

## 6 Chinese Diplomacy in the Multimedia Age

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### Introduction

Globalization brought about by the development of information communications technology is beginning to profoundly change traditional ways of conducting diplomacy. Jonathan H. Spalter asserts that the development of information technology has produced a new "digital diplomacy."<sup>1</sup>

In China, globalization altered the vertically structured diplomatic system, in which China's external relations were unified under national government control. With the country's exposure to globalization, media-tion between China and external powers began to involve multiple channels of communication, especially in the 1990s. As it became easier for ordinary Chinese to send information to the outside world, the borders between domestic and international issues grew increasingly ambiguous, and the Chinese government found it increasingly difficult to monopolize information and manipulate public opinion, once a key element of its diplomacy. In a multimedia age, characterized by unlimited, multidirectional, and instantaneous transmission of information, the Chinese government must formulate policies promptly, flexibly, and efficiently while giving due consideration to the masses both within and outside the country.

The Chinese government has responded by increasing the transmission of information to the international community, following the

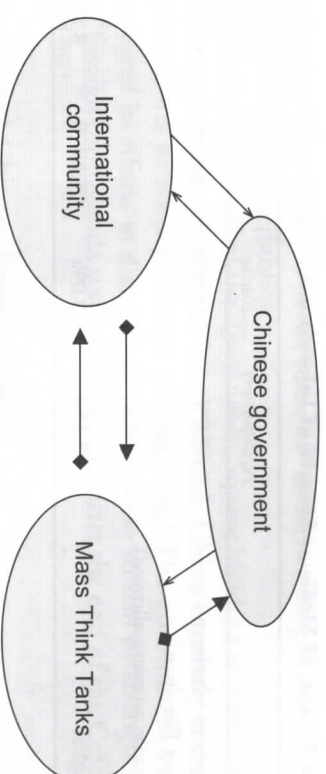


Figure 1. Traditional Chinese Diplomacy

examples of the United States and other technologically advanced countries. It has also restricted the channels of communication between the international community and the Chinese people, while attempting to adhere to the existing framework for the formulation of diplomatic policies inside the country. The result is a new style of diplomacy, called "public diplomacy." Since the mid-1990s, and in particular since 11 September 2001, many countries, including the United States and Great Britain, have bolstered their public diplomacy by further developing their pre-existing institutions. Although China's public diplomacy is basically similar to the American and British versions, it has some distinct features.

In China since the early 1990s there has been a growing trend toward shaping public opinion in diplomatic relations as well as in internal affairs.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese people have begun to dispatch information privately. Through the Internet and other new media, they are influencing the Chinese government's diplomatic stance and the policies of other countries toward China—a sort of "civilian diplomacy."

The Chinese government tries to bolster the dispatch of information to the outside world while maintaining communication barriers between the inside and the outside. Reform in the Chinese mass media is therefore the key to China's public diplomacy and civilian diplomacy. While there have been several studies on the effect of Chinese media reforms on democratization,<sup>3</sup> changes in Chinese public diplomacy and civil diplomacy have arisen from reforms in the Chinese mass media.

In 1998 China launched a project to enable "every village to receive at least Channel 1 of China Central TV (CCTV) and one channel of

**Table 1. Use of Media as Sources of Information**

	Newspapers	Radio	Television	Internet
Villages in southern Jiangsu Province (multiple answers allowed)	62.0%	35.9%	84.8%	NA
Shanghai	25.0%	9.0%	58.0 %	8.0%

a provincial-level TV," with the goal of raising radio and television coverage to 91.5 percent and 92.5 percent respectively by 2000. Today television is quite influential in China, particularly in the countryside, where the illiteracy rate is high. Table 1 compares the findings of surveys on the main sources of information for people in the rural districts of the southern part of Jiangsu Province (including mainly Suzhou, Wuxi, and Changzhou), where the illiteracy rate is relatively low, and in Shanghai.<sup>4</sup> Newspapers and television are important sources of information in both the countryside and the large cities, but television is by far the most important source of information for a majority of people at all income levels. This chapter treats television as the most important form of mass media. It also considers the rise of the Internet and the phenomenon known as "net nationalism."

### **Bolstering the Dissemination of Information to the Outside World**

The expression "public diplomacy" was first used by Edmund Gullion in 1965.<sup>5</sup> The former United States Information Agency defined the term as follows: "Public diplomacy seeks to promote the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad."<sup>6</sup>

It is evident from the definition that public diplomacy in the United States has two dimensions: information furnishing activities (dissemination of information abroad and international broadcasting) and international educational and cultural exchange. However, only the United States defines it this way. In Great Britain and other countries, public

diplomacy is understood in the sense of "understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics."

In the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, which threatened to tarnish China's image abroad, China earnestly embarked upon efforts to bolster "foreign propaganda." The government further increased its efforts to disseminate information abroad by strengthening its "foreign propaganda system," especially after the end of the Cold War in 1991.

### **Traditional Chinese Propaganda**

In China, public opinion is controlled and guided through internal and foreign propaganda. The word "propaganda" is often used in the same sense as "publicity," and it seldom has a negative connotation.

