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Public Diplomacy from Below: The 2008 “Pro-China” Demonstrations in Europe and North America

By Barry Sautman and Li Ying

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and North America**

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CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy

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When we were silent, you said you wanted us to have
free speech,

When we are silent no more, you say we are brainwashed
xenophobes

*From the April 2008 internet poem "An Awakening
Message," about Western demands on Chinese by Lin
Du-Liang, Professor Emeritus of Physics, University of
Buffalo, USA.¹*

I. Introduction: The 2008 Demonstrations as Scaled-up Chinese Overseas Activism

As a riot in Lhasa and protests elsewhere in Tibet in spring, 2008 garnered world attention in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics, Chinese in Europe, North America and other regions held their own rallies. Tens of thousands of Chinese and Chinese-descended students, professionals and business people demonstrated to support the Olympics and uphold Tibet as part of China.² Some rallies were framed as welcoming the Olympic Torch; others were framed as responses to attacks on the Torch by "Tibet supporters," to other forms of criticism of China on the Tibet issue, and to a torrent of disparagement of "the Chinese" in the West for months preceding the Olympics.

Most overseas Chinese demonstrations of 2008 were downplayed by media.³ A scholar who has studied internet aspects of the rallies has stated that "Western media tended to ignore the rallies of the Chinese diaspora most of the time. If the rallies were reported, they

were either underrepresented to show their insignificance or overly exaggerated to imply a perception of the Chinese threat.”⁴

Under-reporting of the rallies occurred in part because journalists, commentators and politicians evinced a certainty that the protests were a Chinese government effort.⁵ For example, an article in the UK-based *Financial Times* stated that “There have been persistent suggestions that Chinese diplomatic missions were involved in the staging of the recent pro-Beijing demonstrations.”⁶ A journalist for Britain’s *Daily Telegraph* asserted that “the ‘Chinese were celebrating’ (with help from their Embassy, which provided them with flags and banners praising the Motherland).”⁷ That view coincided with charges by Tibetan exiles and their supporters that Chinese consulates control Chinese students overseas and had forced them to attend rallies.⁸

Claims that the 2008 rallies were Chinese government-organized and enforced were especially prominent in Australia and New Zealand.⁹ *Washington Post* journalist John Pomfret has written that “In cities around the world, the Chinese embassy has fanned the passions of the ‘angry youth’ by encouraging them to demonstrate, handing out T-shirts and flags,”¹⁰ and “Chinese diplomats . . . ordered Chinese students in Australia to participate in anti-Tibetan protests in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.”¹¹ An Australian newspaper headlined an article about a Canberra rally, “Embassy Brings 10,000 Chinese to Back Torch.”¹² A prominent Australian journalist claimed that “The Chinese embassy helped organize the demonstrations.”¹³ Another asserted that “Most of the violence in the Canberra leg, in fact, seemed to come from pro-Chinese protesters organized by the Chinese embassy,”¹⁴ even though it was the head of a Tibet exile association who had said before the Torch Relay that violence between Tibetan émigrés and Chinese was “inevitable.”¹⁵ A third Australian journalist wrote that the “Chinese authorities” tacitly backed the “mustering of rabid zealots” to form a “genocide

cheer squad” in Australia’s capital.¹⁶ Speculation by politicians, media and “Tibet supporters” that Chinese did not autonomously participate in demonstrations created a result unique to Australia: a “truth” reflected in newspaper articles and letters-to-the-editor that the rallies were based on “rent-a-crowds” or “rent-a-mobs.”¹⁷

The Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory said he had “absolutely no doubt” that “there was contact between the Chinese Embassy and Chinese groups that organized the pro-Beijing demonstration.” Yet he conceded that “he did not know precisely what support was given to the pro-Beijing demonstrators.” But he added that if a similar event involving Australians took place overseas, he had no doubt the Australian embassy there would facilitate attendance by Australians.¹⁸ The Chief Minister thus argued that the Chinese embassy materially aided demonstrators because, *mutatis mutandis*, an Australian embassy would do the same. Australia’s Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman had stated, however, that “I’ve got no evidence to suggest that Chinese authorities are encouraging people to do anything but turn up and put their point of view peacefully.”¹⁹ An Australian newspaper reported that “all students spoken to by *The Courier-Mail* said they had paid their own way.”²⁰ Scholars who observed protests in Sydney and Canberra wrote that “most students to whom we talked emphatically denied having heard of any embassy-organized busses and stressed that they came on their own.”²¹

Monroe Price, director of the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication’s Center for Global Communication Studies, observed that “there’s plenty of support for the view that these students were genuinely moved to protest, genuinely annoyed by depictions of China and spontaneous in their involvement.”²² Global media, however, echoed in 2008 their view in 1999, when protests in China and abroad against the US bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy were depicted as Chinese government

mobilizations.²³ The government may have briefly favored the 1999 protests as leverage in negotiations with the US over China's entry to the World Trade Organization,²⁴ but the overseas rallies were no mere creations of Chinese embassies.²⁵

China's state-run media also gave the 2008 rallies less than full coverage, when compared to the much smaller overseas Chinese Belgrade bombing demonstrations.²⁶ Popular use in China of internet sources of information had greatly expanded in the interim and in 2008 included access to websites Chinese overseas created to critique Western media bias and provide information about their protests.²⁷ The Chinese government thus may not have found it necessary to repeat in its media what was already freely available to the hundreds of millions of Chinese internet users.

There was another reason for the less than full coverage in China of the 2008 rallies overseas. Chinese officials have been said to "At times . . . tacitly encourage the public to express opinions on international issues; at other times, they do their utmost to block expression of public opinion pertaining to foreign policy."²⁸ In the 2000s, officials reinforced the policy of curtailing citizen initiatives with foreign policy implications, as even activities that support government policies often led to criticism of the government.²⁹ In 1998, the Chinese government had been criticized at home and among Chinese overseas for taking insufficient actions during Indonesia's anti-Chinese pogroms.³⁰ Many Chinese protestors in 1999 expressed discontent with a perceived weak Chinese official response to the Belgrade bombing.³¹ Demonstrations against the Iraq invasion of 2003 were banned, despite China's official opposition to the war.³² In 2005, after anti-Japanese protests expanded from students to non-students and protestors headed for Tiananmen Square—which had been off-limits to demonstrators since 1989—the authorities quickly put an end to such protests.³³ A playing-up by state media in China of the demonstrations by Chinese overseas in 2008 could have led

to emulation that the government sought to avoid. When domestic Olympic Torch Relay-related protests did occur, aimed at France through stores of French retailer Carrefour, the government soon reined them in, dispersing demonstrators and deleting online calls for a boycott.³⁴

Despite widespread under-reporting, the 2008 “pro-China” rallies nevertheless represent a remarkable turn of events in the activism of Chinese overseas communities in Europe, North America and other locales. They were notable in three ways. First, despite the varied political backgrounds of organizers and participants, including many who were critical of the Chinese state, the 2008 rallies affirmed government positions that Tibet is part of China and the Beijing Olympics were “the world’s games.” They thus contrasted with Chinese demonstrations in Europe and North America held just before and after the June 4, 1989 suppression in Beijing, in which tens of thousands of Chinese protestors overseas fulsomely criticized the government.³⁵ In the mid-1990s, a leading scholar of diasporic influences on foreign policy could say of Iranians and Chinese in the US that because they had fled their countries, they had no desire to support the leaders of their ancestral homelands.³⁶ By 2008, this was no longer the case for a significant segment of Chinese overseas, who were at least ready to support, if not the leaders, at least what the government labeled as China’s “core interests,”³⁷ especially its territorial integrity. They were also willing to protect China’s status in the face of what many Chinese overseas perceived to be skewed criticisms from world media.

Second and more controversially, we argue, based on interviews with organizers and participants in France, Germany, the UK, Canada, the US, South Korea and Australia, that the 2008 demonstrations in these countries were noteworthy because, contrary to assumptions common in the West, the rallies were not organized at the behest of the Chinese government. There appears to have been little to

no organizational initiative emanating from China's embassies and consulates, some of which opposed staging rallies.³⁸ The 2008 demonstrations thus represent a new kind of Chinese overseas activism that is relatively autonomous, but at the same time is not anti-government.

