



China's rise as a global decision-maker. Spanish adaptation and strategies on bilateral cultural cooperation.

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China's development as a global leader in the international field has been increasingly evident in the recent state of foreign affairs. Beijing's emphasis on cultural diplomacy and education has aimed at achieving a more positive national image abroad. Education, being directly controlled by the government, represents a powerful tool to shape public opinions according to the interests of a given government. Education curricula in Spain show a negligence of China in its foreign projection. This lack of interest from the side of the Spanish government, reflected in the contents of compulsory school curricula, results in a general absence of knowledge about China among Spanish citizens. Consequently, Spanish current and future generations take the risk of not being able to adapt to forthcoming global circumstances, in which China will likely assume a crucial role. A long term investment on further cultural cooperation is encouraged, in order to foster deeper bilateral knowledge, and enabling Spanish and Chinese coming decision-makers to build stronger and more successful relations between both countries in the future.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an adapted version of a study conducted between 2013 and 2016 titled “The image of China in Spain. Education as a public opinion shaper. A general study: synchronic and diachronic analysis of school books in Spain”. This report presents a more current version of the original one. On the other hand, the necessity to compress the contents implied the omission of some details and further explanations that sharpened its presentation.

China has been developing in the last decades, and its discourse as a leading power, initiated through the well-known “peaceful development of China” has gone through a recent impulse as a consequence of the increasing instability of traditional global powers in the West. Due to the scepticism often displayed by western countries, it is of China’s interest to improve its image abroad in order to legitimate its figure as a responsible leader.

As a crucial stratagem of its foreign agenda, Beijing has been focusing on soft-power initiatives, emphasizing the importance of education and cultural interchange inside and outside its borders. Scholarships programmes, an improvement of the image of Chinese universities and the expansion of Confucius Institutes and Chinese Cultural Centres all over the world are all part of the OBOR (One Belt One Road) programme, aiming at encouraging a deeper understanding of China and its methodologies abroad.

China’s focus on education is not casual. Being directly controlled by the government, education represents a powerful source of public opinion among societies. National school curricula are, therefore, reflection of governmental priorities. School books, and especially history school books, reflect government perspectives about other countries and international relations. As a consequence, we could assume that conducting an analysis of a country’s history school books, it would be possible to take a hint on its priorities, as well as its point of view on a given topic.

For this reason, I developed a broad analysis of Spanish history books in the last decades, in order to reach some conclusions about the role China has been playing from the perspective of the Spanish government. This article focuses on the assumption that, in spite of recent relative changes, Spanish government has never really emphasized the importance of China, being this reflected in the school curricula. Even though this could be justified by the recent involvement of China within the international state of affairs, we could also expect the Spanish government to adapt its priorities to the new circumstances, showing new interests in the education system. However, even though

some schools in Spain offer now Chinese as a foreign language, school books in Spain still display a considerable lack of information about China.

This insufficiency could have negative outcomes in the future. Taking into account that education is a delayed process in which results are to be seen in the long term, a neglect of China in current school books could challenge the capacities of future generations to adapt to the presumably forthcoming international environment.

A survey conducted among Spanish people proves a general ignorance about China among Spanish society, supporting my hypothesis.

For this reason, I propose an adaptation of the priorities of the Spanish government, paying more attention to China and its projection abroad. Assisting China in the expansion of its image abroad could bring reciprocal benefits. This governmental support implies an advantage itself, promoting bilateral trust and further cooperation. Furthermore, cultural cooperation would increase deeper understanding between both societies, representing an immediate benefit on its own, while increasing the chances of conducting more fruitful relations in the future based on a better knowledge of one another.

CHAPTER 1. Image and image building in the field of International Relations. China's case

Regardless the ideological tendency of particular governments, choosing the right partner to achieve specific goals is always an essential question when designing foreign policies; therefore, being regarded as a favourable stakeholder would also increase the chances of a nation to get more and maybe more interesting agreements in the international arena. Representing a trustworthy potential partner increases a country's chances to achieve fruitful partnerships and ultimately obtaining particular goals. It is here where the concepts of national image and image building acquire their importance in the current state of international affairs (Xiufang & Naren, 2009).

