

INTERPRETIVE POLICY ANALYSIS CONFERENCE 2021

Panel Title:

P19 - Discourse as an Interface in the study of Interactions between China and the World: Foreign Policy, Narratives, and Diplomacy

Panel Convenors:

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Developing at the intersection between extensive international relations and area studies literature on China's rise and novel methodological and theoretical perspectives from across the social sciences, the study of discourse about China in world affairs is a node marked by growing research interest and a potential for crossing disciplinary boundaries. Within this body of literature, scholars have for instance considered the nature and impact of Chinese soft power and strategic narratives (such as its Belt and Road or Community of Shared Destiny), domestic debates on key concepts (such as discourse power and cultural soft power), international memes about China's global role (such as debt trap diplomacy or 'Chinese assertiveness'), and the reception of diplomatic initiatives in key sites for Chinese foreign policy. In doing so, they have drawn on conventional positivist perspectives, but also increasingly on approaches less familiar in the study of Chinese foreign policy such as discourse theory, ethnography, ontological security theory, and (Gramscian) political economy. This has not only fostered insights into the topic beyond those provided by mainstream IR, but also the inclusion of subnational and (semi-)peripheral perspectives in knowledge production about China's growing global role.

Taking up Lutgard Lams' appeal to view discourse as an inclusive cross-disciplinary interface in the study of Chinese society, this panel calls for empirical and theoretical contributions analysing the production, reception and evolution of foreign policy discourse about China in its various forms, and the power relations this entails. The panel particularly welcomes contributions which further add to the methodological (whether qualitative or quantitative) and theoretical diversity of this research area, either as a standalone paper or as part of an empirical paper. Examples of topics include:

- The ways in which key concepts and leadership directives are translated into the (everyday) practise of Chinese diplomacy.
- How the policy design of state activities aimed at image management affect coproduction of discourse about China.

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- How the content of key narratives differs between their deployment in domestic and international contexts, and different international contexts.
- The ways in which the locally differentiated identity construction in relation to China (for instance via the emergence of novel spatialities) produces variety in how it is perceived.
- The role of Chinese diplomats, their interlocutors, and track II diplomacy in shaping local or regional perceptions of China.