

# Creating a Favorable World Public Opinion

Changes in Chinese Online Propaganda Targeted at Foreigners

1999-2009

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### Note on Romanization

This thesis employs the *pinyin* system for the transliteration of Chinese terms and names. An exception is made for proper names that are commonly transcribed in other systems, e.g. Li Teng-hui. Chinese characters are listed in a separate glossary at the end of the paper.

## 1. Introduction

In January 2009, China's decision to invest 45 billion Yuan into the expansion of its global media and possibly create a "Chinese Al-Jazeera" caught the world's attention.<sup>1</sup> This investment is part of a recently announced new "big style external propaganda pattern" (*da waixuan geju*),<sup>2</sup> a large-scale effort of the Chinese government to boost China's image and increase its influence in shaping world opinion. Although this particular investment received a lot of attention, it is but one of many developments in China's constantly refined external propaganda activities that encompass an increasing range of channels and strategies.

While there has been much discussion revolving around China's rise and its implications for the current world order,<sup>3</sup> concrete measures to raise China's soft power through the improvement of external propaganda is a topic that has only recently received some attention. This has to some extent to do with the fact that the Chinese propaganda apparatus itself was considered in demise for a long period of time. Over the 1990s, the main tenor in China scholarship focussed on the perceived waning of control of China's propaganda system due to the commercialization of media.<sup>4</sup> In more recent years, some

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<sup>1</sup> This decision was first announced in the English-language media on January 12, 2009 in the Hong Kong based South China Morning Post (SCMP). "Da waixuan' jihua yu meiti gaige." <http://yq.people.com.cn/htmlArt/Event158s1.htm>. Accessed April 16, 2009. This report includes a quantitative analysis of foreign medias' reaction to the expansion. <sup>1</sup> Hu Jintao referred to it as a "Chinese CNN" ("Hu Jintao bushu Zhongguo da waixuan geju" January 22, 2009. [http://www.dwnews.com/big5/MainNews/Forums/BackStage/2009\\_1\\_22\\_7\\_58\\_13\\_928.html](http://www.dwnews.com/big5/MainNews/Forums/BackStage/2009_1_22_7_58_13_928.html) Accessed March 18, 2009) while the English language bloggersphere rather speaks about 'Chinese Al-Jazeera'. (See for example, "Chinese Al-Jazeera? No chance." March 25, 2009, <http://www.mutantpalm.org/2009/03/25/chinese-al-jazeera-no-chance.html>. Accessed April 22, 2009; Wolf, David: "5 reasons a Chinese Al-Jazeera is a good thing." February 4, 2009, [http://siliconhutong.typepad.com/silicon\\_hutong/2009/02/a-chinese-al-jazeera---five-reasons-this-is-a-good-thing.html](http://siliconhutong.typepad.com/silicon_hutong/2009/02/a-chinese-al-jazeera---five-reasons-this-is-a-good-thing.html). Accessed April 22, 2009; MacMurphy, Cam: "China spends 45 billion to extend media's global reach." January 12, 2009, <http://www.zhongnanhaiblog.com/web/articles/353/1/China-spends-45-billion-to-extend-medias-global-reach/Page1.html>. Accessed January 22, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> 'Big style propaganda pattern' is a term that has been in use for several years, but gained new significance when Hu Jintao announced the plans for China's external propaganda for 2009. (Cf. "Hu Jintao bushu Zhongguo da waixuan geju." Ibid.) It refers to a new comprehensive approach, namely coordinating various levels of propaganda, including popular diplomacy (*minjian waijiao*), cultural exchanges, official government propaganda, etc. Cf. Tang Jiamei: "Cong 'duiwai xuanchuan' dao 'gongong waijiao.'" *Guangdong waiyu waimai daxue xuebao*, vol. 19, no. 6 (November 2008) p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Sutter, Robert G.: *China's rise in Asia: promises and perils*. (Lanham: Rowman and Middlefield, 2005); Pumphrey, Caroline W. (ed.): *The rise of China in Asia: security implications*. (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2002); Guo, Sujian: *China's 'peaceful rise' in the 21st century: domestic and international conditions*. (London: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Lieberthal, Kenneth: *Governing China: from revolution through reform*. (New York and London: W.W.

scholars have reevaluated this assertion, instead arguing that the Chinese state has done remarkably well adapting the propaganda system to the new circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Brady's *Marketing Dictatorship* includes a chapter on the modernization of external propaganda that focuses on institutional and ideological changes following the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. Furthermore, there has been a trend to analyze China's attempts to increase its soft power in various parts of the world through a variety of sophisticated media and cultural channels.<sup>6</sup>

Overall, these studies paint a picture of success in adapting China's foreign propaganda strategies to current needs. While this is certainly true, they fail to account for the remaining inadequacies in Chinese external propaganda material and largely neglect the continuing discussion in Chinese circles revolving around the urgent need for further improvements, especially with regard to the overall influence of China's media in the world. Some have pointed out this gap of perception between Western and Chinese observers,<sup>7</sup> but so

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Norton, 1995); Lynch, Daniel C.: *After the propaganda state: media, politics, and 'thought work' in reformed China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Brady, Anne-Marie: *Marketing dictatorship: propaganda and thought work in contemporary China*. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). Shambaugh, David: "China's propaganda system: institutions, processes and efficacy." *China Journal*, no. 57 (January 2007), pp. 25-58. Esarey, Ashley: *Speak no evil: mass media control in contemporary China*. (Washington: Freedom House, 2006). Esarey, Ashley: *Caught between state and society: the commercial news media in China*. (PhD. Dissertation. Columbia University, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> D'Hooghe, Ingrid: *The rise of China's public diplomacy*. Clingendael Diplomacy Papers No. 12. Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2007. Kurlantzik, Joshua: *Charm offensive: how China's soft power is transforming the world*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Wang, Yiwei: "Public diplomacy and the rise of Chinese soft power." *The Annals of the American Academy*, no. 616 (March 2008), pp. 257-273. Aoyama, Rumi: "China's public diplomacy." February 2007. [http://dspace.wul.waseda.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2065/12795/1/41\\_070321-Aoyama-e.pdf](http://dspace.wul.waseda.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2065/12795/1/41_070321-Aoyama-e.pdf). Accessed January 23, 2009. These authors usually speak of 'public diplomacy' rather than propaganda in their papers. One definition for public diplomacy is "the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other nations" (Kurlantzik 2007, 61). There is a large discussion on whether a distinction between 'propaganda' and 'public diplomacy' is justifiable in terms of the underlying concept. The term *public diplomacy* was originally coined by Guillion in 1965 to avoid the more negative term *propaganda*. Some justify the use of different terms by associating *public diplomacy* with facts and *propaganda* with "partial disclosure or misinformation" (Aoyama, *ibid*, 2007, 2). Another approach views propaganda as limited to totalitarian regimes. The term 'public diplomacy' is justifiable to use for democracies, as groups other than the government may influence what information is conveyed to other countries (Aoyama 2007, 2). Others distinguish between propaganda as clumsy and 'public diplomacy' as sophisticated attempts to influence others (cf. Kurlantzik 2007, 61). The discussion over the differences between 'propaganda' and 'public diplomacy' touches on some of the basic questions in finding an adequate definition for propaganda. For this paper, I will therefore adopt a broad definition of propaganda (see below) and not attempt to differentiate on the basis of truth-value or actors involved.

<sup>7</sup> Li, Mingjian: "Soft power in Chinese discourse: popularity and prospect." September 1, 2008. Working Paper. <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/WorkingPapers/WP165.pdf>. Accessed October 12, 2008; Wang, Hongying: "National image building and Chinese foreign policy." *China: An International Journal*. Vol. 1, no. 1 (2003), pp. 46-72.

far, there has not been any analysis of the most recent changes in Chinese media propaganda strategies as a result of the continued debate. This study seeks to contribute a small part to filling this gap by examining the changes over the last ten years in one of China's newest channels of external propaganda: the Internet.

I chose to focus on the Internet for several reasons. First, most existing scholarship discusses either how the Internet *erodes* the Chinese government's prerogative on information distribution or how the government *counters* this challenge through censorship and developing more advanced technology to control the Internet.<sup>8</sup> The question of how the government proactively uses the Internet for its own purposes remains largely unexplored, especially with regard to external propaganda. Second, although the Internet opens up many new possibilities, the accessibility of materials also forces the Chinese government to consider both foreign and domestic audiences for any material it puts online. Finally, due to the fact that the Internet is a relatively new medium that constantly develops, it displays some of the most dramatic changes in Chinese foreign propaganda.

The main objective of this paper is threefold: first, to give an overview of China's external propaganda activities through its main online media outlets, second, to trace how these have changed over the last ten years and third, to assess the successes and remaining problems of the reforms of China's online propaganda. This paper can roughly be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will outline the institutional changes in China's external propaganda system, explain its current hierarchical structure, and give an overview of the role of the Internet in China's external propaganda. In the second part, I will analyze the discussion in China on how to improve the effectiveness of Chinese media in shaping world opinion and identify the most important points. The third part consists of an illustrative

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<sup>8</sup> E.g. Chase, Michael, James C. Mulvenon, Center for Asia-Pacific Policy (Rand Corporation), International Security and Defense Policy Center (eds.): *You've got dissent!: Chinese dissidents' use of the Internet and Beijing's counter-strategies*. (Washington D.C.: Rand Corporation, 2002). Yang, Guobin: "The Internet and civil society in China: a preliminary assessment." *Journal of Contemporary China*, no. 12 (August 2003), pp. 453-475. Yang, Guobin: "Contention in Cyberspace" in: Kevin O'Brien (ed.): *Popular protest in China*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 126-143.

content analysis to pinpoint recent developments in Chinese online media outlets. I will focus on changes in four aspects in particular: self-representation, culture, positive versus negative news, and sensitive issues. While these are far from covering the entire scope of changes, they highlight some of the key issues that have informed the discussion about external propaganda among academics and politicians in China over the past few years.

In order to trace the changes on major external propaganda websites, I use both quantitative and qualitative content analysis and focus on five different websites that can be divided into three categories: two central level “key news websites” (*zhongdian xinwen wangzhan*)<sup>9</sup> that were set up, at least in theory, with the explicit aim to target foreigners (China.org.cn, *China Daily* Online), two central level “key news websites” that were originally set up in Chinese but now also have pivotal functions in external propaganda (Xinhuanet, *People’s Daily* Online), and, finally, the web presentations of the Beijing Review, one of the few major propaganda publication of the Mao period. Older versions of the websites in question were accessed through the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org>), a non-profit organization founded in 1996 dedicated to building an Internet library for research purposes.

I will argue that due to a variety of factors<sup>10</sup> the discussion of external propaganda in Chinese political and academic circles has shifted from an economic rationale towards a discourse centred on transforming world public opinion to China’s favor. Reinforced efforts to improve China’s external propaganda in the last few years are clearly visible in China’s online media. Some of the most dramatic changes are surprisingly recent (2006-2007) and underline the increased sense of crisis during the Hu administration. To deal with the new

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<sup>9</sup> As designated by the Central Government; see below for more information. Altogether, there are nine central level key news websites today. Five of them are not considered here. CRI Online and CCTV.com are omitted in the analysis because of their multimedia content, which would add several dimensions to the analysis and goes beyond the scope of this paper. China Economics Net, China Youth Online, and China Taiwan Net are omitted because they are dedicated to specific topics, which complicates a comparison with other websites.

<sup>10</sup> Including crises highlighting China’s image problems, the introduction of new theoretical frameworks such as soft power or the discourse revolving around China as an emerging world power, as well as the continuous development of the Internet itself.

situation, external propaganda channels increasingly deviate from established propaganda principles as applied to domestic audiences. That said, the functioning of the propaganda apparatus also puts certain limits on the flexibility of external propaganda with regard to sensitive issues. If these limits stay in place, they may undermine the success of Chinese media in other areas and may impede the emergence of a highly influential Chinese voice on the international stage, especially in those areas where the Chinese government wants to increase its influence most and where it has to contend with its most persistent adversaries.<sup>11</sup>

## **2. Propaganda in the Chinese Context**

### **2.1 The Propaganda Apparatus of the PRC**

This chapter gives a brief overview of the role of propaganda in China, the hierarchical structure of the propaganda apparatus, and the basic mechanisms through which propaganda cadres wield their influence over the media sector in order to understand the overall system that external propaganda is a part of.

