



Journal of Current Chinese Affairs

China aktuell

Brady, Anne-Marie (2012),
“We Are All Part of the Same Family”: China’s Ethnic Propaganda, in: *Journal of
Current Chinese Affairs*, 41, 4, 159–181.

ISSN: 1868-4874 (online), ISSN: 1868-1026 (print)

The online version of this article and the other articles can be found at:

www.CurrentChineseAffairs.org

Published by

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies
in cooperation with the National Institute of Chinese Studies, White Rose East Asia
Centre at the Universities of Leeds and Sheffield and Hamburg University Press.

The *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* is an Open Access publication.

It may be read, copied and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.

To subscribe to the print edition: <ias@giga-hamburg.de>

For an e-mail alert please register at: <www.CurrentChineseAffairs.org>

The *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* is part of the GIGA Journal Family which includes:
Africa Spectrum ● Journal of Current Chinese Affairs ● Journal of Current Southeast
Asian Affairs ● Journal of Politics in Latin America ● <www.giga-journal-family.org>



“We Are All Part of the Same Family”: China’s Ethnic Propaganda

Anne-Marie BRADY

Abstract: The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government works hard to promote an image of ethnic harmony in China and downplays ethnic conflict by carefully controlling public information and debate about ethnic affairs. Despite such efforts, the recent clashes in Tibetan areas in 2008 and violent riots in Urumqi in 2009 reveal the weaknesses of this approach. This paper surveys the broad themes of ethnic propaganda (民族宣传, *minzu xuanchuan*) in present-day China, looking at the organisations involved, the systems of information management they utilise, and the current “go” and “no-go” zones for debate. The paper forms part of a larger study of the politics of ethnicity in China. It is based on primary- and secondary-source research in Chinese, secondary sources in English, and extensive interviews with Chinese bureaucrats and scholars regarding China’s ethnic affairs conducted during fieldwork in China in 2002, 2004, 2005–2006, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2012. Ethnic issues in China concern not only the minority peoples there, but also the majority Han – hence, my definition of ethnic propaganda incorporates materials relating to all of China’s ethnic groups. The paper uses the events in Tibetan areas in 2008 and in Urumqi as case studies to demonstrate how these policies play out in periods of crisis. It concludes with a discussion of the role that ethnic propaganda plays in maintaining China’s long-term political stability and its international affairs.

■ Manuscript received 26 March 2012; accepted 24 October 2012

Keywords: China, ethnic, propaganda

Dr. Anne-Marie Brady is an associate professor of political science at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. She is the author of *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Rowman and Littlefield 2008) and *China’s Thought Management* (Routledge 2011), along with other titles. She is currently researching the politics of ethnicity in China and China’s polar strategy.

E-mail: <Anne-Marie.Brady@canterbury.ac.nz>

Introduction

According to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda *diktat*, both in the Chinese public sphere and in China's foreign relations, all matters that relate to ethnicity must be strictly managed. The CCP government tries to promote an outward image of ethnic harmony in China and downplays any ethnic conflict by strictly controlling ethnic affairs. Yet despite such efforts, the clashes in Tibetan areas in 2008, violent riots in Urumqi in 2009, and more than 90 incidences of self-immolations of Tibetan monks and nuns since 2011 all reveal the inherent weakness of this approach. Ethnic issues are a key fault line in Chinese politics. Conflict is increasingly focusing on the prominent income and opportunity gaps between different ethnic groups, the desire for greater autonomy by some communities, and a deep sense of cultural loss. China's ethnic-related problems are of considerable concern internationally and are a frequent point of friction between China and other states.

Utilising policy papers, interviews, and relevant secondary sources, this paper surveys the broad themes of ethnic propaganda (民族宣传, *minzu xuanchuan*) in China in the current period, looking at the relevant organisations, the systems of information management they utilise, and the current "go" and "no-go" zones for debate. Ethnic issues in China affect every ethnic group there, including the majority Han. I therefore define ethnic propaganda by incorporating materials relating to all of China's ethnic groups. The paper uses the events in Tibetan areas in 2008 and in Urumqi in 2009 as case studies to demonstrate how these policies play out in periods of crisis. It concludes with a discussion of the role ethnic propaganda plays in maintaining China's long-term political stability and international image.

The Role of Propaganda in CCP Governance

Propaganda (宣传, *xuanchuan*) is a key tool in the CCP approach to governance. CCP propaganda specialists distinguish between propaganda targeted at domestic audiences and that which is targeted at foreigners. CCP leaders have long regarded generating propaganda as an important political task. The Chinese term (at least in party circles) does not have the same negative connotations as it does in English.

China in the Mao era was a classic propaganda state (Kenez 1985), whose main method of mass persuasion was social transformation.

However, since the watershed of 1989, rather than to politically indoctrinate, the role of propaganda in China is now to mould public opinion on issues of concern to the government and to build a consensus for the continuance of the current political system (Brady 2008). Contemporary propaganda themes tend to focus on current sensitive social and political issues, and are aimed at garnering public support for party policies. Ethnic issues are one of the most serious fault lines in Chinese politics today. Hence, educating the Chinese public on ethnic affairs and ethnic policy is a prominent theme of contemporary propaganda. China's ethnic propaganda themes are determined by the CCP's Central Propaganda Department (CPD, 中宣部, *Zhongxuanbu*), the United Front Department (UFD, 统战部, *Tongzhanbu*), working in coalition with the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (SEAC, 国家民委, *Guojia minwei*). Together, they set China's macro- and micro-propaganda policies on ethnic affairs, which must be followed by the multiple agencies within China's propaganda system (宣教系统, *xuanjiao xitong*).

