

Framing the EU in a Time of Crisis: Media Reflections from EU ‘Strategic’ Partners in Asia-Pacific

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Introduction

In 2014, global competition for the role of ‘superpower’ continues unabated. While the 20th century was widely held to be the ‘American century’, since the global financial crisis, the world has been characterized more by fractures than by hegemonic fixtures. The dust has not yet settled from this period of dramatic geopolitical shifting and ‘the emerging landscape is one in which power is diffusing and politics diversifying’ (Kupchan, 2012, p. 3). Some claim that there will be no single, dominant leader in the next phase of world politics: the 21st century, Kupchan claims, ‘will belong to no one’ (Kupchan, 2012, p. 3). Yet the struggle for global leadership continues. As the most regionally integrated body in world politics, the European Union (EU) has long sought to claim this mantle. Its Lisbon Treaty of 2009 was aimed at enhancing its global role, moving it closer to becoming a legitimate global political heavyweight – a counterbalance to its global economic might. Economics, however, have proved to be the EU’s Achilles’ heel. Since 2008 the EU has become embroiled in an ever-growing debt crisis, with Member States’ economies collapsing and public outcry at austerity measures spreading. In this context it is

pertinent to ask what impact the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis has had on worldwide perceptions of the EU's leadership and its relevance globally. In the midst of the Eurozone crisis, is the EU seen by other global powers as an equal, or a 'global pigmy, but local giant'?

This chapter offers a systematic assessment of the global images of the EU circa the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis – among three EU strategic partners in the north-east Asia-Pacific: China, Japan and Russia. This analysis focuses on the news media's contribution to shaping the EU's current image. While attention to external media representations of the EU is growing, systematic comparative research into how the EU is framed by international newsmakers is rarely undertaken. This chapter addresses this research gap. The novelty of this analysis is its positioning within the 'cascade activation' framing theory – an analytical model which considers framing within the 'relationship between government and the media in the foreign policy process' (Entman, 2003, p. 416). The model 'explains how interpretive frames activate and spread from the top level of a stratified system ... to the network of non-administration elites, and on to news organizations, their texts, and the public – and how interpretations feed back from lower to higher levels' (Entman, 2003, p. 415). Importantly for this investigation, the model reconceptualizes the role of news professionals and news frames in initiating and spreading ideas about foreign policy relations positioning media framing and the resulting frames on the intersection of the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' spreading activations.

The changing world is not only one of shifting global architecture; it is a world of changing actors where global governance is seen to occur 'through global and regional associations, substate intergovernmental connections, "countries within countries" ... and the actions of nonstate actors in civil society' (Gregory, 2008, p. 284). It is also a world of new forms of communication between these actors as digital technologies and social media mean

increased volume and speed of information flows coupled with immensely reduced costs in obtaining information. Unsurprisingly, in this context, people lack attention not information (van Hamm, 2008). As such, when facing huge volumes of information, people tend to react to those media frames that possess the ‘capacity to stimulate support of or opposition to the sides in a political conflict’ (Entman, 2003, p. 417). The ‘cascade activation’ model focuses on those ‘capable’ frames – differentiating between frames which dominate the thinking of different levels in the ‘cascade’ and those which are fully contested and thus incapable of spreading ideas. In his attempt to explain how certain frames can become more dominant than others, Entman suggests three variables: (1) motivations; (2) power and strategy; and (3) cultural congruence (Entman, 2003, p. 421). These three variables, elaborated below, are argued to be engaged in the production of foreign affairs news with a ‘local hook’ – that is, when a foreign actor (the EU in our case) is reported to be involved with the location in question. As such, this chapter differentiates between EU news with a ‘local hook’ and that which lacks such a connection.

Hypothetically, locally grounded news representations of a foreign actor will have a greater probability of being committed to an audience member’s memory and thus of becoming more cognitively accessible. It is assumed that the faculties of news readers’ own experiential knowledge and popular wisdom are more applicable than in the case of ‘pure’ foreign news, to which readers usually have limited personal exposure. In this chapter our main research question asks how a particular framing of the EU – news with a ‘local hook’ – contributes to the framing of the EU as a media topic in the EU’s strategic partners of China, Russia and Japan. Our interest is in the potential of those media frames to create cognitive and emotional responses by representing the EU as (1) visible and noticeable (measured here in terms of the volume of reportage from different foci of domesticity and their respective degree of centrality); (2)

understandable (measured in terms of themes); and (3) emotively charged (measured in terms of evaluations). All categories are traced in the text of news stories.

Our understanding of the framing process is further advanced by its positioning within comparative cross-national media research (Semetko and Mandelli, 1997; de Vreese *et al.*, 2001; Dardis, 2006). A cross-national approach is seen as being key to testing and/or extending the US-centric ‘cascading activation’ model and to overcoming the ‘naïve universalism’ of general theoretical propositions based on single-country data (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990, p. 308). According to Livingstone (2003, p. 12), in this approach, ‘given the prior identification of a number of measurable dimensions along which nations vary ... systematic relations are sought among these dimensions’. The comparative approach underlying this model ‘seeks to understand the diversity of different national contexts, achieving it by representing the specificity of each country using a common conceptual language’ (Livingstone, 2003, p. 14).

This chapter uses data from the 2011–2012 phase of the transnational comparative project entitled *The EU in the Eyes of Asia-Pacific* (2002–ongoing: Holland *et al.*, 2007; Chaban and Holland 2008; Chaban *et al.*, 2009; Holland and Chaban, 2010; Chaban and Holland, 2013). It focuses on the media coverage of the EU in prestigious influential broadsheets of three strategic partners: China (*People’s Daily*); Russia (*Russian Newspaper*) and Japan (*Yomiuri Shimbun*). Published in local national languages, these papers boast extensive circulation and high-quality reporting. They serve as popular agenda-setters for the local general public and decision-makers, as well as other national and even international media, which use them as a reference.

