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# **Knowledge breeds affects: Understanding EU's Internal Complexities help increase Chinese perception of the EU and Europe**

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The China Policy Institute, part of the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies at The University of Nottingham, was set up to analyse critical policy challenges faced by China in its rapid development. Its goals are to help expand the knowledge and understanding of contemporary China in Britain, Europe and worldwide, to help build a more informed dialogue between China and the UK and Europe, and to contribute to government and business strategies.

## **Executive Summary**

1. The "Chinese views of the EU" survey data show that Chinese people favor the EU most, followed by Russia, the US and Japan. The same hierarchy is applicable to the citizens of these countries.
2. In order to improve EU's image in China, it is crucial to first identify the areas in which policy intervention can make a difference.
3. For example, if ideological differences between China and EU are found to affect how Chinese perceive the EU, policy responses should focus on reducing the perception of such differences.
4. Statistical analyses conclude that Chinese people who know more about the EU's internal complexities, such as EU's history and the memberships of the EU, are also more likely to have a positive attitude about the EU as well as EU citizens.
5. This finding is robust even after controlling the education level, exposure to foreign cultures, traveling experience abroad, and nationalistic mentalities, among others.
6. Therefore, to improve EU's image in China, an effective strategy would be to build or improve the knowledge Chinese people have about the EU and Europe.
7. This could be done by, for example, creating information points in major cities in China. Within the same centers, information materials could be distributed as well covering topics such as European art, fashion, economy, and politics.
8. The EU should work with Chinese schools and youth centers to promote the knowledge of EU and Europe.
9. Similarly, EU can promote the knowledge of EU and Europe by working with China's Ministry of Education as well as various provincial bureaus of education.
10. EU can work with the EU-related knowledge by working with cultural centers, exhibition centers, museums, websites, newspapers, and TV channels.
11. Popular magazines specialized in fashion, arts, travel, history, movies, automobiles, sports, and politics, among others, can serve as good platform for the dissemination of EU-related knowledge.
12. When inviting Chinese citizens to visit the EU, their itineraries should include components that expose them to the internal complexities of the EU countries and the whole EU community.

## **Knowledge breeds affects: Understanding EU's Internal Complexities help increase Chinese perception of the EU and Europe\***

Zhengxu Wang and Bogdan G. Popescu\*

### **Identifying Areas for Policy Intervention**

- 1.1 The image of a country or power in another country is determined by many factors. At the highest level, structural factors between two countries can affect how the citizens in one country perceive the other. If there was a war in the two countries' history, citizens would have negative feelings about the other country. If one the two countries had different political systems or values, then citizens of one country would be likely to perceive the other country more negatively.
- 1.2 In the case of how Chinese view the EU, the history of European colonialism and aggression in Asia can certainly cast a shadow. Ideological differences between China and EU, differences in the two powers political systems, cultural tradition, and religious traditions, can all affect how Chinese view the EU and the Europeans.
- 1.3 In terms of socio-economic factors, studies have found that middle-class people, are more likely to view foreign countries and foreigners more positively. Rural, parochial, or lower-class people, on the other hand, are more prone to influences of xenophobia. In terms of cognitive, psychological, or behavioral factors, those more exposed to European culture (movies or music, for example), are more likely to view EU more favorably. Furthermore, people who have travelled to the EU areas, as well as people who have come in contact with Europeans, are likely to perceive EU more favorably.
- 1.4 To develop policies that can help improve EU's image among Chinese citizens, we need to identify the factors that can be subject to short- to medium-term intervention. For example, if ideological differences are found to be a main factor affecting Chinese attitude of the EU, measures should be designed to mitigate the perception of such differences among Chinese citizens. That is, if programs can

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\* This is also part of the EU FP7 project "Chinese Views of the EU" policy paper series.

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lead to Chinese perceiving a smaller ideological gap between China and Europe, then the image of EU in China will become more positive.

1.5 For example, if cultural products of EU are found to be positively related to EU's image among Chinese citizens, policy options may exist to promote EU cultural products in China. The survey data shows, for example, that Chinese urban citizens often link EU or Europe to products such as European football, automobiles, and perfume. Hence, by increasing the popularity of these products in China, EU agencies can help increase Chinese people's positive perception of EU.

1.6 This research using the Chinese Views of EU survey data shows that Chinese citizens' knowledge about the internal complexities of the EU area can increase their favorable perception of the EU. As a result, policy measures to increase Chinese people's knowledge of the EU area can significantly contribute to a better image of EU in China.

### **Research and Findings**

2.1 The data of this study comes from a collaborative research project funded by the European Commission's Framework Seven Program. The public survey of Chinese Views of EU project was conducted in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Chengdu and Nanning, in the spring and summer of 2010. Within each city, the sample was designed to be representative of the registered residents aged 18-70 years old in urban areas.