China's propaganda system is vast and comprehensive. It is not a top-down bureaucratic structure, but rather a system of governance that groups together the multiple party-state organisations that contribute to, and manage, the public sphere. Similar *xitong* exist in the Chinese party-state for other important policy areas such as defence and foreign affairs. The propaganda system includes all propaganda cadres and offices installed in party branches at all levels of organisation in both the state bureaucracy and Chinese and foreign-run private enterprises; the political department system of the People's Liberation Army; the education, culture, science, sport, health, information communication technology, publishing, radio, television, film and media sectors; and all mass organisations from neighbourhood committees to government-operated non-governmental organisations such as the China Society for Human Rights. All these organisations, and the various sectors they manage, are required to conform to party policy on handling ethnic issues.

Ethnic affairs organisations are not grouped together in a *xitong*, but official sources speak of a *minzu kou* (民族口, ethnic sector). *Kou* literally means "mouth" and is a term that was common in the Mao era to describe policy groupings of party and state agencies. The UFD's Second Office (统战部二局, *Tongzhanbu erju*) leads party and state organisations within the *minzu kou*. They are also in charge of religious affairs, as many of China's ethnic minorities are religious followers (United Front Bureau 2009). The UFD determines China's overall ethnic policies and helps to

ensure that policies are coordinated within the overall *minzu kou* and within the party-state system as a whole. The SEAC implements these policies through its various sections.

Within the ethnic sector, there are a number of organisations with a propaganda function. The leading state body is the SEAC's Culture and Propaganda Section (国家民委文化宣传司, *Guojia minwei wenhua xuan-chuan si*), which works closely with the CPD and the UFD (SEAC 2010). The propaganda departments of local governments in ethnic-minority areas all have a crucial interest in, and are involved in, ethnic propaganda activities. The various non-Han ethnic groups in China also all have their own state-controlled print and online news media, publishing, radio, film and television programming which must follow party policy (Bai 2004). China also has a network of ethnic colleges and schools that play an important role in educating elites within ethnic-minority communities, as well as specialist research institutes that research ethnic-related policy issues.

China's Ethnic Propaganda Targeted at Chinese Citizens

China's contemporary domestic propaganda on ethnic affairs focuses on building ethnic unity and avoiding ethnic conflict. Propaganda themes promote the notion that the Chinese people – comprised of 55 recognised minorities, with a Han majority – are “one family”, although each group has distinctive cultural traditions. In the following sections, I will discuss various aspects of China's ethnic propaganda activities, which range from cultural “management” to negative attacks on certain leading figures who China regards as threats.

Managing Culture

An important task of the SEAC's Culture and Propaganda Section is to manage and support these cultural traditions. It has long been CCP policy to “manage” (管理, *guanli*) culture in China because of the risk of misunderstandings and ethnic conflict arising from cultural differences. Moreover, there is a potential that groups hostile to the party-state may utilise culture as a vehicle to build opposition forces. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for managing the cultural activities of the Han

majority and coordinates with the SEAC on cultural activities relating to ethnic minorities.

In keeping with the CCP's traditional groupings for propaganda work, the SEAC's Culture and Propaganda Section is also in charge of managing the traditional sports and medicinal practices of ethnic minorities. Sports and the health sector have always been part of the CCP propaganda system, reflecting the party's interest in reforming both the political body of China and the physical bodies of Chinese citizens. The SEAC's Culture and Propaganda Section organises annual sporting events where the traditional sports of Chinese non-Han ethnic groups are played and promoted. Some of these sports are also included in national sporting events. Similarly, China's Dai, Mongolian, Tibetan and Uyghur peoples all have their own medicinal traditions. The SEAC's Culture and Propaganda Section supervises these fields of medicine, ensuring that high standards are met and that traditional medicine remains known and practiced.

Language

Language plays an important role in maintaining cultural difference. It was especially significant in a society such as China's during the Mao era, when the government was engaged in major social change. The authorities needed to effectively convey their policies to all citizens regardless of their mother tongue. Hence in the years after 1949, one of the early tasks of China's new managers of ethnic affairs was to research and reform the written languages of China's ethnic minorities, and in the cases of some ethnic minorities who did not have their own written language, to actually create a written form of their spoken tongue. Once the minority written languages had been reformed and/ or developed, the next task was to educate a new generation of government cadres, journalists, editors and teachers capable of working in these languages (Schwarz 1962). Minzu University in Beijing and its local equivalents were charged with this task, and even in the present era, these institutions continue to perform this role. At the same time, since the late 1950s, Chinese government policy has stressed the need for China's ethnic minorities to learn Mandarin in order to be better integrated into Chinese society as a whole (Schwarz 1962). The government has established boarding schools in a number of major cities to provide a comprehensive Mandarin education to elite students from key ethnic areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang (Chen and Postiglione 2009). However, despite these efforts and intentions,

even today the limited Chinese-language skills of some of China's most restive ethnic minorities is clearly a factor in governance issues. According to official sources, along with other aspects of the central government's propaganda policies on ethnic affairs, many local governments in ethnic-minority areas lack the fiscal resources to invest in high-quality bilingual education (*China Daily* 2010), but it is probably more accurate to say that this reflects a lack of prioritisation by central authorities to achieve these goals.

Propaganda Guidelines

Working closely together with the SEAC's Culture and Propaganda Section and the UFD, the CPD issues regular, detailed instructions to organisations within the Chinese propaganda system on how to represent China's ethnic minorities. These guidelines restrict the range of information available to the public, set the tone of the debate, establish the correct terminology, and decide which topics are to be emphasised and which must not be ignored. Below, I have gathered some representative examples of this "guidance".

