

Is there a problem with... Australian media coverage of the PRC?

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Professor Peter Manning

Rowan Callick is a well-known, award-winning journalist with a deep knowledge of the difficulties of reporting from China.

However, his side-swipe at those who detected a resolute “anti-China stance” in the Australian media ill becomes him. His article carries no academic references to studies of the media over the past two years nor does he supply any data himself to support such a statement.

As a former Head of TV News and Current Affairs at the ABC – and the creator of the long-running “Foreign Correspondent” report – Callick’s points about lack of access, increasing workload due to staff cutbacks, lack of journalist local language skills and “cultural differences” between the role of media have the sound of the plaintive cry of many, many a foreign correspondent, not just in China.

His suggestions for change of practice are nevertheless highly relevant for the profession, especially about correspondents knowing how to speak Mandarin before setting off to Beijing.

But Callick’s dip in to the debate about whether Australian media display a bias against China should be left to those willing to do content and discourse analysis based on real data. Until then, it’s in the eye of the beholder.

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