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China and the European Union

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and pro-Russia. The EU should therefore develop a cyberspace strategy and invest more resources in the areas of new media, such as websites, microblogs and the popular social networking websites accessed in China, to allow more ordinary people to understand the EU, to have contact with the EU and to interact with the EU society. This would pay dividends in improving its image among the Chinese general public.

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10 Media influence on ethnocentrism towards Europeans

Daniela Stockmann¹

Introduction

Nationalism seems to be on the rise in China. At least, this is the impression that foreign correspondents in China convey to audiences abroad.² Indeed, there is empirical evidence that nationalist protests have increased since the late 1990s and that these anti-foreign protests have been primarily directed against Japan and the United States (Johnston and Stockmann 2007; Weiss 2008), though they also included criticism of bias against China in European media, and popular appeals to boycott French products in response to Western reactions to the uprisings in Tibet shortly before the Beijing Olympics in 2008. It is widely believed that this rise of Chinese nationalism is mainly a result of propaganda initiated by the state to boost regime stability.

In contrast to these common beliefs, previous research on media influence on images of the United States and Japan does not suggest that the government is proactively timing the production of negative images in order to prime attitudes among the population for discrete policy initiatives (Reilly 2012; Stockmann 2013). The Chinese Communist Party may have laid the foundations for popular nationalism in the early 1990s when it emphasized more strongly nationalist credentials to substitute for a decline in Socialist ideology in Chinese society (Zhao 1998a; Hughes 2006). However, popular nationalism went beyond the boundaries of the official discourse and contained criticism of China's foreign policy stance, thus imposing pressures and constraints on Chinese foreign policy (Seckington 2005; Reilly 2006). Therefore, the government has attempted to pull public perceptions of the United States and (to a more limited extent) Japan into a positive direction in order to cool off popular nationalism. The propaganda authorities have instructed media practitioners to depict stories on related topics in a positive (or less negative) light.³ Thus, the official line of the central government is to constrain negativity towards the United States and Japan in the press as the government seeks stable relations with those countries.⁴

How do these findings apply to public sentiment towards Europeans? In this chapter, I examine the role of the Chinese media in influencing ethnocentrism – the perceived difference between ingroups and outgroups, in this case Chinese and Europeans. Relying on the survey 'Chinese Attitudes towards Europeans

and the European Union' ('Chinese Views of Europe', CVE) conducted in the fall of 2010 in six Chinese cities, this chapter finds that awareness towards the European Union – a measure for media influence – causes Chinese urban residents to perceive less difference between Chinese and EU citizens. These findings contradict existing research on ethnocentrism which argues that ethnocentrism is activated by political leaders who frame issues in ethnocentric terms. Results are complemented with interviews conducted with 123 media practitioners by Chinese project team members affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the People's University of China, henceforth referred to as the CVE media expert survey.

The Chinese media as a source on foreign politics

The Chinese government generally distinguishes between propaganda aimed at foreigners (*duiwai xuanchuan*) and propaganda aimed at domestic audiences (*guonei xuanchuan*). Some Chinese media mainly function as a means to promote a positive image of China abroad, but since this chapter is focused on domestic audiences, my explanations concerning the Chinese media refer only to those propagating international news to domestic audiences.

Chinese domestic media used to be state owned and financed by the state, but budgetary constraints forced the government to sever media subsidies as early as 1978 (Zhao 1998b). Yet during the past 30 years the Chinese government has issued more licenses to media outlets, resulting in a rapid growth of the Chinese media industry by about 100 percent between 1978 and 2008.⁵ These media outlets were granted greater autonomy for business decisions and allowed to fund themselves primarily by means of advertising, which shifted the main goal of media organizations from serving the public (as defined by the state) towards earning profits, a key feature of commercialization. By the end of the 1990s, the majority of media outlets had become not only financially self-sufficient but profitable (Zhao 1998b).⁶ Although restrictions remain on the share of non-state investment in media outlets – such a share cannot exceed 49 percent – investment has created additional pressures for newspapers to make a profit since the early 2000s.⁷ These trends towards deregulation, commercialization and partial privatization have resulted in the marketization of the Chinese state media.

