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German VE commemorations as a lesson for Japan

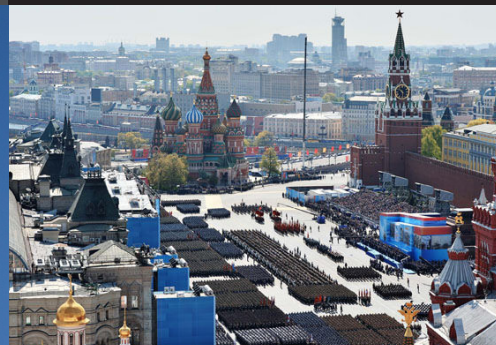
Russia's victory day: a struggle against Western revisionism

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中国媒体观察

CHINESE MEDIA WATCH



GERMAN VE DAY COMMEMORATIONS AS A LESSON FOR JAPAN



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Victory in Europe Day, May 8th, celebrates the acceptance by the Allies of World War II of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender. For Russians, the Victory Day is May 9th, as it marks the capitulation of Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union. Around May 8th and May 9th, many commemoration activities were carried out in Europe, among which the German commemorations attracted considerable attention of Chinese media and Chinese readers.

In Chinese media, detailed information of German commemoration events of WWII are easily found. On May 9th, Xinhua gave a report on the German President Joachim Gauck's speech in front of a cemetery monument. Two days later, Xinhua delivered a report on German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Moscow, saying that the first activity of Merkel after she arrived in Moscow was to lay a wreath with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (默克尔抵达莫斯科后的第一项活动就是与普京总统一起向无名烈士墓敬献花圈). People's Daily also gave a report on the speech given by the President of Parliament Norbert Lammert on the commemoration ceremony held by the German parliament.

One of the reasons why Chinese media gave such a detailed account on the German commemoration event is partly related to its own history. It is generally perceived in China that Japanese failed to give as a good reflection to its WWII crimes as Germans did. In one opinion paper from Qiushi, an official CCP media, the way how Germans reflect on WWII was discussed. This is the first article of the WWII commemoration series, and nine more on the same topic will follow. Interestingly, while this article was named as "humility and memory" by its author, Qiushi editor added another title to it, called "How Germans reflect on WWII @ (Japanese Prime Minister) Abe" (德国人是如何反思二战的 @安倍). Although Japan was not mentioned explicitly in the article, the

title revealed clearly the intention of Qiushi.

While official media such as Qiushi remained relatively calm and objective, some smaller commercial media preferred to make it clear that compared to Germany, Japanese attitude is unacceptable. For example, in Changjiang News, a full article is devoted to the comparison of German and Japanese attitudes to WWII crimes. This article says that while Germany has walked out of the shade of WWII, Japan is still trying to escape from its historical responsibility and crimes (德国早已从二战阴影中走了出来[...] 然而,在这不争的历史责任面前,日本却依然致力于如何逃避历史责任,淡化历史罪证). Japanese poor practice has hurt the feelings of related Asian countries many times (诸多低劣的做法,已经多次伤害到亚洲受二战侵害的国家), and if Abe still does not apologise, then it is without any doubt that Japan is going to repeat its deeds (安倍再不反省道歉,那重蹈覆辙是必然).

News on German commemoration stirs the emotion of Chinese readers, too. In Phoenix, a major Chinese media where readers can leave comments below the article, some readers expressed their anger toward Japan under a report of Gauck's speech. A reader from Ningbo said that "a nation brave enough to admit its mistake is a nation that is going to rise, but a nation that does not dare to admit its mistake is without any hope. Japanese nation is the latter case" (一个敢对自己先辈犯错承认的民族是能够真正崛起的民族,而一个不敢承认自己错误的民族是没有希望的民族。大和民族就是一个不敢承认自己错误的民族). Some others tend to be less calm in their comments, for instance, a reader from Hangzhou commented "Look at Germany, Japan is just a rascal!" (看看德国,日本就是个无赖!)

All in all, while some Chinese media tend to give plain report on German commemorations, some others are not so reluctant to mention Japan and use it as a comparison. But no matter which way the media choose, the report on German commemoration seems to have clear potential to remind Chinese readers of the historical trauma left by Japanese in WWII and to compare the attitudes of Germany and Japan towards their respective WWII crimes.