Third, according to our interviewees in Europe, North America, South Korea and Australia, the protests were also not organized mainly to solidify overseas Chinese communities, which our interviewees approvingly viewed as politically and culturally heterogeneous. Nor was there any sense that the demonstrations were carried out mainly as a way for young Chinese overseas to mobilize or to impress their peers overseas or in China, as has been argued in connection with the rallies in Australia.³⁹ Rather, organizers and participants saw the rallies as efforts to provide an alternative perspective to people in countries where resident Chinese have perceived local media as being one-sided on the Tibet issue and engaged in "China bashing." They viewed this media treatment as having contributed to not only a denigration of China in the eyes of foreigners, but also to making them the targets of anti-Chinese animus, due to CNN commentator Jack Cafferty's well-publicized remark in April 2008 that China is a nation of "goons and thugs" who sell "junk" to the world.⁴⁰

Because most 2008 "pro-China" rallies were organized without government prompting and were aimed to persuade non-Chinese of Chinese government and popular stances on territorial integrity and the acceptability of the Beijing Olympics, they were instances of public diplomacy by Chinese overseas. The demonstrations, however, were not stereotypical state-led public diplomacy. They were in fact the clearest example to date of an overseas Chinese "public diplomacy from below."

We first set out the notion of public diplomacy from below, then discuss earlier instances of largely non-state controlled

activities by Chinese diasporas to support policies of the imperial (Qing Dynasty), republican (Guomindang or “Nationalist Party”) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) governments, on issues of sovereignty, territorial integrity or racial discrimination. We then elaborate our argument that the 2008 demonstrations were mostly grass-roots initiatives, intended to counteract perceived media bias about Tibet and other China-related issues, which many Chinese overseas were convinced had adversely affected their position in host countries and had contributed to keeping them in the status of “perpetual foreigners.”⁴¹

The organizers and participants we interviewed were of varied backgrounds and included veteran business and community leaders who were once aligned with the Guomindang, as well as professionals and students not ordinarily active politically and often critical of the Chinese government. For example, the main student organizer of a large demonstration in Los Angeles told us that he had never been involved in any grassroots organizing before.⁴² Our interviewees broadly confirmed the view that “The pro-China movement during the Torch relay . . . manifested its distance from the Beijing government, but close symbolic ties with the homeland.”⁴³ There was, moreover, among the pro-China demonstration organizers, not a single *fenqing* (“angry youth”) of the kind whose web-based hyper-nationalist rants Western media like to quote.⁴⁴ Indeed, the Los Angeles student leader endorsed freedom of speech for such enemies of the Chinese government as the Falun Gong.

Interviewees generally had a gravitas that bespoke seriousness of purpose. In focusing on organizers and leading participants, we differentiate our approach from research relying mainly on web postings of assumedly typical participants. Such postings are worth researching as to key aspects of the 2008 rallies: a scholar in the US has mined the internet for grassroots discussions about how to organize and finance what became a 20,000-strong gathering of

Chinese for the San Francisco leg of the Torch Relay and about the (non-state) donations by Chinese at home and overseas of national flags for use in demonstrations, as well as for video postings by Chinese overseas that were intended to win over world opinion on the Tibet issue.⁴⁵ It is methodologically problematic, however, to regard any small selection from the vast universe of postings as convincingly evidential of the aims of the 2008 activists, or as revelatory of the main purposes animating participants in these large-scale events.

Finally, we discuss implications of the 2008 demonstrations for the future of Chinese public diplomacy. We conclude that sharpening contention between the Western powers—especially the US—and China is likely to draw Chinese overseas into recurrent acts of public diplomacy from below. The long tradition of “entrepreneurial spirit” in the Chinese immigrant community has manifested itself in more diverse ways at this unique historical conjunction of China’s rise, in a way that “dovetails with the intention of the Chinese government to extend China’s soft power.”⁴⁶

II. Public Diplomacy from Below

Edward Guillion’s widely-quoted 1965 description of public diplomacy includes both “from above” and “from below” aspects:

Public diplomacy ... deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another ...⁴⁷

Public diplomacy may be part of a state's soft power strategy to persuade foreigners of the attractiveness of a national culture, values or institutions, and thus get them to "want what you want."⁴⁸ The Chinese government adopted the concept of soft power and became deeply immersed in such activities in the 2000s.⁴⁹ Public diplomacy may also involve state efforts to convince foreigners of the merits of particular policies or actions; that was the aim, for example, of the US's public diplomacy of the Iraq war.⁵⁰

Because China has only a middling positive rating in world opinion surveys,⁵¹ and a government that recognizes that its soft power and public diplomacy lag behind those of many other states,⁵² the nation has broadened such efforts in recent years.⁵³ China's Foreign Ministry upgraded its Division of Public Diplomacy, established in 2004, to an Office of Public Diplomacy in 2009.⁵⁴ China opened its first center for public diplomacy research in 2010.⁵⁵ Its new media infrastructure abroad⁵⁶—including a planned television network with non-Chinese correspondents⁵⁷ and franker discussions in its overseas media of China's problems, in order to mitigate problems of credibility,⁵⁸ as well as its construction of hundreds of Confucius Institutes to spread Chinese culture—all exemplify classic public diplomacy from above.⁵⁹ As did the Chinese government's largely unsuccessful efforts at public diplomacy about the Olympics.⁶⁰

In contrast to familiar public diplomacy from above, public diplomacy from below involves initiatives from non-state actors, such as business, community, cultural, professional and student organizations, as well as individuals. These actors may be in both a homeland and in the diaspora; for example, Chinese involved in "popular diplomacy" (*minjian waijiao*) over issues such as Japanese redress for wartime aggression or the Diaoyutai islands dispute.⁶¹ They often have more limited objectives than state actors, whose remit often includes a sustained and generalized effort to elevate levels of soft power, although non-state actors may boost soft

power through discrete acts of cultural diplomacy. One of our Los Angeles interviewees, for example, organized a float featuring the Beijing Olympics for the 2008 edition of the high-profile Pasadena (California) Rose Parade and a second float for the 2010 Rose Parade that featured the Shanghai World Expo.⁶²

Non-state actors may also seek across-the-board better relations between one state and another, exemplified by activities of the US Committee of 100 and the China-US Exchange Foundation in Hong Kong.⁶³ Their public diplomacy activities may also relate to specific homeland state policies or activities. Diaspora non-state actors may seek to influence these policies or activities among the people of the national communities in which they are immersed.

Not all prominent examples of protests by Chinese overseas have been linked with public diplomacy. Rallies against the anti-Chinese pogroms of 1998 in Indonesia,⁶⁴ a 2007 demonstration against police targeting of the Chinese commercial sector in Milan, Italy,⁶⁵ and a 2010 rally in Paris, France about police failures to deal with criminals who single out Chinese, did not amount to public diplomacy from below, but instead activism in fighting for the provision of civil rights in host countries. Such protests have generally not had a direct relation to China's interactions with other states through seeking to influence the perceptions of non-Chinese about China and the Chinese or about China's state policies and actions.⁶⁶ There are also ambiguous cases, such as the successful efforts of Chinese in the US to free Lee Wen-ho, a Taiwanese American scientist who had been falsely accused of espionage and to demand that Lee's chief accuser not be nominated for a US cabinet post.⁶⁷

Some activities of Chinese overseas to influence attitudes of states and people toward China may resemble practices of "ethnic lobbies" and constitute public diplomacy from above.⁶⁸ Other overseas Chinese activities are public diplomacy from below,

however, because they are not mainly under Chinese state direction. Analysts often assume, without evidence, that politically-related activities of Chinese diasporas are under state direction, and no other country does the same. Yet, even if there were Chinese government interaction with diaspora actors involved in public diplomacy, that would not be unique. For example, the major diaspora organization Indian American Forum for Political Education makes working with Indian government officials an integral part of its activities.⁶⁹ Also, in the late 2000s Israel's Information and Diaspora Affairs Ministry, concerned about the country's declining international image, "began a campaign to turn every Israeli—and ultimately every Jew—into a travelling public relations agent."⁷⁰ The Tibetan government-in-exile (TGIE) in India, which relies on the Dalai Lama's prestige, harmonizes the political activities of most Tibetan émigré organizations. TGIE jobs, and shares of the international largesse provided to it, are open only to TGIE supporters, and one way such support is manifested is through participating in protests against Chinese government policy in Tibet.⁷¹ Several of our interviewees, in San Francisco, Paris and cities in Germany and the UK alleged, but did not show, that Free Tibet groups paid people to join their 2008 protests.⁷²

Public diplomacy from below includes "unofficial" aspects of the "New Public Diplomacy" that are carried out by NGOs and private citizens.⁷³ It is also part of the new phase of grassroots activism termed "transnationalism from below."⁷⁴ Like "grassroots public diplomacy,"⁷⁵ public diplomacy from below involves people-to-people activities. It remains, however, state-centered in relating people-to-people exchanges to specific state policies rather than mainly serving a culture-bridging purpose.⁷⁶ It is also media-centered, in featuring activities like rallies that are designed to attract media attention. The 2008 "pro-China demonstrations" sought media attention, but also uniquely espoused views that challenge

those that are common in mainstream media, and even impugned the media's claim of objectivity.

