation between access to and quality of information and e-services and trustworthiness, as well as a causal relation with the improvement of image.

Ms Hélène PFEIL

Abstract: “When the media meet: problems and promises of EU-China dialogue in the journalistic sphere”

While the quality and extent of media coverage and communication between Europe and China have improved dramatically over the past decade, this paper argues that ongoing misperceptions and distrust are due not only to gaps in mutual media coverage, but also to the quasi-inexistent interpersonal interaction between European and Chinese media representatives. Given that today’s world experience has become much more mediated than in the past, the participation of media in the social construction of reality makes them crucial conduits of information and their potential to influence foreign policy decision-making processes and country branding - the so-called “CNN effect” - needs to be explored further.

Direct dialogue in the media sphere can lead to improved mutual knowledge on both sides. By using the ‘right channels’, such as cooperating with municipalities and media organisations, long-term network-building between European and Chinese media professionals can fill knowledge gaps.

From participation and resourcing, to communication and cultural challenges, a number of hurdles confront Europe-China people-to-people dialogue programmes in the media sphere. Political constraints and in particular the strongly state-controlled nature of the media in China are particularly significant structural



impediments. However, shifting programme content towards real collaboration and introducing an EU-China Media Platform for Cooperation and Exchange are interesting opportunities to grow these exchanges further.

PANEL FIVE: CHINA IN THE EUROPEAN MEDIA

Mr William FINGLETON

Abstract: “The Quest for Balanced Reporting on China in the EU Media: Forces & Influences”

Usually, it is the local media in the country that is the target of the soft power actions that is most influential in shaping public opinion and perceptions of the other country, its culture and its people. Therefore countries should pay particular attention to the foreign journalists working within their borders and do their utmost to facilitate and encourage them to achieve balanced and accurate reporting in their coverage of their host country.

However, in the case of China, all too often European journalists and EU media outlets, as well as other so-called “Western media” are criticised for some form of bias or deliberate negativity in their reporting on China, especially when reporting on topics that are considered “sensitive”, such as Human Rights issues or anything related to the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The EU media, for their part, claim that it is difficult to achieve balance in China reporting when they are often impeded in their work by a lack of transparency or access to sources of information.

This paper looks at the Chinese point of view and examines some of the forces and influences at work behind the scenes that affect the coverage of China in European media, such as conditions for EU journalists working in China, lack of transparency and access to information, pressures from the audience, editors and owners at home, as well as the diverging views on the role of journalists in Europe and China.

Finally, I hope to provide some insights on how what appears to be a deteriorating relationship can be improved for the benefit of all concerned.

Dr Lutgard LAMS

Abstract: “China: economic magnet or rival? Framing of China in the Dutch- and French-language quality press in Belgium and the Netherlands”

The rising importance of China on the world scene has generated increased world press attention to the region. As a consequence, it has also sparked substantial research into the types of media images that are disseminated about China as an actor in geo-political and economic world affairs. Indeed, the media in all their

diversity provide the perfect playground for meaning negotiation. Construction or representation of reality passes through the mediation of language with its immense power to influence interpretation and popular opinion. According to a recent survey of attitudes toward China, conducted by The Global Poll Center of the Chinese newspaper the Global Times, China is viewed by respondents in 14 countries as confident, belligerent and arrogant and only a tiny minority describe China as 'peaceful'. Chinese policymakers have pointed at a negative media bias in Western news organizations. Several research papers have been published about lopsided China coverage in the US, Germany, Canada.

This study, therefore, aims to complement the research by looking into framing processes in the press narratives about China in the mainstream Belgian and Dutch quality press (De Morgen, De Standaard, De Tijd, Le Soir, La Libre Belgique, De Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad). Findings are presented of a framing and discourse analysis conducted on all news accounts and op-ed articles from November 2012 to October 2013. The overall aim is to understand whether and how the news media construct ideological meanings. The implications of linguistic choice making for meaning generation and interpretation will be examined drawing on theoretical and methodological insights from the fields of media discourse analysis, language pragmatics, framing theory and social representation theory.