In addition, China's media environment has also become more internationalized. With the growth of the Internet, the government has created policy measures to control access to domestic as well as foreign websites.⁸ The government also relies on technological solutions, such as the so-called Great Chinese Firewall and censorship of keywords built into software. However, controlling the web still remains a challenge because of the large number of websites and the fragmentation of the state bureaucracy.⁹ Difficulties in controlling the information circulated on the Internet give traditional media incentives to cover issues that have received significant attention online.¹⁰ Competition also comes from international news media that are accessible to Chinese citizens mainly through the Internet. During the reform era, China opened up to news sources that

originated abroad, such as the BBC, CNN, Voice of America and *Newsweek* magazine. These media sources are sometimes blocked or filtered, but their content cannot be directly controlled by the Chinese government. Both online and international media available in China represent sources of information that are more autonomous from the state than the domestic, official media. These information sources place competitive pressure on television, radio broadcasting and print media to be bold in their reporting.

With respect to international affairs, there exist several specialized newspapers and television and radio shows. For example, the People's Daily Group publishes a semi-official paper, the *Global Times* (*Huagui Shibao*), and World News (*Shejia Xinwenbao*) is run by China Radio International. Yet these specialized publications do not constitute the most important source of information regarding international news for most Chinese citizens. Instead, most regular newspapers and news programs also cover international news, and the consumption of specialized media sources for international affairs is comparatively low. For example, according to data from Beijing Area Studies 2005 the readership of the *Global Times* only constitutes 7.9 percent of the population, while the most popular newspapers in Beijing remain the *Beijing Evening News*, *Beijing Youth Daily* and *Beijing Times* (*Xin Jing Bao*) (Stockmann 2013). Similarly, Chinese citizens prefer to learn about the news from Chinese sources and do usually not go onto the international news websites, even if they have studied English for several years (Stockmann 2011). One reason may be that Chinese audiences prefer to read about the news from their perspective. Since foreign news websites are primarily aimed at foreign audiences, they may not be able to satisfy the demand for more detailed news stories about China and a view of international relations that Chinese citizens can identify with.

When Chinese citizens indicate that media constitute their most important source of information about the European Union, they primarily have domestic news media aimed at a general audience in mind. According to the CVE survey data, about 73 percent of urban residents in the six cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Chengdu and Nanning) name television as their primary source, followed by the Internet (about 8 percent). Newspapers were named by about 6 percent, just as much as family and relatives were brought up. Radio, friends, colleagues, teachers and scientific publications, books, and social gatherings were selected by less than 4 percent.

These self-perceived sources of influence may somewhat understate the importance of media sources other than television. People are not always conscious of the sources that inform their own beliefs and attitudes. Research on media effects has shown that people actively screen the media for information they are attentive to, and store the information in their long-term memory (Zaller 1992). Especially when they are engaging in so-called online processing, information about the source may get lost and they may only remember the result of the cognitive process, not all pieces of information that were necessary to arrive at the conclusion (Lodge *et al.* 1995). People are particularly likely to engage in online processing when updating affect towards a particular concept, such as a

political candidate or a foreign country. When asked about an opinion, the most recent and most frequent activated pieces of information are moved into short term memory (Feldman 1995). Therefore, respondents in the survey may still be influenced by other media sources, even if they do not remember precisely which ones.

What media sources do Chinese ordinary citizens use to learn about the news? In line with people's self-perceptions, television is by far the most frequently consumed media source. In the six cities, 90 percent (Xi'an) to 96 percent (Shanghai) watch television news, averaging between four and five times a week. Newspapers constitute the second most frequently used news medium, averaging about 80 percent four times a week, though consumption rates range between 67 percent (Xi'an) and 90 percent (Guangzhou). With the rapid growth of the Internet, now the Internet reaches almost the same level as newspapers. In the CVE sample, about 64 percent stated that they use the Internet to learn about the news about three times per week. Radio news is listened to least frequently: only about 40 percent listen to the news on the radio between once and twice a week, though Xi'an and Chengdu stand out in terms of, respectively, their low (17 percent) and high (70 percent) consumption rates.

What kinds of messages do these media outlets transmit to Chinese audiences about foreign countries? Most research on this topic has been conducted about Japan and the United States, indicating that criticism arises mainly during periods of tension in international relations between China and these countries. Content analysis conducted among Chinese newspapers in 1999, 2001 and 2003 demonstrated that news reporting about the United States is overwhelmingly positive, especially when dealing with culture, society and entertainment, but becomes more negative as tension in Sino-US relations increases (Gross 2002; Stockmann 2013). Online news websites basically follow this pattern since they are either affiliated with more tightly controlled traditional media or required to reprint newspaper articles.¹¹ Criticism of the United States is most extreme but also less uniform in online discussion forums. For example, after 11 September 2001, netizens expressed a fair amount of schadenfreude, and criticism of American foreign policies, but also sympathy for the victims and opposition to terrorism in the People's Daily-run *Strong China Forum* (*Qiang Guo Luntan*) (Guo 2002). Reilly's case studies (2012) of popular mobilization during periods of tension in Sino-Japanese relations come to similar conclusions.

