

**CHINESE STRATEGIC NARRATIVES IN EUROPEAN CONTEXTS:
CHINESE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY**

By
Fei Vincent Mo

Submitted to Central European University
Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Political Science*

Supervisor: Michael Merlingen

Word Count: 75,418

Vienna, Austria
February 2025

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Copyright © Fei Vincent Mo, 2025. CHINESE STRATEGIC NARRATIVES IN EUROPEAN CONTEXTS: CHINESE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY - [This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike \(CC BY-NC-SA\) 4.0 International license.](#)

For bibliographic and reference purposes this dissertation should be referred to as:
Mo, F. V. 2025. Chinese Strategic narratives in European Contexts: Chinese Public Diplomacy in Austria and Hungary. Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations, Central European University, Vienna.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Fei Vincent Mo, candidate for the PhD degree in Political Science at the Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations declare herewith that the present dissertation is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright.

I also declare that no part of the dissertation has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 28 February 2025

Fei Vincent Mo

ABSTRACT

The evolving international order is shaped not only by *realpolitik* among states but also by narratives that construct global governance and state/social relations. This dissertation examines the Chinese strategic narratives in Europe. This dissertation investigates how Chinese strategic narratives speak to and reach the European public. It focuses on the construction and projection of Chinese strategic narratives by highlighting and analysing local narratives and the translation process in European local contexts. While existing studies on China-EU relations often focus on elite political narratives and state-driven policies, this research adopts a less state-centric approach by bringing the public into the discussion.

This study explores how China's strategic narratives are translated into local narratives in Confucius Institutes (CIs) and the Chinese media outlet *Nouvelles d'Europe* in Austria and Hungary, both of which are considered as part of public diplomacy. The research employs thematic analysis on the Chinese language textbooks used in CIs and news reports from *Nouvelles d'Europe*, as they are considered as different communication conduits of political narratives. This dissertation deconstructs the meaning-making of strategic narratives by looking at those sociocultural, discursive, and less strategic local narratives. This comparison reveals the dynamics of Chinese strategic narratives' translation processes into local narratives when they face different audiences through different communication conduits.

The dissertation contributes to both international relations and communication studies. It argues that local narratives can be political and strategic, and it is necessary to take the public and local narratives into account to analyse strategic narratives on the top level. It also reveals the role of cultural institutions and media, as part of public diplomacy, in shaping political narratives. By unpacking the translation process of strategic narratives, this research advances the understanding of the power of strategic narratives and suggests new directions for analysing the contestation of strategic narratives and interactions between strategic narratives, local narratives, and the public.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the product of my academic journey in Vienna. First of all, I am deeply and truly grateful from the bottom of my heart to my supervisor, Professor Michael Merlingen, who has been guiding, supervising, and supporting me since we were in Budapest. Without him, this dissertation and my academic journey would not be possible. Second, I would like to thank Dr Erzsébet Strausz and Dr Daniel Large, who are in my supervisory panel, for their critical inspiration and feedback.

Third, I want to express my gratitude to the friends at Central European University, Melinda Nagy, Monica Lafaire, and Ingy Kassem, who have been taking care of me at the University. Fourth, I would like to thank Robin Bellers who helped me in Budapest and the first several years in Vienna. Moreover, I am so grateful to Dr Sharon McCulloch from the Center for Academic Writing who selflessly helped me on this dissertation.

Needless to say, I appreciate all other professors, instructors, and friends at Central European University who provided help and support to my PhD journey, particularly, thanks to Prof. Michael Ignatieff and Dr Xymena Kurowska. I also want to thank those who helped me in the interviews and fieldwork.

Fifth, I want to say thank you to my friends and the beloved one(s) in Hong Kong and Vienna, you know I am talking about you. Without you and your company, my PhD studies and these years of my life would be totally different.

In the end, I thank my mother, aunties, and grandparents for their unconditional love, patience, and support!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR’S DECLARATION.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	ix
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
<i>1.1 EU-China general relationships and discussion</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>1.2 Research questions and aims.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>1.3 Confucius Institutes and different analytical approaches.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>1.4 Chinese media outlets overseas</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>1.5 Dissertation structure.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>1.6 Significance and contribution</i>	<i>35</i>
Chapter 2 Strategic Narratives	40
<i>2.1 Strategic narratives: the framework in general.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>2.2 Empirical studies of strategic narratives.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>2.3 Why do we turn to the public?</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>2.4 Why translation processes and local narratives?.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>2.5 What to look at</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>2.5 Conclusion.....</i>	<i>78</i>
Chapter 3 The Narratives That are Strategic.....	82
<i>3.1 Strategic narratives on public diplomacy in general.....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>3.2 China’s strategic narratives on Europe.....</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>3.3 China’s strategic narratives on the US and developing countries</i>	<i>107</i>

3.4 China's strategic narratives on the institution level	112
3.5 Themes on different levels	121
Chapter 4 Road to Success, Textbook Analysis in the Austrian Case	130
4.1 Chinese strategic narratives in an Austrian local context and the bilateral relationship.....	131
4.2 Textbooks and strategic narratives	135
4.3 Road to Success, textbooks used in Austria	140
4.3.1 The coding and the themes generating process	142
4.3.2 The landscape and distribution of themes	144
4.4 Textbook themes and the translation of strategic narratives.....	146
4.4.1 China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners	148
4.4.2 China is a complex and united country in the modern era	151
4.4.3 China is not a threat to the current international order	157
4.5 The continuity of textbook narratives and strategic narratives.....	163
4.6 Conclusion.....	167
Chapter 5 Hungarian Textbook Analysis.....	170
5.1 Textbooks for Hungarians	173
5.2 Thematic analysis and empirical data from CTH.....	176
5.3 Three textbook themes	186
5.3.1 Theme of China and Hungary are civilisations	186
5.3.2 Theme of the harmonious world	197
5.3.3 Theme of the modernisation and the successful development model.....	203
5.4 Comparison between Chinese textbooks in Hungary and Austria.....	208
5.5 Conclusion.....	213
Chapter 6 Nouvelles d'Europe	215
6.1 Nouvelles d'Europe	216
6.2 Themes of the Nouvelles d'Europe	226
6.2.1 China is the leading power of a better world	226
6.2.2 China and Europe should work together	233
6.2.3 China is an economic power.....	239
6.3 Newspapers and information warfare.....	244

6.4 Conclusion.....	248
Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusions	252
7.1 Comparison of local narratives and communication conduits	257
7.1.1 First level themes – What is China	260
7.1.2 Second level themes – relations between China and others	262
7.1.3 Third level of themes – relations between China and the world.....	265
7.1.4 Narrating techniques	267
7.1.5 Bring the past back? The tributary system in Chinese strategic narratives	274
7.2 Conclusions and contributions.....	280
References	286

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 3.1: The distribution of CIs, source from the Annual Development Report 2021	149
Table 3.2: The strategic narratives on three levels	157
Table 4.1. Sub-themes of RTS	201
Table 5.1 Sub-themes and codes of Chinese textbooks for Hungarians	240
Table 5.2 Sub-theme names	243
Figure 5.1 Coverage and frequency of themes in CTH	245
Table 5.3 Cultural knowledge essays in CTH	246
Table 6.1 Sub-themes of the Nouvelles d'Europe	292
Figure 6.1: The front page of the issue on 24th January 2024, Nouvelles d'Europe Central and Eastern Europe version	294
Table 7.1 Themes in the textbooks and the newspaper	333

Chapter 1 Introduction

The international order changes in various aspects, not only the power balance among major powers and the distribution of economic wealth but also how people perceive and understand the international order. In other words, what a good global governance and normal relations among major actors should be are changing. The major powers, the US, the European Union (EU), China, and other BRICS states contribute to the changes not just by their realpolitik decision-making and foreign policies but also by the stories and narratives they offer and project to the world, and these narratives construct the understanding of the international order. For example, although China has already become the second largest economy in the world, the Chinese government still labels and defends itself as a developing country associated with the stories of a successful development model.

Narratives impact how individual people, communities, and states understand and perceive others, and the understanding and perception shape the following behaviours and policies. However, before enquiring about the impacts and the efficiency of narratives, the essential question is the construction and projection of narratives. In other words, where do the narratives come from and how are they diffused? The

political narratives can go through mass communication channels, like national TV programmes, newspapers, political campaigns, and social media on the internet. The political narratives can also travel through international summits, conferences, and negotiation meetings among politicians and leaders. Moreover, narratives can be shared in other social practices, like performances in theatres, exhibitions in museums, and teaching and learning activities in classrooms. For instance, the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games tells the narrative that China is a civilisation with a long history and modern China opens to the world. At the same time, different actors, including those major powers mentioned above, project their narratives through various communication conduits and these narratives are frequently in conflict. For example, the domestic economic and social changes of China and the changes of the external influence from China are narrated as “achieving great success in reform, opening up, and socialist modernization by China” and on the path of realising “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”(ChinaDaily, 2021; Xi, 2021; Xinhua News Agency, 2021), but narrated by the West as the “threat” or “systemic rival” (see Chivvis & Miller, 2023; EEAS, 2023). In short, the narratives play a key role in the relationships among states, constructing and changing the international order.

This dissertation focuses on the political narratives between China and Europe. Both China and Europe (the EU) are key players in the current international order. They are considered major powers and global players. The political narratives between China and Europe do not only impact the relationships between these two actors but also other states, regions, and the international order.

1.1 EU-China general relationships and discussion

After President Xi took power, Chinese foreign policy and its global strategy changed dramatically from its predecessors. Scholars changed their main interests to two topics: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and international norms, both of which concern the relationship between China and the world. BRI becomes a new entrance for scholars to analyse the changes within the Chinese government, like the functions of different ministries (e.g. He, 2020) and the power struggles among Chinese top leaders (e.g. Yu, 2018). The second topic under Xi's presidency is China's efforts to change the meanings of liberal international norms and provide alternative ones. Ian Clark (2014) argues that to become a respected norm maker, China has to first be seen as an appropriate norm taker. The "norm-taker" and "norm-maker" debate of China is widely discussed, such

as China in Africa (see Alden & Large, 2015), and China in Southeast Asia (see Reilly, 2012). Other international norm theories and concepts are deployed to the Chinese case, such as normative power. The Chinese influence on international norms is also analysed at the international organisation level, such as the UN (see Chen, 2009; Foot & Inboden, 2014; Vogt, 2012). However, the majority of debates on Chinese norms and China's engagement with the international liberal order strongly consider those norms as steady and taken for granted, and these norms are located in a dichotomy: liberal vs. illiberal, developed vs. developing, and democratic vs. undemocratic.

More importantly, most of the studies focusing on norms and values try to discover and identify the “illiberal”, “developing”, and “undemocratic” China by linking and classifying those Chinese foreign policies and foreign practices into the dichotomy on a macro level. This is not to say that China is liberal, developed, or democratic. However, the majority of studies do not question enough about the origins of those norms and values deployed by China and how China consolidates those norms and values through various narratives on different levels and practices. Moreover, China's practices are frequently considered as one-way rather than an interaction with others in social relations. This dissertation analyses the issue from the angle of strategic narratives which questions the construction of the strategic narratives used and

promoted by the Chinese government, which is part of Chinese foreign policy. These strategic narratives are strongly connected with Chinese international norms and values, and the projection of these strategic narratives is the extension of the Chinese international norms and values in a local manner.

In terms of China-EU relations, many scholars analyse the “comprehensive strategic partnership” between China and the EU from political, economic, and cultural perspectives (e.g. Shambaugh et al., 2008; Zhou, 2017). The discussion of the EU-China relationship has two main focuses: interests and geopolitics, and norms and international structure. In the EU, China’s regional cooperation “16+1” is considered as a division of Europe, especially by the Chinese FDI (Meunier, 2014). Maher (2016) analyses the EU-China partnership from the perspectives of political values, geopolitical interests, and the concept of international order. At the same time, regional studies also shed light on the EU-China relationship, especially the EU and China’s power competition in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. These analyses are mainly from a conventional geopolitical perspective (see Ó Tuathail et al., 2006). In short, Maher still maintains the Western base to understand China’s politics, which means understanding and explaining Chinese politics and values separated from the influence of Chinese historical legacies and traditions.

The dominant rational IPE approach is widely applied to EU-China relations (e.g. Freeman, 2024; Gaenssmantel, 2023; Glen & Murgo, 2007; Smith, 2014, 2015). Besides those “rational” theories, constructivist scholars are also interested in this relationship. Two concerns are raised to question the economy/material domination within this relationship: the constituted identity of China, and the assumption that both the EU’s and China’s international identities are taken as a “given” (Jørgensen & Wong, 2016). The authors argue that identity is relational: identities form images of both the self and the other; perceptions and images affect the actors’ actions and speech acts. International norms are also the foci for the constructivist approach analysing the EU-China relationship, like how norms shape the decision-making process and how norms are diffused. In 2003, Johnston (2003) suggested already that whether China is a revisionist state or not cannot be addressed without an understanding of the norms governing the international system. Kaya (2014) illustrates how the rise of China damages the normative identity of the EU in two ways: first, the EU failed to integrate significant normative issues within the bilateral relationship with China; second, by using economic power, China challenges the EU’s ability to spread the “new sovereignty”.

Different sectors within the EU-China relationship received much attention from various perspectives. For example, scholars (e.g. Afionis & Stringer, 2012; Ferenczy, 2019) appreciate more EU's normative practice in the energy sector within this relationship and find the limitation of Normative Power Europe (see Diez, 2021; Manners, 2002) when it has faced China in recent years. While the climate change issues show more the positive cooperation between these two actors (e.g. Falkner, 2007; Wunderlich, 2020); human rights issues normally raise tensions (e.g. Geeraerts, 2016; Ting, 2012). Ai and Song (2019) take two cases: the Iranian nuclear issue and the Syrian civil crisis to address why China and the EU cooperate on certain issues but not others. The authors follow a constructivist approach and consider international norms as independent variables. However, such an approach cannot explain why China does not accept some international norms, like R2P. Ai and Song (2019) give an imperfect answer: R2P has not altered China's non-interventionist type identity, so there are no interests constituted in the Syrian civil crisis; but R2P is strongly compatible with the EU's normative power norms. It is difficult for the social constructivist approach to clearly address the dynamics between international norms and national identities with the enquiries about the special and historical changes, especially with the EU and China, such as the Chinese non-interventionist type of identity, suggested by Ai & Song (2019), which is a new thing constructed by the CCP to the "new China". Considering

narratives, especially strategic narratives, as the construction process of shared meaning helps us to close this gap between norms and identity changes. Moreover, the construction of the shared meaning does not only stay on the high-political level and emerge solely from political elites. It is necessary to go deeper to the micro level by focusing on the translation process of strategic narratives to unpack the shared meaning of strategic narratives rather than taking these international norms and national identities for granted.

Although the EU-China relationship is trade-oriented, the norm diffusion between the EU and China shifted from a one-way transfer to a two-way engagement (Lai & Shi, 2017). However, Kaya (2014), and Michalski and Nilsson (2019) argue that the rise of China negatively affects the EU's normative abilities. Besides conventional analyses of economic and political ties between these two entities, the perceptions from both sides gained much attention. The questions include how these two parties perceive each other (see Chaban & Elgström, 2014; Dong, 2014; Orbetsova & Men, 2016), how these two parties perceive the international order (see Chen, 2016; Scott, 2013), and how other actors perceive China and the EU (see Keuleers, 2015; Lucarelli & Fioramonti, 2011; Portela, 2010). For example, China's perception of the EU has changed: from seeing the EU as an exemplar of regional integration and a new pole of international order, to

viewing it as an actor in deep troubles within its territory but playing a credible leadership role beyond its borders (Chang & Pieke, 2018). The political narratives impact the identity construction and the changes in perceptions, even in a discursive and subtle manner (see De Cillia et al., 1999; Whitebrook, 2001). Before asking what perceptions are from both sides, we need to pay attention to how political narratives construct the identities and changes of perceptions.

Three pillars, the politics, the economy, and the people-to-people exchanges (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2014), are the key to EU-China relationships. Compared to the political and economic debates about the EU-China relationships, the people-to-people exchanges receive less attention. However, besides the discussion about the relationships between Beijing and Brussels, and between China and EU member states, more and more scholars turn to the “people” to discover the complex relationships of non-state actors between these two entities. For example, Kamiński (2019a, 2019b) analyses the regional and city-to-city cooperation between Europe and China. Unfortunately, most of the research considers the “people-to-people exchanges” and the “people” only as the extension of the state power rather than enquiring how individuals’ interactions and local contexts can influence the politics and economy on the top level. Unlike the majority of studies with a state-centric approach, this dissertation focuses on

the local narratives and the translation process to analyse the Chinese strategic narratives within the European public.

1.2 Research questions and aims

This dissertation targets the Chinese strategic narratives in Europe by looking at the Confucius Institutes (CIs) and Chinese media outlets in Europe. Strategic narratives are “a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors” (Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 2). Many studies have analysed the strategic narratives of major powers (e.g. Chaban et al., 2019; Feng & Huang, 2021; Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021; Miskimmon et al., 2013, 2018) and the framework of strategic narratives has been applied to different topics and policies, like the global governance on the environment (Zhang & Orbie, 2021), regional development (Ba, 2019; van Noort, 2020), and the Covid pandemic (Colley & van Noort, 2022; Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021; Manantan, 2021). Although scholars have noticed the contestation of strategic narratives, the projection of strategic narratives receives less attention. In what ways do strategic narratives reach and speak to the public, and how do different communication

conduits contribute to the meaning-making process between strategic narratives and the public? More precisely, starting with the framework of strategic narratives, this dissertation analyses how Chinese strategic narratives are translated into local narratives and projected to local communities in Europe.

Unlike the existing studies of strategic narratives, this dissertation turns the focus to the public – the people and the projection of strategic narratives to the public, which is a less state-centred approach. The local narratives are those representations in communication strongly associated with daily life, culture, and away from or without a clear political decision-making centre. This dissertation contributes to the theoretical framework of strategic narratives as it brings the public into the discussion and goes beyond the boundary of strategic narratives studies which are strongly limited in analysing elite classes and high-politics levels. At the same time, it brings the local narratives into the framework as the local narratives can be strategic and political as well. In particular, the case studies of CIs and the newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe* in Austria and Hungary also provide a method of analysing the translation process between strategic narratives and local narratives. On one hand, this dissertation joins the discussion of how Chinese strategic narratives exercise power in a local manner to global audiences by focusing on ordinary local communities. On the other hand, it

contributes to the studies of China-EU relations and narrative contestations between these two actors.

Starting from the framework of strategic narratives, this dissertation argues that strategic narratives cannot be separated from local narratives. The strategic narratives provide the boundary and directions of local narratives and local narratives enrich the meaning of strategic narratives. More importantly, local narratives bring the public into relations, which is the power exercise of narratives. The validity and credibility of strategic narratives strongly rely on the local narratives and the translation process. Looking at the local narratives and the translation process helps unpack the changes and variations of strategic narratives throughout time. Analysing the translation process and bridging strategic and local narratives actually brings both spatial and temporal dimensions into the discussion of strategic narratives framework as this dissertation focuses on the local communities in Europe with European local contexts and the changes of strategic narratives throughout time.

The case studies focus on CIs and the newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe* in Austria and Hungary. Austria and Hungary are both EU member states. Austria and Hungary had long and close ties in history, and at the same time, these two countries have different

languages, political systems, and economic levels within the Central and Eastern Europe region. Geopolitically speaking, the Hungarian government keeps a closer relationship with China than the Austrian government. China's national strategies and private engagements find Hungary more attractive. For example, the Chinese BRI strategy considers Hungary as the key partner in the CEE region, Hungary was the first European country to sign the BRI agreement in 2015, and China and Hungary redefined their relationship as an All-Weather Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for the New Era (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024e). Compared to Hungary, Austria has kept a "Friendly Strategic Partnership" with China since 2018 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2018a). Although there are no clear rules or official explanations on how China names bilateral partnerships with others (Xiang, 2023), the terminology and names of these partnerships still can reveal how friendly and important other countries mean to China. In this comparison, while Hungary is a close friend to China, Austria is only a partner. Moreover, Erlbacher (2021) suggests that China's soft power gives way to the economic interests within this Austria-China bilateral relationship and Austria lacks public debate and strategy on China. At the same time, considering the conflicts and positions of Austria and Hungary within the EU, these comparative case studies present both the CEE regional and some general European-level characteristics. This does not suggest that from the two cases of Austria and Hungary, the Chinese

strategic narratives' translation into local narratives in Europe can be fully uncovered.

However, these two countries and the comparison are representative, which services further analysis on a broader European scale.

The research question targets how the Chinese strategic narratives are translated into local narratives and reach the public. The two communication conduits where the translation processes happen are the CIs and the CEE version of the Chinese newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe* (NE). I look at the Chinese language textbooks used at CIs in Vienna and Budapest and the NE's news reports from 2019 to 2024. The thematic analysis approach is conducted to process the data from these materials. Although the CIs and Chinese media overseas have been intensively studied, the textbooks and Chinese newspapers in Europe receive less attention and they can provide new empirical data and perspectives to the discussion. Both textbooks and newspapers are considered the communication conduits where the translation processes happen, and the comparison between these two conduits helps to uncover the impacts of different conduits on the projection of strategic narratives. Moreover, these materials also echo the comparison on the geopolitical dimension. The Chinese language textbooks used in CI Vienna are designed and published in Beijing and it is a "model" textbook set facing the global market since the textbooks are written in Chinese and English. The textbooks

used in Hungary are a joint product dominantly designed and edited by Hungarian scholars with the help from Beijing, and the textbooks are written in Chinese and Hungarian with a clear target on Hungarian students. Thus, comparing the textbooks used in Vienna and Budapest brings the specific local contexts into the analysis.

While the textbooks serve the local European students who want to learn the Chinese language, the NE serves the Chinese communities in the region. The local students have zero or little knowledge about the language and Chinese culture but the Chinese communities can read the Chinese reports with their prior knowledge and experiences about China in the NE. In other words, the comparison between textbooks and the NE matches the research question of how strategic narratives are translated into local narratives and approach to the public. In this research, the local European students and Chinese communities living in Europe are both considered as the public, the ordinary people. Moreover, this comparison also presents the temporal dimension of different communication conduits. The textbooks are well-edited and -designed for long-term use and are concentrated on cultural and language topics. The NE follows and reports the latest political, economic, and social news from the local city level to the global level.

1.3 Confucius Institutes and different analytical approaches

Confucius Institutes (CIs) are frequently compared with their counterparts, like the British Council, American Cultural Centres, and Alliance française, as a tool for delivering national soft power (see Cai, 2019; Gil, 2017; Lien & Tang, 2022; Liu, 2019b). Not surprisingly, the studies on CIs are strongly associated with soft power and Chinese national interests (e.g. Huang & Xiang, 2019; Lo & Pan, 2016; Lueck et al., 2014; Pan, 2013; Zhou & Luk, 2016). This Chinese global cultural programme received different responses in different continents in the last twenty years. Compared to other regions, the discussion about the CIs in Europe receives less attention; however, the European continent hosts the most CIs in the world (180 in Europe, 135 in Asia, 92 in America, 63 in Africa, and 19 in Oceania, till the end of 2021 (Confucius Institute Annual Development Report 2021, 2022)).

While in the United States, CIs are often labelled as a threat to academic freedom or national security; in Africa, CIs receive different responses which are relatively more positive. In Europe, although there are also debates targeting CIs, like the closure of the CIs in Nordic countries and the UK, Europe still hosts the most CIs. It is important to analyse the CIs in Europe, and this dissertation investigates these institutes in Europe

from the framework of strategic narratives rather than the conventional soft power approach. Since 2013, CIs have been tied with another Chinese global project: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). CIs are no longer an individual global programme promoting Chinese culture and language but a significant part of China's global strategies. In terms of regions, surprisingly, CIs in Europe are less studied compared to the institutions in America and Africa. The divergence of CIs in different geopolitical contexts is not only a matter of the localisation of Chinese cultural diplomacy but also how China defines itself and presents its image respectively to different audiences in the current global order. It seems that the status of CIs and the evolution of CIs is gradually sliding to the people-to-people interaction side, which leads a gap between the on the ground people-to-people daily interactions and the grand national strategies. However, the linkage between people-to-people daily interaction and the grand national strategies receives less attention.

Analysing the CIs gives another perspective for us to understand, in the current international order, the relationship between China and others, and what China's global view is, which means that this dissertation is joining the conversation of China's role in the current international order. This dissertation investigates which and how Chinese strategic narratives are translated and carried by CIs in Europe. These strategic

narratives are about the relationships between China and Europe, China's relationships with the Western world, and China's global view. This study investigates how local communities and contexts contribute to the meaning-making of Chinese strategic narratives in Europe, and whether these local narratives consolidate, modify, or even contradict those official strategic narratives.

In 2020, the CI project was reformed and Hanban, the headquarters of CIs in Beijing, was dismissed and no longer in charge of the CIs and other Chinese language overseas promotion. Scholarship normally considers the Zhongguo Guojia Hanyu Guoji Tuiguang Lindao Xiaozu Bangongshi (中國國家漢語國際推廣領導小組辦公室 Office of Chinese Language Council International), known as “Hanban”, as the administrative brain of CIs in Beijing. It is important to point out that Hanban did not only run CIs but also other Chinese language promotion projects, such as Chinese Bridge and HSK language proficiency test. In other words, the existing studies on CIs may simplify the governance structure of Chinese cultural diplomacy. Meanwhile, in 2008, the Office of Chinese Language Council International was dismissed and its tasks were handed over to the Ministry of Education (State Council, 2018). Before 2008, the Office of Chinese Language Council International was a “leading group” which “referred to in the Chinese title consisted of a group of officials seconded from various

ministries chaired by a State Councillor” (Starr, 2009). After that, CIs and their tasks were downgraded to the Ministry of Education. This shows that the significance of CIs was reduced or transformed to other projects by the Chinese government. The global circumstances have changed as well. This reform has evoked scholars’ curiosity about the future direction of China’s cultural diplomacy and what image China wants to be in the future. Although we cannot say that the revocation of Hanban fully withdraws the Chinese state’s power at CIs, such organisational change triggers the necessity of re-investigation of CIs from new perspectives. In general, although the CIs disappeared from social media and news reports and the absolute number of the institutes has decreased, they are still significantly operating on the ground, which requires further research on these language institutes and their practice in the “post-Hanban” era. In particular, the CI project in Europe needs an urgent update due to its own structure reform and global changes.

The first Confucius Institute (CI) was established in 2004 in Seoul, the capital city of South Korea. Also in 2004, the University of Maryland and the Nankai University signed an agreement for the establishment of the first CI in America which has been since closed. The first CI in Europe was founded in 2005 at Stockholm University and the operation was closed on 30th June 2015 (Chen & Qu, 2015). From 2004 to 2020,

“Beijing has invested at least US\$500 million to establish 530 CIs at partnering universities and colleges and 631 Confucius Classrooms in primary and secondary schools in 127 countries” (Popovic et al., 2020, p. 1449). In December 2020, Filip De Man asked questions about the CIs in Europe in the European Parliament; and he pointed out that China had almost 200 CIs in the EU and several European countries had already taken action against CIs (European Parliament, 2020).

Currently, there are two CIs in Austria (CIs in the University of Vienna and University of Graz) and five in Hungary (CIs in the University of Debrecen, Eötvös Loránd University, University of Miskolci, University of Pécs, and University of Szeged). The cases in Austria and Hungary show the geopolitical dimension of China’s general relations with European countries. Moreover, the comparison between Austria and Hungary presents the differentiated EU’s and European local impacts on the CIs’ practices. Although Austria and Hungary are the targeted cases, the cases in other European countries, such as France, the UK, and Albania, will supplement the analysis of the local practices of CIs.

Along with the evolution of the programme itself, the academic studies on it developed as well. While one group of scholars analyses the programme under the conventional

concept of soft power by focusing on the governance structure and the national interests behind these CIs; another group of scholars takes a less positivist approach refreshing our understanding of CIs from the micro level by analysing the members of CIs and their activities. The first group of studies about CIs are mainly associated with the soft power and cultural diplomacy of China and compared with the Chinese hard power on the economy, sometimes on the military as well. The CI project was considered as an instrument of Chinese cultural diplomacy, together with other tools, like Chinese media and movies (see Becard & Menechelli Filho, 2019). Many scholars focus on the governance, structure, and funding of the CI project. Chun (2010) suggests three phrases of the Chinese cultural diplomacy towards Europe and the CIs are the key engine to speed up the spread of Chinese language learning and Chinese culture in Europe in the third phrase (1992-present). However, these studies take a more direct and macro perspective to analyse CIs by counting numbers and asking whether the CIs reach the goal or whether the CIs expand Chinese soft power or not. For example, Chen and Ha (2020) created a comprehensive database examining 190 countries from 1999 to 2015 and find the results showing that the CIs help China to attract more foreign students on Chinese governmental scholarships. However, the overall number of foreign students studying in China has dropped. These studies are important as they are fundamental and give an overall picture of CIs and even Chinese cultural diplomacy.

In recent years, scholars studying CIs have started to unpack the deeper cultural questions and issues of language education in Chinese foreign policy. Culture and these institutions, serving as the primary vehicle of cultural exchange, are no longer considered as tools which are simply for the Chinese national interests. Rawnsley (2021) emphasises that cultural diplomacy is not about eliminating differences but rather recognising and celebrating diversity, and we need to take Rawnsley's questions into account in CI studies: *“whose culture is represented and, equally, whose culture is marginalised or neglected all together?”* (2021, p. 18). This opens the window to analyse which Chinese culture, or what kind of Chinese culture, is represented and is adopted to tell the Chinese stories by the Chinese government. These Chinese stories and narratives are not taken for granted but selected and framed in a certain social-political context. More importantly, the framed Chinese culture in stories and narratives must be translated to and re-interpreted in a local community – the CI community. The positivist approach sees the Chinese culture and the language as stationary and taken for granted for soft power and this approach frequently neglects the complex of the so-called “selection” process of culture and the power dynamics of interaction practices in a local community on the ground.

Along with the criticisms against the CIs around the world, a second group of scholars turn to the fields and the daily operations on the ground of CIs. By observing the classes of the CIs and interviewing students and teachers, scholars gradually unpack the deeper dynamics between daily Chinese language education and the Chinese national image. For example, Liu (2018) identifies the “cultural other” and the “ideological other” as the two wheels of Chinese cultural diplomacy. Liu concludes that China’s intention to reshape its image as an Eastern cultural contestant is frequently disrupted by its authoritarian political values, and China’s cultural attraction is reduced by state-led persuasion. This group of studies from another perspective shows that culture and local narratives are political and can be strategic. However, these studies strongly emphasise the impacts from the Chinese side, which neglects the local interactions within the CIs’ operations. Although some scholars have already discussed the perceptions and efficiency of CIs, these studies insufficiently and mechanically divide CIs and their students as two agents – the provider and the receiver. The interaction and exchange are noticed by scholars, but the binary model, as “*the senders’ view of China and the audiences’ perception of China*” suggested by Liu (2019a, p. 659) remains strong.

It is remarkable that some scholars (e.g. Benabdallah, 2019; Repnikova, 2022; Stambach & Wamalwa, 2018) and their works constructively take one step further to

break the conventional binary division. These works provide fresh first-hand empirical data about the on the ground operations and interactions of CIs in Africa, which challenges the previous studies' understanding of CIs based on the conventional soft power concept. For instance, Benabdallah (2019) highlights the African students' daily social context and their job-seeking motivations and stretches the attractiveness discussion of soft power to knowledge production – human resource training. For the interviews with African students and Chinese instructors, Stambach and Wamalwa (2018) distinguish the CIs' image presentation of “China-want-to-be” or the “correct China” by Hartig (2015a) from the “real China”. However, these works lack a broad conceptualisation of the relationship – the China-Africa relations in these cases. In other words, what do these local students' divergent motivations and expectations and different images of China perceived mean to the relationship between China and other countries, and China and the world?

In short, the studies on CIs cannot avoid the discussion of soft power and public diplomacy. Analyses are polarised into focusing on daily interactions on the ground, on the one hand, and the instrumental efforts of CIs, on the other hand. Hartig (2015a) significantly contributes to the debate as Hartig acknowledges the new public diplomacy (see Cull, 2013), and tries to analyse CIs from a mixed approach. No matter

the instrument-based approach or the local everyday operation analyses, or even the combination of these two, the current studies on CIs strongly neglect the dynamics between strategic narratives and local narratives in a local context. Following the existing studies, the narratives associated with CIs and, even more broadly Chinese public diplomacy, are supported and re-produced by its joint governance structure and communities on the ground. What distinguishes my project from major studies on the CI, first, is the shift of the base from the instrumental institution structure to narratives. Second, my project will emphasise Chinese culture and social aspects. Following these previous studies and frameworks of public diplomacy, my project does not deny that CIs are instrumental; however, my research analyses the translation process which is the bridge between national strategies and local discursiveness to reveal the power exercise – the effect of strategic narratives on the ground.

1.4 Chinese media outlets overseas

In the 2013 National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference, President Xi Jinping proposed the “tell China’s story well and spread China’s voice well” (People’s Daily, 2013). Under the strategy of “going out”, China’s media outlets join the narrative battle

on the global stage. The three dominant Chinese national media agencies are the People's Daily, Xinhua news agency, and China Media Group. *People's Daily* is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and it was established in 1948. Currently, the People's Daily Institute has 23 internal offices/departments and 72 branches located in provinces, Hong Kong, and Macao. There are in total 39 overseas branches located globally from North Korea to Brazil, from the US to Israel. Within Europe, People's Daily has branches in Belgium, Poland, Germany, France, Serbia and Montenegro, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine, Spain, Italy, and the UK (the list of the countries follows the order in the People's Daily, (People's Daily, n.d.)). The *People's Daily* is the largest issue newspaper in China, and it is also in charge of another influential national newspaper: the *Global Times* and its English version.

Xinhua News Agency is one of the two state-level news agencies in China. Xinhua was established in 1931 and has 183 overseas branches (Xinhua News Agency, n.d.). Another state-level agency is the China News Service which mainly targets and services Chinese overseas. The product of China News Service: "China News Weekly is published in seven languages and nine versions, including the American, British, Japanese, Korean, Italian, South Asian, French, Russian and Arabic editions" (China

News Service, n.d.). *ChinaDaily* is the only state-level English-language newspaper (ChinaDaily, n.d.). China Media Group is the national radio and television broadcasting institute which includes the China Central Television (CCTV) and China Global Television Network (CGTN) and they provide various TV channels and programmes to global audiences in different major languages.

The *People's Daily* is registered under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, China News Service is under the control of the United Front Work Department of the Party, and *ChinaDaily* is under the Publicity Department of the Party. Both Xinhua News Agency and China Media Group are listed as part of the State Council (the central government) but they are also controlled by the Publicity Department of the Party. All these predominant state-level Chinese media have respective channels and outlets in English and other languages, which reflects the political mission and strategy of “tell China’s story well and spread China’s voice well” to global audiences. Due to the complexity of institutional settings and covered internal regulations, it is highly difficult for scholars to map a systemic picture of Chinese state media outlets, institutions, and their respective functions and roles within the Chinese propaganda system. Sun and Chio’s book *Mapping Media in China* (2012) has contributed to the discussion but the situation has also dramatically changed. However, at least what we

are certain about is that China has a huge propaganda system from the state level to the city level mobilising the government and the Party resources. From an institutional perspective, these media agencies and bureaus have their respective missions and targets. For instance, the selected material in this dissertation, the NE, frequently takes resources from Xinhua News Agency and China News Service. China's media agencies are actively engaging with foreign news agencies and providing multi-language resources to global audiences. For example, Morales examines innovative partnerships between Chinese agencies and local media in Latin America (Morales, 2022; Morales & Menechelli, 2023). China also targets international audiences by embracing social media, like YouTube, Facebook, and X (formerly called Twitter). Although YouTube is banned in China, from CCTV to provincial TV stations, like Shanghai Television and Hunan Television, have their own YouTube channels providing live Chinese programmes and news to Chinese people overseas. *ChinaDaily*, CCTV, and CGTN also provide study materials for those who want to learn the Chinese language and culture. In other words, the Chinese media agencies and outlets are providing a comprehensive information service, from politics, economy, to culture and entertainment, to the audiences outside China. The following question is, under China's political system, how do these out-going media outlets and practices carry out China's strategic narratives in a favourable way to the public?

In communication studies, scholars have paid intensive attention to the evolution of Chinese media and their global strategies by focusing on their governance (e.g. Luo, 2015) and the conflict between the market-oriented and politics-priority choices (e.g. Sun, 2007; Winfield & Peng, 2005). Another group of communication scholars are interested in analysing the Chinese media in a global context (e.g. Lee, 2003; Thussu et al., 2018). At the local level, the analysis focuses on the impacts of media on Chinese culture and society. For example, besides the Party, government, capital, professional, and individual forces driving the Chinese media system, Luo (2015) argues that Chinese culture provides an intangible foundation for Chinese media.

In international relations and political science, Chinese media going abroad are frequently analysed as a tool of Chinese soft power, which is similar to the discussion on the CIs. However, the Chinese media outlets are strongly related to the concept of “discourse power”. The discourse power, or “the right to speak” (話語權 huàyǔquán) (Xinhua News Agency, 2013), is about the Chinese government’s and Chinese media’s efforts to “tell China’s story well” (Friedman, 2022). Together with the intellectuals, Chinese media are the key agencies that strengthen the Chinese discourse power (see Hinck et al., 2016; Wang, 2015; Wang, 2023). These studies emphasise how Chinese

media responds to the West in what particular narratives (e.g. Langendonk, 2020; Zhai, 2021) to contest the Western discursive hegemony (西方話語霸權 *xīfāng huà yǔ quán* *bàquán*) (see Langendonk, 2020; Lee, 2016). Another group of scholars analyse how Chinese media influences the power relations between China and other countries, which frequently sheds light on the local societies. For example, 14 years ago, Ngomba (2011) concluded that the Chinese media had no chance to transplant its model to Africa. However, by analysing the on the ground Chinese news agencies and operations, Bailard (2016) concludes that China's media expansion in Africa has achieved the desired effect on African public opinion; the empirical studies in six African countries show that with a larger presence and more accessible media technologies, favourable public opinion towards China is more likely to be generated. The research focus between China and African countries also turns to the professional training and human capacity of journalists (e.g. Gagliardone & Pál, 2017; Umejei, 2018; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018).

In terms of the Chinese media in Europe, Men (2015) introduces the landscape of Chinese news agencies in Brussels. The majority of studies related to media outlets in China-EU relations are concerned with the perceptions of and from both sides presented and shaped by the media (e.g. Wang, 2022; Zhang, 2020). In short, even though the

topic of Chinese media going abroad is strongly linked with the concept of soft power and discourse power, the analytical focuses vary in different continents, and the Chinese media in Europe receive less attention. The selection of the NE in this dissertation is distinct from the existing studies. First, although the NE is the largest Chinese media outlet in Europe, there is little discussion about how it translates Chinese strategic narratives. Second, although there are connections between the NE and Chinese officials and governments, the NE and its parent company are registered as a private company. The existing studies pay much attention to those predominant state-level media agencies or social media. In other words, the NE is at a special middle place in translating Chinese strategic narratives into local narratives in Europe. Third, the NE is facing the Chinese diaspora groups which are considered as the public living in Europe in this dissertation, and this niche focus on this group is significantly different from those political communication analyses on news agencies, professional journalists, and the perceptions within high politics.

1.5 Dissertation structure

This chapter has introduced the topic, research questions and aims, and background information about the case studies. Chapter 2 will discuss the existing theoretical framework of strategic narratives and its gaps in detail and the significance of the translation process and local narratives. Chapter 3 summarises the key Chinese strategic narratives in the past twenty years, like “major-country diplomacy”, “harmonious world” and “a shared future for mankind”. This chapter reviews the authoritative documents, namely leaders’ speeches, governmental policies and documents, and unpacks those strategic narratives on the high-politic level. Moreover, this chapter pays attention to specific strategic narratives on EU-China relations and China’s responses towards Western narratives. Chapter 3 aligns with the existing studies of strategic narratives, and at the same time, it reveals the problem that analysing strategic narratives cannot only look at the authoritative documents. With the strategic narratives identified in this chapter, this research can continue to analyse how these strategic narratives are translated into the local narratives in CIs and Nouvelles d’Europe.

Chapters 4 and 5 analyse the local narratives and the translation process in CIs in Austria and Hungary. By looking at the language textbooks used in these two CIs in Vienna and Budapest, the local narratives in these communities are unpacked. The case studies apply the thematic analysis approach to process the data from the textbooks and

key themes are identified in respective textbooks. The themes are not topics, narratives, or discourses, but the common pattern of meaning-making behind the narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). These themes are the pattern of how different topics and exercises are assembled and why the narratives and stories are presented in a certain way in the textbooks. From the textbooks and the theme-seeking, themes are conceptualised based on the guiding questions connected with the strategic narratives in Chapter 3. These guiding questions are: how does China see itself, its relationships with others, and what is China's view on the global order? More importantly, these themes help to address how strategic narratives are translated into local narratives. Furthermore, the textbooks used in Vienna and Budapest are different. The case studies not only target the translation process but also compare the changes in the translation processes facing different audiences and local contexts. These case studies provide new perspectives to look at the Chinese cultural projects in Europe, which are different from the conventional perspective of soft power. Empirically, the studies on CIs mainly focus on the governance structure and daily operations (e.g. Huang & Xiang, 2019; Repnikova, 2022; Zhou & Luk, 2016). By analysing the textbooks, this dissertation provides new empirical angles and data to the discussion and bridges the strategic narratives and public diplomacy, and these new empirical angles and data unpack how Chinese strategic narratives reach and speak to the public in Europe.

Chapter 6 focuses on the Chinese media outlet *Nouvelles d'Europe* which is another strategic narrative projection conduit in the region. Taking the same thematic analysis approach, this chapter analyses more than two thousand articles from January 2019 to August 2024 in the Central and Eastern European version of *Nouvelles d'Europe*, and key themes are conceptualised from the newspapers. Both empirical cases on the CIs and *Nouvelles d'Europe* address how Chinese strategic narratives speak to the public in Europe. The comparison is important as it reveals the influences of different conduits and audiences which are emphasised as the media ecology in the framework of strategic narratives (see Miskimmon et al., 2013). The CEE version of *Nouvelles d'Europe* is issued weekly and it serves the Chinese communities in the region. The textbooks used in CIs are designed for long-term teaching and the targeted audiences are the local students. While Chapters 4 and 5 investigate how Chinese strategic narratives are translated into local narratives on the topics of culture and language learning, Chapter 6 unpacks how those strategic narratives are translated into local narratives in the form of immediate and fresh news reports and comments. Again, both case studies analyse the Chinese strategic narratives' projection to the public in European local contexts and highlight the local narratives and translation processes, which is different from the main studies of strategic narratives. The conclusion chapter, Chapter 7, will pay more

attention to the comparison between two CIs in Vienna and Hungary, between CIs and Chinese media outlets.

1.6 Significance and contribution

This dissertation focuses on the Chinese strategic narratives in Europe. Unlike the existing studies applying the framework of strategic narratives and empirical analysis on China's soft power and public diplomacy, this research analyses how China's strategic narratives are translated into local narratives and approach to the public living in Europe by looking at the Chinese language textbooks used in Confucius Institutes and the *Nouvelles d'Europe* newspapers in Austria and Hungary.

Theoretically, I argue that analysing strategic narratives cannot be separated from the local narratives and the translation processes. Local narratives are political and can be strategic as well. Although the strategic narratives on the high level suggest the political directions and boundaries of local narratives, strategic narratives still strongly depend on local narratives to enrich the meaning and make sense to the public. This dissertation bridges strategic narratives on the high political level and local narratives on the ground.

Moreover, local narratives and the translation processes bring the local public into relations which is one of the ways how narratives are productive and exercise power with specific local contexts. Local narratives support the validity and credibility of strategic narratives, and looking at local narratives and the translation processes helps us to uncover the changes in strategic narratives throughout time and the variations among different communication conduits. In other words, this dissertation introduces local narratives and the translation process into the analytic framework of strategic narratives, which targets a thicker and richer meaning-making process behind strategic narratives, and locates strategic narratives in the context with more vivid, sociocultural, temporal, and spatial dimensions.

Empirically, this dissertation selects the materials that are frequently neglected. The textbooks provide new perspectives to understand the Confucius Institutes beyond the conventional soft power approach. The newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe* attracts attention to more social and daily media outlets rather than predominant giant state-level agencies. Both the textbooks and the newspapers are the communication conduits where China's strategic narratives are projected by translating into local narratives. Moreover, these materials in Austria and Hungary establish an outstanding comparison

concerning geopolitics, different audiences, and characteristics of communication conduits.

Methodologically, this research adopts the thematic analysis approach to process the data from the materials with computerised supports. The technical support of NVivo makes large-scale data processing possible. This dissertation provides a method of analysing the translation process connecting strategic and local narratives when the local narratives are sociocultural and discursive. Not only the textbooks and the newspaper, I also conducted fieldwork visiting several Confucius Institutes in Europe and interviews with the directors and students. All these methods relying on little authoritative text materials contribute a less state-centric approach to analyse strategic narratives

Taking the strategic narratives framework and analysing the translation process help us to develop an understanding of a cultural institute's role and performance in international affairs. In other words, this dissertation brings new layers, the narratives and daily practices, into the discussion, which differs from the conventional instrumental and state-centric approach of soft power. On one hand, the strategic narratives framework requires us to focus on the meaning-making behind those

narratives, media ecology, and the practical interactions between narratives and practices. On the other hand, CIs and local private Chinese media outlets are no longer seen as peripheral public diplomacy programmes which are marginalised by the hard power, but these communication conduits and translation processes actually bridge the grand national strategies with daily practices in the everyday life of you and me. In the future, other Chinese cultural and social programmes/events like Chinese language competitions and Chinese scholarships for exchange studies, not necessarily a certain institute, can be analysed under the framework of strategic narratives.

Since this dissertation aims at the Chinese strategic narratives and their translation in Europe, the unpacked translation processes help us to understand the narrative contestations between China and Europe. The comparisons between Austria and Hungary also join the discussion of whether China divides Europe or not beyond the limited consideration of Chinese economic interests in the region. This research also contributes to the debates on the changes of international narrative contestation and China's position in the international order, as this research does not highlight what the Chinese new version of world order and associated norms are, but what Chinese strategic narratives mean on the ground, which influence the discursive public understanding of the international order. Moreover, this dissertation takes the

international relations discipline as the foundation, and consults with other disciplines, like communication studies, linguistic studies, and cultural studies. Furthermore, this dissertation sets up promising future research, like the translation of the EU's strategic narratives in China and the translation processes of strategic narratives of international organisations.