As a rule, all issues related to ethnicity and religion must be strictly managed. Controversy must be avoided at all costs. Chinese publishers and the news media are forbidden to publish foreign-sourced materials from the Internet related to ethnic and religious affairs, including foreign media reports and foreign books on China's ethnic affairs – however, while such rules may be in place, actual practice can be very different. Current affairs relating to ethnic minorities and/ or religion must follow the central line; the Chinese news media are forbidden from reporting independently on these matters. All publications on such topics must be strictly controlled to avoid causing or adding to social tensions (NBTX 2005/4: 21). Party propagandists are particularly critical of publications that, under the guise of discussing "traditional culture", promote "feudal and decadent culture" (NBTX 2005/4: 22). The news media and publishers must not publish anything that could provoke ethnic minorities, such as disrespectful comments about their customs and lifestyle. For example, it is forbidden to use the derogatory terms *menggu daifu* (蒙古大夫) or *meng yi* (蒙医), both meaning Mongolian doctor, and *lama daifu* (喇嘛大夫, lamaist doctor) in the media or online as a representation of bad medical practice (NBTX 2005/13: 17).

Online web managers (and this includes individuals with their own websites as well as online giants such as Google and Baidu) are instruct-

ed to delete any inappropriate posts about ethnic groups. They also must delete any links to inappropriate sites, or risk having their websites closed down by the Bureau of Public Security (NBTX 2005/3: 21). As a rule, the Chinese media are not allowed to report on ethnic and religious clashes in China (NBTX 2005/2: 10). As the events in Tibetan areas in 2008 and Urumqi in 2009 demonstrate, the opportunities that modern technology offers China's disaffected ethnic groups to communicate with the outside world are challenging such dictums. Xinjiang is a particularly sensitive area in China's ethnic politics. In August 2005, the Chinese media were given a blanket ban on publishing any politically sensitive or negative issues to do with Xinjiang (NBTX 2005/17: 7–9). At the time, internal reports recorded that Xinjiang was experiencing unrest due to extremely high levels of unemployment among Uyghur youth – an estimated 60 per cent of those with at least a high school education were unemployed in 2005 (SEAC 2006). Such guidelines are in line with the preference for positive propaganda and belief that too much negative information will destroy public confidence in the regime.

During times of ethnic-related crisis, the CCP's Office for Foreign Propaganda (OFP, aka the State Council Information Office) is in charge of guiding the Chinese media on events involving Tibet, Xinjiang, ethnic minorities, religion, human rights, and internal and external terrorist activities, along with being responsible for issuing official statements to the foreign media on such incidents. This arrangement demonstrates the Chinese government's awareness of the role ethnic conflict in China plays in both its foreign relations and its domestic politics. During extremely serious incidents, only *Xinhua* News Agency is allowed to file news reports; all other Chinese media must use the *Xinhua* dispatches word for word.

Propaganda Campaigns

A central task of the SEAC Culture and Propaganda Section is to educate Chinese citizens about China's ethnic policies and the rationale behind these policies. To this end, it organises regular propaganda campaigns on these topics through the news media and local propaganda departments. The CCP has long utilised the mass campaign (运动, *yundong*) as a means of engaging in public political education. However, the term *yundong* is no longer used as it is associated with the excesses of the Mao era; instead, the ambiguous *huodong* (活动), which can be translated as “activities” as well as “campaign”, is now preferred. The Chinese term

for PR campaign is *gong guan huodong* (公关活动) and the new-style national-level mass campaigns do have much in common with PR efforts (Brady 2009). When it comes to ethnic propaganda, instead of political study as in the Mao years, the masses are now targeted with soft propaganda messages aimed at garnering social unity and political stability, such as the regular “ethnic unity” campaigns (民族团结活动, *minzu tuanjie huodong*). However, due to limited resources in many of the local governments in ethnic-minority areas (which tend to be the poorest in China, with a correspondingly low tax take), local governments often do not have the resources to fully promote ethnic-unity education (SEAC 2006). In periods of crisis, ethnic propaganda activities are conducted at the most basic level, including individual oral persuasion. For example, after incidences of ethnic unrest in Xinjiang, Uyghur cadres are regularly sent out to visit local communities to discuss government policy and listen to local concerns. Similarly, in Tibet, monks endure political education classes on the “correct” way to perceive the Dalai Lama and on patriotic education (Bovingdon 2004; Smith 2008).

Managing China’s non–Mandarin-speaking Public Sphere

The SEAC’s Culture and Propaganda Section (in conjunction with relevant state bodies such as the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television – SARFT – and the General Administration of Press and Publishing – GAPP) also oversees China’s minority-language print and online media, radio, film, television and publishing, and supervises the study and use of ethnic-minority languages in China. Without state support, many of the ethnic-minority groups would have little or no news media, radio, film, television and published material in their own languages. For the last 60 years of CCP rule, the ethnic-language mass media have played an important role in maintaining local cultures and communities within the Chinese public sphere where Mandarin is the main language of discourse.

However, the advent of information communication technology (ICT) and the increasing commercialisation of China’s public sphere have brought a host of new challenges to the Chinese party-state’s dominance of ethnic-language mass communication. China’s move to a market-oriented economy has meant that many private organisations are now involved in providing ethnic-language content for the Chinese public sphere. From the government’s point of view, much of this content is harmless, but some materials, such as those regarding religious matters

or cultural traditions, cause concern. Internet and mobile phone technology has also allowed individuals to become directly involved in mass communication, through personal websites, blogs, and the sending of mass text messages. As propaganda specialist Walter Lippmann notes, without some form of censorship, propaganda work becomes impossible. Through censorship, a government can create what Lippmann calls a “pseudo-environment” through which it can manage public opinion (Lippmann 1922). The Chinese government utilises a number of means to maintain a “pseudo-environment” conducive to perpetuating its domestic propaganda on ethnic affairs, including 1) managing personnel by appointing *nomenklatura* to key positions, 2) carrying out ongoing censorship and 3) periodically cracking down on illegal publications. I will discuss these in detail below.