To my knowledge, no systematic study of Chinese news content regarding European countries has yet been conducted. In the CVE survey, respondents themselves assessed the content about the European Union as relatively positive, located on average at about 6.23 on a ten-point scale whereby higher numbers represent more positive perceptions of the news. Beijing and Shanghai were located slightly above average, while Chengdu and Nanning were slightly below. The 123 reporters who specialized in international news as part of the CVE media expert survey shared these basic assessments of ordinary citizens (mean=6.01; s.d.=1.48).¹² Together with our knowledge about news reporting about the United States and Japan, it is reasonable to conclude that these impressions of news content, though

they only represent general impressions and may not apply to individual cases, such as, for example the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, do not significantly differ from actual news reporting and are at least not significantly more negative than news stories about the United States and Japan.

Data and case selection

The CVE survey of the Chinese public was conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the People's University of China in collaboration with local partner institutions in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Xi'an and Nanning in June and July 2010. Sampling was based on PPS random sampling based on lists of registered residents. When CVE survey data are compared with the Beijing Area Studies (BAS),¹³ to my knowledge the only reliable time-series data available on Chinese views of foreign countries, respondents in the CVE sample reported somewhat more positive views of foreign countries.¹⁴ These results stem in part from the sampling of the survey, which excluded migrant workers and the rural population, who, according to the BAS data, tend to have somewhat more negative views of foreign countries. In addition, people with an interest in foreign affairs, and thus possibly somewhat more positive views, may have been more likely to respond to the survey, since respondents were approached with an explanation of the survey content focusing on views about Europe (while the BAS survey primarily focused on social and economic development). With this caveat in mind, the CVE data represent so far one of few randomly sampled survey data on Chinese views of foreign countries and international relations that stem from cities other than Beijing.¹⁵ Interviews were conducted by trained graduate students in the local dialect. The six cities for the CVE survey were chosen in order to cover differences across regions, levels of economic development, and integration into international markets. Since a previous quasi-experimental study has demonstrated Chinese media influence on sentiment towards Japan (Stockmann 2010), I interpret the correlations of the statistical analysis as causal relationships.

Concepts and measurement

Identity difference/ethnocentrism

The perceived identity difference variable tries to tap into the degree to which respondents perceived the Chinese, as people, to be different from Europeans in comparison to Americans, Japanese and Russians. Social identity theory (SIT) suggests that the construction of in-group identity generally leads to the construction of different – often devalued and conflictual – notions of out-group identity. Higher levels of perceived identity difference, *ceteris paribus*, can lead to more devaluation, and this in turn is associated with more competitive or threatened views of the out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Abrams and Hogg 1990). Kinder and Kam also refer to this concept as ethnocentrism, which is

a predisposition to divide human society into in-groups and out-groups. People vary from one another in their readiness to look upon the social world in this way; to those given ethnocentrism, in-groups are communities of virtue, trust, and cooperation, safe and superior havens. Out-groups, on the other hand, are not. To the ethnocentric, out-group members and their customs seems strange, discomfiting, perhaps even dangerous.

(2009: 31)

In the American context, ethnocentrism has been found to have profound consequences on attitudes towards both domestic and foreign politics, including protecting the homeland, dealing with enemies abroad, withholding help to foreign lands, stemming the tide of immigration, pushing back against gay rights, cutting welfare while expanding social insurance, and putting an end to affirmative action (Kinder and Kam 2009).

Though my main interest in this chapter is in explaining the role of the media in shaping ethnocentrism towards Europeans, we would expect identity difference to also shape the stance of Chinese ordinary citizens on foreign policy issues, just as it influences public opinion in the United States. Since current knowledge about media influence on attitudes towards foreign countries focuses on Japan and the United States, I include these countries to establish a baseline for comparison. In addition, I included Russia as a comparison case since Chinese citizens often compare Russia to Europe.

To capture the degree to which respondents believed Chinese and people from other countries differ in terms of their inherent characteristics, I constructed a perceived identity difference measure. Respondents were asked where they thought Chinese and EU citizens/Americans/Japanese/Russians as people were on a 1–7 peaceful-to-warlike scale and a 1–7 trustworthy-to-untrustworthy scale. The scales were combined, and the Chinese means were subtracted from the means of the foreign country, yielding an identity difference score that ran from –48 to +48.¹⁶ The greater the distance from zero, the greater the perceived identity difference; negative numbers indicate high ethnocentrism, while positive numbers indicate low ethnocentrism. On average, urban residents in the six cities felt that Japanese and Chinese had the largest identity difference (mean = –23.61; s.d. = 16.9), followed by difference with Americans (mean = –22.9; s.d. = 17.6), Russians (mean = –13.41; s.d. = 14.81) and Europeans (mean = –11.35; s.d. = 16.12). Since the dependent variable was a continuous variable, I employed ordinary least squares regression analysis.