In 1928 the Communist Party of China (CPC) published its first information bulletin for dissemination abroad. *The Pioneer* was a non-periodical magazine for overseas Chinese, which publicized the party's opinions and positions and reported on criminal activities of the Japanese Army in China. Subsequently, the CPC published the *Voice of China* magazine in Shanghai in the 1930s and the *China Digest* in Hong Kong in the late 1940s. Thus, even prior to the Second World War, the CPC had a tradition of publicizing its opinions and positions. In the early 1940s, an English-language radio broadcasting station was opened in Yanan.<sup>7</sup> The station, along with the periodicals and selective contacts with foreign correspondents, constituted the CPC's three traditional means of foreign propaganda.

The People's Republic of China inherited these three means of publicity. Following the establishment of the country, foreign correspondents were essentially banned, with a few exceptions from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.<sup>8</sup> However, this policy began to change around the time of the Geneva Convention of 1954, and under instructions from Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi that "China should take a more positive attitude toward foreign correspondents willing to visit the country." In July 1955 Zhou Enlai instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to formulate a policy that would enable its information department to handle foreign correspondents' visits to China.<sup>9</sup> In November 1957, when West German reporters expressed a wish to visit China, Chen Yi suggested that by allowing their visit, China would be able to make use of the Western media, and Zhou Enlai concurred.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, Chinese leaders continued to allow visits that were of value to



Chinese policies and agendas and would result in reports that were sympathetic to China and useful to its diplomatic operations.

The English-language magazine *People's China* was launched in 1950, and the *Beijing Review* in 1958. China Radio International started broadcasting in the 1950s.

### From Propaganda to Public Diplomacy

After the Cold War, China faced hostile international public opinion for its human rights violations and was perceived as a threat to the international community. To pacify public opinion abroad, China revised the format of its publicity. Public diplomacy was based on the premise of supporting the leadership of the party. It had five objectives: (1) to strongly publicize China's assertions to the outside world, (2) to form a desirable image of the state, (3) to issue rebuttals on distorted overseas reports about China, (4) to improve the international environment surrounding China, and (5) to exert influence on the policy decisions of foreign countries.<sup>11</sup>

In 2001 Zhao Qizheng, Minister of the State Council Information Office and Director of the CPC Central Committee's Foreign Propaganda Office, said that Deng Xiaoping's "Three Represents" were the guiding principles for international publicity activities and that "we must from now on have greater awareness of the need to provide better services, study the needs of overseas audiences, provide them with large quantities of information, help them understand China better, and make it possible for them to make use of various opportunities available in China."<sup>12</sup> In this sense, China made it clear that external publicity activities would contribute to the country's economic development, as well as build a desirable image of the Chinese state in the minds of foreign audiences.

Thus, creating a desirable image of the state, publicizing China's opinions to the outside world, and promoting business activities both within and outside China are the objectives of China's public diplomacy. Since the 16th National People's Congress of the CPC, in 2002, the policy of "peaceful rising" has represented the new image of China, and efforts have been made to create a positive image of the Chinese state. According to a study by Hongying Wang, the government built an image of China as "a major power dedicated to collaboration with the international community and to the safeguarding of peace."<sup>13</sup>

The reorganization of the government offices responsible for guiding external publicity began in the 1990s. In 1991 the Information Office

of the State Council was established, and in 1998 the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee was renamed the Publicity Department. In 1984 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a spokesperson system, with Qian Qishen as the first spokesperson. In the latter half of the 1990s, other government offices followed the ministry's example and strengthened their foreign publicity activities by establishing media departments. Consequently, China's information dissemination activities came under the authority of the CPC.

The government instructed that foreign publicity be reinforced through the following means: (1) boosting external publicity through the Internet, (2) increasing external cultural exchanges by unifying exchanges and external publicity, (3) making the external cultural industry more competitive and influential, thereby making cultural publicity more attractive, (4) adopting a more positive attitude toward the foreign media, (5) strengthening external publicity activities by studying supply and demand in the global marketplace and promoting moves abroad by Chinese media, and (6) making concerted efforts to publicize important issues.

As a result, China's public diplomacy in the post-Cold War era took on the following three characteristics. It attached importance to both external cultural exchanges and external publicity. Second, it focused on sending information to the outside world according to the rules of supply and demand. And third, it focused on selected issues, which resulted in strengthening its ability to disseminate information abroad. It placed special emphasis on issues that the international community deemed important. For example, the Chinese government revised its website on "China's population and planned parenthood" and issued a publication titled *China's Population Today*. The government actively responded to interviews by foreign correspondents concerning planned parenthood and made positive approaches to Chinese and foreign reporters by sponsoring international conferences and press briefings. The government also gathered foreign media reports on planned parenthood in China and offered "corrections" to inaccurate foreign reports in the *China Daily*.<sup>14</sup>

### The Mass Media as the Main Pillar of Information Dissemination

The CPC and the government are trying to reinforce external publicity activities through disclosure of operations and distribution of publications



to foreign audiences and the media. These efforts to structure the media take on aspects different from the efforts to boost other external publicity activities.

### (1) Reforms of the Mass Media: Targeting the Global Market

Before the launch of its reform and open door policy, China adopted "vertical information measures."<sup>15</sup> In 1978 it began to reform the mass media with the intent that newspapers and other forms of media be organized as projects and managed as business enterprises (Shiye Danwei, Qiye Guanli). Under this concept, a corporate management and administrative system was introduced; organizations were given increased discretionary power in decisions such as page layouts, selection of advertisements, and pricing; and they were forced to become financially self-supporting. Although the basic characteristic of the media as a "mouthpiece of the party" remained unchanged, the principle governing its management had changed. Consequently, television stations were partly projects and partly corporations.

