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China as an Intercultural Partner: Obstacles to EU Effective Communication

Taciana Fisac

Professor, Autonomous University of Madrid

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Introduction

Intercultural differences can lead to communication misunderstandings between people from different nationalities. Much has already been analysed and written on the subject. However, even today, while efforts have been made in China to better understand the European mode of communication, there still seems to be a lack of in-depth understanding of certain unique characteristics of Chinese communication. Our Chinese counterparts are capable of adopting communication practices unfamiliar to their own culture to achieve very specific objectives. However, we, as Europeans, still struggle to fully grasp some of the situations that arise in the dialogue with China.

Generally speaking, the disagreement with China is attributed to its one-party political system and, therefore, to its lack of shared democratic principles with Europe. However, this is a rather reductionist interpretation, as it overlooks the fact that in both European and Chinese contexts, many misunderstandings in communication arise from practices that date back many centuries. In fact, certain difficulties in communication are exacerbated because they respond to cultural traits deeply embedded in a society, to the point that those immersed in it are unable to even recognize them, let alone identify the differences with other cultures.

The phenomenon of globalization, the countless trips made today to all regions of the planet, and the widespread use of digital technology have reinforced the false assumption that, in this increasingly interconnected world, preoccupied with the here and now, differences are gradually fading away. It is as if the social ways of speaking and acting rooted in cultural traditions have become irrelevant. In other words, we tend to automatically interpret words and actions whose meanings may vary greatly across cultures based on our own parameters, without taking into account that the communication methods of different peoples and cultures have been shaped by the customs, habits, and values of the past.

The following lines aim to provide some insights into the misunderstandings that may arise in dialogue between Europeans and Chinese. To this end, we present a brief analysis of European and Chinese communication customs and practices, with a particular focus on high-level political meetings. These are situations generally highly ritualized and where cultural differences are perhaps most evident. These could also be extrapolated to other types of meetings, such as those held for commercial and economic purposes. The aim is to offer a perspective that helps us identify the features of intercultural communication between Europe and China, since in both cases they respond to practices that have been developing over centuries and, therefore, cannot be regarded as nonexistent or insignificant.

Key Findings

- China is an ancient empire with a history spanning thousands of years and an autonomous culture whose traits remain present in the 21st century and continue to shape intercultural communication.
- Chinese people understand the key elements of communicating with Europe. However, Europeans are largely unfamiliar with China's unique communication practices.
- Whereas classical European rhetoric follows the model of an orator (top-down) addressing a subordinate audience, Chinese rhetoric is confined to the private sphere and is traditionally practiced among equals or directed toward a superior (bottom-up).
- Direct speech is common among European politicians, while in China it is considered crude or even impolite. Indirect speech predominates in Chinese communication.
- Many of the statements made by European leaders in exchanges with Chinese people are, in fact, aimed more at a domestic EU audience than at genuine dialogue with China.
- To express disagreements with Chinese people, it is necessary to use a more intimate setting and build bonds of trust with the counterpart.
- Europeans' lack of knowledge of indirect speech leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication.
- In China, not only the purpose of a speech or action matters, but also the entire process. Every aspect of communication must be carefully prepared.
- Despite their excellent training, Chinese interpreters and translators maintain a high degree of identification with their own culture and civilization. This can unconsciously influence their work, particularly when they are required to defend positions contrary to their country's interests or to translate sensitive topics within the Chinese political and social context.
- The EU must invest more effort in training skilled Chinese interpreters and translators of European origin, serving both EU institutions and individual member states.
- The EU needs to develop a greater understanding of China's communication traditions and practices, along with a willingness to maintain dialogue rather than a relationship filled with moralistic prejudices.
- Persuading is more important than public denunciation. The EU needs to be aware of the ineffectiveness of public recriminations among Chinese political elites, as well as the negative impact and increased nationalism they provoke within the broader Chinese population.

