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Enabling China's Voice to Be Heard by the World

Ideas and Operations of the Chinese Communist Party's External Propaganda System

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As China becomes a more prominent international player, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has stepped up its external propaganda in a bid to promote its image as a superpower. The operations of the CCP's external propaganda system are no longer guided by dogma; rather, these incorporate many Western theories related to "public diplomacy," which emphasizes the role played by non-governmental actors and the use of a softer approach. However, the CCP's understanding of the concept of public diplomacy is influenced by the "people's diplomacy" of the Cold War period. This means that it continues to base its external propaganda on the idea of a struggle against enemies, attempting to establish an international united front with a view to boosting the CCP's right of discourse in the international arena and weakening anti-China forces in the West.

INTRODUCTION

In the past, the West's understanding of China was Westerncentric (Cohen 1984). Since 1949, the image of China has also been affected by the constructions of the mainstream Western media, which have produced certain negative preconceptions (Mackerras 2013). For example, the debate between China and the West over the existence of a "China threat" reflected a vast gulf between the two sides in terms of their understanding of the country and its image (Al-Rodhan 2007, 41–66).

In recent years, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been preoccupied with the use of external propaganda (or foreign publicity, *duiwai xuanchuan*) to shape China's national image and reclaim the right to do this from the Western world. For example, the establishment of overseas Confucius Institutes (Paradise 2009) since 2004 is one way in which China is attempting to apply the concept of state Confucianism in its external propaganda to improve its national image (Brady 2012; Niquet 2012).

These efforts, unfortunately, seem to have been ineffective. The CCP propaganda system's reporting on the unrest in Lhasa in March 2008 (the "3.14 Incident") had practically no credibility with the overseas media, and the incident

ended up reflecting badly on China's national image. In the run-up to the Beijing Olympics that same year, participants in the torch relay in San Francisco, London, Paris, and other places were heckled by spectators along the route, while pro-CCP Chinese wore red jackets to demonstrate their support for the government's position (*Changjiang Ribao* 2010). In his commentary on the incidents, Jack Cafferty, a host on the American news network CNN, remarked, "I think they're [the Chinese] basically the same bunch of goons and thugs they've been for the last 50 years" (*Nanfang doushi bao* 2008).

This is a clear indication that sections of the international community still have negative views of China's government and/or its people. These negative views of China are common in Western countries. Hence, this paper will focus on how the CCP conducts its external propaganda toward the Western world. According to the Pew Research Center's 2015 study, the PRFs (Percent Responding Favorable) for China were 9 percent in Japan, 38 percent in the United States, and 45 percent in the United Kingdom. Compared with the Western countries, most countries in the non-Western world seem friendlier toward China. Nevertheless, countries that have been embroiled in territorial disputes with China in recent years, such as Vietnam, had a highly unfavorable view of China (see Table 1).

External propaganda is becoming increasingly significant for the CCP. In 1955, Mao Zedong issued a call to "make

TABLE 1 Survey of Countries' Impressions of China (2015)

Western Countries		Non-Western Countries	
Country	Favorable (%)	Country	Favorable (%)
France	50	Pakistan	82
United Kingdom	45	Russia	79
Canada	39	Malaysia	78
United States	38	Tanzania	74
Germany	34	Chile	66
Japan	9	Vietnam	19

Source: "Global Indicators Database," Pew Research Center, http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/24/ (accessed May 17, 2016).

our voice heard by the world" (rang quanshijie douneng tingdao women de shengyin) (Mao 1983). In 2009, in an effort to improve the country's negative image, Hu Jintao injected RMB 45 billion into the external propaganda system (Zheng 2009). It is only under the current leadership of Xi Jinping that the CCP has succeeded in making the world listen to China's voice. But what has really changed in terms of the CCP's external propaganda policies?

Within academia, analysis and research of CCP's external propaganda policies have led to many findings. The literature indicates that, with the growth of China's national strength after 2000, the CCP also hoped to enhance China's soft power and international status through external propaganda (Brady 2012; Shambaugh 2013; Edney 2014). This paper further found that in recent years, the CCP has adopted relevant ideas from the West, such as "public diplomacy," to strengthen and promote its efforts at external propaganda. Ironically, even though the CCP comprehends the connotations associated with public diplomacy, it applies the concept of "people's diplomacy," which it pursued during the Cold War era, when interpreting the former concept. In other words, the CCP's understanding of public diplomacy is therefore very different from that of Western governments.

