

# Chinese Diplomacy in the Multimedia Age: Public Diplomacy and Civil Diplomacy

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## I. Introduction

Phenomena of globalization brought about by the development of information communication technology are beginning to profoundly change the traditional ways in which societies functioned. Signs of change are also evident in the ways in which diplomacy is carried out. Taking note of the changes taking place in diplomacy, Jonathan H. Spalter asserts that the development of information technology has brought about a new form of diplomacy called "digital diplomacy" that is mediated by electronics technology.<sup>1</sup>

The wave of globalization has also affected China, where the vertically structured diplomatic system has begun to show clear signs of change especially since the 1990s. As demonstrated in Figure 1, China's external relations were once unified under the national government, but with the country's

exposure to globalization, plural channels are beginning to mediate between the inside and the outside of the country. As it has become relatively easier for ordinary Chinese to disseminate information to the outside world, since information on international society now reaches the country on a real-time basis, and since a number of non-governmental factors have come to interfere with diplomatic issues between state governments, the borders between domestic and international problems are becoming increasingly ambiguous. Because of these developments, the Chinese government is finding it increasingly difficult to take recourse to the monopolization of information and the manipulation of public opinion, which once served as the source of power for its diplomacy. In a multimedia age, characterized by the unlimited, multi-directional, and instantaneous transmission of information, the Chinese government must take on the new task of formulating policies promptly, flexibly, and efficiently while giving due consideration to the masses both within and outside the country.

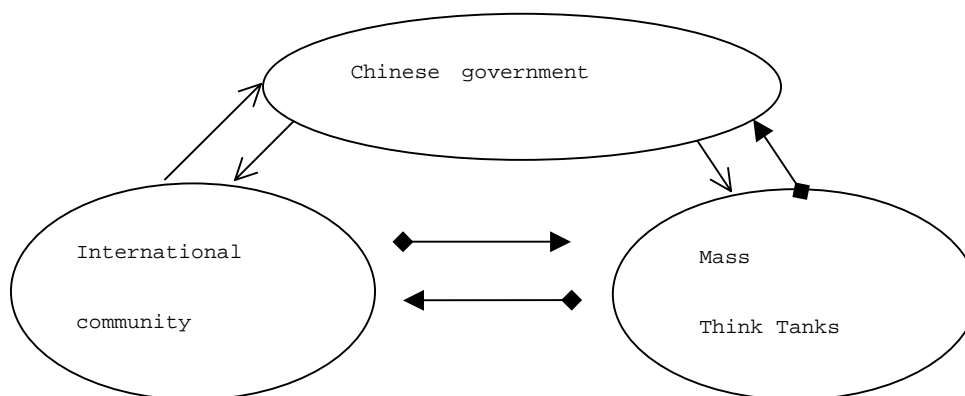


Figure 1. Traditional Chinese diplomacy

In order to tackle this new task, the Chinese government, on the one hand, is stepping up its transmission of information to the international community, following the examples of the United States and other advanced countries. On the other, it is trying to cut off the channels of communication between the international community and the masses inside China, while also attempting to stick fast to the existing framework for the formulation of diplomatic policies inside the country. This dual stance of the Chinese government is giving rise to a new style of diplomacy, called public diplomacy. Since the mid-1990s, and in particular since 9/11, the advanced countries including the United States and Great Britain have bolstered their public diplomacy by further developing their traditional efforts at international publicity. Although China's public diplomacy is basically of the same nature as

the American and British versions, it has some distinct features.

On the other hand, consequent upon reforms of the mass media, China since the early 1990s has begun to see a growing trend toward the formation of public opinion not only on internal affairs but also in diplomatic relations.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Chinese masses, with their own public opinion about foreign relations, have begun to dispatch information on their own, making use of the Internet and other new media for communication, and thereby exerting influence on the Chinese government's diplomatic stance and foreign countries' policies toward China. This sort of "civilian diplomacy," undertaken primarily by the masses, is a new phenomenon that has begun to emerge since the 1990s, and is worthy of careful examination.

Both the dual stance taken by the Chinese government, which is aimed at bolstering the dispatch of information to the outside world, while maintaining the barrier of communications between the inside and the outside, and the formation of public opinion on foreign relations by the Chinese masses, which has the potential to develop into civil diplomacy, are closely related to reforms in the Chinese mass media. While an increasing number of studies have been undertaken recently on the reforms of the Chinese mass media from the standpoint of their effects on democratization,<sup>3</sup> there have been few studies on the effects of these reforms on Chinese diplomacy.

This paper attempts to shed light on changes in Chinese diplomacy, including both public diplomacy and civil diplomacy, from the standpoint of the reforms of the Chinese mass media.

What are the main media that the Chinese masses depend upon in obtaining information? In 1998, China launched a project to enable "every village to receive at least Channel 1 of China Central TV (CCTV) and one channel of a provincial-level TV," with the goal of raising the coverage of radio and television to 91.5% and 92.5%, respectively, by 2000. It is safe to say that in present-day China, particularly in the countryside where the illiteracy rate is high, television is quite influential. Table 1 compares the findings of a questionnaire survey on the main sources of information for people in the rural districts of the southern part of Jiangsu Province, including mainly Suzhou, Wuxi, and Changzhou, where the illiteracy rate is relatively low, and the findings of a survey in Shanghai, a large city.<sup>4</sup> It is clear from this table that in the countryside and the large cities in the economically well-developed coastal area, newspapers and television are important sources of information for the masses. It is evident, in particular, that both in the countryside and in the large city, television is by far the most important source of information for a majority of people, without regard to differences in income levels. In the light of this fact, therefore, this paper places importance on television, among

other media. Furthermore, given the fact that the phenomenon known as “net nationalism” has drawn much attention both inside and outside China since the mid-1990s, this paper takes into account the fact that the Internet is rapidly coming into wide use in China.

Table 1. Use of Media as Sources of Information

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

## II. Bolstering the Dissemination of Information to the Outside World: The Start of Public Diplomacy in China

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

As is evident from the definition by the former USIA, public diplomacy in the United States is understood to encompass two kinds of activities, namely, information

furnishing activities (dissemination of information abroad and international broadcasting), and international educational and cultural exchange. However, it is only in the United States that the term "public diplomacy" is defined as constituting these two aspects. In Great Britain and other countries, it is understood in the sense of "understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics."

In the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident, which gave China serious concern over the international climate surrounding itself, China earnestly embarked upon efforts to bolster "foreign propaganda" in order to improve its image abroad. Since the end of the Cold War, the Chinese government has been trying to bolster its dissemination of information abroad by strengthening its "foreign propaganda system" and its system of reporting international news. This seems to have marked the beginning of China's public diplomacy.

#### 1. Traditional Chinese Propaganda

In China, the control and guidance of public opinion are considered as two categories: internal propaganda and foreign propaganda. The word "propaganda" is often used in the same sense as "publicity," and seldom has a negative connotation.

It was in 1928 that the Communist Party of China (CPC) published its first information bulletin for dissemination abroad. *The Pioneer*, published in San Francisco, was a

non-periodical magazine meant for overseas Chinese, publicizing the Party's opinions and positions and reporting on criminal conduct committed by the Japanese Army in China. Subsequently the Party published the magazine *Voice of China* in Shanghai in the 1930s, and the magazine *China Digest* in Hong Kong in the latter half of the 1940s. Thus, since even before the Second World War, the CPC had maintained a tradition of publicizing its opinions and positions through a number of publications including these. Beginning with its encounter with Edgar Snow in 1936, the Party began to place importance on contacts with foreign correspondents, trying to publicize its opinions abroad through them. In the early 1940s, an English-language radio broadcasting station was opened in Yanan.<sup>7</sup> The dissemination of the Party's opinions abroad through its periodicals, selective contacts with foreign correspondents, and English-language radio broadcasts constituted the CPC's three traditional means of foreign propaganda.