Awareness/media influence

Mere exposure to the media alone does not change people's attitudes. Instead, the extent to which a person is influenced by the mass media depends on the level of awareness of a particular issue. Counterintuitively, moderately informed citizens tend to be most easily persuaded by new information conveyed, for example, through the news media (Converse 1962; McGuire 1968; Zaller 1992).

Starting with Zaller, scholars of political communication have commonly used a person's level of political knowledge as a proxy for political awareness, defined as the extent to which a person pays attention to politics and understands political information. According to Zaller's exposure–acceptance model, a person's likelihood to be persuaded by a piece of information depends on two factors: first, her or his likelihood to be exposed and comprehend the message (reception), and second, her or his likelihood to accept the message (acceptance). Zaller argued that poorly informed citizens are less likely to receive news media messages because they are little aware of politics. Highly informed citizens are more attentive and are thus very likely to receive and store political information conveyed through the mass media. At the same time, however, they also scrutinize the information in light of their predispositions and therefore tend to be more resistant to changing their political views. For example, if a person holds strongly conservative beliefs and receives a liberal message, that message is more likely to make a difference if she or he is not already familiar with it. The more familiar that person already is with similar liberal messages, the lower the likelihood that the message is going to change her or his conservative beliefs. Therefore, a person's level of awareness and attitude change are related to each other in a non-linear way.

In the Chinese context, media effects on sentiment towards the United States have also been found to be non-linearly related, as people's perceived trustworthiness of the media sources makes people either highly resistant or highly susceptible to positive messages about the United States (Stockmann 2013).¹⁷ Unfortunately, the CVE dataset does not contain enough observations for all relevant variables to allow us to replicate the previous analysis. However, we would expect that measures of awareness will nevertheless pick up the positive effect that exposure to news reporting about foreign countries has on people's attitudes. *Therefore, the empirical analysis should reveal a positive linear relationship between measures for awareness and identity difference.*

In order to investigate the extent to which Chinese urban residents were influenced by the mass media, I examined the relationship between levels of awareness about Europe and identity difference.¹⁸ The CVE included questions that asked about the headquarters of the EU, the number of member states, whether Turkey, Switzerland, Russia, Poland and Norway are EU member states, and whether France, Germany, Poland and Russia use the euro. Correct responses to these items were summed, and respondents who fell into the highest categories (getting between 8 and 11 items right) were grouped together to facilitate empirical analysis. The resulting variable, called awareness, was recoded to run from 0 to 1 to facilitate interpretation of the intercept. On average, respondents had about medium levels of awareness (mean = 0.49; s.d. = 0.27), with people in Guangzhou ending up slightly below average (mean = 0.4; s.d. = 0.29).

In order to be able to compare to media influence on other countries, I also employ a measure for a person's level of attentiveness, which is based on a question that asked how much attention to international news a person paid when reading newspapers, watching news on television or surfing the Internet.¹⁹

A follow-up question asked which country the respondent paid most attention to among a choice of the United States, EU countries, Russia, Japan, India and 'other'. On the basis of these questions, I developed measures for a person's degree of attention towards the United States, EU countries, Japan and Russia. This measure allows for some degree of comparison to other countries. The overwhelming majority of respondents selected the United States (about 80 percent), indicating that they were primarily interested in the United States when reading the international news. As a result, the number of people who are interested in other countries drops to less than 34 percent, thus making it difficult to find stable and statistically significant results based on this measure for countries other than the United States. Attentiveness was recoded to run from 0 to 1, where higher numbers represent paying more attention towards the United States, Japan, EU countries and Russia when reading the international news.

Control variables

Control variables were chosen on the basis of the literature on stereotypes and public opinion, which indicates that identity difference may be influenced by a person's strength of national identity and attitudes towards the home country (Tajfel and Turner 1979), level of trust in the home government and satisfaction with the situation at home (Hollander 1992), socialization in school and with peer groups (Greenstein 1965; Jennings and Niemi 1981), personal contact (Brewer and Miller 1988), authoritarian values (Feldman 2003), and the values and skills imparted by higher education (Kinder and Kam 2009). These variables include patriotism;²⁰ political satisfaction; socialization during the rapprochement with the United States (age 43 to 58); degree of contact with foreigners at work or as a result of travel abroad and assessment of the quality of the experience, if working with Europeans or traveling to EU countries; whether respondents felt that it was important to teach children respect for the elderly; educational degree; CCP membership; and gender. Since samples in each city were drawn separately, I also included dummy variables for each city, with Beijing as a baseline for comparison.

