Chapter 4: Chinese Public Diplomacy

The post-Cold War international order has necessitated China to adjust its foreign and security policies. China faced a harsher environment in the aftermath of the crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen protests, with the United States continued to vilify Beijing as a pariah regime. At this point, Beijing no longer sought to advance socialism in other parts of the world, and its grand strategy from the Cold War period of pivoting itself as the lesser, but critical third in relation to the world’s two super powers was becoming a thing of the past. A rational pragmatism and pursuit of national interests began to characterize Beijing’s new diplomatic offensive. Following Deng’s reassurance of the open-door and reform policies on his famous 1992 tour to southern China, Beijing initiated the good-neighbor diplomacy in 1993, which James C. Hsiung compares to the omni-directional foreign policy ascribed to Japan in the 1970s.¹

By the early 1990s, Beijing had discarded its Cold-War grand strategy of siding with the less threatening of the world’s super powers, but it showed no clear direction of what its future grand strategy would entail.² What seemed to be directing Beijing’s grand strategy at this point was Deng’s prescription after the Tiananmen crackdown: to hide its strengths and abide its time. Moreover, the international isolation of China after the Tiananmen violence did not stop China from opening its door further. Jiang Zemin reiterated Beijing’s open-door policy in 1990, pointing out that “the development and progress of China is inseparable from the achievement in civilization scored by every country in the world… [We] need to learn and assimilate the excellent achievements in the creation of civilization scored by the

² Goldstein, p. 838.
people of every country in the world, including those who live under the capitalist system.  

In 1991, China became member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), opening a door for greater interaction with its Pacific neighbors. The next year saw China establish diplomatic tie with South Korea, which became the last of all nations in the Asia Pacific region to normalize relations with China. To further reach out, China launched the good-neighbor diplomacy in 1993 and supported arms control by signing the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty and making commitment to abide by the Missile Technology Control Regime guidelines. It also responded positively to the establishment of a new international order and the reform of the United Nations.  

All these gestures clearly aimed to break China out of the post-Tiananmen Incident isolation and to eliminate the negative impact the incident inflicted upon its global image. Jiang Zemin further advanced the “great-power,” or “big-country,” diplomacy, indicating that China must adopt great-power mentality in conducting foreign policy. Beijing hoped to strengthen its ties with other regional players, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India, Japan, the two Koreas, Mongolia, and Vietnam. In addition, Beijing’s 1993 bid to host the 2000 Olympics failed, which dealt another blow to its national pride. But it did see progress elsewhere. The following year saw the United States move to unlink the renewal of most-favored-nation treatment to China’s human rights record.

At this point, China seemed ready to re-emerge from the shadow of the Tiananmen crackdown. Yet its good-neighbor rhetoric became overshadowed by its action to fortify Mischief Reef in 1995, not long after it had agreed to avoid military

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solution to the region’s disputes. Moreover, when Beijing fired missiles at the Taiwan Straight in 1996, it again antagonized its neighbors and the United States. The United States moved to revise the guidelines for U.S.-Japan military co-operation in 1996, causing great concern on the part of China. Confronted with increased suspicions by its neighbors and a possible countermeasure of containment by the United States, Chinese leaders began to recognize the need to substantiate their good-neighbor rhetoric with concrete actions to mollify their neighbors’ concerns.

Qimao Chen observes three discernable adjustments in Chinese diplomacy during this period. First, Beijing’s long advocated cooperation with the third world remained unchanged in its good-neighbor diplomacy. It maintained close, increasingly fruitful relations with many developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Second, Beijing adopted an omni-directional diplomatic policy defined as strengthening ties with all nations. In so doing, Beijing modified its definition of “hegemonism,” which used to mean the Soviet Union, the United States, or a certain regional power. Beijing now regarded hegemonism as “a policy or an action” rather than a specific country. Third, Beijing sought to play a more active role in the international community and describe itself as a facilitating force for maintaining peace and stability and promoting prosperity.5

This element of “big country diplomacy” began to take a clearer shape after 1996, as China recognized its central challenges being the crafting a foreign policy that would enhance its national security and facilitate its rise to great-power status in the world of U.S. dominance. This prompted China to not just reassure its neighbors, but to forge partnerships with other great powers so as to create an external environment conducive to meeting its goals. China has employed measures such as increased participation in international forums, active formulation of great-power

partnerships, and restrained currency policy, all aimed to help dilute the “China threat” perceptions and facilitate the building of Chinese images as a cooperative, responsible player in current world system.6