After the founding of the People's Republic, the country inherited these three means of publicity in their entirety. In the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the country, the entry of foreign correspondents to China was essentially banned, with the few exceptions of correspondents from the Soviet Union and East European countries.<sup>8</sup> However, under instructions from Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi that "China should



take a more positive attitude toward foreign correspondents willing to visit the country," China began to make a positive approach to foreign correspondents, from the time of the Geneva Conference in 1954. In July 1955, Zhou Enlai instructed Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Zhang Wentian and Assistant Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua to formulate a policy that would enable the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to handle foreign correspondents' visits to China, and take an increasingly positive attitude toward their visits.<sup>9</sup> In November 1957, when West German reporters expressed the wish to visit China, Chen Yi suggested that by allowing their visit, China would be able to make use of the Western media, and Zhou Enlai concurred.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, Chinese leaders have been making direct contacts with specific correspondents, using the issue of whether visits will be accepted or not as effective leverage, thereby tactfully producing reports that are sympathetic to China and useful for its diplomatic operations. Looking at publications for dissemination abroad that were launched after the founding of the People's Republic, the English-language *People's China* was inaugurated in 1950, and the *Beijing Review*, a weekly magazine presenting China's positions on international affairs, was launched in 1958. China Radio International (CRI) started broadcasting in the 1950s.

## 2. From Propaganda to Public Diplomacy

After the end of the Cold War, China faced hostile international public opinion, coming under criticism for violations of human rights, and being seen as a threat to the international community. Seeing the need to pacify this public opinion abroad, China found it inevitable to change its method of publicizing itself to the outside world.

The statements to the outside world that has been stepped up after the end of the Cold War were public diplomacy, and as such had features different from those of traditional propaganda. First, the techniques employed by China's public diplomacy in the post-Cold War era were different from those used for propaganda. Second, as the reform of the media began within the country as will be explained later, China's activities to publicize itself to the outside world came to be carried out in the atmosphere of a somewhat tense relationship between the government and the mass media. And third, China began to target its public diplomacy activities to unspecified members of the general public, and tried to carry them out effectively under the market mechanism.

In the post-Cold War era, China made it a policy to carry out public diplomacy based on the premise of supporting the leadership of the party, with the following five main objectives: (1) more strongly publicizing China's assertions to the outside world; (2) forming a desirable image of the

state; (3) issuing rebuttals to distorted overseas reports about China; (4) improving the international environment surrounding China; and (5) exerting influence on the policy decisions of foreign countries.<sup>11</sup>

At the National Conference on Foreign Propaganda in October 2001, Zhao Qizheng, Minister of the State Council Information Office and Director of the CPC Central Committee's Foreign Propaganda Office, identified Deng Xiaoping's "Three Represents" theory as the guiding principle for international publicity activities, and asserted that in order to create a favorable international public opinion, "we must from now on have greater awareness of the need to provide better services, study the needs of overseas audiences, provide them with large quantities of information, help them understand China better, and make it possible for them to make use of various opportunities available in China."<sup>12</sup> Here, a step was taken forward from the 1990s, making it clear that external publicity activities would be charged with the new task of contributing to the country's economic development, in addition to building a desirable image of the Chinese state in the minds of foreign audiences.

Thus, building a desirable image of the state, publicizing China's opinions to the outside world, and promoting business activities both within and outside China are the objectives of China's public diplomacy in the post-Cold

War era.

Since the 16th National People's Congress of the CPC, the policy of "peaceful rising" has captured attention as representing the new image of the state, and a large number of studies have been made on this policy. In reality, however, various efforts aimed at building a desirable image of the Chinese state have been carried out from the beginning of the 1990s. According to a study by Hongying Wang, throughout the 1990s the Chinese government strived to build an image of China as "a major power dedicated to collaboration with the international community and to the safeguarding of peace."<sup>13</sup>

The reorganization of offices responsible for guiding external publicity began in the 1990s. In 1991, the Information Office of the State Council was established, and in 1998 the English name of the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee was changed into the Publicity Department. In 1984, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a spokesperson system, with Qian Qishen being appointed as the first spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the latter half of the 1990s, other government offices followed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' example, trying to strengthen their foreign publicity activities and establish news press systems of their own, while maintaining liaisons with one another. Consequently, China's information dissemination activities came to be undertaken by the news press systems of

the Party and government offices, and by the spokesperson systems and publicity media at various levels of government offices that had been established in the 1990s.

The new techniques of public diplomacy that went into operation during the 1990s also became diversified, going beyond the traditional three means of periodicals, selective contacts with foreign correspondents, and English-language radio broadcasting. The government issued instructions demanding that foreign publicity be reinforced with the adoption of the following six techniques: (1) boosting external publicity through the Internet; (2) expanding external cultural exchanges by unifying exchanges and external publicity; (3) making the external cultural industry more competitive and influential, thereby making cultural publicity more attractive; (4) adopting a more positive attitude toward foreign media and reporters; (5) strengthening external publicity activities by studying the market mechanism for external publicity items, and promoting moves abroad by Chinese media; and (6) making concentrated efforts to publicize important issues on a priority basis.

As evident from these techniques adopted by the Chinese government, China's public diplomacy in the post-Cold War era took on the following three characteristics. First, its public diplomacy attaches importance to both external cultural exchanges and external publicity. Second, it aims to send out

information to the outside world through the market mechanism. And third, China focuses on selected issues in its public diplomacy. These features mean that China's efforts to strengthen the system of external publicity activities were carried out primarily by reinforcing various organizations' capabilities to disseminate information abroad, and by boosting external publicity activities on an issue-by-issue basis. China has placed a special emphasis on foreign publicity activities on issues of international attention. In carrying out foreign publicity activities on "planned parenthood" in FY2001, the Chinese government revised its website on "China's population and planned parenthood," and issued a publication titled *China's Population Today* on six occasions. Moreover, not only did the government actively respond to interviews by foreign correspondents concerning planned parenthood, but also made positive approaches to Chinese and foreign reporters, sponsoring two international conferences and press briefings. The government periodically gathered foreign media reports on planned parenthood in China, and offered "corrections" to inaccurate foreign reports through the pages of the *China Daily*.<sup>14</sup>

While these foreign publicity activities have had some effect, there are serious obstacles that remain to be overcome. In particular, the Chinese government has identified inequalities between its own information disseminating

ability and those of advanced countries in the information-oriented age (the fact that China, as a developing country, lags behind advanced countries technologically and therefore in terms of information dissemination capability), and its lack of competitiveness as the major obstacles to overcome, and has tried very hard to deal with them.

### 3. The Mass Media as the Main Pillar of Information Dissemination and China's Public Diplomacy

Government offices of various levels and major organizations of the Party and the government are trying to reinforce their external publicity activities through such means as disclosure of their operations, distribution of publications meant for foreign audiences, news press, and responses to interviews by foreign reporters, the efforts to reinforce the external publicity activities of the Chinese mass media, which are performing a special role in China's foreign publicity, take on aspects different from the efforts to boost other organizations' external publicity activities.

Relationships between political power and the mass media can be grouped into four types, namely relationships peculiar to the "theory of authoritarianism," the "theory of liberalism," the "theory of social accountability," and the "theory of Soviet-like totalitarianism." The mass media in China are now at the stage of trying to break out of the mold

peculiar to the theory of totalitarianism.

(1) Reforms of the Mass Media: Adaptation to the Market Mechanism

Before the launch of the reform and open door policy, China adopted "vertical information measures."<sup>16</sup> In 1978, it began to reform the mass media under the slogan that the mass media should be organized as projects, and managed as enterprises (Shiye Danwei, Qiye Guanli). Under this slogan, a corporate management and administrative system was introduced into the media; the organizations were given increased discretionary powers for decisions on page layouts, the selection of advertisements, and pricing; and they were forced to become financially self-supporting. Although the basic characteristic of the media as "mouthpiece of the Party" remained unchanged, the principle governing their management was now changed. Consequently, television stations took on the dual characteristics of being partly projects and partly corporations."

