

UACES Scholarships 2010

Scott BROWN, *University of Glasgow*

Outline of project

The research examines the responses of the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU) have responded to the 'rise' of China since the end of the Cold War. Specifically, it contends that the perceptions held by key decision makers within these polities have influenced the outcome of the foreign policymaking process. Mainstream rationalist theories of International Relations (IR) generally pay little attention to the subjective nature of perceptions given their underlying assumption of actor rationality which leads to specific assumptions regarding the nature of perceptions. This research project seeks to utilise a Foreign Policy Analysis approach which aims to examine to what extent the subjective nature of perceptions impacts upon foreign policy output and behaviour in the international arena. To that end, interviews with elites working within policymaking institutions are a crucial source of information for the project.

Academic achievements

Over the course of the fieldwork period, I took the opportunity to redraft a paper I had recently presented with the aim of creating an article for publication in a relevant academic journal in the very near future. The research trip was highly conducive to the writing of this paper as I was able to incorporate some information obtained through the interviews conducted. The paper was presented at the UACES Student Forum Conference at the University of Bath, 29th-30th April, shortly before the fieldwork began.. I received invaluable feedback from delegates which have been taken into account in the redrafted version.

Use made of resources, facilities abroad

During my time in London, Paris and Brussels I interviewed a number of policy officials from foreign policy making institutions, including civil servants and politicians within the UK and France; individuals working within the European Commission and Member State Permanent Representations; and European Parliamentarians. This also led to establishing more contacts for potential interviews in the future. In addition, I conducted interviews with experts from think-tanks which facilitated my greater understanding of the contexts of policymaking. Further to these activities, I spent time in archives and libraries in both London and Brussels which gave me access to primary and secondary sources (including a range of academic literature) which will contribute to my thesis.

Positive and negative aspects

I think my fieldwork trip has been exceptionally worthwhile and contributed greatly to the research project. The individuals I spoke to were helpful and willing to answer my questions where possible. The one downside was the timing of my visit to London, which coincided with the UK's general election (the timing of which was not concrete when the trip was planned). Nevertheless, a number of individuals occupied with the election have indicated they would be willing to be interviewed in the future.

Overall, the experience was undoubtedly positive and I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to UACES and the European Commission for their generous support of my fieldwork.