Chapter 2 Strategic Narratives

Chapter 1 has laid out the complex dynamics among the elements and aspects associated with the Chinese strategic narratives in Europe. I take the framework of strategic narratives as a departure point to analyse, review, and update the Confucius Institute projects and Chinese media outlets in Europe. Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2013) in their book distinguish narratives from discourses and frames, and they list three phases of strategic narratives: formation, projection, and reception. "Strategic narratives are a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors" (Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, the strategic narratives can be clarified into system, identity, and issue narratives (Miskimmon et al., 2013). The strategic narratives framework involves the temporal dimension of narratives and concerns the relationships among strategic narratives on different levels. Using the framework of strategic narratives helps to analyse the Chinese strategic narratives' projection in Europe not just about what China says and how China says them but also going deeper into the epistemological construction of how and why they, the CI communities and Chinese local media outlets in Europe, think and act like that through the engagements with the public in Europe. More importantly, starting from

strategic narratives, the linkage between China's strategic narratives and local narratives in CIs can be revealed. More precisely, this project analyses how Chinese strategic narratives speak to the public in Europe, and in what ways the public can possibly make sense of the Chinese strategic narratives specifically towards Europe.

Strategic narratives are normally formed and depart from the high-political elite class, and the strategic narratives may be widely circulated among politicians and state leaders. However, those high-political and strategical terms and narratives are not easy for the public to process, absorb, and understand. In the field of political communication, McLaughlin, Velez, and Dunn (2019) suggest that how citizens process and experience political narratives is complex and there are different models for citizens to make sense of political narratives. Schmitt (2018) gives one particular perspective that political myths play a role when strategic narratives are likely to have a political impact. In other words, strategic narratives cannot be considered as a package of political messages which is delivered by politicians and always well received by the public.

In my interviews with students who studied at CIs and those who did not, the interviewees suggested that they could not really recall a clear Chinese strategic narrative. When I asked what Chinese overseas policies or strategies they knew, they

suggested that China was a big power and its power was expanding as they saw more Chinese students coming to their countries, they saw more new Chinese restaurants on the street, and some of them even experienced online shopping on Chinese websites. The strategic narratives have to be translated and take various communication channels to reach the public. These communication channels can be traditional media like TV programmes and newspapers, social media platforms, and even other institutions and discursive daily practices like cultural centres, cultural festivals, and exchange studies that the public sees and experiences. Because “narratives are not universal [...] One culture may interpret a narrative differently than another, for example, leading to vastly different responses” (Donald et al., 2022, p. 2), the unified top-level strategic narratives cannot be interpreted and responded to the same way by different audiences. In order to reach the public, the strategic narratives have to change their representations into local narratives through these communication conduits. This change of representations is the translation process of strategic narratives to local narratives. In order to reach different audiences, the strategic narratives have to tailor their translation processes between strategic narratives and local narratives.

The local narratives are those representations in the communication strongly associated with daily life, culture, and away from or without a clear political decision-making

centre. Some may consider that the local narratives are in absolute opposition against the global, international, or transnational narratives. However, this binary understanding of local narratives is not accurate. Local narratives show not only the geographical dimension of local vs. international but also emphasise a community which is formed of a certain group of individuals who are different from other groups. More importantly, the local narratives are not the opposite of those global, governmental, and strategic narratives as they are not in a binary relationship. Local narratives tangle with strategic narratives: local narratives might be the expansion of strategic narratives, compete against the dominant strategic narratives, and shape the in-progress strategic narratives. Musliu and Orbie (2015) even suggest that local and international narratives can reverse the associated “home” and “guest” relationship in their study of the Kosovo case. Following Musliu and Orbie, the positions of local and international narratives can be exchanged. There are no static and firm relations between the prevalence of narratives and the status of narratives: while local narratives can be obvious and dominant, international or national strategic narratives can be shadowed and marginalised. In other words, local narratives do not simply stay on the ground within an isolated community and stay at the bottom of a narrative hierarchy system but are strongly interwoven with political and strategic narratives. This research focuses on the translation process which is one of many different means of

integration between strategic narratives and local narratives. In particular, this research analyses how Chinese strategic narratives are translated into the local narratives in the textbooks in CIs in Vienna and Budapest and the Chinese newspapers in the same European region.

As discussed before, the strategic narratives have to change their representations into local narratives through communication conduits, and this change is the translation process. Furthermore, different communication conduits towards different audiences may influence the translation process in practice. This research selects two communication conduits to compare and reflect on how communication conduits, or so-called media ecology suggested by the strategic narratives framework (Miskimmon et al., 2013), impact the translation process. While the Chinese language textbooks used in CIs are designed for European local students to study the language from months to years, the Chinese newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe* is regularly issued to the Chinese diaspora in Europe. The targeted audiences are both the general public in Europe, but European local students are those who want to learn Chinese and the culture with little prior knowledge about China and the Chinese diaspora communities are those who are proficient in the language and probably know pretty well about China. These two cases not only reflect the local public's involvement in the translation process but also bring

the local European context into the discussion, as the translation is not a one-way process but in a communication conduit. The targeted audiences and the local context shape how the translation is. With the collected textual materials from the textbooks and news reports, the thematic analysis approach is applied to identify the themes based on which the translation process unfolds.

In this chapter, the strategic narratives framework will be reviewed with its main arguments and approach, existing empirical case studies applied to the framework, and the criticisms towards the framework as a whole. Then, the significance of the translation process from strategic narratives to local narratives, which is neglected by the existing studies, will be demonstrated. There are three reasons why the translation process is important and why this research focuses on the translation. First, the translation process is how strategic narratives bring the public into relations and where the power of narratives rests. Second, the translation connecting the local narratives supports the credibility and validity of strategic narratives. Third, the translation process helps to unpack the changes and variations of strategic narratives travelling through different media conduits and through different time periods.

2.1 Strategic narratives: the framework in general

Starting with the concept of strategic narratives, we can link the storytelling of Beijing and the on the ground local narratives in Europe. By analysing various materials associated with the CIs and Chinese newspapers in Europe, the contradictions and other relationships of narratives within the whole pack of Chinese public diplomacy, or its soft power, might be discovered, since “contradictions between narratives at different levels can undermine the effectiveness of strategic narratives related to policy” (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 8). This dissertation also emphasises the dynamics between narratives and practices, especially those daily operations on the ground which may not always be justified and illustrated by those strategic narratives, and this is a contribution to the existing strategic narratives analytical framework.

Associated with the discussions about soft power but different from conventional state-centric approaches in IR, focusing on strategic narratives examines character or actors (agent), setting/environment/space (scene), conflict or action (act), tools/behaviour (agency), and resolution/or suggested resolution/goal (purpose), as the components of narratives (Miskimmon et al., 2017). Strategic narratives help us to “*trace or measure*” (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 74) the impacts of soft power. In other words, strategic

narratives give a systematic framework for analysing a full range of meaning-making of the soft power on different levels, from the central state government to public diplomacy, especially associated with a cultural programme.

It is appreciated that the framework of strategic narratives provides us with a more powerful angle to understand how political actors influence international affairs without hard powers; however, the application of this intellectual analytical framework to empirical studies still needs improvements. The authors point out three communication phases associated with strategic narratives: formation, projection, and reception (Miskimmon et al., 2017; Roselle et al., 2014). The empirical studies and deploying the framework of each phase do not fully resonate with the theoretical framework.

First, although strategic narratives focus on political actors which include “*states, non-state actors, great powers, normal powers, rogue states, terrorists, NGOs, and MNCs*” (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 75), the empirical investigations mainly target states leaders, national governments, and international governmental institutions (see Ba, 2019; Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021; Liao, 2017; van Noort & Colley, 2021; Yang, 2021). For example, in terms of China and its foreign relationships, Manantan (2021) investigates the Chinese Communist Party’s approach of shaping the narratives in its

favour to oppose China's strategic rival – the US; and Song (2022) suggests that China's macro-strategic narratives are initially driven by political and intellectual elites. This does not mean that official and political actors are not important. However, the individuals and sub-national agencies, these non-state actors, receive less attention from the lens of strategic narratives. One of the theoretical reasons is that the non-state actors are frequently classified as the receiver side under the narrative provider-receiver model. The individual and sub-national actors then are more analysed in the reception phase.

CIIs are the Chinese global culture project. On one hand, considering the funding configurations and their branding purpose of Chinese culture, CIIs certainly bear the official mission of the Chinese government. On the other hand, considering the joint governance structure and the localisation of the institutes in recent years, CIIs position themselves at a distance from politics as a Chinese culture and language community serving the local people. Strategic narratives can help us understand how China's national narratives and its global view are carried out by a cultural project. More importantly, ignored by many studies, strategic narratives initially require the analyses of broader non-state actors and their subtle patterns of participation in the strategic narratives. This dissertation tries to contribute to the current studies on strategic narratives and EU-China relationships: how are those strategic narratives understood

from the translation into local narratives? In other words, strategic narratives, as a research framework, support us in analysing CIs and Chinese newspapers in Europe from a bottom-up approach, at the same time, linking with the grand strategies of nation-states. This differentiates my project from those appreciated ethnographic studies (e.g. Repnikova, 2022) on CIs which solely focus on the operation and individual engagements on the ground. Meanwhile, this dissertation analysing CIs and Chinese local newspapers in Europe helps to enrich the application of the strategic narratives framework by providing new empirical discussions which shed light on those non-authoritative materials and non-governmental communication conduits.

Second, the projection process asks for attention to communication. The projection process involves the tracing of narrative flows, which helps us to stretch to various materials and research methods, like big data analyses, content studies, and network analyses. All forms of “media are helpful in understanding contestation and processes associated with projection of narratives” (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 79). Many scholars (see Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021; van Noort & Colley, 2021; Zhang & Orbie, 2021) have already profoundly studied China’s state-supported media overseas and the role of media in China’s global strategy projects, like BRI, and how media supports China’s strategic narratives.

Media, especially conventional media, play the role of a tunnel for narratives to pass through. However, media, both newspapers and conventional news institutions reporting political leaders' speeches and governmental statements and social media passing information and narratives through the internet, is not the only conduit for narratives to project. The narrative passing also occurs in other materials like textbooks and daily practices like people-to-people engagements in the Confucius Institutes. The CIs as Chinese cultural institutes are the venue where these narratives are projected, translated, and re-interpreted.

More importantly, CIs and the newspaper cases are not only analysing the narratives with the textual materials. The translation process itself is a productive practice. Adler and Pouliot (2011) distinguish behaviour, action, and practice. Both narratives and practice point to the social meaning. "Practices are 'objectified meanings', the expression of narratives in reality" (Last, 2020, pp. 59–60). In other words, narratives cannot have a significant impact without practice, if we consider the spatiality, the temporality, and the repeated actions. The CI case, by deploying the strategic narrative framework, combines the why and how questions, providing a holistic analysis of the textual narratives and practices. Furthermore, this dissertation also looks at the Chinese

newspaper in Europe which is not conventional Chinese governmental media and is frequently neglected by scholars working on the Chinese strategic narratives. The comparison between textbooks and Chinese newspapers reflects the deviation and differences in how strategic narratives are translated into local narratives in different media.

This is not to suggest that media and news reports are simply the mechanical and textual reflection of narratives, or they are only the “throat and tongue” of the Chinese government. I suggest that the practice of translation actually “speaks” out these strategic narratives and creates new meanings to these strategic narratives in a subtle manner and everyday practice. Confucius Institutes and Chinese overseas media outlets are the ideal examples for us to understand how Chinese strategic narratives in Europe are influenced by the European local context and associated with new meanings. What was missing before in the analysis of the projection phase of strategic narratives were those translation practices beyond separated textual messages and information on media, news reports, and official statements. In other words, this dissertation does not intend to deny the framework of strategic narrative but to add a joint-projection layer to the discussion. For instance, the textbooks used in Budapest are co-produced by Chinese and Hungarians.

Third, the reception phase of strategic narratives analysis asks for the investigation of the impacts of narratives on audiences – whether they have changed their opinions, attitudes, or behaviours or not (Miskimmon et al., 2013). Although this dissertation does not look into the reception of Chinese strategic narratives in the CIs and the Nouvelles d'Europe cases, it is worth mentioning the gap before recipients, more specifically the public, who receive narratives. Without analysing what narratives and how narratives are presented to the public, we cannot fully unpack or measure the reception phase. In the outstanding study of China's strategic narratives in global governance on different levels, Yang (2021, p. 313) raises questions at the end “have the narratives achieved their intended objectives? How do we measure the effectiveness of narratives? What factors explain the successful narratives vs. unsuccessful narratives?” Focusing on the contestation of narratives (see Hagström & Gustafsson, 2021) and their persuasion capacities, and considering them within a battle of narratives of the reception phase, Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2013, p. 87) have already suggested what we shall look at to answer the question of success of narratives: “credibility of messages for audiences, effects of competing narratives”, and different types of reactions. In order to answer the question of the success of narratives and further unpack the competition of narratives, we cannot only look at the strategic narratives themselves, because the

strategic narratives cannot be directly compared and we have to unpack the associated meaning behind and other narratives to compare. The public do not directly process and understand the strategic narratives but they need the translation. The public, even the elites, need additional local narratives, practices, experiences, and even emotions, to understand the strategic narratives in the reception phase.

My project does not attempt to answer the measurement question of strategic narratives, like whether CIs in Europe successfully deliver China's strategic narratives and support its national interests. Rather than seeing narratives as a tool of and a product of politicians and small elite circles, especially those strategic narratives with obvious instrumental functions, I consider that narratives are jointly and continuously produced and re-interpreted with new meanings through not only media or rhetoric transactions but also practice and engagements on the ground. This requires further analysis of how strategic narratives from governments are carried out and translated before they reach the public, so-called audiences, and how the local contexts of these audiences contribute to the projection of strategic narratives. For other research to analyse the reception phase, or the successfulness of, the strategic narratives towards the public, there is an essential gap to be questioned. Not how the public understands and interprets the

strategic narratives, but what makes the public understand the strategic narratives. It is the translation process from strategic narratives into local narratives.

In the case of CIs in Europe, from the strategic narratives perspective, I aim to look at not only which strategic narratives are delivered by CIs in Europe or how these narratives impact the operations and governance of CIs, but also the “translation” process of China’s strategic narratives in these CIs communities. The translation process here means how those strategic narratives formed by Beijing are re-packed and hidden by the textbooks into local narratives in the CIs. In other words, the representations of these strategic narratives are changed multiple times by textbooks used and teacher-student daily engagements within the CIs community. Focusing on the translation of narratives supports the analysis of the dynamics between narratives and practices, which is critical as it helps us to break the binary provider-receiver model.

2.2 Empirical studies of strategic narratives

Regarding specific studies applying the strategic narrative framework, strategic narratives have been used in the studies of the EU, China, and their respective foreign

relationships (see Ba, 2019; Chaban et al., 2019; Leigh, 2019; van Noort, 2020; Yang, 2021; Zhang & Orbie, 2021). For example, Liao (2017) investigates the formation, projection, and reception of the Chinese nationalist discourse emphasising the storyline after the “Humiliation Century” of China, and shows how the “victim” narratives conflict with the peaceful rising narratives. The studies of strategic narratives have been expanded and applied to new media and visual arts as well (e.g. van Noort, 2020).

Looking at an existing study analysing the strategic narratives in CIs, Falk Hartig analyses the goals, strategies, and impacts of the CIs and the conclusion, which is interesting, is that the “CIs do not present the ‘real’ China to the world, which is one of China’s public diplomacy’s overarching aims, but rather a ‘correct version’ of it, which in turn limits their ability to project China’s strategic narratives effectively and increase China’s soft power” (Hartig, 2015b, p. 256). The author collects first-hand data from multiple interviewees. Following the concept of strategic narratives, Hartig and other scholars (Hartig, 2012, 2015b; Miskimmon et al., 2013; Roselle et al., 2014) conceptualise the international system and identity narratives (also called the national narratives) of China as “a rising China” and “peaceful rise/development”, which is problematic. First, from their studies, the issue narratives of the CIs are relatively vague and discursive, compared to the international system narrative (a rising China) and the

identity narrative (peaceful rise/development). It is difficult to pin down a specific issue narrative, for example, the case of the CIs. This shows that there is an elasticity difference among these three types of narratives. The elasticity of narratives on different levels may relate to the actors who speak up and explain these narratives in which communication conduits. The international system and identity narratives refer more to politicians or those people in the high-politics circle. These are the actors who have the credibility and authority to construct the narratives and push the wheel of strategic narratives, especially the projection process. In terms of the issue narratives, the actor scale is enlarged: not only top politicians, but also on the ground officials, the intellectual, and ordinary people.

Second, considering the relationships between these three types of narratives, “strategic narratives at these different levels are inextricably linked” (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 8). In empirical studies, for example, the CIs analysis by Hartig (2015b), this inextricable linkage between narratives on different levels is discovered to be reflected by the negative impacts of the local practice and issue narratives of the CIs to the “ability to project China’s strategic narratives effectively and increase China’s soft power” (Hartig, 2015b, p. 246). However, more importantly, the inextricable linkage of the construction of these narratives on different levels is not addressed. In other words,

the question remains as whether the internal dynamics of narratives among these three levels are one-way or two-way directed.

Following the second point, the third point also concerns the construction process of these narratives on different levels, especially in empirical studies. Most studies applying strategic narratives focus on the impacts and efficiency of the narratives. For instance, van Noort and Colley (2021) address how strategic narratives shape policy adoption facing China's BRI; Yang (2021) suggests that Beijing uses narrative strategy to redefine existing norms of global governance; Zhang and Orbie (2021) analyse the Chinese strategic narratives on climate policy; and Hagström and Gustafsson (2021) review the pattern of strategic narratives aiming to gain international supports on the Sino-American case. These studies strongly illustrate the "narrative turn" in the IR discipline and provide multiple innovative methodologies and theoretical frameworks. However, these narratives are considered as a tool, a means, and a resource of soft power. Scholars have well discussed how states construct strategic narratives (van Noort & Colley, 2021), which is more likely the "formation" of narratives addressed by Miskimmon et al. (2017). These analyses of the formation of narratives are relatively agent-based as "What is the role of political actors in constructing strategic narratives? Through what institutions and procedures are narratives agreed upon?" (Miskimmon et

al., 2017, p. 9). For example, Roselle (2017) illustrates how the Bush administration constructed the narratives in the Iraq War. The problem is that these empirical studies have to consider strategic narratives are well formed and designed by political elites, and these strategic narratives are ready for projection and reception, because it is very difficult for scholars to obtain first-hand resources of how particular strategic narratives are negotiated and formed by which decision makers – the black box. This approach strongly neglects the sociocultural contexts where decision-makers are embedded and the local contexts of the strategic narrative receivers.

I suggest that this framework of analysing the formation of narratives is thin, and neglects deeper historical roots and discursive social elements and discourses in a larger social context. Putting it in China's case, in other words, the international system and national narratives of China suggested by scholars are assertively conceptualised and centralised to the political regime, namely the Beijing government. This is not to say that the existing analysis framework of narrative formation is wrong, but it is insufficient.

To address these gaps in analysing the narratives of CIs and Chinese overseas media outlets and the empirical application of the framework of strategic narratives, we have

to pay more attention to the dynamics between strategic narratives and local narratives.

To address the research questions, this dissertation, in particular, analyses the textbooks used in CIs and the Chinese newspapers in Europe as the projection conduits, as the platform of translation, in Austria and Hungary.

2.3 Why do we turn to the public?

The previous part discussed the achievements and limitations of the empirical studies of strategic narratives framework, and it shows that the strategic narratives, from the analytical framework itself, cannot be limited to those high-politics and elite strategic narratives. Before demonstrating the quality and significance of the translation process and local narratives, there is one more theoretical question about strategic narratives.

Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2017) have differentiated narratives, frames, and discourses. However, what is the difference between narratives and strategic narratives? In other words, how do we define to what extent a narrative is strategic?

How do we draw the line between ordinary, daily, discursive narratives and strategic narratives? Can the public local narratives be strategic?

From the context and the intertextuality, it is not difficult to pin down that strategic narratives concentrate on states and nations. Strachan reviews the history of the term “strategy” which was about military, and Strachan suggests that “strategic studies have been replaced by security studies. At times they embrace almost everything that affects a nation’s foreign and even domestic policy” (2005, p. 47) and strategy “is not policy; it is not politics; it is not diplomacy. It exists in relation to all three, but it does not replace them” (Strachan, 2005, p. 49). No matter the traditional understanding of strategy concentrating on the military or the current widening definitions of strategy, from political science and international relations disciplines, strategy and strategicness cannot be separated from states and nations. Strategies and strategicness become a characteristic of states – one of many social organisations.

However, strategies and strategicness are not necessarily solely associated with states and realpolitik. The management and decision-making studies are concerned with strategy with rationality (e.g. Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992; Kørnøv & Thissen, 2000) and decision-making process (e.g. Dean & Sharfman, 1996; Papadakis et al., 1998) within the formation of strategy. Furthermore, some management scholars suggest the notion of “strategy as practice” and argue that strategy is something that people do rather than a property owned by organisations, from the perspective of social practice

theory (see Fenton & Langley, 2011; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). In other words, the understanding of strategy and strateginess varies in different disciplines and time periods. From the perspective of strategy as practice, strategies are ongoing projects which involve stakeholders/participants, and it is the size and quality of certain organisations/communities that determine who these stakeholders and participants are. Even if we follow the assumption that strategic narratives derive from the state and high-political institutions, strategies cannot become alive and powerful without considering the public. In other words, bringing the public into the framework of strategic narratives is one of the contributions of this research.

The strategic narrative theory suggests that strategic narratives are “a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors” (Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 2). Although scholars have clearly suggested that the political actors include both state and non-state actors (see Barthwal-Datta, 2015), the question that remains is to whom a shared meaning is constructed. The current theoretical framework of strategic narrative has successfully portrayed the intentionality and instrumentalness of strategic narratives. However, on whom these

narratives make effects is not clearly defined, and this may fall into the shortcomings of the functionalistic view. De La Ville and Mounoud suggest that

The functionalistic view of strategic stories fails to capture the complexity of strategic processes and practices. It prevents us from widening the field of analysis to include the ordinary narratives of mid to low-level organizational members in relationship with the higher-level ‘visionary’ strategy produced by senior executives. (2010, p. 185)

In other words, the low-level participants and their engagements with narratives bring strategic narratives alive and expand strategic narratives beyond political elites and diplomatic circles. These low-level participants include not only state actors and non-state organisations, like NGOs, MNCs, and terrorist groups but also the ordinary people – the public. To address the question of where the boundary of the effects and power exercise of strategic narratives is, considering communication and management studies, we have to take the public into account. Without analysing how strategic narratives are translated into local narratives reaching the public, the analysis remains limited within the “visionary strategy” produced by small political elite circles.

From Gramsci’s idea of the integral state, analysing strategic narratives has to turn to the public and low-level institutions. The state, “in its integral form, it had become a network of social relations for the production of consent, for the integration of the subaltern classes into the expansive project of historical development of the leading

social group” (Thomas, 2009, p. 143). Built on Hegel and Marx, Gramsci’s integral state concept aims to explain the relationship between the state (political society and the state apparatus) and civil society (Humphrys, 2018). Civil society is the vast range of institutions and it includes

political organizations, but it also includes the church, the school system, sports terms, the media and the family [...] Civil society certainly includes the legal apparatus, but it also includes children’s parties, shopping trips and going on holiday. As it becomes more and more a matter of ‘everyday life’, so it becomes increasingly difficult to recognize that civil society has some connection with the operations of power. (Jones, 2006, p. 32)

Civil society and political society are not in contradistinction, from Gramsci’s integral state concept. Civil society and political society are different sites of social practice, “civil society is the location of hegemonic practice and political society is the site of direct domination” (Humphrys, 2018, p. 37).

Regarding strategic narratives, the national strategic narratives themselves are on the way to consent and they are in the production of consent. This production happens in civil society. Chinese CIs, Chinese media outlets, Chinese restaurants, European factories invested in China, and European tourist groups to China, all these are civil society, and political power exists in these public institutions and “private” businesses. In other words, strategic narratives cannot become alive and powerful without inviting

the “subaltern classes” – the public into the production of consent – the open-ended formation of a real strategic narrative.

From management studies and Gramscian ideas, the public – the people makes a narrative strategic. The public, as the receiver, defines the boundary of strategic narrative from the state and realises the “visionary” strategy from the elite class. The public and the civil society are the venues where the political power exercises and makes effects. It is the daily life and local narratives that support and sustain this relationship between political and civil societies. Thus, it is necessary to look at the public, the local narratives, and the translation process when analysing strategic narratives. The local narratives are political and can be strategic.

2.4 Why translation processes and local narratives?

The strategic narratives cannot be separated from the public. The local narratives and the translation from strategic narratives into local narratives are essential. From the external discussions and studies beyond the framework of strategic narratives, there are three reasons why the local narratives and the translation have to be analysed to

understand the strategic narratives on the top. First, the strategic narratives reach the public but are difficult to process or even barely understood by the public. The strategic narratives need the translation into local narratives to make sense for the public. Second, the validity and credibility of strategic narratives are relatively studied. In other words, whether the strategic narratives are persuasive or not depends on their translation into the local narratives and everyday practice. Third, the changes and variations within the translation process help to reveal the dynamics of strategic narratives on both spatial and temporal dimensions.

The first point is that strategic narratives, normally framed and looked at by scholars, are elite-centred. As mentioned before, scholars working on the EU and Chinese strategic narratives collect their primary data from high officials or governmental statements and try to unpack how narratives, discourses, or even just ideas, influence global politics. However, the public, or the non-elite, may not easily process and absorb strategic narratives or only grasp a vague impression of those strategic narratives.

Stanley and Jackson see the still-existing problems and raise the question:

We simply do not know how audiences receive or mediate elite-driven discourses and ideas in any particular scenario. Do non-elites simply internalise the justifications of the elite in a largely unproblematic way? To what extent do elite discourses speak to the ways in which non-elites make sense of the world? (Stanley & Jackson, 2016, p. 227)

Stanley and Jackson have already questioned the public audience side, and this dissertation emphasises the translation process which is located somewhere between “methodological elitism” (Stanley & Jackson, 2016) and what they are concerned about the non-elites. Rather than the non-elites receiving or mediating those strategic narratives, the public is actually engaging with local narratives and everyday practice which are linked with the strategic narratives by the translation process. The translation process is the “in which ways” the elite discourses speak to the public and the public makes sense of the world.

Furthermore, the studies on narratives have advanced the typology of narratives, like ontological, public, conceptual, and master narratives (see Baker, 2006). Where is the politics and what is the power of narratives? As related to the discussion about management studies and Gramscian ideas, “the politics of storytelling then lies in the process in which personal experiences are made public” (Jackson, 2014, p. 140). In other words, the politics and power of narratives lie in the relations among the people and the social networks. The majority of studies, especially those empirical studies, under the framework of strategic narratives, are elite-centred and driven by authoritative resources, which actually ignore or cut these relations. The investigation of strategic narratives must dig down to their translation and local narratives; otherwise,

it is only about the effects of strategic narratives on the imagined elite circle and ambiguous concepts as a bubble. Although strategic narratives appear everywhere in our daily lives, in newspapers, campaigns, and political posters, strategic narratives keep a distance from the public and ordinary people. It is the translation of strategic narratives into local narratives that brings the public into relations. The translation process makes the everyday politics and power of strategic narratives possible.

Without bringing the public into relations and considering the local narratives, only the question of what China's strategic narratives can be addressed. For example, in terms of public diplomacy and cultural exchanges, China asks to tell Chinese stories well (講好中國故事) (People's Daily, 2013). Looking at local narratives and the translation process unpacks both what the Chinese stories are and how these stories are well told. By bringing the public and the local narratives into account, we can further investigate the Chinese worldview and the inconsistencies within its foreign policies.

Second, the translation and local narratives are the key to the validity and credibility of strategic narratives. The validity of political strategic narratives is about

how narrative truth is fabricated, how the validity of narratives is constructed or deconstructed, and how different modes of reception influence the felicity conditions of political narratives [...] As part of narrative strategies, the analysis of the construction of validity—in terms of both mediation and

reception—is a crucial aspect of understanding the strategic use of political narrative. (Groth, 2019, p. 10)

As Groth suggests that the validity of strategic narratives needs to be deconstructed from the mediation and reception, the validity question is beyond the formation phase within the elite class.

Even for the elite class, the strategic narratives they form and use cannot be separated from their understanding of a specific conceptual system. Even the elite class needs the local narratives and translation to generate the shared understanding.

To understand the political life of a community one must understand the conceptual system within which that life moves; and therefore those concepts that help to shape the fabric of our political practices necessarily enter into any rational account of them. (Connolly, 1994, p. 39)

From this, the strategic narratives are the representations of the society, and these strategic narratives are embedded within the conceptual system which also affect the political practices of the members of this society. In other words, the validity of strategic narratives is not simply from how the elite class forms and in which means they project, but strongly rests on the conceptual system and political practices of the community member. Here, the conceptual system behind is represented by the broader, discursive, and everyday local narratives. The political practices then are how the public in different ways responds to these local narratives. Thus, the translation process of strategic narratives into local narratives is a clue between the high-politic, authoritative,

and strategic representations and the broader social conceptual system. It is also a political practice itself that makes the strategic narratives justified, productive, “rational”, and into the life moves.

Furthermore, the validity question of strategic narratives is not simply about truth or falsehood, agreement or disagreement, but a deeper normative dimension. Many studies have successfully deconstructed strategic narratives, like how certainly strategic narratives are formed from various concepts and cultural elements. For instance, the Chinese strategic narratives “major-country diplomacy” or “a community with a shared future for mankind” are associated with the concepts of Chinese civilisation, the Century of Humiliation, and even the “Tianxia” concept frequently discussed in the Chinese IR (see Chu, 2022; Yan, 2006; Yan et al., 2011; Qin, 2010, 2007; Zhao, 2006).

The normative dimension of the validity here is not just about which specific concepts or periods of history are selected to support the strategic narrative, but the priorities and orders of all these contested social concepts and discursive local representations. In short, the validity of strategic narratives rests on the supportive local narratives and everyday practices, and the priority order of these local narratives as representations closer to the public. The translation process actually reflects the normative priorities of these social and everyday concepts represented by the local narratives, which help us

to further deconstruct the strategic narratives. Moreover, the analysis of the validity and creditability helps us to understand the normative aspects of the Chinese worldview and how China justifies its practices and foreign policies under this worldview.

Third, the translation into local narratives helps to unpack the changes within the narratives on different levels and the variations among various communication conduits in certain media ecologies. Many empirical studies have successfully traced back and identified the changes in strategic narratives over a relatively long period, for example, Chinese strategic narratives of BRI towards CEE countries and 16+1 cooperation have been changed (see Garlick, 2019; Jakimów, 2019; Kavalski, 2019; Lams, 2018; Turcsanyi & Kachlikova, 2020; van Noort & Colley, 2021). Although these studies have pushed the investigation of how strategic narratives shape identities and policy adoptions, these studies limit the changes within the elite class. In other words, the power of narratives from these studies remains on the high-politic level; at the same time, the political leaders' practice of strategic narrative formation is still a black box. Following the first two points, the translation process brings the public into relations where the power of narratives occurs; the translation process and local narratives are essential to the validity of the construction of strategic narratives; the changes and variations via the translation process into local narratives bring in the local context and

communication conduits' differences. These variations shaped by communication conduits and local contexts are concerned with both temporal and spatial dimensions. The variations unpack how fast strategic narratives and local narratives change and how strategic narratives are translated to different audiences in different geographical territories. This connects and contributes to the understanding of China's geopolitical strategies. Moreover, looking at local narratives and the translation process provides a methodological way to unpack the dynamics of narratives on different levels and the impacts of local contexts.

In this case, the comparison between textbooks and the Chinese newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe* presents the variations in the translation. The textbooks and the newspaper are considered as the communication conduits which are not simply the channel or the tube where information flows and narratives simply pass through, but these are the productive platforms with their specific qualities involving different agents and affecting the narratives. While the textbooks used in CIs target European students who study the language and probably the Chinese culture, *Nouvelles d'Europe* serves the Chinese diaspora in Europe whose mother tongue is Chinese and who have already "advanced" knowledge and background about China. In particular, the textbook analysis will take the thematic analysis method to identify the key themes in the

textbooks used in CIs in these two different countries. The textbooks are the key materials in the language/culture courses which do not only provide the knowledge and skills which students learn but also the structure of the course – what the students are expected to learn and understand by the end of the course and what the instructors are guided to teach and illustrate to the students. The comparison of the translation reveals how strategic narratives can bring in different people in relations and, more importantly, their experiences and sharing into being. For instance, the textbooks present the local and daily narratives of culture to European students, but *Nouvelles d'Europe* emphasises telling economic stories to Chinese diasporas. If we only look at the authoritative resources or governmental press releases, we may only have the same narrative repeated hundreds of times, which suggests the validity and consistency of the institution rather than strategic narratives. In other words, focusing on the translation process of strategic narratives into local narratives discovers the power of narratives by comparing the changes and variations in a broader social context and different communication conduits.

2.5 What to look at

This research focuses on the translation process and local narratives rather than strategic narratives staying small political elite circle. This chapter has argued the “turn” to the public for the strategic narrative framework and demonstrated the significance of local narratives and the translation process. The following question is what we look at to analyse the translation process and local narratives. This research selects the Chinese textbooks used in CIs in Vienna and Budapest and the Chinese media outlet *Nouvelles d’Europe*’s Central and Eastern European version. All cases will be analysed with the thematic analysis approach. Many studies have well discussed the significance of newspapers, as a communication conduit serving the public and shaping public opinion, in political communication and how newspaper analysis can help us understand political narratives (e.g. Harcourt et al., 2020; Kriesi, 2004; McLeod & Shah, 2009; Norris, 1997; Schudson, 1982; Valente et al., 2023; Van Aelst et al., 2012; Johnson-Cartee, 2005). The following section will illustrate how focusing on textbooks can better help us unpack the translation process than conventional studies on the Confucius Institutes.

In the IR discipline, the CIs are considered as an agent and their operations and teaching activities are regarded as carrying out policies or the delivery of the Chinese soft power. Some scholars (e.g. Gil, 2017; Huang & Xiang, 2019; Starr, 2009) are interested in the

“instructions” from Beijing to the CIs around the world and the power dynamics between Beijing and the outside via the CIs. Others (e.g. Liu, 2019b; Yang, 2011) highlight the cooperative governance between the Chinese and local directors and the negotiations between the Chinese and local institutes which are normally universities. However, this policy-driven and institutionalist approach considers the headquarters in Beijing and local CIs as a bureaucracy, which neglects the dynamics arising from the local social backgrounds and the changes in the “knowledge” passed through from one to another. For example, some studies (e.g. Keimetswe, 2021; Li, 2021) have discussed the motivations and experiences of Chinese teachers who work in CIs overseas, and I have also read that many had posted their “bad and helpless” feelings about being qualified as an overseas Chinese teacher. On the Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu, many posts suggest that the certificate for teaching Chinese overseas is not a serious credential and does not help their careers much.

More specifically, if we see that the central political institutions in Beijing are the information, knowledge, and views providers, the overseas CIs are the stretching out vehicles carrying the information and knowledge, and the local students who take courses or engage with the CIs are the receiver end; the black box still remains closed as the communication conduits of information, knowledge, and views are not revealed.

As many studies mentioned above have analysed, we may test whether the students in CIs agree or are in favour of the positive images of China after their studies; however, we still do not understand how the students make sense of those images and narratives of China or to what extent they change their perceptions on China.

The CIs are unlikely to play videos of President Xi or hand over the CCP party documents to students. In the interviews with students who studied Chinese in CIs, the students suggested that politics was avoided on purpose in CIs. Rather, CIs frequently organise small-scale cultural events, like Chinese music concerts and Chinese cooking workshops. The information, knowledge, and views are being “translated”, interpreted, argued, and re-interpreted again and again among these actors within the communication conduit. In the current studies, the temporal and spatial qualities of the communication conduits are neglected. In the case of CIs, the key conduit is the textbooks. The textbooks are designed and delivered to overseas CIs and they are relatively fixed and stable compared to other language study materials, namely online introduction videos or webpages.

Another shortcoming of policy-driven and institutionalist approaches is suffered by the presumption of seeing culture as stationary and foreign culture as far in the distance.

Canale (2016) concludes that the existing studies show that foreign culture is considered as something static that certain groups of people either have or do not have. From this perspective, the Chinese culture is considered a fact, an object, from a far distance, which is conceptualised and represented by the language textbooks. The Chinese culture is the resources from which the textbooks and other study materials and content are designed and edited. More importantly, the Chinese strategic narratives are translated into these textbooks through the Chinese culture and other less political daily life expressions and stories. The existing studies mentioned above on the CIs and public diplomacy, in general, ignore the in-depth social and cultural elements within these textbooks and the national strategic narratives intervening in these elements. More importantly, the subtle, unexpected, and even unstrategic changes in the meaning of these elements going through the communication conduits are underestimated.

Textbooks are important and the analyses of textbooks, especially the language teaching books, are strongly debated in the discipline of education and linguistics. For example, cultural elements in Mandarin textbooks in Malaysia are analysed (Lin et al., 2020), Ronci (2021) compares the gender representations in English textbooks in Japan, and Huang (2019) researches whether English textbooks are contextualised enough to improve Chinese students' English communication and learning based on both social

learning theory and social-cultural theory. Textbooks and their texts have to be interpreted in a larger context – the cultural and social context. These studies provide various research methodologies for analysing language textbooks, especially focusing on the cultural elements. Around thirty years ago, Schubring (1987) introduced a three-dimensional scheme to analyse historical textbooks emphasising the changes and suggested keeping an eye on multiple factors of textbooks, like the author, market strategies, teachers, and the textbook forms. Compared to considering textbooks as resources, Goh (2022) argues that textbooks should be considered as active agents, and this approach enriches the actorness of textbooks.

However, these textbook studies in education and linguistics studies mainly focus on the textbooks themselves, like the efficiency of textbooks in reaching the goal of communication skills for students, although the cultural and social dimensions are the key debates. This is the point where strategic narratives and IR discipline can marry with the linguistics and education disciplines. In the case of CIs, it is necessary to merge the key foci from these disciplines; more precisely, it is an alternative and promising agenda to borrow something from communication, linguistics, and education disciplines to IR for analysing the textual, verbal, and visual symbols which are

definitely strongly tied with the concepts of discourse, identity, and narratives in the IR discipline.

2.5 Conclusion

Strategic narrative is a strong analytical framework, and it suggests that we pay more attention to the effects and conduits of strategic narratives. As mentioned in the first part of the chapter, the empirical studies applying or analysing strategic narratives are limited within the elite circle and state-centric approach. Although the framework asks for a broader investigation of the media ecology, the majority of studies look at those authoritative resources only. Moreover, there is a gap before how we analyse the effects of the strategic narratives on recipients, as the recipients do not only receive strategic narratives but feel, experience, and respond with other local narratives and practices in a local context, then they can possibly make sense of the strategic narratives. These limitations are also reflected in the studies of Chinese strategic narratives to global governance and Chinese BRI; at the same time, these limitations restrict the understanding and application of strategic narratives to other less political and less strategic fields.

Considering the empirical foci of this dissertation and the gaps in the current analysis of strategic narratives, I look at the translation process and local narratives of Chinese strategic narratives in its public diplomacy in Europe, namely its Confucius institutes and Chinese overseas newspaper. Shifting from the strategic to the translation does not mean that these local narratives are not strategic; on the contrary, it analyses the relations between the strategic narratives from the high-politics level and local narratives and how strategic narratives are embedded within those local narratives. Focusing on the translation process can help us cover the limitations mentioned above and also enrich the empirical studies.

The existing studies have paid a great deal of attention to the institutional and mechanical effects of strategic narratives but less discuss the power of narratives. Narrating and telling stories are an action of meaning-making (see Erwin, 2021; Jackson, 2014; Stanley & Jackson, 2016), and the meaning-making process is where the power is exercised. “The narrative is thus seen as an occasion for agency both on the level of experiencing events and on the level of reflecting and relating them in a narrative form” (Björninen et al., 2020, p. 439). The narratives, especially strategic narratives, can have powerful effects only when individuals are reached and

experiencing, and strategic narratives need to be translated into local narratives to reach the public. In other words, not only strategic narratives are capable of exercising power but power is within all narratives as narratives bring people into relations. It is the discursive and less political local narratives that bring the public into the relations and the question is how strategic narratives are translated into local narratives, and what local narratives translate strategic narratives.

Moreover, the validity and credibility of strategic narratives are about the question of contestation of narratives. In other words, whether certain strategic narratives are persuasive or become dominant among others relies on the translation and local narratives as the meaning-making bricks. The local and micro-narratives, even if they are discursive and ambiguous, like trauma (e.g. Colvin, 2004) can shape our experiences and perception of the world. Focusing on the translation and local narratives helps us to unpack the validity of strategic narratives which is a pre-condition to the effects of strategic narratives. Furthermore, emphasising the translation and local narratives suggests a larger scale of investigation of the changes and variations of strategic narratives in different communication conduits. These changes and variations within the translation process would reflect strategic narratives' productivity and from another angle open up the "black box" of the formation of strategic narratives.

In short, the strategic narratives framework has already been well developed with existing studies. However, the empirical studies are strongly limited by the “strategic”. Considering the translation process and local narratives, this dissertation will analyse how Chinese strategic narratives speak to and reach the public in Europe and how Chinese strategic narratives are translated into the local narratives in the textbooks in CIs and Chinese newspaper *Nouvelles d’Europe* when these two different communication conduits face different audiences. From these discursive and less political local narratives, this dissertation unpacks the power of strategic narratives on the ground between China and Europe.

Chapter 3 The Narratives That are Strategic

This chapter goes beyond the existing studies on Chinese strategic narratives by focusing on China's public diplomacy and cultural engagements. The current studies of Chinese strategic narratives concentrate on Chinese global projects, foreign policies, and geopolitical strategies. One of the contributions of this chapter is that it focuses on and reviews the Chinese strategic narratives from the perspective of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is not something new as Melissen suggests that "public diplomacy is one of soft power's key instruments, and this was recognized in diplomatic practice long before the contemporary debate on public diplomacy" (Melissen, 2005, p. 4). The debate about public diplomacy has developed beyond the concept of soft power as Nye (2008) suggests that public diplomacy is an important tool in the toolbox of smart power, a strategy that combines soft and hard power resources. Cull concludes seven lessons from the history of public diplomacy and suggests that public diplomacy is

a two-way street: a process of mutual influence, whereby a state (or other international player) facilitates engagement between publics or tunes its own policies to the map of foreign public opinion. In the ideal case, public diplomacy treats the foreign public as an active participant – not just as a flock of sheep waiting to be ideologically shorn. (2010, p. 12)

From a public diplomacy perspective, we can review the Chinese strategic narratives by focusing on the foreign public rather than locating the Chinese state at the centre. These strategic narratives are analysed on three levels. First, on a

general level, the strategic narratives speak to the broadest external audiences and these strategic narratives suggest China's position within the global order and how China should engage with the global competition of soft power. Second, the strategic narratives on a China-Europe level highlight those narratives between China and the EU, and these strategic narratives speak to the public in Europe. Together with the China-Europe strategic narratives, other Chinese strategic narratives towards the US and Global South will be discussed as well. This comparison of Chinese strategic narratives will reveal the local contexts of Europe and bring the geopolitical dimension into the discussion. The strategic narratives on the last level are those specifically associated with cultural institutions and agents, namely Confucius Institutes and Chinese media outlets.

On the first level, the strategic narratives are derived from those documents and speeches by Chinese top leadership. These documents and speeches identify China's position in the world narrative battle and how China can boost its soft power and so-called discourse power (see Liu, 2024; Oud, 2024; Wang, 2015; Wang, 2023). The theme of Chinese strategic narratives on this general level is cultural multipolarity. On the China-Europe level, documents and policies from ministries and diplomats are collected; and these texts directly speak about how China sees its relationships with the

EU and European countries. The themes of strategic narratives on this level are that China and Europe have no fundamental conflicts of interest and they are partners. On the last institution level, the strategic narratives are collected from official websites of CIs and Chinese media overseas and officials' speeches addressing these institutions.

Unlike existing studies, this chapter's analysis of Chinese strategic narratives emphasises public diplomacy; and more importantly, it unpacks the themes behind the strategic narratives on different levels. The existing studies frequently apply the top strategic narratives, like "a community with a shared future for mankind", to specific issues or policies, like BRICS or BRI (e.g. Colley & van Noort, 2022; van Noort, 2019).

This approach ignores the bottom-up narrating dynamics and limits the stakeholders within the diffusion of strategic narratives. The current chapter investigates these strategic narratives and themes on different levels that have three distinct contributions.

First, these strategic narratives target the field of public diplomacy and cultural engagements rather than those top narratives about China's positions and foreign policies in general, which contributes to the discussion of the Chinese strategic narratives in other fields and issues, like US-China relations or climate change.

Furthermore, this Chapter pays additional attention to temporal changes in the Chinese

public diplomacy strategic narratives on the general level, as these strategic narratives started with President Jiang becoming the top leader in 1992.

Second, this chapter classifies these strategic narratives into three levels based on the actors and agents. From the top Chinese leaders to Chinese ambassadors or Chinese missions overseas, to particular institutions, this three-level classification helps to reveal the changes and translation of the shared understanding carried out by different stakeholders. These political actors and agents on different levels are frequently neglected and are frequently considered as a whole in the formation and projection phases of strategic narratives. We have to unpack the relations among these political actors to analyse the shared understanding of strategic narratives on different levels.

Third, this chapter uncovers the themes behind these strategic narratives. The themes are essential as they help to investigate the relations among strategic narratives on different levels. These themes serve as a core that connects strategic narratives on different levels. These themes not only support the analysis of how strategic narratives are translated and travel among political actors and agents but also link strongly political strategic narratives with local narratives. The local narratives and the translation process, the key concepts of this dissertation, will be analysed in the

following three chapters of case studies. This dissertation does not reject the promising research framework of strategic narratives; on the contrary, it pushes the boundary of strategic narratives. It is essential to dig down into the themes behind the strategic narratives and investigate the relations of these themes. More importantly, this dissertation unpacks changes of strategic narratives on different levels. In other words, it deconstructs these strategic narratives and the translation process of these strategic narratives to local narratives on the ground with local contexts. The key link between the strategic narratives and local narratives is the themes, and it is the theme that helps us to uncover the translation process.