At the 11th National Conference on Radio and Television in March 1983, it was resolved that radio and television stations should strive to "expand their sources of revenues and improve their economic effectiveness" as part of the objectives of reform.<sup>17</sup> In the "Decision to Expedite the Development of Tertiary Industries," which was issued in June



1992 by the Central Committee of the CPC, the mass media, including radio and television stations, were classified as part of the tertiary industry, and were required to practice "corporate management." Finally, at the first meeting of the Ninth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government adopted a policy of gradually reducing its provision of funds to organizations in charge of various projects, including television stations, and to ultimately make these organizations financially independent.

The "separation of ownership and management" has gone forward, and the government's subsidies to the media have been mostly abolished, with the result that newspapers such as the *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily* and *Economic Daily* are now managed on a financially self-supporting basis.<sup>18</sup> The reforms of the mass media over the last two decades have been based on the policy that the media should be "managed as corporations, and operated in the open market."

In the course of the implementation of the policy to promote the "corporate management of project organizations," Shanghai Television ran commercials for the first time on January 28, 1979. Three months later, on March 15, Shanghai Television ran the first TV commercial ever broadcast inside China advertising a foreign product. In November 1979, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) gave approval to Shanghai Television's commercials on an ex

*post facto* basis, issuing "A Notification concerning Publication and Broadcasting of Commercials for Foreign Products by Newspapers, Radios and Televisions," which approved the running of such commercials. On January 1, 1994, CCTV began to run TV commercials for 30 seconds during the thirty-minute news program of CCTV from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. and the subsequent weather forecast. On April 1, it extended these commercials from 30 seconds to one minute. Then, in 1995, it introduced a "bidding" system for commercials to be run after the thirty-minute news program of CCTV from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.

In this way, television channels and other media transformed themselves into a mass media industry. In terms of the tax payments, China's mass media emerged as the fourth largest industry, outstripping tobacco. Under the "self-supporting accounting system" the media earn approximately 70% of their revenues through advertising, amounting to approximately 29 billion yuan in 1999, with the figure increasing at an amazing pace of 34.77% per year (see Table 2).

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

	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999
Television	0.16	0.87	1.69	3.62	10.00	29.44	64.98	114.41	156.1
Newspapers	0.73	2.2	3.55	6.29	9.62	37.71	64.67	96.82	112.3

Magazines	0.11	0.28	0.45	0.85	0.99	1.84	3.82	5.27	8.9
Radio	0.18	0.26	0.47	0.74	1.41	3.49	7.37	10.57	12.5
Total for media	1.18	3.61	6.16	11.50	22.02	72.48	140.84	227.07	289.8

Source: Compiled on the basis of data taken from CHINA.COM.CN

<http://www.china.org.cn>

Having been forced into financial independence, the Chinese media had to compete with one another, and the competition became overheated as many TV stations were established beginning in the 1980s. In 1983, the Department of Radio, Film and Television of the State Council released a policy on establishing TV stations. Unlike the previous policy that allowed the establishment of TV stations only at the central and provincial levels, the new policy made possible the establishment of TV stations at the city and prefectural levels as well. Following the establishment of the first station in Shanghai in 1985, cable TV stations were opened in various places. From 1994 to 2000, the number of households with subscriptions to cable TV jumped from 1.64 million, with broadcasting for an average of 439 hours per week, to 3.03 million households and 658 hours.<sup>19</sup> One phenomenon revealing the fierce competition in the TV industry is the fact that audience rating survey companies began to be established in various places around the country starting around 1996.

As China's entry into the World Trade Organization drew

closer to fruition, the second reform objective required of the Chinese mass media, following the achievement of "financially independence," was to beef up their international competitiveness. The operating revenue of CCTV in 1997 was less than 600 million dollars, and even the sales of the Guangzhou Daily Press Group, a winner in market competition, were less than 300 million dollars. The integration of the mass media began in the latter half of the 1990s with the purpose of improving their international competitiveness. Following the establishment of the Hangzhou Daily Press Group as the first group in early January 1996, a total of 16 press groups were established during the period of the Ninth Five-Year Plan. Each group holds total assets amounting to more than several hundred million yuan. Reform of the TV industry was also carried out. After gaining qualification in July 1997 to manage national assets, Shanghai Television is now in the process of forming an audio-visual press group encompassing radio stations under a unified control. The TV and audio-visual industry is scheduled for further integration in the coming three years.

It was in Document No. 82 of 1992 that the expression "China Media Group" first appeared in a notification issued by the central government. With this document, China earnestly embarked on a policy of reorganizing the mass media industry under the slogan of building "larger radio stations, TV stations, publicity activities, and a larger industry," by

abolishing the policy of "establishing TV stations at four levels," and beginning to reorganize the TV industry into three major stations by integrating cable TV and terrestrial TV stations. In August and September 2001, Document No. 17, entitled "Some Opinions of the Central Department of Radio and Television, the SARFT, and the General Administration of Press and Publication concerning Reforms of Press, Publication, Television, Radio, and Film," was issued. In accordance with this document, a grouping of China's mass media got underway, with the establishment of large-sized multimedia groups as a new goal.

Toward the end of 2001, China's entry into the WTO was officially approved. In its statutes of participation, China made no agreement to open up its TV and radio industries. Under the existing "Regulation on the Management of Radio and Television" no TV or radio station is allowed to lease itself or sell broadcasting time. No radio or TV station can be run by a foreign venture, Chinese and foreign joint venture, or Chinese and foreign cooperative joint venture. Furthermore, the "Procedures for the Implementation of the Law concerning Joint Ventures Using Chinese and Foreign Investment" explicitly specifies the press, publishing, radio, television, and film industries as being off-limits to foreign-invested companies. According to the "Regulation on the Management of Radio and Television," only media organizations at the

provincial or higher levels have the right to produce TV programs; other organizations and individuals are prohibited from producing public broadcasting programs. Moreover, an application must be approved to receive satellite TV programs.

Following China's accession to the WTO, the problem of competition between the Internet and television is bound to surface. Moreover, the Chinese mass media are expected to face new competition after the entry in the WTO. The agreement of China's admission stipulates that within one year after entering the organization, foreign companies will be given the right to own up to 30% of the stocks of Chinese firms active in the Internet, television, radio and similar businesses in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, and in the second year after China's membership, foreign companies will be able to own up to 50% of stocks in Chinese firms anywhere in China.<sup>20</sup> With regard to foreign investment in the publishing business, the agreement stipulates that import management rights will not be opened to foreign investment, and that within the first year after China's participation in the WTO, foreign companies will be allowed to establish joint venture marketing companies in five special economic zones and eight major cities, with the areas expanded to provincial capitals in the second year of participation. Within the third year, restrictions on area, quantity, stocks, and form will be abolished, and the importation of up to 20 foreign films will also be admitted.

The marketing of visual software will also be allowed.

To mitigate the effects of the country's participation in the WTO, the Chinese government has announced that it will implement a series of measures, including further reorganization of the mass media into a smaller number of groups, strengthening market integration power, rearrangement of the functions of organizations in charge of the mass media and reinforcement of their management, and the promotion of networking and digitalization.<sup>21</sup>

However, the government's efforts to implement these measures are facing a number of serious obstacles, including duplicate investment, and shortages or poor qualities of technologies, human resources, and funds.<sup>22</sup> At the first media forum held in China, in December 2002, Zhao Qizheng, Minister of the State Council Information Office, emphasized the following four points when discussing problems afflicting the Chinese mass media and measures that had to be taken to promote their development in the future: (1) the circulation or number of subscribers was small; (2) there were operations that were running deficits due to shortages of managerial competence and operating funds; (3) there was a need to accelerate the media's movement toward the market economy, and to help readjust its industrial structure; and (4) the media should be encouraged to continue expanding their exchanges with foreign media.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, since 1978, the Chinese government has

consistently promoted the mass media's transition to a market economy, by taking various means to strengthen their competitiveness. As the movement toward a market economy got underway, the mass media has gradually taken increasingly active attitudes toward consumers, gradually leading to the formation of public opinion.

