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ABSTRACT

Empirical studies of EU-East Asian relationships as depicted in the media are increasingly moving into the foreground of discursive international relations analysis concentrated on the ASEM process. Yet region-to-region perceptions are still largely conceived within national, historical and linguistic prisms which are only gradually transferring into trans-regional ones. This working paper considers two interrelated moments, as indicated in the title, and hopes to make a modest contribution to the academic study of the construction of perceptions as a necessary precondition of and complement to an emerging sense of a common, shared and mutually beneficial inter-regional cooperation.

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REPRESENTATIONS OF EURO-ASIAN RELATIONS IN 2010: SOUTH KOREAN NEWSPAPERS REPORT ON ASEM AND GERMAN NEWSPAPERS ON ASIA (ESPECIALLY CHINA)

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“The time for petty politics is over: already the coming century will bring the struggle for world leadership — the *compulsion* to politics in the greatest sense.”

[adapted from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gute und Böse* (1886)]²

Introduction

In a globalising world, the media can act not only to reinforce viewpoints and even stereotypes, persistent patterns of behaviour, but to prepare a public — a public sphere perhaps — more to cope with change, to meet challenges before they become crises. Thus they show the “schema of the situation, the weighing in the balance of commitment and possibility” (Brecht, *Die Maßnahme* 74-75). They might aim to turn the forces of globalisation, the intersecting currents of the political and the economic, to a common advantage, even if this commonality is fractured socially, politically, economically and in some cases linguistically. Yet even this fracturation is perceived to take place in a context, the national, which, in a post-individual, consumerist world, and with both bipolarity and unipolarity now seemingly retreating, the multipolar, or even non-polar (or apolar) brings back as a line of intersection between the contraction and expansion of once-individualised identity, or of a social identity (a “culture of narcissism” perhaps) based on this.

As the conclusions of a 2005 Bertelsmann survey of ten countries from Brazil, through several in Europe to China and Japan opine, in such a world one’s “interests, fears and desires,” “unfiltered” by those strictly demarcated ideological delineations, come to the fore through national formations (*Wer*

regiert die Welt? 6). Since therefore the national — even with significant regional variations in one country, variations as yet largely untested in work on transregional perceptions across Eurasia — is still a primary boundary or perimeter of social identity, a context in which scenarios of optimism and gloom are played out, and in which political and economic strategies are followed through,³ an as yet abiding nationalism underlies regionalisation, a framing of the global within its prism, whereby the nationalistic is imbricated into the regional but not superseded by it. As recent financial and other crises have demonstrated, regionalised and institutionalised responses like those of the EU cannot yet dispense with national interests.

In this light, and with the contention in mind that foreign news reporting can influence

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² Chapter VI [Wir Gelehrten/ We Scholars] (section 208): “Die Zeit für kleine Politik ist vorbei: schon das nächste Jahrhundert bringt den Kampf um die Erd-Herrschaft — den Zwang zur großen Politik.”

³ The EU through this prism is considered a union *facienda* between states or polities rather than/as yet not of nations (cp. also McCann on the “robustness of national systems” [16]).

public opinion more than domestic news does since audiences have less “contextual knowledge”⁴ South Korea’s weighing of the importance of ASEM, and Germany’s take on the rise of Asia. In both cases, the new is positioned in relation to the dominant and the residual: the persistence of North Korea or the as-yet ongoing rise of East and South Asia maintain certain stereotypical as much as they call for innovative responses. “China’s image in Europe is not as positive as many would assume” (Li Xin; cp. Bersick 247): that which lies behind such an image, behind its positive (or negative) spin, and the assumption itself, is significant in strategising intercultural dialogue and recognising its limits. In what follows, implicit, and at moments explicit, references are made to Carola Richter and Sebastian Gebauer’s 2010 publication on China news reporting in Germany during 2008. While this prism may appear more applicable to the German than to the South Korean material represented, their main claim is apposite to both: news reporting focalises around certain persistent themes which can be taken to reveal at least as much about the readers and editors, the national construction and composition of a public sphere and its horizon of expectations than about the actors covered in the reports. In a large sense, this is perhaps more evident in the South Korean reporting of ASEM, but not so noticeable in the German news reporting on China in 2010.

The importance of inter-regional dialogue – ASEM seen through South Korean reports

The presence, importance and mechanisms of inter-regional dialogue have low public perception. While it can reasonably be supposed that the term “EU” is now relatively well-known among East Asia’s globally-minded

citizenry, knowledge is perhaps still relatively superficial as the opportunity costs too high and the benefits too low of acquiring more knowledge (this of course pertains within the EU itself). The Bertelsmann 2005 survey found that, in ascribing its status as a world power, the EU had no champion outside its own perimeters, and was credited with less importance than Japan; the survey opined that the citizens of the EU member states hadn’t made the “mental” leap to a recognition of its world role (*Wer regiert* 14, 17). It is this perceptions gap that projects like those on mutual perceptions across Eurasia can help minimise. Moreover, when it comes to the purpose, achievement and nomenclature of that organisation, so ever loose it might be, which has done more than most to work towards inter-regional cooperation, perception of ASEM is even less certain. This unawareness has of course many grounds — the organisation’s perceived lack of pertinence to everyday life being one prominent reason — but its depth is disconcerting, and this on both sides of the Eurasian landmass.

As a major vehicle of inter-regional dialogue, ASEM’s importance is not to be underestimated, yet this meeting process is often sidelined in media reports and public and other (“elite”) opinion in favour of a foregrounding of national bilateral (fundamentally economic) ties.⁵ For all the encouragement across a range of actors and their undeniable importance as a bedrock in the shifting tides of globalisation, connections across the Eurasian landmass are often seen as insufficient, with strong mutual recognition still lacking. While the very processes which characterise globalisation are gradually enhancing and nuancing the clarity of

⁴ The essay for example attempts to pencil in some trajectories tentatively sketched out by Sebastian Bersick in his overview of the 2011- “Asia in the eyes of Europe” project (Bersick 251).

⁵ In an October 12 2010 opinion piece in the *Singapore Straits Times*, Kerry Brown and Amy Studdart report that the 2010 ASEM Summit “went largely unnoticed by the majority of the inhabitants of the two continents its members represent.” (Neither Brown nor Studdart is a journalist.)

perceptions across the regions, these same processes, conceptualised more as threats than opportunities, can foster a retention of or an apostasy into ingrained stereotypes.

Suet-Yi Lai and Natalia Chaban have noted that, as the Japanese and Thai, the South Korean media framed the ASEM 6 meeting (2006 in Helsinki) almost exclusively politically (Lai and Chaban 238); this may be seen as a background pattern, as the subsequent meeting (ASEM 7, Beijing in 2008) was overshadowed by the first phase of the ongoing financial crisis. While in their analysis of the South Korean media during crisis-hit 2009, Sung-Hoon Park and Sung-Won Yoon found that North Korea was a “supplementary” issue for South Korea’s “elites” (quotation marks in the original), those interviewed maintained that ASEM 3 in South Korea in 2000 had set a tone for good multilateral relations and that such consistent ties across a range of participants was both welcome and necessary (Park and Yoon 185-186). At a time when conflict on the Korean peninsula may intensify, after a period of more frequent North Korean nuclear tests, and sandwiched in between the sinking of the ROKS Cheonan and the shelling of Yeonpyeong island, ASEM 8 in Belgium (2010) was reported as an opportunity for South Korean President Lee to “broaden the international support base” for the country’s North Korea policy (“Lee dae-tong-nyeong, je8cha a-sem jeong-sang-hoe-ui”); the signing of the EU-Korea FTA was also a welcome boost to ties.