In 1983 it was resolved that radio and television stations should "expand their sources of revenue and improve their economic effectiveness."<sup>16</sup> In the "Decision to Expedite the Development of Tertiary Industries," issued in June 1992, the media was classified as part of the tertiary industry and required to practice "corporate management." Finally, at the Ninth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, the government adopted a policy of gradually reducing its provision of funds to these organizations to ultimately make them financially independent.<sup>17</sup> These reforms were based on the policy that the media should be "managed as corporations, and operated in the open market."

As part of this effort, Shanghai Television ran commercials for the first time in January 1979. Three months later, it had the first TV commercial advertising a foreign product ever broadcast inside China. In November 1979 the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) approved Shanghai Television's commercials on an *ex post facto* basis. In January 1994 CCTV began to run TV commercials for 30 seconds during its 7-7:30 p.m. news program. In April it extended these commercials from 30 seconds to one minute. Then, in 1995, it introduced a "bidding" system for commercials to be run after the news program.

In this way, television and other media were transformed into a mass media industry. In terms of tax payments, the media emerged as

**Table 2. Advertising Revenue of the Chinese Mass Media (Unit: Billion yuan)**

	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2005	2006
Television	0.16	0.87	1.69	3.62	10.00	29.44	64.98	114.41	156.1	195	238.4
Newspapers	0.73	2.2	3.55	6.29	9.62	37.71	64.67	96.82	112.3	40	42
Magazines	0.11	0.28	0.45	0.85	0.99	1.84	3.82	5.27	8.9	4.6	5
Radio	0.18	0.26	0.47	0.74	1.41	3.49	7.37	10.57	12.5	4.2	4.8
Total for media	1.18	3.61	6.16	11.50	22.02	72.48	140.84	227.07	289.8	262.8	310.8

Source: Compiled on the basis of data taken from CHINA.COM.CN <http://www.china.org.cn>

the fourth largest industry, outstripping the tobacco industry. Under the "self-supporting accounting system," the media earn approximately 70 percent of their revenue through advertising, amounting to approximately 29 billion yuan in 1999, with the figure increasing at the amazing pace of 34.77 percent per year (see Table 2).

Having been forced into financial independence, the media groups had to compete with one another, and the competition became overheated. Many TV stations were established after 1983, when the Department of Radio, Film and Television of the State Council allowed the establishment of TV stations at the city and prefecture levels in addition to the existing central and provincial levels. Following the establishment of the first cable TV station in Shanghai in 1985, cable TV stations began to operate throughout China. From 1994 to 2000, the number of households with cable TV jumped from 1.64 million to 3.03 million, and the number of hours of cable broadcasting per week jumped from 439 to 658.<sup>18</sup>

As China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) neared, the government moved toward creating an internationally competitive mass media by establishing press groups. Following the establishment of the Hangzhou Daily Press Group in early January 1996, 16 press groups were established, each holding assets of more than several hundred million yuan.

The TV industry was also reformed. After having gained qualification to manage national assets in July 1997, Shanghai Television is in the process of forming an audiovisual press group, which will encompass radio stations under unified control.



In 1999 the government published Document Number 82, in which the expression "China Media Group" first appeared, and embarked on building "larger radio stations, TV stations, publicity activities and a larger industry" by reorganizing the TV industry into three major cable and terrestrial TV stations. In August and September 2001, the document "Some Opinions of the Central Department of Radio and Television Concerning Reforms of Press, Publication, Television, Radio, and Film," co-issued by the SARFT and the General Administration of Press and Publication, made way for the establishment of large multimedia groups.

Under the existing "Regulation on the Management of Radio and Television," no TV or radio station is allowed to lease or sell broadcasting time. No radio or TV station can be run by a foreign venture, Chinese and foreign joint venture, or Chinese and foreign cooperative joint venture. Furthermore, the "Procedures for the Implementation of the Law concerning Joint Ventures Using Chinese and Foreign Investment" explicitly specifies that the press, publishers, and radio, television, and film industries are off-limits to foreign-invested companies. According to the "Regulation on the Management of Radio and Television," only media organizations at the provincial or higher level have the right to produce TV programs; other organizations and individuals are prohibited from producing public broadcasting programs. Moreover, an application must be approved to receive satellite TV programs.

China's admission to the WTO in 2001 stipulated that within one year after entering the organization, foreign companies would have the right to own up to 30 percent of the stocks of Chinese firms that were active in the Internet, television, radio, and similar businesses in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. In the second year, foreign companies would be able to own up to 50 percent of the stocks anywhere in China.<sup>19</sup> With regard to foreign investment in the publishing business, the agreement stipulated that import management rights would not be opened to foreign investment. However, foreign companies would be allowed to establish joint venture marketing companies in five special economic zones and eight major cities, with coverage expanded to the provincial capitals in the second year. During the third year, restrictions on area, quantity, stocks and form would be abolished, and the importation of up to 20 foreign films and marketing of visual software would be allowed.