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

While the intensification of competition in the mass media in China gave rise to the scandalous practice of "reporting news for fees," it also aroused discussions about the function of the mass media as part of public opinion maintaining a watch over the government, and actually encouraged the mass media to start playing that role.

For the Chinese mass media to survive competition in the open market, depending exclusively on advertising revenues, they must supply services well adapted to the needs of consumers. In 1994 an opinion piece was circulated, titled "Who is the God of Television?" criticizing the situation where "the top leadership, making up 2% of the population, holds information on the remaining 98%, who are the masses" as unhealthy, and demanding that the contents of mass media reporting should be diversified. This document opened a lively discussion over the



need to build mass media for the masses of people.

At the beginning of the 1990s, a shift began to take place in the domestic propaganda function, away from "propaganda and education" and toward "guiding public opinion." In the present world, where it is impossible and impracticable for state authorities to strictly regulate information, China has come to rely on domestic publicity to perform the role of "channeling diversities of thoughts and opinions into correct and sound directions."<sup>24</sup> However, the reporting of news related to international affairs, which falls within the sphere of external publicity, still remains subject to strict controls.

External and internal propaganda are expected to play different roles and are targeted at different audiences, but in reality both are undertaken by the same mass media organizations, including China Central TV (CCTV 9 channels), the *China Daily*, China Radio International, and the Xinhua News Agency. In reporting important issues, unforeseen incidents, and other sensitive and delicate issues, they must follow the unified guidance of the Party's local propaganda departments, and observe the discipline on propaganda.<sup>25</sup> When a Chinese TV reports on a certain event, it must first draw up a comprehensive reporting plan, broken down into detailed plans for all the specific stages involved. In performing an important propaganda duty, such as reporting on the Guoqing Jie (Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of

China), it is customary for TV stations to draw up minute plans for all the pertinent programs on a day-to-day basis from October 1, the peak day, until October 15.<sup>26</sup>

Each year, the Chinese government issues a series of directives concerning publicity and minute standards for reporting, and provides guidance to various news organizations to engage in publicity activities following these directions. For example, in a directive issued in 1991 under the title of "Several Opinions of the Central Propaganda Department concerning Present Propaganda Maneuvering," it prescribed that reporting on developments in and about the Soviet Union should stick fast to the principle of being "accurate, careful, low-key, and moderate."<sup>27</sup> In 1999, the following six publicity campaigns were carried out under the leadership of the Party's Central Department of Radio and Television: publicity about the 20th anniversary of the launching of the reform and open door policy, at around the time of the lunar New Year; publicity about the 80th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement of 1919; publicity about the May 8, 1999 Incident, i.e., the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia; a crackdown campaign on Falun Dafa, an organization engaged in traditional Chinese breathing, which the government alleged to be subversive; publicity about the Guoqing Jie on October 1; publicity about the spirit guiding the Fourth Plenary Session of the 15th Central Committee of the CPC; and a

publicity campaign to celebrate the reversion of Macao.<sup>28</sup> With regard to media reporting on the May 8 Incident, the Party's Central Department is reported to have specifically instructed news organizations to publicize the Incident in such a way as to "lift the morale of the people, appeal to, instead of inciting, their feelings, properly guide public opinion, and resolutely contribute to China's diplomacy." News organizations were further instructed that "the publicity campaign should last for a little more than one month, be divided into three stages," and that "reporting should be made in a systematic order, focusing on 'feelings,' 'reason,' and 'actions,' respectively, in the three stages."<sup>29</sup>

In this way, the Chinese government has always worked out a fine-grained policy concerning external publicity or reporting on issues related to international affairs. Under government guidance, the Chinese mass media have been required to place an emphasis on the bright aspects of international affairs, to be mindful of giving positive effects on public morality and thoughts as well as on the people's scientific and cultural temperament, and to uphold the same political standpoint as the government's. Slogans such as "democracy under centralized guidance" and "reporting should be centered around the positive aspects of things," which are propounded as important components of the guiding principles, are dictated by the idea that "stability should come before all

else."

To ensure that the mass media do not deviate from the basic tone of the government concerning an international issue, they are only allowed to report on international news in China as they are reported in the international news of China National Radio, China Radio International (CRI), and China Central TV (CCTV), or as they are broadcast by the Xinhua News Agency's central news. The media are not allowed to broadcast international news programs or special programs on international incidents obtained from foreign satellite TVs or other channels. Nor are they allowed to internally broadcast the Xinhua News Agency's overseas broadcasting programs.<sup>30</sup>

The government and the Party of China are trying hard to get a thirty-minute news program of CCTV from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. broadcast across the country. Channel 1 in each locality is required to air this thirty-minute program intact every day in the same time slot; not only are they prohibited from failing to broadcast the program, or from disrupting it, but are also prohibited from superimposing subtitles to report other pieces of information, and even from running commercials other than those run on CCTV's original news program.<sup>31</sup> Hotels and inns are required to be able to fully receive programs of the CCTV, Channel 1 in their provinces, and the local Channel 1. Hotels with a three-star or better rating that fail to satisfy this condition are denied permits to receive satellite TV

programs.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the Chinese mass media find themselves facing a very difficult dilemma: on the one hand, they have been cast into a fierce struggle for existence; and on the other, in reporting international news, they are required to follow strict regulations set by the government to "guide public opinion" in a capacity as "mouthpiece of the government."

### (3) Strengthening the International Dissemination of Information: System for Reporting Unforeseen Incidents

This form of external publicity has proved effective to some extent, but still suffers from serious drawbacks as well. The government finds the asymmetry between China's information dissemination capability and those of advanced countries and the lack of competitiveness among the Chinese mass media to be especially problematic, and has worked hard to overcome these drawbacks. With a view to beefing up the information dissemination capability and international competitiveness of the mass media, the government in 2003 began to place emphasis on the establishment of three systems: one for supervising and coordinating activities to publicize China to the outside world, one for disseminating news abroad, and a third for coordinating news reporting that can promptly and efficiently deal with unforeseen incidents.<sup>33</sup>

The new system proved effective reporting unforeseen

incidents in February 2003. Following the crash of the American space shuttle Columbia on February 1, CCTV ran a special newscast of the incident, interrupting regular programming. The Chinese media also acted promptly in reporting the serial bombings at Tshinghua University and Beijing University that took place in February of the same year. The bombings took place on 11:50 a.m. and 1:20 p.m., and the Xinhua News Agency aired initial reports on the incidents at 1:27 and 2:44 p.m., respectively. WWW.CHINANNEWS.COM also quickly reported on the incidents. Subsequently, it made nearly 10 follow-up news reports on the bombings, including on-the-spot broadcasts, reports on the situation of the wounded, the government's response, the causes of the bombings, and the reaction of the public.

On March 20, 2003, the Iraq War began. In stark contrast to the Chinese media's total silence in the aftermath of 9/11, the CCTV set up a round-the-clock reporting system on the war on the day it began. When the time for the news program came, each radio or TV station, in addition to reporting on the war situation in Iraq, asked a panel specialists to comment, and sometimes hosted discussions among them, on the war's progress and the international situation. With the dramatic increase in the quantity of reporting on international issues and with the dramatic improvement in the speed of broadcast of these reports, as many as 51.7% of the residents of Shanghai were

reported to be watching, listening to, or reading about the Iraq War for 60 minutes or more every day,<sup>34</sup> and CCTV won an unprecedented audience rating.

What was characteristic about the reporting in China on the Iraq War was the tendency to adopt a humanitarian perspective, without discussing the rights and wrongs of the war itself. This reporting posture seems revealing of the Chinese media's intent to survive within international competition by presenting a standpoint different from those of foreign media.<sup>35</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that with this posture, it will be difficult for the Chinese mass media to facilitate the formation of a public opinion that can be shared with other countries.