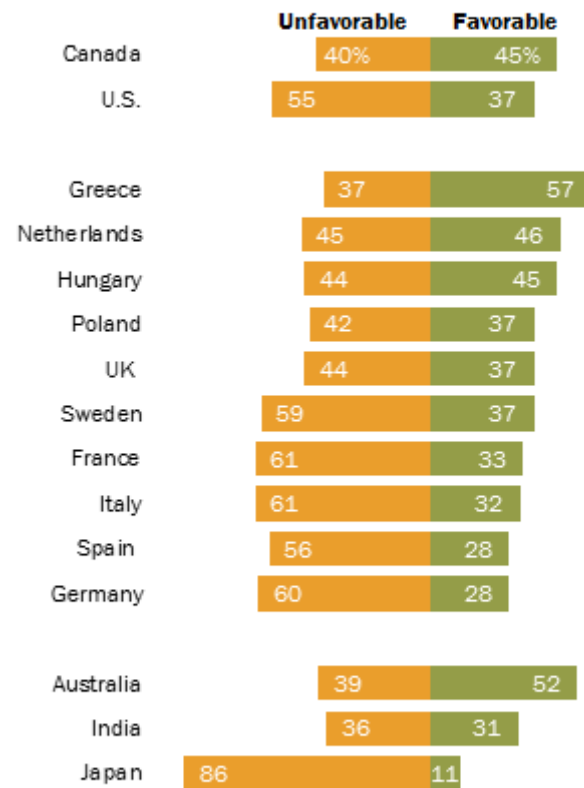
Deng Xiaoping announced in 1977 China's Four Modernizations and conducted a strong opening policy. Later on, Hu Jintao made public the so-called "China's Peaceful Rise". Embedded in China's ambitious new foreign policy, great efforts were precisely placed on the development of a positive national image abroad. Till 2015, China invested around 10\$ billion per annum on public diplomacy and soft-power initiatives outside its borders (Shambaugh, 2015).

However, China's leadership has been generally questioned or challenged by western powers. As we can see in a graphic published by the Pew Research Centre in 2016 (Poushter, 2016), the general opinion about China is mainly negative, especially in the case of the United States and Japan – results that seem reasonable, taking into account the priorities and interests of these two governments.- Beijing is aware of its necessity to be externally accepted first, in order to be fully trusted as a global power.

In the last weeks, we have seen President Xi Jinping in Davos and Li Keqiang (Vidal, 2017), Premier of the State Council of China, emphasizing Beijing's compliance to assume the leadership in the international field, if necessary. The current state of international affairs is offering China a golden opportunity to take a step further in their projection as a global leader. China has been activating a powerful machinery to proof its capability to undertake such a role. Up-to-date circumstances, dominated by a weakened European Union and an unpredictable White House, are helping China advancing its project. Their strategy to achieve greater implication in the international arena is, no matter how, a long-time task started since their opening policy.

Mostly negative views of China in U.S., Europe, Japan

Views of China



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q10b.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

China has been emphasizing the use of soft-power and public diplomacy in order to approach the western community. The employment of culture responds to China's enthusiasm of promoting further international communication (Sinha Palit, 2014).

China's cultural diplomacy has been developing from the 80s with the aim of favouring better understanding and friendlier relations between China and the hosting country. However, this tendency has been accelerated in the last 10 year, opening a total of 27 cultural centres in Europe, America, Asia and Africa¹. The aim is to enlarge this tendency in the next 10 years. These institutions allow the general public to have a personal experience with China from the distance. From 2004, Confucius Institutes, part of China's Ministry of Education, have also experienced a great growth with the aim of assisting foreign learners of Chinese language and "contribut(ing) to the development of multiculturalism and the

¹ China Cultural Centre Webpage. Introduction.

<http://cn.cccweb.org/portal/pubinfo/001002011/20150210/0c793f933c364d4c90f8fffb54771d00.html>

building of a harmonious world”². There are currently a total of 500 Confucius Institutes and 1000 Confucius Classrooms spread in five continents. These centres offer foreigners a positive perspective of China through its culture, providing a kind of knowledge they would otherwise not reach easily.

Above all these initiatives, China has been conducting a plan to promote the enrolment of international students in Chinese universities³. In 1950 the first 33 international students came to China from Eastern Europe. In 2015 the number had already increased up to 379,000. Through the enhancement of education, China is able to reach students from all over the world, planting a seed in current generations that may grow and give its fruit in the future. This way, eventual leaders will have a deeper knowledge and understanding of China’s methodologies. It is a long term investment that China has been working on for decades and is showing its benefits now (Allison, 2013).

As part of their New Silk Road Initiative, the development of education has allowed China to rank the third student destination for international students, just after the United States and the United Kingdom (ICEF, 2016). Nevertheless, the results may not always have positive results. Due to cultural differences, reaching China does not necessarily imply leaving the country with a positive image (JLL Real Views, 2016). Some issues such as pollution, economic gaps in society, or simply cultural differences could signify an obstacle to foster more positive impressions on international students in China. This cultural shock, however, could have been to some extent diminished if students had been prepared in advanced from their country of origin. Nevertheless, having the opportunity to spend some time in China, especially when implying prolonged stays, allow foreigners to leave with a broader understanding of the country and its culture, increasing their chances to conduct more successful relations between their native countries and China.

Furthermore, there exists an indirect consequence that may have other forthcoming positive effects. International students are not the only ones parting the country with a different mind-set. They also set an imprint within China. By coming to China and mingling with Chinese students, they are also promoting certain values and ideologies. Being positive, we could assume that this intercultural connection of new generations may grant China with a better adaptability to the global community in the future. This may or may not be the principal goal of Chinese government; however, it is a favourable outcome that could help Chinese future generations to keep up with the international community and methodologies.