In this article, we discuss the concepts, principles, and practices employed by the CCP in recent years to carry out external propaganda. In addition, the external propaganda on the Tibet issue is used as a case study to analyze the ways in which the CCP has interpreted the concept of "public diplomacy" and how that interpretation has, in turn, guided its implementation of external propaganda.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: OFFICIAL VIEW OF THE CCP

When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, it adopted the party-state system of the former Soviet Union and exhibited the characteristics of a propaganda state (Kenez 1985). Propaganda has a very important function within the political system of the CCP (Cheek 1995; Chang

1997), and this includes internal propaganda directed at China's own people and external propaganda directed at foreign countries. During the Cold War, the CCP's external propaganda was primarily focused on politics and ideology, presenting an image of China as a fighter and a revolutionary. However, after the beginning of the reform and opening up of China, promotion of the country gradually became influenced by commercialization, globalization, and other factors (Lynch 1999).

To promote its economic reforms, China needed to develop friendlier relations with other countries, and that is why, in 1979, the then-head of the CCP's Central Propaganda Department, Hu Yaobang, urged that all publications used for external propaganda should be made acceptable to overseas readers. He also authorized the appointment of foreign experts as editors-in-chief of some of those publications (Wu 2008). In other words, China's propaganda was no longer to be driven by rigid ideology. Instead, a softer approach was to be adopted for both external and internal propaganda, and methods familiar in the West and attractive to both Chinese and Westerners were to be used.

The CCP claims that it has learned from the West in its restructuring of external propaganda. It has adopted the Western concept of public diplomacy (Manheim 1993; Davis Cross and Melissen 2013; d'Hooghe 2015; Zhao 1995) and its promotional activities differ from those of the Soviet Union in two main ways. First, the government no longer uses rigid or insipid ideological language; instead, they package their message more attractively and employ soft power for propaganda (Wang 2011a; Wang 2011b). Second, propaganda is no longer limited to the government-to-government level, but has been expanded to the government—to—non-government and non-government—to—non-government levels. Lastly, the non-official media and actors play a more important role in external propaganda (d'Hooghe 2015, 102–4).

The concept of public diplomacy began to influence the CCP's propaganda efforts toward the end of the twentieth century. For example, after Jiang Zemin became general secretary of the CCP, the Chinese term *xuanchuan* began to be translated into English as "publicity" rather than "propaganda," a term that in the West has negative connotations of imposing one's ideas or ideology on others (Gan and Liu 2008; Barr 2011, 29). It is obvious from this example that a fundamental change has occurred with regard to the CCP's views on external propaganda.

The concept of public diplomacy has become further entrenched under Xi Jinping's leadership, and the vocabulary of public diplomacy has been included in the CCP's official documents. The political report of the Eighteenth Party Congress even included the formulation "promote public diplomacy in a concrete manner" (*zhishi tuijin gonggong waijiao*) (*Zhongguo xinwen wang* 2012). It appears that, according to the official view of the CCP, public diplomacy is the guiding principle for conducing external propaganda in the twenty-first century.

UNDERSTANDING "PUBLIC DIPLOMACY" FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF "PEOPLE'S DIPLOMACY": A DISTORTION OF MEANING

Many scholars have pointed out that the CCP has always been willing to learn from others in order to strengthen its rule (Shambaugh 2008, 7; Christensen, Dong, and Painter 2008, 353). Public diplomacy is just one of the strategies and systems that the CCP has adopted from other countries as it works out how to strengthen its external propaganda.

Interestingly, however, the CCP has its own understanding of this Western concept. This is a problem that often occurs in "policy translation": the learner country's understanding of a policy or system it wants to adopt is influenced by its own ideas or background knowledge. In other words, when theories or policy concepts are transplanted from one country to another, the content and definitions of these theories and concepts are often interpreted in a different way (Stone 2012).

The English term "public diplomacy" is translated into Chinese as *gonggong waijiao*. However, the CCP's understanding of public diplomacy may well have its roots in "people's diplomacy" (*renmin waijiao*), a term used by Zhou Enlai during the Cold War period.² At that time, the CCP called for close exchanges and collaboration with countries and peoples of the Third World as well as with pro-China grassroots groups in the West, so as to form a broad united front against Western imperialism (Wang 2008). The fact that the concept of public diplomacy has been viewed by the CCP through the lens of its own history and experience is evident in the words of Zhao Qizheng, a former director of the State Council Information Office (SCIO):

In fact, as early as 1949, Premier Zhou Enlai already announced the concept of "people's diplomacy."... Unfortunately, against the backdrop of the Cold War, China was relatively isolated at the time. Furthermore, the Chinese language was not very popular, which weakened China's ability to communicate and disseminate information. Hence, the phrase "people's diplomacy" failed to gain popularity. If it had, it would not have been a problem even if the phrase "public diplomacy" had failed to appear, for we could simply have used the phrase "people's diplomacy" [to replace it]. (Zhao 2014)

Although these two concepts are not actually interchangeable, "public diplomacy" and "people's diplomacy" do in fact have some features in common. Both emphasize the importance of non-governmental actors, and both advocate an easily understandable, softer approach to external propaganda. However, the most important way in which the two concepts differ from each other is in their ultimate goals.

