

**Imaging China through the Olympics:  
Government Publicity and Journalism**

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## **Key Words**

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## **Abstract**

Chinese propaganda nowadays is focused on producing soft-sell messages for international consumption instead of hard-core propaganda of agitation. It puts emphasis on “image design” as Jiang Zemin coined it, rather than on the propagation of Communist ideals. This shift from the past is brought about by the government’s new publicity strategy masterminded by Deng Xiaoping. Under this strategy Chinese media have been enlisted in the ideological construction of national images. Image construction for the nation-state has become a mission for the Chinese government and its news media in terms of international communication.

This shift is symbolic of the rapid changes taking place in China. I draw upon Andrew Wernick’s notion of “promotional culture” (1991) to describe these changes, and in particular, their impact on government publicity, domestic reporting, and international journalism in China. I argue that a form of “promotional culture” has made a positive impact on government publicity but not as much on international journalism in China. The shift of focus in propaganda is more of a government initiative than a spontaneous pursuit of international journalism in China. The latter still practices government scripts rather than being creative in form and diversified in content as is domestic reporting. This thesis examines government publicity materials and news media reports concerning Beijing’s Olympic campaign to reveal this extension of promotional culture to government publicity and its implications for Chinese journalism.

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## **Abbreviations**

BOBICO (Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee);

BOCOG (Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad);

CCP (the Chinese Communist Party);

IOC (International Olympic Committee);

PRC (People's Republic of China).

## **Statement of Original Authorship**

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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## Introduction

### Image, Government Publicity, and Journalism

This is a study of Chinese propaganda. Increasingly, propaganda is shifting away from exporting Communist ideology and is focusing on the construction and promotion of an image of China as a rapidly developing country eager to integrate its economic modernization into the global economy. This research is about how the nation-state is remaking its image.

The changes are brought about by a publicity strategy - initially instigated by the late Deng Xiaoping during the 1980s and early 1990s and further refined by his successor Jiang Zemin. Driven by a modernization agenda that relies heavily on foreign investment and technology, the Chinese government has actively engaged in promoting a good image of China to the outside world. The publicity strategy is dispensing with the older model of agitation propaganda. It aims at producing soft-sell messages for international consumption. In the words of Jiang Zemin it puts emphasis on “image design”, rather than on the propagation of Communist ideals. With this strategy, the Chinese media, particularly those charged with making propaganda for foreign audiences, are enlisted in the reconstruction and ‘selling’ of the national image. Image construction on behalf of the nation-state has become a mission for the Chinese government and its news media.

This shift from hard propaganda to soft sell is symbolic of the rapid changes taking place in China. As economic reform deepens, notably integration into the global economy, the government’s publicity machine takes note and learns new ways of conducting propaganda work (*xuanchuan gongzuo*). Although national image has been examined in fields such as advertising, public relations, media studies, international relations, cinema studies, literature, and popular culture, there are few major studies of China’s image cultivation strategies. In this study I seek to redress this imbalance. I examine the function of image making and

Chinese propaganda. And I explore the ideological connotations of this image construction.

The investigation of how national images are made leads to a consideration of the 're-construction' of Chinese national identity. National identity is informed by construction of identity on a regional level, in the case study examined here, Beijing.

My major argument is that "promotional culture" (Wernick 1991) is now widespread. Its impact is felt in government publicity but is largely absent within the field of Chinese international journalism. International journalism in China (formerly called foreign propaganda), is an important part of the Chinese propaganda apparatus. International journalism started with broadcasting news in English from a small radio transmitter by Mao Zedong's communist propagandists during the armed struggles of the 1930s and 1940s. The main purpose of this initial form of foreign propaganda was to get the communists' voice heard so as to gain sympathy and support from the outside world. Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, foreign propaganda has become totally separated from domestic reporting ideologically and institutionally. The ideology of foreign propaganda directly reflects China's foreign policies while that of domestic propaganda is information management.

The term *neiwai youbie* (literally "inside and outside should be differentiated") describes the distinction between foreign and domestic propaganda works. As an instruction from the Party and the government to foreign propaganda practitioners, this catchphrase has dual functions. First, it functions as a discipline -- a rule of procedure that seeks to prevent media from leaking political sensitive information to outside China. It also reminds foreign propaganda workers of the need to constantly update their knowledge of China's foreign policies and to improve their skills so as to make propaganda messages more acceptable to foreign audiences. Because of this distinction between the "inside" and the "outside", foreign propaganda has been historically under the Party and the government's tight control. Foreign propaganda workers are

handpicked by the Party and become a small elite group in the Party's hierarchy of power with access to "inside" information which is often denied to the public.

For the general public in China, foreign propaganda is more a concept than an actual practice as foreign propaganda materials are produced for foreign consumption and circulated outside China. An extreme example from the past is people mistaking *Xinhua News Agency*, China's national wireless news service, for a People's Commune. People's Communes were farming collectives established in the 1950s and modelled on the former Soviet Union. The Chinese character for commune and agency is the same, so *Xinhua News Agency* was mistaken for Xinhua People's Commune. Even in the early 1980s, such cases still occurred. In China today, most people are distanced from the machinations of foreign propaganda work.

On the other hand, foreign propaganda has become institutionalized under the CCP (party) and the State Council (government). The foreign propaganda network is a sprawling apparatus which also includes diplomacy and designated government departments at national, provincial, and city levels. The media are the major vehicles of dissemination. Foreign propaganda media outlets have been established, covering the print media and the electronic media, such as radio and wireless news service (see Appendix 2). Foreign propaganda has become not only an important part of the CCP's ideological work but also a distinctive journalistic discipline practiced by a small number of people (when compared to the large legions of domestic propaganda workers). However, as propaganda bears a negative connotation internationally, the term "foreign propaganda" was modified to "international communication" or "international journalism" in the 1990s. The institutions and the practice, however, have remained unchanged.

My argument is that international journalism in China still replays government scripts. It is primarily a reactive practice. It is not as diversified in content and form as domestic reporting. According to Wernick's notion of promotional culture, marketing strategies extend beyond the economic sphere. In China the government has adopted marketing techniques from advertising and public

relations in order to re-invigorate government publicity. Examples include hiring PR companies and making significant symbolic changes to the translations of key terms. For instance the official English translation for “propaganda” (*xuanchuan*) became “publicity” in 1997, and “propaganda for audience abroad” (*duiwai xuanchuan*) is now replaced by “publicize China overseas” or “international communication”. Even the State Council’s Office of Foreign Propaganda has changed its title to the Office of Information.

Despite the semantic makeover, propaganda is still the main concern of government publicity and journalism. In the following chapters the term ‘propaganda’ does not necessarily assume negative connotations. How often do we hear the term used to give the impression that someone is attempting to mislead the reader? The cry of ‘it’s just propaganda’ is increasingly heard in the post-Cold War age of terrorism: from left wing critics of capitalist media (Herman and Chomsky 1988) to critics of popular culture and advertising (Edelstein 1997). Chomsky argues that US news media is no less propagandistic than state-controlled news media of socialist countries. It works to promote capitalism – it may even achieve more through the adoption of the techniques of promotional culture than hard-core propaganda but ultimately has a similar outcome. This analysis leads John Hartley to view propaganda from a different perspective – the perspective of the reader. Hartley argues that although propaganda has a bad name, it is not necessarily a bad thing for the reader. He views the reader as sophisticated and used to being exposed to propaganda, and therefore not easily manipulated. Compared with news, Hartley argues, propaganda is “more honest” for the reader (2002: 53) in the sense that it not only makes truth claims, but also makes open the rhetorical and visual techniques it uses to propagate ideas (*ibid.* 188). Propaganda does not make any pretentious attempt to hide the fact that it is propaganda. News, however, employs various techniques to “produce the effect that techniques used in the communication are ‘not there’” (*ibid.* 188). This debate about propaganda is important background to this thesis which seeks to track the shift from hard to promotional propaganda in Chinese international communication.

As the critical reader, I draw upon Hartley's open concept of propaganda to analyse Chinese government publicity materials and news reports about Beijing's Olympic campaign. I also examine foreign media coverage of the same event. I find it more convenient to do the former than the latter. This is to some extent due to my familiarity with Chinese rhetorical styles. My exposure to Chinese media, as a former propaganda worker, means that I have an insider's understanding of the processes that contribute to the propaganda campaigns. If we were to adopt a standard position on propaganda, my "indoctrination" would render me less able to see through the message. But it should be noted at the outset that people in China, as elsewhere in the world, have the capacity to decode and evaluate media messages.

### **Case Study**

Beijing's bid and its preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games saw the government's publicity strategy put to the test in a nationwide campaign. For hosting countries the Olympics is a site for image construction. This starts from the very beginning -- the bid, and even earlier. China's new publicity strategy aims to promote Beijing's bid through the construction of the image of China. Although political, economic, and cultural gains are important elements of Beijing's bid, it is the symbolic nature of publicity, the creation of an imagined national identity, which makes Beijing's Olympic campaign an ideal case for study.

Case study is a widely-used means to do qualitative research in almost all fields of study. Robert Stake (2000) identifies three types of case study: the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study, and the collective case study. According to Stake, when a researcher is interested in the case itself and wants to understand its particularity, he is doing an intrinsic case study; when he aims to gain an "insight" into an issue or wants better understanding of something else other than the case itself, he is doing an instrumental case study; and when the researcher attempts to investigate a "phenomenon, population, or general condition" by studying a number of cases, he is doing the collective case study.

Judging from this categorization, Beijing's Olympic campaign in this project is an instrumental case study because findings about national image-making practices are being derived from the study of a particular series of event – the Beijing Olympics bid and the associated Games publicity. The strength of this type of case study lies in the capability of advancing understanding of not only the national image-making itself, but also something else, that is, Chinese propaganda in general.

China bid twice for the hosting of an Olympics. Media coverage of China's bid for the 2000 Games reveals two issues that were significant to the final result: the issue of human rights in China, and the issue of logistics and management. Western<sup>1</sup> coverage was largely negative, criticising China's human rights record and raising questions about China's inadequate infrastructure. Chinese media, on the other hand, retaliated aggressively. I found that China was still confronted by the same two issues during the second bid. But there is a big difference in the way the two issues were dealt with by Chinese media. While human rights was still the key issue for foreign media, the Chinese media adopted a different approach. Moreover, there was a clear association between the two issues and the three themes promoted for Beijing's second bid. The concepts of "Green Olympics", "Hi-tech Olympics", and "People's Olympics" were obviously built around the two issues, with official interpretations pre-empting anticipated human rights criticisms.

These findings are important for this project. They not only differentiate between the two bids but also foreground that foreign media coverage of Beijing's first bid significantly affected China's publicity strategy for Beijing's second bid. This is a key preliminary finding.

This case study of the Beijing Olympics, however, does not represent the whole picture of Chinese propaganda. The Olympics is a special occasion for which specific publicity effort is designed and tailored. But because this special

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<sup>1</sup> Western countries in this thesis refer to countries embracing a liberal democracy, contrasting to countries with one-party systems of government. The term "Western" is itself used extensively, and sometimes loosely, in China to indicate developed capitalist economies, most notably the United States.

publicity is developed within the framework of Chinese government's new publicity strategy, it is therefore expected to have some positive implications for Chinese journalism and propaganda work in general.

### **Sources of Data**

In collecting data, I chose three sources: government publicity material, interviews, and news media. Government publicity material includes the theme slogans, the emblem for Beijing's bid, and issues of *Beijing 2008*, the bid's information bulletin. Both BOBICO (Beijing's bid committee) and BOCOG (Beijing's organising committee for the 2008 Games) are official organizations representing the Beijing municipal government. Their promotional materials are treated as government publicity products. Although the Chinese-language media in Beijing occasionally allowed different expressions of opinion regarding Beijing's bid, there was virtually no conflict between the municipal government propaganda and the national government propaganda targeted at foreign audiences. The municipal government and the national government were highly unified in seeing the Games as serving both local and national interests.

Interviews with people involved in the production of government publicity materials reveal much about the image-makers – their attitudes towards Beijing's Olympic campaign, towards their role in the campaign, and towards foreign media coverage of the campaign. The interviewees include one BOBICO official, one senior media organization official, one senior news editor, and one seasoned sports journalist (see Appendix 1).

Because the research focuses primarily on the manufacturing of China's images for the foreign audience, I chose two Chinese news organizations which are engaged in publicizing China overseas in the English language. These are *Xinhua News Agency*, a wire service which functions like AP and Reuters with 30 branches across China and around 100 outposts across the world; and *China Daily*, an English-language newspaper that is published in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xian, Hong Kong and New York and distributed to 30 provinces and autonomous regions and to 150 countries and regions (see Appendix 2).



They are among the major media players of Chinese international media communication. I did not include TV or radio text because I wanted to keep the scope of the project manageable.

Although the object of my analysis is Chinese propaganda, I also included foreign media treatment so as to situate the study within the international context of media and politics. Without making comparison between Chinese media coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign and international media coverage of the same event, it would be difficult to understand China's desire for image building as well as the actual practice of image making. It was against the background of international media environment and the politics of globalization that the strategy of China's foreign propaganda of its Olympic dreams was formulated by the state government and applied by its media. A comparison of images in news coverage within Chinese and international media is therefore expected to reveal the myths, the discourses, and the ideologies in the existing journalistic and propaganda practices that typify the current post-Cold War period.

The same rationale is reflected in the selection of the four countries, namely the United States, Britain, Australia, and Singapore. These countries reflect presumably different national perspectives and treatment of news coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign. The United States, as a political, economic and media superpower, is an obvious choice. The British press reflects a particular ideological position with a strong human rights tradition in terms of its media's power in the shaping of public opinion. Singapore provides a glimpse of Southeast Asian countries' attitude toward Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympics. Australia is chosen for its unique geographic location that bridges European cultures and Asian cultures, and for the fact that Sydney beat Beijing at the 1993 bid and hosted the 2000 Olympic Games. The selection of these four countries will provide points of reference in comparing differences and similarities in values and political ideologies between these countries.

I chose one major newspaper from each of these countries as representative samples of media text. These newspapers are *The New York Times* (U.S.A.), *The Times* (Britain), *The Australian* (Australia), and *The Straits Times* (Singapore).

All of the four newspapers (see appendix 3) have a reputation for international coverage and belong to the category of elite media (Chomsky 1997; Lee 2003). These media inform elites, who are in turn influential in forming public debates that influence how readers construct impressions and opinions of world events.

I conducted a two-stage preliminary research for this project in order to identify key issues that had been covered by both Chinese and international media. Stage 1 looked into previous media coverage of Beijing's first bid for the 2000 Olympics. It identified two major issues: the issue of human rights and the issue of logistics. Stage 2 investigated into media coverage of Beijing's second bid for the 2008 Games and found the same two issues as the major issues confronting Beijing's second bid. The identifications were made from a large amount of data collected within a time frame of January 1992 to February 2003. I accessed *Xinhua News Agency's* data base for its news bulletins and collected other Chinese foreign propaganda materials during my field work in China in 2002. I accessed the foreign data through the research engine of Nexis. In both cases of database research, I used "Beijing Olympics" as the key words to search for news items.

The scope of the two--stage preliminary research was not limited to the selected media as I wanted a bigger picture of media coverage. So I collected the following materials for the preliminary research:

- *Xinhua* news bulletin dating from January 1992 to February 2003;
- *China Daily* from November 1998 to August 2002;
- *Beijing Review* from November 1998 to December 2001;
- *Beijing This Month* from issue 80 of 2000 to issue 91 of 2001;
- *China Today*: one story on the February issue of 2000 and one story on the July issue of 2001;
- *Business Beijing*: issue 93 of August 2001.

The same broad approach was also applied to the collection of international data in the same time frame of January 1992 to February 2003:

USA:

- *The New York Times*;
- *The Washington Post*;
- *Los Angeles Times*;
- *USA Today*;
- *Chicago Times*.

Britain:

- *The Times*;
- *Financial Times (London)*;
- *The Daily Telegraph (London)*;
- *The Guardian (London)*;
- *Daily Mail (London)*.

Australia:

- *The Australian*;
- *Australian Financial Review*;
- *The Canberra Times*;
- *Sydney Morning Herald*;
- *Sun Herald (Sydney)*;
- *The Advertiser*;
- *The Daily Telegraph*.

Singapore:

- *The Straits Times*.

After identifying the two key issues through this two-stage preliminary research, I narrowed down the scope of data to a manageable level: the selected Chinese and foreign media. I revisited Xinhua News Agency's database for Xinhua news stories. For the other data sources, I went online again using the research engine of Factiva.com. I traced down news items with human rights content, using human rights as key words. I also used other key words such as venue, environment, language, and service to locate news reports concerning the issue

of Beijing's preparedness for the 2008 Games. This brought about two findings: the human rights stories occurred largely before and around the day Beijing won the Games, while logistics stories mainly appeared after Beijing's victory. This is why the text I used for analysing the issue of human rights is on and around July 14 of 2008 whereas the logistics text is mainly after that date. I took from each publication only a few samples which I consider carry more explicit messages than the rest about the two key issues. This has more to do with methodological considerations than political bias. Basically, this study adopts a textual analysis approach following the tradition of cultural studies.

### **Myth, Discourse, and Ideology**

My approach to data is a cultural studies approach the prime agenda of which is to examine how particular structures of meaning determine or are determined by relations of power, notwithstanding whether these relations are representative of the public culture of the state or the operations of civil society. The research methodology combines textual analysis (in the tradition of literary and critical reading), discourse analysis (from the field of critical linguistics), and contextual analysis (drawing on media and communication studies). I apply these three different approaches to the text to examine three components which I consider essential to foreign propaganda in China, namely myth, discourse, and ideology. Of the three, ideology is the focal point because for any study of China, an understanding of the role of ideology is crucial. In contrast to the autonomous and independent role of the media in liberal democracies – the so-called “watchdog media” in China are the CCP's tongue and throat. Foreign propaganda, in particular, is a crucial part of CCP's ideological work. I understand the relationship between the three components as follows: both myth and discourse are culturally constructed as are ideological constructions. Myth can be, and is, exploited by politics. Thus political myths are the ideological consequences of connotation (naturalised over time and through repetition in particular contexts as discourses). They are not simply crude propaganda techniques. What comes out of China is both propaganda and discourse. The combined approach to myth, discourse, and ideology is therefore not just a

linguistically-centred discourse analysis as such, but an analysis of discourse which places discourses within the context of globalization and international politics.

The textual analysis methodology I apply to data takes semiotics as foundation and studies myth as signification system following Roland Barthes (1972). As a discipline of signs, semiotics studies meaning and signifying practices of a culture's sign systems. The critique of myth as a signifying practice is a well-established field in semiotics. My application of myth-making is premised on national image being a cultural construction. In this sense the analysis, where it evokes "imaging", approximates the cultural construction of brands (that is, branding) in modern marketing. The national branding project is thus an extension of the past. Benedict Anderson's (1983) "imagined community" sees the nation-state as imagined and socially constructed. Turner (1994) argues that all nations are constructed and all forms of collective identity are culturally produced. The only difference between nations in national image making, he observes, may be that the older nations have a longer history of mythologies from which mythical messages can be more implicit. In this culturalist explanation, Michael Billig believes that how the national 'we' is constructed - and what is meant by such construction - are the crucial questions that relate to national identity or national image (Billig 1995: 70).

The definition of myth most related to this study therefore comes from semiotics. Yuri Lotman (1990) sees myth as a "central text-forming mechanism" that creates a picture of the world. In his analysis, myth always says something about oneself and so it divides the world into a culture's "own internal space" and an external space of 'theirs' through classification, stratification, and ordering. In other words, myth is an ideological effect of connotation. It identifies the "us" vs. "them" construction in the myth making. But this juxtaposition is not as clear-cut as in the past when China was ideologically positioned against bourgeois capitalism. The case study of Beijing's Olympic campaign clearly shows China's effort to be culturally specific while trying to identify with the global economy, that is to be "us" and at the same time one of "them".

Barthes' semiotic approach to myth is along the same line, seeing myth as a "mode of signification" (1972: 109). Barthes refers to myth as ways of thinking about people, products, places, or ideas that are structured to send messages to the reader or viewer of the text. The emphasis here is on codes of representation and "encoding". For Barthes, myth is "a type of speech" and its function is to make ideas, or the picture of the world created by myth, appear natural, inevitable, and eternal as truth (Bignell 1997). In other words, myth functions both as a discourse and an ideological effect of connotation. The ideological effect of connotation is made possible by the technique which co-opts neutral signs to become signifiers without historical grounding in second-order connotative semiotic systems. In this way, Barthes suggests, myth functions to affirm status quo. I draw upon this conception of myth by Barthes as a discourse and as an ideological consequence to investigate how myths are used by Chinese propaganda in the image construction on behalf of the nation-state. However, the crucial task is to "remove the impression of naturalness by showing how the myth is constructed and showing that it promotes one way of thinking while seeking to eliminate all the alternative ways of thinking" (Bignell 1997: 25). The technique I use is to trace the roots and formation of myth.

My analysis follows Barthes' idea that myth making is the bringing together of 'signs' and their connotations to shape a particular message. I examine images and discourse of the government and the media. I also trace their origins to investigate the foundations on which China's image make-over is based. The political and social contexts are important in revealing how and why the particular message is chosen. The myths of China generated through the Cold War are central to understanding of Chinese and foreign media coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign, and by extension Chinese propaganda.

Although I accept Roland Barthes' notion of sign, connotation and denotation, and dual-order signification system, I acknowledge its limitations. The dual-order signification system is not sufficient to study the way in which myth is used in China not just as propaganda means but as a discursive consequence of ideology. So I go deeper and wider to "the third order of signification" developed by John Fiske and John Hartley (1989). Based on Roland Barthes' two-order

signification system, Fiske and Hartley cohere the cultural meanings generated in the second order “into a comprehensive, cultural picture of the world, a coherent and organized view of the reality with which we are faced” (Fiske 1989: 41). This third-order signification “reflects the broad principles by which a culture organizes and interprets the reality with which it has to cope” (Fiske 1989: 46). In other words, the third order coheres the cultural meanings into a narrative, a story, and in the case of my study, an analysis of discourse. It enables me to study myth not only as a discourse and as an ideology, but also as a broad narrative of Chinese propaganda, a story of Chinese nation building.

But the semiotic approach has its limitations. As pointed out by Bignell (1997), Barthes’ structuralist semiotic approach may imply that fixed meanings are structured into signs and texts through codes and through a fixed range of ways of positioning the audience. The limitation of this approach, Bignell observes, is that it may reveal “merely the meaning which the discourse of semiotic analysis allows it to reveal” (Bignell 1997: 105-107). In order to complement myth critique I use techniques drawn from the discipline of discourse analysis.

In linguistics “discourse” refers to spoken language, as distinctive from text as written language. Discourse analysis literally analysis of speech. Since the mid-1960s, discourse analysis has expanded from linguistics into many disciplines and developed a diversity of theory and methodology. Now a trans-disciplinary study variously called discourse analysis, discourse studies, or text linguistics (Van Dijk 1985), discourse analysis studies discourse not merely as a linguistic unit, but as a unit of human action, interaction, communication, and cognition. Guy Cook points out that discourse analysis “is not concerned with language alone. It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation, through what medium; how different types of communication evolved, and their relationship to each other” (Cook 1992: 1). Some linguists have applied discourse analysis to the analysis of media text with frameworks and approaches ranging from cultural studies to critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1995, Allan 1995, Fowler 1991, Kress 1996, Van Dijk 1985). They study media text closely, in particular news discourses, but these studies are informed by social and political

analysis. Such an approach to discourse establishes the importance of the link between text and context, overcoming the weakness of the traditional linguistic approach which used to identify the “discourse” only within language. Critical linguist Roger Fowler (1991), for instance, applies ideas drawn from critical linguistics to the study of news as a product of the social and political world. Critical linguists Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (Kress 1996) study visual text as a “grammar of visual design” which they consider is socially constructed and culturally determined. Dutch text linguist Teun Van Dijk (1985) approaches news as discourse from a sociocognitive perspective and stresses the importance of context. All these four develop detailed theoretical frameworks for the analysis of media discourses and apply them to their various media text examples.

My work is informed by the critical discourse approach (CDA) represented by Fowler, Kress, Norman Fairclough, and Van Dijk. CDA holds a dominant position in the field of media discourse and was very active and productive during the last two decades. According to Garrett and Bell, this approach was responsible for the majority of published research into media discourse (Garrett 1998). For my thesis, I am less concerned with CDA’s position or productivity, than its explicit political concern and analytical frameworks. CDA reveals the role of discourse in reproducing socio-political dominance; it sees media as discourse-bearing institutions. I share this concern as my work attempts to critically examine the power relationship between government and media through investigating how the dominant discourse is reproduced and circulated by the media. And to achieve this end, Van Dijk’s analytical framework for news reports is a powerful tool.

Van Dijk’s framework is based on the idea that discourse is a communicative event. When discourses are thus defined, “their actual processing or uses in social and communicative contexts should also be accounted for in an integrated approach” (Van Dijk 1988:18). Van Dijk believes that words have histories and bring with them as “potential situated meanings” all the meanings they have accumulated in history. A leading theorist and advocate of discourse analysis as a cross-disciplinary study of text in social context, Van Dijk aims to “integrate



the production and interpretation of discourse as well as its textual analysis” (Garrett 1998: 6-7). In his theoretical framework, social actors and their minds serve as the mediator between ideology and discourse. Ideological positions can be studied both at the micro level (such as lexical items and grammatical structures), and at the macro level (topics and themes). His focus on ideology functions to reveal the discursive process in which the “we” group is represented in a favourable light and the “They” group unfavourably. As an ideological message is often not straightforward, one of the techniques is to look for vagueness, ambiguity, and lack of obvious coherence in a text. In other words, what texts do not say is equally important, if not more, to what they actually say. This conceptualization of discourse and ideology is a good way to complement the myth critique in my work which studies myth as an ideological effect of connotation.

Van Dijk summarises his analytical framework of microstructures and macrostructures as the following:

LOCAL STRUCTURES			
(Microstructures)	}		
Sentence structures (grammar)		}STYLE	RELEVANCE
Morphology			STRUCTURES
Syntax			
Semantics and Lexicon	}		RHETORICAL
Sequential structures (text grammar)			OPERATIONS
Relative syntax (cohesion analysis)			
Relative semantics (coherence analysis)			
GLOBAL STRUCTURES			
Semantic macrostructures (topics, themes)			
Formal superstructures (schemata)			

(Van Dijk 1988: 17)

This framework describes the textual structures specific to news reports in the press. The idea is simple: analysis of news can be conducted at both the micro level and the macro level. The micro structures are related to style and relevance of language while the macro structures have more to do with rhetorical

operations and meaning. This systematic structural analysis approach combined with an emphasis on social context or, in Van Dijk's theorization, the schemata. It is useful for my work in two ways. First, by looking into the syntactic, stylistic, and semantic structures of news, this framework helps me to identify and define those strategic words, sentences, and statements in the samples of text that are crucial in the construction of meaning. Such language structures include the headline, the introduction or the topic, direct quotes and indirect quotes, descriptions, and the ending. It also helps me to identify and define the myths used in the text to convey a particular ideological message. Second, the schemata categories are of particular relevance to my project in that they help me to identify and define the presence or absence of specific historical or contextual elements. These contextual elements are crucial not only to the deconstruction of myth but also to the understanding of Chinese foreign propaganda in general.

That said, I need to point out here that in actually applying the framework to my analysis of news, I choose not to use his theoretical or linguistic terms as they might confuse with other terms used in myth critique. Rather, I use the framework throughout my work but employ a simple, non-academic-jargon language of everyday use. This is consistent with my positioning of myself, as I pointed out earlier, as a critical reader of news. Also, in applying a synthesis of textual analysis, discourse analysis, and contextual analysis, it is not necessary to indicate which of these approaches is used and at which point. In most cases, I integrate two or even all three of these analytical approaches into the analysis of news reports. But still I ensure that the sense of methodology is evident, and explicit through the detailed discussions at both the micro and macro levels.

Apart from complementing myth critique in my study, Van Dijk's framework helps to achieve the project's goals in a more general way. In applying Van Dijk's framework to my project, for instance, the emphasis is on the macrostructures where, as Peter Garrett and Allan Bell (Garrett 1998) point out, meanings are assigned by readers. At this level, macro-rules draw upon the reader's world knowledge to define the most important information in a text. An example of this is when we summarize a text. This requires me, as a critical reader of news, not only to draw upon my knowledge of the world but also to

engage in contextual research into Chinese media and world politics so as to make sense of Chinese foreign propaganda. Thus the analysis of topics, themes, and schemata is important as it shows the depth of the study. Meanwhile I also give attention to the microstructures such as news headlines, styles of reporting, and key words and phrases. So my application of Van Dijk's analytical framework of news as discourse is at both levels, but to different degrees.

The last method in my integrated approach to data is contextual analysis. Widely used in media studies, contextual analysis is a tool to situate meaning in a social, cultural, and historical context. Context is an integral part of my study as it provides a historical framework for the understanding of Chinese foreign propaganda and Chinese propaganda in general. To give a sound basis to my critical reading of news, I researched extensively into academic literature on Chinese media and China's history with the Olympic movement to trace the development of Chinese media and China's involvement with Olympics. It results in two separate chapters (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2) and discussions integrated in analysis throughout the remaining chapters. Without these contextual analyses, the research would be limited to a structural analysis of news as language without social, cultural, and historical grounding.

This combination of textual analysis, discourse analysis, and context analysis has enabled me to study how myths and images have been exploited by the Chinese government and its media to construct a fiction, a discourse to serve the ideology of nation building.

### **Chapter Layout**

There are seven chapters in this thesis in addition to the introduction chapter and the conclusion chapter. I divided these chapters into three parts. Part one is a background on China's image construction and serves to put the research in the political, economic, and cultural context of a China in transition. It includes Introduction, Chapter one, and Chapter two. Chapter one is a literature review that brings together scholarship on image and image building by nations. This chapter also includes a historical overview of image construction by the Chinese

government and Chinese media. Chapter two brings the project to the site on which this research is conducted. It concentrates on China's Olympic history and Olympic experiences to present China's perception of the Games as an opportunity to change the image of China for the international audience. It also sets out the issues of human rights and logistics as the focus for analysis in the following chapters.

Part two examines the actual text. It investigates how the images are constructed by a deconstruction of the text. It includes the four content chapters which use the techniques of myth study and discourse analysis to look closely at Chinese propaganda and foreign media coverage of Beijing's bid and preparations for the 2008 Olympics. Chapter three concerns how Chinese government publicity and journalism dealt with the issue of human rights in the construction of China's image for international consumption. Chapter four looks at the ways foreign press shaped their coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign in the rhetoric of human rights. Chapter five examines China's approach – positive propaganda -- to the issue of logistics through government propaganda and journalism. Chapter six investigates how foreign press covered the issue of China's ability to manage the Games.

Part three is a reconstruction of the text through a discussion of the techniques and the ideologies behind the image constructions. It consists of Chapter seven and the Conclusion chapter. While Chapter seven carries the discussion, the Conclusion chapter brings together the research findings and contemplates possible implications of this Olympic publicity experience of China for the image design strategy during the actual hosting of the 2008 Games and for Chinese propaganda in general.

### **Limitations**

The study of image-making is a large, and relatively new, topic in China. Although I have been able to collect a great deal of valuable data, I am aware of limitations, which lie in the method of analysis. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln point out two approaches within the textual tradition:

some scholars examine the mass media and popular culture as sites where history, ideology, and subjective experiences come together. These scholars produce critical ethnographies of the audience in relation to particular historical moments. Other scholars read texts as sites where hegemonic meanings are produced, distributed, and consumed.

(Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 160-161)

This project takes the second approach, focusing on how meaning is produced and distributed. It does not address the question of reception directly. Yuri Lotman believes that “By reconstructing the type of ‘common memory’ which a text and its consumers share, we shall discover the ‘readership image’ hidden in the text” (Lotman 1990: 64). Andrew Wernick (1991) complements this approach by open-ended interviews to get to the preferred reading. Likewise, I do not deal with the audience and readerships directly but adopt the methods of discourse analysis complemented by open-ended interviews to get to the “readership image” and the preferred reading.

This focus on production of image is more directly related to the title of the thesis itself than neglect of reception. There are also pragmatic issues. It is very difficult to conduct meaningful audience studies in this field as the target audiences are too remote and fragmented. In the case of foreign propaganda, the audiences are located in three countries, at least.

Finally, this study is situated within a period of great social and economic transformation. The 1980s and 1990s signalled great changes in Chinese society. In particular, China became a more open society and people gained greater personal freedoms. All this has contributed to a reassessment of China’s national image and has made “imaging the nation” an important area of study.

## Part One

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# The Construction

## Chapter 1

### The Construction of Image – The Chinese Story

The image of openness and progress painstakingly projected abroad by the Chinese government during the 1980s was tarnished in 1989. The Tiananmen Square incident, referred to as the June 4<sup>th</sup> incident by the Chinese government was an image disaster. International media referred to the incident as the Tiananmen Square massacre, condemning the incident as a violation of human rights and suppression of democracy. Western countries, led by the United States, tried to isolate China politically and imposed economic sanctions against China.

In the period following this much publicised incident, government publicity and domestic reporting in China produced promotional soft-sells instead of hard-core propaganda full of political slogans and ideological teachings. This shift indicates the rise of advertising and public relations into what Andrew Wernick (1991) has called “promotional culture”. In Wernick’s conception of promotional culture, marketing strategies are applied to communications beyond the realm of economic exchange to include politics, educational institutions and the self. The purpose is to cater to the need for public-image construction. Promotion, Wernick argues, is a “rhetorical form diffused throughout our culture” (1991: vii). In this context, promotion is a concept that crosses the line between advertising, public relations and journalism.

I use the concept of promotional culture to demonstrate how communication techniques and skills of advertising, marketing, and public relations are used in image construction. In this study it is *the image of Beijing*, and by association the Chinese nation, that is being cultivated and managed, and it is the Chinese government and the state-owned news media that are ultimately the image-makers. In utilising Wernick’s concept, however, I am aware of his Marxist critique of consumer society. Wernick states that promotion must be defined not by what it says, but by what it does. And what promotion does, according to Wernick, is to force the entry of the economic world into the cultural, and

thereby devaluing the latter. Wernick describes this process of the expansion of capitalism into culture as a new domain, a new area of growth. But colonization of non-commercial territories by market forces is not the field I am entering because my study does not concern consumer society or the wider application of promotional culture within social relationships. What I am interested in Wernick's concept of promotional culture is the term "promotion" which is applicable to my study to the extent that it describes the process in which media in China is becoming part of the broader market economy. This is demonstrated in the fact that advertising is now a major revenue source for Chinese media (Donald 2002: 3-17, Keane 2004: 104-117). I therefore use the term "promotional" to describe the changes in Chinese media, drawing a contrast between the social relations of media as they were organized before 1995 and how they have come to be organized since then. While Wernick's description of the expansion of capital into cultural domains is interesting, my study does not share or develop a key assumption underpinning Wernick's critique. He assumes that prior to capitalism cultural and economic social relations were clearly distinguishable.

I am therefore using the term without all of its critical connotations. However, this should not imply or lead the reader to assume that marketization of Chinese media is a devaluation of cultural forms and related activities. My use of the concept is specific to understanding changes in Chinese propaganda and to putting my study of propaganda into a wider context. That said, I am also aware of the limits of market forces in the Chinese propaganda field. Although some hail the commercialization of media in China as an erosion of the Party's ideological control (Chu 1994, Liu 1998), others are doubtful, arguing that the Party and the state are not only in control of the marketization of media but also are active players in the process, benefiting from it rather than losing (Zhao 1998, Chan 1995, Keane 2002). It is this second argument that has informed my study. My project is about government promotional strategies, and how those persons entrusted with the task of image maintenance (in this case the media) borrow marketing skills and techniques from advertising and public relations. This is the context in which the Chinese government's new publicity strategy has been developed and put into practice.



The following demonstrates that while much academic research has been conducted on Chinese propaganda, few have specifically dealt with national image construction by the Chinese government and its news media. As China's leadership has redefined the mission of China's foreign propaganda as "image design", I argue that construction of China's images deserves more academic attention.

In order to establish the foundations for the theoretical concept of promotional culture, I first look at the origins of image-making through two core traditions: the behavioural and the critical communication studies approaches. I provide some examples from both traditions that are relevant to the "imaging" of China. I then trace the development of China's national image through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following this is a discussion of propaganda and its relationship with journalism and public relations, culminating in a point where hard-core propaganda meets soft-sell promotional products.

### **Section 1: National Image in Academic Literature**

While the concept of the territorially-bounded state came into being in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Hardt 2000), the rapid spread of nationalism was made possible by print journalism some two centuries later. But it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the Cold War era, that governments became acutely aware of the relations between national identity, nationalism, and national image construction. The preoccupation with image building serves a dual function: it shores up support for the political regime, and it promotes the goals of the nation within a wider sphere of influence. The latter has taken on greater significance in recent times, largely due to nations' desire to participate in global markets and in doing so, to integrate into the global economic community.

Michael Kunczik (1997) draws attention to "large gaps" in a scattered research field. This scattered field can be broadly divided into two intellectual traditions: behavioural and critical cultural approach. The former is concerned with human perception and behavioural modification techniques. It views image-making as a

technology based upon observable and measurable ‘effects’. On the other hand, the cultural tradition is more qualitative in its scope, and is evident in the fields of cinema studies, literature, and popular culture. It draws attention to textual representations (encoding), their mythological basis, and their reception (decoding) in the case of audience ethnographic research. There is, nonetheless, a degree of crossover between these fields. The modern art of image-making owes its success to the myths and symbols of literature and popular culture as well as to the practices of market research.

However, there are limitations to each of these two approaches. The behavioural is criticised for treating the reader as passive receivers of information whereas the cultural approach is criticised for being too elaborate and too subjective. This is why I adopt the cultural approach but use a combined methodology of textual analysis, discourse analysis, and contextual analysis to draw my inferences in a more systematic scheme of theoretical basis and methodological approaches.

Since my thesis analyses text, not audiences, the following literature review of behavioural and cultural approaches to media effects may seem out of place. But in terms of identifying my research area, this literature review is necessary. So the main purpose of the literature review is to identify where my study should sit and what intellectual traditions have informed my study.

### ***Image and Cultural Approach***

Much of the literature on image cultivation takes cultural studies approach. These studies are undertaken in the fields of cinema studies, literature and popular culture. These fields of study make use of interpretive ‘psycho-analytical’ methods to study texts, look for meaning, identity, and explain fiction. While there is a fairly large body of scholarly work on textual representations, not many of them deal with the image of nations. Those that have done so have adopted a variety of textual methodologies.

Michael Chanan (1985) has looked at Cuban national images through a study of Cuban cinema. Dick Hebdige (1988) has conducted interpretation of national

images through reading advertisements. Ed Guerrero (1993) has examined the image of African Americans in Hollywood movies.

Sport has also been studied in relation to national images. Lawrence Wenner (1998) has studied the role of mediated sport in constructing national mythology and promoting national image. John Sinclair (2000) has analysed the media coverage of the torch ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympics to reveal how national symbols are used for national image building. Patsy McCarthy (2000) and Caroline Hatcher (2000) have explored how myths of the bush, bigotry and banishment and the myth of Australia as a sporting country were drawn upon to construct the identity and images of Australia in the Sydney Olympic Bid Committee's representation of Australia that won Sydney the right to host the Olympic Games.

Studies in the fields of cinema, literature and popular culture have shown how China has been depicted in the West. The stereotypical images of China are an example of what Edward Said (1978) has famously termed 'Orientalism'. In 1978 Said wrote:

. . . a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial ambassadors, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind", "destiny" and so on.

(Said 1978:2-3)

Orientalist images of China are revealed in a work by Isaacs (1958), who examined popular literature for American attitudes toward China and India. He found that the American image of China was linked to an ancient Chinese civilization, as well as to a barbarian nation of weaklings.

This image persists. Moreover, the image of a cultural China remains central. The cultural image is understandably often positively linked to the ancient Chinese high civilization and culture.

But this culturalist or Sinological image has had to exist alongside a political image of China. In a study of how America represented the Soviet Union and China, Cyndy Hendershot (2000) found that a crucial shift began to emerge in the early 1960s from demonising the Soviets to making China ‘the most frightening’ of Cold War threats - the ‘demonic Red force’. Discussing the film *Red Chinese Battle-plan* made by the Department of Defence in 1964, Hendershot wrote:

The film tries to instil a fear of Chinese communism into the viewer by showing images of a giant dragon that first conquers the map of China and then conquers the map of the entire world. Quotations from Mao portray China as an aggressive and intolerant state. An actor playing Mao says, ‘political power grows out of the barrel of a gun’.

(Hendershot 2000: 67-73)

Hendershot’s study reiterates a theme that appeared earlier in the 1962 film *The Manchurian Candidate*, which tells a horror story of the brainwashing of US troops kidnapped by the Chinese and Soviet communists. The theme also appeared in an episode of a television series *Outer Limits*. Aired on Sept. 23, 1963, the episode entitled “The One Hundred Days of the Dragon” focuses on Chinese Communism’s attempt to take over the American government.

The 1997 film *Red Corner*, which starred Richard Gere as a US journalist who was framed and unjustly convicted by Chinese communist officials, portrayed China as an unforgiving, authoritarian society. Not surprisingly, the film was banned in China, as was its production company, MGM .

The demonising of China by Western mass media continued from the changeover from Mao to Deng (Li 1996), even though the 1970s and 1980s were a period when foreign perceptions of China were more positive and often focused on China's economic reform and evolution towards a market economy. The positive image of an opening and developing China was nevertheless tarred regularly by accusations of human rights abuses.

An example of the human rights abuse narrative occurred in a photo exhibition in Washington DC called *Images of Laogai*. Harry Wu's photos taken when he was incarcerated in the Chinese "Laogai" system or "the Chinese Gulag" prompted Jay Nordlinger (1999) to come to this conclusion that the regime was ruthless and totalitarian:

So Wu's humble display has an effect – as did the jarring and undeniable photos that emerged from the Holocaust; as did the pictures, shown two years ago at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, of the Cambodian genocide, as did the film *Harvest of Despair*, about the 'terror-famine' (as Robert Conquest named it) in Ukraine.

(Nordlinger 1999: 34-36)

In a study of China's place in contemporary American geopolitical imagination, Andrew Latham (2001) cites the April 2001 U.S.-China spy plane incident as an indication of U.S. cultural framing of China. Latham draws attention to the stereotype of China failing to meet "civilised" international standards of conduct:

During the crisis, for example, China was routinely represented in policy, media, and academic circles as being unable to grasp or play by the rules of civilized international society (especially those regarding aircraft in distress, sovereign immunity of damaged military aircraft, and international property rights); undemocratically contemptuous of universal human rights; irresponsible; dangerous; irredentist; militaristic; childish nationalistic; technologically

backward; and wilfully blind to America's benign/stabilizing role in the Asia-Pacific region.

(Latham 2001: 138-145)

These images of China are representative of the critical cultural studies tradition of image-making. They are scattered in the fields of cinema studies, literature, and popular culture. As a theoretically diverse approach that embraces the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, linguistics and political science, cultural studies has been increasingly adopted by Chinese scholars since the early 1990s to examine culture from the perspective of its production, dissemination and reception. A variety of cultural studies theories and positions have been promoted in Chinese critical journals. These include a concern with the everyday and ways of life (the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams), the analysis of cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu), theories of dominant ideologies, hegemony, and resistance (Gramsci, de Certeau). My study is informed by the cultural studies approach in two ways. First, I study media as a cultural form. Second, cultural studies' emphasis is on subjectivity and ideology. It asks the question of how image is constructed. Likewise, my study looks at the ways in which the ideology of nation building is integrated into the propaganda work of image construction.

### ***Transmission Model, Propaganda, and the Psychology of Media Effects***

The behavioural tradition of research into effects has played a leading role in image-making, and its techniques have informed advertising and marketing. This tradition, which is primarily psychological, is attributed to the post-war American communication research tradition, first advanced by Robert Merton (Merton 1946). This was an attempt to go beyond the crude "hypodermic syringe" model whereby the media were seen to be able to inject a message into the minds of the receiver (Katz 1955). One model that exemplifies the hypodermic syringe function is the transmission model of communication. Adopted from a mathematical model of machine to machine communication in 1949 by Shannon and Weaver, the transmission model of communication reduces communication to a process of transmitting information without taking

into account of the receiver's personal values and beliefs as well as social and cultural background. In this model, media messages travel directly from sender to receiver and media works in a top-down, unidirectional way, from one sender to many receivers. Audiences are regarded as passive receivers of media messages. This view of the reader as the passive receiver of media information gave rise to propaganda during the World Wars as the deliberate transmission of information, or information intentionally biased to convince the masses (Boorstin 1971: 45) and as the manipulation of collective attitudes (Lasswell 1979). During the First World War, for instance, media emerged as a powerful tool to create patriotic pro-War sentiment at home and to demoralise the enemy. Governments used this tool deliberately and systematically. The British War Propaganda Bureau was set up in 1914 and the US Committee on Public Information was established three years later to sell the war to the American people. The Second World War saw a more extensive, more pervasive use of propaganda which extended well into the Cold War.

Although an effective model for ideological propaganda, the transmission model has led to criticisms of its being an invalid model of human communication. It is criticised for assuming that all media have equal influence and that free choice of media counteracts media's coercive power. It is also criticised for seeing society as homogenous and passive and for focusing on content rather than the audience. These problems raise the question of control: how can media be used to control people and who does the control? That is the point when behavioural approach tried to go beyond the hypodermic model or transmission model to study media effects. Studies argued that the effects of messages (propaganda) were diffused through social groupings and classes. The research tradition of understanding how "positive propaganda" works through targeting selected groups has subsequently played a major role in election campaigns. It also became the key platform of Chinese propaganda techniques.

For the mass media in China in Mao's era, its function was to reflect reality, namely the reality of class struggle. The role of journalists was to educate the masses about this reality. Accordingly, those media messages which expressed the truth of socialism were encouraged as positive propaganda because they

produced an effect on the inner self (*jingshen*). On the other hand, those media representations that were regarded as unhealthy and negative were denounced as spiritual pollution (*jingshen wuran*) because they would result in psychological diseases. This top down model of communication denied the audience any real part to play other than to recognise the truth of official communication. The audience was situated at the reception end of a communication process that was essentially linear in spite of feedback mechanisms that purported to carry the opinions of the masses back to the leadership so that communication could be more effective.

There are two things to note here about this Chinese propaganda practice. First, it could be identified as a transmission model of communication, given the fact that it has all the characteristics of this model. Second, this communication practice reflects Leninist theory of media as reflecting reality. According to this theory, what is produced by media is a reflection of reality, which by definition is scientific and truthful, as opposed to Western media which manipulates reality for commercial or ideological interests. Therefore, media's role is to educate the masses about the truths. China's propaganda practice in the past was built on this theory of reflection and modelled on the former Soviet Union. News was judged as positive or negative by its effect on the inner self, or in other words, by the psychological effects. The transmission model is a convenient and ideal tool for believers of Leninist theories of propaganda to communicate their ideas and ideology to the masses.

Although my thesis does not enter the field of media effects, an understanding of the behavioural tradition of research into effects is essential as this tradition has played an important role in image-making, and its techniques have informed advertising and marketing as well as propaganda. Following is a brief mapping of studies undertaken under this tradition which will help identify the gap between image construction and Chinese propaganda.

Writing from a socio-psychological perspective, Kelman (1965) identifies 1950, the beginning of the "Cold War", as the time when the new field gained prominence. The Cold War reinforced the relationship between national image



and international relations. The marriage of the intellectual tradition of psychology with marketing resulted in a particular strand of research on national image cultivation, which drew on studies of propaganda in mass media, public relations, and advertising. These fields of study have one thing in common: they study how to manipulate people to achieve pre-set goals. Following on from this behaviourall research into mass media, Kaemba (1968) looked at the propagandistic role of media in national image building for international relations.

It should be pointed out that these studies examine deliberate strategies to create and maintain images, in contrast to accounts referred to earlier which are mainly literary and popular culture representations of other nations and their populations. More scholarly research into media depictions include *The U.S. Media And The Middle East – Image And Perception* (Kamalipour 1995), in which contributors investigate how American media depict images of Middle East and explore implications of such media coverage. Another study edited by Hammond (1997), *Cultural Difference, Media Memories: Anglo-American Images of Japan*, has examined the mass media's role in shaping Anglo-American public's perception of Japan. Jim Willis (1999) has examined images of Germany in international representations by the American media as a metaphor for international reporting by journalists and image making by the entertainment media. The scrutiny of such image-making during periods of conflicts has led to a more sophisticated understanding of the process of national image-making and propaganda.

As early as the 1960s, questions were raised concerning the relationship between reality and the perception of reality, or between reality and image. Daniel Boorstin (1971), writing from a social science perspective, argued that images perceptions of reality in modern American society are illusions shaped by mass media through the staging and propagating of pseudo-events. Pseudo-events “make facts seem more subtle, more ambiguous, and more speculative than they really are” (Boorstin 1971: 45), and thus provide us with illusions about, or pictures of, the world. This is a view that is echoed in the work of the French writer Jean Baudrillard (1988), who has written about media simulacra. Likewise Dayan and Katz (1987) have discussed the effect of “media events”. To Boorstin,

however, modern American society is a place where various pseudo-events are staged by mass media and illusions have become “the very house in which we live” (Boorstin 1971: 240). This partly reflects a strong opposition to advertising in the 1960s’ American academic community.

Kunzick (1997) traces this understanding of image as illusion back to Plato’s notion of the shadow world. He points out that Plato argues that language cannot be trusted:

He spoke of the relationship between reality and appearance, comparing people to prisoners who from childhood on live in an underground cave and are tied up so they cannot turn around. All they ever see are the shadows cast on the cave wall in front of them by things passing that exist in the world of the sun. People living so would regard the shadow world on the cave wall as the real world and, were they released from their cave, would be unable to believe that the outside world was the true reality.

(Kunzick 1997: 51)

This idea that image is a perception of reality rather than reality itself identifies a space for the profession of image construction. Kunzick’s approach is from this aspect of image cultivation. Acknowledging the potential of image-shaping from the public relations (PR) perspective, Kunzick (1997) identifies image as “something created and cultivated by its possessor, that is something that can be actively influenced by PR activities” (Kunzick 1997: 39). By PR, he also means advertising and propaganda. He treats PR, advertising, and propaganda as synonyms in the cultivation of image, following Lasswell (Lasswell, Casey et al. 1969) who maintained that propaganda is the manipulation of symbols to influence attitudes. Kunzick argues that foreign image cultivation involves PR, advertising, or propaganda as persuasive communicative acts. In the tradition of psychological studies, Kunzick defines national image as “the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people” (Kunzick 1997: 46) and he considers

elements of the past and future are crucial to the cultivation of a national image. However, as mentioned above, the weakness of this behavioural approach is in its emphasis on perceiving the “person” as the passive object of persuasion. It ignores the question most crucial to image construction: by whom is the image held? And consequently, what happens when image is out of control of its “possessor”? Also, it does not address collective imaging – this is a cultural as well as individual cognitive production.