The chapter begins by considering the media factors which underpin the construction of news frames of the EU in the popular prestigious press of the three Asia-Pacific strategic

partners. It then elaborates the ‘cascade activation’ framing theory and conceptualizes within it the role of the focus of the domesticity category. After explaining the method of analysis, the chapter proceeds with empirical comparisons. Our discussion revisits the contribution of a cross-national media analysis to advance the theory of framing. It also contemplates the conditions behind the shaping of EU media images and suggests some recommendations for the EU’s respective dialogues with its important Others in Asia-Pacific.

The EU and its strategic partners in Asia-Pacific

Framing, as a process and theory, encapsulates the geopolitical context within which news images and text are produced. The power relations that underpin the construction of news frames play out in the media systems of our three north-east Asian powers. A true cross-national media approach calls for systematic consideration of factors that are both internal and external to media organization and which can explain cross-national differences in media coverage (De Vreese *et al.*, 2001). This section reviews the constellation of factors that are argued to influence the framing of the EU in China, Russia and Japan.

External influences shaping the media environments

According to de Vreese *et al.* (2001, p.117), external influences ‘encompass the nature of the issue covered and particularities of the economic-political context’. Our interest in the media framing of the EU with or without a ‘local hook’ warrants a deeper insight into the EU’s international relations. The EU maintains strategic partnerships with ten countries – Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the USA. While the

definition of what constitutes a ‘strategic partnership’ is somewhat vague and diverse (Grevi, 2012, pp. 7–8), nonetheless, the importance placed on the relationships by the EU makes them a useful framework within which to explore the EU’s global perceptions.

The EU is engaged in dialogue with Japan on a variety of policy areas: environment, science and technology, trade, financial services and industrial policy. Importantly, the relationship goes beyond the earlier trade-related focus of the 1970s and 1980s, and the current Joint Action Plan focuses not only on political dialogue and policy cooperation but also on cooperation on regional and global challenges, and it works towards a free trade agreement.¹ Japan and the EU also cooperate closely in multilateral fora, such as the UN, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G8.

Until the 1990s, relations with Japan dominated the EU’s dealings with its Asian strategic partners. However, China – the ‘world’s second largest economy and the biggest exporter in the global economy’ (European Commission (EC), n.d.) – has since become the EU’s main focus in Asia. China is the EU’s second largest trading partner and its biggest source of imports (EC, n.d.), while the EU is China’s biggest trading partner (EEAS: China, n.d. EU Delegation to China). According to Cao (2007), ‘China is not only a rising power with global aspirations but also a culture with a radically different tradition from the West. How to deal with China’s ascent represents a central concern for western countries.’ For the EU’s relations with China, divisions remain on a numbers of issues, including the arms embargo, human rights and the rule of law (Cao, 2007), fair trade, respect for intellectual property and meeting WTO obligations.

Russia, a Eurasian power, is the EU’s third largest trading counterpart (after the USA and China). Energy is a particular area of cooperation, as are economic issues and the environment;

freedom, security and justice; external security; and research and education (EEAS: Russia, n.d.). Since 2008 the EU and Russia have been negotiating a new joint agreement. However, a shared vision of such a strategic partnership ‘remains largely unfulfilled’ (EU-Russia Centre, n.d.). The principal challenge for the EU is to handle the intensive bilateral relations between individual member states and Russia (David *et al.*, 2011, p. 183), which often ‘detract ... from a strong EU voice in dealing with Russia’ (EU-Russia Centre, n.d.). Another major concern for the EU is the deterioration of democratic freedoms and civil liberties in Russia.

With such extensive and sometimes challenging relations, the current Eurozone sovereign debt crisis is necessarily an exogenous influence on the domestic politics of these three Asia-Pacific powers. As such, the crisis is argued to raise the EU’s local public salience. According to Oppermann and Viehrig (2009, pp. 929–930),

the public salience of foreign affairs should partly follow from the intrinsic quality of international-level events as crises. Insofar as issues in the realm of foreign and security policy display the features of a crisis, they are likely to become highly salient to general publics.

Further, since the EU is a top trading and investment partner to these three countries, its critical economic circumstances may impact the nations in question. Consequently, information about the EU is expected to be processed at the domestic level and to become a more or less salient issue to the general public in the three cases.

Importantly, the three states are vibrant and politically affluent actors in their respective regions – Asia-Pacific in general, North-East Asia and Eurasia in particular. In addition, China

and Russia are now part of the BRICS quintet, a group of ‘emerging’ powers. The BRICS have enjoyed an increasingly visible profile and reputation as global ‘heavyweights’ – actors that pull the blanket of power ‘from the West to the rest’. Japan, on the other hand, as a member of the G8, has long been a member of the ‘in crowd’ of international politics. Self-images of importance, confidence and assertiveness inevitably influence the international agendas of these states, including in their interactions with an economically challenged EU. However, these issues are dealt with in very different political environments: Japan is a democracy, China is an authoritarian regime and Russia’s democracy is substantially flawed.

Internal influences shaping the media environments

In addition to external influences, understanding how news organizations operate in the selected countries is important to understanding how images and information are sourced. Semetko and Mandelli (1997) advocated paying close attention to the influences emanating from different institutional constraints or political cultures on media frames and in the framing process.

The media systems and roles of the press in China, Japan and Russia are understood in this chapter to have unique internal features. Focusing on the differences with the ‘Western’ media, Esser and Pfetsch (2004) stated that non-Western media systems and roles reflect a more general political culture in terms of the democracy dimension and different perceptions of the role of government in relation to individual rights, liberties and freedoms. As such, differing degrees of critical or antagonistic posture by media are expected as they are partially conditioned by the treatment of the ideals of freedom of the press and embracing the media’s role as the ‘fourth estate’. Our study features three locations with differing degrees of freedom from government involvement, ranging from a propagandistic party-led media in China (Brady, 2009;

Hague and Harrop, 2010), through an increasingly patriotic, controlled media in Russia (Krasnoboka, n.d.), to an apparently free press in Japan.