The efforts to establish a system for coordinating news reporting that could promptly and efficiently deal with unforeseen incidents proved effective in providing coverage of social news and international news not closely related to China. By contrast, in reporting unforeseen incidents with the potential to damage the country's image abroad, such as the outbreak of SARS, China hesitated and failed to allow prompt coverage. It was not until April 2003 when objective reporting on the outbreak of the illness began to be made in China, that the Chinese mass media regained the confidence of the international community to some extent, false rumors about the illness disappeared, and society began to regain stability.

After the experiences reporting on the Tsinghua and Beijing University bombings, the Iraq War, and SARS, the method of controlling public opinion has begun to change into one of "guiding public opinion under information disclosure."<sup>36</sup>

#### (4) Strengthening the Dissemination of Information Abroad: The Foreign Media's "Incursions into China" and the Chinese Media's Expansion Abroad

After joining the WTO, China will have to slacken its regulations on foreign media. When Shanghai TV began broadcasting *Sesame Street* beginning on February 14, 1998, it began, with the help of a team of researchers at Fudan University, to reproduce this program, now broadcast in 140 countries, into a Chinese version meant specifically for Chinese children.<sup>37</sup> Today, however, popular animated cartoon programs from Japan, such as *Chibi-maruko*, are aired on Chinese TVs in their original forms.

A large number of foreign media have moved into China. In the print world, magazines including the fashion journal *ELLE*, are already being published in China. During 2003, magazines such as *Newsweek*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and *Forbes* were scheduled to start publishing Chinese editions in China. *Newsweek* was scheduled to be published in China under the title *Newsweek Selecti*.<sup>38</sup> The Chinese editions of these three magazines were scheduled to appear in China not as mere



Chinese translations of the original English, but with contents re-edited for Chinese audiences and therefore different from the original versions.

The Chinese mass media also began to establish joint ventures with foreign media. On September 19, 2001, Star Television (currently STAR) was granted permission to operate a cable TV station in the Zhujiang area of Guangdong Province, and began full-fledged broadcasting on March 28, 2002. The cable TV has a channel for entertainment programs, broadcast in the Beijing dialect round-the-clock, and targeted at young people aged between 18 and 28. The channel had 970,000 households as subscribers as of December 2002.<sup>39</sup> Star TV also has five other channels, including Channel V and channels offering sports, movies, and nature/science.

Following Star TV, AOL Time Warner and China Entertainment Television (CETV) also obtained a license to broadcast commercial programs of CCTV in Guangdong Province, and together had 600,000 subscribing households as of December 2002. This number was expected to increase to 1.2 million households during 2003.<sup>40</sup> Toward the end of 2002, Star TV concluded a contract with the Hunan Media Group. Now, CCTV-9 (English-language program) can be broadcast via AOL's cable network.

Viacom's music channel (MTV) is broadcast round the clock, and 70% of its programs consist of Western pop music. *MTV Tien*

*Lai Tsun*, a one-hour program broadcast every day, is very popular in China.

The American company Encore has been engaged since 1995 in joint production of a one-hour program that is broadcast by CCTV-8 during prime time.

On August 26, 2001 Disney.com.cn, a 100%-owned subsidiary of the American company Disney, began operations in China (<http://www.disney.com.cn/park/homepage/today/flash/index.html?clk=1004398>).

On November 19, 2002, the British firm Person established CTV Media, a joint venture with CCTV, with a view to offering educational and telephone shopping programs to 350 million homes through television and the Internet.

With the signing of a contract between CCTV and the American news channel CNN on November 16, 2002, enabling each party to use the news programs of the other, the two companies launched a personnel exchange and training program.

Beginning on September 15, 2001, a Nickelodeon program for children began to be broadcast, and by 2002 it was broadcast by more than 130 TV stations in China. An estimated 300 to 500 million Chinese are expected to watch the program.

CCTV has signed mutual broadcasting rights contracts for programs with AOL, the British BskyB, and the French Vivendi Universal. Under these contracts, the three foreign companies

obtained rights to broadcast to Chinese hotels with three-star or better ratings, and within the special districts. Hotels with three-star or better ratings in China have only a little over one million rooms at present, and remain a very small fraction of the total number of hotel rooms in China. However, as of January 2003, a total of 30 channels, including Bloomberg, Star TV, CNN, HBO, and BBC World, have already obtained the right to broadcast to hotels with three-star or better ratings.

As noted before, foreign media have only made inroads into China in the areas of entertainment, culture, education, and sports, with news reporting still remaining off-limits. In fact, in 2002, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs temporarily withheld BBC's right to broadcast to hotels with three-star or better ratings on the grounds of a breach of contract by the BBC.

Exchanges between the Chinese and foreign media must be interactive by nature. For Chinese media, expanding abroad is an indispensable prerequisite for cultivating a cooperative relationship with foreign media. Because of the interactive principle of international exchanges in mass media, CCTV-9's broadcasting abroad, for instance in the United States, has nearly 700,000 subscribers, and its satellite broadcasting in the United States also has more than 500,000 subscribers. It seems safe to say that the infrastructure for China's public diplomacy is being prepared.

### III. China's Civil Diplomacy

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

While trying to bolster its international dissemination of information, the Chinese government is also making efforts to maintain the barrier separating the inside and outside of the country. To do so, it is trying to maintain the system for unifying the dissemination of information abroad under its own control by imposing severe restrictions on the mass media, on the one hand, and also trying to shut out the inflow of information from abroad into China.

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

At the same time, however, there have been changes in the method of controlling information. Previously, China used the method of "cutting off" the inflow of information. When watching satellite TV programs, it was not infrequent for people to see the screen suddenly become blank. When dealing with news reports that it found undesirable, the government upheld the principle that "the reporting of such news should either be withheld, delayed, or be made only briefly." At present, the Chinese government has adopted a system of approvals and licenses to control information, under which it

"would regulate but not cut off the flow of information, and open up but not give the media a free hand." There are two aspects to this system of approvals and licenses: it is meant to regulate the inflow of information from abroad, on the one hand, while also to control the contents of broadcasting within the country.

Each year, an overall plan, including quantitative quotas, is drawn up for foreign programs (including those from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) to be approved for domestic broadcasting within the year. Concrete programming proposals, examined and approved in accordance with the overall plan, are announced at the beginning of each year or season. Channel 1 in each locality is prohibited from rebroadcasting foreign programs, and other channels are prohibited from doing so during prime time, from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m.<sup>42</sup>

"Document No. 250," issued in February 1992, laid down regulations on broadcast time for foreign programs. Programs produced abroad, in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan were not supposed to be broadcast in excess of one third of the weekly total broadcast time of each radio and TV station.

Clause 9 of the "Administrative Rule concerning the Introduction and Broadcasting of Foreign Television Programs," announced in February 1994, stipulated the following: "No television station should broadcast TV dramas or movies produced outside of the continent in excess of 25%

of its daily broadcasting time, and should not do so during prime time [6:00 to 10:00 p.m.] in excess of 15% of its daily broadcasting time."<sup>43</sup> The 1994 regulation made no mention of music and other entertainment programs, and in that respect seems to be more moderate than the 1992 regulation.

As for restrictions on cartoons, the broadcast time for such programs produced abroad is not supposed to exceed 25% of the total broadcast time for programs meant for juniors and teenagers. Each TV station is required to keep the broadcast time for foreign-produced cartoon programs at less than 40% of the broadcast time for all cartoon programs.<sup>44</sup>

The 2000 regulation required TV stations to keep the broadcast time for TV dramas produced abroad within 15% of total broadcast time during the prime time from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m..<sup>45</sup>

In addition to restricting the broadcasting of foreign programs, the government has been trying to strengthen the broadcasting of its own programs. The "Regulation on the Administration of Radio and Television," which made improvements to the "Draft Law on Radio and Television" of 1986, and which took effect on September 1, 1997, stipulated that each station should broadcast the programs of CCTV-1 and Radio Beijing.

The "Notification concerning Further Reinforcement of the Administration of Advertising Publicity on Radio and Television," issued on February 17, 1997, set upper limits on

the broadcast time for TV and radio commercials and fees for commercials, and explicitly specified the contents of commercials that could not be broadcast. It prohibited the broadcasting of commercials with contents injurious to the unity of the state, to the stability, honor and interests of the state, and to the unity of the nation, or with contents related to secrets of state, insults, obscenity, and violence to others, and superstitious beliefs, as well as those with contents prohibited by regulations.