Kunczik (1997) also argues that the strongest image shapers are probably mass media. He categorizes international advertising, international public relations and propaganda as one-sided influencing attempts at international communications and he considers pseudo-events discussed by Boorstin (1971) as important to image building. The role media played in image making is the process “through which the nation is constructed” (Hodge and Louie 1998: 146).

Boulding’s (1969) approach is more directly applicable to public relations and international relations. He has examined the relationship between national images and international systems in his study of international politics. His definition of image as “total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit, or its internal view of itself and the universe” (Boulding 1969: 423) suggests that people tend to believe that their images of the world or the pictures in their head are true despite of the fact that the images are shaped by mass media. In a similar vein, Robert Jervis (1970) has focused on the techniques utilised by states to make a “desired image” for international interactions, and Tajfe (1981) has investigated how nations are represented cognitively as a study of cross-cultural psychology. In the domain of political science, Manheim (1984) has investigated the relations between international public relations, media and national images by investigating the problem of “image management” in violence-inflicted Southern Africa (Manheim 1987).

Following the collapse of the socialist bloc in East Europe, literature from the behavioural tradition has turned from propaganda towards marketing and public relations. Nicolas Papadopoulos and Louise Heslop (1993) have studied the impact and role of a product’s country-image in international marketing. In

another study of national images, Yahya Kamalipour (1999) has analysed American images across the world from a multicultural perspective. His study raises interesting questions for mass media's role in marketing the image of a country. The issue here becomes how places, events, and attractions add to and define national images. Greg Richards (2001) has studied the role of tourist attractions, such as the theme parks in the creation and maintenance of an image of China. Derek Hall (2002) has looked at how former Yugoslav states are looking to tourism to help rebuild and reproject national identity and national images.

Image makers for a country can be big international propaganda activities. Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell (1986), in a communication approach to propaganda, include as image makers foreign policy pronouncement, international trade exhibitions and world expositions, international conferences, overseas travelling, sporting events, and cultural activities such as film, music, art and fashion shows. Using the Olympics as a mediated sport event for instance, Manheim (1990) has examined the 1988 Seoul Olympics as a case of public diplomacy for the advancement of the nation, while the journal *Media International Australia* devoted the whole November 2001 issue to research papers on the 2000 Olympic Games. These papers discussed the cultivation of national images by states through sports.

While national images have been debated in different fields following the intellectual traditions of behavioural and cultural approaches, the study of national image cultivation still has "large gaps" and this area remains under-researched (Kunczik 1997: 16). With the exception of studies of Communist propaganda in China and the Soviet Union, the role of journalistic practice in the construction of national image has not received adequate scrutiny. Literature on image and journalism has focused on the War periods (the two world wars and the Cold War) – a time when radio broadcasting was a "prominent weapon in the arsenal of propaganda" (Jowett and O'Donnell 1986: 86).

This research project provides an account of how the Chinese government and its news media have collaborated in a new publicity strategy to build a national

image for international communications. However, it also makes distinctions between government publicity and international communication in China by contesting the impact of promotional culture on the latter. To put the study in the wider context of Chinese propaganda, the following sections trace the development of Chinese media through a historical look at China's image construction.

## **Section 2: A Historical Look at China's Image Construction**

For over 2,000 years, the Chinese considered their country to be the "centre of the universe" (Li 1979: 146). *Zhongguo (China)* means literally the Middle Kingdom, the terrestrial focal point of "all under heaven" (*tianxia*) and the source of all civilization (Cao 2001). This perception of their home country comes from a deep sense of Chinese national pride of its ancient culture. The identification with cultural supremacy or cultural nationalism can be traced back to the ancient Chinese cosmology.

This cultural supremacy had never been challenged until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century when British broke open the closed door of the country. The Chinese sense of their position in the world is also determined by other factors. Qing Cao (2001) identifies two of them that have distinguished China from the rest of the world. One is the "historical oneness"; the other is the establishment of the Chinese empire through means other than military conquest. The "oneness", Qing Cao points out, is a "unity of the largest ethnic group on earth, the Han Chinese". It is characterized by the "sinicized peripheries, an extensive settled land, and a consistent and continuing culture" of the Han Chinese. For centuries, China has sustained this "historical oneness" and remained the so-called civilisation-state. This is, Qing Cao argues, very different from Europe, Africa, and other parts of Asia where "kingdoms and empires rose and fell to form different nations". The second difference lies in the fact that China as an empire was not established by conquest of other nations. Qing Cao points out that while other great empires, such as the Greek, Roman, Persian, or, in modern times, British, and French, were built by imperial conquests that "stretched over long distances, even across

oceans”, no armies ever marched out of the confines of the traditional “Middle Kingdom” in China’s two thousand years of “imperial” history.

This sense of cultural supremacy and ethnic pride was never reflected in the perceptions of China by outside countries (*waiguo*). In the 100 years of national humiliation from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to the time of the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, the images of China abroad were a typical example of Edward Said’s (1978) notion of “orientalism”, that is, China was seen as a society of oriental despots and uncivilised populations. Even within China in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had become known as the “sick man of Asia”, following its submission to the eight imperial powers and in the light of the publication in China of the evolutionary writings of Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, and Herbert Spencer in the 1880s. This image of the “sick man of Asia” was to play a role in the mobilisation of support for the Communist Revolution under Mao Zedong in the 1930s and 1940s.

But this sense of cultural supremacy and ethnic pride has played an important role in the image-making of the Chinese state. Painfully aware of these stereotypes, the Chinese leaders and reformers had tried to rebuild China’s image abroad through a reform program that was intended to re-construct China and the image of China. The program was aborted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Chinese placed their hope on the Republic of China.

This Chinese nation officially came into being following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. At the turn of the century the new Chinese nation was weak and fragmented. Construction of an alternative image abroad in the 1930s and 1940s was out of the question due to more pressing concerns. During the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945), both the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government led by the Nationalist Party had projected an image of China as a weak nation fighting on one of the fronts of World War II. This image-making effort, however, was a temporary strategy to seek international support (Kunczik 1997), rather than a systematic building of an image of China.

The systematic building of a national image did become possible after the wars. When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, image building became a central issue of nation construction, along with the construction of a strong national identity.

The Chinese Communist Party under the Leadership of Mao Zedong drew upon ethnic pride in the construction of a national identity founded on Socialism and an international identity of Communist brotherhood within the Third World. Feeling menaced by the U.S. and its allies, the Chinese Communist Party projected the image of China abroad as self-reliant (*zili gengsheng*) and anti-imperialist (*fandi*) in order to give the Chinese people a sense of political identity and national mission (Markham 1967). In those years, international communication or the foreign propaganda apparatus was already established and institutionalized. Radio Beijing, Xinhua News Agency, China Construct, and Beijing Review were the major players in getting the Chinese government's message out of China. The target audience was an unidentified "people of the world". This approach reflected Leninist theories of propaganda. It was also a typical example of the transmission model.

These images, as the leader of the Third World and the model of self-reliance, however, were questioned and discarded when the political ideologies behind them were discredited with the death of Mao. The new leadership under Deng Xiaoping faced two major concerns in seeking to legitimate its rule. One was to look for a new vision, a new direction, and a new sense of purpose for its people who felt politically and ideologically disoriented. The other concern was to reconstruct the country's image abroad to obtain advanced technology and foreign investment for its modernization program.

On the home front, there was a firm belief that a modernized economy and improved living standards could be solutions to the country's problems. The leadership subsequently declared at the Third Plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee in December 1978 that China would shift its focus from class struggle toward economic development and would strive to modernize its agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology. This

modernization program in the form of economic reform and opening up to the outside world was designed to strengthen China's political system. In the context of nation building, this modernization program was almost a recast of the aborted reform program masterminded at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

To complement this economic reform program, the Chinese government needed to mobilize public support and restore popular confidence in the Party. They resorted to nationalism as a glue to hold the Chinese people together, just as Mao did in the name of ethnic pride.

As China had a history of nationalism in the modern era, the call for popular support fell on fertile ground. Prasenjit Duara (in Ong and Nonini 1997: 42-54) has identified three streams of nationalism in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911): the imperial nationalism which refers to a program launched by the Qing state to strengthen the power of the country in national defence, law and education against imperialist powers; the reform nationalism characterized by an effort to incorporate capitalism into Confucianism in the creation of a new nation so as to retain the imperialist rule; and the revolutionary nationalism, a radical rhetoric aimed at ending the Qing imperial rule to build a new nation with "newly discovered Enlightenment values of adventurousness, enterprise, and expansionism".

During the May Fourth Movement (1919), nationalism, a political and cultural movement that called for the introduction of democracy and science in the construction of the new nation, identified more with the revolutionary stream. However, the ensuing revolutionary nationalism sought to distance China from the Capitalist world.

While Mao's anti-imperialist nationalism was framed upon the assumption that China is under eternal threat from imperialist countries, Deng's nationalism drew upon the undefined "Chineseness as a unifying and mobilisatory political myth" (Goodman and Segal 1995: 31) to deliver a sense of belonging.



Deng even described the aim of the reform as to “build socialism with Chinese characteristics”, a term he coined and announced at the 12<sup>th</sup> Chinese Communist Party Congress in September 1982. This was made the Party’s guiding ideology at the 15<sup>th</sup> CCP National Congress for the ‘initial stage of socialism’, which is expected to extend to the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century. This stress on “Chinese characteristics” attempted to have the Chinese people identify with the reform while setting limits to the reform. The logic is that “socialism will use capitalism for increasing the power of the Chinese nation-state” (Ong 1997).

By the 1990s, the Maoist brand of anti-imperialist nationalism was dead in China (Friedman 1995) and the self-reliant socialist and anti-imperialist identity of the nation was replaced by a new identity of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

On the international scene, the new leadership under Deng realized the need to gain advanced technology and foreign investment for its modernization program. The anti-imperialist image and political stance were blamed for having kept the modernizing support out of the door of China (Friedman 1995). The “Western” concept of openness and progress has been linked to the new image of China in the post-Mao era and projected to the outside world as a nation building “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

But the image of openness and progress was tarnished in 1989 by the Tiananmen Square incident. Seeking to regain its footing on the world stage, China lost no time in grasping the opportunity of bidding for the 2000 Olympic Games. It hoped to take advantage of this most popular world sports event to improve its image abroad and to legitimise the communist rule. The bid was used as a vehicle to communicate the message that China wanted to be accepted into the international community, indicated by the bid slogan “A more opening China awaits Olympics”. Efforts focused on re-building the image of openness. The Chinese media uniformly projected the image of China victimized by the United States and its Western allies to respond to international criticisms of the “military crackdown” of the “pro-democracy student movement”, the Western definition of the June 4<sup>th</sup> incident.

The bid failed: Beijing lost to Sydney by two votes. Although bids were not decided just on 'image' (there are other factors to consider such as the physical preparedness of a bid city), the way how a bid city presents itself plays an important role in giving IOC voters a good impression. In this sense, the narrow margin between Sydney and Beijing demonstrated how China had progressed in image construction under very difficult circumstances. The great restraint on the part of the Chinese government from blaming others for the loss won China extra credit which was expressed in the form of sympathy for China during Beijing's second bid. During the years following the loss of the first bid, China impressed the world with outstanding economic growth and rapid improvement of people's lives. By the time it decided to bid again for an Olympic Games, China was ready to showcase its achievements and to again bring itself under international scrutiny. In addition to the image of openness, China sought to present itself to the outside world, through Beijing's bid, as confident, dynamic, and hardworking. The message of progress was embedded into every single image of China projected by the second bid.

Beijing's winning of the bid was a boost to the national morale. Popular support for the Games has turned into work commitments to prepare for the 2008 Games. Liu Jingmin, vice president of BOCOG, announced in early April 2004 that venue constructions would be completed by the end of 2006, a record 18 months ahead of the scheduled time for the 2008 Games. While keeping a low profile for the preparations, Beijing does not hesitate to project the image of credibility and efficiency when the right time comes. China seems to be more refined in its publicity skills than ever before. The lessons learnt from the past have been put into practice.

This historical account shows the image construction efforts by the late Chinese empire and the modern Chinese nation-state. Such efforts involved mobilization of persons and institutions crucial to the construction of the national identity of China and the national image of China abroad. These persons and institutions are the so-called image makers, the key concept to be addressed in this project.

### Section 3: Image Makers, Journalism, and Promotional Culture

Image makers can be dedicated personnel or more broadly, anyone in the public arena. In the latter sense, everyone is an image-maker for his country, through contact with foreigners in his home country or through travelling abroad. Image building for the nation is conducted at different levels, ranging from government diplomacy, corporate advertising, to personal communications. David Goodman gives an example of Deng Xiaoping as image-maker for China when “speaking at the United Nations and touring the world, visiting the United States, Japan, Western Europe, and South-east Asia at the head of government delegations” (Goodman 1990: 2). Goodman comments that Deng’s appearance on television in a ten-gallon hat in Houston “did his and China’s cause no harm at all”. He also noted that “in 1985 Deng was even nominated as *Time* magazines’s Man of the Year, the first time a communist had been so honoured” (Goodman 1990: 2).

In a broader sense, Chinese image makers also include publicity, government diplomacy, foreign trade and travel in China’s overall international communication structure (Zhai 2001). This overall international publicity structure, according to Huang Zecun (2002), consists of three parts: diplomatic outposts such as Chinese embassies and consulates; Party and government functions at the central level that include the special mission delegated by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, the Information Office under the State Council, and media and publicity departments in government ministries; and media and publicity departments in local governments at provincial, city and township level. News media, because of its speed to cover and communicate information, are serving as the main channel for China’s international communication (Huang 2002).

The image makers this project focuses on are the government and news media of China. Government is represented by BOBICO and BOCOG in this case, although both institutions have claimed to be independent of the Beijing municipal government, a gesture to show they have been operating according to IOC norms. Both BOBICO and BOCOG represent local interests, or in other word, the municipal government of Beijing. The text I chose to study is

BOBICO's news bulletin *Beijing 2008*. The national government is represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The text for study is the Foreign Ministry's press conferences covered by both the Chinese and foreign press. News media, on the other hand, are those involved in "foreign propaganda work". Building images of China abroad is described as "foreign propaganda" (in Chinese language) and "international communication" (in English). Media engaged in foreign propaganda are described as "media serving audiences abroad". Beijing-based media at the national level include *Xinhua News Agency*, *China News Service*, *People's Daily (overseas edition)*, *China Radio International*, the Overseas Centre of *China Central Television*, *China Daily*, and *China Foreign Language Publishing and Distribution Administration*, and internet media (see appendix 2). Except for *China News Service* and internet media, all these media are official national media under the supervision of the Chinese Communist Party and function as part of the Chinese government's national diplomacy. As has been widely discussed and acknowledged in both Chinese and foreign literature on Chinese mass media, news media are the "tongue and throat", or tools, of the Party and the Chinese government (Schramm 1964; Chu 1978; Lin 1994; Ong 1997; Zhai 2001). Zhai Shuyao (2001) asserts that news media have always been a vital player in the construction of the Chinese nation and in the national image making politics.

### ***Chinese Journalism: from information to imaging***

Image presentation is a central feature of diplomacy and related communication processes. Won Ho Chang (Chang 1989) traces China's earliest newspaper, *Di bao (Court Gazette)*, incidentally the only "newspaper" in China that lasted for more than 1,000 years well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to early 8<sup>th</sup> Century. In the form of a news bulletin, the Court Gazette served as information document for the imperial court.

Chang points out that mass journalism in China did not develop until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when foreign businessmen and missionaries arrived and founded nearly 300 newspapers, most of them in Chinese. These early newspapers functioned mainly as disseminators of information and ideology,

providing business and religious information and introducing a way of life new to the Chinese.

Newspapers founded by Chinese intellectuals began during this period and mushroomed in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in an endeavour to push for reform and to call upon the nation to end the feudal rule of the Qing Dynasty. The role of print journalism was the catalyst for the birth of a political consciousness in China at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lee 1985). By this time, newspapers were put to political use as tools of spreading political ideas, more so than creating images.

During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of print journalism had brought together an intellectual stratum disenfranchised from their formal role as state intellectuals. Intellectual leaders such as Liang Qichao and Yan Fu had paved the way with new ideas about collective nationhood and cultural identity. Other leading writers such as Hu Shi and Lu Xun were among the many calling for China to awaken and become a nation.

In 1917 a young Chinese writer had published an article called 'A Study of Physical Education' in the journal *New Youth*. It argued that if China was weak, it was because the Chinese were weak. Mao Zedong wrote that the Chinese should strive:

To be able to leap on to horseback and to shoot at the same time; to go from battle to battle; to shake the mountains by one's cries; and the colour of the sky by one's roars of anger.

(cited in Spence 1990: 303)

A couple of years later Mao Zedong was again creating another image in an article published in a Hunanese journal, entitled 'To the Glory of the Han People'. He exhorted collective action on the Chinese race. During Mao's era after the founding of the People's Republic, communism became official ideology and journalism was practiced in the form of class journalism (Li 1979).

Class journalism, a product of Mao's political determinism, was characterized by agitation propaganda. Practicing agitation journalism was an ideological product of Leninist media theory. Under this form of journalism, there was no real distinction in journalistic practices between domestic reporting and reporting for international communication. News media advocated Mao's theory of class struggle at home while projecting to the world an image of China locked in a life-and-death struggle between the third-world China and the first-world imperialist countries. The task for international communication was to "stimulate world revolution" and news was filled with political slogans, such as "planting the great red flag of Mao Zedong Thoughts across the whole earth" (Zhai 2001: 8). This "us vs. them" construction, in which the national space is constantly threatened and encroached upon by foreign interests and internal enemies (Ong and Nonini 1997), accorded well with Mao's conception of self-reliance and anti-imperialism.

Propaganda, following the tradition of Marxist media theories, is a positive word in China in accordance with the Communist Party's journalism theory. In Mao's words, journalists have to be "good at translating the Party's policy into action of the masses, to be good at getting not only the leading cadres but also the broad masses to understand and master every movement and every struggle we launch" (Li 1979: 213).

Definition of the masses, as representing "the intangible embodiment of revolutionary virtue" (Li 1979: 213), was determined by Mao's categorization of political classes that effectively engaged the whole nation in class struggle. News media, by serving the masses, took on a class character of its own and was put under the Party's strict control.

In contrast to Western news media's emphasis on self-claimed objectification, the Party "openly declares that news is value-laden" and a good news item should have "a clear political orientation, advocates or criticizes, makes an explicit or implicit value judgement" (Zhao 1998). So it came as no surprise that ideological indoctrination became the function of news media rather than dissemination of information.

The instrument for media content control was Xinhua News Agency. Other media were required to use all important news stories and pictures distributed by this agency. The agency's coverage determined largely "what goes into print, what goes on the air, and thus what the world's largest potential national audience reads or hears" (Markham 1967: 370). It comes as no surprise therefore that Western observers saw Chinese media performance was "monotonous, repetitious, and dull" and "essentially monolithic" (Markham 1967: 412).

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when class struggle and Mao's ideology were overemphasized and carried out to the letter, the Party condemned the practice of writing news stories directly in English as "a loss of national ethnic self-respect". So journalists had to write news stories in Chinese and English editors became translators who had to translate those news items from Chinese to English word by word. Even the script of the eight "model theatrical works on contemporary revolutionary themes", the only theatrical works allowed to be performed (while all other literary and art works were banned), were translated word by word with no regard to whether the reader could understand the context or not and used as news item for international propaganda. In effect, the news discourse in international communication or propaganda was no different from that in domestic journalism, and international communication was simply "an extension of domestic propaganda" (Zhai 2001).

Journalism during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s still carried the tradition of Marxist media theory but the emphasis shifted from agitation to mobilization. Journalism in this period is best described as advocacy journalism, a term borrowed from Thomas McPhail (1987) who uses it to describe journalism engaged in the promotion of government objectives in Socialist and Eastern Bloc countries.

Journalism in this period could also be defined as positive journalism, or development journalism. Chang (1989) in his resourceful book that sketches a map of the history and changing trends of the Chinese news media and

journalism gives a definition of positive journalism taken from a textbook of the Beijing Broadcasting Institute:

‘Positive propaganda’ means news that deals with models and excellent situations that can mobilize and inspire the people. ... News that is typical in this respect should be used. Disaster news can be reported. However, emphasis should be placed on the activities and brave endeavours that serve to recover from the disaster. ... But positive propaganda does not mean exclusion of criticism. Stories of criticism should be: (1) truthful; (2) typical; and (3) constructive, to give people confidence, inspiration, and strength rather than make them depressed and pessimistic. Stories solely for the purpose of exposure should be dumped.

(Chang 1989: 167)

Judging from this definition, positive propaganda stresses the mobilizing function of Chinese news media, rather than the agitation function in Mao’s era, to serve the government’s reform and modernization program. With this shift came the distinction of journalistic practices between domestic reporting and foreign propaganda.

For domestic propaganda, the shift of orientation from political ideology to nation building through economic development brought about a political relaxation although the Party’s traditional policy of treating the press remained intact. In a document published in 1980, the Party’s central committee made it clear that the press “must work unconditionally to publicise the Party’s political line, policies and political views, and it is absolutely impermissible for newspapers and periodicals to print, and for radio and TV broadcasts to air, statements that run counter to decisions already made by the Party” (Li 1998).

To advocate the Party’s modernization objectives instead of class struggle, media changed their tone, focus, and styles accordingly (Lin 1994). As Lin observes:



As class struggle became less intense in people's lives, use of language designed to provoke hatred and to dichotomise the social world declined. Words and sentences like 'make the class enemies fall to the ground and stamp a foot on them,' 'revolution,' 'down with so-and-so,' 'to criticize so-and-so until they become stinky,' and 'so-and-so is the landlord's son of a bitch,' nearly disappeared from the mass media. ... Mao's pictures were no longer on the front page of all publications, and there was less need to quote him in order to justify an argument. The class divisive terms were now replaced by words such as 'time is money,' 'competition,' 'modernization,' 'self-values,' 'multiple-party system,' 'participation' and 'stock market.' ... Advertisements for such things as company products, lotteries, stocks, and adult education programs, came to fill more and more space on television and in the newspapers.

(Lin 1994: 88)

The new discourse of modernization indicated the Party's appropriation through media of Western concepts and values, such as individualism, wealth, competition and efficiency, which are not associated with traditional Chinese values and are directly in opposition to core communist values. But such appropriation gradually led to a crisis of social identity and eventually challenged the image of the socialist state (Ong and Nonini 1997: 173). Media were subsequently mobilized again to carry out a series of "anti-spiritual pollution" campaigns initiated by the Party to counteract the influence of Western ideology and social values seen by the Party as unwanted "tendencies of bourgeois liberalism". In this period, the media played a vital role in the construction of the image of "socialism with Chinese characteristics".

While domestic policy turned from class struggle to economic construction, China's foreign policy also shifted from the theory of an unavoidable world war to the two contemporary themes of peace and development. China opened its

closed door to the outside world and relations with other countries were developed according to the five principles of peaceful co-existence rather than by the categorization of social systems and political ideologies. The media for international communication, used to win over international understanding, sympathy and support for China's national development program, was given due attention by the Party and the government and experienced a period of expansion (Zhai 2001).

In a circular distributed in 1990 by the Central Committee of CCP, international communication was considered as "an important part of our country's overall national diplomacy" and it was required to "take the initiative to comprehensively and correctly communicate China's image abroad" (Zhai 2001: 35). In April of 1980, CCP established a commission to supervise and manage international communication. In June, 1991, the State Council also established an office in charge of government publicity, the Office of International Propaganda. Eventually, China has established a national international communication system, which consists of government publicity at all levels, news media, and Chinese diplomatic missions abroad. The first English-language newspaper in the People's Republic, *China Daily*, went into print in 1981 followed by other publications for international communication.

This effort to strengthen China's international communication for the modernization program had something to do with the lack of positive coverage by Western media. David Goodman and Gerald Segal described the situation like this:

Unlike the Soviet Union during the Cold War, China has rarely been a front-page story. During the Chinese crisis in the spring of 1989, China policy was of high priority, but the subsequent collapse of communism in Eastern Europe rapidly moved it to the inside pages. The death of the Soviet threat has cleared more space for horror stories about China selling the organs of its executed dissidents, but by and large China is most often reported on the business pages. Chinese policies are only headline news in

Asia where the proclivity is to be less hostile, at least in public, about Chinese intentions.

(Goodman and Segal 1995: 88)

It was largely up to the Chinese media to get China's message across. During this period, Chinese media stressed the difference between international communication and domestic reporting in journalistic writing (Zhai 2001). They deemed the criteria for judging a good piece of writing for domestic reporting, such as giving a conclusion before the facts are given, having a theoretical theme, and embodying political significance, as unfit for international communication.

The Chinese media in international communication also urged journalists to take off the hard edges of political propaganda and adopt the style and language that are familiar to the foreign reader. They paid special attention to cultural differences such as attitudes toward money and the ways to express emotions (Zhai 2001).

New discourses appeared in reporting for audiences abroad, characterized by such catch-phrases as "peace-loving", "foreign investment", "socialist market economy", "market mechanism", "private property holdings", "private economy", "millionaire", "enterprising", "political participation", "realization of self-value", and "emancipation of the people's minds". These new discourses were able to construct a positive image of China as an opening society anxious to identify with the global market economy in its own modernization drive.

Despite these institutional and semantic changes, foreign propaganda in this period was behind domestic reporting in both content and form. As Chinese journalism developed into the so-called "popular journalism" as a manifestation of what we have termed "promotional culture", this distinction is made even clearer.

Domestic reporting since 1995 is characterised by a marked shift of orientation from Marxist media theory to a marketing theory of promotion. It has developed

into a new kind of market-driven, readership-oriented journalism that was described as “popular journalism” by Li Zhurun (1998), following John Hartley (1996). Popular journalism “caters to reader interest and needs” but “is government-bound, and has to follow the Chinese Communist Party’s political line and policies” (Li 1998: 308). It is practiced by a rapidly growing number of quasi-official or popular media in the form of service- and entertainment-oriented evening newspapers and weekend editions, while Party press is in a steady decline. Radio and TV also contribute to this trend with new programming formats of Deeplayed pop music, phone-in hot lines, MTV, talk shows, and weekend entertainment programs.

Li Zhurun attributes the rise of the popular journalism largely to market forces; the popular press can only survive by selling its audience to advertisers. Exposure to internet and Western cultural products such as films and TV programs is also considered accountable for the new journalistic practice. In Li’s argument, popular journalism in China is characterized by “the intertwining of Party logic and market logic”, a Chinese characteristic that differentiates it from popular journalism in the West.

The Party logic comes from Jiang Zemin’s requirement of the Chinese press that they should be “arming the people with scientific theory; guiding the people with correct opinion; educating the people in high moral standards; and using outstanding works to inspire the people” (Li 1998). In Li’s interpretation, “scientific theory” refers to Deng’s theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics while “correct guidance” means positive reporting and restriction of reporting of erroneous opinions.

Following both logics, popular journalism takes a soft approach to news and takes the form of features writing, “actually a hotchpotch of the categories of ‘service reporting’, ‘consumer reporting’, ‘women’s reporting’, etc” (Li 1998: 317). Li cited the words of Xiao Pei, editor-in-chief of the Beijing Youth News, to describe what to keep in mind in constructing a leading story:

First of all, the story must be ‘politically sound’, containing nothing that runs contrary to the ‘four cardinal principles’; second, sufficient background information and in-depth analysis should be provided; and third, care must be taken to see to it that the story produces a ‘positive influence’ on society.

(cited in Li 1998: 26)

Yang (in Ong and Nonini 1997) describes Chinese media and journalism in relation to the audience in this way:

If the Maoist period can be described as a period in which the mass media sought to level, uniformize, and homogenize the Chinese public, the post-Mao period can be said to have brought about the pluralisation, differentiation, and stratification of media publics according to class, educational level, region, locality, gender, occupation, and leisure interests, fragmenting the state’s mass public.

(1997: 292)

As China becomes increasingly involved in the global economy, reporting on China for audiences abroad in this period focuses more on image cultivation. China also faces the challenge of having to improve its image damaged by the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident. While image abroad has always been a concern for the Chinese government since the country opened up to the outside world, it was Jiang Zemin who coined the phrase “image design” in English as a highly generalized task for Chinese media involved in international communication. In a speech delivered at Xinhua News Agency to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the news service, Jiang stated that through image design, reporting for international communication should “comprehensively and completely” convey the Party’s and the government’s

domestic and foreign policies and “correctly” reflect the image of a socialist China to the international community (Zhai 2001).

In accordance with this emphasis on image, the State Council’s Office of International propaganda changed its name to Information Office, and the CCP’s Department of Propaganda was changed into CCP Publicity Department in 1998, taking account of the negative implication of the word “propaganda” in Western usage.

Jiang’s “image design” is interpreted by Zhai Shuyao as meaning the use of facts. This emphasis on the “image” or facts instead of abstract concepts, judgment and inference has important implications for China’s journalism for international communication. It determines that reporting of China for audiences abroad is not to export communist ideology but to introduce and showcase China with facts and with techniques that will make the foreign audiences feel they are actually experiencing the Chinese images in person (Zhai 2001: 7).

An increasing amount of reporting has taken the soft approach of storytelling. Zhai Shuyao cites an English news bulletin filed in 1998 as a typical piece of Xinhua-style storytelling. Headlined ‘More Chinese Muslims Making Pilgrimages to Mecca’, the news item constructs an image of China through the story of a three-generation family paying pilgrimage to Mecca. The image of a China where Chinese people enjoy freedom of religion is enhanced and enriched by the designed use of facts and details, such as the comparison of travelling by camel and by air:

Ma Zhengang, a 52-year old farmer in Guyuan Prefecture, said improved transportation had made it easier for Muslims to go on Mecca trips. He recalled that it took his father-in-law three years to cover the whole pilgrimage when he travelled by camel and sought temporary jobs during the journey.

Now, highways link all the counties in the region’s mountainous areas.

He said Muslims now take trains to Beijing and fly chartered planes to Saudi Arabia.

(Zhai 2001: 131-132)

Although there are still traces of propaganda, such as “the government guarantees normal religious activities” put in the mouth of a Muslim, the story is a good piece of image design in propagating the Chinese government’s policies in relation to religion and ethnic nationalities.

Apart from the new story-telling feature of news report, foreign propaganda adopted no other techniques to improve its content and form. This is in sharp contrast to domestic reporting where various new techniques from advertising and public relations were used to produce soft sells.

Chinese journalism today, domestic reporting in particular, is bent on building the “correct images” of China which are linked to the discourse of reform, opening, political stability, unity, development, progress, peace and friendliness (Zhai 2001: 163). It is different in many ways from its past.

Lee Becher (2001), after making contacts with and observations of two groups of Chinese journalists in Shanghai and Beijing, comes to the “tentative” conclusions that while control of media is still in place in China, Chinese journalists are open to change. According to him, the “continued control” is evidenced by editors being disciplined for small transgressions, coverage of controversial events being highly regulated, and media reports reading more like government news releases than independent reporting. But he argues that it is the openness that may be “more informative about the future of Chinese journalism” in the long run, “and maybe even China”, than is the evidence of control. His reasoning is:

The openness to change seems to be the result of the major economic revolution taking place in the country, and it may be

necessary for the continuation of these economic developments. If this is the case, we can expect Chinese journalism to continue to evolve as the country enters the world trading market in the coming years.

(Becher 2001: 32-33)

To conclude, Chinese journalists were enlisted in a noble cause during the 1940s-1980s period: they became “engineers of the soul”. They were entrusted with the task of creating the images that would be used to propel the revolution – images of model workers, soldiers, and peasants. However, whereas the Communists under Mao Zedong had believed that revolution and violent class struggle were the means to reshape Chinese society, they largely neglected to build an image abroad. So much journalistic activity was concentrated on domestic image management that foreign propaganda became a crude exercise in relaying domestic propaganda, which only served to reinforce a negative image of China in Western minds.

With the opening up of China to the outside world, Chinese journalists have been mobilized for the new mission of serving China’s economic development. The old ideology of class struggle was dumped. Journalism has experienced institutional expansion and more editorial independence. But compared with domestic reporting, foreign propaganda lags behind in improving its journalistic practice and still conveniently copies the government script. Government control should be the main reason behind as the Chinese government is not ready yet to give foreign propaganda the kind of autonomy they are giving to domestic reporting. The government’s concern has much to do with the fact that foreign propaganda is about the design and construction of China’s image for international consumption. For a one-party political regime, it is important to keep this part of the propaganda apparatus under strict control to make sure that favourable images of the Party and of China are made. Meanwhile, what is noteworthy is the fact that the government has largely improved its publicity strategies and techniques, taking advantage of the development of a promotional culture in China.



### *Promotional Culture and Chinese Propaganda*

Promotional culture is a more recent trend in China in which propaganda, national image making, international relations, and economic development are brought together. The evolution of a promotional culture is contingent on the development of advertising, public relations, and marketing industries in China.

The introduction of international advertising and public relations knowledge followed China's opening up to the outside world. Advertising in China existed early in this century and experienced a boom in the 1920s and 1930s (Gerth 2003), but modern advertising began with the entry of international agencies at the end of the 1970s. In less than 20 years, Chinese advertising has grown "from bare-bones government propaganda broadcast over loudspeakers to internationally competitive television and Web promotional campaigns intended to increase consumption on the basis of emotional appeal" (Everett and Wong 1999). It has grown into a US\$11 billion industry last year and stood as the second largest advertising market in Asia, behind Japan (Jones 2002).

The same rapid growth can also be observed in public relations in China. Public relations came to China much later than modern advertising, in 1985 when Hill and Knowlton opened its doors. At that time public relations in China "focused on market entry – public affairs, ceremony-type activities and media publicity" (Warren 2002). Chinese companies "had little concept of the need to manage their image and build brand awareness" and "corporate understanding of basic devices such as press releases, news conferences and relationship building with media organisations remains rudimentary" (Kynge 2002). Public relations in China today, in contrast, has become a dynamic industry with an annual growth rate between 30 percent and 50 percent according to a survey conducted in 2000 by the China International Public Relations Association. Its focus has changed to "market development and educating Chinese consumers about products new to their lifestyle" (Warren 2002).

Integrated Marketing Communication, which refers to the integration of various marketing communication skills such as media advertising, marketing and public

relations to achieve more effective marketing communication, was introduced to China in the late 1990s. In 1997, the book 'Integrated Marketing' was published for the first time in the Chinese mainland.

The development of advertising, public relations and marketing in China or what Nordenstreng and Schiller (1979) call the "different informational services" has made an impact on the propaganda strategy. Geremie Barme (1999) makes some interesting observations in this aspect. Under the influence of advertising, he points out, there is an accelerated shift in China's official propaganda from the staple indoctrination and campaign-based propaganda to a new style of "corporate advertising" characterized by a melding of old socialist icons and new commercial practices. The party is increasingly represented in ways "more familiar to us from international corporate advertising practice than Maoist hyper-propaganda". He observes that the national propaganda apparatus, a system of "multi-faceted propaganda/public relations organisations", are "enmeshed in" a complex of relationships that range from the purely propagandistic-ideological to the corporate-promotional.

Barme concludes that advertising culture assists the Party retain its role of domination, and through competition in the marketplace its sign system has been enriched and enhanced, backing up its image as a responsible government. He gives an example to illustrate this point:

When in 1996 the Party launched a new 'spiritual civilization' campaign which featured moralizing slogans exhorting people throughout the country to comply with road rules and to speak politely, huge computer-enhanced images, neon slogan boards and advertising displays were erected throughout Beijing to help deliver the message.

(Barme 1999: 9)

On the other hand, the marriage of Party propaganda and mainstream advertising is also embodied in the conversion of former Party propaganda tools, such as

billboards which have become a extremely popular medium of advertising in China (Everett and Wong 1999), as well as adoption of Party icons by advertising. Barne again has some observations to share:

One insecticide, for example, was advertised with the slogan ‘Away with all pests!’, a line from an anti-imperialist poem penned by Mao in 1963. Similarly, a make of vacuum cleaner was promoted with a TV commercial voice-over telling viewers that ‘dust won’t disappear of its own accord’, a phrase taken from a famous Mao quotation about reactionaries who, like dust, would not disappear of their own accord.

(Barne 1999: 19)

The new advertising landscape is evolving rapidly. In a study of advertising in Shanghai, Steven Lewis (2002: 140) notes:

. . . state political propaganda has survived because the combination of economic liberalisation and political decentralisation has forced the local state – the organs of the Chinese Communist Party and urban government – to adapt, innovate, and experiment with new messages and technologies.

Public relations, on the other hand, also enhances the Party’s publicity performance. In August 2000, the Chinese government staged a US\$7 million public relations campaign in the United States that consisted of a series of performances, exhibitions and lectures. It was organized by the State Council’s Information Office and Ministry of Culture and partly sponsored by American corporations with investments in China. According to a news report by New York Times on Aug. 23, 2000 (Rosenthal 2000), this “touring cultural extravaganza” is “the first large-scale attempt by the Chinese government at public relations and marketing in the United States, skills that were largely

irrelevant and ignored there when it was an isolated Communist state”. This campaign, called “2000, Experience China in the United States” is seen by the news report as “clearly intended to polish China’s image for the American public” and as “likely” to “help at least somewhat to humanize a country that is frequently demonised in the American psyche as a colourless land of fear and forced abortions”.

This news report quotes Zhao Qizheng, the then head of the State Council’s Information Office, as saying: “I hope that some day an American president will say something good about China. Will that take 10 years? 20? 50? It shouldn’t be that long. So we are bringing a little of China to the U.S. for people to see.” This new public relations activity by the Chinese government in the field of international relations is a deliberate attempt to reshape the international image of China.

Advertising and public relations affect Chinese domestic reporting in three ways. First, the interplay of the forces of politics and market economy, or of the “Party logic” and “market logic” (Li 1998) is transforming press roles. Zhou He argues that this tug-of-war between the two forces is converting the party press into a “Party Publicity Inc.” (He 2000: 112). A “Party Publicity Inc.” implies that press institutions take the promotion of the Party’s image as their mission while operating like a business entity. Journalists become ‘hired party publicity officers’ in such an entity. Zhou He supports his argument by a close examination of the Shenzhen Special Zone Daily, a Party newspaper based in China’s first “capitalist lab”.

The second way in which Chinese domestic reporting is transformed is that more and more journalists have become involved in advertising or PR industries, either by changing their job into becoming a professional or by working as part-time specialists for advertising or PR companies. This occupational shift has occurred since the late 1980s. They are called government relations specialists, or specialist navigators that “operate much like media relations specialists in the United States’ and they function to “help identify the appropriate targets, develop personal contacts and relationships with government officials, and often have

spent time on the government or media side” (Warren 2002). And because of their ties with the media, they have also played an important role in developing relations with media for advertising or PR companies. Their involvement has to a large extent affected journalistic practice in China: advertising and public relations are increasingly becoming the sources of news for journalists.

The third way in which advertising and public relations have impacted upon Chinese domestic reporting is that journalists are being fed with news releases from government publicity offices and corporation PR departments who are beginning to adopt the Integrated Marketing Communication approach in a more open and promotional political, social and cultural environment.

In sharp contrast, advertising and public relations have made little impact on China’s news reporting for international communication. Media engaged in foreign propaganda are still rehashing government scripts according to the old propaganda model. This is the second major argument of the thesis, the first being that promotional culture has made an impact on Chinese government publicity. These arguments find proofs in Beijing’s Olympic campaign where both government publicity and news media of foreign propaganda are involved in China’s new image making strategy.

## Chapter 2

### The Games – The Site for Image Construction

As a global sporting event, the Olympics is a familiar topic. Because of its familiarity I have not addressed the history of the Olympic movement. Instead, I focus here on China's Olympic history and experiences. For China, the perception that the Olympics is a site for image construction applies.

In relation to the issues of national identity and national image, the Olympics have long been regarded as a good occasion for the hosting country to construct a national identity for its people and to project the nation's image to international audiences. In the age of mass media, sport is transformed into "late twentieth century spectator-centred technology and business" (Real 1998). John Gold and Stephen Ward (1994) argue that even the very act of bidding becomes "a promotional act" in itself because it asserts the credentials of a place to an international audience.

Media coverage of Olympic events is deemed important in that it presents a vehicle for prominent display of nationalist ideology and nationalistic images that support the status quo (Kinkema 1998). In their study of how an imagined community is constructed and how identity is presented and performed by Australia through the bid and at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, Caroline Hatcher and Patsy McCarthy (Hatcher 2000; McCarthy 2000) concluded that the Olympic bidding process is an ideal place for creating a fictional national identity, and that the Olympics is a "unique blend of theatre, sport and marketing" for performing the identity of the host country. The South Korea Olympics provides an example of political and economic benefits a mediated sport event can bring to the host country. South Korea's bid for the 1988 Olympic Games was largely intended to "improve its image as a developed, stable country, capable of hosting an international event which demands expertise in marketing, finance, management, and organization" (Nebenzahl 1993). Jeffe and Nebenzahl's study (1993) found a positive shift in the overall

image of South Korea as a producer of electronic products as result of the Olympic Games and the study suggests that such event-related publicity may be utilized to change a country's image.

The political and economic benefits were not lost on the Chinese government. China's modernization program depends largely on foreign investment and integration with the global economy. A mediated world sports event like the Olympics would give the country a much-needed opportunity to improve its international image and to market itself to foreign investors and tourists.

Although the Olympics was generally seen by the world as solely a Western concept and a vehicle for Western culture, despite the fact that Japan and South Korea had each held one game (in Tokyo in 1964 and in Seoul in 1988), China decided to give it a try, upholding the Olympic ideal of universality established by the founder, Baron de Coubertin. On the other hand, China justified its decision by examining its Olympic history and came up with the rationale that the Chinese has harboured the Olympic dream for 100 years.

The dream began in 1908 as the official version goes in Chinese media, and on the opening page of a photo album published to mark the first anniversary of Beijing's victory of its bid for the 2008 Games. In that year, *Tianjin Youth*, a magazine published by a group of enlightened Chinese, asked the entire nation to ponder the following questions: When will it be possible for China to send an athlete to an Olympic Games? When will it be possible for China to send a team of athletes to an Olympic Games? And when will it be possible for China to host an Olympic Games on her own soil? The album sums up China's Olympic history by way of answering the questions.

The first question was answered when a lone Chinese athlete, Liu Changchun, was sent to the 1932 Olympics to compete. He was eliminated in the first round of his contest. In 1984, athletes sent by New China won the country's first batch of Olympic gold medals at the Los Angeles Games, thus opening a new chapter in the history of Chinese Olympism. Despite the excellent achievements of Chinese athletes in the following Olympics, the last of the three questions remained ... when would China actually host an Olympic Games?

The realization of China's Olympic dream was hampered for decades by the issue of the representation of Taiwan, an issue the Chinese propaganda machine understandably omitted in its promotion of Beijing's two bids. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), China's Olympic history was simple (Chester 1975; Buchanan 1995; Diao 2001): it had its first IOC member elected in 1922 and sent one athlete to the Los Angeles Games of 1932, and more to the Berlin Games of 1936 and the London Games of 1948. Problems with the IOC appeared after the founding of the PRC due to the IOC rule that it only recognises one national Olympic committee (NOC) of one country and that countries without a NOC are not eligible to participate in the Games. While Taiwan continued to participate in the Games representing "China", the People's Republic was kept out of the five rings. To bring the PRC into the Olympic movement, the IOC decided in 1952 that the PRC could participate in the Games as well but only the NOC in Taiwan would be officially recognised. The PRC sent to the Helsinki Games that year a delegation representing basketball, soccer and swimming. But because they arrived late, only a swimmer managed to compete and he was eliminated in the heats. The PRC boycotted the 1956 Games because the IOC still maintained its recognition of Taiwan's NOC while giving the PRC's NOC official recognition in 1954. Two years later, the PRC angrily withdrew from the Olympic movement and all the international sporting federations.

The PRC was wooed back by the IOC following the official recognition of the PRC in 1971 by the United Nations. But not until 1979 did China become an active member of the Olympic movement. In that year, the IOC passed a resolution that confirmed the PRC as representative of the Olympic movement in the whole of China and Taiwan was allowed to remain under the name of Chinese Taipei. Three months later, China sent 28 athletes to the 1980 Winter Olympics in the United States in 1980 and the Chinese flag was raised at the Olympics for the first time in its Olympic history. China boycotted the Moscow summer Games held in the same year and had to wait for the Los Angeles Games in 1984 to make the real breakthrough. In 1981 He Zhenliang was elected as an IOC member. In 1984 China sent a team of more than 350 competitors to the Los Angeles Games and shooter Xu Haifeng became China's first ever Olympic



Gold medallist. The gold medal was presented by Juan Antonio Samaranch himself who was reportedly saying that it was a big day in China's 5,000 year history. It marked the beginning of China's high profile in the Olympic movement. In 1985 He Zhenliang became a member of the IOC executive board and was made a vice president in 1989. In 1989 the Chinese Olympic Committee announced the decision that Beijing would bid for the 2000 Games. In 1990 China held its first comprehensive international sports event, the 11<sup>th</sup> Asian Games. The success of the Asian Games held in Beijing further encouraged the Chinese government to go for the Olympics.

China lost the 1993 bid to Sydney by a margin of two votes, narrowly missing the opportunity of realising the Olympic dreams. The *China Daily* put it this way: "Just two votes shattered the dream of millions" (Daily 2001a).

Despite the loss China had made good use of the bidding process to introduce and promote China to the outside world. The publicity China enjoyed throughout the bid encouraged the Chinese government to try for the second time. As was the case with the first bid China mobilized the entire nation behind Beijing's bid by rallies, campaigns, and media coverage. Publicity stunts were practised to the fullest to draw attention to the bid, which was exalted by the state media as China's national mission. For the final pitch, for instance, China sent a media crew of more than 400 to Moscow to cover the IOC's vote, the largest yet for the Chinese media to cover an event outside the country. *CCTV*, China's national television station, set up four studios in Moscow and sent staff to the other four competing cities – Toronto, Paris, Istanbul and Osaka. Under the Chinese government's publicity strategy for the bid, the Chinese media, both at home and abroad, were restrained in their coverage of Beijing's bid and endeavoured to be objective and unbiased in their coverage of other bid cities. But once Beijing's victory was announced, the Chinese media duly politicised the IOC decision by turning it into a vote not only on its ability to host a sporting event but on the suitability of the nation. From the sick man of Asia, China had become a country judged fit to stage the world's most prestigious sports and media event.

The media hailed Beijing's victory on July 13, 2001 as a national triumph and as a realization of a century-old goal for the Chinese: recognition, respect and acceptance as an equal by the rest of the world (Collins 2002). Together with the accession to the World Trade Organization later the same year, the successful bid was taken as "confirmation that the policy of reform and opening up is the key to future security and success" (Collins 2002). At the local level Beijing hopes to match the development of other cities and meet international standards through the hosting of the Games. At the national level the Games will be a unique opportunity for renewal and development to the Olympic movement itself.

The publicity strategy for Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympics was different from the unsuccessful 1993 bid. In international publicity strategies the bid was focused on Beijing the city, rather than China the State. This represents a strategic shift compared with the first bid, which projected China as the bidder. This time Beijing was the bidder and key members of BOBICO were all from Beijing. This change of strategy was in line with IOC regulations that it is the city, not the country, which should be the bidder. It was a lesson learnt from the first bid and Beijing projected itself as ahead of other large Chinese cities in opening up to the outside world and taking the lead in the country's modernization drive. According to Li Zhurun, editor of *Beijing 2008*, by foregrounding Beijing as the bidder, the bid committee was able to project a more structured image of the bid. For instance, Beijing's GDP was US\$2,700 per person, much higher than China's national GDP, and was projected to reach US\$6,000 by 2008. At US\$6,000 Beijing will have reached the level of Seoul when it hosted the 1988 Games. This distinction made between the city and the state gave BOBICO an edge in promoting the bid.

Another important difference in publicity strategies was the hiring of foreign publicity companies to help with BOBICO's publicity effort. The foreign publicity professionals did a lot of lobbying for BOBICO and worked out publicity plans for each stage of the bid, proposing what image publicity should be carried out. They also conducted research on news media coverage of Beijing's bid in other countries, which Beijing failed to do for the first bid. Gao Dianmin, director and senior editor of the Sports News Department of *Xinhua*

*News Agency*, believed they did a good job in image building and publicity for BOBICO, and his opinion was shared among interviewees. But what impressed BOBICO most was the language polishing work they did on official documents and speeches to make them sound sincere and warm. Li Hepu, senior sports reporter of Xinhua News Agency, who was still emotional when recounting to me Beijing's moving final presentation in Moscow, said He Zhenliang's speech, which was hailed several times, had been polished by foreign experts word by word. "At the first bid," however, said Zhang Jian who is an official with Beijing's organizing committee, "We basically did everything by ourselves and it turned out to be too political and certainly not as refined."

Other characteristics of the new publicity strategy include promoting Beijing's bid through the internet, publishing special periodicals targeted at IOC members, and inviting journalists as well as athletes to visit Beijing. The publicity effort around the bid, as Li Zhurun pointed out, was a systematic project. It mobilized different resources and affected all groups of people. The direct goal of the promotion was for Beijing the city to win the bid, but it has benefited China the country in the improvement of its image.

Because IOC members were not allowed to visit bid cities this time, BOBICO was able to concentrate on other forms of publicity and did not have to worry about working out strategies concerning whom to invite to visit Beijing and how to impress and please them. During the first bid, Beijing had spent much time and resources on IOC members' visits. In fact Beijing painstakingly did its homework in the making of the publicity strategy for that bid. For one thing, BOBICO studied the ideological, political and practical inclinations of IOC members and categorized them into three groups. According to Li Hepu the first group were seen as conservative and traditional, consisting of princes, princesses, and aristocrats who are not friendly to China and definitely would not give their votes to China no matter what techniques are used to please them. The second group were considered to have strong geographical and political principles. A Commonwealth country would certainly vote for Australia while China's friends, because of the closeness of political ideologies, would vote for Beijing. The third

group are poor countries, Africa, and former socialist countries. They were considered the most uncertain group.

While this ideological line-up still held true for the second bid, it was not the key element in the making of the bid's publicity strategy and therefore not essential to the success of the bid. Instead, commercial sponsorship had a big influence over IOC's decision. Gao Dianmin gave an example. In order to get the support of NBC, who bought the TV rights of the Games till 2008, BOBICO proposed that the Games should be held in Beijing at the end of July or beginning of August. This accommodates NBC's rating needs. Universities in the United States have holidays in July and new semester starts in late August. Young people, especially students, normally constitute two-thirds of the TV audience for the Olympic Games. Gao Dianmin explained that it was a tactic used for the bid, although from the very beginning it was understood that it would be impossible to hold the Games at that time because Beijing's heat is often at its worst. After Beijing won the Games, BOCOG proposed a new time slot, the end of August, for the Games.