III. Chinese Antecedents of Public Diplomacy from Below

Chinese residents in Europe or North America had been involved in episodes of public diplomacy from below before the 2008 rallies. Most examples derive from the US, whose Chinese community is long-established and extensive, making it the most prominent Chinese overseas community outside Asia. In comparison, most other Chinese communities in developed countries have been smaller (Canada, Australia) and more recently developed (Germany, Italy).

The earliest example involves Chinese in the US from the 1850s to the early 1900s. The Qing government learned from members of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA or "Six Companies"), the most prominent Chinese organization in the US, how to carry out modern diplomacy. The Six Companies had honed techniques and arguments to deal with matters relating to relations between China and the US, especially the issue of racially-discriminatory immigration laws and policies—so much so that one can speak of "Six Companies diplomacy." The Six Companies' leaders defended the interests of China and Chinese in the US by seeking to influence the way in which Americans conceived of those interests. It published articles in US newspapers and journals and lobbied US politicians, while also communicating its ideas on how to deal with US-related issues directly to the imperial court in Beijing. Only gradually did Chinese public diplomacy from above partially displace the Six Companies' public diplomacy from below. During the decades before it did, it was the Six Companies that was instructing the Chinese government, rather than the other way around,⁷⁷ a phenomenon not unknown with other "ethnic lobbies" and their "home governments," as public diplomacy characteristically

requires highly specific cultural knowledge that is best acquired by those immersed in a host culture.

The 1905–1906 “Anti-American Boycott” organized by the Baohuang Hui (Protect the Emperor Society), headed by famed constitutional reformists Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, against the renewal of US Chinese exclusion laws, involved efforts to bolster the resolve of the Qing government and to sway the US public:

American public opinion was also seen to play a role in the shaping of American policy, and Chinese boycott propagandists in the United States occasionally sought to influence it, through speeches by Kang Youwei and others to American church and business groups as well as interviews and articles in the American press.⁷⁸

During the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s and first half of the 1940s, Chinese organizations in the US again engaged in public diplomacy from below. They mobilized support for anti-Japan efforts among Chinese-Americans and Chinese residing in the US and reached out to the US general public. Most notable were efforts of Chinese-Americans and other ethnic Chinese in the US to mobilize the American public, especially through non-Chinese ethnic associations and through trade unions. They enlisted non-Chinese Americans in often successful efforts to boycott Japanese goods and the shipment of US commodities, such as scrap metal, to Japan. As was the case with earlier Six Company public diplomacy activities, non-official Chinese public diplomacy in the US just before and during World War II was not entirely divorced from the Chinese government. Many organizers were members of the Guomindang, then China’s internationally-recognized ruling party, led by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek). Yet, like earlier public diplomacy from below activities, these mid-20th Century mobilizations were largely instigated by the diaspora, rather than the Chinese government.

Once again, the Chinese state had to learn from Chinese overseas about how to conduct public diplomacy. The most successful efforts to create a boycott of Japan also involved alliances with the kind of non-Chinese who would likely have met with disapproval from the Guomindang in China, namely several Communist-led unions within the US Congress of Industrial Organizations.⁷⁹

A more recent example involves protests, mainly through print media articles and advertisements authored by Chinese- and Chinese-American organizations in the US, about the American television network NBC's coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Remarks by NBC's sports analyst Bob Costas that vilified Team China and China more generally led to a series of protests during and after the Atlanta Olympics, including protests by significant numbers of Chinese who had been granted asylum in the US after June 4, 1989. Though Western media recognized that thousands of Chinese students in the US had raised money for the ads, some attributed the student protests to Chinese state-controlled media whipping up nationalism.⁸⁰ The protests were, however, more likely to have been the culmination of adverse reactions by Chinese overseas to a series of US government actions from 1993–1996 that were perceived by Chinese in the US to be against their country's interests, beginning with US efforts to block Beijing from hosting the 2000 Olympics. These actions turned many Chinese students and graduates in the US away from their previous fervid admiration for the US political system and toward what they understood as a defense of China's sovereignty. The 1996 protests were addressed to the US public and designed to persuade it of the inaccuracy and double standard of Costas' allegations about China and its Olympic athletes.⁸¹ They also provided a basis for manifestations by Chinese overseas of support for Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympics, in the run-up to the International Olympic Committee vote in Moscow in 2001.⁸²

Chinese public diplomacy from below during the imperial, republican and CCP eras both influenced public opinion in host countries and shaped Chinese government policies. While there were varying degrees of connection between Chinese officials and Chinese overseas who engaged in this form of public diplomacy, Chinese overseas may well have had more influence on the conduct of the Chinese government than vice versa. Because Chinese overseas who participated in these activities represented varied political standpoints and affiliations, it was inevitable that their activities would be perceived as aiming to create unity within the generally fractious Chinese communities. There is no evidence, however, that such unity was the main objective, which instead seems to have been to influence public opinion in the host country, in order to achieve a resolution of disputes that implicated the perceived interests of China and Chinese.

IV. The 2008 “Pro-China” Demonstrations in the Eyes of Organizers

In the late 2000s, about 200,000 Chinese were studying in Europe, with 30,000 in Germany, 30,000 in France and 100,000 in the UK. There were approximately 100,000 in the US and 50,000 in Canada.⁸³ About 600,000 new Chinese migrant professionals with advanced professional training in the West had remained abroad⁸⁴ and many Chinese business people in the West are now drawn from among advanced degree holders. People from such highly-educated groups were the main organizers of the 2008 rallies, alongside a sprinkling of earlier-migrated, more “grassroots” ethnic Chinese. A Los Angeles interviewee, describing a meeting to organize what turned out to be a 5,000–6,000 strong protest against CNN commentator Jack Cafferty’s remarks, noted that “Among us there were lots of PhDs and Master’s degree holders.”⁸⁵ The strong educational background of organizers co-related to a significant change in the demographics and activities of the Chinese diasporas seeking to influence host

countries vis-à-vis their homeland.⁸⁶ Higher-level education also enabled interviewees to confidently articulate the aims of the 2008 rallies and the protests' relationship to Chinese and host country institutions and peoples. It is to their narratives that we now turn.

A. The 2008 Rallies in Canada

1. The Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) and the Vancouver Demonstration

Although the CBA leaders expected 500–1,000 people to attend an April 26, 2008 rally and march it organized, 5,000 came.⁸⁷ CBA leaders⁸⁸ told us that its aims were to support the Olympics, voice Chinese community sentiments on the Tibet issue, and respond to “distorted” media representations. They held that in Western media such as CNN and BBC, “99% of what’s good in China is ignored, while the 1% that is bad is talked about all the time.” CBA leaders related deprecatory media attitudes to past instances of “humiliation of Chinese people” that had given rise to antecedent mobilizations, such as a 2006 CBA-organized demonstration about the “comfort women” issue in China/Japan relations. Although the turn-out at the 2008 march was gratifying, because it “had been intended to reach out to the non-Chinese communities,” lack of coverage by English-language media was a disappointment: Canadian Broadcasting Co. (CBC) TV and the leading newspaper *Globe & Mail* sent reporters, but no coverage resulted. CBA leaders noted that there had always been ample coverage of the annual Chinese New Year’s parade. Its fund-raising activities in May, 2008 for Sichuan earthquake relief were also well-covered. They thus concluded that English-language media representatives must have allowed their own views about the Tibet issue to come into play regarding coverage of the April 26 demonstration.

CBA is an umbrella for community groups, and the impetus for organizing the march came not from top CBA leaders, but from constituent groups. Besides these groups, the Chinese Student and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) of the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University mobilized for the rally. The CBA Secretary General, who is a professional martial arts instructor, indicated that “We’re sure that the [Vancouver Chinese] consulate appreciated what we did and knew about it, but there was no direct involvement on their part.” The CBA constituent groups and CSSAs had provided their own transportation, food and slogans.