Thus, the themes behind these strategic narratives and local narratives are essential. This chapter tries to identify the themes of the Chinese strategic narratives focusing on public diplomacy on three levels: the general level – China speaks to broader global audiences, China-Europe level – China speaks to European countries, and the institution level – China speaks through cultural institutions and news agencies. The themes conceptualised from these three levels and the relations among them will be discussed, which is important to the later chapters working on textbook and media outlet analysis.

3.1 Strategic narratives on public diplomacy in general

In the 16th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2002, the former General Secretary of the party and the Present, Jiang Zemin, reported to the whole ruling party and suggested that “we will continue to carry out extensive people-to-people diplomacy, expand cultural exchanges with the outside world, enhance the friendship with peoples and propel the development of state-to-state relations” (ChinaDaily, 2013b). In this report, the 6th section discusses cultural development and restructuring, which suggests that culture plays a key role, along with economy and politics, in the competition for overall national strength. Although the section mainly talks about the cultural industry and cultural policies within China, it suggests that “the Chinese civilisation, extensive and profound, and with a long history behind it, has contributed tremendously to the progress of human civilisation” (ChinaDaily, 2013a). Twenty years ago, the Chinese leadership emphasised the narratives on the Chinese cultural exchanges and foreign policies as China became more active on the international stage and China stood for equal relationships of people-to-people diplomacy and cultural exchanges. Compared to the following years, Jiang’s leadership did not provide strong and ambitious strategies for how to present China to the world, or detailed policies of how China should promote its culture overseas.

In the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2007, Hu Jintao gave a clearer statement on the relationship between the Chinese and foreign cultures. In the report submitted to the Congress, he suggested that:

We must keep to the orientation of advanced socialist culture, bring about a new upsurge in socialist cultural development, stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests, [...] Promote Chinese culture and build the common spiritual home for the Chinese nation. Chinese culture has been an unfailing driving force for the Chinese nation to keep its unity and make progress from generation to generation. We must have a comprehensive understanding of traditional Chinese culture, keep its essence and discard its dross to enable it to fit in with present-day society, stay in harmony with modern civilization, keep its national character and reflect changes of the times. We will further publicize the fine traditions of Chinese culture and use modern means of science and technology to exploit the rich resources of our national culture. [...] We will also strengthen international cultural exchanges to draw on the fine achievements of foreign cultures and enhance the influence of Chinese culture worldwide. (Hu, 2007a)

In the cultural policies, especially the cultural exchanges with the outside world, Hu points out that the Chinese culture needs to fit in modern society by “keeping its essence and discarding its dross” and “draw on the fine achievements of foreign cultures”, which shows that Hu and his leadership group realise that China needs to learn something from the others and the relationships between China and others are equal, regarding culture. However, more importantly, as the term “soft power” appeared for

the first time in a Chinese official report on the top level, it was only since Hu's regime when the Chinese leadership paid attention to the significance of soft power, and started to prepare the country for the new race of soft power.

In the same report, Hu explained how China saw the global order:

At the same time, the world remains far from tranquil. Hegemonism and power politics still exist, local conflicts and hotspot issues keep emerging, imbalances in the world economy are worsening, the North-South gap is widening, and traditional and nontraditional threats to security are intertwined. All this poses difficulties and challenges to world peace and development [...] Historic changes have occurred in the relations between contemporary China and the rest of the world, resulting in ever closer interconnection between China's future and destiny and those of the world. (Hu, 2007b)

From this statement, China sees the global order as imbalanced; and it tries to frame China as the peace defender in the world alongside other nations rather than a superpower itself.

In this period, Hu and his leadership group presented a modest gesture towards the world and embraced the international liberal order. Such modest gestures and positive images of China during Hu's regime were communicated through public events and people-to-people diplomacy, as the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi summarised the past decade of achievements of the Chinese foreign policy in 2012: "taking the benefits of leaders' bilateral visits, the Beijing Olympic Games and

Shanghai Expo, we conduct public and people-to-people diplomacy, strengthen the relationships between Chinese and foreign people, fully demonstrate China's image of civilisation, democracy, openness, and development" (Mission of the PRC to the EU, 2012). As many (e.g. Chen et al., 2012; Giulianotti, 2015; Lee & Yoon, 2017) suggested, the events like the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and the Shanghai Expo in 2010 increased the positive image of China and its soft power in the world.

However, such modest and ambiguous gestures changed within the last year of Hu's leadership. The first issue of 2012 of the party theoretical journal, *Qiushi*, published Hu's speech in a central committee meeting in 2011 targeting the cultural security issues. The speech suggests that whoever takes the high ground of cultural development owns the strong cultural soft power, and wins the dominance in the international competition:

We must clearly see that the international enemies are strengthening the strategy of westernisation and division towards us, the ideology and culture field is the field where they permeate for the long-term [...] Our general cultural strength and international influence do not balance with our international position, the 'west-strong-I-weak' international culture structure and narrative structure have not yet fully twisted. (Hu, 2012, pp. 3-4)

Hu and his leading group changed their views, as China and others were not just competitors in the international culture race but rather enemies. It seems that cultural cooperation is no longer the dominant paradigm but the leadership was concerned about

the unbalanced position. The Western culture and ideologies started to be considered as a threat to the Chinese culture and the party, which might be a response from China to the global narrative of “China threat theory”. On one hand, China tried to establish its positive and peaceful image to the global audience; on the other hand, China was aware that outside ideology and cultural influence was becoming a barrier to the country twisting the current global order and taking the key position. The international cultural competition and the narratives become a battlefield.

While Hu and Jiang’s regimes presented the Chinese strategic narratives of its public diplomacy and cultural exchanges by emphasising equal relationships and ambiguous guidance on how to engage with others’ cultures, President Xi Jinping and his leadership provide more aggressive and detailed mechanisms about what should be done and who is responsible for these mechanisms.

In 2013, Xi gave a relatively comprehensive illustration of Chinese soft power, cultural diplomacy and the mechanisms of Chinese soft power; and this key strategic narrative represents how China (the leadership) sees itself, its relationships with others, and its global view. In the 12th group study session of the political bureau, Xi suggested:

[We] have to pay attention to the establishment of our national image, emphasise presenting the image of a long-history, multi-ethnic, culture-

diverse and harmonious civilised great country, the image of an Eastern great country with political integrity, economic development, cultural prosperity, social stability, people unity, environment daintiness, [...] [in order to] strengthen the national soft power, [we] need to work hard to improve the international discourse power. [We] need to strengthen the capacity of international communication, pay attention to the construction of the external discourse system, well use the impacts of the new media, improve the creativity, charisma, and credibility of external discourse, tell good Chinese stories, spread good Chinese voice, demonstrate well the Chinese characteristics. (Xinhua News Agency, 2013b)

In 2022, Xi re-emphasised the significance of the promotion of Chinese civilisation in the report to the 20th National Congress of CCP:

We will stay firmly rooted in Chinese culture. We will collect and refine the defining symbols and best elements of Chinese culture and showcase them to the world. We will accelerate the development of China's discourse and narrative systems, better tell China's stories, make China's voice heard, and present a China that is credible, appealing, and respectable. We will strengthen our international communications capabilities, make our communications more effective, and strive to strengthen China's voice in international affairs so it is commensurate with our composite national strength and international status. We will deepen exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations and better present Chinese culture to the world. (Xi, 2022)

It is noted that, in Xi's regime, how China and the national leadership see China itself has substantially changed from Jiang and Hu's eras, and this change of self-image is reflected by the strategic narratives. In Xi's narratives (see CPC NEWS, 2014), China is a great/powerful country and this great/powerful country has the characteristics of political integrity (the country and all ethnic groups are under the leadership of CCP),

economic development (China has become the second largest economy in the world), cultural prosperity (the combination of the traditional values of the Chinese civilisation and the communist party ideology), social stability, people unity (the concept of Chinese people now includes, under the CCP's ruling, all ethnic groups and those in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan), and environment and nature daintiness. These are the key elements constructing the image of China that the Chinese leadership wants to present to global audiences through strategic narratives and other means.

Moreover, China now not only sees itself as a great/powerful country in the world but also highlights the Eastern power countering the Western countries in the current imbalanced international order. In the 12th group study session of the political bureau, Xi directly pointed out that

Although we have achieved significant progress in increasing our international discourse power, compared with Western countries, we still have a long distance. We have to admit that, in terms of using the international discourse power, we are always the new player. (Party Literature Research Center, 2017, p. 203)

Facing the two imbalanced positions, first, the Western narratives take dominance; second, the Chinese narratives do not match the Chinese “hard power” in the current global order, as “currently, we put many efforts on economic cooperation, the leg of culture overall is still not strong enough” (Party Literature Research Center, 2017, p.

215); Xi and the leadership group pay much attention to the mechanisms of strengthening the Chinese discourse power and soft power to make China heard and clearly heard. In 2016, Xi suggested that the image of China on the global stage is strongly “other-constructed” rather than “self-constructing”; and not only the national media and national level leaders but also local bureaus and cadres need to tell the Chinese stories better (People’s Daily Online, 2019). In academia, scholars’ attention is also turned from the traditional soft power to the discourse power (see Nymalm, 2020; Wang, 2010; Wu et al., 2021; Yang, 2016), from the Olympic Games (see Breslin, 2020; Dayan & Price, 2008; Finlay & Xin, 2010; Manzenreiter, 2010) to Chinese media globalisation and localisation (see Guyo & Yu, 2022; Kurlantzick, 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Morales-Sanfurgo, 2018; Song & Bian, 2016; Zhu, 2022).

In the past twenty years, the Chinese strategic narratives on public diplomacy and cultural exchanges have changed, and many scholars (see Gehrig, 2022; Jiang, 2021; Ptáčková et al., 2021; Vlassis, 2016) have already discussed the changes from the perspective of soft power by focusing on governmental institutes and agencies. From the framework of strategic narratives, the changes of strategic narratives themselves are highlighted. The Chinese strategic narratives in Jiang and Hu’s twenty years noticed the significance of narratives towards global audiences and were aware of the competition

of narratives. However, the strategic narratives about public diplomacy and cultural exchanges were ambiguous about what to do and shared a modest attitude towards the West and Western strategic narratives. From the end of Hu's regime to Xi's new era, how to deliver Chinese soft power has become clearer and the strategic narratives have become more institutionalised. The strategic narratives also have become more assertive and have responded to the West more directly. However, there is still continuity through the changes. Chinese culture and China seeing itself as a civilisation are always the fundamental resource of Chinese strategic narratives about its public diplomacy and cultural exchanges.

To some extent, it was the Western strategic narratives that “seduced” and “forced” China to become more aggressive and assertive in its global strategic narratives. In the late 90s and early 2000s, the strategic narratives of “liberalising China” and “China can be and will be liberalised”, which were mainly from a liberal economy perspective, were still popular as China was open to global trade and China joined the WTO with greater commitment of embracing the international community. The Western narrative “China threat” or the discussion of the “China threat theory” (see Al-Rodhan, 2007; Broomfield, 2003; Scott, 2013; Song, 2015; Yang & Liu, 2012) together with China's own economic power pushed China to change and refine its strategic narratives towards

the global audiences. Yang and Liu (2012) studied the appearance and changes of the China threat theory in the US by emphasising different perspectives: China as a political/ideological threat (1992-1994 reached the peak and disappeared), as a military/strategic threat (remained dominant from 1995 till now), and as economic/trade threat (remained from 1997 till now with a clear uptick). More precisely, it was the growth of the strategic narrative of the China threat, which gradually took the dominance and marginalised “liberalising China” narratives, that triggered the changes in Chinese global strategic narratives. The contestation of Western strategic narratives plays a role in shaping Chinese strategic narratives that speak back to the West. These joint “efforts” and co-constitution narratives are not only on the high politics level but also down to the local level, which will be highlighted and demonstrated by the empirical cases in this research.

Taking the framework of strategic narratives helps us go deeper to unpack the various layers of the narrative construction and the knowledge production which are not only associated with soft power. On the general level, the leadership’s statements and speeches show how China sees itself, its relationships with others, especially with the Western countries, and its relationship with the world order. More importantly, these strategic narratives share the theme of multipolarity, especially considering the aspects

of cultures and civilisations. For instance, China expressed its attitude of learning from others and catching up with the modernised international society. Now, China sees itself as an oriental/Eastern power that wants to take the leading position of not only the economy, and military, but also culture and discourse powers, within an international competition. This international competition includes not only the US and China but also other actors, such as European countries.

3.2 China's strategic narratives on Europe

In terms of the relationships between China and European countries, the narratives are concentrated on the cooperation of specific sectors, namely the economy, global security, international development, environment protection, and human rights. The key themes derived from these narratives are “no fundamental conflicts of interest” and China and EU's identities in a multipolar system.

From the Chinese side, China sees that the EU-China relationship and the interactions should reach cooperation rather than be interrupted by disputes in both politics and the economy. These narratives surround the theme of no fundamental conflicts of interest,

which is quite different from how China sees its competition with the US. In the latest China-EU summit 2023, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (2023g), both sides agreed to maintain strategic stability in China-EU relations, continue to carry out mutually beneficial cooperation, and jointly address global challenges. More specifically, President Xi directly expressed cooperation over confrontation: “Both sides should establish the correct understanding, [...], [we] cannot see each other as rivals because of different polities, [we] cannot reduce cooperation because of competition, [we] cannot confront [each other] because of disagreement existing” (Economic and Commercial Office of the Mission of the PRC to the European Union, 2023).

These narratives are not saying that China and the EU are naturally bound based on cooperation; on the contrary, China is aware of the disputes and practical conflicts between the two entities. In the same summit, the Chinese side (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023g) expressed

[the] concern over the EU’s ‘de-risking’ and restrictive economic and trade policies, including the anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese electric vehicles launched by the EU, 5G and other issues, and urged the EU to keep its trade and investment markets open, provide a fair and non-discriminatory business environment for Chinese companies, and use trade remedy measures prudently.

It is noted that how China responded to these disputes and conflicts is quite different from those with the US, as China rarely immediately fought back with countersanctions to the EU.

Moreover, the narratives of these disputes have been changing and there are internal inconsistencies within these strategic narratives. On 14th September 2023, the Spokesperson from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce expressed “deep concern and strong opposition” to the anti-subsidy investigation on Chinese electric vehicles (Ministry of Commerce of the PRC, 2023; Mission of the PRC to the European Union, 2023a). However, on the same issue, the Chinese leadership, including President Xi and the Head (Ambassador) of the Chinese Mission to the EU, only expressed “concern” without strong opposition (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023g; Mission of the PRC to the European Union, 2023c). Another example is that Chinese Ambassador to France, Lu Shaye, in an interview with French television network LCI on 21st April 2023, suggested that former Soviet countries have no effective status in international law and these countries did not legally have status as sovereign states (France 24, 2023; Zimmermann, 2023). Ambassador Lu’s arguments immediately raised a wave of brutal criticisms from Baltic states, Ukraine, and the EU. In the regular press conference of

the Chinese Foreign Ministry, spokesperson Mao Ning was asked about Ambassador's argument, and spokesperson Mao responded:

After the Soviet Union dissolved, China was one of the first countries that established diplomatic ties with the countries concerned. [...] China respects the status of the former Soviet republics as sovereign countries after the Soviet Union's dissolution. [...] The Soviet Union was a federal state and as a whole was one subject of international law in international relations. This does not negate the republics' status as sovereign countries after the Soviet Union's dissolution. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023d)

The Chinese ambassador questioned and even denied the sovereign state status of former Soviet Union republics, and the central government came out to withdraw the Ambassador's argument three days later. This example shows that there are internal inconsistencies and contestations within strategic narratives and these inconsistencies and contestations can be revealed by a closer look at the political actors on different levels.

Despite China's awareness of the bilateral disputes on the economy and the EU raising different concerns on the economy and human rights issues in China, the Chinese side still frames the narratives about the bilateral interaction on cooperation rather than emphasising interruption by the disputes. The key theme supporting these narratives is no fundamental conflicts of interest between them. In October 2023 before the China-EU Summit, the High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing. Minister Wang clearly stated that "there are no

geopolitical conflicts between China and Europe, there are no essential interests conflicts, [what we] have are the large common interests and huge cooperation demands” (Mission of the PRC to the European Union, 2023b). These narratives and themes are repeatedly stated by the Chinese leaders to the EU (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023e, 2023f). The theme “no fundamental conflicts of interest” is also reflected in urgent security issues. For example, the Head of the Chinese Mission to the EU, Ambassador Fu Cong, stated:

Even before coming here, I know that the Ukraine crisis is becoming a problem for our bilateral relationship with the EU. But frankly speaking, we don't believe the Ukraine crisis should be an issue, much less a problem, between China and the EU, because it is not. (Mission of the PRC to the European Union, 2022)

From economy to political values, from human rights to regional security, the Chinese side is aware of European arguments, demands, and narratives; at the same time, the Chinese responding narratives on these issues all point to cooperation which replaces confrontation and puts aside those differences and disputes. Generally speaking, Chinese narratives on essential issues towards the EU are less aggressive than those towards the US. The key theme behind these narratives is that there are no fundamental conflicts of interest between China and the EU.

The second theme of the narratives on the China-EU level is the identity in a multipolar system. The theme of identity has two features. The first feature is temporal as how

China sees itself has been changing when it faces the EU and European countries. The second feature is horizontal as China expresses itself with multiple faces at the same time. In the latest *China's Policy Paper on the European Union 2018* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2018b), China considers that itself and the EU are both the major participants and shapers in the world multipolarity and economic globalisation. However, the “major participants and shapers” were not stated in China’s Policy Paper on the EU in 2003 and 2014. In *China's Policy Paper on the European Union 2003* (The State Council of the PRC, 2003), China considered the EU, but not China itself, as one important/major power in the world. Furthermore, in the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation (EEAS, 2013), jointly signed by the EU and China in 2013, China and the EU were considered only as “important actors in a multipolar world”. The EU now sees China as “a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival” (EEAS, 2023). The Chinese Ambassador to the EU, Fu Cong, in 2024 published an op-ed saying that “the first question is: Is China trying to upend the existing international order? Contrary to some misconceptions, China is a founder and beneficiary of the existing international order, and remains a firm defender of the current system” (Fu, 2024; Mission of the PRC to the European Union, 2024). Ambassador Fu’s suggestion on China’s identities: the founder, beneficiary, and defender was a response to the EU’s action labelling China as a systemic rival.

From these top policy documents and diplomatic statements, we may see that, although there is a general relationship framework between the EU and China, the detailed identities of both actors have been changing. More importantly, there is a contestation of what the EU and China's identities are. This contestation, at the same time, is a joint formation of strategic narratives. Moreover, it is important that identities respectively from these two sides are relatively self-evident from their responses. For example, China is confused by the "three-pronged designation" of China and refuses to be viewed as the "systemic rival" (Mission of the PRC to the EU, 2022, 2023). The EU's Ambassador to China Jorge Toledo responded to China's criticism against the EU's de-risking strategy with China, saying that de-risking is "not protectionist. It is not closing the door to cooperation. Our de-risking is country-agnostic and only affects a small part of our trade, de-risking is not self-reliance" (Liboreiro, 2023). In other words, there is an exchange of declaration on identities – China and the EU play a key role in contesting each other's identity narratives. They do not agree with each other but they respond to each other. Strategic narratives are defined as "a means by which political actors attempt to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors" (Miskimmon et al., 2017, p. 6). It seems that there is no shared meaning between the EU and China on their

identities, especially China's identity. However, in fact, these two actors share a meaning construction process, the conversation on identities, rather than a concrete agreement by both; and this identity conversation with its changes throughout time shapes the behaviour of these two actors. In a simplified and clichéd saying: they agree to disagree.

The second feature of the theme of identity between China and Europe is the multiple faces of China. In the meeting with President Charles Michel, President Xi recently raised the narrative on and Chinese attitude towards the EU:

China and the EU are the two main powers keeping the world peace, the two main markets promoting the joint development, the two civilisations pushing the human development. [...] Differences exist between China and Europe in history and culture, development level, and ideologies, it is quite normal that the two sides have different views on some issues. [...] Europe is the key partner, also the benefiter, of China's rapid development. (Xinhua News Agency, 2022)

In a global context, the Chinese strategic narratives show that China now considers itself on the same level as the EU; they are partners, key powers, markets, and civilisations.

The engagements between China and European countries, even those cooperations and conflicts in politics and the economy, are framed under the relationships of civilisations

which are deeply historically rooted. In 2010, former Chinese Prime Minister Wen

Jiabao visited Greece and he admired the culture and history of Greece saying that

China and Greece are both world ancient civilisations, [...] in the global finance crisis, the world economy was dramatically challenged, both China and Greece passed the challenges, [...] as the friend of Greece, the Chinese government will firmly support Greece, and China wants to help Greece to conquer the difficulties as soon as possible by strengthening the cooperation. [...] Europe is the region where concentrates the world-class developed countries, which is also the target which China learns from and cooperates with. (Wen, 2010a)

In 2011, Vice Prime Minister Li Keqiang delivered a speech to the China-Europe people-to-people dialogue of friendship and cooperation saying: “China is far away from many European countries, but the friendship among the people has a long history, the East and West civilisations add colours to each other, improve the human development together” (Xinhua News Agency, 2011). China and European countries are both civilisations that play key roles in human development, and this strategic narrative is frequently mentioned by Chinese leaders. For example, in PM Wen’s speech to the first China-Europe Culture Forum in Brussels (Wen, 2010b), Wen’s speech to the 6th Germany-China Economy and Technology Forum (Wen, 2011), PM Li’s speech to the first Asia-Europe Economic development & cooperation forum (Li, 2011), and the former member of the politburo standing committee of the CCP Liu Yunshan’s speech to the China-Europe civilisation dialogue (Xinhua News Agency, 2016). Although there

are internal inconsistencies, changes, and joint formation of Chinese strategic narratives on Europe, the theme of civilisation as a core identity of both China and Europe always remains the same. This theme of civilisation as an identity is embedded in various Chinese strategic narratives on Europe in different issues like politics and the economy, and this theme is a strong complement to another theme “no fundamental conflicts of interest” in the China-Europe relations on the high politics level. Moreover, this theme of civilisation as an identity is also a key theme in translating strategic narratives into local narratives, as will be demonstrated in the case studies.

The governmental documents and leadership’s speeches and statements, and more importantly, the narratives from these texts reflect how China sees itself, its relationship with the EU and its member states, and its relationship with the world. These strategic narratives also provide the orientation and directions to China’s practice towards the EU and detailed narratives on specific issues on the ground. These strategic narratives are changing and they are not a single solid pack. The two key themes behind these narratives are the ones being translated and carried to further interpretation and practice on the ground. These two key themes of strategic narratives on the China-EU level are no fundamental conflicts of interest and identities in a multipolar system. The theme of no fundamental conflicts of interest conflicts is associated with the strategic narratives

on cooperation and innovative interaction mechanisms between China and the EU, such as global security, anti-subsidy investigation on Chinese electric vehicles, EU-China annual Summit, and Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries. Rather than any specific identities, the conversation and declaration of identities are the second theme of Chinese strategic narratives. In recent years, China increasingly emphasised itself as a power towards the EU. China as a power has many variations, like being the second largest economy, the strongest developing country, a civilisation, the founder, the beneficiary, and the defender of the current international system. The EU and the EU-China relationship contribute to China's identity-seeking and consolidating on the world stage and the projection of the identity theme embedded in the strategic narratives. Uncovering this identity theme helps us to trace the changes in the strategic narratives and how these strategic narratives are translated and projected by different issues on the ground.

3.3 China's strategic narratives on the US and developing countries

As briefly mentioned above the Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe are quite different from those towards the US and other regions and countries. In Mao Zedong's

era, the US was referred as American imperialism, and Mao's famous argument "American imperialism is a paper tiger" was raised in 1946 in an interview with Anna Louise Strong (Qi, 2021). In 1974, Deng Xiaoping addressed the UN Assembly by following Mao's principles but Deng raised his clear arguments representing a new China to the world:

China is a socialist country, and a developing country as well. China belongs to the Third World. Consistently following Chairman Mao's teachings, the Chinese government and people firmly support all oppressed peoples and oppressed nations in their struggle to win or defend national independence, develop the national economy and oppose colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism. This is our bounden internationalist duty. China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one. (ChinaDaily, 2015)

In Jiang's regime, the Chinese leaders recognised that both China and the US were big/major powers. The US and China shared various common interests, and at the same time, there were disagreements and divergences (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, n.d.-b). The divergences here mainly referred to the Taiwan issue, unlike what the US and China currently disagree on both economic and political aspects. In Hu's era, Chinese strategic narratives on the US did not change dramatically and they kept emphasising that the US and China were big powers and this bilateral relationship was the key to international order. For example, Hu gave a speech during his US visit in 2011: "China and the US are respectively the largest developing country and the largest developed country in the world. A stable bilateral relationship is already a great

contribution to global peace and stability” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2011a). Due to the enlarged conflicts between the US and China, new Chinese strategic narratives towards the US emerged. Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi talked to his counterpart Antony John Blinken in 2024: “The US cannot have two faces towards China, on one hand, [the US] unconditionally oppresses China, on the other hand, keeps dialogues and cooperation with China as nothing happened” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024j). In the latest conversation between President Xi and President Trump, Xi admitted that conflicts and divergences were inevitable between China and the US which were two big powers with their own national conditions (Xinhua News Agency, 2025). However, the strategic narratives about the conflicts in Xi’s era have one more concern – the economy and the trade war, compared to those strategic narratives before which were mainly referred to the Taiwan issue.

The Chinese government currently does not have a concrete white paper on the US or a general policy paper towards the US (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, n.d.-a). However, several documents issued by the Chinese government in recent years focus on specific issues in the US, like gun violence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023b), drug abuse (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023a), freedom of speech (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024b), environmental damage

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2020), and so on. These documents are generally presented as fact sheets. One white paper specifically focusing on the China-US trade conflict was released in 2018. In this white paper *The Facts and China's Position on China-US Trade Friction*, the foreword starts with

China is the world's biggest developing country and the United States is the biggest developed country. Trade and economic relations between China and the US are of great significance for the two countries as well as for the stability and development of the world economy. [...] In order to clarify the facts about China-US economic and trade relations, clarify China's stance on trade friction with the US, and pursue reasonable solutions, the government of China is publishing this White Paper. (The State Council Information Office of the PRC, 2018; English translation from: English Bus, 2018).

In the same white paper, the Chinese government argues that the US administration violating its own commitments and international contracts is against civilised human society.

Unlike the Chinese strategic narratives on Europe, those on the US do not contain the theme of civilisation. In other words, China does not see the US as a civilisation. In the China-US strategic narratives, the strategic narrative of civilisation is replaced by the people's common interests and people-to-people exchanges of the two sides. Also, although both Chinese strategic narratives on Europe and the US recognise the conflicts within these two bilateral relationships, those on Europe clearly emphasise “no fundamental conflicts of interest” which is missing in Chinese strategic narratives on

the US. The Chinese fact sheet *US Hegemony and Its Perils* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023c) suggests that the US and its hegemony “maintain and abuse hegemony, advance subversion and infiltration, and willfully wage wars, bringing harm to the international community”. Europe and the US are both priorities in China’s “major-country diplomacy”. However, put in an extreme way, the Chinese strategic narratives portray that the US is considered as an entrepreneur-like hegemony and the conflicts between the US and China are about the rise and future development of China, but Europe and China are both civilisations and conflicts between these two can be solved in a “civilised” manner. These also reflect how strategic narratives shape political actors' different behaviours.

In terms of the global south and other developing countries, China’s strategic narratives emphasise development issues, cultures, and history. For example, Xi told Indian Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi that both China and India are great ancient civilisations, the largest developing countries, and key members of the global south (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024h). Xi suggested the relationship between China and Thailand is like between family members who both work hard on their own developments (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2022). In the meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, China’s strategic narrative suggested that

the friendship between the two countries was from the companionship in their national liberation movements and their cooperation for global justice (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024i). Compared to Chinese strategic narratives on Europe, those on the global south and other developing countries portray China itself as a reliable partner and leader within the developing countries. At the same time, China's strategic narratives shadow its big and rising power identities in the current international order. The themes of China's strategic narratives on the global south are development and cultural and historical ties. In other words, unlike strategic narratives on Europe and the US, which frame China as joining the competition as a big power, those strategic narratives towards the global south frame it as a friendly partnership and it can lead the developing countries to resist the Western hegemony. The comparison of China's strategic narratives on Europe, the US, and developing countries unpacks the details and diversity within China's foreign policies. At the same time, this comparison shows that it is necessary to bring specific stakeholders and their distinguished contexts into the analysis of strategic narratives.

3.4 China's strategic narratives on the institution level

The concept of public diplomacy requires to focus on the foreign public. Culture and cultural institutes are key elements in the field of public diplomacy. The Chinese project Confucius Institutes started in 2004 was a flagship project of Chinese public diplomacy to the global audiences. Before 2020, the governance and operation management of the CIs were under the *Hanban*, a governmental office for promoting the Chinese language and culture overseas. After 2020, Hanban was dismissed and the project of CI was de-governmentalised. Therefore, the original public resources cannot be retrieved. CIs are currently globally marketed as a brand managed by the Chinese International Education Foundation (CIEF). In 2021, the global portal of the Confucius Institute was launched, and the Annual Development Report stated that it was the first time that the CI had its own website for staff and students as a common online home (Confucius Institute Annual Development Report 2021, 2022). This may lead to other interesting questions and research on the CIs from the global digitalisation and marketisation perspectives. Till the end of 2021, there were in total of 489 CIs and 817 CI Classrooms in 158 countries and regions. The distribution (see Table 3.1) shows that Europe holds the most CIs compared to other continents. Meanwhile, in Asia and Africa, the CI Classrooms are less than CIs; in Europe, America, and Oceania, CI Classrooms are far more than CIs, around two to three times. This shows the diversity of the local practice of CIs among different regions, which also suggests that the investigation on CIs in Europe is

necessary since the main studies on CIs are concentrated and represented by those in the US and Africa. In other words, CIs can no longer be simply considered as a tool mechanically delivering Chinese soft power from the conventional perspective.

Locations	Number of CIs	Number of CI Classrooms
Asia	135	112
Africa	63	46
Europe	180	332
America	92	249
Oceania	19	78
Total	489	817

Table 3.1: The distribution of CIs, source from the Annual Development Report 2021 (Confucius Institute Annual Development Report 2021, 2022, p. 10)

What is the Confucius Institute? By itself, the CIs are “non-profit educational institutions jointly established by Chinese and overseas partner institutions based on principles of mutual respect, friendly consultation, equality and mutual benefit” (Confucius Institute, n.d.-a). The English version website does not even fully translate the full message in the Chinese version. Directly translated from the Chinese version:

The CI is a non-profit educational institution established by Chinese and foreign partners in compliance with the principles of mutual respect, friendly consultation, and equality and mutual benefits, for the promotion of the international communication of the Chinese language, deepening the international people’s understanding about the Chinese language culture, increasing the people-to-people exchange on Chinese and foreign education. (Confucius Institute, n.d.-b)

The website of the CI portal and the official websites of individual CIs around the world do not have explicit strategic narratives on China's identity and China's relationships with others; rather, the websites focus on the CIs themselves. The strategic narratives on the CI level are conceptualised from various CIs around the world. For example, the CI in Munich introduces that "It is important to us to give a comprehensive and nuanced image of China, and to make it possible to experience Chinese culture with all the senses." (Konfuzius-Institut München, n.d.). The home page of the institute in Frankfurt suggests that "Erleben Sie mit uns die faszinierende, jahrtausendealte und gleichzeitig so moderne Welt der Sprache und Kultur Chinas" (Konfuzius-Institut Frankfurt am Main, n.d.). The Institute in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University suggests that "as its comprehensive national strength continuously increases, China's influence in international affairs and the importance of the Chinese language become increasingly notable. Learning Chinese has become increasingly popular" (Confucius Institute of Hong Kong, n.d.).

The Chinese leadership keeps an eye on the CIs. In 2013, the 3rd Plenary Session of the 18th Communist Party China made the decision and Article 41 suggested that the party and the government encouraged social organisations and Chinese capital institutions to participate in the establishment of CIs and Chinese Culture Centres, to carry out people-

to-people and cultural exchange programmes (Xinhua News Agency, 2013a). In 2009, Vice PM Li Keqiang attended the opening ceremony of the CI at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and he suggested that China had become the largest origin of international students and overseas tourists to New Zealand; New Zealand people also desired to learn Chinese and understand the Chinese culture; the new CI was a result of the practical and friendly cooperation between China and New Zealand on culture exchanges (Xinhua News Agency, 2009). The Chinese leaders have been visiting different CIs in various countries as part of their state visits, for example, Wen Jiabao went to the CIs in Hungary, Mongolia, and Spain, and Li Keqiang went to those in Belgium, Hungary, and the UK. In 2023, Xi wrote back to the teachers and students of the CI in South Africa. The letter was reported, and it says China and South Africa are both important big developing countries, the two countries hold a special relationship as brothers and comrades; Xi encourages the students to learn Chinese and welcomes them to visit China more to understand China to introduce a real, solid, comprehensive China to more friends (Xinhua News Agency, 2023).

The Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes were published in 2006 and are still widely used by CIs nowadays. The Constitution states that:

Confucius Institutes devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese

language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples, to strengthening educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and other countries, to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multiculturalism, and to constructing a harmonious world. (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2006).

This general principle of CIs presents hierarchical aims of CIs: from learning Chinese, understanding the Chinese culture, connecting educational and cultural exchanges, developing friendships between China and other nations, and finally contributing to a multicultural world.

From the strategic narratives analysis framework, the themes of strategic narratives on CIs are that the Chinese language and cultures are welcomed and should be widely accepted, and multiculturalism. The first theme, that the Chinese language and cultures are welcomed and should be widely accepted, is reflected by the confidence and pride embedded in those narratives about and by CIs. The strategic narratives about CIs present the ambition and the goodwill of China believing that the Chinese language and cultures can contribute to a harmonious and multicultural world. It is noted that the first theme does not only make the meaning of confidence and pride but also desire. This theme requires that CIs provide a channel for more people to understand and even visit China. Second, compared to the other two higher levels of strategic narratives, the theme of multiculturalism makes the strategic narratives on the CIs level modest and

less aggressive than those on the national and China-Europe levels. Meanwhile, the theme of multiculturalism also supports the meaning-making of the narrative of friendship, rather than powers, describing the connections between China and other nations. This theme is embedded in the textbooks and the analysis will be demonstrated later in the case studies.

Taking the strategic narratives and themes approach is different from what conventional soft power analysis suggests – CIs are the vehicle for spreading Chinese culture to support the Chinese hard power in a global context. First, the conventional soft power analysis considers culture and attractiveness secondary to the so-called hard power. The strategic narratives framework emphasises a more dynamic system of narratives containing both those so-called hard and soft powers/elements, which does not only see the culture as secondary.

Second, the analysis of the strategic narratives helps the investigation of the changes of narratives across space and time – the translation and localisation of certain narratives. Some strategic narratives, such as China keeps supporting and welcoming European integration, have been carried out and projected without many variations. However, some strategic narratives are changed and their meaning is re-interpreted by audiences

from the reception side. The soft power perspectives on CIs pay more attention to what kind of culture the CIs provide to students rather than the social and political meaning these Chinese classes and learning materials are delivered to students. The soft power approach also focuses on whether the local society successfully accepts the Chinese culture and whether a positive image of China is established or not, rather than how these narratives and meanings are varied by local context and the localisation of CIs. I suggest that the current framework of strategic narratives needs to unpack the themes behind the strategic narratives and see how these themes and meaning-making travel across spatial and temporal changes. However, the public information and introduction from the officials and the websites of the CIs are not sufficient to conceptualise comprehensive and concrete strategic narratives and the themes on the institutional level; the textbook analysis becomes necessary in the following chapter. Although the public information and introduction are not sufficient, it is still worth pointing out that, as perceived by the CIs themselves, China is a complex country that has thousands of years of history and a modern society at the same time. Rather than emphasising the political differences among countries, the CIs highlight the differences in culture. Furthermore, the Chinese officials emphasise that the CIs are a platform for cultural exchanges and people-to-people dialogues in the diverse international environment, which facilitates bilateral political and economic relationships.

In terms of Chinese media outlets overseas, this dissertation looks at the local Chinese media in Europe – *Nouvelles d'Europe* (NE). The Chinese ambassador to Hungary suggests that NE is a golden brand of Chinese media overseas, and NE should strengthen China's global communication capacity and well tell stories about China-Europe relations (Xuan & Li, 2024). The Chinese ambassador to Bulgaria suggested that NE should be an important bridge between China and Europe and promote the understanding of China for Europeans (Chinese Embassy to Bulgaria, 2023). In the speech at the 30th Group Study Session of the Political Bureau of the 19th CPC Central Committee which centralised the propaganda strategies, Xi emphasised that “to strengthen our international communication capacity, it is important to tell genuine and engaging stories, make our voice heard, and present an accurate, multidimensional and panoramic image of China” (Xinhua News Agency, 2021). While the Chinese strategic narratives about CIs emphasise Chinese culture and the language, those about Chinese media outlets overseas are more focusing on the mission – how China and its media can win the global contestation of narratives. From a soft power perspective, both CIs and Chinese media outlets aim to construct a favourable image of China to global audiences. However, the theme of narratives about CIs pays attention to multiculturalism and the theme of narratives about media outlets recognises the global

narrative contestation. As NE is different from the Chinese official media groups, NE is closer to Chinese diaspora communities in Europe and bridging Europe and China. In other words, NE is one of the case studies in this dissertation, and I provide new empirical analysis by looking at its translation process, and this is different from media analysis from the soft power perspective and the institutional approach.

3.5 Themes on different levels

This Chapter has given an overview of Chinese strategic narratives on three levels. The first level is the general level emphasising the changes throughout time. The second level focuses on the strategic narratives about bilateral relations, especially China-Europe relations. The third level is the institutional level which focuses on the narratives about CIs and Chinese media outlets overseas. From Table 3.2, on one hand, we see that the Chinese strategic narratives on public diplomacy and cultural exchanges on each level are divergent from each other; on the other hand, these narratives have their internal connections across the levels. For instance, “China is a civilisation” can be considered as an integrative element of the “great/powerful country”, and emphasising the cultural exchanges on the CI level is considered to deepen the

understanding of bilateral relationships between China and others, which facilitates the political and economic ties. Thus, it is essential to unpack the themes behind the strategic narratives on each level.

	Strategic narratives			Themes
	What is China?	How does China see its relationships with others?	How does China see its relationships with the world?	
The general level	Part of the international order, Peacekeeper, Strong state, Great/powerful country, Eastern power	Learn from others, Equal relationships, take the leading position	To catch up with the modernised international society, Hegemonic, the international order as a race, a community with a shared future for mankind	Multipolarity
The China-Europe level	China is a developing country.	Partners, markets, and main powers keep the world peace. China and Europe are both ancient civilisations.	China is a founder and beneficiary of the existing international order, and remains a firm defender of the current system.	No fundamental conflict of interests, Identities
The Confucius Institute level	China is a civilisation, a complex country	Emphasising on the cultural differences rather than the political ones, China is about to construct a	Diverse, a multicultural world	the Chinese language and cultures are welcomed and should be widely

		harmonious world.		accepted, multiculturalism
--	--	-------------------	--	----------------------------

Table 3.2: The strategic narratives on three levels

The theme on the general level focusing on the Chinese public diplomacy and cultural exchanges is multipolarity. It is important that this group of strategic narratives and the theme are different from those in the field of specific China-US relations or Chinese economic and military power, although there are some overlaps. The Chinese strategic narratives in this field have changed in the recent twenty to thirty years alongside the changes of the Chinese leadership. Under Xi's regime, the strategic narratives started with the "Chinese Dream" (CPC NEWS, 2012) introduced in 2012 to the domestic Chinese people and "a community with a shared future for mankind" introduced to global audiences. All these strategic narratives share the same theme of how China sees the international order and the Chinese position in this order. It is noted that the Chinese multipolarity does not mean absolute equality among sovereign states but a China-led multipolarity, or a shared leadership among China and other great powers. Furthermore, this theme of Chinese multipolarity, and other associated strategic narratives, like the Beijing consensus and China's proposals, is a counter-narrative against Western dominance and the rising narratives of "China threat" (see Broomfield, 2003; Roy, 1996; Yang & Liu, 2012).

The strategic narratives on the general level need those on the lower levels to make the meaning profound and easy to share. In other words, the strategic narratives on a higher level give the direction and the frame to those on lower levels and even to those local narratives. The lower-level strategic narratives and local narratives enrich the meaning-making of and “visualise” the strategic narratives on the higher level. In this case, strategic narratives like “a community with a shared future for mankind” and the theme of multipolarity have been deconstructed and translated into strategic narratives on the China-Europe level.

How does China counterargue the strategic narrative “China threat”? On the China-Europe level, China expresses that it is a developing country; China and the EU are partners, the main powers keep the world peace; both China and Europe are civilisations; and China is a founder, beneficiary, and defender of the current international system.

The themes behind these strategic narratives are “no fundamental conflicts of interest” and the multiple identities in a multipolar system. These strategic narratives and themes are different from those towards other countries and regions, namely the US and developing countries.

On one hand, the theme “no fundamental conflict of interest” addresses the “China threat”, which deconstructs the multipolarity as China considers Europe as one pole in the Chinese version of multipolarity. The question that arises is, if China sees both Europe and the US as poles in this multipolar system, why are Chinese strategic narratives towards these two entities different? It means that the theme of multipolarity and strategic narratives on the general level are not solid, isolated, and firmly self-evident; but they need the strategic narratives and the themes on a lower level to make the meaning possible and vivid. On the other hand, the theme of identities in the multipolar system suggests the changes and multi-face of the identity conversation between China and Europe. These Chinese claimed identities include major power, civilisation, partner, and defender, which bypass the political and ideological disputes within China-Europe relations. Although the EU and China do not have a concrete shared strategic narrative on their identities, their conversation is a joint practice for constructing the strategic narratives of both sides. The strategic narratives might be strategic and deliberately designed in the small circle of elites, but at the same time, these strategic narratives are relational.

The last level of Chinese strategic narratives in this research is the institutional level. On this level, strategic narratives concentrate on China as a civilisation, China is a

diverse and complex country, and Chinese culture promotion and language education contribute to a multicultural world. The themes behind these strategic narratives are “the Chinese language and cultures are welcomed and should be widely accepted” and multiculturalism. These two themes connect with the themes on the China-Europe level as the cultural exchanges are not the fundamental interests and enrich the identity conversation between Europe and China by adding a specific cultural layer. For instance, promoting the Chinese culture and language, which should receive more attention in the world, makes the strategic narrative of China as a founder, beneficiary, and defender of the current international order meaningful and valid as China contributes to the international order with culture. This is an extension of the meaning of strategic narratives on the China-Europe level. Furthermore, on one hand, the theme of multiculturalism connects with multipolarity as it deconstructs the polarity of not just political, economic, or military powers but also civilisations. On the other hand, the theme of multipolarity draws the boundary for the theme of multiculturalism and its strategic narratives on the institutional level. These strategic narratives on the CIs emphasise the glory and the attractiveness of the Chinese civilisation in a modest and relatively equal relationship with other countries and nations. For example, the strategic narratives on this level express the good wish to enhance the friendship between China

and others. These strategic narratives concentrate on friendship and a harmonious world rather than an interest-driven competition world.

The strategic narratives and their themes on different levels are not isolated but strongly connected. The narratives are not simply transferred from a higher level to a lower level by replacing specific technical terms. In order to further unpack the relations among these strategic narratives on different levels, the themes are essential as these themes are the common meaning-making pattern for the narratives. In this case, the themes on the three levels connect to each other. The themes on a higher level provide an abstract direction for those on a lower level, and themes on the lower-level condition and make the meaning of those on a higher level. For example, it seems that there are no relations or dynamics among the strategic narratives “China is a strong Eastern power”, “China is a developing country”, and “China is a civilisation”. However, the themes behind these strategic narratives organise the meaning-making across different levels and make the linkages among strategic narratives possible.

This chapter has not only reviewed China’s strategic narratives on different levels but also discussed the dynamics between strategic narratives and themes. In short, the strategic narratives and themes are relational. First, this relationality refers to the

internal dynamics of strategic narratives and themes across different levels. Second, relationality refers to the relations and conversations between actors constructing the strategic narratives, in this case, China and Europe. Again, from the higher level to the lower level, the strategic narratives are not simply narrowed down to specific policies. On the contrary, the meaning is enlarged and enriched across the levels. It is suggested that strategic narratives travel from the formation, projection, and reception phases (Miskimmon et al., 2017). This also means that there are more and more actors and relations emerging and involved as the strategic narratives travel away from the formation centre. In other words, we cannot simply take the strategic narratives from the small circle of political elites and test the responses of these strategic narratives from audiences as the reception, and finally assess whether the projection is successful or not.

The strategic narratives are translated and (re-)interpreted on each level as new actors and new relations are involved. The strategic narratives do not stop the journey here but continue to the individual perceptions and daily practices. These local narratives, although they might not be as structured and tactical as strategic narratives, are part of the journey. On these three levels in this chapter, Chinese strategic narratives and themes seem relatively well connected and coherent. However, the relationships among

the narratives and themes might be different if we take the local narratives into account.

The thematic analysis and the themes that serve as the shared meaning-making pattern of narratives are still essential to local narratives and the dynamics between local narratives and strategic narratives. Here, the local narratives and strategic narratives are classified for analytical purposes only, which does not necessarily mean that ontologically there are two kinds of separate narratives. In this chapter, while the strategic narratives focused on are those closer to the political power centre and the formation process, the local narratives are those away from the political power centre and involve more individual actors and social relations in a local context. This is the reason why the review of strategic narratives in this chapter is essential and it serves better analysis of the local narratives and translation process in the textbooks and *Nouvelle d'Europe*. From this perspective, this dissertation goes further and analyses the local narratives, which extend the scale of the Chinese strategic narratives in Europe and fill the gap of the neglected role of local narratives and the translation process in the framework of strategic narratives.