The success of the bid was achieved against the background of intensive lobbying by human rights activists and groups and human rights accusations and attacks by Western media. Normally, media coverage of a bid city should focus on the issue of capacity. But because of this prominence of human rights within the Western media's coverage of Beijing's bid, I focus on the two major issues surrounding Beijing's bid and preparations: the issue of human rights and the issue of logistics. The human rights issue deals with the moral question: should China be given the Games? It illustrates the fight for the high moral ground. The logistics issue concerns the question of ability: can China manage the Games? Through the interplay of the two issues, Beijing's Olympic campaign has been a contested site for image construction.

It is unusual that human rights is directly associated with the Olympic Games. Throughout Olympic history media coverage of a bid city has focused on the practical aspect, or the capability of the bid city rather than ideological issues. IOC politics has been a constant topic of media coverage, whereas the issue of

human rights has never been the top agenda item of international mainstream news media coverage of the cities bidding for the right to hold the Games. Beijing, however, was an exception. The first and the second bids were both targeted by human rights criticisms and accusations of international media, particularly media in countries that were ideologically opposed to Communism. Human rights, not Beijing's capacity, became "the issue" for Beijing while it was just the opposite for other bid cities.

Human rights issues effectively blocked Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympic Games. The U.S. House and Senate introduced resolutions which linked Beijing's bid with China's human rights records and asked the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to reject the bid. Beijing's bidding effort was also targeted by news reports in major Western newspapers of anti-China demonstrations and human rights problems in China, such as the Tiananmen Square incident, Tibet, dissidents and prison labour.

These moves met with strong reactions from the Chinese side. He Zhenliang, an IOC vice president and an executive vice president of Beijing 2000 Olympic bid committee, accused the U.S. House human rights subcommittee of trampling upon Olympic principles and interfering with the right of the IOC at a news conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. *Xinhua* quoted him saying: "Let sportsmen decide sports affairs, not interference by politicians" (Xinhua 1993a).

Close to the final pitch, the then Chinese premier Li Peng stated that for any country to exert pressure on the IOC is "inappropriate as well as unreasonable, and runs counter to the spirit of the Olympic Games" (Xinhua 1993b). This official line was reiterated by Chinese vice Premier Li Lanqing at a press conference in Monte Carlo (Xinhua 1993c).

After Beijing lost to Sydney, some overseas Chinese blamed some Western countries for interference into the Olympic balloting (Xinhua 1993d). But official response was more restrained. The *People's Daily* (Daily 1993b) commented: "Beijing lost the chance due to various, complicated reasons. We blame no others and we won't give ourselves up as hopeless." In the same article

the rationale for this attitude is summarized as this, “In the Olympic movement, it’s more important to participate. Bidding itself is a process of participation, a process of improving China’s material and cultural civilization and of strengthening the nation’s unity. From this point of view, it is of great importance whatever results.” It was not until four years later in 1997 when a high-ranking Chinese government official started to refer to the failure as “due to the non-sports factors” (Xinhua 1997e).

It is beyond the scope of this research to investigate how much the human rights issue accounts for Beijing’s failure. But one thing could be said of the short overview of Beijing’s bid for the 2000 Olympic Games is that human rights had inflicted damage to China’s image with the Tiananmen Square incident still fresh in the world’s memory.

When the Chinese government decided to enter the bid for hosting the 2008 Olympic Games, the biggest challenge was to repair the damage and build a new image of China that would convince the world of its improvement in human rights. The Chinese government’s approach was a low-key publicity strategy aimed at avoiding direct confrontation with human rights criticism. Zhang Jian outlined the following principles of the strategy:

We deliberately drew a line between the government and BOBICO; Our news media focused on the positive side of China; We upheld the principle of separating politics from sports.

Zhang was obviously very pleased with the distinction between the municipal government and BOBICO and considered it a smart way to deal with human rights questions. According to him, BOBICO was a temporary institution and did not function in the capacity of government. Because of this autonomy, BOBICO was able to redirect questions about human rights to the government.

This strategy was mainly used for BOBICO’s press conferences where questions of human rights were constantly raised by foreign reporters. When confronted

by human rights questions, BOBICO officials preferred to discuss human rights “on a specific basis” as Zhang Jian put it. He said BOBICO refrained from directly responding to what foreign reporters had to say. They would rather cite other cases, positive ones of course, to demonstrate that there are other ways to look at the issue of human rights.

The job of answering tough questions concerning human rights was left to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was responsible for making official statements about the Chinese government’s position and stand while BOBICO took a low-key indirect approach to human rights questions.

The avoidance strategy means not talking politics and not getting involved in human rights debates, Li Zhurun explained. To illustrate how this strategy worked, he gave an example of foreign criticisms about China’s religious policy. Using the celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matteo Ricci’s visit to Beijing, BOBICO organized an academic seminar to mark the occasion and positively evaluated his visit to Beijing through Fu Tieshan, the archbishop of the Beijing Parish of the Chinese Roman Catholic Church. BOBICO’s publication *Beijing 2008* quoted Fu as saying that Matteo Ricci introduced to China advanced Western scientific ideas and contributed to the interchange between China and the West. This publicity used the knowledge that two thirds of IOC members are Christians. This is a deliberate strategy to appease the Christian element within the IOC. It served to remind them of China’s acknowledgment and appreciation of Christian influence on China’s transition from a feudal society to a modern society.

But low-key did not mean that BOBICO would leave the matter as it was or totally ignore the issue. It meant dealing with human rights issues in indirect ways, such as the initiative to invite foreign journalists to visit Beijing to “see for themselves” the “real” human rights situation, as the interviewees termed it. It was completely different from the first bid when the Chinese were worried about negative reporting. BOBICO’s policy for the second bid was to let foreign press report what they want, rather than concealing things from them. This public

relations technique of “see for themselves” obviously wants to present a more open face to the international media.

And this technique worked well. According to Zhang Jian the number of news reports about Beijing on foreign media increased drastically after the strategy was implemented, surpassing the coverage of the five other bid cities. “If we had not invited foreign journalists to Beijing, we might have had more negative reporting on the foreign media,” Zhang commented.

A similar initiative was inviting athletes to visit Beijing. Although their visits did not appear in the news media because of the low-key strategy, these athletes made “a lot of publicity” for Beijing’s bid by talking about “the real Beijing” and “the real China”, according to Li Zhurun. In addition, BOBICO’s publicity materials put emphasis on how the Games would benefit athletes. This point was exemplified by Beijing’s open commitment that when the Olympics are held in Beijing in 2008, Prince Jun’s Palace will be the Olympic Reunion Centre where athletes from all over the world will be treated with the best food and entertainment Beijing could offer. One article in Issue 17 of Beijing 2008 quoted Mayor Liu Qi as saying that “we’ll offer them the same warmth and hospitality as our kinsmen”. Liu Qi made this pledge at a reception in 2001 at Prince Jun’s Palace, which was held in honour of Chinese and foreign Olympic gold medallists and in celebration of the World Olympics Day. Prince Jun was a most powerful member of the imperial family of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and was the owner of the 120-year-old palace before China became a republic in 1911. Another example is the promise made by Mayor Liu Qi that part of the profits made by the Games would be given to the Third World countries to help develop their sports.

To be in accordance with the low-key strategy, the English-language Chinese media covered Beijing’s bid in a non-confrontational way when human rights was concerned, that is, reports avoided direct confrontation with criticisms. It focused on the positive side of China, a strategy that has served Chinese media well domestically. The media policy was to present to the outside world “a true Beijing” and “a true China” that the government felt were not reflected in



international media coverage. This policy was based on the reasoning that if the Chinese side of the story is told, then the reader would have something to compare with the different reports by some Western media and thus make his own judgment.

In contrast, there were many negative reports and unfavourable voices on foreign media. These reports focused on human rights. But despite these unfavourable voices and news coverage, Beijing won the Games. All the interviewees agreed that eventually it was economics, not the negative media reports, which counted in the IOC's decision to give Beijing the rights to host the 2008 Games. China's enhanced national strength and its desire to open more to the outside world were ultimately the factors that led to Beijing's victory. In addition, the attraction of China's huge market was another factor crucial to Beijing's success. This positive power of the market was more powerful than the influence of media in winning Beijing the bid.

Nevertheless, the news media's role in imaging China through the issue of human rights was undeniable. It is difficult to substantiate the degree to which news media reports led to Beijing's loss in 1993 or to Beijing's victory in 2001. It is possible to say, however, that news media reports achieved a degree of public perception that will have a more profound impact on China's international image than the event of Beijing's win of the bid itself.

It is important to consider why human rights, not logistics, was targeted as the overriding issue for Beijing's bid by Western media. A brief introduction of the issue of human rights as it applies to China is necessary. So is the introduction of the issue of logistics. The two issues were central to the construction of China's image on the site of Beijing's Olympic campaign.

### **The Moral Ground: the Issue of Human Rights**

Human rights emerged as a central issue in international affairs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has remained high on the agenda of international politics in the post-Cold War world when an international debate emerged after the fall of the

former Soviet Union. The debate, which is still ensuing, has involved governments, scholars and human rights activists all over the world. Peter Van Ness sees the emergence of the international debate partly as “a result of an assertive new US role”, partly as “an attempt by abusive governments to defend themselves from international condemnation”, and partly as “a determination by Asians to assert their own standards and to reject Western hegemony in deliberations about what is most fundamental to humanity” (Peter Van Ness 1999).

The international debate has focused on different interpretations of human rights and on what rights should be given priority over others. On one side of the debate is the US-led West which, after the demise of Communism in the former Soviet Union, seeks to democratize the rest of the world through propagating Western values and standards embodied in its conceptualization of human rights. On the other side is the Third World, especially Asian countries, who reject Western hegemony in human rights discourse and assert an “Asian values” discourse on human rights.

The battle between the West and the Third World is reflected in the huge existing literature on human rights. A look at the official UN documents on human rights, the “human rights regime” as Peter Van Ness calls it, serves the purpose of profiling what is actually there for debate in the first place.

Key UN documents on human rights include *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*, *the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*, and some 20 other documents. Different priorities and emphasis of different groupings of countries are reflected in these documents. The *ICCPR*, for instance, highlights the rights of the individual against the intrusion of the state in accordance with the individualistic Western cultural tradition. The *ICESCR* emphasises the state over the individual, translating economic, social, and cultural rights in terms of the state meeting a person’s subsistence needs such as adequate food, shelter, health care and employment. This approach takes its root in the Marxist philosophical tradition and represents views of socialist countries.

Other documents specify people's rights to self-determination and to development, reflecting the special concerns of the Third World countries about the inequalities of the world system, which is dominated by the developed Western countries and regions such as the US and EU.

The different emphases are the basis for all debates concerning human rights. The current international debate is one between individual human rights and collective or group human rights, an issue that reflects fundamental differences in defining and implementing human rights. The dominant Western discourse on human rights is the civil and political rights for the individual based on the notion that human rights are inherent and therefore the state cannot take them away. This discourse excludes collectivistic economic, social, and cultural rights. It refuses to acknowledge the validity of "alternative conceptions of rights" from the Third World because it addresses the "fundamental inequalities" of the world system (Nikhil Aziz in Van Ness 1999: 39). Asian countries, on the other hand, insist upon the particularity of "Asian values" which are labelled by the West as relativist or fundamentalist. They give first priority to the collectivistic economic, social, and cultural rights, arguing that what is most fundamental to human development is enough food on the plate and a roof over the head, or in other words the rights to subsistence or the rights to survival. They criticise Western posturing on human rights as self-serving and alien to other cultures.

As Peter Van Ness points out, the human rights debate inevitably focuses on the performance of the state: the state as protector of or abuser of civil and political rights; and the state as the expected provider of social, economic, and cultural rights (Van Ness 1999: 4). But he regards the various positions on human rights taken by "all the governments involved" as self-serving and he points out the practice of double standard by governments in foreign relations when human rights is concerned. He observes that human rights abuses committed by friendly governments are typically ignored, while abuses by one's opponents are forcefully condemned. Moreover, he points out, when human rights issues are addressed in a systematic way by governments, it is always someone else's human rights abuses that are to be investigated, and almost never one's own (Van Ness 1999: 12).

Although this view tends to gloss over important differences between governments in being inconsistent and having double standard, it nevertheless reflects the role human rights plays in international affairs: a weapon that is always aimed at opponents for one's own interests.

Domestically, the acknowledgement of the concept of human rights in China has gone a long way, from being a forbidden topic to appearing in Party and government documents, and eventually to being amended into the Constitution. The changes reflect China's ideological adaptation to the international environment in its modernization drive to make China a strong and prosperous country.

For a long period of time after the founding of the People's Republic, the issue of human rights had been a "forbidden zone" in political theory and ideology. The concept of human rights was criticised as a bourgeois idea and was not used in the drafting of either the Constitution or the law. As a consequence, human rights was treated with indifference and was constantly violated in practice, especially during the decade of the so-called Cultural Revolution. Even at the beginning of the reform and opening period, a large number of articles was published in newspapers highlighting topics such as "Whose slogan is human rights?" "Human rights is bourgeois slogan" "Human rights is not proletarian slogan" and "human rights is hypocritical". These articles regarded human rights as the "patent" of the capitalist class and emphasised that the proletarian has always been "critical" of the human rights slogan.

In order to carry out the reforms and to open up to the outside world, the Chinese Communist Party began to re-evaluate socialism and in the early 1990s came up with the new "theory" of building "socialism with Chinese characteristics". This provided the theoretical basis for framing the issue of human rights. In June of 1985, against the background of fierce human rights attacks on China by some hostile international forces, Deng Xiaoping pointed out, "What is human rights? First of all, whose human rights? It is a human rights for the minority, or for the majority, the whole Chinese nation? The so-called Western "human rights" is fundamentally different from ours. They are different concepts" (Xinhua 2004f).

By distinguishing China's concept of human rights from the Western concept, Deng's statement indicated that a socialist China can also talk about human rights. It marked the beginning of the opening up of the "restricted zone".

With the collapse of the former Soviet Union and its socialist bloc and the Tiananmen Square incident, the United States and other Western countries launched aggressive human rights offensives against China which included the implementation of political and economic sanctions, such as the suspension of arms sales, postponement of transfer of high technology with both military and civilian applications, and opposition to financial aid by international financial institutions. In response, the CCP led by Jiang Zemin decided to give a definite answer to the question of whether socialist China should hold the banner of human rights up high. In 1989, Jiang and other CCP leaders made it clear that it was time to tackle the theoretical issue of how to deal with democracy, freedom, and human rights from the Marxist point of view. They emphasised the need to explain and show that China's democracy is people's democracy in the broadest sense and that socialist China has paid the highest respect to human rights. They instructed the news media to propagate justifiably and forcefully China's concept of human rights, to present the "true" picture of how human rights has been protected and democracy has been implemented, and to raise the banner of human rights, democracy and freedom to confront international criticisms.

To implement these instructions, China's propaganda machines were mobilized in 1989 to produce their own interpretation of human rights to confront the Western deliberations. On November 1 of 1991, the Publicity Office of the State Council published the *White Paper on Human Rights* to openly discuss China's human rights situation based on the argument that the right to subsistence is more important for China than other rights because China's development level is still low. This was the first time that the Chinese government had issued to the world an official government document on the issue of human rights. Its historical significance lies in the dumping of the leftist idea of human rights and the breaking up of the "restricted zone".

The white paper called human rights a “great term” and stated that human rights is a long-term historical task for the Chinese people and the government. It was the first time that the Chinese government had positively acknowledged, in the form of government documents, the position of the concept of human rights in the political development of socialist China. The significance also lies in the integration of the universality of human rights into the history and reality of China. As a result, the basic line of China’s view of human rights was produced: rights to survival are the primary human rights for the Chinese people. From then on, human rights has become a key theme for China’s foreign publicity efforts, and it has become routine for the Chinese premier to make statements concerning China’s fundamental stand on human rights in his annual work report representing the State Council.

In September, 1997, the concept of human rights was written into the theme report of the 15<sup>th</sup> Party Congress delivered by Jiang Zemin. It was the first time that the phrase of respecting for and protecting human rights actually appeared in official documents of the Party Congress. Respect for and protection of human rights was adopted by the Party’s action programme as a basic goal and became an action goal for the Party regime. This goal was reaffirmed by the theme report of the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress held in November, 2001. At this congress, respect for and protection of human rights was also established as a key development target for the Party and the State in the new century.

In March, 2004, the annual meeting of the National People’s Congress, China’s parliament formally approved constitutional amendment that addresses human rights. The clause that states “The state respects and preserves human rights” marked the first time that the concept of human rights was introduced into the Constitution. The previous four Constitutions used “citizens’ basic rights” rather than human rights. It means that human rights has been upgraded from a Party goal to a constitutional principle. It also means that human rights had been raised from the level of a political concept to the level of a legal concept, allowing the state, not just the Party and the government, to be the protector of human rights. It has become the will of the people and the will of the nation, to respect and

protect human rights, rather than the will of the Party and the will of the government.

The constitutional amendment is hailed by China's human rights activists as an important milestone for China's human rights development. Although some critics see the amendment as of more symbolic significance than of legal importance, it is agreed that it is an important move in improving China's international image.

On the international stage, China's foreign policy and rhetoric on human rights have changed over time, from head-on ideological confrontation to arguments based on cultural differences. The changes are characterized by political discourses on nationalism, development, and culture. In Mao's era, China played the role of the leader of the Third World and joined other Third World countries in trying to secure development as a right and in protesting the violation of self-determination and national sovereignty.

During the 1989-1992 period, China was involved in the international human rights debate following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. China recast itself as an East Asian country instead of the revolutionary leader of the Third World. Questioning the motives behind the Western concept of universality, China put emphasis on the conspiracy to destroy Chinese cultural values and to overthrow communist rule through peaceful evolution and human rights imperialism. Through the annual white paper, China argued that the right to subsistence was more important for China than other rights because China's development level is still low.

In the 1993-1996 period, China changed the conspiracy mentality and accepted the distinction between Marxist and capitalist concepts of human rights although China still insisted that the Western concept was incompatible with China. Jiang Zemin argued in 1993 that developed and developing countries have different concepts of human rights due to varying cultural traditions, ways of life, and stages of development. China launched its own human rights diplomacy and was more assertive in the international debate. It has published a series of white

papers on its own human rights situation and regularly published a critique of the annual US Department of State human rights report. The developmentalist argument was appropriated with the nationalist sentiments roused by the failed Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympic Games and gained popularity and support from the Chinese public.

In the middle of 1996, China's attitude towards human rights criticisms became more accepting and reacted to human rights offensives in new ways. The first change was indicated by President Jiang Zemin's speech at Harvard in November 1997, in which Jiang dropped the political or ideological approach when comparing the different interpretations of human rights between China and the West. He approached the human rights issue from cultural, historical, and economic perspectives with the conspicuous absence of ideological perspectives. The second indication of changes in China's human rights strategy was the signing in October 1997 of *the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)* after years of delay.

China's arguments in international human rights debates have been characterized by nationalism, development, and culture. Joining other Asian and Third World countries in stressing the notion of particularity of human rights, China picked up the argument of "Asian values". It regards the Western interpretation of human rights as the civil and political rights for the individual as alien to Chinese culture. China's official line on human rights is that because history, cultural and social conditions are unique, human rights concepts are different in various countries. During his 1997 official visit to the United States, President Jiang Zemin stated that concepts on democracy, on human rights, and on freedom are relative and specific and they are to be determined by the specific national situation of different countries. Accordingly China argues that its national conditions such as development level and huge population make it impossible to apply the Western standards on civil and political liberties. Human rights concepts should be modified according to specific historical, social and cultural conditions.

The developmental discourses are characterized by the emphasis on economic growth under political stability. Order and stability are regarded as preconditions



for economic growth. Collective rights are placed ahead of individual rights because appeals for civil and political rights to the individual are premature and would disrupt the process of economic development. The rationale for placing national development before the fulfilment of human rights standards is that economic development would produce civil and political liberties. In other words, economic growth and the improvement of people's living standards will enable people to enjoy every type of human rights and basic freedoms. The rhetoric of China's developmental discourses is that reform and openness has brought about a comprehensive improvement to China's human rights situation under conditions of reform, development, and stability. The promotion of Beijing's first bid in 1993 for instance projected China as enjoying a flourishing economy, political stability, a harmonious society, and a rise in the country's overall economic capacity. This rhetoric of development and progress has been criticised by international news media as an attempt to legitimize China's human rights abuses and to deflect criticisms.

The international debate on human rights is not simply a matter of ideological conflicts. It also reflects concerns with national sovereignty, national identity, and national image. China's arguments reflect its intolerance of individual rights and individual freedom which it considers a threat to the authoritarian regime. The emphasis on the collective rights or the rights of the state based on the idea of developmentalism is a strategy to resist Western democracy and to legitimize the one-party political system through nation-building. The Western insistence on individual rights, on the other hand, shows the Western tendency to "bring" capitalist democracy to China and change China according to their own images of China. The demise of the Soviet bloc has made such attempts seem a natural outcome of circumstances.

Needless to say there are real human rights concerns in China. International media coverage of human rights abuses include detention without trial, the one-child family planning policy, the lack of a legal system that allows people to exercise democratic rights, and abuses of Tibetans and Falun Gong followers. These criticisms are not totally ungrounded and international human rights activists and groups, such as Amnesty International, are responsible for keeping

these issues burning. And of course, there is the Tiananmen Square incident which has become shorthand for human rights abuses in China. It exists in the Western imagination of China as evidence of China's intolerance of individual human rights. This bad image haunts China.

It haunted Beijing's Olympic campaign as human rights was brought to international attention by anti-China forces. In fact, Beijing's Olympic campaign has been a battlefield of image construction with Chinese propaganda and Western media actively engaged in the production of conflicting images of China. While Chinese propaganda carried on the "positive reporting" traditions with new strategies, Western media intensively exploited the Tiananmen Square incident as a myth to signify China's poor human rights record. This battle of conflicting images of China is the epitome of the on-going international debate on human rights, reflecting all the existing arguments concerning the interpretation of human rights.

### **Preparing the Ground: the Issue of Managing the Games**

It is a fact and disadvantage that Beijing has not hosted many international sports events. Naturally, there were doubts about Beijing's bid for the 2008 Games apart from human rights concerns. Does Beijing have the required experience and management skills for hosting such mega sports event like Olympic Games? Are they capable of building new venues? How will Beijing deal with air pollution that will surely pose a threat to the health of athletes? Apart from Beijing's venue and infrastructure, doubts seemed to concentrate on environmental issues, such as pollution.

Beijing's solution to these doubts was the promotion of the three major themes, or concepts. Unlike the low-key strategy developed for dealing with human rights, the strategy for the issue of logistics was high-key. This high-key strategy meant sparing no pain to promote Beijing to the outside world through propagating the three themes. Under this strategy, the English-language Chinese press have been concentrating on the positive reporting of issues concerning logistics.

The three themes were worked out to reflect the current international trends so as to show that Beijing's bid and Beijing the city itself are adapting to the world trends. The bid borrowed the concept of The Green Olympics from Sydney to introduce improvements of the environment in Beijing as well as in China. It aimed to convey the message that environmental problems occur in the process of development, so they will be addressed and solved gradually in the process of development. In fact, the concept of Green Olympics was borrowed because the issue of environment was a relatively recent thing in China. Gao Dianmin pointed out that there had been virtually no mention of the issue of environment in Xinhua's coverage before 1995. It gradually appeared in Xinhua reports out of the need to raise people's awareness of environmental protection. That probably explains why Beijing focused on the developmentalist argument when using the borrowed concept of Green Olympics.

The same argument, based on the note of development, was also designed for The People's Olympics to deal with questions of human rights. The theme of the High-Tech Olympics highlights the best technologies to be used to fulfil Beijing's promise to make the 2008 Games "the best ever". The three concepts supported the slogan, or the motto, of Beijing's bid in a way that Sydney's concept of the Green Olympics had not. "Sydney's slogan was something like sharing the Olympic Spirit. But what really is the Olympic Spirit? It was invisible. In contrast, Beijing's slogan, New Beijing and Great Olympics, was made very rich in connotation by the three themes and reflected international trends through them," Zhang remarked, suggesting that Beijing borrowed from Sydney but did a better job.

Addressing the concerns that Beijing lacked the experience and management skills for large international sports events, BOBICO highlighted the several international sports events China had already hosted and claimed that Beijing, though indeed lacking the required experience for hosting an Olympics Games, could always borrow from, and take advantage of, both the Chinese Olympic Committee and the State Sports Administration which have rich personnel resources in the fields of organizational skills and sports management. To

address other specific concerns, a series of publicity techniques was used. For the environment issue, for instance, BOBICO had a campaign to promote the Green Olympics Action Plan which introduced the measures Beijing had taken to improve the quality of environment and to treat air pollution.

After Beijing won the bid, the issue of logistics, rather than the issue of human rights, should have become the major topic for both the foreign and the Chinese media. But because of the IOC requirement that before 2004 all media attention should be focused on the Athens Games and Beijing should not steal the spotlight, foreign press coverage of Beijing's preparation for the 2008 Games was very limited while Chinese press coverage, still substantial, was much restrained compared with its coverage for the bid. Beijing's publicity for the preparations has been around building two images: the image of openness and the image of thrift. While openness is an old rhetoric, thrift is a new approach and is in line with IOC's insistence that the scale and costs of the Games should be reduced.

The media also emphasised how the Games would stimulate Chinese sports and how the demands of 1.4 billion Chinese people for sports facilities have grown. "For the people" was seen by Beijing's organizing committee as what the Olympic preparations were all about. To translate this principle into reality, Beijing's development was put on the course of high-tech. According to data released by the municipal government, high-tech industries are expected to be responsible for 40 percent of the city's economic growth by 2008, up from about 28 percent now. The service sector will furnish 65 percent of the city's GDP, as against 45 percent in 2001. The city mayor pledged to attain the target through the 'Olympic economy'. In other words, the money will not come from people's pocket. The so-called "Olympic economy" refers to the commercial side of the Olympic Games. BOCOG is expected to raise at least 80 percent of the budget of the 2008 Games which, as stated in Beijing's bid report, stands at US\$1.625 billion. This figure will probably rise due to increased security costs, which has been evidenced by the Athens Games. To make up for any shortfall, BOCOG will licence the intellectual property rights under its ownership such as the logo,

to commercial exploitation in order to raise the funds for material supplies, technologies and services needed by the Games.

Venue construction also saw an emphasis on the people element. The Five-Pine Cultural and Sports Centre, for instance, will be turned into a mass cultural and sports centre after the Games. The National Stadium in the Olympic Green will be reserved for national and international sports competitions. But the 19,000-seat indoor stadium in the Olympic Green, the venue for Olympic gymnastic contests, will be turned into the National Circus Centre. Many temporary seats are to be installed in the National Natatorium, also in the Olympic Green. After the Games, these will be removed and replaced by an artificial sandy beach with palm trees, so that the site will be turned into a bay-like playground. The clinic in the Olympic Green will be renovated after the Games to serve as community recreational centre. The athletes' dormitories will be sold and become a modern residential estate, complete with a school and various service facilities and serviced by a web of public transport routes. This emphasis on the human element is a key feature of publicity campaign for Beijing's preparations.

While it could be maintained that the purpose of the publicity strategy on human rights was to repair China's damaged image abroad, the strategy on logistics was for the construction of new images of China. Through the Olympics, the site for image construction, China has been striving to present a new image to the world in three "mediated" stages: the bid, the preparations, and the holding of the Games in 2008, especially the opening and the closing ceremonies. The first stage was successful and Li Zhurun has gone so far as saying it was "the most successful foreign propaganda" in the history of CCP since the founding of the People's Republic. "It was so successful that even the Pope issued a statement in support of Beijing's bid prior to the IOC voting," he commented. Currently at the second stage, publicity and press coverage of the on-going preparations are carefully paced and meticulously calculated to keep the international audience well informed of the progress and yet not overly excite them. The "climax" is kept for the opening ceremony which, unfortunately, will take place well after this research project is finished.

## **Part Two**

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# **The Deconstruction**

## Chapter 3

### **The Chinese Imaging – The Moral Ground**

Michael Schoenhal (1992) argues that formalized language is a form of power in politics. This provides an interesting insight into the “centralized management and manipulation of ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ formulations” in Chinese texts. What he means by formalization is “a particular quality of linguistic ‘impoverishment’”. He sees direct control and manipulation of words as the techniques used by the Party and the government to ensure censorship. He points out that by “proscribing some formulations while prescribing others”, the Party and the government set out to “regulate what is being said and what is being written – and by extension what is being done” (Schoenhals 1992: 3).

China’s publicity strategy for the issue of human rights during its Olympic campaign is a good case of this kind of formalized language. It exemplifies the power of the Party and the government in regulating what is being circulated by the mass media.

Human rights was an issue that Beijing needed to address for its second bid. China’s Olympic administrators had learnt a lesson from the unsuccessful 1993 bid: countering criticism in a confrontational manner would be counter-productive and only encourage and invite more unwanted scrutiny. The decision was to indirectly deal with the human rights issue, officially called the “low-key” strategy.

The low-key strategy did not mean being inactive. In fact, in anticipating criticism of China’s human rights record during its preparation for the bid for the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese government had been very actively and consciously involved in the construction of an official discourse that not only addressed the human rights issue but also reflected the low-key and indirect approach. Apart from drawing on a discourse of development, the government also made good use of the proposition that communist rule succeeded with economic and social

rights while lagging behind in political and civil rights (Michael Sullivan in Van Ness 1999). This developmental rights approach features in the majority of propaganda produced for Beijing's Olympic campaign.

In this chapter I examine this component of the huge enterprise of government, as well as media's representation of the official perception and interpretation of human rights in China for Beijing's Olympic campaign. Through deconstruction of China's discourse on human rights in China, I find that while the Chinese government has improved its publicity skills, Chinese journalism is still undertaking the old Chinese journalistic practice of presenting "scripted events and preferred interpretations" (Chang 2003).

### **Imaging by Government Publicity**

#### ***The Motto***

The four-word motto for Beijing's bid succinctly illustrates the new publicity strategy. "New Beijing, Great Olympics" evokes a very different theme line designed to differentiate itself from the logo of Beijing's first bid. While the "more open China" theme of the first bid signalled the Chinese government's economic and foreign policies toward reform and opening up to the outside world, this logo constructs Beijing in a new imaginary dimension of space and time. In this way it foregrounds Beijing to cater to IOC norms and plays up the theme of the great Olympic movement to please IOC votes.

The Olympic bid is construed as a competition of cities rather than countries. The motto therefore depicts Beijing, not China, as both the real space and virtual site where the meaning of Beijing's bid is constructed. This is a strategic manoeuvre that reflects the improved skills of government publicity. The official interpretation of the motto is that Beijing, a city with a history of over three thousand years, is striding into the new millennium with a new outlook – the result of policies of reforms and opening to the outside world. Liu Qi, Mayor of Beijing and president of Beijing's bid committee, was thus quoted in a *Xinhua* report: "By 'new Beijing', we mean our resolve to let Beijing become the first



Chinese city to achieve modernization. ‘Great Olympics’ refers to our pledge to make the 2008 Olympics the best in the history of modern Olympiad”.

This interpretation of transformation not only reflects the technical positioning of Beijing as a bid city so as to cater to IOC norms and the norms of an Olympic bid, but also demonstrates the strategic positioning of the city in the country’s national development program. The choice of Beijing to represent China to bid for the 2008 Olympics provides a historic opportunity for Beijing to develop into a modern global city. As the mayor of Beijing puts it, the first part of the slogan, New Beijing, expresses the city’s anticipation of becoming “the first” city in China to achieve “modernization”, the benchmark of modernity associated with internationalism. The slogan also expresses determination to realize this prospect by refashioning Beijing out of the old.

Embedded within this explicit message is a more implicit one meant to serve the purpose of countering anticipated human rights attacks. Projected as a bid city, Beijing was in a better position to deal with human rights questions. As pointed out by interviewees in Chapter 2, Beijing could always divert these questions to the Foreign Ministry and insist that human rights was out of the scope of the bid. In fact, the positioning of Beijing as a bid city was a strategic move reflecting the indirect approach of the low-key publicity strategy concerning human rights. It could effectively shield Beijing from human rights criticisms with the logic that the bid should have nothing to do with human rights issues.

The construction of these messages is based on a Chinese linguistic tradition of using a very deliberate language to deliver a loaded message within the framework of a certain ideology. It is important therefore to understand the message, and more importantly the ideology embedded in the message, rather than taking the message at its face value.

The adjective “new” in the construction of “New Beijing” is strategic: the interplay of new and Beijing is construed as being to the advantage of Beijing. In other words, “New Beijing” is imagined in two time frames: the present and the future. The present image of New Beijing is projected as a much-improved city

with so many changes that it is for the purpose of this propaganda a different city compared with the past. The adjective “new” suggests other “improvements” and implies improved conditions of human rights. Improvement in the future sense implies that Beijing has put its past imperfections behind and is seeking new links to be built with the imagined outside global system. In this imagery, critical issues such as human rights will find solutions in the process of global integration as that process will expose China to international scrutiny. Through this global integration, Beijing will make great improvement and eventually become China’s first city to become a modern international metropolis. By then, China -- represented by Beijing -- will be an honoured member of the international community.

The word “new” in the construction of the motto is used as a myth. By stressing differences between the present Beijing and the past Beijing, and between the present Beijing and the future Beijing, the adjective “new” blocks out the similarities, such as the *same* authoritarian regime, the *same* political ideology, and the *same* human rights problems. This is a construction of Beijing as a myth, in other words an implicit way of thinking about Beijing. In Roland Barthes’ (Lavers 1972) interpretation, myth refers to ways of thinking that are structured into texts to convey particular messages and to make the messages appear natural. The myth of Beijing is such a construction. It diverts public attention from any unpleasant past images of China to wondering about the new things that might have transformed Beijing. It frames the audience in a particular way of thinking: this New Beijing has become something that is more recognisable as a modern global city.

The concept of development, which is connoted by the word “new”, plays the vital role in the new mythic imagery of Beijing. Improvement has two implications here: the acknowledgement of imperfections and the promotion of progress. Beijing’s logic, as pointed out by interviewees in Chapter 2, is that China is a developing country and therefore should be allowed time to make progress or improvement in human rights in the due process of development. Zhang Jian, the BOBICO and BOCOG official interviewed for this research, claimed that “Development is our ideology”. This logic of development is

wrapped in the improvement and progress rhetoric which had served as an overarching frame for the official discourse on China's human rights situations for Beijing's Olympic campaign.

Ideas of development and progress are actually Western concepts. The primary concern is to expand and enhance economic growth, as measured by gross national product. Development was thought of as a "package" with economic growth as the major motivating force. The idea of progress was invented more than two centuries ago in Western Europe and progress is measured in terms of wealth generation (Zhao 1997). The Chinese government has adopted this Western idea of development and progress to serve its pursuit of modernization. It has also used it as myth to gloss over political and social contradictions and problems. Used in the official discourse of Beijing's bid, for instance, the myth of development had been an ideal weapon to justify, or even to evade, its human rights issues.

A different myth is used for "Great Olympics". This part of the motto expresses China's determination to uphold Olympic principles and to carry on Olympic traditions. But hidden in this explicit message lies the implicit, unstated one: the universality of Olympics and the humanistic tradition include everyone in the Olympic movement regardless of race, religion, and political beliefs. Here, the "Olympic rhetoric of internationalism" (Polumbaum 2003) or the Olympic spirit is drawn upon as a myth to create the impression that politics has never been part of the Olympic movement. The logic is that if Olympic internationalism dictates that no country should be discriminated against participating in the Olympic movement, then China should not be denied the equal opportunity on the human rights abuse charges. This is a subtle message, strategically positioned for later exploitation. And this positioning proved to be farsighted, useful and effective in relation to events during the bid, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the same Chinese cultural tradition of "doing things with words" (Schoenhals 1992), "Great Olympics" carries an excess of meaning and exemplifies multi-layered strategic thinking. At the primary level, the positioning of this phrase in the motto aims to exemplify China's motives for hosting an Olympic Games.

Unlike the motto of Beijing's first bid, "A More Open China awaits Olympics", which was criticised as over-emphasising the benefits China could obtain from staging an Olympic Games, this motto shows that Olympics is important in its own right. In addition to helping with the country's reconstruction of reform, the Olympics is deemed "Great" first and foremost because of its humanistic tradition and universal principles. As a strategic manoeuvre to win over IOC votes, this motto ties Beijing's bid with Olympic movements in a tight knot by giving the prominent position to Olympics rather than to the promotion of self-interest.

At another level, the combination of the two phrases as the bid's motto suggests an interactive relationship. It implies that hosting the Olympic Games would bring great changes to Beijing while China's participation in the Olympic movement, with the world's largest population, would provide strong support to the universality of Olympics. This point can be illustrated by the Chinese version of the motto, which uses the same adjective "new" to describe Beijing and Olympics: "*xin Beijing, xin aoyun*" ("New Beijing, New Olympics). The Chinese version, however, puts more emphasis on suggesting how a new Beijing is capable of hosting a *unique* Olympic Games, whereas the English version (New Beijing, Great Olympics) stresses the changes an Olympic Games could bring about to Beijing. The contrasting emphasis is an indication of the Chinese government's consciousness of the difference between domestic propaganda and propaganda for international consumption. According to Li Zhurun, who proposed the change from "New Olympics" to "Great Olympics" for the English version, "Great Olympics" is not as presumptuous as "New Olympics", and it makes it possible to use Olympics as a myth.

The design of the motto indicates that the Chinese government was better prepared in its bidding strategy the second time around: the motto is more focused, better thought out, while also having the benefit of being politically correct. It establishes a "moral base" from which arguments could be drawn to counter possible human rights attacks. And because of the ideological weight it carries, the motto serves the ongoing preparations for the Games. At a reception marking the first anniversary of the city's Olympic victory, Mayor Liu Qi

claimed that the bid slogan would continue to be the guiding principle for Beijing's preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games.

### *The Themes*

When Liu Jingmin, vice mayor of Beijing and executive vice-president of BOBICO, told foreign reporters in February, 2001 that the motto carries more meaning when considered in conjunction with the three themes of the bid (as reported by issue 3 of *Beijing 2008*), he was making a particular point about the promotion strategy for Beijing's Olympic campaign. For one thing, while "New Beijing, Great Olympics" was the promise of Beijing's bid, this promise was supported by the three major themes: Green Olympics, Hi-tech Olympics and People's Olympics. The three themes deal directly with the issues deemed by Beijing as crucial to hosting the Olympic Games. Beijing Mayor Liu Qi identified these issues as the ability to provide superior, reliable transportation systems, to incorporate state-of-the-art technology into all aspects of the games, and to place a strong emphasis on protecting and improving the environment (Xinhua 2000g).

Conspicuously absent from these crucial issues is the issue of human rights. Rather than engaging in a direct human rights debate, the Chinese government adopted an indirect approach: it concentrated its publicity effort on promoting the positive side of Chinese society, such as rapid economic development, great social progress and continued improvement of people's lives (Li 2001). The three themes have reflected this approach. Green Olympics focuses on the environment; People's Olympics pays attention to athletes and ordinary people; and Hi-tech Olympics aims to apply high technology to make the Games a unique event. These emphases are an indication that the three themes are created under the overarching ideological frame of development. The myth of improvement or progress is fully exploited in this creation to serve as the logic behind the official rhetoric of improvement of people's life meaning the improvement of human rights in China.

The focal point of the official rhetoric is the essentialisation of the Chinese people. “We have the people’s support” is a pet phrase for bid officials who claimed national support. The all-inclusive term of “the people” (*renmin*) hides the conflicts of interests between government and some social groups on issues ranging from relocation of Beijing residents to protection of cultural relics. It shapes the reader in the preferred way of thinking: think of “the people” in terms of an unspecified large group rather than in terms of individuals. This is where “the people” functions as a myth: to make ideas appear natural as truth, or in Bignell’s (1997) interpretation of Barthes, to “promote one way of thinking while seeking to eliminate all the alternative ways of thinking”. By drawing on the myth of the people, for instance, the theme of People’s Olympics conceals conflicts and creates an imagery of an all-inclusive community of the Chinese people who will benefit from the 2008 Games in terms of improvement of living standard as opposed to the Western concept of political and individual rights as human rights.

The myth of the people was intensively and extensively used in the official discourse on human rights for Beijing’s bid. After Beijing won the bid, “People’s Olympics” has been continuously promoted as the point of departure for the preparatory work for the 2008 Games and resolved to be its end result. In fact, the use of the people as a myth by the Chinese government had a long history before the bids. The bids were only another episode in the manipulation of language and myth for achieving political ends by the Party and state.

### ***The Emblem***

The emblem likewise, is a masterpiece of propaganda for the Chinese interpretation of human rights. Using the traditional physical exercise of *taijiquan* as myth, the official emblem (see appendix 4) signifies specificity and universality of Chinese sports culture in relation to human development, a key aspect of human rights.

The basic structure of the design is a knot in the shape of a person practising *taijiquan*, or traditional Chinese shadow boxing. The shape of the knot is

modelled after the “Chinese knot”, a traditional Chinese handicraft which symbolizes unity, co-operation, and exchange. *Taijiquan*, a symbol of China’s traditional sports culture, embodies the essences of this culture, namely smoothness, harmony, vitality, and mobility. According to a BOBICO statement, the use of the same five colours as the Olympic rings in the design symbolizes a perfect integration of Chinese sports culture and the Olympic spirits of Faster, Higher and Stronger (Xinhua 2000h).

*Taijiquan*, which is developed to achieve harmony, unity and co-operation of human movement, is a popular sport in China, especially among aged people. It favours slow, smooth and coordinated body movements in opposition to abrupt, explosive and confrontational sports. It is a traditional physical exercise that draws upon theories of traditional Chinese medicine. It stresses the coordination between breathing and physical movement that aims to achieve a state of balance and inward calmness. It also draws upon the philosophy of *taiji*, which could be traced back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The theory of *taiji* argues that *taiji* (or the supreme ultimate) is the source of the universe. Thus, by practising *taijiquan*, a human being could achieve a state of harmony with the universe.

*Taijiquan* has undoubtedly achieved recognition internationally as a symbol of traditional Chinese sports culture, and this has been exploited in the official emblem to signify the long history of China’s emphasis on human development. The message is that China’s emphasis on human rights is fundamental, starting right from the development of the human body itself and showing a unique interest in the coordination of the body and mind of the human being. *Taijiquan* is projected as a good example of this approach.

But contrary to the official interpretation of the *taijiquan* as representing the traditional Chinese sports culture, taijiquan in reality has never been a sport in the conventional sense of competitive human movements. Throughout ancient and modern history, Taiji Quan has been practiced as a physical exercise aimed at self- improvement in order to achieve a state of harmony with the universe or nature. This is still the philosophy for people who practise *taijiquan*, although for the government taijiquan has acquired a new layer of meaning for Beijing’s bid

for the 2008 Olympics. By exploiting *taijiquan* as a symbol of traditional Chinese sports culture, the government has been able to hide the fact that sports has never been a part of Chinese culture, no matter how much the Chinese government has claimed otherwise. Playing on the Western assumptions of *taiji* as a form of ancient Chinese sport, Beijing's bid had strived to make as natural the association of *taijiquan* with a so-called Chinese sports culture. In this context, *taijiquan* has been used as a myth in the creation of the official emblem for Beijing's bid.

A sense of modernness is emphasised in this creation, characterized by putting the Chinese knot in the shape of the five Olympic rings and by highlighting the sense of body movement. It underlines the intended message that China has a long history of sports culture and is very active in carrying on the tradition. It also reinforces the idea that Beijing is a place where ancient cultures co-exist with modern cultures and where Chinese cultures meet foreign cultures. This is different from the emblem of the first bid which foregrounded the Temple of Heaven, a symbol of China's ancient history and culture. Ancientness is what the previous emblem tried to sell to the world, with the conspicuous absence of signifiers of modernity. This emblem for Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympics is a much more refined publicity product for the Chinese government, as a result of the clever use, as myth, of the Western perception of *taijiquan* as a symbol of traditional Chinese sports culture. It also uses the powerful idea that *taijiquan* is now universally practised and its origins are Chinese to enhance this mythic use of the Chinese sport.

### ***The Beijing 2008***

BOBICO issued over one million copies of special publications including information bulletins, photo albums, books, folding brochures, and postcards. They were sent abroad through various channels, such as exhibitions, conferences, Chinese embassies and personal contacts. The *Beijing 2008* information bulletin was one of these information outlets. Published in four languages from January 2001 to June 2001, *Beijing 2008* was a weekly newsletter that was sent to IOC members by mail. It carried official information



about Beijing's bid. An examination of its content has revealed more about how government publicity dealt with human rights issues in imaging Beijing and China for IOC members and the outside world.

On the cover page of issue 1, published in January of 2001, a news story about Tibet occupies an eye-catching one third of the total space. The headline, 'Tibetan People Support Beijing in Bid for 2008 Olympic Games', is more like a political statement than a news item. It is made more so by enlarging and italicising "Tibetan people", the first two words of the headline. The introduction of the story tells what Tibetan people do to support Beijing's bid. It runs like this:

The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee will, in early February, receive a 100-metre-long hata bearing the autographs of more than 10,000 people in Tibet Autonomous Region as a token of support for its work. Hata is pure silk streamer that Tibetans, in following their tradition, offer individuals or organizations they respect most.

Hata, the traditional symbol of Tibetan respect and hospitality, is used here to signify the relationship between the ethnic nationality and the central government. The logic is obvious: when Tibetan people show their respect and support for the bid, they are also showing respect and support for the Chinese government because the bid is initiated by the Chinese government. In fact, this is not the first time that hata has been used as a symbol to signify the political statement by the Chinese government. Hata is the most exploited signifier in China's battle with Tibet separatists and human rights groups.

The supporting paragraph to the introduction describes the scope of the event. Although the paragraph fails to identify who did the autograph collecting and who sponsored them, it nevertheless supports the theme of the story that Beijing's bid attracts popular support in Tibet. To illustrate this theme, three ethnic Tibetans are quoted. They represent different social groups in Tibet. The first person, a politician, says:

“I fully support Beijing in her bid for the 2008 Olympic Games,” he said. “I believe all people in Tibetan (Tibet), whether ethnic Tibetans or Hans, ardently hope that Beijing will win.”

The quote is typical of official rhetoric among ethnic Tibetan politicians. The phrase “whether ethnic Tibetans or Hans” is especially targeted at attacks of the intrusion of the Han culture to the traditional Tibetan culture. But the use of the fact that he is a “witness” to what progress has been made in the “past 50 years” softens the hard edges of his political rhetoric and makes it more acceptable.

The second quote is from a renowned veteran mountaineer in Tibet:

“I have been following developments in Beijing’s bid for the 2008 Olympic Games,” he said, “Beijing is fully qualified for the games. Her success in hosting the Asian Games and many other international sports events testify to that.”

This is a voice chosen to echo popular support from Tibetans. The technique is to appropriately concentrate on sports and use the success of the Asian Games to prove that Beijing is capable of staging an Olympic Games as well. The clout of a successful veteran mountaineer gives this quote some extra weight.

The most important and meaningful quote comes from a lama:

“Beijing’s bid for the 2008 Olympic Games shows that our country is getting increasingly prosperous. I am proud of China. That’s why I support Beijing’s bid.”

The quote is meaningful and important for two reasons. First, it is a quote from a lama. Lamas are greatly respected in Tibet and their political orientation often influences public opinion. By quoting a lama, the story hopes to convey the logic that lamas support Beijing’s bid, and so do their followers. Second, such phrases as “our country” and “proud of China” are used to underscore the fact that Tibet is part of China. What should be further noted in this quote is the fact that the

official line of improvement, or the myth of progress, is deployed again. “Getting increasingly prosperous” is obviously the official discourse of development on questions concerning human rights. But expressed through the mouth of a Tibetan lama, the official rhetoric sounds more persuasive than the previous two quotes who more or less have the government in the background. In fact, it has been common practice for government propaganda and for Chinese journalism as well, to personalize official rhetoric through quoting people. Such quotes can be true, obtained through interviews. Other times, they could be conveniently manufactured in order to achieve the desired effect. It does not really matter in this case whether it is a quote in the true sense or a fake since no one will bother to check on it. What really matters is the message the quote conveys: even lamas, the religious element of the Tibetan society, are supporting us.

The story is a typical piece of government propaganda. Throughout the story there is only one voice preaching the noble cause of Beijing’s bid. No opposing voices are heard. And no mention is made of the Tibetan separatists overseas who were actively involved in lobbying, partitioning, and demonstrating to block Beijing’s Olympic campaign on the ground of China’s poor human rights record in Tibet. The “Tibetan people” is used as a myth to marginalize all other voices. To enhance this myth the story uses the traditional symbol of hata as well as quotes to signify popular support for Beijing’s bid. This popular support, as well as the official rhetoric of development and progress through the tongue of the three Tibetans, is exploited to hint at China’s human rights arguments.

In line with the official “low-key” policy, other stories in *Beijing 2008* make no direct reference to the human rights issue, except for press conferences. A whole page of issue 3 is devoted to response to media questions by Liu Jingmin, vice executive president of BOBICO and vice mayor of Beijing. Liu’s argument represents the official standing in relation to human rights. In response to the question of how he interprets the news headline ‘IOC Emphasizes Ability More Than Politics’, Liu first elaborates on the Olympic ideal, which “transcends human limits”, and which allows every person the right to participate in the Olympics “regardless of political affiliation, religious belief, or ethnicity”. And then he argues that throughout Olympic history people have been trying to keep

sports separated from politics in pursuit of the Olympic spirit. “In our case,” he is quoted saying, “the emphasis should be on a bid city’s ability to host the Games, and not on the political affiliations of that city and its representatives.” He points out that international controversy over the Falun Gong should not hinder Beijing’s chances because the cult’s philosophy runs counter to the Olympic ideal. He ends his response on the note that Beijing’s Olympic bid is aimed at promoting not only the Olympic spirit but also a healthier, positive standard of living.

Liu’s message is strategic. The official standing of dealing with human rights issues is based on the Chinese government’s interpretation of the Olympic spirit and its aspiration to improve the standard of living of the people. The separation of Olympics from politics is an old discourse already used by Beijing’s first bid, but the argument of promoting a “healthier, positive standard of living” is a new strategy developed for the second bid. This official rhetoric explains the concept of “People’s Olympics” and interprets human rights in terms of the rights to live a healthier and positive life. Key to this rhetoric is the use of the myth of the people, the myth of progress, and the myth of development. Together with the myth of the Olympic spirit, these myths have become the framework for China’s discourse on human rights for Beijing’s Olympic campaign.

The only other reference to human rights, indirect though, is found in issue 4 of *Beijing 2008*. Yuan Weimin, Minister of the State Sports General Administration and chairman of the Chinese Olympic Committee, is quoted as saying at a BOBICO press conference: “We call for the observation of the Olympic spirit in the bidding process and we oppose any non-sport elements to interfere with the bid”. This is a reiteration of the official rhetoric on human rights even though human rights is not actually mentioned. The familiar line of Olympic spirit shows how this is exploited as a myth to advance Beijing’s argument for its rights to host an Olympic Games.