In all, the Tiananmen Square Incident has taught China a hard lesson, and the degree of China’s integration into the world economy has the Chinese leader put on a likable face in order to smooth out the course ahead to great power status. As the following discussions will show, China has since strengthened its diplomatic offensive particularly where public diplomacy is concerned. Section one of this chapter will briefly discuss the relationship between public diplomacy and international image. The remaining sections will look into China’s public diplomacy categorized into three fronts, respectively: high-level official visits, international forums as public relations venues, mega events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai Expo.

4.1 Public Diplomacy and International Image

John Hertz has pointed out in 1982 that with rising importance of public in international affairs comes the emphasis on image-making by nations. “It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that today half of power politics consists of image making,” Hertz asserts.7 Nye believes that the use of soft-power resources through public diplomacy is critical to successfully forge a favorable global image conducive to shaping desired response. As discussed earlier, public diplomacy, or new diplomacy, is known as “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions

6 Goldstein, p. 858.
and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies.”

The United States Information Agency (USIA) defined in 1963 that public diplomacy means the presentation of a variety of private views in additions to government views through communications with not just foreign government, but primarily with non-governmental individuals and organizations. Edmund A. Gullion, former dean of the Fletcher School at Tufts University, defined public diplomacy in 1965 as encompassing dimensions of international relations that go beyond traditional diplomacy. It includes the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries, the interaction of private groups and interests between two countries, the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy, communication between diplomats and foreign correspondents, and the process of inter-cultural communications.

Joshua Fouts defines public diplomacy as “government reaching out to a public or polity to explain its cultures, values, policies, beliefs and, by association, to improve its relationship, image and reputation with that country.” Several characteristics mark the various definitions. First, the targets of public diplomacy today include foreign publics, governments, organizations, and key individuals. Second, public diplomacy is conducted through just about all channels available to reach the said targets, particularly through the press and by cultural exchanges. Third, a country’s successful public diplomacy is closely related to its global images and reputations.

Joseph Nye categorizes public diplomacy into three areas: daily communications aimed to explain the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions most critically to the foreign press corps, strategic communication in which a set of simple themes is

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developed and campaigned to advance a particular government policy, and the
development of lasting relationships with key individuals over long years through
scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences and access to media
channels. Manheim names three forms of public diplomacy: head of State visits,
hosting of mega events, and management of national images. The management of
national images, furthermore, is closely related to the management of international
public relations, which in turn is connected to mediation of foreign policy.

Governments and leaders around have engaged in public diplomacy since the
two World Wars. In its early stage, however, public diplomacy appeared in the form
of propaganda. The Soviet Union was the first state to set up “the Communist
International,” a permanent international propaganda apparatus known as
“Comintern,” in 1919 to use propaganda as a tool for its management of international
relations. The Soviet Union’s propaganda efforts advanced Communist world
revolution as a moral duty to smash capitalism, and they succeeded in portraying the
country as a worker’s paradise to foreign publics.\(^9\) Soviet propaganda, particularly
radio broadcasts, extended to countries such as China, Britain, France, Germany, and
Romania.

Propaganda, as said earlier, came to be deemed as counterproductive as the press
and the public grew increasingly wiser to the bombardment of explicit, manipulative
messages by governments. The advent of the information age governments further
deprieved of governments their monopoly on providing information for the public.
Public diplomacy emerged as an open, creative, and comprehensive form of
diplomacy that turns away from explicit propaganda. The United States established
the USIA at the height of the Cold War in 1953, with an aim, as its director Charles

Winick put it, “to provide the United States with another kind of protection and peace; the kind that is won when the people of one nation freely communicate their values and aspirations to the people of other nations, refute disinformation and other manipulative measures calculated to destabilize free world unit—all through public diplomacy.”

The USIA major operations included radio broadcasts of the Voice of America, Free Europe, Radio Sawa, Radio Marti; the production and distribution of films, TV programs, magazines in English and other languages; and the establishment of 159 libraries and reading rooms in 100 countries. The USIA also sponsors activities such as lectures and seminar programs, English-teaching programs, educational exchange programs, and cultural presentations featuring performing and nonperforming artists. Today, the USIA no longer exists, but the operations continue in the U.S. State Department as the importance of public diplomacy continues to increase in international relations.