2. The Edmonton demonstrations

An April 5, 2008 rally of about 1,500 people and a May 12 walk of some 1,000 in Edmonton were mobilizations by individuals, not groups. The Edmonton CBA did not endorse the events, although one non-student organization did: the Chinese Freemasons. We interviewed the main organizers, Robin Hao, a University of Alberta (U of A) economics graduate student; Dai Weiqun, who came as a graduate student to Canada and had been active in protests there about the June 4, 1989 incident, before heading a firm that assists Chinese to immigrate to Canada; Cai Hong, a company manager with an MBA and founder of Edmontonchina.com, the Chinese community’s website; and Lv Han, an ESL teacher and U of A communications graduate student.⁸⁹

The organizers averred that until they held their rally, Edmonton’s major media had attacked China and the Olympics. The rally was organized to argue that the Olympics would benefit both China and the world. Speakers underscored their Canadian identity, while some speakers had lived in Tibet. Most rally posters were individually made and a photo exhibit about Tibet had some photos from individuals and others, mostly of Tibetan scenery, borrowed from the Calgary Chinese consulate. The rally and walk were intended

to reach “the mainstream” Canadians and emphasize that a strong China was not a threat. Organizers saw these activities as a way for Chinese to “get our voice out. Otherwise, no one would know what our voice is and it was also a process to coming to terms with one’s voice.” They stressed the politically diverse backgrounds of rally and walk participants, with Dai Weiqun emphasizing his own history of criticism of the Chinese government.

3. The Toronto Rally

Two University of Toronto students were among the main organizers of the March 29, 2008 rally of 600–700 students and thousands of non-students in Toronto,⁹⁰ and also of ten of 50 busloads from Toronto that went to the thousands-strong April 13 rally on Ottawa’s Parliament Hill organized by the All Canada Chinese Federation.⁹¹ Media imaging PhD student Wu Gang was Chairman of the U. of T. CSSA. Undergraduate Lei Lei became an events coordinator.⁹²

The organizers criticized the Chinese consulate as overcautious and were emphatic that they were not under its control or acting as its spokesperson; rather, the consulate had pressured them to not participate in the rallies. Ideas for slogans were solicited via online forums and BBS, with the mildest of 20–30 suggestions selected. Flags belonged to student unions or were purchased in Chinatown. Bus fees for the trip to Ottawa were paid from individual donations, mainly from a single Chinese businessman. Most posters were in English and “The event was aimed at Canadians and other Westerners, especially white people. It was meant to disclose the truth and to pressure the media to not make up reality.”

B. The 2008 Demonstrations in the United States

1. The San Francisco Torch Relay Turnout and anti-CNN Demonstration

San Francisco was the only North American city through which the Olympic Torch passed, on April 9. The Bay Area is a major “pro-Tibet” stronghold, but ethnic Chinese are about 20% of San Francisco’s population, and since 1882 the city has been a home to the US’s most prominent traditional Chinese American organization, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). We met the CCBA leaders at offices of its off-shoots, the Chinese American Association for Commerce and the Committee for the Promotion of the Reunification of China. CCBA president Sam Ng Kok-Po, who came to the US from Hong Kong in the 1960s, is a realtor and Commissioner of the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission.⁹³

About 100 of the 200–300 Chinese organizations in the Bay Area participated in welcoming the Olympic Torch, including community, student and church groups. Each group got their members to the route, printed flyers and made T-shirts and gathered some of the 30,000 China and US flags that were displayed. The CCBA leaders reckoned the turnout to be the largest-ever gathering of Chinese in the region. Reportedly, 20,000 ethnic Chinese participated.⁹⁴ Participants included many people who had been in opposition to the CCP, but who opposed splitting Tibet from China. Whole families came, including many elderly people.

The two main aims of CCBA leaders in taking the lead in organizing attendance at the Torch relay were to welcome the Olympics and make known the discontent of ethnic Chinese with the mainstream media’s treatment of China and the Tibet issue. After the Torch Relay, they noticed no improvement in media treatment, but were convinced that “the Chinese community here will never go

back to the old days where people kept a low profile.” That idea was reinforced by the April 26 demonstration in San Francisco against CNN, said to have involved 5,000 people.⁹⁵

Helen Zia, a Bay Area member of the Committee of 100, the leading group of prominent Chinese Americans, told us that many Chinese, especially older people, came to the Torch Relay out of cultural pride, not for political reasons.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the media’s biased discourse of a “China Threat” and pegging of China as the world’s worst human rights violator, as well as its one-sided support for the “Free Tibet” movement, had created a charged atmosphere harmful to the image of Chinese. East Asians more generally were also implicated, as much of the US population sees them as an undifferentiated mass engaged in various “Asian invasions.” It had been the media that propagated the false espionage accusations as Lee Wen-ho. The turnout for the Torch Relay was thus in part a reaction to the denigration of ethnic Chinese.

2. Anti-CNN and other Los Angeles Efforts

Zhang Sujiu, a retired scientist whose father had been a Guomindang general famed for leading the resistance to Japan’s attack on Shanghai in the 1930s, is head of the Roundtable of Southern California Chinese-American Organizations, one of the two main coalitions of ethnic Chinese groups in the southern half of the state. She had come to the US from Beijing in 1981 and had been involved before the Olympics in overseeing Chinese participation in the Rose Parade. In 2007, she engaged in a long process of fund raising and securing permission from the local city council, over the opposition of Falun Gong, to have an Olympic-themed float in the 2008 parade. That effort in fact involved participation of the Chinese consulate, which indirectly contributed to funding the float and sent consular officers to march in the parade. Zhang also helped organize about 300 people to go to San Francisco for the Torch Relay. The

Chinese consulate, she affirmed, was not involved in that effort, nor with the anti-CNN demonstration, which Zhang Sujiu put at 5,000–6,000 people.⁹⁷

Chen Jun, a businessman, is President of the Southern California Chinese American Federation, the other coalition of ethnic Chinese in the area. He was a key organizer of the anti-CNN demonstration, compelled by the negative media coverage of the San Francisco Torch Relay, which he attended. He cited the purpose of the anti-CNN rally as “to fight against incorrect Western media representation and to regain power over the discourse,” and thought that only 100 people might attend. There was a connection with the Chinese government, but it was indirect: the Foreign Ministry had also demanded that CNN apologize for Jack Cafferty’s remarks. He noted, however, that the organizers “[did] not demand that the media beautify China, because we ourselves have problems with what China is doing.”

Kevin He Minxue, a civil engineering graduate student, was president of the UCLA CSSA and main organizer of a pro-Olympics campus rally.⁴² He indicated that CSSA was reluctant to involve itself in anything political, and that he had never been involved politically before but thought they should reach out to the media. The campus rally was organized after two Chinese students almost got into a fight with 20 Free Tibet supporters when Chinese students went to a Free Tibet rally at a nearby Federal Building. The CSSA leaders asked the consulate what it thought should be done, and the consulate said “It is none of our business. We do not give any command.” The students decided “we should turn to the other people, such as the mainstream white people, to communicate, and to the other international student bodies. Take the Olympics, not Tibet, as the breakthrough point, as the Olympics belong to the world and not just to China.”

3. The New York Rally

Lawrence Wang, a New York Film Academy student, was a main organizer of the May 4, 2008 Foley Square rally in New York, attended by 2,000–3,000 people, according to the pro-Tibet independence Tibetan Youth Congress, and by 10,000 people according to rally participants.⁹⁸ In early April, he had noticed pent-up anger among Chinese students in New York over biased reporting about the Olympics. Lawrence posted a comment on MITBBS.com⁹⁹ and met with five people who responded to plan a rally on May 4. They created an organization, “One China New York,” and a website. Their Facebook group had 4,000 members at the time of our interview.

Lawrence was in charge of liaising with authorities and raising funds. An elderly Taiwanese man signed the permit application as the event’s financial guarantor, and another businessman donated 7,000 T-shirts, which they sold. Volunteers, mostly students, were recruited via MITBBS to make placards, find printing facilities and write news releases. The event’s near-term objectives were to expose media bias and fight against Tibet separatism, but the long-term objective was “to make the West not see China as a threat.” The main theme was “welcome to Beijing,” to encourage people to make their own judgment about China. Volunteers prepared materials about the Tibet issue, in English, using information taken from Western sources.

Lawrence recalled that a new Chinese Consul General had arrived recently and “he told us to be quiet.” Organizing went ahead however, with the intended audiences being mainstream media, non-Chinese people, “disillusioned Chinese” and “pro-democracy movement participants” (*min yun renshi*). Six speakers, five speaking English and one Chinese, addressed the rally. About 700 volunteers planned and executed it as a celebration of the Olympics. The stage was also

directed by US-China Chamber of Commerce members. Lawrence and the other organizers regarded the event as “the largest rally of *Huaren* in NYC ever organized from the grassroots. He noted that:

We were mainly conveying our messages to the mainstream American society. Our elites’ understanding of American culture and communication with that culture is shallow, like dealing with an itchy leg by scratching one’s boots. In using narratives familiar to Americans . . . we need to persuade them in daily life, beyond the encounters in Chinatown.