ASEM in some ways therefore complements the apparent close ties between South Korea and the US, and serves as an additional conduit for discussions with most of its large neighbours. A 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey (Washington D.C.) across 24 countries worldwide found that South Korea has the highest “favourable” view of the US (70%, as compared to 50% in Japan, 68% in Poland and 31% in Germany); by far the highest (74%, 9% over the next highest, India) see the US as the

world’s leading economic power. Conversely, yet related to these findings, South Koreans gave the highest rating, along with Japan, to China’s influence (even if this was less than that of the US), and this influence was seen as largely negative. South Koreans do not believe that China considers their interests, but pursues instead its own national priorities (the US, however, is rated as being even less interested than the Chinese are in considering South Korea’s interests). ASEM therefore allows bilateral relations to be seen in a wider frame, and gives another forum or focus for discussions in the search for multilateral consensus.

In the first eight months of 2010, 91 items with some reference to ASEM could be found in the four South Korean news papers observed: the three main dailies with circulations of two million or so (the *Chosun Ilbo [Daily]*, *Dong-A Ilbo* and *JoongAng Ilbo*) and the main business newspaper, the *Maeil Business News* (circulation somewhat under a million); the *Korea Herald*, as an English-language paper, was considered only on the sidelines (Figure 1).

With 49 articles, *Maeil Business* by far showed most interest in ASEM related topics, most (25 articles) presented not within an economic, but rather within a primary political frame. This might be due to the *Cheonan* incident on 26 March 2010, which dominated the news for about two months. The overall peak on April and May marks the discussion that followed that incident and in which ASEM was often mentioned along with other international arenas like the G8 or G20 Summit, as an occasion to coordinate a joint international response towards North Korea.

Given the possible political and economic consequences of continued heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula (of course not only for the two Koreas), and therefore the recognition that such categorisation must have porous borders, the separation — as common

in such media analysis — between the two categories (political, economic) cannot be exact. It is therefore *faute de mieux* that we use such a categorisation below.

The findings regarding the content of the articles are very consistent.⁶ All articles are directly linked to Korea-related events, which goes along with the fact that South Korean news media have a very low level of international news coverage compared to other countries (Park and Seo 147; see Li Zhang's summary tables of the South Korea results from the 2006 "EU through the Eyes of the Asia-Pacific" project). The general outline

was either neutral or positive (Figure 2).

52% of the articles focused on political, 23% on economic issues (Figure 3). All news regarding the environment could also be viewed as focused on economic issues, since they all deal with new Green technology products.

The third ASEM Summit (2000) in Seoul has in retrospect been seen as a test run for the G20 Summit in September 2010 there. In terms of major international events held in South Korea, the 2000 Summit is often perceived as standing in one line with the 1988 Olympic Games and the G20 meeting. Here especially the aspect of

Figure 1: Distribution of ASEM Coverage in Korean News Media (01/2010 – 09/2010)

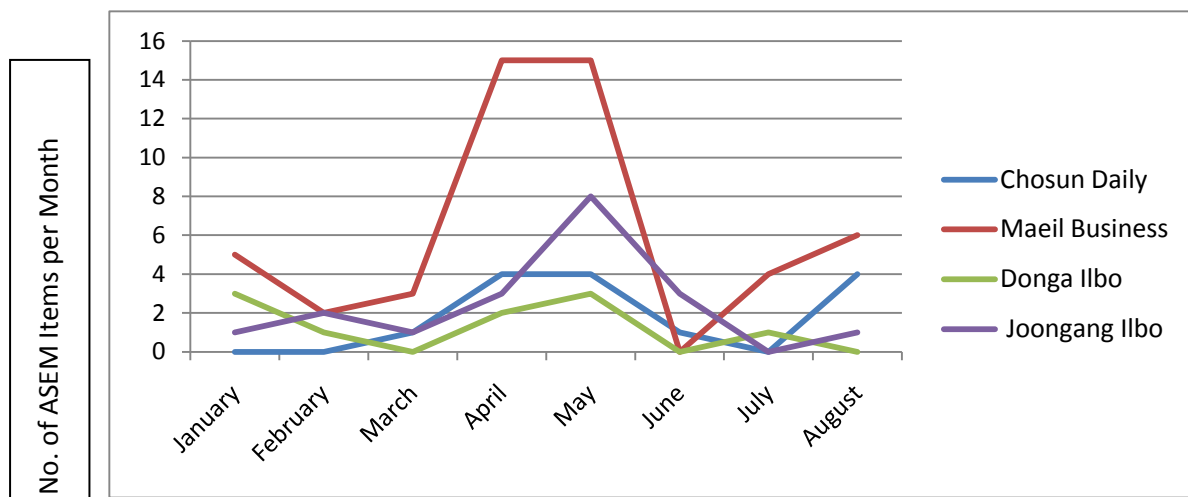
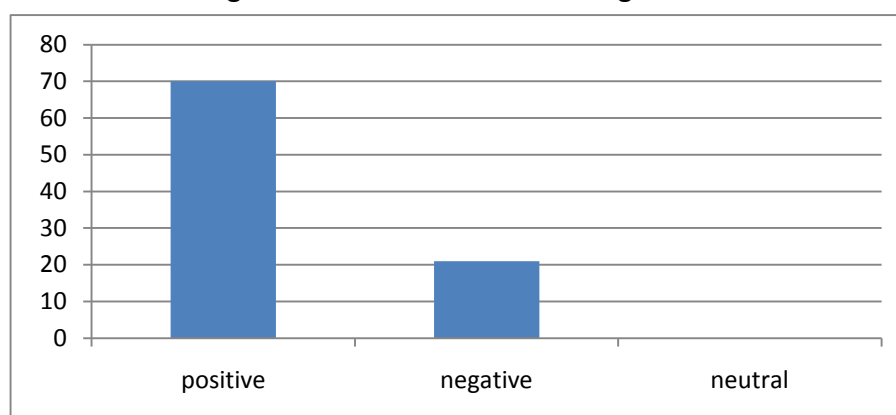
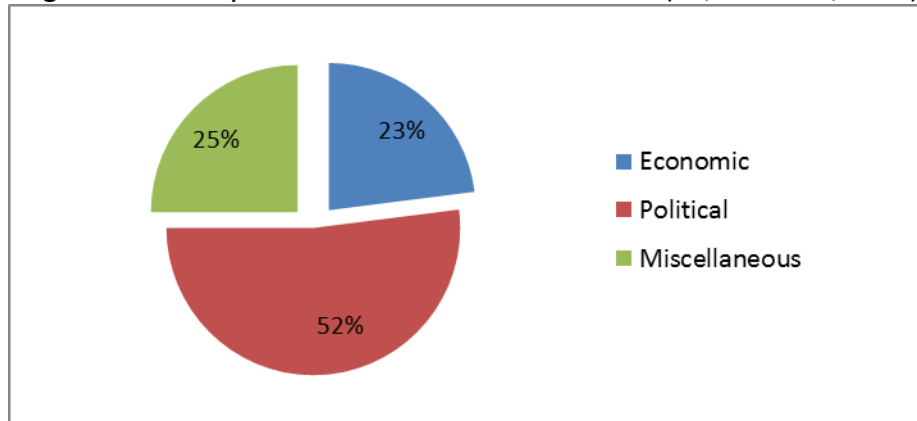


Figure 2: Evaluation of ASEM in general



⁶ It should be noted that many of the articles were provided by the same press agency and therefore have identical content.

Figure 3: Primary Frames of ASEM News in Korea (01/2010 -09/2010)



gaining necessary know-how in reference to organisational and security matters is stressed.