Personnel Management

Appointing *nomenklatura* to key positions – in Chinese the closest term is *zuzhi gongzuo* (组织工作, organizational work) – is still one of the government’s most basic means of ensuring that the party line is followed on important political matters. The leading personnel of all ethnic-language media organisations are all appointed by local propaganda departments. This is because, as with all media organisations in China, the leading editor of each of China’s minority-language media outlets is responsible for censoring materials and hence must take responsibility for any mishaps (Brady 2008). In addition, party membership is required for appointment to any politically sensitive job within the *minzu kou*, as it is with many other politically sensitive sectors of China’s party-state system.

Censorship

As noted above, censorship is an essential aspect of successful propaganda activities – not only in China, but in any state. In 2010 the Dalai Lama stated that “censorship [...] is the source of the problem” when it comes to Sino-Tibetan social and political tensions. He noted that due to the Chinese government’s strict censorship on Tibet-related issues, Chinese people had no opportunity to learn the Tibetan perspective (Reuters 2010). Although the Chinese government promotes the notion of China becoming a “knowledge economy” and there is much more freedom of information now than in previous eras, strict controls remain in place on

taboo topics such as ethnic affairs. In the mid-1990s, a system was set up that specified at least three levels of censorship any book must go through before being published in China (Xinwen chubanshe tushu guanlisi 1991). Publishers must provide an annual report on their activities to GAPP and must pay a fee for the cost of the annual audit of this report. Publishers that have published inappropriate material at any point in the three years previous to an audit are closed down (Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu zhengce fagui yanjiushi 1998). Publications that “promote superstition” are of particular concern. Banned subjects include religious texts from non-state-authorized religious groups, geomancy, divination, and communicating with spirits and ghosts with the purpose of telling fortunes or curing the sick. Such materials are thought to “confuse and poison people’s minds and create confusion in the public order” (Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu zhengce fagui yanjiushi 1998). Permission to publish books on Islam must be obtained through the State Administration for Religious Affairs, and only approved religious groups may publish Islam-related religious texts in China (Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu zhengce fagui yanjiushi 1998). In principle, it is forbidden to publish materials produced by overseas sources on Islam; however, this ruling is frequently ignored. Publications in Uyghur have been under an even stricter system of censorship since the Baren incident of April 1990, when a group of armed Uyghurs took over a police station and demanded an end to CCP rule in Xinjiang. The central government blamed the incident on prominent Uyghur intellectuals, who it was claimed had fanned the flames of ethnic separatism in their publications. As a consequence, Uyghur-language publications began to be more closely monitored, as did music recordings and film (Bovingdon 2004).

All present and future forms of ICT are now classified as instruments of mass communication. This means that, like other mediums, they must follow propaganda guidelines on content (Chen 1999). China’s Internet connections, e-mail, text messaging and paging are all filtered for sensitive content, and those who are caught flouting official no-go zones by circulating illegal material risk imprisonment. However, thanks to re-routing software and other techniques, such controls can be evaded by netizens with some technical know-how. Hence, in times of political crisis, China’s propaganda authorities will resort to even more radical measures such as temporarily closing down access to the Internet, international calls and mobile phone coverage, as it did in July 2009 during

the Urumqi riots. During such crises, the government knows it must be absolutely in control of the public sphere if it wishes to manage public opinion and bring the crisis under control.

Use of Force

In 2004 there was a crackdown on religious texts being smuggled into China; all the examples listed in a Central Propaganda Department publication were Buddhist tracts (NBTX 2004/22: 18). In 2007 there was a crackdown on illegal ethnic and religious publications of the Quran and other religious texts, many of which were coming into China from abroad. These crackdowns are part of the annual Anti-Pornography, Anti-Illegal Publication Movement (扫黄打非行动, *saohuang dafei xingdong*) organised by the National Sweep Away Pornography and Strike Down Illegal Publications Office (全国扫黄打非办公室, *Quanguo saohuang dafei bangongshi*), a coordinating body that involves officials from the various agencies that oversee the Chinese public sphere (Quanguo saohuang dafei bangongshi 2009). With regard to ethnic affairs, the two main concerns of such campaigns are 1) to avoid harming ethnic sensibilities and 2) to maintain social and political stability (NBTX 2007/15: 18). As the situation in Tibetan areas has continued to be tense since the outbreak of riots in 2008, security forces have arrested a number of prominent Tibetan writers, poets and filmmakers, and held them in detention indefinitely. It is not that they have done anything directly related to the instability, but their potential to sway public opinion in the Tibetan community is seen as a security risk.

Negative Propaganda

On the whole, China's ethnic propaganda directed at Chinese citizens focuses on "positive propaganda" (正面宣传, *zhengmian xuanchuan*). However, in recent years, the CPD has recognised the value of negative propaganda in crisis situations. China's modern propaganda specialists argue that releasing negative (负面, *fumian*) information during crisis situations creates popular confidence in the government's ability to manage the situation (Dong 2007). This policy is not yet followed consistently, however, as there are too many crises and unsolvable issues in China today, many of which derive directly from the inherent problems of the party-state. Party leaders fear that allowing journalists free rein to expose all crises to public scrutiny would create instability and undermine confi-

dence in the political system. For this reason, deciding which major news events can be exposed and which must be hushed up is a task of national importance that is still micro-managed at the apex of Chinese political power.

Name-calling is a well-known propaganda technique (Institute for Propaganda Analysis 1938) and a tried-and-true part of the CCP propaganda repertoire (Brady 2008). This approach is selectively used against a few high-profile figures – at present most notably the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama – in order to isolate and stigmatise them in the Chinese public’s eyes. Chinese-language media typically refer to the Dalai Lama and those associated with him as “splittists” (independence advocates), “traitors”, and “saboteurs”. In recent years, the Uyghur activist Rebiya Kadeer has also been singled out for negative attacks from Chinese authorities. However, unlike the Dalai Lama, Rebiya Kadeer’s name is virtually absent from the mainland Chinese media, a sure sign that her name is banned. Her name can instead be found in Chinese mainland blogs, where she is typically called a “splittist” and labelled the malevolent force behind the Urumqi riots. Given the strict censorship of all online content in China, we can safely assume that if this content is allowed to stay online, this reflects official policy. Similarly, a search of google.cn news yields absolutely no mention of the Falungong’s spiritual leader, Li Hongzhi, in any online news media, and China-based webpage mentions are only pejorative.