The purpose of public diplomacy is to improve a country's image by building networks that will encourage close and friendly relationships and mutual trust with other countries (d'Hooghe 2015, 36–37). The purpose of people's diplomacy, on the other hand, is to conduct a power struggle against one's enemies. This kind of diplomacy uses external propaganda to establish a broad united front with pro-China governments and people throughout the world so as to enhance China's international influence and to combat anti-China forces. The similarities and differences between the two concepts are shown in Table 2.

The CCP has officially acknowledged that it is adopting the Western concept of public diplomacy in order to strengthen the effectiveness of its external propaganda. In reality, however, the CCP's understanding of public diplomacy may be influenced by its thinking regarding people's diplomacy. Since the late twentieth century, the CCP has conducted external propaganda through non-governmental actors while trying to improve its propaganda methods, in order to encourage a better understanding and approval of the CCP's position among people in the Western world. However, the goal of this diplomacy is similar to that of people's diplomacy: to pursue a power struggle against enemy countries. The hope is to form a broad united front in the international arena to strengthen the CCP in its competition with anti-China forces for ideological leadership. Below, this paper will first examine the way in which the CCP's system of external propaganda operates; it will then show how the CCP has carried out propaganda activities based on the theory of "public diplomacy."

MAKING CHINA'S VOICE HEARD: OPERATION OF THE CCP'S EXTERNAL PROPAGANDA SYSTEM

Before we can undertake an in-depth discussion of China's external propaganda operations, it is necessary to examine the institutions and organizations in charge of this system.

TABLE 2
Comparison of Public Diplomacy and People's Diplomacy

	Similarity (Actor and Propaganda Method)	Difference (Purpose of Conducting Diplomacy)
Public Diplomacy	1. Important role for non-governmental actors	To establish close, network-based relationships in order to increase friendly relations and mutual trust between countries
People's Diplomacy	2. Easily understandable and softer approach to propaganda	To establish a broad international united front to combat anti-China forces

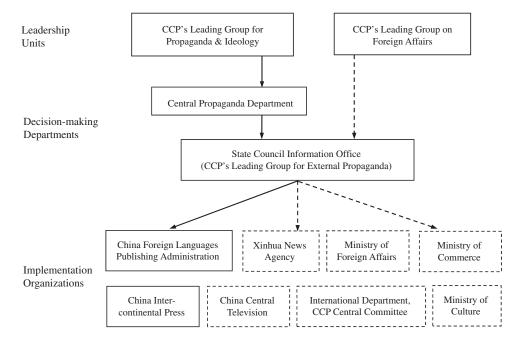


FIGURE 1 Operational structure of the CCP's external propaganda system.

Note: Solid lines represent a leadership relationship and dotted lines are professional relationships. Based on Brady (2008, 11) with modifications by the author.

For the purposes of this discussion, the CCP's external propaganda system is divided into three levels: leadership units, decision-making organs, and implementation organizations (Duan 2009) (see Figure 1).

The leadership units are the CCP's Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideology (CLGPI) and the Central Leading Group on Foreign Affairs (CLGFA) (Shambaugh 2007, 47). The leaders of both groups are members of the Politburo Standing Committee. After the Eighteenth Party Congress, Liu Yunshan was appointed leader of the CLGPI, with responsibility within the Party for directing work related to propaganda, ideology, and culture (*Journal San Wa Ou* 2014). In the post–Jiang Zemin era, the CLGFA has been led by the general secretary of the CCP, who is currently Xi Jinping. While the CLGPI has direct leadership over external propaganda work, the CLGFA is responsible only for providing related professional guidance.³

The decision-making organs include the Central Propaganda Department (CPD) and the State Council Information Office (SCIO). The former is responsible for formulating the overall direction of the CCP's publicity policies, with external propaganda included under the heading of publicity. The SCIO is in charge of actual external propaganda policies, which are prepared at ministerial level. Members of the SCIO hold concurrent appointments within the CCP's Committee for External Propaganda. This is a "one set of personnel under two headings" situation (*yitao renma, liangkuai zhaopai*), symbolizing an integrated party–state system (SCIO 1996, 39). Although the SCIO is

under the leadership of the CPD, it must seek the opinions of the CLGFA when handling publicity surrounding major issues related to foreign policy (SCIO 1996, 37).

