

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the presentation of strategic narratives by various European Union (EU) institutions towards the People's Republic of China (PRC), with a particular focus on developments between 2012 and 2022. The core of the research was an analysis of EU strategy and foreign policy documents on China. The aim is not only to identify different EU strategic narratives towards the PRC, but also to analyse how these narratives envisage EU-China strategic engagement, how they evolve over time, how they differ across institutions, and what the dynamics of different narratives within EU institutions are. The first part of the thesis provides the context of current Chinese and European narratives and explains the theoretical and methodological framework used. The second (main) part of the thesis is an analysis of EU policy communications on China. The key finding is that there are inconsistencies and sometimes even contradictions between the narratives used by different EU institutions, and that there is no single vision for EU-China strategic engagement. The evolution of each narrative over time has also been very different. Such inconsistency hampers the EU's efforts to present a coherent strategic approach vis-à-vis China. This, in turn, can arguably weaken the EU's ability to negotiate effectively with the PRC in both bilateral and multilateral settings. In other words, China's rise and growing discursive power require the EU to increase its own discursive power and narrative coherence in order to better compete with Beijing on the world stage and defend its interests and values more effectively.