But the picture is more complex than this. As China's economy has moved increasingly towards a more market-oriented system, there is also evidence that profit-making goals are beginning to shape Chinese news media production (Tang and Iyengar, 2011) and that this challenges government involvement. In Russia the news media are increasingly characterized by intense commercialization pressures leading to the media doing 'the bidding of sparring elites in return for financial support' (Lowrey and Erzikova, 2010, p. 275). The Russian news media landscape is characterized by 'depoliticization' coupled with 'increased patriotization', which dictates that newsmakers will 'glorify Russia's past and present' (Krasnoboka, n.d.). In Japan, reports have surfaced recently about the role of 'press clubs': club members have a close and collaborative working relationship with the political figures or government agencies to which they are attached. There is little opportunity for reporters to establish a genuinely critical, independent stance because reporting distasteful matters might lead to exclusion from the club and thus inability to gain information and to write (Freedom House, n.d.).

In a cross-national study of foreign news coverage, consideration of a range of media contexts is important. In our study, foreign news coverage in Japan is conceptualized as an 'important source of information and a potentially powerful lobbying force' (Rubin, 1979, p. 7) for local governments, as well as a major shaper of voter's preferences, since it is assumed that 'an enlightened public will receive politically important information through the press and in turn will provide guidance to policymakers' (Larson and Chen, 1992, p. 82). However, news coverage carries political significance even in less free societies, such as China and Russia, since, as Rubin noted, news 'vision' of foreign counterparts in a controlled press environment is

a 'prime indication ... of current political attitudes ... The press is used by such ... governments both for diplomatic signalling and for shaping the ideas of their people' (1979, p. 7).

This chapter now turns to the 'cascade activation' theory of framing in order to understand the mechanisms behind the particular images of foreign affairs actors in domestic news coverage.

Theoretical reflections

The plenitude and speed of information transfer in the modern world leads members of the public to be highly selective in attending to and processing information. It is safe to suggest that only a tiny fraction of foreign affairs content will attract public attention and an even smaller portion will be used by voters when making decisions. The more easily voters can retrieve information about an issue from memory, the more weight they will assign to that issue in their overall assessment of competing political parties and candidates (Iyengar, 1990, pp. 2–4; Zaller, 1992, pp. 37–39) when it comes to foreign policy-making. Oppermann and Viehrig (2009) argued that the public salience of foreign affairs in a specific country at a given point in time is considered to be a function of issue-specific news factors and of country-specific catalysts of the issue's newsworthiness. This rationale warrants nuanced attention to the representations of a foreign policy actor in local news discourses in general, and to news frames which are capable tools in activating and spreading the ideas in particular.

The question of media influence has more recently incorporated the idea that media tells the audience 'how to think about' an issue – namely, how something is presented will subsequently influence how people think about the topic. This research perspective is often

conceptualized as framing, and this informs our investigation. Despite the popularity of framing theory, there is still a lack of consensus about how exactly to define the notion and the ways to operationalize it (Adam, 2009). Drawing on the work of Vliegenthart and van Zoonen (2011), our study recognizes framing as ‘the process of contextual features of news making’ (Vliegenthart and van Zoonen, 2011, p. 102) and an act in which ‘journalists emphasize certain aspects of a news event and downplay others’ (Fahmy and Kim, 2008, p. 445). In this way, the study differentiates between the concepts of ‘framing’ (the process of contextual features of newsmaking) and ‘frame’ (content features of the news) (Chaban *et al.*, 2013).

Thus framing is more about the composition of various elements into a larger story than just the manifest content, and it is considered to be vital in ‘organizing a news story, thematically, stylistically and factually, to convey a specific story line’ (Lee *et al.*, 2006). Once a story about a foreign actor is organized from a certain perspective in which some issues are prominent and others are invisible (framing, or frame-building), then particular attributes are assigned to that actor. As a result the news content frames an actor in a particular way. Our study shares the conviction of Neuman *et al.* (1992, p. 60), who saw frames as a concept that is applicable to both media and individuals. This study clearly differentiates between media and audience frames (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). Media frames address how the news is presented through choices of language and repetition of certain story schemas that organize and frame reality in distinctive ways. An audience frame determines how news is comprehended – a schema of interpretations that enables individuals to perceive, organize and make sense of incoming information (Pan and Kosicki, 1993). Our study is concerned with the former – media – frames.

At the heart of discussions about framing are contestations over the construction of meaning. Building on the work of Riker (1986), Entman has claimed that, at its core, framing is ‘the central process by which government officials and journalists exercise political influence over each other and over the public’ (2003, p. 417). Moreover, in political gamesmanship, ‘successful political communication requires the framing of events, issues, and actors in ways that promote perceptions and interpretations that benefit one side while hindering the other’ (Entman, 2003, p. 417). Hence framing analysis should be seen as a dynamic process of negotiating meaning. Entman has theorized this process in his ‘cascade activation’ model (Entman, 2003, 2004) in which the shaping and sharing of perceptions on foreign policy is linked intrinsically to news frames. According to the ‘cascade activation’ model, the primary influencer in the widespread distribution of ideas is the national administration. It is followed by national elites, networks and journalists, and then by the general public.

The media are conceptualized as the primary public space in which the spreading of frames – either ‘top down’ or ‘bottom up’ – occurs. Sending ideas ‘cascading’ downwards is considered to be a consequence of the interface between journalists and elites, but the public are not without agency. If an idea gains ground within public opinion, the media can be used as a ‘pumping mechanism’ (Entman, 2003) through which the public are able to disseminate ideas back ‘up’ the cascade, and in doing so ‘can affect leaders’ strategic calculations and activities’ (Entman, 2003).