The implementation organizations can be classified into three categories. The first consists of units reporting directly to the SCIO, which include the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration (CFLPA, also known as the China International Publishing Group) and the China Intercontinental Press (CIP, Wuzhou chuanbo chuban she). Both organizations conduct external propaganda work, with the former publishing books in foreign languages and the latter publishing Chinese books, films, and audiovisual material (SCIO 1996, 45). The second category consists of media units under the jurisdiction of the CPD, which include the Xinhua News Agency and China Central Television (CCTV), for both of which the SCIO provides operational guidance. Finally, there are the important relevant government or CCP departments, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Commerce,⁴ and International Department of the CCP Central Committee. The SCIO is also responsible for providing operational guidance to these units. For example, whenever rumors detrimental to the CCP's reputation are circulating overseas, the SCIO issues a notice to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting that it refutes and clarifies the rumors (SCIO 1996, 135).

The SCIO is the most important decision-making unit in the entire external propaganda process. To the outside world, the director of this office is generally regarded as China's top public relations officer (*Zhongguo divi gongguan*), responsible

for enhancing the image of the government and disseminating government policies. Holders of this office include Zhu Muzhi (1991–1992), Zeng Jianhui (1992–1998), Zhao Qizheng (1998–2005), Cai Wu (2005–2008), Wang Chen (2008–2013), Cai Mingzhao (2013–2014), and the incumbent, Jiang Jianguo (2015–).⁵

With only one exception, these cadres all underwent training in the CCP's publicity or news organizations before taking up the post. The exception was Zhao Qizheng, who prior to his appointment as director of the SCIO was the vice mayor of Shanghai. During his tenure in Shanghai, Zhao was responsible for the development of the Pudong District, work which brought him into frequent contact with many members of the foreign community there; this gave him useful insights into external propaganda work. Specifically, he was aware that the publicity methods employed by the CCP in the past were too rigid. The international community found them unpalatable and, as a consequence, they were ineffective (Tao 2002). To promote international understanding of-and agreement with-the CCP's ideas, in 2006 Zhao published a book series titled "Explain China to the World" (xiang shijie shuoming Zhongguo), which described China's political position, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural ideas to the international community (SCIO 2006). Zhao advocated the use of illustrations and explanations instead of propaganda to prevent people from being put off by the CCP's publicity methods.

EXPLAINING CHINA TO THE WORLD: STRENGTHENING THE FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICIAL MEDIA

Public diplomacy involves making external propaganda easily understandable to foreign audiences. This mainly involves using foreign languages and methods of communication that are in line with foreign cultures. First, in order to enhance its broadcasting in foreign languages, the CCP has strengthened the role of the Xinhua News Agency and CCTV, in the hope that these two agencies will become China's answer to Cable News Network (CNN) (Brady 2008, 167). In response to policies mandating more highprofile international publicity, the Xinhua News Agency established an English-language television station in 2009, broadcasting news programs from an official Chinese perspective to areas including the United States, Europe, Australia, and Africa (BBC Zhongwen wang 2009). On New Year's Day 2011, the Xinhua News Agency even rented a gigantic advertising billboard in New York City's Times Square, one of the most famous sites in the world. showing videos promoting China's image. The aim was to introduce to the Western world (including the United States) a China that was not only thriving and prosperous, but also civilized and progressive (Ta Kung Pao 2012).

The role of CCTV in external propaganda has been similarly strengthened. The station's 2009 Spring Festival Gala was broadcast live on its Chinese-, English-, French-, and Spanish-language channels. This was the first time that such a high-profile event was broadcast live by CCTV globally and in multiple languages. The aim was to give the world an insight into the way China celebrates the New Year, as well as to project an image of harmony and unity among China's various ethnic groups under the leadership of the CCP. In his congratulatory note sent to CCTV on its fiftieth anniversary, Hu Jintao urged the broadcaster to "strive to become a world-class media organization with advanced technologies, high information volume, extensive coverage, and strong influence" (Jiang 2009).

Another way in which the CCP conducts its propaganda is through the translation of Chinese books. In particular, translations are used to refute misunderstandings about China in the West and to embellish its image. The CCP has invested in the translation business in recent years. Translators have been trained in an organized way and then tasked with translating books which will promote China's official position internationally.

The China Academy of Translation (Zhongguo fanyi yanjiu yuan), which is under the jurisdiction of the CFLPA, was established by the CCP in July 2014 (Xinhua wang 2014). Most of the books translated by the CCP contain contents promoting China's policies. For example, philosophical works related to Xi Jinping's "China Dream" have been translated with the aim of explaining the core values behind the idea, including peaceful development and a benevolent culture. The CFLPA has also participated in important international book fairs, including the London Book Fair, promoting these translations to Western readers (*Huanqiu shibao* 2014).