Differences in Traditional Communication Practices

European communication is rooted in practices dating back to ancient times, which can be traced to the classical era of Athenian democracy (6th-4th centuries BC). Rhetoric reached an enormous level of development during this period, and its principles were practiced by those seeking election to the highest positions of responsibility in the city-state of Athens. Those aspiring to high political-military office required oratorical skills to persuade their audience. That was, in the case of Athens, the assembly that brought together those with decision-making power on important matters. The foundations of European oratory were laid in the Greek and Latin traditions, with clear rules and a logical framework for crafting convincing arguments. Many famous orators, such as Pericles in the 5th century BC, were distinguished for their rhetorical mastery and the importance they placed on it in their political responsibilities.¹

In analyzing this type of speech, several features can be identified.² It was essentially a monologue, aimed at persuading the audience through spoken language. A top-down dynamic was established, similar to that of a superior addressing a subordinate. Those who wished to gain or maintain power were the ones speaking, attempting to persuade their audience with their principles and arguments. No political deliberation on the pros and cons of the issue was introduced; rather, the objective was to gain and secure the audience's trust in the speaker. Although this form of political rhetoric has changed over time, and today greater emphasis is placed on constructing a narrative to lend credibility to political discourse, the dynamic that persists in Europe continues to perpetuate practically the same patterns. Politicians try to convince their audience at every public appearance or in meetings covered by the media. For this reason, their speeches are often not addressed to their direct counterparts but to a wider circle, especially the audience who may or may not renew their trust in them.

However, this tradition is completely foreign to the one forged in China over centuries. Ancient texts attest to the development of a certain rhetoric in the Middle Kingdom as well. The elite of learned bureaucrats memorized the classics, whose Confucian canon established the principles that should govern public policy. Written language predominated over oral rhetoric, and the objective was very different from that of classical Greece. The art of persuasion has been recorded through prototypical dialogues, which developed during the Warring States Period (5th - 3rd centuries BC), when China was a fragmented collection of territories dominated by warlords. After countless battles, the state of Qin finally prevailed, founding the first Chinese empire in 221 BC.

The Classical texts recorded the development of a Chinese rhetoric, with counsellors, masters, or literati bureaucrats engaged in a dialogue within a private setting. It was not a monologue but a very polite and wise dialogue. The aim was for the counselor to convince a

¹ Samons, Loren J. *What's Wrong with Democracy?: From Athenian Practice to American Worship*. 1st ed. Berkeley : University of California Press, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520940901>

² In explaining European and Chinese oratory, I follow the analysis carried out by Juan Luis Conde Calvo, David Sevillano López, and Ziqiao Meng. "The Yin Technique: Theory and Practice of Persuasive Discourse in China during the Warring States Period (5th-3rd centuries BC)." *Talia dixit*, no. 15 (2020): 101-121. <https://revista-taliadixit.unex.es/index.php/TD/article/view/458>

superior who was often a sole listener, usually the sovereign. The dynamics of persuasion occurred in the opposite direction to that in Europe: from the bottom up. To be convincing, a very specific strategy had to be employed: indirect speech. Persuading those in power also involved the need not to displease them. Otherwise, not only an appointment to a position but even one's life could be at stake. The objective was not to persuade a subordinate but to persuade an equal or a superior.

While the European tradition of political communication is conducted in public, with open demonstrations, Chinese political communication takes place in private, involving a small number of counterparts. Whereas direct speech is valued in Europe, indirect speech is highly regarded in China. Indeed, direct language has traditionally been considered a sign of poor manners and lack of cultivation. To express an opinion that differs from one's counterpart, one must find ways to disagree gracefully, in a way that may win the sympathy of the person being contradicted.

Indirect speech plays a crucial role at all levels of communication in China, and it encompasses much more than words. Over the centuries, Chinese civilization has developed a way of acting and speaking in which the subtlety of indirect speech is always present. Europeans, by contrast, being more inclined toward direct forms, often fail to grasp the subtle ways in which social discontent is conveyed in China. This mode of communication cannot be explained simply by current censorship but rather by a long history through which the Chinese people have learned to employ strategies that are difficult to understand without deep knowledge of the Chinese language and customs.³ Furthermore, indirect speech allows for no improvisation, as every detail of the communicative process must be carefully considered.

Importance of the Process

Chinese writing has been one of the great pillars on which Chinese civilization rests. Classical literary texts capture aspects that have been deeply embedded in society and remain valid to this day. The Chinese literary tradition abounds in variations of indirect discourse while also offering insights into other phenomena reflected in social customs and practices.