To mitigate the effects of the country's participation in the WTO, the Chinese government has announced that it will implement a series

of protective measures. It will further reorganize the media into a smaller number of groups, strengthen market integration power, rearrange the functions of organizations in charge of the mass media, reinforce their management, and promote the use of networking and digitization.<sup>20</sup>

However, the government's efforts to implement these measures face a number of obstacles, which include duplicate investment, shortage of funds, and shortage or poor quality of technology and human resources.<sup>21</sup> At the first media forum in December 2002, Zhao Qizheng, Minister of the State Council Information Office, emphasized four problems afflicting the Chinese mass media and measures that had to be taken to promote its development: (1) the circulation or number of subscribers was small, (2) some operations were running deficits due to shortages of managerial competence and operating funds, (3) there was a need to accelerate the media's movement toward the market economy and to readjust its industrial structure, and (4) the media needed to be encouraged to continue increasing exchanges with foreign media.<sup>22</sup>

## (2) The Media's Dilemma between Guiding Public Opinion and Serving as the Government's Mouthpiece and the Need to Become More Competitive

While intense competition in the mass media in China gave rise to the scandalous practice of "reporting news for fees," it also increased discussion about the function of the media and actually encouraged the media to play the role of watchdog over the government, especially in relation to public opinion.

For the media to survive competition in the open market, while relying exclusively on advertising revenue, it must supply services well adapted to the needs of consumers. In 1994 an opinion piece, "Who is the God of Television?" criticized as unhealthy a situation in which the top 2 percent of the population controlled the information for the remaining 98 percent. The article initiated a lively discussion about the need to create a more diversified media for the general public.

In the early 1990s, domestic propaganda shifted away from "propaganda and education" toward "guiding public opinion." In today's information age, in which it is impossible and impractical to strictly regulate information, China has come to rely on domestic publicity to "channel diversities of thoughts and opinions into correct and sound directions."<sup>23</sup>

However, the reporting of international news, which falls within the sphere of external publicity, remains subject to strict controls. External



and internal forms of propaganda play different roles and are targeted at different audiences, but the media is responsible for both. In reporting important issues, unforeseen incidents, and sensitive issues, the media must follow the unified guidance of the party's local propaganda departments.<sup>24</sup> When a TV station reports on certain events, such as the Guoqing Jie (anniversary of the founding of the PRC), it must draw up comprehensive, detailed plans for all programs related to that event.<sup>25</sup> In addition, there are government directives concerning publicity and specific standards for reporting, and these directives provide instructions on engaging in publicity activities. For example, a directive issued in 1991 said that reporting on developments in and about the Soviet Union should be "accurate, careful, low-key, and moderate."<sup>26</sup>

In 1999 six publicity campaigns were carried out by the Central Department of Radio and Television: (1) on the 20th anniversary of the launching of the reform and open door policy, (2) on the 80th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and on the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, (3) a crackdown campaign on Falun Dafa, an allegedly subversive organization, (4) a campaign about the Guoqing Jie (National Day), (5) a campaign about the spirit guiding the Fourth Plenary Session of the 15th Central Committee of the CPC, and (6) a campaign to celebrate the reversion of Macao.<sup>27</sup> The instructions to the media were often quite specific. For example, it was to publicize the bombing incident in such a way as to "lift the morale of the people, appeal to, instead of inciting, their feelings, properly guide public opinion, and resolutely contribute to China's diplomacy." News organizations were further instructed that "the publicity campaign should last for a little more than one month, be divided into three stages" and to report "in a systematic order, focusing on 'feelings,' 'reason,' and 'actions,' respectively."<sup>28</sup>

The Chinese government has a finely tuned policy concerning external publicity and reporting on issues related to international affairs. Its mass media is required to emphasize the positive aspects of international affairs and to promote public morality in a positive way. Furthermore, it is expected to be in agreement with the scientific and cultural temperament of the people and to uphold the political views of the Chinese government. Slogans such as "democracy under centralized guidance" and "reporting should be centered around the positive aspects of things" are dictated by the idea that "stability should come before all else."

To ensure that the mass media does not deviate from the basic tone of the government, it is allowed to report on international news only in the way that those events are reported by China National Radio, China Radio International, and China Central TV or as broadcast by the central news of the Xinhua News Agency. The media is not allowed to broadcast international news programs or special programs obtained from foreign satellite TVs or other channels. Nor are stations allowed to internally broadcast the Xinhua News Agency's overseas broadcasting programs.<sup>29</sup>

The government and the CPC are trying to establish a nationwide 30-minute CCTV daily news program from 7 to 7:30 p.m. Channel 1 in each locality is required to air this program intact and is not allowed to disrupt the program or superimpose subtitles to report other information or run commercials other than those on CCTV's original news program.<sup>30</sup> Hotels and inns are required to receive CCTV Channel 1 as well as the local Channel 1. Hotels with a three-star or better rating that fail to satisfy this condition are denied permits for satellite TV programs.<sup>31</sup>

### (3) Strengthening the International Dissemination of Information

With the idea of improving the information dissemination capability and international competitiveness of the media, the government in 2003 began to place special emphasis on the establishment of three systems: one for supervising and coordinating activities to publicize China to the outside world, one for disseminating news abroad, and a third for coordinating news reporting that can promptly and efficiently deal with unforeseen incidents.<sup>32</sup>

In February 2003 the new system proved effective in reporting unforeseen incidents. Following the crash of the American space shuttle Columbia on 1 February, CCTV ran a special newscast of the incident, interrupting regular programming. The Chinese media also acted promptly in reporting the serial bombings that occurred at Tsinghua University and Beijing University. The bombings took place at 11:50 a.m. and 1:20 p.m. respectively, and the Xinhua News Agency aired initial reports on the incidents at 1:27 and 2:44 p.m. The website [www.chinanews.com](http://www.chinanews.com) also quickly reported on the incidents and followed up with news reports on the bombings, including on-the-spot broadcasts, reports on the wounded, the government's response, the causes of the bombings, and the reaction of the public.