The term *propaganda* itself is difficult to define. It was first coined in the context of Catholicism and only acquired its negative connotation in the 1920s, after governments had made systematic use of propaganda during World War I for the first time.<sup>12</sup> Various definitions for propaganda co-exist that view propaganda either in positive, negative, or neutral terms. As a working definition for this paper, I will adopt Laswell's broad definition of propaganda as "the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations,"<sup>13</sup> regardless of the 'truth-value' of the representation, and regardless of the actors involved in the manipulation. In sum, while this paper concentrates on government-initiated propaganda, anybody can be involved in it.

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<sup>11</sup> Such as Falun Gong, the Tibetan Government in Exile, etc., which are all very skillful at conducting their own propaganda.

<sup>12</sup> Miller, Mark Crispin: "Introduction" In: Edward Bernays: *Propaganda*. (New York: Ig Publishing, 2004), pp. 9ff.

<sup>13</sup> Laswell, Harold. In: Jackall, Robert (ed.): *Propaganda*. (London: MacMillan, 1995), p. 13.

The Chinese term for propaganda, *xuanchuan*, generally does not have a negative connotation as in the West.<sup>14</sup> Like in the original context, it is associated with propagating the truth, not misinformation. It is seen as a vital strategic tool for “educating the masses”<sup>15</sup> and, especially since 1989, for maintaining regime stability. The basic propaganda apparatus, as it still exists today, was first established in 1951 under Soviet influence.<sup>16</sup> According to Brady, it is “the most extensive and, arguably, the most important of all the CCP-controlled bureaucratic systems.”<sup>17</sup> As can be expected, the influence of the propaganda bureaucracy over the media is immense: all media conglomerates in China belong exclusively to the Propaganda Departments at the respective levels in the bureaucracy.<sup>18</sup>

The propaganda “gateway” (*kou*)<sup>19</sup> is divided into two areas: internal and external propaganda, which can be seen as two separate *xitong*,<sup>20</sup> as each wields its own *nomenklatura* system.<sup>21</sup> At the top of the propaganda *kou* is a member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), currently Li Changchun, who is responsible for overseeing all propaganda and thought work, both internal and external and who heads the Central Leading Small Group (LSG) for Propaganda and Thought Work, the highest organ in the domestic propaganda system.<sup>22</sup> The administrative body of the Central LSG and the most important organization in the propaganda system is the Central Propaganda Department (CPD). In the post-Mao period, the *nomenklatura* system of the CPD was extended significantly. It now controls key appointments, among others in the *People’s Daily*, Xinhua, State Administration of Radio,

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<sup>14</sup> Shambaugh, *ibid*, 2007, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Shambaugh, *ibid*, 2007, p. 29

<sup>16</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> They are therefore Party owned. Most analysts had previously assumed that the Chinese media were *state*-owned. It was not until the publication of Document 17 that academics became aware of the actual ownership relations. Cf. Zhao, Yuezhi: “The state, the market, and media control in China.” In: Pradip Thomas, Zahorom Nain, and Peter Golding (eds.): *Who owns the media?* (London: Zed Books, 2004), p 196.

<sup>19</sup> A *kou* is a “major functional area” in the organization of Party work, headed by one or two central leaders, such as the Party Affairs *kou*, the State Security *kou*, etc. The number of *kou* has varied over the course of the history of the PRC. Cf. Lieberthal, *ibid*, 1995, p. 192f.

<sup>20</sup> A *xitong*, usually translated as ‘system’, refers to a “grouping of functionally related bureaucracies”. Lieberthal *ibid*, 1995, p. 193.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Shambaugh, *ibid*, 2007, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 9.



Film, and Television (SARFT), the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), and the Ministry of Culture (MoC).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, it “guides” (*zhidao*) the Office of Foreign Propaganda/State Council Information Office (OFP/SCIO), the main administrative organ of the external propaganda system (see below), which demonstrates some of the overlap between the internal and external propaganda *xitong*.<sup>24</sup>

Propaganda work is subdivided into four broad areas: political, economic, cultural, and social, meaning that different actors are involved in policy making in different sectors, and different degrees of restrictions apply. The Ministry of Culture, for example, is heavily involved in devising China’s cultural propaganda.<sup>25</sup> The rigidity of guidelines and regulations that media have to follow vary depending on the area, and the specific issue in question. The distinctions between these areas, especially between political (controlled strictly) and social (controlled more leniently) are set by top leaders and can be subject to change.<sup>26</sup>

CPD’s most important lines of communication with the relevant media work units are through the organization of oral instruction meetings with leaders in the media sector and through the publication of *Neibu Tongxun*, a journal intended for guidance on the latest propaganda directives, including correct formulations (*tifa*), slogans (*kouhao*), and topics to be stressed or avoided.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, each media unit is led by a Party Committee that always includes propaganda cadres.<sup>28</sup> Although not much concrete information exists on how the external propaganda bureaucracy functions, it presumably wields its influence through parallel or similar channels and in collaboration with CPD.

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<sup>23</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Shambaugh, *ibid*, 2007, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 157.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Zheng, Yongnian and Liang Fook Lye: *China’s propaganda reforms (II): the challenge of modern information management*. EAI Background Brief No. 202. (Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, 2004) p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 10.

## 2.2 External Propaganda Reforms

Since its earliest years, the CCP has made use of external propaganda. Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, the CCP published journals<sup>29</sup> and used selected Western individuals to leak information.<sup>30</sup> Both of these traditions, issuing regular print publications and using foreigners, were kept up during the Mao era. Furthermore, foreign language broadcasts, first launched in Yan'an in the early 1940s, were continued after the PRC was founded.<sup>31</sup> However, it was mainly in the post-Mao period, necessitated by China's economic reforms, that 'external propaganda' was professionalized and gained momentum.

Over the course of the 1980s, a variety of reforms were implemented to improve foreign propaganda with the goal of making it "serve the economy" (*waixuan wei jingji fuwu*).<sup>32</sup> During the Mao period, there had been no specific institution charged with overseeing external propaganda. Instead, external propaganda was the joint responsibility of the Foreign Affairs Small Leading Group (*Waishi Lingdao Xiaozu*) and the Propaganda and Education Leading Group.<sup>33</sup> In 1980, the Foreign Propaganda Leading Small Group (FPLSG, *Duiwai xuanchuan xiaozu*) was founded under the direct leadership of the Central Committee and charged with supervising all external propaganda work.<sup>34</sup> Simultaneously, Chinese propaganda strategies began to be modernized, as pre-World War II Western classics on propaganda and publicity (Lippmann, Bernays, etc.) were increasingly translated into Chinese.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, a variety of foreign language newspapers and journals was

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<sup>29</sup> E.g. *The Pioneer*, published in San Francisco, and *Voice of China*, published in Shanghai. Aoyama, *ibid*, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Most famously Edgar Snow, who published *Red Star over China*. Cf. Aoyama, *ibid*, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Aoyama, *ibid*, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Huang Zecun: "Duiwai xuanchuan de lishi kaocha." *Shandong shehui kexue shuangyuekan*. No. 2, 1991, p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Shambaugh, *ibid*, 2007, p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> Huang, Zecun: *Xin shiqi duiwai xuanchuan lungao* (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe, 2002) p. 178;

Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 152.

<sup>35</sup> Brady, Anne-Marie: "Regimenting the public mind." *International Journal*. Vol. 57. No. 4. (2002), p. 8.

established over the course of the 1980s, including the *China Daily* (1981), the *People's Daily* Overseas Edition, and *Outlook (Liaowang)* Overseas Edition.<sup>36</sup>

As recollections from the earliest propaganda cadres suggest,<sup>37</sup> during the 1980s, the necessity of external propaganda was not unchallenged. Towards the end of the 1980s, the CCP, in fact, lost interest in foreign propaganda, which resulted in the abolition of the FPLSG in 1988.<sup>38</sup> However, matters changed dramatically after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, when the CCP's image abroad was significantly tarnished. In order to counterbalance the negative images of Tiananmen, the FPLSG was re-established in 1990.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the basic assumption of propaganda work changed. Before 1989, foreigners were viewed as potential friends of China. After 1989, the CCP began to view other countries as 'hostile forces' that spread anti-China sentiment through their media.<sup>40</sup> The need to counterbalance these negative images can perhaps be seen as the start of the Chinese government's struggle over world public opinion (*shijie yulun douzheng*) that has become such an important concept today.<sup>41</sup>

In January 1991, the Office of Foreign Propaganda/State Council Information Office (OFP/SCIO) was set up as a separate entity from the Central Propaganda Department, and foreign propaganda expenses were increased significantly.<sup>42</sup> OFP, a party organization, and SCIO, a state organization, are headed by the same person (currently Wang Chen<sup>43</sup>), and are

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<sup>36</sup> Huang, *ibid*, 1991, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, an interview with Zhu Muzhi, former head of OFP/SCIO: Shen Honglei et al.: "Duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo ying gaige kaifang er sheng – zhuanfang xin shiqi waixuan shiye de kaituo zhe Zhu Muzhi." *Duiwai chuanbo*, no. 11, 2008, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 156.

<sup>39</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, pp. 151-156.

<sup>40</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 153f.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, the summary of a speech by Li Changchun. "Li Changchun: Zuo hao waixuan gongzuo, yingzao youliyu de guoji yulun huanjing." January 22, 2003. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2003-01/22/content\\_5637548.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2003-01/22/content_5637548.htm). Accessed April 20, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Overall, however, foreign propaganda still had to pay for itself as much as possible (Brady 2008, 156), a point that some analysts in the 1990s complain about, e.g. Zhang Zhenhua: "Guanyu duiwai xuanchuan ruogan wenti de sikao" In: Zhongyang duiwai xuanchuan bangongshi yanjiushi (ed.): *Duiwai xuanchuan lunwenji* (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo hubanshe, 1998), p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> Wang Chen replaced Cai Wu briefly after the Tibet Incident in March 2008 although the latter had only been in charge of OFP/SCIO for less than three years. The official explanation, as released through Xinhua, was that Wang Chen, former editor-in-chief of the *Renmin ribao* who had also worked as a vice minister of the

considered ‘one organization with two different nameplates’ (*yi ge jigou, liang kuai paizi*).<sup>44</sup> OFP/SCIO consists of a secretariat in charge of coordinating policy between the central and local levels and seven different offices, two of which are especially relevant in the context of this paper: the Fifth Office, which is responsible for Internet propaganda policies and regulations, and the Seventh Office that is dedicated to promoting China’s human rights activities,<sup>45</sup> and has most recently also been entrusted with managing and regulating the presentation of Tibet to foreigners.<sup>46</sup>

Over the course of the 1990s, a variety of new propaganda media that eventually superseded print media in their importance were established. In 1992, CCTV-4, a Chinese-language TV channel targeted mainly at Overseas Chinese, was set up. CCTV-9, broadcasting in English, followed suit in 2000.<sup>47</sup> China has also begun to promote Chinese language and Chinese culture abroad, for instance through the establishment of Confucius Institutes.<sup>48</sup> This has presumably become even more important after Hu Jintao stressed the importance to increase China’s “cultural soft power” at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress.<sup>49</sup> An additional strategy is the use of foreign media to broadcast China.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the Internet has gained in importance as a channel for external propaganda since the beginning of the 2000s and receives a lot of

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CPD in the past possessed more experience with media and propaganda work and was therefore better equipped for the job. Cai Wu was instead made Minister of Culture. (Cf. “Wang Chen: xinren ‘Zhongguo xingxiang dashi.’” April 24, 2008. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2008-04/24/content\\_8040487\\_1.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2008-04/24/content_8040487_1.htm) . Accessed April 17, 2009). It is unclear whether the Tibet Incident was the reason for the reshuffling or whether it had been agreed on before and was only formally announced through the decision of the NPC session.

<sup>44</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 156. This information is openly available online for anyone able to read Chinese (cf. “Jigou shezhi.” <http://www.scio.gov.cn/jbqk/jigou/#Menu=ChildMenu1>. Accessed April 10, 2009.). In the English language web, however, the OFP is usually not mentioned, and any activity is attributed to SCIO.