One example can be found in the Chinese genre of *gong an* (公案), which bears certain similarities to Western detective novels and was popularized in Europe through the works of the Dutch sinologist Robert Hans van Gulik (1910-67). In the Western detective novel tradition, the story's outcome is revealed only at the end, when the murderer is finally disclosed. In contrast, in the Chinese tradition, it is stated at the very beginning. So, what is the point of reading a

³ The popular expression of mourning for the death of a politician can be a form of protest against living leaders: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-67236049> [accessed August 15, 2025]. Another example is the use of images and words on social media that sound the same but have different meanings. A paradigmatic example is the video that went viral in 2009, "The Song of the Grass Mud Horse" (Caonima zhi ge 草泥马之歌) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grass_Mud_Horse# [accessed August 15, 2025], in which Grass Mud Horse is pronounced like a swear word in Chinese (cao ni ma 操你妈 "fuck your mother") and which, as a whole, was a criticism of freedom of expression, which even led to the production of stuffed animals https://tao.hooos.com/goods_w0YkQwtgtNKaGmcoB0Ubtd-0Rakk7FB7zXd7aNun6.html [accessed August 15, 2025].

detective novel if the murderer's identity is already known? How should we interpret the fact that in these Chinese novels the suspense is unveiled from the outset? The paradox may be better understood through comparison with a chess match between two grandmasters: what matters is not who wins or loses, but rather the precise moment when one of the players makes a move that leads to victory or defeat. This genre of Chinese literature demonstrates the importance of the process: the ending is not decisive. Instead, every detail that shapes the course of the events is valued.

In meetings between Chinese and European delegations, every detail of the communication process must be taken seriously, leaving no room for improvisation. Punctuality, therefore, is essential. The Chinese are extremely punctual when it comes to important meetings, and it is even common for them to arrive a few minutes early. This is an indirect way of conveying to their counterparts the significance of the arranged meeting. Conversely, arriving late naturally conveys the opposite message. For the same reason, answering a cell phone during a meeting or failing to give one's full attention to the interlocutor may be seen as disinterested and impolite, although younger generations may occasionally fall into this practice.

Chinese delegations like to know the names and responsibilities of every member of the delegation they are meeting, including their resumes and, above all, their level of responsibility. The Chinese side is particularly attentive to hierarchy, as it reveals the delegation's decision-making capacity. When meeting with foreigners, they always prepare and translate speeches in advance, and Europeans should do the same if they wish to ensure their message is clearly understood by the Chinese counterpart. Words carry weight, and a public commitment can hold the same value as a written agreement if relationships of trust between the counterparts have been established and sustained.

Modesty is considered a virtue in the Chinese context, and the language has therefore developed formalized expressions, such as *nali, nali* (哪里, 哪里), which are commonly used in response to a compliment. Compliments are appreciated when offered in public, but complaints are not, as they are considered more appropriate for private conversations. To express disagreements more directly, one must resort to a more intimate setting, which is not problematic if bonds of trust with the Chinese counterpart have already been established.

The concept of "face" is often mentioned as a determining factor in communication with the Chinese. It can be expressed through two terms: *mianzi* (面子)⁴ and *lian* (脸). Both relate to personal honor or dignity, but with a distinction. While the former corresponds to a person's prestige or outward reputation, that is, their social facade, the latter is more tied to the loss of honor or personal integrity due to unethical behavior. This value was once important in Europe as well, although in the West, the notion of "honor" has largely lost its relevance today. Perhaps for this reason, the importance of "face" has been overestimated in China. What has not been sufficiently emphasized, however, is that direct speech in the Chinese context can cause

⁴ This and other cultural-bound keywords are analysed in a book produced with EU support. See Huang Ping 黄平, Alain le Pichon, Tinka Reichmann, and Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳 (eds.), *Transcultural Dictionary of Misunderstandings. European and Chinese Horizons*. 2nd edition revised and extended. European Union: Cent Mille Milliards, 2023.

https://www.academia.edu/104321628/Transcultural_Dictionary_of_Misunderstandings_Edited_by_Huang_Ping_Alain_le_Pichon_Tinka_Reichmann_Zhao_Tingyang

certain behaviors to be perceived as rude. Needless to say, insults are inappropriate in any context, including Europe. Yet European politicians are accustomed to openly expressing their disagreements among their equals, that is, with other politicians, and even publicly calling them out, in order to send a message to their own supporters. Such behavior, however, is completely counterproductive when dealing with Chinese counterparts.