In addition to using translations to boost its public diplomacy, the CCP has changed the style of its foreign-language broadcasting to make it more acceptable to foreign audiences. Xinhua News Agency and CCTV tend not to be trusted in the West due to their strong links with the Party, so the CCP has adopted a new approach, using overseas Chinese media for its external communications. Unlike the Chinese media, these overseas media organizations are free of official characteristics and have a more extensive understanding of the societies in which they are based, making their output more acceptable to locals (Cheng 2009).

In recent years, the CCP has been actively courting these overseas Chinese media organizations, even acquiring shares in some to enhance its control over them (*People's Daily* 2014). It has also organized training courses for their staff in an effort to turn them into propaganda tools of the CCP. One example is the training on how to report the Tibet issue. When a major event occurs, the CCP offers guidance to these media organizations as to how it should be reported. In one example, the CCP convened an emergency meeting in New York, attended by the chairman of the Chinese

Olympic Committee, to guide overseas Chinese media on the approach to be adopted in reporting the incidents surrounding the 2008 Olympic torch relay (Wang et al. 2011).

In addition, the CCP has also tried to use Western media to get its message across. The China Intercontinental Press (CIP) claims to be a private company, although it is in reality controlled by the SCIO. In the United States, CIP has identified a number of pro-CCP individuals and used them to set up ten or more Chinese-controlled television and radio stations in major cities, including New York, Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Honolulu. It has also indirectly leased channels from the three major U.S. television broadcast networks—ABC, NBC, and CBS—thereby facilitating the infiltration of CCP's influence into U.S. society (Cui 2007).

TELLING CHINA'S STORY WELL: CIVIL MOBILIZATION AND THE USE OF FOREIGN PROFESSIONALS

Public diplomacy also stresses the use of non-governmental actors in external propaganda. The CCP is aware that the effectiveness of using official organizations to explain China to foreign countries is questionable. In addition to the lack of trust in the official media, another major factor has been the contents of the CCP media's external propaganda. Specifically, it is deemed to be staid and dull, and fails to resonate with an international audience (Zhongguo jizhe 2004). An interesting phrase that has been coined by the CCP to describe its external propaganda in recent years is "telling China's story well." Specifically, stories about everyday life are shared through non-governmental actors, for example, through civil mobilization and the assistance of professionals. The CCP hopes that these stories, which are easy for people to relate to, will help to explain its ideas and enhance China's image, thereby making a positive contribution to its external propaganda.

In a speech delivered on August 19, 2013, Xi Jinping mentioned that it was necessary to "tell China's story well, disseminate China's voice, and enhance its right to speak in the international arena" (Oin 2013). The CCP further noted that when conducting external publicity, it is necessary to use storytelling to explain to the world China's characteristics and values (Qin 2013). Xi Jinping's concept of the "China Dream," the idea that China should pursue the dream of being a developed and harmonious country that promotes world peace (Ren 2013, 4) has been publicized by the Central Propaganda Department via a mass mobilization campaign titled "Travel to China and Enjoy Wonderful Stories" (xingjin Zhongguo, jingcai gushi). The campaign encouraged people from different walks of life to share with an international audience the significance of the China Dream through telling the stories of their own lives. This storytelling approach focused on the personal experiences of individuals and the ways ordinary citizens contribute to the country. Examples included medical staff exhibiting professionalism through their care for the sick and infirm, and workers adopting production methods that reduce pollution, thus achieving the dual goals of economic development and environmental protection (Li 2015).

Another example is the external propaganda that has been conducted through the private sector to improve the image of "made in China" products, which have long been seen as being of inferior quality. The incident in 2008 when a number of people in Japan fell ill after eating imported Chinese dumplings laced with insecticide did serious harm to the image of goods manufactured in China and of China in general. To address this issue, the SCIO and the Ministry of Commerce worked with a number of Chinese enterprises in 2009 to produce a commercial for airing in the United States titled "Made in China with Global Cooperation" (Zhongguo zhizao, shijie hezuo). The commercial included images of products made in China, including running shoes. software used in Silicon Valley, and fashion items worn by French models (Fang 2010). It was all about Chinese entrepreneurs and had minimal ideological content. It was essentially a simple reminder to viewers that products made in China are very much a part of daily life in the modern world. This commercial, which eschewed the heavy-handed approach of old-style official propaganda films, seems to have been effective in enhancing China's national image.

In a further attempt to improve its external propaganda, the CCP has enlisted the assistance of foreign professionals to tell China's story well. Cultural differences between China and the West often cause Westerners to misconstrue the content of the CCP's propaganda materials, which may even provoke feelings of hostility. For example, one Chinese propaganda film told how the Chinese government supported farmers who raised dogs to be sold as meat in order to overcome poverty issues. Instead of encouraging its audience to laud the political achievements of the Chinese government, the film caused Westerners to regard China as a barbaric country (Zhongguo jizhe 2004). It was obvious that the CCP needed the assistance of foreign professionals to tell China's story well and create a good image of the country among Westerners. One such professional is the American television producer Bill Einreinhofer, who was hired by the CIP to assist in the shooting of two films, Chengdu and Jiangsu. These were filmed in China in 2004 and aired in the United States on Public Broadcasting Service stations. In 2006, Einreinhofer was hired by the CIP again to shoot The Chinese Olympic City, a publicity film to promote the Beijing Olympics (Cui 2011).