The ASEM Summit is considered a step both towards full acceptance into the international political community and towards an active participation in international decision making. The success of ASEM 3 led to a sustained interest in the dialogue process, particularly of course in the light of the need for a positive and proactive multilateral engagement over North Korea; questioning whether this is or has been forthcoming lends weight to the argument for the perception of its need, not least at a time when a period of deep reflection offset against the urgency of action seems to prevail, as the 2010 report of the South Korean Ministry of Unification makes clear. As David Camroux and Park Sunghye remarked in a still pertinent 2004 article, South Korea saw ASEM as offering “opportunities where it could raise its own international profile” (Camroux and Park 173). ASEM therefore appeared as a “channel” for South Korea to “diversify” its foreign policy (Kim 55), to move away from “a US-led unipolar system to balanced mutual interdependence” (Kim 56).

ASEM is therefore seen as a forum which offers the possibility to discuss conflicts, attract international attention and initiate joint actions. This could be seen in the case of the *Cheonan*

incident and the following declaration of South Korea to urge measures against North Korea at the next G8, G20 and ASEM Summits.

Commenting on the investigations into the *Cheonan* incident, a *Chosun Daily* article (7 August) mentioned that fora like the South Korea-Russia summit and ASEM later in the year would offer venues for a common position to be worked out between the two countries after an inconclusive Russian report on the sinking (“Reo bo-go-seo”; see also a post ASEM 8 wrap-up in *Maeil Business* [“ASEM Cheonan”]). Several articles mentioned the ASEM meeting and highlighted South Korea’s place in the “North, South and East Asia” group (i.e. those countries which before the ASEM enlargement in 2010 were neither in ASEAN nor the EU), for example the *Maeil Business News* on 2nd August 2010 (“ASEM jo-jeong-gu-koe-ui”). In November, when the South Korean and Russian Presidents met in Seoul, their joint statement called for a range of fora, including ASEM, to be used to discuss and help solve persistent problems (“Lee, Medvedev”); multilateralism and multiregional responses are seen as critical to help resolve intractable problems.

It is not surprising therefore that the 8th ASEM Summit (2010) attracted daily reports in the South Korean newspapers surveyed. Here of importance was also of course the EU-South

Korea FTA, signed in the margins. ASEM is therefore seen as an opportunity for such “bilateral” meetings. According to the *Chosun Daily* report of the FTA signing (“Lee dae-tong-nyeong bel-gi-e bang-mun”), “opening the door to the world’s largest market” is of course important, but more so seems to be an awareness—not so common these days in some other countries, but structured into the EU’s own normative agenda—that such an FTA has political and ethical dimensions, as economic alliances imply to some extent at least a sharing of “value systems”. A presidential spokesman noted that these include liberal democracy, market economy and respect for human rights. ASEM 8 was also significant to South Korea because of the presence of Russia, the opportunity to share views over the North Korean issue with now three members of the discontinued Six-Party Talks.

Of course, continuing and rising tensions are not the only context for the reporting about ASEM in the newspapers. ASEM is also seen as an opportunity for South Korea to enter the international community along a broad range of other topical fronts. South Korea’s place as a hub for green innovation was a theme of several articles, especially the ability of ASEM to foster growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) (“ASEM reuk nok-ssae-kyeok-ssin-sen-teo”). ASEM was construed as a stage to present innovative products and build business relations. The focus here was strongly on Green technology products like electric cars and the main prospects were seen in the improving of small scale business relations (“ASEM nok-ssaek-sseong-jang”).

In general, then, in recent South Korean news ASEM figures through one main prism, as a means of making known and garnering support for the move away from South Korea’s “sunshine policy” at a time when its aim of peaceful co-existence is increasingly fragile and when the Ministry of Unification noted in its

2010 White Paper that the policy could not withstand the pressures of the new, evolving situation (“White Paper”). This foregrounding, although of course understandable, rather relegates the diversity of ASEM’s activities to the background. Even if therefore more interest is seen in the South Korean newspapers with regard to ASEM than in most of ASEM member countries, it is with this particular national, historical context in sight. Following Richter and Gebauer’s “theses” for a deeper engagement by German newspapers with East Asia though a widening of approaches and themes covered, a comparable extension might be beneficial for the Korean media with respect to ASEM.

ASEM and Asia – comparative South Korean/German perspectives

ASEM seems to have a much greater importance for South Korea than for Singapore (Turner and Ma 187), the UK (only two articles, both with tangential reference, in the first half of 2010 in the leading dailies), or the Netherlands and Germany where it is practically invisible. During the first eight months of 2010, only 2 items were located in the German-speaking print media in which the ASEM was mentioned; while, during the ASEM 8 summit (later than the period here focused on), there was some coverage, this was limited. Articles mentioned the Summit in passing (calling it the “EU-Asia-Summit [EU-Asien-Gipfel]”), one seeing it as an occasion for certain EU leaders to address the issue of the yuan appreciation (“Europa ruft China”) and another as the occasion for an attempt at a rapprochement between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands (“Japan und China bemühen sich um Annäherung”). The process itself of ASEM therefore is of limited interest. Why is there no interest in ASEM in German-speaking countries in contrast to the much bigger interest in ASEM in South Korean news?

Often quite loosely bandied about, the term “Asia” is of course both largely a European contrivance and too large and heterogeneous to avail itself of a canny overview, while Europe, since Nietzsche at least,⁷ is visible as “Asia’s” promontory or peninsula. It is such a common occurrence that it hardly warrants mentioning, but “Asia” often seems more a generic term for China and a few other major economies, rather than for the “eastern” part of the Eurasian landmass to its full extent (and which would of course include Russia and — depending perhaps on who is in power in Canberra — Australia). Germany deals with Asian countries either on a bilateral basis (so there is news about China-Germany, South Korea-Germany, Japan-Germany, etc.) or on EU level (so news about EU-China). However, the EU frame is arguably of secondary importance to the large and, during 2010, burgeoning German economy, especially in the context of the euro-crisis to its south and west.

The 2007 ASEM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Germany was directly followed by the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which was perceived as a much more important meeting. Also the matters discussed at that meeting were a minor focus, since the violent riots of anti-globalisation activists (gearing up in Hamburg for their June trip to the Baltic seaside) dominated the news and the chance was missed to raise more awareness of ASEM. In essence, there appear to be few concrete results that Germany could not also achieve in other fora. For South Korea, as mentioned above, every hosted international event since the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, when it was a fledgling democracy, is a first for South Koreans.

⁷ See for example *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) #52: “das alte Asien und sein vorgeschobenes Halbinselchen Europa, das durchaus gegen Asien den ‘Fortschritt des Menschen’ bedeuten möchte” [“that old Asia and its little protruding peninsula Europe, which would insist, in contrast to Asia, on representing the ‘Progress of Mankind’”].

Therefore huge interest is paired with pride. In South Korean news the efforts of the country addressed as ‘our country’ play a bigger role than in German-speaking countries. Every event is seen as a project of the whole nation, whereas in Germany the hosted Summits are rather perceived as business of the ministers.

Germany reads China in 2010

As one of the world’s leading economies, both in terms of relative size and per capita GDP, Germany sees itself as remaining in the premier league for the foreseeable future. The media have little compunction therefore in benchmarking their country’s performance against that of other major economies, especially of course China and the US, even if the country asserts its awareness of its strong role in the EU. As BASF CEO Jürgen Hambrecht told *Die Zeit* in May 2010, Germany can and must look at the *Asiaten* “eye to eye” and forge a new basis for dialogue (Knipper). According to the 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, Germans do not fear being sidelined or overlooked by China (only 59% expressed doubts that China “considered” Germany’s interests, as opposed to 82% in France, and 77% in Spain [39]). However, almost twice the number of Germans (14%) than French, Britons or Spaniards see China as a potential threat, and the Germans have about the lowest “favourable” rating of China/the Chinese (26% for the country) among the EU nations polled. To give some context, 66% of Germans had unfavourable views of the US (22), and from 2005 to 2008, while the favourability index for both countries dropped, that for the US was consistently lower than for China. The danger, of course, of such public opinion surveys is that they may reveal only national characteristics rather than considered opinions. Being conscious of placement in the premier league brings a certain self-confidence and self-assertion to the fore.

