
近在中國：意大利兩份全國性日報關於中國崛起的新聞報道和話語 1994-2013

Submitted to
Department of Media and Communication
media與傳播系
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
哲學博士學位

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January 2016
二零一六年一月
Abstract

This longitudinal study utilizes quantitative and qualitative methods, that is content analysis and critical discourse analysis to investigate the characteristics of the news coverage and the representation of China’s political, social and economic rise in the two most prominent Italian national newspapers, Il Corriere della Sera and La Repubblica, analyzing 584 news articles over a period of 20 years, from 1994 to 2013. Within the theoretical framework of the Hierarchical Influence Model, Polarized Pluralist Model and Orientalism, this study examined the news coverage of China, in order to evaluate its characteristics and their relations with how favorably China is covered in the news; the relations between external economic factors and the extent of the news coverage on China; and to explore the narratives on China emerging from the news discourse of the most influential newspapers in Italy.

The analysis found that overall, both Repubblica and Corriere generally follow similar coverage patterns with regard to China’s rise, with the latter more balanced in the coverage than the former, although the general views on China are negative in both newspapers. The study found no significant association between government political stance and how favorably China is depicted in the news coverage in Corriere, which suggests a substantial absence of direct institutional influence on the media content. It found significant but weak associations between favorability and context in both newspapers and between favorability and type of article in Corriere. The analysis also found that Gross Domestic Product, Foreign Direct Investment, Tourism Flow and Trade Volume constitute potential determinants of the extent of news coverage on China in the two newspapers.

This study also found the coexistence in the news discourse of two main narratives, a narrative of partnership and friendship between Italy and China, defining the relations of power between the two countries by a principle of equality, and a narrative that assumes the
characteristics of Orientalism as an ideological and stereotypical way to conceive of and represent the Oriental “Other.” The Orientalist narrative was found to be prevalent in the discourse of the examined Italian media in the considered period of time, defining the relations between Italy, as a representative of the West, and China as the epitome of the East, through the prism of an ever-present principle of ideological, political and overall cultural superiority of the former over the latter, exemplified by recurring images, most importantly the image of China as functional to serving western expectations and interests, as well as the image of China as a bully in the domestic and international relations, other than metaphors of military conquest in the economic realm, which evoke a colonial discourse on China. The official narrative on China, based on images of friendship and partnership with Italy, however, still emerges in the discourse of both newspapers, in particular at times of high-profile events involving Italy and China, such as state visits to China or Italy, although more markedly in Corriere. The findings suggest that the emergence of the official narrative may be owed to a convergence of influences taking place at both the institutional and the organizational levels. While Repubblica appears to be more vocal, Corriere tends to assume a more “institutional” role by emphasizing more diffusely the elements of the official narrative about China. The relations of power between the West and China, defined through the news discourse, emerge as imbalanced in favor of the former. Overall, in the analyzed Italian newspapers China emerges as a “deviant” issue and over time it appears to “switch” from semi-peripheral towards being perceived as a core-zone country.

The study attempts to shed light on the media representations of China as the political, economic and cultural Other than the West in the context of its global rise and of its increasingly relevant political and economic role in Europe, especially in Italy, where the value of ethnocentrism is found to be still persistent in the media. It also tries to highlight the cultural and geopolitical implications for the West in the context of the rise of China. The
study concludes by identifying present limitations, and indicates possible directions for future research by also introducing the concept of networks of representation.

**Keywords:** Italy, China, Polarized Pluralism, Hierarchical Influence, Content Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Orientalism