It is worth noting that government statements in relation to human rights were focused on Beijing, rather than on China. As mentioned previously, this city emphasis was meant to make it easier for spokespersons for Beijing’s bid to deal

with human rights questions and criticisms. Myths of the people, of development, of progress, of the Olympic spirit were duly exploited to serve this purpose. The tough job of confronting human rights attacks in a direct way was left to the Foreign Ministry which represented the Chinese government in its deliberation of China's perception of human rights. So there are actually two images created for Beijing's bid: the image of Beijing and the image of China. While the government publicity foregrounded the city, as we have seen from this section, Chinese news media were engaged in the creation of dual images.

### **Imaging by the Chinese Media**

Chinese media have never been allowed to be autonomous of the control of the Party and the Chinese government. Moreover, those media engaged in international communication are subject to even tighter control and have always served as the mouthpiece for the Party and the Chinese government. Their coverage is also in line with China's foreign policy. Therefore, media coverage of Beijing's bid is part and parcel of the government's publicity strategy. It is merely for technical reasons that Chinese media coverage is discussed in a separate section of this chapter: to reveal this relationship between the government and the media through the construction of the image of Beijing and the image of China.

### ***Xinhua***

*Xinhua* coverage of the human rights issue seems to have focused on reporting the views of the Chinese Foreign Ministry as well as the pronouncements of BOBICO officials. Few stories went further than that and there was no evidence of Western-style investigative reporting of alleged human rights violations. This could be interpreted as an indication that the press had been implementing the government's low-key publicity strategy for Beijing's bid. It is also a good example of China's English-language news media loyally serving as the mouthpiece of the Party and the Chinese government.

The first *Xinhua* report for the 2008 Beijing Olympic bid related to the human rights issue is a short news item filed on April 8, 1999. Headlined ‘Chinese Government Firmly Supports Beijing’s Bid for Olympic Games’, the report goes:

The Chinese Government will do its best to support its Olympic Committee’s bid effort to host the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Sun Yuxi said at a regular press conference here this afternoon.

China hopes that political issues would not be tied up with the bid process, Sun said.

He emphasized that China would remove the obstacles to ensure the success of Beijing’s bid for the 2008 Olympic Games.

Both the headline and the introduction make it clear that the report is about the Chinese government’s reaffirmation of its support for the Beijing bid. Naturally the body of the report should support this theme by providing information of how the Chinese government plans to realize the promised “firm” support. But unexpectedly, without providing any background information, the next paragraph introduces some unidentified “political issues” that China hopes would not be tied up with the bid process. This statement seems to have come from nowhere. For readers who are familiar with the *Xinhua*-style coverage, this figure of speech is a sure sign that China is having trouble with some kind of “political issues” that might impede its progress to a successful bid. But why does the report fail to identify those “political issues”? This is again a strategic positioning that is in line with the government publicity policy of “no involvement of direct debates”. If human rights is identified as one of the political issues, China needs to put forth some kind of argument and by so doing, would encourage more debates or even fiercer attacks.

Attacks of human rights are just what the Chinese government wanted to avoid. The Chinese government hoped to concentrate its limited international publicity resources on wooing world attention to accept positive aspects of China rather

than on engaging in unproductive confrontation with human rights attacks. The *Xinhua* report served this purpose well. By not identifying the “political issues” and encouraging the reader to make their own interpretations, the report was actually able to define human rights as a political issue – and by inference an issue that has nothing to do with the bid. This definition thus implicates political activists as attempting to block China’s bid effort. For the same purpose, the ending paragraph is vague about “the obstacles” that China promises to remove to ensure the success of Beijing’s bid.

It is obvious that the story is about China, not about Beijing. In so positioning, the story is able to allow the national government to make a strong political statement while giving Beijing the opportunity to pose as a bidding city that would have nothing to do with politics. This positioning is a characteristic of *Xinhua*’s coverage of Beijing’s bid concerning human rights. According to this, the Image of China is that of a developing country with its *own* interpretation of human rights and of the Olympic spirit. Although the myth of development and the myth of the Olympic spirit are not used directly in this news item, the Foreign Ministry spokesman’s wording is an echo of the bid’s official rhetoric on human rights. In expressing the Chinese government’s hope that political issues would not be “tied up” with Beijing’s bid process, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Sun is drawing upon the established governmental myths discussed earlier.

Almost 18 months elapsed before a second *Xinhua* report appeared in relation to the human rights issues. This silence is an indication that the Chinese government played its low-key theme to the extreme -- until it couldn’t desist any longer. This time, the report, dated October 2, 2000, is again coverage of the regular Chinese Foreign Ministry press conference and is again about China, not Beijing. But targets are named, background information is provided, and more details about China’s stand are given.

Headlined ‘Opposition to China’s Olympics Bid Accused’, the story is about the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s response to a motion tabled by some US Congressmen asking the IOC to block China’s bid. In a rare show of anger

during Beijing's bid, the Foreign Ministry "accused" the motion of being "a blatant contempt" for the Olympic spirit. "Such an action by a handful of anti-China congressmen, out of prejudice against China, will inevitably meet with opposition from the justice-upholding people all over the world," Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi is quoted as saying. Arguing that Beijing's bid has popular support from the Chinese people, Sun tries to drive home the point that by supporting the bid, the Chinese people are making "their own contributions" to the realization of peace, friendship, and progress of mankind. He cites as "the best embodiment" of the Olympic spirit "the excellent performances" by the Chinese athletes at the Sydney Olympic Games. In contrast, he contends that any discrimination against a certain country or a certain person for ethnic, religious, political, gender or other reasons is "incompatible with the Olympic Spirit".

Although the specific issue of human rights is not identified in this *Xinhua* report, the Foreign Ministry Spokesman in this instance does not resort to vague language to sidestep the human rights issue. Instead, an explicit message is constructed with unequivocally strong words in the introduction, such as "accuse", "blatant contempt", and "discrimination". This message is an extension of the first statement in the previous story, making clear the Chinese government's stance. But while the first one was more toned down using the word "hope" in "China hopes that political issues would not be tied up with the bid process", this message is strong and unambiguous from the outset.

This statement is later supplemented by two arguments from the Foreign Ministry. One is that the Chinese people are contributing to peace, friendship and progress of mankind by supporting Beijing's bid. Drawing on the Olympic spirit of peace, friendship and progress, this argument implies that China's interpretation of human rights is related to those noble ideals of mankind. But without giving a political, social, and cultural context to these noble words, *Xinhua* is able to empty the meaning of those words, using them as myths to conceal conflicts and to make natural China's interpretation of human rights. This exploitation of the Olympic spirit as myth is a good example of China's soft promotional approach to difficult issues.



The other argument is the excellent performance of Chinese athletes at the Sydney Games as the “embodiment” of the Olympic spirit. Built on indisputable medal records, this argument points an accusing finger at any attempt to block China’s bid as discrimination and prejudice against China. This argument also implies that the Olympics is about sports, reinforcing the position that politics should be separated from the bid.

As a conclusion, the last paragraph uses the word “opposition” to echo the wording in the title. But there is a significant difference: while the word “opposition” used in the title refers to China’s attitude, the “opposition” used in the ending is expanded to “the justice-upholding people all over the world”. With this reasoning, those who do not oppose the discriminative move by “a handful of” anti-China U.S. congressmen are certainly not upholding justice.

This *Xinhua* story does not provide any reason why the U.S. congressmen should table the motion, but focuses on China’s response. It represents a copy of China’s official discourse in human rights in the form of a press report. It serves as a source of reference for both the bid team and the Chinese media in dealing with the issue of human rights. Later news reports are elaborations of the arguments and within the scope of this official discourse.

Two myths could be identified from this official discourse of the Chinese government. First is the myth of the people. There are two peoples in this story: the Chinese people and the “justice-upholding people all over the world”. The Chinese people is used in the context of popular support for Beijing’s bid and the mythic meaning of popular support is exploited for the argument of Chinese people making contributions to the Olympic spirit by supporting Beijing’s bid. The people of the world is drawn upon as a myth to simulate a sense of unity and friendship that in actual reality do not exist. The moral undertone of the “justice-upholding world people” serves to counter the moral judgment delivered by the US congress motion.

The second myth is the Olympic spirit, the universality and excellence of performance of the Olympic movement. Universality is drawn upon to contrast

the “prejudice” against China as a “blatant contempt” for the Olympic spirit. On the other hand, excellence of performance is exploited to foreground the outstanding achievements made by Chinese athletes at the Sydney Games, which was described by the Foreign Ministry as “the best embodiment” of the Olympic spirit. Such intensive use of the myth of the Olympic spirit plays a key role in the construction of the Chinese government’s discourse on human rights. So does the exploitation of the myth of the people. In this construction, China appears in the image of a victim, demonized by the West despite Chinese people’s support for Beijing’s bid and excellent performance of the Chinese athletes at the Sydney Games.

The first *Xinhua* news report that actually identified human rights issues appeared eight weeks later, on November, 30 of 2000. Headlined ‘Attempt to Foil Beijing’s Bid for Olympics Futile: FM Spokeswoman’, the news is again about Chinese Foreign Ministry, which responded to a British report, and it is again about China, not Beijing. It identifies the human rights issue in the second paragraph as background information:

Zhang made the remarks in response to a report recently made by Britain’s Lower House, which advised the British government not to support China in hosting the Olympics on the grounds that China has human rights problems.

FM Spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue’s remarks had nothing new to offer as argument, but she does point out a fact to support her argument:

The Chinese government has also been dedicated to carrying out international cooperation with other countries in human rights, she noted. Since 1997, she said, China and Britain have conducted several rounds of dialogs on human rights, which have enhanced mutual understanding and yielded positive results.

This remark tries to go on the offensive by suggesting that since a dialogue on human rights had been established between the two governments, this move is

contrary to the spirit of the existing dialogue. This point is well made, but as always is the case with the coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign, this *Xinhua* report does not provide any information on the details of the dialogue or the "international cooperation" mentioned by the spokeswoman. It is restricted to the reporting of what the Foreign Ministry has got to say, in this way faithfully playing the full role of the mouthpiece of the Chinese government. Two other *Xinhua* examples of Chinese Foreign Ministry reaction replicate this strategy. The only commentary worth noting is the description of U.S. Senator Jesse Helms and some others as being overwhelmed by a "cold-war mentality" (Xinhua 2001i). This reference to the outdated cold-war mentality reflects an attempt to put the opponent in an unfavourable light.

*Xinhua* also gave coverage to the "other image" of Beijing, strategically constructed in accordance with the Chinese government's strategy of image design for Beijing's Olympic campaign. *Xinhua* coverage of how BOBICO has dealt with the human rights issue focused on how bid officials reacted rather than following up any problems targeted by human rights groups. Stories appeared in a concentrated period around the arrival of the IOC evaluation group in Beijing. Worried that growing criticism of China's human rights records would affect the result of the group's evaluation report, BOBICO officials began to talk about human rights to media. *Xinhua*, as it did with the Foreign Ministry press conference, picked up all the arguments presented by the bid officials.

From early February to mid-March in 2001, a total of six *Xinhua* news reports related to the human rights issue in the construction of Beijing, a sharp contrast to the scarcity in the previous two years. They are also lengthy compared with previous reports about China, averaging 350 words. A story dated February 7, 2001, is an example of lengthiness which carries 372 words. Headlined 'Beijing: Olympic Bid Helps Develop Human Rights', the story reports on how BOBICO vice president Liu Jingmin delivered his arguments about human rights, although it fails to identify where and to whom Liu made the remarks.

Liu's arguments are built around the theme that Beijing's bid for the Games will not only boost urban development but also help further advance the human rights

conditions of China. This theme is foregrounded in the introduction. The supporting paragraphs provide a detailed account of Liu's argument which tries to convince the reader that to help realize the Chinese people's Olympic dream "means respect for human rights" because it is the Chinese people's right to want to stage the Games. In addition, reports stress improvement of people's livelihood, a key argument throughout *Beijing 2008*'s coverage. "We have done many things that bring tangible benefits to the broad masses," Liu is quoted as saying. He cited Meng Jingshan, a Beijing taxi driver, as an example to explain why Beijingers "threw their weight behind" their city's bid:

"Why does Meng support Beijing's bid? Because he is fully aware that under the bidding, he could move out of his shabby house and into spacious building rooms, he understands that the bidding can make him live better."

By the end of the story, Liu is seen expanding the scope of human rights situations from the city to the country to support his arguments. But he does not elaborate on it further, taking care that he should keep his arguments focused on the city and should not get directly involved in something the Foreign Ministry is in a better position to do. But it is the first time that BOBICO officials talked about human rights in China, not just the city:

Liu said that as the economy develops, China's human rights conditions have gained much headway in the past years, evidenced by such things as the set-up of grass-roots democratic election system and media supervision.

This news report presents BOBICO's arguments for human rights by quoting the bid official throughout the news report. As a result it reads more like a government publicity release than a news report, again exemplifying the point that media have served as the mouthpiece of the Chinese government. It should also be noted that this was the first time that the phrase "human rights" has ever appeared in the headline of a *Xinhua* news report. This change from a low-key strategy to open discussion had much to do with the scheduled visit by the IOC

evaluation group, whose report would be crucial to the success of Beijing's bid. It should be regarded as a shrewd, well calculated strategic publicity ploy. The heavy quoting by the *Xinhua* news report reflects this change of publicity strategy in dealing with human rights issues. But this obvious change of strategy does not allow the appearance of any opposing arguments, such as criticisms of China's human rights abuse. The report just covers the one-sided argument of BOBICO, making the story read like one man arguing his case with no opponent in sight. This neglect of journalistic principles could only be explained by the Chinese government's media policy for Beijing's Olympic campaign.

Beijing's arguments presented by *Xinhua* can be summarized into three points. First, it is Chinese people's human rights to host the Olympic Games in China and therefore to help realize this "inspiration" is showing respect for their human rights. This is certainly the city's interpretation of human rights in relation to its bid for the 2008 Games. Second, Beijing's bid is also about "improvement of local livelihood". This argument is another example of exploiting both the myth of progress and the myth of the people in the construction of the official rhetoric on human rights. Third, much improvement has been made in human rights conditions in China along with economic development. Here, the myth of development and the myth of progress are used to justify China's human rights record and to promote the logic that economic development will help advance human rights causes. These arguments are supported by the citing of a *laobaixing*, the Beijing taxi driver.

Unlike the first bid in 1993, these arguments reveal a well organized publicity effort. Beijing's case on human rights is thus more focused, better supported, and carefully planned. The strategic effort is further developed by a *Xinhua* news report the following day. Headlined 'Olympic Bid Official Denounces Falun Gong Cult', the *Xinhua* story cites a Liu Jingmin press conference in which Liu gives two examples of how the problem of a cult need not affect hosting an Olympic Games. One example is the Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) in Japan and the other the Branch Davidian in the United States. Liu said both cases had not prevented either of the two countries from hosting the Games. The two cases are drawn to support Beijing's argument that the Falun Gong should not get in

the way of Beijing's bid. By paralleling Falun Gong with the two cults in Japan and the United States, Beijing aims at driving home the message that the Falun Gong cult should have "nothing to do" with Beijing's bid.

There is an implicit message, too, in the depiction of the two cases: if the problem of cult is an issue of human rights violation, then these two countries, Japan and the United States, should also be included in the countries which have such human rights problems. This implicit message is hinted at discrimination against China since discrimination is a violation of human rights in itself. This construction of the argument is another example of well planned publicity technique.

In fact, the same press conference and the same topic had already been covered by *Beijing 2008*. But *Beijing 2008*'s story makes no mention of the Aum Shinrikyo and the Branch Davidian cases. The reason is simple: the readers of the information bulletin are IOC members who have the right to vote. Some of them might be resentful of the citing of the two cases as too imposing. But the *Xinhua* news targets a wider audience, including those evaluation members who are not directly involved in the voting process. This reader-oriented approach by *Beijing 2008* is a sharp contrast to the previous bid when the same official rhetoric was used across all media.

*Xinhua* is focused on topics other than human rights in its construction of the image of Beijing. These topics are consistent with the promotional package announced by BOBICO in February, 2001. The five themes to be promoted in the package include "the vibrant economic growth, extensive public support for the Olympic bid, sufficient accommodation, communication and transportation capacity as well as the well-planned Olympic venues" (Xinhua 2001j). This list shows that logistics issues and service issues are ranked higher than the issue of human rights. This is understandable as these two areas are easier to manage than the area of human rights. The list also indicates what myths are being exploited by Beijing in the construction of its arguments for human rights. At least the myth of development and the myth of the people are very obvious in this promotional package.

## *China Daily*

*China Daily*'s coverage of human rights necessarily pays more attention to the home reader, as the daily newspaper is still largely distributed within China. Because of this orientation, a subtle difference has always existed between *China Daily* news reports and *Xinhua*'s coverage. This difference in orientation has reminded us of the different treatment of the same source materials by *Xinhua* and *Beijing 2008*, such as the case of Aum Shinrikyo in Japan and the Branch Davidian case in the United States. Variations like these can be attributed to the Chinese art of using a formalized language in a political context. Michael Schoenhals (1992) traces China's tradition with language formulation back to Confucius:

In the *Analects* Confucius argued that when names are not correct – and what is said is therefore not reasonable – the affairs of state will not culminate in success, and the common people will not know how to do what is right. Consequently, “the Prince is never casual in his choice of words.”

(Schoenhals 1992: 2)

In his depiction of China's practice of language formulation, he sees direct control and manipulation of words as the techniques used by the Party and the government to ensure censorship. He points out that constant strategic deliberation at the highest levels of the Party have affected the use and abuse of formulations. This point of deliberation provides a footnote for the division of work between the Chinese Foreign Ministry and BOBICO concerning how to respond to questions and criticisms from the foreign press.

Schoenhals' thesis reinforces yet another point I have made in this chapter:

When the CCP leadership approves of a certain formulation, it does so because the formulation is judged to be politically useful and clever. A highly scientific formulation is one the

state can use as a powerful tool of political manipulation. In rare cases, it will be a formulation that lends itself to only one clear and concise interpretation. In a majority of cases, it will be a formulation the meaning of which can be bent in a number of directions.

(Schoenhals 1992: 11)

This description fits the case of the motto perfectly: the simple linguistic property of the four words is impoverished in a way that the meaning of these words can be “bent” in a number of directions. In other words, it allows different interpretations for different purposes.

The variations in the style of reporting between *Beijing 2008* and *Xinhua* coverage are an example of language formulation in the sense of prescribing and implementing what is considered appropriate and what is inappropriate by the Chinese propaganda authorities. Although all the media use the same official discourse, different orientations of these media have made language formulation an issue that we need to address. Now armed with Michael Schoenhals’ insight, we see how the Chinese tradition with words works for the Party and the state.

The difference between *Xinhua* and *China Daily* can be illustrated by two stories -- a *Xinhua* story ‘Attempt to Foil Beijing’s Bid for Olympics Futile: FM Spokeswoman’, which was filed on November 30, 2000, and a *China Daily* story ‘Foreign Ministry Rebuts Human Rights Criticism’, which was published on December 1, 2000. The two stories cover the same Chinese Foreign Ministry press conference and report on the same topic. But there is a difference in the wording of the headlines and the organization of the body of the story that is more than just about style.

While the *Xinhua* headline suggests that the Chinese Foreign Ministry is going to argue its case before an imagined world audience, the *China Daily* headline commands a blunt, accusing tone mainly for the consumption of the home reader. The former is more restrained using the word “attempt” to imply human rights



criticism, probably for fear that drawing too much attention to human rights might not serve its purpose well. Aiming at gaining sympathy and understanding, China's argument presented to the outside world is restrained rather than agitated. In sharp contrast, the phrase "human rights" sits conspicuously in the *China Daily* headline to catch as much attention as is possible. The reason is understandable, taking into consideration that the domestic reader is part of a different "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). The domestic reader is likely to be sensitive to, and resentful of human rights criticism emanating from the West. A long history of national humiliation and manipulation by foreign interests has cultivated in the Chinese people a strong desire to maintain national sovereignty and national identity. The official rhetoric -- and interpretation of human rights as rights of survival and rights of development -- has almost unequivocal consensus within China and has actually functioned as a national discourse. This sentiment has been fully exploited by the Chinese government in dealing with human rights attacks within the international political arena. But in this instance, nationalism is exploited at home to recruit popular support for the bid. The *China Daily* headline is an indication of this strategy.

Difference in the two news reports can also be observed in the treatment of the text. *Xinhua* quotes in detail what the spokeswoman said to constitute the arguments, but *China Daily* quotes only those elements that could be used to make clear the Chinese government's stand to reassure its people that everything is under control and that the government won't allow the nation to be bullied. For instance, *China Daily* addresses the issue using direct quotes: "China has made lasting and unremitting efforts to improve its human rights record and great achievements have been made." *Xinhua*'s version is an indirect quote: "She said the Chinese government has made unremitting efforts to protect and improve human rights and has made great achievements acknowledged by countries worldwide". *Xinhua*'s use of the phrase "acknowledged by countries worldwide" attempts to remind the foreign reader that China's improvement in human rights has been acknowledged by many countries.

*China Daily*, however, does not use this phrase. This omission shows a consistency with the government's stance and the common consensus among the

Chinese people that human rights is an issue of internal affairs and that any move by a foreign government concerning China's human rights is considered an interference in Chinese affairs. Therefore, deleting the phrase in the quote saves the trouble of explaining why China desperately needs international acknowledgement of its human rights progress while insisting that human rights is China's internal affair. Putting the phrase in the quote might have confused the home reader with this conflicting message.

Sometimes, *China Daily* uses *Xinhua*'s story as a whole piece or rewrites *Xinhua*'s story. The rewriting, which in practice often means a cut here or an addition there, further reflects the different tactics used to deal with human rights for the foreign reader and the home reader. An example is the rewriting of *Xinhua*'s news report headlined 'Beijing: Olympic Bid Helps Develop Human Rights', which was already discussed in the previous section on *Xinhua*.

*China Daily* edited the *Xinhua* story by: 1) omitting the fourth paragraph, the last sentence of the sixth paragraph, and the last paragraph; 2) adding two paragraphs of its own; and 3) giving due credit to *Xinhua* by this credit line below the story: "Xinhua contributed to the story". After this "rewriting", however, the *China Daily* story is still largely a version of the *Xinhua* story, but the parts that have been deleted and the part that has been added have shown that *China Daily* has a more targeted reader in mind and is therefore sending a little extra politics in the message and exploiting a knowledge of what psychological buttons to push for maximum impact.

The fourth paragraph that has been deleted in the *China Daily* is the BOBICO interpretation of Beijing's bid within the framework of China's interpretation of human rights. For the home reader, the linking of human rights to economic and cultural benefits -- such as the right to hold the Games -- is well-rehearsed. This connection therefore does not need to be further elaborated in the report. The deletion of the final paragraph, which is a list of rival bid cities and the timeline of the final decision, is simply technical as by now the Chinese people were very bid-conscious as a result of government publicity campaigns and intensive media coverage of Beijing's bid.

There is also no need to remind the home reader that “We have done many things that bring tangible benefits to the broad masses”, the last sentence of the sixth paragraph in *Xinhua*’s story. These omissions are mainly technical to cater to the home reader. But the adding of two paragraphs to the *Xinhua* story is more than technical. The two paragraphs conclude the *China Daily* version:

Liu said that the issue of the Falun Gong would not affect the city’s pursuit of the sporting extravaganza when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) visits Beijing later this month.

He said that the cult can not damage Beijing’s image and would not have an adverse effect on the IOC officials who will tour the ancient capital later this month.

The new paragraphs are about the Falun Gong cult and did not appear in the *Xinhua* version. By adding the paragraphs, *China Daily* is reporting that the Chinese government would take necessary measures to ensure that Falun Gong “would not” affect the IOC inspection -- because it is a matter concerning “Beijing’s image”. For the Falun Gong cult, this is also intended as a warning. For the home reader, this provides a show of the Chinese government’s determination to clear any obstacles to its bid for the 2008 Olympics. For the limited foreign readership of the *China Daily*, it symbolizes a flexing of political muscles in dealing with outlawed cults and a reminder that this is, for the Chinese – like most human rights disputes -- an internal affair.

This kind of message could not appear in the *Xinhua* story because of the firm and threatening tone signified by the use of the word “would”. The following day, *Xinhua* dispatched a story on the same topic of Falun Gong which was headlined ‘Olympic Bid Official Denounces Falun Gong Cult’ and which has been discussed in the previous section on *Xinhua*. The story quoted the same person, but it substituted the word “should” to tone down the message and to introduce a supporting argument:

The Falun Gong cult should not get in the way of Beijing's bid efforts to host the 2008 Olympic Games, Vice Mayor of Beijing Liu Jingmin said Thursday.

The strategy of selective reporting, as shown by these examples, is integrated into the journalistic practice in China and has become a characteristic of Chinese propaganda<sup>2</sup>. It reveals the connections between the Chinese government and the Chinese media and between the media as well. Three particular pieces can best exemplify this relationship through the exploitation of the opinions of Meng Jingshan, a Beijing taxi driver. It began with a story which was written by a freelance journalist with the US-based Atlanta Journal and was subsequently published in an American local newspaper. The story quoted Meng as saying that if Beijing wins its bid, it will mean that "Beijing would be greatly improved, and I and my family might be able to move to a high-storey building". *Xinhua* saw a golden opportunity of propaganda. It picked up this story and used it as propaganda material for its human rights arguments in a story headlined 'China Opens Up to Join World', which was filed on December 5, 2000. The same day, this *Xinhua* story was used by *China Daily* without any language changes.

The government obviously liked the story. Liu Jingmin, vice mayor of Beijing and vice president of BOBICO, picked up the Meng Jingshan story two days later to support his argument that Beijing's bid is closely linked with the improvement of local livelihood. "Why does Meng support Beijing's bid?" he asked at a BOBICO press conference. "Because he is fully aware that under the bidding, he could move out of his shabby houses and into spacious apartment building rooms, he understands that the bidding can make him live better" (Xinhua 2001k).

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<sup>2</sup> Tsan-Kuo Chang has a detailed discussion of this kind of practice in his analysis of TV representation of President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States and President Clinton's visit to China by the Chinese Central Television and ABC respectively. For more details, see his article entitled 'Political Drama and News Narrative – Presidential Summits on Chinese and U.S. National Television' Chang, T.-K. (2003). Political drama and news narratives: presidential summits on Chinese and U.S. national television. *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. C.-C. Lee. London, RoutledgeCurzon: 119-138.

The Meng story was also picked up by a BOBICO album published in December of 2001 by the Beijing Press to celebrate the first anniversary of Beijing's victory. On page 47, there is a picture of Meng Jingshan standing by his red taxi, all smiles. The caption, in Chinese and English, tells the story of Meng Jingshan and summarizes Meng's words in dot points. It concludes in a single sentence: "These sincere and enthusiastic words gave Keith the impression that Beijing was a genuine candidate".<sup>3</sup> (Diao Lisheng 2001)

This connection between *Xinhua*, *China Daily*, and *Beijing 2008* not only indicates the relationship between media and government but also reveals the extent to which Chinese propaganda is intent on producing soft-sell messages for the international audience. The selection of the Meng Jingshan story from a local American newspaper by *Xinhua* is also an indication of the interaction between the Chinese media and foreign media.

## **Conclusions**

The Chinese media coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign is such a reiteration of the government official positions that the old-fashioned "transmission model" of propaganda is still working well for analysing them (Polumbaum 2003). The recurring themes of popular support and of different interpretations of human rights in both the government pronouncements and official press coverage suggest that while the Chinese government is striving to improve its image by adopting publicity devices, the national press is still functioning mainly as a propaganda machine for the government.

This finding shows that as long as the Chinese government continues to see formalized language as a form of authoritarian power in managing the state, the media are subject to strict control in circulating "what is being said and what is being written – and by extension what is being done".

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<sup>3</sup> Keith is the American journalist who wrote about the Chinese taxi driver. The BOBICO album introduced him as "Mr. Keith Graham, a journalist from Atlanta City" who "published three articles about Beijing's preparations after his interviews".

## Chapter 4

### **The Foreign Text – The Moral Ground**

July 14, 2001 represents an important signifier for both the Chinese and foreign media. Most foreign media stories related to human rights appeared on and around that day. Some other stories appear around the time when IOC inspection team was in Beijing in February of 2001. Examination of these stories addresses the following questions: do foreign media report Beijing's Olympic campaign in relation to human rights? Are there significant differences in the coverage? And what do the differences mean? These questions concern how China was perceived by the foreign media.

#### ***The New York Times (U.S.A.)***

*The New York Times* carried two news stories on July 14 of 2001. Headlined 'Beijing Wins Bid for 2008 Olympic Games', the first story was filed by Jere Longman from Moscow where the IOC made its decision. It is a round-up story on Beijing's race and analyses reasons for Beijing's victory. It also raises human rights issues as a likely undying debate during the seven-year run-up to the 2008 Games. The part concerning human rights is supported by quotes, comments and a selection of recent reports on human rights issues in China.

The introduction says nothing about human rights, though. It reads like a simple statement of fact that the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2008 Games to Beijing because the committee said China deserves the opportunity as the world's most populous country. It has no special indication of any arguments or debates concerning Beijing's win. It casts China as "the world's most populous country", which the IOC wants to open to the outside world.

Human rights then appears in the second paragraph, which serves as the key note paragraph. Human rights, however, is mentioned as an aspiration rather than a criticism: "The committee's delegates expressed widespread hope that a seven-

year build-up to the 2008 Games would accelerate openness in China and facilitate improvement in its record on human rights”. This optimistic note of hope for changes is supported throughout the news report by quotes and comments where words such as improvement, advances, progress, and changes are constantly used. The fifth paragraph, for instance, quotes China’s Minister of Sport Yuan Weimin as saying that economic progress “will bring along advances in culture, health, education, sport and, not least of all, corresponding progress in human rights causes”. More quotes from IOC delegates also use these words to deliver the message that giving China the Games would help improve its human rights situations. The story ends with a quote from Mayor Liu Qi of Beijing, which facilitates this message of hope and change: “I am very confident that Beijing will organize an excellent Games in 2008 and the Games will leave a unique legacy in China and in sport.”

All this wording and quoting seems to represent China in a favourable light, despite criticisms of China by human rights groups and politicians. To balance the story, two countering arguments are also presented. The arguments are introduced as follows: “Some cautioned, however, that the committee should not overestimate the effect it could have on China’s internal affairs.” Here, the word “caution” is used instead of more harsh words such as warn, criticize or accuse. Countering the concept of change, the first argument comes from a history scholar who is director of the International Centre for Olympic Studies at the University of Western Ontario. He is quoted as saying that “History shows the Games have not done these kinds of things. I don’t think we saw any less racism in the U.S. because the Olympics were in Atlanta.” This argument is supported by a quote from Sidney Jones who is Asia director for the Human Rights Watch, based in New York. He says: “We’re disappointed the I.O.C. didn’t get guarantees from the Chinese government on human rights issues before giving the Games away. Now the burden is going to be on corporate sponsors and governments fielding teams to ensure that human rights abuses don’t take place in direct association with the Games. I don’t think the Games will change things on their own”. The next paragraph cites an Amnesty International report that execution of Chinese citizens is still carried out and that ritual public humiliation still takes place before the executions are carried out. The underlying logic of

this argument is that now that Beijing has won the Games and does not have to please anybody any more, who can be sure that changes or improvements are bound to happen? Such reasoning is also used by the second argument presented by a Human Rights Watch representative. He was quoted, as a conclusion of his argument, as saying: “I don’t think the Games will change things on their own.”

Comparatively speaking, these countering arguments are downplayed against the dominant key-note message of change. Although the two examples given by the Amnesty International report present the Beijing government as a human rights abusing regime, the argument for exposing China to international norms and the law is made to carry more weight. As the arguments in the story show, while doubts remain that the Games can not change things on their own, IOC members are hopeful that China will change for the better. Change in this argument signifies advances, improvement, and progress. The representation is of a China being brought into the world community. This is the right approach to improve China’s human rights behaviour.

This bright picture of China, however, is tainted by reference to Tiananmen Square as a myth to signify China’s poor human rights record. In explaining the plans to use the square as a venue for beach volleyball, the story refers to the square as “the site of the violent crackdown on the student democracy movement in 1989”. Although it does not elaborate in detail what happened in the square in 1989, the phrase “violent crackdown” is enough to reinforce the message of Tiananmen Square as an established myth of totalitarianism and human rights abuse.

Tiananmen Square has been used by the Chinese Communist Party for large-scale public gatherings and mass activities ever since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong announced the birth of the new Republic to a large cheering crowd. Since then, people have gathered every October to celebrate the national anniversary with various parades, shows, and performances. Mass political campaigns, notably the so-called “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1976), were also started in this famous environment. The square also serves as symbolic site of the nation-state where



foreign state guests and visitors are honoured with flag-raising ceremonies and cannons. Over the years, it has become a symbol of power for the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese state, as well as being symbolic of political manoeuvres. In fact Hodge and Louie (Hodge and Louie 1998) point out that Tiananmen Square as a political symbol is meant for “domestic consumption”. The point of this comment is the square is a national symbol of China signifying the power and achievements of the Communist rule. It is not meant for international exploitation in a negative sense and had never actually been negatively exploited by international media until 1989.

From the time of the student movement in 1989, the symbolism (or the sign in Roland Barthes’ theory of meaning) has been stripped of its original symbolic meaning by the Western news media and has become a myth with newly inserted meaning. The technique to make the new signification seem natural is to link the “crackdown” of the student movement with the square every time and on every occasion it is mentioned in a story. For instance, as this story does when talking about plans to use the square as the site for beach volleyball.

In due course this technique works. The square has become a myth for Western consumption, signifying the display of “sinister power” of the Chinese Communist regime and the alleged outrageous abuses of human rights. It is no accident that Tiananmen Square is mentioned in this story. It has been used to enhance the myth, although the prevailing argument of the report is for China to improve its human rights behaviour by integrating into the world community through such opportunities as the Olympics and WTO.

The second story, which appeared on the same day, is in the same vein but adopts a more celebratory tone than the first. Understandably so, because the story is filed from Beijing, the tension-filled spot where long-repressed emotions erupted with volcanic forces into a sea of joy and oblivion. Just as the headline indicates: ‘Joyous Vindication and a Sleepless Night’, the story, for the most part, is an on-the-spot description of the large-scale celebrations in Beijing and reactions to Beijing’s win from both inside and outside China.

It begins with the scene where thousands of people await the announcement of IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch at the Millennium Monument in Beijing. As the name of Beijing is pronounced, a “deafening roar” from people is heard coupled with “skyrockets” and fireworks. Then the description is expanded to the bigger scenes of the Tiananmen Square and Beijing’s streets where “more than a million” citizens blare horns, wave flags, chant slogans and sing the national anthem. Starting from the fifth paragraph, the story starts to comment on the spectacular scene with quotes from participants of the celebrations. It goes directly to make a comparison with what is now happening in Tiananmen Square with what occurred in the past. Through on-the-spot interviews of people on the street, the story relates and compares historical events in the past 40 years of China’s history on the symbolic site of the square: the 1989 “pro-democracy” demonstrations, the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976, and the chaotic Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. But as the interviewees point out, there is a difference, a big difference. “We’re so happy now,” one participant in the celebration says. The report says it is “more than a matter of civic or even national pride for people here”. People are happy because “As host to the Games, China believes it will stand as a respected member of the world community, a position it has long felt the West has denied it”, the story explains. The reasoning is echoed by participants on the street who felt that these emotions have been repressed for years.

So far, the story has presented an exultant China, where people gathered and poured into the street not for political campaigns, but for national celebrations. Long repressed emotions broke out in such force that people were united instantly in national pride. The description of the scenes and the quotes from the people on the street send out a clear message that for the Chinese people at least, winning the bid is more than just winning the rights to host a prestigious world sports event. Moreover, it is a political issue that has much to do with the long history of national humiliation and Western denial. The success of the bid has not only given China the world recognition of its position but has also given the Chinese government the popular support of its people much needed for its modernization drive.

But the story has not forgotten the issue of human rights. Tiananmen Square is used as a myth to keep the issue alive: “The crowds were clearly the largest on Beijing’s streets since pro-democracy demonstrators swept through the city in 1989, though people were quick to draw a distinction”. This 1989 democracy movement is not mentioned immediately although the linguistic symbol of Tiananmen Square appears so as to give the report the mythic meaning. Rather, the movement and the square are mentioned in separate paragraphs. This makes the square sound innocent of the mythic political signification – and by extension it makes the story innocent of making use of the myth. But only one paragraph apart, it also makes it easy for the reader to make a connection of the two elements since the square is by now an established Western myth.

The issue of human rights reform is also indicated as such: “Winning the bid has raised hopes inside and outside China that the international scrutiny that comes with playing host to the world will pressure the government to improve its treatment of people whose behaviour or ideas do not conform with the views of the Communist Party.” No specific human rights are mentioned in black and white, and yet through the choice of words and the sentence structure, it is clear that it is in fact the issue of human rights that it is being addressed.

The introductory sentences in the two stories are strikingly similar. Both emphasize the word “hope” so as to make it the dominant argument of the stories. “Improvement” is also used in both sentences to support the key note of the stories. This similarity has reflects what is a global integration approach to China’s human rights problems.

However, there is a difference. While the first story, ‘Beijing Wins Bid For 2008 Olympic Games’, goes straight to the focus of human rights by saying “facilitate improvement in its record on human rights”, the second story, ‘Joyous Vindication and a Sleepless Night’, avoids the use of the words “human rights”. Rather, it paraphrases human rights as “treatment of people whose behaviour or ideas do not conform with the views of the Communist Party”. The toning down of criticisms of human rights matches the story’s celebratory tone. The technique is also an indication that the second story is set to adopt a still milder tone than

the first. This toning down is probably because the emphasis of the story is on the on-the-spot large-scale celebrations in Beijing, rather than on human rights criticism. It may be that human rights is something the reporter uses to balance the story with the knowledge that the issue is never too far away from Western perceptions of China.

The adoption of a milder tone is also evident in the way the arguments concerning human rights are introduced to the story. Four paragraphs are used to quote the optimistic view of a China scholar at UCLA and a commentary issued by the official *Xinhua News Agency*. Richard Baum, the China scholar from U.C.L.A. is quoted as saying: “I think the glare of international publicity, together with Beijing’s strong motivation to present the best possible face to the outside world, will constrain Chinese leaders from repeating the gross, mediagenic political crackdowns of the past. When trees fall in a forest filled with cameras and microphones, people around the world will hear”. The *Xinhua* commentary says as much about the Olympic Committee’s decision: “Their wisdom has allowed them to see into the future and proved to them that in seven years, Beijing and the whole of China will be home to a stable society, a prosperous economy and a well-off population. The cause of democracy and rule of law will continually advance”. These quotes spell out the global integration argument.

Similar space is also given to a different voice: an unidentified Chinese magazine editor, as well as CBS news report that includes video footage of the banned Falun Gong was blocked by the Chinese authorities. The current affairs magazine editor is quoted as saying that the Olympics “won’t help to make us more open and they won’t help to push reform and they won’t help improve human rights. The pressure for change has to come from within, and I’m not sure that the Olympics will encourage that”. His comment is representative of the pessimistic view pointed out by the story that “China’s eagerness to present a seamless front to the world will result in the same sort of abuses for which it has often been criticized in the past”. However, against the background of “joyous vindication” of China and the recurring rhetoric of “hope” and “international scrutiny” in the story, this different voice which expresses doubts and pessimism

about the justification of awarding China the Games is weak. The argument of global integration is dominant in the story.

The story also reports Beijing's plans to bring benefits to its people by building roads and stadiums and controlling pollution. It even quotes a migrant worker to illustrate what these benefits mean to ordinary people. "That's more jobs and more money to make," the labourer is quoted as saying. More positive messages are conveyed by returning to the celebration scenes at the Millennium Monument and in Tiananmen Square. Students are described greeting Chinese President Jiang Zemin's address with "a howl of approval" at the monument while on the square people stayed up the night for the traditional flag-raising ceremony to express their patriotic sentiments. The description of the mass scenes sends out not only a message of joy and happiness but a more important message of popular support for the Chinese government as Beijing's win is considered more of a national triumph than of a victory for a municipal government. The message of popular support is important because it gives weight to the argument of global integration on the issue of human rights. The rationale is that as China is exposed to international scrutiny, the awareness on the part of the general public in this process will hopefully push the government toward human rights reforms.

The story ends on a note of popular support. The final paragraph reminds the reader of the scenes in China: "A front-page editorial today in the People's Daily reads: 'A sleepless night! A sleepless night for 1.3 billion!'" Such an ending encapsulates Beijing's celebrations and offers some food for thought. For those who are against Beijing's bid on the grounds of human rights abuses, the outpouring of popular support on this sleepless night is not to be questioned but may be an impulsive display. But their doubts and distrust appear so weak and unpersuasive under the overwhelming atmosphere of joy and hope in Beijing that the whole report is distinctively on the positive side of Beijing's win.

The two stories have more common features than differences. They are mild in tone when introducing the human rights arguments; they are balanced stories and could be interpreted as favourable coverage of Beijing's victory. While the argument for not giving Beijing the Games because of its human rights record is

still heard, the prevailing voice of the stories is for giving Beijing the Games to expose it to international scrutiny and pressure. Both arguments have acknowledged human rights problems in China, but they differ in the specific methods to approach these problems. The first argument is doubtful about the “wisdom” of trying to change China through Olympics whereas the second argument seeks to change China through fully involving China in the world community.

The voice of integration, however, had been very weak in *The New York Times* before Beijing won the bid. In fact, the newspaper’s coverage of Beijing’s bid was always negative. One example is a story filed from Beijing, on February 23, 2001. Headlined ‘Beijing Tries to Woo Olympics And Keep Dissidents in Check’, it appeared during the time when the IOC inspection team was visiting Beijing, an important event for any bidding cities. Positive results would prove vital for a city’s bidding success. While the Chinese Foreign Ministry and Beijing’s bid officials argued that political issues such as human rights should not interfere with the sports event (see Chapter 3), there was a wave of criticism and attacks on alleged Chinese government’s abuse of human rights on Western media. In the creation of a bad impression of China for the IOC inspectors, Western media had spared no effort. This *New York Times* news item is just one of the many such unfavourable stories appearing during that sensitive period.

In the headline, the topic is made clear: the Chinese dissidents. This is a favourite media topic as well as the favourite among human rights activists. Clearly, the headline links Olympics with the issue of human rights. It could be paraphrased as: if Beijing fails to keep dissidents in check, its human rights record would probably prevent it from getting the Olympics. And this story is about how the Chinese government has violated the human rights of dissidents in its effort to present the best possible side to the inspectors.

The lead of the story tells of dissidents or “critics of the government” and their families who are put under more surveillance and warned not to speak out. The two following paragraphs identify the Chinese government’s efforts, which include giving the city a face-lift as a “two-pronged approach”. But the issue of

human rights is the only prong the story seems to be interested in. The rest of the eight-paragraph story focuses on cases of dissidents and their families being detained or warned. It is also devoted to the depiction of views of human rights critics and democracy advocates.

Apart from a quote from a Foreign Ministry spokesman at a news briefing, the story seeks no official confirmation from the Foreign Ministry of the cited cases. Nor does it give any comments from the Chinese authorities. Even the Foreign Ministry spokesman's quote is presented in a sarcastic way to contrast the depicted reality: while the Foreign Ministry says most Chinese "believe that the human rights situation in China is the best ever", dissidents and their families in China are being detained and threatened. In this construction, the story is obviously a one-sided story critical of Chinese government's security measures. Responding to the Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement, the story says straight in the next paragraph: "But that was not true for all Chinese this week" before starting to cite cases of alleged abuses of human rights.

Criticisms of the Chinese government are also shown in the depiction of the government's efforts to make a good impression on the inspectors, the other prong of the government's approach. Here is an example taken from the second paragraph (*italics added*):

But the government, which has repeatedly stated that human rights issues should not influence the committee, has *dispatched security forces to make sure this is so*. On Wednesday, the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee pressed on *courageously* with its slick presentations, despite unseasonably wet weather and unusually *thick* pollution in a city that has done much to *improve* its air quality in the last three years. Roads were lined with *fake* flowers as well as banners bearing Beijing's *flashy* Olympic logo; inspectors were showered with love and *performances* wherever they went.

With no mention at all of what Beijing has actually done in preparing for the bid, particular words and phrases (in italics) present China as insecure and dishonest. Beijing's serious and yet amateur effort at wooing IOC inspectors is presented as a clumsy "performance" only to be laughed at.

Tiananmen Square, the inexhaustible myth, is used twice in the story. It is first mentioned as background information for Jiang Qisheng, "a jailed pro-democracy advocate", whose court hearing was postponed:

Mr. Jiang was detained in 1999 for calling on people to commemorate June 4, 1989, the day Chinese troops fired on pro-democracy protestors in and around Tiananmen Square, killing hundreds.

This reference to the square is further utilized in the seventh paragraph:

The police have also increased surveillance on Tiananmen Square, where five Falun Gong followers set themselves on fire last month, apparently to protest the government's ban on the spiritual movement.

The first occurrence serves to remind the reader of the 1989 crackdown of student movement while the second one reminds the reader of the Chinese government's ban on Falun Gong as a violation of human rights. It is worth noting that although Chinese law has condemned Falun Gong as a cult, the story, and Western media as a whole, has continued to categorize it as "the spiritual movement".

This spate of negative reporting on China's human rights record received a bit of a break when Beijing won the Games. During this break the two articles discussed previously were obviously in favour of the integration approach. But their appearance did not necessarily mean that China would expect less attacks and criticisms from *The New York Times*. Two weeks after Beijing's successful bid, on August 3 of 2001, another report criticising China's human rights



behaviour appeared in print, picking up the argument of punishment and carrying on the tradition of negative reporting on China's human rights conditions.

Headlined 'Reaching Overseas, China Tries to Tether Its Own', the news report is a compilation of individual cases to show that the Chinese government has expanded its security surveillance to overseas Chinese academics. It is depicted as a "heavy-handed" government "campaign" to monitor Chinese scholars living abroad, as the story claims in the lead. Six cases are cited in the story to support this thematic line, the leading case being a 56-year-old senior Chinese scholar at Yale University who has permanent residency in the United States and who was reportedly detained and interrogated by security police during a visit in China the year before. Although the story concedes that such interviews by the police are often "nothing more than debriefing sessions" similar to those once conducted by CIA, it claims that sometimes the Chinese security police use these interviews to intimidate people and silence criticism of the Communist Party. The story concludes that this muscle-flexing of power beyond the country's border is a sign of weakening of a police state. "China's sense of national security appears to be so fragile that the country's equivalent of the K.G.B. expends vast amounts of time and resources to track the activities of innocuous individuals living far from China's shores," the story points out. By comparing China's security forces to the K.G.B., the story reminds the reader that this is an anti-democracy Communist regime that would never hesitate to use police forces to put its people in terrorized silence.

This message is supported by the myth of Tiananmen Square which is used three times. The use of the myth serves not only to remind the reader of the 1989 crackdown of student movement, but also to keep the reader alert of the fact that China's human rights record is not improving as it has promised and as it is hoped, but instead is worsening due to the Chinese government's fragile sense of national security. The logical conclusion should be that all the doubts and worries about the merits of giving Beijing the Games are justifiable after all. This use of the square has contributed in a large part to the construction of the Chinese government as an evil power which is feared reaching beyond the Chinese border.

The two arguments, or two approaches to China's human rights problems, have been vying for dominance throughout the *New York Times* coverage of Olympic campaign. This study of the four *New York Times* stories shows that despite efforts at keeping arguments balanced, the prevailing argument has been the one seeking to punish China rather than involve China. Doubts and criticism about China's human rights situation are always present, often so much so that they make most of the stories one-sided negative reporting. Through the use of Tiananmen Square as a myth, these stories are able to present an updated version of the old anti-Communism discourse of the Cold-War period. This discourse is contrary to the White House discourse of global integration regarding China's human rights problems. In this government discourse, China should be accepted into the international community in order to subject it to international norms and the rule of law. This argument, represented in the stories through the rhetoric of hope, improvement, and progress, dominated for only a short while before its voice was submerged by the opposing argument. As a result, China is cast as a villain and therefore should be punished. This is a quite different image from the Chinese-made one, which shows China as a fast-developing country with an improved human rights record and an open agenda for building a modern state.

### ***The Times (London)***

In its coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign, *The Times* focused its attention on the issue of human rights and its accusing voice is among the loudest and fiercest. On July 14, 2001, *The Times* also carried two news stories about Beijing's landslide win of the bid, one in the Overseas News Section, the other in the Sport Section. Unlike the *New York Times* stories, these two news reports focus on human rights issues in a confrontational straight forward way and never waver from a critical, condemning attitude. Both stories depict Beijing's win in a bitter, harsh, and hostile tone that is surprisingly different from the mild way in which the *New York Times* has dealt with Beijing's win on the same day.

Filed from Moscow by John Goodbody and Giles Whittell, the first story is unapologetically a piece of political polemic. Its stance is made clear from the very beginning by its headline: 'Olympic Win Puts China on Probation'. The

negative connotation of the word “probation” clearly positions China as a convicted criminal about to undergo a period of probation. The word indicates that the report has taken the role of a moral judge to pass a sentence to the law breaker. It also indicates that this story is not about something to be celebrated but something bad and evil to be carefully watched.

Sure enough, the introduction has not only clarified what crimes China is convicted of, but also has used the word “condemn” to emphasise the moral tone. “Condemn” is actually used to target two crimes:

Beijing was handed the 2008 Olympic Games yesterday in a landslide vote that was swiftly condemned as an endorsement of China’s bleak record on human rights.

It is made clear here that one crime is China’s human rights abuses. The other crime is obviously the awarding of the condemned the 2008 Games. For the story, the IOC decision means that Beijing’s approach to human rights will be “closely watched” over the next seven years. This wording is apparently differently from that of the *New York Times* stories which is positively connoted with words like “hope”, “improvement”, and “changes”. The negative tone is strengthened in paragraph 3 which draws “the Tibetan Government in exile” in accusing the IOC decision of giving “an international stamp of approval for Beijing’s violations”. Although different views are given in this and the following paragraph, these views are made to sound weak by the mention of the accusations that “changes will be mere window-dressing, as in Berlin in 1936”. Such negative association of Beijing with Berlin serves as a reminder that there is something similar about the fascist government and the Chinese Communist regime. It is a way of criticising the IOC decision to give China the Games.

The last few paragraphs are devoted to criticisms of China’s human rights record. Citing sources and using direct quotes, the story does not hesitate to draw a picture of China as a “corrupt regime”, and “a repressive political system that each day flouts freedom”. The Chinese government is also depicted as a villain who has a recent record of public execution and “the routine suppression of

Tibetan independence activists”. Counting the crimes China has committed, the story does not forget to include the issue of Taiwan, accusing China of employing war games aimed at “intimidating Taipei into joining the mainland”. And of course there is the Tiananmen incident to exemplify China’s poor human rights behaviours. Take a note of how Tiananmen is referred to: “Hundreds of pro-democracy activists were crushed by armoured vehicles and shot dead in the square in 1989”. What a violent, inhuman, cold-blooded picture it presents to reinforce the negative image of China.