We also interviewed Deng Long,¹⁰⁰ a businessman in New York since 1991 who had donated the T-shirts used to raise funds for the rally. He mentioned that an anti-CNN rally had preceded the May 4 demonstration by a couple of weeks,¹⁰¹ and viewed the latter event as a result of Chinese no longer being able to stand the media’s denigration. Deng said that Chinese Americans were especially willing to respond to acts of prejudice. He related the 2008 rally to actions taken two years earlier by Chinese and other ethnic minorities to protect their marketplace stalls against a proposed New York law that would have shut them down. Deng was pleased that through the rally “Chinese stood up for themselves in a rational act,” and was impressed with students’ organizing ability and their willingness to come together again to mobilize relief for Sichuan Earthquake victims.

Deng related that when rally organizers encountered difficulties, they approached the Chinese consulate. They were told that it was not appropriate for the consulate to be involved and that organizers should make their own judgments. Because the consulate was not being supportive, organizers did not seek out media coverage. He noted that after the rally, the consulate, unlike the students, “did not do anything.”

C. The 2008 Demonstrations in Germany

1. In Frankfurt, Xiu Haipao, Chief Editor of *Hua Sheng Bao*, the main Chinese-language newspaper in Germany, told us that around 1993 the population of legal Chinese immigrants to Germany reached 30,000–40,000, the same numbers as today. He stated that there may be 180,000–200,000 Chinese in Germany legally or illegally, with 70% of them working in catering. Smaller numbers of Chinese operate businesses in the tourism industry, or practice Chinese medicine. Chinese in Germany have no political representation and China's ascendancy generates fear in this community about authoritarianism displacing liberal democracy and about economic competition, due to the lack of protection for intellectual property in China, the production of fake goods and supposed industrial espionage.

Although the April 19, 2008 rally in Berlin was said to have attracted 3,500 Chinese, it was barely reported by mainstream German media.¹⁰² Xiu thought this was because the protest organizers intentionally framed the messages in a non-controversial manner. According to Liu Dan, an economic engineering student at the University Hamburg whom we interviewed, at the Berlin rally the demonstrators were divided into sections, and four of the five sections had displays about media misrepresentations of the Tibet Question, while only the last section dealt with the Olympics. Liu stated that although there was only about 10 seconds of coverage on German TV, German passers-by at the rally seemed impressed.

Xiu Haipao also noted that:

As in many places, the Chinese embassy and consulates were not involved at all. At meetings, when people talked of a rally or mobilization, the consulate people just quietly left. They felt it was not their role to even be involved. So it turned out that immigrants provided the money, while students marched in the street.

2. Interviews in Essen

Wang Xin, head of the Chinese Academic and Student Society in Essen, Germany, is a University of Duisburg-Essen engineering management graduate student.¹⁰³ He noted that Chinese are Germany's largest international student group, but only one-third earn degrees. Most Chinese students know little about student organizations and the main contact these organizations have with the Chinese embassy and consulates is when they invite student union presidents to annual Chinese New Year dinners. Most non-student Chinese work in restaurants and are from Wenzhou and Qingtian in Zhejiang province. Many are of peasant origin and not interested in politics. Only in Hamburg do many Chinese work in trade.

The 2008 Chinese protests in Germany began in Munich, where a small group of Chinese academics and professionals held silent protests, covering their faces with masks and displaying information boards.¹⁰⁴ Their protests were barely covered by mainstream media. In addition to the April 19 rally in Berlin, there was a demonstration of 150 Chinese in Dusseldorf on May 4. Wang Xin was a major organizer of another demonstration, on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's visit to Bochum on May 15. It was not staged by student unions, but he did involve their presidents. This was followed by a demonstration in Nuremburg on May 18, which was financed in part by the Wenzhou and Qingtian business communities.

Wang Xin views Western media as "educating the public in order to formulate certain attitudes." The media seek to subvert Chinese students, who are the third generation of leadership outside China, yet media bias had caused the reverse to occur:

It drew the Chinese students closer to their mother country and made them skeptical of Western reporting. As multilingual as the students are these days, when they read news, they read Chinese, English and German news

together. The current overseas students are a special group. They know there are lots of problems in China, but they have to take a position that is against the Western media's incorrect portrayal. . . . They won't accept Westerners' opinions without reservations.

Chinese students in Germany compiled publicity materials for their rallies that mainly utilized writings of German Sinologists, because "it's more powerful to use the opinions of Germans to correct the wrong information that the public has received."

3. Interviews in Dortmund

In Dortmund, we interviewed four Chinese post-doctoral or PhD students in natural sciences and engineering at the Max Planck Institute.¹⁰⁵ They had worked with a group of 15–20 people to organize attendance at 2008 rallies. None had any experience in organizing grassroots mobilizations, but five of these organizers did attend the Berlin rally and hired a bus for 50–60 students to go the rally, with each student paying his or her own way. Although they did not know the Berlin rally organizers and lacked any formal structure, the Max Planck Institute interviewees could organize others using BBS and through networks of Chinese professionals.

The aim of the organizers was to use foreign approaches to engage foreigners, i.e., non-Chinese, about the Olympics and Tibet issue. They thought there should be a perspective available that differs from that of the Tibetan exiles, and learned from the internet what they needed to know to present this perspective.

The Berlin march stretched for two kilometers and marchers encountered Germans with a wide variety of views. When confronted by some white, English-speaking "Tibet supporters," they found that when they attempted to debate the issue, the Free Tibet people had no coherent arguments about Tibet but just criticized communism,

which the organizers thought to be irrelevant to the thinking of most Chinese participants. Our informants noted that unlike Tibet and Xinjiang separatists in Germany, Chinese do not have stable, well-structured organizations. Still, if there were a need to do so, they would take part again in activities along the lines of the 2008 rallies.

4. Interviews in Hamburg

There was a demonstration of Chinese in Hamburg on April 26, 2008, where a Chinese community has existed since the 1920s and most Chinese have been mainland students or business people since the 1980s.¹⁰⁶ Some 2,000 Chinese now live there, 1,200 of them students. About 400 Chinese firms have offices in Hamburg. Approximately one-third of the city's tax revenues derive from these firms, and Hamburg aggressively recruits more Chinese companies.¹⁰⁷

Liu Dan, one of the student organizers of the Hamburg rally, had participated in a demonstration of 200–300 people in 2005 against Japan's attempt to join the UN Security Council. He also helped with a rally to greet Premier Wen Jiabao in 2006. The Chinese consulate was supportive of this effort, helping the organizers obtain a permit for a slightly better location than they would otherwise have been granted.¹⁰⁸ Sun Xiaonan, a Hamburg stringer for *Hua Shang Bao*, employee of the Bureau for the Promotion of Hamburg's Economy, law student, and Vice-President of the University of Hamburg CSSA, explained that the 2008 demonstration had roots in a 12-page, 2007 *Der Spiegel* article entitled "Die Gelben Spione" (The Yellow Spies) that singled out Chinese as especially prone to industrial espionage.¹⁰⁹ It claimed that Chinese students in Germany were funded by the Chinese government and that the sole purpose of 20,000–30,000 Chinese living in Germany was to steal technology.¹¹⁰ Scholars at Hamburg's Confucius Institute stated that Germans' views about the Chinese were strongly affected

by the article.¹¹¹ CSSAs, at the suggestion of Liu Dan, organized Chinese from various parts of Germany to demonstrate in front of *Der Spiegel's* Hamburg headquarters. Some 200–300 attended.

Sun Xiaonan noted that the April 26, 2008 demonstration in Hamburg was much larger than any demonstrations organized by the Chinese diasporas before.¹⁰⁹ Chinese businesses, especially the CEISA export-import group, sought out the student union to sponsor the protest. Volunteers made signs for the rally in space provided at CEISA headquarters. About 4,000 people from northern Germany came to the rally. There were speeches in German, followed by a half-hour-long silent march. The rally themes, Sun said, were to support the Olympics, as the media had called for athletes to boycott it, and for a halt to lying by German media, whose reports on China were consistently negative. Sun also noted that Deutsche Welle (Voice of Germany), the government broadcaster, had demoted Zhang Danhu, its Chinese service employee in Berlin, because she publicly criticized its continuously negative reports on China and argued that the reform in China had lifted many people out of poverty. Germans, however, Sun averred, felt free to cast judgment on others. She recalled times when she was on the subway and someone sat next to her and started to angrily blame China on Tibet, environmental problems, and so forth.