<sup>45</sup> The responsibilities of the other offices are managing the liaison with foreign media (First Office), managing China’s international news and researching international public opinion (Second Office), publishing, film, and cultural exchanges (Third Office), foreign propaganda planning and research (Fourth Office), and managing foreign journalists’ activities in China (Sixth Office). Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> “Jigou shezhi.” *Ibid*. The exact time when this change took place is unclear, but it must have been some time after the Tibet Incident in March 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 167.

<sup>48</sup> Kurlantzik, *ibid*, 2007, p. 68.

<sup>49</sup> Li Mingjian, *ibid*, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Bao Guihua: “Qiantan liyong waili wei wo xuanchuan.” *Neimenggu xuanchuan*. Vol. 9, 1994, pp. 19-20.

attention in official speeches, articles, and OFP/SCIO publications.<sup>51</sup> The section below will provide a brief overview of the role of the Internet in China's external propaganda.

### 2.3 The Internet as a New Channel for External Propaganda

China was first formally connected to the Internet in the first half of 1994. In 1996, it officially became open to the general public.<sup>52</sup> The Internet is considered one of China's most important external propaganda channels. One Chinese author even argues that the development of the Internet in China was to a large extent driven by China's need to establish new foreign propaganda media.<sup>53</sup> While the government recognized the inherent dangers to regime stability, it was convinced that it could manage the Internet and use it for its own purpose.<sup>54</sup> Considering that the *China Daily* was the first Chinese news paper to launch an online edition in 1995 before the Internet was even opened to the general public, and considering the speed with which subsequent English versions of other websites were set up, external propaganda may actually have been a very important factor. This view is also supported by the fact that OFP/SCIO (not CDP) has the overall coordinating and policy making responsibility for the Internet.<sup>55</sup> All in all, the Internet allowed China to reduce costly print publications and opened the opportunity to remove content more easily if propaganda guidelines change.<sup>56</sup>

Expansion of online foreign propaganda took place in phases that can be roughly matched with the publication of Five Year plans. For instance, in 2002, two years into the

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 167; Liu Pei: "Yong shijie de yuyan jiang Zhongguo de gushi." *Guangdong waiyu waimao daxue xuebao*, vol. 19, no. 6 (November 2008), p. 27; Tang Jiamei, *ibid*, 2008, p. 32f; "Cai Mingzhao: Hulianwang yi chengwei xiang shijie shuoming Zhongguo de zhanxin judao." December 9, 2008. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2008-12/09/content\\_10488494.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2008-12/09/content_10488494.htm). Accessed April 16, 2009; Guowuyuan Xinwen Bangongshi: *Hulianwang xinwen xuanchuan yewu duben*. Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe, 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Zhou Yongming: *Historicizing online politics: telegraphy, the Internet and political participation in China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 136.

<sup>53</sup> Peng Lan: *Zhongguo wangluo meiti de di yi ge shi nian*. (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2005) p. 44f.

<sup>54</sup> Zhou Yongming, *ibid*, 2006, 138.

<sup>55</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 129.

<sup>56</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 156.

Tenth Five Year Plan (2001-2005), there was a major investment in China's online foreign propaganda material. According to Brady, this was especially true for material on sensitive issues such as Taiwan, Tibet, and Falun Gong.<sup>57</sup> As the analysis below will show, this investment also entailed expansions in other areas, such as culture. The decision to strengthen print and news media groups, associated with the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year plan (2006-2010),<sup>58</sup> can also be interpreted in terms of improving online external propaganda, as websites are usually administered by affiliated work units of big News Media Groups. In fact, perhaps the most important step in the development of Internet propaganda occurred over the course of 2006, which suggests that online propaganda received considerable attention in the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and its subsequent implementation.

As all other media, China's official online media are organized hierarchically and are associated with an administrative level. At the top are nine central level "key news websites" (*zhongyang zhongdian xinwen wangzhan*),<sup>59</sup> all of which have versions in English and, increasingly, versions in other foreign languages.<sup>60</sup> The first five were designated in May 2000, consisting of China.org.cn, *People's Daily* Online, Xinhuanet, CRI Online, and *China Daily* Online.<sup>61</sup> CCTV.com, *China Youth* Online (*Zhongguo qingnian bao*), China Economic Net, and China Taiwan Net were added later. Each administrative jurisdiction below the central level equally has one or more key news websites,<sup>62</sup> most of which were established

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<sup>57</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 269.

<sup>58</sup> "Regulatory developments" In: *Destination digital: opportunities in China's media and advertising market*. [http://www.trpc.com.hk/bank/presfiles/digital\\_payments\\_in\\_china.pdf](http://www.trpc.com.hk/bank/presfiles/digital_payments_in_china.pdf), p. 25. The relevant section of the Five Year Plan is referred to as "2006—2010 nian quanguo duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo guihua." (Cf. "Shiliu da yilai wo guo duiwai xuanchuan he duiwai wenhua jiaoliu gongzuo zongshu." Xinhuanet. January 21, 2008. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-01/21/content\\_7465933.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-01/21/content_7465933.htm). Accessed April 17, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> "Zhongyang zhongdian xinwen wangzhan: wubian fengjiang, wuxian shengji." January 18, 2008. [http://www.china.com.cn/news/txt/2008-01/18/content\\_9555385.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/news/txt/2008-01/18/content_9555385.htm). Accessed March 19, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> For instance, China.org.cn has versions in French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Esperanto, Big-5, and Koreans versions in August 2001 and June 2006 respectively; Xinhuanet is also available Big-5, Spanish, French, Russian, and Arabic; and the *People's Daily* Online has versions in Big-5, Japanese, French, Spanish, and Arabic.

<sup>61</sup> Peng, *ibid*, 2005, p. 87.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Peng, *ibid*, 2005, p. 110.

between 2001 and 2002.<sup>63</sup> An increasing number of provincial government websites have English versions,<sup>64</sup> but so far most of them do not seem to play an important role in external propaganda yet aside from attracting tourism and investment for the locale. Thus, until now, external propaganda concentrates on a few external propaganda websites at the central level, which means that the propaganda bureaucracy can exert direct and fairly efficient control over the work units involved.

While the Internet is by and large viewed in favorable terms as far as external propaganda is concerned, it has not been overlooked that it also poses a challenge to established propaganda principles. Especially the traditional approach of “treating Chinese and foreign differently” (*neiwai youbie*) no longer fully applies. In 2003, CPD argued that due to the increasing number of foreigners reading Chinese, internal propaganda should be regarded as external propaganda.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, the influence of foreign propaganda on domestic audiences is considered a challenge.<sup>66</sup> Finally, at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in October 2007, Hu Jintao stressed the need to “coordinate the domestic and the international situation” (*tongchou guonei guoji liang ge daju*).<sup>67</sup> While this new slogan was coined with a large variety of different situations in mind, it is also applied to the context of propaganda.<sup>68</sup>

In conclusion, from the point of view of external propaganda, the Internet is seen both as good opportunity and as a challenge to established propaganda principles. It is currently

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<sup>63</sup> Peng, *ibid*, 2005, p. 158.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. <http://www.ebeijing.gov.vn>, <http://www.shanghai.gov.cn>, <http://www.eng.yn.gov.cn>.

<sup>65</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> An article from 2003 notes that external propaganda websites still have to come up with a solution on how to deal with news that are published in foreign languages, but not in Chinese (*duinei bu bao, dui wai bao*). Zhang Hong: “Chongfen fahui youshi, jiaqiang wangluo waixuan.” October 10, 2003. <http://www.kesum.cn/zjzx/zjfc/200512/9254.html>. Accessed March 5, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> “Hu Jintao bushu Zhongguo da waixuan geju.” *Ibid*. This is an addition to the “Five Coordinates”, which were announced at the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and are now an integral part of the idea underlying the slogan of the ‘harmonious society’. Cf. “Ba zhong xin tifa shouru shiqida baogao.” October 18, 2007. State Intellectual Property Office of the PRC. [http://www.sipo.gov.cn/sipo2008/gjzscqjltxbbb/zcxx/mtbd/200807/t20080722\\_412197.html](http://www.sipo.gov.cn/sipo2008/gjzscqjltxbbb/zcxx/mtbd/200807/t20080722_412197.html). Accessed April 10, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Ling Jihua: “Tongchou guonei guoji liang ge daju.” November 14, 2007. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/theory/2007-12/25/content\\_7310336.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/theory/2007-12/25/content_7310336.htm). Accessed April 10, 2009.

one of the main channels of external propaganda and will likely increase in importance in the future.

### **3. Domestic Criticism of External Propaganda**

#### **3.1 Reasons for Increasing Criticism**

Although Brady differentiates between different motivations for external propaganda and clearly recognizes the increased importance of improving China's image after 1989, she still considers "talking up the economy, rather than improving China's political image"<sup>69</sup> as the main aim of Chinese foreign propaganda and therefore concludes that overall China's external propaganda has been successful. However, Chinese observers see this differently: starting in the 2000s, a large amount of articles discussing the shortcomings of external propaganda and pointing out possible solutions appeared in Chinese journals. Obviously, a change in the rationale for external propaganda has taken place. While the economic factor used to be extremely important, current OFP/SCIO publications mainly stress the need for "establishing a good image" (*shuli guojia lianghao xingxiang*).<sup>70</sup> A variety of factors are probably responsible for the shift in the discourse towards the inadequacies of Chinese external propaganda. Three seem particularly important:

First and foremost, the intensified discussions are linked to China's new role in the world, both as perceived by foreign countries and by China itself. The emergence of the "China threat theory"<sup>71</sup> highlighted China's image problem and created the necessity to become more proactive in countering it. The discussion about China's rise and increasing influence in the world recast the question of external propaganda into new theoretical frameworks. For example, after Joseph Nye introduced the concept of "soft power"<sup>72</sup> in the

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<sup>69</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 170.

<sup>70</sup> "Tuijin waixuan kexue fazhan, shuli guojia lianghao xingxiang." November 19, 2008. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/gzdt/ldhd/200811/t235699.htm>. Accessed April 13, 2009.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 51.

<sup>72</sup> Soft power, simply defined, is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or



early 1990s, it quickly caught Chinese attention.<sup>73</sup> Chinese analysts especially highlight the importance of mass media in exerting soft power and view the Western dominance of world media as the source of Western “cultural hegemony.” They blame a large proportion of the lack of China’s soft power on the miniscule influence of its media in shaping world opinion.<sup>74</sup> As a consequence, many Chinese scholars and analysts have discussed measures to increase the effectiveness of Chinese propaganda targeted at foreign audiences in order to raise China’s overall soft power.

Second, the Internet itself probably helped to stir the discussion about external propaganda. Internet websites allow for a much wider dissemination of information and open up the possibility of direct feedback through emails or comments sections. From the beginning, websites such as *China Daily Online* placed visible feedback links in their pages.<sup>75</sup> Today, websites have significantly expanded their options for feedback.<sup>76</sup>

Third, a series of crises led to the intensification of debate and an increased perception of the urgency of the problem. There were a large number of events over the course of the 2000s that helped to keep the discussion alive.<sup>77</sup> Most recently, the failure of Chinese media after the Tibet Incident in March 2008 to sway international public opinion to China’s favor caused another round of intense debate on how to improve China’s soft power and the effectiveness of Chinese media abroad. OFP/SCIO, for example, convened a conference and published a report on the lessons learned from the Tibet Incident both for internal and external

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payment”. Nye, Joseph: *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004) p. x.

<sup>73</sup> The concept of soft power was first presented in Chinese academia in 1993. Li Mingjian, *ibid*, 2008, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Li Mingjian, *ibid*, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> China.org.cn. Archived version from May 9, 1998.

<http://web.archive.org/web/19980509065958/http://www.china.org.cn/>.

<sup>76</sup> For example, China.org.cn most recently introduced the option to leave a comment after every article.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Huang Fengwu: “Xinwen wangzhan jianshe yu fazhan.” November 14, 2003.

<http://www.cnnic.net.cn/html/Dir/2003/11/14/1302.htm>. Accessed March 17, 2009.

online propaganda.<sup>78</sup> Finally, the decision to invest in Xinhua's expansion is also directly linked to the events of 2008.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.2 Improving China's External Propaganda

Due to the reasons outlined above, criticism of China's propaganda system became increasingly fierce and increasingly specific over the course of the 2000s.<sup>80</sup> As the CPD 'guides' the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)<sup>81</sup> and stipulates topics for research, the rising number of articles pointing out flaws in foreign propaganda should first and foremost be seen as an indicator of a change in policy thinking and as a result of encouragement from the highest level to explore the topic. Especially with regard to the more general suggestions, the authors reuse concepts derived from Western journalism studies that already dominated the discussion over more consumer-oriented domestic media in the 1980s.<sup>82</sup> The basic assumption underlying the discussion is that "the West is strong and China is weak" and it may take a long time until this changes.<sup>83</sup> Hence, all strategies proposed are not short-term remedies, but rather intended to unfold their effect in the long run. Although there is some variation and some authors are clearly more outspoken than others, most of the discussion on what is wrong with China's external propaganda remains within certain parameters and includes the following recurring topics:

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<sup>78</sup> "Jingwai meiti shehua jiemu hulianwang chuanbo de duice yu sikao." March 13, 2009. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/glfw/11yj/200903/t279001.htm>. Accessed March 16, 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Including other big media events such as the Sichuan Earthquake, the Sanlu Milk Scandal, and the Beijing Olympics. Cf. "Hu Jintao bushu Zhongguo da waixuan geju." Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> By comparison, the points of criticism that appeared in volume published in 1998 by the research office of OFP are extremely general and focus on organizational and financial aspects rather than on details what is wrong with foreign propaganda. Cf. Zhang Zhenhua, *ibid*, 1998.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p.13.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Zhao 2004, 34 for the discussion on how to reform Chinese journalism in the 1980s. Despite reference to the same concepts, there are of course many differences between the 1980s discussions on domestic journalism and the current debate. The most important is, perhaps, that Western journalistic practices today are primarily seen as an instrument to raise the effectiveness of propaganda, not as a way to change the basic nature of Chinese journalism.

<sup>83</sup> Liu Jiang: "Gai ge chuangxin, zhuoli tigao yulun yindao nengli" *Zhongguo jizhe*, no. 5, 2008. <http://www.chuanboxue.net/list.asp?Unid=4113>. Accessed March 19, 2009.

1. Timeliness (*shixiaoxing*): In order to sway world public opinion it is important to be the first to break the news. As far as this is concerned, it has been suggested to allow foreign propaganda media more freedom to report on sudden events immediately and only make additions prescribed by the Propaganda Departments later. Such proposals are still worded rather carefully,<sup>84</sup> which indicates disagreement over the degree to which CPD should control news content in cases of sudden – possibly sensitive – events and signals opposition to giving media outlets too much freedom. What is important here to note is that the necessity to deliver timely reports touches on one of the basic problems faced by the propaganda system, namely how to find the right balance between flexibility and control.

2. Adapting news to fit the expectations and reading habits of foreigners (*zhenduixing*): Discussion mainly centres on four aspects: language, cultural differences, points of reference, and choice of topics. As far as language is concerned, brevity, and simplicity are recommended.<sup>85</sup> Various authors comment on the necessity to avoid simply translating Chinese formalized language<sup>86</sup> into English.<sup>87</sup> One analyst specifically recommends the reduction of adjectives.<sup>88</sup> As far as cultural differences are concerned, articles should avoid

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<sup>84</sup> They are, for example, always presented as personal opinion, never as normative regulations. “Tigao waixuan youxiaoxing de wu dian jianyi” *Zhongguo jizhe*, no. 2, 2004. <http://203.192.6.68/2004/2/2-23.htm>. Accessed March 17, 2009. Also see “Jingwai meiti shehua jiemu hulianwang chuanbo de duice yu sikao.” Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Zhang Xinxin: “Shilun tigao duiwai xuanchuan shixiao de fangfa” *Xinwen zhanxian*, no. 5, 2008, p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> None of the authors use the term ‘formalized language’, but the term sums up well what they mean. I am using Schoenhals’ definition of formalized language, i.e. a “restricted code” or linguistically reduced form of language, used, for example, in politics for the purpose of constituting one’s power. In this “restricted code” only a selection of the vocabulary, syntax, and speech patterns of every day language is available for use. (Schoenhals, Michael: *Doing things with words in Chinese politics: five studies*. [Center For Chinese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992], p. 1). Formalized language is not restricted to the Chinese context, but it has traditionally been extremely important in Chinese politics and is still plays a decisive role in CPD directives, which prescribe specific formulations or sentence patterns to be used.

<sup>87</sup> Some only give very general recommendations (source!), while others go into detail, and suggest, for example, that campaign names or other political terminology should not be translated literally any more but rather be explained (E.g. Tang Runhua: “Zhangwo jiqiao jianshao xuanchuan secui, waixuan gongzuozhe xuyao shenme.” *Duiwai da chuanbo*, no. 6, 2005. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2005-07/06/content\\_3182686\\_1.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2005-07/06/content_3182686_1.htm). Accessed March 17, 2009; Ding Daishu: “Qianxi waixuan yu neixuan de lianxi he qubie” August 26, 2005. [http://www.guangzhou.gov.cn/node\\_530/node\\_533/2005-08/112504723766622.shtml](http://www.guangzhou.gov.cn/node_530/node_533/2005-08/112504723766622.shtml). Accessed March 17, 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Zhang Zhenhua: “Duiwai xuanchuan – yong shenme shuo hua.” *Dianshi yanjiu*. No. 2, 2005, p. 6. Presumably, what is meant by this, is a reduction of adjectives (and adverbs) such as *unswervingly*, *ardent*, *strenuous*, *historical*, *vigorously* and other ‘big words’ common in CCP speech that generally tend to alienate foreign audiences.

using endless lists of numbers, which are meaningless to foreign readers.<sup>89</sup> Journalists are moreover asked to include points of reference, some sort of a “known variable” for foreigners, into their articles, for instance by drawing analogies.<sup>90</sup> Finally, journalists have to concentrate less on what they want foreigners to know and pay more attention to topics that are of interest to foreigners.<sup>91</sup> This last aspect is interesting because it touches on the basic functioning of the propaganda system in preventing certain stories from being broadcast. For instance, one author points out that due to restrictions on coverage of certain topics, China misses many good opportunities to influence world opinion to China’s favor.<sup>92</sup> While many of the above suggestions, especially those on language or cultural difference, seem very basic, their constant recurrence in articles on external propaganda over several years highlights the apparent problems in their implementation. One commentator even suggests that all journalists and editors writing for foreign audiences should put a sign on their desk to remind themselves that “Foreigners are not Chinese” (*waiguoren bushi Zhongguoren*).<sup>93</sup>

3. Disguising propaganda: Another aspect is the question of how to reduce the “propaganda flavour” (*xuanchuan secai*) of Chinese news.<sup>94</sup> The key to this problem is seen in avoiding overly politicized long theoretical lectures. Journalists need to learn how to “soften” “hard” news, meaning that they need to learn how to avoid directly spelling out political messages. The favored approach has become to “use people to tell stories and to tell stories to explain concepts.”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, authors recommend using seemingly innocuous

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<sup>89</sup> Li Xia: “Duo jiaodu he xijie – duiwai baodao de kexindu.” *Zhongguo jizhe*, no. 1, 2008.  
<http://chinesejournalist.xinhuanet.com/html/200801/lix2.htm>. Accessed March 19, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> One such example would be the likening of the role of the CCP in Tibet to that of Lincoln in the US (abolition of slavery). Cf. “Commentary: US bill on Tibet confuses facts.” March 12, 2009.  
[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/12/content\\_7571422.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/12/content_7571422.htm). Accessed March 20, 2009. While this particular example, perhaps, does not create the desired effect, the strategy in general enjoys increasingly widespread use.

<sup>91</sup> Or, ideally, concentrate on topics that fulfill both criteria. Tang Runhua, *ibid*, 2005.

<sup>92</sup> Lu Di: “Ruhe cong duiwai xuanchuan zouxiang guoji chuanbo?” *Hangzhou Shifan Xueyuan xuebao*, no. 2, 2005.

<sup>93</sup> Tang Runhua, *ibid*, 2005.

<sup>94</sup> Tang Runhua, *ibid*, 2005.

<sup>95</sup> Zhang Hui: “Zuohao liang hui waixuan de si da guanjian.” *Zhongguo jizhe*. No. 4, 2008.

details to convey ideological points.<sup>96</sup> An aspect that is not addressed explicitly in these open journals, but that has probably been given some thought,<sup>97</sup> as the analysis below suggests, is the question of whether or not to link external propaganda channels to the Chinese government.

4. Rethinking the effectiveness of ‘positive propaganda’: The question whether or not to include more negative news, is related to all of the points above, but deserves separate discussion. “Positive propaganda” (*zhengmian xuanchuan*), i.e. to concentrate on disseminating positive news about the successes of Chinese socialism has been one of the guiding principles of Chinese domestic propaganda since 1989, when the government realized the need to restore confidence in the government after the Tiananmen Incident.<sup>98</sup> Under this policy, the media were filled with positive stories, and “success stories” (*chengjiu baodao*) – negative news that were portrayed as positive news by concentrating on the efforts of the government to solve the problem.<sup>99</sup> In 1998, an article in a volume published by the Research Office of OFP still reconfirms that positive reporting should also be the guiding principle of external propaganda.<sup>100</sup> In 2003, tentative proposals to reconsider the effectiveness of positive propaganda on foreigners began to appear.<sup>101</sup> Some authors attacked the strategy to portray negative news in a positive light.<sup>102</sup> Others have questioned the notion that China should avoid reporting bad news in order not to look bad.<sup>103</sup> By 2008, the insistence on the inclusion of negative news to give a more balance picture has become part of the standard narrative of

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<sup>96</sup> Li Xia, *ibid*, 2008; Liu Jiang, *ibid*, 2008; Ding Daishu, *ibid*, 2005.

<sup>97</sup> One observer mentions that Westerners generally do not trust official government media. He does not, however, make a recommendation to de-emphasize media’s links to the government, but instead stresses the role of ordinary people in foreign propaganda through the longstanding practice of popular diplomacy (*minjian waijiao*), as they will be met with less suspicion (Tang Jiamei, *ibid*, 2008, 32).

<sup>98</sup> Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 95.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 95. Also see Tang Jiamei, *ibid*, 2008, p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> One should only be careful about not scaring other countries with too many success stories and fuelling the “China Threat Theory” (Zhang Zhenhua, *ibid*, 1998, 96f.).

<sup>101</sup> E.g. Gou Ke: “Shilun woguo duiwai chuanbo zhong guoji shouzhong xinli yanjiu” July 3, 2003. <http://tech.sina.com.cn/other/2003-10-13/1647243344.shtml>. Accessed March 18, 2009. Gou still words his suggestions very carefully by saying that “this does not mean that we cannot continue to rely mainly on positive reports in external broadcasting, but the condition for this has to be that it is effective.”

<sup>102</sup> Tang Jiamei, *ibid*, 2008, p. 31.

<sup>103</sup> Li Xia, *ibid*, 2008.

what is wrong with Chinese external propaganda.<sup>104</sup> Although a limited number of sensitive issues and negative reports have also been included in domestic media,<sup>105</sup> the suggestion of systematically including negative news to raise the credibility of Chinese media goes against an established principle of the propaganda apparatus.

In sum, a large number of problems have clearly been detected and are frequently discussed in journals or conferences organized at the highest level. The fact that basic points such as adapting the language and content to the target audience are still raised in 2008 indicates that despite serious efforts to improve external propaganda, many shortcomings still remain. While the lack of implementation of some suggestions may have to do with lack of resources and personnel, others question the general functioning of the propaganda apparatus and can therefore be expected to encounter some resistance.

## **4. Content Analysis**

### **4.1 Brief Overview**

The analysis in this chapter will draw on five different websites, four of which are central level key news websites. The changes of the websites are, as can be expected, immense, and it is impossible to cover all of them or provide a complete picture. This chapter instead picks out a few key aspects that give some sense of the direction of change. The approximate timing of the changes (2002 and 2006) suggests that the 10<sup>th</sup> and especially the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Five Year Plan for External Propaganda included the order, and presumably financial backing, for a large-scale improvement of Chinese external propaganda websites. Before continuing with the analysis, this chapter will first provide a brief overview of the websites in terms of ownership, development history, and information on where most page views come from. All information

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<sup>104</sup> See Li Xia, *ibid*, 2008; Zhu Jianting: “Duiwai xuanchuan: tigao guojia wenhua ruanshili de zhongyao lujing xuanze.” *Jiangxi Xingzheng xueyuan xuebao*. Vol. 10, no. 2 (2008), p. 29.

<sup>105</sup> In order to increase the media’s influence to ‘guide’ public opinion (*yulun yindao*), especially since the Internet has opened up new channels for citizens to voice their opinion or gain access to foreign news. Also, the media have been asked to monitor some problems in society (cf. Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 58).

about the country of origin of page views was retrieved from Alexa Internet ([www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com)) on March 16, 2009.<sup>106</sup>

### ***China.org.cn***

China.org.cn is led (*lingdao*) by OFP/SCIO<sup>107</sup> and is maintained by the China Internet Information Center (CNNIC), a subordinate organization of the Ministry of Information Industry (MII).<sup>108</sup> The English version underwent two major layout makeovers: in 2000 and November 2006. 38.6% of China.org.cn's page views are from China, with 12% from the United States, 4.6% from Japan, 3.8% from Germany, and 3.7% from India.

### ***China Daily Online (www.chinadaily.com.cn)***

Published since 1981 (Duan 2004, 4), the *China Daily* was the first Chinese newspaper to go online in 1995.<sup>109</sup> In 2003, it also began to offer some content in Chinese.<sup>110</sup> The site took its current shape after its last major make-over in the first half of 2006. About 50% of page views are from outside of China, with 16.2% originating in the United States, 5.2% in India, 2.7% in the UK, and 2.1% in Germany.

### ***Xinhuanet (www.chinaview.cn)***

Xinhua News Agency (*Xinhua Tongxun She*) is the official state news agency. It was first founded in 1931 under the name Red China News Agency (*Hongse Zhonghua Tongxun She*) and renamed in 1937.<sup>111</sup> Xinhuanet is under direct command (*zhijie bushu*) of the Party Center and is operated (*zhuban*) by Xinhua News Agency. Within Xinhua, Xinhuanet is run

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<sup>106</sup> Alexa Internet provides information on traffic ranking and other usage data of websites.

The information is not absolute reliable, as it is based on "patterns of Alexa Toolbar users and data collected from other, diverse sources" (<http://www.alexa.com/help>), but it gives an approximation of usage patterns.

<sup>107</sup> "Guanyu women." <http://www.china.com.cn/fuwu/guanyuwomen.htm>. Accessed April 9, 2009. China.org.cn is actually listed as the official website of OFP on Renminwang (Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 169).

<sup>108</sup> "About CNNIC". <http://www.cnnic.net.cn/en/index/> Accessed March 16, 2009.

<sup>109</sup> The original domain name was <http://www.ihep.ac.cn/chinadaily> (Peng, *ibid*, 2005, p. 30).

<sup>110</sup> Peng, *ibid*, 2005, 31

<sup>111</sup> Kockartz, Fabian: *Werden Chinas Massenmedien demokratisiert?* (Books on Demand, 2007), p. 57.

by the Internet Network Center (*wangluo zhongxin*), one of Xinhua's Editing Departments.<sup>112</sup> Xinhuanet was first launched in 1997. A separate domain name for the English version, <http://www.chinaview.cn>, was established in January 2000. In April 2004, Hu Jintao assigned Xinhua a leading position in China's external propaganda.<sup>113</sup> This increased importance, however, did not translate into a better website immediately until June 2006, when Xinhuanet received its last major make-over. 45% of page views of the English version are from China, 14.1% from the U.S., 7.3% from India, 5.4% from Nigeria, and 4.9% from Bangladesh.

### ***People's Daily Online (english.peopledaily.com.cn)***

The *People's Daily* is the official "mouthpiece" of the CCP and the most important publication of the People's Daily Group (*Renmin ribao she*). Renminwang (People Net) was established at the beginning of 1997. It is run by the Network Center (*wangluo zhongxin*), an affiliated work unit (*suoshu danwei*) of the People's Daily Group.<sup>114</sup> The English version followed suit in January 1998.<sup>115</sup> No separate information on page views of the English version of the *People's Daily Online* is available through Alexa. Around 1% of page views of [www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn) are from the United States. The English website received two major makeovers, one in the first half of 2004 and one at the beginning of July 2007, in time for the birthday of the CCP.

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<sup>112</sup> "Xinhua She jigou shezhi". <http://203.192.6.89/xhs/jgsz.htm> . Accessed April 13, 2009; "Operating advantages". Archived Version from January 1, 2006. [http://web.archive.org/web/20060113070915/www.xinhuanet.com/english/aboutus\\_e3.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20060113070915/www.xinhuanet.com/english/aboutus_e3.htm).

<sup>113</sup> Liu Pei, *ibid*, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>114</sup> "Jigou shezhi." Renminwang. <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/50142/104580/index.html>. Accessed April 23, 2009.

<sup>115</sup> Peng, *ibid*, 2005, p. 40.



### *Beijing Review* ([www.bjreview.com.cn](http://www.bjreview.com.cn))

The *Beijing Review* is a weekly English-language magazine that has been published by the China International Publishing Group (CIPG) since 1958.<sup>116</sup> The website's layout received three major make-overs, one in April 2003, one in April 2005, and the last at the beginning of 2007. Since 2001, the *Beijing Review* has also been available online. 46.9% of page views are from China, 15.3% from the United States, 13.2 from India, and 9.4 from the UK. Although no reliable data on page views is available, it can be safely said that the *Beijing Review* Online has considerably less page views than the other four websites.<sup>117</sup>

## 4.2 Self-Representation

In order to analyze how the self-representation of the five websites has changed since ca. 2000 this part will examine their "About us" sections. Aside from the elimination of basic language errors and cultural adaptations, changes centre on the question of whether or not to delink websites from the government or the CCP in order to decrease foreigners' perception that they are reading propaganda. This question is interesting because there are two basic options, either to delink all websites from the government to increase the effectiveness of the news or to continue to link the websites to the government and attempt to improve the government's image by filling the websites with good quality news. While the general trend is in favor of the first option, no unified binding regulation seems to exist.

Very few substantial changes were made to the "About us" sections on *China.org.cn*, *People's Daily* Online, and *China Daily* Online after they were first added in 2001, 2000, and

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<sup>116</sup> "About Us: Introduction" 2006. *Beijing Review* Online, archived version from December 23, 2006. <http://web.archive.org/web/20061213033915/www.bjreview.com/>.

<sup>117</sup> According to the website itself, *Beijing Review* has 700,000 hits daily ("About beijingreview.com" [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/txt/2006-12/20/content\\_51383.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/txt/2006-12/20/content_51383.htm). Accessed April 22, 2009). A "hit", however, does not equal a page view, as it denotes any file sent to a browser from a web server. Since any image is stored as a separate file, one page view of a site with x images produces x+1 hits. In comparison, *China Daily* Online claims 12 million hits daily ("Connecting China, Connecting the World." [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/static\\_e/About\\_Chinadaily.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/static_e/About_Chinadaily.html). Accessed April 22, 2009).

2002 respectively.<sup>118</sup> First, the self-representation of China.org.cn did not change at all and has always presented the site as an “authorized government portal site [...] published under the auspices of the State Council Information Office and the China International Publishing Group.” The People’s Daily Online did not change its self-representation significantly either, It was never directly linked to the government or the Party, but instead always said to “reflect the views of the people”.<sup>119</sup> *China Daily* Online had some minimal changes. The first “About us” section from May 2000 indirectly linked *China Daily* Online to the government by stating that the site was “designated by the Chinese government as one of the country’s five key media websites”.<sup>120</sup> This was changed during the last major makeover in 2006, when *China Daily* Online was instead declared “one of China’s top nine news portals at state level”. Furthermore, a reference that Business Daily Update (a publication of the China Daily Group) “works closely with the State Information Center [...] and other government agencies” was eliminated as early as 2003. In conclusion, in all three cases, no large changes were made, but this is likely due to the fact that the three “About us” sections were already rather professionalized from the beginning, so no substantial changes were needed.

Considering its less important status, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Beijing Review lagged behind both in terms of content and of language. A first “About us” section was put online in April 2005 and was replaced after a thorough make-over in January 2007.

As far as the language and style are concerned, the text from 2005-2006<sup>121</sup> is not tailored to foreign audiences. First, it contains grammatical errors that are very surprising

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<sup>118</sup> Aside from changes reflecting the professionalization of the websites, such as announcing the addition of new Services (RSS feed, multi-media content, etc.).

<sup>119</sup> The only change interesting in terms of better adapting to the expectations of foreigners that took place on the *People’s Daily* Online was the elimination of the reference to the *People’s Daily* being “a newspaper leading the others in China”, i.e. a reference to an organizational and hierarchical structures that most foreigners are unfamiliar with and that is presumably not viewed positively. Cf. “People’s Daily Online.” Archived version from August 15, 2000.  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20000816201218/english.peopledaily.com.cn/about/aboutus.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Chinadaily.com.cn. Archived version from January 24, 2002.  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20011217180245/www1.chinadaily.com.cn/static/function/aboutus.html>

<sup>121</sup> The entire English text before 2007 reads as follows: “Beijing Review is China’s only English weekly news magazine, published in Beijing by the China International Publishing Group (CIPG). Proposed by the late

considering both the time (end of 2006) and the status of the journal.<sup>122</sup> Second, sentences are not logically connected in the English version. Figuring out the target audience is actually quite confusing without consulting the Chinese original that explicitly points out that the journal is aimed both at foreigners *and* at Chinese working with foreigners. Third, the self-description from before 2007 uses buzzwords such as ‘friendship’ that have a specific meaning in Chinese politics,<sup>123</sup> but do not carry the same connotations for international audiences and may consequently be perceived as overly sentimental or even dishonest.

With regard to content, there is a shift from legitimacy through the invocation of Chinese top politicians’ names to legitimacy through stressing accuracy, objectivity, service, and international esteem for the journal. Emphasizing a website’s legitimacy by showing top leaders’ support is a common practice that remains an important practice in Chinese language PRC media. Xinhua.com<sup>124</sup> and Renmin.com<sup>125</sup>, for instance, both have a section called “Leaders concern [for our website]” (*lingdao guanhuai*) that provide a comprehensive list of anecdotes of leaders’ praise for the website. The version from 2005-2006 refers both to Zhou Enlai and Jiang Zemin. After January 2007, this reference to Chinese politicians is completely omitted, probably because editors realized that an open connection to individual leaders does not create the same effect among foreign readers as it does in the Chinese context and damages the journal’s reputation rather than improving it. The new version instead declares that “over the past 48 years, Beijing Review has strived to maintain objective and

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Premier Zhou Enlai, the magazine was launched in 1958. Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin wrote an inscription for Beijing Review that captures its essence: “A window into China to foster international friendship”. For Chinese engaged in foreign affairs, foreign trade, and economic relations, as well as some other professions, Beijing Review has become an indispensable English magazine” (“About Us: Introduction”, *ibid*, 2006).

<sup>122</sup> The sentence *Huanying dingyue Beijing Zhoubao!* is translated as “Welcome subscribe Beijing Review!” (“About Us: Introduction”, *ibid*, 2006).

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Brady, Anne-Marie: *Making the foreign serve China: managing foreigners in the People’s Republic*. (Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 7f

<sup>124</sup> “Lingdao guanhuai.” <http://www.xinhuanet.com/aboutus/ldgh.htm>. Accessed April 17, 2009.

<sup>125</sup> “Lingdao guanhuai.” <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/50142/50472/index.html>. Accessed April 8, 2009.

comprehensive reporting and is highly regarded both domestically and internationally for its efforts to serve the needs of its readers.”<sup>126</sup>

Moreover, in the earlier version from before 2007, the text is available both in English and in Chinese on the same page and still demonstrates the principle of *nei wai you bie* – differentiating between Chinese and foreign – that has increasingly come under attack today due to foreigners who read Chinese. The Chinese text, for example, points out that the Beijing Review is “one of the key publications [issued by] the central level [for the purpose of] external propaganda”<sup>127</sup> – an explanatory note that is, of course, skipped in the English translation. In the new self-introduction after January 2007, the Chinese text is eliminated.<sup>128</sup>

Xinhuanet shows the most important changes in self-representation of the four key news websites. Before 2003, the only link to the government was the remark that Xinhua was the “state news agency” of the PRC.<sup>129</sup> However, in 2003, the “About us” section was changed as part of a major makeover to include a section called “Concept” that remained on the website between 2003 and June 2006 and reads as follows:

Xinhuanet.com [sic!] consistent principle is to persist in giving top priority to national interests, unswervingly uphold correct guidance to public opinion and safeguard the authenticity, authoritativeness and objectivity of news reporting. "Making Xinhuanet.com more influential and bigger as soon as possible" is the ardent expectation of the Party Central Committee on Xinhuanet.com. Never resting on success and keeping growing are the requirements posed by Leading Party Group of the Xinhua News Agency. Keeping pace with the times and seeking the outstanding are the consensus of all Xinhuanet.com employees. [...] Xinhuanet.com will continue

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<sup>126</sup> Beijing Review Online. Archived version from January 1, 2007.

[http://web.archive.org/web/20070218203342/www.bjreview.com.cn/txt/2006-12/20/content\\_51382.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20070218203342/www.bjreview.com.cn/txt/2006-12/20/content_51382.htm).

<sup>127</sup> “About us”, *ibid*, 2006.

<sup>128</sup> Beijing Review Online. Archived version from January 1, 2007.

[http://web.archive.org/web/20070218203342/www.bjreview.com.cn/txt/2006-12/20/content\\_51382.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20070218203342/www.bjreview.com.cn/txt/2006-12/20/content_51382.htm)

<sup>129</sup> “Brief Introduction to Xinhua News Agency.” Archived version from May 10, 2000.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20000511224506/www.xinhua.org/english/index.htm>.

to develop vigorously, boldly make innovations and make steady progress. It will bear in mind its duties and tasks, and make every possible effort to fulfill the historical mission of "publicizing China and reporting the world" and scale new heights in the network field.<sup>130</sup>

This text goes against any principle for effective propaganda that analysts have emphasised. First, the entire statement is written in formalized language and includes words and organizational structures that are only used in Chinese politics, a practice that had been criticized by various commentators for several years at the time the self-introduction was put online. Second, Xinhuanet is linked to the Party through the mentioning of the Central Party Committee. Third, the existence of a Leading Party Group within Xinhuanet is acknowledged. After 2006, this statement was eliminated, as was any other reference to the state or the party. The 2003 change on Xinhua can perhaps best be explained by an overzealous new editor with little experience in foreign propaganda, who allowed the "About us" section to be remodelled on the basis of its Chinese counterpart. This underlines one of the basic problems Chinese English-language websites battle with, namely the lack of qualified manpower. Nonetheless, the existence of formalized CCP language and repeated references to the Party (!) on the website of the state news agency two years after it was officially designated as China's most important foreign propaganda organ and only two years before the Chinese government announced its decision to turn it into a "Chinese CNN" remains somewhat puzzling.

All in all, before 2006, the self-representation of the five websites gives a surprisingly varied picture. The fact that Beijing Review lagged behind the key news websites is unsurprising; the backward "About us" section on Xinhua seems like an accident. The professionalization of both Xinhua and the Beijing Review in late 2006 and early 2007 reconfirm this time as a watershed in the unification and professionalization of online

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<sup>130</sup> "Concept." Xinhuanet. Archived version from May 26, 2006.  
[http://web.archive.org/web/20060430021318/www.xinhuanet.com/english/aboutus\\_e4.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20060430021318/www.xinhuanet.com/english/aboutus_e4.htm).

propaganda outlets. Finally, although the analysis of the four websites' self-representation suggests that there is a general tendency to disassociate the websites from the Chinese government, there seem to be no clear guidelines on this aspect, as the continuing link to the government on China.org.cn shows.

### 4.3 Culture

As some Western observers have pointed out, “[o]ne of China’s biggest assets [...] is the positive image of its culture.”<sup>131</sup> Chinese analysts agree: When Nye’s concept of “soft power” was introduced to China, the role of culture, a point Nye does not emphasise in his original paper, was stressed from the beginning and continues to receive much attention as a source of soft power, epitomized in Hu Jintao’s call at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress to “increase the country’s cultural soft power.”<sup>132</sup> This chapter will not take up the difficult task of trying to provide a definition for culture. It will, however, trace the basic steps of the development of content categorized under the tag “culture” on the websites in question.

First, all websites show a similar pattern of neglecting culture or lumping it together with other topics at varying points in time: “Culture and Education” (2000-2001)<sup>133</sup> and “Culture and Science” (2001-2002)<sup>134</sup> on China.org.cn, “Society/Culture” on Beijing Review Online (2001-2003),<sup>135</sup> “Culture/Edu” on Xinhuanet (2003-2006),<sup>136</sup> and “Culture/Life” on the People’s Daily Online (2004-2007).<sup>137</sup> Also, there was no specific category for “culture” at all before 2002 on the *China Daily* Online. This random classification, which was coupled

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<sup>131</sup> D’Hooghe, *ibid*, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> Li Mingjian, *ibid*, 2008, p. 8; Zhu, Jianting: “Duiwai xuanchuan: tigao guojia wenhua ruanshili de zhongyao lujing xuanze” *Jiangxi Xingzheng xueyuan xuebao*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2008) p. 27.

<sup>133</sup> China.org.cn. February 29, 2000.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20000303134814/www.china.org.cn/English/index.html>.

<sup>134</sup> China.org.cn. May 8, 2001.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20010526121946/www.china.org.cn/english/index.htm>.

<sup>135</sup> Beijing Review Online. April 5, 2001.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20010410224337/www.bjreview.com.cn/bjreview/EN/Index.htm>.

<sup>136</sup> Chinaview.cn. January 1, 2005. <http://web.archive.org/web/20050101023517/http://www.chinaview.cn/>.

<sup>137</sup> *People’s Daily* Online. January 5, 2005.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20050103085116/http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/>.

with a low number of culture-related news overall, indicates that not much thought was put into the question what ‘Chinese culture’ was supposed to mean and which aspects of Chinese culture should be presented to foreigners.

China.org.cn was the first website to introduce a category solely dedicated to culture in 2002, further subdivided into four sub-categories: “News,” “Folk Arts,” “A Lively Present,” and “A Treasured Past.”<sup>138</sup> At the same time, the journalistic quality of articles on culture improved significantly, from articles listing too many specific details<sup>139</sup> and obsessed with numbers<sup>140</sup> to articles with catchy headlines frequently employing quotes from both Chinese and Westerners, focussing on individual artists, and stressing the interrelatedness of Chinese culture and the rest of the world, for instance by reporting on the popularity of Chinese music abroad or on woodcarvers including Christian icons in their work.<sup>141</sup>

The timing of the change on China.org.cn coincides approximately with the first test launch of [www.chinaculture.org](http://www.chinaculture.org) in 2002, a site specifically dedicated to Chinese culture “guided” by the Ministry of Culture and maintained by [Chinadaily.com.cn](http://chinadaily.com.cn).<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, no previous versions of [www.chinaculture.org](http://www.chinaculture.org) are accessible through the Internet Archive, but it can be assumed that the style and quality of articles is similar to that of articles on China.org.cn.

Around the same time that China.org.cn and *China Daily* Online began to pay more attention to culture, Xinhua and the People’s Daily Online first introduced categories that were broadly related to culture, “Culture-Edu” and “Culture/Life.” However, their presentation of culture was not thought through and rather resembled that on China.org.cn before 2002. Xinhua’s “Culture and Edu” mainly featured articles related to education, while

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<sup>138</sup> China.org.cn November 15, 2002. <http://web.archive.org/web/20021208183444/english/culture/34435.htm>.

<sup>139</sup> E.g. “Xinjiang Heading for Major Tourism Region.” China.org.cn. Archived version from February 29, 2000. <http://web.archive.org/web/20000528164314/www.china.org.cn/English/News/Edu/0303/11.htm>.

<sup>140</sup> E.g. “Undo Glacier Wonder Seen in Tibet.” China.org.cn. Archived version from February 29, 2000. <http://web.archive.org/web/20000523194809/www.china.org.cn/English/News/Edu/0301/03.htm>.

<sup>141</sup> E.g. “Carving Out an Honest Life.” China.org.cn. Archived version from November 28, 2002. <http://web.archive.org/web/20021220132950/www.china.org.cn/english/culture/49921.htm>

<sup>142</sup> “About us”. [www.chinaculture.org](http://www.chinaculture.org). [http://www1.chinaculture.org/2007-10/09/content\\_687.htm](http://www1.chinaculture.org/2007-10/09/content_687.htm). Accessed April 11, 2009.

Culture/Life on People's Daily Online primarily covered topics that would today be categorized under "Society."<sup>143</sup> Between 2003 and 2006, the number of culture-related articles increased, but there still was no clear idea which topics to focus on. This shows that while the Ministry of Culture apparently became more active after 2002 as part of the general expansion of online foreign propaganda, only the websites targeted primarily at foreigners were immediately affected by the change. Xinhuanet and People's Daily Online only followed suit in June 2006 and July 2007 respectively. Xinhuanet still retains the name "Culture and Edu", but subsections<sup>144</sup> reveal that the main concern is with culture.

Likewise, the *Beijing Review* also had its most important change at the beginning of 2007. The earliest version of the *Beijing Review* that was online between 2001 and April 2003 had a category called "Society/Culture", whose articles were of poor quality compared to the rest of the website and showed the same problems as the other websites.<sup>145</sup> With the first two layout changes, this category disappeared between 2003 and 2006. Articles on culture were occasionally featured under categories such as "Forum," and "People & Points" mixed in with other topics, but overall, they did not receive much attention. With the make-over in 2007, 'culture' returned to the center of attention, as several new categories were introduced: "Arts & Culture," "Books," and "Movies." Another innovation from 2007 was the inclusion of a wide variety of articles not published in the print version of the journal, thus broadening the scope of coverage.

The new emphasis on all websites since 2006 has been on contemporary cultural activities such as exhibitions, performances of individual artists, awards, etc. This change is certainly part of a marketing strategy, as popular singers probably attract a larger readership

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<sup>143</sup> For example "Hainan police crack large car-theft gang", "Anti-drug awareness now part of curriculum." *People's Daily* Online. Archived version from January 5, 2005.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20041229204638/english.peopledaily.com.cn/life.html>.

<sup>144</sup> 'Education/Training', 'Cultural Exchange', 'Heritage/Archeology', 'Exhibition/Festivals', 'Travel', and 'Others'. "Culture and Edu." Xinhuanet. <http://www.chinaview.cn/culture/index.htm>. Accessed April 22, 2009.

<sup>145</sup> See, for instance "Largest Bass Drum Made in China." *Beijing Review* Online, archived version from April 5, 2001. <http://web.archive.org/web/20010410224337/www.bjreview.com.cn/bjreview/EN/Index.htm>.



than ancient base drums, but it is also in accord with the recommendation to “use people to tell stories”<sup>146</sup> and to focus on individual artists in order to help Westerners “overcome the psychological divide caused by the difference in ideologies and political systems.”<sup>147</sup>

In conclusion, three periods can be identified: First, the time before 2002, when none of the websites paid particular attention to “culture” or indicated that any thought had been put into which aspects of Chinese culture should be presented; second, the period between 2002 and 2006, when the representation of “culture” on the two websites specifically targeted at foreigners (*China Daily Online* and *China.org.cn*) was fairly well-structured and advanced in terms of language and style, but remained unsystematic on *Xinhuanet*, *People’s Daily Online*, and the *Beijing Review*, and third, the period after 2006, when “culture” received a clear priority on all websites after their last major makeover (between 2006 and 2007) and contemporary culture was elevated above traditional culture. All in all, the increasing inclusion and improvement of culture-related news is an important step in strengthening “softer” news to propagate China and symbolizes the increasing sophistication in external propaganda.

#### 4.4 Negative News

As pointed out above, Chinese scholars have called to reconsider the usefulness of applying the principle of “positive propaganda” to foreign audiences, a trend that probably received backing from top leaders. The constant stress of China’s domestic problems within the context of the theory of China’s “peaceful development”<sup>148</sup> certainly would encourage more negative reports. This section takes a closer look at the inclusion of negative news from the point of view of ratio and scope. The focus in this section is on how China presents itself

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<sup>146</sup> Liu Jiang, *ibid*, 2008.

<sup>147</sup> Zhu Jianting, *ibid*, 2008, p. 29.

<sup>148</sup> China’s politicians frequently point towards domestic problems to assure foreigners that China’s rise/development will not threaten other countries and will take a long time. See for example “Zai shi jie quanguo renda er ci huiyi jizhe zhaodaihui shang Wen Jiabo zongli da Zhong wai jizhe wen.” *Renmin Ribao*. 15.03.2004. P. 1.

to the world; consequently, articles for analysis are taken from categories that can broadly be summarized as “China – Society”.<sup>149</sup> As some archived versions are not available and in other cases the date of the archived version does not correspond to the date of the content archived, a comprehensive quantitative content analysis documenting the increase of negative news in terms of percentage is not possible. However, general trends can be indicated through probes from specific periods. I will examine versions from 1999/2000,<sup>150</sup> 2003/2004,<sup>151</sup> and 2009<sup>152</sup> of the four key news websites.<sup>153</sup> Beijing Review Online will not be considered in this analysis because it is not a news website and only recently began to publish articles other than those featured in the print version.

In 1999/2000, websites still contained mostly positive news. On October 2, 1999, the *China Daily*, for example, carried exclusively positive headlines under the category “People/Life”.<sup>154</sup> This does not mean that all news at this time had to be positive, but it does show that it was okay and not unusual to find exclusively good news under a specific heading. Occasionally, a few pieces of negative news were included. Reports such as “Yunnan Earthquake claims heavy losses”<sup>155</sup> on People’s Daily Online, or “Production accidents kill 1,470 people in Yunnan in six months”<sup>156</sup> on *China Daily* Online are still rare, but do appear. However, while these titles do not say anything about how the government tries to solve the problems, the content of both articles still includes information on relief efforts and measures

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<sup>149</sup> In some cases, the category may have a different name, such as “People/Life” or may only be referred to as “China”.

<sup>150</sup> Before the publication of the 10th Five Year Plan and before the question of negative news was raised.

<sup>151</sup> Before the publication of the 11th Five Year Plan, when the issue of negative news was already tentatively addressed, but still phrased very carefully.

<sup>152</sup> In order to give an update on the most recent situation after the necessity to include negative news to raise the credibility of external propaganda had already become an unchallenged part of the standard criticism of foreign propaganda.

<sup>153</sup> As the changes on the websites are very similar and the existence of unified regulations can be assumed, I will not cover them separately.

<sup>154</sup> *China Daily* Online. Archived version from October 2, 1999.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20000816163450/www.chinadaily.com.cn/20years/main.htm>.

<sup>155</sup> *People’s Daily* Online. Archived version from August 15, 2000.

[http://web.archive.org/web/20010509164856/english.peopledaily.com.cn/200008/23/eng20000823\\_48865.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20010509164856/english.peopledaily.com.cn/200008/23/eng20000823_48865.html)

<sup>156</sup> *China Daily* Online. Archived version from August 15, 2000.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20000816143511/www.chinadaily.com.cn/cover/storydb/2000/08/14/cn-accid.814.html>

introduced to prevent the loss of human life. In general, the first topics to become safe for negative coverage are natural disasters and work place accidents. Negative articles are still extremely few in number and include information on government efforts to counter the problems. This result is unsurprising, as the general guideline was still to focus on positive news at this time.

There is an overall increase in negative news between 2000 and 2003. However, they continue, by and large, to be limited to natural disasters (droughts, floods, forest fires, etc.), traffic accidents, and mining or factory accidents.<sup>157</sup> Generally, when a distinction between national and local news is made, news categorized as “local” unsurprisingly have more negative headlines.<sup>158</sup>

By 2009, the scope of negative news has been visibly broadened. The majority of negative reports focus on disaster and crime as well as health-related issues that began receiving more extensive coverage after China was criticized for its handling of the SARS issue in the media.<sup>159</sup> In addition to relatively safe disaster, accident and crime news, there have been a small number of articles on more delicate topics. One article on China.org.cn, entitled “Shanghai hukou reform just for show,”<sup>160</sup> points out the inadequacies in the recently introduced new *hukou* policy.<sup>161</sup> Another article covered the outrage over the reappointment of officials involved in the Sanlu Milk scandal.<sup>162</sup> It is furthermore not uncommon to find

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<sup>157</sup> E.g. Xinhuanet. Archived version from August 5, 2003.

[http://web.archive.org/web/20030801080717/www.xinhuanet.com/english/china\\_5.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20030801080717/www.xinhuanet.com/english/china_5.htm).

<sup>158</sup> Compare, for example, China.org.cn. Archived versions from August 4, 2003:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20031206124458/www.china.org.cn/english/China/33983.htm> (local) and

<http://web.archive.org/web/20031021055727/www.china.org.cn/english/China/33990.htm> (national).

<sup>159</sup> See Esarey *Caught between State and Society*, *ibid*, 2006, pp. 188-198 for an in-depth case study of how the government handled SARS-related news during the epidemic.

<sup>160</sup> March 19, 2009. [http://www.china.org.cn/china/features/content\\_17468979.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/features/content_17468979.htm). Accessed April 17, 2009.

<sup>161</sup> The Shanghai municipal government announced in February 2009 that it would allow migrants to obtain a local *hukou* under a number of conditions, including having had a Residence Permit for at least seven years. “Shanghai hukou reform just for show”, *ibid*.

<sup>162</sup> “Milk scam officials get fresh positions.” April 10, 2009. [http://www.china.org.cn/government/news/2009-04/10/content\\_17580723.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/news/2009-04/10/content_17580723.htm). Accessed April 17, 2009.

exclusively or almost exclusively negative news under the category “China” or “China – Society” today.<sup>163</sup>

Again, it should be noted that the broadening of scope is not limited to websites aimed at foreigners, as a lot of new topics have become safe for negative coverage in domestic news as well. However, the structure of external propaganda websites increases the impression of a high percentage of negative news overall. As Chinese language websites have much more content that is subdivided into more categories and according to localities, negative news are spread out evenly over the entire website, and there is not one single category with almost exclusively bad news.<sup>164</sup>

In conclusion, over the last few years, the number of topics safe for negative coverage has grown constantly, occasionally in response to acute crises, such as in the case of SARS. While a number of articles on more sensitive aspects, such as critique of provincial-level policies, has appeared, the majority of articles remains on topics such as murder, health problems, accidents, natural disasters, and other areas that demonstrate the range of domestic problems the government has to battle with at home and hence fit neatly into the theory of China’s “peaceful development road.”<sup>165</sup> While it could be argued that the inclusion of more negative news may be a strategy to increase the revenue of websites as they potentially attract more readers, the discussion centring on the inclusion of more negative news as necessary to increase the credibility of Chinese news indicates that the most important rationale was to create a sense of openness so as to raise the effectiveness of external propaganda. This does not mean, however, that these changes cannot alter Chinese journalistic practices both for domestic and foreign audiences in the long run. As internal and external cannot be separated

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<sup>163</sup> See, for example, China.org.cn, March 19, 2009. [http://www.china.org.cn/china/node\\_1033982.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/node_1033982.htm). Accessed March 19, 2009.

<sup>164</sup> It is also my overall impression that a larger proportion of negative events on websites aimed at Chinese readers are still covered in the form of “solution” or “success” news stressing government efforts to solve them, although this is not exclusively the case any more.

<sup>165</sup> This does not mean that the emergence of the “Peaceful rise/ peaceful development” theory was the only reasons why these types of news in external propaganda became more acceptable, but the new Party line that presents China as a developing country needing to focus its energies on internal problems probably helped.

neatly any more, the push for more exclusively negative coverage in external propaganda may influence how domestic journalism is defined and bring about new practices.

#### 4.5 Sensitive Issues

In dealing with sensitive issues,<sup>166</sup> Chinese editors, and most importantly the institutions drafting the guidelines editors must follow, face a basic dilemma. On the one hand, articles should be written so that they can be well received by the foreign target audience, which not only includes linguistic and stylistic adjustments, but also avoiding deviations too far from the target audience's values, expectations, or assumptions. On the other hand, CPD directives frequently caution against "promoting the views of the enemy."<sup>167</sup> This section examines how this dilemma is dealt with by looking at the changes and consistencies in how sensitive issues are presented in online media. As the emphasis in external propaganda has clearly been on Tibet since the Tibet Incident in March 2008, Tibet-related news are analyzed and compared to previous coverage of articles on Tibet, Taiwan, and Falun Gong. Two types of news dominate sensitive issues: proactive positive propaganda<sup>168</sup> and condemnations of single individuals or rebuttals published during times of crisis or in reaction to outside attacks, such as the Dalai Lama's strengthened propaganda activities in March 2009.<sup>169</sup> This analysis focuses on the latter type.

First, a variety of the suggestions as discussed in Chinese academic circles have been included. As far as terminology is concerned, some improvements have been made. The regular use of the term "evil" to brand opponents in the late 1990s and early 2000s,<sup>170</sup> for

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<sup>166</sup> Sensitive issues include Tibet, Taiwan, Falung Gong, Human rights, etc. The two most important issues at the moment are human rights and Tibet, as revealed by the fact that they are dealt with separately in the Seventh Office of OFP/SCIO.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Brady, *ibid*, 2008, p. 99.

<sup>168</sup> Such as the most recent campaign to promote 'Serf-liberation Day'. See for example On Serfs Emancipation Day, celebration, recollection, and wishes from across China." March 29, 2009. [http://www.china.org.cn/china/tibet\\_democratic\\_reform/content\\_17517717.h](http://www.china.org.cn/china/tibet_democratic_reform/content_17517717.h)

<sup>169</sup> For instance his address on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tibetan uprising in 1959. Cf. "March 10 Statement of H.H. the Dalai Lama." <http://www.dalailama.com/news.350.htm>. Accessed April 20, 2009.

<sup>170</sup> E.g. "Commentary on the Evil Nature of Falun Gong: People's Daily." *People's Daily Online*. Archived

instance, has been successfully eliminated from comparable articles today. In addition, the negative publicity effect associated with using strongly value-laden terms seems to have been understood quite accurately, as the word “evil” is now actually used occasionally when quoting adversaries.<sup>171</sup>

Some other new propaganda principles, such as citing famous foreigners or including analogies to the West is also frequently included in these forms of articles. For instance, Lincoln is cited<sup>172</sup> or the circumstances in Tibet before 1951 are compared to the “dark ages of medieval Europe” in another article.<sup>173</sup>

Finally, in some very rare cases, there has been some experimentation with more subtle techniques that make articles look surprisingly ambiguous at first sight. The article “How a layman sees the Dalai Lama”,<sup>174</sup> released by Xinhua and republished on *China Daily* Online, is one such example. It begins by giving a detailed description of the daily routine of Gonpo Tashi, a nephew of the Dalai Lama’s, in cleaning and polishing his home every morning in the hope that the Dalai Lama may some day return to Tibet. As the article continues, it mentions in passing that Mao Zedong wanted the Dalai Lama to come back, and that Gonpo is also a member of the county-level political consultative conference. It also implies, without ever spelling this out, that the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama was, perhaps, only chosen because of his brother’s good relationship with the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. It finishes by summarizing the career of the Dalai Lama, juxtaposing the fact that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace with the fact that he is accused by his “homeland government” of being

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version from February 24, 2001.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20010202160300/english.peopledaily.com.cn/home.html>.

<sup>171</sup> E.g. Chang, Chung-yue: “The failure of a not so simple Buddhist monk.” *China Daily*. March 16, 2009. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/16/content\\_7585824.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/16/content_7585824.htm). Accessed March 19, 2009.

<sup>172</sup> “You may deceive all the people part of the time, and part of the people all the time, but not all the people all the time.” “Can Dalai Lama’s Lie Deceive the World for Long?” *People’s Daily* Online. March 29, 2009. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6624775.html>. Accessed April 9, 2009.

<sup>173</sup> “Dalai Lama’s utter distortion of Tibet history.” *China Daily* Online, March 11, 2009. [http://www2.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/11/content\\_7565260.htm](http://www2.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/11/content_7565260.htm). Accessed April 17, 2009.

<sup>174</sup> *China Daily* Online. March 13, 2009. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/13/content\\_7578261.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-03/13/content_7578261.htm). Accessed April 17, 2009.

a “chief rebel” and concluding that “in many Westerners’ eyes, he was no less than fodder for sound bites, photo-ops and newspaper front-page slots.” Thus, this article first “uses people to tell stories” by concentrating on the daily routine of Gonpo. Second, it cites the official government position twice without officially speaking from the perspective of the government. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it uses details to make ideological statements: it informs the readership that Mao Zedong wanted the Dalai Lama to return, points out the compatibility of being involved in official PRC institutions while still hoping for the Dalai Lama’s return, and asserts China’s sovereignty over Tibet through the use of the term “homeland government.”<sup>175</sup> In addition, it questions the reliability of Western media by insinuating that they will exploit any opportunity for a good headline. It should be noted, however, that articles of this type are still an absolute exception.

In terms of acute crises or when having to counter outside attacks, the largest proportion of articles, today as much as ten years ago, still rely on the basic model of making a small group of lying individuals responsible for a crisis. This is a well-established model in Chinese politics that has been used over and over in official rhetoric, for example when denouncing the “Gang of Four” or when explaining the Tiananmen Incident to the population.<sup>176</sup> Obviously, the details vary a little, but the underlying model in all cases is very simple:<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> To use seemingly innocuous details to make ideological or political statements is a technique recommended by several Chinese analysts. Li Xia, *ibid*, 2008; Liu Jiang, *ibid*, 2008.

<sup>176</sup> The origin of this model can be traced back to the *A short course of the history of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)*, a text partially authored by Stalin, in which, among others, he justifies his victory over Trotsky. *The Short Course* used to be mandatory reading for Chinese cadres and influenced both Chinese political thinking and historiography highly. While the zero-sum model of politics associated with it has been weakened significantly in post-Mao China, the mode of representation and of writing history apparently survives.

<sup>177</sup> For good examples of the model see: “Can Dalai Lama’s lies deceive the world for long?” *People’s Daily Online*, March 29, 2009. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6624775.html>. Accessed April 22, 2009 ; Hu Yanan: “Dalai ‘used’ disgruntled youths, Tibetologists says.” *China Daily*, March 19, 2009. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-03/19/content\\_7593115.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-03/19/content_7593115.htm). Accessed April 22, 2009; “Exposing the Trickery of the Dalai Lama.” *China.org.cn*. April 20, 1999. <http://web.archive.org/web/19990420010732/http://www.china.org.cn/index.html>; “Change or not, Lee Teng-hui’s true separatist nature.” *China Daily Online*, archived version from April 8, 2000. <http://web.archive.org/web/20000523114002/www.chinadaily.com.cn/highlights/taiwan/8063.htm>; “Falun

1. There is an individual (e.g. Li Hongzhi, Lee Teng-hui, Chen Shuibian, the Dalai Lama) or a small group of people (e.g. the Dalai Lama Clique) with ulterior political motives (to split China or at least create social instability) that spreads lies to deceive the Chinese people, the international community, or both. In some cases, these individuals receive backing by hostile forces seeking to weaken China.
2. Ordinary people may be deceived by these lies and sustain harm as a result.
3. In order to protect the ordinary people from the few troublemakers, it is the responsibility of the CCP to expose the lies and the ‘true face’ of their disseminators.
4. The truth will always prevail in the end.

Likewise, the key terminology is still largely identical with that of ten years ago and some other new terms of questionable effectiveness in improving the image of China’s media, such as “Self Liberation Day,” have been added.<sup>178</sup> These types of articles go against almost all principles that Chinese analysts recommend in order to improve propaganda. The most important reason for the lack of change with regard to the coverage of sensitive issues is the way the PRC propaganda apparatus functions. The layered hierarchy of broad sectors (political, social, cultural, etc.) as well as further differentiation within these sector that determine how strictly a government provided master text has to be adhered to, explains the significant deviance of the coverage of sensitive issues compared to other subjects. It also explains why articles of this type are usually written in more awkward English. As OFP/SCIO

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Gong practitioners need further educating.” *China Daily* Online, archived version from October 2, 1999. <http://web.archive.org/web/20000818000643/www.chinadaily.com.cn/falun/8263.htm>; “More people clear on true nature of Falun Gong.” *China Daily* Online, August 15, 1999. <http://web.archive.org/web/20001121112400/www.chinadaily.com.cn/falun/8166.htm>.

<sup>178</sup> Articles still speak of “splittists” “fabricating lies” and “covering up the truth” in a “desperate attempt” to “deceive the people.”



guidelines on exact formulations have to be followed word by word, there is little use for native speaker proof readers that the websites usually rely on.<sup>179</sup>

Theoretically, it would be possible to eliminate or at least significantly reduce this type of articles. However, there are two strong arguments that speak against such a development in the near future. First, the Chinese government appears to be convinced that China's view on sensitive issues is correct, and sincerely hopes that if China persists in promoting its views, it will eventually succeed in slowly swaying world public opinion to its favor. Second, CDP's cautionary remark that the principle of *neiwai youbie* no longer fully applies may actually put additional limits on what can and cannot be said in sensitive issues. Even if people within OFP/SCIO wanted to relax guidelines on the adherence to master texts or discard the model outlined above, they would run into powerful opposition from CDP or the Ministry of Public Security, which would point to the impact of such relaxations on the domestic population and domestic public opinion.<sup>180</sup> In conclusion, the discrepancy between most articles on sensitive issues that still rely on an antiquated former political model, and articles on other topics, will continue to exist, despite the fact that it presumably affects the credibility of Chinese media in foreigners' eyes negatively.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis above has demonstrated that all of the websites have changed significantly over the last few years, with progress in terms of language, style, choice of topics, and inclusion of negative news. These changes are clearly the result of an intense debate over specific shortcomings of external propaganda that only really gained momentum in the 2000s and evolved simultaneously with the Internet. This shows that the changes are

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<sup>179</sup> See "FAQ" on *People's Daily* Online for a job ad recruiting foreign students studying in China. Archived version from January 16, 2008.  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20080116155639/english.peopledaily.com.cn/90827/90832/index.html>.

<sup>180</sup> An article in *Zhongguo jizhe* points out the necessity of consulting with other departments involved in controlling society in order to coordinate specific policies or other controlling mechanisms (Liu Jiang, *ibid*, 2008).

not merely driven by marketization, but are strategic. An important watershed in the development of English-language news websites was the year 2006, which suggests that the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan highlighted the necessity to improve China's main internet propaganda outlets. Websites have become much more sophisticated in tailoring their articles to foreigners' tastes, China's top politicians have recognized culture as one of China's most important assets in boosting its soft power, and a variety of previously taboo topics have become safe for coverage to increase the credibility of Chinese media outlets. Some of these adjustments have direct consequences for the field of Chinese scholarship, which has traditionally looked at the publication of articles on specific topics as an indicator of a policy shift or direction within the Center. China scholars may have to rethink to what extent English-language publications can still accurately reflect policy trends and to what extent articles simply have to be seen as an adaptation to suit foreigners' reading habits.

On the other hand, the different degrees in changes also show the limits under the current structure of the propaganda apparatus. The analysis of online articles reveals the layered hierarchy of topics that are subjected to different degrees of control in the propaganda apparatus. While an increasing number of topics are no longer categorized as having political implications in external propaganda and are thus less strictly regulated or even encouraged to be reported on, there is a clear limit to this trend. As English-language publications on the internet are available to a growing percentage of the Chinese population that reads English, both domestic and foreign audiences need to be considered, and this may be one of many reasons why OFP/SCIO and CPD continue to keep a tight lid on sensitive topics.

The stress on coordinating the internal and the external shows the basic dilemma propaganda work faces, as it is sandwiched between fulfilling the expectations of foreigners while at the same time avoiding articles that may contribute to social instability in the domestic framework or stray too far from the actual point of view of the government. The continued inclusion of articles condemning opponents or promoting new initiatives such as

'Serf Liberation Day' in English-language media can be easily explained both by the wish to avoid "promoting the views of the enemy" and by the bureaucratic problems within the propaganda system that allow for little flexibility in the most sensitive topics. Nonetheless, this is a problem that will very likely affect the credibility of Chinese news.

Some have noted that it is very easy to ruin one's image, and very hard to improve it.<sup>181</sup> Chinese observers are aware of this. Nobody expects the modernization of propaganda techniques to have an immediate effect on foreigners' view of China or its media. The aim is to slowly shift "world opinion." However, I would argue that, given the general difficulty of shedding a negative image, the few sensitive areas that have not undergone any significant change in content and style may outweigh much of the progress that has taken place in determining whether and within what time frame China can improve the reputation of its media.

Although the analysis in this paper is limited to the Internet, the results, I believe, are not. China faces the same problems of how far to go in the coverage of negative news and how to deal with sensitive issues in all its other media, including TV, radio, and various print publications. If anything, the restrictions imposed by the propaganda apparatus on websites are less strict for the Internet than for other types of media in order to allow them to react to crises more quickly and be the first to report.<sup>182</sup> Any attempt to increase the image of China's media will ultimately have to deal with the same questions. As China seeks to establish Xinhua as "China's CNN", the debate over how far Chinese media have to compromise to appeal to foreign audiences can be expected to resurface, and it will be interesting to see how China's leaders decide to deal with it.

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<sup>181</sup> Wang Hongying, *ibid*, 2003, p. 61.

<sup>182</sup> This suggestion has been made at a conference organized by SCIO. Restrictions on Internet media can also be more relaxed because publication of materials online does not have the finality of an article in print or a news broadcast. "Jingwai meiti shehua jiemu hulianwang chuanbo de duice yu sikao." *Ibid*.

## 6. Glossary of Chinese Names and Terms

Cai Wu	蔡武
Chen Shui-bian	陈水扁
<i>Chengjiu baodao</i>	成就报道
<i>Da waixuan geju</i>	大外宣格局
<i>Duinei bu bao, duiwai bao</i>	对内不报，对外报
<i>Duiwai Xuanchuan Xiaozu</i>	对外宣传小组
<i>Huanying dianyue Beijing Zhoubao</i>	欢迎订阅北京周报
<i>Hongse Zhonghua Tongxunshe</i>	红色中华通讯社
Hu Jintao	胡锦涛
<i>Hukou</i>	户口
<i>Kou</i>	口
<i>Kouhao</i>	口号
<i>Liaowang</i>	瞭望
Li Changchun	李长春
Li Hongzhi	李洪志
Li Teng-hui	李登辉
<i>Lingdao</i>	领导
<i>Lingdao guanhuai</i>	领导关怀
Liu Yunshan	刘云山
<i>Minjian waijiao</i>	民间外交
<i>Neibu Tongxun</i>	内部通讯

<i>Neiwai youbie</i>	内外有别
<i>Renmin Ribao She</i>	人民日报社
<i>Shijie yulun douzheng</i>	世界舆论斗争
<i>Shixiaoxing</i>	时效性
<i>Shuli guojia lianghao xingxiang</i>	树立国家良好形象
<i>Suoshu danwei</i>	所属单位
<i>Tifa</i>	提法
<i>Tongchou guonei guoji liang ge daju</i>	统筹国内国际两个大局
<i>Waiguoren bushi Zhongguoren</i>	外国人不是中国人
<i>Waishi Lingdao Xiaozu</i>	外事领导小组
<i>Waixuan wei jingji fuwu</i>	外宣为经济服务
Wang Chen	
<i>Wangluo zhongxin</i>	网络中心
<i>Xinhua Tongxunshe</i>	新华通讯社
<i>Xitong</i>	系统
<i>Xuanchuan</i>	宣传
<i>Xuanchuan secai</i>	宣传色彩
<i>Yi ge jigou, liang kuai paizi</i>	一个机构，两块牌子
<i>Yulun yindao</i>	舆论引导
<i>Zhenduixing</i>	针对性
<i>Zhengmian xuanchuan</i>	正面宣传
<i>Zhidao</i>	指导
<i>Zhijie bushu</i>	直接部署

<i>Zhongdian xinwen wangzhan</i>	重点新闻网站
<i>Zhongguo Jizhe</i>	中国记者
<i>Zhongguo Qingnian bao</i>	中国青年报
<i>Zhongyang zhongdian xinwen wangzhan</i>	中央重点新闻网站
<i>Zhuban</i>	主办

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