Chapter 4 Road to Success, Textbook Analysis in the Austrian Case

This chapter analyses the textbooks used in CIs across Europe with the thematic analysis approach, specifically on the Austrian case – the Confucius Institute in Vienna. The thematic analysis identifies the themes embedded in the textbooks that are deliberately designed and promoted. These themes and textbook presentations reveal how language textbooks present China and the Chinese culture, and unpack how the textbook themes illustrate, support, or even contradict the Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe. In other words, this chapter analyses how textbooks translate strategic narratives to a local level and how strategic narratives are translated into people-to-people diplomacy. Unlike some of the conventional studies (e.g. Pan, 2013; Shuto, 2018; Yang, 2010) on the CIs that focus on their efficiencies in terms of whether CIs successfully deliver a positive image of China to global audiences, this research pays additional attention to the Chinese language textbooks used in the CIs. Chapter 2 has illustrated the significance of textbook analysis to both the CI studies and the relations between strategic narratives and local narratives. The textbook analysis bridges the Chinese strategic narratives on the top level and local narratives on the ground, which addresses how Chinese strategic narratives reach and speak to the public.

4.1 Chinese strategic narratives in an Austrian local context and the bilateral relationship

China and Austria established the “Friendly Strategic Partnership” in 2018 and this partnership has not been changed for years. From the Chinese side, although Austria is in the centre of Europe connecting the east and west of the continent, Austria is not a top priority of Chinese foreign policy towards Europe. The strategic narratives on the top level about the Austria-China relations emphasise the economic ties and cultural exchanges. For instance, in the latest guidance for outbound investment cooperation from the Chinese governmental bureaus, Austria is described as

Austria is located in the heart of Europe, a country known for its beautiful scenery, developed economy, and rich history and culture. Austria has a relatively small land area, roughly equivalent to the size of Chongqing in China, and its population is comparable to that of Hainan Province. In 2023, Austria ranked 14th in the world for GDP per capita. The country has a stable political environment and good public safety. Its capital, Vienna, has been repeatedly ranked as the world's most livable city and is renowned as the “Capital of Music”. (Department of Outbound Investment and Economic Cooperation Ministry of Commerce et al., 2024, p. III)

In terms of economic relations, the bilateral trade volume between China and Austria was 12.55 billion USD in 2023, China’s investments in Austria only reached 0.59 billion USD by February 2024, and the total Austria investments in China were 2.93

billion by February 2024 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024k; Xiao, 2024).

These numbers are relatively tiny compared to the bilateral trade between China and Germany, 206.78 billion USD in 2023 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024l), and between China and France, 78.94 billion USD in 2023 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024m). The cultural exchanges between China and Austria happen on both high politics and public diplomacy levels. In 2011, Chinese President Hu Jintao visited the Austrian National Library in Vienna, a local farm family in St. Gilgen, and Mozart-Wohnhaus in Salzburg. In the official meetings between Presidents from the two countries, such as when Hu met Heinz Fischer in 2011 in Vienna and Xi met Alexander Van der Bellen in 2018 in Beijing, the international order and global affairs are not the key concerns. The key concerns and topics are bilateral economic trade and cultural exchanges. For instance, Xi discussed with Van der Bellen that China and Austria both had long and great cultures and the people from both sides were friendly to each other (Xinhua News Agency, 2018).

In terms of cultural engagements, musical concerts are the predominant Chinese events in Austria. For example, multiple Chinese concerts, with Chinese musical instruments and organised by Chinese musical groups, are held regularly during the Spring Festival every year in the main concert halls in Vienna, like China Traditional Orchestra of

Conservatory of Music performed the 25th Grand Chinese New Year concert at the Wiener Konzerthaus on 2nd February 2025 (see Wiener Konzerthaus, n.d.), China Qingdao Traditional Chinese Orchestral Music Society performed the Chinese traditional music at the Vienna Musikverein on 3rd February 2025 (see Musikverein, n.d.). The first Chinese orchestra to perform in Europe can be traced back to 1998 at the Musikverein (Wiener Konzerthaus, n.d.). Not just well-established Chinese musicians come to Vienna to perform but also Chinese students and youths visit the Musikverein where the annual New Year's Concert is performed by the Vienna Philharmonic. The Vienna Philharmonic was the first foreign orchestra to visit China after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2023 (Botschaft der Volksrepublik China in der Republik Österreich, 2024). At the same time, the CI Vienna also organise small Chinese concerts from time to time, like "A Night of Chinese Music" held in October 2023 (see Konfuzius-Institut an der Universität Wien, n.d.). The annual New Years's Concert at the Vienna Musikverein has been live broadcasted by the Chinese Central Television to Chinese audiences across the country since 1989 (CCTV, 2008). These musical events show that the Chinese's understanding and perceptions of Vienna, or Austria, are strongly associated with Western classical music – the capital of music. The music events enhance the popularity of Vienna and Austria , 43 thousand Chinese tourists visited Austria in 2022 (Botschaft der Volksrepublik China in der Republik

Österreich, 2024), and the number of Chinese tourists keeps growing as many Chinese now are interested in outdoor activities and nature in Austria (Wang, 2024).

As a key player in the cultural exchanges between China and Austria, the Confucius Institute at the University of Vienna was established in 2006. A second CI in Austria established in 2010 is located in the University of Graz. Both CIs provide Chinese language courses to the students at these two universities and the public in the local communities. Both CIs also provide professional Chinese courses like business Chinese. In the interview with the Director of CI Vienna, Prof. Richard Trappl suggested that the institute offered more than Chinese language courses but also cultural events like music concerts and Chinese poetry competitions. The CI Vienna also frequently organises workshops, public lectures, academic colloquiums, and art exhibitions. More importantly, Prof. Trappl suggested that the CI actually helped the Department of East Asian Studies at the University: many students enrolled in the degree programme just for the language courses and these students quit the programme once they finished the language studies. This means that the quota of the department is wasted. The CI is valuable as it perfectly serves those students who only want to learn the language and saves resources in the Department. The CI Vienna has hundreds of students every year, and the language courses are provided all year round. Besides regular courses, the CI

Vienna also provides individual courses and in-house courses tailored to companies or other organisations. From the news reports and social media posts, not just young students but also middle-aged and elderly people attend the events held by the institute. In short, the bilateral relationships between China and Austria focus on economic and cultural engagements. The CI Vienna is one of the key and regular institutes facilitating the cultural engagements and public diplomacy between these two countries, and the textbooks in the institute used for years are the primary source to analyse how Chinese strategic narratives are translated to the Austrian local level.

4.2 Textbooks and strategic narratives

In this chapter, the textbooks used at CI Vienna are analysed with the thematic analysis approach. The following sections will introduce the thematic analysis approach and explain how the textbooks are analysed with NVivo. The preliminary findings from the textbooks will then be demonstrated, followed by the analysis of the translation of strategic narratives in textbooks.

Empirically speaking, the Chinese language textbooks receive less attention compared to the language textbooks of English – a Lingua Franca. Unlike exiting studies, this research analyses the CIs and their Chinese language teaching in the circumstance of asymmetric positions between the Chinese and English languages. Also, the empirical studies on foreign language teaching focus more on the education at the secondary and primary levels (e.g. Huang, 2019; Lin et al., 2020). The CIs are commonly cooperating with or integrating within local universities where the students are older, and sometimes are public, which means the student audiences of CIs are more diverse. Theoretically, the perspectives from the IR discipline give deeper and more critical ideas to linguistics and education disciplines, unpacking not just the relationships between languages, or between language teaching and communication; but also the relationships between language teaching and national strategic narratives, and between language/culture exchanges and national images constructions. This chapter identifies the themes embedded in the textbooks, analyses these themes and textbook presentations to address how language textbooks present China and Chinese culture, and unpack how the textbook themes may illustrate, support, or even contradict China’s strategic narratives.

Thematic analysis is adopted in the investigation of the textbooks. The thematic analysis approach helps to identify the themes which “capture something important

about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Identifying themes, which is different from identifying topics, helps not only clarify what the textbooks are talking about but also discover the pattern of meaning-making behind the topics. Language textbooks are normally edited by topics and units. Taking the thematic analysis, especially the latent approach, can go beyond the topics explicitly designed. For example, units are named after “environment protection”, “Chinese family”, and “going to the bank”; thematic analysis can help go beyond these edited and structured topics for language study to identify the common themes/patterns underlying these units. In other words, taking the thematic analysis approach deconstructs the textbooks’ structure serving the language education purpose and reveals the political dimension which is embedded in the social context and the engagements of individuals.

Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) suggest steps for conducting thematic analysis: familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally writing up. For the first step, I made myself familiar with the textbook sets which I collected from the CIs. Before the following steps, I went through all the content of the textbooks and gave myself a general picture of the whole textbook set. After the first step, I had a general idea about

what topics were covered in the textbook set. More importantly, I briefly finished the learning journey, knowing where the textbooks started for beginners and where they stopped for the most advanced learners. In the second step, generating the initial codes from the textbooks means extracting data from texts and maybe images within textbooks, putting aside linguistic knowledge, and focusing more on the meaning-making patterns behind the storytelling. Then to generate initial codes, I used NVivo to help me digitalise the data, organise codes, and conceptualise the sub-themes. I took my own advantage of understanding the Chinese language and the social meaning behind it to support my reflective and thoughtful engagement with the dataset.

In practice, I went through all the textbooks I had and made the transcripts of the textbooks in English based on the coding questions: how China sees itself, how China sees its position with other countries, and how China locates itself in the global order. These three questions are the key clues for the transcript-making process. First, these three questions are strongly associated with the research questions of this dissertation, and these three questions match the types of strategic narratives – system, identity, and issue narratives. Second, the textbooks are Chinese language textbooks and the content includes texts, practices, and images. Not every single word or activity in the textbook is related to the research questions. For example, the textbook illustrates numbers in

Chinese or asks students to practise speaking by describing the furniture in the room.

Thus, based on the coding questions, I extracted the key texts and information from the textbooks and translated them into English to make the transcript. The transcripts were inputted into NVivo for generating and analysing the codes and themes.

In terms of translation, four principles were followed to ensure the fidelity and fluency of translation outputs. First, in most cases, I follow the literal meaning and use general English to translate. Second, if the translation based on the literature cannot fully capture the essential social, cultural, and emotional meaning and expression behind it, the free translation is adopted in order to unveil the implicit meanings mentioned above.

The free translation prioritises the fidelity of meaning over grammar. In other words, if the literal meanings match the social-cultural meaning after the translation, the direct literal translation is adopted; however, if the literal translation conflicts with the social-cultural meaning, the free translation is superior to the literal translation. The third principle is that the specific terms and proper nouns, especially political and/or governmental institutions and positions, are translated by following the Chinese official translation. For example, while the 故宫 (transliteration: gù gōng) is translated as the Forbidden City which is widely accepted in general, the 故宫博物館 (transliteration: gù gōng bó wù guǎn) is translated as the Palace Museum (The Palace Museum, n.d.)

which is following the official name of the current museum institution in Beijing, rather than translated as the Forbidden City Museum. The fourth principle of translation is consistency. For some terms, sentences, and topics that appear more than once in different volumes of the whole textbook set, the same English translation is applied to all in order to avoid any confusion or ambiguity.

4.3 Road to Success, textbooks used in Austria

Road to Success (RTS) is a set of Chinese language textbooks used by the Confucius Institute at the University of Vienna. This set of textbooks is designed and published by the Beijing Language and Culture University Press. The whole set consists of 22 volumes, from the threshold to the advanced levels. According to the textbook itself, these volumes are designed for non-native learners. The whole 22 volumes are divided into three phases: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. I have accessed nine volumes out of 22 (the CI Vienna only provided six volumes and another three were obtained from online resources) and these nine volumes have covered these three phases. These nine volumes are sufficient to present the themes and design patterns of the whole set. The textbooks suggest that students shall be able to learn from around

100 words on the lower elementary level at the very beginning to around 6000 words on the advanced level at the end. These volumes also correspond to the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) which is the Chinese proficiency test that is comparable to the international English proficiency tests, like IELTS or TOEFL. The CI Vienna is eligible to host the HSK test for students. In other words, the usage of RTS textbooks is for learning the Chinese language not only based on personal interests but also for passing the standardised and institutionalised tests.

According to the Director of CI Vienna, not many students can reach the advanced level, which means that the majority of students are only involved with elementary and intermediate textbooks. The themes in the elementary and intermediate levels do not explicitly point to or carry out the strategic narratives of China. From this perspective, the projection is not successful if we only see the textbooks and the levels of study. However, these themes on the lower level are essential for students to reach higher-level themes which are closer to the strategic narratives. In other words, the themes embedded in volumes on different levels cannot be isolated, and the textbooks need to be analysed as a whole set.

4.3.1 The coding and the themes generating process

The textbook analysis first identifies the key information in the textbooks based on the coding questions of how China sees itself, its relations with others, and its position in the world order. This first step of information extraction filters those texts and information that are purely linguistic- and grammar-oriented. For example, pages 68 and 69 of the lower elementary textbook present two paragraphs introducing foreign students living in Beijing. The text “there are many foreign students here, I do not like to live on the campus” is extracted as it shows a large number of students coming to China for studies, and more importantly, not everyone likes the study environment due to various reasons. This relates to what kind of daily life in China is pictured to foreign students before they go to visit China if possible. However, in the same paragraph, “From my home to the campus, [I] can take buses and the underground too” is excluded for information extraction as this sentence purely helps students to familiarise themselves with how to talk about public transportation in Chinese. Regarding the same topic of public transportation, “taking the bus is convenient and easy in Beijing” is included in the transcript, because this line presents the value judgement and carries the message that Beijing prioritises public transport for the people. The extracted

information was listed in a systematic way in an Office Word doc. form that lists the textbook volume number and the page number.

The second step is to input the data to NVivo. NVivo helps to organise and generate the codes and conceptualise the themes of the textbooks. More importantly, NVivo can help to keep the codes and themes of the same series of textbooks consistent and integral.

All the information extracted from the first step is considered as a database which is inputted into NVivo. Hundreds of codes are manually generated from the database.

Moreover, one particular text may generate several codes. For example, in the Advance 2 level, the textbook has one piece of text about Beijing city and the Shichahai district.

The text “Shichahai is the traditional sightseeing and reserved residency area with old Beijing characteristics which reserves rich folk culture in Beijing” is coded as “Chinese cities”, “the Chinese modern society”, and “introducing Beijing”. These codes are later conceptualised into different sub-themes and themes.

The third step is to conceptualise the sub-themes and themes from these codes. Merging codes into themes based on their “topics” might be the first phase, which, however, cannot produce the final themes. Themes ask for the common meaning-making patterns behind these codes which requires more attention to the internal relations among these

codes. In other words, conceptualising themes does not simply summarise codes to a “topic” but reveals the common patterns and echoes to the research questions. The next phase of the conceptualisation is to re-visit these primary themes to see whether there are any overlaps among these themes and whether these themes are consistent with the database or not.

4.3.2 The landscape and distribution of themes

There were 265 codes coded from the RTS based on the three coding questions. These 265 codes were analysed and generated twenty primary sub-themes (see Table 4.1). These twenty sub-themes were further conceptualised into three main themes. From the distribution, we can see that these sub-themes are not weighted equally. For example, “Chinese culture & arts, and their supporting elements”, “Chinese families and the very Chinese people”, and “How China sees the West” appear in eight volumes out of nine. However, the themes “the international affairs” and “the Silk Road” only appear in two volumes. “The Silk Road” is directly introduced only in the advanced level textbooks: the Lower Advanced 2 and Advanced 2.

Sub-Themes	Files	Files %	References
Chinese culture & arts, and their supporting elements	8	88.89	110

Chinese families and the very Chinese people	8	88.89	82
How China sees the West	8	88.89	104
The Chinese modern society	8	88.89	105
What is China	8	88.89	52
Direct comparison between China and others	7	77.78	19
Study in China and (foreign) students' life in China	7	77.78	89
China's politics and its political structure	6	66.67	68
The environmental issues	6	66.67	64
Chinese economy and market	6	66.67	44
Chinese history and historical events	5	55.56	36
China's values, philosophies, traditions	4	44.45	44
Chinese people overseas	4	44.45	7
Education issues in China	4	44.45	13
China's development path and projects	3	33.34	8
China and Europe	2	22.23	9
China civil society	2	22.23	11
China's aims	2	22.23	14
The International affairs	2	22.23	16
The Silk Road	2	22.23	4

Table 4.1. sub-themes of RTS

From Table 4.1, the frequency of sub-themes appearing in different volumes approximately matches the weights of the sub-themes conceptualised from the corresponding codes (number of references). In particular, the sub-theme “Chinese culture & arts, and their supporting elements” is covered in eight volumes out of nine and the code references under this theme make up 12 per cent of the code database. One exception is the sub-theme “Direct comparison between China and others” which is covered in seven volumes but its code references only account for 2 per cent of the total

codes. This means that, on one hand, the direct comparison between China and others is important but the textbooks do not explicitly present the comparison to students. On the other hand, the textbooks try to dominantly present the students with the elements constituting what China is. The top four sub-themes with the most weight are “Chinese culture & arts, and their supporting elements”, “Chinese families and the very Chinese people”, “How China sees the West”, and “The Chinese modern society”.

4.4 Textbook themes and the translation of strategic narratives

From the coding and the sub-themes, three textbook themes are conceptualised: “China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners”, “China is a complex and united country in a modern era”, and “China is not a threat to the current international order”.

The first theme “China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners” presents the identity of China and contributes to the meaning of the strategic narrative of “diversity of civilisation” as part of China’s worldview. The second theme “China is a complex and united country in a modern era” is the translation of the strategic narrative “development is the top priority and China is a developing country”. This theme also

echoes the strategic narratives emphasising the sovereignty and integrity of China, namely the “One China Principle”. While the first theme pays more attention to the past, the second one emphasises the present. The last theme “China is not a threat to the current international order” translates China’s systemic strategic narrative “Harmonious World” into the textbooks and how China sees its relationships with others.

It is noted that this set of textbooks was published in 2008 and the analysis primarily pays attention to how the strategic narratives before 2008 (during Hu Jintao’s regime) were translated into the textbooks. More importantly, the strategic narratives on the top level may have significantly changed after 2012, though my analysis shows the continuity of the strategic narratives between the two Chinese leaderships. These textbooks are still used by the CI Vienna which was confirmed by the Director of the institute. If the textbooks and the contents were outdated and dramatically de-coupled from the strategic narratives and China’s current image under Xi’s regime, this set of textbooks should have been replaced around 2012 already. Also, the textbooks are considered as a relatively stable presentation platform of both strategic and local narratives, compared to those in newspapers and other public media which change their wording and narration immediately following the change of the leadership. In other words, the textbook analysis is essential as it contributes to unpacking the changes and

continuity of strategic narratives, and it deconstructs the strategic narratives across political leadership on a lower level. These textbooks were published in 2008, which does not mean that they only reflect and translate the Chinese strategic narratives before 2008 or 2012, but they also serve the emergence and the changes of the new strategic narratives.

Rather than continuously process the sub-themes to themes with NVivo, the three themes are conceptualised from the sub-themes and their associated codes without NVivo, because certain codes and sub-themes may serve two or multiple themes at the same time and the technical process of NVivo limits the conceptualisation from a holistic perspective and to unpack the translation linkages between textbook narratives and strategic narratives. Each of the three themes is discussed in turn below.

4.4.1 China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners

One of the major bases where this set of textbooks is established is the Chinese culture and traditions. The first theme “China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners” is associated with sub-themes like “Chinese culture & arts, and their supporting elements” and “study in China and (foreign) students’ life in China. While the second

theme “China is a complex and united country in a modern era” targets the strategic narratives about China’s identity as a united developing country, the first theme “China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners” from the textbooks lines up with China’s strategic narrative of a civilisation which it wants to project to the global audiences. The focus on China’s culture and traditions serves China’s strategic narrative of “anti-hegemony” which was discussed in Chapter 3. In particular, these local narratives focusing on the culture and traditions change the political and military contexts of strategic narrative “anti-hegemony” to a cultural one. This theme tries to de-politicise China and its image as a rich culture country rather than a strongly different country in politics.

This de-politicising or culturalising narrating in the textbooks is a translation of China’s system strategic narrative of “diversity of civilisations”. Along with the “Harmonious World”, Hu illustrated the importance of the diversity of civilisations:

The diversity of civilisations is a basic feature of human society and an important driving force behind human progress. In the course of human history, all civilizations have, in their own way, made a positive contribution to the overall human progress. It is their differences that allow them to learn from one another and grow stronger together. Uniformity, if imposed on them, can only take away their vitality and cause them to become rigid and decline. The world's civilisations may differ in age, but none is better or more superior than others. Differences in history, culture, social system and mode of development should not become barriers to exchanges between countries, let

alone excuses for confrontation. (The Central People's Government of the PRC, 2005)

The strategic narrative of “diversity of civilisations” is not only an integral part of the “Harmonious World”, but also a counter-response against the narrative of the “China threat”. The textbooks then translate this counter-response on the top level into specific cultural elements, like Chinese ancient philosophy, Chinese chopsticks, Chinese ancient clothes, Chinese dialects, and so on. This translation transfers the narrative battle over economic power and political ideological difference to cultural differences.

This theme of “China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners” serves China's strategic narratives specifically towards Europe. On multiple occasions, China's leaders appreciate that China and Europe are both great civilisations and there are no fundamental conflicts of interest between these two actors. On the Chinese strategic narratives level, disputes on political values, capitalism-vs-socialism ideologies, human rights issues, and so on, are not and should not become the reasons for conflicts between China and Europe. China considers both Europe and China to be great powers of the multipolar international order and, to some extent, they share the vision of the US hegemony. This understanding of fundamental conflicts of interest is translated into the textbooks as the textbook narratives are de-politicised and culturalised. Although the textbooks indeed present minor lines in secondary language exercises about the

economic disputes between China and European countries, the main narrating of Europe and the relationship between China and Europe is appreciation and long historical connections between the two civilisations. For instance, in the Advanced 1 volume, the same volume which accuses the US CIA of spying on China, one long text introduces an odd village in the northwest of China called Zelai. The villagers in Zelai have different customs and appearance from the Chinese majority. The text tells that scientific DNA tests show that the villagers carry European blood lineage, and suggests that these villagers are the descendants of a missing Roman army in history and concludes “it has great meaning in the history of East-West exchange” (page 134).

4.4.2 China is a complex and united country in the modern era

While the first theme is associated with the narratives and stories more about the engagements and exchanges between Chinese and foreigners, as foreigners and students are attracted by the Chinese culture and traditions, the second theme “China is a complex and united country in a modern era” pays more attention to the local Chinese daily life in the present, which is the translation of strategic narrative “development is the top priority and China is a developing country”. In particular, the second theme covers two clusters of narratives in the textbooks, first the development achievements

and problems in the country, and second, the solidarity of the country. This theme is associated with sub-themes and codes like “China’s development path and projects”, “the environmental issues”, and “the Chinese modern society”.

First, the textbooks present plenty of Chinese development achievements, mainly in infrastructure construction and environmental protection, to convey the message that development is the top priority of the country, as the country invested a lot and achieved a lot. For example, the textbooks introduce the Qinghai-Tibet railway construction which links Tibet and the mainland, the long-distance lifestyle of white-collar families living in Shanghai as the city grows too fast, and the Three-North Shelter Forest Programme holding back the expansion of the desert in the north of China. These development achievement examples in the textbooks highlight how development brings a better life to Chinese people, which aligns with China’s strategic narratives on development whose narration centres on the people and life quality.

More importantly, the textbooks translate the strategic narratives about development by revealing the problems in China. Under the sub-themes of “environmental issues”, “the education issues”, and “the Chinese modern society”, the environmental, educational equality, and gender equality issues, which are barely discussed in domestic textbooks

in China or the official propaganda serving as the China's soft power, are revealed in the textbooks used at CI Vienna. For example, the textbooks outline that the environment got worse in the North of the country in the last century. One essay criticises the phenomena that Chinese pupils are over-stressed under the current education system and many Chinese university students cannot find a job after their graduation. The textbooks also compare women in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and suggest that those Chinese women in big cities have more chances to become professionals, while those in other regions are tied to family and marriage. These problems revealed do not construct a negative image of how bad China is; rather, they construct a victim and hard-working image of China facing development issues. The textbooks finely present these problems as inevitable mistakes on the path of development, like environmental issues and education issues due to urbanisation and overpopulation. Such narrating also can be found on the highest strategic narrative level. For instance, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao stated at the China-Europe Commercial Conference 2024: "Someone is worried about the development of China, such a huge 'animal', will threaten other countries, which is nonsense. China is a country with big export and import volumes; [...] like many other countries, China's development also faces resources and environmental issues" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2004).

Even more interestingly, the textbooks indirectly blame the problems in China on those developed countries. For example, in the Advanced 1 volume, the textbook suggests that

there are many people on the earth; because of the development of the economy, energy has become a very basic need. [...] Any country that wants to increase the living quality, to develop the economy, cannot live without energy. [...] Developed countries own around 10 % population of the globe but consume almost 70% of the global energy. (page 207)

Under this theme, the textbooks present both achievements and problems of development in China. These stories and narratives in the textbooks translate the strategic narrative of “development is the top priority of China” and explain why this is the case for China as a developing country. More importantly, the narratives reveal problems in China that contribute to the strategic narratives that China asks for new global governance to protect its development rights against the developed countries.

The local narratives associated with this second textbook theme, together with the strategic narrative “China is a developing country”, may also help us review how China understands development. From the textbook narratives, the development is mainly associated with the stories and narratives about economic growth and people’s quality of life. Although China also advocates and aligns with the latest norms of “sustainable development”, Chinese development strongly rests on economic and material aspects.

In the textbooks, the discussion about development, and its achievements, with examples of Chinese companies going abroad and foreign investments in China, also connects to the strategic narrative of Chinese identity as a huge market towards Europe (see Embassy of the PRC in the US, 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2004; The Central People's Government of the PRC, 2009, 2012). For example, Wen (The Central People's Government of the PRC, 2009) suggests that “the EU is the largest economy in the world, China is the largest developing country in the world, strengthening the cooperation between China and the EU fulfils the fundamental interests of both sides”.

The second cluster of narratives under this theme covers the sub-themes and codes of “China's national development programmes”, “introducing Taiwan”, “Tibet is beautiful”, “China is a multi-nation country”, and so on. In particular, the narratives introduce the diversity across the country from the geographical landscapes to spoken dialects. In the Advanced 2 volume, in an exercise on page 40, students are asked to extend the sentences based on the given short phrases. It says that the mountains on the Taiwan island go from North to South, the central Yu Mountain just like the back of the whole Island. In the west of the island, it is the 4000m high Yu Mountain which is the highest mountain in the east of China. On page 44, a travel essay talks about Xinjiang

and the author of the essay “cannot stop thinking about Zhangqian”. Zhangqian (around BC 175-114), in the mainstream narrative of Chinese history, was a great politician and traveller who connected the Chinese central government and the “west region” (Xinjiang) and established the “Silk Road”. His journey dramatically contributed to the governance of the “West region” under the central government in the Chinese empire later.

In terms of Tibet, the textbooks introduce the Qinghai-Tibet railway construction. The majority of the text talking about Tibet focuses on how difficult the construction was as the Chinese wanted to maximally protect the local environment which was dramatically different from the rest of China. The success of the construction is concluded by the text:

If we count from the 1958 Qinghai-Tibet railway construction phase I, it took 48 years from preparation to whole-line completion. The opening of the Qinghai-Tibet railway filled the gap that there was no railway in Tibet which takes 1/8 of China’s territory – all 34 provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities including Taiwan. (page 147)

At a glance, these narratives suggest how diverse and different China is. However, the message behind them is that these territories are part of China. The narratives about these territories are under the framework of one solid China. “China’s sovereignty” and “One China Principle” these specific terms are not in the textbooks. However, the

strategic narratives of the “One China Principle” and the “respect of sovereignty” are translated into the diversity of these territories in China and how China helps these regions to develop.

It is noted that, even on the issue of sovereignty, the textbook narratives still try to de-politicise the issue by separating the state from the Communist Party. Frequently in the strategic narratives, especially to domestic audiences, the Chinese nation-state, the Chinese people, and the Chinese Communist Party are integrated as one. The Chinese Communist Party represents the interests of all Chinese people of the Chinese nation-state. Here, the textbooks separate the Party from the state and Chinese culture, which shows that the local narratives do not always follow the strategic narratives when local narratives face different audiences through different project conduits.

4.4.3 China is not a threat to the current international order

The last theme “China is not a threat to the current international order” covers various topics and linguistic practices in the textbooks. This theme is the translation of Hu’s promotion of the “Harmonious World” (和諧世界 *hé xié shì jiè*) in textbooks. This “Harmonious World” is a foreign policy alter ego of “Harmonious Society” (和諧社會

hé xié shè huì) under Hu Jintao's regime (see Bin, 2008; Zheng & Tok, 2007). More importantly, it gives vivid demonstrations on the ground level of what a "Harmonious World" is and how it should be. It is noted that this harmonious world is a Chinese harmonious world – a Chinese worldview and its system strategic narratives to the global audiences. The first two themes are the translations of Chinese strategic narratives about how China sees itself and its relations with others, and this third theme translates Chinese systematic strategic narratives into local narratives in the textbooks.

In particular, the theme "China is not a threat to the current international order" can be traced in several prominent scenarios, topics, and stories in the textbooks. First, in the lower-level textbook volumes, the contents pay extreme attention to introduce the study and living in China, namely Beijing. On one hand, the textbooks serve as an introductory guidance handbook for foreign students who want to go to China. The lower-level textbook volumes introduce the language practices of how to exchange money, how to take buses in Beijing, and how to visit other cities in China with public transportation.

On the other hand, these all try to show a positive and easy-life image in China as the Chinese local universities and local Chinese people would take care of them, and the

Chinese people are friendly. For instance, on pages 42-43 in Upper Elementary 2, a foreign student goes to a local park in Beijing, the foreign students see that Chinese people are running, dancing, and doing sports. The local people are interested in this foreign student and “they were friendly answering my questions as I was a ‘Laowai’ (a general nickname of foreigners in Chinese)”. At the end of the story, this foreign student starts to learn Taichi from a Chinese master practising in the park, and the foreign student concludes “I am crazy about Taichi now”. The strategic narrative “Harmonious World” is translated into the comfortable life and friendly Chinese helping foreigners in the textbooks.

Second, the theme “China is not a threat to the current international order” is presented by narratives and stories about how China is open to foreign products and cultures; and many of these are under the sub-theme “how China sees the West”. For example, in the Lower Intermediate 1 volume, there is a sentence-making task and the content is about purchasing a family car. Different family members have their own preferences, the brother prefers Japanese cars as they are more energy efficient but the father suggests German cars as they have better quality. The textbooks also introduce that Chinese students learn foreign languages, like French and German, and would like to go to France, Germany, and Italy for higher education. An essay on pages 77-78 in the Lower

Intermediate 1 volume tells the story of a Chinese girl moving to Canada without any friends or relatives. The girl realised that her top priority was to learn French and she received plenty of help from her neighbours even though she could only communicate with her poor French. After living a while in the house, the Chinese girl got along with an old local lady living in the same house. The Canadian old lady said that the Chinese girl was her Chinese daughter and she was the girl's Canadian mother, when the girl moved out from the house. These stories and narratives in the textbooks show that foreign cultures and products are welcome in China, and even Chinese people are eager to learn and understand others as they go overseas and enjoy friendly relationships with the locals. In other words, these daily life examples and narratives try to state that China does not stand in opposition to the West, rather it embraces foreign cultures and products. This theme and the narratives associated separate China from the Western strategic narrative of China is a threat.

Third, without any doubts, the textbooks pay extreme attention to introducing Chinese cultures, traditions, values, and customs, which are coded under sub-themes "Chinese culture & arts, and their supporting elements" and "China's values, philosophies, and traditions". It is noted that when the textbooks introduce the positiveness of Chinese civilisation, the textbooks' narratives restrict the influence of Chinese culture. The

textbooks emphasise the uniqueness of Chinese culture and traditions which are specifically based on the land of China. The textbooks do not frame the Chinese culture and civilisation as universal or argue that they should be learned by everyone around the world. When the textbooks present the popularity of Chinese culture, the textbooks translate the abstract “culture” or “civilisation” into specific elements, like Chinese cuisine, Chinese Taichi, or Chinese tea. These specific Chinese elements are popular and welcomed by local people in other countries. The message behind these narratives is that China wants to distance itself from hegemony – Chinese culture and values are great and welcomed by others but China is not a hegemony. These local narratives in the textbooks support the meaning-making of strategic narrative of “anti-hegemony”, particularly against the US hegemony, and the meaning-making of “multilateralism” which frequently appears in Chinese strategic narratives.

Speaking of hegemony, the last point under the theme “China is not a threat” is that the textbooks illustrate the dark history of the US which points to the US hegemony. In the Advanced 1 volume, the textbook introduces the Hakka Tulou as an example of world cultural heritage in an essay within the unit presenting the minorities in China:

In the 60s, the US CIA found something like a nuclear plant in the mountains of Fujian from satellite photos, which caused panic in the White House. Later, US intelligence went to Tulou in person, and found out that the nuclear plant was a circular residential house of hundreds of people. (page 100)

This narrative not only shows the readers that the US monitors other countries, but also that the US as a hegemony does not respect others' cultures. The textbooks appreciate aspects of other countries, like Shakespeare in the UK, the highly developed economy of Australia, and Napoleon as the great militarist and politician in France. In contrast, the textbooks demonstrate the dark side of slave history in the US and how the US government brutally oppressed the indigenous people. In short, the textbook narratives take the US hegemony as an example and target to differentiate China, as China is not a threat or a hegemony. The textbooks translate the "Harmonious World" into the theme of "China is not a threat to the current international order" in this set of textbooks, and there are three clusters of narratives behind this theme: Chinese people are friendly and take care of foreigners in China, China is open to foreign cultures and products, China's culture and values are great but not universal. The highly political wording and narrating in Hu's speech on the "Harmonious World" are translated into daily life engagements and practice as the illustrations, and the key to this translation is the theme of "China is not a threat to the current international order".

4.5 The continuity of textbook narratives and strategic narratives

The strategic narratives are translated into the local narratives in the textbooks used by CI Vienna. For example, the strategic narrative of the “Harmonious World” of Hu’s government is translated into the theme of “China is not a threat to the current international order” in this set of textbooks. At the same time, these narratives in textbooks serve as a discursive basis on the ground for the emergence of new strategic narratives of the new leadership after 2012. In other words, the strategic narratives on the top level may significantly change due to the leadership, while the local narratives in the textbooks reflect continuity as the change of strategic narratives cannot emerge from a vacuum. The textbooks translate the strategic narratives before 2012, and they also contribute to the strategic narratives after 2012.

First, one of the top system strategic narratives projected by Xi is “a community with a shared future for mankind (人類命運共同體)”. Here, the Chinese term 共同體 (gòng tóng tǐ) is translated as *community* in English. In the RTS textbooks which were published in 2008, the term 共同體 already appears on page 203 in the Advanced 2 volume. This term appears in an essay talking about sustainable and scientific development. The textbooks specifically give a footnote to explain what 共同體 is:

“the collective community comprises of people under the same conditions”. Although the specific narrating of the community (共同體) might be different from the 2008 textbooks and what Xi advocates after 2012, it shows that the new strategic narratives do not come from nowhere and there is a long discursive and subtle preparation of the formation and emergence of new strategic narratives. This is not to say that the Xi’s current strategic narratives come from this set of textbooks. However, it is suggested that even though the textbooks were published beforehand, the local narratives in the textbooks still play a role in the formation and projection of new strategic narratives. More importantly, in order to reveal the continuity and changes between new and old strategic narratives, it is necessary to dig down into those less strategic and everyday local narratives, and the textbooks used in CIs are a perfect example.

In the textbooks, the everyday life of Chinese people and how Chinese people work for their modernisation serve the strategic narrative of “a community with a shared future for mankind” or the “China dream”, as global prosperity benefits from China’s development, according to these strategic narratives. The textbook examples of domestic development achievements serve a more “aggressive” China defending its national interests on the global stage and show how China now is a leader of the global south leading developing countries against Western “hegemonic lecturing”. The content

in the textbooks about China's modern society portrays an image of China's readiness to reform and lead the current international order which is different from the West. The narratives of Chinese people suffering in history, especially the "century of humiliation", serve as a discursive but legitimate reason for China to develop itself to become a great power to lead the world order.

While the strategic narratives and specific narrating on the top level have changed before and after 2012, the textbooks and their themes on the ground reveal the continuity of the Chinese strategic narratives. The textbooks' narratives about development and the content of everyday engagements connect to the strategic narratives illustrated by the Chinese leadership. For example, in a joint press release between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Canadian counterpart Stéphane Dion in 2016, a journalist was concerned about and criticised Chinese human rights records in Hong Kong and territory ambitions in the South China Sea. Minister Wang responded with anger:

I have to say that your question is full of prejudice against China and arrogance [...] I don't know where that comes from. This is totally unacceptable. ... I have to ask whether you understand China. Have you been to China? Do you know that China has lifted more than 600 million people out of poverty? [...] And do you know that China is the second largest economy in the world from a very low foundation? Do you know development is possible in China without protecting human rights? And do you know China has written protection and promotion of human rights into

our constitution? Other people don't know better than the Chinese people about the human rights condition in China and it is the Chinese people who are in the best situation, in the best position to have a say about China's human rights situation. (The Guardian, 2016)

When facing the direct and sharp criticisms of both human rights and the aggressiveness of China, even the Chinese top leader shifts the responding narratives to development and economic growth in the country. Moreover, Minister Wang's counter questions suggest that only individual engagements, or going to China in person, enables someone to understand China. The textbooks were published before 2012, and the content of the textbooks might be outdated. Although new Chinese narratives and narrating, like Chinese e-commerce, mobile payment, AI technologies, and "major-country diplomacy", barely appear in the textbooks, the textbooks still connect and serve the new strategic narratives after 2012 as their themes do not dramatically change. This is not to say that everything stays the same and the Chinese strategic narratives only replace certain wording; but the textbooks in CIs serving as a conduit in part of the projection of strategic narratives hold its special role on the ground, unlike other conduits, like newspapers and governmental statements. These on the ground materials and local narratives, in this case, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy, help to unpack the changes and continuity.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the Chinese language textbooks used in the Confucius Institute in Vienna with the thematic analysis approach. More than 260 codes were generated and three key themes are conceptualised: “China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners”, “China is a complex and united country in a modern era”, and “China is not a threat to the current international order”. These themes are the common meaning-making platforms of how strategic narratives are translated into local narratives – the narratives and stories in the textbooks. The local narratives de-code and interpret the Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe and Austria. The thematic analysis approach helps to identify these themes in the textbooks and to unpack the translation process between strategic narratives and local narratives.

In other words, identifying themes helps link the local narratives and strategic narratives on the top. For example, during his visit to Austria in 2011, Chinese President Hu suggested four points to China-Austria relations: strengthening the bilateral political trust, expanding the win-win economic trades, improving cultural exchanges, and strengthening multilateral cooperation for peaceful development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2011b). The linkages between these four points from China and the

local narratives are the translations presented by the three main themes. The bilateral political trust and the win-win economic trade refer to the theme “China is a complex and united country in a modern era”. Improving cultural exchanges is translated into those stories and narratives in the textbooks about China’s cultural legacies and traditions which is under the first theme. Strengthening multilateral cooperation for peaceful development is related to the third theme “China is not a threat to the international order”. This is not to say that there is clear written-down guidance on how the strategic narratives and keynotes of politicians are translated into the textbooks. However, these local narratives and stories follow the theme patterns, enrich the meaning of strategic narratives and reach the public. In other words, the public may not notice or deeply understand the strategic narratives “bilateral political trust” and “multilateral cooperation”. In the case of the CI Vienna, the local narratives in the textbooks targeting the local students translate and de-code the strategic narratives to the students.

These local narratives and stories in the textbooks target Austrian students who want to learn the Chinese language and culture. More importantly, these local narratives bring the students into a relationship with the Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe and Austria. For example, what does the Austria-China “Friendly Strategic Partnership”

mean? This strategic narrative is translated and presented by the Chinese culture and traditions, foreign students' life in Beijing, China's development projects in the western regions, and Chinese people open to foreign products and cultures. From the study and engagement with these local narratives in the textbooks, students "experience" the strategic narratives. At the same time, these local narratives and stories also project the One China Principle and China's view on the global order – an international order dominated by the US hegemony. In other words, local narratives are the front line of constructing the shared meaning for the Austrian public, and the translation process which bridges the strategic narratives and local narratives addresses how strategic narratives reach and speak to the public. There is no doubt that these local narratives and stories in the textbooks concentrate on culture and daily language which keep a far distance from what the political leaders and governments say. However, these local narratives can be political and part of strategic narratives as the translation process bridges the strategic and local narratives, which serve the public as the target to make sense of the strategic narratives on the top. Not only are the strategic narratives the construction of shared meaning, but the local narratives and the translation process also play a key role in the meaning construction.

Chapter 5 Hungarian Textbook Analysis

China nowadays considers Hungary as a key partner not just in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) but also in the European Union. These two countries have developed an “all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era” in 2024 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024e). Among the EU member states, Hungary responds the most to the Chinese global strategy – the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and Hungary was the first European country to sign a BRI cooperation agreement with China, as the “BRI has synergized more closely with Hungary’s Opening to the East policy” (Xinhua News Agency, 2024a). For example, China has invested in the upgrade project of the 350-km Budapest-Belgrade high-speed railway. Many Chinese companies have invested and established factories in Hungary, like Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Limited in Debrecen and BYD in Szeged. Hungary hosts the first renminbi (RMB) clearing centre in the CEE region and China is the largest trade partner of Hungary outside the EU.

In 2013, Liszt Intézet - Magyar Kulturális Központ (Hungary Culture Centre) was established in Beijing and its main mission is to promote Hungarian culture as part of Hungary’s cultural diplomacy (Embassy of Hungary in Beijing, n.d.-a). A China

Culture Centre (Budapesti Kínai Kulturális Központ) was registered in 2020 and established in 2024 in Budapest. In the CEE region, China has set up these cultural centres in Belarus, Hungary, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and Serbia (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC, 2024). These culture centres are organised and operated by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism rather than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The China-CEEC (Central and Eastern European Countries) Tourism Coordination Center was inaugurated in Budapest in 2014 and it is the first-ever regional tourism cooperation between China and CEE countries (Embassy of Hungary in Beijing, n.d.-b). In the first ten months of 2024, a total of 183 thousand Chinese tourists have visited Hungary, and this number is almost doubled compared to 2023 (Xinhua News Agency, 2024c).

Hungary has one of the largest Chinese communities in the CEE region. Many Chinese people migrated to Hungary at the end of the last century, and many of them have been running small businesses (European Parliament, 1999), and these Chinese migrations so-called entrepreneurial migrants (Nyíri, 2005). This Chinese community in Hungary has attracted scholars' attention, especially from sociocultural analytical approaches (e.g. Liu, 2017; Nyíri, 2006, 2006, 2018; Szalai & La-Torre, 2016). Currently, there are in total six Confucius Institutes and two Confucius Classrooms in Budapest, Debrecen,

Miskolc, Pécs, and Szeged. There are twelve universities in China offering the Hungarian major (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024n), and four of them are in Beijing. These CIs and other Chinese institutes in Hungary play a key role in connecting the local Hungarian people and China.

In 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Budapest as part of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Hungary. The Chinese Ambassador to Hungary, Gong Tao, suggested in an interview (Global Times, 2024):

They [China and Hungary] always respect each other's independently chosen development paths and domestic and foreign policies, firmly support enhanced connectivity, and advocate for a world of multipolarity and inclusive economic globalization. The two countries firmly oppose decoupling and bloc confrontation. They are good friends and partners, stand for mutual trust and win-win cooperation. They are on the path to national development and rejuvenation, and support maintaining world peace and stability. [...] This milestone visit will elevate bilateral relations to a new height, open a new chapter in China-Hungary friendship and cooperation, inject impetus into China-EU relations, and provide elements of stability and positive energy to a turbulent world. [...] In the second half of this year, as Hungary takes over the rotating presidency of the EU, we hope that Hungary will encourage the EU to view China's development in a rational and friendly manner, adopt a more positive and pragmatic policy toward China, strengthen China-EU strategic communication, create more positive expectations for mutually beneficial cooperation, and promote the continuous, stable, and healthy development of China-EU relations.

In short, on the strategic narrative level, China considers Hungary a close friend and partner in the CEE region. More importantly, China encourages Hungary to contribute

more in the EU to form policies in China's favour. On the sociocultural level, the Chinese diaspora, Chinese students, Chinese culture, Chinese investments, and even Chinese tourists have become a significant topic in Hungary.

5.1 Textbooks for Hungarians

Unlike the textbooks used by the Confucius Institute in Vienna, the Confucius Institute in Budapest has its own edited and designed textbooks. The editorial team of this set of textbooks is mainly from the personnel of the Confucius Institute at Eötvös Loránd University. This set of textbooks is called *Chinese Textbooks for Hungarians* (CTH), or *Kínai nyelvkönyv magyaroknak* in Hungarian. They were published in 2011 by a Hungarian local press house called Rocket KFT. This chapter will demonstrate the empirical findings from the thematic analysis of CTH. There are three themes derived from the coding process: “China and Hungary are civilisations”, “the harmonious world”, and “the modernisation and the successful development model”. At the end of this chapter, the textbooks used in Hungary and Austria are compared.

The first volume of CHT introduces the reasons why these Chinese textbooks specifically for Hungarian students exist. The editors decided to design this set of textbooks specifically for Hungarians because they were not satisfied with the existing Chinese language textbooks. In other words, the other textbooks are not suitable for Hungarian students in the Hungarian local context. The particular reasons are, according to the textbooks and the editors, firstly, Hungarian students cannot master the dominant English Chinese textbooks due to relatively low proficiency in English. Second, other textbooks do not have stories and examples about Hungary, which keeps Hungarian students at a distance from learning the language. Third, the contents and structure of other textbooks do not fulfil the goals of Hungarian students in CI Budapest. The targeted Hungarian students are those who choose Chinese as a mandatory second language in high schools and the public, including university students, who are interested in the Chinese language and culture. These students spend little time studying language both inside and outside the class, which means that the content of the textbooks must be interesting and practical.

