Asia in the eyes of Europe

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Radu Megeleac

IRSEA
Institutul Român de Studii Euro-Asiatiche
## Selection of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion leader</th>
<th>Position held at the time of the interview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BABOIAN, Karen</td>
<td>Chief Editor and Owner of “Diplomatic Club”</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOGDAN, Radu</td>
<td>Owner and CEO of “Nine O’ Clock”, Journalist</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHIRIEAC, Bogdan</td>
<td>Journalist, Political Analyst, particularly on foreign affairs, TV Commentator, Director and Editor of “DC News”</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMANICI, Constanta</td>
<td>Journalist, “Radio Romania Actualitati”</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRISTOIU, Ion</td>
<td>Writer, Publicist, Journalist, Political Analyst and TV Commentator; Correspondent of “Adevarul”</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUMITRESCU, Razvan</td>
<td>Journalist, Talk Show Host at TV station “Antena 3”, Director and Editor of “DC News”</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUREZEANU, Emil</td>
<td>Writer, Journalist, Political Analyst, Publicist, President of the “Realitatea – Catavencu” group</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIRCEA, Virginia</td>
<td>Founder and Chief Editor of “Cadran politic”</td>
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<tr>
<td>MITCHIEVICI, Lidia</td>
<td>Legal analyst, “Realitatea TV”</td>
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<tr>
<td>RACOVICEANU, Alecu</td>
<td>Chief Editor of “Puterea”</td>
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<tr>
<td>URSU, Adrian</td>
<td>Journalist, Talk Show Host; Commentator at the TV station “Antena 3”</td>
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<tr>
<td>VALCU, Val</td>
<td>Associate Professor in the University of Bucharest - the Faculty of Journalism, Journalist, Editorial Director at “DC News”</td>
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</table>
How Asia-news is made in general

• **News selection criterion**: the audience’s interest for the subject.
  Requirements for arising interest:
  – professional audience: relevant information concerning the specific professional field
  – generalist audience: novelty, spectacularity and sensationalism and/or relevance for Romania and Romania’s interests

• **Sources**: almost exclusively external
  – Foreign news agencies: Reuters, AFP, Associated Press, CNN, BBC, Bloomberg
  – Romanian news agencies: Agerpress, Mediafax etc.
  – Outlets from the event area: CCTV, Al Jazeera, Korean public television etc.

No outlet has Asia based correspondents at the moment; Radio Romania Actualitati has had a correspondent in China until recently; it maintains a collaboration with Radio China International
• **If the need arises:**
  – 2/3 of elites regularly employ experts of varying qualifications, according to the event
    • Ambassadors, diplomats
    • Professional experts (analysts etc.)
    • Asian issues specialists
    • People with experience and understanding of the Asian culture and society
  – Personal contacts abroad (from Asia) are used
  – Local Romanian communities are contacted
  – Teams of correspondents are deployed to the event area

• **Research:**
  – Made depending on the expected public interest for the subject
  – Varies according to the outlet media type:
    • Televisions (need to present the information as fast as possible) perform little research
    • Written publications have more time to dedicate to research
• **Budget:**
  - No special budgets destined to Asia
  - Special budgets are usually assigned in the case of Asian events of great significance (covering the employment of experts, travelling expenses for correspondents, research materials etc.)
Editorial approach

• **Policy of covering Asian news:**
  – No special policy – just like any other foreign news
  – Subject to the internal regulations and specific of each outlet, e.g.:
    • ”Diplomatic Club“ avoids political news and news which may cause controversy entirely
    • ”Radio Romania Actualitati“ is legally required to dedicate a portion of its broadcasts to Romanian political issues – limited time for addressing foreign (Asian) news

• Almost all outlets (except ”Cadran Politic“) cover Asian news reactively
  – the coverage may become proactive in the case of events of longer duration

• **Interaction with Asian partners:**
  – Almost half of elites have no contact to Asian partners
  – The interaction is usually performed in a bilateral context
• **Selling an „Asia“ story:**
  – Very different opinions among the elites:
    
    **Asia news sell...**
    
    • **...very well** – special editions centered on Asia have been very well received by the public
    • **...just as any other foreign news** of similar significance
    • **...not at all**: they would need to be very spectacular to attract any attention
    
    – Asian stories sell well when they are interesting and/or relevant to Romania
    – Stories about the larger, more powerful Asian states sell significantly better than news about smaller countries
• **Future areas of media focus**
  – EU and US according to some elites
  – Asia and (Northern) Africa according to others:
    • China, India, Japan, Pakistan
    • War theaters in Afghanistan and Iraq
    • Middle East countries
    • Caucasus states

• **Coverage of officially issued news:**
  – 2 elites would not agree to transmit such news
  – The rest would agree to transmit them if the news fulfill conditions regarding correctness, importance and fit the news format
Asia - a great power?

- Not an unified entity, but a heterogeneous conglomerate of nations of different power
- Several of these are recognized as significant actors on a global scale
- Lacking “a common voice, common interests and the ability to perform <together> coherent action” the Asian states are unable to form an entity of global power
- Despite some attempts at collaboration between states, because of the significant differences between them “the day in which we will speak of an united Asia [...] is far”
Asia – political leader?

• Varied opinions:
  – Several Asian states have already ascended to a ‘silent’ leading position
  – Asia’s political influence is currently on equal footing with that of US and EU
  – Asia is still lagging behind the ‘de facto’ leaders, US

• Several elites see Asia as excelling mainly in economics and using its financial status as leverage for obtaining political influence.
• An elite considers that Asia is currently trying to consolidate its economy and is not interested in assuming a leading political position.
• All elites consider Asia’s political influence to be on the rise.

Is Asia a leader in international politics?

[Graph showing a majority of yes]
The importance of Asia to Romania

• Present:
  average grade 3
    3,4,5 awarded from the elites’ perspective
    1 awarded from the perspective of the authorities

• Future:
  average grade 4.5
  all elites expect the importance of Asia to Romania to increase
Asian-Romanian relations

• Are defined by:
  – Economics related aspects
    • The level of commercial exchanges
    • Asian investments to Romania
  – Security and military related issues (involvement through NATO’s interventions in the area)
  – Collaboration in the field of energy, in the context of ongoing projects AGRI, South Stream, Nabucco
ASEM

• Largely unknown among the Romanian media elites
• More than 50% of respondents do not know the subject
• The others have offered very generalist answers; ASEM is considered
  – A welcomed attempt to improve Asia-Romanian relations, or
  – A purely diplomatic initiative with no practical results - “a possibility for a group of gentlemen to meet and discuss without solving anything”
• Only 4 elites commented on the effects of ASEM 8
  – 1 considers it to be “positive”
  – 3 believe the effects on Romania to be only mediated, through EU, which passes its positions along to the member states.
• The elites generally consider the idea of multi-regional dialogue to be quite abstract, without having offered any practical effects for Romania thus far
Thank you!