A recent visit by U.S. president George W. Bush to five African countries marked as latest example of U.S. public diplomacy move in the form of state visit. Bush introduced the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2003 and pledged US$15 billion to combat AIDS around the world. The majority of that amount was marked Africa, and the fund was doubled later, marking the largest international health initiative dedicated to a specific disease ever undertaken by a single country.

Bush was warmly welcomed during his African trip in early 2008 since many Africans were grateful to this PEPFAR program, apparently an expression of U.S. soft power in the form of foreign aid. PEPFAR paves the way for Bush’s visit—that

10 Kunczik, p. 230.
helped patch up images of the United States that have become less popular elsewhere under Bush’s watch. Even though the U.S. global images declined over the past few years, the United States still holds advantages as a well of resources and experiences in terms of soft power and public diplomacy.

Elsewhere, governments pour resources into the making of public diplomacy. France, for instance, spent an estimated $1 billion on information and cultural activities. Like other countries, France views such form of public diplomacy an essential instrument of foreign policy. Britain, on the other hand, has the instrument of British Council, founded in 1934, to promote language teaching, cultural exchanges and presentations, and library services. Another European country, Sweden, has put in place several organizations to polish its global images. Among them, the Sweden Institute facilitates cultural exchanges and cultivates contacts with foreign institutes and individuals, while the Sweden Travel and Tourism Council works to project the country’s touristic image.12

Beijing is among those governments that seek to copy American experiences to reshape its global images with great enthusiasm. The previous section has touched upon Beijing’s diplomatic offensive empowered by soft-power resources in several aspects, the following sections will follow Manheim’s classification to discuss Beijing’s public diplomacy in three forms: head of State visits, which would be expand to include high-level official visits and Beijing’s involvement in international forums; hosting of mega events, namely, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games; and management of national images, which would be reviewed from Beijing’s international public relations initiatives.

4.2 High-level Official Visits

As Manheim points out, “Visits by head of state or government constitute one of the principal classes of events around which public diplomacy is often organized.” The United States classifies visits by foreign leaders into “official” and “state” visits, both with full ceremonial accompaniment; “official working” visits characterized by lesser amounts of ceremony; and “private” visits where the visitor stays in the United States for a variety of non-official reasons. In addition, the United States treats trips by foreign leaders to address the United Nations as private visits. All of these types of visits, Manheim notes, can provide a locus for media event and other forms of image making.13

In other words, this additional value of creating elbowroom for publicity and image-making programs transforms the traditional diplomacy of exchange visits by state leaders into a form of public diplomacy. Due to the fact that Chinese conduct of such visits in recent years tends to accord with Manheim’s interpretations, this thesis has included the Chinese leaders’ visits to other countries as part of their public-diplomacy efforts to shape a more positive and visible international image of China and themselves. In so doing, this thesis hopes to highlight the changes in Chinese diplomacy that are driven by the desire to present a new China to a foreign audience.

During his 27-year rule over China, Mao left China only twice and visited but one country, the Soviet Union. His plan to visit Poland in 1957 never realized. In contrast, Mao’s successors have since become more inclined to make public appearance abroad than before, despite the fact that the publicity often comes with critical attention. Soon after the death of Mao, Beijing normalized its relations with

Washington, and then Vice-Premier Deng made an official visit to the United States from January 28 to February 25, 1979. The trip marked the first Chinese leader to visit the United States since 1949. With this visit, Deng put an end to China’s self-imposed isolation from the international community to open the door for infinite possibilities.

But Deng in his life time traveled abroad as China’s top leader only a handful of times. Starting in the 1990s, exchange visits between Chinese leaders and their counterparts in other countries saw continued increase as leadership change from one generation to the next. Jiang Zemin, who urged the country to enter a mindset living up to China’s ascent to big-country, or great power, status, was more inclined to travel afar to face foreign publics and “open-up” the once blurry images of Chinese leadership to foreign audiences.

Jiang himself visited the United States the first time in 1997, signing a communiqué with U.S. President Bill Clinton to strengthen cooperation toward a constructive strategic partnership. Clinton returned the goodwill by visiting China the next year. A study of China’s new global foreign policy indicates that in 2002, Chinese president and premier spent more than four times as many days abroad as they had in 1993.14 By the time Jiang stepped down, he had toured across the five continents and set up annual exchange visit with countries including Japan.