Compared to the textbooks *Road to Success* used in Vienna, CTH volumes are written in Chinese and Hungarian. The texts, content, examples, figures, and stories in CTH are all about China and Hungary only. For instance, Beijing and Budapest are the

sample cities. In *Road to Success*, stories and examples are mainly set in the scenarios between China and Western countries. CTH even has an editor's note in the first volume to address the difficulties of learning Chinese pronunciation for Hungarian native speakers, which shows that this series of textbooks is specifically tailor-made for Hungarians. These all reflect that CTH is specifically designed for Hungarian students, unlike *Road to Success* – the one designed and published in Beijing and serves as a textbook model for all. Furthermore, the series *Road to Success* has around twenty volumes from A1 level to C1 level. However, CTH only covers from A1 to B2 levels in five volumes. This means that the expectations of CTH are lower and what students need to learn from CTH is quantitatively less than those using *Road to Success*. Both textbook series aim for the Chinese language level assessment exam – HSK. While the final volume of *Road to Success* reaches above the sixth level of the new HSK, the final one of CTH only covers the fourth level of the new HSK. This brief comparison reflects the need and motivations of this series of specific Hungarian Chinese textbooks. More importantly, it reflects the aims and rationales behind the textbooks designed in Beijing and the ones by local Europeans.

Although CTH was initiated and edited by local Hungarians, the series received support and help from Chinese colleagues and Beijing Foreign Studies University, which is the

Chinese partner institution of CI Budapest. This Beijing Foreign Studies University is also the partner institution of CI Vienna and it is a top CI partner university in China. By the end of 2024, Beijing Foreign Studies University supported and cooperated with 23 Confucius Institutes and CI Classrooms in 18 countries, mainly located in Europe (Office of CIs Beijing Foreign Studies University, 2024). Beijing Foreign Studies University states that its Office of CIs has a dual mission of “introducing the world to China” and “introducing China to the world”, and the Office has already sent in total about 900 Chinese directors, international Chinese language teachers, and volunteer Chinese language teachers to CIs around the world (Office of CIs Beijing Foreign Studies University, 2024). CTH textbooks are considered the first localised Chinese language textbooks in Hungary. Not only is CI Budapest a joint project between a Chinese institution and a local one, here namely Beijing Foreign Studies University and Eötvös Loránd University, but the textbooks and study materials are also jointly produced.

5.2 Thematic analysis and empirical data from CTH

Following the same process of thematic analysis which has been done for the Austrian case, CTH textbooks used in Budapest have been coded, and the sub-themes are conceptualised. Table 5.1 shows the codes and sub-themes from CTH. The table also shows the hierarchical relationships between sub-themes and codes, which demonstrate the coding and conceptualisation process.

Names of sub-themes and codes	Files	References
1. Beijing	4	39
Beijing city	4	23
Beijing people	1	1
Life in Beijing	2	4
Transportations in Beijing	4	11
2. Budapest	4	18
Budapest city	4	17
Budapest people	1	1
3. Changes in China	2	27
Business	1	4
Development of rural areas in China	1	5
Environment issue	1	4
Hygiene and medical issues in China	1	1
Love relationships	2	4
Opening reform	1	2
People are not satisfied with the Chinese local governments	1	2
Pollution in Beijing	1	2
Social institution and function	1	1
The rural areas in China are essential	1	2
4. China is diverse	2	27
China is big	2	3
Chinese dialects	1	5
Inner Mongolia	2	3
Minorities in China	1	1
Northern China	2	7

Southern China	1	8
5. China's cities other than Beijing	3	21
Chinese sightseeing	2	9
Guilin	1	1
Hangzhou	1	7
Suzhou	1	1
Xi'an	2	3
6. Chinese people	4	6
7. Chinese politics	1	2
Cultural revolution	1	1
Mao Zedong	1	1
8. Compare China and Hungary	4	35
Chinese online life	2	3
Compare Hungary and China	3	16
Online activities in Hungary	1	1
Transportation in Budapest	1	4
Transportations in Beijing	4	11
9. Compare Chinese and foreigners	1	2
10. Confucius Institute and Chinese Bridge	3	24
Chinese Bridge	1	9
Chinese scholarship	1	2
Confucius Institute	2	8
Eotvos Lorand University	2	5
11. Cultural communication	2	7
Chinese cultural influence in the world	2	2
Cultural communication is relational and conditional	1	2
12. Engagements between China and Hungary	3	18
Chinese culture activities in Hungary	1	5
Hungary and China are far away from each other	1	1
Learning Chinese in Hungary	3	12
13. What does living in China look like	3	55
The Chinese language is essential to live in China	2	4
Daily life in China	2	3
Difficult to seek jobs in China	1	2
Expenses in China	2	3
Functions of Mandarin	1	3
Gender	2	14

Modern lifestyle	1	12
Transportation in China	2	5
Travel in China	2	9
14. What does studying in China look like	3	37
After study in China	1	1
Chinese high education institutions	1	2
Chinese university students	2	9
Free to choose what to learn	1	1
Relationships between Chinese parents and children	2	6
Rural areas in China develop less	1	1
Study at Beijing Foreign Studies University	3	7
Study in China	3	10
15. Hungarian people	4	11
16. Local life in Hungary	4	19
Budapest city	4	17
Online activities in Hungary	1	1
17. Beyond China and Hungary	4	8
American movie	3	3
Countries in the world	2	4
Languages	1	1
18. Representations of China	4	44
Chinese culture	4	34
Chinese clothes	1	1
Chinese cuisine	3	6
Chinese festivals	2	6
Chinese Kung fu	2	2
Chinese literature	1	1
Chinese medicine	2	3
Chinese pop stars	1	3
Chinese sayings	1	2
Chinese traditions	1	2
Tang poetry	1	3
Tea	1	5
Pandas	1	1
Pride of China	2	9
19. Representations of Hungary	4	27
Hungarian culture	4	22

Hungarian cuisine	3	6
Hungarian culture and customs	1	3
Hungarian festivals	2	3
Hungarian music	1	1
Hungarian poetry	1	1
Hungarian wine	2	4
Princess Sissi	1	4
Pride of Hungary	2	5

Table 5.1 Sub-themes and Codes of Chinese Textbooks for Hungarians

In total 19 sub-themes (see Table 5.2) are conceptualised from the coding process. The “files” and “references” show the coverage and the frequency of the sub-themes. In the table, “files” indicate how many volumes the sub-themes and codes appear in. For example, the sub-themes “Beijing” and “Budapest” are covered in all four volumes. “References” indicate the number of texts and sentences that have been coded under the sub-themes and codes. For example, the codes under the sub-theme “representations of China” appear in total 44 times across four volumes.

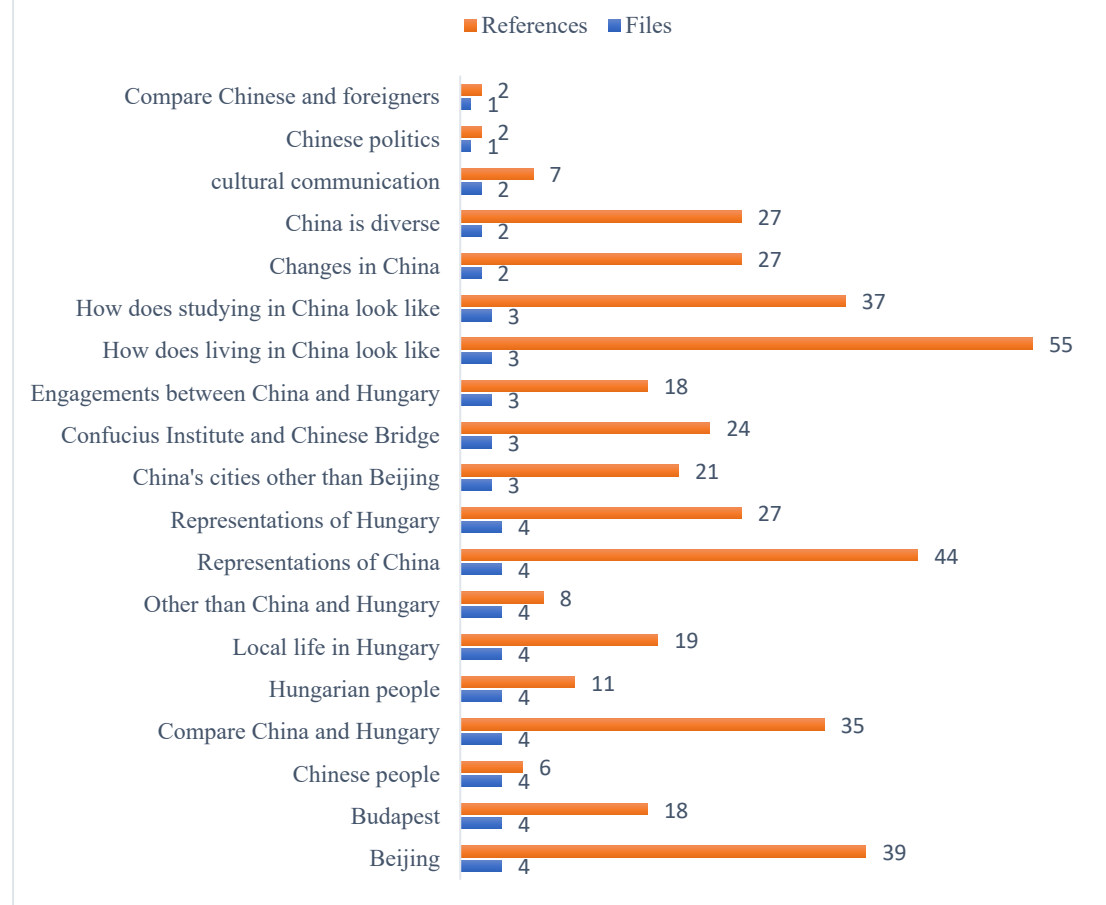
Sub-theme names	Files	References
Beijing	4	39
Budapest	4	18
Changes in China	2	27
China is diverse	2	27
China's cities other than Beijing	3	21
Chinese people	4	6
Chinese politics	1	2
Compare China and Hungary	4	35
Compare Chinese and foreigners	1	2
Confucius Institute and Chinese Bridge	3	24

Cultural communication	2	7
Engagements between China and Hungary	3	18
What does living in China look like	3	55
What does studying in China look like	3	37
Hungarian people	4	11
Local life in Hungary	4	19
Beyond and Hungary	4	8
Representations of China	4	44
Representations of Hungary	4	27

Table 5.2 Sub-theme names

Figure 5.1 shows that the coverage and the frequency of sub-themes are not always perfectly positively correlated. Unsurprisingly, sub-themes like “representations of Hungary and China”, “Beijing”, and “compare China and Hungary” account for the most coverage across the whole series and top frequency. “What does living in China look like” has the second most references but it only appears in three volumes (in A1, B1, and B2 volumes). A few sub-themes are concentrated in only two volumes, namely “China is diverse” and “Changes in China”. For instance, the sub-theme “China is diverse”, including codes “Chinese dialects”, “minorities in China”, “Northern China”, and “Southern China”, is only presented in volumes B1 and B2.

Figure 5.1 Coverage and frequency of themes in CTH



The coverage and the frequency of the sub-themes show that the textbooks preliminarily fulfil the aims and motivations of designing this first Hungarian-Chinese language textbook series. The sub-themes are mainly associated with life and study in China, especially in Beijing. Interestingly, there is an isolated sub-theme “compare Chinese and foreigners” on page 67 in the B2 volume which compares Chinese and international employees (without mentioning any specific nationality): “From the HR perspective of domestic companies, the [Chinese] people who stay abroad for a long time, compared to an international employee, the most obvious difference is [Chinese

employees like to] complain and grumble”, and “international employees do not complain or grumble much, he thinks that working with Chinese colleagues is interesting”. Although these two references are coded to “Business” as well, this code/sub-theme is the only one that compares Chinese and foreigners but not Hungarians. Other countries that appear in the series, except Hungary and China, are Austria, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and the US. The only movies and TV dramas mentioned in the main texts in the textbooks are neither Chinese nor Hungarian, but the American movie *Avatar* and the TV drama *Friends*. The textbooks also cover how to say and express those Hungarian figures and culture in Chinese, which, as the editors explain, does not keep Hungarian students at a distance and strongly targets Hungarian students.

Besides the main texts and practices in the series, there are essays about Chinese cultural knowledge (see Table 5.3) at the end of each unit. These essays which introduce aspects of knowledge and information about Chinese culture, history, and daily life, are written in Hungarian.

Pages	Topics of the essays
A1	
28-29	Traditional and simplified characters
44-45	The legend of Oracle bone scripts
56-57	How do Chinese call/address each other

68-69	Chinese names
81-82	Foreign names in Chinese
95-96	Counting in one hand in China
109	Hungarian Chinese bilingual elementary school
132-133	The Chinese family
146-147	Chinese animal zodiac
161-162	Chinese traditional time calculation
174-176	Interesting Chinese numbers
187-188	Chinese currency
201-203	Chinese dumplings
213-214	Urbanisation in China
226-227	Pop culture/music in China
238-239	Climate and weather in China
252-253	Budapest-Peking
A2	
11	Peking, China's capital
23-24	Who pays the bill?
37	Hungary and Huns
50	Chinese cuisine
65	Chinese medicine
77-78	China and sports
91	A bicycle superpower
104	Chinese Kong fu
115-116	The powerful internet
129	From polygamy to free love
142-143	The official exam for university admission
157-158	The Chinese New Year
171	From Mao's jackets to jeans
184-185	Li Bai and Petöfi
198	Travel in China
B1	
15-16	Early Hungarians travelling to China
33-34	Xi'an, the ancient capital city of China
51-52	Birthday in China
68-69	China Bridge and foreign stars in China
87-88	The traditional Chinese books
104-105	Confucius Institutes

122-123	Giant Pandas
140-141	Qipao
159-160	Holy mountains in China
177-178	Breakfasts in China
195-196	Chinese dialects
211-212	Chinese tourists in Hungary
227-229	Transportations in China
245-246	The university admission system in China
263-264	Traditional Chinese medicines
281-282	The Spring Festival
B2	
17-18	The Chinese tea
34-36	The education system in China
51-52	Foreign students in China
69-70	The internet in China
88-90	Hangzhou and the West Lake
108-110	Chinese railway
127-128	Houses and housing in China
144-146	Chinese rural areas
162-164	Siheyuan and Hutong in Beijing
179-180	Pollution problems in China
198-200	Social networks in China
217-218	Chinese cuisines
233-234	Chinese meals
251-252	Marriage in ancient China
269-270	Television in China
287-290	Traditional and new festivals
305-306	Karaoke
321-323	Watering festival
339-340	Chinese companies
355-356	Tourism in China

Table 5.3 Cultural Knowledge Essays in CTH

These essays about cultural topics enrich the images of China – what China was, what China looks like now, and what China wants to be in the future. The thematic analysis

investigates the main texts and exercises in CTH written in Chinese which target and train the students' Chinese language skills – the main purpose. Moreover, the cultural knowledge essays, on the one hand, are supplements to the main texts and exercises as the essays make the textbooks more interesting. On the other hand, the main texts and exercises in Chinese would be isolated and meaningless without these cultural knowledge essays. In other words, these essays provide contexts where the main texts and exercises can be embedded.

5.3 Three textbook themes

5.3.1 Theme of China and Hungary are civilisations

This theme of civilisations can be divided into China is a civilisation and Hungary is a civilisation as well. The comparison technique is the key presentation mechanism in the textbooks bridging these two civilisations together. This theme of civilisations serves as a foundation of how China wants to portray its own identity to Hungary and how China sees its relationship with Hungary, which services the translation process of Chinese strategic narratives. The theme of civilisation derived from the textbooks in

general supports the Chinese strategic narratives of China and Europe/European countries are civilisations. In the latest 2024 state visit to Hungary, President Xi addressed the arrival statement at the Budapest airport: “Hungary is known for its time-honoured history and profound cultural heritage” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024d). PM Li Keqiang’s article in Hungarian media in 2017 suggested that “the Hungarian nation is well-known as the nation of inventors, [...] Hungarians built the first underground railway on the European continent. China is an ancient civilisation, the four great ancient inventions and the Silk Road contributed to the development of human society” (Chinese Embassy in Hungary, 2017). The textbooks and Confucius Institutes, as part of the Chinese public diplomacy to Europe, help translate the strategic narratives on the ground and enrich the meaning of the strategic narratives.

The motivations and aims of CTH, according to the editors, require that this set of textbooks serve Hungarian students. The Hungarian civilisation is represented by its cuisine, wine, festivals, music, and literature. For example, regions Vilányi and Tokaji are introduced as they produce the most famous Hungarian alcohol. Also, in unit 3 of the A2 volume, the main conversation (pp. 25-26) is unfolded between a Chinese student called Taoshi and a Hungarian student called Dóri.

Taoshi: Dóri, I want to ask you a question.

Dóri: What question?

Taoshi: There is a symphony piece called the Blue Danube, do you know it?
 Dóri: Of course I know it, it is a very famous Hungarian symphony.
 Taoshi: Is the Danube really blue?
 Dóri: Haha, many Chinese people have asked me this question.
 Taoshi: What did you answer?
 Dóri: When it is good weather, stand on the Gellért hill and see the Danube River,
 the Danube is blue!
 Taoshi: What about in bad weather?
 Dóri: In bad weather, some say the Danube River is green, and some say it is grey.
 Taoshi: Very interesting. Is your home close to the Danube River?
 Dóri: Very close, my home is near the river, I can see the Danube River every day.

Following the conversation, the practice in the same unit shows pictures of the Parliament House and the Gellért Hill in Budapest in contrast to the Tiananmen in Beijing. The Hungarian civilisation is represented by the daily practice of Hungarian people – what they eat and drink, how they celebrate festivals, and where they go on weekends, rather than its history, as there are less than five cultural knowledge essays talking about Hungarian culture and civilisation. However, China being a civilisation is presented by its culture, history, and traditions.

This is about the identity of China: a civilisation with a long history which is diverse and united at the same time. In CTH textbooks, from the thematic analysis and the investigation of the cultural knowledge essays, this theme of Chinese civilisation is presented by the glories and pride of Chinese traditions and culture, at first glance. The theme covering Chinese dialects, minorities, and traditional vs simplified Chinese

characters presents China as a diverse, complex, and even fragile country. The textbooks illustrate that while Chinese people speak their local dialects, they all need to learn the standard Chinese Mandarin for the whole nation to easily communicate with each other. Different minorities have their own customs and cultures, but all of these are attributed to the Chinese culture. People in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are still using the traditional characters which are different from those in the Mainland of China, and this comparison is only valid when it is assumed that these territories and the mainland are together as one single China.

Regarding the diversity, the main texts pay dramatic attention to Beijing and Budapest as the textbooks were designed in the capital city of Hungary serving Hungarian students with the assumption that more and more Hungarian students will go to China, and Beijing will be their ideal first stop in the country. Although the main texts, according to the sub-themes, introduce other cities in China, like Shanghai and Hangzhou, these cannot fully present the diversity of China as the west, southwest, and northeast regions in the country are overlooked. In the cultural knowledge essays, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are presented to support the image of a diverse China in the textbooks. Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are introduced in two topics. First, these three territories are using the traditional Chinese characters rather than the simplified

ones in Mainland China. Second, these three territories became the window into and basis of Chinese pop culture, especially pop music, in the 20th century after 1949 – when pop culture was banned in the Mainland of China.

Another example of narrating a diverse China is the Chinese dialects and minorities in the country. The main texts in the 11th unit in the B1 volume provide a scenario in which a Hungarian student encounters Chinese locals speaking local dialects in a bank. The cultural knowledge essay (pp. 195-196) in the same unit supplements the seven main dialects in China, and more importantly, strengthens the necessity of Mandarin – a symbol of a united country. The main texts clarify that Mandarin is widely used in cities and the purpose of promoting Mandarin is for everyone to understand each other in this big and diverse country. The cultural knowledge essay gives more background information about the promotion of Mandarin and the general regulation that Chinese schools must teach lessons in Mandarin nationwide.

Although the narratives and stories in CTH literately present a diverse China – a diverse civilisation, the message behind this is that China is a solid and united country based on the common Chinese culture and national identity. This is not to say that the common Chinese culture and the national identity are taken for granted but imagined and

constituted by the specific narratives and descriptions of those dialects, minorities, and other language deviations. The local narratives of Chinese culture simplify Chinese culture by concentrating on a few particular cultural items and elements. The minorities are marginalised. More importantly, what combines these two poles, a diverse China and a united China, is the Chinese culture and the language. The textbooks do not mention political systems, but present the Chinese culture which gives the definition of China and the Chinese nation. The textbooks' narratives indirectly suggest that it is the Chinese culture and the glorious civilisation that integrates the minorities within the country, and it is the Chinese language and historical roots that support Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and other minorities in the "great China" family.

The strategic narratives of how Beijing sees the Chinese nation, the integrity of territory, and the justification of the legitimacy of the Beijing government are translated into these textbook narratives about cultural diversity and Chinese civilisation. For instance, on the Taiwan issue, President Xi's speech in 2019 marking the 40th anniversary of the issuance of the *Message to Compatriots in Taiwan* suggests that

The soul of a nation is moulded and cast by its culture. We on the mainland and in Taiwan share the same roots, culture, and ethnic identity; it is Chinese culture that has instilled vitality in us and given us a sense of belonging. [...] We people on both sides should together pass on the fine traditional Chinese culture and promote its evolution and growth in new and creative ways. (Xi, 2019)

Although the Beijing government lists more than the Chinese culture and great civilisation as the justifications and legitimacy of its “One China Principle” (Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, 2000), the shared culture and the civilisation are a long-standing support to those strategic narratives. The first *Message to Compatriots in Taiwan* issued in 1979 by the National People’s Congress has already narrated that “the Chinese nation is a great nation. It accounts for almost a quarter of the world’s population and has a long history and brilliant culture, and its outstanding contributions to world civilisation and human progress are universally recognized” (ChinaDaily, 2019).

The Chinese strategic narratives use the Chinese culture and civilisation to justify the “One China Principle”. However, the strategic narratives in these leaders’ speeches and governmental documents only refer to a Chinese culture which is vague and plain. In other words, these vague and plain strategic narratives about Chinese culture and how the culture makes sense of the “One China Principle” are translated into the textbook narratives on the specific cultural elements mentioned before. It is the local narratives that give the cultural and historical justifications of the “One China Principle”.

At this point, the textbooks' narratives associated with the theme of civilisations, on the one hand, align with the Chinese strategic narratives on the China-Europe level and, on the other hand, are the result of the translation of the strategic narratives of a united China to broader global audiences. Although Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe portray China as a market, a partner, a rising power, and an important pole of current global governance, the textbooks pay attention to the theme of civilisations to support the strategic narrative that China and Europe are both civilisations and there are no fundamental conflicts of interest (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2009, 2024g). Not just to Hungary, but to other European countries and the EU as well, China's strategic narratives prioritise its identity as a civilisation. For instance, Xi met with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and suggested that China and Italy significantly contributed to the overall exchanges between Eastern and Western civilisations, and "the Silk Road spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit is a shared treasure of China and Italy" (Xinhua News Agency, 2024b).

From the textbook narratives, including the texts, exercises, and pictures, the "diverse China" can be easily connected to and interpreted as a "big China". With the diverse cultural elements and one of the largest national territories, China is not only a country

far away but also large and even powerful. The Chinese strategic narratives frame China as a big power in the global multipolar system, a big market, and a major country in global governance. In the textbooks, most of these specific narratives introducing China are in a comparative conversation with Hungary. For example, the comparison between the public transportation of Beijing and Budapest, between Chinese Li Bai and Hungarian Petöfi, between Chinese dumplings and Hungarian Goulash, and between Tsingtao beer and Hungarian Tokaji. With these narrating comparisons and the conversations between these two countries, the “big and powerful” characteristics of China’s image are marginalised as there is always a counterpart in China corresponding to Hungarian cultural and daily life elements. With the specific cultural elements in the textbooks, China is presented as a normal country like Hungary and these two are civilisations, which supports the strategic narrative that China and Hungary, and maybe other European countries, are in an equal relationship without fundamental conflicts of interests.

The narratives in the textbooks translate the strategic narratives of a united China. First, rather than telling the story of the state, the sovereignty and the state keeping a diverse China united, the textbooks suggest that it is the culture and civilisation that make China and the Chinese people united, as mentioned above. The general term “country” is

translated in Chinese as a word with two characters “國家” (guó jiā) and these two characters respectively mean state and family/home. Especially in Chinese domestic propaganda and strategic narratives, “國家” is interpreted as state first and then family, or without the state, there is no home or household; although there is still a tiny difference between Chinese understanding of state and Western understanding of “sovereign state/state agency”. In other words, the textbooks attribute the united and powerful China to Chinese culture and civilisation, rather than the state in the mainstream of strategic narratives. Second, the Communist Party and the party-state are missing in this translation. To external audiences, Chinese strategic narratives frequently frame the success of the Chinese model under the leadership of the Communist Party, and the Chinese state, the Chinese people, and the Chinese Communist Party cannot be separated (e.g. Xi, 2021). In the textbooks, the narratives without the appearance of the state and the Communist Party actually contribute to the understanding of a united China based on culture and civilisation. In strategic narratives and authoritative materials, the Chinese state refers to an abstract concept and is highly political. However, in the local narratives, the Chinese state becomes visible and is supported by Chinese cultural elements and people’s daily life. This change is the re-production of the translation process with new meaning added, and the translation

process is determined by the local context – the Hungarian students and Hungarian society, and the communication conduit – these CTH textbooks as a joint production.

The textbooks' theme of civilisations is related to the themes of identities and “no fundamental conflicts of interest” on the strategic narrative level. China is not narrated as a strong power or a threat, but as a diverse country and civilisation with rich cultures.

The textbooks present various aspects of China's identities in detail. However, the conversation of identity, or the seeking of the identity of China, changes from the China-EU context to a more narrowed China-Hungary context. On the China-EU level, the theme of identities is reflected by the strategic narratives of China as the founder and defender of international order, China is a major power and large market in the multipolar system. On the China-Hungary level, the theme of civilisations is reflected by the local narratives of China as a multi-national and complex country and civilisation.

In other words, the Chinese strategic narratives about what China is are translated into “civilisations” in the textbooks, and this theme of civilisations provides an alternative identity of China to its strategic narratives about the Chinese identity – China is not a threat, no longer a strong economy or a powerful state, but a diverse civilisation as Hungary.

There is more than one single narrative system within the textbooks and the relationship between the strategic narratives and local narratives is not simply hierarchical, which is an important feature of this special series of textbooks – a joint production between Hungarians and Chinese. The textbooks’ narratives reflect the mixture of meaning-making on what China is, as the Chinese identity needs to take references from the Hungarian identity via comparison. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Chinese strategic narratives are relational as they respond to Western strategic narratives, and Chinese and Western strategic narratives are in a contestation. This relationality is also translated into the local narratives in the textbooks as the narrating presentation of Chinese identity and how China considers the China-Hungary relationships needs the comparative references from the Hungarian identity. This first theme of civilisations serves the second theme “a harmonious world” in the textbooks, which is discussed in the next section.

5.3.2 Theme of the harmonious world

Through comparisons, the textbooks place China and Hungary together under the same topics, like cultures, cuisines, and public transportation. Based on the first theme of civilisations, through comparison, the textbooks present the equal friendship between

China and Hungary and this equal friendship is a model of the “Harmonious World” (和諧世界 hé xié shì jiè) which is a Chinese strategic narrative. The textbook theme of the harmonious world is supported by the first theme of civilisations and is translated into the narratives of an equal relationship between China and Hungary in the textbooks. Moreover, what makes the CTH outstanding is the two-way narratives and storytelling of the engagements between Chinese and Hungarians.

The Chinese strategic narrative of the Harmonious World has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. At first glance, we may see that the Chinese strategic narratives on the highest level do guide and shape the local narratives, as both the textbooks in Austria and Hungary have this theme embedded. Multiculturalism or cultural diversity is one of the key elements of the strategic narratives of the Harmonious World. In CTH, Chinese culture and history are the bricks which support the understanding and meaning-making of Chinese multiculturalism. At the same time, however, CTH textbooks include Hungarian cultural and social elements, which are no longer Sino-centric like in *Road to Success*. As mentioned before, within the first theme of civilisation, the identity of China as a civilisation needs the comparative reference from Hungary as a civilisation. In other words, although the strategic narratives of the Harmonious World are translated in both sets of textbooks, the translation processes of

the narratives are different. In CTH, the theme of the harmonious world is about an “equal friendship”.

On the China-Europe level, the Chinese strategic narratives consider China and European countries as partners and main powers keeping the world peaceful. In CTH, the possible equal relationship between China and Hungary is constructed by the comparisons among different items and topics across these two countries. The textbooks do not only list some Hungarian cultural and social topics performatively, but the content is evenly distributed under Chinese and Hungarian elements. The “equal friendship” is embedded in these well-balanced textbooks’ narratives. For example, the textbooks suggest that while the metro system in Beijing is complex and convenient, Budapest constructed the first metro line in Europe continent. While Chinese people eat dumplings and soya-bean milk for breakfast, Hungarians prefer bread, yoghurt, and juice. In unit 4 of the A2 volume, a Chinese student and a Hungarian student are talking about the breakfast styles in China and Hungary respectively. The Chinese student suggests that Chinese people prefer soy milk, eggs, and Xiaolongbao (small soup dumplings) for breakfast, which also absolutely oversimplifies the reality. Only in the B1 volume, the cultural knowledge essay introduces more Chinese breakfast dishes across the country. The Hungarian student suggests that “Hungarian breakfast normally

includes eggs, milk, and bread, and some people like drinking coffee or juice; and some Hungarians like having salami and cheese in the morning”. The textbooks do not judge which one, the Chinese or Hungarian, is better, but place them in an equal position with these cultural and social topics and narratives.

In May 2024, China and Hungary raised their bilateral relationship to an “all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024f); and President Xi latest described the China-Hungary relationship as “good friends and good partners of mutual trust” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024d). It is noted that CTH stands out, or at least is strongly different from *Road to Success*, because the comparisons and conversations between China and Hungary are a two-way narrative presentation. CTH does not only make the content balanced evenly between Chinese and Hungarian cultural and daily life elements but also emphasises the narratives about the mutual engagements between Chinese and Hungarians. *Road to Success* sets the main scenario that foreign students go to China for their further studies. However, CTH tells the stories of both Hungarian students living in China and Chinese students living and visiting Hungary. For example, while Hungarian students go to China to study the Chinese language and Chinese medicine, Chinese students come to Hungary to study music, and to appreciate the freedom of

choice, especially on the education in Hungary. The Chinese students even studied the Hungarian language already in China before coming to Hungary. This two-way storytelling is more convincing for the audiences to accept the equal friendship strategic narratives.

Many existing studies on Chinese strategic narratives, soft power, and foreign policies ignore these two-way narratives: Chinese go out and foreigners come in. The studies on Chinese soft power mainly focus on the attractiveness of China – how many students or how many foreign investors go to China, or what kind of culture is selected and presented to attract foreigners to go to China. The studies on foreign policies, geopolitics, or political economy highlight the Chinese going-out activities, like the “warrior diplomacy” (see Martin, 2021; Mattingly & Sundquist, 2023; Sullivan & Wang, 2023) and the BRI investments (see Cabestan, 2019; Gamso & Moffett, 2023; Ohashi, 2018). Taking the strategic narratives framework and analysing the textbooks in CIs helps to bring these two narratives “going-out” and “coming-in” under the same analytical framework and empirical context.

As the equal friendship is an essential pillar of the strategic narrative of the Harmonious World translated into CHT, it is noted that these equal friendship local narratives are

something deeper and more consistent, compared to the Chinese strategic narratives on the China-Hungary and China-CEE levels in the recent decade. In 2012, China launched a new forum called Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries (China-CEEC). At its peak, China-CEEC reached 17 CEE countries and the cooperation is only 14+1 now. Many scholars have noticed that the Chinese perception of the region and its official narratives towards the region were problematic and unstable (see Kowalski et al., 2017). In the beginning, China tried to frame this cooperation with the strategic narrative of “traditional friendship” indicating the common communist past – the comradeship which the CEE countries were not happy with (see Turcsányi & Qiaoan, 2020). Then the strategic narratives were changed to South-South cooperation which was not welcomed in the region either (Hu, 2017; Jakóbowski, 2018; Kowalski et al., 2017). In other words, the strategic narratives are changing but the local narratives in the textbooks keep their position as the textbooks are still in use since the first publication. From the theme of the harmonious world of the Hungarian textbooks, on one hand, we see that local narratives are guided by strategic narratives, and they align across recipient countries; on the other hand, the translation processes differ in each case. Moreover, the local narratives change slowly, or they are not as easily changed as strategic narratives on the top level. The strategic narratives on the top need the local narratives to make sense and enrich the meaning.

Thus, in order to understand and de-code Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe and European countries, the CTH case shows that it is essential to unpack the translation processes of these strategic narratives into local narratives.

5.3.3 Theme of the modernisation and the successful development model

The third theme from CHT is the common meaning pattern of those narratives and stories about both changes within China and changes in China-Hungary relations. These changes are not simply the description of the comparison between past and present. They serve as presenting Chinese achievements under the globalisation and international liberal order. They also indirectly suggest that the current modern China can contribute to the international order, which is a showcase of the translation process.

First, the textbooks present the changes in domestic China in various fields. For example, the 9th unit in the B2 volume introduces Hutong and Siheyuan in Beijing, which are classic housing in the city. These historical houses are replaced by modern buildings in the process of modernisation. The cultural knowledge essay introduces the architectural features of these two typical types of housing. Furthermore, it tells that since the 1950s, several families were moved into the mansions that were once

inhabited by one large family, and the courtyard was often overcrowded. In Beijing, many Siheyuan were demolished to make more space for new estates. From the 1990s, another wave of destruction began on a business basis, and the traditional houses were replaced by skyscrapers, office buildings, and hotels. In the centre of the city, a few blocks of hutongs have been left for the sake of tourists, but outside the city centre, there are still quite a few traditional Hutong neighbourhoods. In recent years, Siheyuans have come into vogue, and hotels are opening in old buildings. In the main text of the same unit, a Hungarian student makes conversation with a Chinese student saying “Yes, what you see in Beijing now are all new buildings, but you barely see new housing in Budapest where those are all historical old houses” (p. 148).

Another example is the changes in social positions and images of Chinese women and girls. In the 15th unit in the B2 volume, the texts (pp. 267-268) suggest that Chinese women had education rights and came into the public sphere in 1911. The texts introduce several female talents in the periods before 1949 and during the Cultural Revolution. Nowadays, “dual incomes, no kids” (DINK) are those well-educated people in China. The whole unit starts the topic of marriage and gender relations with a conversation (pp. 253-254) between a Hungarian boy and a Chinese girl who are watching a Chinese TV programme which helps Chinese singles to go on a date. This

example shows the gender and marriage issues in China now and how it differs from before. Chinese females receive more respect towards gender equality; and more and more Chinese people accept those ideas and practices from the West, like “DINK”. At the same time, modernisation and urbanisation bring new problems to young people who do not have time to take care of their romance.

Based on such two-way, equal, and normal partnership narratives, the strategic narratives on the realpolitik levels are indirectly enriched and given meaning by the narratives and stories in CTH. The cultural knowledge essays introduce various topics and aspects of China. These essays are not simply descriptive but most of them are like brief historical introductions. For instance, the Chinese characters, the Chinese public transportation systems, the development of rural areas, the Chinese business companies, the internet, and even the marriage and love relationships in China are presented in a historical and storytelling way. More importantly, these narratives end up with showcasing modern China, as they all finally point to presenting the current and modern China to the readers. These narratives on China’s evolution are not isolated within the country but in a globalised and interactive context. These narratives enrich and de-code the meaning of the strategic narratives of China being part of the international order and catching up with the modernised international society.

The changes in China-Hungary relations are presented, for instance, on tourism and learning Chinese. In the B1 volume, two Hungarian boys are having a conversation (pp. 89-91) and one of them asks the other, besides their school, where else his father can learn Chinese; and the CI Budapest is suggested. One week later, the father has already started his Chinese course at CI Budapest and says that there are thirty students in the class. This short conversation piece shows more and more people in Hungary are trying to learn the Chinese language, even middle-aged people. It also reflects that there are more and more Chinese language institutions in Hungary. The increasing popularity of the Chinese language aligns with the Chinese economic power and its BRI project stretching to Europe. The third theme involves the developments in China and the relations between China and Hungary. Presenting China in history and comparing it with modern China tells the achievements of China after its opening-up reform and integration into the international liberal order. A progressing, modern, open, and strong China nowadays is portrayed. This theme connects with the strategic narratives of China as a beneficiary and defender of the current system, China is catching up with the modernised international society.

These narratives in the textbooks and the theme of change marginalise the Western strategic narrative of China as a threat. The examples and stories about Chinese urbanisation in Beijing, Chinese marriage programmes on TV, and others convey the message that China has changed and tries to construct an understanding of modern China which can and should contribute to the international order as China benefiting from the current international order, of which China is one of the important powers. These narratives and stories on the development model of China and the relations between China and Hungary, on one hand, present the achievements and progress of China under its opening-up reform and integration into the international liberal order. On the other hand, they also pass the message that China is a modern and strong country that is an important player in the global order, to which China can contribute.

These three themes of the Hungarian textbooks serve as the pattern conditioning how the strategic narratives in Beijing can be understood and interpreted. On one hand, there are highly political strategic narratives on the top, like “Harmonious World”, “a community with a shared future for mankind”, and “One China policy”. On the other hand, the textbooks introduce the “innocent” and joyful Chinese modern society by narrating the everyday scenarios of Chinese people. Both the strategic narratives and local narratives serve for how China sees itself, its relations with others, and its

worldview. The relationality in strategic narratives is also translated into local narratives. The strategic narratives provide the directions and make the boundary of where the local narratives and storytelling can go and how far they can go. In this case, the human rights issues and the communist memories do not appear in a single line in the textbooks. The local narratives enrich, redefine and visualise the strategic narratives in specific local contexts. Although Hong Kong and Taiwan use traditional Chinese characters, it is the Chinese language and culture binding these territories together as one China, which contributes to the understanding of the “One China policy”. Thus, the strategic narratives on the top and everyday local narratives in public diplomacy are important; what is more important is the translation of strategic narratives into local narratives.

5.4 Comparison between Chinese textbooks in Hungary and Austria

Conventional studies would consider that the CIs are the Chinese soft power projects trying to promote a positive image of China for China’s global influence and that these institutes are under the control of the Chinese government. This perspective simplifies the practices on the ground and has been discussed in previous chapters. In reality, the

operation, the configuration, the governance structure, and the targeted audiences of the various CIs are different. For example, from the fieldwork and interviews, while the CI Budapest has around 500 students and is considered as a successful model, the CI in Chisinau holds around 1000 students while the whole country of Moldova has only around 50 Chinese residents, and the CI in Chisinau is barely heard even in the global CI community. While CIs in Vienna and Budapest are based on the partnerships between a Chinese university and a European university, a civil organisation in Munich is playing the role of a foreign partner jointly governing the CI in Munich. Many Chinese teachers are deployed overseas to support the CI as Chinese language teachers. However, many local Europeans who studied and master the language teach and run the operation in CIs. A local Albanian instructor teaching at the CI in Tirana said that he moved to China when he was young and stayed there for 15 years. The CIs in Budapest and Vienna also have training sessions and programmes for teachers.

Besides all these aspects of CIs, this project focuses on the textbooks used in CIs and Austria and Hungary. The Chinese textbooks used in Austria and Hungary are different and some of their basic features have been discussed above. While Austrian textbooks introduce classical Chinese literature that might also be found in Chinese textbooks in China, Hungarian textbooks pay more attention to dialogues and daily language use. In

terms of editing and design, the Austrian textbooks present a pure Chinese perspective of how to teach Chinese to foreigners, but Hungarian textbooks reflect a joint practice in which the Hungarian scholars played a dominant role. This leads to one of the many differences in content; while Austrian textbooks emphasise Beijing and China, Hungarian textbooks highlight the engagements between these two countries.

Moreover, both sets of textbooks pay attention to social and environmental issues in China, like the imbalance of education resource distribution in China, the pollution in the northern region, and the new problems of gender inequality caused by modernisation and urbanisation. In *Road to Success* used in Vienna, the textbooks start to question the labour division within Chinese households and compliment those professional females who free themselves from the traditional views of marriage in Hong Kong and Shanghai. The Hungarian textbooks present a story about how Hungarian girls like the Chinese traditional Qipao dress and there is a competition of who is the most beautiful girl with Qipao in a Hungarian high school. Also in CHT, boys are portrayed as naughty and energetic, and their dormitory rooms must be untidy and messy. It is a surprise that, to some extent, the textbooks designed solely by Beijing are more radical and liberal than the Hungarian textbooks whose edition and design were dominated by Hungarians.

As language textbooks, both sets have very little or no content about Chinese politics and the Chinese Communist Party. In CHT, the Cultural Revolution is mentioned once in the cultural knowledge essay. In *Road to Success*, Mao Zedong and a few Chinese political institutions are mentioned in the high-level volumes. This is not to say that the politics, the state, and the Party are entirely isolated from the textbooks. As illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5 analysing the textbooks, the politics together with the strategic narratives, are translated into the local narratives in textbooks. The local narratives themselves are political and can be strategic.

Unlike *Road to Success*, the CTH has unique content that is based on China and Hungary only, a special textbook design that assigns conversations and dialogues as the main text and cultural knowledge essays as supplements, and limited volumes target Hungarian students. Combining the main texts and the cultural knowledge essays, there are three main themes from the CTH: China and Hungary are civilisations, the harmonious world and the equal friendship, and the modernisation and successful development model.

It is noted that the power of these narratives and storytelling is exercised in the translation process. It has been illustrated before how the strategic narratives are translated into the local narratives in the textbooks and how the textbooks' narratives enrich and make sense of the strategic narratives on the top. At this point, the strategic narratives need to be emphasised in this translation process; the strategic narratives guide the direction and mark the boundary of local narratives in the textbooks. For instance, the human rights issues in China and the disputes between Budapest and Brussels are not included in the textbooks, and the narratives about these are excluded from the China-Hungary relationships in general. On the strategic narrative level, the human rights issues, considering China as a threat or a systematic rival, and labelling Hungary as an electoral autocracy by the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2022), do not appear. In the textbooks, these topics are certainly not included as these are not in the strategic narratives on the top level. Furthermore, together with the strategic narratives and textbooks' narratives, these topics are excluded from the China-Hungary relationship in general. In other words, the strategic narratives and the local narratives on the ground outline the political agenda and priorities of the China-Hungary relationship. Unlike strategic narratives, local narratives in textbooks, after the translation process, directly reach and speak to the public. It is these local narratives and translation processes that bring the public into relations. It is these local narratives

and translation processes that make the public's understanding and "experiencing" of the strategic narratives possible. It is these local narratives and translation processes through which the power of strategic narratives can be exercised.

5.5 Conclusion

The strategic narratives of the China-Hungary relationship are translated into daily life local narratives of practices, bilateral tourism, and cultural engagements. The human rights issues or the Budapest-Brussels disputes no longer belong to China-Hungary relationships, and they should not be discussed in the local narratives of China-Hungary relations. Even the economic ties, such as the BRI, become vague to ordinary people and are left to the political and economic elites in these two countries. It is a de-politicisation by the textbooks. This de-politicisation of the translation process increases the credibility and validity of strategic narratives through these local narratives in textbooks. The textbooks and their narratives circle what kind of conversation, what kind of topics, and what kind of foci are considered (ab)normal within the interactions between Hungarians and Chinese. The strategic narratives on the top mark the direction and boundary where these local narratives from textbooks

and daily practices can go and how far local narratives can go. The local narratives are empowered to enrich and, more importantly, to make sense of the strategic narratives on the ground. What connects the strategic narratives and local narratives is the translation process. Within the translation process, these themes serve as the common meaning-making pattern to inter-constitute both strategic narratives and local narratives. At the same time, the Hungarian and Austrian cases show the changes in Chinese strategic narratives to Europe with both temporal and spatial dimensions.

Chapter 6 Nouvelles d'Europe

This chapter analyses the *Nouvelles d'Europe* (NE), a Chinese newspaper serving the Chinese community in Europe. This chapter concerns the Chinese strategic narratives being translated into news reports and articles. Following the same thematic analysis approach as conducted in the textbook analysis, three main themes are conceptualised. These themes elucidate the translation process and the relations between the strategic narratives and local narratives, which also serve the comparison of different communication conduits. For example, while the textbooks in Confucius Institutes are designed for European local students, the NE is issued for the Chinese diaspora who live in European countries. In terms of the content, while the textbooks focus on language study and presenting Chinese culture, the NE reports on politics, business, and local affairs in Europe. Like the textbooks, the NE is not simply a channel passing on the messages but a platform of interaction and contestation of narratives. Because the NE is the largest Chinese media outlet in Europe, it has an ambiguous and special connection with the Chinese embassies in Europe, and because of its qualities of mass media, the NE presents more political and strategic narratives in its articles. These qualities also distinguish the NE from the textbooks used in Confucius Institutes and the Chinese official newspapers like *People's Daily* and the *Global Times*. Finding the

words and expressions used in the Chinese strategic narratives is not difficult in the NE. However, the key research question is how these strategic narratives are translated into the local narratives in European local news aimed at Chinese communities in Europe. In other words, the NE does not simply copy and paste those authoritative leaders' speeches and governmental documents but edits and comments with daily news within a European context. The translation process is how the NE makes the Chinese strategic narratives more focused on Europe and more accessible and readable to its audiences. This chapter will first introduce the background of the newspaper, and then the coding process, followed by the empirical analysis of the translation process in the newspaper.

6.1 Nouvelles d'Europe

Nouvelles d'Europe, or 欧洲时报 (ōuzhōu shíbào) in Chinese, is the largest and the most influential Chinese newspaper serving the broader Chinese communities in Europe. The newspaper was established in 1983. According to the newspaper itself (Oushinet, n.d.), the NE is the flagship publication of its parent company: Guang Hua Cultures et Media. The company provides multi-media services, including newspapers, websites, social media, and even its own mobile application called *Nouvelles d'Europe*

Online (see Google Play, n.d.), to its audiences. The company established various branches across Europe, namely in London (2011), Vienna (2012), Frankfurt (2013), Rome (2014), and Madrid (2018), and its headquarters are located in Paris, France. The company publishes the NE in different versions corresponding to its regional branches. Only the NE issued by the Paris headquarters is a daily newspaper, and its versions in the UK, Germany, Italy, Central and Eastern Europe, and Spain are issued weekly. These newspapers are issued in printed copies and also digitalised for online browsing from its website *outshinet.com*.