China’s Ethnic Propaganda Targeted at Foreigners

China’s ethnic propaganda targeted at foreigners reflects the government’s long-held suspicion that the Western world does not want China to become strong and is intrinsically opposed to the PRC for ideological reasons (Brady 2008). As a 1998 handbook on foreign propaganda stressed, while coveting the Chinese market, Western powers attempted to “Westernise” and “divide” China,

using their powerful tools of propaganda and public opinion to suppress, distort and denigrate China’s image on such issues as human rights, arms sales, trade and ethnic problems (*Shandong sheng duinai xuanchuan gongzuo huibian ziliao 1992–1998* 1998).

Such views have continued to dominate internal discussions in the foreign propaganda system. The report of the 2004 national foreign propaganda workers' meeting emphasised China's ongoing "struggle against the West's efforts to Westernise and break up China" (*Dui wai xuanchuan* 2004).

Managing International Public Opinion on China's Ethnic Affairs

As noted above, the OFP is in charge of dealing with the foreign media during any major events regarding Tibet, Xinjiang, China's ethnic minorities, religion, human rights, and internal and external terrorist activities (as well as those relating to democracy movements and the Falungong). In partnership with the SEAC Culture and Propaganda Section they also issue regular guidance to China's foreign propaganda media outlets such as *China Daily*, *Global Times*, China Radio International, CCTV-9 and CCTV-4 on the correct foreign propaganda line on China's ethnic affairs. The Ministry of Culture is in charge of China's foreign cultural propaganda, under the leadership of the CCP Foreign Propaganda Group (Li 1996).

White Papers as a Tool of Propaganda

Since 1991, the OFP has issued 62 white papers in English on various sensitive topics of interest to foreign audiences, 24 of which have dealt with aspects of China's ethnic policies (SCIO 2005). Within two months of the riots in Urumqi in 2009, a new white paper was issued, emphasising that China's ethnic affairs were harmonious and equal (SCIO 2009). The white papers represent a comprehensive, albeit sanitised, view of China's ethnic affairs. China's ethnic policies are one of the most risky topics of research for foreign journalists and scholars. Scholars and journalists who research politically sensitive ethnic themes without official support and supervision are at risk of being expelled or even banned from China indefinitely. This is directly related to the CCP's fear that "hostile Western forces" will aid and abet China's ethnic nationalists and cause further tension in China's volatile ethnic relations. China's own ethnic-affairs specialists play a central role in efforts to combat foreign critiques of its ethnic policies (Smith 2008). Many China-based scholars who do not follow the official propaganda line on ethnic policy have even been detained, some for years.

Confucius Institutes

China's ethnic affairs relate not only to the minorities of China, but also to the majority Han. For this reason, I consider China's efforts to manage international perceptions of what constitutes "Chineseness" (Brady 2003) part of the government's ethnic propaganda aimed at foreigners. In 2004 China developed a worldwide programme for its Confucius Institutes, which are based in foreign tertiary institutions and engage in teaching Chinese language and culture (Brady 2008). According to Li Changchun – at the time of writing the most senior CCP leader in charge of propaganda – the Confucius Institutes are "part of China's foreign propaganda strategy" (Wachter 2007). Other authoritative sources emphasise that the rolling out of the Confucius Institute programme is part of an effort to develop China's "soft power", so that foreigners will cultivate more positive feelings toward China (Wang 2007). However, one of the outcomes of having Chinese government-sponsored programmes in foreign universities is that these universities are required to fall in line with official policy on ethnic and cultural issues in China, including, for example, the need to accept the "One China" policy and to avoid interaction with Tibetan, Uyghur, Taiwanese or Falungong political figures. Many of the Confucius Institutes are barely operational as their number greatly outweighs demand for Chinese-language studies or cultural programmes (Niquet 2011; Hartig 2011). A further controversy, which has attracted surprisingly little attention, is that foreign institutions are actually subsidising this propaganda project, as the contract requires they match the Chinese funding. A great gulf is developing in contemporary Chinese studies between those academics who are willing to accept the political constraints of the Confucius Institutes in return for the status and financial advantages of operating one, and those who reject them as a form of political interference which should be anathema to the university environment.

Positive and Negative Propaganda

China's foreign propaganda on ethnic issues aims 1) to promote a positive international perception of China's ethnic affairs and China's overall political stability, 2) to dominate global depictions of "Chineseness" and the culture and identity of China's ethnic minorities, and 3) to isolate dissident forces and their foreign supporters. As with China's domestic propaganda, the overwhelming focus of foreign propaganda on ethnic

issues is on positive propaganda, but it is the negative propaganda that makes the international headlines. China's subsidised tours of cultural troupes raise barely a stir, though to ethnic nationalists they might arouse concerns about official definitions and representations of minority cultures.

In 2008 London Metropolitan University was forced to apologise for offering an honorary doctorate to the Dalai Lama after China protested and many of its China-based educational partners boycotted it (Li 2008). In 2009 Tasmania University's vice-chancellor was forced to step down for similar reasons (Neales 2009). Since many Western universities are now dependent on international students from China to balance their books, foreign tertiary institutions that officially recognise the Dalai Lama or Rebiya Kadeer are easy targets. In 2009 China also put enormous pressure on the Australian government and the organisers of the Melbourne International Film Festival to cancel plans to show a documentary on Rebiya Kadeer. The effort failed and the documentary was screened at the festival, but all of the directors of the festival's other China-related films pulled out their films, this experience serving as a lesson to other, less independent organisations. A month after that ordeal, New Zealand's Maori Television backed down after pressure from the Chinese embassy and agreed to show a Chinese propaganda report on the July riots in Urumqi immediately after the screening of the Kadeer film. Maori Television was in the process of negotiating joint programming with its Chinese counterparts and could not afford to offend. Australia's ABC was scheduled to broadcast the same programme in December 2009, but has now delayed broadcasting indefinitely.