This chapter considers one particular paradigm of EU media-framing – news with a ‘local hook’ *vs.* news without such a linkage. The phenomenon of foreign news’ ‘domestication’ is well established in the literature on news production. Within this there is almost unanimous agreement about the influence of the national context, which ‘tends to affect both the selection

(i.e. inclusion or exclusion) and the presentation (i.e. content and orientation) of international news' (Novais, 2007, p. 555). Its main characteristic is the deliberate positioning of a foreign actor in local discourses, a framing technique that Ginsberg (2002, p. 53) called 'localizing', or 'giving people explicit reasons why they should care about a place by pegging the story directly to the local economy, local business, local culture, local immigrants'. This strategy can result in the retention of a local audience's attention towards news that might otherwise be considered 'irrelevant' and 'remote'. Our study argues that foreign (EU) news items with a local angle have a greater ability to influence foreign policy ideas among different societal groups, and in doing so transform media frames with a 'local hook' into the dominant frames. This is due to a more pronounced presence of motivation, power and strategy, and cultural congruence – variables defined by Entman as being useful in explaining the capacity of frames.

Foreign news is permeated by the 'mental associations into the minds of elites, journalists and citizens' – associations which Entman terms 'motivations' (2003, p. 422). For newsmakers and gatekeepers, these motivations reflect 'economic pressure and incentives; professional customs, norms, and principles; and normative values. The latter include self-images...' (Entman, 2003, p. 422). We argue that there is a range of motivations which may prompt local newsmakers to frame a foreign actor employing a domestic anchor. First, the commercial imperative: a 'local hook' may help to sell news about distant international counterparts. Second, such framing may prove more cost-effective in terms of resources as local sources are more easily accessible. Finally, there may be conceptual motivations in that local issues will be better known and, as such, it is easier for local newsmakers to situate a foreign affairs story within familiar discourses in terms of values, norms and principles.

In contrast to motivations which are conceived by Entman as internal forces, power and strategy (deployed by the administration and other elites) are conceptualized within ‘cascade activation’ theory as external forces ‘that may push the activation of a particular set of mental connections’ (Entman, 2003, p. 422):

Although journalists possess less ability to shape news frames than members of the administration or elite networks, they do have some independent power, arising from their capacity to ask questions and to decide precisely which words and images to assemble and transmit.

As such, we contend that foreign news with a ‘local hook’ empowers journalists since they possess the necessary local knowledge to ask informed questions, and can be more confident in the choice of their words and images. The second element is strategy – the ‘deliberate, planned activation of mental associations, which is the province mainly of elites.’² Word choice, information distribution and withholding, and timing are among the strategic resources (Entman, 2003, p. 422). Entman draws on Althaus *et al.* (1996) and Althaus (2003) when he argues that for most journalists it is about their ability to ‘produce ‘good stories’ that protect and advance their careers and that accord with their self-images as independent watchdogs’ (Entman, 2003, p. 422). More far-sighted are the strategic aspirations among ‘investigative journalists, pundits, and editorial writers, who may strategize in hopes of shaping policy’ (Entman, 2003, p. 422). Foreign news with a ‘local hook’ once again resonates with local newsmakers and allows for a pronounced partisan point of view, and thus offers the ability to shape local foreign policies (difficult in the case of the reportage of ‘pure’ foreign news).

Finally, the variable of cultural congruence reminds us that ‘the substance of a news event or issue matters’: ‘the more congruent the frame with schemas that dominate the political culture, the more success it will enjoy’ (Entman. 2003, p. 422). Entman differentiated between congruent, ambiguous and incongruent frames. In the case of foreign affairs news with a ‘local hook’, there is a greater chance for journalists to produce a frame that is more congruent with schemas that resonate with local political culture. As a result of their greater familiarity with local political realities, the newsmakers will afford a greater possibility of success to a particular frame.

The next section outlines the procedure for content analysis of EU news. This is an ‘indispensable step’ and an ‘important prerequisite for the study of effects of news frames’ (De Vreese, 2001, p. 108).

Methodology

Operationalization

In studies of EU news reported within European nations, the use of the domestication frame is well recognized (see, e.g., Peter *et al.*, 2003; Kevin, 2003). In contrast, studies of domestication frames in the media outside the EU are rare (Chaban *et al.*, 2006; Chaban *et al.*, 2012 remain an exception). Following Sreberny-Mohammadi’s operationalization (1985, pp. 38–39) the main category division in our analysis is between ‘external’ and ‘domesticated’ news (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Operationalization of the foci of domesticity framework

‘External’ news			News with a ‘local hook’
EU-focused news	EU news- abroad	EU news in the region	
stories about the EU	stories about the EU in a	stories about the location’s	stories about the country in
occurring in the EU, without	third country, neither in the	region in general, or about	question with some EU
any involvement of the	EU nor in the location in	regional neighbours, with EU	involvement
locality in question	question	involvement	

News items were coded according to their focus of domesticity of the EU. In each category of domesticity, textual images of the EU and its actors were assessed in terms of their intensity – or degree of centrality (Kevin, 2003). This category examined the level of EU presence within a news text according to three indicators: a major, secondary or minor perspective. A major perspective was assigned to a story in which the EU and/or its representative actors/institutions were depicted as the dominant theme. A secondary perspective was coded when the EU’s activities were deemed to be on a par with other actors in the story. Finally, a minor perspective was coded if the EU was mentioned only in a fleeting or minor capacity within the story.

Thematic framing was also considered by determining whether EU actions were positioned within economics, politics, social affairs, the environment or development. The degree of centrality and themes are considered by our study to be the ‘substantive elements’ of a news frame, but we also explored the affective elements of the frame which refer to the valence dimension of attribute salience. Despite its contentious nature, evaluation remains widely used in communication studies (Peter *et al.*, 2003; de Vreese *et al.*, 2006). The team of coders – all native speakers – analysed the sample to determine the explicit judgement and tone of EU textual representations. Depending on an article’s approach towards the EU and its style, three

categories were identified: neutral, negative and positive. Language clues (literal as well as metaphorical) guided the textual analysis in terms of evaluation.

In addition, the sources of EU news were evaluated – determining whether the sources were foreign to the country of reportage (produced by non-local journalists and agencies) or local (produced by Chinese, Indian, Russian or Japanese correspondents, in post at home or overseas).