On 20 March 2003, the Iraq War began. In stark contrast to the Chinese media's total silence in the aftermath of 9/11, CCTV reported around the clock. Each radio and TV station hosted a panel of specialists to comment on the war's progress. With the dramatic increase in the quantity of reporting on international issues as well as improvement in the speed of each broadcast, as many as 51.7 percent of the residents of Shanghai were watching, listening to, or reading about the Iraq War for 60 minutes or more every day.<sup>33</sup> This won CCTV an unprecedented audience rating.

The reporting on the Iraq War was characterized by a tendency to adopt a humanitarian perspective, without discussing the rights and wrongs of the war. This form of reporting seems to reveal the Chinese media's intent to survive in the international market by presenting a viewpoint that is different from those of other media.<sup>34</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that this posture does not facilitate the formation of a public opinion that can be shared with other countries.

By contrast, in reporting incidents with the potential to damage the country's image abroad, such as the outbreak of SARS, China was not as forthcoming. The first outbreak was in November 2002, but objective reporting on the outbreak of the illness began to appear in China only in April 2003. The April reports coincided with the dissemination of false rumors about the illness and paved the way for society to begin to regain stability.

After the experiences in reporting on the Tsinghua University and Beijing University bombings, the Iraq War, and SARS, the method of controlling public opinion had begun to change into one of "guiding public opinion under information disclosure."<sup>35</sup>

#### (4) Increasing the Dissemination of Information Abroad

As a member of the WTO, China needs to relax regulations on foreign media operating in China. When Shanghai TV began broadcasting *Sesame Street* on 14 February 1998, it had the help of researchers from Fudan University, who re-edited the program for Chinese children.<sup>36</sup> Today, popular animated cartoon programs from Japan, such as *Chibi-maruko*, are aired in their original forms.

A large number of foreign print media have moved into the Chinese market, including *ELLE*, *Newsweek*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and *Forbes*. *Newsweek* is published in China under the title *Newsweek Select*.<sup>37</sup>

The Chinese mass media have also begun joint ventures with foreign media companies. In September 2001 Star Television was granted permission to operate a cable TV station in the Zhujiang area of Guangdong Province. One of its channels targets young adults and is broadcast 24 hours a day in the Beijing dialect. It had 970,000 household subscribers as of December 2002.<sup>38</sup>

Following Star TV, AOL Time Warner and China Entertainment Television had a combined total of 600,000 subscribing households in Guangdong Province as of December 2002, which was expected to increase to 1.2 million households during 2003.<sup>39</sup> Toward the end of 2002 Star TV concluded a contract with the Hunan Media Group, and CCTV-9 (English-language program) is now broadcast via AOL's cable network.

Since 1995 the American company Encore has been engaged in joint production of an hour-long program that is broadcast by CCTV-8. On 26 August 2001, Disney.com.cn began operations in China. On 19 November 2002 the British firm Person established CTV Media, a joint venture with CCTV that now offers educational and telephone shopping programs to 350 million homes through television and the Internet. In 2002 CNN signed a contract with CCTV, enabling each party to use the news programs of the other. Simultaneously, the two companies launched a personnel exchange and training program. Finally, Nickelodeon was being broadcast on CCTV to more than 130 TV stations from 2004; it had a 10 percent audience share, which is a good rating in China.

CCTV has signed mutual broadcasting rights contracts with AOL, the British company BskyB, and the French company Vivendi Universal. Under the contracts, these foreign companies may broadcast to Chinese hotels with a three-star rating or better. Exclusive hotels have a little more than one million rooms at present and account for a small fraction of the total number of hotels in China. However, as of January 2007, a total of 31 television channels, including Bloomberg, Star TV, CNN, HBO, and BBC World, had obtained the rights to broadcast to these hotels.

Exchanges between Chinese and foreign media companies are interactive by nature, and this has greatly enhanced the stature of CCTV-9's broadcasting capability abroad. In the United States, for example, CCTV has nearly 700,000 subscribers, and its satellite broadcasting has more than 500,000 subscribers.



## China's Civil Diplomacy

### Maintaining the Barrier between the Inside and the Outside

While trying to bolster its international dissemination of information, the Chinese government is also increasing its efforts to maintain the barrier between the inside and outside of the country by imposing severe restrictions on the Chinese media and keeping out information from abroad.

#### (1) Control over the Reception of Foreign Programs

There have been changes in the Chinese government's method of controlling information. The government continues to believe that undesirable news should be "withheld, delayed or be made only briefly." It has adopted a system of approvals and licenses to control information from abroad as well as broadcasting within the country, under which it "would regulate, but not cut off the flow of information, and open up, but not give the media a free hand."