2.2 The questions that were of interest for this research were:

- Overall Impression of the EU: "Please tell me if you have unfavorable, somewhat unfavorable, somewhat favorable or very favorable impressions of: the EU."
- Overall Impression of Europeans: "Please tell me if you have favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable impression/image of: EU citizens".
- Trustworthiness of Europeans: "Do you think in general EU citizens are trustworthy or cannot be trusted? Please select on the 7 point scale below a value that expresses your view. (1 very trustworthy, 2 quite trustworthy, 3 somewhat trustworthy, 4 neutral, 5 somewhat untrustworthy, 6 quite untrustworthy, 7 very untrustworthy)."

- Assessment of EU's Positive Role in Global Affairs: "In your opinion, would you say that the EU tends to play a positive or a negative role regarding: a. Peace in the world; b. The international economy; c. Protection of the environment; d. Scientific progress; e. Fighting poverty in the world; f. Fighting international terrorism". An average score is calculated for EU's role in these six areas of global governance.
- Assessment of EU-China Relationship: "In general how friendly is the China-EU relationship?" The respondent rated this relationship with a number that can range from "1" representing "very unfriendly" to "10", "very friendly".

2.3 The survey data indicates that overall, Chinese people favor the Europeans much more than they favor Russians, Americans, and the Japanese. Chinese also think Europeans are more trustworthy than Americans, Russians or Japanese. Chinese people also assess the relationship between China and EU as friendlier than China's relationships with the other three countries, and Chinese citizens feel EU plays a largely positive role in the various issues of global governance.

2.4 In order to assess whether the knowledge of EU's internal complexities help foster a good perception of the EU in the Chinese mind, the survey respondents' knowledge about the following aspects were examined:

- Where the EU headquarters is located?
- How many member states does the EU have?
- Is each of these countries part of the EU: Turkey, Switzerland, Poland, Russia, and Norway? (comprising five separate questions)
- Which these countries does not use Euro: France, Germany, Poland, or Russia? (comprising four separate questions)

2.5 These were constructed into a single measurement to represent individual Chinese citizens' EU-related knowledge in the areas listed above. The overall score is the number of questions to which the respondent provided a correct answer. The score can range from 0 to 11.

2.6 A series of ordinary least square regressions were then run, to see whether scoring higher in these EU-related knowledge questions is positively related to a person's affection toward EU and Europeans.

- 2.7 Results from these statistical analyses indeed confirm that an increased understanding of EU's internal complexities (operationalized as a high score in EU knowledge) is associated with a high amity towards the EU.
- 2.8 That is, if a Chinese citizens have better knowledge about EU's history, EU's administration (where the EU headquarters is located) or composition (which countries are in the EU and which ones use the Euro), they are more likely to have a better impression of the EU and Europeans, to think the Europeans are trustworthy, to feel EU is playing a positive role in various areas of global governance, and to think that EU-China relationship is in good shape.
- 2.9 These findings are robust even after controlling various factors, such as sex, age, number of years of education, life satisfaction, trust in other nations, the perception of whether the news about the EU is positive or negative and whether people have been to EU countries or not before.
- 2.10 In the case of attitudes towards the EU citizens, the knowledge that people have about the EU, the amount of education and the trust that people in general have, leads to a more positive image about the EU citizens. In addition, men tend to have a more positive attitude about EU citizens than women.
- 2.11 When it comes to how trustworthy EU citizens are, again, the knowledge that Chinese people have about the EU has a positive impact, together with the perception of whether the news about the EU is positive or not, trust and whether Chinese people have been to EU countries before or not. In this case as well, Chinese men think on average that Europeans are trustworthy, more than Chinese women do.
- 2.12 As far as the role of EU in the world is concerned, what matters is age, the interest in politics, the interest in arts, perception about the news on EU and the trust in other nations. In this case, the amount of knowledge the Chinese people have about the EU does not have a significant impact.
- 2.13 When it comes to the perception about the China-EU relationship, what matters is the number of years of education, the interest in EU economy and arts, the perception about the EU news, nationalism and the level of trust in other nations. In other words, the more educated people are, together with increased interest in EU arts and economy and the increased ability to detect whether the news about

the EU is either positive or negative, the better Chinese people see the relationship between China and the EU.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- 3.1 The EU should concentrate its efforts on building or improving the knowledge that Chinese people have about the EU. This could be done by, for example, creating information points in major cities in China. Within the same centers, information materials could be distributed as well covering topics such as European art, fashion, economics, politics which could raise people's interests.
- 3.2 The EU should work with Chinese schools and youth centers to promote the knowledge of EU in areas such as EU administration, countries which are part of the EU, history of the EU and Europe, and cultural diversity of the EU area, among others.
- 3.3 Similarly, EU can promote the knowledge of EU and Europe by working with China's Ministry of Education as well as various provincial bureaus of education.
- 3.4 EU can work with the EU-related knowledge by working with cultural centers, exhibition centers, museums, websites, newspapers, and TV channels.
- 3.5 EU can also engage print media in China to promote Chinese public's knowledge about the EU and Europe. Popular magazines specialized in fashion, arts, travel, history, movies, automobiles, sports, and politics, among others, can serve as good platform for the dissemination of EU-related knowledge.
- 3.6 When inviting Chinese citizens to visit the EU, their itineraries should include components that expose them to the internal complexities of the EU countries and the whole EU community.