

Exercising soft power in the living room: television drama in CCTV's foreign language channels

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Dimensions of power

- Power is at the center of IR studies. From Carr (1940) to Morgenthau (1954) to Knorr (1975) have discussed the different dimensions of power
 - Carr: “power over opinion”
 - Bell: “ideational power”
- Nye defines soft power as “getting the outcomes one wants by attracting others rather than manipulating their material incentives” (2008, p. 29)

Why soft power... again?

- Messages and audiences are absent in most studies on soft power. Interest has been mostly on systemic and structural levels of analysis.
- How State-sponsored CCTV's international channels employ television drama narratives to reproduce specific images of contemporary China and to craft an officially sanctioned discourse on the nature of State-society relations.

Outline

- Soft power and China
- China's International broadcasting
- Chinese TV dramas
- Research questions and method
- Findings
 - Quantitative and qualitative analysis of TV drama
- Conclusion

China's harnessing of soft power

- There is a **quasi-monopoly** of the State and a residual presence of other actors in society.
- It is a reactive strategy to perceptions of **ill-representations** of China globally
- It is **multifold** and **heavily funded** and resourced:
 - Confucius Institutes
 - China Radio International

Soft power objectives

- **Cultural appeal:** The ability of a country's cultural products, norms and values to be attractive to global audiences
- **Perceptual influence:** the degree to which a country is able to influence foreign audiences in the formation of representations of that given country

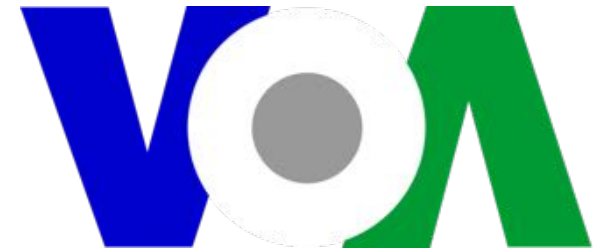
International Broadcasting

«The elegant term for a **complex combination** of state-sponsored news, information, and entertainment directed at a population outside the sponsoring state's boundaries»

(Price 2003, p. 53)

International Broadcasting

arirang
아리랑국제방송



China's international broadcasting



2004

2009



2004

2009



Content on CCTV International

Table 1. Time allocation of content across channels

	CCTV-E		CCTV-F		CCTV- Русский		CCTV- العربية	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Documentary	25.0	19.0	16.7	22.9	28.8	15.5	26.8	12.2
Drama	27.8	25.0	27.8	25.0	37.5	41.5	25.0	37.5
News and debate	21.9	22.6	25.8	25.6	17.4	17.4	26.3	24.1
Educational	2.7	5.2	8.3	12.5	3.7	3.0	3.1	4.2
Lifestyle and Arts	22.6	24.0	21.4	11.0	12.5	22.6	18.8	15.8
Cartoons	0	4.2	0	3.0	0	0	0	6.3

TV drama in China

- TV drama in China “provides a space for the society to engage in cultural debates about its citizens’ most prevalent concerns and deepest dilemmas” (Zhu, Keane & Bai, 2008).
- China’s “main melody” (*zhuxuanlü*) content acts as an influential social institution as it has become an important (re)producer of social order.

Main melody

«Main melody drama transforms the direct propaganda of socialist drama into ideological persuasion so that it can effectively address the market's demands and the needs of consumerist audiences»

(Ma 2013, p. 2)

Research questions

RQ₁: What types of television dramas have been most frequently broadcast on CCTV's international channels since 2004?

RQ₂: What are the differences in category, genre, locality and time of action, and year of production of drama across CCTV's four international channels?

RQ₃: In what ways are family and State-society relations depicted in the most frequently broadcast dramas?

Methods

- Content analysis of television drama in CCTV's four non-English international channels (n = 146)
 - Genre | Location | Time period
 - Popularity | Year of Production | Year of broadcast
- Two dramas were discourse-analysed
 - Urban domestic drama: *Xin jiehun shidai* (2006)
 - Rural domestic drama: *Nüren de cunzhuang* (2009)

Findings – Preliminary observations

- TV drama in international channels is subtitled and, just recently, is starting to be dubbed (only on CCTV-A)
- There are differences in the logic of content selection. With CCTV-F and CCTV-E and CCTV-R and CCTV-A showing similarities.

Findings – Data (I)

Table 2. Pearson's correlation coefficients between TV dramas broadcast across channels

	CCTV-E	CCTV-F	CCTV-A	CCTV-R
CCTV-E				
CCTV-F	.21			
CCTV-A	-.16	.10		
CCTV-R	-.09	-.15	.43	

Findings – Data (II)

Table 3. Frequencies of drama genres by channel

	Costume drama	Domestic drama	Crime drama	Red classics	Youth drama	Idol drama	Other
CCTV- E	25.42	29.66	2.54	.85	2.54	16.10	8.47
CCTV-F	24.06	33.08	2.26	.75	3.01	13.53	6.77
CCTV-A	20.00	37.78	2.22	2.22	2.22	13.33	11.11
CCTV-R	25.42	23.73	-	-	3.39	25.42	6.78
Overall	24.66	30.14	2.05	.68	2.74	15.07	16.44

Findings – Data (III)

Table 4. Frequencies of time of action

	Pre-qing	Qing	Republican	1949-1978	1978-2001	Post-2001
CCTV- E	10.00	5.00	15.00	10.00	22.50	37.50
CCTV-F	9.09	5.68	14.77	7.95	28.41	34.09
CCTV-A	3.23	3.23	12.90	16.13	32.36	32.26
CCTV-R	7.69	2.56	17.95	7.69	17.95	46.15
Overall	9.00	6.00	16.00	10.00	25.00	34.00

Findings – Data (III)

Table 5. Frequencies of the main location of action

	Urban	Rural	Abroad	Other
CCTV- E	58.75	15.00	3.75	22.50
CCTV-F	59.09	15.91	3.41	21.59
CCTV-A	66.67	13.33	-	20.00
CCTV-R	76.92	5.13	1.69	10.17
Overall	58.59	17.17	3.03	21.21

Findings – Data (IV)

- The time difference between the of production and the year of broadcast is large.
 - CCTV-E : M = 4.43 years
 - CCTV-F : M = 3.93 years
 - CCTV-A : M = 4.96 years
 - CCTV-R : M = 5.75 years
- The average online user score of TV drama broadcast in international channels is 7.05 (SD = .97).

Findings – An example



Findings – An example



- Confucian ethics/values
- Stressing of filial piety
- The wise voice of the elderly

Conclusion (I)

1. In contrast to the increasing diversity of narratives on China available domestically, the content rendered accessible to foreign audiences through CCTV is limited.
2. There is a dominance of content that conforms to the precepts of “main melody” narratives (*zhuxuanlü*) which conforms to the objective of *yulun daoxiang*.

Conclusion (II)

3. Content selection does not appear to be based on commercial success but largely on ideologically driven goals.
4. Studying messages (and audiences) is useful in problematizing discourses on China's power
 - China as a “partial power”

(Shambaugh 2013)

Questions?

Thank you.