² Hanban Headquarters Webpage. January 2017.

http://english.hanban.org/node_7719.htm

³ Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China. Overall Situation of Studying in China for International Students.

<http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s3917/201007/91575.html>

China's development and its foreign projection have become more obvious every day, resulting in a broader awareness about it internationally. However, my hypothesis is that, particularly in the case of Spain, its government is not being completely conscious of its importance. Consequently, its opportunities of benefiting from China's leadership in the long term could be reduced.

China's emphasis on education as a shaper of public opinions is not casual. Directly controlled by the government, school curricula reflects its priorities. For this reason, I conducted a broad analysis of Spanish curriculum in order to proof my belief that China is still not a preference for its government.

CHAPTER 2. Education as a shaper of public opinion. The politics of the school curriculum.

We have seen in the first chapter how China has conducted a potent public diplomacy with the objective of fostering a favourable national image abroad.

Locating the source of particular public opinions is not an easy task due to its heterogeneity, adding to its delay when showing outstanding effects (Maraboto, 2013). There are several actors involved in this phenomenon that can include mass media tools, opinion leaders and influential personalities in society, family members and friends, education or personal experiences, among others.

In spite of its great development in the last decades, the power of the media as a shaper of public opinion is still shared by other actors, such as education. As John Meyer affirmed, education and schools are still responsible of “process(ing) individuals” (Meyer, 1944). Education - and school books in particular - represent a determining source of information in order to study national image and image building in a given country. Taking a look at school text books can give us a relevant hint on most prevailing ideas within a specific country, as well as what issues are considered priorities to be taught at school. School books reflect government’s main interests and legitimizations, and their content changes through time due to their potentiality to shape new ideologies within society (Lee, 2000).

It is through personal experience how human beings acquire their first impressions on the world, and education plays a major role in it. School years and the content of school curriculum shape social cognitions and feelings (Sylva, 1994).

Therefore, this chapter will focus on the influence of education and school years in the process of framing national images, using Spanish history textbooks as a study case in order to explore the image of China in Spain and the potential inter-relation between history textbooks and Spanish government’s priorities. Nevertheless, this study will only take into account the contents included within compulsory education.

The relationship between political systems and public opinion must be taken into account. In democratic governments, public opinion represents societies, and societies are meant to shape the political system. Under these circumstances public opinion is, therefore, determinant for politics and political parties. Depending on the political system of a nation, the willing of the government to influence the public opinion may vary. This way, liberal political systems would accept the supremacy of the governed ones, and therefore, the party in charge would not try to impose specific public opinions. On the other hand, in more authoritarian and controlling political systems, political parties will make use of their tools to shape the public opinion in order to guarantee their supremacy. Hence, leaders will take tight control of education and mass media with the aim of protecting their sovereignty. However, no matter the political

system and its degree of control over society, in essence “...every education decision can be seen as being, in some sense, a political decision”. (Levin, 20117)

But what make politicians determine what issues are or are not convenient to be taught at school? Once again, due to the revolution of information in the last year, the world has gone through a process of globalization, in which national circumstances may have an international effect. As a consequence, national political interests get influenced by international circumstances. Education, as one of the main concerns of political agendas, is adapted in order to foster specific knowledge, for the achievement of particular outcomes in the long or the short term.

In the late years, globalization has made obvious the need to include new topics in our educational systems. As exposed before, one of the most significant changes is triggered by the gradual relocation of global powers towards the East, being China the most remarkable case. The development of China has become a focal point in the international arena. Its economic transformation “has no historical precedent” (Xiaodong, 2014). China is expecting to become a new global power, and in order to do so, it is promoting its foreign policy with the aim of being internationally recognised (Zhao, 2013).

How is this influencing public opinion of China in Spain? And more importantly, how has the Spanish government reacted to it? To what extent has the Spanish education system adapted to the new circumstances? School curriculum developers in Spain speak of China as a mandatory content in contemporary times⁴. However, it would be interesting to take a look at the development of specific contents in school books through history in Spain. This way, it would be possible to determine how politics in Spain influenced contents about China and how this could have potentially affected Spanish people perspectives about China. Spain is an especially appealing case, including a dictatorship in its recent history.

History provides students with knowledge about human experience and the development of the world till the present times. This way, at school, it is one of the most determinant module when shaping opinions of students about other societies and nations. For this reason, it seemed relevant to focus on Spanish history schoolbooks in order to investigate education about China in Spain. Assuming that education curriculum reflects government priorities, this research will allow us to glimpse China’s position in this aspect.

⁴ García-Noblejas, Teresa. Spanish schoolbooks editor. Interviewed by Belén García-Noblejas. (Feb 7th 2016)

Spanish history school books;

- **Contents regarding China; a diachronic approach.**

"History is the political weapon of the government." (Zapata Parra, 1995)

The digitalization of school books has not been promoted till recent times in Spain. The impossibility of reaching digital versions of history school books, especially the oldest editions, makes this a slow and time-consuming research process that implies full-dedication and actual visits to the National Library in Madrid and Alcalá de Henares. This study provides, therefore, with a general glimpse on the development of contents about China in Spanish history school books, exposing the most remarkable findings, with the aim of supplying the reader with a general vision.