Not surprisingly then, the China concept in the German newspapers is to a certain extent essentialist, normative and evaluative. With relatively few East Asians with German domicile (about 3% of the total foreign population; there are three times as many Poles and more than twice as many Italians [*Statistisches Jahrbuch* 2010: 52]), there is still a mark of the foreign, if not exotic, about East Asia, a knowledge and experience gap that needs to be filled. Reports aim at the building and retention of a German readership for that particular newspaper (by which is meant a German-speaking one rather than that confined to the Federal Republic of Germany itself) but can also chivvy readers into taking as important that which is generally tangential to their daily lives.

While such momentous events as the Beijing Olympics (August 2008) and the Tibet unrest (March 2008) — essential moments in Richter and Gebauer's analysis of the German media — are in the background of the reports from the first half of 2010, this period is marked by a relative calm from such incidents, and is therefore perhaps a more accurate, if less exciting, indication of a "business [a term chosen advisedly] as usual" scenario than that of the Richter and Gebauer book which gives of course a much more comprehensive coverage. They found almost 4,000 articles in 6 newspapers/weeklies over the 2008 year; the survey to be presented here — much more modest, indeed admittedly more a snapshot — found a steady stream of major articles every other day or so, the majority of which dealt with China (Figure 4).

Scanning through the online search engines of three widely disseminated German newspapers (the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* [circulation 559,000], the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [circulation 477,000] and *Die Zeit* [a weekly;

circulation 650,000]),⁸ the present project (mostly on the first half of 2010) found some 657 items with some reference to Asia or a dependent term (China, ASEAN etc). Of these, around one quarter were deemed to have a substantial enough focus for the article to be added to a rudimentary list the main issues of the items in which were noted and some (about 50 or so) read in some depth in order to give some narrative to the quantitative results which follow; essentially, these will be found in the reference list. In terms of methodology, that of the "Perceptions of the EU in Asia" project (Martin Holland et many al.) was followed, on which one of the present writers made a modest contribution.⁹

Many readers will be able to list main terms used in the construction of Asia without further prompting. These include of course: booming, emerging, catch-up, low price competitor, new actors in world politics etc. Yet whereas the main tone might be marked by the narrative of the rise and fall of world regions (with

⁸ These are the largest circulation German papers, selected for this and for the pragmatic reason that two of the three allow easy online access; that they are published in three different German regions is noted, but the analysis does not present on this aspect, nor on the ideological contours of each and its presumed readership (which are in any case on the one hand variegated and on the other muted to some extent when Asia as the other is considered).

⁹ Please see the two volumes of the EU through the Eyes of Asia project (2007 and 2009). This project surveys the media both quantitatively (how many articles about a particular theme or topic, the distribution among representative media outlets, etc.) and qualitatively (how a topic, region, country etc is framed or evaluated, how it is made relevant to local readers); in addition, public and "elite" opinion is taken into account. In the present contribution on the German newspapers, we have in some senses followed this lead which, as Chaban and Holland (2007: 32) point out, is itself derived from earlier survey techniques. While, as can be seen, we have included some more general findings on public opinion, this is as tabulated in recent authoritative sources. We have also included certain "elite" opinion, but this is as presented in the newspapers, rather than in face-to-face leaders with business people, senior reporters and politicians.

Europe on the losing side), this would be to misrepresent both the general picture of Asia given in the German newspapers and of course the actuality. In western Europe, people think that China is the world's second leading economy (after, of course, the USA), but the Chinese — although they share this opinion of their country's ranking — give themselves fewer points than those allotted to their country in western Europe (*Wer regiert* 10); there is perhaps more ground to make up than is hypothesised in some scenarios.

In their survey of German newspapers' China reportage in 2008 (in some respects a somewhat exceptional year [Beijing Olympics, Tibet issues]), Richter and Gebauer claim that the newspapers should widen their scope of reporting beyond that about conflict, characterised by a dominant negative mindset in which disasters and the exercise of power figure largely, a "monolithic" representation of the Chinese. They should move away from such a rise/fall, zero-sum game scenario, a "scenario of fear," in order to "return to a more mutual respect in the news reporting about an 'Other.'" Admittedly, in 2010 also, a certain dominant narrative, and attitude to it, prevails, as the following overview of current findings reveals. Not surprisingly, the main accent in the Asian reporting is on China (Figure 4), and, as a counterweight, Japan, then to a lesser extent India; other countries and organisations (eg. ASEAN) are rarely mentioned. Russia is seen as a transit or grey zone between Europe and Asia (by which is largely meant East Asia or the Asia-Pacific).

Russia is seen as a transit or grey zone between Europe and Asia (by which is largely meant East Asia or the Asia-Pacific).

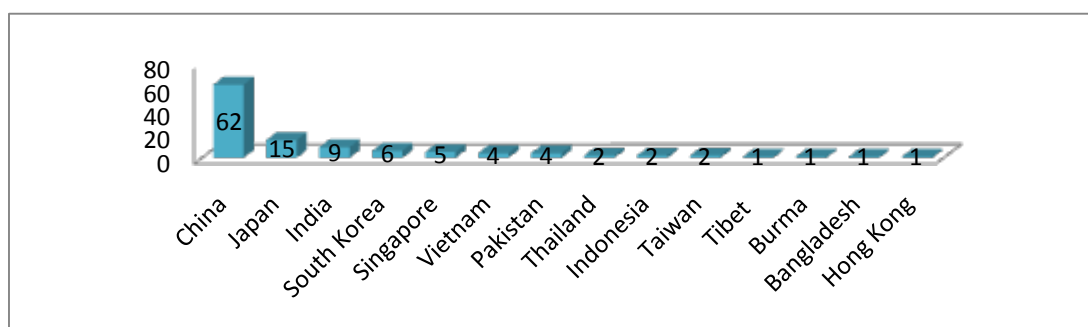
The "East" (which until relatively recently of course meant the Soviet Union and its European allies including of course about a third of the current Germany) still retains this ambiguity (Weikard), the narrative of a threat which is still latent but which the main accent is to minimise in a mood of optimism in 2010, perhaps even a hubris that such threats to Europe from the East have generally been defeated.

There seems to be a general correlation with the most important countries in terms of economic relations with Germany. The most important East Asian countries for German exports in 2009 were (in million Euros): China (36,459), Japan (10,787), Korea (7,863), India (7,997), Singapore (4,898) and Taiwan (3,857) (*Statistisches Jahrbuch* 2010). As can be seen, this roughly maps the order of the above chart, and rather uncannily the number of articles follows the relative importance (ie. relative absolute value) of the country.

In about a quarter of the months, positive and negative presentations have about equal weightage; a range of issues, from corporate solvency to the "China factor," increased the percentage of negative reporting (Figure 5).

However, if economic news is abstracted from the total picture (Figure 6), a noticeable increase in negative views can be seen mid-

Figure 4: Number of items, which mention 'Asia' and an Asian country, listed by country



year (for example, in June), because of a number of events concerning working conditions in several parts of East or South Asia.