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RUSSIA'S VICTORY DAY: A STRUGGLE AGAINST WESTERN REVISIONISM



Flickr/The Presidency of the RSA

The coverage of Moscow's WWII anniversary celebration revolved around three main topics. Most space was given to China's growing position in the world. Readers, however, could have also learnt a lot about Russia's ideological struggle with the West and Moscow's will to preserve the post-WWII world order.

Polishing the picture of strong China and importance of Xi Jinping still remains one of the core objectives of the reporting on the topic. Remarks about Russian preferential treatment of Chinese may be found in most of the related articles. The same applies to the lines describing the visit of Chinese president who enjoyed the pride of the place that only ten years ago belonged to his American counterpart, G. W. Bush, suggesting a shift in their importance (与十年前不同的是, 当年坐在普京旁边观看阅兵的是美国时任总统小布什, 而今年坐在普京身边的是中国国家主席习近平).

Chinese media are aware that the reason why most of the Western leaders had decided not to attend Moscow's celebration lies in Putin's support of Ukrainian separatist forces (许多国家的领导人因莫斯科支持乌克兰的分裂力量, 拒绝参加相关活动). Even prior to the actual anniversary, however, another reason was found – the Russian perspective. According to this view, the alleged pressure of American government on European leaders not to attend this commemorative occasion is to be found behind their absence. Particularly France and Germany are often thought to be too capitulatory towards the U.S. (俄罗斯批评德法两国过于屈从美国). Chinese media also approve the Russian point of view that such conduct is not beneficial to their national interests (他表示, 德法两国领导人这一决定非明智之举, 不符合其国家利益). The aim of Chinese press is to reaffirm its readers that clashes outside of China are a common phenomenon and that gaps in the Russia's relations with the West are still too wide to be crossed easily (凸显他们同俄罗斯的关系存在裂痕).

The Polish decision to invite European leaders to Gdansk is understood as a reaction to a crisis in relations with Russia. Chinese media suggest it has been arranged with an intent to provide a reason not to venture to Moscow (纪念活动旨在为希望避免出席俄罗斯纪

念庆典的西方领导人提供一个机会). However, it has been also suggested that because of a fear not to infuriate Kremlin any further, most leaders did not travel to Poland either (大部分西方领导人也没有出席此次活动, 也许是为避免激怒克里姆林宫).

Interestingly enough, Chinese readers may also find in their media translations of foreign press that is much more critical of Putin's policies. Such translations also gave space to Western leaders. Poland's president Komorowski's comment that the end of the WWII also meant the beginning of Russian rule over Eastern Europe (科莫罗夫斯基在讲话中表示二战的结束标志着苏联对东欧数十年统治的开端) which should not be celebrated, seems to have also led to addressing the problem of different perspectives on the course of history. This leads us to the last point.

Chinese media suggest that European decision not to attend Moscow's celebration represents a trend of historical revisionism of the post WWII world order. Indeed the description of WWII and its consequences incorporating the important role of USSR in war against the Nazis and China fighting the Japanese were both common and extensive. The calls not to forget the history are common. Chinese media also believe that this trend of historical revisionism is harmful not only to Russia but to the whole world including China.

Such revisionism, naturally considered to be carried out by the West, is seen to be further fuelling conflicts and polarizing standpoints, in other words, to serve Western political interests. The situation in Ukraine often serves as an example. The Chinese press says: "In addition to Ukrainian plan to make a cut in the common history with USSR and decision not to attend the celebrations in Moscow, Kiev also let other leaders know that if they do pay a visit to Russia on that occasion, it will have detrimental effects on their relationship with Kiev" (乌克兰除了打算与苏联历史进行彻底切割、不参加胜利日阅兵式外, 还向参加阅兵式的外国领导人发出警告, 称若出席该活动将会破坏与乌克兰的双边关系).

While West is thought to be reinterpreting the course of events and putting the post-WWII peace at stake, China and Russia are pictured as responsible players that defend current world order. As reported by Chinese media, Moscow's will to guard against such reinterpretations of WWII history comes even at the sake of further diplomatic collision with the West (俄对篡改二战历史的行为予以强硬反击, 捍卫历史真相寸步不让, 与西方进入新一轮政治和外交对抗). The aim of the military parade is deemed to be a response to this Western pressure. Such "display of military muscles" demonstrates the ability to overcome Western economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation and military deterrence (今天也一定能战胜西方的经济封锁、外交孤立和军事威慑).