Since ancient times, practices such as hosting banquets or exchanging gifts have been part of the process of fostering trust that allows for the establishment of a long-term relationship. To this end, people have sought opportunities and spaces in which to become better acquainted with their counterparts. It is not a coincidence that in China, one of the most traditional Confucian values is friendship and the cultivation of mutual trust. Hence, sharing a meal carries greater importance in the Chinese context than in the European one. When this occurs, easing tensions and creating a cordial atmosphere requires introducing conversations unrelated to the negotiation. Topics such as traditional festivals, sports, customs, or culinary habits are generally unproblematic, whereas jokes should be avoided, as it is well known that humor has a very strong cultural component. Western business lunches are often used to make the most of time and discuss ways of addressing specific problems. In China, however, meals have traditionally served a different purpose: they are a way to entertain and get to know the other person better, as well as a moment of relaxation for the Chinese side, who traditionally liked to wash down those moments with good alcohol.

Historical Knowledge

On March 21, 2023, journalists' cameras filmed President Xi Jinping's farewell with President Putin, offering the public a glimpse of a few brief sentences that the two dignitaries were exchanging in private:

Xi Jinping: This is also truly a part of the change that occurs in a hundred years. Let's push it together. (*Zhe ye zhen shi bainian bianju zhi yi bufen*. 这也真是百年变局之一部分。Women gongtong lai tuidong. 我们共同来推动。)

[The Chinese interpreter then translates into Russian.]

Putin: I agree. (*Wo tongyi*. 我同意。)

Xi Jinping: Take care of yourself. (*Duo baozhong*. 多保重。)

Putin: I wish you a good trip. (*Zhu ni yi lu ping'an*. 祝你一路平安。)

Xi Jinping: Goodbye. (*Zaijian!* 再见!) ⁵

A closer look at this exchange reveals that, despite this being a private conversation, President Xi was using a phrase that was anything but spontaneous. It was a slightly adapted allusion to "great changes unseen in a hundred years" (*bainian wei you zhi da bianju* 百年未有

⁵ BBC News Chinese, "Xi Jinping xiang Pujing daobie: "Bainian bianju women gongtong lai tuidong" - 习近平向普京道别: 「百年變局我們共同來推動」 [Xi Jinping bids farewell to Putin: "Let's promote the turn of the century together."]. Video archived March 22, 2023 at BBC News 中文 https://youtu.be/bmYYcQdr3LM?si=mBkej_3rDp4f2ZbP [accessed August 14, 2025].

之大变局), an expression that has long been part of the official political rhetoric of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The origin of this expression is generally attributed to Li Hongzhang (李鴻章), a high-ranking official of the Qing dynasty who, in the 19th century, referred to “changes not seen in three thousand years” (*san qian nian wei you zhi da bianju* 三千年未有之變局) to describe the emerging world order of the time, in which China had lost its centrality, following the successive defeats of the Opium Wars and the challenges that followed. The CCP later revived this expression, with a temporary modification, and official websites note that President Xi Jinping first employed it in June 2018. Since then it has been used on multiple occasions and has given rise to many analyses, disseminated through official publications.⁶ Without going into the detailed meaning of this phrase, it broadly reflects the idea that currently “The East is on the rise (ascent) and the West is in decline (descent)” (*Dong sheng Xi jiang* 东升西降).

A few days later, on March 30, 2023, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, speaking at an event organized by China-focused think tanks in Brussels,⁷ offered remarks that revealed her ignorance of the background behind this farewell phrase:

Most telling were President Xi's parting words to Putin on the steps outside the Kremlin when he said, "Right now, there are changes, the likes of which we have not seen for 100 years. And we are the ones driving these changes together."⁸

Overall, her speech can be seen as a position statement by the European Commission on China, as it was subsequently published on the official EU website. Without delving into the translation of Xi Jinping's remarks, President von der Leyen's text may provide some insight into the EU's current communication practices with China.

Although the achievements that this country has made over the past decades were acknowledged at the outset, with sustained economic development that has lifted 800 million people out of poverty, the overall tone of this speech was highly critical of China. What stood out first was the number and diversity of topics addressed by President von der Leyen. By introducing a multitude of issues, the main message became diluted, making it an ineffective means of communication. There were vague critical allusions,⁹ and a repeated emphasis on significant differences with China.¹⁰ It could be said that this was a text more aimed at EU public

⁶ See Dong Zhenrui 董振瑞, “Jinnianlai guonei xueshuji guanyu ‘Bainian wei you zhi da bianju’ yanjiu shu ping.” 近年來國內學術界關於“百年未有之大變局”研究述評. *Dang de wenxian* 《黨的文獻》v. 3. (2020): 118 et seq. Published online in Zhong Gong Zhongyao dangshi he wenxian yanjiuyuan 中共中央黨史和文獻研究院 <https://www.dswxyjy.org.cn/BIG5/n1/2020/0805/c427152-31811747.html> [accessed August 14, 2025].