Is there any positive note on Beijing’s win in the story? In paragraph 3, there is this sentence:

IOC leaders have embraced the view that the Games will be a force for good. They point to the effect on Seoul in the run-up to the 1988 Games and dismiss accusations that changes will be mere window-dressing, as in Berlin in 1936.

This is closely followed by a quote from Craig Reddie, the British IOC member who “sided firmly with Beijing”:

The Chinese said quite clearly that they wanted the Games to improve the quality of life of their people and society. In seven years we want to be able to say that we have brought about changes in China. I am confident that we have taken the right decision.

And further down the story, there are also two paragraphs about China’s response to the successful bid. The quote taken from the Chinese Sports Minister is similar to the one used by the Chinese media which promises reforms in areas including human rights.

It sounds like a lot. But considering that there are altogether 15 paragraphs in the story and most of them are criticisms and accusations, this part is comparatively much weaker. They are not used to give a positive note so as to balance the story,

but are used as nothing more than responses toward the IOC decision. No back-up materials and information are supplied for the responses, for example how IOC voting members have been convinced of Beijing's ability to improve its human rights record, or how Beijing plans to end human rights abuses. On the contrary, cases of human rights violations are cited in graphic details, such as the public execution of 1,800 people in the past three months in athletic stadiums and what happened in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

From the very beginning to the end, the report has tried hard to build up the image of China as a criminal on probation. The techniques it uses include strong, harsh vocabulary, words like probation, condemn, crush, and shot dead, the elimination of certain elements from the scene, such as how the Chinese delegation is celebrating their victory and the spontaneous response of nationwide joy and elation in China, and the selective use of sources, cases and quotes. These techniques make the story more about political propaganda than a journalistic coverage of an event. In this construction, China is the condemned and the IOC is the one who has helped the villain.

Appearing on the same day is the second story which also focuses on the issue of human rights but has a stronger sense of upholding the high moral ground. This is indicated by the use of the word "gamble" in the headline which reads: 'Let Us Pray the IOC's Gamble Pays Off'. Gambling has always been a moral issue as well as a political and social issue. Gamble is a game of chances, an undertaking with a risk of loss and a chance of profit. It implies certain instability of mind and the downgrading of human morality. By defining the IOC decision as a gamble, the headline implies that IOC members are playing an immoral game of chances, gambling on senseless hopes regardless of the huge risks it involves.

The intro makes this point clear (*italics added*):

On Thursday night, those members of the IOC who were neither ill nor *behind bars* supped with a former head of *the KGB* and went to the Bolshoi Theatre to watch Giselle, the ballet that is closest to the heart of their departing President, Juan Antonio

Samaranch. Thus *fortified*, they took their places in the Congress Hall at the World Trade Centre on the banks of the Moscow River yesterday and *made a deal* with what *little* of their collective *conscience* remains.

Here, the word “conscience” is used to indicate the high sense of morality corresponding to the word “gamble” in the headline to accuse the IOC members of having little conscience and being morally wrong to award the 2008 Games to Beijing. IOC members are depicted as an ailing, privileged group who are troubled by scandals. The normal social function – having a drink with Russian President Putin – is deliberately described as involving some kind of a conspiracy with the head of the notorious KGB. The following paragraph specifies the misconducts of IOC members:

Instead, the IOC pretends that everyone is innocent. They are masters at turning a blind eye until the evidence is shoved, stinking, into their faces. Its members were notorious for taking more kickbacks than a Texas rodeo long before the shenanigans that surrounded Salt Lake City’s successful bid for next year’s Winter Olympics were exposed.

The IOC rationale for committing this misconduct, the story further points out, is that “human rights problems will simply have disappeared by 2008”. This rationale sounds funny, but that is exactly the effect the story has been trying to achieve: making the IOC look bad and stupid. In this construction, the IOC decision is put under a big question mark.

The leader of the group, Samaranch, is especially targeted. He is said to be “obsessed with being credited with masterminding the move towards yesterday’s historic vote”. The IOC president is portrayed as having been at the helm for too long to keep his moral senses in place and becoming “obsessed” with manipulating the vote towards Beijing’s victory. The motivation behind Samaranch’s obsession with favouring China is compared to that of the Fifa President who wants to be credited with awarding the World Cup to South Africa in 2006. But the story is quick to point out that while South Africa “does not

exist under apartheid any more”, China is being accused for human rights abuses. By pointing out this difference, the story tries to pin down the president for the moral crimes he committed by guiding the Games towards China which has been “executing more people in the past three months than the rest of the world”.

China is under attack too, naturally, although it is not the prime target. China is depicted as “the world’s most populous country” as well as “the most vengeful towards erring citizens”. Here, “vengeful” is used to imply the ruthlessness of the Beijing regime because the noun form of the word contains the element of excessiveness, meaning to revenge to a greater degree than is normal, expected or desired. Correspondingly, the word “erring” is meaningfully employed to describe the victim of the ruthless government as there is a positive connotation in the word which concedes that it is human nature to sin and make mistakes and therefore one should be as forgiving as possible. So the use of “erring” has not only set off the negative connotation of the word “vengeful”, but also has presented a contrasting picture of Chinese citizens who are often punished too severely for their mistakes. Even the celebratory scene of the Chinese delegation in Moscow is depicted in a negative way:

The immediate aftermath of yesterday’s vote was enlivened by familiar scenes of hysteria. Chinese camera crews and Beijing bid staff sent tables and glasses crashing to the floor in the rush to greet their officials.

The message in this description is explicitly negative. In a positive report, these scenes of sending “tables and glasses crashing to the floor” would have been depicted as scenes of elation and oblivion.

The issue of human rights appears in the fifth paragraph where a comparison is made between the “hysteria” of the Chinese delegation and the chilling effect of the Tiananmen myth on both the Chinese and the foreign media. It goes this way:

Later, a journalist from China’s state television station told the victorious bid committee that it was close to midnight back

home and thousands of people had gathered to celebrate the result in Tiananmen Square. A shudder went through the audience then and the questions about the country's abuses of human rights that dogged the run-up to this vote began again.

The word "shudder" tells it all, serving to condemn the "victorious bid committee" for their hysteria in the face of human rights problems. It also serves to show how powerful the myth of the Tiananmen Square is.

The ending paragraphs fall on the note of conscience again, pointing out how the IOC conscience is fooling itself by taking a head-in-sand approach. The story concludes with a note of strong doubts supported by all the negative images the story has projected: that of the pro-China Samaranch, the wilful IOC voting members, the vengeful Chinese government, and the hysterical Beijing bid officials.

The outburst of anger and frustration about Beijing's win is almost beyond containment in the two stories. Behind this outburst lies the Cold-War mentality of isolation and embargo. Communism is to be encircled and annihilated, not to be courted and disseminated. Thus awarding China the Games is regarded as a huge stupid "gamble" made at the cost of human rights, democracy and Western moral standard. With this ideology at play, the image of China constructed in the stories bears the same features as those projected during the Cold-War era.

The blatant accusation of China's human rights record by *The Times* became more intense at the end of bid. An example is a news item which appeared on July 10, 2001, three days before the final vote due to begin in Moscow. Filed from Beijing by Oliver August and headlined 'China Dissident Banned from Olympic Talks', the news report is about Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng who was denied a visa to Moscow. It portrays Wei as a victim of political manoeuvring between the Chinese and Russian governments to "keep out dissident voices". It casts China further into the negative light.



Earlier, shortly before the IOC assessment team arrived in Beijing, around which event Western criticism of China's human rights record was at the most intense, *The Times* carried a news report about official documents smuggled out of China as evidence of Chinese Christians being tortured. One document, the news says, shows that a female prisoner named Yang Tongi was "forced to kneel for hours" and "handcuffed behind her back". Another female prisoner named Zhang Hongjuan was tortured "with an electric prod" while her hand and foot were "shackled". Such graphic details disclosed by the unverified documents are intended to call the attention of the IOC inspection team to the new evidence of China's human rights abuses.

Human rights was a consistent theme of *The Times* coverage of Beijing's bid. It was preoccupied in reporting and criticising China's human rights conditions, largely to the exclusion of other issues related to Beijing's Olympic campaign. Placing China in this overarching frame of human rights discourse, *The Times* is able to construct a vicious and oppressive China whose very existence is against the Olympic spirit.

### ***The Australian (Australia)***

The coverage of Australia's national newspaper of human rights issues in relation to Beijing's Olympic campaign is somewhere between the alternatively positive and negative news reports of *The New York Times* and the blatantly uncompromising criticism of *The Times*. It does not simply criticize China's human rights record and bombard the Chinese government with anti-Communism rhetoric. Nor does it adopt a sarcastic tone when making a critical report. It pays more attention to the political and media aspects of Beijing's bid in relation to human rights issues.

A typical report appeared on July 9 of 2001, five days before Beijing won its bid. Headlined 'Beijing Bid Team Deflects Criticism', the story aims to discredit Beijing's claim that politics should play no part in the bid process of a sports event. It devotes a total of 19 paragraphs to make the point that the Beijing bid is a political game played by politicians despite Beijing's public no-politics stand.

It was published at the crucial moment when China's claim was gaining more and more sympathy and wider support from the international community.

The headline sounds like a loud statement pinpointing Beijing as playing politics. It is a clear message that the Beijing bid team is a group of politicians who are bringing politics to the bid process of a sport event. This message goes throughout the story, constituting the theme of the report. The negative message is further indicated by the word "oppression", which is used in the intro to describe Beijing as a "city synonymous with oppression". Without actually mentioning Tiananmen Square, this combination of Beijing with oppression is aimed at reminding the reader of what has happened in the city in the recent past to make the city a politically oppressive one. The myth of Tiananmen is indirectly used here to play upon the reader's consciousness and hence enhancing the theme of dirty politics.

Playing the dirty games is Liu Jingmin, vice-mayor and deputy executive president of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee, a politician, as the second paragraph informs us. It reports that he "smoothly deflects international criticism and concerns". The word "smooth" often carries a negative tone when used to depict politicians as it implies being polite but insincere. And combined with the other negative word, "deflect", the same implications are obviously applied here to accommodate the negative tone set in the intro.

The specific word "politicians" actually appears in the third paragraph which compares the smoothness of Mr. Liu with the aggressiveness and impatience of "most other Chinese politicians". Liu's smoothness is defined in the fourth paragraph as having "all the answers" to sensitive topics including "human rights, religious suppression, freedom of speech, Falun Gong, Tibet, public protest, pressure for political change". The political skills of Liu and his team are so refined because, the report says, they are "well coached" by two international public relations firms. The use of the term "well coached" attempts to show that the smoothness of the Chinese is a staged political performance, well rehearsed and thus untrue and insincere. While giving credit to the PR firms, the report does not forget to mention that one of the firms "acted for former Chilean

dictator Augusto Pinochet”. This association serves to implicate the Chinese politicians in the unfavourable spotlight of international politics.

Apart from the “coached” smoothness of the Chinese politicians, the story provides some “facts” that could discredit the Chinese claim of no politics. First, the story questions Chinese government’s double standard in dealing with home and overseas Falun Gong members. Drawing on Chinese government’s decision to welcome overseas Falun Gong members to attend the Games, the story challenges the same government’s claim that Falun Gong is an illegal cult. It also draws the case of Taiwan as an example to contradict Beijing’s public claim that no politics should be involved in the bid process. It makes Beijing’s suggestion that Taiwan could co-host some events another indication that Beijing is playing politics. To make the argument more convincing, the story quotes an unidentified Chinese official as admitting that “To the outside world, we say that politics should not be part of the process, but in reality, everything in China is political”. The story further points out that the Chinese government has invested “enormous political capital” in the bid. That includes the “State-controlled media” which is “projecting the impression that widespread international support makes Beijing a shoo-in for July 13”. This media is also good at “whipping up nationalistic sentiment”.

All this effort to discredit Beijing’s no-politics claim was aimed at eventually discrediting the Chinese government. The legitimacy of the Communist regime, for instance, is questioned for “the brutal way the government stays in power” as pointed out by the story. “The brutal way” is actually a different wording for abuse of human rights as it is intended to bring back memories of Tiananmen Square. The story cites critics as saying that this brutal way “compromises the Olympic ideal” of respect for universal fundamental ethical principles and the preservation of human dignity. This could be paraphrased, and is obviously intended to be paraphrased, as that the Chinese government stays in power through abuses of human rights and therefore the existence of the government is a violation of “the preservation of human dignity”, or an abuse of human rights. Human rights is something unspoken and yet having its presence felt. From the intro where the abuse of human rights is hinted at by “a city synonymous with

oppression” to the mention of Tibetans protesting the Beijing bid in the middle of the report, the issue of human rights is always present.

This story is a masterpiece of image projecting. Look at all these images projected in the story. First there is the image of Beijing, the city of “oppression”. And then there is the image of this Chinese bid official who “smoothly deflects” criticism and who “has all the answers”. And then there is the image of all BOBICO officials who have been “well coached” by international public relations firms. And then there is the image of “most other Chinese politicians” who are characterized by “an aggressive wave of the hand or a piquish grunt”. And finally, there is the image of the Chinese government which is “brutal”, behaves “strangely”, and has become “adept at whipping up nationalistic sentiment”. And do not forget the image of this one Chinese official who is quoted in the story and yet who “declined to be identified”.

What conclusions could be drawn from these separate and yet closely related images? First, the images are all negative and unflattering. There is no positive image at all, not even a compromise. Second, the images of Chinese politicians are actually a portrait of two generations of Chinese politicians. The image of the older generation, which is characterised by “an aggressive wave of the hand or a piquish grunt”, is still in the same mould of the Western stereotyping of Chinese leaders in Mao’s era. The image of the younger generation, which is represented by Liu Jingmin, is different, but no better. The professionalism and the competence of China’s new generation of professional politicians, which are proudly presented by China as an extra credential for its bid, are meaningfully described as smooth and having “all the answers”. Young politicians are imaged as “well coached” actors for the purpose of “performing for the international media”. In other word, the competence of the younger generation is projected as the temporary result of PR coaching, other than good professional qualifications. Third, putting all the images together could produce a larger picture of China which, as portrayed by the story, is under oppression of the “brutal” Communist regime although Chinese politicians are trying hard to put on a different show. The one clue that strings all the images together is the theme of propaganda. Everything reported in the story, from the coaching of BOBICO officials to the

impression projected by the State-controlled media and further to the agitation by the Chinese government, is portrayed as part of a huge propaganda effort. The images are projected in such a way that the churning and turning of a huge propaganda machine could almost be heard and felt from behind all those images.

At a time when the final vote is just a few days away and criticism of China is at its most intense, this piece of report stands out as different. It is politically correct, joining the chorus of Western criticism. But it is harsher in tone than *The New York Times*. It is uncompromising in its stand against the Communist regime, just like *The Times*. But its hostility is masked by the indirect way it has used the myth of the Tiananmen Square.

*The Australian* treats the myth differently from the other two Western newspapers. The story, dated February 26, 2001 and headlined ‘Tiananmen Fails IOC Venue Test’, provides a good example. The story appeared at a time when IOC’s assessment team was at the end of their inspection tour of Beijing. While most other negative Western coverage of the team’s activity in China was focused on Falun Gong demonstrations, dissidents and Beijing’s clumsy effort to paint up the city for the inspection, this report was about Tiananmen Square being rejected as a sports venue. Any other spot being rejected as a venue will be a simple, routine report. But with Tiananmen, which has become a symbol, a myth, it is not that simple.

The headline and the first two paragraphs read like standard objective news reporting that tells the reader what has just happened: Tiananmen has been rejected as a suitable sports venue. No ambiguity. No play of word games such as words or phrases overloaded with meanings. Tiananmen Square is simply introduced as “a vast grey concrete plaza at Beijing’s epicentre”. It is in the third and fourth paragraphs that the myth of Tiananmen Square is brought into the story. Quoting the head of the inspection team as saying that the reasons for the rejection were beyond technical considerations, the report is able to define a political Tiananmen Square. It goes like this:

Tiananmen Square is China's most politically sensitive site, the centre of mass student-led demonstrations that were fatally quashed by an army assault in June 1989, and most recently the venue for almost daily demonstrations by Falun Gong followers protesting the demonisation of their group.

This definition is quite different from the versions used by the *New York Times* and *The Times*. It conceives Tiananmen Square as a “most politically sensitive site” rather than a symbol of human rights abuse. What happened in June 1989 is described as demonstrations “fatally quashed” by an “army assaults, rather than a “pro-democracy” student movement that ended up in a “massacre” by the Chinese government. And the Falun Gong followers’ demonstrations on the square are described as protesting the “demonisation” of their group, rather than the “crackdown” of their group. It says nothing about the police surveillance, the arrests, and the intimidation of foreigners at the square, which have been widely reported by other Western press. This version of the myth is more reserved and more politically sensitive than the American and British versions which, by contrast, are filled with more negative and more aggressive words. These words have produced chilling images of students being crushed by military tanks and being torn apart by bullets. These words have also produced images of Falun Gong protesters being dragged away by plain-clothed policeman and put into re-correction centres. These images eventually lead to the formation of the myth of Tiananmen Square which not only symbolises the brutality of the Chinese government, but also makes the brutality a natural consequence of the Communist regime.

It seems that the closer the voting day comes, the softer *The Australian* has become in criticising China's human rights record. The July 2001 story uses “a city synonymous with oppression” and “the brutal way the government stays in power” to hint at human rights abuses without actually mentioning human rights. Human rights is not mentioned in the February of 2001 story either, but the myth of Tiananmen Square is used. Still earlier, on September 28, 2000, one story not only straightforwardly criticises China for its latest human rights abuses but also is much harsher in tone. Headlined ‘State of Amnesia’, the story cites reports of

religious repression as well as political oppression from various sources to show what an “appalling” and “notoriously woeful” human rights record China has. By comparison, “Australia is undeniably a mature multi-party democracy where race relations are being discussed at every level of society”.

While this construction of the superior, democratic “us” versus the inferior, oppressive “them” was consistent in the newspaper’s coverage of Beijing’s Olympic campaign, the blatantly hostile stance in the year 2000 obviously changed to a soft approach by the eve of IOC’s final decision. The international political environment and domestic policy probably might have much to do with the change but it is beyond the scope of this research to look into the detailed possible reasons. However, one thing about the stories is noteworthy: the conspicuous absence of the argument that awarding the Games to China will expose China to international scrutiny and thus help improve its human rights behaviour. This absence reveals that harsh approach or soft, the argument is for punishing China for its human rights behaviour. The message is that giving China the Games means supporting the Communist regime.

### *The Straits Times (Singapore)*

*The Straits Times* coverage of Beijing’s bid is a very different reading experience from those previously discussed. The four stories under study are filed from Beijing and written by the same person, the paper’s China Correspondent Mary Kwang.

The first story appeared on July 13, 2001. Headlined ‘Beijing Remains Hot Favourite’, the story focuses on the advantages Beijing has over its rivals. It devotes 11 paragraphs including the intro to the account of the advantages which range from geographic considerations to political factors. It is told in a cool, matter-of-fact tone, being more logical than analytical.

Human rights is mentioned in the last two paragraphs as the key disadvantage or “challenge” faced by Beijing. This positioning of the issue of human rights in the story shows that human rights serves only as background information for the

story. It is not given a big space as considered “due” by the news reports of *The New York Times*, *The Times*, and *The Australian*. So designed, the human rights issue carries much less weight quantitatively compared with the advantages.

Have a look at this paragraph:

Many international observers and organizations, including Beijing’s rivals, have voiced concerns about its human rights violations, arguing that holding the Olympics there violates the Olympic spirit.

Obviously, the issue of human rights is not elaborated. In fact, the sensitivity and prominence of human rights trumpeted by Western media is played down through careful, diplomatic wording. It uses “international observers and organisations” rather than human rights groups and activists; “voiced concerns about” rather than criticised or attacked; and “arguing” rather than accusing. It indicates the existence of a controversy over human rights but reveals nothing about the fierceness of the attack on China’s human rights record and its implications. In effect, it reduces the heavily stressed importance of the human rights issue and gives more weight to other factors that are giving Beijing an edge over its rivals.

Through these positive factors, China is cast in a favourable light, contrasting sharply to the negative news coverage by *The Times* and *The Australian*. It not only depicts the momentum that Beijing will win but also sends out the message that Beijing “deserves to win”. Its sympathy with Beijing is obvious as it depicts all the strong points Beijing has and all the support Beijing could count upon. Creating a favourable atmosphere surrounding Beijing’s final bid, it portrays Beijing as the hot favourite despite “the key challenge” of human rights.

This news report is also characterised by the factual, non-aggressive style of writing. This style not only differentiates *The Straits Times*’ coverage of Beijing’s bid from that of the other three newspapers, but also best reflects its stand on the issue of human rights. By the way it deals human rights in the story, such as playing down the theme and placing it at the end of the story to serve



only as background, it is safe to say that it does not regard human rights as the single one factor that should affect Beijing's bid.

The factual style is especially noticeable in the second story because it deals with Falun Gong, the latest subject picked up by Western media when criticising China's human rights record, following the old ones such as Tiananmen dissidents, Tibet, and public execution of convicted criminals. The headline of the story, 'Mass Suicide by Falungong Inmates, is simple and factual, not much different from a routine piece of catastrophe reportage. No accusations. No sensationalising. Simply a statement of fact although what it deals with is not that simple. It is a very sensitive political issue. The same could be said about the intro. It introduces Falun Gong as: "the controversial group" which "was outlawed two years ago by the Chinese authorities". It does not elaborate on why it was outlawed and why it has become a political issue of international concern.

The body of the report is built upon three sources: "reports here", "Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy", and "a central government spokesman". It does not portray the prisoners who tried to kill themselves as victims or heroes. It does not classify the incident a human rights issue. In fact, there is no mentioning of human rights throughout the story except in the name of an organization as source. Human rights is not treated as the theme of the story even though the suicide is such a good case to elaborate on.

But that does not mean that it is not critical of China's dealing with Falungong. In one paragraph, it says: "China, which denies abuse of Falungong members, said in February that more than 240 Falungong followers had killed themselves, some while in custody". In a subtle way, it expresses concerns about the fact that so many people have killed themselves. The underlying question is if the government did not abuse the followers, then what happened to make people kill themselves? Also in a subtle way, the story questions the motives behind the suicide and the news coverage of it. Pointing out that the suicide news appeared "nine days shy of the July 13 date", the story conveys the message without actually saying it that the suicide case is being manipulated for making China

look bad and thus influencing IOC members' votes. This information also carries a note of resentment toward the manipulation.

Sticking to facts rather than elaborating, the story also tells about another suicide case by Falungong members which took place in Tiananmen Square on the eve of Chinese New Year: "One woman and a girl died from severe burns, three were injured badly while two others were stopped from setting themselves on fire by the police". It describes the suicide as "a self-immolation bid". It does not directly give reasons why these followers tried to kill themselves. Instead, it gives more background information about Falungong for the reader to draw his own conclusion:

The Falungong, founded in 1992 by the New York-exiled Li Hongzhi, preaches a mix of Buddhism and Taoism coupled with breathing exercises. The authorities cracked down on it after a mass protest of more than 10,000 practitioners outside the Zhongnanhai complex, the headquarters of the Communist Party, in April 1999.

This background information on Falungong is based on solid facts. It does not make any moral judgement, obviously taking care and making sure that all the words it has used are depleted of emotion and ambiguity. It is not open to interpretations.

China in this construction is not cast in a positive light because the suicide event itself is negative. But certainly not in a negative light, either. It portrays China as a "strong contender" for the 2008 Games but whose bid effort suffers from the outlawed Falungong sect. To some extent, China is portrayed as victimised or framed by Falungong. This is indicated by its pointing out the timing of the two mass suicide cases: one is "nine days shy of the July 13 date" when IOC members are to vote; the other is "on the eve of Chinese New Year". The techniques it uses, such as sticking to basic facts, making no moral judgement, and not depicting the suicide case as an abuse of human rights, have all served to play down the Western theme of human rights. Its sympathy is with China.

The third story, which is dated February 21 of 2001, best exemplifies the newspaper's stand over China in relation to human rights. Headline 'China: We're not perfect but we'll improve', the story is about a BOBICO press conference where Beijing's narrative on human rights is introduced by Liu Jingmin. This is the same press conference which has been covered by *The Australian*, as already discussed previously. A comparison of the two newspapers' coverage reveals different approaches to human rights problems in China.

First, the headline. *The Australian's* is 'Beijing Deflects Criticism', which focuses on what "criticism" is there and how China "deflects" them. In comparison, *The Straits Times'* headline focuses on what "imperfections" are there and what China will do about it. The difference is obvious: while *The Australian* puts China on the defensive and criticises China for deflecting criticism, *The Straits Times* is sympathetic with China and puts emphasis on, if not supports, Beijing's promise to improve.

This difference in attitude can also be seen in wording. Whereas *The Australian* describes Mr. Liu Mingmin's approach to questions from the press as "deflects" international criticism, *The Straits Times* depicts it as "sidestepped" questions about human rights. Semantically, there is not much difference in the two words, but it makes a difference when *The Straits Times* puts it this way: "Mr. Liu sidestepped questions about human rights, an issue played up by overseas groups to thwart Beijing's Olympic aspirations." With human rights issue thus defined, the word "sidestep" no longer carries such a negative connotation.

The difference also lies in the ways Mr. Liu's speech is covered. While *The Australian* treats every quote from Liu with something to contradict his claims, there is no such "something" in *The Straits Times'* report. In addition, the story quotes Liu more extensively, giving an exclusive coverage of what Beijing has got to say, rather than what everyone is arguing about.

The most obvious difference, however, lies in the story focus: while *The Australian* concentrates on China's human rights, *The Straits Times* seems to be

more interested in practical matters such as environment and infrastructure. And whereas *The Australian* is devoted to criticism and doubts about China's human rights record, *The Straits Times* helps China sell the will-improve line. These differences allow a glimpse into the different editorial policies and political ideologies of the two newspapers.

The fourth story covers the tension-filled situation in Beijing where the IOC inspection team was on its working tour of the city. The headline, 'Hush-hush Olympic Bid', gives a clue to what is going on in Beijing at this crucial moment.

The tension comes from "tremendous pressure from the Falungong and human-rights groups" as the introduction identifies it. The first part of the story, or the first 11 paragraphs, is devoted to how the tension has been building up and how the Beijing government deals with it. Apart from citing two suicide cases of Falungong members and "a stream of messages" sent to the IOC and the press by both Falungong and human rights groups, the story also mentions the US congress' resolution to show the intensity and scope of the pressure Beijing and IOC are facing. It shows how the oppositional voice and activities have been getting human rights onto the agenda as *the issue* to impede China's bid for the Games.

On the other hand, the story reported the "great secrecy and tight security" the Beijing government has put in place as a countermeasure to prevent Falungong followers from "dogging the inspectors". The team is under tight security and its timetable is kept a top secret. That fits in the "hush-hush" situation described by the headline. Beijing's argument for holding the Games in relation to human rights is also cited as a counterargument to the US resolution's statement that Beijing should not be given the Games if no improvement has been made in human rights.

What is noteworthy about the first part of the story is not the description of the hush-hush situation in Beijing, but the description of Chinese government's dealing with Falungong. Read this paragraph: "The inspection takes place at a time of heightened tension in the Chinese government's fight against the

outlawed Falungong group.” The word “fight” is used instead of crackdown. It has a positive connotation when used here together with “outlawed”, implying that it is a battle between justice and the illegal. Depictions like this have never appeared in the coverage by the other three newspapers. It once again reveals *The Straits Times*’ stand on the human rights issue in relation to Beijing’s bid. This stand is further revealed in the story by pointing out that “Chinese Olympic officials have more than human rights to worry about.” It implies that human rights should not be the only issue to discuss in relation to Beijing’s bid. There are other important issues as well that are crucial to the bid and to the Olympic movement as a whole.

That explains why it devotes the second part of the story to issues other than human rights, ranging from air pollution to traffic. It quotes Beijing Mayor Liu Qi’s pledge that if the city won the bid, the stadiums, environment and services would be of the best quality. This kind of quote rarely appears in Western coverage. Even if they do appear, they are often used in a different context for the purpose of ridicule and questioning, such as the “but” formula: Beijing pledges to ..., but ....

Giving coverage to issues other than human rights in the story serves to balance the report at the most obvious level. It demonstrates a different journalistic approach to covering human rights in relation to Beijing’s bid, never allowing its attention to be distracted away from other important issues by the issue of human rights. In the ideological sphere, it reflects conflicting interpretations of human rights by the West and by Asian countries. While critical of China’s human rights record, it is sympathetic with the Chinese government’s “fight” against Falungong and resentful of Western media’s heavy emphasis on human rights as the overriding issue for the bid.

China’s image in this construction is more positive than negative, although the issues it deals with are obviously significant problems for Beijing, such as air pollution and traffic, as well as pressure from Falungong and human rights groups. Yet it is an image of China in which there is much to improve and which

shows Beijing's determination to win; an image of China in which China has much to do but has been made to give heavy attention to the human rights issue.

To sum up, *The Straits Times*' coverage of Beijing's bid is factual and positive. It downplays human rights issues considerably through several rhetorical and editorial techniques: it tries to be factual and does not elaborate on the fact that Falungong followers killed themselves; it does not use China's official definition of Falungong as "evil cult" or the Western definition as "spiritual movement", it describes it as "outlawed" and the Chinese government's dealing with it as a "fight"; it does not depict Falungong practitioners as victims of human right abuse, nor does it give much space to the human rights debates; it gives wholesale coverage to Beijing's line while making passing references of opposition from human rights groups and organizations. The headlines of the four news items themselves reveal a great deal about the newspaper's different stance on China's human rights and Beijing's Olympic campaign: 'Hush-hush Olympic Bid' (February 20, 2001), 'China: We're Not Perfect but We'll Improve' (February 21, 2001), 'Mass Suicide by Falungong Inmates' (July 5, 2001), and 'Beijing Remains Hot Favourite' (July 13, 2001).

Thus, China, in the *Straits Times*' construction, does not look vicious or suspicious. In a sense, China is even depicted as a victim to the orchestrated chorus of human rights criticism by Western media when it was forced to make IOC's inspection tour a "hush-hush" situation.

## **Conclusions**

Differences can be seen in the coverage of human rights issue by the four foreign newspapers: while *The Times* is the most blatant critic of China's human rights record, *The New York Times* is marked by a suggestion of pluralism in that it presents different views. *The Australian* is somewhere in between, while *The Straits Times* reports on human rights issues but takes care not to make any judgment. The differences suggest that the four quality national newspapers tend to be more aligned with government foreign policies although they could be more open and critical and free when doing domestic coverage. It probably has

something to do with the fact that home news is more or less about politics while international reporting reflects national interests. In this sense, the images of China projected by these major opinion makers are constructed largely through the lens of government policy objectives. Such a construction does not necessarily represent the government stand, but it nevertheless reveals the dominant ideologies of the country represented by the news media.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Chinese Text – Preparing the Ground**

This chapter focuses on how Chinese propaganda covers logistic issues for Beijing's Olympic campaign. Logistics is defined here as any issue that is related to Beijing's campaign, extending far beyond the scope of venue construction and environment. Within this definition, text is selected that concerns Beijing's capability to, and capacity for, hosting the Games. These texts are divided into two sections: namely, environmental protection and Games-related services. In winning the bid, Beijing pledged to offer not only first-rate stadiums, but optimal environmental safeguards and the most user-considerate services seen in Olympic Games.

The analysis investigates how the three themes central to Beijing's bid and preparations are promoted. Beijing's publicity effort is largely focused on the three themes. A series of publicity campaigns, for instance, were launched by BOBICO in 2001 to promote the bid: "Green Olympics, Green Beijing" for March, the "Month of Support for Beijing's Bid" for April, "Science and Technology for Olympics and Beijing" for May, and "People's Olympics" for June. The Associated Press described the momentum of the bid's publicity as an "open season on stunts". These stunt-filled theme campaigns provide an ideal material for the study of Chinese propaganda for Beijing's Olympic campaign. Analysis of the texts which are in the form of special government publications and press coverage further reveals the close relationship between the Chinese government and its news media in building the image of Beijing and the image of China.

#### **Environment and the Green Olympics**

In the Chinese communicative tradition, sequence or order signifies the relative degree of importance. The placement of the Green Olympics ahead of the other



two themes thus signifies that environment is the No. 1 issue for Beijing's Olympic campaign.

### ***The Beijing 2008***

Therefore it is no surprise to find environment taking up the first two inside pages of the first issue of *Beijing 2008*. Six news items constitute the special report package entitled 'Environmental Improvement'. The first story, under the long title 'US\$6.6 Billion Investment to Send Pollution Packing from 2003-2007', sums up in two paragraphs what the Beijing municipal government has achieved so far in combating pollution and uses six paragraphs to list the targets to be achieved in the immediate future. The achievements include: 45 percent of days in the year 2000 with an air quality classified as "good" and 80 percent of days classified as "relatively good". A colorful picture of a red ferry boat cruising along the blue water of the canal which runs through the north-western part of the city complements the text which is full of figures and vague descriptions. The caption, though, gives statistics about Beijing's consumption of natural gas, reduction of sulphur dioxide in the air and in pollutant car emissions, and greened land, but it tells nothing about the picture itself.

The story is written in a government work report style, which is characterised by the way the caption is handled, if it could be called caption at all, and by statistics-ridden content. No attempt is made to hide the fact that it reads like a chapter from a government document. Perhaps that is exactly the kind of effect the story hopes to achieve: the authoritative, no-nonsense voice of the government claiming credit for what has been achieved and delivering a fat promise for the rosy future. This style is convenient for IOC members, the intended readers of *Beijing 2008*, whose main concern was not politics but the issue of logistics. Because IOC members were not allowed to visit bid cities, the Beijing bid committee tried to drive home its first message on environment in a simple and yet powerful way to catch the passing attention of busy IOC members.

Probably because of the focus on the voice of the government, other voices are deliberately silenced - even those voices in favour of the government. For

instance, the story mentions the possibility of other voices in the intro paragraph: “The government is putting into effect more than 100 regulations to reduce air pollution, moves that are already benefiting city residents.” It is common practice in journalism for the introduction to serve as a lead and signal more to come in the following paragraphs. But this story leaves the lead there as it is and does not return at a later stage. Possible favourable voices from local residents of Beijing are not picked up. Although this one-voice approach is efficient in getting the government’s message across, it nevertheless gives the impression that the Beijing municipal government is also wishful and wilful, with no regard to the will of the people.

The second story takes the same approach: it reproduces the same kind of authoritative text - one-voice government publicity story. Even the style of writing is the same: statistics abound and each paragraph is headed by a short phrase rather than a sentence. For instance, the last three paragraphs begin respectively with “Control of vehicle emissions” “Control of dust pollution” and “Control of industrial pollution”. The only difference from the first story is that it uses two tables, rather than a picture, to enliven the dull content. In contrast to the dry content which is an account of the measures that have been taken to improve air quality, and the achievements to date, the title is lively and enticing: “Breathing easier over improved air quality”. But as in the first story, the element of people was missing. Having suggested in the title, the story should have talked more about people enjoying fresh air thanks to so much effort by the municipal government. At least one paragraph should be given to people’s account of their improved lives to pick up and develop the idea suggested by the title. But nothing is done. This conspicuous absence of the people only serves to weaken the government voice. Also like the first story, this second piece might have fared better without inserting the element of people. Propaganda is an open statement with this BOBICO publication. There is no need to pretend to be otherwise.

The same could be said of the third story which is entitled ‘New Sports City for All Age Groups’. The story itself is good material for government propaganda: an ugly open warehouse has been transformed into a first-class community sports

centre, “a glittering addition to the capital’s increasing array of such facilities”. Also, there is another positive story behind this story that shows the uniqueness and the significance of the new sports facility: the coal warehouse, which belonged to a major heat supplier for Beijing’s winter heating system, became useless when the plant was converted from using coal to using natural gas for fuel. This transformation has effectively “increased public heating efficiency by 20 percent” and reduced environmental pollution. This feat of environmental protection by the Beijing municipal government was doubled by making good use of the former storage space for the benefit of local community. Thus, the creation of the community sports centre is not simply a new construction project to cater to local needs, but a transformation of something harmful to people’s health to something that is a positive influence. It is used by this story as a symbol to signify the Beijing municipal government’s concern for local residents’ health needs in dealing with environmental problems. As pointed out by the final sentence, the new sports city is “part of the municipal government’s policy of popularizing sports and other healthy exercise among all citizens”.

The story is enhanced by a picture of the tennis courts which shows a well-lighted modern indoor structure of glass and steel. The caption, this time in the true sense of this word, tells of the 5,400-square-metre Tennis Gymnasium being built “to the highest standards for the Australian Tennis Open”. This luxury is in sharp contrast to the shabby past when a few home-made table tennis tables built with cement and a piece of plank could be a luxury for the neighbourhood community and health facilities were almost non-existent.

This “first-class” community sports centre is obviously built as a model to showcase the municipal government’s achievements in improving people’s lives. But as in the first two stories, the story does not elaborate on that point which is already suggested in the title. A few voices of local residents expressing appreciations of this “glittering addition” to their lives would make the story a perfect piece of propaganda for the Beijing municipal government.

The fourth and fifth stories in the package, by contrast, do not pretend. They are un-apologetically simple and short and document-like. No effort is taken to make

them more appealing to the reader. They are offered as information, not news, to update the reader's knowledge of environmental protection in Beijing. What is interesting about these stories is the exploitation of the mythology of tree planting. For the Chinese, their concept of environmental protection is largely associated with the practice of tree planting. Some twenty years ago, the Chinese government established National Tree-planting Day to raise public awareness of environmental protection. Over the years, top Chinese leaders have been seen on TV planting trees every spring, and the Chinese media have been routinely reporting how many new trees have been planted to mark the annual planting season. If the figures are to be believed, every inch of the Chinese mainland has long been covered with trees. But no one seems to really care about the accuracy of the figures. What is more important is the symbolic meaning of the act for environment protection. The message is we care, so we plant. Because of this conscientious effort by the Chinese government and its media, the Chinese public have become used to the idea that environmental protection equates with tree planting; or in other words, tree planting is environmental protection. This mythology (in the sense used by Roland Barthes) is created and maintained by the Chinese government and its propaganda machine. Environmental protection is emptied of its original content – the wider issues of sustainability - and is reduced to tree planting. The change is naturalised -so much so that people have come to take it for granted, not aware of what have been stripped away from the original concept of environmental protection. But it is exactly the missing elements that would reflect the ideology behind the changes: attention is diverted to the simple act of tree planting from other more important environmental issues that the Chinese government is reluctant to address.

That is why the myth of tree planting is used by the fourth and fifth stories: to attract attention to tree planting rather than other harder to resolve environmental issues. It is used in a simple way. Entitled 'New Urban Greening includes 12 million', the fourth story has only one paragraph, which tells of how many new trees and how much grass was planted during the previous year. The fifth story is one paragraph longer in passing the information that cold-resistant plants have been planted along the Fourth Ring Road, also called the "Bidding Road", to keep the road green in winter. These two items are simple and yet effective in

enhancing the logic that a lot has been done in environmental protection because a lot of trees have been planted.

The last story in the package is the most interesting one. Entitled ‘Green Angels spread environment message’, it concerns about 1,500 children inaugurating the Green Angel Movement at their school. The movement, launched by the Global Village of Beijing, is “the first of many environmental exercises” to be undertaken by Beijing’s 830,000 primary school children. The “exercise” is aimed at educating their parents and wider family on the need to participate in the improvement of Beijing’s environment.

Apparently, it is a story about children endorsing environmental protection. It begins with an emotional verse composed by Liao Xiaoyi, director of the Global Village of Beijing, and sung by children for the inauguration event. The message is clear: China’s young generations are being mobilized for education about environmental protection. And different from the old perception of environment protection as an issue of symbolic tree planting, these “Green Angels” will spread new concepts that include, according to the story, properly disposing of garbage, protecting animals, saving electricity (for example, switching off unnecessary lights at home), recycling paper and not dropping rubbish in the street.

It is also a story that partially endorses environmental NGOs (or NPOs as more widely used in China). Partially, because the story does not identify the Global Village of Beijing as a NGO. There are three probabilities for this lack of identification: the first is that they forgot to do it; the second is they took it for granted that people know about the Global Village of Beijing and therefore they considered it unnecessary to do it; the last probability is they were still shy or reluctant to do it. The first two are unlikely because judging from the politically correct way the other five stories in the package are done, the editors are too sophisticated to forget the basics like this, nor is the Global Village of Beijing a familiar name in Beijing. That leaves the last probability as the possible reason for failing to identify the Global Village of Beijing as a NGO. It is possible because NGOs have never found favour with the Chinese government, nor have

they gained unbiased access into the mainstream media. They belong to the marginalised section of the public sphere and their activities are limited to grass roots. For the government, they are more or less a nuisance because they tend to touch the raw nerves of the government.

Given these sentiments, the story is obviously a “publicity stunt” for the municipal government’s image building. For the bid, which is trying to promote the image of an open Beijing, NGOs are an ideal material for the enhancement of the image. By including the item on the Global Village of Beijing, BOBICO hopes to convey the message that even NGOs are supporting Beijing’s bid. However, the government’s welcome of NGOs is measuredly reserved: not too much to give NGOs wrong ideas about government’s attitude toward them, but enough to show the openness of the government. The measuredness is reflected by the failure to identify the Global Village of Beijing as a NGO. It is also indicated by the treatment of the photo which accompanies the story: it is much smaller than other photos in the package and there is no caption for it at all. A woman is seen in the photo presenting something to a little girl while three official-looking adults are watching with smile on their faces, against a background of a school building. The woman could be anyone from the Global Village of Beijing and it seems that for the editors they can’t care less. But this woman is actually Liao Xiaoyi, whom the story gives a passing reference as the composer of the touching verse and director of the Global Village of Beijing. She was enlisted by BOBICO to help prepare the Candidature File on the topic of environmental protection and was one of the presenters to brief the IOC evaluation team of Beijing’s bid. Her presence on the Beijing’s bid team representing NGOs is good publicity for the bid and for the Beijing municipal government. It is good publicity for Chinese NGOs, too, as Liao grasped this opportunity to advance her environmental protection initiatives. But Liao’s Global Village of Beijing and other NGOs in China still have a long way to go before their contributions to Chinese society could be fully acknowledged by the Chinese government and the general public. The kind of treatment they get in this “Green Angels” publicity item is a telltale story of the long journey they need to take.

In March 2001 the local government promoted the theme of Green Olympics under the slogan “Green Olympics, Green Beijing” as one of the series of theme campaigns. Tree planting, the most celebrated topic of environmental protection in China, was deployed again in its mythological sense, and became the focus of publicity for the March theme of Green. BOBICO took full advantage of the National Tree-planting Day, which was first designated on March 12, 1981, to serve its own ends. It pulled off a publicity stunt on March 18 by organising 1,000 young men and women to plant willows, acacias, and cypresses along the Grand Canal in Tongzhou District to the east of the city centre. Issue 6 of *Beijing 2008* devoted two inside pages to the coverage of the event, complete with five colour photos which take up two thirds of the total space.

Under the title ‘BOBICO Celebrates 20th Anniversary of Tree-Planting Day’, there are three sub-titles: ‘Volunteers’, ‘My Trees will be Three Meters Tall in 2008’, and ‘Tree-Planting to Continue’. The ‘Volunteers’ section tells of how young volunteers, in response to the call of the BOBICO Environment Department, came to plant trees to help ward off dust and sand blown from the north. The second section is obviously based on two on-the-spot interviews. One of the interviewees, an 80-year-old war veteran who insisted on donating money to the tree-planting drive, is quoted as saying “That’s my way of supporting Beijing’s bid”. The other interviewee, identified as Professor Guan Junwei who is a member of the Chinese Engineering Academy, said he participated in tree planting every year and can’t really remember how many trees he has planted so far. But he is sure of one thing: the saplings he is planting “will have grown to three meters tall by 2008”.

These two interviews of elderly people seem at first to be out of place as the article is about young volunteers. When talking about volunteers, the Chinese association is almost always young people. For this, the media are to blame as their coverage of volunteers focuses almost entirely on the young. This mindset is also reflected in this article’s photos which show the smiling young faces. Aged, lined faces are nowhere to be seen. Naturally, the reader expects to see young volunteers to be interviewed about the event which was participated by “more than 1,000 young men and women”. But the article goes out of its way to

interview two old people and devotes the section on participants' response and comments totally to these two interviews without any input from the young participants. It is apparently an attempt to present an all-inclusive picture of volunteers of all age groups planting trees for a Green Olympics. Technically speaking, it is a clumsy attempt given the contradictory description of the event in the first section as being participated by "young men and women". But at the ideological level, it breaks through the stereotype in covering volunteer events and complements the publicity stunt in conveying the message that Green Olympics is a widely accepted concept in Beijing and is supported by Beijing residents.

While the publicity stunt exploits the symbolic meaning of tree planting, the article does comment on the impact of tree planting on people's lives. "A new style of life is emerging," the last section of the article exclaims. "People are planting trees to celebrate weddings and births or commemorate a dead relative." This claim gives the symbolic meaning of tree planting, or the myth, a new perspective. It suggests how powerful the myth is: it has politicized people's private lives.

The myth, or the symbolic meaning, of tree planting is exploited to the fullest in the same issue of *Beijing 2008*. On the cover page is a photo of President Jiang Zemin watering a tree with a little girl. The caption reads: 'President Jiang Zemin and other Chinese leaders planted trees on April 1 in the Olympic Green, the Olympic Park in Beijing. The first Sunday of April is Beijing's Voluntary Tree-planting Day. This photo shows the president and some children watering a tree.' Underneath the photo and to the left is a two-paragraph item entitled 'BOBICO Staff Plant Trees', which reports that 200 BOBICO staff members, headed by leading Party and government officials of Beijing, planted trees on the same location and on the same day as President Jiang did. This emphasis on the participation of the government leaders in tree planting on the cover page shows how both the central and the Beijing municipal governments collaborated in building up the myth of tree planting for the consumption of Beijing's bid.



Tree planting is the main story line for *Beijing 2008*. Other issues have also been covered by this BOBICO publication, but with less impact. The key image of Green Olympics presented by this kind of coverage is a city resplendent with trees and grass. The concept of environmental protection is being narrowed to the colour of green and Green Olympics is literally symbolised by the word green. In this, the myth of tree planting plays a key role.

### *Xinhua*

The myth is also used in the English-language Chinese press, but less extensively. Where it is used, tree-planting is treated in a more subtle way, projected as part of the greening effort by Beijing rather than the boldfaced symbol of environmental protection. Targeted at the general public abroad rather than IOC members, the foreign propaganda has a broader scope of coverage to accommodate the Western concept of environmental protection. The *Xinhua* coverage, for instance, includes improvement of air quality, treatment of wastewater and life garbage, adoption of clean energy, and control of car exhaust, in addition to forestation. Compared with *Beijing 2008*, *Xinhua*'s coverage tends to be more versatile and more subtle, but not as aggressive and impressive.

A typical such *Xinhua* report is the news bulletin headlined 'Beijing Strives for a Greener City'. As suggested by the headline, the story is about the environment. But it is also a story where the myth of tree planting is used to shape the concept of environmental protection through the literal meaning of the word "green". Throughout the story, tree and grass planting are the only two initiatives to make the city green, to the exclusion of other elements of environmental protection, such as control of industrial waste and treatment of rubbish. By citing official statistics about these greening efforts, the story makes it sound natural in conveying the mythical message that environmental protection is tree planting, so natural that the reader would most probably not bother to question the ideology behind the myth.

But the story allows a glimpse of how the government and the media have been building up the myth of tree planting through specific political events. The

second paragraph, for instance, tells how Beijing had greened itself in the previous year to “celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic on October 1 and Macao’s return to the motherland on December 20 last year”. By establishing a link between tree planting and ceremonial events with political significance, the government and the media are able to strengthen the myth of tree planting and promote it to the public. At this level, tree planting is not simply a myth signifying environmental protection; it is also a sign symbolic of political achievements by CCP and it is used to mark political milestones by the Chinese communist regime. By now, tree planting has become an established publicity practice by the government to promote its political ideology in socialist construction as well as in environmental protection.

The media, especially the media engaged in propaganda for international communication, have served their role as the tool of the Party and the state by being collaborative in the construction of the myth. This collaborative relationship is well illustrated by this story which pieces together the publicity figures provided by the government and makes it a propaganda piece that not only translates environmental protection into symbolic tree planting but also exploits the ritual of tree planting for the celebration of the CCP’s political achievements.

But except for the delicate way the myth is used in the story, the *Xinhua* style of reporting does not help the story in any other way. Dated February 11, 2000, it is an item about Beijing’s environmental conditions in the previous year with the Beijing Municipal Statistics Bureau as the sole source. It tells of how many new greenbelts and new trees were added to the green landscape of Beijing and what the municipal government had done to make it happen. It cites so many figures that it reads like the Bureau’s statistics report itself. Take one paragraph for example:

The renovations to Tian’anmen Square extended greenbelts in the city by another 4,800 sm. In total, some 270,000 trees, 322,000 sqm of greenbelts were added along the Avenue of Eternal Peace. Some 140,000 sqm of greenbelts in the inner

city area have vastly improved the quality of air.

Apart from “greening” the city by tree and grass planting, *Xinhua* also gives considerable coverage of other issues concerning the environment. A round-up story of Beijing’s delegation to Lausanne to meet with the IOC in December 2000, which is headlined ‘Beijing Capable of Hosting Successful Olympic Games, Mayor’, mentions Beijing’s promise to “place a strong emphasis on protecting and improving environment”. One paragraph devotes itself to an US\$13 billion environment management program that the municipal government was implementing. It provides no specific detail about the program which “will generate enormous awareness and mass participation that might go beyond the boundaries of Beijing and China, reaching the whole world ultimately”. Although this description is vague, it gives the reader a general idea of what the city government is up to. Another news report filed two months later, on February 22, 2001 with the headline ‘Beijing Olympic Bid Officials Reiterate Environmental Cause’, is more specific with the goals the city government hopes to achieve in improving environment. Jiang Xiaoyu, vice-president of BOBICO is reported saying at a news conference that Beijing aims to qualify Beijing as “a world-class metropolis in the terms of air and drinking water quality”. Yet another *Xinhua* news item dated March 28, 2002 and headlined ‘Beijing Works out Comprehensive Plan for 2008 Olympic Games’, lists a series of measures to be put in place for environmental protection. Environmental protection is depicted in the story as “one of the world’s major concerns for Beijing’s Games”.

While these reports expand the concept of environmental protection beyond the realm of tree planting, other reports go to the detail. One story, dated January 11, 2001 and headlined ‘Beijing Rounds off Bidding Report for 2008 Olympics’, mentions the first specific attempt at environmental protection to impress the IOC and the world: the report “is also made of environment-friendly paper, which is an embodiment of the “Green Olympics” Beijing promotes in its bidding process” (2001-1-11). This specific reference of BOBICO’s effort at environmental protection provides a footnote to the city government’s grand blueprint of environmental protection. It is a change from the vague, figure-plagued press coverage of the city’s environment endeavour.

