Asia in the Eyes of Europe

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Interview selection and criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Info</th>
<th>Media outlet</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 correspondents (1 religious/social affairs, 1 political and economic affairs)</td>
<td>BBC radio and TV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Editor</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief of Bureau</td>
<td>Independent/Irish Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social and Economic Affairs Reporter Correspondent</td>
<td>Freelance/BBC</td>
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<td>Freelance/BBC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>Regional publi. (FEER &amp; Asiasentinel) &amp; Guardian and FT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Editor</td>
<td>The Economist</td>
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Selection of Interviewees:

- Variety of news sources and formats (TV, radio, printed press)
- Geographical distribution (various regions of the UK)
- Various positions of responsibility within the news outlet (senior personnel through to more junior positions)
- Variety of topics associated with the reporting of Asia
How is Asia Covered?

- The Economist categorises the region: beginning at Afghanistan through Central Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia, Australasia, and the Pacific but others did not define the region.

- News is normally sourced from national news agencies but more often rely on local contacts recruited by correspondents.

- Correspondents are attached to regional bureaux that coordinate news for specific countries. News is often organised into specific areas within the region.

- Sections focused on Asia cover politics, social developments and cultural issues – often scattered throughout the newspapers (business, technology, city & finance, art, theatre, travel, etc)
Research and Budgets

• Research is key to preparation. Local knowledge, grasp of language & travel important to source local news.

• Extra correspondents are drafted into key locations according to ‘big’ events (commonwealth games, natural disasters, elections, festivities etc).

• In general, no specific ‘Asia’ budget. Bureaux have delegated budgets with overheads, staff expenses, travel etc.

• Number of foreign-based correspondents on decrease as costs are slashed.
Editorial Approach

• Generally, no ‘official line’ on Asia-related news. Much is left up to correspondents’ own judgments.

• Need to ‘Humanise’ news.

• Competition for ‘space’. Big events elsewhere in world, Asia squeezed out.

• Identified as a ‘key’ region. Focus on change, shift in global economic power.
Difficulties in ‘selling’ Asia-related News

- On the whole, some problems are encountered when trying to sell Asia news but no more than it is for other parts of the world. Competition for space.

- Key - link it to interest of UK audience

- Most common stories on social or cultural issues (culture, travel, art, environment, etc)

- Future – expect interest in region to grow. Interest has generally increased over past 5 yrs.
Expected shifts in the balance of reporting

• Shift expected towards Asia – ‘Asia will own 21st Century’. ‘the world is shrinking’

• On the whole, there is less foreign news – budgets slashed

• The type of coverage is changing - more features, rather than straight news reporting - the internet, the BBC, and the wire services.

• News on demand – internet
Info flows from Asian reg. bodies & governments

- Anything that helps the flow of information is helpful

- Beware of information overload and influence of governmental bodies

- Receptive if information is relevant and coordinated. Needs relevant and compelling to interest and help journalists in the region
Elites’ Personal perceptions on Asia
Asia - A great power?

- Great powers within but Asia itself is not. No unity, collection of individual countries.
- Big story – rise of China, emerging India
- Difficult to speak of Asia in general terms – doesn’t mean anything without definition
- What is Asia?

Do you see Asia as a great power?

- Yes: 13%
- No: 74%
- Yes and No: 13%
Asia – A leader in international politics?

- Asia is really trying to play catch up
- Learning to play a role on diplomatic stage experience of G20
- Will get there in future – summits overshadowed by disputes betw. ‘key’ players (China, Japan etc)
- More power than it used to wield purely because of its increased economic might

Do you see Asia as a international leader in politics?

- Yes: 25%
- No: 62%
- Yes and No: 13%
Importance of Asia to the UK

- Present: average = 2.75
- Future: average = 3.25
- Economic power and security will make Asia more and more important in the future
Important issues in the UK’s current relations with Asia

• Trade = Bargaining for influence – visits of European leaders
• Security – international terrorism
• Finance and business
• Human rights
• Foreign policy and diplomacy
• India, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan
ASEM Knowledge and impact on UK

- Generally, low levels of knowledge about ASEM
- Impressed about the intentions of ASEM
- Difficulties of coordination and dissemination of information
- Little knowledge or recollection of summit in Brussels, though, aware of Asian leaders visiting Europe
Images of Asia

- Diversity, people, opportunity
- Rice, crowds of people, construction
Images of Asia

• India, terrorism, corruption

• Emerging power, influence on rest of world, instability of risk
Word cloud of interview text
Summary

• Foreign news budgets increasingly constrained & competition for ‘space’. Need to ‘anchor’ stories to UK audience

• Recognition that Asia will be increasingly important in the future - shift towards region identified as ‘key’ area

• Important policy areas for UK include: Trade, security, finance and business investment, human rights, key partners (China, India, Pakistan)

• No general consensus on ‘what is Asia?’ – dominant players (China, India, Japan). Lacks unity, collection of countries.

• Images of Asia – diversity, people/crowds/populations, construction, corruption, food, etc
Conclusions

• Asia identified as a key region in foreign news reporting, ‘one-to-watch’. Media elites expect interest in region to increase.

• Revolution in nature of reporting news brought about by internet – ‘news on demand’ 24 hrs news channels. Is printed media rendered redundant?

• Concept of Asia – ambiguous, means different things to different people. Hard to define and categorise.
Thank you!