

Perceptions of China in Southeast Asia: Between politics, elite interests, and public attitudes

Double session proposal for EuroSEAS 2021

Convener: Dr. Richard Turcsanyi (Department of Asian Studies, Palacký University Olomouc; contact: richard.turcsanyi@upol.cz)

Abstract:

Role of perceptions in international relations has been long studied as part of various traditions and approaches, most popular among researchers and practitioners being soft power and public diplomacy, but also including symbolic power, normative power, discursive power and others. The suggested double session wants to serve as a platform of dialogue for scholars working with different sets of empirical data, methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives, and focus on various countries in Southeast Asia.

As part of the “Sinophone Borderlands” project, new large-scale public opinion survey data from Southeast Asia on public attitudes towards China will be available at the time of the conference, besides already available data from the similar survey conducted in Europe in 2020 (www.sinofon.cz/surveys). This data will contribute new insights and allow for comparisons with existing research such as that conducted as part of “Asian Barometer” project by National Taiwan University or ISEAS Singapore series of “State of Southeast Asia” offering insights into elite perceptions.

Some of the possible issues which will be discussed include drivers of public attitudes towards China among Southeast Asian populations, potential discrepancies between public opinion and government positions and their interpretations, assessment of relationship between the public opinion and government policies and their influences on each other, impact of China’s public diplomacy and broader foreign policy approach on public perceptions in Southeast Asia.

Information for the members of the selection committee

Two panels are planned, in which we expect 3 presentations by members of the Sinophone Borderlands project at Palacký University Olomouc, joined by scholars from other institutions in Southeast Asia and Europe.

Bio of the convener:

Richard Q. Turcsanyi is a Key Researcher at Palacký University Olomouc, Assistant Professor at Mendel University in Brno, and Program Director at the Central European Institute of Asian Studies (CEIAS.eu). He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations and further degrees in economy and political science. In past, he conducted long-term research stays at the University of Toronto, Peking University, National Chengchi University in Taipei, and the

European Institute for Asian Studies in Brussels. He is an author of "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea" and has published a number of academic articles and opinion pieces on Chinese foreign policy and relations between China and (Central and Eastern) Europe. He is a member of various networks focusing on contemporary China and EU-China relations, including European Think Tank Network on China (ETNC), a COST action "China in Europe Research Network" (CHERN), or Chinese Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE).