

**CHINA'S MEDIA INITIATIVES
AND ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE BUILDING**

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EAI Background Brief No. 555

Date of Publication: 26 August 2010

Executive Summary

1. China has made a concerted effort to shape a positive international image of itself in recent years. The focus is on promoting China's softer aspects such as its language and culture as oppose to hard indicators like its economic prowess and growing military presence.
2. In particular, Beijing has embarked on a number of media initiatives to shape how other countries perceive and relate to China. It hosted the first ever World Media Summit in October 2009 for major international news corporations to better understand and report more objectively on China.
3. China has reportedly further unveiled an ambitious 45 billion *yuan* package to fund overseas expansion plans of state media organizations like *China's Central Television*, the *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily*. It seeks to develop an alternative Chinese perspective to the Western-dominated view of the world. *China Daily*, China's official English language newspaper, has also undergone a revamp to appeal to a wider English audience.
4. Relevant Chinese ministries and departments have further held overseas exhibitions and fairs, sponsored publications and promoted exchange programs to extend the reach of Chinese language and culture. There has also been a significant increase in the number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms established overseas.
5. Within China, the news briefing and spokesman system has been improved to provide more timely and accurate information to the foreign media and public. Regulations have also been eased to facilitate reporting by foreign journalists in China. The foreign and local media have further been granted greater leeway to report on major events such as the Sichuan earthquake and Xinjiang unrest.
6. While these developments are to be welcomed and indeed show how far China has progressed, they should be set in context. The Chinese government and

Party will only liberalize at a pace they are comfortable with and will not want to be seen as bowing to external pressure.

7. China continues to face an uphill task in convincing its critics that positive changes have been made. A poll conducted by the *BBC World Service* showed that public perception of China across 21 countries had eroded substantially in 2009 compared to 2008.
8. There remains a strong “anti-China” bias in other countries’ perception and foreign media coverage of China. This is primarily due to the fact that China is not a democracy. It will have to grapple with the prevailing inclination of others to evaluate China according to certain established Western standards and norms.
9. Also, the Chinese government’s active role in shaping its overseas image will be viewed with suspicion. There remain doubts on whether the expansion plans of *China’s Central Television*, the *Xinhua News Agency* and *People’s Daily* are primarily profit driven or intended to serve a political objective.
10. Despite these difficulties, China will most likely press on. The Shanghai World Expo and the Asian Games are two major events this year where China will want to put on its best showing. It is realistic of what it can achieve in the short run and will be patient enough to wait for more favorable results to bear in the future.

CHINA'S MEDIA INITIATIVES AND ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE BUILDING

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Promoting China's Softer Side

- 1.1 China has been proactively shaping a positive image of itself on the international stage in recent years. It wants to project itself as a progressive, prosperous, culturally advanced and peace-loving country. To this end, China has focused on promoting its softer or non-threatening aspects as opposed to its economic prowess and growing military presence.
- 1.2 Most recently, in his work report to the National People's Congress in March 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao vowed to attach more importance to cultural development and promote cultural exchanges with foreign countries so as to enhance the international influence of Chinese culture.¹ Key to the promotion of Chinese culture is the media initiatives by China to shape how other countries perceive and relate to China.
- 1.3 According to a *Pew Research Centre* survey, the percentage of respondents from participating countries who have a favorable opinion of China has generally declined in 2009 compared to 2005 (See **Appendix I**). The countries that have experienced a drop in their favorable rating of China include Britain, France, Germany, Mexico, Japan, South Korea, India and Indonesia. A

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¹ "How to Improve China's Soft Power?", *People's Daily Online*, 11 March 2010 at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6916487.html>.

separate poll by the *BBC World Service* indicates that negative perception of China among the public had generally increased in 2009 compared to 2008.²

- 1.4 Well aware of the mixed feelings it receives around the world, China has launched a number of media initiatives, both externally and internally, over the past few years to proactively shape its international image. Externally, it hosted the first ever World Media Summit in October 2009 to reach out to major international news corporations and encourage them to report more objectively on developments in China.
- 1.5 China is also developing an alternative voice at the global media scene by pushing its media companies to boost their overseas presence. *China Central Television* (CCTV), the national broadcaster, launched its Arabic and Russian international channels in 2009, on top of its English, French and Spanish channels. The *Xinhua News Agency*, *People's Daily* and *China Daily* have also undergone some restructuring to appeal to a wider international and domestic audience.
- 1.6 China's Ministry of Culture and other relevant ministries and agencies have organized overseas exhibitions and fairs, sponsored publications as well as facilitated cultural exchange programs to promote Chinese language and culture. In addition, more Confucius Institutes (孔子学院) and Confucius Classrooms have been established overseas.
- 1.7 At the domestic level, China has improved its news briefing and press spokesman system to provide more timely and accurate information to the foreign media and public. It has also made the regulatory environment more conducive for foreign journalists working in the country. It had further shown greater openness in managing the foreign and local media during the Sichuan earthquake (in May 2008) and Xinjiang unrest (in July 2009).

² "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll", *BBC World Service Poll*, 6 February 2009, at http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbcntryview09/.

- 1.8 There are several reasons behind China's preoccupation with its external image. Foremost among them is China's rapid rise on the world stage in virtually all spheres – political, diplomatic, economic, social-cultural and even military – is not supported by a corresponding positive image. While some are receptive to its rise, many others are critical of its apparent lack of democracy and alleged abuse of human rights. A serious mismatch thus exists between China's new found status and its perception by others.
- 1.9 In the past, China paid little heed to external perception as its involvement and interdependence with the international community was minimal. Today, China's participation is regarded as critical to addressing several worldwide issues such as global warming, world economic recovery, international terrorism and piracy. Also, any actions taken by China will have implications for other countries. There are now more substantive reasons for China to be attuned to how others view it.
- 1.10 Through a piecemeal approach, China is laying the foundations for the exercise of its soft power. Yet, this endeavor is wrought with challenges. For one, China is not yet a democracy and, for some time to come, will have to contend with the prevailing tendency by others to evaluate China according to certain Western standards and norms.
- 1.11 Also, China's dependence on a state-driven approach to drive its image building will always be viewed with suspicion particularly by the West who will continue to question China's intentions. The credibility of these Chinese media organizations will be judged more on how they can enrich existing perspectives on China than on how well they speak up for China.
- 1.12 Despite these challenges, China will most likely persist with its efforts to build up and strengthen the institutions and channels that will enhance China's international image. This is a long term strategy that China has embarked on. While there will be bumps along the way, China is confident that some headway will be made in the future.

China's External Media Initiatives

- 2.1 As far back as 2002, the concept of “peaceful rise” was proposed to underscore the message that China’s rise would be peaceful and beneficial to other countries. In February 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao said that China should “expand cultural exchanges with other countries”. In his view, “cultural exchanges are a bridge connecting the hearts and minds of people of all countries and an important way to project a country's image”.³
- 2.2 In the same year, President Hu Jintao told delegates to the 17th Party Congress in October 2007 that the Party must “enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people’s basic cultural rights and interest”. He added that the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will definitely be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture”, and that China will publicize the fine traditions of Chinese culture and enhance the influence of Chinese culture worldwide.⁴
- 2.3 China’s strategy to improve its international image has both external and internal dimensions. Externally, China has proactively engaged international media organizations in an effort to urge them to be more professional in their reporting on China. Most notably, *Xinhua News Agency* (China’s official state media) hosted the first ever World Media Summit in October 2009 attended by about 300 representatives from more than 170 media outlets around the world.⁵

³ “Our Historical Tasks at the Primary Stage of Socialism and Several Issues Concerning China's Foreign Policy”, *People's Daily Online*, 7 March 2007 at http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200703/07/eng2007_0307_355104.html.

⁴ “Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 17th Party Congress”, *Xinhuanet*, 24 October 2007 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749.htm.

⁵ The theme of the World Media Summit was “Cooperation, Action, Win-Win and Development”. The idea to hold this summit arose from a series of talks held during the Olympic Games in Beijing in August 2008 between *Xinhua News Agency* President Li Congjun and *News Corporation* Chairman and CEO Rupert Murdoch, *Associated Press* President and CEO Thomas Curley, *Reuters News* Editor-in-Chief David Schlesinger, *BBC* Director-General Mark Thompson, *Kyodo News* President Satoshi Ishikawa, and *ITAR TASS News Agency* President Vitaly Nikitich Ignatenko.

- 2.4 Underscoring the importance China attached to this summit, President Hu Jintao gave an opening speech where he urged the world media to respect “each other's practical situations, respond to each other's appeals through consultation, take into account each other's interests, keep a balance between competition and cooperation, and strive to be mutually complementary, helpful and beneficial”.⁶ Hu was clearly making a pitch for the world media to understand China for what it is (and not through tinted lens) and to be more objective in their reporting on China.
- 2.5 Besides reaching out to foreign media organizations, China has simultaneously and gradually tried to build up an alternative Chinese perspective to the Western-dominated view of the world. Augmenting its existing English, French and Spanish international channels, *CCTV* launched an Arabic channel on 25 July 2009, targeting a viewership of nearly 300 million people throughout the Middle East, North Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. Less than two months thereafter, on 10 September 2009, *CCTV* launched its Russian channel with a potential viewership of an additional 300 million in the 12 nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eastern Europe and the Baltic states.
- 2.6 Going further, *CCTV* launched a national Internet television service with the domain name of *CNTV.cn* in December 2009. Available in all five foreign languages and Chinese, this Internet television service boasts the ambitious tagline of “one click, one world”, meaning that users of this service can understand the world by just clicking on the news, entertainment, sports and video products offered.⁷
- 2.7 Separately, *Xinhua News Agency* announced in July 2009 an ambitious plan for a 24-hour international television news service known as *China Xinhua News Network Corporation (CNC)*. Described in some quarters as the Chinese

⁶ “Chinese President Addresses World Media Summit”, *World Media Summit Website*, 9 October 2009 at http://www.worldmediasummit.org/english/2009-10/09/content_17889208.htm.

⁷ See *China Network Television (CNTV)* at <http://www.cntv.cn/>. The broadcasts on this Internet television service are done by not only Chinese but also native speakers in the five foreign languages. Clearly, this service is directed at the international audience.

version of America's *CNN*, the goal is to broadcast both domestic and international news round the clock to viewers worldwide through various platforms such as TV stations, websites, outdoor screens and mobile phones.⁸ *CNC* began broadcasting to the Asia-Pacific region and some European countries in Chinese from Beijing in January 2010.⁹

2.8 In July 2010, *CNC* launched its English language television service (known as *CNC World*) to broadcast English news programs 24 hours a day, covering breaking news and major political, economic and cultural events worldwide. In the words of *Xinhua* President Li Congjun, *CNC World* seeks to "present an international vision with a China perspective. It will broadcast news reports in a timely way and objectively and be a new source of information for global audiences".¹⁰

2.9 Changes have also been introduced at the *People's Daily*, the Party's mouthpiece. In April 2009, *Global Times*, a publication under the *People's Daily* that focuses on international news, launched its English edition nationwide. Instead of a translated version of its Chinese newspaper, the English edition prides itself on carrying accounts of international news based on an independent team of local reporters, editors and foreign experts.¹¹ Also, the *People's Daily* underwent a revamp on 1 July 2009¹² with an increase to 20 pages, adding three pages on domestic and international news, and one

⁸ "Main Media Arm of Chinese Government to Launch English-language TV Service", *Associated Press*, 1 July 2009.

⁹ For a start, *CNC*'s 24-hour broadcast features programs in Chinese including news events, special news bulletins along with a new *CNC* Finance and Business channel. English programs are expected to commence only in July 2010. Programs in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Russian will follow some time in the future.

¹⁰ "Xinhua Launches *CNC World* English Channel", *Xinhuanet*, 1 July 2010 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-07/01/c_13378575.htm.

¹¹ "Beijing-based Newspaper *Global Times* Launches English Edition", *People's Daily Online*, 20 April 2009 at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6640215.html>.

¹² 1 July 2009 marked the 88th Anniversary of the Founding of the Party. The announcement of the increase in the number of pages is considered a gift to the Party, indicating the commitment of the *People's Daily* to stay relevant to the times.

page on theoretical studies, art and literature reviews. It also plans to beef up its 72 domestic and overseas branches.¹³

2.10 The overseas expansion initiatives by the *CCTV*, *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* described earlier are reportedly supported by a war chest of 45 billion *yuan* (US\$6.6 billion) provided by the government to boost China's global image and media influence.¹⁴

2.11 In addition, *China Daily*, the official Chinese government English newspaper that reaches 105 countries, has undergone a revamp since 1 March 2010. An obvious change is the new masthead. The Chinese characters “中国日报” (*Zhongguo Ribao*), previously in red and appearing prominently above the English name “*China Daily*”, has been significantly reduced in size and relegated beneath the English name.¹⁵ In terms of layout, the revamped newspaper has a cleaner look, with more use of white space that is visually more appealing.¹⁶ All these changes are intended to make *China Daily* more appealing to English speaking audiences within and outside China.

2.12 China has further been active in expanding the reach of its language and culture. For instance, it was invited as Guest-of-Honor at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2009. China reportedly pumped in US\$7.5 million, including putting up an impressive-looking pavilion (featuring a winding wall made of thousands of books) and sponsoring the translation of more than 100 Chinese

¹³ “People's Daily Revamp”, *China Daily*, 16 June 2009 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-06/16/content_8287216.htm.

¹⁴ For a further analysis of the overseas expansion of China's state media, please see “Chinese State Media Going Global”, *EAI Background Brief*, No. 488, 5 November 2009 by Zhang Xiaoling.

¹⁵ Also, the Chinese name now appears in blue, a more neutral color as opposed to the original red color that symbolizes the Party's revolutionary nature.

¹⁶ In terms of content, the revamped *China Daily* has fine-tuned its reporting mix, giving breaking news and instant updates to its website and beefing up in-depth investigations and analyses for its print version. Going beyond its previous slogan of being China's “national English language newspaper”, *China Daily* has set the goal of being a “world-class newspaper commensurate with China's global stature”. See “Xinban 《Zhongguo Ribao》 3月1日 shanliang dengchang” (A stunning makeover for *China Daily* - translation provided by *China Daily*), 2 March 2010 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/language_tips/news/2010-03/02/content_9524822.htm.

books into German and English for sale at the fair.¹⁷ Although there were disagreements between China and the German organizers on the Chinese writers that could best represent China at the fair, such events underscored growing overseas interests in China's language and culture.¹⁸

2.13 Most notably, the Confucius Institute, another important platform for the spread of Chinese language and culture, has opened more overseas branches. **Table 1** shows that there were 282 Confucius Institutes and 272 Confucius Classrooms (making up a total of 554) in 88 countries and regions by November 2009.¹⁹ Between 2009 and 2008, the number of Confucius Institutes and their classrooms witnessed impressive growth in the US, Central and Latin America (225%), Europe (24%) and Oceania (20%). To extend the reach of the Confucius Institutes, scholarships have also been offered since 2009 to train non-native Chinese language teachers as well as students.

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES AND CLASSROOMS

Countries	Confucius Institutes and Classrooms	Confucius Institutes and Classrooms	% increase in 2009 over 2008	Confucius Institutes	Confucius Classrooms
	2008	2009	%	2009	2009
Americas	81	263	224.7	87	176
Europe	103	128	24.3	94	34
Africa	21	23	9.5	21	2
Asia	90	97	7.8	70	27
Oceania	10	12	20.0	10	2
Others*	0	31	N.A	0	31
Total	305	554		282	272

*Burma, Mali and the Bahamas have independent Confucius Classrooms, not affiliated with an institute.
Source: Various publications of the Confucius Institute at http://college.chinese.cn/en/node_1974.htm

¹⁷ "China's Cultural Influence on Rise in Germany", *Xinhuanet*, 30 December 2009 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/30/content_12730819.htm.

¹⁸ China was opposed to the participation of Dai Qing, a Chinese writer who has been particularly critical of the Three Gorges Dam and its environmental impact, at the book fair. See "China's Troubled Coming-Out at Book Fair", *Time*, 20 October 2009.

¹⁹ "Senior Official Calls for Enhancing Int'l Chinese Language Education", *Xinhuanet*, 11 December 2009 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/11/content_12633620.htm

China's Internal Media Initiatives

- 3.1 Complementing its external initiatives, China has introduced measures internally that are also directed at improving its international image. They can be examined from the institutional perspective, the regulatory perspective and the authorities' ad-hoc response to events. At the institutional level, China has improved the news briefing and spokesman system (新闻发布制度) introduced in 2004 to provide timely and accurate information to the foreign media and public.
- 3.2 **Appendix II** shows that the number of news briefings (comprising regular and impromptu ones) conducted by central and local governments and party organizations have steadily increased over the years. In 2009, there were a total of 1,646 press conferences, an increase of four percent over 2008.
- 3.3 At the Party level, improvements have also been made to the news briefing and spokesman system. In 2006, the Party took a step forward by announcing the names of the press spokesmen for six departments under the Party. Most recently, in June 2010, Wang Chen, Director of the International Communication Office of the Party's Central Committee, introduced the spokesmen for 11 departments of the Party.²⁰ This move is intended to make the Party more open and transparent in its affairs.
- 3.4 China has also continued the practice of publishing white papers on major issues of interest to the international community. In June 2010, it released the first ever white paper on the Internet in China. It describes the state of the Internet development in China, China's basic policies on the Internet and stand on related issues. In 2009, China published five white papers on national defense, disaster prevention and reduction, ethnic policy, development and progress in Xinjiang, and democratic reforms in Tibet.²¹

²⁰ "11 Party Spokespersons Meet Media Together", *China Daily*, 1 July 2010.

²¹ "Wang Chen's Remarks at the Press Conference", *State Council Information Office*, 29 December 2009 at http://www.china.org.cn/china/2009-12/29/content_19151526.htm.

- 3.5 At the regulatory level, the trend appears headed in the direction of a more conducive environment for foreign journalists operating in China. For instance, in the run-up to and during the Olympic Games in August 2008, China permitted foreign journalists to travel freely to most parts of China for interviews as long as they had the prior consent of the interviewees.²² Previously, foreign journalists had to apply for permission at the local foreign affairs office. This liberalizing measure was continued after the Games.²³
- 3.6 There have also been noticeable changes in China's handling of ad-hoc events. During the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008 for example, China broke new grounds when it gave foreign and local media a relatively free hand to report on developments in the disaster zones.²⁴ State media channels such as *Xinhua News Agency* and *CCTV* led the way with round the clock reporting on the latest developments in the disaster areas. As expected, their reports prominently played up the government and Party's committed response to the earthquake and efforts to help survivors.
- 3.7 China's State Council Information Office also held numerous press conferences involving officials and experts from relevant ministries and agencies as well as Sichuan leaders to provide up-to-date information on the disaster and disaster relief efforts.²⁵ Such pro-activeness stands in stark contrast to China's almost dismissive response in the 1976 Tangshan earthquake that reportedly claimed over 240,000 lives and left millions more injured or homeless. At that time, *Xinhua News Agency* reportedly only made

²² See the "Regulation on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists during the Beijing Olympic Games and Preparatory Period" from 1 January 2007 to 17 October 2008 at <http://en.beijing2008.cn/23/37/article212063723.shtml>.

²³ See Decree No. 537 effective since 17 October 2008 available at China's Foreign Ministry website at <http://ipc.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wgjzzhznx/fj/t541164.htm>.

²⁴ "China Media Unusually Aggressive in Covering Quake", *Associated Press*, 14 May 2008.

²⁵ A reported 20 press conferences had been held in the 18 days since May 13, one day after the quake shook the country.

a cursory mention of a quake that occurred in a city 180 kilometers to the west of Beijing.²⁶

- 3.8 There had also been changes to China's handling of the ethnic unrest in Xinjiang in July 2009. It has been observed that Chinese state media channels such as *Xinhua News Agency* and *CCTV* were quick to report on the unrest to put forth their version of events.²⁷ Separately, *Human Rights Watch (HRW)* has admitted that the Chinese government allowed "significantly greater foreign media access to Urumqi following deadly rioting there on 5-7 July 2009, than it did to Tibet during the unrest that began there in March 2008".²⁸

Putting Things in Perspective

- 4.1 While the various media initiatives outlined earlier are to be welcomed and indeed show how far China has progressed, they should be set in context. For one, China is still a highly authoritarian state that maintains a relatively tight control over what can and cannot be carried by state media organizations. In particular, the government and especially the Party will only liberalize at a pace they are comfortable with and will not want to be seen as giving in to external pressure.
- 4.2 In the run-up to and during key anniversaries, such as the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen incident and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 2009, Beijing noticeably tightened its control over the media. Also, at important events, such as President Obama's visit to China in November 2009, restrictions were imposed to ensure that the impact of any sensitive remarks made by him in public would be limited. For example, Obama's question and answer session with students in Shanghai was

²⁶ "Interpreting Sichuan Earthquake - A Different Picture from What We Used to See", *Xinhuanet*, 12 June 2008 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-06/12/content_8353152.htm.

²⁷ "Mass Arrests Over China Violence", *BBC*, 7 July 2009.

²⁸ See page 286 of "World Report 2010" by *Human Rights Watch* at <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2010>.

not broadcast live on China's official state network.²⁹ In the lead-up to the 18th Party Congress in 2012, relevant authorities are likely to tighten the political atmosphere to ensure a smooth political transition from the fourth to the fifth generation leadership.

- 4.3 Beijing is also prepared to punish those it regards as deliberately trying (and even working with foreign elements) to erode the Party's authority. In February 2010, a Beijing court rejected an appeal against an 11-year jail sentence for "incitement to subversion" meted out to Liu Xiaobo, a prominent Chinese human rights crusader. Liu co-authored Charter 08, an online petition for political freedom and an end to the ruling Party's monopoly of power. By mounting a public campaign, Liu had overstepped the line. Critics have conveniently seized on this example to argue that little has changed in China.
- 4.4 Most recently, Google's decision in March 2010 to formally shut down its Chinese-language search engine in mainland China had presented another public relations challenge to China.³⁰ Commendably, China maintained a level-headed response and cast it as a commercial issue that should not affect Sino-American relations. This episode seemed to have passed for now as China has renewed the operating license for Google in China for another year after Google stopped the automatic re-directing of users to its unfiltered Hong Kong website.
- 4.5 Despite China becoming more media savvy, it still faces an uphill task to convince its critics. In its 2010 World Report, *HRW* has observed that Chinese citizens "face significant limits on freedom of expression, association, and religion; government surveillance and censoring of internet communications is

²⁹ Instead, the session was reportedly broadcasted live only on a single small Shanghai television station -- and that station's website switched to a children's program instead of live-streaming the president's event. And most news websites deleted stories about Obama taking a question on Internet freedom. See "Access to Obama Remarks Blocked in China", *CBS News*, 16 November 2009 at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/11/16/politics/washingtonpost/main5673512.shtml>.

³⁰ Google's decision to shut down its Chinese language website (Google.cn) was apparently a response to a sophisticated and targeted cyber attack that Google claimed originated from China. Since March 2010, users of its search engine have been automatically re-directed to its unfiltered Hong Kong website. However, Google backed down from challenging the Chinese authorities in June 2010 when it stopped automatically re-directing users to its Hong Kong website.

far reaching”. It further said that while China’s international profile and economic clout are growing, “it is also drawing increasing international scrutiny for a foreign policy that fails to prioritize civil and political rights”, a reference to China’s diplomatic and financial support of dubious regimes like Burma, Zimbabwe and Sudan.³¹

4.6 In its 2009 Press Freedom Index, *Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF)* gave China a dismal ranking of 168 out of a total of 175 countries. It observed that although the foreign press is supposed to enjoy freedom of movement and interview rights, they find themselves obstructed and even becoming targets of violence as soon as they begin to take an interest in sensitive matters like Tibet, dissidents or the Aids epidemic. *RSF* said the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China “recorded 178 cases of interference with foreign media during 2008, 63 of which were during the holding of the Olympic Games”. The Chinese authorities also “threatened several foreign correspondents with non-renewal of their press visas at the end of 2009”.³²

4.7 In 2009, a poll conducted by *BBC World Service* showed that public perception of China across 21 countries had eroded substantially so that views were generally divided compared to 2008 when they were predominantly positive.³³ The poll showed that negative views of China have grown most notably in European countries, including France, Italy, Germany and Spain. Other countries that have seen views of China worsen considerably include Turkey, the Philippines, Egypt and Australia (See **Appendix III**).

³¹ See page 296 of “World Report 2010” by *Human Rights Watch* at <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2010>.

³² See Report on China by *RSF* at <http://www.rsf.org/en-rapport57-China.html>.

³³ The results of the poll were based on 13,575 in-home or telephone interviews conducted across 21 countries by the international polling firm *GlobeScan*, in conjunction with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. *GlobeScan* coordinated the fieldwork between 21 November 2008 and 1 February 2009.

China Likely to Press Ahead

- 5.1 Although China has mounted a concerted effort internally and externally to create a positive image for itself, there still remains a strong “anti-China” bias in other countries’ perception and foreign media coverage of China. The effort to counter this bias is wrought with challenges as many players and factors are involved.
- 5.2 Foremost among them is the fact that China is not a democracy and will constantly have to grapple with the penchant by foreign governments, non-governmental organizations and even individuals to judge what is happening or will happen in China according to certain established Western standards or norms. China will have its hands full to convince them that there is a Chinese way forward, one which largely goes against their existing value system and beliefs.
- 5.3 The strong state role behind the overseas expansion plans of China’s state media organizations, while ensuring strong political support and financial muscle, actually has a downside. It reinforces the impression that these media agencies are not commercially driven (unlike other foreign media organizations) but are conscious agents of the state. In this sense, there will always be doubts about the actions and real intentions of these corporations.
- 5.4 Despite these challenges, China appears determined to press on with this unenviable task. As compared to the past, it now has more resources and stronger reasons to shape an international image that is commensurate with its new found status on the world stage. It is fully aware that given the vagaries of the international environment, there will be ebbs and flows in how others view China. China wants to be actively involved in shaping this process.
- 5.5 There are two major events in China this year where Beijing will want to put on its best charm. The first is the Shanghai World Expo that began on 1 May and will last till 30 October 2010. It is the largest event after the Olympic Games to again showcase China, together with its many achievements, to the

world and to its own people. It also provides an important platform to build better understanding among the more than 200 countries and international organizations participating at the expo. The number of visitors to the World Expo has so far exceeded 40 million.³⁴

- 5.6 Another event is the 16th Asian Games to be held in Guangzhou from 12 to 27 November 2010. The Guangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee is expecting 10,000 media representatives.³⁵ China will want to be a good host to participants and spectators from the region.
- 5.7 China has embarked on this important mission of shaping a positive image of itself for the long haul. It is realistic of what it can achieve in the short run and will be patient enough to wait for more favorable results to come to bear in the future.

³⁴ “Expo Welcomes 40 million Visitors”, World Expo Website, 15 August 2010 at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/SpecialReports/2010-08/15/content_4184325.htm. The target set by the Shanghai Expo authorities is to attract 70 million visitors.

³⁵ “Making plans for 10,000 media during 2010 Asian Games”, 16th Asian Games official website, 8 January 2010 at <http://www.gz2010.cn/10/0108/10/5SGFE8S50078002U.html>.

**APPENDIX I DO YOU HAVE A FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE VIEW
OF CHINA? (PERCENTAGE RESPONDING FAVORABLE)**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Percentage Change (comparing 2010 with 2005)*
China	88%	94%	93%	95%	95%	97%	7%
Europe							
Russia	60%	63%	60%	60%	58%	60%	same
Britain	65%	65%	49%	47%	52%	46%	-19%
France	58%	60%	47%	28%	41%	41%	-17%
Germany	46%	56%	34%	26%	29%	30%	-16%
Spain	57%	45%	39%	31%	40%	47%	-10%
Poland	37%	N.A	39%	33%	43%	46%	9%
Central Asia & Middle East							
Lebanon	66%	N.A	46%	50%	53%	56%	-10%
Egypt	N.A	63%	65%	59%	52%	52%	-11%
Jordan	43%	49%	46%	44%	50%	53%	10%
Turkey	40%	33%	25%	24%	16%	20%	-20%
Africa							
Kenya	N.A	N.A	81%	N.A	73%	86%	5%
Nigeria	N.A	59%	75%	79%	85%	76%	17%
South America							
Argentina	N.A	N.A	32%	34%	42%	45%	13%
Brazil	N.A	N.A	50%	47%	50%	52%	2%
Mexico	N.A	N.A	43%	38%	39%	39%	-4%
East, Southeast & South Asia							
Japan	N.A	27%	29%	14%	26%	26%	-1%
South Korea	N.A	N.A	52%	48%	41%	38%	-14%
Indonesia	73%	62%	65%	58%	59%	58%	-15%
India	56%	47%	46%	46%	46%	34%	-12%
Pakistan	79%	69%	79%	76%	84%	85%	6%
US	43%	52%	42%	39%	50%	49%	6%

* For % change over time, the comparison is mostly between 2010 and 2005 figures. If 2005 figure is not available, then the next available figure is used.

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project 2009 - Key Indicators Database at <http://pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=24>

APPENDIX II OVERVIEW OF CHINA'S NEWS BRIEFING AND SPOKESMAN SYSTEM

Year	No. of Press Conferences Held			Party Organizations	Total No. of Press Conferences Held (A+B+C)
	State Council Information Office ^A	Various Departments under the State Council plus Party Organizations ^B	Provincial Governments ^C		
2010	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	11 Party Organizations with 11 spokesmen**	N.A.
2009	60	573	1,013	As below	1,646
2008	83	521	983	As below	1,587
2007	72	547 (involving 74 departments with 96 spokesmen)	789 (involving 31 provincial governments with 60 spokesmen)	6 Party Organizations with 7 spokesmen*	1408
2006	58	506 (involving 74 departments with 91 spokesmen)	757 (involving 31 provincial governments with 52 spokesmen)	6 Party Organizations with 7 spokesmen*	1321
2005	68	390 (involving 69 departments with 86 spokesmen)	630 (involving 27 provincial governments)	Nil	1088
2004	60	270 (involving 62 departments with 75 spokesmen)	> 460 (involving 23 provincial governments)	Nil	Close to 900
2003	41	N.A.	N.A.	Nil	N.A.

Source: Authors' own compilation from the *China Internet Information Center* at <http://www.china.org.cn/e-news/>.

C: Provincial governments here refer to provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities

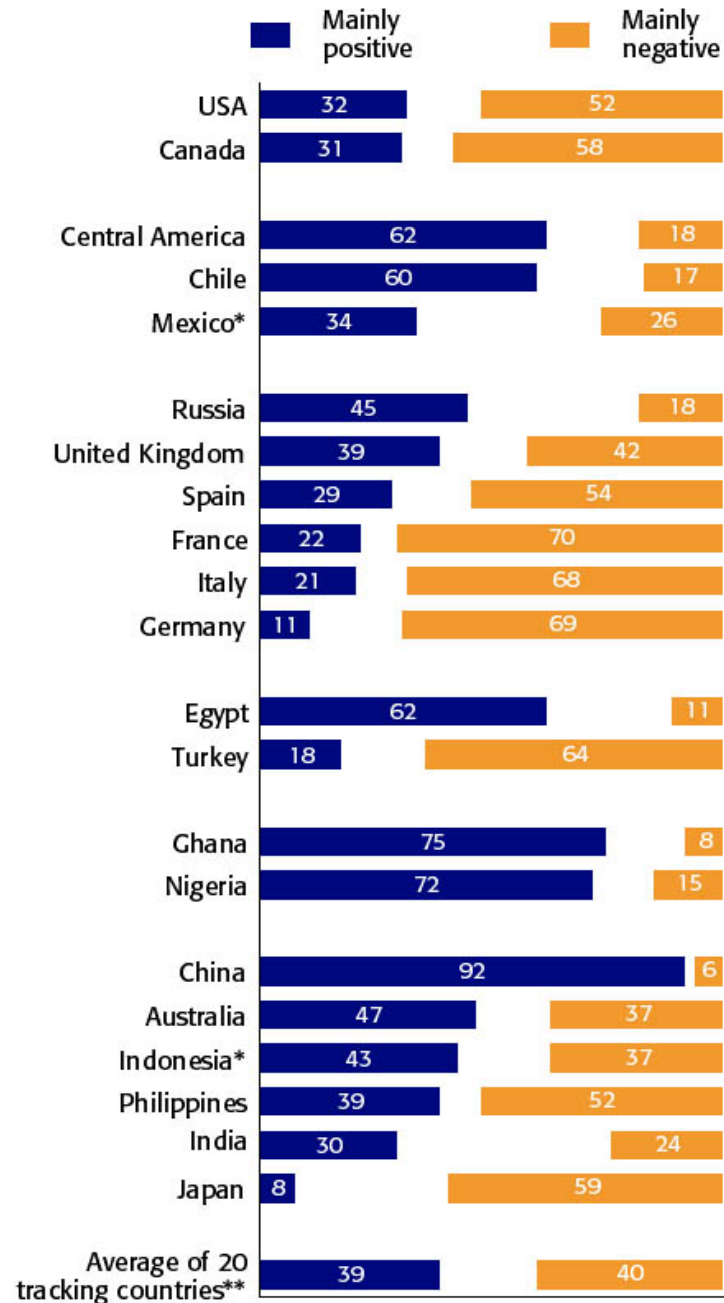
*: The 6 Party organizations here include the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the United Front Work Department, the International Department, the Taiwan Work Office, the Literature Research Center and the History Research Center.

***: The 11 Party organizations here include the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the United Front Work Department, the International Department, the Taiwan Work Office, the Literature Research Center, the History Research Center, the Organization Department, the Publicity Department, the International Communication Office, the Central Archives Department, and the Party School.

APPENDIX III COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY PERCEPTION OF CHINA'S INFLUENCE

Views of China's Influence

By Country, January 2009



*Sample profile has changed

**Does not include views of subject country

The white space in this chart represents "Depends," "Neither/neutral," and "DK/NA."

(Note: Please refer to the following section for explanatory notes to the above diagram)

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO DIAGRAM: COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY PERCEPTION OF CHINA

(The China portion below is extracted from the *BBC World Service Poll Report*)

While views of China were predominantly positive in 2008, they have eroded substantially so that views are now generally divided. On average, in 2008, 45 per cent had a positive view while 33 per cent had a negative view. But now positive views have slipped six points to 39 per cent, while negative views have risen to 40 per cent. In 2008 16 countries had a predominantly positive view and five had a negative view; now 10 countries' views of China's influence are mainly positive, while in nine they are mainly negative and in one, they are divided.

Negative views have grown most significantly in European countries over the past year, including France (70%, up from 46%), Italy (68%, up from 50%), Germany (69%, up from 59%), and Spain (54%, up from 32%), with corresponding drops in positive views. Positive attitudes among Britons have also dropped (39%, down from 48%) while 42 per cent now say China has a negative influence in the world, making attitudes in the United Kingdom divided.

Other countries that have seen views of China worsen considerably include Turkey, the Philippines, Egypt, and Australia. Turkey has shown a dramatic decrease in positive views of China (18%, down from 30%) while negative views have increased (64%, up from 58%). A majority in the Philippines now sees China's influence as mainly negative (52%, up from 30%), while positive views have dropped also (39%, down from 48%). Egyptians have seen positive views of China drop 20 points (62%, down from 82%), though negative attitudes remain stable (11%). While Australians most commonly still see China as a positive influence, positive attitudes have decreased (47%, down from 60%), while negative attitudes have grown (37%, up from 28%).

Attitudes about China in the United States have remained somewhat stable. While a majority (52%) in the US continues to view China's influence as mainly negative, there has been little change in both positive and negative attitudes over the previous year.

Eight countries continue to show positive views of China's influence, including large majorities in Ghana (75%, up from 56%), Nigeria (72%), and Central America (62%). A majority in Chile has a favorable view (60%), while Mexicans lean positive (34% positive to 26% negative), as do Indians (30% positive to 24% negative). In Russia, attitudes have remained largely stable with most saying China has a positive influence rather than negative (45% positive to 18% negative).

Source: *Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll*, 6 February 2009, BBC World Service Poll at http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbccntryview09/background.html