First, I will make a broad introduction about school books prior Franco's government. Later on, I will establish a more systematic analysis, setting a common base around Santillana school books. Founded in 1960, it became the most important publishing house for school books in Spain in the last decades. Considered '...the leading company in Spain and Latin America in the production of educative contents and services'.

School curriculum is directly connected to its social, historical and cultural context. Its content cannot be understood without taking its context into account (Sacristán, 1991). For this reason, between 1800 and till 1900, the subject of history in Spain was parallel to its contemporary findings of science. By that time, the focus was placed on Spanish history. Only a 40% of content was dedicated to Universal History, being the rest focused on the Spanish context. Also, a lack of knowledge implied a mixture between reality and fantasy when teaching about far cultures and civilizations, adding exoticism and romanticism to the facts, influenced by texts written by travellers. In a book from 1883, China is referred to as an extremely antique civilization being also attributed a high degree of isolation (García Pubhol, 1993).

In an encyclopaedia (commonly used for school education before the generalization of school-books *per se*) edited in 1934⁵, prior the Spanish Civil War, the only mention to China depicts it as an agricultural country, dedicated to the production of rice and tea. Also, Chinese citizens are considered hard-working, driven by routine, patient and skilled. According to this edition, China has a well-developed industry thanks to its mines and good commercial practices, which are mainly issued at "Tian Tsin" (Tianjin), Shanghai, and Hong Kong.

⁵ Enciclopedia Álvarez. (1032). Editorial EDAF, S.A.

Later on, at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1936, Francisco Franco's dictatorship was established in Spain. Naturally, every sphere of the government suffered a drastic reform. Education was once again a priority in the political depuration, and as the Official State Gazette of 1949 asserts, a special focus was placed on the education of children in a strict catholic style, teaching them about service and love to the *Patria* (in Latin language relative to *father, ancestors*). This way, the new government had the promotion of a traditional, beloved Nation as a goal, rooting pride for Spanish glorious and imperial past, and focusing on the reinforcement of the Catholic Dogma⁶.

Due to the government's effort to re-establish order after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), emphasis was placed on settling down a strong nationalistic feeling in society, neglecting this way the development of other topics and contents. The objective was not to teach students about the outside world (Navarro, 2014). This is why during Franco's government, every text was under strict censorship, according to the nationalistic, catholic ideologies. In this sense, mentions to China are very rare.

During late years at school, in 1953, it is explained how the Spanish Civil War was a "war of liberation", in which the aim was to protect the Christian civilization and a "defence against the threat Eastern communism implied" (Rebollo, 2013). We could deduce, then, that any content related to China in school books would focus on either its ancient history, giving it an exotic, mystic perspective, highlighting stereotyped characteristics of Chinese population, or in a modern China, directly related to communism, and therefore, negative.

With the aim of getting further information in this aspect, interviews were conducted with Spanish people who attended school during Franco dictatorship. Flor Camacho⁷, current teacher in a Spanish high school, when asked about what kind of information she received from teachers and school books, she asserted that "communism, being a political movement contrary to Franco's Regime, it was either omitted or exposed from a negative perspective"

Mario Farpón⁸, 61, a teacher in a Spanish high school, affirmed that during Franco's Regime, they were told about China as "a very conservative country, with a huge tradition and very hardworking".

When asking Mr. Farpón about his opinion regarding the influence of history education on his generation's opinion about other countries, he answered that "they gave (them) a biased

⁶ Boletín Oficial del Estado (1949) Num.199. Pag 385
<http://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1945/199/A00385-00416.pdf>

⁷ Camacho, Flor. Spanish school teacher, interviewed by Belén García-Noblejas via email in February 2016.

⁸ Farpón, Mario. Spanish school teacher, interviewed by Belén García-Noblejas via email in February 2016.

information, and (they) just learnt what (they) were told, that is why (they) learnt very few about other countries, and only what they wanted (them) to learn.

In a school book of history from 1957 we can find, once again, a very short description of China, in which information is general. It is also possible to perceive certain political ideologies. The first mention refers to the richness of ancient China, and describes it as the “country of spices”. According to this book, China was discovered by Portuguese and Spanish explorers. The information about China later on is again emphasizing its antiquity, its size and its isolation, also attributed to the “hate of Chinese citizens towards Europeans”, which also implied a lack of communication between Europe and China till the end of the 19th century. It is mentioned that, a first contact was possible thanks to the Christianisation of the area in the XVI century by Spanish and Portuguese. However, the repulsion of Europe from the Chinese side erased all the European influence from China. When developing the content related to the 19th century, China is still seen as an isolated society which does not accept any influence from Europe. This book makes reference to the name Europeans were called by the Chinese: “Foreign Devils”. The book later explains that this rejection of European influence made it necessary for England to impose its penetration by force (also mentioning that England has no limits in its ambition, which also denotes an ideology against the English Empire, traditional enemy of the Spanish Empire). This way, we can see how, even though the rejection of Europe from China’s side is criticized. However, the point of view switches when a greater enemy comes into play.

