

# Chinese newspaper coverage of the BRICS summit

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Chinese press media focuses a lot of its coverage on explaining the importance of the new BRICS bank to China and to the world through interviews with Chinese scholars and editorials. The analysis of these news articles and editorials shows that China is gradually accepting its leading -though denying being dominating- position among the developing countries. Yet it still detaches itself from admitting being a developed country in order to avoid being perceived as a direct threat to other western developed countries and reserve the right to criticize their behaviors.

Four newspapers are used for analysis. They are *People's Daily*, a mouthpiece of Chinese Communist Party, *Global Times*, a daily tabloid which enjoys a nationalist approach to international news, *Jiefang Daily*, the official daily newspaper of the Shanghai Committee of Communist Party of China, and *Xinmin Evening News*, the top local newspaper in Shanghai in circulation.

## The rise of the BRICS

In their coverage of the BRICS Summit, Chinese mainstream newspapers still largely draw a clear line between the developing world and the "developed countries in the west". Many news articles or editorials adopt the form of responding to the negative views from the western media or scholars to make their argument. The negative views, which the *Global Times* describes as "contempt" and "upset"<sup>1</sup>, include low expectation of success of the BRICS

bank and fear that the New Development Bank may challenge the current financial order led by the western powers.

With regard to the low expectation of success of the BRICS bank, while some BRICS countries show trends of slow economic growth, Fan Yongming, director of Center for BRICS Studies in Fudan University and Jin Canrong, vice dean of School of International Studies at Renmin University of China, both believe that the economic situation in BRICS countries will get better and these countries will have a bigger share in the world market not only economically but also politically in the long run in their interviews with *Xinmin Evening News*<sup>2</sup>.

In response to the argument that the differences among the BRICS countries may darken the future of the cooperation, *Jiefang Daily* refers to an expert who claimed that the common ground among the BRICS countries is still bigger than the differences<sup>3</sup>. Fan Yongming in his interview with *Global Times* also argued that "there are many differences or contradictions within any international organization, even G7. Differences can thus become the basis for cooperation."<sup>4</sup>

Besides objecting to the concerns from the western media, all of the news reports or editorials in the four newspapers show an absolute positive view of the New Development Bank. They share the same views that the bank will support the developing countries with fewer restrictions and improve the global financial system, which was once dominated by western powers, by making it more balanced through an alternative financial institution from the developing world.

### **China's "leading" role in the BRICS**

Even though China is the biggest investor to the New Development Bank and the venue for the bank's headquarter, none of the news articles or editorials indicates that China is going to be the dominating countries among the BRICS or the country in charge of the BRICS bank, not even in the *Global Times*, which is famous for its nationalistic reports.

Moreover, *Global Times* is actually the only newspaper among the four that has mentioned concerns from the western world as well as within the four BRICS countries that the newly established bank will be China-centric. In the commentary with title "the west shows 'envy, jealous, hate' to BRICS", the national tabloid responds that "equality is the political foundation of the BRICS organization and BRICS bank, which differentiates the BRICS bank from the World Bank."<sup>5</sup> Another commentary also states that unlike the G7 where the U.S. is being the "boss", BRICS has a more active atmosphere<sup>6</sup>.

However, though denying China will be the dominator of the BRICS by manipulating the organization, the *China's fox news* suggests that China as the "World No.2" and the most powerful country among the BRICS should not be constrained to the equality principle too much in terms of listening to others all the time and should take more initiatives<sup>7</sup>.

### **"World No.2"**

In the *Global Times* commentary "the west shows 'envy, jealous, hate' to BRICS", Chinese social philosophy "Low profile" is once again brought up. It says "China is milder and more willing to share power than any other 'World No.2' in modern history."<sup>8</sup>

The "low profile" philosophy can be also found in the rhetoric in the Chinese press media. None of the correspondents or writers in these four mainstream media has taken the initiative to say that the establishment of BRICS Bank and reserve currency pool may challenge current financial order. Even in *Global Times*, though highlighted in the translation of foreign news, the word "challenge" never appears as an argument in any news articles written by the newspaper's own correspondent or writers. Professor Zhu Ning from Shanghai Advanced Institute of Finance preferred to use the word "complement" instead of "Challenge". Zhu believed that the New Development Bank "is rather a complement of 'things they cannot do' to the World Bank and IMF than a challenge" in his interview with *Jiefang Daily*.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, in an editorial with *Title The West should not view the the rise of BRICS as a zero-sum game* on the overseas version of *People's Daily*, the scholar from China Institute of International Studies (name not declared) says that "even if the BRICS countries have developed greatly, they have not upset the initiative of the western countries in the world economy". It also encouraged the west to see the rise of BRICS as "a co-operative bloc committed to promoting peace and prosperity in the world"<sup>10</sup>.

## Conclusion

Chinese media is still careful in covering China's development in the way that China's rise will not be perceived as a bigger threat to the world. Therefore, China is now quite comfortable with its position as only being the No.1 country in the developing world while not recognizing itself as a developed country. This position gives it the privilege to represent the developing countries, speak for it and question the other developed countries. Moreover, China's not recognizing itself to be part of developed countries is also consistent with China's foreign policy discourse of "never seek hegemony", otherwise it will put it on the direct challenging position to the U.S.

Also, in terms of the possible threat or discomfort that it may generate among the BRICS or other developing countries, Chinese press media has never used the term "leading" to describe the position of the China in the world of developing countries. And China also keeps denying that it will play the same dominant role as the role of U.S. in the western developed countries. With regard to the future of the BRICS organization and the New Development Bank, under the international pressure, China is most likely to choose to abide the international order and equality principle in the functioning of the bank.

However, there may be a concern for future cooperation among the BRICS, if China does not change its perception of seeing itself to be superior to most of the other developing countries. This is something that China need to work on if it wants to take most advantage from an organization without being seen as a threat to other countries.

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1. <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/editorial/2014-07/5063937.html>
  2. <http://www.kaixian.tv/gd/2014/0716/7223378.html>
  3. [http://newspaper.jfdaily.com/jfrb/html/2014-07/17/content\\_1177900.htm](http://newspaper.jfdaily.com/jfrb/html/2014-07/17/content_1177900.htm)
  4. <http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2014-07/5066332.html>

5. <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/editorial/2014-07/5070746.html>
6. <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/editorial/2014-07/5063937.html>
7. <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/editorial/2014-07/5070746.html>
8. Ibid
9. [http://newspaper.jfdaily.com/jfrb/html/2014-07/17/content\\_1177900.htm](http://newspaper.jfdaily.com/jfrb/html/2014-07/17/content_1177900.htm)
10. [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2014-07/15/content\\_1452687.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2014-07/15/content_1452687.htm)

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