CREATING A NEW CHINESE BRAND: THE CHINA DREAM?

Influenced by the concept of people's diplomacy, the CCP sees the ultimate goal of public diplomacy as being the formation of a broad international united front that will

enable the CCP to wrest global ideological leadership from the hands of the West. This aim has become even more apparent under Xi Jinping. In his speech on August 19, 2013, Xi mentioned the need to "enhance China's right to speak in the international arena" (Qin 2013). In addition to wanting China to explain itself to the world and tell its story well, he has also proposed the creation of a new brand image for China.

Peter van Ham, who first proposed the concept of a "brand state" in 2001, argues that a country should build upon the good reputation or image that it enjoys globally. By establishing a unique brand, a country is able to strengthen its global influence. For example, the national brand of the United States is freedom and democracy, France's is fashion and taste, and Germany's is efficiency and precision (Van Ham 2001, 3–4). If China wishes to enhance its external propaganda, the CCP has no choice but to establish a Chinese brand based on soft power (Nye and Wang 2009).

The CCP has yet to come up with a clear expression of this new brand. Xi Jinping had hoped to establish it by means of his governing idea—the China Dream. The CCP hopes to establish the legitimacy of its regime both domestically and internationally by strengthening its ideology (Holbig and Gilley 2010). However, the China Dream concept is vast, complex, and abstract. In essence, it encompasses two principles. The first has an internal focus: to continue promoting the country's growth and development so as to "realize the majestic rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." The second principle is externally focused: the pursuit of world peace. The China Dream is deliberately intended to counter the China threat theory espoused by the mainstream media in the West. The CCP would have us believe that the rise of China does not pose a threat to the existing world order and world peace. This is because the concept of the China Dream is rooted in the ancient Chinese philosophy of benevolence (wangdao) (Jiefang Daily 2013).

The problem with concepts such as "benevolent culture" is that they are abstract and incapable of influencing other people's opinions. Scholars have questioned whether the various CCP leaderships have acted in accordance with the principles of benevolent culture when drawing up peace agreements with neighboring countries (Johnston 1995; Y. Wang 2011). To date, the CCP still has not come up with any notable form of soft power upon which to establish a new national brand, nor has it fully dispelled external doubts about its authoritarian nature. The China Dream is too vague a concept to give rise to a new trend of thinking. This is one of the reasons why China has only achieved "partial power" status to-date (Shambaugh 2013).

For example, when Zhao Qizheng was asked by a Voice of America reporter during a media conference whether the CCP had received letters from family members of the victims of the Tiananmen incident, he refused to give a direct answer (these families write annual letters to senior leaders

of the CCP asking for the victims to be vindicated). Instead, adopting an officious tone, Zhao replied that "a clear conclusion has already been reached by the Chinese government" regarding the Tiananmen incident. This question was then rapidly deleted from all of the CCP's official media and websites (Kan Zhongguo 2009). It is clear from this incident that the CCP still insists that its external propaganda efforts serve political ends.

Even though the CCP has adopted some Western methods of public diplomacy, its ultimate purpose seems to be to achieve global ideological leadership for China through a struggle against its enemies. This thinking is fundamentally no different from the people's diplomacy of the Cold War period. In other words, the CCP understands and uses the concept of public diplomacy instrumentally, making use of a Western theory to embellish and package its real motives. In the following section, we use the case of Tibet to observe how the CCP uses propaganda to strengthen its right to make its voice heard in the international arena while refuting Western criticism of its policies on Tibet.

PROPAGANDA ON A PIVOTAL SUBJECT: THE TIBET ISSUE

There have indeed been changes in the CCP's external propaganda efforts in recent years. One specific case in which this is evident is China's handling of the Tibet issue. Of the eight bureaus that comprise the SCIO, the seventh bureau has been assigned the special task of informing foreign countries about the development status of Tibet (Jia 2011). This is a clear indication that the Tibet issue remains a core focus of the CCP's external propaganda work. In this section, the Tibet issue is treated as a case study to examine the ways in which the CCP uses propaganda tactics in its external publicity.