The fourth generation leader Hu Jintao has followed suit to frequent countries across the continents since he came to power in 2003. One report indicates that the members of the Politburo Standing Committee to succeed Jiang’s administration made more than 40 overseas trips in the four years preceding their appointment.15 To Hu’s advantage, he has China’s growing economic might and wealth at his disposal.

14 Kurlantzick, p. 66.
15 Medeiros and Fravel, p. 31.
when he visits foreign countries, and his November 2004 visit to four Latin American countries, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Cuba, demonstrated just that.

The following list records some of the head-of-state visits made by Beijing to other countries:

- From July 11 to 31, 1985, Chinese President Li Xiannian made a visit to Canada and the United States. This event marked the first U.S. visit by a Chinese head of state.

- On November 19 to 20, 1993, Jiang Zemin visited the United States to attend the APEC summit in Seattle. His meeting with Bill Clinton highlighted the first formal top-level meeting between the two nations since 1989.

- Chinese President Jiang Zemin made an official visit to the United States from October 29 to November 4, 1997. During the visit, Jiang and U.S. President Bill Clinton issued a joint communiqué that called for strengthened cooperation toward a constructive strategic partnership in the 21st century.

- Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji paid an official visit to the United States in April, 1999 at the invitation of U.S. President Bill Clinton, marking the first visit by a Chinese premier in 15 years.

- Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a state visit to Britain, France, Portugal, Morocco, Algeria and Saudi Arabia in October 1999, marking the first state visit ever made by head of state of China to the United Kingdom, Algeria and Saudi Arabia.

- On his way to attend the APEC Summit in Chile on November 20 to 21, 2004, Chinese President Hu Jintao called on Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba. He demonstrated China’s economic might by striking several business
deals with these countries and Chile.

● In April 2006, Hu made a series of state visits to four countries: the United States, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Nigeria and Kenya. The Chinese government highlighted Hu’s four-day visit from April 18 to 21 to the United States as a state visit, but the White House responded by calling it an “official” visit. Hu during the visit delivered speeches outside the White House and at the Yale University, both occasions attracted much media attention.

● From January 30 to February 10, 2007, Hu Jintao paid a visit to eight African countries including Cameroon, Liberia, Mozambique, Republic of Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, and Zambia.

● On September 3, 2007, Hu paid a state visit to Australia for the second time. He then attended the 15th APEC Summit in Sydney.

● From May 6 to 10, 2008, Hu paid a visit to Japan where both sides vowed to strengthen bilateral relations while moving away from historical enmity.

From the public diplomacy perspective, Beijing employed a calculative combination of head-of-state visit with economic enticements that are country-specific to achieve its economic and political ends. As Manheim notes, “the decisions as to how to accomplish these public diplomacy objectives, and the ability to implement them, are neither uniform nor automatic. At both the strategic and tactical levels, they require an understanding of the potential audience for the visiting leader’s message and of significant segments thereof…a command of the appropriate channels for reaching the target audience…the generation of the ‘right’ message to accomplish the public diplomacy or policy objectives, and a modicum of
communication skill."\textsuperscript{16}

Beijing is clearly learning the game with some success. For instance, although the quest of natural resources dominates Beijing’s diplomatic foray into Latin America, it has capitalized on the rising tide of anti-America sentiments across the region to position itself as the more favored alternative than the United States. Hu Jintao’s 2004 visit to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Cuba demonstrated just how Chinese leaders use the country’s economic might and the visit to win friendship.

4.3 International Forums as Public Relations

In the 1990s, China became more enthusiastic about participation in international forums, which served as a mechanism for China to upgrade its economy and further integrate with the world economy. Overtime, these international forums have worked as a venue to raise China’s international visibility as it seeks to expand its regional and global roles. Furthermore, China has over the past decades entered into 300-strong multilateral treaties and joined more than 130 inter-governmental and international organizations.\textsuperscript{17} Even in Latin America, the backyard of U.S., China has devised ways to bring forth “friendly” forums with Taiwan’s several diplomatic allies. Today, it has become more difficult to find places where Chinese influence would be entirely absent.

APEC, ASEAN, the WTO are a few examples that have seen China’s increasingly active participation. Its enthusiasm in such communication platforms became more evident as it moved on to establish and set the agenda for its own forums, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), and the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation. In addition, in June 2003, Hu

\textsuperscript{16} Manheim, 1994, p. 82.
Jintao took the invitation by the Group of Eight highly industrialized countries (G-8) and became the first Chinese leader to attend the venue as a “dialogue member.” Both sides have since been pondering China’s future position within this group. As the following paragraphs will show region by region, these forums provide opportunities for Chinese leaders not only to deliver support and goodwill in a fact-to-face manner, but also to make high-profile appearance that significantly enhance the country’s overall global visibility.

China became a member of the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) in November 1991, along with Taiwan participating under the name of “Chinese Taipei.” The following decade saw China furthering its participation in the forum, including hosting the ninth leader’s meeting in Shanghai in 2001. Over the past few years, Chinese leaders have come to view this forum as a venue for public diplomacy. For instance, Hu’s attendance at 15th APEC Summit in Sydney was highly profiled, with much media attention focused on the interaction between Hu and U.S. President George W. Bush.

Aside from APEC to communicate with its neighbors in the Pacific region, China has sought to organize forums with itself as the agenda-setters. It led the establishment of the BFA with 26 Australasian states on February 27, 2001. The BFA, with its Secretariat based in Beijing, was intended to be the Asian model of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. In 2002, the BFA held its first meeting in April, in Boao, Hainan, China. It has since held several high-level annual forum, gaining attendance from governments, businesses, experts and scholars across the region to discuss a wide range of issues.

Another forum that China has initiated brings together countries in Central Asia, namely, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which became the region’s first multilateral forum. The group first came to be known as the Shanghai five, with
China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signing the first multilateral treaty in April 1996 to build confidence in the region. Uzbekistan later joined the organization, which initially aimed to introduce a mechanism for settling long-standing territorial disputes and demilitarizing borders. Regional trade development has since taken on importance on the group’s agenda, an area China enjoys much leverage vis-à-vis other members. The group has also made counter-terrorism cooperation part of its agenda since September 11, 2001.

In Southeast Asia, China’s acts during the Cold War, supporting various communist insurgencies and waging war against Vietnam in 1979, and its rising power over the past decades have caused some anxiety. In recent years, Beijing has launched a major charm offensive to mend its relations with Southeast Asian nations. Prior to the outbreak of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, China made strong claims to the disputed islands in the South China Sea. After the crisis turned China’s into a “nice” neighbor, China became increasingly adept in reducing tension with neighbors in the region. In addition to staging high-level visits, China has been lending development assistance to the region’s poor countries such Laos, Burma, and Cambodia, as well as more developed countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

More importantly, Beijing took a proactive position in continued dialogue with ASEAN has been central to its charm offensive. In November 2001, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji took the ASEAN leaders by surprise when he offered an unprecedented free trade agreement (FTA). The following year China and ASEAN signed the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation to create an ASEAN-China FTA (ACFTA) within ten years. Once implemented, the ACFTA will constitute a common market of 1.7 billion people, with a GDP arriving at US$2
trillion.\textsuperscript{18} In 2006, China became the tenth overall source of ASEAN’s foreign direct investment, and the third largest source for tourism with a total of 13.8 million arrivals between 2001 and 2005.\textsuperscript{19}

Some indications can be found in the BBC World Service Polls as to the effect of China’s charm offensive in the region. Two nations in the region, Indonesia and the Philippines, participated in the BBC annual survey for four consecutive years from 2005 to 2008. The polls showed that a large majority of Indonesians held favorable views toward China, while the Philippine people’s favorable view of China declined from an overwhelming 70 percent to 48 percent during this period. It is noteworthy that the two countries are directly involved in the territorial disputes with China. Factoring in the historical mistrust and recent disagreements between China and its neighbors, the BBC surveys should still spell a relatively positive message for China.

The following table shows excerpts of the BBC survey:

\textbf{Figure 6. Excerpts of BBC World Service Polls, 2005–2008}

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>countries</th>
<th>Views of China’s Influence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainly Positive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In other parts of the region, a survey conducted in the summer of 2006 by Chicago Council on Global Affairs found that Australians and South Koreans generally held positive attitude about China. The poll investigated views on the rise of


\textsuperscript{19} Lum, Morrison, and Vaughn, pp. 13-14.
China and India in Australia, China, India, and South Korea concurrently. The key findings with regard to attitude about China indicate that while majority Americans held unfavorable feelings about China, Asians tend to view China as a constructive player in Asia. Feelings toward China expressed by the four countries surveyed are charted on a 100 scale in the diagram below, where 100 means a warm, favorable feeling toward China, 0 means a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and 50 means not particularly warm or cold:

Figure 7. Views of China in 4 Countries


In Europe, China co-founded in 1996 the Asia-Europe Meeting, which holds biannual summits for heads of states and yearly ministerial meetings. In addition, China also sought to communicate directly with the European Union, initiating an annual political dialogue in 1998. In October 2002, China even officially reached out to NATO, proposing to open up a regular bilateral dialogue to discuss strategic concepts, shared security concerns, and NATO activities in Central-Asian countries bordering or near China. Some commentators have pointed out:

China’s outreach to NATO appears to be part of a much larger effort to establish a more
constructive and less critical international presence. A more positive assessment would attribute this change in tone to a more confident and mature foreign policy. A more cautious view acknowledges such potentially constructive adjustments in Beijing’s outlook but recognizes that they may be motivated by tentative and short-term interests.20

Furthermore, in the 2008 G-8 Summit in July, Hu’s participation in the event reaped big as U.S. President Bush, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda all announced their long-deliberated attendance to the Olympics opening ceremony. Voice of boycott of the Olympic Games and its opening ceremony had grown loud since the Chinese crackdown on Tibetan riots on March 12, 2008, with Sarkozy among the first to propose a stay-away from the opening ceremony. A boycott of the Beijing Olympics by major world leaders would have greatly embarrassed China. In the end, more than eighty leaders from around the world attended the August 8 Olympics opening ceremony.

Another multilateral forum in which China has been an active player is the World Trade Organization (WTO). China is well aware that its modernization scheme depends on its smooth integration into the global economy. The WTO becomes critical for China to make that transition successful. More importantly, the WTO’s multilateral trade principles and dispute settlement mechanisms serve as useful means for China to defend against threats of discrimination and protectionism that it often confronts as a rising economic power.21

Beijing has found ways at the WTO to counter domination by the industrialized countries, which have long been the agenda-setter. In the past years, however,

developing nations led by China and India formed a coalition to resist pressure from the Western countries to open their markets for agricultural products. The Doha Round has since been plagued by standoff between the two coalitions, and there is no telling whether members will return to the negotiation table anytime soon. Future scenarios may be that, as Beijing’s commitment to economic liberalization grows, the more mature Western economies will scale back their support for the WTO. More likely, however, both the developed and developing economies will find value in the WTO mechanisms to settle differences.22

In Africa, China is gaining ground with the establishment of Forum on China-Africa Co-operation in October 2000, with the participation of 44 African nations. In addition to delivering aids to many African nations, China has in recent years increased its efforts in raising investment and trade in this resource-rich region. As mentioned earlier, at the November 2006 Forum on China-Africa Co-operation where 48 African nations attended, Hu Jintao delivered unprecedented gifts of development funds, loans, and custom reductions and exemptions. Whereas the Western countries’ African strategies have seen little success, China is reaping recognition by delivering unconditional and constructive assistance to the region.

China’s image-promotion efforts have achieved various degree of success in different regions. In a BBC World Service Poll released in April 2008, China’s influence was viewed most positively in Africa and the Middle East than in other regions. Conducted in December 2007 across 34 countries, the poll showed that China enjoyed a large majority of positive views in Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana at 74%, 67%, and 56%, respectively. Developed countries in the West where nations increasingly feel China’s economic power, China’s favorable ratings runs much lower, particularly in Germany (28%), France (35%), Italy (35%), and the U.S. (33%).

22 Ikenberry, 2008, p.32.
Figure 8. 2007 BBC World Service Poll on Views of Chinese Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Mainly Positive</th>
<th>Mainly Negative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
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<td>Israel*</td>
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<td>Japan*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of 25 Tracking Countries**</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The white space in this chart represents “depends,” “neither, neutral,” and “DK/NA.”
*No tracking data available.
**Not including views of subject country.

Source: 2008 BBC World Service Poll
4.4 Mega Events

4.4.1 The 2008 Beijing Olympics

Beijing failed its first bid in 1993 to host the 2000 Olympic Games, and came back to win the 2008 Games in 2001 with the help of a public relations firm. Beijing’s first try won more votes from Asian, African, and Latin American members of the International Olympic Committee than it did from American and European members. Beijing lost its bid to Sydney by two votes. This failure dealt a serious blow to the pride of the Chinese public, igniting a nationalism that evoked the “hundred year humiliation” imposed by the West. When Beijing’s second try succeeded, hundreds of thousands of people in Beijing took to the street to celebrate the long-waited glory.

In the context where governments “produce, construct, and/or control access to newsworthy events for the purpose of influencing foreign public or elite opinion to their advantage, major international sporting competitions offer targets of opportunity for public diplomacy efforts.”23 Baruch Hazan offers best observation as to what makes sports event such as the Olympics Games a target for public diplomacy:

Sport…is a medium that may simultaneously embrace billions of people, an unsuspecting audience whose absorption screen is exposed and vulnerable and whose mental defenses against propaganda are completely down. It is a means of…penetrating all defenses, engaging the audience emotionally, vocally, and physically.24

Trevor Taylor has noted: no international competition is more subject to such politicization than the quadrennial world’s fair that is the Olympic Games.25 Adolf Hitler used the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games as a parade scene for the powerful Germany. The Tokyo Olympic Games of 1964 were generally regarded as the

24 See Manheim, 1994, p.103.
“coming-out” party of the Japanese economy. The 1972 Olympic Games saw political expressions in the most tragic form, the murders of Israeli athletes in Munich. There was also the America-led boycott in Moscow in 1980, a successful move in protest of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviet then led the retaliatory boycott in Los Angeles in 1984.

The “Japanese experience of Olympics politics” tempted the Mexican and the South Korean governments to hope to emulate that experience at the 1968 Games in Mexico City and the 1988 Games in Seoul, respectively. Both governments ended up seeing political instability and street violence in anticipating the Games. South Korea was a military dictatorship when it is awarded the 1988 Summer Games. But antigovernment protests diverted international attention on the Games, and the Seoul government gave in. The 1988 Games hence became known as precipitating the democratization of South Korea. When Olympic officials awarded China the 2008 Summer Games, they justified the move by referring to the controversy of the 1988 Games.

Dick Pound, an International Olympic Committee member from Canada, points out that the IOC hoped the Beijing Games might also spark political changes. Some Chinese officials encouraged the notion, hinting possible improvements that the games would bring to China.26 Like its Japanese, Mexican, and Korean predecessors, the Chinese see the Games as the country’s “coming-out” party to herald China’s arrival as world-class political and economic power. They have since reveled in a vision of a new China winning worldwide respect and recognition. For that vision, the Chinese government has poured a humongous amount of resources into revamping the Beijing capital, turning the city into an arena for world-renowned architects from

foreign countries.

By early 2008, Beijing has spent an estimated more than US$40 billion on building venues for the Games. Moreover, Beijing has painstakingly taken every opportunity available during the run-up to the Games to draw worldwide attention. It has invited world-famous filmmaker Steven Spielberg to serve as the artistic director for the opening ceremony of the Games. It went through a long selecting process to generate the Olympic mascots with identifiable Chinese characteristics. Even the opening date of the Games, 8, 8, 2008, was carefully picked, with the three lucky eights heralding an auspicious grandeur. The Olympic torch relay, another venue for publicity ahead of the Games themselves, was designed to travel 85,000 miles worldwide in 130 days, the longest distance covered in Olympic history.

In addition, dozens of constructions for competition venues have been underway, with updates on their progresses available on the official Beijing Olympic Games website. With each construction or task completed for the Games, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games would hold press conference to inform the public of its new accomplishment. Architectural projects such as the National Stadium dubbed the Bird’s Net, the National Aquarium Center known as the Water Cube, and the Beijing Capital International Airport have each generated media coverage for their scale and innovative design. What’s more, they also demonstrate the determination of Beijing to venture its image as forward-looking, willing to accept new, at times even bold, ideas and designs.

To make sure its good-citizen-of-the-world image goes global, Beijing has invited world leaders to attend the opening ceremony for the Games. But publicity for the Beijing Games does not come out all positive, particularly with the crackdown on Tibetan riots on March 14, 2008 severely damaging Chinese image and putting pressure on the world leaders to consider whether they would boycott the Olympic
ceremony. Human rights organizations have long placed the Beijing Games under close watch, pointing out that the Games have worsened Beijing’s already criticized human rights record on many fronts. The March 14 incident gave watch groups reasons to muster support for boycott of the opening ceremony or even the Games.

