

A Golden Carnival in the Golden Era?

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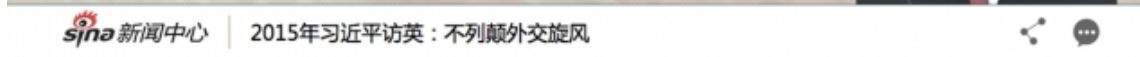
Earlier this month, the UK had the first state visit by a Chinese President in ten years. Xi Jinping or “Big Daddy Xi” met UK royals and politicians, visiting universities and enterprises, even enjoying fish and chips in a pub. Both British media and Chinese media gave huge coverage to the event and mass media, online news sites, together with social media, constructed a carnival-like media event with space for both humour and more serious themes.



Xi on Air

During much of Xi's visit, there was live online coverage on UK outlets including [The Guardian](#), [The Telegraph](#), [Mirror](#) and [BBC](#). In China, Xi's Visit was covered by Chinese online media giants like [Netease](#), [Sina](#), [Sohu](#), [Ifeng](#) and [Tencent](#), with both featured pages on their websites and uninterrupted posts on their social media outlets.

Chinese mass media, particularly the main-stream ones, [lauded ties with the UK and the success of Xi's visit](#).



Interestingly, 6 Chinese enterprises advertised in Financial Times on 20th October in celebration of Xi's Visit and the

advance of China-Britain relations.



Grassroots Coverage

When searching the hashtag [#XiUKvisit](#) or [#Xijinping](#) on Twitter, all sorts of live information and personal comments were there – partly positive and partly negative – from the media organizations or the public .

On Weibo (China's equivalent of Twitter), some of the most popular social media accounts of UK-based Chinese users took over the reporting of Xi's Visit. Britain-based famous microbloggers [@英国的那些事儿](#) (here in UK) and [@英国报姐](#) (UK times), with over 4 million and 8 million followers respectively, led the discussions of the state visit.

A popular topic on Social Media in China was when Xi and Cameron were still in The Plough at Cadsden, the name of the pub, together with Cameron's story of losing his daughter there, were widely discussed on Chinese social media. It was the very first time for most Chinese that they had seen the head of the country clinking glasses in an

informal setting .

Quite a few British-Chinese and Chinese students chose to cherish this infrequent opportunity to see the president in real life, following Xi's trail and sharing photos on their personal social networks like Wechat. LSE student Lily He went along to greet the president and took these photos:



Mutual Curiosity

Xi's Visit brought the British and Chinese media into an interesting relationship. They were often not in agreement but there was notice paid to how each side covered the same story.

For example The Telegraph frequently highlighted how Chinese media covered president's visit and The Guardian summarized how the message from Chinese coverage amounted to: [China is a dominant world power](#).

Tom Phillips, Beijing correspondent for The Guardian, [posted a photo of front pages of Chinese media on Twitter](#).



Meanwhile, coverage highlights of British media were nearly everywhere on Chinese web. Chinese media either translated a certain piece of news or outlined standpoints of the British media. They were very focused on the attitudes of British media, not only toward the state visit, but also the “First Couple”. Chinese journalists gave daily updates on the British media reactions on social media.

The official English-language website of China Radio International gave summaries through its Wechat public account “Word Wide Chinese”.

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2015年10月23日10:41



英国主流媒体21日集锦



英国主流媒体20日集锦



Consensus and Divergence

Although the British media and Chinese media focused on the same event, their standpoint varied.

The consensus was that business matters. Both sides agreed that Xi's state visit made business sense. For instance, the [£40-billion deal](#) was of great concern and the Chinese media frequently highlighted the [commercial logic behind Xi's visit](#). But does that mean Sino-UK relations were improved? The British media seemed not to think so.

Another divergence occurred in the unfailing critiques. Human rights? Democracy? Tibet? Hong Kong? Ai Weiwei? All these subtle issues were covered by British media but not in China.

Xi Jinping in the UK: who will press the president on China's human rights?

Protest groups and Jeremy Corbyn are poised to give the Chinese leader a challenging reception in London, but will the prime minister join in?



Xi Jinping state visit: Cameron seeks assurances over Hong Kong freedom

Prime minister wants to know state will remain semi-autonomous, but little is revealed about talks on human rights



Is the golden age coming? The visit certainly marked a new moment in stability of UK-China relations. And “Keep calm and carry on” is not only a British saying. Maybe in the future, as President Xi intimated, UK and China can ‘forge ahead together’.

By Zhiyi Li

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