Besides the newspaper to the Chinese community, the Guang Hua Cultures et Media also provides online news websites in English (*chinaminutes.com*), in French (*chine-info.com*), and in German (*de.china-info24.com*). The contents and reports of websites in European languages are separated from the NE which is issued in Chinese only. The websites do not simply translate the Chinese resources and articles in the newspaper NE. These multi-source presentations in multiple languages also show that the company has the capacity to mobilise media resources covering major European countries. These news websites in European languages have their respective channels and pages on Western social media, like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube. Besides the media, the company also expands its business to culture training and

hospitality, like its cultural centres in its regional offices, for example, the one in Paris is called the L'Association des Amis de Nouvelles d'Europe (culture-oushi, n.d.). It also provides travel services through its subsidiary firm Euro-Chine Voyages (ecvoyages, n.d.) which was established in France in 2002 as a limited liability company (L'Annuaire des Entreprises, n.d.).

Different resources suggest that the NE is connected with the Chinese government, especially the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office under the State Council (the central government). However, probably due to business and commercial confidentiality, the funding and networks of the Guang Hua Cultures et Media and the NE are unclear. The academic discussions about this newspaper are mainly from communication studies and diaspora studies (see Li, 2020; Lindberg, 2020; Rojas, 2021). Unfortunately, there are insufficient discussions on this Chinese media, neither in English nor French academia. Few Chinese articles discuss and compare the NE and Chinese domestic newspapers, like *People's Daily*, on how the Chinese media contribute to the national image building (see Han, 2016; Zhang, 2020).

The NE (Oushinet, n.d.) portrays itself as the main Chinese reading for Chinese high-level official groups visiting Europe, and its partners include Chinese embassies in different European countries, the China National Tourist Office London, Chinese domestic media like *People's Daily* and *Xinhua News*, and European local cultural institutions like Palais Brongniart, Le Palais des Congrès d'Issy, and Livre Paris. Interestingly, not only Chinese Mainland and European giant enterprises like Air China, Huawei, UnionPay, AirFrance, Lufthansa, and Austrian Airlines, are its commercial partners; two Taiwanese aviation companies, Eva Air and China Airlines, are listed as well. The newspaper has advertisements saying “our newspaper is now also available on your flights to Asia” in both Chinese and English, with the logos of Air China, Hainan Airlines, China Airlines, Eva Air, and Austrian Airlines attached (see Figure 6.1 below). In short, the NE and its parent company cannot be simply classified as an inner part of the Chinese governmental media system, as the connections are not clear, less academic discussion and research pay attention to such Chinese local media overseas, and many non-Chinese private and commercial factors are involved and associated.

Because of these qualities of the NE, it is important to bring this new empirical case into the discussion. In particular, I place the NE, the newspaper and its reports, as a communication conduit and agent, just like the textbooks used in CIs. On one hand, the

NE is certainly different from those conventional Chinese official media, like *People's Daily* and the *Global Times*, which have a very clear hierarchical relationship within the Chinese official propaganda system. On the other hand, the NE, in its reports, speaks for the Chinese authorities and spreads policies from the Chinese embassies, which is not the same as the language textbooks. In other words, analysing the NE with the same theoretical framework and methods helps us to compare different translation processes of Chinese strategic narratives through different communication conduits, and more importantly, to compare the translation processes targeting different audiences, as the textbooks serve European students who study the language, and the NE provides news and reports to Chinese communities in Europe. Both the textbooks and the NE are on the edge of the Chinese official propaganda system and they are far away from the core of Chinese strategic narrative formation. At the same time, they are the frontline where Chinese strategic narratives are translated into local narratives and finally meet the targeted public.

This chapter examines the NE's Central and Eastern European version whose digital versions from January 2019 to August 2024 are provided publicly on the website *paper.oushinet.com*. Normally, this weekly newspaper has 16 pages per issue. The first ten pages concentrate on global and Chinese political and economic news, followed by

two to four pages about sports, fashion, and other entertainment topics, and the very last two to four pages are advertisements. In the issues of 2019 and 2020, advertisements are located on the second and third pages and the last two pages. I selected the first three pages with headlines and key political and economic reports, with the assumption that the most important news and information were provided on the earlier pages. Thus, pages one, four, and five of the issues in 2019 and 2020 were selected and pages one to three of the issues in 2021-2024 were selected. In total 274 issues were collected with 822 pages. Each page contained at least two to three articles, which is far more than Zhang's study (2020) collecting 587 articles only about China from the NE from 2013-2017 and Han's collection of 87 articles (Han, 2016).

Unlike Zhang and Han's studies on China's national image building from the NE, my collection consists of articles not only about China but also European and global issues, as these all match the guiding questions of the thematic analysis: how China sees itself, how China sees others, and how China sees the world, which also makes this chapter comparable with the textbook analysis. In practice, I downloaded the pages from all available issues from January 2019 to August 2024 and converted them into one file per issue. In other words, I created in total of 274 files ordered by the issue date. Then, I inputted these files into NVivo for coding, and the manual coding process followed

the thematic analysis approach as before in the textbook analysis. In the end, 547 codes are coded which is far more than those from the textbooks. These 547 codes are conceptualised into eight sub-themes (see Table 6.1).

	Sub-themes	Number of files	Number of references
1	China is the major responsible power and part of the international order.	135	279
2	China is a strong support and the motherland of Chinese people in Europe.	105	201
3	China and Europe cannot be de-coupled.	107	190
4	China does not want to get involved in internal European affairs.	73	108
5	The US is the inevitable player for China to participate in global governance.	59	92
6	Cultural and people-to-people exchanges in the region.	49	63
7	The old Western-dominated international order is problematic.	35	39
8	The China-Europe relations are not independent from the US.	27	35

Table 6.1 Sub-themes of the *Nouvelles d'Europe*

Before discussing the main themes of the NE, there are several empirical notes about the NE itself and the coding process. First, after the coding process and the numbers presented above, the correspondence of the numbers of files and references shows the validity and consistency of the coding process. Second, this Central and Eastern Europe version of NE is edited and issued by the office in Vienna, and the contents focus, by nature, more on the region, compared to other versions of the NE. While the NE in

Germany and Spain cover more news about Germany, Nordic countries, and the Iberian Peninsula, this Central and Eastern Europe version focuses on 22 countries in the region as its issue coverage. These 22 countries are Albania, Estonia, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Romania, Moldova, Switzerland, (Kosovo), Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, and Hungary (the list of the countries follows the order in the “issue coverage” in the NE, see top right corner in Figure 6.1). More precisely, Austria and Hungary as the subjects take significant weight in the news reports, which matches the textbook analysis in Vienna and Budapest.

Third, there are fixed seasonal topics in the newspaper. For example, in January or February, the newspaper publishes public letters and greetings of the Chinese New Year from the Chinese embassies in the region; in March, the two sessions in Beijing are reported; in October, the national holiday is the fixed topic with multiple reports on the celebrations in China and public letters from the Chinese embassies. Also, the newspaper publishes specific policies and regulations concerning the Chinese diaspora like the travel restrictions and test requirements for Chinese going back to China during the pandemic. This information is not published as a news report, but as an announcement – representing the embassies to spread the policies and regulations to

more Chinese diaspora. On one hand, this shows that the NE serves the Chinese community as it follows the news of Chinese festivals and domestic politics; on the other hand, this might indicate its relations with Chinese officials and governments, although to what extent we do not know and these cannot be measured. To be clear, the coding process is not based on the topics of these articles, but on the specific meanings and themes. In other words, the thematic approach helps to go beyond the topics and these fixed seasonal arrangements to re-integrate and generate the meaning-making patterns.



Figure 6.1: The front page of the issue on 24th January 2024, *Nouvelles d'Europe*
Central and Eastern Europe version.

Fourth, another interesting individual observation is that, on the first page of the issue on 24th January 2019 (Figure 6.1), the newspaper highlights the headline with “Wuhan Pneumonia” in blue, which is the first and the only time that the newspaper used this term. During the pandemic, the battlefield was not only limited to the public health sector and medical professionals but also expanded to narratives and labelling. The Chinese government made huge efforts to disconnect the word virus from China or Wuhan. In the detailed reports in the same issue and the following issue, the virus is referred to as the neo-corona virus, and a short report on page 5 issued on 7th February 2019 is titled “A joint statement by German friends: the enemy is the virus, not Chinese people”. No matter whether the single appearance of “Wuhan Pneumonia” was an accident or edited on purpose, it reflects that the NE is different from the *People's Daily* and influenced by the European local context as the NE must rapidly report the European local news and respond to its European local audiences. These four specific notes from the NE show that the NE, and other communication conduits and materials of Chinese public diplomacy in Europe, are not simply the “throat and mouth”, or the mouthpiece in English, of the Chinese government as a tool of speaker projecting

Chinese political values and establishing a favourable image of the country. There are many more interesting things which the state-centric approach cannot unpack.

6.2 Themes of the Nouvelles d'Europe

Based on the key guiding questions of conducting the thematic analysis and the eight sub-themes (see Table 6.1), three dominant themes from the NE are conceptualised.

The first theme is that China is the leading power of a better world, and this theme is concerned with how China sees the world order. The second theme is that China and Europe should work together, which emphasises the relationships between China and Europe. The last theme is that China is an economic power which strongly integrates with the first two themes and is different from the “civilisation” focus of the textbooks.

These three themes are conceptualised based on how China sees the world, how China sees others (in this case, Europe and European countries), and how China sees itself, which are the translation patterns of the strategic narratives.

6.2.1 China is the leading power of a better world

The theme that China is the leading power of a better world contains how China perceives the current international order and how China wants to change it. This theme and the translation into the narratives in the *Nouvelles d'Europe* relate to the Chinese strategic narratives of the “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” and its BRI narratives. From this theme, the narratives in the newspaper present that first, China considers itself a major responsible power in the current world order, and second, China considers the current international order problematic due to the US hegemony. In other words, the current international order dominated by the US hegemony needs change and that change comes from China.

In the newspaper NE, many articles report how China helps and supports other countries. For example, China provided vaccines to Eastern European countries while the EU was busy with making regulations among the member states, China asked for peace and diplomatic solutions to the Ukraine conflict, how BRI projects benefit local people in receiving countries, and so on. The newspapers collected are from January 2019 to the end of August 2024 and the pandemic and the Ukraine conflict were the main issues during this period. China is portrayed as the defender and leader of international order, and the rest of the world considers China as a new and better model.

In the issue on 22nd May 2022, the NE reported President Xi's address and promises to the world at the 73rd World Health Assembly. Xi introduced China's five actions to coordinate global cooperation in fighting against the pandemic. First, China would provide an international assistance fund of two billion USD over two years. Second, China would work with the UN to establish global humanitarian response depots and hubs in China. Third, China would establish a mechanism of thirty China-Africa hospitals pair-up cooperations to help African countries. Fourth, the Chinese vaccines would become global public goods; and finally, China would work with other G20 members to implement the Debt Service Suspension Initiative for the poorest countries.

On the other side, the European countries and the US are described as suffering from the pandemic due to weak governments and lack of capacity. For example, the NE reports that new waves of infection restrict the local economic recovery, while Chinese people have already enjoyed domestic travelling and festivals. In the issue on 11th December 2020, the headline on page 4 says "Merkel becomes emotional, reflecting the helplessness towards the reality" and another article on the same page is titled "Bavaria declares 'state of disaster' again, Corona-virus-party organised in many places". These news reports and narratives tell stories to its Chinese readers that China is capable of controlling its domestic pandemic and giving a hand to the rest of the world, but European countries cannot deliver efficient policies fighting against the virus.

Besides the pandemic, on the topic of the Ukraine conflict and together with other negative news, the NE delivers the stories based on the worldview that the current international order led by the US is problematic and the US hegemony is problematic. For example, in the issue of 11th December 2020, the commentator of the newspaper writes that

The boss of the West, the US, was absent from leading global affairs of fighting against the pandemic, its domestic actions were a mess as well, its full-capacity image established since the World War II is collapsing, the US is even called a failed country by its domestic media; the red-zone of pandemic Europe has never received concrete support from the US, but some tiny peanuts under the flag of America first.

In the issue of NE on 9th December 2022, a public article by the Chinese Ambassador to Moldova is translated from the original published on the *InfoTag* (see Embassy of the PRC in the Republic of Moldova, 2022). The Ambassador suggests that

nobody can deny that, in the current international community, there is still too much existence of hegemonism, power politics, Cold War mentality, double-standard, intervening others' domestic affairs, [...] The country doing this, the purpose is to forever maintain its top position on the world pyramid, the country considers that only itself has the right to enjoy a developed and wealthy life and other countries only deserve to work for it, to provide cheap products and resources, and to wait for being harvested, the problem behind is the civilisation exceptionalism and even racism.

Although the Ambassador does not explicitly mention it in the article, “the country” points to the US. In the article, the Ambassador makes the comparison that “China

has never, and will not bully others and ask for hegemony and so-called world leadership, [...], will not do things based on ‘China first’ and ‘Chinese priority’”.

Not only these international affairs but also the US hegemony is presented by the stories in Hong Kong and Taiwan as the US intervenes in Chinese domestic affairs. From the NE’s perspective, the US is irresponsible and a troublemaker around the world. In the issue on 9th June 2023, the commentator of the NE clearly writes that “the world needs the US, a powerful and responsible US; at the same time, the world also needs China, a China that can lead the world out of crises and continue sustainable peace”. The current problematic international order led by the US hegemony is the opposite and the narrating target of the theme “China is the leading power of a better world”. These narratives of the negativeness of the US and its hegemony and the positiveness of China’s rising power are connected to the strategic narrative of “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics”. In other words, the “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” is translated into the negative narratives of the US and some European countries, and how China helps others, and at the same time, is restricted by the US hegemony.

What does this strategic narrative “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” mean? An official website of “China’s Diplomacy in the New Era” gives the basic definition:

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, modern China is experiencing the broadest and the most significant social reform in our country’s history, is conducting the greatest and special practice innovation in human history, is embarking on a path of socialism with Chinese characteristics that is in line with China’s national conditions, conforms to the requirements of the times and has achieved great success. China nowadays is closer to the centre of the world stage than at any time in history, and is closer to achieving the goal of national rejuvenation than at any time in history. The world is so big, problems are so many, the international community expects to hear China’s voice, and to see China’s proposals. General Secretary Xi emphasises China must have its major-country diplomacy with its characteristics. We need to base on the summary of practice experiences, enrich and develop the ideas of foreign affairs tasks, and make our foreign affairs tasks with obvious and outstanding Chinese characteristics, Chinese style, and Chinese manner. (China’s Diplomacy in the New Era, n.d.)

Unfortunately, this basic definition does not deliver as much as it is supposed to do. The Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning’s regular press conference on 29th December 2023 might give a clearer and more detailed narrating and explanation:

We have opened up new prospects in major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. China has become a responsible major country with enhanced international influence, stronger capacity to steer new endeavors, and greater moral appeal. [...] It was pointed out at the conference that a community with a shared future for mankind reflects the Chinese Communists’ worldview, perception of order, and values, accords with the common aspiration of people in all countries, and points the direction for the progress of world civilizations. It is also the noble goal pursued by China in conducting major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics for the new era. Given the

series of major issues and challenges facing the world today, China calls for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. An equal and orderly multipolar world is one in which all countries, regardless of size, are treated as equals, hegemonism and power politics are rejected, and democracy is truly promoted in international relations. A universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization is one that meets the common needs of all countries, especially the developing countries, and properly addresses the development imbalances between and within countries resulting from the global allocation of resources. [...] and raise China's international influence, appeal and power to shape events to a new level. We will create a more favorable international environment and provide more solid strategic support for building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through the Chinese path to modernization. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2023h)

Comparing these two official statements carrying a strategic narrative of “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” and the reports in the NE, we may find out what problems are as “the world is so big, and the problems are so many”. The problems are the US hegemony and its associated small-circle power politics; in particular, the US is bullying other countries and making others depend on the US to maintain its top position. This strategic narrative is translated into the local narratives in the NE such as the US starting wars in the Middle East and triggering the Ukraine conflict, and some European countries, namely Hungary and Serbia, strongly want their independence from the US and EU's geopolitical and social influence. At the same time, combining the strategic narratives and the local narratives, we may find out that the major-country diplomacy suggests the major countries are the US, China, and Western

European countries. These major countries are the key to the international order and the US is trying to maintain its old hegemony, while China is trying to reshape this power relationship with the US.

What does “responsible” mean in Chinese strategic narratives? The translation into the local narratives shows that China is cooperating with other countries, no matter how big or small, to solve practical development issues, like stories on China’s infrastructure projects in the Balkan states. These Chinese supports are a counterforce against the US hegemony. In other words, from both the strategic narratives and local narratives, a responsible China is a major country on the same level as the US in the world order now, and China must speak more and fight more to lead the others to shake the US hegemony.

6.2.2 China and Europe should work together

As the NE is the largest Chinese media outlet in Europe, the newspaper, by nature, pays extreme attention to European local politics, economy, and societies, which are even more weighted than Chinese domestic news. As briefly discussed before, the local news includes major topics like the pandemic, the Ukraine conflict, and Chinese BRI projects

in the region. Furthermore, the newspaper highlights Central and Eastern European countries more than those in Western Europe or Scandinavia, as the data collected are the NE issued by the Vienna branch. The second theme of NE is about the China-Europe relations and it is that China and Europe should work together. This theme is related to the Chinese strategic narrative towards Europe that China and Europe have no clash of fundamental interests. On one hand, the narratives and stories in the NE present the internal division within Europe but China has no interest in getting involved in these European troubles; On the other hand, China emphasises its major role in the global economy, and that European countries and China should work together to shake the current international order under the US hegemony.

The message of internal division within Europe is presented in various issues in the NE. For example, the NE comments and quotes: “Europe has been more divided than ever on seeking a joint political solution to the migration issue” (1st Nov. 2019); “Italy complains that Germany receives more vaccine supplies and Spain will not share with other member states about the injection information” (1st Jan. 2021); “On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the UK, France, and Germany, do not share the same position” (25th Mar. 2022); “‘Hungary must protect its interests’, Orban says, ‘Budapest must defend

its position for peace and against the Biden administration and Brussels” (24th Feb. 2023), and “the EU wants to blackmail pro-Russia member states?” (2nd Aug. 2024).

More interestingly, another example from the NE presents the meeting and negotiation amongst European leaders in a theatrical narrating style. In the issue on 24th July 2024, page 3 reports the Special European Council meeting held on 17th-21st July about the recovery package and the European budget (European Council, 2024). The NE reports the meeting:

French President Macron once thumped the table and accused Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, even threatening to quit the negotiation. Especially when Austrian Chancellor Kurz left the room to answer a phone call, which irritated Macron who said: “look, he does not care at all, he does not listen to others, terrible attitude”. Hungarian PM Orban had a furious argument with Mark Rutte, and Orban directly pointed to Rutte: “[I] do not know the reason why [you] hate me or Hungary” and “[you] try to use financial mechanism to punish Hungary”.

The report presents the meeting as a high school class without a teacher, and each leader just fights for their own national interests rather than a common European interest. It frames the EU as weak and divided within itself.

When reporting these inner divisions and social problems of Europe, China is missing in the narratives and stories. However, China is involved when it comes to the economy and global governance. Most of the time, the NE presents China as an economy and

market power towards Europe, which will be discussed in detail in the third theme. The newspaper also narrates that the internal problems of Europe and the conflicts between the EU and China are due to the US hegemony and European countries following the US, and the solution is that European countries should be more independent and cooperate with China. For instance, the conclusion of the article on the Ukraine conflict in the issue on 18th February 2022 concludes that “Europeans are squeezed between two imperialist powers, and are divided by Europeans themselves, the Europeans’ desire for the third path rather than the US or Russia should not be an impossible dream”.

In the issue on 26th August 2022, the NE translated the interview with the Chinese Ambassador to Austria by the Press Kurier. The Ambassador answered a question about Huawei:

Europe is one of the important poles of the multipolar system. China always supports the European integration, [...] considers Europe as an important cooperation partner, we hope that Europe can act from its own interests and global interests, and follow an independent foreign policy. [...] The US and Europe still have not yet provided evidence of the security problem of Huawei. [We] hope that European countries can clearly understand the nature of the problem, and do not obey the US’s intimidation.

The headline of the article on page 2 in the issue on 27th October 2023 is titled: “Decoupling with China will destroy the European economy, Europe should not follow and obey Washington”.

The Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe are that China supports European integration, and China and Europe have no clash on fundamental interest. These strategic narratives are translated into the NE and presented by the stories and narratives of the division within Europe and that the China-Europe relationship should be independent from the US. On various occasions, the Chinese leaders admit that Europe is a partner and another civilisation of China, Europe and China are both the key players of the current global multipolar system. For example, Chinese Minister Wang Yi met the press during the Second Session of the 14th National People's Congress, and the Minister answered the question about China-Europe relations:

In fact, China and Europe do not have clashing fundamental interests between them, or geopolitical and strategic conflicts. Their common interests far outweigh their differences. In the context of China-EU relations, the two sides should be characterized rightly as partners. Cooperation should be the defining feature of the relationship, autonomy is its key value, and win-win is its future. We hope that China-EU relations will move ahead smoothly with green lights at every crossing. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024a)

Two months later, President Xi visited France and re-emphasised the Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe and European countries:

Both China and France are parts of the Eurasian continent, located at its east and west ends respectively. China is a typical Eastern civilization, and France showcases the Western. Our two countries do not have geopolitical conflicts, and we do not have clashes of fundamental interests. What we do have in common is we both think independently, both are fascinated by our splendid cultures, and we are engaged in result-oriented cooperation based on many shared interests. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2024c)

The translation of the strategic narrative of “no clash on fundamental interests” into the newspaper NE is different from the ones in textbooks and other narratives. Although one of the missions of the NE is to present the positive side of China and tell good stories of China to its Chinese audiences in Europe, it does not necessarily mean that it has to present the problems and divisions within Europe. In other words, the NE emphasises the division within Europe on various issues, like the pandemic, the Ukraine conflict, and social issues such as migration, and the emphasis is not to reach a conclusion that China is good and Europe is bad. The purpose of these news reports is more targeting the message that China is not involved in European internal affairs, which makes a counterargument against the Western strategic narrative of the “China threat”. These news report narratives and stories show that China is away from the problems and division within Europe, which, at the same time, serves the strategic narrative that China and Europe have no clash on fundamental interests and these two actors should work together.

How do these two work together? The strategic narratives on the highest level suggest that both Europe and China are key players of the multipolar system and they both should act independently. The local narratives of the news articles suggest that the US and its hegemony are the barriers restricting a better Europe-China relationship and it

is the European side that needs to work more to keep away from the US influence. In other words, the Chinese strategic narratives do not clearly suggest the fundamental problems or the US as the third party of the Europe-China relationships. The local narratives, from the translation, present clearly that the Europe-China relationship currently is not only between these two players but also associates with the US which China suggests the relationship should be independent from.

6.2.3 China is an economic power

The last theme of the NE is that China is an economic power. No matter towards the EU or specific European states, the NE narrates that China is a key economic power that Europe cannot risk de-coupling from. This third theme supplements the first and second themes as China is capable of being more responsible in global governance and countering the US hegemony. At the same time, China and Europe should work more on the economy rather than focusing on political disputes.

It is noted that the narratives associated with the theme China is an economic power are not isolated and are not based on absolute economic numbers. The local narratives are presented in a comparative way between China's economic status and how China sees

its counterparts in Europe. In the NE, there are other labels that China uses to describe its relationships with European countries. For example, the identity label “civilisation” is applied to Spain, France, and Romania. Hungary and Serbia are considered “friends” and “models of China-Europe relations”, Spain is a “reliable friend” of China in the EU, Austria is a “rich-culture” country, Switzerland is a “great economic partner”, Germany and other Western European countries are considered as “high-income and welfare states”, and Lithuania is a “small country”. It is noted that the relationships between China and some Central and Eastern European countries, which had the communist past and where Chinese BRI projects receive more positive responses, are labelled as the “traditional friendships”. Among all these, the economic aspect has never been absent in the narratives.

When narrating the bilateral relationships between China and European countries, the reports in the NE always emphasise that China is the second largest economy in the world, and that bilateral economic relations are important to the respective European countries. For instance, the newspaper suggests that China is the largest trade partner of Austria in Asia (17th May 2019) and the second outside the EU (18th Oct. 2019), China is the largest trade partner of Romania in Asia (27th Sep. 2019), China is the largest trade partner of France in Asia and the 7th in the world (11th Aug. 2023), Spain

is only the 6th trade partner of China in the EU but China is the largest partner of Spain outside the union (7th Apr. 2023), and China is the largest trade partner of Norway in Asia (17th May 2019). This narrating pattern, presenting the importance of bilateral trade relations, also applies to the reports on other European countries. Moreover, narrating the economic trade significance does not only remain on the level of China and European countries, but also covers the EU-China and US-China relations. The commentator piece on 2nd April 2021 suggests that China is the largest trade partner of the EU, the EU cannot be separated from China, and the rapid recovery of China impacts European economic recovery after the pandemic. These reports reflect that the NE prioritises economic ties among other topics.

This theme, China is an economic power, gives a more concrete meaning of China as a responsible major country. The NE reports narrate that China, the EU, and Central and Eastern European countries are markets. For example, in the issues of the first half of 2023, the NE pays attention to the CEE countries: CEE countries have huge market potential, because, as part of Europe, CEE countries have enormous populations and consumer markets. Serbia, Croatia, and other CEE countries became the experimental destinations of Chinese group tourism after the pandemic, and Chinese tourists re-appear in Hungary. In these narratives, European countries are considered as the market

and Chinese people who come to Europe are supporting the economic recovery. At the same time, the narratives are selling the narrative that China is a market for Europeans: China will become the largest consumer market in the world by 2020 (3rd Jan. 2020); the EU needs China, needs cheap Chinese products to reduce the impacts from the high inflation, and needs to share the Chinese market. At the same time, China also needs the support from the EU on technologies and service trading (29th Jul. 2022). Targeting its Chinese audiences, the NE also introduces domestic improvements and economic recovery after the pandemic, which may attract the Chinese diaspora to bring business to China.

These reports highlight the economic significance of China. At the same time, they deliver the message that China plays a role in world order with its economic power. The NE highlights the Chinese participation in and history with the Davos Forum. The news reports narrate that China is the focus and key in the Davos Forum and a Chinese voice is much expected. The Davos Forum has a long history with China as the establishment of the Summer Davos Forum in China since 2007 shows that China is part of the global economy and Chinese economic power supports global trade. Moreover, these narratives associated with economic power serve as a counterargument against the narrative of China's division in Europe. This theme highlights that China wants to do

business with European countries, and European countries need the Chinese market; at the same time, the theme marginalises political disputes like human rights issues.

The theme of China as an economic power is not isolated and simply presents what China is, but supplements the strategic narratives and first two themes. Because China is an economic power, and China has been deeply involved in the global economy, China needs to play a more responsible role in global governance as a major country.

We may push further to see, in Chinese strategic narratives, who are considered as the major powers. The economy and market determine who the major powers are in the multipolar system: the US, the EU, and China. By looking at the translation and local narratives in the NE, we may find that the Chinese strategic narrative as a major country strongly rests on its economic narratives; and this strategic narrative not only refers to China's GDP and its status as the second largest economy in the world, but also China's identity as a market for Europeans and China has been strongly involved and participating in the global economy order. The third theme of economic power helps to convey the message that within the current world order, Europe and China can actually work together, and there is no clash in fundamental interests, as the political disputes between Europe and China should give way to their economic cooperation. Combining

these three themes, we may find that, in the narratives to Chinese external audiences, economic power is the priority and China has always been part of the international order.

6.3 Newspapers and information warfare

The newspaper NE has developed a comprehensive communication network including multiple media: printed newspapers, online new websites, accounts and posts on both Chinese and Western social media – WeChat, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter), and mobile applications. The parent company of NE has set up culture centres in Paris, Frankfurt, Rome, Vienna, London, and Madrid. The business has been expanded to tourism and publishing namely its travel agency Euro-Chine Voyages and its publishing house – Editions Horizon Oriental. The media cooperation partners include Xinhua News Agency, CCTV, ChinaDaily, China News Service, Jiangsu TV, AFP, The Telegraph, Die Welt, and so on. The introduction chapter introduced the landscape of Chinese media overseas and the relationships between Chinese media outlets and the Beijing government, and the current studies on Chinese media and their propaganda towards overseas receive extreme attention. However, the NE, a localised and commercial-oriented Chinese media in Europe which has discursive links with the

Chinese government and Chinese private capital, receive less attention in academic discussions. Considering the NE as a media outlet and as part of how China speaks to the world, this case study is relevant to the discussion of information warfare.

Information and communication technologies are no longer just about what people know and how people know, but are weaponised. “Information is not just a means to boost the effectiveness of lethal technologies as has occurred often in the past, but opens up the possibility of non-lethal attacks that can incapacitate, defeat, deter or coerce an adversary” (Bishop & Goldman, 2003, p. 114). The information warfare is warfare characterised by the use of information and communication technologies and such a phenomenon has departed from military use of information and technologies to political and ethical aspects (Taddeo, 2012). Payne argues that “The media, in the modern era, are indisputably an instrument of war. This is because winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield” (2005, p. 81). Besides information and technologies, the media also plays a role in information warfare. Discussions focus on the validity and credibility of media, and the key concepts are disinformation and fake news (e.g. Babacan & Tam, 2022; Golovchenko et al., 2018; Kumar, 2006; Szostek, 2018). Not just focused on the facts and information, narratives have been highlighted in

information warfare (e.g. Asmolov, 2022), as narratives can shape public opinion and information warfare is about strategic campaigns to win over both local and global public opinion (Golovchenko et al., 2018).

The NE seems not in the discussion of information warfare since the NE, the Chinese diaspora groups, and the Chinese government are not at the centre of a military conflict, and the NE is not a media outlet on the national level like the *People's Daily*. However, the NE case can be part of the discussion of information warfare and provide new perspectives. First, the NE covers warfare and conflicts in its reports, although it is a low-level newspaper. The reports collected in this research cover the main international military conflicts, namely the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Palestine conflict. The reports of NE narrated the military capacities of stakeholders of the Russia-Ukraine war, that the US should be responsible for the war, and that the EU is in crisis because of the war. Second, the NE is an example of Chinese media in Europe and due to its discursive connections with Chinese government and Chinese private capital, the NE presents an alternative voice of China. Here, the alternative voice does not mean that the NE speaks differently with opposite opinions against Chinese national media outlets, but local narratives in European contexts different from the Chinese strategic narratives on the top. This chapter has already analysed the translation process between the NE's local

narratives and Chinese strategic narratives. The NE's narratives are supported by three themes: China is the leading power of a better world, China and Europe should work together, and China is an economic power. These themes and the narratives directly speak to and reach the Chinese diaspora groups in Europe, which play a role in shaping the public opinion of these groups.

Third, the NE is not just conventional mass media, namely printed newspapers, but a comprehensive media network including both online and offline communication channels with technologies. This comprehensive communication network contributes to the efficiency and accessibility of the diffusion of narratives. This chapter has already shown that the NE is a narrative battlefield of not just the wars mentioned but also daily and social issues. These local narratives are political and can be strategic. In short, the NE case can contribute to the discussion of information warfare as it provides new perspectives of daily narrative contestations which bring ordinary people into relations. Moreover, the NE case sheds light on the actors – China and Chinese diaspora groups, who are not at the very centre of conflicts in information warfare.

6.4 Conclusion

As part of the Chinese strategic narratives projection and Chinese public diplomacy to Europe, the *Nouvelles d'Europe* has received less attention as an analytical object, although the framework of strategic narratives strongly advocates investigation into different communication conduits and media ecologies. Although the NE has connections with the Chinese government and embassies in Europe, it is placed on a lower level than those official Chinese media and newspapers, namely the *People's Daily* and the *Global Times*. The audiences of the NE and its private commercial structure make it a special case of looking at the Chinese strategic narratives in Europe, and the NE is a joint result of the Chinese strategic narratives and the European local context.

Following the thematic analysis approach, almost three hundred issues and 822 pages were collected covering the issues from January 2019 to the end of August 2024. More than four hundred codes were coded in the first round, and from these four hundred codes, three key themes were conceptualised. The first theme is that China is a leading power of a better world, which is strongly connected to the Chinese strategic narrative “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics”. The narratives associated

with this theme suggest that China is, as a responsible country, helping other countries and that the current international order led and controlled by the US hegemony is problematic. In particular, we have reports focusing on how China supports European countries and donates medical equipment and vaccines to the region, and how the small circle of G7 and NATO brings conflicts and suppression to the region. The second theme is that China and Europe should work together and this theme connects to the Chinese strategic narratives of China supporting European integration and China and Europe having no clash on fundamental interests. These strategic narratives are translated into the local political news in Europe about the internal East-and-West division within Europe. Furthermore, the NE also pushes the narrative that the obstacle to Europe-China relations is the US, and both China and European countries should act independently from the US, which means that China acknowledges Europe as one key player in the multipolar system, and that China and Europe should work together to shake the US hegemony.

The third theme that supplements the first two themes is that China is an economic power. Unlike the textbooks used in Confucius Institutes, the NE portrays European countries and China more as markets from the economic perspective rather than emphasising them as civilisations. The narratives in the NE under this theme are about

the bilateral economic trade volumes, the markets for future cooperation, and China's long history of participating in the global economy. From the third theme, we may see how China understands its major country position and which countries can be the major countries. On one hand, these reports and articles in the NE align with the Chinese strategic narratives; on the other hand, they function as the counter-narratives against those Western narratives of China's threat and China's division in Europe.

In the case of NE, when combining the strategic narratives and the translation, some inconsistencies are found. First, through its strategic narratives and reports in the NE, China wants to project its leading position against the US hegemony, and at the same time, it tells the stories about how China is deeply involved with the global economy and is part of the international liberal order. Second, China sees the US hegemony and its Western European followers as problematic, and at the same time, it suggests that economic cooperation is the key between China and Europe. The narrative that China and Europe are economic partners marginalises those narratives on political disputes between these two actors. Thus, from the translation and local narratives, we unpack the meaning of Chinese strategic narratives towards Europe in the European context. Moreover, we may discover the variations and conflicts between these narratives on different levels. Again, without the translation process and local narratives, the strategic

narratives cannot be understood and projected. At the same time, by looking at the translation and the local narratives, the high-level strategic narratives are located in specific temporal and spatial dimensions. The meaning of strategic narratives is supported and illustrated by these local narratives in the reports, and these local narratives tell European stories about what happened in the past, what is happening now, and what should be done for a better future. In the conclusion chapter, an overall comparison of the translation and local narratives between the NE and textbooks will be presented.

Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusions

Are strategic narratives limited within the political elite circle? If so, the function and purpose of strategic narratives in constructing the shared meaning of the past, the present, and the future are limited. How do strategic narratives speak to and reach the public? This dissertation focused on the translation processes from Chinese strategic narratives to local narratives in Austria and Hungary. As it focused on the translation process of strategic narratives, two different communication conduits were selected, the Chinese language textbooks used in Confucius Institutes (CIs) and the Chinese newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe* (NE). From these three cases (CIs in Vienna and Budapest, NE's Central and Eastern European version), this dissertation sheds light on to the translation process and bridges the top-level strategic narratives and the discursive and sociocultural local narratives on the ground. This chapter will compare the three cases and their themes with further discussions, and the conclusion of this dissertation will be presented with its theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions.

In general, the strategic narratives give the directions and boundaries of local narratives. For example, human rights issues do not occur in the strategic narratives between China

and Hungary, nor do they show up in the local narratives in the textbooks used in CI Budapest. In other words, human rights issues are excluded from the narrating of the bilateral relationship between China and Hungary. The local narratives enrich the strategic narratives and enable the public to understand, feel, and experience the meaning of strategic narratives on a daily basis. For instance, China's strategic narratives towards Europe are translated into the language practices and fictional stories in the textbooks. The strategic narratives like "China and Europe (or European countries) are both civilisations" and "China and Europe do not have fundamental conflicts of interests" are de-politicised and translated into stories of Hungarian students studying in Beijing and Chinese students admiring Hungarian heritage in Budapest.

Local narratives are political and can be strategic, which is one of the theoretical contributions of this dissertation to the analytical framework of strategic narrative. This dissertation does not suggest that there is a hidden commandment or written authoritative handbook clearly regulating and guiding how each strategic narrative must be translated into particular local narratives. In other words, the translation process between the strategic and local narratives might or might not be instrumental but is shaped by the local contexts and communication conduits. It is the relations and particular local contexts that shape the translation process, and this is one of the reasons

why it is necessary to analyse strategic narratives with local narratives, to bring the local contexts in, and to unpack the translation process in different communication conduits facing different audiences.

In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework of strategic narratives was reviewed and discussed. Strategic narratives are “a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors” (Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 2). The analytical framework does not only analyse the texts and narratives but also how the narratives are constructed and projected through various channels. In other words, the framework helps us to unpack the epistemological and normative dimensions of international order and world politics.

This dissertation has argued that analysing strategic narratives cannot be separated from local narratives and the translation process. Based on the main research question of this dissertation, how Chinese strategic narratives speak to and reach the public in Europe, the local narratives and the translation process are the key. Starting from the strategic narratives, why do we have to look at local narratives? Chapter 2 has suggested that, from management studies, decision-making perspectives, and Gramscian ideas, it is the

public that brings strategy alive and makes it powerful, and it is the civil society where the power of strategic narratives exists and is exercised.

In particular, first, it is the local narrative that brings the people, the public, into relations where the power of narrative can be exercised. In an interview with an EU high official located in Hong Kong, she gave a straight answer that “I do not understand ‘a shared future for mankind’” after I asked her about Chinese strategic narratives. In a remote interview with an EU official located in Brussels, he also clearly suggested that “I do not understand it, there is no ‘shared future’ for everyone, we are all different.” In the semi-structured interviews with Austrian and Hungarian students, the students did not understand what strategic narratives were, and had barely heard of or were able to identify what Chinese strategic narratives were. The commonality of the students is that they understand China is a big power in international relations. During the fieldwork at the Confucius Institute in the University of Paris Diderot, I randomly had a conversation with two people who were smoking in the courtyard of the building where the CI was. They were working in the same building and the University, and they told me “Yes, I know, it (CI Paris) is here, but I have no idea what they are doing”. These interviews, to some extent, reflect that the strategic narratives themselves are away from the public. However, the power and the effects of strategic narratives are not away from the public.

It is essential to look at the local narratives as they bring the public into relations, and it is the translation process that bridges the strategic narratives and local narratives. This dissertation no longer separates the strategic narratives within the political elite class and ordinary people in social communities, and it no longer considers there is only a one-way static and mechanic message path from strategic narratives to local narratives, but local narratives and the translation process are productive.

The second significance of looking at local narratives is that local narratives support the validity and credibility of strategic narratives. The validity and credibility support the sharedness of strategic narratives connecting the past, the present, and the future. The daily stories and news reports – local narratives – in the textbooks and the newspaper make the strategic narratives closer and more convincing to the public. Third, looking at local narratives and the translation process helps to unpack the changes in strategic narratives throughout time and in different local contexts, which brings the temporal and spatial dimensions into the analysis. The analyses of the textbooks and the newspaper show that strategic narratives can be translated into different local narratives. Again, theoretically speaking, the framework of strategic narratives provides a useful tool to look at how international actors, including states and non-state actors, construct the shared meaning and participate in narrative contestations. Although this

dissertation focuses on the projection phase of strategic narratives and pays attention to local narratives, the emphasis on local narratives and translation processes is helpful to the analysis of the formation and reception phases of strategic narratives as well.

7.1 Comparison of local narratives and communication conduits

Chapters 4 and 5 have analysed the textbooks used in the Confucius Institutes in Vienna and Budapest. Regionally and globally, these two CIs are considered the model CIs. In CI Vienna, there is a photo hanging in the corridor showing the former Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong presenting a reward to the Director of CI Vienna in Beijing. CI Budapest is the first CI in Hungary and there are in total five CIs in the country. Both CIs were established in 2006 and their Chinese partner is the Beijing Foreign Studies University. The textbooks used in the CI Vienna are from Beijing, called *Road to Success*, and this set of textbooks is designed for general global students. The textbooks are designed and edited in English and Chinese. The textbooks used in the CI Budapest were a joint product of Hungarian scholars and Chinese editors and they are the first Chinese language textbooks in Hungarian. The Central and Eastern European version

of the Nouvelles d'Europe is a weekly newspaper in Chinese. This Chinese newspaper covers Austria, Hungary, and other countries in the region.

The thematic analysis approach was applied to all these three cases and the coding process was supported by NVivo. The first step of the thematic analysis approach was to familiarise myself with the general content of the material and to extract key information, lines, and narratives from the textbooks. All the data extracted were put in order and translated into English. The second step was to input the data to the NVivo software for the coding process. The coding process of the textbooks was based on the guiding questions: how China sees itself, how China sees others, and how China perceives the world. There were in total 265 codes coded from the RTS and 20 primary sub-themes were conceptualised. 107 codes were coded and 19 sub-themes were conceptualised from the textbooks used in Hungary. In the case of the NE, 547 codes were coded and eight primary sub-themes were conceptualised. These sub-themes in each case are further conceptualised into themes, and each case has three themes (see Table 7.1).

	Textbooks in Austria	Textbooks in Hungary	Nouvelle d'Europe
China itself	China is a complex and united country in a modern era	China's modernisation and China is a successful development mode	China is an economic power

Relations between China and others	China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners	China and Hungary are civilisations	China and Europe should work together
Relations between China and the world	China is not a threat to the current international order	Harmonious world	China is the leading power of a better world

Table 7.1 Themes in the textbooks and the newspaper

Table 7.1 presents the themes on different levels from the three cases and these themes are the common patterns of how Chinese strategic narratives are translated into local narratives. The first level is the themes about China itself and these themes are mainly about how China sees itself. The second level is about the relations between China and others and these themes focus on how China sees its relations with other countries and regions. The third level themes are those about how China sees the world – China’s worldview. It is noted that these three levels are not perfectly divided. The themes on each level connect with each other in the same case, and the themes on each level are not isolated. For example, Chapter 5 has argued that the theme “China and Hungary are civilisations” plays an important role in supporting the theme “harmonious world”. The theme “China is an old civilisation and welcomes foreigners” in the Austrian case is put on the second level. Although “China is an old civilisation” is strongly presented by Chinese cultural elements in the local narratives, the purpose of presenting these Chinese cultural elements is to attract foreigners to understand more about China and

even visit the country, and the narratives and stories about Chinese civilisation are frequently identified in a conversation, comparison, or exchange between Chinese and others. Moreover, due to the set of textbooks used in Vienna being a general set targeting global language learners, the textbooks themselves do not have a clear specific target group, unlike the cases in Hungary and the newspapers, the targeted public groups are in Hungary and other Central and Eastern European countries.

7.1.1 First level themes – What is China

The relationships and dynamics among the themes in each case have been discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Now these nine themes are collected together. In terms of the first level about how China sees itself, the themes from these three cases suggest that economic, cultural, and modern society are the key aspects. In other words, the local narratives in these three cases strongly rely on narrating elements, namely the Chinese economy, culture and history, and China's modern society to portray the identities of China. At the same time, these themes are aligned with Chinese strategic narratives on the top which are frequently stated by Chinese leaders and its government, like China is the second largest economy in the world, China is a civilisation, and China has

achieved great achievements in modernisation and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Scholars (e.g. Hartig, 2015b, 2015a; Stambach & Wamalwa, 2018) have suggested that CIs work on the image of China and CIs and other Chinese public diplomacies construct the image of “China-want-to-be” or a “correct China” rather than a “real China”. Their argument might not be accurate. From the findings of my dissertation, the themes and narratives associated on the first level indeed present a real China, especially when the textbooks introduce the cultural elements, traditions, and historical events. More precisely, the local narratives present a “selected real China” – a partial real China to audiences. It has been illustrated in previous chapters that minority cultures are marginalised as the result of a nationalist historical view. Furthermore, it is not simply the image of “China-want-to-be” that exercises power influencing others and changing others' perception of China, but it is the “selected real China” – how these fragile narrating elements are prioritised, ordered, and selected by these themes, that exercises power. Drawing on Gramscian ideas, this “selected real China”, as an image of China itself following the themes and embedded in the local narratives, leaves the freedom to the audiences to discuss and invites the audiences to process and construct a consent. It is this negotiable and debatable quality of local narratives that brings the public into

relations. The “selected real China” is presented by local narratives in the textbooks and the newspapers, and the Chinese strategic narratives are translated into these local narratives based on the themes and the local contexts. In other words, the Chinese strategic narratives to Europe go through the translation process into a civil society form and invite the public into relations to construct consent, and this is how strategic narratives can exercise power within the public through local narratives and the translation process.

7.1.2 Second level themes – relations between China and others

The themes on the second level focus on the relations between China and others, particularly China-Hungary and China-Europe relations from the textbooks used in Budapest and the NE. These themes translate the Chinese strategic narratives to Europe like China supports European integration, China and European countries are civilisations, and China and Europe do not have fundamental conflicts of interest, into local narratives. All these local narratives support the validity and credibility of Chinese strategic narratives to Europe by providing and presenting concrete daily stories and examples. More importantly, these themes and local narratives present China’s geopolitical understanding of Europe. In particular, the local narratives define what no

fundamental conflicts of interest means and what the fundamental interests are. The local narratives in textbooks and the NE reports narrate economic trade, student and tourist exchanges, and social issues between China and Europe. In other words, the military and geopolitical interests, and arguably ideological dominance supporting the ruling legitimacy do not appear in the textbooks, which probably suggests these are fundamental interests for China. Although the NE reports pay extreme attention to the Ukraine-Russia war and Israel-Palestine conflict, the theme behind the narratives is that China and Europe should work together to solve these regional conflicts – China is a stakeholder in these conflicts but not a direct party. Moreover, the NE reports, on the one hand, describe many European problems like refugee issues, energy crises, political instability, and financial troubles. On the other hand, the reports present a better China over Europe and China's support to Europe, like China's advanced digital payment technologies and China's medical and material support to European countries. Although these reports are only part of the fact, they show that China's understanding of Europe has changed. China no longer sees Europe as its modernisation model, which was the case in the 80s and 90s. China now sees itself sharing the same global status as Europe.

