



# Public Diplomacy and Image Building: A Case of China

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## Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between China's public diplomacy and image building in the United States, and the subsequent impact on China's foreign policy in the U.S. and in some other parts of the world. As the second largest economy in the world today, China is playing an increasingly important role in the global arena. China's weight is felt not only in economics and business, but also in politics and international relations. With the growing influence China exerts on global issues, China also feels the necessity to create a better image for itself on the world stage. While specific figures are hard to obtain, by any estimate, China has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in the past few years on promoting China and projecting a positive image of itself to the world. The aggressive public diplomacy campaigns are launched on multiple fronts and in different countries around the world. Examples include promotional visual campaigns in Times Square in New York City, the launch of the China Xinhua News Network Corporation in the United States, and the establishment of the Confucius Institutes around the globe. We explore all these examples in our analysis.

## Focus & Questions

1. U.S. media coverage of China.
2. China's public diplomacy campaigns.
3. China's image in the U.S. and other parts of the world.
4. Analysis and discussion.

*RQ1.* Does China have a more positive image in the world today than before?

*RQ2.* Do Americans see China and Chinese people differently today than before?

*RQ3.* Are China's public relations and marketing strategies to promote China effective in changing people's views of China?

*RQ4.* Is China's foreign policy successful in Asia, Africa, and the United States?

## U.S. Media Coverage of China

1. Amount – Overwhelming.  
Daily, all the time.
2. Scope – Wide.  
Business and economic.  
Government and politics.  
Social, cultural, sports, and entertainment.
3. Media – All over the map.  
Traditional.  
New media.  
Social media.  
Liberal and conservative.
4. Tone – Both positive and negative.

## China's PD Campaigns

1. Promotional videos and ads in Times Square.
2. Xinhua's China Network Corporation.
3. Confucius Institutes.

## Campaign in Times Square



## Xinhua's CNC

1. A 24-hour global English-language news channel.
2. Launched on July 1, 2010.
3. 51% owned by the China Xinhua News Network Corporation.
4. 49% by private investors, including a Chinese home appliances maker.
5. To provide comprehensive coverage of world affairs while explaining matters of direct concern to the Chinese leadership in a perspective its producers consider appropriate.
6. To present an international vision with a Chinese perspective.



## Confucius Institutes

1. About 400 Confucius Institutes around the world now.
2. Plan to increase the number to 500 by 2020.



## Why It Has Not Worked Out?

1. The state is the sponsor: Heavy-handedness.
2. Technical aspects: Celebrities, China red, target audience.
3. Promoting a country vs. promoting a company or product.
4. What happens in China: Gap between the rich and the poor, corruption, pollution, food safety, credibility issues.
5. The CNC failed because of perceptions on freedom of the press, journalistic professionalism, and the quality of the team.

## Conclusion

1. China has been engaging in public diplomacy aggressively in the past few years.
2. The result has not been very encouraging.
3. How China is seen is based not only on promotional images, but also on what is happening inside China, as well as China's performance on the world stage.