General media effects

My hypothesis predicts that greater awareness towards the EU will lead to perceptions of less difference between Chinese and Europeans. Table 10.1 displays the results of this first test. Each column represents a separate regression equation, whereby awareness is measured in one case by means of knowledge, in the other by means of attentiveness. The functional form of the model is as follows:

$$\text{Identity Difference} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Awareness} + \beta_{2-14} \text{Controls} + u$$

My hypothesis hinges on the magnitude of coefficients for β_1 , whereby a positive coefficient represents less ethnocentrism: less identity difference

between EU citizens and Chinese as well as a tendency to evaluate EU citizens more positively compared to Chinese, if the two groups are seen as different from each other. If positive news reporting about the EU leads citizens to become less ethnocentric, we should observe that they become *less* likely to report that Europeans are different than the Chinese and that this difference is based on a more negative assessment of Europeans compared to the Chinese.

Table 10.1 Media effects on perceived identity difference between Chinese and EU citizens

Independent variables		Identity difference EU citizens coefficient (standard error)	
Attentiveness to news on EU countries		-1.47 (1.025)	-
Awareness of the EU		-	2.870** (1.312)
<i>Control variables:</i>			
Support for authoritarian values		-2.076*** (0.699)	-1.985*** (0.699)
Patriotism		-13.063*** (1.188)	-12.996*** (1.188)
Political satisfaction		4.182** (1.646)	4.250*** (1.646)
Rapprochement generation		1.487** (0.693)	1.563** (0.693)
Educational degree		7.980*** (1.588)	7.378*** (1.604)
CCP member		-1.837** (0.76)	-1.938** (0.76)
Female		-3.885*** (0.631)	-3.765*** (0.634)
Contact with foreigners		3.664*** (1.028)	3.493*** (1.028)
Shanghai		0.048 (1.086)	0.024 (1.085)
Guangzhou		0.738 (1.178)	0.861 (1.178)
Xi'an		-3.671*** (1.083)	-3.680*** (1.081)
Chengdu		-4.330*** (1.129)	-4.443*** (1.13)
Nanning		-2.338** (1.125)	-2.219** (1.118)
Constant		-4.042** (1.608)	-5.658*** (1.705)
N		2,308	2,308
R ²		0.14	0.14

Source: CVE 2010.

Notes

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

Table 10.2 Media effects on identity difference between Chinese and Americans, Japanese and Russians

<i>Independent variables:</i>	<i>Identity difference Americans Coefficient (standard error)</i>	<i>Identity difference Japanese Coefficient (standard error)</i>	<i>Identity difference Russians Coefficient (standard error)</i>
Attentiveness to News on US	2.233** (1.077)	—	—
Attentiveness to News on Japan	—	-1.415 (0.911)	—
Attentiveness to News on Russia	—	—	1.627* (0.961)
<i>Control variables:</i>			
Support for Authoritarian Value	-2.199*** (0.713)	-1.885*** (0.693)	-1.593** (0.651)
Patriotism	-17.654*** (1.22)	-15.368*** (1.182)	-10.637*** (1.123)
Political Satisfaction	2.391 (1.673)	0.6 (1.633)	0.626 (1.53)
Rapprochement Generation	0.865 (0.707)	1.362** (0.686)	0.893 (0.643)
Educational Degree	7.579*** (1.613)	7.542*** (1.569)	2.994** (1.472)
CCP Party Member	-2.066*** (0.781)	-1.557** (0.755)	-0.843 (0.707)
Female	-2.419*** (0.648)	-2.809*** (0.627)	-2.400*** (0.589)
Contact with Foreigners	2.887*** (1.076)	1.845* (1.036)	0.282 (0.972)
Shanghai	-0.158 (1.111)	-0.586 (1.082)	-1.702* (1.018)
Guangzhou	1.409 (1.185)	2.547** (1.147)	-0.831 (1.095)
Xi'an	-4.474*** (1.098)	-5.520*** (1.068)	-3.823*** (1.01)
Chengdu	-6.056*** (1.142)	-5.665*** (1.116)	-4.551*** (1.052)
Nanning	-4.441*** (1.139)	-4.557*** (1.114)	-3.089*** (1.052)
Constant	-12.262*** (1.66)	-13.156*** (1.561)	-4.358*** (1.49)
N	2,543	2,526	2,384
R ²	0.16	0.14	0.07

Source: CVE (2010)

Notes

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

Results displayed in Table 10.1 show that awareness of the EU in the media can make people less ethnocentric. As a person's awareness about the EU increases, the level of perceived identity difference declines by about 3 points on the identity difference scale. These results are both substantially and statistically significant. Since the number of respondents who indicate that they primarily care about the EU when reading the international news is very small (ranging between 187 and 93 across cities), this basic pattern of results cannot be replicated when the independent variable is measured by attentiveness, resulting in a statistically insignificant coefficient.