In the early 1990s, a number of live broadcast programs made their appearance. In April 1994, a "Forum on Live Broadcasts" was held to discuss the question of how to manage live programs. Participants pointed out the dangers of live broadcast programs, such as the fact that rash opinions and opinions deviating from the official lines of the Party and the government might be broadcast, and concluded that it was imperative to reinforce the "system of supervisory monitoring" of live broadcast programs and to require responsible individuals such as department chiefs and station managers to be present at the scene of broadcast. The forum also concluded that in sensitive times, the contents of live programs should be recorded beforehand.<sup>46</sup> In 1999, a new notification entitled "Tentative Administrative Methods concerning Mass Participation in Live Radio and TV Programs" was issued with stipulations that live programs could be broadcast only with

the consent of the manager of the radio or television station concerned and of the departments of mass media at various levels, that broadcast delays and measures to monitor callers should always be available, and that the individual in charge of the station producing the live program should be held responsible for the program.<sup>47</sup> The latter stipulation meant that the responsible persons were no longer required to be present at the scene of production, as they were under the previous notification, and in this regard this notification represented a relaxation of the restrictions.

Furthermore, beginning in the latter half of the 1990s, the Chinese government strengthened inspection and supervision over broadcast programs. In 1999 the government began to intensify supervision over the channels of CCTV-8 on a priority basis, while also performing similarly strict supervision over provincial-level TV stations broadcasting satellite TV programs. In 2000, it began exercising supervision over the Central People's Radio station and all the channels of CCTV, by recording their programs. More specifically, programs broadcast in the time slot from 6:00 to 11:00 p.m. were monitored on a priority basis.<sup>48</sup> In 2002, the government embarked on the establishment of "watching" and "listening" monitoring organizations, issuing a notification of its intention to reinforce its supervision and administration function over TV and radio programs. The



purpose of the stepped-up monitoring and supervisory activities was to ensure that TV and radio stations were not broadcasting programs whose contents ran counter to the principle concerning the guiding of public opinion, the principle concerning publicity, political disciplines, publicity disciplines, Deng Xiaoping's thought, the "Three Represents" theory, that they were properly relaying the programs of CCTV as required, and that they were not illegally broadcasting foreign programs. The new notification also required monitoring and supervisory organizations to submit by the end of the first week of each month reports on the records of their monitoring activities in the preceding month.<sup>49</sup>

At present, the establishment of radio and TV stations is allowed at the prefectural or higher level. Stations cannot be established by individuals, foreign companies, joint ventures between Chinese and foreign companies, or cooperative joint ventures between Chinese and foreign companies.<sup>50</sup> Individual firms, organizations and schools planning to establish radio and/or TV stations must have their plans reviewed and approved by provincial authorities. These stations are allowed to broadcast news of the parent organizations to some extent, but are prohibited from broadcasting foreign programs. Their primary purpose must be to broadcast programs of CCTV and provincial TV channels, and are prohibited from inserting commercials in these programs.<sup>51</sup>

Despite these restrictions, however, there has been no end to TV stations and cable TV stations broadcasting foreign programs without permission.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, there are limits to official measures to prevent the inflow of information from abroad. At present the reception of foreign programs broadcast via satellite is approved on a license basis, but in reality it is easy to watch foreign programs by installing a satellite dish at one's own cost. After all, China has no choice but to improve the competitiveness of Chinese TV stations. This is how things stand.

## (2) Elimination of Foreign Influences on Programs Produced within China

Another means for maintaining the barrier between the inside and outside is to regulate the participation of foreign companies and people in the production of programs inside China.

China has a very strict system for granting permits and licenses allowing foreigners to participate in the production of broadcasting programs and movies in China. Foreigners, meaning persons without Chinese nationality, are not allowed to become anchorpersons of radio and TV news programs (or to act as commentators on news and special news programs). When it becomes necessary to ask a foreigner to appear on a TV program other than a news program, approval must be obtained from

SARFT.<sup>53</sup>

## 2. Control over the Mass Media and Chinese Public Opinion about Foreign Affairs

Unlike domestic news reporting, which is being deregulated, the regulations on the reporting of international news show no signs of being slackened. Thus, various organizations including the media, which are placed under strict regulations, have been asked to contribute to beefing up China's voice in the formation of international public opinion. Nonetheless, the news reporting activities of the Chinese mass media, in the face of this dilemma, have had the effect of stirring up Chinese nationalism. Following the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in May 1999, an upsurge of anti-American nationalism is reported to have taken place inside China. A review of how the Chinese media competed for greater news coverage at the time identifies problems inherent in the Chinese media that led them to inspire anti-U.S. nationalism.

A survey of the reporting activities of papers including *People's Daily*, *Nanfang Daily*, and *Xinmin Evening News* in the period from September 2001 to April 2002 finds that the number of articles commenting on the foreign policy, economy and culture of the United States remained stable on the whole, and

their comments tended to be rather unbiased.<sup>55</sup>

In stark contrast, however, in the immediate aftermath of the accidental bombing, there was a rush of newspaper articles and TV news coverage on the incident. A very popular program of CCTV called "Focus" (Jiaodian Fangtan), which has enjoyed a high audience rating since its launch on April 1, 1994, reports primarily on political and social issues within China. It also runs follow-ups to specific reports, and high-level Chinese leaders such as Li Peng and Zhu Rongji are reported to watch the program almost every day. When Zhu Rongji visited CCTV in 1998, he praised it for being the mouthpiece of the government, mirror of the Party, and pioneer of the reform.<sup>56</sup> This program reported on the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade every day for three weeks from May 8 until May 26, 1999.<sup>57</sup>

The *Nanfang Daily*, a city paper which in 2000 had a circulation of 500,000 and had ad revenues of 200 million yuan, spent 12 pages reporting on the incident on May 9, 8 pages on May 10, and continued to spare four pages or more for the incident every day for one week.<sup>58</sup>

The *Beijing Youth Daily*, the most popular newspaper among the young people of Beijing, ran a total of 179 articles on or related to the United States in the week from May 8 to May 15, 1999 - 10 articles on May 8, 25 on May 9, 22 on May 10, 36 on May 11, 19 on May 12, 17 on May 13, 30 on May 14, and

20 on May 15.

A close examination of the articles reveals that the number reporting on the facts related to the bombing was small, while a large portion were interviews with the families and friends of the victims. The articles were often accompanied by graphic photographs. By contrast, there were virtually no articles either reporting on making proposals for Chinese policy toward the United States.

The Chinese mass media, which are required to perform the function of "mouthpiece of the government," are forbidden from discussing external policy prior to the announcement of the government's policy through the Xinhua News Agency; and they must compete each other for larger circulation or better audience ratings while facing this restriction. Thus, they vied with one another by presenting "new" and "different" reports from the standpoints of the victims and their families, or from the scene of the accidental bombing, and there is no denying that this behavior tended to inflame anti-U.S. nationalistic sentiment. In dealing with the mass media, China is following what is called a policy which places political reporting under strict, microscopic control, while exercising macroscopic control with regard to the development of the mass media as an industry; He Zhou characterizes the present state of this policy as a tug-of-war between the economic and political elements.<sup>59</sup>

The bottom line for the Chinese government is to tolerate the existence of capital but to not allow it to interfere with propaganda,<sup>60</sup> but in the final analysis not only does this policy end up stirring up nationalistic sentiments toward the outside world, but also renders China's public diplomacy less effective. As noted above, news organizations are working to step up the international dissemination of news by producing programs for external publicity and by advancing into foreign countries. A reporter from CCTV's Channel 9 points out, however, that China's external publicity activities carried out by the mass media have little influence abroad.<sup>61</sup> Thanks to cooperation with overseas TV stations, CCTV's English channel has 14 million households abroad as users. However, a survey by CCTV's English channel found that 90% of its viewers are living within China, that more than 80% watch the channel for the purpose of learning English, and that foreign viewers make up only 4%.<sup>62</sup> CCTV-9 has started advancing into various parts of the world, but is still weak in terms of audience rating and insufficient coverage of local news.<sup>63</sup> Though it suffers from a shortage of funds, CCTV is unable to earn profits by running commercials abroad. Given the strict regulations on the mass media including this regulation on commercials, international broadcasting activities, without the ability to produce programs freely, have naturally become centered around stiff and formalized programs, and especially news on meetings

and conferences. As pointed out by many academics, the strict regulations imposed upon international programs are an impediment to the efforts to step up China's external publicity activities and to make the Chinese mass media more competitive.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the time-consuming process of drawing up guidelines for regulating news reporting is preventing the Chinese mass media from promptly responding to unforeseen incidents.