Regarding Asia, political news is clearly of minor interest compared to economic news (Figure 7). Asia and especially China are seen as present business competitors and partners, with great prospects for growth in the nearer future. The valuation of Asia is however gradually changing from being seen as a mere region where things are made to a growing sales market and importer of European goods and technology.

Almost half of the evaluated news items regarding Asia are presented within a local context (Figure 8). As noted above in regard to South Korea, the “Other” (in Germany’s case, Asia) generally generates interest if the news item has a relation to local developments and is of certain importance for Germany. News with a focus on Asia itself accounts for only a small percentage of all evaluated news. Within this, there are almost no news items framed exclusively or primarily politically. News within an economic framework tends to generalise more about the ‘Asian economy’ rather than a specific country, whereas political news often

Figure 5: Evaluation of Asia in general (01/2010 – 08/2010)

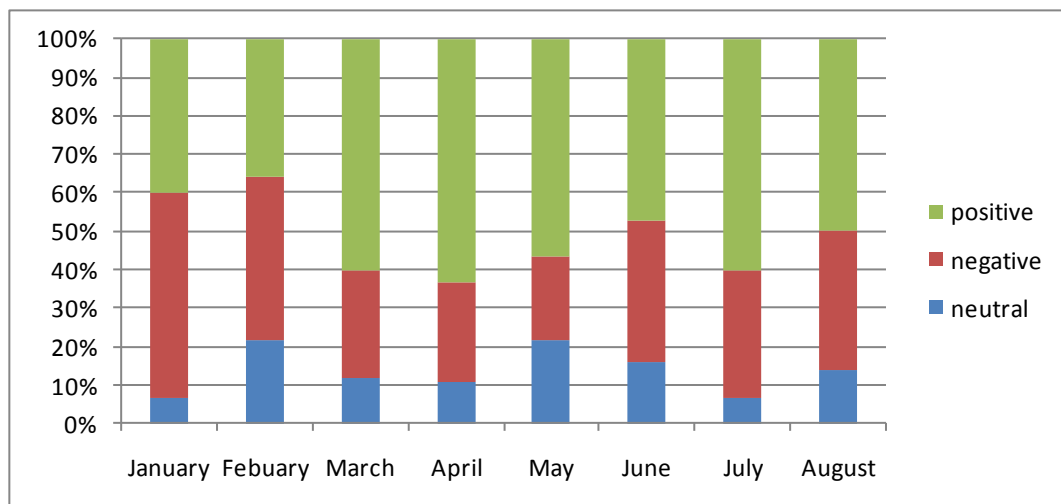
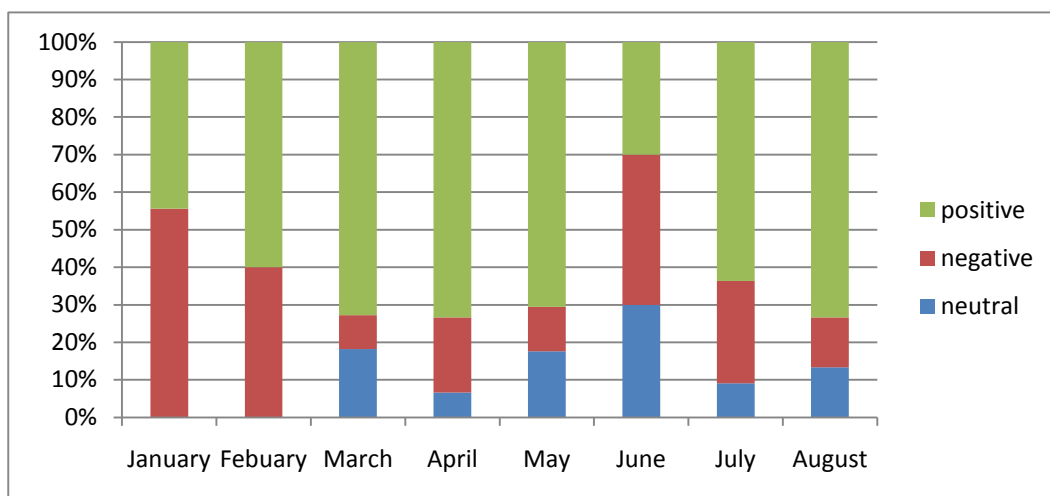


Figure 6: Evaluation of Asia in Business-related news (01/2010 – 08/2010)



compare countries or focus on one Asian country.

In over 75% of the news items which mention 'Asia', Asia actually only plays a marginal role. About 16% deal with Asia in a comparative or secondary way and only 7% focus mainly on, while 77% have Asia as a minor focus (Figure 9).

The findings of both the focus of domesticity and the focus of centrality lead to the conclusion that Asia is of interest in the German media mainly in terms of business relations. It is not so much about understanding Asia, but more about estimating how and how much Germany can profit from these relations.

Figure 7: Primary Frames of 'Asia' news in Germany (01/2010-08/2010)