If we compare the themes and narratives in the CI Budapest and the NE cases, we find the changes and variations because of different communication conduits and local

contexts. In the NE reports, the theme “China and Europe should work together” also leads the presentations of the problems in Europe as mentioned above. In these reports, the EU and Western European countries are blamed. The EU and Western European countries are portrayed as the hegemony oppressing other regions in Europe. In the Hungarian case, China sees Hungary as a friendly partner in the region. The Chinese strategic narratives that China and Europe have no fundamental conflicts of interest are translated into two different local narrative outcomes in the textbooks used in Budapest and the NE reports which also cover Hungary. One of the reasons is obvious, which is that the textbooks target local Hungarian students and the NE serves its Chinese readers in the region. More importantly, this comparison tells us that one single strategic narrative on the high level can be translated into different local narratives. Furthermore, another reason behind this translation variation might be the local historical context. This variation might reflect how China sees regions within Europe: while the Western European countries were colonisers and still dominate other regions, Hungary and other countries in the CEE region are not colonisers and some of these countries also share a communist past. In other words, focusing on the translation process and the local narratives in different communication conduits helps us to analyse the validity and credibility dimension of strategic narratives and it tells the variations of the translation process caused by the conduits and local contexts. In particular, the comparison reveals

the different translations of Chinese strategic narratives to Europe and unpacks the Chinese geopolitical understanding towards different European regions and countries. It is the strategic narratives and local narratives together that draw out and present particular bilateral relationships of China.

7.1.3 Third level of themes – relations between China and the world

The themes of the third level focus on the relations between China and the World and how China sees the world order. These themes are “China is not a threat to the current international order” from the textbooks used in CI Vienna, “harmonious world” from the Chinese Hungarian textbooks, and “China is the leading power of a better world” from the NE. In particular, “China is not a threat to the current international order” is a response to the Western strategic narrative of China threat. The latter two are the Chinese proposals for a new world. First of all, these themes are relational. These themes on the third level are strongly linked to the themes on the first two levels. At the same time, these themes show that China does not see itself as isolated but in a network of global order. These themes present China’s worldview and what needs to be done to achieve this worldview.

Second, following the relationality, these themes show that Chinese strategic narratives are in contestation about the global order. These strategic narratives and themes show that China's worldview is a multipolar system and it is leading, or at least will be shortly, this multipolar system. Besides the military and economic powers, another supplementary factor China considers as the criteria of whether a country is a pole in the system or not is culture power – whether this country or nation is a civilisation or not. This may explain the current differentiated attitudes and actions of China towards the US and Europe. China and the US have fundamental conflicts of interest, including economic, geopolitical, ideological, and military ones. Although the American people are appreciated and called “the great people” by Chinese leaders many times, the US is not perceived by China as a civilisation. This means that China's worldview considers the US as a temporal and realistic hegemony, and since there are fundamental conflicts of interest, the current China and US conflicts are urgent and a matter of the rise of China. In terms of Europe, because China does not have fundamental conflicts of interest and Europe is a civilisation, China and Europe then can co-exist as poles in the future and their current disputes are not as urgent as those of China-US relations. In the local narratives in the textbooks, the US is marginalised; and in the NE, the US is the troublemaker of various global crises.

Third, compared to the themes on the first two levels, the third-level themes are more concerned about the normative aspect. The power of normativeness is that the normative aspect influences the judgement of what good or bad is and what normal and abnormal are. More importantly, taking local narratives into account in this research, this power impacts the public – European local students and Chinese diaspora communities in Europe. From another perspective – Normative Power Europe (see Manners, 2002, 2008; Manners & Diez, 2007; Whitman, 2013), these Chinese strategic narratives and local narratives with worldview themes are part of the construction of China's normative power. In other words, if these themes of China's worldview and the associated local narratives are accepted by the public, the China's actions and engagements with Europe and others are justified on the individual level. If these are rejected and strongly contested by European strategic narratives and themes, then China's actions are in doubt as the actions are wrong and abnormal.

7.1.4 Narrating techniques

Comparing these three cases together, the textbooks show some narrating techniques different from how Chinese strategic narratives are directly projected on mass media through national-level media outlets. There are two narrating techniques in the

textbooks: de-politicisation and question-raising. From the analysis of the themes, this research suggests that the Chinese political strategic narratives are translated into local narratives and stories about culture, the economy, and individual exchanges. Generally speaking, these two sets of textbooks in Austria and Hungary are consistent in using the de-politicisation narrating technique to translate the strategic narratives into local narratives.

De-politicisation also means that, in the textbooks, the political parties and government institutes are missing. These themes conceptualised tell us what the textbooks want to present to the students and also how the language instructors and the institution should teach the students. The missing elements from the textbooks should be paid attention to as well. What the textbooks do not illustrate is the Chinese Communist Party. For example, in the *Road to Success*, the term “Chinese Communist Party” only appears twice, the Party-related history only appears in a few lines; and the terms “socialist”, “socialism”, or “communism” never appear. In the textbooks used in Hungary, the Cultural Revolution and Mao Zedong only appeared once. In the Austrian case, on page 71 in the Advance volume, it says: “Chinese Communist Party suggests that taking Marxism as the guidance is the key and soul of developing and expanding advanced culture”; on page 77 in the Advance 1 volume the texts suggests that “Mao Zedong’s

military theories are sophisticated, you can only understand their profundity by careful research”; and on page 58 in the Lower Intermediate volume: “I (the author of the edited essay) wrote a letter, through the central committee of China Democratic League to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, then it worked out”.

China Democratic League is one of the eight minor political parties in China under the political framework of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). However, the CPPCC cannot be considered as one of the two legislative chambers since it only functions in political cooperation and consultation. This single line in the textbook tries to show that China has its own “democratic” political system and there are other political parties in China, although the CCP is the only ruling party. Such a tiny and easily-ignored line in a selected essay in the textbook reflects how China tries to push back the liberal strategic narratives on a global level: the Western criticisms of China as undemocratic and “one-party” system are not accurate, and China has its own political system to be part of global liberal order. Moreover, the political disputes and national interests conflicts are not explicitly carried by the themes. This shadowy and scattered information about China’s politics is how Chinese strategic narratives, after the translation, speak to Western strategic narratives on the ground. These local narratives about China’s politics are presented as knowledge in the

textbooks to students. In other words, these shadowy local narratives are objectified, and make students feel that they know China better because they have a little more knowledge learned about China's politics. In this particular case, the de-politicisation technique in the textbook turns China's politics into objectified knowledge: students learn that there are Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities in China and they also learn that there is more than one political party in China with its own political system.

Some implicit narratives on the international order and affairs, like China supporting the UN resolutions, individually appear only in exercises in the textbooks rather than the main text. However, this actually shows that the textbooks for foreign language learners try to avoid the “communist” and “communist party ruling” labels on China, and hide the key political quality of this party-state. Hiding the “communist” quality in the textbooks first provides an alternative perspective for foreign students to start to understand China along their language study journey. Second, it contributes to the strategic narratives of China as a peacekeeper and part of the international order – China is a normal country like others. As discussed about the first-level themes in Section 7.1.1, those narratives of Chinese culture, cuisines, and family life are away from politics – the communist system does not matter. In the high-level textbooks, the politics come in a shadow way – China has its own political system and understanding of

democracy. At this point, the textbooks and their themes, avoiding the CCP and the party-state, echo with the strategic narratives from China on the China-Europe relationships which emphasise the civilisation exchanges, the economic ties, and de-politicisation as China and Europe do not have conflicts on fundamental interests.

The projection of strategic narratives is not simply one direction and well-designed beforehand but it is an ongoing process which must be embedded in a specific local context. Here, the specific local context is the foreign students studying the Chinese language, who may have a negative image of China's party-state. The non-communist countries in Europe where they live as the background may also affect the projection and translation processes of the Chinese strategic narratives.

The second narrating technique is question-raising. Unlike the strategic narratives in the political propaganda in which only positive images and stories are presented and the crises and problems in Europe are reported by the NE, the textbooks are critical and reveal China's own problems. In the *Road to Success*, China is also presented as a problematic country. Many shortcomings and problems in China are introduced to foreign students, especially environmental issues, social issues, education issues, and even political justice discussions, which are barely touched on in the domestic

textbooks in China. For example, on page 2 in the Lower Advanced volume, “terrible ecosystem put three-north region people in poverty for a long time, which strongly restricted the economic and social development in this region, which is also a huge problem restricting the survival and development of Chinese nation”; on page 42 in the Lower Advanced volume, “various social pressures and feudalism traditions unabolished, (these) make Chinese women walk with difficulty on the path of fighting for new life”; and on page 37 in the Intermediate volume “we exactly lack civilian thoughts, speaking about equality, [but] the inequality [is] in [our] bones”. The textbooks, as a communication conduit, translate the strategic narratives on the ground and use a narrating technique of question-raising to target and attract the audiences. Such technique is different from official propaganda which only presents the good and glorious side of China.

Based on these problems and issues, these language textbooks expand the discussion and language exercises, more importantly, about the understanding of China. For instance, the texts describe the environmental issues and their damage to the residents and the society which has been improved and recovered by the Chinese people. For example, the Advance 1 volume introduces the environment in Tibet and how crucial the ecosystem is to the wild animals and residents in the region. The text introduces the

infrastructure project, the Qinghai-Tibet railway. On page 7, it says: “On the Qinghai-Tibet railway, almost all the main models of animal tunnels can be seen”.

Moreover, normative suggestions are provided and some of these suggestions and Chinese views are located in a global context. On the same environmental and energy issue, the textbooks not only raise the problems and challenges in China but also provide normative ideas and suggestions to the world. For example, when talking about energy security, the Advanced 1 volume of RTS (p. 207) suggests that

if developing countries follow the way how developed countries consume energy, there must be a problem of how global provides energy to all population. [...] Thus, if we talk about sustainable development, on one hand, we need to think about how we can equally and sufficiently provide energy to all population, especially giving the development opportunities to developing countries; on the other hand, we need to solve the regional and global environmental problems related to energy.

Rather than throwing out doctrinal slogans or proposals, the textbooks use a sophisticated technique to introduce the Chinese positions on a variety of issues by raising the problems in China first and then presenting the improvements that have been made, and then gentle normative ideas and suggestions are flowing out from the texts. It seems that this means of presentation in the textbooks is the opposite of China’s strategic narratives as the textbooks initiatively raise the problem and the discussion. However, this means of presentation becomes a more persuasive element of making the

strategic narratives on the high-level convincing. The environmental issue is just one of many problems raised about China in the textbooks. These problems and issues do not only illustrate how China is a normal country but also, more importantly, play an essential role in supporting the strategic narrative that China is part of the international order, as the Chinese improvements are not limited to the country but also are recognised by the others and contribute to the world.

7.1.5 Bring the past back? The tributary system in Chinese strategic narratives

The general Chinese strategic narratives on public diplomacy and cultural exchanges and the translation processes and local narratives in the three cases have been discussed in previous chapters, and the comparison among them has been illustrated in this chapter. This section goes further to discuss Chinese traditions and culture in these narratives. Since both the Chinese strategic narratives and local narratives in Europe are concerned about the worldview of China, and themes suggest that the Chinese strategic narratives receive enormous support from the so-called Chinese traditions and culture, the question is whether Chinese ancient “worldview” or “international order” leaves legacies in the current Chinese strategic narratives. It is not difficult to find outstanding literature, for example, the Chinese IR theories (see Acharya, 2019; Chu,

2022; Katzenstein, 2024; Kim, 2016; Qin, 2018; Yan, 2019; Zhao, 2006), bringing historical legacies into current international relations discipline. Among different concepts and perspectives in the Chinese IR theories, talking about the current China's worldview cannot escape from the tributary system. Although this research does not focus on the historical legacies in the translation process of Chinese strategic narratives or illustrate how the old tributary system influences the formation and projection of Chinese strategic narratives, it is still worth opening the discussion since the cultural legacies and political traditions certainly play a role.

To be clear, rather than arguing how Chinese ancient political traditions influence the current strategic narratives, this section introduces the discussion and unfolds potential connections between the concept of the tributary system and Chinese strategic narratives nowadays. The key reason is that there is no consensus on what the tributary system was and how it worked. Speaking of Chinese traditional foreign policy and even Asian traditional transnational relations, the concept of the tributary system is the core and this term was profoundly introduced to the academic communities by Fairbank and Têng (1941). The tributary system was

a scheme of things entire, and deserves attention as one historical solution to problems of world-organization. Behind the tributary system as it became institutionalized in the Ming and Ch'ing periods lay the age-old tradition of

Chinese cultural superiority over the barbarians. (Fairbank & Têng, 1941, p. 137)

The tributary system was an ancient Chinese way of dealing with its external relations, especially the cultural superiority vs barbarians relationship. Besides the cultural aspect, this system was used by the rulers of China for political ends of self-defence with a fundamental commercial basis (Fairbank & Têng, 1941). In his book review, Pritchard (1942) adds that the tributary system was Chinese traditional foreign policy which was expressed in the relationship between vassal and suzerain, and the intercourse was carried on by tribute-bearing missions. One of the political-economic qualities of the tributary system suggested by Fairbank is the trade-off of interests, “wherein China received legitimacy in exchange for trade concessions to the peripheral state” (Zhou, 2011, p. 177); or the other way around: the new ruler of a tribute state sent tribute missions to the Chinese court to receive recognition as the legitimate ruler, which was comparable to recognition in Europe by the Pope (Fairbank, 1953). In other words, it was the Chinese market and bilateral economic interests that attracted peripheral states to recognise the superior political position of the Chinese empire. In Chinese strategic and local narratives, on one hand, there are themes strongly emphasising China’s economic and market power; on the other hand, there are strategic and local narratives drawing the leading and major position of China in the current international order.

Perhaps the current Chinese strategic narratives formed and projected share the same logic, the trade-off of economic interests and political legitimacy, as the tributary system. In the textbooks and the NE, China's culture and economic power are emphasised as the key elements presenting the Chinese identity. This logic of emphasising culture and the economy in a trade-off for political recognition and supremacy might be long-lasting in China's narrating tradition. However, it must be pointed out that the tributary system is strongly associated with a Sino-centric perspective, but the textbooks used in CIs in Vienna and Budapest do not present Sino-centrism.

Different scholars have approached this concept tributary system in various ways with different foci. Fairbank (1942) himself highlights the trade relationships in the early times. However, Zhou (2011) rejects Fairbank's simplified theorisation of the tributary system. Selbitschka (2015) points out that Fairbank's understanding of the tributary system is outdated, and goes back to the historical facts in different periods and suggests that generous reciprocation of tribute offerings was not a common case from historiographical data. One of the key debates about the tributary system is whether this system is unilateral or reciprocal. While Zhou (2011) argues that it is wrong to understand the system as unilateral behaviour towards China among states in China's

periphery, Chen (2020) suggests that the tributary system is a kind of imaginary alliance – a product of wishful thinking by the Chinese imperial court.

Scholars also pay attention to the power relationships within this pre-modern international system. Zhou takes a game-theoretic equilibrium as the standpoint and suggests that this system is rational. One of his assumptions is that “as long as the Chinese regime is stable, the overall objective of its foreign policy will be defensive in nature, or it will at least be very cautious about making aggressions” (Zhou, 2011, p. 151). This assumption might be further discussed in the Chinese strategic narratives towards Hungary and the EU. Perhaps China sees that its relationship with Hungary is more stable and under control than the one with the EU, then China applies a more friendly (defensive) strategic narrative towards Hungary to maintain the equilibrium. However, it is noted that Womack does not agree with Zhou’s equilibrium model and argues that “the capacity of resistance by smaller states was key to the emergence of an equilibrium that was not based on domination” (2012, p. 38).

From the English School and constructivist perspectives, Zhang and Buzan argue that Zhou’s equilibrium model treats the tributary system as a set of mechanical and institutional frameworks and that “is a tributary system, so to speak, without soul”

(Zhang & Buzan, 2012, p. 7). Zhang and Buzan consider the system a shared and common institutional practice and the fundamental institutions in this system represent a “collective solution invented by, and consented to among, East Asian states to the perennial problem of inter-state conflict, co-existence and cooperation” (2012, p. 34). Following this perspective, the worldview in the Chinese strategic and local narratives is in a process of consent building. The CIs and Chinese media outlets are the institutions which invite the local people in Europe to shape and reach a consent of Chinese worldview which is more like an imaginary construction rather than *realpolitik*.

Again, rather than suggesting a clear argument of how China’s political traditions and historical foreign policies influence the modern Chinese strategic narratives, this section introduces a possible discussion which links the past cultures and traditions to the current political narratives. The concept of the tributary system, out of many others, may help unpack the discursive rationale of the assembly of strategic and local narratives. Only when combining strategic and local narratives, we can go further to unpack the historical legacies in China’s political narrating practice. This brief discussion also shows that historical cultures and political traditions, considered as productive rather than instrumental analytical tools, are important to uncover strategic narratives and their power exercise.

7.2 Conclusions and contributions

By focusing on the translation process and local narratives in the Chinese language textbooks in CI Vienna and Budapest and in the NE, this research provides new insights into how Chinese strategic narratives speak to and reach the public in Europe. The Chinese strategic narratives speak to and reach the public in Europe through local narratives after the translation process. These local narratives do not necessarily fully follow and support the strategic narratives. The local narratives and the translation process are productive. It is the local narratives and the translation that make strategic narratives alive and powerful. The textbooks and the NE newspaper make the European public feel, experience, and learn the Chinese strategic narratives in the form of local narratives. The local narratives can be political and strategic. Moreover, the translation processes and local narratives are shaped by the local contexts and communication conduits. By looking at the local narratives and the translation process, this dissertation deconstructs the meaning of Chinese strategic narratives, how China sees itself, how China sees its relations with others, and how China sees the world, especially in a European context.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this research brings the public into the discussion of strategic narratives. The strategic narratives need the public to become strategically alive and powerful. In particular, it is the local narratives that engage with the people and the translation process brings the strategic narratives to the people. On one hand, the strategic narratives give directions and draw boundaries where the local narratives can be unfolded and how far the local narratives can be expanded. On the other hand, the local narratives enrich the meaning of strategic narratives. More importantly, local narratives bring the people into relations and this is how the strategic narratives can exercise power to the public. Local narratives support the validity and creditability of strategic narratives, and analysing the translation process and local narratives unpacks the changes and variations of the meaning of strategic narratives. This perspective contributes to the framework of strategic narratives by shifting the focus from political elites and state actors to the public and non-state actors.

Focusing on local narratives must involve the contexts. The projection of strategic narratives is no longer considered as one-way direction but a joint practice. In other words, focusing on local narratives and how strategic narratives are translated into local narratives combines both top-down and bottom-up approaches – connecting grand

national strategies and local narratives and practices, which drive away from the state-centric presumption of strategic narratives. This research also contributes to the theoretical framework of strategic narratives by bringing both temporal and spatial dimensions. Moreover, the framework classifies system, national (identity), and issue narratives, and these three layers of narratives are on the strategic level. This research and its case studies have revealed that there are also layers within the local narratives, as the empirical findings identify local narratives in the textbooks and the newspaper and themes on different layers: how China sees itself, how China sees its relations with others, and how China sees the world. In other words, there are layers within the local narratives as those in the strategic narratives.

Another theoretical contribution is that this research suggests that analysing the dynamics among strategic narratives on different layers is not enough but also the dynamics among local narratives on different layers should be taken into account, and this enlarges the scale of the framework of strategic narratives. This research re-draws the boundaries as local narratives, after the translation process, are political and can be strategic. By redefining the relationship between strategic and local narratives, we can strengthen the framework and findings with more political actors and narratives on both micro and macro levels. Furthermore, shifting the focus on local narratives and the

translation process makes the framework easier to collaborate with other studies and disciplines, as this research has consulted with communication studies and culture studies. Further research can also join the debates on information warfare and communication power.

Methodologically, this dissertation provides a way to analyse the local narratives and the translation process. The local narratives are social, everyday, and discursive, and this research suggests taking themes to process the discursive local narratives. With the thematic analysis approach, the themes can be identified in both strategic and local narratives and then the translation from strategic narratives to local narratives is revealed with the clue given by the themes. This methodological approach, aiming at the themes, provides a means to collect and process discursive and fragile local narratives, and ensures alignment with the theoretical goal – shifting from the state-centric focus and authoritative text material to the public and sociocultural focus. In practice, this dissertation took advantage of computer software NVivo to process the data coding. With computerised support, large-scale data processing becomes possible and convenient, as a good use of the software can provide both statistical results and outcomes for further interpretive analysis.

This research analysed the local narratives from the textbooks and the NE reports. Although these are two different communication conduits, the primary data in both cases is still textual-based. In the future, the analysis of local narratives should be able to extract data and conceptualise themes from other types of material, such as pictures, videos, and even performances.

Empirically, this research compared the Chinese strategic narratives' translation processes in Austria and Hungary and between textbooks and newspaper reports. The first empirical contribution is that this research sheds light on frequently ignored material – language textbooks and Chinese media outlets overseas, and this empirical analysis no longer considers these materials as static or tools of Chinese soft power. Second, this research provides new insights into how different communication conduits and local contexts influence the translation process. For instance, the NE newspapers, as a weekly issue serving the Chinese communities in the region, highlight the contemporary Chinese economic power and European social and political issues in their report narratives. The textbooks, designed and used for years, pay more attention to cultural elements and history. The new findings here also contribute to soft power studies, analysis of Confucius Institutes, and analysis of Chinese overseas propaganda. Third, this dissertation has unpacked the Chinese strategic narratives on Europe and

analysed the local narratives. In particular, after the translation process, more new meanings are enriched by the local narratives in the Hungary case than in the Austrian one. This reflects how China understands specific European countries in the Central and Eastern Europe region. Fourth, from both the textbook and newspaper analyses, the US and the triangular relationship amongst the US, the EU, and China, is inevitable, although this research focuses on the Chinese strategic narratives on Europe. In other words, analysing the local narratives can unfold the implicit messages of the strategic narratives in a broader context, which the empirical studies focusing on bilateral relationships and applying a conventional strategic narrative framework cannot do. This dissertation also provides inspirations to review and analyse China's strategic narratives associated with other foreign policies and international issues. It brings new empirical focuses to join the discussion about China's role in the international order. Finally, the empirical findings in this research are essential for further analysis of the reception phase of Chinese strategic narratives in Europe – whether the public understands the strategic narratives and how they process and respond to Chinese strategic narratives through direct interactions with the local narratives.

References

- Acharya, A. (2019). From Heaven to earth: 'Cultural idealism' and 'moral realism' as Chinese contributions to global international relations. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 12(4), 467–494. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poz014>
- Adler, E., & Pouliot, V. (2011). International practices: Introduction and framework. In E. Adler & V. Pouliot (Eds.), *International Practices* (pp. 3–35). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511862373.003>
- Afionis, S., & Stringer, L. C. (2012). European Union leadership in biofuels regulation: Europe as a normative power? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 32, 114–123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2012.03.034>
- Ai, W., & Song, W. (2019). China and the European Union's participation in conflict resolution: Norm dynamics, convergence and divergence in foreign policy. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(116), 277–292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1511397>
- Alden, C., & Large, D. (2015). On becoming a norms maker: Chinese foreign policy, norms evolution and the challenges of security in Africa. *The China Quarterly*, 221, 123–142. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741015000028>
- Al-Rodhan, K. R. (2007). A Critique of the China Threat Theory: A Systematic Analysis. *Asian Perspective*, 31(3), 41–66.

- Asmolov, G. (2022). The transformation of participatory warfare: The role of narratives in connective mobilization in the Russia–Ukraine war. *Digital War*, 3(1), 25–37. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42984-022-00054-5>
- Ba, A. D. (2019). China’s ‘Belt and Road’ in Southeast Asia: Constructing the Strategic Narrative in Singapore. *Asian Perspective*, 43(2), 249–272. <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2019.0010>
- Babacan, K., & Tam, M. S. (2022). The Information Warfare Role of Social Media: Fake News in the Russia - Ukraine War. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, 3, Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.17680/erciyesiletisim.1137903>
- Bailard, C. S. (2016). China in Africa: An Analysis of the Effect of Chinese Media Expansion on African Public Opinion. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(4), 446–471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161216646733>
- Baker, M. (2006). *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203099919>
- Barthwal-Datta, M. (2015). Strategic narratives and non-state actors. *Critical Studies on Security*, 3(3), 328–330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2015.1103014>
- Becard, D. S. R., & Menechelli Filho, P. (2019). Chinese Cultural Diplomacy: Instruments in China’s strategy for international insertion in the 21st Century.

Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional, 62(1), e005.

<https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329201900105>

Benabdallah, L. (2019). Explaining attractiveness: Knowledge production and power projection in China's policy for Africa. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 22(2), 495–514. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-017-0109-x>

Bin, Y. (2008). China's Harmonious World: Beyond Cultural Interpretations. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 13(2), 119–141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-008-9020-z>

Bishop, M., & Goldman, E. (2003). The Strategy and Tactics of Information Warfare. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 24(1), 113–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260312331271839>

Björninen, S., Hatavara, M., & Mäkelä, M. (2020). Narrative as social action: A narratological approach to story, discourse and positioning in political storytelling. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 23(4), 437–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1721971>

Botschaft der Volksrepublik China in der Republik Österreich. (2024, April 25). 中国同奥地利的关系 [The relationships between China and Austria]. http://at.china-embassy.gov.cn/gbgk/202404/t20240426_11289372.htm

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. SAGE.
- Breslin, S. (2020). China's Global Cultural Interactions. In D. Shambaugh (Ed.), *China and the World* (pp. 137–155). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190062316.003.0007>
- Broomfield, E. V. (2003). Perceptions of Danger: The China threat theory. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 12(35), 265–284.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1067056022000054605>
- Cabestan, J.-P. (2019). Beijing's 'going out' strategy and Belt and Road Initiative in the Sahel: The case of China's growing presence in Niger. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(118), 592–613. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1557948>
- Cai, L. (2019). A comparative study of the Confucius Institute in the United Kingdom and the British Council in China. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 18(1), 44–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2047173419845531>
- Canale, G. (2016). (Re)Searching culture in foreign language textbooks, or the politics of hide and seek. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 29(2), 225–243.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2016.1144764>

- CCTV. (2008, December 18). *维也纳新年音乐会历史上的几个阶段* [*Several periods of Vienna New Year's concerts in history*]. CCTV.COM. <https://ent.cctv.com/special/xinnianyinyuehui/20081218/108796.shtml>
- Chaban, N., & Elgström, O. (2014). The role of the EU in an emerging new world order in the eyes of the Chinese, Indian and Russian press. *Journal of European Integration*, 36(2), 170–188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2013.841679>
- Chaban, N., Miskimmon, A., & O'Loughlin, B. (2019). Understanding EU crisis diplomacy in the European neighbourhood: Strategic narratives and perceptions of the EU in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine. *European Security*, 28(3), 235–250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2019.1648251>
- Chang, V. K. L., & Pieke, F. N. (2018). Europe's engagement with China: Shifting Chinese views of the EU and the EU-China relationship. *Asia Europe Journal*, 16(4), 317–331. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-017-0499-9>
- Chen, C. C., Colapinto, C., & Luo, Q. (2012). The 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony: Visual insights into China's soft power. *Visual Studies*, 27(2), 188–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2012.677252>
- Chen, D., & Ha, W. (2020). Are Confucius Institutes Building Blocks or Stumbling Blocks for Foreign Students in China: An Empirical Study of 190 Countries

(1999–2015). *ECNU Review of Education*, 3(2), 235–253.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531120913682>

Chen, J. (2009). Explaining the Change in China's Attitude toward UN Peacekeeping:

A norm change perspective. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 18(58), 157–173.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560802431891>

Chu, S. (2022). Whither Chinese IR? The Sinocentric subject and the paradox of

Tianxia-ism. *International Theory*, 14(1), 57–87.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971920000214>

Chen, X., & Qu, X. (2015, January 12). 瑞典将关闭欧洲第一所孔子学院 称这样的

合作多余 [Sweden will close the first Confucius Institute in Europe saying the

cooperation is unnecessary]. Huanqiu.

<https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJGBIT>

Chen, Z. (2016). China, the European Union and the Fragile World Order. *JCMS:*

Journal of Common Market Studies, 54(4), 775–792.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12383>

China News Service. (n.d.). *About us*. Chinanews.Com. Retrieved 9 January 2025, from

<https://www.chinanews.com/common/footer/aboutus.shtml>

ChinaDaily. (n.d.). *About China Daily Group*. ChinaDaily. Retrieved 9 January 2025,

from https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/e/static_e/about

ChinaDaily. (2013a). *党的十六大报告全文(中英对照)*[10 *[The full text of the report of the 16th national congress of CCP (Chinese-English) [10]]*.

https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/news/2013-11/26/content_17132209_10.htm

ChinaDaily. (2013b). *党的十六大报告全文(中英对照)* [12] *[The full text of the report of the 16th national congress of CCP (Chinese-English) [12]]*.

ChinaDaily. https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/news/2013-11/26/content_17132209_12.htm

ChinaDaily. (2015, September 25). *中国领导人联合国发声记录* *[Remarks of Chinese leaders' speeches in the UN]*. ChinaDaily.

https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-09/25/content_21977725.htm

ChinaDaily. (2019, January 2). *《告台湾同胞书》* *[Message to Compatriots in Taiwan]*. ChinaDaily.

<https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201901/02/WS5c2c55eea310d91214052164.html>

ChinaDaily. (2021, July 2). *双语全文！习近平：在庆祝中国共产党成立100周年大会上的讲话* *[Full-text in Both languages! Xi Jinping: Speech at a Ceremony Marking the Centenary of the Communist Party of China]*. ChinaDaily.

<https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202107/02/WS60de676ca310efa1bd65f4fe.html>

China's Diplomacy in the New Era. (n.d.). *中国特色大国外交 [China's major-country diplomacy]*. China's Diplomacy in the New Era. Retrieved 2 November 2024, from http://cn.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/2022-09/09/content_78400032.shtml

Chinese Embassy in Hungary. (2017, November 26). *李克强总理在匈牙利媒体发表署名文章 [PM Li Keqiang published an article on Hungarian media]*. Central People's Government of the PRC. https://www.gov.cn/premier/2017-11/26/content_5242261.htm

Chinese Embassy to Bulgaria. (2023, June 26). *驻保加利亚大使董晓军出席《欧洲时报》保加利亚办事处揭牌仪式 [Ambassador to Bulgaria Dong Xiaojun attended the opening ceremony of Nouvelles d'Europe's Bulgarian branch]*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_678916/1206x2_678936/202306/t20230627_11104443.shtml

Chivvis, C. S., & Miller, H. (2023, November 15). *The Role of Congress in U.S.-China Relations*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/11/the-role-of-congress-in-us-china-relations?lang=en>

Chu, S. (2022). Whither Chinese IR? The Sinocentric subject and the paradox of Tianxia-ism. *International Theory*, 14(1), 57–87.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971920000214>

Chun, K.-H. (2010). Cultural Diplomacy of China Towards Europe: Its Implications and Evolution. *The Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7(4), 393–414.

<https://doi.org/10.31203/AEPA.2010.7.4.018>

Clark, I. (2014). International Society and China: The Power of Norms and the Norms of Power. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 7(3), 315–340.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pot014>

Colley, T., & van Noort, C. (2022). China's COVID-19 Strategic Narratives in 2020 and How States Responded to Them. In T. Colley & C. van Noort (Eds.),

Strategic Narratives, Ontological Security and Global Policy: Responses to China's Belt and Road Initiative (pp. 211–263). Springer International

Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-00852-8_8

Colvin, C. J. (2004). Ambivalent Narrations: Pursuing the Political through Traumatic Storytelling. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 27(1), 72–89.

- Confucius Institute. (n.d.-a). *Confucius Institute (English)*. Retrieved 21 August 2023, from <https://ci.cn/en/gywm/pp>
- Confucius Institute. (n.d.-b). 孔子学院全球门户网站 [*Confucius Institute Global Portal*]. Brand. Retrieved 21 August 2023, from <https://ci.cn/gywm/pp>
- Confucius Institute of Hong Kong. (n.d.). *About CIHK*. Confucius Institute of Hong Kong. Retrieved 23 August 2023, from <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/cihk/about/about-cihk>
- Connolly, W. E. (1994). *The terms of political discourse* (3. ed., reprint). Blackwell.
- CPC NEWS. (2012, November 29). 实现中华民族伟大复兴是中华民族近代以来最伟大的梦想 [*Realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the Chinese nation in modern times*]. CPC NEWS. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/xuexi/n/2015/0717/c397563-27322292.html>
- CPC NEWS. (2014, January 1). 习近平：建设社会主义文化强国 着力提高国家文化软实力 [*Xi Jinping: Establish cultural socialist strong country focus on improving national soft power*]. CPC NEWS. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0101/c64094-23995307.html>
- Cull, N. J. (2013). The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Internet in US Public Diplomacy. *International Studies Review*, 15(1), 123–139. <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12026>

culture-oushi. (n.d.). *Les Amis de Nouvelles d'Europe*. Qui Sommes-Nous? Retrieved

30 October 2024, from <https://culture-oushi.com/french/about/>

Dayan, D., & Price, M. (2008). *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*.

University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/book.6372>

De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (1999). The Discursive Construction of

National Identities. *Discourse & Society*, 10(2), 149–173.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926599010002002>

Dean, J. W., & Sharfman, M. P. (1996). Does Decision Process Matter? A Study of

Strategic Decision-Making Effectiveness. *The Academy of Management*

Journal, 39(2), 368–396. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256784>

Department of Outbound Investment and Economic Cooperation Ministry of

Commerce, Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic

Cooperation Ministry of Commerce, & Wirtschafts- und Handelsabteilung der

Botschaft der Volksrepublik China in der Republik Österreich. (2024). 对外投资

资合作国别（地区）指南 奥地利（2024 年版）[*The Guidance for Countries*

(Regions) Outbound Investment Cooperation Austria (2024 version).

<https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/dl/gbdqzn/upload/aodili.pdf>

Diez, T. (2021). X The End or the Beginning of Normative Power Europe?:

Transcendence and the Crisis of European Foreign Policy. In *X The End or the*

Beginning of Normative Power Europe?: Transcendence and the Crisis of European Foreign Policy (pp. 251–273). Columbia University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.7312/bayk19544-012>

Donald, R., Young, C., & Mach, K. J. (2022). The role of local narratives in emerging climate governance. *Environmental Research: Climate*, 1(1), 015003.

<https://doi.org/10.1088/2752-5295/ac7aca>

Dong, L. (2014). Chinese Perceptions of the European Union. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 23(88), 756–779. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2013.861172>

Economic and Commercial Office of the Mission of the PRC to the European Union.

(2023, December 7). 习近平会见欧洲理事会主席米歇尔和欧盟委员会主席冯德莱恩 [Xi Jinping meets with the European Council President Michel and the Commission President von der Leyen].

<http://eu.mofcom.gov.cn/article/todayheader/202312/20231203458927.shtml>

ecvoyages. (n.d.). *Welcome to Euro Chine Voyages (ECV)*. Euro Chine Voyages.

Retrieved 30 October 2024, from <http://www.ecvoyages.com/fr/index.html>

EEAS. (2013, November 23). *EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation*.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/eu-china-2020-strategic-agenda-cooperation_en?s=166

EEAS. (2023, December 7). *EU-China Relations factsheet*. EU-China Relations

Factsheet. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-china-relations-factsheet_en

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Zbaracki, M. J. (1992). Strategic Decision Making. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13, 17–37.

Embassy of Hungary in Beijing. (n.d.-a). *Liszt Intézet—Magyar Kulturális Központ*.

Retrieved 22 February 2025, from <https://peking.mfa.gov.hu/zho/page/a-pekingi-magyar-kulturalis-intezet>

Embassy of Hungary in Beijing. (n.d.-b). *The China-CEEC Tourism Coordination*

Center. Retrieved 22 February 2025, from <https://peking.mfa.gov.hu/eng/page/kina-koezep-kelet-europa-turisztikai-koordinacios-koezpont>

Embassy of the PRC in the Republic of Moldova. (2022, December 8). *Ambasadorul*

Chinei în Republica Moldova a publicat pe site-ul Agenției de presă Infotag un articol semnat cu titlul „Dezvoltare pașnică, beneficii reciproce și câștig comun—Dezideratele susținute și urmărite de diplomația Chinei” [The Ambassador of China to the Republic of Moldova published on the website of the Infotag Press Agency an article signed with the title ‘Peaceful development, mutual benefits and common gain—Desires supported and pursued by

Chinese diplomacy']. News. http://md.china-embassy.gov.cn/gdxw/202212/t20221208_10987176.htm

Embassy of the PRC in the US. (2010, July 20). 温家宝在第六届中欧工商峰会上的演讲（全文） [*Wen Jiabao's speech at the 6th China-Europe Business Summit (full-text)*]. http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/zgyw/201010/t20101007_4416621.htm

English Bus. (2018, October 29). 双语：《关于中美经贸摩擦的事实与中方立场》白皮书 [*Bilingual: The Facts and China's Position on China-US Trade Friction White Paper*]. en84. <https://www.en84.com/6018.html>

Erlbacher, L. (2021). *China's soft power in Austria: Building on the power of nonchalance* (China's Soft Power in Europe, pp. 14–20). Clingendael Institute. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep32152.8>

Erwin, K. (2021). Storytelling as a political act: Towards a politics of complexity and counter-hegemonic narratives. *Critical African Studies*, 13(3), 237–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1850304>

European Council. (2024, January 28). *Special European Council*. European Council. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2020/07/17-21/>

European Parliament. (1999, February). *Migration and Asylum in Central and Eastern*

Europe:

Hungary.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/workingpapers/libe/104/hungary_en.htm

European Parliament. (2020, December 10). *Confucius Institutes in the EU.*

Parliamentary Questions. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-006751_EN.html

European Parliament. (2022, September 15). *MEPs: Hungary can no longer be*

considered a full democracy. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220909IPR40137/meps-hungary-can-no-longer-be-considered-a-full-democracy)

[room/20220909IPR40137/meps-hungary-can-no-longer-be-considered-a-full-](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220909IPR40137/meps-hungary-can-no-longer-be-considered-a-full-democracy)

[democracy](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220909IPR40137/meps-hungary-can-no-longer-be-considered-a-full-democracy)

Fairbank, J. K. (1942). Tributary Trade and China's Relations with the West. *The*

Journal of Asian Studies, 1(2), 129–149. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2049617>

Fairbank, J. K. (1953). *Trade and Diplomacy On the China Coast: The Opening of the*

Treaty Ports 1842-1854. Stanford University Press.

<http://archive.org/details/dli.ernet.536630>

Fairbank, J. K., & Têng, S. Y. (1941). On The Ch'ing Tributary System. *Harvard*

Journal of Asiatic Studies, 6(2), 135–246. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2718006>

Falkner, R. (2007). The political economy of 'normative power' Europe: EU

environmental leadership in international biotechnology regulation. *Journal of*

European Public Policy, 14(4), 507–526.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760701314326>

Feng, Z., & Huang, J. (2021). Chinese Strategic Narratives of Europe Since the European Debt Crisis. In A. Miskimmon, B. O’Loughlin, & J. Zeng (Eds.), *One Belt, One Road, One Story? Towards an EU-China Strategic Narrative* (pp. 139–165). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53153-9_7

Fenton, C., & Langley, A. (2011). Strategy as Practice and the Narrative Turn.

Organization Studies, 32(9), 1171–1196.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840611410838>

Ferenczy, S. A. (2019). *Europe, China, and the Limits of Normative Power*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Finlay, C. J., & Xin, X. (2010). Public diplomacy games: A comparative study of American and Japanese responses to the interplay of nationalism, ideology and Chinese soft power strategies around the 2008 Beijing Olympics. *Sport in Society*, 13(5), 876–900. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430431003651115>

Foot, R., & Inboden, R. S. (2014). China’s Influence on Asian States During the Creation of the UN Human Rights Council: 2005–2007. *Asian Survey*, 54(5), 849–868. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198758518.003.0011>

France 24. (2023, April 23). *China's ambassador to France questions 'sovereign status'*

of former Soviet nations. France 24.

<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230423-%F0%9F%94%B4-live-france-pledges-solidarity-with-baltic-states-as-chinese-ambassador-questions-their-sovereignty>

Freeman, D. (2024). The Political Economy of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment: Balancing the European Union's Economic Interests.

In A. Svetlicinii & I.-J. Chen (Eds.), *The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment: Towards a Binding Investment Liberalisation* (pp. 15–35).

Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-66862-3_2

Friedman, T. (2022, March 17). *Lexicon: 'Discourse Power' or the 'Right to Speak'* (话

语权, Huàyǔ Quán). DigiChina. <https://digichina.stanford.edu/work/lexicon-discourse-power-or-the-right-to-speak-huayu-quan/>

Fu, C. (2024, January 18). *Closer China-EU Partnership: Adding Positive Energy to a*

Turbulent World. Wwww.Euractiv.Com. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-china/opinion/closer-china-eu-partnership-adding-positive-energy-to-a-turbulent-world/>

Gaenssmantel, F. (2023). China-EU economic relations—new perspectives on decision-making, mutual understanding and effects—Introduction to the special issue.

Asia Europe Journal, 21(3), 401–412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-023-00674-w>

Gagliardone, I., & Pál, N. (2017). Freer but not free enough? Chinese journalists finding their feet in Africa. *Journalism*, 18(8), 1049–1063. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916636171>

Gamso, J., & Moffett, M. H. (2023). Unraveling the Belt and Road Initiative: China’s “Building Out” Strategy. *East Asia*, 40(1), 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-022-09394-1>

Garlick, J. (2019). *The Impact of China’s Belt and Road Initiative: From Asia to Europe*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351182768>

Geeraerts, G. (2016). China, the EU, and Global Governance in Human Rights. In J. Wang & W. Song (Eds.), *China, the EU, and the International Politics of Global Governance* (pp. 233–249). Palgrave Macmillan.

Gehrig, S. (2022). Informal Cold War Envoys: West German and East German Cultural Diplomacy in East Asia. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 24(4), 112–156.

Gil, J. (2017). *Soft Power and the Worldwide Promotion of Chinese Language Learning: The Confucius Institute Project*. Multilingual Matters.