Ondřej Macháček

THE EU IMMIGRATION CRISIS



Flickr/No border network

Most Chinese media stress the seriousness of the immigration problem in EU which, according to some of the articles, puts to test the EU common policies (不断发生的非法移民船海难事件引起了意大利、德国等欧洲国家和欧盟的重视, 同时也考验着欧洲的相关政策). The situation is described by China Daily as becoming critical, with some EU countries getting overwhelmed with refugees (愈演愈烈的非法移民危机、大批难民涌入欧洲, 也让欧洲国家不堪重负). Many articles claim the difficulties that rising influx of refugees causes to border countries are so big that they cannot be solved without EU's help (如何安置逗留在意大利境内的难民, 是意大利政府难以独立解决的难题). The gravity of the problem is supported by recalling all the accidents that recently happened and the resultant loss of lives (今年1月以来, 地中海翻船事故已造成1776人死亡, 其中仅4月以来就有约1300人死亡).

Main focus of majority of the articles is on EU efforts to solve the crisis. Leaders of the EU and member countries are often quoted. They demonstrate the EU's desire and efforts to solve the problem (我们不能接受成百上千的人在跨越大海奔向欧洲的路上遇难、该计划是目前为止欧盟对难民危机做出的最全面、最实际的反应, 体现出欧盟对该问题的重视和彻底解决的政治意愿). But on the other hand they highlight that EU struggles to find a solution and is unlikely to find a fast and efficient one. In many articles we can find reference to EU leaders acknowledging that it is very difficult and time-demanding to settle the issue, because if there were an easy solution, they would have already applied it (我不期望马上就找到解决根本问题的方法。如果有的话, 我们早就那么做了、图斯克说他承认, 解决非法移民危机绝非一朝一夕能够实现).

Some of the reporting about the EU plan of the solution for this crisis cover the problem of recently proposed idea of introducing the resettlement quota. These articles show the lack of unity of EU in the immigration question which brings about many problems (由于欧盟内部缺乏统一的移民政策, 大量北非难民滞留给意大利造成了更大的压力). Similarly, the diverse approaches towards immigration issue among the EU member countries are highlight-

ed (有的明确反对, 有的强烈支持, 成员国对配额态度不一). One article in PLA Daily was devoted solely to the differences in the British, German and French approaches. The strongest opponent of the resettlement quota, UK PM Cameron was quoted in many articles, showing that finding common EU immigration and refugee policy is very complicated (卡梅伦的态度清楚地表明, 向欧盟各国合理分配难民的这一欧洲难民政策仍是棘手的问题). Global Times even spoke of Greece blackmailing EU with the threat of offering all refugees Schengen visa in case EU will cease the economic support for the country (希腊警告: 如拒救助 就用恐怖分子移民冲击欧盟).

While Chinese articles frequently involved negative comments about the EU's role in this crisis, some of them were particularly sharp. Global Times quoted critical commentaries by many Western press that EU should be blamed for having let the situation reach this point without proper response (到底还要发生多少事故, 欧盟才会改变移民政策及难民政策? 到底还要有多少人溺死地中海, 欧洲政治家们才肯动一动? 到底还要举行多少次悼念活动, 布鲁塞尔才会有所反应?). China Daily also states that the criticism of EU's slow reactions to this problem comes from all over the world (欧盟应对非法移民危机的迟缓节奏饱受各方指摘). Many of the articles now refer to the Mediterranean as "Sea of death", "Mass grave" or the "Death route" ("死亡之海", "万人坑", "死亡航线"). EU was also criticized for not acting in conformity with its humanitarian values, as it lets many die at its doorstep (大批生命葬送在欧洲的大门口, 让以人道主义价值观自傲的欧洲蒙羞).

Except for the abovementioned criticism there were no other mentions of human rights or similar issues that tend to be the crux of Western reports. The refugees and their stories got also somewhat watered down to a couple of basic brief remarks. By the same token, the voice of NGOs, who are prominent in the West, is non-existent in China. Only a few research institutes and the representatives from UNHCR studying this issue were mentioned. Such an approach is, in the Chinese context, fairly understandable.

To sum it up, many of the shorter informative articles do not go behind basic facts about recent tragedies. Commentaries and analysis, however, try to question EU's policies and lack of efficiency to resolve this problem. Its inability to find the middle ground often suggests deep splits in the Union.

Daniela Róthová

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