How do these results differ from media effects on identity difference regarding other countries? Table 10.2 presents the results of this second test. Each column represents a separate regression equation, yet this time the dependent variable differs, while the main independent variables are always measured based on attentiveness. As in the case of awareness of the EU, these results demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between increased attentiveness and lower levels of ethnocentrism. Coefficients show a strong positive relationship between attentiveness and perceived identity difference between Chinese and Americans. With respect to Japan and Russia, these results are either not statistically significant or substantially smaller, which is likely to be a result of the small number of respondents who pay attention to either of these countries when reading the international news. If we assume for a moment that the awareness scale on the EU is roughly as valid as attentiveness with respect to the United States, we would have to conclude that media effects tend to be stronger with respect to the EU compared to the United States, but since the CVE does not allow us to test this assumption, these conclusions can only be suggestive, not definite. Nevertheless, these findings strengthen our confidence that Chinese media tend to weaken ethnocentrism.

The role of the Internet

As was mentioned previously, the Chinese Internet is the most loosely controlled of the media available to Chinese citizens, though the government has expended great effort and resources to control the information transmitted through the World Wide Web. In principle, the absence of information control on the World Wide Web provides opportunities as well as dangers for the mobilization of ethnocentrism, as website content can provide platforms for hypernationalists as well as moderates. However, since alternatives to the Internet are more tightly controlled in China, people are more likely to obtain information from Internet sources if their views conflict with the official line promoted via the less autonomous traditional media (Stockmann 2010). As a result, we would expect to find that people who are exposed to the Internet tend to be more resistant to the more positive messages about the European Union promoted through television, radio and newspapers.

Indeed, when allowing awareness and Internet use (a dummy variable) to interact with one another, we find that awareness of the EU remains positively

Table 10.3 Effects of media types on perceived identity difference between Chinese and EU citizens

Independent variables:	Identity difference EU citizens Coefficient			
	(standard error)			
Awareness of the EU	6.028*** (2.133)	6.847** (3.019)	3.638** (1.657)	4.234 (5.205)
Internet [†] awareness	-5.290** (2.672)	-	-	-
Exposure to Internet	3.607** (1.558)	-	-	-
Newspaper [†] awareness	-	-4.581 (3.308)	-	-
Exposure to newspapers	-	0.425 (1.836)	-	-
Radio [†] awareness	-	-	-2.094 (2.63)	-
Exposure to radio	-	-	0.788 (1.56)	-
Television [†] awareness	-	-	-	-1.416 (5.369)
Exposure to television	-	-	-	-0.137 (2.866)
Constant	-7.522*** (1.887)	-6.337*** (2.233)	-6.088*** (1.808)	-5.667* (3.177)
N	2,284	2,284	2,284	2,284
R ²	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14

Source: CVE (2010).

Notes

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

[†] Control variables were consistent with Table 10.1, but not reported in Table 10.3. Results can be obtained from the author.

related to perceived identity difference, though this relationship is weaker than when watching the news on television, listening to it via radio broadcasting or reading it in newspapers. This finding rests on the sum of the coefficient for awareness plus the interaction term, which adds up to 0.738. Compared to users of traditional media sources, Internet users are about 5.3 points more ethnocentric and tend to perceive Europeans as different, and negatively when compared to Chinese.

With its manifold communication technologies, the Internet obviously provides numerous possibilities to learn about Europeans. As was mentioned previously, only a small minority of Chinese access websites outside the Great Firewall; the overwhelming majority use domestic websites. Apart from obtaining information through search engines and general websites, there remain three major sources of information available to Chinese netizens, news websites being the most important of these. According to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), 77.2 percent of netizens indicated that they used the Internet for reading the news online in 2010. News content on these websites is

strikingly similar to that publicized in highly marketized newspapers, as news websites are either run by traditional outlets, which tend to give their online portals more space for news reporting, or allowed solely to reprint stories published in traditional media outlets, leading to preferential selection of marketized papers, such as *Global Times* or *Chongqing Business News* (*Chongqing Shangbao*) (Stockmann 2011). Therefore, the information retrieved through online news websites is roughly similar to that obtained from marketized newspapers.

