

中国媒体观察

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CHINESE MEDIA WATCH



JE SUIS
CHARLIE

DONALD TUSK AS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL



Flickr/ Αλέξης Τσιτάρας Πρωθυπουργός της Ελλάδας

Donald Tusk, formerly a Prime Minister of Poland, became the President of the European Council at the end of the last year. Chinese media paid a lot of attention to the news of the first "CEE" politician at a leading EU position.

Citing certain EU dignitaries, China Daily was perceptive enough to point out the political bargain taking place when selecting new heads of EU. "Since Poland is taking the lead when pushing for sanctions against Russia and Tusk would become EU's new head, countries of CEE were not against Federica Mogherini to serve as EU's "minister of foreign affairs" (鉴于波兰是带头推动欧盟制裁俄罗斯的国家之一，如果图斯克出任欧盟“总统”，东欧国家就不大会反对莫盖里尼出任“外长”). As Poland is thought to be spearheading anti-Russia sanctions, from the CEE's perspective it was thought Mogherini would not be strong enough to resist the Kremlin (东欧国家批评她对俄罗斯太软弱，缺乏抵抗克里姆林宫的政治分量). Although such commentaries are common in press worldwide, Chinese media seem not to omit any information on possible emergence of dividing fault lines within EU. This is clearly perceivable in the case of Greece as well.

Erudite insights into Tusk's personal background, affiliations, standpoints, and connections to other prominent politicians (such as Angela Merkel) are remarkable. A lot of attention has been also paid to Tusk's CEE descent. Coming from Poland, Chinese media suggest growing importance of this region within European politics (意味着中东欧国家影响力增强). Some note that it is the first time in EU's history a CEEs politician becomes a head of EU's structures and go as far as claiming it to be a "win of Central and Eastern Europe" (中东欧的胜利). Rising influence of CEE and Poland within EU became a common knowledge for Chinese readers. Indeed, it almost seems as if geopolitics (or at least rhetoric about it) generally moved to the east of EU.

It is said that Tusk's political standpoints do not match those of politicians coming from the EU's West. He is thought to give more consideration to the Baltic states, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, etc. (图斯克的执政观点与西欧政治人士存在很大不同，他将更多为波罗的海三国、波兰、捷克和匈牙利等国家考虑). Furthermore, it has been also suggested that the influence Poland has within CEE should bring about even stronger voice in EU (加上波兰在东欧国家中的影响力，图斯克在欧盟内说话具有分量).

Stimulating the picture of CEE's importance may be in Chinese interest. Whereas Tusk's personal descent and the Ukrainian crisis are thought to swing European focus to the East, his economic success when serving as Polish Prime Minister are believed to help revive EU's economy. Should Chinese recent focus on CEE last for longer time, its growing importance within EU will be welcomed as much as general EU's growth that could help diminish the dominant role of US Dollar, helping to establish a global tri-polar monetary system. Promotion of Chinese investment to help European economy serves this goal.

The adoption of European Economic Recovery Plan including an investment fund was mentioned in relation to the Chinese cooperation and investment talks with CEE. Chinese media present EU's plan as not concrete enough and suggest that Chinese engagement in the form of 16+1 platform may offer some good ideas over how to approach such investment plans (先一步结束的中国与中东欧国家第三次会晤，或许会为欧盟的投资项目蓝图规划送来些“好主意”). Even bolder language followed when commenting on the meeting that was to establish such a fund. EU's Central and Eastern European members were thought to contribute with some "new ideas" on investment that had been discussed at the 16+1 platform with China only a couple of days earlier at the Belgrade summit (中东欧同僚们则有望在周四的布鲁塞尔峰会，贡献些“新想法”。因为就在欧盟峰会召开前两天，...“中国-中东欧国家领导人会晤”...的一大重点就是投资中东欧). The positive picture of Chinese financial engagement in this region hopes to be cemented. By the same token we may speculate that Chinese financial engagement in this region hopes to provide one of the ways to go when alleviating economic difficulties.

In general, Tusk is in China believed to be pioneering EU's eastward policies. Accepting an invitation from Xi Jinping to meet him in person this year is deemed to affirm such "look East" signals ("往东看"的信号). Since mutual cooperation and shared interest seem to be on the spot again, such "look East" suggests looking further than Eastern Europe.

Ondřej Macháček

CHARLIE HEBDO ATTACK



Wikimedia

On 7th January 2015, two extremists, offended by Charlie Hebdo's caricatures mocking Prophet Muhammad of Islam, raided the magazine's headquarters in central Paris, leaving a total of 12 people dead. Charlie Hebdo, founded in 1970, is a far-left-wing satirical magazine consisting of cartoons, reports and articles on parties, religion, politics etc. President François Hollande described it as a "terrorist attack of the most extreme barbarity".

Generally, we can assume that in providing the basic information on the cause of the tragedy the Chinese media are mainly referring to foreign sources. The articles simply answer the basic questions as to what, when, where, how it happened, citing the information from abroad (据英国《卫报》1月7日报道，当地时间7日，一伙武装人员闯入法国讽刺漫画杂志《查理周刊》(Charlie Hebdo)位于巴黎的总部，武装人员开枪致12人死亡，其中有两人是警察，10人是《查理周刊》的记者，另有5人重伤). Reflection of the attack is, however, somewhat different.