Moreover, human rights groups have also condemned Chinese officials’ efforts to transform Beijing into a world-class city for the Games by forcing more than a million people to relocate, without providing adequate measures for their re-settlement. Construction workers attracted to Beijing’s booming job market have reportedly been working and living in inadequate environments, seriously underpaid or overworked, and in many cases, unable to collect agreed wages. Rights groups also target at press freedom in China during the run-up to the Games, as Beijing tightens its measures on regulating the press and public opinion to ensure a flawless “coming-out” party for its arrival as a new great power.

Noting that the 1988 Olympic Game in Seoul expedited the democratization of South Korea as international attention focused instead on the democratic protests prior to the Games, some observers have pointed out that the Beijing Games nevertheless show no sign of triggering similar political changes in China. In many ways the Olympic Games have indeed brought changes to China, changing the face of its capital city and raising the pride of its people, but what the Games mean to China’s overall development and how they will affect Chinese image as a whole remains to be observed.

What may come as a comfort to China is a recent poll by Pew Research Center, released in June 12, 2008, where a clear majority—14 of 23 nations surveyed—approved of the decision to hold the Olympics in Beijing. Conducted in March 17 to April 21, 2008, the poll showed strong support for the decision from

China’s neighboring countries such as India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and South Korea. Meanwhile, overwhelming support for the idea was found in African and Latin American countries, including Nigeria, Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil. The polls are shown in the table below:

**Figure 9. Global Poll on Views of China Holding the Olympics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number Favoring Bad Decision</th>
<th>Number Favoring Good Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Africa</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


On August 8, 2008, the Beijing Olympics unfolded with such extravaganza that former British leader Tony Blair described its opening ceremony as “the spectacular to end all spectaculars and probably can never be bettered.” Moreover, he noted, the Olympic Games “have given people a glimpse of modern China in a way that no
amount of political speeches could do.” The message that the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony sought to convey was loud and clear: that China’s rise is a peaceful one and the country means no harm to the world. The New York Times, characterizing an Olympic opening as a “propaganda exercise,” noted that as Chinese leaders wanted the Olympics Games to “reassure the world that a rising China poses no danger,” Chinese Communist Party readily used these games to raise national pride domestically and strengthen its own legitimacy in the process.

Reportedly attracting 4.3 million visitors to Beijing in addition to nearly 100,000 reporters and 8,000 teams of more than 62,000 members from around the world, the Beijing Olympics concluded as a successful public relation deed. Nevertheless, the event sums up China’s diplomatic challenges. On the one hand, China today has the economic and perhaps military might it needs to raise its international status. On the other hand, China’s one-party rule, human rights record, internal unrest, serious corruption, environmental problems, and issues surrounding the quality and safety of Chinese products will continue to mar its global reputation if little change can be implemented. After all, one single PR success, however effective, cannot work magic to turn around a country’s global image altogether. China’s image project has a long way to go.

4.4.2 The 2010 Shanghai World Expo

In a bid to promote Shanghai as the financial and economic center in East Asia, China succeeded in applying to hosting the 2010 Expo, one of the major international mega events today, in 2005. Having ambitiously proved its ability to host

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international mega event with the Olympics, China is looking to impressing the world again with this event. As the Olympics Games did for Beijing, the 2010 World Expo has been bringing improvements to Shanghai’s infrastructure in a hope to project the city as a regional economic and cultural center representative of China’s modern image. These improvements include the city’s metro systems, inter-city railway systems, the Pudong International Airport, and other urban constructions such as museums, performance venues, and grand theaters.

Promoting the theme of “better city, better life,” the Shanghai Expo expects to attract 200 participants and 70 million visitors from around the world within its six-month duration from May 1 to October 31, 2010.\(^{30}\) While the 2008 Beijing Olympics reportedly attracted several billion viewers to watch the Games on TV over the 17-day period, the Shanghai Expo will open China’s door to participants and viewers from across the continents for six months. With the Olympics, China deployed heavy security forces and surveillance systems as it sought to stage a perfect presentation of its wealth and power. How China intends to use the Shanghai Expo as a PR venue to present itself during a six-month period and in close contact with tens of millions outsiders remains to be watched.

\(^{30}\) See the official website of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo at http://en.expo2010china.com/.