### 3. The Internet

#### (1) Method of Administering Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs)

The "BBS Forum for Adamantly Protesting the Outrage Committed by NATO," which was launched after the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, is said to be the first decisive test of the Chinese government's policy to guide public opinion with the use of the Internet.

Within one month of its establishment, it had 90,000 posts, and on June 19, 1999, it was renamed the Strong China Forum (Qiangguo Luntan). In early August, full-time moderators were appointed, and in September an eight-member panel was formed. The BBS is accessible daily from 8:00 a.m. to midnight, and has grown to encompass 15 forums, including the one on Japan-China relations. When an issue sensitive to China erupts, the number of persons using the BBS tends to increase

dramatically. On March 18, 2001, the day of the Taiwanese presidential election, it had as many as 230,000 visitors, and 5,680 posts were made. On the following day, March 19, the number of new posts increased to 6,900, and the number of visitors also increased to 270,000. On May 20, the day of the inauguration speech by President Chen Shui-bian, 7,888 new posts were made on the BBS, and there were more than 300,000 accesses.<sup>65</sup>

Through its operation of the Strong China Forum, the Chinese government learned how to guide public opinion on BBSs. The main task of the moderators/administrators of the BBS forum is to delete extreme opinions. Universities often manage BBSs in such a way as to let students sympathetic to the government's position express views in favor of the government's policy on the open forums, and to have them persuade those who have anonymously expressed anti-government views in on-line chat rooms.<sup>66</sup> In view of the possibility that the excessive deleting of undesirable entries from a BBS can drive away potential users, it is considered wise "not to delete entries which do not have to be deleted." Consequently, BBSs and chat rooms are regulated relatively leniently.

The Chinese government is conscious of the strong influence the Internet could have on its management of the political situation. Fully conscious of the imbalance between English and Chinese as means of international communication



on the Internet, the government is trying to step up international publicity on its policies. At the 14th Central Meeting of the Chinese Communist Youth League in December 2000, then Vice President Hu Jintao drew attention to the effects the Internet could have on the youths, and gave instructions that strenuous efforts should be exercised to develop the use of the Internet as a new means of political education.

It is also notable that in chat rooms run by the People's Daily Online and other networks, experts on international relations under the relatively strong influence of the government, including researchers affiliated with the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS, a subsidiary research institute of the Ministry of International Affairs) and the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR, a subsidiary research institute of the Council of State), along with retired ambassadors, hold periodical discussions on international affairs with Internet users. These activities are also performing the role of communicating the government's official views to Internet users.

## (2) Internet Nationalism

According to statistics released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), there were 33.7 million Internet users in China in 2002. The *China Youth Daily* (November

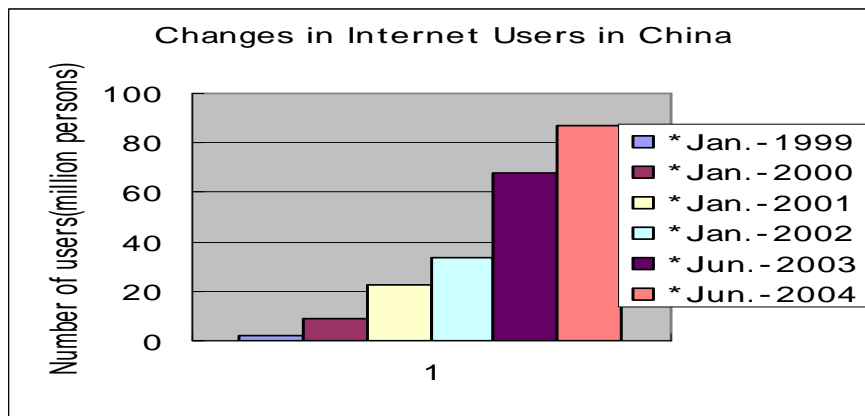
4, 2001) predicted that by 2005, there would be 200 million Internet users, and that in the coming 10 to 20 years the Internet, as the fourth media, would grow more influential than newspapers, radio, and television.

As seen from the fact that China's foreign diplomacy is discussed in an Internet chat room, the Internet is offering an arena for the formation of public opinion concerning international affairs. Academic specialists on foreign diplomacy have long been divided into two groups, hard-liners and those arguing for a conciliatory policy. It is also undeniable, however, that the debate between the two groups was strongly restricted by the government's official view. In other words, the presentation of points of contention through television, newspapers, and academic journals was subject to the influence of the government. On the other hand, it is also true that opinions disagreeing with the government's official view are often expressed on the Internet in China. Moreover, it is not uncommon for extreme views criticizing the government's foreign diplomacy to appear on BBSs and in chat rooms. These phenomena are manifestations of what is called "Internet nationalism."

As demonstrated by Figure 2, the number of Internet users in China has grown year after year. According to CNNIC's statistics at the beginning of 2004, the number of Internet users in China exceeded 78.5 million, the second-largest in

the world. According to CNNIC's statistics on the Internet population released in June 2003, 80% of users in China are young people 35 years in age or younger. Moreover, students at professional schools, and junior and senior high school students account for 83.5% of total users. In other words, 80% of Internet users in China are young people with mid-level educational qualifications.

Figure 2. Changes in Internet Users in China



The apparently radical manifestation of nationalist sentiment on the Internet represents the opinions of only a small portion of young people. Nonetheless, the opinions of this minority expressed on the Internet have grown so influential as to lead the public opinion of the masses, and to affect the Chinese government's attitude toward foreign affairs.

In dealing with the Internet, the Chinese government is pursuing a policy of leniency, allowing young people to use

it to vent their frustration. At the same time, the government is guiding public opinion on the Internet, and is introducing an Internet police force. It seems possible to say that on the whole these measures are not contributing to the healthy formation of public opinion on international affairs.

The use of the Internet, which makes external information readily accessible, has the to nurture mutual trust between the masses in different countries, on the one hand, but also has the possibility of allowing ill-founded anti-American public opinion to be formed in BBSs or chat rooms, for instance, and allowing it to mushroom into a strong hard-line policy toward the outside world in a short span of time. The Luo Gang Incident of 2003 - where a Chinese listener called in to a program hosted by Luo Gang on a radio station in Hunan Province and spoke ill of Chinese people, pretending to be a Japanese student studying in China - seems to be symbolic of this sort of nationalism that can get excited easily.

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

The Chinese masses have begun to take part in diplomacy through the Internet. A typical example was a recent "incident" in which a group of Chinese people from the mainland attempted to land on the Senkaku (Diaoyutai) Islands.

It was on April 4, 2003 that Feng Jinhua, who had become

famous by spraying red paint on a statue at the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan, talked about the plan to land on the islands for the first time with Li Nan, Yin Dongming, and others, whom he had come to know through the Internet. The plan was postponed due to the outbreak of SARS, but upon learning that a group of Japanese had landed on the islands in May, Feng and his group hurriedly decided on June 15 to carry out the plan on June 20. They used the Internet to raise the funds to pay for the expenses for the venture, and over a two-month period from mid-April to mid-June managed to raise 92,000 yuan. They recruited, also through the Internet, volunteers willing to land on the islands, and received more than 80 application.<sup>67</sup>

This attempt - publicity about the plan for which, a fund-raising campaign for which, and recruitment of volunteers for implementation of which - were all carried out through the Internet drew much attention from both within and without China as an epoch-making attempt by ordinary Chinese people to take part in diplomacy. Subsequently, the *China Youth Online* carried an article highly appraising Feng Jinhua and his group's attempt, but the Chinese government referred only to its official position about the islands, without committing itself to the group's action.