Even though the variety of school books in Spain has become more diversified in the last years, Santillana, as mentioned before, has been one of the most influential publishing houses for school books in Spain. Taking Santillana as a common base for my study allows me to conduct a systematic and standardized research. This way, I proceed now to develop a more exhaustive research on school books after the foundation of Santillana.

As it is possible to see in Table 1, there are four main topics that repeated generally in history school books when presenting China: Ancient Chinese history, 19th New Imperialist Period, The Communist Era, and Modern China. Depending on the year of edition, the quantity and quality of content in each section changes through time. The content in the table has been categorized by colours according to the quality of information (red: negative, blue: positive, yellow: neutral).

We can see how in older books, those edited during the dictatorship of Franco, the most developed section is precisely about ancient China, which was also presented in a very positive way, including concepts such as Chinese millenarian culture, its isolation, its dynasties, philosophy (emphasizing Taoism and Confucianism), Chinese culture and the special beauty of its arts such as painting and

ceramic. In the book of 1975 we can also find references to the social hierarchy, in which the importance of family and filial piety are highlighted.

Topic School book	Antique History	19 th century New Imperialism	Communist period	Modern China
1965 History textbook Santillana	-Millenarian civilization -Dynasties -Buddhism, Confucianism	-European objective -Boxers movement -Provoked fall of Chinese imperialism	Mao Zedong -Conflicts with Russia (beneficial for the world)	
1975 History textbook Santillana	-Millenarian civilization -Culture -Religion -Sense of community -importance of family -Respect for parents -Nature and arts: ceramics and painting	-China's arrogance -Ignoring Europe's help→ economic and political lag -Pro-Europe -Comparing China to Spanish feudalism period	-China's isolation decrease -China's influence rise (United Nations) -Promising previsions	-Japan and China's development -Over-population -Very diligent -Rich and sustained economic resources
1996 History textbook Santillana		Unfair Treaties for China	-China-Russia relations -Mao Zedong period: freedom inspiration for countries in the 3 rd world. -Equality promotion -defence of women's rights -development of education -Movement of 100 flowers	-Deng Xiaoping -Economic development, no remarkable political development -opening policy -nonalignment movement -Conference of Bandung -Beijing Women Conference 1995
2002 History textbook Santillana		-Unfair treaties for China -Hong Kong, Japan, Nanjing Treaties -Victim of attacks and abuse.	- Long March-nonalignment movement-Conference of Bandung -Mao Zedong's system A. Ezorla (2001) El Pais.	-Economic development -inclusion in the global system-social and environmental problems
2008 History textbook Santillana		-Victim of abuses and suffering (by Europe)	-Communist period -A. Ezorla (2001) El Pais.	-Economic development -no political development
2011 History textbook Anaya		-European interest in China.	-Chinese communist period (more objective than Santillana)	-Remarkable economic development -Peculiar economic system.

The focus on ancient China shifts to other topics such as the Communist era and modern China, in which information becomes more complete. In the books edited during Franco times, the period of the New Imperialism is extensively developed. 1965 edition shows China as a victim of European ambitions, and describes events such as the Boxer Revolution, the Opium War and the end of imperialism. It is interesting to realize the difference in perspective about the same period in the 1975 edition. According to this book, China remains undeveloped in the 19th century due to its arrogance and consequent rejection to Europe. Its economic system is compared to the European feudal system in the Middle Ages, considering it backward. In this edition, the preference for a European style is evident. This may be due to the fact that, precisely in the years this book was edited (the 70s), Spain was experiencing an economic development, also a result of an opening towards Europe.

Later on, in 1996, 2002 and 2008, the image of China in school books becomes more positive, showing it once again as a victim of international abuse. Finally, the edition of 2011 shows a more neutral image of China, simply explaining the interest of Europe towards China.

In relation to the Communist Era, as shown in the table, school books showed either a neutral or a negative perception of China, with exception of the edition of 1996, which considered this period as an inspiring movement for the liberation of undeveloped countries, a period in which gender equality was encouraged, and education was developed.

However, in the editions of 1965, 1975, 2002 and 2011, there is a more neutral presentation of the topic. In the edition of 1965, the conflicts between China and the URSS are shown as a beneficial event for the rest of the world. Later on, in 1975, this period is shown as a period in which China became less isolated and which predicted a great development (probably assembling it to Spanish experience), specially thanks to China's high population, its abundance in natural resources and their high capacity for work. As a contrast, the edition of 2008 shows a very negative image of the communist period and Mao Zedong. We can see how the edition of 1965 still does not include any information in this aspect, even though Mao started its government already in 1949. However, in later editions, this is one of the most important chapters.