Every year, an overall plan and quantitative quotas for domestic broadcasting of foreign programs are determined. Channel 1 is prohibited from re-broadcasting foreign programs, and other channels are prohibited from doing so during prime time, from 6 to 10 p.m.<sup>40</sup>

Programs produced abroad (Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) are not to be broadcast in excess of one-third of the weekly total broadcast time of any radio or TV station, and no station may broadcast foreign dramas or movies "in excess of 25 percent of its daily broadcasting time, and should not do so during prime time in excess of 15 percent of its daily broadcasting time."<sup>41</sup> In addition, each TV station is required to keep the broadcast time for foreign-produced cartoons at less than 40 percent of broadcast time for all cartoon programs.<sup>42</sup>

The government has also tightened regulations on the broadcasting of its own programs. The 1997 "Regulation on the Administration of Radio and Television" stipulates that each station broadcast the programs of CCTV-1 and Radio Beijing. The 1997 "Notification concerning Further Reinforcement of the Administration of Advertising Publicity on Radio and Television" sets time and fee limits on commercials and prohibits commercials that are deemed inappropriate or threaten the unity, stability, honor, and national interests of the state.

In the early 1990s a number of live broadcast programs made their debuts. In April 1994 a "Forum on Live Broadcasts" was held to discuss the question of how to manage live programs. Participants concluded

that it was imperative to reinforce the "system of supervisory monitoring" of live broadcast programs and to require that responsible individuals be present at each live broadcast. The forum also concluded that in sensitive times, live programs should be recorded in advance.<sup>43</sup> In 1999 "Tentative Administrative Methods concerning Mass Participation in Live Radio and TV Programs" stipulated that live programs could be broadcast only with the consent of the station manager as well as the relevant media departments. Furthermore, broadcast delays and measures to monitor callers were required to always be available, and the individual in charge of the station producing the live program would be held responsible for the program.<sup>44</sup>

In 1999 the government intensified its supervision of CCTV-8 in concert with strict supervision of provincial-level TV stations that were broadcasting satellite TV programs. In 2000 it began recording and supervising the Central People's Radio station and CCTV on a priority basis.<sup>45</sup> In 2002 the government established "watching" and "listening" organizations to ensure that the stations were not broadcasting programs whose contents ran counter to positions of the Chinese government and reiterated that the media's role was to guide public opinion. The monitoring and supervisory organizations were required to submit monthly reports.<sup>46</sup>

At present, the establishment of radio and TV stations is allowed at the prefecture or higher level. Stations cannot be established by individuals, foreign companies, joint ventures between Chinese and foreign companies, or cooperative joint ventures between Chinese and foreign companies.<sup>47</sup> Individual firms, organizations, and schools planning to establish radio and/or TV stations must be approved by provincial authorities and are prohibited from broadcasting foreign programs or inserting commercials in these programs.<sup>48</sup>

Despite these restrictions, TV and cable TV stations broadcast foreign programs without official permission.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, there are limits to official measures to prevent the inflow of information from abroad. At present, receiving foreign programs broadcast via satellite is approved on a licensing basis, but in reality it is easy to watch foreign programs by installing a satellite dish.

#### (2) Eliminating Foreign Influence on Programs Produced within China

Another way to maintain the barrier between the inside and outside is to regulate the participation of foreign companies. China has a strict system for granting permits and licenses to foreigners who wish to



participate in the production and broadcasting of programs and movies. Foreigners are not allowed to be anchorpersons or to act as commentators on news and special news programs. When it becomes necessary for a foreigner to appear on a TV program other than a news program, approval must be obtained from SARFT.<sup>50</sup>

### Control over the Mass Media and Chinese Public Opinion in Foreign Affairs

Unlike domestic news reporting, which is being deregulated, international news reporting is still tightly regulated. Thus, various organizations, including the media, have been asked to contribute to strengthening China's voice in the formation of international public opinion. However, the news reporting activities of the Chinese media, in the face of this dilemma, have had the effect of stirring up Chinese nationalism. Following the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in May 1999, the Chinese media competed for greater news coverage, which led to an upsurge in anti-American nationalism, indicating problems inherent in the Chinese media.

A survey of the reporting activities of the *People's Daily*, *Nanyang Daily*, and *Xinmin Evening News* between September 2001 and April 2002 found that the number of articles commenting on the foreign policy, economy, and culture of the United States remained stable on the whole, and their comments tended to be rather unbiased.<sup>51</sup>

In stark contrast, in the immediate aftermath of the bombing, there were many newspaper articles and much TV news coverage about the incident. A popular program on CCTV called *Focus* (*Jiaodian Fangan*) reported on the bombing every day for three weeks.<sup>52</sup> *Focus* was launched on 1 April 1994 to report primarily on political and social issues within China and has a high audience rating. High-level Chinese leaders, such as Li Peng and Zhu Rongji, watch the program almost every day. When Zhu Rongji visited CCTV in 1998, he praised it for being the mouthpiece of the government, mirror of the party, and pioneer of the reform.<sup>53</sup>

The *Nanyang Daily*, a city paper that had a circulation of 500,000 and advertising revenue of 200 million yuan in 2000, published 12 pages in three days on the bombing incident,<sup>54</sup> and the *Beijing Youth Daily* ran a total of 179 articles on or related to the United States. The contents of these articles were primarily interviews with families and friends of the victims, often accompanied by graphic photographs. There were virtually no articles reporting on possible diplomatic solutions between China and the United States.