Ms. Sun stated that German coverage of the April 26 rally was scant, since the media had assumptions about Chinese and their demonstrations, i.e., that they were expressions of the Chinese government. The Chinese consulate in Hamburg was not, however, supportive of the demonstration, indicating that it wanted to “protect the students,” presumably from untoward consequences of protesting. CEISA allowed rally organizers to use their garages to prepare posters, and provided food and drinks. Business firms made donations, as did Taiwanese individuals. Some people also brought a lawsuit against *Der Spiegel*. Ms. Sun thought that in

future more Chinese scholars should engage in TV debates with Germans, as dialogue is the only way to change attitudes; when things are kept secret, people second-guess your motives. Li Feng, another University of Hamburg student organizer, thought that the aim should be to “make the Germans more aware of their bias.” The key to doing that is to be “people of reason” and thus keep testing Germans, so that they may make their own judgments about China.¹¹²

We also interviewed the editor-in-chief and CEO of the *Ouzhou Xinbao*, a Chinese-language newspaper founded in 2003.¹⁰⁹ Based in Germany, it has a circulation of 95,000 in Western, Northern and Southern Europe.¹¹³ They stated that stories about China in German media are very negative, often based on made-up “facts,” and are intended to stir up conflicts in the realm of economic and cultural affairs. For example, a reduction in the number of passenger compartments in German trains was blamed on a shortage of steel caused by China buying up this commodity, and a shortage of milk was blamed on Chinese increasingly drinking milk. Mr. Fan stated that before the Olympics, there were many China-bashing stories, about the country being “non-humanistic, not environmentally friendly and backward.” German high school textbooks claim that China “occupied” Tibet in the 1950s.

Fan and Chen said that German politicians use the Dalai Lama as a key element of China-bashing, in order to check China’s rise. It is useless, however, to bash the Dalai Lama in return; rather, Chinese should argue that Tibet is part of China. The goal is to change the media’s reporting, and in 2009 there was somewhat less negative reporting about China than before. Mr. Fan added that after the riot in Urumqi in July, 2009, Chinese in Germany had discussed making a response if the German media supported the Xinjiang separatist movement or started bashing ethnic Chinese, and that the response would be stronger than it was in 2008. At present, however, with

only about 20,000 ethnic Chinese voters, they felt that electoral action was not an option.

5. Berlin Rally

In Berlin we interviewed Xiao Qingquan, the main organizer of the Berlin rally, and Ou Yang. Xiao stated that “Our aim was to attract the media, not on-lookers on the street, not to wave flags or let out our anger.” He and Ou Yang wanted all the actions of the organizers to be transparent and because they were, there was confidence among participants. They were inspired by the rally in Dusseldorf, which did not have one central figure, but approximately five leading organizers. For the Berlin rally, they decided to use many exhibit boards and keep the message simple; it was based on two themes: the false reporting about the riot in Tibet, and expressing condolences to those killed in the riot. If they went into the street just to express their anger, few media would cover the demonstration. Yet although there was huge media coverage, about 40 media outlets in all, there was little coverage of the goals of the demonstration. Organizing was mainly among students and their organizations, as “the local Chinese consulate did not allow participation in the demonstration. There was no involvement by the local Huaren association, and no assistance from any formal organizations either.” The funding came from small donations, most in the €20 range, with a total of €7,000 raised and €3,000 spent, with the remainder designated for earthquake relief.

Xiao stated that knowledge is necessary for democracy. He was not sure he would participate in demonstrations in the future, as these tend to be too emotional. He loves China, but does not love its government. Chinese should write for mainstream German media or use new media, such as YouTube, to have some influence on domestic media. He concluded by stating:

[We] shall not try to tell the truth—that’s a last century approach—instead, we shall convey how we wish others to interpret [an event, etc.]. The Chinese government is all about emphasizing “the truth”. But first of all, others may not believe it. And it may not be the real truth. The truth is hard to come by. If you insist on telling the truth, no matter what form you use, it won’t succeed.

6. Interviews in Munich

In Munich we were told by a professor of Chinese studies that there was much interest in China and, if the Tibet issue were put aside, people were not particularly anti-China. There are in fact more than 500 students pursuing Chinese studies majors and minors at the University of Munich.¹¹⁴ The head of the Confucius Classroom in Munich¹¹⁵ told us, however, that many Germans presumptuously assert that all Han people are brainwashed on the Tibet issue, and that:

Even though we Chinese here listen to more than one story, we often find ourselves being pushed to the opposite side from the Germans’ view. They do not care where we get our information and arbitrarily think we have been brainwashed. And they don’t want to hear us to begin with.

7. Freiburg Demonstration

In Freiburg, Lu Yi, a fifth year Chinese studies and English literature student at the University of Freiburg, said that the small Chinese student body had debated in spring 2008 about whether to go to Berlin for the demonstration or to stage its own protest.¹¹⁶ The local Chinese consulate (in Frankfurt) provides funds to the Chinese Student Union in Freiburg, especially for celebrating Chinese New Year. The consulate was against organizing demonstrations: “from

the PRC authorities' perspective, participation was not encouraged. The consulate said that we should be considerate and that it's best not to go to protests," he said. Yet, the students here, especially the younger ones, wanted to both go to the Berlin demonstration and organize a local one. But the student union preferred to be neutral on the Berlin protests, although it would lend support if people wanted to go, by making T-shirts and providing national flags. Only three Freiburg Chinese students ended up going to the Berlin demonstration, which the media said had attracted 10,000 people.

There was also a demonstration in Freiburg, where about 600 Chinese students were enrolled.¹¹⁷ The turnout was smaller than expected. With some Germans the students could discuss media bias, but with others, if the conversation did not favor Free Tibet, the Germans became very agitated and "accused Chinese of being brainwashed by their government and hence only capable of expressing the voice of the government." Responding to a question about "brainwashing," Lu Yi stated "Has there been any brainwashing? It is hard to say. If yes, it should be a small amount. But I do not think so. If we were brainwashed, we should side with the CCP. Overseas students have been holding an open position toward the CCP." He also noted that "In the past the view of the West among overseas Chinese students was mostly positive. Now we have reasons to change our view. Western media have done a disservice to themselves, while not serving anyone else either."

D. The Paris Demonstration

We first met with Donatien Schramm, President of the Association of Chinese in France/French in China, in his Bellville neighborhood. His wife is second generation Franco-Chinese with parents from Qingtian who also hold French citizenship. He told us that there are many Chinese communities in Paris, with the earliest founded by Qingtian migrants before World War I. By the 1980s, many Wenzhou

people arrived to work mostly in textile wholesaling. Many ethnic Chinese from Vietnam and Cambodia also arrived. Most were of Chaozhou origin and some already spoke French. During the 1990s, many people from China's northeast came, as the restructuring of industry proceeded there.

Chinese newspapers estimate that there are about 5,000 Chinese living in Belleville. They did not understand French hostility during the Paris Torch Relay, so it was students who were the main organizers of the several demonstrations. Nevertheless, French media accused the Chinese embassy of encouraging the students' demonstrations, implying that it was not people's rational decision to protest. Many Chinese were angry; they wanted to demonstrate and they reached a consensus to do so. Protests were neither paid for by business people nor manipulated by the students. By the same token, French politicians sought to enhance their own images as democrats by being seen to respect the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Schramm perceived the demonstrations as intended to provide an alternative view to the French and show them that they have been mistaken. Chinese do not think they can change the minds of the French, but do want to point out that the French media and a majority of the people really don't know about China. Spring 2008 was not the first time that French media had made negative statements about China: they had previously spoken about a Chinese mafia, unclean eating environments in Chinese restaurants, and so forth. At the same time, the Wenzhou immigrants are mainly involved in trade and services and are not integrated into French society, in part because they received little education in China and even less in France. They therefore have no contacts in mainstream society. Additionally, the Chinese people of Belleville do not even have contact with Chinese cultural centers or the Chinese embassy, both of which are far from this Chinatown.

We next met in Belleville with three demonstration organizers.¹¹⁸ Liu Zhongjun is a PhD student who also works at the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po), directing international exchanges in the social sciences and humanities. He told us that before April 19 there was a debate organized between the China-hostile head of Reporters without Borders and students about whether to support the Beijing Olympics. Although he tried to get other students to participate, he could not find any willing to do so, and a professor who directs PhD students tried to discourage their participation. So he ended up participating in the debate himself, along with Shen Fei, a graduate of Fudan University now studying at Sciences-Po. After that, more students were willing to participate in discussions and go before the cameras.