By undertaking such aggressive actions, China is showing the lengths to which it will go to demonise figures the government has singled out for opprobrium such as the Dalai Lama, Rebiya Kadeer and those who support them internationally. In the last ten years, there has been an exponential increase in international media coverage of the Dalai Lama as he travels the world, attempting to speak to international leaders and audiences about the plight of his people (Google 2012a). There has been a similar exponential rise in international coverage of Ms Kadeer, as she, too, has embarked on a series of international visits to drum up support for her cause (Google 2012b). The Chinese government's response has been obdurate and punishing; despite the cost to world public opinion, the CCP government has mostly succeeded in preventing world leaders from meeting formally with either the Dalai Lama or Rebiya Kadeer, and

some countries have even been successfully pressured to deny visas to them and their supporters. In this sense, such negative propaganda can be counted a success, as it has met the essential goal of isolating opposition.

Case Study 1: Protests/ Riots in Tibetan Areas in March 2008

The protests – and then riots – in Tibetan areas in March 2008 served to test the CCP’s policies on ethnic propaganda in a crisis situation. The government’s failure to properly manage foreign perceptions of the events of March 2008 was a major blow to China’s efforts to improve its national image, and it also cast a blight on the 2008 Beijing Olympics. However, from a domestic propaganda point of view, coverage of the riots in Tibetan areas helped to build mainstream support for authoritarian rule in China and can be counted a success. The lessons of the Tibetan riots in 2008 were a learning experience for party propaganda specialists and led to some adjustments in policy, evidenced in the following year when violence erupted in Urumqi. In the following section, I will analyse the two crises from the point of view of China’s ethnic propaganda policies.

Beginning on 10 March 2008, a series of peaceful demonstrations by Tibetan monks were launched in Tibetan areas to protest China’s policies toward Tibet. Some of these demonstrations had been signalled to the Western media in advance. Chinese police responded forcefully to the demonstrations, and thanks to the pre-warning of the protests given to the Western media, Western reporters were on hand to record the violence. “Citizen journalists” in Tibetan areas also contributed images and information on what was happening to the international media and through blogs. It was information and images from such sources that tended to frame Western media coverage of the demonstrations and subsequent crackdown.

After local police forcibly suppressed the peaceful protests, outbreaks of violence between Tibetans and Han Chinese occurred in Tibet proper as well as in areas with large Tibetan populations. A barrage of negative reports on China’s handling of the protests erupted in the international media, and many reports linked the protests to China’s promise that it would improve human rights in the lead up to the 2008 Olympics. Some of these reports were later found to be exaggerated or to have used doctored photos to demonstrate their criticisms of Chinese government policy. Selected examples of such coverage were translated and

denounced in the mainland Chinese media, resulting in a predictable outpouring of rage from many Chinese netizens, not only in China, but also internationally. MSN China launched an avatar-based pro-Beijing campaign (“I ‘Heart’ China”), in response to Western criticisms of China’s ethnic policies. The campaign received strong official support (*Xinhua* 2008). Within China and abroad, Chinese netizens used online forums, public rallies outside China – and even a few within China – to express their support for Beijing’s ethnic policies and its handling of the situation in Tibet. Ultimately, the outcome of the crackdown on the protests in Tibetan areas could be regarded as a success for China’s ongoing efforts to unite the Chinese population and many of the overseas Chinese through nationalism (Brady 2009). However, from the point of view of China’s foreign propaganda it was a disaster that cast a severe shadow over the August 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Case Study 2: The July 2009 Protests/ Riots in Xinjiang

On 5 July 2009 nearly 10,000 Uyghurs in Urumqi gathered to protest the official handling of an incident in Shenzhen where violence had erupted between Uyghur and Han workers in a factory, leaving two Uyghurs dead. Local police broke up the Urumqi demonstration and many of the protesters scattered throughout the city, smashing windows, torching cars and beating Han Chinese. The protest march and its aftermath were filmed by local “citizen journalists” and, within hours, the Western media had reported on the events. In the days following the protest, some in the local Han community responded by attacking Uyghurs. At least 192 people were killed, while many more were injured.

In the days after the rioting, the Chinese media were filled with reports of Uyghurs attacking Han Chinese in Urumqi, but it played down the subsequent Han-led violence. This scare tactic was a reminder to the Chinese public of what would happen if the central government relinquished its stronghold on political power: chaos. Predictably, the government claimed that the attacks had been instigated by Rebiya Kadeer and the World Uyghur Congress (*Xinhua* 2009). Chinese editors received instructions from the CPD to “expose the crimes of the East Turkestan movement as much as possible [in order that] the masses understand the real face of the East Turkestan movement” (*China Digital Times* 2009). This was interpreted to mean that the Chinese media were permitted to show horrific images of Han Chinese who had been attacked by Uyghurs

rioting on the streets of Urumqi; the decision appears to have stirred up copycat violence from Han toward Uyghur.

Unlike the troubles in Tibetan areas in 2008, this time the government took an extremely proactive approach to foreign propaganda on the protests and subsequent riots. This was done in order to ensure that Beijing's framing of events dominated Western media coverage, and to assist the authorities in their efforts to mould domestic public opinion about how to perceive the protests and subsequent violence.