Yet apart from this important but also more tightly restricted source of information, Chinese netizens also learn about news stories as they read blogs and communicate with others in bulletin board system (BBS) chat forums. According to the CVE data, about 31 percent of netizens use BBS and 35.2 percent use blogs as a means to learn about events (*liaojie shishi*).²¹ These information sources constitute highly autonomous information sources available to Chinese netizens (Esarey and Xiao 2008).

Interestingly, there is a significant difference between those who use blogs and those who participate in BBS discussion forums in terms of their views about Europeans. In Table 10.4, I added dummy variables for people who report using blogs and BBS forums to learn about events to the previous statistical analysis. Since I restricted the analysis to those who indicated to read the news online, the baseline for comparison is users of online news websites. Table 10.4 shows that netizens who use blogs tend to be more ethnocentric and people who

Table 10.4 Effects of exposure to blogs and bulletin board system (BBS) forums on perceived identity difference between Chinese and EU citizens among Internet users[†]

Independent variables:	Identity difference EU citizens Coefficient (standard error)			
Awareness towards the EU	0.703 (1.673)	-0.422 (1.988)	-1.009 (2.046)	
Exposure to blogs	-1.850** (-0.903)	-	-4.025* (2.176)	
Exposure to BBS chat forums	1.876** (0.952)	-0.757 (2.225)	-	
BBS [†] awareness	-	3.212 (3.584)	-	
Blog awareness	-	-	5.029 (3.488)	
Constant	-4.293* (2.215)	-3.675 (2.312)	-3.399 (2.3)	
N	1,508	1,508	1,508	
R ²	0.15	0.15	0.15	

Source: CVE 2010.

Notes

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

[†] Control variables were consistent with Table 10.1, but not reported in Table 10.4. Results can be obtained from the author.

like to chat in BBS forums tend to be less ethnocentric than those who read the news online – despite a significant overlap of about 70 percent between blog users and BBS users. We do not know where these differences come from; people who are more ethnocentric may be more attracted by blogging – a form of communication whereby one speaker or blogger communicates with a broader audience that can post reactions – while people who are less ethnocentric may be attracted by the format of the BBS websites, which allows for discussions in groups that are less focused on the opinion of a particular person. Alternatively, it may be the case that people are influenced by the content discussed on those websites, though an initial test including an interaction term does not support this conclusion.²² What can be said with more confidence is that netizens differ systematically in terms of their perceptions of differences between Chinese and Europeans, though as a rule of thumb they tend to have significantly more ethnocentric views than users of traditional media sources.

Conclusion

In a recent publication, Kinder and Kam (2009) argue that ethnocentrism is partly genetically determined and partly built during the early years of adulthood. At a later point, it gets activated by political leaders who frame suitable issues in ethnocentric terms. Yet in addition to activation by political leaders, ethnocentrism may also be influenced by the content of the news, especially when reports about an out-group are roughly uniform. The Chinese case shows that media may ‘massage’ public sentiment towards out-groups by transmitting positive messages that lead to perceptions of the out-group as more positive and more similar to the in-group. In the six Chinese cities examined here, the more aware were also less likely to hold ethnocentric views. In addition, people with views that conflict with the positive official line promoted in the traditional media are more likely to move into less tightly controlled sources of information, particularly the Internet. Therefore, opinions spread on the Internet differ considerably from the average views of Chinese urban residents and should not be regarded as representative of Chinese public opinion.

Notes

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2 See, for example, *The National Interest* (Winter 2000/2001); CNN, 3 April 2001; *Newsweek*, 16 April 2001.

3 My findings differ from those of Brady (2008), since her data stem from the early 1990s while mine refer to the situation in the early 2000s.

