

Presentation on the China Chapter

Prof. Dai bingran
Centre for European Studies
Fudan University
brdai@fudan.edu.cn

I. Introductory remarks:

The surveys on which Chinese chapter of *THE EU THROUGH THE EYES OF ASIA* was based were done mainly in Shanghai. While Shanghai is an important city in China, and has had very important relations with the EU (it is estimated that some 20 thousand European firms have had some kind of presence in Shanghai), it is not the political centre of China. Here I am reminded of a comment on the people in Shanghai, which says that they are commercial -minded. The undertone is that they are less political-minded. So, I am not very sure if the survey could represent the perceptions of the Chinese people in general. Notwithstanding the limitations, I found the results of the surveys very instructive and informative.

As the main findings have been described in details in the chapter of the book, my presentation will just try to highlight some of the main findings out of the survey of the elite—the most informed part of the population. Then I will give some of my general comments.

II. Main findings

1. EU as a great power:

29 out of the 32 interviewed (B: 6, P: 7, C: 8, M: 8) regard the EU as a great power, but most of them (B: 7, P: 7, C: 6, M: 7) do not think it as playing a leading role in international politics. This somewhat contradictory picture shows that in the Chinese perception, EU is a great power only in economic sense.

2. EU's importance to China:

While most of the interviewed regard the EU as among the most important partners of China, very few rank it as the first one, and it lags behind the US and the neighbouring countries. It is interesting to find that only one in the business group gives this place to EU, in spite of the fact that since 2004, EU has become the No. 1 trade partner, and played likewise important roles in investment and technology transfer. This gives me the impression that EU's importance is not adequately known, even to the educated part of the people.

3. State of the current EU-China relations:
While most of the interviewed think the relationship as progressing, stable, promising, few seem to think it as satisfactory. It might have something to do with the disappointment among the Chinese people concerning the arms embargo, market economy status, and trade disputes. And I guess the disappointment would be stronger if the survey was done this year.
4. EU's impact on China:
To all the interviewed groups, EU's impact on China comes more from the economic side. This goes with the general Chinese impression of the EU as an economic power; and it also has something to do with the fact that there are, between EU and China, comparatively few political conflicts.
5. EU's enlargement:
The majority of the interviewed look at enlargement more as positive than as negative to China. This may have something to do with the prevailing Chinese perspective for a multi-polar world: people want to see a strong Europe, and the enlargement is an indicator.
6. Euro:
The result of survey indicates that while the interviewed welcome Euro as an important development, they are a little disappointed as to its performance both internally and externally—it fails their expectation of being a currency of an international status like the Dollar.
7. ASEM's impact on EU-China relations:
Though most of the interviewed regard the ASEM as a positive process, but the result seems to show that people tend not to link it very closely with the whole EU-China relations. This gives us—the people who realize how important the ASEM process is--the task of raising the profile of ASEM in China. The importance is to let the people know its existence and presence.
8. Source of information in China:
As was expected, most of interviewed elite have had their information on EU from mass media and from internet. This has something to do with the quickening life tempo in Shanghai: the young people are more and more dependent on mass media like television for their knowledge about the world.
9. EU's importance at present and in the future:
All of the 4 groups attach great importance to EU and expect better EU-China relations in the future. The slight difference shows by the media group may come from their awareness of the great impact of the US on China's political life, as well as of their perceptions of the recent difficulties in the EU-China

relations.

10. EU's image in China:

The result shows that business and political elites are a bit more focused as to their impression of the EU.

III. General conclusions

1. The survey result corresponds to our general expectation that the EU is regarded as very positive, quite important.
2. The EU is still regarded first and foremost as an economic power, and its importance to China is more as a trade partner.
3. From these:
 - (1) EU needs to increase its political presence in China;
 - (2) EU-China relations needs to extends the scopes beyond trade;
 - (3) There is still the need for improving mutual understanding.