The edition of 1975 assigns Chinese development to its opening policy. Later on, in 1996, we can find a very positive image of China, in which Deng Xiaoping and his Opening Policy are introduced as the promotion of a new prosperous China, which implied an enormous economic development (even though it also admits that political and economic development were not parallel). The Bandung Conference in 1955 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 are shown as positive practices that took place in China. In 2002 this book introduces, once again, economic

development. It includes China's new inclusion in the global context, and new social and environmental problems as a result of development and modernization. The edition of 2008 praises economic advancement, but criticizes the lack of political adaptation during this period. Finally, the edition of 2011 shows a positive image of modern China, talking about its growth as remarkable, and assigning it to a singular economic system (referring to capitalism with Chinese characteristics).

After Franco's death and consequent political reform, with the Constitution of 1978, a new model of education was developed, and its contents transformed. This adaptation of the curriculum of education to its context and circumstances is due to the known power of the school education to shape particular ideologies among the alumnae, becoming a political tool to mold society in the long term. According to J. Gimeno Sacristán, "the content of curriculum is part of the intervention of the State in the organization of social life"⁹. As mentioned before, the degree of intervention within the content of the curriculum depends on the political system in question. From 1939 till 1975, Spain was under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, and the curriculum was affected by it.

School books from that period clearly reflect the strong influence of the government in education and the curriculum. Contents are direct, dogmatic. Later on, after the Constitution of 1978, the education system acquired a new direction, aiming at the development of an education system that would allow teachers and students to decide, creating a more plural education and accepting new teaching methods in a multicultural context. Spanish education went from being homogenous and restrained to heterogeneous and independent.

As a conclusion, we can say that, even though the quality and quantity of the content of each topic in Spanish history books varies, there are four main priorities when presenting China to Spanish students. These are: Antique China, the 19th New Imperialism, the communist era, and modern China.

In the following section, we will focus on the development of these topics in the editions of 2011, paying more attention to the quality of the content..

- **Spanish history school book; contents regarding China: a synchronic approach.**

With the aim of providing a veracious analysis, the newest available editions of history schoolbooks have been observed, being those edited between 2008 and 2011. The investigation examines every school grade starting by the first grade in Primary education, up to the last grade in the pre-university preparation¹⁰. Through this investigation, it is possible to appreciate the evolution of

⁹ J. Gimeno Sacristán (1991) *El currículum: una reflexión sobre la práctica*. Ediciones Morata. P 129.

¹⁰ High school diploma known in the United Kingdom as 'A level'.

teaching along school grades in Spain. I consider important to mention that this analysis did not take into account the existing difference among particular Autonomous Communities editions.

To offer the reader a more specific knowledge about my work, I will introduce more in detail the evolution of the Chinese image in Santillana history books, 2008 to 2011 editions, course by course.

It is not difficult to realize that during the first years of primary education, history contents are basically focused on general knowledge. Also, the centre of attention is placed mainly on familiar and near locations in relation to Spain. In fact, during this period, there is no subject such as 'history'. Instead, the equivalent subject to history is called *Conocimiento Del Medio*, meaning 'knowledge about the environment'. In this area, history is mixed with Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Geography. It will be during Secondary Education (E.S.O¹¹), when History will be considered a subject on its own.

Generally speaking, in history school books during the first years of secondary education, China seems to play a minor role in historical facts till the Second World War. Till then, the main characters in history books are Russia, United States or the United Kingdom. During this period, China is mostly presented as a passive victim of Japan, France and other colonizing countries.

As mentioned before, primary education books do not talk about China in particular. It is only from 1st grade in ESO when school books start mentioning China more thoroughly.

As a conclusion, at this stage of education information about China is very general and mainly contextualized into other topics. China assumes a secondary importance in the whole syllabus. The kind of education offered about China till this point might explain why some stereotypical knowledge about the country is funded in Spain. Spanish citizens and students would commonly describe China as an overpopulated country, and they recognise Chinese language as one of the most spoken languages in the world. This could be considered general knowledge about China in Spain. However, it still seems too vague.

Paying attention to history and geography school books in Spain, we could conclude that once Spanish children become 14, the knowledge they have been provided with about China is not only very broad but also mainly concerned about quantitative aspects of the country such as linguistic, demographic, or geographic facts. Historical information about China is either almost exclusively subdued to European historical facts or briefly mentioned as one of the oldest civilizations in the history of humanity.

¹¹ Translation: "Compulsory secondary education". (E.S.O Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria)

Until this point, the image of China reflected by Spanish textbooks is too blurry. The education system in Spain does not seem to prioritize the necessity of creating a clear impression about China. It is possible as well to conclude that at this still early stage of education in Spain, priority is given to historical facts that relate more directly to the history of Spain itself. Education is generally organized so student can easily assimilate the concepts. This implies teaching about facts physically close environments to the students' reality to progressively include facts about further locations (Perdomo, 2002). Therefore, being China a very distant country to Spain, education about it will not be a priority till later on.