⁷ At the beginning of the speech, support is expressed for the organizers of the event: Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Center with these words: “...We must preserve and uphold your right – and that of all think tanks — to be analytical and to be critical. So I want to express my solidarity with you and all the other individuals and institutions who have been unfairly sanctioned by the Chinese government.”

⁸ Speech by President von der Leyen on EU-China relations to the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Centre (March 30, 2023) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_2063 [accessed August 14, 2025].

⁹ For instance, the mention of intolerable Chinese activities in the societies of EU member states: “We have seen that Member States increasingly have to deal with Chinese activities in their societies which are not tolerable.”

¹⁰ On the occasion of a meeting in Beijing on July 25, 2023, the president of the EU explicitly stated: “From this Summit I gather that there is a lot that we can do together. Despite our differences – and we have differences – we can find pragmatic solutions. Europe will always defend its interests, as China would.” In

opinion—something that is considered natural and very common in Europe—than at a dialogue with China.

The speech did not open the door to dialogue. The tone and manner reflected a desire to convey a shared opinion to the audience on a wide range of issues, without clarifying what the European strategy toward China was or which topics were to be discussed between the two sides. Furthermore, it reiterated a recurring feature of the EU's relations with China: the asymmetry in how China is treated compared to other countries.

In the EU's dialogue with other nations, there is not always mention of existing disagreements or discrepancies regarding human rights.¹¹ Can it really be believed that continuous public recriminations will have any impact on improving human rights in China? Naturally, this does not mean abandoning the defense of people deprived of their liberty for political reasons or other aspects of human rights advocacy. But for this task to be effective, an understanding of Chinese communication culture requires establishing bonds of trust and avoiding public recriminations, instead using them in settings where both parties can speak confidentially, without publicity or stenographers.

Translation Issues

Oral acquisition of the Chinese language has never been easy for Europeans. In fact, it was only after China's opening under Deng Xiaoping that Chinese language teaching programs were developed for foreigners. Unfortunately, although learning Chinese requires time and dedication, the foreign translator or interpreter is faced with the fact that Chinese grammar has been superimposed on grammatical structures typical of English, leading to the mistaken assumption that Chinese follows a subject-verb-object structure. Much of the difficulty in oral learning of Chinese is due to this persistent grammatical misunderstanding. In reality, Chinese is a topic-comment language and does not rely on a grammatical subject.¹²

It is most common for Chinese interpreters to handle translation work at European-China meetings. Despite their strong command of European languages, entrusting interpretation solely to Chinese interpreters can also lead to challenges. A deep identification with their own culture and civilization provides a strong sense of identity among people of Chinese origin, which may interfere much more than the interpreter realizes. Chinese interpreters have been socialized in a culture with educational standards and modes of expression quite different from the European ones, and regardless of their professionalism, they may unconsciously identify with their country of origin, which can work both positively and negatively.

"Statement by President von der Leyen with President Costa following the EU-China Summit" https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_25_1903 [accessed August 14, 2025].

¹¹ It is worth mentioning, for example, that the use of the death penalty has been and continues to be a point of disagreement between the EU and certain democratic countries, including the United States of America.

¹² Fisac, Taciana, and Riccardo Moratto. *Fundamental Structures of the Chinese Language: Topic-Comment and Other Key Structures*. London & New York; Routledge, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003439271>

Sometimes it can be beneficial when the Chinese interpreter omits certain expressions that in any diplomatic setting would be considered tactless and, in communication with China, even more inappropriate. However, there are also cases where the Chinese interpreter refrains from translating aspects regarded as too sensitive within the Chinese political and cultural context. This may lead to the European counterpart's message being conveyed only partially or in fragments, prompting a response from the Chinese side that is perceived as ambiguous or simply as an attempt to avoid a sensitive topic.