Indicators of visibility – the volume of news of each foci and degree of centrality – provided an insight into the magnitude of frames (warranted by prominence and repetition according to Entman (2003)), while the indicators of degree of centrality of EU representations, themes, evaluations and sources were used to measure the aspects of cultural resonance – that is, frames that make impact through their noticeable, understandable, memorable and emotionally charged images (Entman, 2003). The indicators used qualitative assessment which was later classified creating a quantitative reality.

Media sample

Our study sampled news articles that specifically referenced the EU, as well as its representative bodies – the European Central Bank, the EC, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice – and the officials representing these institutions as well as the Eurozone. This chapter pertains to data collected over a six-month period of daily observation (June 2011–December 2011) from prestigious broadsheets in the three Asia-Pacific powers (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Volumes of	<i>People's Daily</i>	<i>Russian Newspaper</i>	<i>Yomiuri Shimbun</i>
coverage (articles)	(China)	(Russia)	(Japan)

Findings

Visibility of EU news with ‘local hooks’

The proportion of EU news with a ‘local hook’ *vis-à-vis* other foci of domesticity is presented in Figure 5.1. Approximately a third of the sample in each country case was devoted to the reporting of the EU with a ‘local hook’.

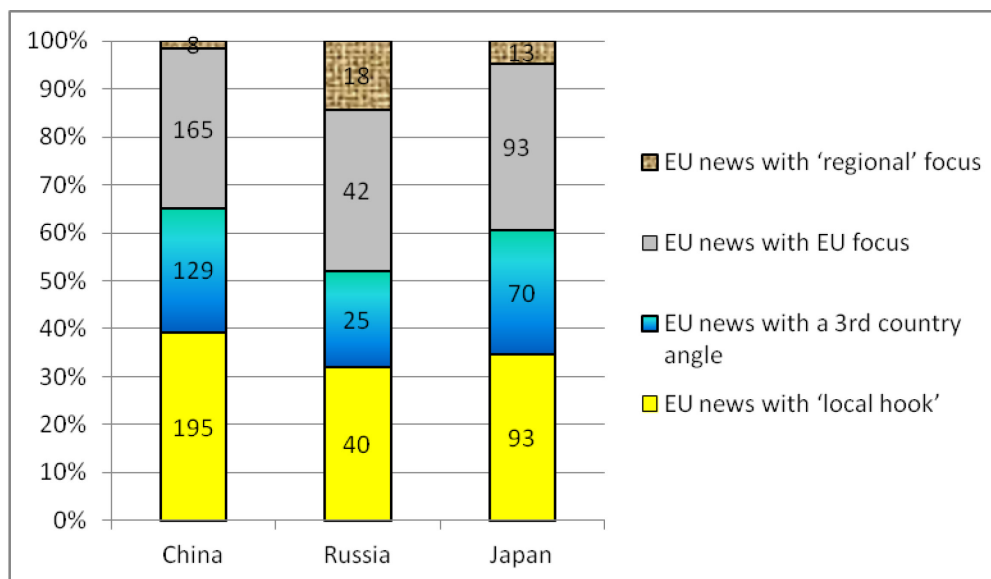


Figure 5.1 Visibility of EU news ‘with local hooks’ *vis-à-vis* EU news without such hooks

Remarkably, all EU news, across all foci of domestication, was written by local sources. The Japanese, Chinese and Russian dailies observed did not utilize a single international source in their reports of the EU in the six months of daily observation.³ The status of the

national flagship newspaper often prescribes a heavier reliance on the top national journalists rather than foreign wires or writers. This observation is in contrast with Thussu and others' arguments about the dependence of 'non-Western countries' on Western news wires (2000, p. 6). One set of explanations may be the size of countries in question, the language issue and the affluence of the observed outlets which enables them to maintain correspondents in Europe. Another possible explanation is a more assertive self-perception of these states as independent and increasingly important global powers. This self-vision may mean that these newspapers – as the 'voices of the nations' – prefer to be free from 'Western' influences.

Degree of centrality

The major degree of centrality was the most prominent attribute in the case of the Chinese and Japanese news reporting the EU in the context of its own, EU affairs (Figure 5.2). In contrast, a minor degree of centrality prevailed in the Russian coverage – the *Russian Newspaper* chose to cover the individual EU member states more prominently, leaving the EU and its institutions on the periphery of the reportage. As discussed above, the Russian policy towards Europe consciously prefers bilateral relations with member states over multilateral relations with the EU, and the correspondents of this pro-government newspaper may have reflected on this government message.

EU news with a 'local hook' was also heavy on the minor degree of centrality. As leading national papers with the goal of being the 'voice of the nation', their presentation of foreign actors is not expected to be extensive and/or intensive. The rather balanced and relatively prominent representation of the EU from major and secondary angles in the three cases is

significant. In the former angle, the EU was presented as a leading voice in the dialogue with the location in question, and in the latter it was on the receiving end in the interaction with the location. Yet the prevailing minor degree of centrality might send a message to readers that when it comes to their country's international relations, the EU is only of marginal importance.

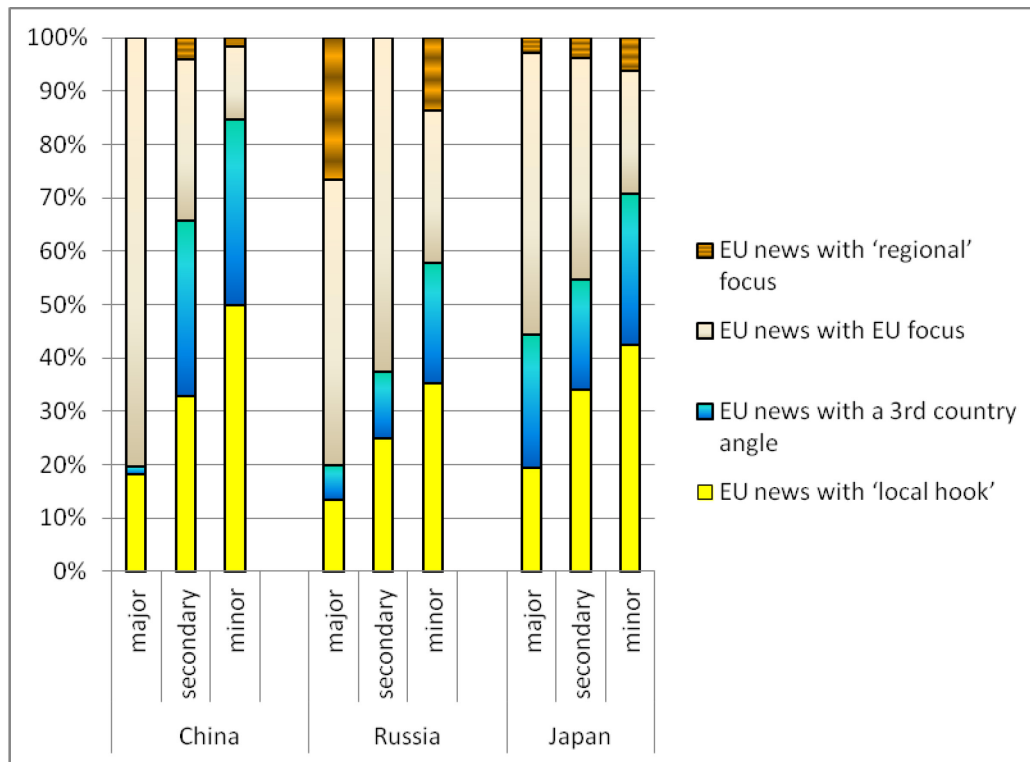


Figure 5.2 Degree of centrality

Evaluations

In the 'domesticated' EU reportage, neutral evaluations were the most visible in the three cases (Figure 5.3). This emphasis on neutrality could be related to cultural practices and self-perceived roles of newsmakers as objective professionals, but could also indicate a certain indifference towards the EU. Nevertheless, the Chinese coverage of the EU 'with a local hook' featured the most positively coloured images of the EU in contrast with the other two cases. The Chinese

enthusiasm for this category could be the journalists' reflection of the Chinese official line, which recognized the importance of the EU to Chinese trade and investment. Moreover, in political terms, the EU tends to be cast in a more positive light than the USA, with the EU being the proverbial 'lesser evil' of the two Western powers, offering a possible counterbalance to the USA's unipolar ambitions. The Japanese reportage 'with a local hook' featured the greatest number of neutral assessments among the three locations. In general, 'locally hooked' EU news did not feature high shares of negative evaluations: the EU was seen continuing its activities with the locations in question, undisturbed by the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis.

In contrast, images of the EU in the 'pure EU' context attracted pronounced negative assessments due to the crisis. Neutral assessments were still the most frequent, but negative portrayals were considerably more prominent than positive ones (except in the Chinese case).

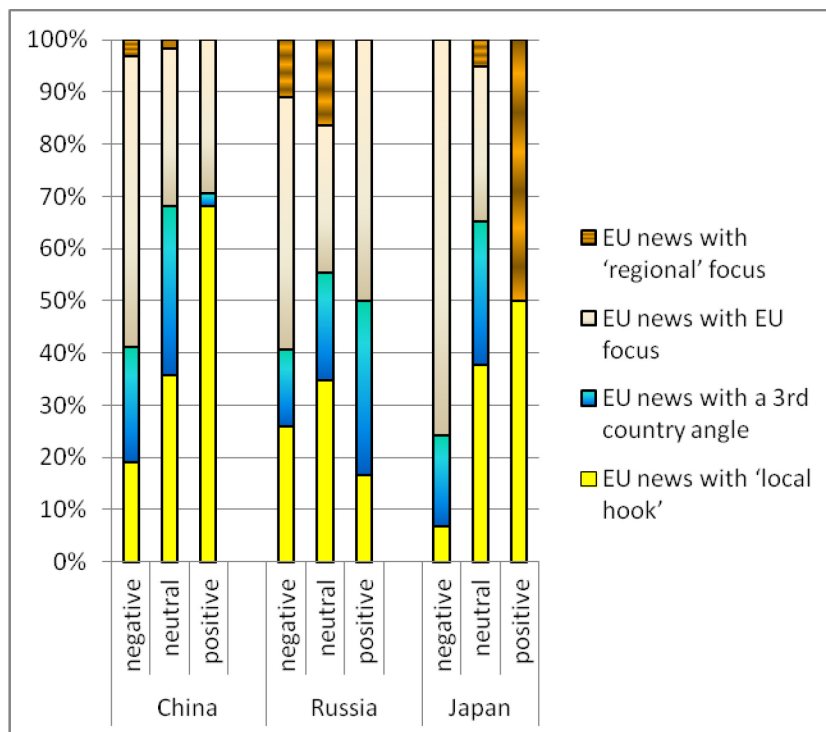


Figure 5.3 Evaluations

Themes

Framing the EU in the context of third countries showed a dominance of the EU as a political actor in the three locations (Figure 5.4). In contrast, framing of the EU in the context of its own affairs characterized by an ongoing crisis raised the EU's profile as an economic actor in two cases (Japan and China). In prioritizing the EU's social affairs, Russia proved to be an exception. The regional focus highlighted that EU reports in Russia and Japan depicted political and economic attributes in almost equal measures while in China the development theme was most pronounced.

While there was a great deal of convergence in the framing of non-domesticated EU reportage, the 'local' focus featured great diversity. For China, the EU's portrayal with a 'local hook' showed a balance in EU political and economic representations, depicting the EU as both an important economic partner and a key political counterpart in international relations for China. In contrast, the same focus of domesticity in Russia featured a highly political EU profile. Arguably, the *Russian Newspaper* reflects the government's vision of the EU as a key political interlocutor, not least due to the EU's and Russia's shared neighbourhood. Finally, in Japan, the EU was prominently reported as an economic partner. Arguably, the USA is the dominant political orientation of Japan, while the EU features mainly as an 'economic powerhouse' that is important for trade and investment.