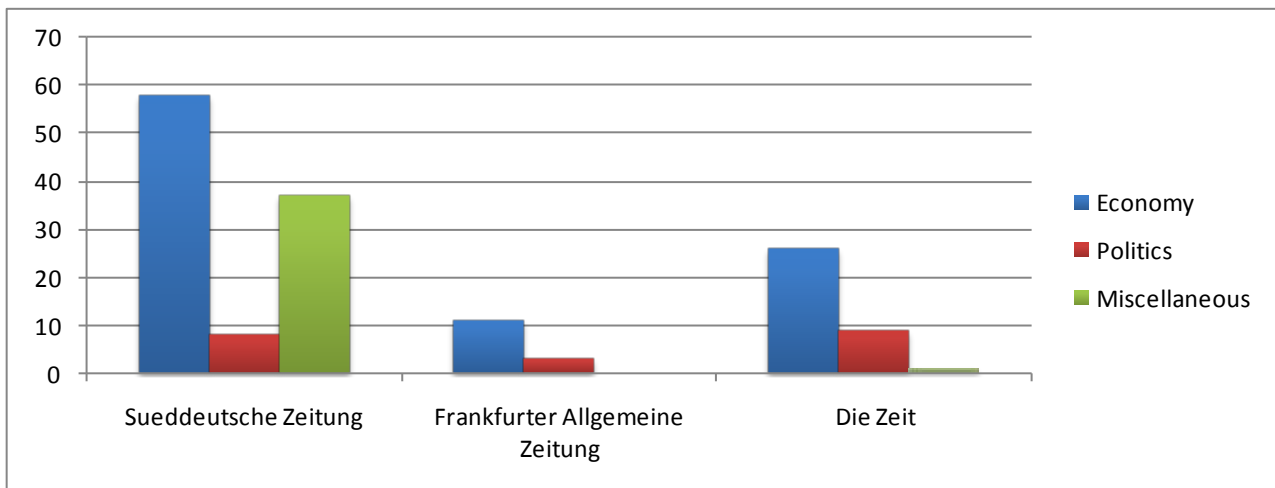


Figure 8: Focus of Domesticity

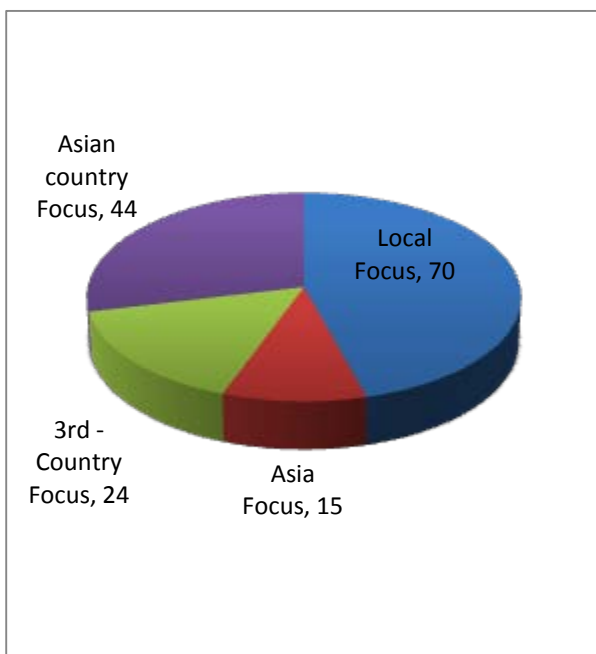
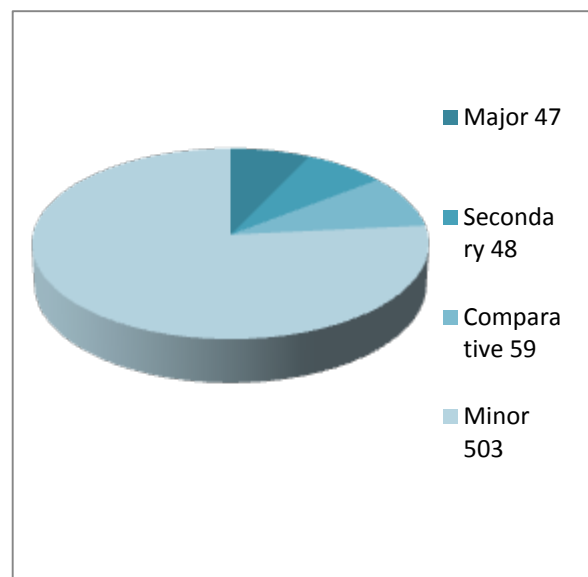


Figure 9: Focus of Centrality



Yet, contra Richter and Gebauer, such a dominant attitude does not tell the full, developing story for 2010. Some loose figures might be worth introducing here to give some context for the following analysis and for an argument for the relative complacency with regard to the rise of China as depicted in the German media discussed. The EU 3 (France, Germany, the UK) contribute about as much to world trade as does China, with some 15% of the population. As an export destination for the eurozone, China is but one of some half-dozen countries of comparable magnitude, while the UK and the US are much larger. While in the first part of 2010 EU exports to China increased to an annual level of some €110 billion (the previous high two years earlier being €82 billion, imports also climbed back to 2008 levels (some €125 billion for the first half of 2010). The eurozone does as much trade with Poland, Switzerland and Sweden (total population 55 million) as it does with China. Germany does about one-third of the trade with Norway (population just under five million) as it does with China. Trade with Norway is comparable with that with ASEAN; Germany trades twice as much with the EFTA countries as it does with ASEAN (as for example Figure 10, from the German *Statistisches Jahrbuch 2010* points out).

With this background in mind, and while current and foreseeable trends may favour East Asia, the German media reflect — and perhaps elicit — public diffidence in riding the East Asian wave too enthusiastically at the expense of other world regions, or their own.

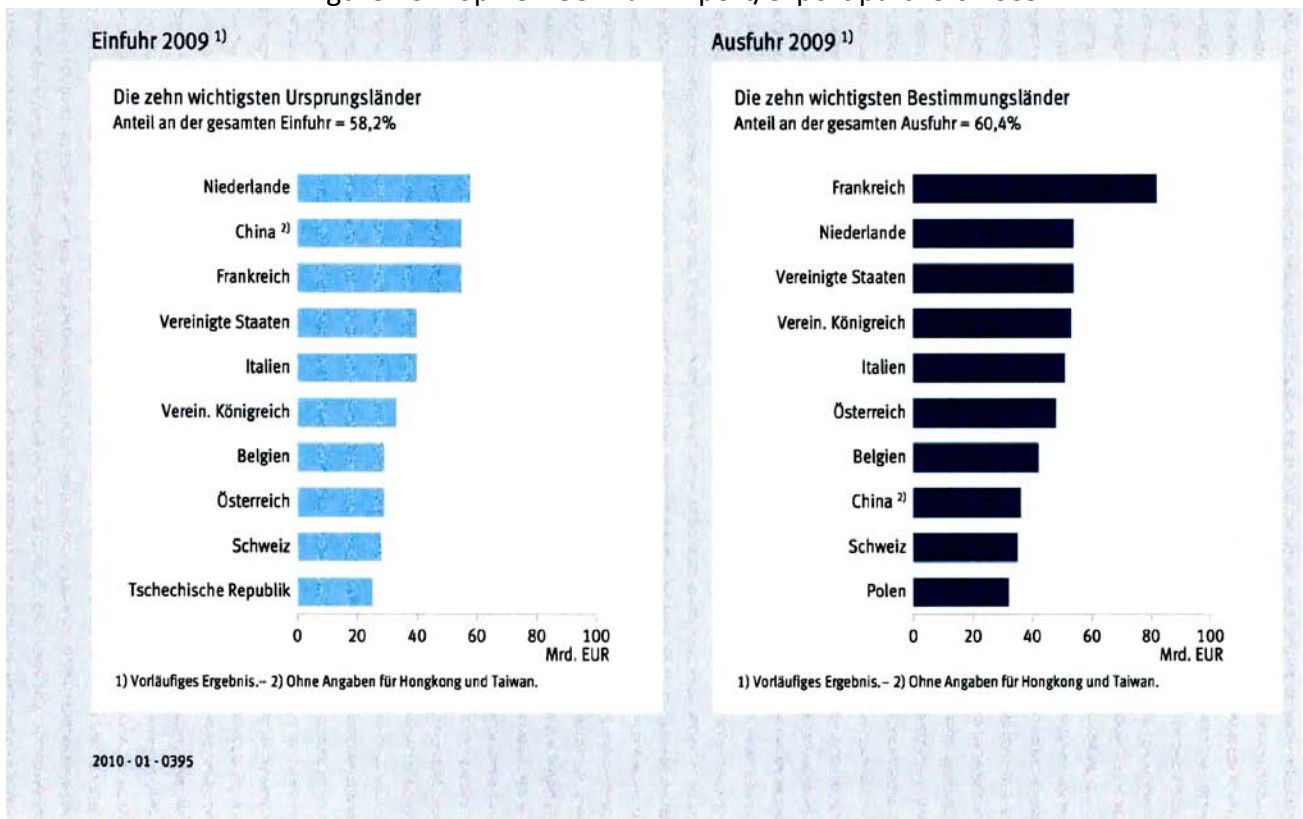
China may be seen as a super economic power, but few German investors would place their money there or elsewhere in Asia (6%, as many as in the USA); 79% prefer to invest in Germany itself, and 30% elsewhere in Europe (Zydra). “One day” — so an apocalyptic March 2010 review in the *Die Zeit* — “there will be no more customers.” “Export Wonderlands” like China and Germany — a rare touch of a common

pursuit and challenge—can exist only as long as other countries rack up debts in order to pay for the commodities, unless of course these wonderlands start to import to equal measure (“Prügel für den Streber”).

In essence, Asia is seen as a nexus of contradictions, even in one land. China seems well on the way to being integrated economically with the West (the Greek crisis led to selling on East Asian bourses [“Börsen in Asien”]), and yet continues to be “enigmatic” in its social attitudes, leading to a picture which seems imbued with contradictions (“Rätselhaftes China”). In part, such a perceived ambivalence shows a resolute European attitude, seeing as contradictory what it cannot understand, but on the other hand it is a continuation of the concept of the mysterious East, the “empire of signs” and thus shows the embeddedness of a historical discourse in constructing present conceptualisations. A newspaper might write about the excessively rich in one issue, and follow up with a story about the (in European terms) desperately poor the next. While this is not an explicit criticism of the inevitable and threatening rise-of-Asia concept, and thus would escape proper framing on these grounds, it shows that the German public at least is being groomed to adopt a sanguine attitude to the geostrategic economic and cultural change.