- Giulianotti, R. (2015). The Beijing 2008 Olympics: Examining the Interrelations of China, Globalization, and Soft Power. *European Review*, 23(2), 286–296.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000684>
- Glen, C. M., & Murgo, R. C. (2007). EU-China relations: Balancing political challenges with economic opportunities. *Asia Europe Journal*, 5(3), 331–344.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-007-0121-7>
- Global Times. (2024, May 9). *BRI cooperation leads a golden period of China-Hungary ties: Chinese Ambassador*.
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202405/1311978.shtml>
- Goh, D. (2022). Rethinking textbooks as active social agents in interpretivist research. *The Curriculum Journal*, n/a(n/a). <https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.162>
- Golovchenko, Y., Hartmann, M., & Adler-Nissen, R. (2018). State, media and civil society in the information warfare over Ukraine: Citizen curators of digital disinformation. *International Affairs*, 94(5), 975–994.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiy148>
- Google Play. (n.d.). *欧洲时报在线–Apps by Google Play [Nouvelles d'Europe Online-Apps by Google Play]*. Google Play. Retrieved 30 October 2024, from <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tangyin.mobile.oushinews&hl=gsw>

- Groth, S. (2019). Political Narratives / Narrations of the Political: An Introduction. *Narrative Culture*, 6(1), 1–18.
- Guyo, A. G., & Yu, H. (2022). China's news media as public diplomacy in Africa: An assessment of CCTV/CGTN among Kenyan audience. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 40(3), 400–415.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2022.2064979>
- Hagström, L., & Gustafsson, K. (2021). The limitations of strategic narratives: The Sino-American struggle over the meaning of COVID-19. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 42(4), 415–449.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2021.1984725>
- Han, J. (2016). 海外华文媒体与国内媒体 构建国家形象报道比较 [The comparison between overseas and domestic Chinese media about the reports on the national image building]. People.Cn.
http://paper.people.com.cn/xwzx/html/2016-02/01/content_1673676.htm
- Harcourt, R., Bruine de Bruin, W., Dessai, S., & Taylor, A. (2020). What Adaptation Stories are UK Newspapers Telling? A Narrative Analysis. *Environmental Communication*, 14(8), 1061–1078.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2020.1767672>

- Hartig, F. (2012). Confucius Institutes and the Rise of China. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 17(1), 53–76. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-011-9178-7>
- Hartig, F. (2015a). *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute*.
- Hartig, F. (2015b). Communicating China to the World: Confucius Institutes and China's Strategic Narratives. *Politics*, 35(3–4), 245–258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12093>
- He, B. (2020). The Domestic Politics of the Belt and Road Initiative and its Implications. In *China's New Global Strategy*. Routledge.
- Hinck, R. S., Manly, J. N., Kluver, R. A., & Norris, W. J. (2016). Interpreting and shaping geopolitics in Chinese media: The discourse of the 'New style of great power relations'. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 26(5), 427–445. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2016.1202990>
- Hu, J. (2007a). 十七大报告全文英汉对照 [The full text of the report of the 17th national congress of CCP English-Chinese, p. 7]. ChinaDaily. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzg/2007-10/31/content_6220592_7.htm
- Hu, J. (2007b). 十七大报告全文英汉对照 [The full text of the report of the 17th national congress of CCP English-Chinese, p. 11]. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzg/2007-10/31/content_6220592_11.htm

- Hu, J. (2012). 坚定不移走中国特色社会主义文化发展道路 努力建设社会主义文化强国 [Unswervingly follow the path of socialist cultural development with Chinese characteristics make Efforts to build a powerful socialist cultural country]. *Qiushi*, 2012(1), 3–7.
- Hu, Y. (2017). 南南合作视野下的中国-中东欧国家合作 [China-CEE Cooperation from the Perspective of South-South Cooperation]. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 10, 3–14. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.13644/j.cnki.cn31-1112.2017.10.001>
- Huang, P. (2019). Textbook interaction: A study of the language and cultural contextualisation of English learning textbooks. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 21, 87–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2019.02.006>
- Huang, W., & Xiang, J. (2019). Pursuing Soft Power through the Confucius Institute: A Large-N Analysis. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 24(2), 249–266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-018-9571-6>
- Humphrys, E. (2018). Anti-politics, the early Marx and Gramsci’s ‘integral state’. *Thesis Eleven*, 147(1), 29–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513618787638>
- Jackson, M. (2014). *The Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt*. Museum Tusculanum Press. <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/P/bo16828339.html>

- Jakimów, M. (2019). Desecuritisation as a soft power strategy: The Belt and Road Initiative, European fragmentation and China's normative influence in Central-Eastern Europe. *Asia Europe Journal*, 17(4), 369–385.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00561-3>
- Jakóbowski, J. (2018). Chinese-led Regional Multilateralism in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America: 16 + 1, FOCAC, and CCF. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 27, 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1458055>
- Jarzabkowski, P., & Spee, P. A. (2009). Strategy-as-practice: A review and future directions for the field. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 11(1), 69–95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2008.00250.x>
- Jiang, M. (2021). Translation as cultural diplomacy: A Chinese perspective. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 27(7), 892–904.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2021.1872554>
- Johnson, G., Langley, A., Melin, L., & Whittington, R. (2007). *Strategy as Practice: Research Directions and Resources* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511618925>
- Johnson-Cartee, K. S. (2005). *News narratives and news framing: Constructing political reality*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

- Johnston, A. I. (2003). Is China a Status Quo Power? *International Security*, 27(4), 5–56.
- Jones, S. (2006). *Antonio Gramsci*. Routledge.
- Jørgensen, K. E., & Wong, R. (2016). Social Constructivist Perspectives on China-Eu Relations. In J. Wang & W. Song (Eds.), *China, the European Union, and the International Politics of Global Governance* (pp. 51–74). Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137514004_4
- Kamiński, T. (2019a). The Sub-state Dimension of the European Union Relations with China. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 24(Issue 3), 367–385. <https://doi.org/10.54648/EERR2019030>
- Kamiński, T. (2019b). What are the factors behind the successful EU-China cooperation on the subnational level? Case study of the Lodzkie region in Poland. *Asia Europe Journal*, 17(2), 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-018-00532-0>
- Katzenstein, P. J. (2024). Is There a Chinese School of IR Theory? *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 17(3), 222–241. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poae012>
- Kavalski, E. (2019). China in Central and Eastern Europe: The unintended effects of identity narratives. *Asia Europe Journal*, 17(4), 403–419. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00563-1>

- Kaya, A. (2014). The EU's China Problem: A Battle Over Norms. *International Politics*, 51(2), 214–233. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2014.4>
- Keimetswe, L. A. (2021). The Role of Confucius Institute in Shaping China's National Image in Botswana: Case of CI Students. *Social Change Review*, 19(1), 120–144. <https://doi.org/10.2478/scr-2021-0005>
- Keuleers, F. (2015). Explaining External Perceptions: The EU and China in African Public Opinion. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(4), 803–821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12231>
- Kim, H. J. (2016). Will IR Theory with Chinese Characteristics be a Powerful Alternative? *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 9(1), 59–79. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pov014>
- Konfuzius-Institut an der Universität Wien. (n.d.). *Konzert: 'A Night of Chinese Music'*. Konfuzius-Institut an der Universität Wien. Retrieved 20 February 2025, from <https://www.konfuzius-institut.at/veranstaltungen/vergangene-veranstaltungen-nachlese/08-oktober-2023-konzert-a-night-of-chinese-music/>
- Konfuzius-Institut Frankfurt am Main. (n.d.). *Willkommen beim Konfuzius-Institut Frankfurt am Main*. Konfuzius-Institut Frankfurt am Main. Retrieved 23 August 2023, from <https://www.konfuzius-institut-frankfurt.de/>

- Konfuzius-Institut München. (n.d.). *Konfuzius-Institut München: About us*. The Confucius Institute Munich. Retrieved 22 August 2023, from <https://www.konfuzius-muenchen.de/en/about>
- Kørnøv, L., & Thissen, W. A. H. (2000). Rationality in decision- and policy-making: Implications for strategic environmental assessment. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 18(3), 191–200. <https://doi.org/10.3152/147154600781767402>
- Kowalski, B., Nolan, P., & Gerrits, A. (2017). China’s foreign policy towards Central and Eastern Europe: The “16+1” format in the South-South cooperation perspective. Cases of the Czech Republic and Hungary. *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 1, 1.
- Kriesi, H. (2004). Strategic Political Communication: Mobilizing Public Opinion in “Audience Democracies”. In B. Pfetsch & F. Esser (Eds.), *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges* (pp. 184–212). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511606991.009>
- Kumar, D. (2006). Media, War, and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 3(1), 48–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420500505650>

Kurlantzick, J. (2023). *Beijing's Global Media Offensive: China's Uneven Campaign to Influence Asia and the World* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197515761.001.0001>

L'Annuaire des Entreprises. (n.d.). *L'Annuaire des Entreprises: Le moteur de recherche officiel: EURO CHINE VOYAGES (ECV) 441515897*. L'Annuaire des Entreprises : le moteur de recherche officiel. Retrieved 30 October 2024, from

<https://annuaire-entreprises.data.gouv.fr/entreprise/euro-chine-voyages-ecv-441515897>

Lai, S., & Shi, Z. (2017). How China views the EU in global energy governance: A norm exporter, a partner or an outsider? *Comparative European Politics*, 15(1), 80–98. <https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2016.14>

Lams, L. (2018). Examining Strategic Narratives in Chinese Official Discourse under Xi Jinping. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 23(3), 387–411. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-018-9529-8>

Langendonk, S. (2020). Discourse Power as a Means to ‘Struggle for Position’: A Critical Case Study of the Belt and Road Narrative’s Effects on Foreign Policy Formulation in the Netherlands. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 25(2), 241–260. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-019-09649-4>

- Last, E. D. (2020). Strategic narrative and strategic practices. In *Strategic Culture and Violent Non-State Actors*. Routledge.
- Lee, C.-C. (2003). *Chinese Media, Global Contexts* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203402290>
- Lee, J., & Yoon, H. (2017). Narratives of the nation in the Olympic opening ceremonies: Comparative analysis of Beijing 2008 and London 2012. *Nations and Nationalism*, 23(4), 952–969. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12318>
- Lee, P. S. (2016). The rise of China and its contest for discursive power. *Global Media and China*, 1(1–2), 102–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436416650549>
- Leigh, M. (2019). A view from the policy community: A new strategic narrative for Europe? *European Security*, 28(3), 382–391.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2019.1648257>
- Li, K. (2011, September 3). 李克强在首届中国—亚欧经济发展合作论坛上致辞 [Li Keqiang's speech at the first Asia-Europe economic development & cooperation forum]. The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2011-09/03/content_1939536.htm
- Li, S. (2021). China's Confucius Institute in Africa: A different story? *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*, 23(4), 353–366.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCED-02-2021-0014>

Li Z. (2020). *Chinese Ethnic Media in France*. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17932548-12341425>

Liao, N. (2017). The Power of Strategic Narratives: The Communicative Dynamics of Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Relations. In A. Miskimmon, B. O'Loughlin, & L. Roselle (Eds.), *Forging the World* (pp. 110–133). University of Michigan Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.6504652.8>

Liboreiro, J. (2023, November 15). Chinese ambassador blasts EU ‘assertiveness’ and ‘unilateral actions’. *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/11/14/chinese-ambassador-fu-cong-decries-eus-assertiveness-and-unilateral-actions>

Lien, D., & Tang, P. (2022). Let's play tic-tac-toe: Confucius Institutes versus American Cultural Centres. *Economic and Political Studies*, 10(2), 129–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20954816.2021.1920194>

Lin, W. Y., Ang, L. H., Chan, M. Y., & Paramasivam, S. (2020). Analysing Cultural Elements in L2 Mandarin Textbooks for Malaysian Learners. *Journal of Language and Education*, 6(4), 121–137. <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2020.10332>

- Lindberg, F. (2020). *Different Sides of the Same Coin: A cross-national comparative frame analysis of news reports about the protests in Hong Kong 2019* [Uppsala University]. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-412099>
- Liu, A. H. (2017). Loving the money but not the migrants: Hungarian attitudes toward the Chinese. In *China's Rise and the Chinese Overseas*. Routledge.
- Liu, X. (2018). The Vehicle and Driver of China's Cultural Diplomacy: Global Vision Vs. Localised Practice. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 17(1), 130–151. <https://doi.org/10.17477/jcea.2018.17.1.130>
- Liu, X. (2019a). China's Cultural Diplomacy: A Great Leap Outward with Chinese Characteristics? Multiple Comparative Case Studies of the Confucius Institutes. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(118), 646–661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1557951>
- Liu, X. (2019b). So Similar, So Different, So Chinese: Analytical Comparisons of the Confucius Institute with its Western Counterparts. *Asian Studies Review*, 43(2), 256–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1584602>
- Liu, Y. (2024). A Study on Language Conversion and Construction of Discourse Power in Chinese Diplomacy. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 7(4), 85–91. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.4.11>

- Liu, Z., Yang, J., & Shi, F. (2023). Research of the Spring Festival Report Overseas in Chinese Mainstream Media: Taking the CGTN as an Example. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 162, 01039. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202316201039>
- Lo, J. T., & Pan, S. (2016). Confucius Institutes and China's soft power: Practices and paradoxes. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(4), 512–532. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2014.916185>
- Lucarelli, S., & Fioramonti, L. (Eds.). (2011). *External perceptions of the European Union as a global actor* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Lueck, T. L., Pippas, V. S., & Lin, Y. (2014). China's Soft Power: A New York Times Introduction of the Confucius Institute. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 25(3), 324–349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2014.925311>
- Luo, A. J. (2015). Media system in China: A Chinese perspective. *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, 2(1), 49–67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40636-015-0012-3>
- Maher, R. (2016). The elusive EU–China strategic partnership. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 92(4), 959–976.
- Manantan, M. B. (2021). Unleash the Dragon: China's Strategic Narrative during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *The Cyber Defense Review*, 6(2), 71–90.

- Manners, I. (2002). Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), 235–258.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00353>
- Manners, I. (2008). The Normative Ethics of the European Union. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 84(1), 45–60.
- Manners, I., & Diez, T. (2007). Reflecting on Normative Power Europe. In F. Berenskoetter & M. J. Williams (Eds.), *Power in World Politics* (pp. 173–188). Routledge.
- Manzenreiter, W. (2010). The Beijing Games in the Western Imagination of China: The Weak Power of Soft Power. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 34(1), 29–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723509358968>
- Martin, P. (2021). *China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy*. Oxford University Press.
- Mattingly, D. C., & Sundquist, J. (2023). When does public diplomacy work? Evidence from China's "wolf warrior" diplomats. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 11(4), 921–929. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2022.41>
- McLaughlin, B., Velez, J. A., & Dunn, J. A. (2019). The Political World Within: How Citizens Process and Experience Political Narratives. *Annals of the*

International Communication Association, 43(2), 156–172.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2019.1597635>

McLeod, J. M., & Shah, D. V. (2009). Communication and Political Socialization: Challenges and Opportunities for Research. *Political Communication*, 26(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600802686105>

Melissen, J. (2005). The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice. In J. Melissen (Ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (pp. 3–27). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_1

Men, J. (2015). Chinese media in Brussels and EU–China relations. *International Communication Gazette*, 78(1–2), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048515618102>

Meunier, S. (2014). Divide and conquer? China and the cacophony of foreign investment rules in the EU. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(7), 996–1016. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2014.912145>

Michalski, A., & Nilsson, N. (2019). Resistant to Change? The EU as a Normative Power and Its Troubled Relations with Russia and China. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 15(3), 432–449. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/ory008>

Ministry of Commerce of the PRC. (2023, September 14). 商务部新闻发言人就欧盟

领导人宣布即将对我电动汽车发起反补贴调查事答记者问 [*Spokesmen's remarks to the press on the issue of the announcement of launching anti-subsidy investigation on Chinese electric vehicles by the EU leaders*].

<http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/xwfb/xwfyrrth/202309/20230903440349.shtml>

Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC. (2024, May 31). *Overseas Missions—Europe*.

https://www.mct.gov.cn/gywhb/jgsz/zwwhjg_jgsz/202405/t20240531_953210.htm

Ministry of Education of the PRC. (2006, October 1). 孔子学院章程 [*Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes*].

http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/zsdwxxgk/200610/t20061001_62461.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (n.d.-a). *Documents*. Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the PRC. Retrieved 23 February 2025, from

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3376_665447/3432_664920/3434_664924/index.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (n.d.-b). 江泽民主席访美 [*Chairman Jiang*

Zemin visited the US]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. Retrieved 23

January 2025, from

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/wjs_674919/2159_674923/200011/t20001107_10251009.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2004, December 9). 温家宝总理在中欧工商

峰会上的演讲 (全文) [*Prime Minister Wen Jiabao addresses to the China-Europe Commercial Conference (full-text)*].

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/1206_679930/1209_679940/200412/t20041209_9389311.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2009, February 3). 温家宝总理在英国剑桥

大学发表演讲 (全文) [*Prime Minister Wen Jiabao gave a speech at the University of Cambridge*]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679906/1209_679916/200902/t20090203_9353572.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2011a, January 21). 胡锦涛在美国友好团体

欢迎宴会上的讲话 (全文) [*Hu jintao's Speech at Welcome Luncheon by US Friendly Organisations (full-text)*]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/ywzt_675099/2011nzt_675363/hujintaozhuxifangwenmeiguo_675423/201101/t20110121_7956632.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2011b, October 31). 胡锦涛同奥地利总统

菲舍尔举行会谈 [Hu Jintao held a meeting with Austrian President Fischer].

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/ywzt_675099/2011nzt_675

[363/hjtzxfwadi_675417/201110/t20111031_9284940.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/ywzt_675099/2011nzt_675363/hjtzxfwadi_675417/201110/t20111031_9284940.shtml)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2014, April 2). *China's Policy Paper on the*

EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual

Benefit and Win-win Cooperation.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/wjzcs/201404/t20140402_679655

[.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/wjzcs/201404/t20140402_679655.html)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2018a, April 8). 中华人民共和国和奥地利

共和国关于建立友好战略伙伴关系的联合声明 [The joint statement of

establishment the friendly strategic partnership between the People's Republic

of China and the Republic of Austria]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/201804/t20180408

[9868946.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/201804/t20180408_9868946.shtml)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2018b, December 18). *China's Policy Paper*

on the European Union. The State Council of the PRC.

https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/ministrydocument/201812/18/content_WS5d3ae98cc6d08408f5022944.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2020, October 19). *Fact Sheet on Environmental Damage by the US*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3376_665447/3432_664920/3434_664924/202406/t20240612_11426041.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2022, November 19). 习近平同泰国总理巴育举行会谈 [Xi Jinping talked with Thailand Premier Prayut]. Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zyxw/202211/t20221119_10978187.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023a, February 9). *Drug Abuse in the United States*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3376_665447/3432_664920/3434_664924/202302/t20230209_11022554.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023b, February 16). *Gun Violence in the United States: Truth and Facts*.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3376_665447/3432_664920/3434_664924/202302/t20230216_11025874.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023c, February 20). *US Hegemony and Its*

Perils. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3376_665447/3432_664920/3434_664924/202302/t20230220_11027664.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023d, April 24). *Foreign Ministry*

Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on April 24, 2023.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202405/t20240530_11347510.htm

1

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023e, June 23). *李强会见欧洲理事会主席*

米歇尔 [Li Qiang meets with the President of the European Council Michel].

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/gjldrhd_674881/202306/t20230623_11102610.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023f, July 15). *王毅会见欧盟外交与安全*

政策高级代表博雷利 [Wang Yi meets with High Representative Fontelles].

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/gjldrhd_674881/202307/t20230715_11113744.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023g, December 8). *Head of the Department*

of European Affairs of the Foreign Ministry Gives an Interview to the Media on

the 24th China-EU Summit.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3265_665445/oumeng_eng_664510/Activitiesoumeng_664514/202312/t20231211_11199167.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2023h, December 29). *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on December 29, 2023.*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202405/t20240530_11347669.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024a, March 7). *Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjbzhd/202405/t20240527_11312296.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024b, March 14). *'Freedom of Speech' in the United States : Truth and Facts.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3376_665447/3432_664920/3434_664924/202403/t20240314_11260689.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024c, May 7). *Building on Past Achievements to Jointly Usher in a New EraIn China-France Cooperation_Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs

of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/zyjh/202405/t20240530_11332923.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024d, May 8). *Arrival Statement by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China At Budapest Airport, Hungary.*

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202405/t20240509_11301517.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024e, May 9). *Joint Statement Between the People's Republic of China and Hungary on the Establishment of An All-Weather Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for the New Era.*

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202405/t20240510_11302189.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024f, May 10). *中华人民共和国和匈牙利关于建立新时代全天候全面战略伙伴关系的联合声明 [China-Hungary Joint Statement on the Establishment of an All-Weather Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for the New Era]*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zyxw/202405/t20240510_11302174.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024g, July 8). *习近平会见匈牙利总理欧尔班 [Xi Jinping meets with Hungarian Prime Minister Orban]*. Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zyxw/202407/t20240708_11449761.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024h, July 24). 习近平会见印度总理莫迪

[Xi Jinping met India Prime Minister Modi]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

PRC. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/zyxw/202410/t20241024_11515096.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024i, September 2). 习近平同南非总统拉

马福萨会谈 *[Xi Jinping met with South Africa President Ramaphosa]*.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zyxw/202409/t20240902_11483479.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024j, September 28). 王毅会见美国国务卿

布林肯 *[Wang Yi met US Secretary of State Blinken]*. Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202409/t20240928_11499554.shtml

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024k, October). 中国同奥地利的关系

[The relationship between China and Austria]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_678

[868/sbgx_678872/](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_678868/sbgx_678872/)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024l, October). 中国同德国的关系 *[The*

relationship between China and Germany]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679086/sbgx_679090/

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024m, October). *中国/同法国的关系 [The relationship between China and France]*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679134/sbgx_679138/

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. (2024n, October). *中国/同匈牙利的关系 [The relationship between China and Hungary]*.

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679858/sbgx_679862/

Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. (2013). *Strategic narratives: Communication power and the new world order*. Routledge.

Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Forging the world: Strategic narratives and international relations* (First paperback edition). University of Michigan Press.

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2012, March 6). *外交部长杨洁篪就我国对外政策对外关系等答问(实录) [Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi meets the*

press]. Mission of the PRC to the EU. http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/chn/zyxw/201203/t20120306_8393505.htm

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2022a, December 23). *Transcript of Ambassador Fu Cong's Interview with the South China Morning Post.*
http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/mh/202212/t20221224_10994641.htm

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2022b, December 25). 傅聪大使：中欧合作应该“去政治化” [*Ambassador Fu Cong: China-Europe cooperation should be "de-politicalised"*]. Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union. http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/stxw/202212/t20221226_10994930.htm

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2023a, September 14). 商务部新闻发言人就欧盟领导人宣布即将对我电动汽车发起反补贴调查事答记者问 [*Spokesmen's remarks to the press on the issue of the announcement of launching anti-subsidy investigation on Chinese electric vehicles by the EU leaders*]. http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/zclc/202309/t20230914_11142825.htm

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2023b, October 14). 王毅同欧盟外交与安全政策高级代表博雷利举行中欧高级别战略对话 [*Wang Yi and High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles held the China-EU high-level strategy*

dialogue/].

[http://eu.china-](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/zzjws/202310/t20231023_11166319.htm)

[mission.gov.cn/zzjws/202310/t20231023_11166319.htm](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/zzjws/202310/t20231023_11166319.htm)

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2023c, November 21). 傅聪大使在 2023

第九届欧洲论坛上的主旨发言 [*Ambassador Fu Cong's speech at the 9th*

Europe Forum 2023]. Mission of the People's Republic of China to the

European

Union.

[http://eu.china-](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/stxw/202311/t20231121_11184716.htm)

[mission.gov.cn/stxw/202311/t20231121_11184716.htm](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/stxw/202311/t20231121_11184716.htm)

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2023d, December 27). 中国驻欧盟使团

团长傅聪大使：中欧关系“回升回暖”，要多做加法 [*Ambassador Fu Cong*

the Head of Chinese Mission to the EU: China-EU relations coming back and

becoming warmer, do more plus maths]. [http://eu.china-](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/stxw/202312/t20231228_11213961.htm)

[mission.gov.cn/stxw/202312/t20231228_11213961.htm](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/stxw/202312/t20231228_11213961.htm)

Mission of the PRC to the European Union. (2024, January 18). *Ambassador Fu Cong:*

Closer China-EU Partnership: Adding Positive Energy to a Turbulent World.

http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/mh/202401/t20240119_11228919.htm

Morales, P. S. (2022). China's Global Media in Latin America: Exploring the Impact

and Perception in Mexico and Argentina. In T. Tudoroiu & A. Kuteleva (Eds.),

China in the Global South: Impact and Perceptions (pp. 79–94). Springer

Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1344-0_5

- Morales, P. S., & Menechelli, P. (2023). Mundo China: The media partnership reframing China's image in Brazil. *International Communication Gazette*, 85(1), 63–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485221139465>
- Morales-Sanfurgo, P. S. (2018). Could Chinese News Channels Have a Future in Latin America? *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.276>
- Musikverein. (n.d.). *Chinese traditional music 2025 Chinese New Year Concert of China Qingdao Traditional Chinese Orchestral Music Society International performers*. Retrieved 20 February 2025, from <https://www.musikverein.at/en/konzert/>
- Musliu, V., & Orbie, J. (2015). MetaKosovo: Local and International Narratives. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-856X.12069?casa_token=3rb3JrjpNUgAAAAA%3AJ4FsdwkG6vXZb9bKdcAy4jO96NlDtMK6J3VBfNNvxeIc_NVbfo0CJi-ZOLP-SxosWX4MMNXA19Dj
- Ngomba, T. (2011). Differing Paradigms of Media Systems Development in Contemporary Africa: Does the 'Chinese Model' Have a Place? *Journal of*

Asian and African Studies, 47(1), 52–67.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909611417679>

Norris, P. (1997). Political Communications. In P. Dunleavy, A. Gamble, I. Holiday, & G. Peele (Eds.), *Developments in British Politics 5* (pp. 75–88). Macmillan

Education UK. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25862-8_4

Nye, J. S. (2008). Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 94–109.

Nyíri, P. (2005). Chinese in Hungary. In M. Ember, C. R. Ember, & I. Skoggard (Eds.),

Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World (pp. 664–672). Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-29904-4_68

Nyíri, P. (2006). The Nation-State, Public Education, and the Logic of Migration:

Chinese Students in Hungary. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 17(1), 32–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1835-9310.2006.tb00046.x>

Nyíri, P. (2018). *New Chinese Migrants in Europe: The Case of the Chinese Community*

in Hungary. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429451584>

Nymalm, N. (2020). The US Congressional Discourse on Japan and China: Issues and

Topics. In N. Nymalm (Ed.), *From 'Japan Problem' to 'China Threat'? Rising Powers in US Economic Discourse* (pp. 81–90). Springer International

Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44951-3_4

Ó Tuathail, G., Dalby, S., & Routledge, P. (Eds.). (2006). *The geopolitics reader* (Second edition). Routledge.

Office of CIs Beijing Foreign Studies University. (2024, December 19). *Office of Confucius Institutes*. Beijing Foreign Studies University.
<https://kzxy.bfsu.edu.cn/info/1086/1565.htm>

Ohashi, H. (2018). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the context of China's opening-up policy. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 7(2), 85–103.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/24761028.2018.1564615>

Orbetsova, V., & Men, J. (2016). The EU and China: How do they perceive each other? *International Communication Gazette*, 78(1–2), 3–8.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048515618096>

Oud, M. (2024). Powers of persuasion? China's struggle for human rights discourse power at the UN. *Global Policy*, 15(S2), 85–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13361>

Oushinet. (n.d.). 欧时网-关于我们 [Oushinet-About US]. Oushinet. Retrieved 30 October 2024, from https://www.oushinet.com/resource/other_page/about.html

Pan, S. (2013). Confucius Institute project: China's cultural diplomacy and soft power projection. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 2(1), 22–33.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/20463161311297608>

- Papadakis, V. M., Lioukas, S., & Chambers, D. (1998). Strategic Decision-Making Processes: The Role of Management and Context. *Strategic Management Journal*, 19(2), 115–147.
- Party Literature Research Center. (2017). 習近平關於社會主義文化建設論述摘編 [The edited summaries of Xi Jinping's theories and thoughts on the construction of socialist culture]. Party Literature Research Center.
- Payne, K. (2005). The Media as an Instrument of War. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, 35(1). <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2243>
- People's Daily. (n.d.). 机构设置 [Institutional setup]. People's Daily. Retrieved 9 January 2025, from <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/50142/208384/index.html>
- People's Daily. (2013, October 10). 讲好中国故事传播好中国声音 [Tell China's story well Spread China's voice well]. People.Cn. http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/1010/c1001-23144775.html?utm_source=The+Sinocism+China+Newsletter&utm_campaign=c994565df6-Sinocism10_10_131&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_171f237867-c994565df6-24571569
- People's Daily Online. (2019, January 10). 习近平：让全世界都能听到并听清中国声音 [Xi Jinping: Make the China's voice heard and clearly heard by the

world]. CPCNEWS. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/xuexi/n1/2019/0110/c385474-30514168.html>

Popovic, M., Jenne, E. K., & Medzihorsky, J. (2020). Charm Offensive or Offensive Charm? An Analysis of Russian and Chinese Cultural Institutes Abroad. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 72(9), 1445–1467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1785397>

Portela, C. (2010). The perception of the European Union in Southeast Asia. *Asia Europe Journal*, 8(2), 149–160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-010-0257-8>

Pritchard, E. H. (1942). “On the Ch’ing tributary system.” By J. K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng. Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1941. (Reprint from the Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies Vol. 6, June, 1941, 135–246). *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1(2), 191–192. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2049627>

Ptáčková, J., Klimeš, O., & Rawnsley, G. (Eds.). (2021). *Transnational Sites of China’s Cultural Diplomacy: Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Middle East and Europe Compared*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5592-3>

Qin, Y. (2007). Why is there no Chinese international relations theory? *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 7(3), 313–340.

Qin, Y. (2010). International Society as a Process: Institutions, Identities, and China's Peaceful Rise. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3(2), 129–153.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poq007>

Qin, Y. (2018). *A Relational Theory of World Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316869505>

Qi, Y. (2021, March 3). 毛澤東關於對美鬥爭的六則論斷及其啟示 [Six assertions and inspirations of fighting against the US of Mao Zedong]. Institute of Party

History

and

Literature.

<https://www.dswxyjy.org.cn/BIG5/n1/2021/0303/c219000-32041152.html>

Rawnsley, G. (2021). Cultural Diplomacy Today: A 'Culture of Dialogue' or a

'Dialogue of Cultures'? In J. Ptáčková, O. Klimeš, & G. Rawnsley (Eds.),

Transnational Sites of China's Cultural Diplomacy: Central Asia, Southeast

Asia, Middle East and Europe Compared (pp. 13–33). Springer.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5592-3_2

Reilly, J. (2012). A Norm-Taker or a Norm-Maker? Chinese aid in Southeast Asia.

Journal of Contemporary China, 21(73), 71–91.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.627667>

- Repnikova, M. (2022). Rethinking China's Soft Power: "Pragmatic Enticement" of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia. *The China Quarterly*, 250, 440–463.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022000340>
- Rojas, C. (2021). CHAPTER 57 OVERSEAS CHINESE NEWSPAPERS. In B. Rusk, A. Detwyler, C. Nugent, X. Liu, & J. W. Chen (Eds.), *Literary Information in China: A History* (pp. 561–568). Columbia University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.7312/chen19552-061>
- Ronci, M. (2021). Who gets to be the hero(ine)? Analysing female and male role models in Japanese textbooks of English as a foreign language. *Babylonia Journal of Language Education*, 3, 30.
- Roselle, L. (2017). Strategic Narratives and Great Power Identity. In L. Roselle, A. Miskimmon, & B. O'Loughlin (Eds.), *Forging the World* (pp. 56–84). University of Michigan Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.6504652.6>
- Roselle, L., Miskimmon, A., & O'Loughlin, B. (2014). Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power. *Media, War & Conflict*, 7(1), 70–84.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635213516696>
- Roy, D. (1996). The 'China Threat' Issue: Major Arguments. *Asian Survey*, 36(8), 758–771. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645437>

- Schmitt, O. (2018). When are strategic narratives effective? The shaping of political discourse through the interaction between political myths and strategic narratives. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39(4), 487–511.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2018.1448925>
- Schubring, G. (1987). On the Methodology of Analysing Historical Textbooks: Lacroix as Textbook Author. *For the Learning of Mathematics*, 7(3), 41–51.
- Schudson, M. (1982). The Politics of Narrative Form: The Emergence of News Conventions in Print and Television. *Daedalus*, 111(4), 97–112.
- Scott, D. A. (2013). Multipolarity, Multilateralism and Beyond? EU–China Understandings of the International System. *International Relations*, 27(1), 30–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117812463153>
- Scott, J. (2013). China Threat? Evidence from the WTO. *Journal of World Trade*, 47(4).
<https://kluwerlawonline.com/api/Product/CitationPDFURL?file=Journals\TRAD\TRAD2013025.pdf>
- Selbitschka, A. (2015). Early Chinese Diplomacy: ‘Realpolitik’ versus the So-called Tributary System. *Asia Major*, 28(1), 61–114.
- Shambaugh, D. L., Sandschneider, E., & Zhou, H. (Eds.). (2008). *China-Europe relations: Perceptions, policies and prospects*. Routledge.

- Shuto, M. (2018). Patterns and views of China's public diplomacy in ASEAN countries: Focusing on Confucius Institutes. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 7(2), 124–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24761028.2018.1553227>
- Smith, M. (2014). EU-China relations and the limits of economic diplomacy. *Asia Europe Journal*, 12(1), 35–48. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-014-0374-x>
- Smith, M. (2015). The EU and China: The politics and economics of strategic diplomacy. In *The Diplomatic System of the European Union*. Routledge.
- Song, L., & Bian, Q. (2016). The EU through the eyes of Chinese social media: A case study of the official micro-blog of Chinese Foreign Ministry. *International Communication Gazette*, 78(1–2), 64–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048515618106>
- Song, W. (2022). 'Seizing the Window of Strategic Opportunity': A Study of China's Macro-Strategic Narrative since the 21st Century. *Social Sciences*, 11(10), 461. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11100461>
- Stambach, A., & Wamalwa, K. (2018). Students' Reparticularization of Chinese Language and Culture at the University of Rwanda Confucius Institute. *Signs and Society*, 6(2), 332–348. <https://doi.org/10.1086/696798>
- Stanley, L., & Jackson, R. (2016). Introduction: Everyday narratives in world politics. *Politics*, 36(3), 223–235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395716653423>

- Starr, D. (2009). Chinese Language Education in Europe: The Confucius Institutes. *European Journal of Education*, 44(1), 65–82. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2008.01371.x>
- State Council. (2018, March 21). 国务院关于议事协调机构设置的通知(国发〔2008〕13号)[State Council's announcement about the settings of cooperation offices]. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-06/14/content_5082270.htm
- Strachan, H. (2005). The lost meaning of strategy. *Survival*, 47(3), 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330500248102>
- Sullivan, J., & Wang, W. (2023). China's "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy": The Interaction of Formal Diplomacy and Cyber-Nationalism. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 52(1), 68–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681026221079841>
- Sun, W. (2007). Dancing with chains: Significant moments on China Central Television. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877907076786>
- Sun, W., & Chio, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Mapping Media in China: Region, Province, Locality*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203117552>
- Szalai, B., & La-Torre, K. (2016). Comfortably Invisible: The Life of Chinese Migrants Around 'The Four Tigers Market' in Budapest. In F. Pastore & I. Ponzio (Eds.), *Inter-group Relations and Migrant Integration in European Cities: Changing*

Neighbourhoods (pp. 69–87). Springer International Publishing.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23096-2_4

Szostek, J. (2018). Nothing Is True? The Credibility of News and Conflicting Narratives during “Information War” in Ukraine. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23(1), 116–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161217743258>

Taddeo, M. (2012). Information Warfare: A Philosophical Perspective. *Philosophy & Technology*, 25(1), 105–120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-011-0040-9>

Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council. (2000, February). 一个中国的原则与台湾问题 [One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/dnzt_674981/qtzt/twwt/twwtbps/202206/t20220606_10699030.html

The State Council Information Office of the PRC. (2018, September). 关于中美经贸摩擦的事实与中方立场 白皮书 [The Facts and China’s Position on China-US Trade Friction White Paper]. Central People’s Government of the PRC. https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2018-09/24/content_5324957.htm

The State Council of the PRC. (2003, November 30). 中国对欧盟政策文件 2003 年第 33 号国务院公报 [China’s policy paper on the EU 2003 No. 33 State

https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2003/content_62478.htm

The Central People's Government of the PRC. (2005, September 16). 胡锦涛在联合国成立 60 周年首脑会议上的讲话 [Hu Jintao's speech at the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the UN]. https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2005-09/16/content_63871.htm

The Central People's Government of the PRC. (2009, December 1). 温家宝总理在第五届中欧工商峰会上的演讲(全文) [PM Wen Jiabao's speech at the 5th China-Europe Business Summit (full-text)]. https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2009-12/01/content_1477030.htm

The Central People's Government of the PRC. (2012, September 21). 温家宝总理在第八届中欧工商峰会上的演讲(全文) [PM Wen Jiabao's speech at the 8th China-Europe Business summit (full-text)]. https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2012-09/21/content_2229682.htm

The Guardian. (2016, June 2). Chinese minister vents anger when Canadian reporter asks about human rights. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/jun/02/chinese-foreign-minister-canada-angry-human-rights-question>

- Thomas, P. (2009). *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*. Brill.
- Thussu, D. K., Burgh, H. de, & Shi, A. (Eds.). (2018). *China's media go global*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ting, W. (2012). Human rights and EU-China relations. In R. Vogt (Ed.), *Europe and China: Strategic partners or rivals?* (pp. 115–138). Hong Kong University Press.
- Turcsanyi, R., & Kachlikova, E. (2020). The BRI and China's Soft Power in Europe: Why Chinese Narratives (Initially) Won. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 49(1), 58–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868102620963134>
- Turcsányi, R., & Qiaoan, R. (2020). Friends or foes? How diverging views of communist past undermine the China-CEE '16+1 platform'. *Asia Europe Journal*, 18(3), 397–412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00550-6>
- Umejei, E. (2018). Chinese Media in Africa: Between Promise and Reality. *African Journalism Studies*, 39(2), 104–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2018.1473275>
- Valente, A., Tudisca, V., Pelliccia, A., Cerbara, L., & Caruso, M. G. (2023). Comparing Liberal and Conservative Newspapers: Diverging Narratives in Representing

Migrants? *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 21(3), 411–427.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.1985200>

van Aelst, P., Sheafer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2012). The personalization of mediated political communication: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings.

Journalism, 13(2), 203–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911427802>

van Noort, C. (2019). The Construction of Power in the Strategic Narratives of the BRICS. *Global Society*, 33(4), 462–478.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2019.1581733>

van Noort, C. (2020). Strategic narratives, visibility and infrastructure in the digital age:

The case of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 33(5), 734–751.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2020.1741513>

van Noort, C., & Colley, T. (2021). How do strategic narratives shape policy adoption?

Responses to China's Belt and Road Initiative. *Review of International Studies*, 47(1), 39–63. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210520000388>

Vlassis, A. (2016). Soft power, global governance of cultural industries and rising powers: The case of China. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 22(4),

481–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2014.1002487>

- Vogt, R. (Ed.). (2012). *Europe and China: Strategic Partners or Rivals?* Hong Kong University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5790/hongkong/9789888083879.001.0001>
- Wang, H. (2015). Contextualising China's Call for Discourse Power in International Politics. *China: An International Journal*, 13(3), 172–189.
- Wang, M. (2024, September 30). *Scenic Austria seeking Chinese visitors*. ChinaDaily. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202409/30/WS66f9ac08a310f1265a1c598e.html>
- Wang, Q. (2022). The China–EU relation and media representation of China: The case of British newspaper's coverage of China in the post-Brexit referendum era. *Asia Europe Journal*, 20(3), 283–303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-021-00611-9>
- Wang, W. (2010). On the Struggle for International Power of Discourse on Climate Change. *China International Studies*, 23, 42–55.
- Wang, X. (2023). Evaluation of the discourse power in Chinese academic journals: A multi-fusion perspective. *Data and Information Management*, 7(4), 100026. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dim.2022.100026>
- Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2018). How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa? An Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 2212–2231.

Wen, J. (2010a, October 4). *坚定信心 共克时艰——温家宝在希腊议会的演讲*

[Firm the confidence conquer the temporal difficulties together—Wen Jiabao's speech in the Greek Parliament]. The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2010-10/04/content_1715451.htm

Wen, J. (2010b, October 7). *温家宝总理在中欧文化高峰论坛上的致辞(全文)* *[The speech of Wen Jiabao at the China-Europe culture forum (full-text)]*. The

Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2010-10/07/content_1716439.htm

Wen, J. (2011, June 29). *温家宝在中德经济技术合作论坛上演讲(全文)* *[Wen Jiabao's speech at the Germany-China economy and technology forum (full-text)]*. Foreign Ministry of the PRC.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679086/1209_679096/201106/t20110629_9334856.shtml

Whitebrook, M. (2001). The narrative construction of identity. In *Identity, Narrative and Politics*. Routledge.

Whitman, R. G. (2013). The neo-normative turn in theorising the EU's international presence. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48(2), 171–193.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713485538>

- Whittington, R. (2006). Completing the Practice Turn in Strategy Research. *Organization Studies*, 27(5), 613–634. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840606064101>
- Wiener Konzerthaus. (n.d.). *Das 25. Große Chinesische Neujahrskonzert*. Wiener Konzerthaus. Retrieved 19 February 2025, from <https://konzerthaus.at/konzert/eventid/62568>
- Winfield, B. H., & Peng, Z. (2005). Market or Party Controls?: Chinese Media in Transition. *Gazette (Leiden, Netherlands)*, 67(3), 255–270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016549205052228>
- Womack, B. (2012). Asymmetry and China's Tributary System. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 5(1), 37–54. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pos003>
- Wu, B., Peng, B., Wei, W., & Ehsan, E. (2021). A comparative analysis on the international discourse power evaluation of global climate governance. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 23(8), 12505–12526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-020-01180-4>
- Wunderlich, J.-U. (2020). Positioning as Normative Actors: China and the EU in Climate Change Negotiations. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58(5), 1107–1123. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13019>

Xi, J. (2019, April 12). 习近平在《告台湾同胞书》发表 40 周年纪念会上的讲话

[Speech at the Meeting Marking the 40th Anniversary of the Issuance of the

Message to Compatriots in Taiwan]. Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council.

http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/szyw/201904/t20190412_12155687.htm

Xi, J. (2021, July 1). 庆祝中国共产党成立 100 周年大会隆重举行 习近平发表重

要讲话 *[Ceremony held for marking the centenary of the Communist Party of*

China Xi Jinping gave an important speech]. Central People's Government of

the PRC. https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-07/01/content_5621846.htm

Xi, J. (2022, October 25). *Full text of the report to the 20th National Congress of the*

Communist Party of China. Xinhuanet.

<https://english.news.cn/20221025/8eb6f5239f984f01a2bc45b5b5db0c51/c.htm>

1

Xiang, H. (2023, October 20). *What “Partnerships” Does China Have?* Interpret:

China. [https://interpret.csis.org/translations/what-partnerships-does-china-](https://interpret.csis.org/translations/what-partnerships-does-china-have/)

[have/](https://interpret.csis.org/translations/what-partnerships-does-china-have/)

Xiao, X. (2024, May 1). 奥地利与中国 *[Austria and China]*. China Council for the

Promotion of International Trade.

<https://www.ccpit.org/austria/a/20240501/20240501kg9g.html>

Xinhua News Agency. (n.d.). 新华社简介 [*Introduction of Xinhua News Agency*].

Retrieved 9 January 2025, from <http://www.news.cn/xinhuashe/jbqk.htm>

Xinhua News Agency. (2009, November 1). 李克强出席新西兰坎特伯雷大学孔子学院成立仪式 [*Li Keqiang attended the establishment ceremony of the*

Confucius Institute in the University of Canterbury New Zealand]. The Central

People's Government of the People's Republic of China.

https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2009-11/01/content_1454150.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2011, September 15). 李克强出席中国—欧洲民间友好合作对话会开幕式 [*Li Keqiang attended the opening ceremony of China-Europe*

people-to-people dialogue on friendship and cooperation]. The Central

People's Government of the People's Republic of China.

https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2011-09/15/content_1947835.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2013a, November 15). 中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大问题的决定 [*The Decision on Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively*

Deepening Reforms by the CPC Central Committee]. The Central People's

Government of the People's Republic of China. [https://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2013-](https://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2013-11/15/content_2528179.htm)

[11/15/content_2528179.htm](https://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2013-11/15/content_2528179.htm)

Xinhua News Agency. (2013b, December 31). 习近平:建设社会主义文化强国 着力提高国家文化软实力 [*Xi Jinping: Construct the strong culture socialist*

country pay attention to improve the national culture soft power]. The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China.

https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-12/31/content_2558147.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2016, October 4). *中欧文明对话会在雅典举行 刘云山出席并发表主旨讲话* [*China-Europe civilisation dialogue took place in Athens Liu Yunshan attend it and delivered a theme speech*]. Xinhuanet.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-10/04/c_1119666181.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2018, April 8). *习近平同奥地利总统范德贝伦举行会谈* [*Xi Jinping held a meeting with Austria President Van der Bellen*]. Central People's

Government of the PRC. https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/08/content_5280686.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2021a, June 1). *习近平主持中共中央政治局第三十次集体学习并讲话* [*Xi Jinping hosted and made a speech at the 30th Group Study Session of the Political Bureau*]. China.Org.Cn.

https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-06/01/content_5614684.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2021b, July 1). *Full Text: Speech by Xi Jinping at a ceremony marking the centenary of the CPC*. The 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2021-07/01/c_1310038244.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2022, December 1). *习近平同欧洲理事会主席米歇尔举行会谈 [Xi Jinping had a meeting with the President of the European Council Michel]*. Xinhuanet. http://www.news.cn/world/2022-12/01/c_1129176217.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2023, August 18). *习近平复信南非德班理工大学孔子学院师生 [Xi Jinping writes back to the teachers and students of the Confucius Institute in Durban University of Technology South Africa]*. The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202308/content_6898920.htm

Xinhua News Agency. (2024a, May 5). *Interview: Hungary looks forward to further cooperation with China, official says*. Belt and Road Portal. <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/0DG0579C.html>

Xinhua News Agency. (2024b, July 29). *Xi meets Italian prime minister, calls for upholding Silk Road spirit*. The State Council of the PRC. https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202407/29/content_WS66a7916cc6d0868f4e8e98f2.html

Xinhua News Agency. (2024c, December 12). *今年前10个月中国赴匈游客人数接近翻番 [In the first 10 months the number of Chinese tourists in Hungary almost doubled]*.

<http://www.news.cn/world/20241213/9db93999f39541d1be650b8cceb84a20/c.html>

Xinhua News Agency. (2025, January 17). 习近平同美国当选总统特朗普通电话
[Xi Jinping talked to the President-elected Trump on the phone]. China.Org.Cn.

https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202501/content_6999620.htm

Xuan, X., & Li, Z. (2024, February 6). 《欧洲时报》一行到访中国驻匈牙利大使馆
[Nouvelles d'Europe visited Chinese embassy in Hungary]. Nouvelles d'Europe.

<https://www.oushinet.com/static/content/qj/qjnews/2024-02-06/1204651251079077888.html>

Yan, X. (2006). 和谐社会与和谐世界的政策关系 [The policy relations between
Harmonious society and Harmonious world]. *The Journal of International
Studies*, 1, 20–21.

Yan, X. (2019). *Leadership and the Rise of Great Powers*.
<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691190082/leadership-and-the-rise-of-great-powers>

Yan, X., Bell, D. A., & Zhe, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern
Chinese Power* (E. Ryden, Trans.). Princeton University Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7skkq>

- Yang, J. (2016). Constructing Discourse Power in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics: Mission and Challenges. *China International Studies*, 61, 38–55.
- Yang, R. (2010). Soft power and higher education: An examination of China's Confucius Institutes. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 8(2), 235–245.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14767721003779746>
- Yang, R. (2011). Soft power and higher education: An examination of China's Confucius Institutes. In *The Internationalisation of Higher Education*. Routledge.
- Yang, Y. E. (2021). China's Strategic Narratives in Global Governance Reform under Xi Jinping. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 30(128), 299–313.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2020.1790904>
- Yang, Y. E., & Liu, X. (2012). The 'China Threat' through the Lens of US Print Media: 1992–2006. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(76), 695–711.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.666838>
- Yu, J. (2018). The Belt and Road Initiative: Domestic interests, bureaucratic politics and the EU-China relations. *Asia Europe Journal*, 16(3), 223–236.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-018-0510-0>

Zhai, Y. (2021). Discourse power: Sovereignty claims over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

Territory, Politics, Governance, 9(2), 203–221.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2019.1687324>

Zhang, L. (2020). Research progress in Chinese perceptions of the EU: A critical review

and methodological reflection. *Asia Europe Journal*, 18(1), 17–34.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00540-8>

Zhang, Y., & Buzan, B. (2012). The Tributary System as International Society in Theory

and Practice. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 5(1), 3–36.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pos001>

Zhang, Y., & Orbie, J. (2021). Strategic narratives in China's climate policy: Analysing

three phases in China's discourse coalition. *The Pacific Review*, 34(1), 1–28.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1637366>

Zhao, L., Yu, Y., Zhang, J., & Li, H. (Eds.). (2022). *Confucius Institute Annual*

Development Report 2021 (2021).

<https://ci.cn/qkylxq?file=/profile/upload/2023/04/18/%E5%AD%A6%E9%99%A2%E5%B9%B4%E5%BA%A6%E5%8F%9>

[1%E5%B1%95%E6%8A%A5%E5%91%8A%EF%BC%882021%E5%8F%9](https://ci.cn/qkylxq?file=/profile/upload/2023/04/18/%E5%AD%A6%E9%99%A2%E5%B9%B4%E5%BA%A6%E5%8F%9)

[89_20230418100457A006.pdf](https://ci.cn/qkylxq?file=/profile/upload/2023/04/18/%E5%AD%A6%E9%99%A2%E5%B9%B4%E5%BA%A6%E5%8F%9)

[89_20230418100457A006.pdf](https://ci.cn/qkylxq?file=/profile/upload/2023/04/18/%E5%AD%A6%E9%99%A2%E5%B9%B4%E5%BA%A6%E5%8F%9)

Zhao, T. (2006). Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia, 天下). *Social Identities*, 12(1), 29–41.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630600555559>