From the CCP's point of view, the core of the Tibet issue is collusion between the Dalai Lama and Western imperialism. The West attempts to vilify the CCP's political achievements in Tibet in order to achieve its ultimate political goal: Tibetan independence from China. The CCP further believes that many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the United States, including Milarepa and the Tibet House, are sympathetic toward what they call the "Dalai clique." The Chinese view is that these NGOs attract Western support by portraying Tibet as a mysterious Shangri-la and the Chinese government as the destroyer and abuser of a "pure" land (Lei 2005). In the past, the CCP's propaganda on Tibet was primarily undertaken by official agencies, which took the rigid line that "Tibet has been a part of China's territory since ancient times." This kind of tone made it difficult for Westerners to believe the Chinese government's rhetoric.

This approach has changed in recent years. When explaining major events that are of interest to the West, the CCP has begun to adopt methods that are more easily

understood by Westerners. When the Qinghai–Tibet railway was opened in 2006, many Western media outlets portrayed it as the CCP's way of exerting more control over Tibet and plundering its resources. In response, the CCP published an article in the *China Daily*, its official English-language newspaper, ¹⁰ which drew a parallel with the U.S. government's preservation of Native American culture and explained that the railway was intended to preserve Tibetan culture and develop the economy of that region (Lei 2006).

Furthermore, following the "3.14" unrest in Lhasa in 2008, the CCP stepped up its use of NGOs to conduct external propaganda. Various NGO representatives were sent to the West to explain the situation in Tibet, including delegations of Chinese Tibetologists, Tibetan cultural exchange groups, folk artists, and members of cultural preservation associations (Wang 2014). The CCP also enlisted the help of overseas Chinese media organizations under its control to disseminate its perspective on the incident more effectively. These media were mobilized on a large scale to provide "objective" reporting of the event. The *China Press* in the United States and *Nouvelles d'Europe* in France published entire pages of detailed reports almost daily for two weeks (Zhou and Wang 2014).

In addition, the CCP recruited Western scholars to help explain China's policies. ¹¹ It organized activities in Paris to explain how the CCP had handled the incident. When a professor of political science at the University of Paris was invited to make a speech, he used language acceptable to Westerners to justify the Chinese government's policies. He said, "Everyone has some positive and some negative aspects; France is not purely good, and China is not purely evil" (Li 2009).

Besides dealing with major events mentioned earlier, the CCP has attempted to utilize the storytelling approach to showcase its development efforts in Tibet. The Western media have also played an important role in this. In 2008, Sun Shuyun, a Chinese filmmaker based in Britain, obtained

permission from the CCP to shoot *A Year in Tibet*, a five-episode English-language documentary. The film was widely broadcast overseas and received very positive ratings. It was a realistic portrayal of Tibetans' living conditions and the problems they face. This storytelling approach succeeded in winning over some Westerners who appreciated the CCP's efforts in developing Tibet over the past six decades as well as solving difficulties faced by the local population (Zhou 2011).

This was the first time any Western media organization had been permitted to film in Tibet, and the permission was obtained with the assistance of a cadre from the CCP Central Committee's United Front Work Department. When filming was completed, a dozen experts from the official China Tibetology Center reviewed the documentary and guided the revision of its contents. Approval was further granted in 2009 for a Chinese version to be released for the benefit of the Chinese diaspora (Ping 2009).

The propaganda strategy of "telling the Tibet story well" has been integrated into the China Dream concept under Xi Jinping. During CCP-organized events, ordinary Tibetans have described how they have fulfilled the China Dream. For example, the Tibet TV Station aired *The China Dream: Tibet's Story* (Zhongguo meng: Xicang gushi), a series of reports on how thirty-seven ordinary Tibetans had worked hard in their respective careers in pursuit of prosperity and stability in Tibet, thereby fulfilling the China Dream (Zhongguo jixie wang 2014).

The CCP's propaganda strategy for Tibet has evolved from one of ideology-based dogmatic propaganda to one that incorporates some new techniques—either explaining its policies on Tibet using methods acceptable to Westerners or "telling the Tibet story well" through a process of mass mobilization. Using its own version of public diplomacy as the framework, the CCP has introduced some innovations into its external propaganda on the Tibet issue. The relationship between the theory and the practice are outlined in Table 3.

TABLE 3 "Public Diplomacy" as Perceived by the CCP and the Approach to External Propaganda on the Tibet Issue

External Propaganda on the Tibet Issue	
Using foreign languages to facilitate propaganda on the Tibet issue	
Defending Tibet policies using historical allusions with which people in other countries are familiar	
Recounting the life stories of Tibetans while steering away from ideological rhetoric	
1. Dispatching scholars and civilians overseas to explain the current state of Tibet	
Using Western scholars and overseas media to present China's policies in a good light	
3. To mobilize Tibetans to tell relevant positive stories	
External Propaganda Approach on the Tibet Issue	
Refuting Western criticism of China's Tibet policies by using the concept of the "China Dream"	

CONCLUSION

As China has risen to prominence on the international stage in recent years, the CCP has begun to place more emphasis on propaganda designed to boost China's image as a major power. This is especially true since 2008, when a series of boycotts against China by the international community made the CCP aware of the extremely negative image that China had in the West. Thus, the country's leaders, including Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping, invested huge amounts of resources in strengthening the country's propaganda system. Their aim was to enhance China's right to make its voice heard in the international arena and to reclaim the right to shape its own image.