In general, “elite” opinion presented in the newspapers is thus pragmatic, level-headed and sanguine, even at times overtly self-confident. Hans-Jörg Bullinger, President of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, a research organisation, mentions in a January 2010 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* interview that Chinese solar collectors may seem “primitive” by German standards of technology, yet mass-producible, cheap goods are what the “market demands” (Bullinger). In competition for markets in third countries, in the developing world especially, therefore, China may have an advantage. Yet, the “consolation” for western

Figure 10: Top Ten German import/export partners 2009



Statistisches Bundesamt, Statistisches Jahrbuch 2010

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(Einfuhr: Imports into Germany; Ausfuhr: Exports from Germany; most of the country names are apparent, with the exception perhaps of “Vereinigte Staaten” [the USA] and “Verein. Königreich” [the UK]. The relative weighting of Belgium in comparison to China might be noticed.)

industrial nations is that they have “creativity,” but not perhaps always the spirit to bring such goods to market quickly and expediently as can and do “possible imitators.” The China auto market for example is a great opportunity, and in the competition to sell cars with GM, between European firms (Škoda doing well there) or amongst German ones, German automakers — recalling Hotelling’s law perhaps—express a confidence in a win-win situation, even as they strive to protect their “Technik” from imitators’ “frenzy of copying” (“Kopierwut”). Yet even now, and even if the Chinese are quicker at getting product to market, there are still “worlds” between the original and the counterfeit version (S. Viehmann, “Der Drache”). *Süddeutsche*

Zeitung’s economics editor asserts that the BRD is an “example” (“Vorbild”) for the rest of Europe, not to be discounted for its achievements in becoming such an important exporter (in the background is the sentiment that divisions within leading EU nations [here, between France and Germany] will be to the profit of the US and East Asia) (Hagelüken).

The CDU/CSU “Asienstrategie” paper of October 2007 calls for an engagement with Asia which is both pragmatic and normative, reminiscent in some respects of EU policy in this area. Common values and convictions, including democracy, the rule of law, social justice and observance of human rights are all important. The alliance however points out, in

Churchillian manner, that the transatlantic partnership can be enhanced but not displaced by an extension of the euro-asian axis. The rise of Asia must be prevented from leading to “our” fall. This extension might lead to a win-win situation, a combination of German and European “know-how” and Asian dynamism. Yet the newspapers in 2010 seem to be moving away slightly from this sense of othering Asia.

There are movements towards nuancing an intra-Asian perspective, even perhaps to consider learning from Asia’s strategies themselves, and triangulating the German-China relation by considering how other Asian nations see issues of the day impinging upon perceptions along the former axis. An early April *Die Zeit* article comments on ASEAN countries as relatively “peaceful” with regard to the Chinese currency, and on the milestone of the China-ASEAN FTA (CAFTA) of January 2010 (Sieren, “Die ruhigen Nachbarn”). Cognisant of US criticism of the “weak” Chinese currency, another article by Sieren in the same issue, on the 16th ASEAN Summit, mentioned that such criticisms had not been evident (Sieren, “Aufsteiger”). Crises can therefore pull countries together, and leading EU countries should work in unison in order to permit the EU to better compete in a globalised economy with a range of perspectives. The implication again of course is that if France and Germany don’t, they, and the EU in general, will lose out to East Asia. (Readers may well recall a similar narrative of East-West relations, but with different actors, during the late Cold War period.) It is perhaps ironic that here ASEAN — with respect to the EU still in a more fundamental stage of integration, and with a wide variety of political structures among its member states—should appear more cohesive, both as a region and with respect to a large neighbour, China, than does the EU. Even so, as the article goes on to point out, there is (not only a motto but also) a strength in diversity, even though this could be a weakness in competing with an Asia which would rather

strike a balance across a range of opinion (“Ausbalancieren”) than dissent.

It is important therefore not to underestimate the diversity of stories and perspectives in the quality newspapers. Starting from a relatively low base, with interest levels targeted at certain recurrent issues (the economy, competition, etc.), the media strive to variegate the picture, to nuance it so that a more accurate, contemporary image of changing trends in East Asia can be constructed. Historical trajectories and legacies — path dependencies — focus and curtail behaviour across the world, of course, not least in Europe and East Asia. Christian Schmidt-Häuer for example gives a crisp account for *Die Zeit* in mid-August of Japan-Korean relations commemorating the 1910 Annexation and leading to the unfortunately still premature conclusion that a divided Korea is a “Jurassic Park of the Cold War” (Schmidt-Häuer).

There was a growing confidence, even self-satisfaction with German economic performance throughout the year. While in February the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported that Germany had lost its world champion export title to China (a title which, the article points out, was in a non-existent competition [Balser and Busse 9 February 2010]), by August euphoria was beginning to be evident over the strong German GDP growth rates. Basing their report on figures from the Federal Statistics Bureau (Statistisches Bundesamt), Marc Brost and Mark Schieritz imagined an annual growth rate of 9-11% (comparable with China’s), a result of “industriousness, frugality and the art of engineering” (qualities which, if Alastair Bonnett is to be believed in a speech re-reported in a July report on a conference in Munich, were the reverse of which are accorded to the “West” by the “East” [Weikard]). Such a rate would also be made possible by domestic and EU demand, not only that, albeit significant, of other countries: the eurozone, so Brost and Schieritz, is almost as important for German

goods as “Asia and North and South America combined”. The country was experiencing one of its highest growth rates since the post-World War II “economic miracle”: that the 2010 year-on-year rates were based on a low base, that of the (still ongoing) financial crisis, rather mitigates the relief, and a growth of consumer demand is not to everyone’s taste, but it was this last feature which was high on the agenda of Gerhard Cromme, Chair of Siemens and ThyssenKrupp’s board of directors, in a speech in Paris reported in *Die Zeit* on June 1st, in which he called for more efforts to be placed in getting an ageing population to consume more.¹⁰

On the one hand, then, traditional German values — now perhaps more associated with East Asian ones — should be thanked for the warm GDP figures, but on the other, such growth was partially at least caused—so Cromme — by Germans not behaving in such a German way (“sich... nicht so Deutsch verhalten”), as for example with regard to relatively high levels of corporate credit financing. By November, the papers were reporting business confidence levels at near all-time highs: that month’s CES Ifo [Center for Economic Studies, Information und Forschung, Munich] Business Climate Germany survey showed that confidence levels in most economic areas had outstripped those of the 2006-2007 boom, even if Chair Hans-Werner Sinn on the Ifo’s own webpage tempered his assessment somewhat (“Ifo Geschäftsklima Deutschland”).