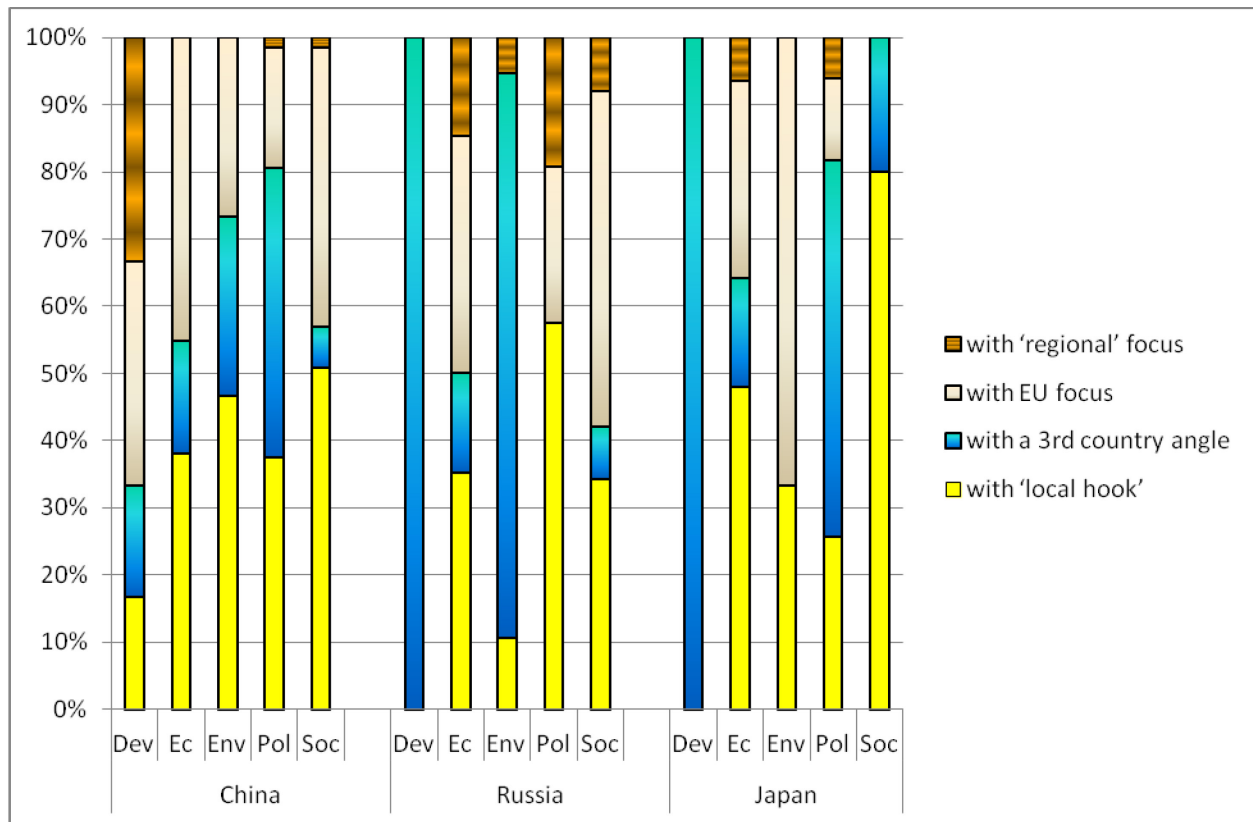


Figure 5.4 Themes

Summary of media findings

In summary, our analysis of the media content according to the foci of domesticity revealed multiple and intersecting frames of EU representations. Reporting the EU from the third country focus of domesticity presents the EU to Chinese, Russian and Japanese readers as a political actor on the world stage. However, this political actor is also framed as a largely peripheral one whose actions are assessed mostly from a neutral, and sometimes indifferent, standpoint. Considered within the context of the ‘capable frames’ notion within the cascade activation model, the low emotive charge and limited prominence of these EU frames indicate frames with lesser magnitude and cultural congruence. The findings lead to a conclusion that EU news with a

third country and/or regional focus of domesticity has a limited potential to activate and spread ideas about the EU as a global political actor (the dominant thematic frame within this focus) up and down the cascade.

When EU news is framed from the ‘pure EU’ focus, the EU is cast as a major economic actor (with the exception of Russia, where it was featured primarily with the attributes of a social affairs actor) with visible negative features (with the exception of China). It is suggested that this type of framing with a higher emotive charge either towards negativity or positivity and higher visibility in terms of intensity of representation potentially leads to media frames that are more capable of influencing ideas about the EU. These ‘more capable’ frames in China and Japan activate ideas about the EU as predominantly an economic actor on its own continent, while for Russia the ideas of the EU in Europe featured a prominent social affairs dimension.

Finally the EU reportage ‘with a local hook’ had a visible share of major/secondary intensity representations (presenting the EU as a leading or secondary interlocutor for the locations in this study) and a low degree of polarized opinions (most of the reportage in the three locations was neutral). The neutrality could be a reflection of the ‘business as usual’ attitude of the three North-East Asia Pacific giants: despite the ongoing crisis, the EU continues high-volume trading and investing with all three just as it had before the crisis. Yet the low emotional charge in the EU framing jeopardizes the influence of the frames in the ‘cascade’.

Discussion and conclusions

This analysis considers domesticated news-framing of the EU through the lens of the ‘cascade activation’ theory of framing. The distinction between news with a ‘local hook’ *vis-à-vis* news

without this ‘hook’ was seen as a more nuanced way of considering which media frames have a greater capacity to influence the activation and spreading of ideas about the EU as an important Other. ‘Domesticated’ foreign affairs news is typically assumed to connect a remote foreign counterpart to local interests and thus potentially have a greater influence over a general public removed from and/or disinterested in foreign policy. This framing was also seen as having a strong potential to increase motivation, power and strategy, and cultural congruence of the news outputs among local newsmakers.