Another *Xinhua* piece that is specific was filed on November 19, 2002, more than a year after Beijing got the 2008 Games. Headlined ‘Clean Geothermal Resources Used for Beijing Olympics’, the story is about the city’s plan to use geothermal energy for one of the main venues. According to the plan, 160 geothermal wells will be dug in the city by 2008 to “heat, bathe and refrigerate” the Olympic Garden and measures will be taken to avoid possible negative impact on environment. It concludes with BOCOG’s claim that natural gas, electricity, solar energy, wind power and biomass energy will also be used for the 2008 Games. This news item, compared with other *Xinhua* reports, reads more like news. It does not use any myth to sell political ideology. It does not even use the catchphrase of environmental protection. Instead, it deals with environmental concerns with a simple, direct approach: clean geothermal resources to be exploited as energy for the venues. Even the possible negative impact on the environment is mentioned, in sharp contrast to the all-bright picture of environmental protection presented by most *Xinhua* reports. This is probably because the story has something specific to talk about. Such a report is not only informative, but also provides substance for the creation of a positive image of Beijing as fulfilling its promise of improving Beijing’s environment for the 2008 Games.

NGOs are also mentioned in *Xinhua* coverage - although there are just a couple of passing references. One appeared in an article headlined ‘Beijing Confident but Clear-headed in Olympics Bid’. Dated August 30, 2000, the article is about how Beijing will go about for its bid. NGO is mentioned as a supporting statement for the municipal government’s all-out effort:

More than 20 non-governmental environmental groups gave Beijing’s bid for the “Green Games” a boost by signing up to the action plan with the Bid Committee.

The second reference is found in the round-up story discussed earlier about Beijing’s delegation meeting with IOC in Lausanne in December 2000. An NGO is mentioned in the fifth paragraph: “A non-profit, private organization called Global Village of Beijing initiated an environmental campaign, which has up to

now attracted 830,000 families”. The Global Village of Beijing is a familiar name by now as it already appeared in *Beijing 2008*. While *Beijing 2008* mentions a few environmental initiatives the NGO has embarked upon apart from the Green Angel Movement, this *Xinhua* report gives the result of the campaign – 830,000 families are involved. It is a very impressive figure considering the fact that the campaign is launched by a NGO, not the government. The figure is impressive also because if each of these families comprises three people, the combined figure will be at least 2.5 million people, around one fifth of Beijing’s total population.

This size of the NGO campaign, however, would be unimaginable without support from the government. Even if a NGO did have the ability and resources to mobilize so many people for causes other than government endorsed ones, it would not dare to for fear that it would evoke government suspicion. So when this report puts it in a way like the accomplishment of the campaign has been achieved solely by the Global Village of Beijing, it is helping the Beijing city government to impress IOC members. But like the government publicity in the *Beijing 2008*, this *Xinhua* report has been carefully calculated to give the NGO just the right amount of coverage: enough to get the intended message across but insufficient to give Chinese NGOs a wrong idea about their “rightful” positions. The measured publicity of Chinese NGOs is a reflection of the Chinese government’s distrust of NGOs.

With this distrust, the all-happy picture projected by the first reference is destined to be short-lived. A search for more *Xinhua* coverage of Chinese NGOs after Beijing won the Games produced no results. This suggests that for the government, the NGOs’ official mission in the government’s publicity campaign is over and there is no need to champion them any more. It also suggests that the Chinese media have reverted back to their comfortable selves again without having to worry about exactly how much space should be given to the coverage of an unfamiliar topic.

## *China Daily*

Dealing with the same unfamiliar topic, *China Daily* seems to be more relaxed and less guarded in its coverage, although it has, like *Xinhua*, virtually dumped NGOs after Beijing got the Games. The coverage of a BOBICO's publicity stunt is a good example of *China Daily*'s skilful treatment of the difficult topic.

Headlined 'Public Praised for Rescuing, Protecting Wild Animals', the story is about an awards ceremony to "honour outstanding wildlife protection groups and individuals". Five weeks away from the final vote in Moscow, the ceremony is obviously a publicity stunt organized by BOBICO to draw attention to the message that public awareness on wildlife protection has "greatly improved", as described by the introduction. Those honoured at the ceremony include "27 groups and 33 individuals from government departments, schools and non-governmental organizations". Two government departments are identified but no individual nor any NGO is specifically named. In spite of this, the message that NGOs are also awarded kudos as part of "the public" is enough to serve the publicity purpose of the government. In fact, the lack of direct references to NGOs has made the government publicity less aggressive. By comparison, *Xinhua*'s references of NGOs are so clumsy and blunt that they are more likely to rouse suspicions about the motives behind them.

Another story in *China Daily*, headlined '2008 Bid Brightens City's Green Dream', is also about "heightened awareness" of environmental protection among the capital city's local residents. To highlight the active participation of Beijingers in the "Green Olympics" drive, the story quotes Liao Xiaoyi as saying that environmental protection is "not merely an undertaking of government". Rather, "it is done for the people and by the people". At the end of the quote, the story identifies the Global Village of Beijing as "a non-governmental organization". This is straightforward compared with *Beijing 2008* and *Xinhua* coverage. The *Beijing 2008*, as we have noted earlier, does not identify the organization as a NGO but introduces it ambiguously as "the environmental Global Village of Beijing". *Xinhua* seems to have a dislike of the phrase NGO, so it uses a compromising term, "non-profit" and "private", to describe the Global Village of Beijing.

These differences are not simply editorial. They reflect the political standing and relationship to the government of each medium. The *Beijing 2008* is an official publication of BOBICO which represented the Beijing municipal government although for the sake of the bid it had claimed otherwise. So naturally it speaks the official language in the voice of the municipal government. *Xinhua*, the national wire service of China, is the “tongue and throat” for the Party and the government. Through the long-standing practice of paraphrasing the Party rhetoric and government policies into a semi-official language for journalistic use, it has developed the notorious *Xinhua* style. The treatment of the Global Village of Beijing, using “non-profit and private”, instead of non-government, to describe the organization, is an example of this style which sounds different but is actually never more than inches away from the government’s definition. It loyally reflects the government’s attitude.

*China Daily*, on the other hand, publicly claims itself to be non-official, although people both at home and abroad tend to see it in a different light. Because of its consciousness of distinguishing itself from the elite group of the Party media, *China Daily* takes pains to develop its own style of reporting while taking care not to step over the line. This effort can be seen in its coverage of NGOs: the story not only identifies the Global Village of Beijing as a NGO, but also quotes its founder. This is in sharp contrast to the *Beijing 2008* which carries Liao’s photo for its story but “forgets” to give a caption. In addition, eight paragraphs following the quote are devoted to the Green Angel Project initiated by the Global Village of Beijing. This also provides an interesting comparison to *Xinhua*’s reports where NGOs appear in a single or two paragraphs as reference.

The *China Daily* style is also reflected in its coverage of other environmental issues. These news reports are unambiguously specific, colourful and full of interesting details. In the story that highlights the technological aspect of environmental protection in the construction of sports venues, specific details are provided instead of simply saying such and such environmental technologies are to be used for the Games. Headlined ‘Technology Aids Goal of Environmental Games’, the story uses three recently renovated sports stadiums as an example of

what technologies will be used for new venues and how. The following are the interesting details the story offers that exemplify the *China Daily* style:

Along the road by the Beijing Workers' Stadium, street lamps, telephone booths and public toilets powered by solar energy can be seen. Not only are the flush-free toilets using clean energy, they are also hygienic and save water. Micro-organism in the toilets transforms waste into a compound organic fertilizer.

Thanks to the new nanotechnology, sound-absorbing boards are becoming water-and-oil-proof and more resistant to distortion. Nano-paint is making floor boards water-resistant, and nano-plastic will stand hard wear and corrosion. In smoking rooms, nano air purifying machines could turn smoke into harmless air.

Details like this flesh out the abstract concepts of clean energy and nanotechnology. Because they help the reader to understand the new technologies to be used for the Games, they have a better chance of getting the message across. In this story, the message is that high technology will guarantee the realization of Beijing's commitment to host a "Green Olympics". It indirectly addresses the international doubts about Beijing's ability and willingness to fulfil its commitment given the fact that for years China had been unenthusiastic to address environmental issues on the assumption that for a developing country, environmental damage is a necessary cost for development.

An important characteristic of the *China Daily* style in covering the environment issue is that it does not exploit the myth of tree planting. Rather, it puts more emphasis on technology when reporting on environment issues. Just as the previous story suggests, *China Daily* seems to be keen to create the impression that it is technology, not the tree planting or anything else, which is crucial to solve environmental problems.



Technology is not used in a mythological sense, however; it is used to reflect the newspaper's perspective on environment protection.

Considerable space is also devoted to other issues concerning environment. A news report published on June 19, 2001 covers a series of measures Beijing has taken to improve the city's environment. Headlined 'Beijing to go Greener over next Five Years', the report devotes most of the space to what the municipal government has already achieved. "Blue skies and starry nights are no longer strangers to Beijing residents," the story concludes, a literary ending that stereotyped *Xinhua* has seldom attempted.

While all these three media outlets are actively engaged in the promotion of Beijing's Olympic campaign, they have different emphases in their coverage of environmental issues. *Beijing 2008* and *Xinhua* have focused on the government's efforts and achievements in environmental protection whereas *China Daily* puts more emphasis on people's participation. The government image conscientiously constructed by *Beijing 2008* and *Xinhua* through the exploitation of the tree planting myth is more symbolic than persuasive. By comparison, the image of the enthusiastic people constructed by *China Daily* through the depiction of the Global Village of Beijing and its "Green Angel" campaign is both symbolic and persuasive. The two images are mutually complementary in that they have not only promoted Beijing's bid but also promoted the ideology of China's interpretation of environmental protection. But the two different images are not products of design. Rather, they are the results of difference between the official rhetoric and non-official perception of environmental protection. They present a true picture of government's publicity for the bid as well as a true picture of the media landscape for international communications.

### **Service and the "Best Games Ever"**

Service is a broad term that covers nearly all aspects of Beijing's ability to manage the Games except venue construction and environment. During Beijing's first bid in the early 90s, doubts about the city's ability had focused on language,

transport, and accommodation. In light of these concerns, the bid for the 2008 Games paid special attention to the promotion of the service area to address the international doubts.

### *The Beijing 2008*

In the first issue of *Beijing 2008*, one inside page is devoted to the language issue in the form of a package. Under the main title of ‘Zest for Foreign Languages’, there are five short items and three photos. The first item, entitled ‘Volunteer Translators Aid BOBICO Bid Effort’, is about a special program launched by BOBICO to enlist volunteer translators for the bid. Within two weeks, the story says, more than 2,000 volunteers were enrolled who offered their language services in “English, Japanese, French, and eight other languages”. Through this story, BOBICO aims to deliver these two messages: that Beijing is rich in language resources and that these resources can be mobilized not only for the bid but for the Games too if Beijing gets the Games.

While these language experts will be kept busy with translating documents for BOBICO, those who can speak little of a foreign language have rushed to brush up their English. This message is conveyed by two other stories on the same page. One of them is about Beijing’s trolley men practicing oral English in their spare time in anticipation of the 2008 Games. The other tells of a trend in which more and more children in Beijing are interested in learning English.

Accompanying the story is a photo showing children wearing earphones and sitting in front of computers in an apparently modern language lab. These two stories are designed to give the impression that with all these people, adult and young, studying English in frenzy, there should be no language problem in greeting and servicing overseas participants of the Games, as well as tourists.

While the three stories present a general picture of Beijing residents’ zest for foreign languages, the fourth story is a personal profile that exemplifies the zest. It is about a taxi driver named Sun Ling who can speak Japanese, English and a little French, German and Spanish. His language ability is admired by his

colleagues who call him with respect “teacher”. The reason for studying foreign language is given by the story in a quote:

“It was a kind of ‘ability storage,’” he recalled. “I always think that if I can master a language, it will be mine for ever.”

The drive for self improvement has landed Li in a rare case which was used by the government to its own advantage in promoting the bid. This story is not only the longest of the five in the package but also carries a photo of Li reading a language book beside his taxi car. Even the title is much bigger than those of other stories, showing the prominence given to the story. The title itself, ‘Multi-lingual Taxi Driver Gives Value-added service’, spells out the preferred message: language learning will help provide value-added services to the Games.

The last item in the package, a short one of only one paragraph, tells about the first information board in English that has been erected for a tour bus stop. Targeted at overseas tourists, more such boards will be set up for the city’s tour buses as reported by the story. The story is also accompanied with a photo in which two bus information boards are fore-grounded, one in English and the other in Chinese. Both provide the same information: route of the bus, operation time, round-trip bus fare, and telephone number of the bus company. With providing reassurance for foreign visitors in mind, the story and the photo are simple and yet to the point. They enhance the message of language learning with view to services to be provided for foreign visitors.

The issue of language was addressed again in issue 10 of *Beijing 2008* which was published in May 2001. This is a special issue dedicated to the preparations for the 21st World Universiade which was later held in Beijing from August 22 to September 1 of 2001 and was widely acclaimed as a successful rehearsal for the 2008 Games. The item, appearing in an inside page of the BOBICO publication, is about a 40,000 member-strong volunteers’ service corps named “Rainbow” which was established the year before for the World Students’ Games. The members, fluent in English, French or other foreign languages, were recruited from college students in Beijing. Their work, according to the item, is

not limited to providing volunteer services at the games. They also help “teach English in their neighbourhoods and disseminate the knowledge of the Universiade to local residents”. This story reinforces the stories in the first issue by delivering the message that in addition to the 2,000 local residents who have volunteered their language services for the bid as well as the rich language resources being built up by the zest for studying foreign languages, Beijing has an army of college students in Beijing that could be mobilized to serve as organized volunteers for the Games. The story demonstrates again the city’s ability to deal with the language problem. It also demonstrates the government’s ability to mobilize people for a designated cause, which had been promoted by the bid as an edge of socialist system over capitalist system.

Transportation and traffic is another service issue addressed by *Beijing 2008*. One inside page of issue 2, which was published in February 2001, was devoted to a publicity package that includes two stories, four photos and a fact sheet entitled ‘Mass-transit Facts’. The first story, entitled ‘City on the Move as Transportation Improves’, focuses on air transportation which is a major concern for IOC because it is related to the city’s airport capacity of managing the incoming visitors and athletes. It devotes four paragraphs to the “shiny new” Beijing Capital International Airport, now the largest international airport in China. The story also introduces the city’s bus system as well as taxis which, as “a main symbol” of Beijing, will be equipped with GPS and wireless telecommunication equipment by the end of 2008. It also talks about the “clean and speedy” subways which have become “an indispensable means” of transportation for local residents. Those pieces of information are put together to give the impression that the city will be able to provide a “timely and convenient ride” for any passenger in 2008. This impression is designed to be enhanced by the second story which is about networking the city’s public transportation into a “quasi-express public transport system”. As a final touch, the fact sheet gives figures and statistics about the city’s taxis, public buses and subway as well as passenger loads for each type of the transport vehicles.

This package of information is both descriptive and informative. The four photos showing respectively a running bus, a stopping taxi, a subway train picking up

passengers and a birds-eye view of a traffic overpass are pleasant to the eye, especially the subway one which foregrounds a shining escalator in a well-lit and spacious modern subway station. Both the articles and the photos are very accommodating to the message expressed by the titles that modern traffic network has made it possible for the city to be on the move.

However, what is behind this shining picture is not addressed. The reader's gaze is directed to the grandness and modernness of the city's traffic plan other than the serious problems of peak-hour traffic jams, public complaints about overcrowded buses and subways and poor services, as well as hygiene and safety concerns related to taxis. These problems cannot be simply solved by merely building more roads and increasing the number of public transport vehicles. Because of irrational and random urban planning, the city's transportation system has become a bottleneck for the city's development. New roads have been built and new public transport vehicles have been put into use, and yet the city's traffic has not remarkably improved as expected. Without addressing the fundamental problems in urban planning, the traffic problems are likely to remain, if not become worse, when the 2008 Games are held in Beijing. Such doubts and criticisms have occasionally appeared in local Chinese-language media, and experts at home and abroad are sometimes reported to have offered suggestions and advice on what foreign models should be adopted to improve the city's traffic. But it seems that the city government is still struggling with finding a cost-effective shortcut as solution. But these facts do not appear in this promotion package. Focusing on the city government's attempt to maximize the publicity effect of new airport, new roads, and new public transport vehicles, the package excludes these existing problems and controversies concerning traffic in urban planning. It is a good example of what the Chinese mean by "positive reporting".

An important aspect of service related to the Games is tourism. Beijing's ability to attract and accommodate huge numbers of visitors will be put to test in 2008 when the city needs not only to handle athletes and sports officials but tourists and visitors as well. In Issue 13 of *Beijing 2008*, which was published in May 2001, a story entitled 'Tourism Booming' tells about the city's existing resources

and facilities for tourists that range from tourist attractions to tourist services. Accompanying the story are five photos which, in the tradition of *Beijing 2008*, have no captions. The two bigger photos show Chinese performers in colourful costumes of Beijing opera and China's minority nationalities posing with foreign visitors for pictures. Two other pictures show respectively the smiling faces of two foreign girls and two Chinese boys engaged in sightseeing. The fifth photo is a long shot of the inside of the main terminal hall of the Beijing Capital International Airport. Together, these photos present a picture of tourists enjoying the diversified cultural experience Beijing is eager to offer. Speaking from the tourist perspective, the story covers Games-related services as well, such as airport, hotels, and telecommunications.

Short and yet informative, the story sketches out the resources and services Beijing has to offer. But it says nothing about future plans to attract more overseas tourists, probably for fear that too much emphasis on the profit-oriented industry would distract attention from the celebrated theme of the Olympic spirit and thus displease IOC members. This may help explain why other stories on tourism carried by *Beijing 2008* are mainly business reports about how many tourists have visited Beijing and how much revenues have been achieved from tourism, rather than what to do to boost the tourism industry through the Olympics. Such focus can be reflected from the story titles such as '100 Million Tourists in Beijing Last year' (Issue 2), 'More Tourist Arrivals in January, February' (Issue 6), and 'More Tourists Visit Beijing' (Issue 11).

This omission of how Beijing is going to package its tourism resources and services for the 2008 Games, however, is compensated in part by the beautiful photos that have always accompanied the *Beijing 2008* stories. Smiling faces of tourists and exotic ancient buildings in the background are a promise themselves: ancient treasure to see and modern things to make you happy. In this sense, BOBICO's promotion of tourism is a big help in the selling of other packages of service that are related to the 2008 Games.

Compared with environment, the issue of service seems to be a comfortable topic for the Beijing municipal government. The *Beijing 2008* writes in a more relaxed

style and provides more photos. The stories of language learning, for instance, are less document-like and more human-interest oriented. One story begins like this:

“Good Morning! Welcome!” This familiar greeting comes from Beijing Bus Company’s trolleyman’s restroom of streetcar No. 106. Every day, the trolleyman use their spare time to practice oral English, even though the more elderly among them feel they are a little too old to learn a foreign language.

Such a beginning is rare among *Beijing 2008* stories. It is an encouraging sign that government publicity is improving in skills and techniques. Those eye-catching photos, with American film star Arnold Schwarzenegger holding up his thumb and laughing with Chinese young supporters of Beijing’s bid (Issue 2), with a group of smiling foreign tourists making “V” signs on the Great Wall (Issue 6), and with one female departing foreign tourist at the airport wearing a Chinese handcrafted bamboo hat and happily guarding her big pile of baggage (Issue 11), have served as supporting statement that government propaganda is taking off hard edges and making soft sells. These changes have enabled *Beijing 2008* to project an impressive image of Beijing determined to carry out the mission of making the 2008 Games “the best ever”.

The same image is also projected by Chinese English-language media. The only difference lies in the way the image is constructed. Media coverage of the service issue, as with the issue of environment, is more organized, more specific, and more detailed.

### *Xinhua*

A *Xinhua* story, which was filed on September 1 of 2000, tells of the Beijing municipal government’s effort at mobilizing its residents for the Olympic bid. Headlined ‘Beijing Gives Pep Talk for 2008 Olympic Bid’, the story depicts a public speech delivered by Jia Qinglin, the city’s Party head. Jia calls for “people

from all walks of life” to “unite their strength and combine their wisdom” in the Olympic campaign. Their roles are summed up in the following two paragraphs:

Fully aware of the intense competition ahead, Jia and other municipal officials detailed to a 1,000-strong crowd their expectations: the grassroots units of the communist party and mass party members are urged to play the leading role in the bid; neighbourhoods and townships administration are expected to develop better community service.

And college students should regard the bid as an opportunity of honing their skills and opening their horizon; police departments are responsible for securing a safe environment for living and working; public service departments should work for the image of the city.

The two paragraphs give a general idea of what kind of an environment should be created for the bid and what kind of service should be expected from what groups. These ideas have served as the basic concept of service that was later further developed by BOBICO and BOCOG and elaborated in media reports.

*Xinhua*'s coverage of the enthusiasm for English learning is an example of how the concept of service is concretized. Headlined 'Beijingers Enthusiastic about Learning English', the story begins with an English teaching radio program launched in the previous day to cater to local residents' thirst for English. Claimed to be different from the traditional way of English teaching in textbooks which “start with grammar and phonetic symbols”, the program teaches “everyday oral English sentences”. Taking a cue from this specific radio program, the story addresses the bigger picture -- the phenomenon of the English language fever which involves local people “from government employees to housewives”. It describes Beijingers as feeling “proud” to be able to speak English and concludes that foreigners will “no longer be astonished” when greeted cordially in English by local residents. It concludes on the note that the municipal



government has invited “English consultants” to correct the existing English signs and instructions on roads and in public places.

In giving bones and flesh to the idea of language service, the story has constructed two images: the image of the people eager to study English in support of the city’s bid and the image of the government taking measures to improve road signs for the convenience of foreign visitors. These images are constructed in a way that gives the impression that both the municipal government and local residents are taking an active part in the city’s bid for the 2008 Games.

What is not revealed by *Xinhua* is the truth that English learning is actually a campaign launched and supported by the municipal government as part of its bid effort to improve services related to the Games. Local residents are mobilized through their work units or neighbourhood committees to study English as an additional credit for their work performance. The government, with the help of news media, has been able to create an atmosphere in which everybody believes that everybody else is studying or ready to study English and therefore it seems the right time to catch up with the “trend”. The success of the government campaign should also be attributed to the government’s conscientious effort to stay out of the picture in order to make the “zest” or “enthusiasm” for English learning something emerging out of people’s own initiative. The *Xinhua* story is an example of how media have helped the government in delivering this message. In addition to the headline, the introduction, which runs: “In support of the city’s bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, Beijingers have become more enthusiastic than ever about learning English”, also gives the impression that people learn English because they are interested and eager to do it as a gesture of support for their city’s bid. The impression is enhanced by this sentence: “From government employees to housewives, Beijingers feel proud to be able to speak English, which they consider important in building Beijing into an international metropolis”. But while some people may be interested, it’s hard to imagine housewives’ enthusiasm: their main concern is far from contributing to the making of an international metropolis by learning oral English. But despite this stretching of the reality, by the process of drawing people (including housewives)

into the picture, the *Xinhua* story is serving the municipal government well by keeping it out of the picture. The invisible hand of the government could only be felt between the lines. The radio, identified as the Beijing People's Broadcasting Station, is government-owned and its new program should be regarded as part of the government's language learning campaign. In this sense, the municipal government is never left out of the picture.

The second image - the image of the municipal government - is simple and does not require as much effort. The details, such as the government inviting English consultants to improve English road signs, only show the municipal government in a favourable light by demonstrating the government's readiness to create a favourable environment for the foreign visitor.

*Xinhua* also covers service information such as hotels and telecommunications, but such information largely appears in figures and statistics rather than specific examples, such as what kind of service a foreign visitor can enjoy in a hotel. A typical example of such coverage is the story dated 20 February 2001, the time when IOC inspectors were doing their rounds in Beijing. Headlined 'Beijing Declares Five-point Bidding Package', the story is a news report based on a BOBICO press conference. Liu Jingmin, BOBICO's vice president, is cited extensively as expounding the five focus points of the bid's promotion package, namely "vibrant economic growth, extensive public support for the Olympic bid, sufficient accommodation, communication and transportation capacity as well as the well-planned Olympic venues". But apart from figures, nothing specific is given to elaborate the points. It is a typical example of government publicity rhetoric in the mouth of news media.

But *Xinhua* could be truly specific when it thinks necessary. A story filed two days later provides a good example. Headlined 'No measures taken to control traffic these days, says Beijing bid official', the story is also based on a BOBICO press conference. It is about a bid official's answer in response to a journalist's question of whether the city has taken special measures to improve traffic conditions while IOC inspectors are in Beijing. "Nothing special," BOBICO's vice president Jiang Xiaoyu is quoted as saying. "People went about their work

and lives as usual,” he added. Then the following two paragraphs specify the details to support Jiang’s comment:

The typical traffic flow in Beijing during the rush hours is 10,000 vehicles per hour while for the normal hours it’s 6,000 or 7,000, Jiang referred to information from the Beijing Traffic Control Bureau.

The traffic flow on Thursday stood 8,000 vehicles per hour. “That’s a very usual figure,” Jiang said.

The figures are produced to answer a specific question and they help the story to address a specific audience. While the figures are cited by Jiang to argue that the city had not done anything special about traffic control to impress the IOC inspectors, Jiang is cited by *Xinhua* to deal with foreign news reports that local traffic has been held up to make way for cars carrying the visiting IOC inspectors. As being specific is to the advantage of the municipal government, *Xinhua* does not hesitate to be specific.

While *Beijing 2008* tends to promote the Green Olympics, the High-tech Olympics and the People’s Olympics separately, media coverage of the services issue is more conscious of associating each topic with the three themes. *Xinhua*’s coverage, for instance, is very consistent in its attempt to integrate the three themes in all of its stories. This consistency can be reflected from the following three stories which cover a period of three years.

The first story dated November 25, 2000 and headlined ‘Better Taxi Service Called for Bidding Olympic Games’ is a good example of integrating the three themes into the measures to be taken to improve the city’s taxi service. It defines in humanistic terms what “quality service” means: “safe, comfortable and dependable” and making visitors “feel at home”. The three themes are reflected in concrete measures. Teaching drivers oral English and providing each taxi with newspapers and introductory tapes have reflected care for passengers; using new technologies to improve the monitoring processes and building an efficient taxi

dispatching and positioning system have embodied the spirit of High-tech Olympics; and using cleaner liquid natural gas to replace conventional petrol has reflected efforts to utilize the concept of Green Olympics. The concept of a green, high-tech, and humanistic Olympics is thus closely knitted into the fabric of the city's taxi service.

The second story puts emphasis on technology as the means to achieve the Green Olympics and the People's Olympics. Filed on February 23 the following year and headlined 'Beijing Shows High-tech Side to IOC Inspectors', the story illustrates how state-of-the-art technologies will help achieve the goals. For instance, computer, software, automatic control and communication technologies will be used in the establishment of a "highly-efficient" traffic system while two high-performance computers have already been installed for meteorological service. As for how technology will help achieve the People's Olympics, the story gives as an example the establishment of the "telemedication system" which links Chinese hospitals with foreign counterparts in providing medical services for the Games. The Green Olympics will be aided, according to the story, by the high technologies, with which the natural gas supply can be "adjusted to the climate change".

The three themes are not promoted on an equal footing, though. Rather, the concept of High-tech Olympics is integrated into the making of the Green Olympics and the People's Olympics. Compared with the way the three themes are promoted in the previous story, the difference shows not only the awareness of the complementary relationship between the three concepts but also the attempt to take advantage of the relationship in the promotion of Beijing's bid.

This conscious use of the complementary relationship between the three themes is also reflected in the third *Xinhua* story dated November 20, 2002. Headlined 'Better Transport for 2008 Olympics, the story highlights the theme of the People's Olympics in reporting on the city's pledge to build "a safer, faster and more environment friendly transport network" for the 2008 Olympic Games. The first four paragraphs describe how the city government will build new subways and light railways to improve the city's public transport system, which is

expected to carry over one third of the estimated 30 million people travelling in Beijing each day in 2008. Here, the theme of People's Olympics is embodied in the large number of people the public transport system is designed to serve. The fifth paragraph promotes the concept of the people in clear terms: "Bus commuters would also feel more comfortable, with 30 percent of the 18,000 buses and trolleys having air-conditioning". The use of environment friendly energy and high technologies, such as global positioning systems, wireless communication systems, and electronic displays of bus schedules, are exploited in the following paragraphs by the story as a means to help make the city's public transport "safer, faster and more environment friendly" for the people. The people theme is thus complemented by the other two themes. This technique, consistent throughout *Xinhua's* coverage, is a unique characteristic of *Xinhua's* coverage of the service issue.

### ***China Daily***

*China Daily's* coverage of the service issue, on the other hand, devotes more attention to the people than the government, giving the impression that it is not a propaganda tool of the government but a news medium reporting from the perspective of the people. In reporting the city's plan of large-scale constructions for the Games, *China Daily* has never forgotten to add a few lines about what each of those projects means to the ordinary people. A story dated June 11 of 2001 is an example. Headlined 'Completed Fourth Ring Road Opens to Traffic', the story is about the newly completed 65.3-kilometre express way, dubbed the "Olympic Avenue". After dutifully quoting the vice mayor of Beijing as saying that the road shows Beijing's ability to fulfil its promise, the story devotes two of the next four paragraphs to address the issue with which local residents are most likely to be concerned:

It is estimated that the expressway will save a total of 45.1 billion yuan (US\$5.5 billion) by reducing traffic congestion and related costs.

...

The expressway cost 7.3 billion yuan (US\$881 million),

about 5 billion (US\$600 million) of which was bank loans.

These two paragraphs are intended for the tax payers. They carry two messages. One is that the new road will actually save them money in terms of traffic congestion-related costs; the other is that their pocket is safe because most of the money used for the construction of the road is from bank loans, not from private donations. Such messages can not be found in *Xinhua*'s coverage of Games-related constructions. They reflect *China Daily*'s people-oriented editorial policy. They serve to remind people of the municipal government's promise that local residents will not be financially burdened with the constructions for the Games. They also serve to remind the municipal government that they should honour their words because the media are watching. However, the second function is not as obvious as the first -- you have to read between the lines to get the message. At this specific point, the newspaper is venturing into the grey area where the border line between what media are allowed to do and what media are not allowed to do is not as distinct as in Mao's era. The concept of media as a watch dog is a recent thing introduced to China in the late 1980s.

Another example of *China Daily*'s people perspective is a story published on May 17 of 2001. Headlined 'Olympic Bid to Improve City's Urban Conditions', the story depicts the municipal government's efforts to improve the city's transportation system for the 2008 Games. As the "group of projects" are unveiled in the story, the image of a conscientious government is constructed and projected. But for the people, it also means something else – a picture of Beijing as a big construction site. While "convenient" transport is in the immediate future, the dust and noise are unpleasant realities local residents and overseas visitors have to endure. To address this temporary discomfort, the story endeavours to draw by the end of the story a picture of future Beijing as a city of parks. It cites an official with the city's Garden Bureau as saying that the bureau has planned to open more parks to the public to "create more space for city dwellers to do exercise". The bureau has also decided that all parks adjacent to streets and residential communities will be open for no charge. In addition, the bureau has urged construction companies to increase park coverage and green belts in building new residential areas. This picture is painted for the people

while the picture in the first part of the story is for the benefit of the municipal government.

This distinction is worth noting because other foreign language Chinese news media including *Xinhua* would normally do the first part to promote the government image and would not bother to acknowledge the human aspects or social aspects. The people element in *China Daily*'s coverage shows the newspaper's consistent attempt to distinguish itself from being simply a mouthpiece for the government. It tries to retain its own voice for the people in the media chorus of singing praises for the government.

However, *China Daily* cannot really be truly non-government. The government rhetoric on Beijing's bid is in its language as well and its stories are never far away from the official discourse. The people element in its coverage is more symbolic and stylistic than a serious political pursuit. This is indicated by *China Daily*'s coverage of the services issue which has actually served the government well in image building. Take its coverage of language fever for instance. One story published in February of 2001 describes how residents ranging "from kindergarten children to grey-haired ladies" are rushing to classes to brush up their spoken English. Like *Xinhua*, there is no mention of the government campaign to mobilize local residents to study English for the 2008 Games. Contributing to this impression is another story which is about foreigners volunteering their English expertise for Beijingers, a perspective missed by *Beijing 2008* and *Xinhua* coverage. Published on February 24, 2001 and headlined 'Olympic Bid Fever Catches on', this story depicts the participation of foreigners who are "moved" by Beijingers' enthusiastic study of English to support the bid. Apart from depicting foreigners offering English assistance to support Beijing's bid, the story also uses these foreigners to help build the city's image. The story quotes a student from Congo, who is a "regular passenger" on Beijing's buses, as saying that Beijingers are very kind. "I never had any trouble taking buses here, because the conductors have taken good care of me and told me when I have reached my destination," he is quoted in the story. Similar quotes run throughout the story. These quotes, in the mouth of foreigners living temporarily in Beijing, are good propaganda for Beijing's bid. They have helped

build up the government preferred image of a Beijing able to provide good services for foreign visitors alike. Even the story which mentions bank loans for the construction of the “Olympic Avenue” could be regarded as a piece of propaganda for the municipal government. In spite of the people sentiment, the story serves the municipal government well in the sense that it has projected an image of the government able to honour its promise to its people. The underlying message of this image is that the municipal government therefore could also be expected to fulfil its commitment to the 2008 Games.

These stories show that *China Daily* does take care to keep the larger picture positive so as to show support for Beijing’s bid. But within the boundary, *China Daily* does not hesitate to talk about problems. It sometimes voices concerns that are unpleasant to the city’s policy makers. This could be seen as the real difference from *Xinhua*’s coverage of the services issue which has always presented a rosy picture for the service of the government. This critical note in *China Daily*’s coverage can be found in a news commentary headlined ‘Clean Air Drive Gets a Boost’. Published on July 29 2002, the article comments on the government’s new automobile emission standards effective as of August 1, 2002. The first paragraph states clearly what the article thinks about the policy: “The application of higher emission standards is surely crucial to cleaning Beijing’s air, but more efforts to improve traffic are also urgently needed to materialize its “Green Olympic” dream”. This paragraph suggests that the application of the new standards is far from enough to realize the goal of Green Olympics. In the following paragraphs, it has lost no time to locate where problems may rise. First it looks into the reasons behind the adoption of the new emission standards and discovers that the stricter measure has much to do with worries over the “foreseeable increase” in the city’s cars due to lowered car prices brought about by China’s entry into the WTO. The growing number of cars means a corresponding rise in emissions and the new emission standards are adopted as a “countermeasure”. The story warns that “lower speed resulting from heavy traffic could lead to more emissions and thus offset the efficacy of the new policy”. As a remedy, the concluding paragraphs call for the municipal government to address the bigger problem of traffic jams, rather than to simply implement “an administrative rule like higher emission standards”. Less traffic



jams can “facilitate reduction of air pollution”, the article reasons. In a subtle way, the municipal government is criticised here for neglecting the bigger, more fundamental issue of traffic while busy claiming credits and publicity for taking administrative measures to deal with minor but attention grabbing problems. Understandably, by applying the so-called “Euro 2 emission standards”, the municipal government could attain positive international publicity for following the international standard. By the end of the article, the subtlety is replaced by a more critical tone:

Admittedly, massive infrastructure construction and urban expansion makes traffic improvement very difficult.

But nothing is impossible to a willing heart, at least in this case. For instance, Beijing could take aggressive measures to encourage public transportation and better traffic direction.

The first paragraph seems to show that the writer understands the difficulty the government will be confronted with if traffic is to be improved comprehensively. But it could also be interpreted as a criticism of the municipal government which has cited the massive infrastructure and urban expansion as an excuse for not getting down to the more urgent task of traffic improvement. This interpretation is made possible by the wording of the next paragraph. By stressing that “nothing is impossible to a willing heart”, the critical note is placed on the municipal government’s unwillingness to take up challenges “at least in this case”. To elaborate on the note of “nothing is impossible” if the government is willing to, the article suggests that the municipal government could start with “aggressive measures” to ease traffic jam. The suggestions are made in such a way that they sound like plain knowledge which only the municipal government has failed to acknowledge.

This news commentary was published one year after Beijing won the rights to host the 2008 Games. While other foreign propaganda media in China were busily engaged in positively covering publicity events organized by the municipal government to celebrate the anniversary of Beijing’s victory, *China*

*Daily* had the fortitude to take issue with the municipal government on something that must have been designated by the government to gain good publicity. This rare note of dissonance once again demonstrates *China Daily*'s people-oriented approaches. In a haste to reflect growing public concerns with worsening traffic congestion, *China Daily* chose to be daringly different, testing the limit of government tolerance of media criticism. Whether the article got any response from the Beijing municipal government is unknown, but one thing is certain: *China Daily*'s coverage of the services issue is not as conspicuous as *Xinhua* in helping the municipal government to build up the image of a government determined to deliver its promise of making the 2008 Games in Beijing "the best ever". On the other hand, this news commentary demonstrates again that media coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign is more relaxed and diversified than when they deal with issues that are more politically sensitive, such as the issue of human rights.

### **Conclusions**

Although using the same official discourse on Beijing's Olympic campaign, *Beijing 2008*, *Xinhua*, and *China Daily* have shown different emphasis in their coverage of the logistics issue. While *Beijing 2008* is devoted to the image of the municipal government, *Xinhua* is more focused on integrating the concepts of a Green, high-tech and people's Olympics into each topic it covers. *China Daily* tends to show its concerns for the people by approaching each topic from the people's perspective. Despite these differences, government publicity and news media have been complementary to each other in the construction and promotion of the image of Beijing as capable of hosting the 2008 Games.

While the myth of tree planting is used by both *Beijing 2008* and *Xinhua* in the coverage of the environment issue, no myth is exploited for the coverage of the service issue. That is probably because the issue of services covers too many topics for any one myth to signify. But exactly because the scope of the service issue allows full play of rhetorical skills and techniques, the coverage of the service issue is not in the least less powerful than the coverage of the

environment issue. Together, the kinds of coverage have managed to present a designed picture of Beijing's Olympic campaign.

## Chapter 6

### **The Foreign Text – Preparing the Ground**

Foreign coverage of the logistics issue is strikingly little compared with its coverage of the human rights issue. During the period surveyed, *The Times* carried only one news report in relation to logistic issues concerning Beijing's bid and preparation for the 2008 Games. *The New York Times* was marginally better: it carried only two news reports. Although *The Straits Times* carried the most stories and covered a wide range, foreign coverage of the logistics issue was conspicuously scarce compared to the issue of human rights. This probably has much to do with the fact that there is not really much there about the logistic issues in Beijing's bid and preparations for the 2008 Games to attract media's critical attention while human rights is a never-ending story. As a so-called totalitarian state, China is assumed to be able to manage logistics and probably will overachieve. The lack of attention to logistics is probably also due to the IOC's call that media attention should be focused on the upcoming Athens Games.

This neglect would have probably lasted until the Athens Games closing ceremony had it not for the fact that something traumatic took place. That traumatic something was SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome, which broke out in China in late 2002 and spread to 32 countries and regions. With no vaccine, no cure and no diagnostic test available, SARS infected more than 8,000 people and claimed 800 lives worldwide. It caught the immediate and concentrated attention from the world media for a period of around six months in the first half of 2003. In sharp contrast to their economical coverage of the logistics issue concerning Beijing's bid and preparation for the 2008 Games, *The New York Times* and *The Times* produced multiple stories critical of China's reactions to the sudden outbreak of SARS. International news media in general raised questions and doubts about the credibility and accountability of CCP and the Chinese government because of the initial "cover-up" of the outbreak of the fatal virus. They presented a very unfavourable image of China. But when the

SARS crisis was over, international coverage of China was back to normal, which means news about Beijing's preparation for 2008 Games were scarce as usual.

Originally, I was tempted to include in this chapter the SARS coverage by the four foreign newspapers so as to make up for the shortage of news items about the logistics issue concerning the 2008 Games. But restricted by the limited scope and space of this thesis paper, I eventually gave up the idea. It is aborted also because the foreign coverage of SARS did not link the virus crisis with the 2008 Games in a direct manner, although indirectly, they raised questions about Beijing's ability to deal with unfortunate emergencies like the SARS epidemic when hosting the world's most prestigious sports event in China.

So, I cite the SARS crisis briefly here as background instead to show the sharp contrast between the huge amount of negative coverage of SARS in China and the scarcity of news coverage of Beijing's preparation for the 2008 Games.

#### *The New York Times (USA)*

The newspaper carried two stories related to the issue of logistics. The first story, dated February 2001 and headlined 'Beijing Is Given an Olympian Burnish', is about Beijing's preparation for the official visit of IOC inspectors. It began with an on-the-spot observation of an English learning course taken up by 50 taxi drivers who are reciting "in unison" greetings in English. Each of the 50 taxi drivers, the story says, is expected to teach at least 100 colleagues after their sessions at the Beijing Traffic Bureau. The language learning is described as an "earnestness of the quest" for the 2008 Olympics. The two intro paragraphs are positive and informative in describing part of the scene of Beijingers eager to brush up their English. But starting from the third paragraph, the story turns to look behind the scene and redefines the cheerful and earnest English learning as a reflection of the nervousness on the part of the Beijing municipal government in preparation for the IOC inspection team. "The city has been in a nervous state," the third paragraph claims. This nervous state is presented as such:

The city, known for congestion and smog, has already begun costly efforts to build new roads and subways, reduce pollution and plant grass. Over the last several days, metal street dividers were scrubbed and owners were told to wash their cars. Today some construction was halted to reduce dust.

The freeway from the airport is lined with “New Beijing – Great Olympics” banners and potted plastic flowers. As usual during sensitive events, the streets have been cleared of beggars and vendors, with some taken to detention centers and others frightened off.

These descriptions show how everything in the city is under tight official control to “improve its chances” for the 2008 Olympics. The next six paragraphs are devoted to the depiction of the “some things” that are “beyond official control”. Focusing on the theme that human rights is still being violated in China, these paragraphs talk about the Chinese government’s “harsh crackdown” on the so-called Falun Gong spiritual movement and the “violent repression” of student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989. They mention the incident, which took place in the Square in the previous month, in which a number of Falun Gong members tried to immolate themselves. This incident on the square is specifically used to contradict the Chinese government’s imaging of Beijing as “a fun-filled and relaxed city” through planning to use the Square for beach volleyball and triathlon races in 2008. Although Beijing’s argument is cited and the inspection team’s no-politics stand is quoted in the words of the chief of the delegation Hein Verbruggen, the emphasis is obviously on the “human rights concerns” and the Square is used as a metaphor. “Today, to head off incidents, the square was sealed off,” states one paragraph, giving the Square the mythic meaning of human rights.

After all this signification, the gaze is back to the English learning scene again. The story quotes a senior Traffic Bureau official as saying that the goal of the English learning course is “to have 40 percent of taxi and bus drivers and subway workers able to exchange a few words with foreigners by next summer” and to

have “some model workers able to engage in basic communication”. By now, it has become clear that even the seemingly innocent and delightful scene described at the beginning of the story is after all not that innocent. It is imbued with the message that Beijingers are “being asked to do their share to make the city more hospitable” as pointed out by the end of the story. The earnestness and enthusiasm of taxi drivers for language learning are not depicted as a natural expression of their own thirst but rather as a staged show of organized study program. This is in sharp contrast to the *Beijing 2008* and *Xinhua* coverage of the English learning fever. While the Chinese take pains to project an image of Beijing residents learning oral English out of their heartfelt support for the city’s bid, this *New York Times* story presents a completely different image.

This story appears to be a simple and objective piece of reporting. But it has managed to be very loaded and ideological. Through the image of Beijing trying to impress the IOC inspectors by scrubbing up the city, and through the use of the myth of the Tiananmen Square, the story has managed to convey the message that China would do “just about everything” to be a world power regardless of huge economic cost, honesty, and above all violation of human rights. With little coverage of what Beijing has already achieved, the story allows the reader to see only what they are intended to see: the picture of Beijing nervously staging a show to give IOC inspectors a favourable impression. Everything depicted in the story, from learning oral English to reducing dust, is staged, pretentious, and artificial. They are constructed to ridicule Mayor Liu Qi’s claim depicted earlier in the story: “We are ready”.

Are they really ready? There could only be one answer after reading the story. The “No” is framed through selected facts and the exploitation of the myth of Tiananmen Square. As a result, the story is a completely different reading from the Chinese coverage of the IOC inspectors’ visit to Beijing, a “sensitive event” as defined by this *New York Times* story. The Chinese coverage, as discussed in the previous chapters, tends to put emphasis on the improvement Beijing has already made as well as on the goals the city hopes to achieve before 2008.

The second story was published the day after Beijing was given the right to host the 2008 Games. Headlined ‘Olympics: TV/Marketing; You’ll Be Looking Live At Some Morning Events’, the story is focused on the business prospects of Beijing’s win for foreign Olympic sponsors. It reports on the strong interest and confidence in the Chinese market by not only American but also worldwide sponsors. Although the story does not deal directly with the logistics issue concerning Beijing’s preparations for the 2008 Games, it is nevertheless chosen for study because of the fact that foreign corporations’ entry to, and presence in, China will undoubtedly help improve Beijing’s logistic services for the 2008 Games. Money and expertise are the two things Beijing can count upon foreign Olympic sponsors in providing the best services for the 2008 Games.

The first part of the story tells of the 12-hour difference from Beijing and the scheduling the Beijing Games in July as “easier” for the NBC network to cope with. As “the largest financial contributor” to the Olympics whose sponsorship of the 2008 Games is “the last in a cycle of five Olympics”, NBC welcomed the choice of Beijing as offering “greater chances for some live coverage”. The second part of the story is devoted to other Olympic sponsors, including Visa and Coca-Cola who, having “fewer worries” about time differences, aim to “expand business in China or break into its vast market”. The story describes Beijing’s win as the sponsor’s “pot of gold”.

Surprisingly, there has been no mentioning of human rights throughout the story. With regard to the fact that human rights has been the staple of *The New York Times* coverage of Beijing’s bid for the 2008 Games, such absence could only be explained by the capitalist principle at work: when it comes to making big bucks, politics is carefully avoided. With human rights out of the picture, the image of China projected by this story is a paradise for American business corporations. “For sponsors who are primarily American companies, to ride the Olympic rings to China will be a totally unique opportunity,” the story quotes John Krimsky as saying. John Krimsky is the former chief marketer of the United States Olympic Committee. As a land of business opportunities, China radiates charm in the eyes of sponsors who are ready to dig in the “pot of gold”. Human rights as politics is automatically separated from business when money is concerned.



*The Times (London)*

The single story carried by *The Times* is really about one sport, not about services or environment. Nevertheless, the story is cited for study anyway for two reasons. One is that there is not much choice as *The Times* carries virtually no other stories related to the logistics issue concerning the 2008 Games. The other reason is that through this story, the reader can have a glimpse of how the International Rugby Board (IRB) and the Sports General Administration of China have collaborated in expanding rugby in China in a bid to include rugby as an Olympic sport. Although it is more a rugby than an Olympic story, it has something to do with creating a favourable sports environment in anticipation of the 2008 Games and it has everything to do with contributing to the Olympic movement. In this sense, the story is considered fit for this study.

Dated March 21, 2002, the story was published eight months after Beijing got the 2008 Games. Headlined ‘Sevens Initiative Helps to Ensure Fulfilment of Eastern promise’, the story is about the IRB taking its World Sevens Series to Beijing for the first time after visiting Shanghai in the previous season. This move is welcomed by China which sees the rules as simple to understand and easy to promote in schools. The secretary-general of the China Rugby Union Li Gaochao is quoted as saying that the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing is “crucial” to the development of rugby in China as acceptance of rugby into the Olympic movement will make it a “priority sport” in China. The story ends by saying that although there were only a few thousand watching the Sevens in Beijing the previous weekend, “no one should underestimate the ambition of the nation that built the Great Wall”.

As suggested by the headline, this Sevens initiative by IRB is depicted as helping China to fulfil its Olympic promise. To highlight the IRB’s contribution to the development of rugby in China, China is portrayed as the grateful recipient of IRB’s financial investment and the happy host of the World Sevens Series. China is also positively depicted for the progress made in the development of rugby in the country in the past six years. Even the widely-held assumption that China is disadvantaged because Chinese players are “not built for the rigours of the

game” is lightly dismissed by the story, with a touch of humour. Li Gaochao is quoted saying “We have a very large population in which it is not impossible to find big men”. He argues that rugby is “a game of the mind as well as the body”. Under this favourable light, even the Chinese government, which has always been the target of criticism for *The Times*, is given credit for including sport in the tenth Five-year Plan. It is “the first time that sport has been made such a priority,” the story comments. Focusing on sport, the story gives a positive depiction of China even though it is so constructed largely to give credit to the IRB initiatives.

The aim of the IRB initiatives is to get rugby accepted as an Olympic sport, which is seen by the story as “vital” to the global development of rugby. This aim coincides with China’s desire to host a unique and “best Games ever”. But to get a passport to the Olympics is depicted more as China’s desire than the pursuit of IRB. This is probably because the host country of the 2008 Games may have more clout than a single international sports association. If that is the case, it may also help explain why China is portrayed in such a favourable light, which is very uncharacteristic of *The Times* coverage of Beijing’s Olympic campaign.

The story ends in a rare show of confidence in “the nation that built the Great Wall”. Like in the case where the story dumps the ready-for-use myth of the “sick men of East Asia” in preference of the mild version of the assumption that the Chinese are not big and strong enough to play the rigorous rugby, the story chooses to use the positive meanings of the Great Wall as a symbol, rather than the negative meanings of the Great Wall as a myth. As a symbol, the Great Wall is one of the Seven Wonders of the world and embodies wisdom of the Chinese people. At the mythical level, however, it is a sign of self-isolation. Western media often exploit the sign of the Great Wall to signify the close-door policy of ancient and modern China. But this story uses the symbol of the Great Wall to convey the positive message that the ambition and ability of the Chinese nation, which had accomplished the largest building construction project ever completed in the world, should not be underestimated.

Such a favourable image of China, constructed through sports to the exclusion of politics such as human rights, is rare in *The Times* coverage of China in relation to the 2008 Games. It is presented largely as a supporting mechanism to set off the IRB initiatives in China, rather than as a consistent media policy toward China.

### ***The Australian (Australia)***

Technically speaking, *The Australian* stories fit in the researcher's definition of the logistics issue more comfortably than those carried by *The New York Times* and *The Times*. These stories cover the issues of drugs, facilities, and business. They were published between July 13, 2001, the day IOB members cast their votes, and May 15, 2002 after Beijing won the 2008 Games, a period when organisers with some justification were trying to direct media attention away from the concerns of human rights to more tangible issues such as facilities and services. But as shown in the previous analysis, *The New York Times* and *The Times* had little coverage of the logistics issue, with the former unable to refrain from its human rights impulse. Conspicuously absent from *The Australian* coverage, though, is the topic of environment protection, an area in which Beijing's bid benefited from Australia's experience, including the concept of a Green Olympics.