The Chinese mass media, which is required to be the "mouthpiece of the government," cannot discuss external policy prior to announcements made by the Xinhua News Agency, yet the media groups must compete with one another for larger circulations and better audience ratings. Thus, in this case, they competed by presenting "new" and "different" stories about the victims and their families and from the scene of the bombing. This had the natural effect of inflaming anti-U.S. sentiment.

In dealing with the mass media, China follows a policy that places political reporting under strict, microscopic control, while exercising macroscopic control with regard to the development of the mass media as an industry. He Zhou characterizes the present state of this policy as a tug-of-war between the economic and political elements.<sup>55</sup>

The bottom line for the Chinese government is to tolerate the existence of a financially independent media but not allow it to interfere with propaganda. However, in the final analysis, not only does this policy stir up nationalistic sentiments, it renders China's public diplomacy less effective. As noted above, news organizations are increasing the international dissemination of news by producing programs for external publicity and by promoting them in foreign countries. A reporter from CCTV-9 points out, however, that China's external publicity activities have little influence abroad.<sup>56</sup> CCTV's English language channel has attracted 14 million household users abroad, but a survey by CCTV found that 90 percent of its viewers live in China, and more than 80 percent watch the channel for the purpose of learning English.<sup>57</sup> CCTV-9 has started to broadcast to different parts of the world but is still weak in terms of audience rating and local news coverage.<sup>58</sup> It is forbidden from running commercials abroad, thereby forgoing any potential revenue. Given the strict regulations on the mass media, international broadcasting programs also tend to be stiff and formal and generally based around news or coverage of meetings and conferences. Many academics have pointed out that the strict regulations imposed on international programs are impediments to improving China's external publicity activities, further limiting the Chinese mass media's ability to be competitive.<sup>59</sup>

### The Internet

#### (1) Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs)

The "BBS Forum for Adamantly Protesting the Outrage Committed by NATO" was launched after the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in



Belgrade. It was the first decisive test of the Chinese government's policy to guide public opinion with the use of the Internet. Within one month of its establishment it had 90,000 posts, and on 19 June 1999 it was renamed the Strong China Forum (*Qiangguo Luntan*). In early August full-time moderators were appointed, and in September an eight-member panel was formed. The BBS is accessible daily from 8 a.m. to midnight and has grown to encompass 15 forums, including one on Japan-China relations. When an issue sensitive to China erupts, BBS usage increases dramatically. On 18 March 2000, the day of the Taiwanese presidential election, it had as many as 230,000 visitors, and 5,680 posts were made. On 20 May 2000, the day of the inauguration speech by President Chen Shui-bian, 7,888 new posts were made on the BBS, and there were more than 300,000 hits.<sup>60</sup>

Through its operation of the Strong China Forum, the government has learned how to guide public opinion concerning BBSs. The main task of the administrators is to delete extreme opinions, although it is considered wise "not to delete entries which do not have to be deleted." Consequently, BBSs and chat rooms are regulated relatively leniently, and those who anonymously express anti-government views are persuaded to use online chat rooms.<sup>61</sup>

In chat rooms run by the People's Daily Online and other networks, experts on international relations under the relatively strong influence of the government hold periodic discussions on international affairs with Internet users. Those experts include researchers affiliated with the China Institute of International Studies (a subsidiary research institute of the Ministry of International Affairs) and the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (a subsidiary research institute of the Council of State), as well as retired ambassadors.

## (2) Internet Nationalism

According to statistics released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), there were 33.7 million Internet users in China in 2002. The *China Youth Daily* (4 November 2001) predicted that by 2005 there would be 200 million Internet users, and that in the coming 10 to 20 years the Internet, as the fourth form of mass media, would grow more influential than newspapers, radio, and television.

The Internet is an arena for the formation of public opinion concerning international affairs. Academic specialists on foreign diplomacy have long been divided into two groups: hard-liners and those who argue

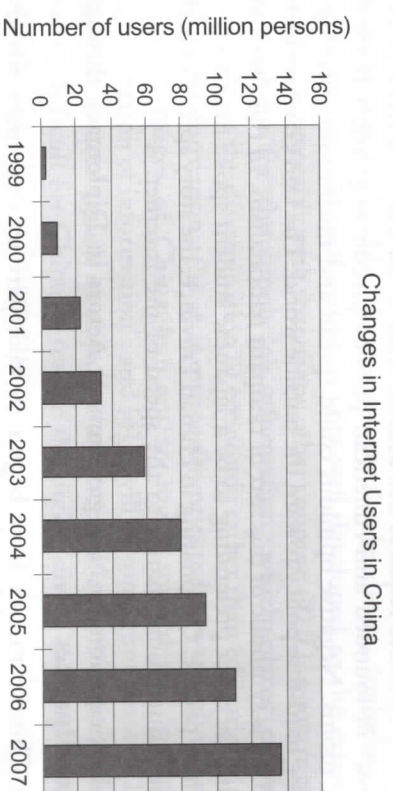


Figure 2. Changes in Internet Users in China

for a conciliatory policy. It is undeniable that debate between the two groups has been strongly restricted by the government's influence over television, newspapers, and academic journals. However, dissenting opinions are often expressed on the Internet. This phenomenon is a manifestation of "Internet nationalism."

As illustrated in Figure 2, the number of Internet users in China has grown year after year. According to CNNIC's statistics at the beginning of 2004, the number of Internet users exceeded 78.5 million, the second-largest number in the world. According to CNNIC's statistics released in June 2003, 80 percent of users in China are 35 years of age or younger. Students at professional schools, and junior and senior high schools account for 83.5 percent of users.