Within hours of the protests and subsequent riots, one of the first and most dramatic acts of the authorities was to shut down Xinjiang Province's IDD and Internet connections. The violence was first reported internationally via Twitter, and nationwide access to Twitter was closed down at the same time (Heacock 2009). Xinjiang's international Internet links were closed for over a year; access to Twitter, YouTube and Facebook was permanently banned. IDD links were only partially restored in Xinjiang in February 2010, the week before Chinese New Year, allowing Xinjiang phone users to call internationally, but still not permitting international callers to phone in to Xinjiang. These draconian measures were essential for maintaining a "pseudo-environment" suitable for censorship. Unlike the events of March 2008, this ensured that Beijing's version of events dominated international media coverage. As a result, opposition voices and perspectives were marginalised. Unlike in 2008 in the Tibetan areas, this time government authorities actually permitted foreign reporters to come to Urumqi soon after the violence began, but they were kept under very close supervision, greatly inhibiting their ability to report independently.

Within a few weeks of the riots, the government had launched a new ethnic unity campaign with the slogan "We are all part of the same family" (Foreman 2009). According to an *Associated Press* report, as part of this, Chinese television showed political advertisements featuring a group of smiling ethnic Han and Uyghur men wearing matching yellow t-shirts and singing "We are all part of the same family", and news programmes featured interviews with Uyghurs who praised inter-ethnic relations in Xinjiang. Yet the same report noted that when an *Associated Press* journalist attempted to find people on the street who would confirm such sentiments, he was unable to find any. Instead, the reporter noted that the Han and Uyghur he encountered were all tense and afraid of future conflict (Foreman 2009).

Since the 2009 riots there have been several violent incidents in Xinjiang, though not on the same scale. It is very difficult to publish independent accounts of what is going on in Xinjiang, as journalists are heavily restricted there. The government is keeping the lid on the situation through brute force as well as continued strict control of the public sphere. It is not a sustainable situation and the government is exploring alternative methods to defuse the ethnic tension.

Conclusion

China has a well-developed system for managing domestic and foreign opinion on ethnic issues, and this system is constantly evolving to adapt to new crises. While China's ethnic-related propaganda has been relatively successful in winning over the Han majority (and also in gaining some ground in some of the areas where ethnic minorities dominate, such as Yunnan), it has been less successful in some of the most restive areas of China such as Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, and it has been a resounding failure in the battle for influence over international public opinion.

Both positive and negative propaganda on ethnic issues play vital roles in maintaining China's long-term political stability. Positive reports and activities build a sense of unity among the Chinese population, while negative reports strengthen the group against the threat of the Other. The goals are somewhat different when it comes to China's foreign-targeted ethnic propaganda: While positive propaganda activities aim to boost China's national image, negative propaganda is meant to isolate ethnic leaders and movements that might threaten China's political stability.

The Internet and mobile phone technology allow the individual to become directly involved in mass communication, through personal websites, blogs, and the sending of mass text messages. These new tools of mass communication inherently challenge the party-state's ability to successfully engage in propaganda as dissident voices are able to crack the "pseudo-environment". In 2008 ICT was a medium for opponents of government policies toward Tibetans to get their message out to the rest of the world. In 2009 Beijing shut down that channel for communication for Uyghurs and Han alike and won a brief victory in the information war on how China's ethnic affairs are perceived and reported internationally, and the impact such coverage has on China's domestic

politics. But it was only a temporary victory, and Beijing's tactics are not sustainable if it wishes to develop a modern, knowledge-based society and political and social stability for the whole of China, not just the Han-dominated areas.

China is moving from a period of employing a relatively passive foreign policy to pushing a more assertive one, and is increasingly willing to go head-to-head with other nations on issues it regards as intrinsic to its national security. Its stridency over ethnic issues is one thread in this new foreign policy. Ethnic conflict is one of the key tension points in Chinese politics, and as the events in 2009 show, the government will go to great lengths to bring such conflict under control, regardless of the social and economic cost. The basic tools of CCP rule were long ago characterised by Mao Zedong as consisting of the "pen" and the "sword" – in other words, a combination of persuasion and force. In the present day, we can see that ethnic propaganda continues to play an important role in CCP governance, and that it is adaptive and responsive to new challenges. However, given the extreme levels of popular discontent in China's ethnic hotspots – Tibet, Greater Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang – force and persuasion are only stop-gap measures that cannot resolve the issues underlying the violence.

References

- Bai, Runsheng (2004), 白润生新闻研究文集 (*Bai Runsheng xinwen yanjiu wenji*, *Bai Runsheng's Collected Works on News Research*), Beijing: 中国文史出版社 (Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, Chinese Literature and History Press).
- Bovingdon, Gardner (2004), Heteronomy and Its Discontents, in: Morris Rossabi (ed.), *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 117–154.
- Brady, Anne-Marie (2009), The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction, in: *The China Quarterly*, 197, March, 1–24.
- Brady, Anne-Marie (2008), *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Brady, Anne-Marie (2003), *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Chen, Junhong (ed.) (1999), 加强和改进思想政治工作学习读本 (*Jiaqiang he gaijin sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo xuexi duben*, *A Reader on Strengthening and Reforming Political Thought Work*), Beijing: 中共中央党校出版社