Wang Jiaqing, a successful Wenzhou businessman in Belleville with a chain of Chinese supermarkets and trade-related businesses, stated that although Chinese immigrants usually only pay attention to their own business, they did care about the Olympic Torch being blocked. Not for political reasons, but out of solidarity they turned out to welcome it. Although the flame is a symbol for the whole world, the authorities in Paris hung a Tibetan independence flag from the windows of the Municipal Building and displayed a flag showing the Olympic rings as handcuffs. The news reports were too narrow, and when a woman attempted to explain the actual situation in Tibet, she was met by strong laughter. The “Tibet supporters” did not even know where Tibet is or what its standard of living is. Wang added that although they welcome the Olympic Torch, it doesn’t mean that they support the Chinese government. The flame stands for unity and the Olympic spirit. Wang, the businessman, said that he paid for T-shirts reading “Olympics: a bridge, not a wall.” Even though Chinese people don’t have extra time for demonstrations, about 10,000 people came out. They were very civilized in the mass gathering, and nothing untoward happened. They all paid attention to hygiene and the environmental aspects. There is also an Overseas

Chinese Group, whose membership is about 90% Wenzhou people. It holds Chinese New Year celebrations and a Temple Fair, with the involvement of the local officialdom. It was the center of student activity and issued press releases, as well as providing “dessert” and water, all without the intervention of the Chinese government.

Wang observed that the French media misunderstand China and lack expertise. For example, journalists don’t speak Chinese, yet the only way that the French people learn about China is through the media. The Dalai Lama knows that people do not care about what he actually says; he merely has to set the agenda through the media. It would be helpful therefore to expose French people more to Chinese culture; for example, by directing their attention to what the Chinese community is doing on a daily basis.

Mr. Zhang stated that the annual Temple Fair presents a great stage for demonstrating Chinese culture. There is a chance to use public space in France to communicate with French people. Liu added that demonstrations are an extreme way to show one’s feelings and that the Temple Fair is better. Cultural communication is way to peace.

Our interviewees said that the reputation of Chinese businessmen overseas for focusing only on making money is not deserved. They were very much involved in the 2008 pro-China movement, as they were in the 2009 demonstration by Wenzhou people against the Dalai Lama in Amsterdam (see below) and in the protests by ethnic Chinese in Milan in 2009.

The interviewees also reflected on media demonization of China and the Chinese. Mr. Zhang observed that “Belleville has an image of filth and low quality, largely due to the media. Wang recalled that six years earlier there had been a play in a Paris opera house entitled “Dogs and Chinese not allowed,” after the infamous sign in the old British Concession in Shanghai. The Chinese community

sent people to negotiate with the show's producers, and sued them in civil court. The Huaren Federation supplied the lawyers, who worked *pro bono*.

We also interviewed another group of organizers of the welcoming of the Torch in Paris.¹¹⁹ Song Zhenzheng was a self-financed master's student in politics. Li Sunhui is a Taiwanese immigrant to France and Tong Aimin is involved in the organization of immigrants in Paris.

Song spoke about a monthly salon among Chinese in Paris, including people from Taiwan and Hong Kong, to discuss current affairs, culture and politics. He also mentioned that while mainstream French people do not support Falun Gong, they consider Tibet to be a colony of China, and French textbooks all speak about Tibetan independence. Song indicated that this is a misunderstanding of colonialism, which involves robbery and plunder, but the Chinese government in fact supports Tibet financially.

Song is a member of the Chinese Friendship Alliance. He had participated in a symposium about Tibet-related issues, which was conducted in French and open to the French media, although the latter have not covered these activities. The symposium had also encountered problems in obtaining venues; a hotel refused to let them rent a meeting room, for example. The Overseas Chinese immigrant groups are mainly composed of business people, but salons are usually held among intellectuals. The salons provide an overseas Chinese perspective, which may not be the same as a Chinese domestic discourse. The salons usually invite people from the Chinese embassy, from the French media and from Centre Culturel de Chine, a cultural institutions founded by China in Paris.

Song mentioned that there are more than 200 overseas Chinese groups. The most prominent is the Overseas Chinese and Chinese Business Association (华侨华商会).

There are many Wenzhou Associations, but they don't communicate with each other. The Chinese embassy was unwilling to offer any support for demonstrations and did not help in any way. In fact, the embassy is usually against Chinese immigrant associations becoming politically involved. But once an event has been approved by the local police, the embassy will support it, knowing that the French police will monitor the event.

Li, who is from Taiwan and has resided abroad for nearly ten years, spoke of several communities of Chinese. There are older Chinese who treat the Republic of China as sovereign and who, compared to more recent immigrants, are more clannish, with a greater sense of local place attachment. There are people from Taiwan who are loyal to the ROC, but when Chen Shuibian came to power, discontent with him brought them closer to the mainland organizations, which are against Taiwan independence. Also, Taiwanese born in the period from the 1950s to 1970s who moved to France did not suffer from the Communist Party, but from the Guomindang. At the April 19 rally in Paris, the slogan used was to "Support the Beijing Olympics; All Chinese Take Pride in It" (*zhichi Beijing aoyun, zhonghua gongxiang shengju*). Taiwanese supported the slogan and people from the mainland had their pictures taken with the ROC flag. There were not many Taiwanese people at the rally, but some Taiwanese government officials did attend, albeit while keeping a low profile. Taiwanese who support Taiwan independence support the Free Tibet movement as well. There are Chinese from Vietnam, Cambodia and other parts of the Southeast Asia mainland; they are more bilingual, with a higher level of assimilation, yet none has entered French political circles except French President Nicolas Sarkozy's advisor on Asian affairs, He Fuji.

Song added that the overseas Chinese communities had been transformed by the change in the CCP's policy, which has been more people-based and flexible since Hu and Wen came to power in 2003. Overseas Chinese now find the government more persuasive. Therefore, in the last 10 years overseas Chinese associations became more connected to mainland China.

Tong Aimin is a woman in her mid-50s, originally from Beijing. She owns a business and is well connected with the higher leadership of immigrants from mainland China, among whom she seems to be respected. She observed that in the salons of the Chinese community many people wanted to learn more about Tibet-related issues and the history of Tibet. She thought that if Chinese let the facts speak, they would win on the Tibet issue, but still salon activities should not be too political. It should be mainly cultural. Chinese cultural programs, such as "Chinese Culture Week," "Culture Season" and "Year of China" have had great success in France.

Mr. He observed, however, that China has always passively responded to issues related to the Dalai Lama. The government does not even distribute brochures related to Tibet, so even Chinese lack knowledge about the matter. Tong responded that there were such brochures, but the language is not appropriate. Mr. He commented that the media in France are one-sided, and Sarkozy does not know much about China.

Ms. Tong stated that in 2009, only about 500 people participated in the Tibetan exiles' rally to mark to anniversary of the March 10, 1959 Lhasa uprising and that there was little energy, while in 2008, when the event was largely organized by Robert Menard of Reporters Without Borders, about 1,000 participated. She also observed that most French Sinologists are anti-China, though most French intellectuals are suspicious of their own government and stated that it is said that the Dalai Lama's translator in France gives

a class in Tibetan Buddhism to Sarkozy every two weeks. Li added that senior French intellectuals are under pressure to be politically correct. Other intellectuals have a more open attitude toward China, but they do not have much of a voice in the media, whose views greatly influence ordinary citizens.

E. An organizer in Britain

Xie Hui, a PhD student majoring in architectural technology at the University of Sheffield School of Architecture, was vice president of the local Chinese Students' Federation in 2008. The CSFs are nominally attached to the Education Section of the Chinese embassy and consulates, in the sense that the consulates certify diplomas and issue letters of approval. This is because there are many fly-by-night schools in the UK and students need to get a reliable certificate once they graduate. Nevertheless, the CSFs are not closely connected and the consulates do not involve themselves much in the affairs of the regional students' federations.

Xie stated that there may now be 100,000 or more Chinese in the UK. The older, mostly Hong Kong-derived community built a lot of community centers and didn't interact much with the more recent Chinese overseas students.