There are three stories on the drug issue. The first one was published on July 17, 2001, only four days after Beijing's win. Headlined 'Banned but Still Training – Changing the Olympic Guard', the story tells of Chinese athletes and coaches who were banned from the international scene but are still training in China. It questions China's sincerity in solving the doping problem and uses unambiguously negative words to wrap the story in a sense of suspicion and distrust. Take the introduction for instance:

Athletes and coaches banned from international competition to help China win the right to stage the 2008 Olympics Games are still training, casting doubt on claims that China's state-sponsored sports system has cracked down on drug abuse.

The wording is blunt and uncompromising, just inches short of making a direct accusation. The message is clear: China's widely-acclaimed ban was only a show staged to "help" Beijing get the 2008 Games. Now with the Games safely in hand, China allows those banned to be back in the game again. China's so-called crackdown on drug abuse therefore remains at the stage of making only "claims" other than concrete moves. Such criticism and "doubt" are further expressed in the second paragraph:

Amid promises by Communist Party officials that bringing the Games to China will help improve human rights, little has been said about how genuine reforms to the world's last remaining socialist sporting behemoth will be in the run-up to 2008.

The word "genuine" spells out the distrust of the Chinese government's promises and claims. Later, the story cites the cases of Ma Junren, trainer of women's long-distance running, and Zhou Ming, former national swimming coach, to justify this distrust. Ma is called "the notorious trainer" and is identified as one of the 27 athletes and coaches pulled from the Chinese Olympic team for the Sydney Games "amid suspicions of widespread doping". Zhou Ming, on the other hand, is found still training while "supposedly suspended on doping charges for eight years". Although the story mentions the fact that "none" of the athletes taken off from the Olympic team had tested positive, the story nevertheless has tried to make it sound like just the opposite should have happened. The technique of assumed guilt is conveyed by saying that the removal of the athletes came "immediately after it was announced Sydney would randomly test for the previously untested substance EPO". In this way, the story implies that if the Chinese are innocent, why should they be so scared? Other techniques have also helped the story to convey the sense of doubt and distrust. For one thing, by giving credible sources, the story has managed to make a seemingly strong argument out of the two cases.

Seemingly, because the case of Ma Junren is not a valid case in the first place. Ma was removed from the national Olympic team for the Sydney Games all right, although none of his athletes returned positive samples later. But he was not

banned from training and no charges of doping were brought against him. So he was not “bragging” when he told the Chinese media, as reported by the story, that he is not out of the game. He was in fact well into the game and playing out his training skills at his “world-class training camp in the northern city of Dalian” as described by the story. In this sense, the story has got a weak case to argue its point. In a haste to point its accusing finger at China, the story forgets to verify facts, one of the basics of journalism. Perhaps Ma Junren, being one of the most controversial figures in world sport, is too big a temptation to resist. Drawing him as a case would give far greater weight to the criticism of China than the case of Zhou, because the name of Ma Junren simply registers.

China in this story is an image of an untrustworthy government which has kept making promises and yet has kept breaking them as well. What China is apt to do is claiming to have done something but has actually done little. Even if it did do something, it was most probably done for some immediate gains rather than long-term commitment.

But what does all this construction of an untrustworthy government reveal? Deeply rooted in this display of doubt and distrust is anti-Communist sentiment. As indicated by the second paragraph, instead of saying the Chinese government, the story uses “Communist Party officials” to stress its hostility toward the Communist ideology. At play is the Cold War good vs. bad mentality. Now the villain has got the prized pie, the good should do everything in power to make them uncomfortable if they do not behave like ‘us’. Or could they behave like ‘us’? Not likely, even if they claim to be so. This distrust is disseminated through the story as grave concerns for the problem of drug abuse. But in essence, the story is an expression of distrust and doubt for the Communist regime’s ability to deliver on its promise of making the Beijing Games “the best ever”.

The second story on drugs is in the same vein. In fact, it could be read as a follow-up piece to the first story. It uses the same rhetoric of suspicion and distrust to convey the same message. Dated August 2, 2001 and headlined ‘Ma’s Latest Storm Blows into Canada’, the story reports of a defiant Ma Junren in Edmonton, Canada, as deputy head of the Chinese team for the world

championships while two of his charges were recently banned by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) for two years. Despite the fact that Ma is given a fair amount of space to argue his case, the emphasis on the IAAF ban of Ma's two charges, as well as on the suspicion around the Chinese pre-Sydney ban, has effectively played up the theme of distrust and has kept the accusing finger firmly pointed at China. See how the introduction goes to this effect:

Having only just won the rights to host the 2008 Olympic Games, a cloud hovers over China's athletics squad in Edmonton, Canada, for the world championships, starting tomorrow.

The cloud of doubts, as the story goes on, comes from the IAAF bans of Ma's charges for using the banned body-building drug testosterone. The bans are regarded by the story as confirmation of "long-held suspicions" about the record-breaking performances by Ma's long and middle-distance female runners. But they also "throw renewed doubts" on Chinese government claims to have cleaned drugs out of sport. The story ends by citing an unnamed Chinese source as saying that the pre-Olympics ban was a cynical exercise aimed only at ensuring that China was not embarrassed by positive tests during the Olympic Games. The Chinese source is further quoted:

"In reality, nothing has been done about cleaning drugs out of sport in China because the most important thing is to win – and not be caught taking drugs to do it," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Although voiced by the Chinese source, the logic has a striking similarity to the previous story which sees the Chinese ban as a move to "help China" win the right to stage the 2008 Games and which believes "little has been said" about how genuine reforms will be. The same logic has naturally produced the same conclusion: China's credibility is in doubt. China in this construction is portrayed something like a villain.

The one difference from the previous story should be the depiction of Ma Junren. The story uses “controversial mentor” to describe Ma and refers to Ma’s reputation “as a super coach”. In the previous story, however, Ma is described as “the notorious trainer” and has been cited as an example of the “banned but still training” cases to exemplify China’s insincerity in cleaning drugs out of sport. This change of terms is probably due to the fact that Ma was officially cleared of any direct involvement in the doping by his two charges and had IAAF permission to continue coaching at an international level. As reported by the story, Ma himself had not been banned from coaching and the IAAF only criticised Ma for “loose administration”. This is a different version from the previous story which is based on the assumption that Ma had been banned from coaching at international level. That assumption has turned out to be wrong. But the change of terms does not necessarily mean that Ma is put under favourable light this time. As in the previous story, Ma is too newsworthy to be wasted on the construction of a good guy. So the first part of the story is devoted to the “controversial” side of Ma rather than to the man reputed as “a super coach”. The technique is to implicate Ma in the doping scandal even though Ma has claimed to be innocent. See how the technique works:

Controversial mentor Ma Junren is with the Chinese team in Edmonton as deputy head coach, as officials in his homeland attempt to quash fallout from Ma’s threats to sue his country’s track-and-field authorities over bans handed down to athletes under his charge for using performance-enhancing drugs.

Here, Ma’s first international appearance after China got the 2008 Games is interpreted as a compromise by China’s sports officials to “quash fallout”. In addition, “Ma’s threat” is phrased in such a way that it suggests that Ma went to Canada virtually by blackmailing the sports authorities in China. Hence, Ma’s international appearance, intended by the Chinese sports authorities as a positive and symbolic gesture to show that China’s track-and-field movement is still intact and unaffected by a few individual cases of doping, has been transformed into an event in which, both Ma and the Chinese sports authorities are put under suspicion. Questions arise about indecent dealings, and even possible scandals,

by the Chinese sports authorities regarding its fear of Ma's threats, while Ma's own innocence is put under a question mark by stressing the fact that the athletes banned are "under his charge".

This kind of transformation is everywhere in the story. For instance, while the Chinese greeted the IAAF's criticism of Ma as "a mild rebuke", the story calls it "denunciation" and quotes a Chinese sports official as saying that Ma's case was being handled "internally". "Internally" suggests handling something behind closed doors and observing a different set of rules. In the case of Ma, "closed doors" means he is being excepted from China's common practice of banning coaches of athletes caught using drugs. The explanation is, using the words of Shen Chunde, a senior official with the Chinese Athletics Association, that Ma was not the "direct coach" of the two runners. But the story rushes to add, and still in the words of Shen, that Ma is "supervisor of the Liaoning team". This addition implies that by being the supervisor, Ma's role in the doping should be investigated, rather than giving him the exception.

These transformations have made Ma's argument sound weak. As told by the story, he called the ban "an unjust verdict" and believed "someone is out to frame me". This feeling of being victimized is made to sound like a convicted man protesting his innocence. Ma's argument is put there only to make the story look good: we are presenting the other side of the controversy. But the way it is framed in the story does not make the story an objective read. Enveloped in the "cloud" of doubts hovering over Edmonton, Ma is made to look no better than his home country, even though he himself has been officially cleared of any involvement in the doping charges.

In sharp contrast, the third story on drugs, which was published ten months later, is a positive portrayal of China. Headlined 'Chinese Take Advice from Australia on Drug-testing', the story is about how Australia will "assist in developing China's national drug-testing program over the next three years and in planning for the testing program during the Olympics". Throughout the story, the tone is positive and optimistic about China's anti-drug battle. The primary reason must be the involvement of Australia in the Chinese battle: if China is depicted as a



villain, then Australia would look bad in helping the villain. So the story spares no effort in the construction of a favourable image of China, putting emphasis on the seriousness of China in dealing with drug issues. This emphasis is first reflected by the headline which suggests that China is eager to learn. Based on this positive note, the story begins to build up the theme of the Chinese ready to take strategic actions against drug abuse. Such actions include “an approach” to Australia for help and the desire to establish “the most stringent testing program in history for 2008”. Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA) chief executive John Mendoza is quoted to show ASDA’s confidence in China: “I think people can be confident of a strong deterrent program in China.” These favourable depictions of China have helped justify Australia’s involvement in China’s plan to set up both a national drug-testing program and a specific drug-testing program for the 2008 Beijing Games. After repeated criticism and attacks that China has done virtually nothing to clean drugs out of sport, such a justification is certainly necessary.

But pretending that the newspaper has never made any critical coverage of China’s drug issues would be stupid and would raise questions about the newspaper’s consistency in dealing with the drug issue in China. Picking up the old rhetoric, however, would contradict the favourable theme of the story. Confronted with this dilemma, the story’s solution is to acknowledge problems in China without making any direct criticism. The acknowledgement is accomplished through the tongue of Mendoza:

“One of the problems the Chinese have is that their testing program can’t cope with the vast numbers of athletes coming through their development programs,” he said.

The tone is obviously not critical. The one problem Mendoza identified is more technical than bureaucratic neglect. This is a very different picture from the previous two stories which have portrayed China as unwilling to deliver on its promises. To show consistency with the newspaper’s critical coverage of the drug issue in China, the story makes some criticism, but in a disguised form:

The Australian Olympic Committee yesterday launched its three-year drug education program leading into the 2004 Olympic Games, and it places particular emphasis on the dangers of athletes using nutritional supplements.

The emphasis on “nutritional supplements” is not put there simply to highlight the Australian campaign. It could be read as a technique designed to allude to the extensive use of nutritional supplements by Chinese athletes to improve performance. Because many of the nutritional supplements reportedly contain banned substances, the use of them has been a sore spot for China and is probed even by international news media. The mention of the issue, although in relation to the Australian drug education program, is thus intended to touch off a string of associations with China’s practice. Five more paragraphs are devoted to the issue of supplements. In this indirect way, the story criticises China and yet does not risk triggering negative responses from China.

The image of China in this construction is an ordinary guy struggling with doping problems and wanting to become one of us good blokes. This is a different image compared with the one constructed by the previous two stories as a villain claiming to be a good bloke like us. Such a distinction is not a change of the newspaper’s perception of China. Rather, it should be interpreted as a technical manoeuvre, or a tactic, to make Australia look good.

When it comes to routine reporting on China, the newspaper’s coverage has tended to be critical, as already shown by the first two stories on doping. Another example is a story published on August 23, 2001. Headlined ‘Big Guns Called Up for Games Dry-run’, the story is a critical report about logistic issues concerning the 21<sup>st</sup> World University Games held in Beijing, a dry run by China for the 2008 Olympic Games. Covering a range of issues including environment, facilities, traffic, and security, the story presents a negative picture of Beijing’s preparations for the university games to contradict Beijing’s promise to make the Universiade “the best in history”.

The first three paragraphs are a sarcastic description of how Beijing has managed to “have tamed mother nature” with their manipulative skills. The second part of the story, consisting of seven paragraphs, is a depiction of the logistics problems the university games is already experiencing, such as insufficient facilities, traffic disorders, and potential security threats. The last part of the story, also consisting of seven paragraphs, is about how differently the university games is perceived by the Chinese and other countries.

The first part of the story begins with the Chinese shooting cannonballs containing silver iodine into the clouds to clear the skies, restricting traffic movement, and closing factories to ensure clean air for the Universiade. These measures are depicted as examples to prove that the Chinese are “master manipulators”. The transitional paragraph to the second part of the story is a concentrated display of almost all the negative elements of the story.

But although organisers appear to have tamed mother nature, things on the ground aren't quite as controlled. As the city's communist overlords brag about staging the best ever Universiade, members of the home delegation have been forced to move out of the athletes village and roads around major venues have been choked for weeks with largely immobile traffic.

Here, Beijing organisers are portrayed as “communist overlords” who have proven to be bragging about the games. This image is almost a copy of the one projected by the first two drug stories: the same kind of wording, the same kind of message, and the same kind of Cold War mentality. The communist villain seems to be the standard typecast for imaging China in *The Australian* coverage of Beijing's Olympic campaign. Such typecasting is in the same vein with *The Times* and *The New York Times* in their imaging of China, although *The Australian* is more skilled at representation.

The skills displayed in this story are remarkable. First is the use of sarcasm. Take the introduction for example:

The Chinese pride themselves on being master manipulators,

so when they needed clear skies for the opening ceremony of the 21<sup>st</sup> World University Games yesterday, they wheeled out the big guns.

The sense of sarcasm is expressed through the vivid description of the Chinese wheeling out “the big guns” to tame Mother Nature. The combination of “the big guns” with the active verb phrase “wheel out” has managed to project a picture of serious-looking Chinese doing something stupid and self-deceptively childish. Behind the comic effect is the criticism that China is taking some cosmetic measures to treat fundamental problems. The use of sarcasm in the intro has helped convey the message that the Chinese think they are clever in working out the temporary solution to air pollution, but that solution has only made them a laughing stock as well as the target of criticism for the international media.

Sarcasm in this sense is also used in the description of the “tight” security surrounding the university games:

Security is tight: plainclothes police officers are stationed every few metres along streets around the stadium, and paramilitary police wearing bullet-proof vests jog around the neighbourhood in formation.

What is made laughable about this scene is that deploying so many policemen and paramilitary police is supposed to give a sense of good security, but in effect nobody could feel safe in this tense atmosphere. The sight of “bullet-proof vests” and the densely planted police surveillance only makes people feel insecure: the police are armed to the teeth because something bad may happen. The other point is while the Chinese are celebrating the games in festive mood inside the stadium, the presence of the police is making a nuisance to the general public outside. The Chinese are mocked for attempting to convey a sense of security while feeling insecure themselves.

The other technique skilfully exploited by the story is contrast. This technique is extensively used in the third part of the story, which is a depiction of China’s

perception of the Universiade as well as the general world perception. As a contrast to the problems covered by the second part of the story, for instance, the story sarcastically reports that IOC luminaries have been “praising the games’ facilities”. Another example is the sharp contrast made between China’s effort to make the Universiade a “high-profile” event and the indifference shown by the rest of the world in the games. The story points out that while there was no competition when Beijing decided to bid for the Universiade which “generally loses money for host cities”, the Chinese vowed to make it “the best in history” and had spent more than US\$120 million on it. To achieve a more striking effect of contrasting, two quotes are put in, one paragraph apart:

“We made a solemn promise when we won the bid in 1998 that the 21<sup>st</sup> Universiade would turn out to be the best in history,” said Liu Jingmin, Beijing’s deputy mayor, vice-chairman of the Universiade organising committee and vice-chairman of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee.

“No one cares, no press comes, it’s a non-event,” said a European sports journalist in Beijing to observe the city in Olympic mode.

Through such contrasting, no one could fail to catch the sarcasm exhibited in the story and would probably finish reading the story with agreeing that China is ludicrous, if not stupid, by making a big fuss out of a “non-event”. Such negative impression is very likely as the story ends this way, still by contrasting:

Nevertheless, China is fielding a team that includes nine Olympic champions in five sports – table tennis, diving, gymnastics, judo, and track and field – and is confident of topping the medal tally.

The story constructs a negative image of the Chinese government as a manipulative power. In fact, it is a typical piece of *The Australian* coverage of Beijing’s Olympic campaign: descriptive, refined, but negative and critical.

But when it comes to business, everything is positive about China and the 2008 Beijing Games. While *The New York Times* regards the Beijing Games as a pot of gold for sponsors and projects an image of China as a paradise for American companies, *The Australian* does exactly the same thing, if not more. The three stories on business are all positive reporting, depicting China as a land of opportunities for Australian business. One story dated November 2, 2001 and headlined ‘Beijing Comes Clean on Tenders’, depicts Beijing’s effort to assure foreign companies that tenders for work linked to the 2008 Games will be free of corruption. It quotes Beijing bid executive and deputy mayor Liu Jingmin as saying that “very high priority” will be accorded to ensure a “clean and clear” process. It also cited Liu as saying that Beijing is prepared to introduce “stringent auditing procedures” on tendering for work related to the 2008 Games. The story ends by advising Australian companies to move fast and start looking for Chinese partners.

China in this construction is positive, sincere, and meaning business. It is a very different image compared with the insincere, pompous and bragging China constructed by the previous story and the two drug stories discussed before. It is understandable as money is now in the picture. Once big money and big business are involved, politics seems to be secondary in concern and off the top of the agenda. As in the *New York Times* story, no human rights concerns are addressed and no doubts are raised about drug abuse or overloaded facilities. Even the problem of corruption is not given much coverage and is only dealt with positively through the depiction of the government’s assurances to keep it out of the tendering process. When \$50 billion worth of work is there for grabs, no one wants to offend the “villain” holding the purse strings. Business is business, and politics is politics. The two should be separated. Such a distinction is clearly made by *The Australian*, and *The New York Times*, in their coverage of Beijing’s preparations for the 2008 Games. While they steadfastly stick to their human rights rhetoric to link the Games with politics in their coverage of Beijing’s bid, they separate politics from the Games in the same steadfast manner when they talk about business after Beijing got the Games. To put it in a more accurate way, human rights is still a main topic of their coverage of China after Beijing won the 2008 Games except for the coverage of business and finance. In other words,

China is still imaged as the communist villain, but the difference is it is a communist villain with a pot of gold.

The other two pieces placed more emphasis on how Australian companies are “well placed” to win contracts from Beijing than on how big the money is there for grab in Beijing. They strive to create the impression that Australian companies have a “head start” already before the competition begins because of the support Sydney organisers gave Beijing’s bid. In the story headlined ‘Business in Box Seat to Reap Billions – Olympics Decision Time’ and published on July 13, 2001, the day of the IOC’s vote, Australian trade officials are quoted as saying that Australian companies have a two-year lead on competitors and could expect to win “a few percentage points” of the \$100 billion Beijing would spend on the Games if Beijing wins the 2008 Games. Big Australian companies, including Telstra, Bovis Lend Lease, and Endeavour Consulting Group, are depicted as “well placed” to reap billions from contracts in Beijing because of their support and consultant service for the Beijing bid. All these big players are happy with their “good local presence” in Beijing as well as the “numerous relationships” they have built there and are highly expectant of good returns. Even the NSW government expects to get contracts in the areas of policing, hospitality and environmental services because it is “well positioned”, as reportedly pointed out by NSW Premier Bob Carr. This line of Australia’s edge over other competitors was repeated after Beijing won the 2008 Games, as indicated by the other story which was published on February 27, 2002, seven months after Beijing’s victory. Headlined ‘Capitalising on Games Knowhow – World Congress on IT’, the story reiterates the point of Australia being “well positioned”, claiming that “Australia had a head start with the support Sydney Olympics organisers gave China’s Games bid”.

This construction of the impression that Australia is “well placed” to win a few gold ingots from “the big pot” seems to serve two purposes. One appears to be reminding China that now it is the time to return our favours; the other is to intimidate or discourage other competitors for Beijing’s lucrative contracts. Such a tactic, though normal in business practice, is somehow contradictory to the high moral stand the newspaper has been taking in its coverage of Beijing’s

Olympic campaigns. For one thing, while showing concerns about corruption “rife” in China, the newspaper does not hesitate to pressure Beijing for preferential treatment of Australian companies, especially those involved in Beijing’s bid. A good example could be found in the story on the World Congress on IT. See how the two paragraphs might go together to help convey the message:

Dr Chen is adviser on information technology to the 2008 Beijing Olympics organising committee and a member of the bidding committee responsible for deciding who gets a slice of the \$7 billion in IT contracts at the Digital Olympics. “Now, as China is in the WTO, all the projects will use the bidding process. It’s very fair, very transparent, it’s equal, it’s open,” said Dr Chen, also chairman of Capinfo Co.

Australia had a head start with the support Sydney Olympics organisers gave China’s Games bid.

The two paragraphs are virtually saying: “Hey look. You can say whatever you want to say about being fair, and transparent, and equal, and open. But just don’t forget what we have done for you.” As a preferred reading, this would suggest that Australia should be an exception to the stringent process promised by the Chinese. It could mean that the newspaper is applying double standards to China: China should ensure a fair and equal process of tendering when domestic competitors are involved; but when it comes to competition among foreign companies, China is expected to be conscious of favours delivered in the past.

### ***The Straits Times (Singapore)***

Compared with the three newspapers previously discussed whose stories are both negative and positive depending on the topic, *The Straits Times* coverage of the logistics issue could be said largely positive on any topic, with emphasis on the Chinese government’s efforts to improve logistics conditions for the 2008 Games, rather than on criticism and doubts. And it has carried many more stories than



the other three newspapers combined. This is another expression of sympathy which has been displayed in the newspaper's coverage of human rights issues in China.

The six stories under study were all published after Beijing got the 2008 Games. These stories cover the issues of environment, transport, English learning, tourism facilities and self-improvement of Beijingers for the staging of the 2008 Games. This range of coverage is obviously much broader than those of *The New York Times*, *The Times*, and *The Australian*. Through the coverage, a vivid picture of a Beijing bent on the creation of a favourable environment for the Games is presented.

There are two stories of environment, both on the topic of sandstorm, a major environmental concern for Beijing organisers for the 2008 Games. The first story, headlined 'Stopping Beijing's Sandstorms', is a news report about a finding by Chinese scientists. According to the story, Chinese scientists tracked 32 dust storms of varying intensity in the previous year and 14 of them originated in China. Scientists found that sand picked up from the deserts of Inner Mongolia had contributed to the severity of the storms that hit the Chinese capital via three routes. Based on the findings, the story says, scientists have proposed measures to fight the storms. The head of the research team Dr. Quan Hao, who is from the State Environmental Protection Agency of China, is cited as warning of ever heavier sandstorms to hit Beijing if these measures are not taken. Such a prospect "does not bode well" for the 2008 Olympics, Dr. Quan is cited noting.

Although a gloomy picture is presented by the finding, the story is not a negative report as no doubt is raised and no criticism is made about the Chinese government's dealing with the sandstorm problem. Rather, it should be considered positive coverage in the sense that the story has not only reported on the findings which will definitely help advance people's knowledge of the sandstorms, but also has put its emphasis on the proposed measures to fight the sandstorms. China in this construction is a country seriously looking into the problem and trying to find a good solution. On the other hand, the positive

attitude of *The Straits Times* toward China is not surprising, considering the fact that even its coverage of China's human rights situations is balanced.

The second story on environment is a depiction of "the largest sandstorm in a decade" that swept over Beijing in March of 2002. Headlined 'Sandstorm: 130m Chinese hit', the story is based on eyewitnesses accounts, as well as Chinese and foreign media coverage. In this reconstruction, the severity of the sandstorm is described as "much worse than last year" and the worsened disaster is attributed to "massive deforestation and the increased drought". But while the description of the sandstorm takes up ten paragraphs of the 12-paragraph story, only two paragraphs are given to the discussion on the sandstorm. This is a typical way of covering sensitive problems concerning the 2008 Games by *The Straits Times*: sticking to facts and avoiding making direct criticism. This technique is extensively used in the newspaper's coverage of human rights issues in relation to Beijing's bid, as already discussed in Chapter 4. Here, as in the previous story, the emphasis is placed on what has actually happened rather than becoming critical about who is responsible for it. In sharp contrast to the detailed and vivid description of the disastrous sandstorm which "affected nearly 130 million Chinese people and caused numerous flight delays", there are only two paragraphs in the story, a few paragraphs apart, which point out the cause of the problem and what this problem might mean for Beijing in view of the 2008 Games:

The problem has worsened in the past 20 years due to massive deforestation and the increased drought.

Experts have warned that sandstorms could be a major problem for Beijing when it hosts the 2008 Olympic Games, despite costly efforts to halt the desert's advance.

It should be noted that with such a good propaganda material like the sandstorm to construct a negative image of the Chinese government, *The Straits Times*' sympathetic attitude toward China has managed to restrain criticism of a China devastated by natural disasters. They do not play up criticism, though the citation

of the “massive deforestation” as a cause is an indirect criticism of China’s failure to stop deforestation. The “costly efforts” also implies China’s tendency to carry out grand but ineffective campaigns to stop the desert’s advance. In fact, the “costly efforts” could even be interpreted as a credit given to the Chinese government in the sense that it has at least acknowledged the huge investment China has put in trying to fight sandstorms. In this construction, the story has turned out to be more factual than critical. China is warned against the negative impact of sandstorms on the 2008 Beijing Games rather than being criticised for past failures. And the sandstorm is used to ring the warning bell, not to discourage China’s enthusiasm in its preparations for the 2008 Games.

The story on transport is another example of the newspaper’s sympathetic approach to problems concerning Beijing’s Olympic campaign. Headlined ‘Beijing Set to Curb Car Growth’, the story, dated September 18, 2003, is about Beijing’s effort to improve public transport. It puts emphasis on the measures Beijing is taking rather than on the depiction of problems. One of the measures is the control of the use of cars, as indicated by the headline. Details about these measures fill up this 19-paragraph story. No specific criticism is made of the city’s traffic problems and air pollution. It is a positive portrayal of Beijing seriously undertaking the difficult task of preparing the logistics ground for the 2008 Games. It is such a positive reporting that it could be easily mistaken for a *Xinhua* news bulletin or a *China Daily* story. The only difference, perhaps, will be the style of writing, with this *Straits Times* report citing more details and giving appropriate quotes.

The story on English learning could be a good comparison between *The Straits Times* and *Xinhua*. While *Xinhua* has attempted to keep the government hand out of the picture so as to make the point that people are studying English out of their support for Beijing’s bid and preparation for the 2008 Games, this *Straits Times* story focuses on English learning fever as a government initiative. Headlined ‘From Jiang to Retiree, China Is Learning English’, the story tells of the Chinese government’s all-out effort to “promote” the learning of English to “all strata of society”. The introduction describes the momentum as such:

China is going all out to promote the learning of English across all strata of society, from top government leaders and civil servants to traffic cops and taxi drivers, as the country prepares to play a key role on the world stage.

The Chinese government's role in the English learning phenomenon is made very clear in this introduction. But positively so. The next five paragraphs give several examples to illustrate the point of "across all strata of society", which include then Chinese President Jiang Zemin who chairs in English a Pacific Rim symposium and a 71-year-old retiree who designed a set of Mahjong using the 26 letters of the English alphabet. The government's role is again made clear in the sixth paragraph, which refers to the English learning fever as "the government-driven crusade". The remaining paragraphs, with more examples, describe the intensity and the scope of the language fervour. What should be noted about these examples, except the retiree and President Jiang, is that they are all government and social institutions, such as the Beijing municipal government, police, newspapers, universities, and primary schools. These examples show a top-down promotional campaign launched by the Chinese government, in sharp contrast to the picture presented by *Xinhua* coverage in which, people, as individuals and as groups, are seen studying English out of their own initiative.

With positive emphasis on the Chinese government, the story has constructed a favourable image of the Chinese nation-state mobilized for the making of a "best ever" Games. It is in the same positive mould as the previous story whose emphasis is also on the government.

The last two stories are on lighter but not less serious topics concerning the preparation of ground for the 2008 Beijing Games. Exclusively local focused, one story is about tourist facilities in Beijing and the other on Beijing residents' awareness of their bad habits. Both have much to do with the city's "global image", as one of the stories points out. Through such specific topics, the stories have not only reflected *The Straits Times*' positive emphasis on the government but also displayed more general interest in Beijing's preparations for the 2008

Games. No stories of this kind can be found in *The New York Times*, *The Times*, and *The Australian*.

The first story, headlined ‘Tourist Complaints Spark Overhaul of Beijing Toilets’, was published on August 20, 2001, one week after Beijing won the bid for the 2008 Games. It shows the quick shift of the newspaper’s coverage from Beijing’s bid to Beijing’s preparations for the 2008 Games. Going to such minor details as toilet facilities, the story also shows the newspaper’s genuine interest in how Beijing prepares the logistics ground for the Games, while the other foreign newspapers have shown little interest in such perspectives. The story tells of the municipal government’s plan to invest 240 million yuan (S\$50 million) in the overhaul of public toilets in the city’s major tourist spots. This overhaul is depicted as a response to tourist complaints by a city government more conscious of its global image because of the 2008 Games. Although complaints from foreigners, ranging from foul odour to poor hygiene and maintenance, are described as especially “vociferous” by a Beijing tourist official, the emphasis of the story is on how the poor toilet situations will be improved. The women’s toilets, for instance, will have desks, chairs, and diaper-changing tables installed and will be 20 percent bigger than men’s lavatories. But most of the investment, the story says, will go into equipping toilets with infra-red triggers which do not require human touch.

Despite the fact that the story ends on a negative note quoting a restaurant owner in Beijing as saying that there is a tendency to favour building projects because construction is where money is made, the story is a piece of positive reporting in general. The emphasis is still placed on the government, as in the other *Straits Times* stories discussed previously, which is portrayed as sparing no effort in the improvement of its global image. This positive imaging of Beijing, typical of *Straits Times* coverage of Beijing’s Olympic campaign, is made all the more powerful by the choice of topics. These topics are all specifically related to the logistics issue concerning Beijing’s preparations for the 2008 Games, in contrast to the coverage of the other three foreign newspapers.

The second story is headlined ‘7 Years to Kick 12 Bad Habits’. The story is an account of one Beijinger’s solemn call for his fellow city residents to watch their behaviour if they want to make a “best ever” Games. Identified as “a reader of one local newspaper”, the Beijinger compiled a list of 12 bad habits for Beijing residents to kick and the list was reproduced by the online newspaper Beijing News. Topping the list is the habit of spitting indiscriminately and jumping the queue. This story is again a reproduction of this list, with a bit of its own elaboration. The ending paragraph, under the subtitle of ‘Beijing’s rough edges’, is a summary of the 12 habits in the form of a list.

Published the day after Beijing got the 2008 Games, on July 18, 2001, the story welcomes the list as a clear-headed and timely warning for a Beijing “dizzy with success”. This attitude, again a clear indication of the newspaper’s positive approach to Beijing’s preparations for the 2008 Games, is shown in the second paragraph of the story:

Euphoria over the city’s successful bid may have turned many in the country’s capital dizzy with success, but a reader of one local newspaper was obviously sober enough to warn his fellow residents to watch their behaviour if they wanted to make the event a success.

This depiction of the “sober” reader also reflects the newspaper’s sober treatment of the list. Throughout the story, no fun is made of the 12 bad habits, nor is sarcasm used to ridicule Beijing. Instead, the 12 bad habits are treated exactly as intended by the compiler of the list: as a warning, not as a target of criticism. This positive approach like this has been a key element in the newspaper’s projection of the Chinese government as a responsible one busy with putting policies and measures in place to improve China’s overall conditions for the hosting of the 2008 Games in Beijing. The only difference in this story is that the emphasis is put on the depiction of ordinary Chinese rather than the government. It makes a perfect full stop to the newspaper’s construction of China as a nation trying with all its might to fulfil its promises of making the 2008 Games “the best ever”.

## Conclusions

Different images of China are constructed in the foreign press in relation to the logistics issue, the difference lying mainly between *The Straits Times* and the other three foreign newspapers. While China is depicted as a communist villain with a pot of gold by the latter, the former constructs an image of a developing country both acknowledging problems and working hard to solve them. Business seems to be the focus of the latter but ideological framing is not forgotten altogether and should be considered consistent with their coverage of the human rights issue. The myth of Tiananmen Square, for instance, is again used by *The New York Times* in its coverage of Beijing's preparations for IOC inspectors' visit, and the problem of doping is given continued negative coverage by *The Australian* in its construction of an untrustworthy Chinese government. *The Straits Times*, on the other hand, works on the discourse of improvement in the construction of a positive image of the Chinese government. This discourse has coincided with the official discourse used by Chinese government publicity and its news media. Such coincidence should be attributed to the same "Asian values" the two countries share. Because of this, *The Straits Times* coverage is more sympathetic and friendly, treating China as "one of us". This is in sharp contrast to the negative coverage by the other three newspapers, in which, China is still depicted as one of "them" villains.

## **Part Three**

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# **The Reconstruction**



## Chapter 7

### The Meaning - Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the previous chapters. It looks at the ways China has been imaged through Beijing's Olympic campaign. I discuss techniques such as rhetoric and the use of myth and look into the ideologies behind the images constructed to gain a better understanding of why China is so perceived and treated.

Graeme Turner, Frances Bonner and David Marshall (2000) observe that media are one of the channels through which the nation is constructed. Bob Hodge and Kam Louie (1998) also project the print and electronic media as “crucial mechanisms” through which the “national consciousness” can be constructed (1998: 12). As shown in the previous chapters, news media have indeed served as the vehicle for the presentation of images of China through Beijing's bid and preparation for the 2008 Games. They have provided “contrasting portrayals to illuminate struggles over meanings” (Polumbaum 2003: 59). In contrast to the Western media's largely negative imaging of China, the Chinese press has been faithfully selling the publicity product endorsed by the Chinese government. In summarising my findings, I have compiled four tables, two for the issue of human rights and two for the issue of logistics.<sup>4</sup>

To understand the ideologies behind the images, I utilize three ideological packages, namely containment, engagement, and integration. Chin-Chuan Lee used these packages to deconstruct the New York Times narratives on U.S.-China relations. Lee points out that these ideological packages were “largely associated” with the foreign policy of the Clinton administration. He notes that

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<sup>4</sup> The tables are modelled on Tsan-Kuo Chang's table 6.1 in his article entitled *Political Drama and New Narrative – Presidential Summits on Chinese and U.S. National Television* (2003) and Chin-Chuan Lee's table 4.1 in *Established Pluralism – U.S. Elite Media Discourse on China Policy* Lee, C.-C. (2003). *Established pluralism: U.S. elite media discourse on China policy. Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. C.-C. Lee. London, RoutledgeCurzon: 76-96. I include in my tables the markers/indicators of “metaphors” and “depictions” from Lee's table.

media representation of China “has always paralleled the fragile U.S.-China relationship” and that “the oscillating cycles of romanticism and of cynicism reflect not only what is going on in China, but also what is going on in the United States, and what is going on between the two countries (Lee, 1990)” (Lee 2003: 77). Elite discourses have “converged on” the general goals of disseminating capitalist democracy to China but “diverged on” the specific methods. Lee observes that in the 1990s both Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton sharply divided the nation’s elite on this issue of specific methods but their policies were also contested by “a coalition of Congress, human rights groups, and the elite media” (Lee 2003: 77-78). The implication here is that although media act as the interpreters of a country’s foreign policies, news discourse may diverge on the specific approaches. The approach used by Lee is “constructionist” in the sense that it deconstructs and reconstructs editorials and column articles into elemental frames (Lee 2003: 81). These become ideological packages, following Gamson (1988).

The deconstruction and reconstruction of ideological positions behind Washington’s foreign policies toward China are applicable to this study; here these ideologies are not merely considered in the American context but in the broader context of foreign media narratives of China, specifically Beijing’s bid for the 2008 Games. Differences should be noted, however, in the interpretation of the three ideological packages across different contexts. For one thing, although Lee argues that none of the current three frames favours the pre-1979 stance of isolating China, it is a different story when put in the international context. *The Times* narrative of human rights in China, for instance, is starkly reminiscent of a narrative of isolation.

The discussion in this chapter concerns four topics: the image, the rhetoric, the myth, and the ideology. The key question is the rationale and ideology that position China’s Olympic bid and subsequent actions.

## **The Image: the Construction of ‘them’ for the Anchoring of ‘us’**

For the Chinese government and its press, the bid and preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games presented both an opportunity and challenge for projecting positive images of China for international consumption. The challenge lay in how to foreground Beijing the city in the nation’s pursuit of the 2008 Olympic Games while trying to construct a good image of China. Historically, China had always appeared as a unified nation; the autonomy of regional and local identities had not been encouraged for fear of creating regional tensions. During Beijing’s first bid for the 2000 Summer Olympics, for instance, China pitched its bid as a national campaign rather than a bid of the city. It created a momentum in which China the nation was foregrounded and Beijing the bid city was backgrounded. While this strategy was successful in giving Beijing’s bid an edge of ensured financial support from the state government as well as moral support from the whole nation, it failed to recognise the simple technical requirement of the IOC: it should be a city, not a country, which bids for the rights to host an Olympic Games. It is difficult to determine how much this miscalculation can be attributed to the loss of Beijing’s first bid, but all the four interviewees agreed that it did affect the bid in a negative way.

Taking a lesson from the first bid, China applied a different strategy to its second bid, making sure that everything about the second bid for the Olympics reflected IOC rules and met IOC requirements. Hence, Beijing the city was foregrounded as the bid city while China the nation stood behind as the cheerleader in the background. BOBICO, not the Chinese government, launched publicity campaigns for the bid. BOBICO also talked directly to media and the press. And when BOBICO officials talked, they talked exclusively about Beijing the city, rather than China. It was the same with BOCOG, Beijing’s organising committee for the 2008 Games, after Beijing won the bid. On the part of BOBICO and BOCOG, they represent the Beijing municipal government although they claim not to be operating in the capacity of the government. In the process of the bid and the current preparation for the 2008 Games, the two organisations have consciously taken advantage of the rare opportunity to promote the local identity

<b>Text</b>	<b><i>Beijing 2008</i></b>	<b><i>Xinhua</i></b>	<b><i>China Daily</i></b>
The image	Beijing a modernizing city	China a developing country, Beijing a modernizing city, a victim	China a developing country, Beijing a modernizing city, a victim
Discourse	development, progress, advances, changes, no politics	same	same
Rhetoric	development, internationalism, popular support, improvement of living standard	same, plus prejudice against China, discrimination, rights to Games as Chinese people's human rights, Games to further advance human rights	same plus human rights as internal affairs, Falun Gong as obstacles to be cleared
Myth	development, progress, Olympic spirit, people, Taiji Quan	development, progress, Olympic spirit, people	development, progress, Olympic spirit, people
Depictions	Olympic spirit, motto, bid themes, the emblem, popular support,	central government support, anti-China Congressmen, British Parliament criticism, press conferences	British Parliament criticism, press conferences
Ideology	nation-building	nation-building	nation-building
Metaphors	hata,	the Aum Shinrikyo of Japan, the Branch Davidian cult of US, Meng Jingshan	Meng Jingshan
Logic	to carry on the Olympic spirit	to carry on the Olympic spirit	to carry on the Olympic spirit

Table 1. Chinese imaging through human rights

of Beijing the city and the prospect of becoming a modern international metropolis ahead of other Chinese cities. Publicity efforts are solely focused on the construction and presentation of new images of Beijing the city (see Table 1 and Table 2).

The images of Beijing speak the universal language of progress and identify more with internationalism and globalisation than with socialism and communism. It could be regarded as the first time in the history of the People's Republic that a city has been allowed to promote its unique local identity on top of national identity. It demonstrates China's eagerness to conform to international practice in the process of globalisation. But it has also raised the question of rivalries and increased tensions between Beijing and other Chinese cities because this central government-designed promotion of a local identity is fundamentally different from the kind of image promotion other Chinese cities have launched to attract foreign investment. By choosing Beijing as the bid city for the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese government is literally giving the city the privilege of utilising the whole national resources to transform itself into the country's first international modern metropolis. The impact of this strategic move by the central government is yet to be fully felt and needs to be assessed by future research.

In terms of image construction, the bid and preparation for the 2008 Games therefore has been largely a showcase of Beijing the city. Government publicity is exclusively about Beijing and Chinese English-language news media have played the role of the government's mouthpiece to the fullest in getting the messages across. As a result, the image of Beijing is that of a developing city on a rapid modernisation course towards becoming an international metropolis. This image is produced by both the central and the municipal governments and it is loyally and faithfully promoted by Chinese media, as is indicated by Table 1 and Table 2.

In the background, the central government has been watching closely and giving instructions. For the central government, the promotion of Beijing the city has an ulterior purpose. Not only is Beijing in a better position to win the 2008 Games

<b>Text</b>	<b><i>Beijing 2008</i></b>	<b><i>Xinhua</i></b>	<b><i>China Daily</i></b>
The image	Beijing means business	state and city governments	people and governments are serious
Discourse	improvement, progress	improvement, progress	improvement, progress
Rhetoric	government measures, people enthusiastic	government measures, people enthusiastic	government measures, people enthusiastic
Myth	tree planting, people	tree-planting, people	tree-planting, people
Depictions	control of pollution, NGO, language fervour, tourism, transport	environment goals, clean energy, English fervour, hotels, communications, traffic, taxi service, transport	technology, English learning, public awareness of environment, road construction, new car emission standard
Ideology	nation-building	nation-building	nation-building
Metaphors	NGO	NGO	NGO
Logic	Government dedication and popular support will make a “best ever” Games.	Government dedication and popular support will make a “best ever” Games.	Government dedication and popular support will make a “best ever” Games.

Table 2. Chinese imaging through logistics

but the focus on the city redirects human rights questions from foreign media to the central government. Under this strategy, Beijing has been able to “deflect” human rights criticism and has found it relatively easier to concentrate on the business of the bid than ten years ago at the first bid. Promoted as a bid city, not as a representative of the People’s Republic, Beijing had also been able to argue that politics should be separated from sports. As I discussed in Chapter 3, BOBICO’s vice president Liu Jingmin is quoted by *Beijing 2008* as saying to the press that media emphasis should be on a city’s ability to host the Games rather than on “the political affiliations” of that city and its representatives. This had virtually separated Beijing the city from the political associations of Communist China. In the event that political associations were indeed made, Beijing put up another argument using the Olympic rhetoric of internationalism. Liu Jingmin said at the same press conference in Beijing that Olympics transcends human limits and allows every person the right to participate in the Games “regardless of political affiliation, religious belief, or ethnicity”. These arguments had won Beijing considerable sympathy within the Olympic community for its “victimisation” by human rights attacks from Western countries. Gains like this had proved that the central government’s strategy for China’s bid for the 2008 Olympic Games had worked well.

While Beijing the city is fore-grounded in China’s campaigns for the 2008 Olympics, China the country is not completely out of sight. In dealing with human rights issues, for instance, the central government has stood out from the shadow and talked directly to the foreign press. As a crucial aspect of the government strategy for Beijing’s bid, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took the responsibility of confronting human rights questions, the major obstacle to the realization of China’s Olympic dreams, while the Beijing municipal government concentrated on the logistic issues of the bid and preparation for the 2008 Games. In arguing its cases, the Ministry had tried to draw a different picture of China, a China of overall improvement in political, economic and social conditions, including human rights. In this construction, China is projected as a developing country rather than a Communist country. The underlying logic is that as a developing country, China considers human rights as an inevitable problem it

<b>Text</b>	<b><i>The Times</i></b>	<b><i>The NYT</i></b>	<b><i>The Australian</i></b>	<b><i>The ST</i></b>
The image	criminal, corrupt regime, repressive political system	1. villain, police state, abuser of human rights; 2. one of “us”	brutal, behaves strangely, plays games, untruthful	victim, strong contender
Discourse	bleak record	1. surveillance 2. hopes	woeful record	human rights as disadvantage
Rhetoric	condemn, probation, gamble, hysteria	1. interrogation, detain, monitor, intimidate 2. international scrutiny	oppression, suppression, brutal government	not perfect, will improve
Myth	Tiananmen	Tiananmen	Tiananmen	development, Progress
Depictions	public execution, suppression of Tibet, Wei Jing-Sheng	1. dissidents and their families, human rights advocates and critics 2. celebrations, popular support	Falun Gong, Tibetan protesters, Chinese politicians	Falun Gong as outlawed, suicides, government speeches
Ideology	containment	1. containment 2. engagement	containment and engagement	integration
Metaphors	1936 Berlin Games	1. KGB 2. South Korea	Augusto Pinochet	
Logic	China does not deserve the Games.	1. The Games would give legitimacy to human rights record. 2. China should be given the Games.	The Games would mean supporting the Communist Regime.	China deserves the Games.

Table 3. Foreign imaging through human rights



expects to tackle in the process of economic and political development. Also, by playing down the ideological identification of the nation-state as communist, China finds it easier to sell its rhetoric of integration into the global economy. This image of China as a developing country was projected by the Foreign Ministry through press conferences and did not appear in BOBICO's pronouncement and publicity materials. It was the Chinese media that had picked up the Ministry's arguments from its press conferences and conveyed this ready-made image of China to a broader international audience (see Table 1). This division of publicity work demonstrates the strategy of promoting separate images of Beijing and China through the Olympics.

Naturally, a nation has to "construct 'them' to anchor 'us'" (Lee 2003: 77). In order to anchor the images of "us", the Chinese government made good use of the Western media's negative coverage of human rights in China in the construction of an anti-China plot in which, all anti-China forces conspired to block China's entry into the international Olympic community. In this construction, China was the victim of the West. As a victim, China was in a better position to peddle its own rhetoric of development and progress within the Olympic rhetoric of all-inclusive internationalism. It was able to comfortably anchor its image of a developing country against the anti-China conspiracy.

In effect, dual images have been constructed and promoted through Beijing's Olympic campaign: the image of Beijing (the city) and the image of China (the nation). The distinction is made largely for pragmatic reasons but this strategy may have a profound impact on China's political, economic, and social configurations, which need to be addressed by future academic studies.

For the foreign press, however, Beijing's Olympic campaign has been about the nation-state, not the city (see Table 3 and Table 4). In foreign coverage of China, Beijing is synonymous with China and in international relations Beijing is also synonymous with Chinese government. But for an event where only bid cities are involved, the Western press' depiction of the nation, rather than the city, is more than a matter of force of habit. When coverage of other bid cities (e.g. Paris, etc.) was centred on the specific cities, the focus on China was an indication of

<b>Text</b>	<b><i>The Times</i></b>	<b><i>The NYT</i></b>	<b><i>The Australian</i></b>	<b><i>The ST</i></b>
The image	the nation that built the Great Wall	1. paradise for American business 2. laughing stock	1. big pie for Australian business 2. manipulator, villain	both Beijing and China striving for a “best ever” Olympics
Discourse	business	business	business	improvement
Rhetoric	China contributing to Olympics by developing rugby	1. pot of gold 2. costly effort, superficial	1. Aussie business positioned to win contracts 2. China not delivering its promises	governments fulfilling their commitments
Myth	Rugby as Western Sport	1. money 2. Tiananmen	1. money 2. Ma Junren	authoritarianism
Depictions	World Sevens series in Beijing	1. NBC 2. scrubbing up Beijing	1. drug testing 2. drug abuses, Universiade	government measures, environment, transport, service facilities
Ideology	Olympicism	capitalism	capitalism	Asian values
Logic	Business is business; politics is politics.	Business is business; politics is politics.	Business is business; politics is politics.	China is capable of a “best ever” Olympics.

Table 4. Foreign imaging through logistics

an ideological agenda. The images of China projected by *The Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Australian* on Table 3 show that the target of human rights criticisms is China, not Beijing the city. Human rights has been used as the vehicle to convey a political agenda. Even in covering non-human rights issues concerning Beijing's Olympic campaign, these three newspapers focused on China rather than Beijing (see Table 4).

The ideological framing of China by international (Western) journalism is expressed through the construction of an inferior "them" for the anchoring of the superior "us". As pointed out by Chin-Chuan Lee (2003), the U.S. media have "habitually" made worthy "victims" out of Communist abusers to highlight "the superiority of capitalist democracy". *The New York Times* coverage is a good example of this observation. The image of China as a villain, a police state, an abuser of human rights is obviously constructed from a sense of moral superiority and ideological difference. The "us" in this villain vs. the good guy construction is democratic capitalism and human rights is the yardstick to make the distinction between "them" and "us". So is the case with *The Times* and *The Australian*. The only difference lies in the wording, the most critical being *The Times* coverage. By projecting the image of China as a criminal, a corrupt regime, and a repressive political system, *The Times* is reflecting a position of opposition to authoritarianism born out of the Cold War. *The Australian*, a scale lower in intensity but not necessarily less hostile, plays the role of a disapproving and condescending superior. Seeing through the lens of ideological disparity, *The Australian* coverage constructs the image of China as a brutal regime that behaves strangely and therefore should not be trusted. Together, these Western media have anchored themselves as the voice for capitalist democracy through the construction of China as a communist villain. They have perceived China as a communist country rather than a Third World or a developing country. By tailoring China into this ideologically hostile frame, these media have been able to justify their logic of demonising China. The overemphasis on negative coverage of human rights in China by these Western media has diverted public attention from Beijing's actual campaign to land the 2008 Games.

On rare occasions, there are seemingly positive images of China as well, such as the one carried by *The New York Times*. In a story published on the day of Beijing's victory, China is depicted as a developing country given the chance to become one of 'us'. But doubts and suspicion are also expressed and serve as reminder that China has a record of human rights violations. Given the White House's neutral, if not supportive, stance toward Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympics, it should come as no surprise that at least one *New York Times* story should reflect the U.S. government perspective. It does not in any way though affect the fact that the dominant images of China in *New York Times* coverage of Beijing's bid have been negative. Just as in the more overtly critical *Times* and the more refined *Australian*.

However, ideological differences are put on hold when money is concerned, as I have indicated in Chapter 6. Rather than analysing logistic and service issues that are so crucial to Beijing's Olympic campaign, the three newspapers were more interested in contemplating how much business a Beijing Olympics could bring to their respective countries. So China was depicted respectively as "a paradise" for American business, "a big pie" for Australian business, and "the nation that built the Great Wall" (see Table 4). Money is the common denominator in these stories and Communism is temporarily forgotten as a constant threat. But that does not mean that ideological denunciation stopped altogether when Beijing won the 2008 Games. Even within the business sphere, negative criticism still prevails. Table 4 shows how human rights continues to be an ever present theme in *The New York Times'* coverage of China while *The Australian* repeatedly links the problem of doping in the construction of a deceitful Chinese government. *The Times*, on the other hand, conspicuously avoids discussion of the city's preparation for the 2008 Games. In this context, the overall image of China constructed by the three newspapers could be said to be of an authoritarian regime with a pot of gold.