In its attempt to establish a guiding ideology for its propaganda work, the CCP has continued to promote the interests of China while also incorporating Western theories related to public diplomacy. One example of the influence of public diplomacy is the way in which the CCP has tried to explain China to the world so that outsiders can better comprehend its Furthermore, it has also adopted reporting methods that are more easily understood by Westerners and used stories about ordinary people to make its official views more palatable to the outside world. However, the goal of the CCP's external propaganda is similar to that of its people's diplomacy during the Cold War era. The CCP's fundamental purpose is to form, as far as possible, an international united front with all governments and grassroots forces in order to undermine anti-China forces and drown out anti-China voices in the West. Since Xi Jinping came to power, the China Dream has emerged as the driving force behind external propaganda, a concept the CCP hopes to use to seize global ideological leadership.

Mao Zedong's appeal to "make our voice heard by the world" seems to have been realized by modern China. However, one question worth pondering is whether China's national image has been improved as a consequence. An official survey report published by the CCP indicated that there was an improvement in China's national image in 2014 compared to 2013. 12 This seems to indicate that the CCP's propaganda efforts have achieved some results, although it remains to be seen whether the world is willing to fully embrace and accept its "red voice." By adopting the Western notion of public diplomacy, the CCP is perhaps hoping that the outside world will be better disposed to its propaganda. In reality, however, it seems that the CCP's understanding of external propaganda is still influenced by a Cold War mentality and serves the hidden purpose of struggling against China's enemies in the international community. This may explain why many countries do not trust China's gestures of goodwill and friendliness.

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NOTES

- For discussion on the way the CCP has adjusted its foreign policy and is constructing its national image, see Wang (2003).
- 2. In the CCP's official vocabulary, the term "people" (renmin) carries a strong sense of purposiveness and instrumentality. Any groups of individuals that could, at a certain point in time, help the CCP acquire and strengthen its political power may be called "people." "People" include Chinese people and people throughout the world. The CCP emphasizes that the people of China and the world must join together to form the broadest united front to strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP regime (Van Slyke, 1967).
- For discussion of the relationship between CCP leadership and guidance, see Lieberthal (2011, 52).
- For discussions on public diplomacy work carried out by departments of the Chinese government, see d'Hooghe 2015, 144–46; and Zhao 1995, 185–89.
- PRC Political Elites Database (Department of Political Science, National Chengchi University, Taiwan, directed by Professor Kou Chien-wen), http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/index_flash.htm (accessed April 27, 2015).
- 6. The foreign audience discussed in this paper is the audience in Western countries. The CCP's external propaganda also targets audiences in non-Western countries by emphasizing their racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds and their relationships with the West. The CCP uses different methods for different audiences to increase the effectiveness of its propaganda. The CCP dubs this strategy "not all foreign countries are the same" (waiwai youbie) (Jin 2003, 39). Due to lack of space, non-Western audiences are not included in the discussion here.
- 7. The dumplings were manufactured in China's Hebei Province and exported to Japan. After Japanese consumers fell ill after eating them, investigations by the Japanese police revealed that the dumplings contained large amounts of poisonous substances.
- The CCP has tried to rebrand China in the past. For discussion of the CCP's efforts to build a national brand for the Beijing Olympics, see Brady 2009, 8–11; and for the CCP's attempt to establish a national brand based on Confucianism, see Barr 2011, 58–77.
- 9. Since China adopted the policy of economic reform and opening up, the CCP has aspired to tread a path different from that of the West and to establish a new paradigm of development. Hence, the presentation of such concepts as the "China Model" and the "China Dream." Unfortunately, these concepts have not been clearly defined, and there has been no uniformity of views among scholars (Zhao 2010; Brady 2008, 186–89).
- The China Daily was founded in 1981 and is under the jurisdiction of the Central Propaganda Department.
- 11. One scholar from a CCP think tank has noted that the CCP often establishes contact with and rewards Western scholars willing to spread pro-China opinion through semi-official "white gloves" organizations. Interview with a scholar from a CCP think tank, Shanghai, September 15, 2015.

 Xinhua wang [Xinhua Net], "2014 Global Survey of China's National Image," http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-03/19/c_ 127597504.htm (accessed April 30, 2015).

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