Our comparative account of the news frames in three different media discourses provides not only a valuable scholarly exercise in the growing field of comparative international communication research but also concrete information for the EU and its still new European External Action Service. If the EU is serious about becoming a major global actor that is keen to upgrade its dialogue with powerful actors in North-East Asia-Pacific, it is important to identify and systematically account for many perspectives on its images. In our analysis the least ‘capable’ frame for spreading ideas about the EU as a global political actor stemmed from framing it from the third country and regional angles. The most potentially ‘capable’ frame came out of the ‘pure EU’ framing. This led to an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, the EU’s visibility and prominence was high in locally ‘hooked’ news. This finding correlates with evidence in existing literature which claims an increased visibility of foreign news reportage when anchored domestically. On the other hand, the very low degree of emotional charge found in this news was counterproductive to the creation of a ‘capable frame’, as defined by the ‘cascade activation’ theory. This neutrality could be a reflection on the ongoing stable interactions of the EU with the three strategic partners despite the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis. However, it could also be a reflection of a cautious government position mirrored by the

news media, and/or indifference or ignorance from the newsmakers' side. Importantly, all EU-related reportage in our analysis was written by local journalists. This finding reiterates the need for the EU's extensive contacts with newsmakers in third countries as one of its public diplomacy outreach priorities in strategic partnerships.

The findings confirm Vlienghart and van Zoonen's argument that 'frames do not come about intentionally but are the results of interactions and conflicts between collective and individual social and media actors' (2011, p. 107). The ambiguous character of news-framing of the EU with a 'local hook' is argued to be triggered by a complex interaction between internal and external factors in news production. The internal factors can be divided into individual, organizational and national.

Considering the internal individual level – that is, news as the product of an individual journalist or editor – foreign news with a 'local hook' presents numerous opportunities to newsmakers in terms of increased power to influence the policy level and to reach readers with culturally congruent frames, as well as demonstrates competence, supported by a clear ideological stance and a more cost-effective position. A number of local correspondents who had been posted to Europe as well as certain locally based journalists were found to specialize in the coverage of the EU in the reportage with a 'local hook'.

The level of organizational factors deals with practices of the media outlet in question, local media market imperatives, and the media systems and news culture of the location of the reportage. Following the argument by Vliegthart and van Zoonen (2011), particular news frames are tied to the 'way news is socially constructed, as a routinised production in which newsworthiness is dependent on how a particular event or story fits the time and space

requirements of the news organization'. The observed national dailies from these three 'non-Western' media systems relied heavily on local correspondents and agencies for their news about the EU. Irrespective of the media system (democratic *vs.* authoritarian), newsmakers from the three countries have noted that 'selling' EU news without a 'local hook' is problematic because EU news is not seen as 'sexy' or attractive (Chaban, 2012).

On the level of national factors – national culture, local political situation, international agenda of the location, self-vision in the global architecture – this study chose to deal with outlets which are seen as mainstream prestigious news sources that are more or less representative of the government position. The reportage of the EU's interaction with a location in such newspapers is the most likely to reflect the agenda of the location towards the EU, the local political situation and the self-images of their own powerful position within their immediate region and globally.

Finally, external factors are shaped by global events. In this regard, the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis – a factor that was external to each of our locations – triggered a particular EU framing: from the 'pure EU' focus of domesticity with a higher emotive charge and prominence. We argue that this constitutes a 'capable' frame that is able to influence opinions up and down the cascade. This capability might have been induced by the drama of the crisis as a means of selling news in the EU: outsiders to the Eurozone crisis become 'consumers of the ever delightful spectacle of poverty and catastrophe' (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 67 quoted in Tester, 1999, p. 477). Recent parallel research has found that newsmakers in the three countries thought that the end of crisis may mean that the EU will no longer be viewed as an important subject to cover (Chaban and Elgström, 2014).

Our analysis has shown that a nuanced differentiation between the ‘external’ foci of domesticity triggered different EU frames in terms of content and influence. This suggests that future studies of EU external media representations could also employ the category of domesticity to ensure robust and accurate assessment of the EU’s external media images. In particular, the employment of this category showed that the EU has not been framed by its strategic partners in simplistic negative terms as a weakened economic actor. This was despite the fact that ‘the media have often been accused of overemphasizing negative news while downplaying more positive news’ (Hester and Gibson, 2003). The three prestigious dailies painted the EU in an array of shades, and the patterns in these portrayals seem to be linked to the Self–Other conceptualization. The media framing across all three locations did change when the Self is present and active in the reportage of the EU, or when Others are interacting with the EU without the involvement of the location in question.

However, the analysis also reveals a number of paradoxes. The influence of the frames that are most capable of shaping ideas – those which resulted from framing the EU with ‘pure EU’ focus – was arguably offset by the fact that the EU remains a distant Other, geographically, politically and culturally. Despite bringing a distant but important counterpart closer to home, the influence of the next most ‘capable’ frames – generated by framing the EU with a ‘local hook’ – was dampened by a low emotional charge. Finally, framing the EU from the third country focus of domesticity produced the weakest influences. Future studies could use the analytical category of the focus of domesticity and compare the media images of the EU with images of the USA and the ‘emerging’ powers of the BRICS. This comparative research design could be extended further, and future research may compare the changes in EU frames over time. Such insights

could be used to further explain the images of the EU in the shadow of its period of economic turmoil.

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Endnotes

¹ At the time of writing, a new Framework Agreement based on a revised Action Plan was being negotiated but had not been signed. </en>

² Not journalists, although the boundary according to Entman is blurry.</en>

³ This is different from the other newspapers observed in a larger project. In addition to the prestigious popular daily, the project entitled The EU in the Eyes of Asia-Pacific observed a reputable business daily and an English-language daily in each location. Those two types did use international sources when reporting about the EU