The attempt to land on the Senkaku Islands, which was implemented to a significant extent by making use of the Internet, is worthy of attention as an epoch-making attempt

by a group of ordinary Chinese people to assert themselves as participants in foreign diplomacy. At present, however, it is clear that ordinary people's participation in diplomacy is still limited, despite its large impact both inside and outside the country. Of the 92,000 yuan raised through the Internet, a little more than 10,000 was raised by the participants' own fund-raising efforts. The number of applicants, a little over 80 individuals, was extremely small compared with the total number of Internet users. Of them, only about 20 actually came to Zhejiang, the base for the excursion. The applicants even included one who volunteered out of emotional shock of a break-up.

Thus, the tendency for non-governmental actors to participate in diplomacy using the Internet has begun to germinate in China, but the competence of these actors still leaves much to be desired.

#### IV. Concluding Remarks

Since the early 1990s, China has been trying to strengthen its public diplomacy on its state image. When faced with hostile international public opinion, being criticized for violations of human rights or viewed as a threat to the international community, China found it inevitable to improve its external publicity activities. The government's efforts to improve the

country's image abroad seem to pivot around creating an image of China as a "country committed to international cooperation" and a "major power" on a "peaceful ascension." TV stations, including CCTV and those at the provincial and city levels, are making earnest efforts to expand their activities abroad, report on the domestic situation in China to foreign audiences, and eliminate negative views of China. However, it will be some time before the Chinese mass media, with its lack of competitiveness caused by strict government restrictions on the media, can start winning large audiences abroad.

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

While strengthening external publicity, the Chinese government is also trying to maintain the barriers between the inside and the outside of the country. In order to prevent the inflow of official information through television and the Internet, it has established laws to restrict the inflow of information from abroad, and has also tried to restrict the activities of foreign-invested media organizations inside China. However, these efforts to maintain the barriers for blocking the inflow of information from abroad have not been fully successful. Meanwhile, external publicity activities have been undertaken by government organizations and media organizations of various levels. The Chinese mass media, including newspapers and TV stations, are faced, on the one hand, with the need to earn profits and remain economically viable, while they are also required to perform their functions as "mouthpieces of the Party," on the other. In their desperate efforts to overcome this dilemma, the Chinese media have ultimately opted to compete with either other in carrying out sensational reporting and thereby fanning nationalistic public opinion about international affairs. With this sort of public opinion about international affairs as a breeding ground, China's civil diplomacy has begun to strike roots, even though its influence remains very limited. One important factor affecting the direction in which civil diplomacy is likely to develop from now on will be the question of what



becomes of the restrictions imposed on the Chinese mass media.

Globalization, characterized by the fast development of information technologies, has exerted a far-reaching influence on China's foreign diplomacy. China's public diplomacy and civil diplomacy are taking on features peculiar to China, reflecting the tense relationship between the Chinese mass media, which are now in the process of breaking out of the mold peculiar to "totalitarianism," and the government of China. And China's diplomacy has begun to change from the days of unilateral and vertical propaganda to a new era of public diplomacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan H. Spalter, *Toward a New Digital Diplomacy: Information Technology and U.S. Foreign Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,

<http://www.cisp.org/imp/may99/0599moran.htm>

<sup>2</sup> On China's public opinion concerning Japan, see Rumi Aoyama, "Futatsu no Kûkan de Keiseisareru Chûgoku no Tainichi Yoron" (China's Public Opinion concerning Japan being Formulated in Two Spaces), *Kokusai Mondai* (published by Japan Institute of International Affairs), No. 527 (February 2004), pp. 47-61.

<sup>3</sup> See Tang Liang, *Henbôsuru Chûgoku Seiji: Zeishin Rosen to Minshuka* (Transformation of Politics and Society in the Post-Mao China), University of Tokyo Press, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The sources of the data in Table 1 are as follows: Fang Xiaohong, *Dazhong Chuanmei yu Nongcun* (Public media and agricultural villages), China Press, 2002, p. 16; Li Liangrong, "Yao zai Feidian de Xinwen Chuanbo Jiaoxu zhong Jinxing Xinwen Baodao Zhidu de Chuangxin" (Reforming the media system through the lessons of SARS/SARS), <http://chinese.mediachina.net/>, May 23, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Dictionary of International Relations Terms*, 1987, p.85.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Kaneko Masafumi, "Paburikku Dipuromashî: Sono Rekishi o Yakuwari" (Public Diplomacy: Its History and Roles), <http://www.mskj.or.jp/getsurei/kanekom0008.html> (January 24, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> On the CPC's foreign propaganda prior to the founding of the People's Republic of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>Zhan Kun, “Luelun Duiwai Xuanchuan de Jiu Da Guanxi” (Discussing nine relationships in foreign propaganda), Zhongyang Duiwai Xunchuan Bangongshi (CPC’s Central Propaganda Office) ed. *Duiwai Xunchuan Gongzuo Lunwen Ji* (Collection of papers on foreign propaganda), Wuzhou Media Press, 1998, p. 73.

<sup>12</sup> *People’s Daily*, October 15, 2001 and January 30, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Hongying Wang, “National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy,” *China: An International Journal* ( Vol.1 ), March, 2003, p.52.

<sup>14</sup> “Overall discussion of foreign propaganda activities in FY2001 on planned childbirth”, [http://www.sfpc.gov.cn/cn/news20030110\\_2htm](http://www.sfpc.gov.cn/cn/news20030110_2htm) (July 23, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Lin Xiaoguang, *Gendai Chûgoku no Masu Mededia: Kindaika to Minshuka no Kiro* (The Mass Media in Contemporary China: A Crossroads between Modernization and Democratization), Sophia, 1996, p. 162.

<sup>17</sup>Qian Wei, *Politics, market and the television system—Study on changes in China’s television system*, Henan People’s Press, 2002, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Zhao Kai and Zhao Feiluo, *The market economy and control of radio and television*, Fudan University Press, 2002, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> *Statistical materials on the economic and social development of Shanghai City*, China Statistics Press, 2001, p.343.

<sup>20</sup> *Zhongguo Dianshi Hongpishu 2001 (China television red book 2001)*, Lijiang Press, 2002, pp.37-38.

<sup>21</sup> “Jiji Zhudao Chenru Chuangxin Jiada Lidu Wenbu Tuijin” (Lure aggressively, deepen development, and promote steadily) <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/19/20020115/648902.html> ( March 2, 2003 )

<sup>22</sup> *Zhongguo Dianshi Hongpishu 2001*, p.41.

<sup>23</sup> Zhao Qizheng, “Zhongguo Meiti Chanye” (China’s media industry), *Jiefang Daily*, December 7, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Li Genchen, *Zhongguo Gongchandang Baike Quanshu* (Unabridged Encyclopedia of the Chinese Communist Party), Sichuan Press, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> See notification issued by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and SARFT, Guanyu Jiaqiang Shengji Dianshitai Shangxing Jiemu Pingdao Gongzuo de Tongzhi, (Notification strengthening regulation of satellite broadcasts by provincial level television stations), January 30, 2000.

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<sup>27</sup> Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and Central State Archive, eds., *Zhongguo Gongchandang Gongzuo Wenxian Hunbian 1957-1992* (Selected literature on propaganda activities of the Chinese Communist Party, 1957-1992), Xuexi Press, 1996, p.1094.

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<sup>35</sup> "Xin Shiji Ruhe Baozhuang Zhongguo Duiwai Xuanchuan Youdai Gaibian" (How to wrap China in the new century: needed reforms of foreign propaganda activities, *International Pioneer Weekly*, August 4, 2003.

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