In sharp contrast, *The Straits Times* is more focused on Beijing the city than China the nation-state and is positive and sympathetic towards Beijing's Olympic campaign. Portraying Beijing in a positive light as a strong contender for the 2008 Games, it was more interested in Beijing's capability and

preparedness for the Games than in human rights problems in China. Unlike the other three foreign newspapers which concentrated on covering human rights, *The Straits Times* devoted most of its stories to how Beijing the city has been striving for a 'best ever' Olympics. Measures taken by the municipal government to fulfil this commitment were the key note of the stories while the nation largely appeared in the background as a supporting statement. Reflecting the Chinese coverage, the national image was fore-grounded in *The Straits Times* only when the question of human rights popped up. And when the newspaper did cover the issue of human rights, it addressed it as a disadvantage for Beijing's bid rather than the capital lettered reason for why China should not be given the Games. One story had this big headline: 'China: We're Not Perfect but We'll Improve'. A note of sympathy was expressed through this depiction, and the rhetoric used was strikingly similar to the Chinese version. For instance, when referring to Falun Gong, it was presented in a law vs. culprit construction. It referred to it as an "outlawed" and "controversial" group. The conflict between Falun Gong and the Chinese government was depicted as the government's "fight" against illegal forces. This rhetoric was paralleled by the Chinese official discourse on human rights for Beijing's bid. The image constructed in this discourse of human rights was that China is a victim of Western media coverage of human rights. This construction of China is a construction about one of "us" rather than a construction of "them" as portrayed in *The Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Australian*. It anchors Singapore in the same category of developing Asian countries although Singapore identifies itself ideologically with capitalism and is constructed as a democratic society. The government of Singapore has a controlling interest in *The Straits Times*, which, along with a balanced view of the issues, may contribute to the lack of emphasis on human rights in the newspaper's coverage of the Beijing Olympics. *The Straits Times'* construction of China's image also indicates that Singapore shares some of the same Asian values with China and is sympathetic to China's approach to human rights. It is also an indication that the Chinese rhetoric of development and of the internationalism of the Olympia sells and that China's 'them' vs. 'us' construction strikes a chord with developing and many developed countries, particularly Asian countries.

## **The Rhetoric: An Art of Presentation, Persuasion, and Marginalisation**

By “the Chinese rhetoric”, I refer to the presentations put forward by the Chinese government and its news media to sell Beijing’s bid and by extension, China itself. Because the rhetoric used by the government and the media is ideologically unified (see Table 1 and Table 2), I use the collective phrase, “the Chinese rhetoric”, to refer to these presentations rather than separately as “the government rhetoric” and “the media rhetoric”. The close symbolic relationship between government and media makes it possible to discuss rhetorical presentations in different texts, such as government publicity and news reports.

In these presentations China is not a physical existence but rather an identity built up of images. These images represent what Benedict Anderson (1983) called “the imagined community”. Anderson argues that this community comes from “imagining” and “creation” and “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 1983: 6). While institutionalized discourse plays the key role of the “imagining” and “creation” of imagined community of China, or the identity of China, rhetoric, as “the practice of using language to persuade or influence others and the language that results from this practice” (Hartley 2002: 201), is more about the style in which China is imagined, created, and promoted.

By tradition, persuasion is an important feature of rhetoric. To sell the image of China to international audiences through the Olympics, the production of appropriate rhetoric is deemed crucial. As I already pointed out in the previous section, China did well in this aspect. The rhetoric of development and of the internationalism of the Olympiad has fared well in gaining sympathy and moral support for China’s Olympic dream. *The Straits Times* coverage of Beijing’s Olympic campaign shows that the newspaper has not only bought China’s line on human rights and on Beijing’s capability of hosting an Olympics, but has actually incorporated it as its own rhetoric.

The rhetoric of popular support is another well developed line for the sale of China’s arguments on human rights. The logic is that when the whole nation

stands behind Beijing's bid, it is not simply a matter of support for hosting a world sports event; it should be considered a show of general approval of the Communist regime. If human rights had been such a big problem as critics say it is, then the Chinese people would not have given their unconditional support to this government initiative. This reasoning, together with the rhetoric of internationalism of the Olympics, provided a footnote for the Chinese argument that it is the Chinese people's rights to have the desire to host the Games. In this logic, blocking Beijing's bid for the Games is a violation of Chinese people's human rights. And with over one quarter of the world's population involved, this violation of human rights deserves more attention from human rights activists and the media than China's so-called bleak record of human rights. This argument constituted a key part of China's official discourse on human rights for Beijing's bid and preparation for the 2008 Games.

As shown in Table 1, the official discourse on human rights is characterized not only by catchphrases such as development, progress, and advances but also by rhetorical devices designed to sell China's arguments. While the government highlighted changes and improvements in people's living standard and framed human rights criticism in the light of politics, the media endorsed the government stance and discourse by elaborating on other points of the government arguments. *Xinhua*, for instance, played up the theme of Western criticism of human rights as prejudice and discrimination against China through its coverage of criticism from British Parliament and some U.S. Congressmen. It also put emphasis on BOBICO's argument that denying China's rights to host the Games is a violation of Chinese people's human rights. *China Daily*, with the Chinese subscriber in mind as well, adopted a harsher tone for domestic consumption to mobilize popular support under the banner of national sovereignty. The rhetoric it used is that human rights is China's internal affairs, a readily accepted belief in China. Emphasis was given to the depiction of Falun Gong as a political obstacle to be cleared for Beijing's bid rather than an issue that invites international intervention. These different rhetorical approaches to the issue of human rights have served the Chinese government by trying to make government arguments more persuasive. The power of persuasion lay in the logic of the official rhetoric which separates sports from politics.

The rhetoric of popular support was also used for the issue of logistics. In promoting Beijing as capable of hosting a best ever Olympics, the government and media were highly unified in playing up the line that people are enthusiastic about Beijing's Olympic campaign. Government publicity campaigns and media coverage concentrated on the depiction of mass participation in Games-related events and, in particular, an English-learning fervour that has involved different age groups from different walks of life. This rhetoric of popular support has helped balance the official discourse of government initiatives and measures taken to create a best ever Games in the sense that it prevents the government propaganda from appearing too top-heavy. If the propaganda is too much focused on the government, it might send a wrong message that would only enhance the outside perception of China as an authoritarian state. The message of people's support was designed to give the impression that the Beijing Games is not simply an effort from the top but a national desire that has mobilized mass participation. In effect, the use of people as rhetoric is an important element of persuasion for the sale of China's official discourse on logistics concerning the 2008 Games. The rhetoric of popular support has helped construct an all-inclusive picture of Beijing's bid and preparation for the Games and helped promote the theme of the People's Olympics.

It should be noted, however, that this rhetoric of popular support has marginalized oppositional voices for this costly effort with the Games. As reported by a few domestic news media, some people are concerned that the huge economic costs of hosting the Games and the large scale of construction would put excessive strains on local residents of Beijing and put ancient cultural relics in danger. Others argue that money should be put into more urgent problems on the government agenda, such as inadequate infrastructure and the settling of the disadvantaged in the development of the market economy. The disadvantaged include large populations of mobile rural labourers who have migrated to urban cities as well as the huge numbers of unemployed urban workers. They are marginalized social groups in the rapid transformation of the Chinese society and could become a major source of social instability if their ordeals are not addressed properly and adequately. The key point of the argument is that although the Games is expected to bring tangible economic



benefits to China, these benefits will not necessarily benefit those disadvantaged people. These arguments, however, are nowhere to be seen in the official propaganda for foreign audiences although occasional pieces have appeared in newspapers for domestic consumption. The oppositional voice is effectively lost in the chorus of popular support and the marginalized groups are out of the picture constructed by the rhetoric of people's Games. As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, the rhetoric of popular support has also effectively excluded the tensions between rivaling Chinese cities in the construction of local identity and escalating social contestations in China's nation building through the Olympics. Rhetoric, in effect, has been used as an art of marginalization by the Chinese propaganda.

Likewise, the Chinese rhetoric on human rights is also an art of marginalization. In its presentation of Chinese arguments, the rhetoric of development and progress did not acknowledge criticisms of its human rights record, to the extent that it has not identified a single specific human rights problem in China. China's arguments have never touched a specific human rights issue except the grand rhetoric of development and improvement. Even Falun Gong is not considered an issue of human rights. The rhetoric of popular support, in addition, tends to gloss over domestic discontent and conflicts over human rights in its construction of an all-supportive picture of the Chinese regime. Furthermore, through exploitation of the Olympic rhetoric of internationalism, the emphasis of Chinese propaganda is put on accusing "them" of demonizing "us" rather than defending itself using concrete cases of "improvement" and "progress" in human rights conditions in China. Such a focus has managed to marginalize domestic human rights criticisms in China and to disengage the Chinese government from debates over reportedly ugly and messy details of human rights problems in China.

But marginalization has also managed to make China's arguments sound weak and superficial when challenged by critics and foreign media. While the on-going suppression of Falun Gong and the detaining of dissidents have been prime targets for human rights critics and constant topics for foreign media coverage, the Chinese rhetoric has failed to come up with arguments to justify these cases

and therefore has failed to convince the foreign reader of the claim that China has made “improvement” and “progress” in human rights.

By contrast, what the Chinese propaganda was trying to avoid is what the Western propaganda concentrated on. Take the human rights issue for instance. *The New York Times* coverage was replete with depictions of dissidents and their families being detained and threatened, as well as views and comments from human rights critics and advocates. These depictions used the words that are associated with the description of a police state, such as interrogation, detain, monitor, and intimidate. They revealed the American perception of human rights conditions in China and gave a clue (where the Chinese propaganda did not) of the specific human rights problems that exist in China. The rhetoric it used for the presentation of the human rights problems in China was the note of surveillance. This rhetoric carried a power of persuasion only to be enhanced by China’s detainment of dissidents and the on-going campaign to suppress Falun Gong. In fact, as pointed out by Judy Polumbaum (2003), China has continued to supply “ammunition” for human rights critics (Polumbaum 2003: 65) in these fields. She further observes that China had also “paradoxically endorsed” the logic that human rights and the Olympics site selection decision are connected by the practice of detaining people who called for the making of that connection. She gives the following example to illustrate her point: “Western reports readily pointed out, for instance, that when a seventeen-member IOC inspection team visited Beijing in February, in the first scheduled review of the five finalist cities, police warned relatives of jailed dissidents to stay away from the inspectors” (Polumbaum 2003: 65). These observations hold true for this project as well. My findings in the previous textual analysis chapters have resulted in the same impression - that Western criticism of China’s human rights conditions did not emerge from nowhere and that the Chinese government has unwittingly contributed to the Western rhetoric of surveillance and made it more persuasive. In short, while China claims that Western media were demonising China, it had kept providing materials for such demonization.

The *Australian’s* coverage of Beijing’s Olympic campaign in relation to human rights was cast in the same negative light. It depicted China as a brutal

government using a discourse characterized by oppression, suppression, and appalling and woeful human rights record (see Table 3). The rhetoric it used is “the brutal way” the Chinese government stays in power. This rhetoric was backed up by news accounts of crackdowns on Falun Gong and Tibetan protesters, as well as negative and critical depictions of Chinese politicians and Chinese media. To ridicule the Chinese government, one story, which was published on July 9 of 2001, drew attention to the contradiction of China’s claim that no politics should be involved in a sport event like Olympics. As discussed in Chapter 4, the story pointed out that while the Chinese government claims Falun Gong as illegal and takes actions to stop home members from practicing, the same government also announces its decision to welcome overseas Falun Gong members to attend the Beijing Games. The same story also contradicted Beijing’s no-politics claim by taking issue with China’s suggestion that Taiwan could co-host some events at the 2008 Games. The conclusion was that the Chinese government is not to be trusted. An unidentified Chinese official was quoted to this effect of untrustworthiness: “To the outside world, we say that politics should not be part of the process, but in reality, everything in China is political”. This presentation of the Chinese government as a villain carries more persuasive power than *The New York Times* as the rhetoric is more refined and more focused in terms of organization of facts, sources and quotes. It does not simply accuse China of a bad human rights record or bombard the Chinese government with accusations. Rather, it tries to convince the reader of its criticism of China with well-structured stories.

The most blatantly polemical of the three Western newspapers is *The Times*. Presenting the Chinese government as a corrupt and repressive regime, *The Times* narrative focuses on criminality. Words like condemn, probation, gamble, conscience, and hysteria hold the high moral ground while reproaching China for public executions, routine suppression of Tibet, and constant intimidation of Taiwan (see Table 3). Its rhetoric focuses on “the bleak human rights record” of the “most vengeful” government and gives exposure to Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng who is portrayed as a victim of political manoeuvring between the Chinese and Russian governments to “keep out dissident voices” prior to the IOC vote in Moscow. Although different views are included in the newspaper’s

coverage of human rights issues in relation to Beijing's bid, it is evident that it is the criticism and accusations that have taken up most of the space and carried the heavy weight of meaning. Readers do not have to read between the lines to get the message; the message is right out there like an open statement. Moreover, this is a different kind of propaganda from the Chinese propaganda. While the Chinese propaganda has started to experiment with making soft sells, *The Times'* style of propaganda is reminiscent of the Cold War period when the emphasis was on agitation, not altogether dissimilar from Communist style of propaganda under Mao. In this sense, the rhetoric of *The Times* on China's human rights is not as persuasive as *The Australian* and *The New York Times*.

But the question concerning the rhetoric used by the three Western newspapers is not merely a question of how persuasive the rhetoric is. What is noteworthy is the role played by the rhetoric in the construction of China's image.

Marginalization, or in Judy Polumbaum's (2003: 65) words "the training of the lens on one issue, largely to the exclusion of others", is at issue here. Polumbaum points out that human rights had remained "the single most prominent theme" in U.S. media accounts about Beijing's bid (2003:65). This emphasis on human rights, she observes, "overshadowed" attention to Beijing's actual campaign to land the 2008 Olympics. My findings from this research project coincide with her observations, and such observations can also apply to news account by *The Times* and *The Australian*. As I have described in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, news coverage by the three newspapers was full of human rights with very little written about the logistic aspect of Beijing's bid and preparations for the 2008 Olympics. When they were not talking about human rights problems in China, which was rare, they talked about business and money to be made from a Beijing Games by companies in their respective countries (see Table 4). And when they did mention BOBICO activities, they put emphasis on making a mock of Beijing for the flaws it had made in its bid. *The New York Times*, for instance, highlighted the awkward face-lift efforts by Beijing to impress the IOC inspection team. It focused on the fresh paint, the fake flowers, and the grass sprayed bright green with chemicals to brighten up the bleak winter of the city. It also depicted mockingly the city's taxi drivers practising fractured English. Such marginalization of Beijing's ability and preparedness to host the 2008 Games,

according to Polumbaum, reflects the ethnocentrism of U.S. media coverage of international issues which places the focus on U.S. policy interests. This policy interest, as I have discussed earlier, is to balance trade and in the tradition of U.S. free marketers, to export capitalist democracy to China.

Whether or not this judgement applies to *The Times* and *The Australian* is difficult to determine, but the other two newspapers have definitely used similar rhetoric to marginalize China's Olympic efforts in a similar way. Take *The Australian* for example. When it touched the logistic aspect of Beijing's bid, it said little about the actual preparations. Rather, it concentrated on two topics: the business opportunities for Australian companies and the doping problems in China. At the same time, it devoted most of its coverage of Beijing's bid and preparations to the issue of human rights. In effect, the rhetoric of human rights has largely marginalized Beijing's logistic capability to host the 2008 Games.

By contrast, *The Straits Times* rhetoric on Beijing's Olympic campaign has been more balanced at the most obvious level. While critical of China's human rights record, it is sympathetic with the Chinese government's "fight" against Falun Gong and resentful of Western media's "play up" of human rights as the overriding issue for the bid. It takes care not to be distracted away from other important issues by the heavily emphasised issue of human rights. One story points out that "Chinese Olympic officials have more than human rights to worry about." This rhetoric implies that human rights should not be the only issue to discuss in relation to Beijing's bid. There are other important issues as well that are crucial to the bid and to the Olympic movement as a whole. In practice, it devoted more space to issues ranging from air pollution to traffic. One story quotes Beijing Mayor Liu Qi's pledge that if the city won the bid, the stadiums, environment and services would be of the best quality. This kind of quotes seldom appears in Western coverage. Even if they do appear, they are often used in a different context for the purpose of ridicule and questioning, such as the "but" formula: Beijing pledges to ..., but .... In short, *The Straits Times* rhetoric demonstrates an art of balancing, rather than marginalization in the ideological sphere.

## **The Myth: the Logic or the Underlying Philosophy of Discourse**

Myth is another technique used by both the Chinese propaganda and the foreign media in the construction of China's image through Beijing's Olympic campaign. In Roland Barthes' conceptualization, myth is signification and a way of thinking about people, products, places, or ideas that are structured to be read in particular ways. Myth's function is to make ideas appear natural as truth. Along this line of thinking, this section discusses, based on the findings in the four textual chapters, how myths have been used to make propaganda discourse appear natural as truth.

As shown in Table 1, Chinese propaganda, including government publicity and journalism, has used mainly four myths in the presentation of official discourse on human rights in China, namely the myth of development, the myth of progress, the myth of Olympic spirit, and the myth of the people. The exploitation of these myths by Chinese propaganda has illustrated the Chinese government's publicity strategy of promoting the positive side of Chinese society rather than wasting limited publicity resources on unproductive confrontation with human rights criticisms. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, these myths have served as the overarching frame for the construction of China's discourse on human rights in relation to Beijing's bid. In this construction, China appears in the image of a victim, demonized by the West despite Chinese people's support for Beijing's bid.

On the other hand, a different myth, in addition to the myth of the people, is exploited for the construction of China's discourse on the logistic aspect of Beijing's Olympic campaign. Tree planting, the most celebrated topic of environmental protection in China, has been used as a myth. Because of the conscientious effort by the Chinese government and its media, tree planting has become an established myth in the promotion of CCP's political ideology in socialist construction as well as in environmental protection. The Chinese public have become used to the idea that environmental protection is tree planting because tree planting is environmental protection. Environmental protection is emptied of its original content which is replaced by the new content of tree planting. The change is made to look so natural that people have come to take it

for granted, not aware of what have been taken away from the original concept of environmental protection. But it is exactly the missing elements that would reflect the ideology behind the changes: attention is diverted to the simple act of tree planting from other more important environmental issues that the Chinese government is reluctant to address.

While the Chinese have exploited quite a few myths for Beijing's campaign for the 2008 Olympics, the Western press used literally one single myth in Roland Barthes' sense of the term: the myth of the Tiananmen Square (see Table 3). It is understandable since Western coverage of Beijing's bid was largely focused on the issue of human rights. Their coverage of the logistic aspect is virtually nil and the stories I have discussed in Chapter 6 are a bit farfetched if judged by the true sense of the term "logistics". But these stories are still included in this research project for the purpose of showing what has been actually written about Beijing's campaign. That said, I consider it appropriate to concentrate here on the myth of the square since human rights has been the main discourse of Western media on Beijing's campaign for the 2008 Games. Discussion of the myths used in the so-called "logistic stories" can be found in Chapter 6.

The myth of Tiananmen Square is a pretty recent Western myth symbolizing "Communist rigidity and repression" (Hodge and Louie 1998: 115). Hodge and Louie point out that Tiananmen Square was initially a show of force displayed "for domestic consumption" but was "picked up and elaborated by Western media" to become "a highly complex signifier, symbol not only of the operations of traditional Chinese discursive systems but also of new forces and forms of communication" (1998: 116). It is also re-signified by what happened there on June 4, 1989.

This myth has been intensively and extensively used by Western media in the construction of their human rights discourse for Beijing's Olympic campaign. As discussed in Chapter 4, all of the four news items on *New York Times* have used Tiananmen Square as a myth. This extensive use of the myth has played a key role in the construction of the Chinese government as a police state and abuser of human rights. In a similar manner and to the same end, the myth was

also exploited by *The Times*. *The Australian*'s version of the myth, however, is more reserved and more politically sensitive. One story already discussed in Chapter 4 referred to Tiananmen Square as "China's most politically sensitive site, the centre of mass student-led demonstrations that were fatally quashed by an army assault in June 1989, and most recently the venue for almost daily demonstrations by Falun Gong followers protesting the demonisation of their group". Compared with the versions of *The New York Times* and *The Times*, the careful tone of this version is evident. It conceives Tiananmen Square as a "most politically sensitive site" rather than a symbol of human rights abuse. What happened in June 1989 is described as demonstrations "fatally quashed" by an "army assault, rather than a "pro-democracy" student movement that ended up in a "massacre" by the Chinese government. And the Falun Gong followers' demonstrations on the square are described as protesting the "demonisation" of their group, rather than the "crackdown" of their group. It says nothing about the police surveillance, the arrests, and the intimidation of foreigners on the square, which has been widely reported by Western press. Another noticeable difference is that the myth was seldom used directly in a story. Rather stories have played upon the reader's political consciousness to recognise the mythical meanings of the square. These differences may be explained by international political environment and domestic interests. The effect is the same. As an established myth, the square naturally takes the reader to the scene where all the mythic meanings were generated and recreated to naturalize the signification.

### **The Ideology: the Framing of Meaning**

While rhetoric and myth have been used to create the preferred meanings, ideology is the drive and force behind such creations. John Hartley (2002) points out that "It is useful in insisting that not only is there no 'natural' meaning inherent in an event or object, but also the meanings into which events and objects are constructed are always socially oriented – aligned with class, gender, race or other interests" (2002: 106). That said, he sees ideology as the "active practice" which undertakes to "reproduce familiar and regulated senses" or "transform the means of sense-making into new, alternative or oppositional forms, which will generate meanings aligned to different social interests"



(Hartley 2002: 106). Ideology here in this research project is discussed along this line of thinking.

Judy Polunbaum observes that China's 2008 Olympics mission has come across as largely "ideological" (2003: 69). The mission is framed in "both altruistic internationalism and benevolent nation-building". From what I have found in the four textual analysis chapters, I come to the same conclusion. It is useful to distinguish internationalism and nation-building in analysing Chinese narratives, but in terms of ideology I have combined the two elements into one overarching ideological frame of nation-building under which Chinese propaganda has undertaken to "reproduce familiar and regulated senses" for the consumption of an international audience. My argument is that the rhetoric of altruistic internationalism has served the Chinese momentum of nation-building, rather than being an ideology itself.

Nation-building is the ideology behind China's image building through Beijing's Olympic campaign. Government publicity and news media cast Beijing's bid as a national mission to realize a century-old dream and aspirations for the Chinese nation. Emphasis is placed on political and economic benefits that include recognition and respect from the international community and opportunities to develop the national economy in terms of foreign investment and service industries. The propaganda has created the impression that in pursuit of national development in nation-building, the government is eager to promote China's development into global economy, an integration already well underway since accession to WTO in December 2001.

The idea of opening up to the outside world as a means of nation-building has come a long way before it was adopted as the political ideology for CCP and the Chinese nation-state. Ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Chinese had been struggling with the impulse to close the door for self-strengthening and the rational necessity to open to modern technology in order to build up national defence. Michael Yahuda (1997) observes that while the first course holds the promise to uphold a national cultural identity, it nevertheless has the risk of becoming vulnerable to more powerful adversaries. The second course, he says,

may end the vulnerability but has the risk of undermining cultural identity. This tension between fear of being colonised and the desire for new ideas and technology had led to the abortion of reforms along the second course at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued to affect policy making after the founding of the Chinese nation-state at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Mao's era, anti-imperialism and self-reliance (*zili gengsheng*) were emphasized and so Mao's approach took the first course. This isolationist approach was criticised in Deng's era as having kept the Chinese from embracing the other side of a two-edged sword, that is, the modernizing role of foreign capital required for a catching-up type of economy (Friedman 1995). Deng's approach since 1978 was economic development through reform and openness, which could be said to have represented the second course. In this approach, Western ideas of competition, modernization, development, progress, environment and technology were introduced to China. The ideology is that the absorption of these ideas into China's modernization drive can help China's nation-building. In either approaches, however, the same tensions existed as they did for the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese reformers. As Yahuda (1997) points out, modern technology in practice carries with it "a complex set of values and socio-political configures that cannot but undermine the alternative essence it was meant to serve" (Yahuda 1997: 6).

Such tensions were constant throughout the reform era. In the first decade of reform and opening up, the absorption of Western ideas and technology was seen as a mixed blessing. Deng himself talked about 'the flies and insects' (i.e. the capitalist and Western influences) that would inevitably come in through the open door (Yahuda 1997). Those 'flies and insects' would challenge the core values of independence and sovereignty. In the 1990s, there was the concern as to the extent to which opening up may create pressures for capitalism and democracy, echoing the historic debates about the need to import technology but to maintain the Chinese essence (Goodman, Segal et al. 1997).

Despite these worries and concerns, nation-building through reform and opening up has eventually become the ideology for the CCP and the Chinese nation-state.

It is a matter of survival for the CCP as well as nation-building. As David Goodman and Gerald Segal (1995) put it, if the CCP was to survive then it had to restore its traditions of popular support and emphasize economic modernisation rather than political correctness. And the Olympics presents a good opportunity to mobilize popular support under the purported national mission of nation-building.

Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympics found Chinese leadership under Jiang Zemin going further along the second course of opening up to the outside world. The government rhetoric of integration into the global economy sent the message that China wants to be one of 'us', instead of one of 'them'. News media were mobilized to focus on the positive side of hosting the Games, largely to the exclusion of possible negative impact on the Chinese society as a whole. The 'flies and insects' were no longer in the official discourse and success of the bid was shaped as a vital step towards nation-building as well as political achievements for Jiang's regime.

Against the same background of globalization, foreign media coverage of Beijing's bid and preparations for the 2008 Olympics has not only reflected foreign policies of respective countries but also contestations from various interest groups. In this context, I apply Chin-Chuan Lee's three ideological packages to discuss ideologies behind the news coverage by *The New York Times*, *The Times*, *The Australian*, and *The Straits Times*.

According to Chin-Chuan Lee, the containment policy takes its root in the Manichean Cold War ideology which aimed at encircling the Communist bloc. It imagines China as a hostile communist regime that needs to be estranged. It calls for the use of trade privileges to punish China for its poor human rights record. The engagement strategy seeks "to balance American values of human rights with its business and strategic interests" (Lee 2003: 86). It is a variation of "carrots and sticks" policy, favouring the attachment of modest and achievable human rights conditions to trade. The integration approach argues for the acceptance of China into international trade organizations such as WTO, asserting that such integration would not only subject China to international

norms and the rule of law but also benefit American trade. In conclusion, Lee believes that Washington is trying to “change China according to America’s image” (Lee 2003: 91).

The ideological frames are closely related to the two schools of thoughts about China popular in the 1990s: engagement and containment. In looking for ways to prevent China from becoming a cause of instability, the first school tried to ‘engage’ China and the second ‘contain’ China so as to prevent from either a breakdown of order at home or riding roughshod over the conventions and norms of international society (Yahuda 1997: 6). These two schools of thoughts addressed the question of how best to relate to China as a rising power. In essence, Chin-Chuan Lee’s ideological packages are an updated American version of the two schools, with trade utilised more noticeably as the tool to move beyond mere engagement.

Lee’s analysis of *The New York Times*’ editorials and columns from 1990 to 2000 shows that although the “hawkish voices” persisted, the dominant view of China seemed to be in favour of integration in the hope of subjecting China to international norms and the rule of law. Lee (2003) observes that from March, 1997 onwards, “the New York Times has argued for the very position it once criticized: permanently awarding China normal trading status without attaching human rights conditions” (Lee 2003: 88). This indicates that media during that period had largely reflected American foreign policies. However, my analysis of the *New York Times*’s news discourse on Beijing’s bid, another big occasion alongside WTO to usher China into the international community, has produced different findings. For instance, while the voice for integration could be heard, the prevailing news narratives were centred on human rights (see Table 2). Rather than arguing for integrating China into the “us” club, the dominant view positioned China as one of “them” villains and questioned if this villain deserved to host the Olympics. These news narratives were obviously framed in the engagement ideological package instead of the integration package that the White House was implementing. This indicates that *New York Times*’ news narratives of Beijing’s bid were more about the views of a “coalition of Congress, human rights groups, and the elite media” (Lee 2003: 78) than a reflection of

American foreign policies. This finding reflects Lee's observation that American elite discourses converge on the general goals of disseminating capitalist democracy to China but diverge on the specific methods.

*The Times'* news discourse on Beijing's bid seemed to be framed more in the containment package than the engagement. Human rights was obviously the only issue *The Times* was interested in. It was preoccupied in reporting and criticising China's human rights conditions, largely to the exclusion of other issues related to Beijing's bid. In its depiction of the Chinese government as vicious and oppressive whose very existence is against the Olympic spirit, *The Times* upheld a high moral ground and expressed no interest in transforming China into one of 'us' through integrating China into the global economy. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate whether this ideological framing was a mirror of British foreign policies towards China or rather a contestation by the media. Nevertheless, in either way, this ideological framing of *The Times'* coverage of Beijing's bid would affect public opinion in the sense that the readers are most likely to adopt elite cues in the news to structure their own thinking about world event (Lee 2003).

*The Australian's* approach was in more or less the same vein. Conspicuously absent from the newspaper's coverage was the argument that awarding the Games to China would expose China to international scrutiny and thus help improve its human rights behaviour. Throughout its coverage of Beijing's bid was the consistent theme of the superior, democratic 'us' versus the inferior, oppressive 'them'. Although by the eve of IOC's final decision, its stance had softened noticeably, there was no indication that integration was favoured. Ideological framing by *The Australian* seemed to fluctuate between containment and engagement. This might be seen as an indication that contestations by human rights groups and the media were represented in the newspaper's discourse on Beijing's bid, rather than the foreign policies towards China by the Australian government.

By contrast, *The Straits Times'* coverage of Beijing's bid fitted comfortably in the integration ideological package. It downplayed the issue of human rights

considerably and devoted largely to the coverage of issues other than human rights. While sympathetic with the view that China deserves to win, it developed its rhetoric along China's line of "We're not perfect but we'll improve" (see story dated February 21, 2001 in Chapter 4). This rhetoric is rhetoric of integration, in which China is expected to improve its human rights conditions by being exposed to international norms and law. It reflected government policies of Singapore towards China. Contestations by human rights groups were also represented, but the prevailing view was integration rather than containment or engagement.

### **Conclusions**

Deconstruction of the images of China as cultural constructs allows us to see difference in the creation of an imagined China between Chinese propaganda and foreign media. In this process, difference is also evident in the strategies of the Chinese media and foreign media. Differences in discourse, in rhetoric, in mythmaking, and in ideology not only reveal the fragmentation of Chinese propaganda today but also indicate a new direction for Chinese propaganda in the future.

## Conclusion

### **Image Design and Chinese Propaganda**

In this thesis I set out to explore the impact of promotional culture on Chinese propaganda. On the one hand, “image design” has become a new mission for Chinese propaganda in terms of international communication. On the other hand, there is a significant gap in the study of China’s image cultivation strategies. This thesis has redressed this imbalance through examination of image construction by the Chinese government and news media.

I used Beijing’s Olympic campaign as a case study to explore the symbolic nature of its publicity – the creation of an imagined national identity. As the critical reader, I applied the study of myth, discourse analysis, and contextual analysis to the examination of government publicity materials and news media reports. I also used open-ended interviews to supplement my methodology. Together, these methods have enabled the exploration to reveal the extension of promotional culture to government publicity and its implication for Chinese journalism.

My central argument has been that promotional culture has made a positive impact on Chinese government publicity. This is supported by the government’s new approach to the issue of human rights and its improved skills and techniques in the construction of China’s images. While Western media coverage of Beijing’s Olympic campaign was centred on human rights and solely used Tiananmen Square as myth, government publicity of China avoided direct involvement in human rights debate and focused largely on Beijing’s ability to host the Games. The government employed a variety of techniques, some of which were adopted from advertising and public relations practices. In fact, the government publicity strategy for Beijing’s Olympic campaign itself is a product of promotional culture. For instance, the construction of the dual images of Beijing and China was a well conceived approach, taking into consideration IOC norms, and at the same time showing the strategic thinking of the state

government on regional development in nation-building. This was a different approach from Beijing's first bid where government publicity had doggedly adhered to the promotion of China regardless of IOC norms and practices. Market research and advice from foreign PR companies have contributed to this change of strategy as all the interviewees have identified the same government initiative to line up foreign PR consultancy support for Beijing's second bid. The application of publicity skills and techniques of advertising and public relations to government publicity is an indication of promotional culture's impact on the Chinese society.

Other examples of promotional culture's influence on government publicity include the official policy of no direct involvement in human rights debates with Western media and the production of publicity strategies and stunts for the media. In contrast to Western media's focus on human rights, the 'no-involvement' or 'low-key' publicity policy of the Chinese government reflected the government's concern that engaging in human rights debates would bring human rights criticisms and attacks to a new level of intensity. Such intensity, as was evident during Beijing's first bid, would focus international attention on human rights problems in China, rather than on Beijing's bid itself. So the government chose to concentrate its limited resources on the promotion of Beijing's bid in terms of environment protection, high technology, and humanistic spirit. In other words, the positive side of Beijing's bid was highlighted and human rights criticisms were given 'low-key' treatment. This approach was also a result of the government's initiative to apply marketing skills to the making of government publicity strategies. In this process, overseas PR companies played the role of image consultants for BOBICO and the Chinese government.

Publicity strategies and stunts were another feature of government propaganda that shows the connection between promotional culture and government publicity. One of the stunts was the inauguration of the Green Angel Movement at a primary school in Beijing which involved 1,500 children (see Chapter 5). Three things marked the event as a publicity stunt: it was organized by a NGO; it was covered by BOBICO's official publications, such as *Beijing 2008*; and it was reported as news by local and national media. Because Chinese NGOs had



seldom enjoyed such a spotlight due to the government's suspicion and distrust, this event, in which the fingerprints of the government were everywhere - ranging from the use of the school to the presence of both local and national media -, could be nothing but a government publicity stunt aimed at building the image of openness as well as popular support. Another example is the organization of tree planting on the National Tree-planting Day in March, 2001, the month designated by BOBICO for the promotion of the theme of Green Olympics. Participating in the event were 1,000 young men and women who planted trees along the Grand Canal to the east of the city centre. Issue 6 of *Beijing 2008* devoted two inside pages to the coverage of this event, complete with five colour photos which took up two thirds of the total space (see Chapter 3). Stunts and strategies like these have been a staple of government publicity in China. The Chinese government is very adept at taking advantage of historical dates and occasions to achieve goals and agendas of today through the organization of orchestrated media events. Marketing skills and techniques from advertising and public relations have only enhanced the government's ability of producing such events in terms of content variety, performance, and effect. Compared with theme campaigns for Beijing's first bid, the current practices place more emphasis on the research of target audiences and as a result produce more subtle messages. This is indicative of the extent to which the Chinese government has benefited from a local version of promotional culture.

My other argument has been that promotional culture has not made an impact on international journalism in China. This is supported by the perceived top-down relation between the Chinese government and the news media engaged in international communications. The coverage of Beijing's bid by *Xinhua* and *China Daily*, for instance, were almost a wholesale promotion of the government version. They were mainly "presentations of scripted events and preferred interpretations" (Chang 2003). *Xinhua*, in particular, practiced more repetitions of government scripts than journalistic approaches. Chapter 3 shows that the recurring themes of popular support and of different interpretations of human rights in both the government pronouncements and news reports by *Xinhua* and *China Daily* suggest that while the Chinese government is striving to improve its

publicity skills, international journalism in China is still functioning as a propaganda mouthpiece of the Chinese government.

Similar findings are also evident in Chapter 5. Textual analysis shows that although there are different emphases, government publicity and news media addressed the same topics and promoted the same themes. These similarities between government publicity and news media in content are a further indication of the top-down relationship between the two. Such a phenomenon – during a period when Chinese journalism for domestic audiences has been experiencing rapid changes and moving slowly towards a more diversified, more open, and more autonomous model – alerts us to the shared ideology of nation-building. Unlike domestic reporting which is more or less about politics, international reporting in China is more concerned with national identity and national sovereignty. Nation-building for international journalism is therefore an issue of image building for the nation-state. In this context, international journalism has been an extension of China's foreign policy and accordingly must be in line with government agendas. But on the other hand, international journalism would have performed better in this nation-building drive in terms of image construction if not for the delay in structural reforms to transform scattered institutional resources into one powerful propaganda apparatus. Habit and the fear of making political mistakes have shaped the current mode of practice. Taking both factors into consideration, it is no surprise to find that international journalism in China has not really learned from advertising and public relations, and improved its performance in terms of audience research, rhetorical skills, and script writing. It remains the old-fashioned transmission model of propaganda.

Differences between *Xinhua* and *China Daily* in emphasis of topics show that the latter is more reader-oriented, an indication that promotional culture has an impact on domestic reporting. Still largely distributed within China as well as abroad, *China Daily* also pays attention to the home reader whereas *Xinhua* news bulletin in English has only the foreign reader to worry about. With the home reader in mind, *China Daily* has sometimes treated the same source materials differently from *Xinhua*. The comparative analysis of two stories in Chapter 3 reveals how the use of words as well as the deletions and add-ins were exploited

by *China Daily* to cater to domestic interests. In addition, in covering environment issues (see Chapter 5), *China Daily* placed more emphasis on technology than tree planting, based on the assumption that by helping the home reader to understand new technologies to be used for the Games, it has a better chance of getting the preferred message across. Its preferred message was that it is technology, not the tree planting or anything else, that is crucial to solve environmental problems. In the same chapter, we saw that *China Daily*'s approach to the issue of services paid more attention to the element of the people than to the government so that the home reader can relate more to the events being covered. For instance, in reporting Beijing's plan of large-scale constructions for the Games, *China Daily* never forgot to add a few lines about what each of those project means to the ordinary city residents. The story about the completion of the 'Olympic Avenue' which connects almost all the proposed Olympic sites best illustrates this point. After dutifully quoting vice mayor of Beijing as saying that the road shows Beijing's ability to fulfil its promise, the story devoted two of the next four paragraphs to address the issues with which local residents were most likely to be concerned: traffic jams and money. These two paragraphs conveyed the message to local residents that while travelling will be easier with reduced congestion, their pocket is safe as most of the money used for the construction came from bank loans.

These reader-oriented differences in emphasis of topics may partly be explained by the newspaper's consciousness of distinguishing itself from other news media engaged in international communications. It publicly claims itself to be non-official, although people both at home and abroad tend to see it in a different light. In practice, *China Daily* takes pains to develop its own style of reporting although it also takes care not to step over the line. The emphasis on the people rather than the government and on technology rather than tree planting exemplifies this effort. This has indeed made its reporting of Beijing's campaign for the Olympics different from that of *Xinhua*. *Xinhua*, as the 'tongue and throat' for the Party and government, has established the long-standing practice of paraphrasing the Party rhetoric and government policies into a semi-official language for the journalistic use known notoriously as the *Xinhua* style. But differences like these are more symbolic and rhetorical than political and

discursive. *China Daily* still speaks the language of the government discourse on Beijing's Olympic campaign and its emphasis on technology and the element of the people is rhetorical. Nevertheless, in its pursuit of being different from the elite Party media such as *Xinhua* and *People's Daily*, *China Daily* has improved its reporting by bringing more human-interest elements into its news stories. In this, *China Daily* is more like its Chinese counterparts in domestic reporting which, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, have increasingly applied promotional skills from advertising and public relations to journalistic practice in terms of regarding the reader more as a consumer than a passive object of propaganda. In this, *China Daily* also seems to have inspirations to portray itself to foreign readers as more pluralistic and more open. It would be interesting and worthwhile to conduct further research on *China Daily* as a propaganda vehicle with a pluralistic face.

Differences and similarities between foreign media in their coverage of human rights support the proposition that foreign media discourses converge on the idea of disseminating democracy to China but diverge on the specific methods. While varying in tone and intensity in their criticisms of China's human rights problems, with *The Times* being the most blatant and *The Straits Times* the most lenient, all the four elite national newspapers celebrated the idea of democracy as the fundamental ideological basis from which human rights in China were perceived and criticised. They saw the need to change China in the image of this capitalist idea of democracy, but they argued for different approaches. The ideological packages discussed in Chapter 7 show that *The New York Times* alone was divided between the methods of engagement and integration, although the prevailing argument was for the former. *The Times'* discourse, on the other hand, was framed more in the containment package than engagement as it expressed no interest in transforming China into one of 'us' through bringing China unconditionally into the global economy. While *The Australian* fluctuated between the arguments of containment and engagement, *The Straits Times'* approach was obviously one in favour of integration. This divergence in foreign media's discourses on China's human rights problems have directly impacted upon the way the foreign press have constructed the image of China through Beijing's campaign for the 2008 Olympics. Although Beijing eventually won the

2008 Games, this divergence is still likely to continue to affect the coverage of China by these elite media. *The New York Times*, for instance, has continued its criticism of China's human rights conditions after Beijing won the bid.

The degree of interaction between government publicity, news media, and foreign media is an indication of the shift of Chinese propaganda from agitation to producing soft-sell messages for international consumption. A good example of this interaction is the exploitation of the quote of Meng Jingshan, a Beijing taxi driver. As discussed in Chapter 3, it began with a story which was written by a freelance journalist with the US-based Atlanta Journal and was published in an American local newspaper. *Xinhua* picked up this story and used it as a good propaganda material for its human rights arguments. In the story headlined 'China Opens Up to Join World', *Xinhua* began with Meng's conversation with the American journalist as the hope expressed by an ordinary Beijing taxi driver. Then the point was elaborated into the theme of popular support for Beijing's bid and advances brought about by opening up in various fields including human rights. This approach was obviously to the taste of *China Daily* because *China Daily* published the story as a whole instead of rewriting it. This approach also pleased the government. Liu Jingmin, then vice mayor of Beijing and vice president of BOBICO, picked up the Meng story from the media to support his argument at a BOBICO press conference. As a perfect ending to all this exploitation, Meng's story landed in the BOBICO official album published to celebrate the first anniversary of Beijing's win. A smiling Meng Jingshan was shown standing by his red taxi, happy with the spotlight that is normally reserved for heroes.

Interactions between media and government like this have not only revealed the connections between government and journalism but also revealed the extent to which Chinese propaganda is experimenting with the manufacturing of soft-sell messages for the international audience.

These findings have both positive and negative implications for Chinese propaganda in the run-up period before 2008 and during the Games. The positive implication is that because the government's soft-sell publicity strategy was

tested at Beijing's second bid for the Olympics and proved that it has performed well, it may further encourage the Chinese government to focus on 'image design' and continue to use the soft approach in international communications. Further development of a promotional culture as China opens wider to the outside world through the successful bid for Olympics and its entry to WTO will also enhance the government's ability to improve its publicity skills and techniques in the production of soft-sell messages for international consumption. But there is a negative message from my findings as well: human rights is likely to remain a focus of Western media coverage when the Games is actually held. This will present an even bigger challenge for Chinese propaganda because the battlefield is on home soil where protests from dissidents, Tibetan separatists, and Falun Gong followers and even terrorist threats are highly possible. These security issues will not only be ready materials for international human rights criticisms but also pose a threat to the image of China as a safe and stable society. If Beijing's bid was about re-building the image of the nation-state, the hosting of the Games is about maintaining and enhancing the image. If international journalism in China continues to rehearse government scripts, Chinese propaganda will end up in a no-win situation in competing with world media. So to further implement the image-design strategy in international communications for the 2008 Olympics, the government needs to address the problem of structural reform of its news media engaged in international reporting to make them creative both in form and in content and therefore more competitive. By so doing, the government will turn the big challenge into a good opportunity for the improvement of Chinese propaganda for a world audience.

To sum up, the findings have demonstrated that the thesis has addressed the research questions and has supported the key arguments. It has contributed to a research area where construction of the image of nation-state is not adequately studied. However, this research is only a limited one in scope and in method. More studies of the construction of national image, or national identity, are needed to make sense of nation-states' increased efforts at being culturally specific while integrating into the global economy.

## Appendix 1

### **List of Interviewees**

Gao Dianmin, Director and senior editor of the Sports News Department of *Xinhua News Agency* and member of IOC's (International Olympic Committee) media committee, who went to Moscow for the final bid as a member of BOBICO staff. As a high-ranking media executive with a career of 23 years of sports reporting, he worked closely with Chinese media and kept a watchful eye on Western media during the bid.

Li Zhurun, language expert of the Department of Home News for Overseas Service of *Xinhua News Agency*, who worked as editor of BOBICO's information bulletin *Beijing 2008* and who went to Moscow, too. As editor of *Beijing 2008*, he was able to attend top BOBICO meetings to discuss the bid's publicity strategies.

Zhang Jian, deputy director of the Project Management Department of Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG). He was deputy secretary-general of Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee (BOBICO) and worked with the strategy research section as deputy director for Beijing's bid.

Li Hepu, senior sports reporter of the national *Xinhua News Agency*. He covered both of Beijing's bids.

## Appendix 2

### **China's Foreign Propaganda Institutions**

The following information comes from a book by Zhai Shuyao (Zhai 2001) published in Chinese.

*Xinhua News Agency* is the official national wire service, gathering and distributing news and information to domestic and world news media. Established in 1931 as *Red China News Agency* by the Chinese Communist Party, it has developed into a news network covering the whole country and the world with more than 30 branches across China and more than 100 outposts across the world. It claims to be a world-renowned global news service joining *AP*, *Reuter* and *Agency France* as the fourth biggest world news agencies. Its department of home news for overseas service broadcasts news to the world in seven languages including Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese. It also provides an English-language feature service for the foreign press and publications as well as a photo service.

*China Radio International* is the national broadcaster of China. Established in the 1940s, it has set up its own network with 35 branches across the country and 18 outposts across the world. It broadcasts 170 hours of program in 40 languages.

*China Central Television*, the national television network, was established in 1958, much later than its foreign counterparts. It set up the overseas centre in 1991 to strengthen international broadcasting. The centre has established 30 television enterprises with counterparts from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and other regions overseas and more than 100 countries and regions can receive its broadcast in Chinese, English, French and Spanish.

*China News Service* is the sole unofficial news agency in China. It was established in 1952 by Chinese journalists and well-known people who returned to China from overseas. It provides Chinese-language news bulletin and feature stories as



well as photo and audio and video services for Chinese overseas. Established in 1952, *China News Service* now has branches in major areas and regions across the country, an office in Hong Kong and outposts in the United States, France and Japan. It has established business contact with 160 Chinese-language newspapers, radio stations and television stations overseas.

*China Daily* is the first English-language national newspaper published by the People's Republic of China. It is printed in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xian, Hong Kong and New York and is distributed to 30 provinces and autonomous regions across the country and to 150 countries and regions. It went into print in 1982 and has been expanded to include *Beijing Weekend*, an English weekly that covers cultural, entertainment and community service activities, *21<sup>st</sup> Century*, an English newspaper serving English language learners, and *Shanghai Star*, an English newspaper jointly published with Shanghai.

*People's Daily* (overseas edition) is the Chinese Communist Party's official newspaper in Chinese targeting at overseas Chinese, Chinese students and workers abroad, and foreigners who can read Chinese. Apart from Beijing, it is also printed in Hong Kong, New York, San Francisco, Tokyo, Paris and Toronto, and is distributed to 70 countries and regions.

News weeklies and periodicals for distributions abroad are published by *China Foreign Language Publishing and Distribution Administration* (or *China Foreign Publishing Group*). This organization is the biggest publisher in China of publications for foreigner readers. It publishes in 32 languages seven publications, including *Beijing Review*, the sole news weekly in China covering domestic government policy and current affairs in English, French, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, *China Today* (originally named *China Reconstruct*), a monthly in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese, *China Pictorial*, a pictorial in 14 languages, *People's China*, a monthly in Japanese distributed to Japan, *China Reports*, a monthly in Esperanto, *China-Africa*, a monthly distributed to Africa, and *China Literature*, a monthly carrying contemporary Chinese stories, classic literature, poems, literature criticism, and new literature developments.

The Internet, the fourth medium following print, radio and television, has become a new, important channel for international communication and publicity. A multi-level network of internet media has been established consisting of news and information websites of print and broadcasting media, news websites run by commercial .com companies, government websites, and industry websites.

### Appendix 3

## Foreign Newspapers under Study

The following information helps explain why these national newspapers are selected for study.

***The New York Times***: “With a circulation of more than 1.1 million on weekdays and 1.7 million on Sundays, ***The Times*** has the highest circulation of any seven-day newspaper in America. It's also the publication with the strongest metropolitan base: the New York City area. ***The Times*** offers a unique circulation unmatched by any other publication.” -- *The New York Times* website

***The New York Times***: “*The New York Times* is considered to provide the best overall coverage of national and international events of any U.S. newspaper. It is a known as a “paper of record” not only because it often includes the full text of important speeches and official documents such as treaties, but also because of its comprehensive treatment of the news.” -- Reba Leiding, a reviewer for *The Ulrich's Periodicals Directory*.

***The New York Times***: “There is another sector of the media, the elite media, sometimes called the agenda-setting media because they are the ones with the big resources, they set the framework in which everyone else operates. The *New York Times* and CBS, that kind of thing. Their audience is mostly privileged people. The people who read the *New York Times*—people who are wealthy or part of what is sometimes called the political class—they are actually involved in the political system in an ongoing fashion. They are basically managers of one sort or another. They can be political managers, business managers (like corporate executives or that sort of thing), doctoral managers (like university professors), or other journalists who are involved in organizing the way people think and look at things. – Noam Chomsky, “What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream.” Z Magazine, October, 1997

***The Times***: It is “an excellent newspaper to turn to for coverage of British news, politics, business, sports, and culture”. -- Christine Forte, a reviewer for *The Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory*.

***The Australian***: As the national broadsheet, *The Australian* has a circulation of 131, 000 and a readership of 423,000, according to the newspaper’s website.

***The Australian***:” *The Australian* is this country's only national broadsheet newspaper. The editorial values focus on leading and shaping public opinion on the issues that affect Australia. Led by a team of highly credible and experienced journalists, editorial themes cover economic, political and social issues.

“Unparalleled national and international news and business sections are supplemented by indepth business to business sections such as: The Australian IT (the largest newspaper IT section in the world), Higher Education, Media, Aviation, Thoroughbreds. As well, lifestyle, arts and sports sections balance the read for our independent thinking and influential readership.” *The Australian* website

***The Straits Times***: “*The Straits Times* is one of the region's oldest English-language daily newspapers. It is the flagship publication of the publicly-listed Singapore Press Holdings group.

“First published on July 15, 1845, *The Straits Times* is the most widely read newspaper in Singapore. *The Sunday Times*, which is produced by the same team of journalists, has a circulation of nearly 400,000 and a readership of 1.23 million.

“*The Straits Times* strives to be an authoritative provider of news and views, with special focus on Singapore and the Asian region. It has nine bureaus in Asia and a worldwide network of other contributors.” – *The Straits Times* website

## Appendix 4

### **The Emblem of Beijing's Bid**

This picture is taken from BOBICO's photo album entitled 'China's Olympics – A Century-Old Dream'. The album was published in July, 2002 to mark the first anniversary of Beijing's successful bid. The picture shows the emblem of Beijing's bid and its designer Chen Shaohua.

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