Since there are very few professional European interpreters, except for high-profile political meetings, many still rely predominantly on interpreters of Chinese origin.¹³ In fact, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Interpretation (DG SCIC) established a cooperation program with China in 1985 (The EU-China Interpreter Training Project EUCITP), which has trained many Chinese interpreters and translators. Some of these professionals have also served as intermediaries in the European Union's meetings with China.¹⁴ However, this reliance has had a significant drawback: very little effort has been invested in training skilled interpreters and translators of European origin to serve the EU and its member countries.

Moreover, Europeans are often unprepared for meetings, and Chinese interpreters are not briefed on the content. Lacking such preparation, it is generally difficult for the Chinese interpreter to translate every sentence spoken by the European counterpart, whether simultaneously or consecutively. Therefore, it is not uncommon to hear comments regarding the Chinese interpretation being shorter than the original speech. Although Chinese is more concise and generally shorter in its expression, it is often impossible to arrange a succession of sentences in the required order and at the necessary speed. In this context, interpreters frequently abbreviate and select only part of what has been said.

Chinese delegations know that it is difficult to convey a message accurately without prior preparation. Even when a simultaneous interpreter is present in the booth, the speech is usually translated beforehand. The interpreter must know the key points and prepare the vocabulary for the meeting. In China, the interpreter's or translator's specialization and knowledge of specific topics are highly valued, while in Europe, this is not given the importance it deserves. It is sometimes assumed that if both delegations or counterparts share a common language—usually English—it is more practical to use it in the negotiation. The problem arises because the Chinese side may sometimes not feel comfortable expressing certain issues in a foreign language. The situation becomes even more complex when, as often happens, the Chinese delegation does not fully understand the counterparts' words but refrains from admitting this during the meeting. Such circumstances frequently give rise to misunderstandings.

If qualified interpreters or translators of European origin are not available and interpretation is entrusted to Chinese nationals, European staff with knowledge of Chinese should at least supervise the interpretation. In this regard, the Chinese side has consistently held an advantage, as its diplomatic personnel specialize in world regions and are assigned to countries according to the language they have learned during their university education.

¹³ This information was provided in a meeting held at the Delegation of the European Union to the People's Republic of China on September 4, 2025.

¹⁴ Brennan, P., Moratto, Riccardo., & Zhang, I. A. "The European Commission's Directorate-General for Interpretation (DG SCIC) and Its Cooperation with China. *In The Rise of Conference Interpreting in China*" (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 141–156). Routledge, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003357612>

Policy Recommendations

- To improve communication between the EU and China, both sides must be able to identify and neutralize certain pre-rational factors that pose an obstacle to relations between the two regions.
- On the European side, an example is the prejudice of emphasizing differences between the EU and China's political systems before any further discussion. On the Chinese side, there is also a tendency toward nationalist idealization that can even interfere with neutrality, and it is sometimes reflected in the interpretation work. Ultimately, in both cases, such predispositions negatively affect communication.
- The reality is that European media and social networks largely reproduce and reinforce these two ways of presenting China, adopting either a decidedly pro-China or anti-China attitude.¹⁵ Most European politicians also align with one of these two predominant currents, positioning themselves as judges who constantly issue their moral prescriptions and, before engaging in dialogue on any topic, emphasize the differences that separate us.
- The fact is that both European and Chinese communication practices date back many centuries. European ought to adopt greater awareness of Chinese indirect speech, protocol, and advance preparation of meetings.
- Fewer but more focused messages, tailored to Chinese communicative norms, will be more effective than broad, publicly oriented statements meant primarily for domestic European audiences.
- To strengthen communication between European and Chinese counterparts, policymakers should prioritize building long-term trust through private, carefully prepared exchanges rather than public confrontation.
- Sensitive matters—such as human rights—should be addressed in confidential spaces where open dialogue can occur away from public scrutiny.
- The training of neutral and professional interpreters and translators, both from the EU and China, will also be of great help in this task. European institutions should rely on Europeans interpreters, rather than predominantly on Chinese nationals. Mixed interpretation teams—combining European and Chinese professionals—should be encouraged, with European staff capable of supervising translation accuracy when needed.
- Finally, It is essential to foster a deeper mutual understanding of each other's traditions and modes of communication, as well as to maintain a willingness to engage in dialogue free of prejudice.

¹⁵ Jörg Becker, "Coverage of the Tibet Crisis (March 2008) and the Olympic Games in China (August 2008) in the German-Language Mass Media." *The international communication gazette* 73, no. 6 (2011): 495–506. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048511412284>



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