Rhetorical stances at both ends of Eurasia often sketch a monochrome rise/fall scenario, with the rising power of East (and to some extent South) Asia weighed against a falling

“West” (whether North America is part of the picture dependent to some extent of course on ideology, as is the placement of Brazil and Russia in the scenario). As a March 2010 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article points out, reporting on the Forbes rich list, China is quickly climbing up the super-rich stakes; in general, of the world’s 97 new billionaires list, 62 are from Asia, even a few in the world’s top ten. Yet since 53 of the overall list are from Germany, that country does well on a per capita basis (“Die Reichen”).¹¹ As a May 2010 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article points out, a Bolognese research institute (Prometeia) estimates that, by 2015, 123 million “new rich” will be created, three quarters in the emerging countries and a third in China (Sauer).¹²

On the one hand, East Asia (especially China) is a competitor, however sanguine Hans-Werner Sinn may be about China overtaking Germany as world exporter Nummer Eins (“I find [the figure] irrelevant” [quoted in Balser and Busse]), or increasingly getting into higher value exports. On the other, it is also a potential market, even if still very poor. Nevertheless, Swedish Foreign Minister Anders Borg opined in a June 2010 interview that in 20 years, Europe will be a “small part” of the global economy, and “China and Asia [note the collocation] are growing.” But instead of accepting that in a greater equilibrium between relative population (the EU’s being

¹⁰ “Wie soll man eine alternde Bevölkerung dazu bringen, mehr zu konsumieren?” Cromme spoke in French, and the original runs: “Comment parvenir à inciter une population vieillissante à consommer davantage?” which softens the “soll” but intensifies the “bringen” (CIDAL). (Hagelüken plays with a similar theme in his 17th March 2010 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article.)

¹¹ In a rough tabulation of income distribution, Germany — where that for which wealth is needed has been more widespread for longer and is more sedimented—comes out quite well in comparison, for example, with the “BRICs.”

¹² The bar for “rich” is seemingly quite modest by European standards, USD30,000 p.a. of disposable income. The basic strategy of this report seems to be to encourage the export of Italian luxury goods, pointing out that such new rich are generally young and female. While there is a whole paper in the assumptions of this report, suffice it here to say that readers with Italian can find it at: http://www.sace.it/GruppoSACE/export/sites/default/download/eventi/2010/13_4Pres_Lanza.pdf (“Esportare la dolce vita”).

less than 10% of the world's) and economic weight might actually be a good sign of global development, Borg grants readers his considered opinion that "if we want to be strong, we must be strong together" (Herrmann). On the other hand, as a May 2010 *Die Zeit* article points out, a period of savings and low growth in the OECD countries, even the loss of the euro as a safe haven, might be a chance for developing countries which have managed their accounts better (Wolff).

While then to some extent the German papers bear out the rise-fall scenario, with a certain "China tropism"¹³ evident, a more detailed analysis would make evident the nuancing of this scenario, a more positive attitude recalling historical strategies for at least the past half-century or so. Interviewed in January by the publisher-editor of *Die Zeit*, Condoleezza Rice reminded international readers that talk of the downfall of the USA (and by extension perhaps of the West) was somewhat exaggerated, an attack on a shadow, since her country had never been "the only power in the world" (there had been of course the Soviet Union) and "the rise of Asia" was only the latest chapter in some long narrative of the "downfall" of the US. Previous narratives had seen the opponent in the Soviet Union, then Europe and Japan; "now it's China and Japan" (Joffe). Even so, the "unipolar" world of the "hyperpower" ("Hypermacht") USA is now passing,¹⁴ as the 2005 Bertelsmann Stiftung survey declares (*Wer regiert* 5).

Yet the equivalencies between the two East Asian countries Rice mentions here are swiftly undercut. The newspapers compare a rising China with a stagnant Japan, a "cartel of the average" (Neidhart) losing market share. Commenting on the 5th East Asia Summit (Hanoi, October 2010), a *Die Zeit* article made

much of the contention between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and presented the Summit as the "scene of a territorial dispute" between the two "Asian superpowers" ("China und Japan streiten weiter"). Flash Eurobarometer 283 (2010) found that the Chinese were less risk-averse than the Japanese or South Koreans (only 6.7% said one should not start a business if there were a risk it would fail, as against 28% average of the other two nations [p. 185]); 11.6% of Chinese surveyed said that it would be feasible to become self-employed (p. 116), more than ten times that of the Japanese and 1.5 times the EU average, and twice as many Chinese as Japanese would like to be self-employed (p. 110). It is the perspectives gained from consideration of such figures towards which German news reporting on China, and East Asia in general, seems to be moving, especially in the context of a rising China and falling Japan.

China might be increasingly the world's factory, but its middle class and apparent liking for certain European consumer goods (from noses [Heidenreich] and Easter bunnies [Jakat],¹⁵ BMWs ["BMW hofft auf die 5er-Reihe"], and art ["Die Kunden"] to private planes ["Asiens Superreiche"]) offer opportunities for the maintenance of German exports, even if — post euro-crisis — growth in the EU itself, especially perhaps in the eastern Baltic, should be encouraging. Well-placed economists Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff and Thomas Straubhaar, for example, talk of the importance of the rising middle class in "eastern Europe" from which Germany is well-positioned to profit later (Kleine-Brockhoff and Straubhaar). Even so, and if only because of its sheer population size and also perhaps because of the ramifications of the "one-child" policy, consumerism is of course expected to gradually

¹³ The term is taken from a January 2010 talk by Alain Ruche at ASEF in Singapore.

¹⁴ The term was apparently first used in 1991 by Sir Peregrine Worsthorne.

¹⁵ Asked whether the classical Easter bunny was changed for the Asian market, maker Claus Cersovsky said that at the moment the characteristics were "universal" but if "Asian customers" asked for one with more Asian features, he might consider making it.

rise in China. “Nowhere is the potential for the future clearer than here,” proclaimed Daimler’s CEO for Northeast Asia, Ulrich Walker, at the Auto China 2010 fair, as reported in *the Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Viehmann, “Neue Heimat”). His colleagues and competitors in Germany would have been even more heartened by a report in the same newspaper the following month that BMW and Mini had sold 65% more cars in Asia than in the month in which he spoke (“Exporte”).

Yet the German newspapers seem to take a more cautious, long-term perspective. One should not overlook one’s neighbours and nor put all one’s eggs (or luxury goods) into the China basket. China is an extensive country and investment can be considered in many forms across it, for example in the central-west (Shaanxi province) with a population about the size of North America, as an *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* report points out (“Aufbau West in China”). There is room for optimism here. Yet the reports do not shy away from adding a muted suggestion that fear for the future and Europe’s changing place in it will bring on certain worst-case scenarios of economic gloom, a lack of faith in one’s own abilities, a protectionism, etc. In constructing futuristic scenarios, data are often cherry-picked, but the reports show noble attempts to present the complexity of globalisation, to see the rise of Asia in a global setting in which Europe still undeniably has an important role. Latin America is largely dependent on its raw materials exports, and although certain countries are now among the world’s leading producers, the continent as a whole accounts for only 6% of world trade and poverty is not to be overlooked among the growth (Weiss). Even the growth areas of Asia are home to a large percentage of the world’s poor and disadvantaged, growing populations increasingly in harm’s way of climate change and subject to great income disparities (“Aufstand der Billiglöhner”; Steinberger; Unicef-Bericht). In a chilling report, Christian

Weber laments the child mortality rates in several parts of the world, including several in Asia.

Conclusion

Globalisation increases the need for nuanced, strategic responses to the other, to that displacement — be it psychic, economic or political — inherent in the confrontation with the new and unsettling. All normative endeavours, is of course self-reflexive, opening one’s own standards to criticism in the very act of judging others. This in turn can be both productive (as in the “learning curve” of education) and dispiriting, if one is unprepared or unwilling to negotiate the change. In the construction of a world view, stereotypes, generalisations and cherry-picking of data are all too common strategies of self-expression and defence, whether at the individual, the social or the political level, and can be both enhanced and superseded by the judicious media. While, given that present competitiveness has often historically been seen as the ground for future cooperation, and the focus on the former serves temporal rather than universal human interests, the time is now ripe for a more nuanced, variegated, mutually respectful and empathetic global engagement, the opposing triumphalism and melancholia which inform certain strategies of public intellectual debate remain as yet unproven, schematic, abstract and, worst of all, premature.

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