Dr Jeanne BODEN

Abstract: "Eurocentrism and Sinocentrism in media reporting on China in the West"

China's position in the world has grown, but reliable information about China as a basis for reporting on China is problematic and results in speculating, wrong perceptions and journalists and writers copying each other. The underlying reasons are related to both Eurocentrism in Europe and a general lack of understanding of the Chinese context and Sinocentrism in China. In the first part, this paper will focus on the post-colonial discourse, Eurocentrism, Sinocentrism, Orientalism, Occidentalism, and 'constructed' concepts and stereotyping in Euro-China discourse. In the second part, a variety of issues at stake will be explored. Some of these findings come from the PhD research of the author, others are more generally about China in mass media, such as the general context of dealing with information in China and in Europe respectively, language and narrative structure, news selection and news value, the people reporting, presentation and representation of China in mass media in the West.

Mr Dirk NIMMEGEERS

Abstract: “Presentation of China in on-line West European media: more fairness and accuracy required”

More attention than ever is paid to China in West European on-line media, but news coverage, comments and analyses are often partisan and inaccurate. Sensationalism tends to prevail in the selection of the topics. Certain kinds of Chinese sources are ignored or neglected, others get a preferential treatment. Sometimes it is hard to draw the line between journalism and activism. On the one hand, forecasting and (complot)theorising seem more important than rendering objective pictures based on the painstaking collection of data. Putting China, its institutions and leadership, in a poor light is even appreciated. On the other hand, however, there is progress measurable through the increase of Chinese media digests and of serious articles on China, heightened awareness of the quality and honesty in Chinese journalism.

There seem to be three possible reasons for ideological and unfavourable presentation of China due to flaws of western journalism, ‘churnalism’, distortion, even propaganda, caused by commercialisation, competition and undue pressure of time. China is a challenge for European and American power and ideology. Nevertheless, the censorship and possibly exaggerated guidance have a strong impact on China’s soft power which appears to be inadequate. This paper will look at possible conceivable remedies and will offer suggestions directed at both European and Chinese media workers.



PANEL SIX: THE EU IN CHINESE MEDIA

Dr SONG Lilei

Abstract: “The EU through the Eyes of Chinese Social Media – a case study of the official micro-blogging of China’s Foreign Ministry for European Affairs” (jointly written with Dr BIAN Qing, Tongji University, China)

In order to promote public understanding of Europe and Sino-European relations, the Chinese Foreign Ministry for European Affairs opened an official micro blog in Sina Weibo account named Zhongou Xinshi (“Sino–European messenger”) on 24 August 2012. This paper uses both textual and content analysis methods to examine the posts in this micro blog so as to answer the questions regarding EU’s image in the eyes of Chinese social media. The main findings of this study revealed that, firstly, “Sino –European messenger” Weibo takes full advantage of features of new media platforms to post large amount of information about Europe and Sino-European relations. Secondly, the majority of the public pays attention to the topics related to their daily lives and public issues rather than to political affairs issued in this Weibo. The image of Europe shaped through this Weibo is comparatively neutral and objective. The authors suggest that Chinese authorities need to make strong efforts to promote dialogue between China and Europe and to accurately and effectively communicate through social media.

Ms MA Xinru

Abstract: “Beyond the Economic Ties: The EU in the Chinese Media”

Despite the increasing number of studies on EU-China relations, there is an obvious gap in literature on how the EU is portrayed and perceived in China. This paper seeks to address the following questions: What are the most mentioned images of the EU in China? Is the EU in China a recognisable actor, both politically and economically? Is the EU or its Member States more likely to be seen as partners for China? How important is the EU to China when compared to the United States of America and other neighbouring nations? Looking ahead, how would China envision the future of EU-China relationship?

By examining the volume, sources, focus, neutrality, and news frames of the EU news in two national Chinese media – China Daily and Xinhua Net - this paper hopes to find out how the EU is portrayed in the Chinese media, thus defining the gap between the aspirations of the EU and the actual perceptions of the Chinese community. It also hopes to shed light on the nature of the China-EU strategic partnership, and whether there is real strength underpinning this relationship, besides the obvious trade policies. In the end, this paper will propose how the EU’s public diplomacy efforts could help to narrow the perceptions gap.