It is not until 1^o Bachillerato when a clearer image of the country is being shaped. However, this school year corresponds to non-compulsory education in Spain. Due to the fact that this paper is focused on education as a reflection of Spanish government priorities, non-compulsory education is not taken into account anymore.

CHAPTER 3. Public opinion about China in Spain

We have seen how school curriculum in Spain did not show particular interest in promoting knowledge about China. Spanish government and its disregard of China's importance, proved through a lack of information about China would explain Spanish people general ignorance of this topic. Aiming at strengthening my view, I conducted a survey among Spanish people regarding knowledge about China. The results of this survey would allow me to reconfirm the connection I established between government priorities, school curriculum and public opinion.

This was a personally designed survey, which principal objective was to get a deeper understanding of the general knowledge regarding China among Spanish people. First, I intended to obtain quantitative results that allow me to know how much Spanish people know about China. Second, I aimed at getting information about the general perception of China in Spain. Third, as a crucial section of this survey, I intended to reach conclusions about whether these perceptions are based on genuine and truthful knowledge or if, on the contrary, are rooted on neglected information.

This survey was digitally distributed through email and different social media websites (facebook, Whatsapp and Wechat). The target group was Spanish citizens who studied at Spanish schools till at least the age of 17. In order to obtain meaningful results, they were mainly divided into two different sub-groups: those who had never been to China and those who had been to China in the past. Out of a total of 204 people who completed the survey, 153 had never gone to China, while 51 had. Among those 51 people who had been to the country, only 13 of them stayed in there for more than one year.

78% of the ones who finished the survey had never been to China before. Out of the remaining 22%, those who had been to China, 12% stayed for less than 3 months. Those who are in China for more than three years joke asserting that after passing that limit, you will not go back. Even though the numbers are not significant enough in this particular case, the tendency actually shows certain veracity in the statement.

This survey included a total of 30 questions regarding the quantity and the quality of Spanish public opinion about China. Due to the limitations on the length of papers for this particular symposium, it is not possible to present the outcomes of the survey in detail. However, I expose the most remarkable conclusions below:

- First, the general knowledge of Spanish people about China is very limited, none of the variables about knowledge sources showed a remarkable influence on the public opinion. The amount of information about China in Spain is considerably low.

- Second, generational difference in public opinion about China is not remarkable among Spanish citizens.
- Third, as a consequence of misinformation, the knowledge and opinion of Spanish people about China and its society is remarkably stereotypical.
- Fourth, public opinion about China in Spain nowadays includes modern concerns such as pollution or political freedom.
- Fifth, the opinion of Spanish people about China develops and transforms after experiencing China in first person, which shows certain misconception in the origin, also due to the lack of information. After visiting China, perception becomes more realistic, more heterogeneous, more flexible and generally more positive.

CHAPTER 4. Fostering reciprocal understanding to boost common benefits. Cultural relations.

We have seen how China is increasingly important in the international field. Spain, being a potentially powerful strategic partner for China in Europe and Latin America, should take into consideration the development of certain policies that could optimize Sino-Spanish relations in the long term.

Embedded in its national government and its traditional partners in Europe and Latin America, Spain is not particularly prioritizing its relations with Asia, and therefore not China either.

The lack of knowledge among Spanish citizens about China, as well as a general lack of information in this field reflects that China is still not a priority for Spanish government. From 2013 to 2016 I conducted an investigation of Spanish history schoolbooks and their content involving China. After my study it was clear that even though contents regarding contemporary China have slightly increased in the last years, China is still not a priority in Spanish education.

The Spanish government and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs need to focus on fomenting further relations with China¹². The Plan Integral de Desarrollo de Mercado¹³ in 2015 counts among the treaties Spain has signed with China in the last decades. Even though this kind of initiatives can provide mid-term benefits and can contribute to achieve direct economic outcomes, these measures are reserved to a minor percentage of the population. This type of cooperation does not involve the general public. This negligence directly affects Spanish society, implying a lack of opportunities to obtain wider knowledge about China among Spanish citizens. Hence, the capabilities of Spanish experts in every field are limited when intending to conduct optimal relations with China.

Beyond business and political relations, that help promoting specific knowledge among a relatively small percentage of the whole population, cultural relations are part of what is known as public diplomacy, which aim is to engage with the public (Cull, 2016).

Cultural events such as art exhibitions and guided visits, concerts, performances...do not necessarily require a deep knowledge of any particular field from the participants, allowing everybody to take part in them. Furthermore, these events are generally related to leisure and enjoyment, making them attractive for a broader set of the population, in opposition to other type of international relations that only include a specialized group of people, such as business or politics.

¹² Sebastián de Erice, José-Pedro. Capítulo 3. Oportunidades y riesgos del mercado chino para la empresa española. Cátedra Nebrija-Grupo Santander en Dirección Internacional de Empresas.

¹³ Plan Integral de Mercado 2015

China is opening to international cooperation and interchange through cultural projects. In China there are currently numerous festivals and art fairs that encourage international interchange, partially covering the costs for international artists to arrive to China and perform their art. Meet in Beijing, Art Beijing or Jz Shanghai Festival are some of the cultural programmes that open foreign cooperation with China.