Although Chinese media do not agree with such radical response to the published cartoons, in comparison to European and American media, they show much less condemnation. The world largely responded to the attack with a dedication that free speech should be ardently defended, even among those whom the newspaper mocked. However, the Chinese articles and commentaries published in English version of the People's Daily are rather different. The authors, while not showing sympathy for the attack, are still at least partially defending such a reaction. They call for respect and understanding of other cultures different from the West: "The Western society should be fully aware that so-called "freedom of expression" and "legal standards" are applicable only to its own countries and are not necessarily appropriate to other nations or regions". What is more, due to the nature of the at-

tacks, the term "freedom of speech" is currently a highly debated topic worldwide. In Chinese press, however, there is a lack of articles which mention this term regardless of the attack in general.

Xinhua continues by blaming the satirical magazine for not knowing where their limits are (殊不知，世界是多元的，新闻自由应该是有限度的). For China the attack makes a chance to bring attention to its own problems with terrorism. In the last decade, clashes between Han majority and Muslim ethnic group of Uyghurs in Xinjiang have arisen. Considering that the perpetrators of the Paris attack were French-born Muslims, who have struggled to assimilate into French society, one can assume Charlie Hebdo attack was a pertinent happening for Chinese government and their restrictions on freedom of speech and press imposed on the minorities. The words of Hong Lei, spokesmen of Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, prove this assumption. He said that China mourns the victims of Paris attack and that "the Chinese side strongly opposes terrorism in all manifestations and supports the efforts done by the French side to safeguard security of the country" (中方坚决反对一切形式的恐怖主义，支持法方为维护国家安全所做努力).

Interestingly, Xinhua develops an argument that blaming one side only would be a simplification. The published article is quietly blaming not only the attackers, but the cartoonists as well. According to Xinhua they "persisted in their approach of doing things" (但这一刊物坚持其做法) that might have led to the inability to prevent such attacks and to learn from the past. The main point is that: "Charlie Hebdo had on multiple occasions been the target of protests and even revenge attacks on account of its controversial cartoons," (此前，《沙尔利周刊》曾多次因为刊发争议性漫画引发抗议甚至报复).

To sum up, Chinese press is from the ideological perspective somewhat self-contradictory. On one hand, it calls for respect of other cultures promoting a multi-centric world order, on the other, however, it tries to provide an ideological background against similar threat at home.

Mária Márkusová

THE GREEK ELECTION AND THE EU CRISIS



Flickr/Linksfraktion

In January 2015, the Greek left-wing anti-austerity party Syriza won the general election in the country. Chinese media believe that the tiredness of Greeks toward austerity contributed to the success of Syriza and the promise of Syriza of “ending the vicious circle of austerity” brought hope to the Greeks.

However, the Chinese media is in general not optimistic about the effect of the success of anti-austerity Syriza in Greece. The idea of Greece leaving the eurozone worried the Chinese media. Global Times commented that if present Greece led by Tsipras decides to exit the eurozone, then it will bring a disaster (若齐普拉斯选择带领希腊退出欧元区将会“造成灾难”); Xinhua News also agrees that “to exit eurozone means a disaster for Greece”(希腊退出欧元区对希腊又意味着什么？这可能带来灾难性的后果).

Apart from the word “disaster”, “danger” is another common term Chinese media use to describe the current situation and potential future of Greece and the EU. Xinhua commented that Greece and Europe are playing a “Game for Brave” but this is very dangerous (希腊和欧洲在玩一场勇敢者的游戏。但这很危险). The same article pointed out that if Greece breaks the contract, a more dangerous political result will be mistrust between EU members, which might at last lead to the disunity of EU (更危险的政治后果可能会导致欧盟不再团结，因为希腊的违约将导致成员国之间的不信任). Chinese critics already noticed that the southern European countries and the rest of the EU members not only hold different opinions on the reason of the financial crisis, Greece also shows a different attitude on the policies toward Russia. Although at the end Greece agreed on the extension of sanctions, the disaccord between Greece and EU at the beginning can be regarded as a first sign of the political disunity of EU.

Over the short term, Chinese media is con-

cerned with the “chain reaction” (连锁反应) from Greece. For example, People’s Daily mentioned that after the left-wing anti-austerity party won the election, its “model effect has reached Spain” (示范效应在西班牙掀起了涟漪). Global Times commented that one of the concerns of Merkel not making a concession with the radical left-wing of Greece is that it might “cause riots in other Euro countries, especially Spain” (鼓励其他欧元区国家(尤其是西班牙)平民骚乱). Xinhua News also reminded us that if Greece breaks the contract, then investors will “doubt the safety of Portugal immediately” (会立即质疑葡萄牙的安全性). In another words, the current crisis might expand far beyond Greece in the future.

While it is clear that the Chinese side is not less pessimistic about the future of Greece crisis and the EU than any Western media, the Chinese media is trying, at the same time, to downplay the negative impact of the crisis on Chinese economy. Right after the announcement from the new Greek Government that the Piraeus Port Authority (OLP) will remain public, Xinhua quoted Greek critics to assure the Chinese that “the cooperation between China and Greece is unavoidable” (“同中国的合作不可避免”) and “China still has the priority when it comes to cooperation with Greece” (“中国将仍然是享有优先地位的希腊合作伙伴”). Moreover, Xinhua also quoted the Greek ambassador to China that “Greece agreed very much on the 21st century Maritime Silk Road from the very beginning” (“我们一开始就很赞同’21世纪海上丝绸之路”) and “building the Maritime Silk Road is in line with the Greek interests” (“建设好海上丝绸之路符合我们的利益”). Above quotes are delivering a clear message to the Chinese citizens that Chinese government is capable to protect the Chinese interests in Europe notwithstanding the circumstances.

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Chinese Media Watch is a project of the Institute of Asian Studies which aims to shed light on the perception in Chinese media of the most impactful stories in Europe.