- (Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, The Chinese Communist Party School Press).
- Chen, Yangbin, and Gerard A. Postiglione (2009), Muslim Uyghur Students in a Dislocated Chinese Boarding School: Bonding Social Capital as a Response to Ethnic Integration, in: *Race/Ethnicity*, Spring, 287–309.
- China Daily* (2010), Bilingual Teachers Needed for Xinjiang Uyghurs, 4 March.
- China Digital Times* (2009), Chinese Tweeting about Urumqi, 7 July, online: <<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2009/07/tweeting-from-urumqi/>> (7 July 2009).
- Dong, Guanpeng (ed.) (2007), 政务公开理论与实务 (*Zhengwu gongkai lilun yu shiwu, Theory and Practices of Transparent Government*), Beijing: 新华出版社 (Xinhua chubanshe, Xinhua Publishing House).
- Dui wai xuanchuan* (对外宣传) (2004), 1: 7.
- Foreman, William (2009), *Government PR Campaign Targets Chinese Muslims*, Associate Press, 15 July.
- Google (2012a), archive search, online: <<http://news.google.co.nz/archivesearch?q=dalai+lama&hl=en&ned=nz&scoring=t>> (23 March 2012).
- Google (2012b), archive search, online: <<http://news.google.co.nz/archivesearch?q=rebiya+kadeer&hl=en&ned=nz&scoring=t>> (23 March 2012).
- Hartig, Falk (2011), China's Confucius Institutes and the Rise of China, in: *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 17, 1, 53–76.
- Heacock, Rebekah (2009), *China Shuts down Internet in Xinjiang Region after Riots*, 6 July, online: <<http://opennet.blog/2009/07/china-shuts-down-internet-xinjiang-region-after-riots>> (24 October 2009).
- Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1938), *Propaganda Analysis*, 2, New York: Institute for Propaganda Analysis.
- Kenez, Peter (1985), *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilisation, 1917–1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, Guoda (ed.) (1996), 企业宣传思想工作实用读本 (*Qiye xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo shiyong duben, Practical Handbook of Enterprise Propaganda and Thought Work*), Beijing: 冶金工业出版社 (Yejin gongye chubanshe, Metallurgical Industry Press).
- Li, Xiang (2008), London School Regrets Honoring Dalai Lama, in: *China Daily*, 7 August, online: <www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-07/08/content_6826398.htm> (12 December 2012).
- Lippmann, Walter (1922), *Public Opinion*, New York: Macmillan.

NBIX see *Neibu tongxin*

Neales, Sue (2009), Uni at the Crossroads, in: *The Mercury*, online: <www.themercury.com.au/article/2009/10/24/105455_opinion.html> (24 October 2009).

Neibu tongxin (内部通信) (NBIX), 1990–2008.

Niquet, Valerie (2011), “Confu-talk”: The Use of Confucian Concepts in Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy, in: Anne-Marie Brady (ed.), *China’s Thought Management*, Abingdon: Routledge, 76–89.

Quanguo saohuang dafei bangongshi (2009), online: <www.shdf.gov.cn/portal/index.html> (2 February 2010).

Reuters (2010), Censorship at the Heart of Tibet/China Issue: Dalai Lama, 21 February.

Schwarz, Henry G. (1962), Communist Language Policies for China’s Ethnic Minorities: The First Decade, in: *China Quarterly*, 12, 170–182.

SCIO (2009), *China Issues White Paper Stressing Harmony, Equality among all Ethnic Groups*, 27 September, online: <www.chinahumanrights.org/Messages/feature/21/t20090929_498371.htm> (27 September 2009).

SCIO (2005), *White Papers*, online: <www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-08/17/content_24165.htm> (23 March 2012).

Shandong sheng duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo huibian ziliao 1992–1998 (山东省对外宣传工作汇编资料, Shandong Province Foreign Propaganda Work Reference Materials 1992–1998) (1998), Shandong.

Smith, Warren W. (2008), *China’s Tibet? Autonomy or Assimilation*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

SEAC (2010), online: <www.seac.gov.cn/lSNSJG/wxs/2010-01-21/1264034658472115.htm> (23 March 2012).

SEAC (2006), 民族工作参阅资料 (*Minzu gongzuo canyue ziliao, Ethnic Work Reference Materials*), 9, 14.

United Front Bureau (2009), 机构设置, 10 October, online: <www.Zytzb.cn/09/introduce/200910/t20091010_577662.html> (11 November 2009).

Wachter, Will (2007), The Language of Chinese Soft Power in the US, in: *Asia Times*, 24 May.

Wang, Shanshan (2007), Modern Times Meet Ancient Philosophy, in: *China Daily*, 9 May.

Xinhua (2009), 市委会策划变动 7 5 巴黎时间全过程公布 (Shiwei hui cehua biandong 7-5 bali shijian quan guocheng gongbu, Public Notice on How the World Uyghur Congress Stirred Up the Violent

- Events of 5th July), 16 October, online: <www.chinaxinjiang.cn/news/xjxw/shjj/t20091016_502067.htm> (16 October 2009).
- Xinhua* (2008), Red Heart China Appears in Netizens MSN Signatures, 18 April.
- Xinwen chubanshe tushu guanlisi (新闻出版社图书管理司) (ed.) (1991), 图书出版管理手册 (*Tushu chuban guanli shouce, A Handbook of Book Publishing Management*), Shenyang: 辽宁大学出版社 (Liaoning daxue chubanshe, Liaoning University Press).
- Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu zhengce fagui yanjiushi (中共中央宣传部政策法规研究室) (ed.) (1998), 宣传文化政策法规选编 (1996–1997) (*Xuanchuan wenhua zhengce fagui xuanbian (1996–1997), Selected Policies and Regulations on Propaganda and Culture 1996–1997*), Beijing: 学习出版社 (Xuexi chubanshe, Learning Press).

Contents

Introduction

- Anne-Marie BRADY
Ethnicity and the State in Contemporary China 3

Research Articles

- Carla FREEMAN
From “Blood Transfusion” to “Harmonious Development”:
The Political Economy of Fiscal Allocations to China’s
Ethnic Regions 11
- Robert BARNETT
Restrictions and Their Anomalies: The Third Forum and the
Regulation of Religion in Tibet 45
- Janet C. STURGEON
The Cultural Politics of Ethnic Identity in Xishuangbanna,
China: Tea and Rubber as “Cash Crops” and “Commodities” 109
- Uradyn E. BULAG
Seeing Like a Minority: Political Tourism and the Struggle for
Recognition in China 133
- **Anne-Marie BRADY**
“We Are All Part of the Same Family”: China’s Ethnic
Propaganda 159
- James TO
Beijing’s Policies for Managing Han and Ethnic-Minority
Chinese Communities Abroad 183

- Contributors 223