We have seen how China is aiming at building the capacity of foreign professionals in the future to conduct fruitful relations with China through a very powerful cultural diplomacy. Spain could also benefit from this strategy. Being idealistic, a push of cultural relations between Spanish and Chinese societies would increase mutual understanding and contribute to friendlier relations between both countries. Being realistic, it could greatly contribute to achieve more effective and successful agreements with China, bringing economic benefits to Spain.

Assisting China in its positive projection in Spain would in the long term attract the attention of Spanish people towards China. It is a necessity that young generations are prepared for a new global environment in which China will be playing a crucial role. In order to keep up with China's development and being able to adapt to new circumstances, as well as increasing Spanish possibilities of achieve sustainable development, mutual understanding must be promoted.

This way, promoting cultural diplomacy and cultural relations helps Sino-Spanish relations at three different levels that will contribute to the achievement of different goals:

- Governmental relations: for Chinese leaders, trust is a crucial aspect of cooperation. Spain has traditionally been well-positioned in this aspect, signifying a loyal partner among Western partners. Building closer relations and achieving a deeper understanding will contribute to foster China's government willing to strengthen mutual cooperation.
- Economy and business experts: The deeper mutual understanding is, the higher is the probability of achieving more fruitful and successful relations with a particular partner. Knowing our partners priorities and methodologies is crucial when aiming at cooperating with new partners.
- Society and general public: Developing a powerful programme around cultural relations could allow the general public to get a deeper understanding of a given partner, also attracting more attention towards it and encouraging potential expertise in the field in the long term.

Through a direct and deeper approach of Spanish culture to Chinese citizens, immediate results bring further circular benefits, building stronger relations that are beneficial for both sides.

Encouraging cultural relations have direct and indirect impact on the economy of both countries, opening the chances to increase further cooperation in the future.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

China's development is becoming more and more determining in the state of global affairs every day. From the beginning of its projection abroad, Beijing has been challenged by the traditional decision-makers in the international community. As a consequence, its foreign agenda has been conditioned by the priority of projecting a positive image abroad through a vigorous cultural diplomacy. Cultural centres, Confucius Institutes, foreign scholarship programmes and the improvement of their international education system are some of the highlights of China's soft-power initiatives.

Education, being considered a governmental tool to shape public opinion, represents a meaningful source of information about national priorities. For this reason, in this paper I have conducted an analysis of Spanish history school books with the aim of proving that, in spite of its current importance, China is not (and it has not been) a priority for the government of Spain.

A diachronic and a synchronic analysis of history school books in Spain has been exposed, proving that, even though the tendency is slightly changing, Spain does not put an emphasis on the necessity of future generations to understand China and its methodologies. Later on, a survey among Spanish people proved my hypothesis, demonstrating that, due to a lack of information, the general public in Spain has a very vague knowledge of China.

Finally, I defended the necessity of developing a deeper approach to China and its strategies, assisting its projection abroad with the aim of optimizing our possibilities of building stronger relations with what may be a determinant decision-maker in the international arena. In order to do so, I suggest the support of further cultural collaboration, promoting this way bilateral ties within societies that could bring mutual benefits in the long term.

It is important for the Spanish government to be adaptable and reconsider its priorities within the international community. Keeping the support of traditional partners is indeed necessary. However, given the current circumstances and the expected development of foreign affairs, it is crucial to find a balance that allows us to keep up with new realities. Cultural relations and education allow governments to root the change in the society, and especially among new generations who will be, after all, the leaders of the future.

CHAPTER 6. Suggestions for further research

Other aspects of public opinion must be studied with the aim of providing a more accurate study of the origins of Spanish public opinion about China.

This study must be considered just the starting point for a number of deeper and more formal studies. It could be a very interesting investigation regarding different points related to it. I would like to suggest some specific fields to study.

Related to the synchronic approach of school books in Spain, it might be very interesting to develop a more specific studies focused on:

- Existing differences between editorials. Spain has several editorials in charge of editing books for schools. For this reason, It could be interesting to establish a comparison between them in order to find differences in perspectives and potential reasons for this disparity.
- Existing differences between Spanish autonomies' perspectives. As I mentioned in my introduction, different autonomies might also include specific teaching materials and books, which differ from other autonomies. Looking for these aspects and its reasons might be also a fruitful field of study.
- Existing differences between European countries. Each country in Europe probably has a different perspective about China and its history. This is why it might be a successful topic to develop in a further investigation.
- Existing differences and similarities between China and Spain, taking political systems and their relation to education as the main focus. Both countries present common points in their development that would be interesting to explore.

In relation to the diachronic analysis of school books, it would be needed to establish a deeper study in order to get more trustful conclusions. A larger amount of books and editorials, paying attention to different Spanish political and social periods would provide the reader with a better understanding of the change in perspectives about China and its history in Spain.

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