The radical manifestation of nationalist sentiment on the Internet represents the opinions of only a small portion of young people. Nonetheless, their opinions are increasingly influential. They have influenced the Chinese government's attitude toward foreign affairs and constitute a driving force behind public opinion.

In dealing with the Internet, the Chinese government is pursuing a policy of leniency, but it is also guiding public opinion on the Internet and will soon introduce an Internet police force. These measures will detract from the healthy formation of public opinion on international affairs.



The Internet requires the mutual trust of all users. Because of this "trust," ill-founded anti-American public opinion may infect BBSs or chat rooms. Negative opinions could spread and mushroom, forming a strong hard-line policy toward the outside world. The Luo Gang incident of 2003 is symbolic of this sort of rampant nationalism. In this incident, a Chinese caller pretending to be a Japanese student spoke negatively of Chinese people. Originating in Hunan Province, the story spread quickly throughout China thanks to the speed of the Internet.

### (3) Participation by Non-government Actors in Diplomacy through the Internet

The Chinese masses have begun to take part in diplomacy via the Internet. A typical example was a recent "incident" in which a group of Chinese people from the mainland attempted to land on the Senkaku (Diaoyutai) Islands. On 4 April 2003, Feng Jinhua, who had gained fame for spraying red paint on a statue at the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan, first spoke about plans to land on the islands together with Li Nan and Yin Dongming. The plan was postponed due to the outbreak of SARS, but upon learning that a group of Japanese had landed on the islands in May, Feng and his group hurriedly decided to carry out the plan on 20 June. They had used the Internet to raise 92,000 yuan and recruit volunteers, receiving more than 80 applicants.<sup>62</sup> This attempt—publicity, fund raising, and recruiting volunteers—was all accomplished on the Internet and drew much attention from both within and without China as an epoch-making attempt by ordinary Chinese people to take an active part in diplomacy.

## Conclusion

Since the early 1990s, China has been trying to improve its public diplomacy image. When faced with hostile international public opinion, it increased its external publicity activities. The government's efforts to improve the country's image abroad appear to center around creating an image of China as a "country committed to international cooperation" and a "major power" on a "peaceful ascension." TV stations are making an effort to expand activities abroad. They have committed to reporting on domestic situations in China, as well as avoiding negative views about China. However, it will be some time before the Chinese mass media, with its lack of competitiveness, attracts large audiences abroad.

Chinese public diplomacy has the following characteristics: (1) its infrastructure for public diplomacy, or the hardware, including the media and institutional setups, is very well developed to the extent of comparing favorably with that of any other country; (2) it is a government undertaking for the supply of information, which places emphasis primarily on the dissemination of economic rather than educational and cultural information; (3) it is primarily oriented toward eliminating negative images of China but not so much toward the "proactive dissemination of information"; and (4) it will be some time before China manages to accomplish its objective and become a "soft power," and it will be difficult for China to resolve the digital divide existing between English and Chinese Internet sites.

While trying to disseminate information about China internationally by exploiting multimedia, the government is also trying to maintain the barriers between the inside and the outside of the country. In order to prevent the dissemination of unauthorized information through television and the Internet, it has established laws to restrict the flow of information from abroad. The government has also restricted the activities of foreign-invested media organizations within China. However, these efforts to maintain barriers to the inflow of information have not been completely successful.

Meanwhile, efforts to improve China's public diplomacy have been undertaken by government and media organizations at various levels. The Chinese mass media, including newspapers and TV stations, is faced with the need to earn profits and remain economically viable while simultaneously functioning as the "mouthpiece of the party." In its efforts to overcome this dilemma, the media organizations have ultimately opted to compete with one another, reporting sensational stories and inciting nationalistic public opinion. With this sort of public opinion, China's civil diplomacy has begun to take root, even though its influence remains limited. The growth of civil diplomacy is likely to be greatly influenced by the restrictions imposed on the Chinese media.

Globalization, characterized by the rapid development of information technology, has exerted a far-reaching influence on China's foreign diplomacy. China's public diplomacy and civil diplomacy are taking on features peculiar to China. This is reflected in the tense relationship between the Chinese mass media, which is now in the process of breaking out of the mold peculiar to "totalitarianism," and the Chinese government. China's diplomacy has begun to change, moving away from



the days of unilateral and vertical propaganda and entering a new era of public diplomacy.

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## 7

### Non-traditional Security Cooperation for Regionalism in Northeast Asia

*Akaba Tsuneo*

This brief analysis is based on the assumption that the formation of regionalism in Northeast Asia requires confidence building at multiple levels. The central argument is that multilateral cooperation on non-traditional security issues will contribute to the building of mutual confidence among nations. “Northeast Asia” includes China, Japan, North and South Korea, Mongolia, and Russia.

The paper discusses regionalism and non-traditional security and then identifies the main factors preventing the development of multilateral cooperation in both traditional and non-traditional security through comparison with more developed regionalism in other areas of the world, such as among the EU countries, in the NAFTA region, and among the ASEAN countries. The discussion then moves to a brief look at the major non-traditional security issues in Northeast Asia.

#### “Regionalism” Defined

According to Gilbert Rozman, “regionalism” has the following five dimensions:

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