- 4 This approach by the central government can change during a crisis. During nationalistic outbursts the central government walks a fine line between allowing expressions of negativity while at the same time constraining popular anger. Since this study examines general trends over time, my explanations of the position of the central government relate to regular circumstances. For more detailed explanations of the dynamics between the central government and citizens in times of crisis, see Johnston and Stockmann (2007) and Stockmann (2010).
- 5 According to official statistics from the General Administration of Press and Publications, the National Bureau of Statistics of China and the China Internet Network Information Center, newspapers increased in number from 186 to 1,943, periodicals from 930 to 9,549, television stations from 32 to 287 (excluding *guangbo dianshitai*), radio stations from 100 to 263, and websites from 0 to 2,878,000.
- 6 Some newspapers had already lost all subsidies in the early 1980s. An example is the *Jilin Daily* (Y. Zhao 1998b: footnote 6, page 52).
- 7 Guanyu Guifan Xinwen Chubanye Rongzhi Huodong De Shishi Yijian' (Opinion on the implementation of regulations on financial activities of the publication and press industry), General Administration of Press and Publications, 25 July 2003. Foreign investment remains restricted to magazines and the Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV, a satellite television joint venture between Rupert Murdoch's Star TV, Liu Changle, an overseas Chinese entrepreneur, and the Bank of China.
- 8 Regulations restrict pornography, gambling, and publication of 'counterrevolutionary' materials, ask Internet content providers and Internet cafés to monitor website content and users' browsing, and require users to register with the police when opening an account. Certain foreign websites are sporadically blocked. See, for example, Zhao (2008), McKinnon (2009) and Xiao (2011).
- 9 The Internet developed as part of the telecommunications bureaucratic structure rather than the propaganda apparatus. In 1996, the State Council set up a Steering Committee on National Information Infrastructure to coordinate Internet policy. In 1998, the new Ministry of the Information Industry absorbed the functions of the committee. See Chase and Mulvenon (2002).
- 10 Personal interviews with editors by the author in Beijing, 2005 (nos. 8 and 25).
- 11 See 'Provisions on the Administration of Internet News and Information Services', Online, available at http://www.china.org.cn/business/2010-01/21/content_19281869.htm.
- 12 Reporters and editors exclude Chinese media staff located abroad; they were contacted by graduate students of the People's University of China and Communication University of China using the snowballing method instead of random sampling; therefore, results are not representative of Chinese reporters as a social group, but may give some indication that media practitioners' assessment does not differ significantly from that of ordinary citizens.
- 13 The BAS is a biannual survey conducted by the Research Center of Contemporary China (RCCC) of Peking University. It is based on GPS random sampling, which samples the geographical location of the respondent. For details, see Landry and Shen (2005).
- 14 The CVE 2010 and BAS 2009 surveys both included questions regarding semantic differentials between Chinese, Americans and Japanese on a dimension ranging between highly peaceful and highly aggressive. According to the CVE, identity difference between Americans and Chinese in Beijing was, on average, -3.17; among comparable BAS respondents (with Beijing urban *hukou*, meaning residency permit), it was -3.26. When all respondents (migrants and those with a rural *hukou*) from the BAS 2009 data were included, identity difference was even more negative, averaging -3.37. Similarly, according to the CVE, identity difference between Japanese and Chinese in Beijing was, on average, -3.29; among comparable BAS respondents it was -3.08, but among all BAS respondents it was -3.17. For an explanation of the

- coding of the identity difference scale, see the section 'Concepts and measurement' (pp. 195–196).
- 15 The methodology of most Chinese surveys is unclear. The CVE Beijing sample contained about 48.8 percent women (54 percent among BAS respondents with Beijing urban *hukou*) and its respondents were 2 years younger, on average, than the BAS sample (about 41 years old compared to 43 among BAS respondents with Beijing urban *hukou*), included about 5 percent cadres (compared to 2 percent among BAS respondents with Beijing urban *hukou*), and were significantly more traveled (18.7 percent compared to 8.3 percent among BAS respondents with Beijing urban *hukou*). The scales were recoded from the original questionnaire in order to make them consistent with my earlier work. See Johnston and Stockmann (2007) for more details.
- 16 On the relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards foreign politics in Europe, see Philip Everts' contribution in this volume (Chapter 7).
- 17 Price and Zaller (1993) provided evidence that political knowledge constitutes a valid indicator for news reception. For a discussion of the measurement validity of knowledge scales in China, see Stockmann (2009). To lower the probability of respondents' guessing the right answer, I relied on substantive questions to construct the scale.
- 18 On the measurement validity of this survey instrument to assess news reception in China, see Stockmann (2009).
- 19 Patriotism is measured consistently with the work of Dekker *et al.* (2003).
- 20 CVE data differ from China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) data as the survey question asked specifically about motivation to read blogs and BBS forums in order to read about events. According to CNNIC data, 64.4 percent of netizens were using blogs, including both bloggers and people who read other people's blogs, while 32.4 percent of netizens were participating in BBS discussion forums in 2010.
- 22 In both models displayed in the middle and right-hand columns of Table 10.4, the interaction term is positive (and not statistically significant), pointing towards a positive relationship between awareness and being less ethnocentric.

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