Xie's activism derived from his not having seen on TV many Chinese faces during the Olympic Torch relay, even though he was informed by friends who had attended the event that there were lots of Chinese there. He decided to organize a protest, focusing on "peaceful speeches," on April 12. It was attended by 100–200 people. They distributed about 2,000 leaflets and carried posters and banners in the city center. Before the demonstration, the university's vice-rector contacted them and asked that they exercise restraint. During the march, they did not shout slogans, but used posters. They did not have any loudspeakers.

It was all a spontaneous act, not being influence by any other parties. The consulate showed neither support nor opposition. They were afraid of being criticized by foreign media. The protest was carried out on behalf of each individual protestor, because the local consulate was afraid of being accused of 'red China infiltration.'

Some people came to quarrel with them and called their stuff "rubbish," while a few people talked to the demonstrators.¹²⁰ Most British people kept silent. Although they sent out a press release to the media, none showed up.

After the local demonstration, some Chinese students criticized the Chinese Student Federation for their attitude of neither supporting nor encouraging participation in the April 12 demonstration. Yet the core force of the organizing was still members of the student federation.

Xie also averred that Britons are now more suspicious of Chinese students. One of his senior classmates who entered a post-doctoral degree in London was interrogated by the university authorities and by British intelligence, which suspected that he was a Chinese agent, although he was simply more articulate than most scholars. He quit the post-doctoral program and took a nominal position with the Chinese Students and Scholars Association.

Xie said that he used to support the center-right, but "awoke" around April 12 and now finds that Western democracy is not the best, yet "loving the country does not equal loving the CCP." Many CCP members join without much thought. Chinese immigrants do seem, however, to be more readily joining in organizing efforts.

F. Chief organizers in South Korea

We interviewed two leading organizers of the demonstration in Seoul. One is Zhang (name changed to protect interviewee's identity), president of the Chinese Student Association in Korea (CSAK) and a post-graduate student at Yonsei University, and the other is anonymous. We also interviewed a student participant surnamed Wang.

Before coming to the interview, we were told by Li that there were actually 30,000 Chinese in Seoul to welcome the Olympic Torch to Seoul on April 27, which would make it the largest overseas demonstration of 2008. He stated that students had attended the event voluntarily and that no financial support was offered. The activity had no relationship with the embassy and South Koreans, including the police, were very helpful during the entire process. The aim was not to protest against the news media, which compared to other countries did not report in a biased way before the event, nor was the aim to counter the "pro-Tibet" elements.

By way of background, we were told at the interview that there are 670,000 Chinese in South Korea, of whom 200,000 are Han and the remainder are Korean Chinese. The situation in South Korea is very different for Chinese students than it is in Japan, as most South Korean students must work as well as study. Many South Koreans had gone to China and there were also Chinese in South Korea; after 1949, there were about 20,000 of them. Now there are many more Chinese in South Korea and Chinese are the largest foreign student group in the country, with 60,000 enrolled in the CSAK. China's relations with South Korea are different from that with other countries, in that the South Korean government's attitude toward political activity by foreigners is much less tolerant than, say, that of the US government. The situation for foreigners is relatively free,

but still, it is like a Confucian host/guest relationship; that is, the guest should not be rude while here.

The main way that participants in the Seoul action were mobilized was through MSN, QQ and other electronic means. They knew the situation of the South Korean government well; when there were demonstrations, it mobilized the police. They made it clear that theirs would be a volunteer-based public gathering, but that there was no political purpose in demonstrating. The students were all volunteers and no one organized them, except perhaps the more senior members of the student community. The original group of people with whom they went to greet the Olympic Torch numbered only 10–20, but they met many Chinese people on the way and got them to join in. They also encountered and talked to some Canadians and New Zealanders.

The people in South Korea who supported Tibetan separatism were very few. There were, however, some very anti-Communist North Korean refugees as well as some old men in their 60s and 70s. There were rather few Chinese students at first, and they were confronted by some pro-Tibet independence and anti-Communist individuals, all of whom were “adults” compared to the Chinese students. Altogether, between 200,000 and 250,000 people turned out to watch the Torch Relay. Even though there were no confrontations involving the majority of them, TV channels said there were confrontations across the board—this in spite of photos showing that this wasn’t so.

In South Korea there had been lots of hostility about the Free Trade Agreement (with the US, signed in 2007 but not yet ratified because of various obstacles; President Obama and President Lee have agreed to try to get it ratified by November 2010). Koreans are, in fact, very nationalistic and conservative. They think it’s bad when guests do rude things. The South Korean media had also failed

to understand the situation with China. They did not show images of South Koreans attacking Chinese at the Torch Relay. Because the Chinese students' social position is very low, they must have been deeply chagrined by what they saw as unfair news coverage.

Like in other countries, the students also claimed that the demonstration in South Korea was organized by students themselves, and the Chinese embassy was not involved, except to a very small extent. The demonstration didn't even really amount to a movement that could be organized; in any case, it was not organized to address political questions, but to show support for the Olympics. The embassy remained quite isolated from whatever organizing did take place. All the signs used in the demonstration were created by students, to show support for the Olympics. Those who came out to protest against the Torch relay used photos to claim that China was occupying Korean territory (this probably refers to the Socotra Rock, a tiny submerged rock known in Chinese as 苏岩礁 far off southwest Korea that South Korea claims as its territory and China says is in its exclusive economic zone). Although there were about 30 core organizers of the Chinese assemblage, the media never asked them to comment on what occurred. The media only showed partial reports from their interviews with rank-and-file Chinese participants who thought traditionally and said that the CSAK had organized the gathering. Everything that they did was from a positive point of view, but anticipating that there would be problems, they sent text messages to tell people to be careful.

When Chinese students first started to come to South Korea in 1993, they were humiliated by being treated as if they were backward. For example, they were asked whether they had ever seen apples, watermelons, etc. It was not until just before the Olympics that Chinese were shown some respect, and it was only then that there was support from South Koreans (for the Olympics). The media reports about the Chinese students were, however, negative, even though

there had never been any previous political activities in South Korea by overseas Chinese students. In fact, Chinese students in South Korea are very different from Chinese students elsewhere, in that they are very young (mostly undergraduates) and many are attracted to the country by K-pop. They also lack financial resources and thus need to obtain scholarships from South Korean universities. The South Korean Ministry of Culture, however, did become involved in matters concerning Chinese students, and in February 2009 held a seminar asking the students what kind of help they might need. The Ministry of Culture asked whether their problems related back to the 2008 demonstration or had to do with South Korea/China relations. In 2009 there was, however, a substantial increase in the Chinese student population. The quality of education in South Korea is not good, but the cost is cheap, so every year there is an increase of roughly 15,000 Chinese students, so that now South Korea has the sixth largest population of Chinese students in the world. Most of the Chinese students are Han, with ethnic Koreans accounting for no more than 10% (In China, Korean is one of 55 ethnic minorities. These people mostly live in the Northeastern part of China).

There was something of a change in the attitude of South Koreans toward China after the Torch Relay. Before that, there was no consciousness among Koreans of the large number of Chinese students studying in their country. There was also no real contact between Chinese students and average Chinese immigrants living in Korea. After all, most Chinese in Korea have already acquired Korean citizenship, whose national identity is split and living conditions are difficult. Looking back at what happened in 2008, it can be said that on the one hand they made a difference in terms of the reception of Chinese in South Korea, and South Koreans now have something of a changed attitude. This has given Chinese a better standing in Korean society. The year 2008 represented a turning point for Chinese communities overseas: global society had started to re-examine the social position of Chinese, including

those from Taiwan. The voices of the Chinese community had also become stronger.

In April or May 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a paper that encouraged students to act as public diplomats for China. The Chinese government had been surprised by what Chinese overseas had done in 2008, when the government had tried to avoid public demonstrations. Many Chinese, after all, think demonstrations are not good because they lead to chaos, yet some demonstrations are good. In their case, it led to dramatic change and improvement.

Wang has been in South Korea for six years and studies international trade. He came to what was almost the last stop of the Torch Relay. Chinese students in South Korea felt that they should do something to welcome the Torch, given that there were more than 50,000 Chinese studying in South Korea.

On April 27, South Koreans' impression of the Chinese changed. Many Chinese showed up with flags, and the visual impact was quite remarkable. South Korean friends said that on that day, they felt they were in China. Perhaps 10,000 Chinese showed up. Many South Koreans thought that Chinese became involved on the order of the Chinese government, as was the case in North Korea. There were banners with such slogans as "Best wishes for the Olympics," "Tibet is part of China" and "We love our country." These were all handmade and the Chinese who came were from a variety of backgrounds, not just students. Some were business people and some were Chinese who had married Koreans. There were also many Korean spectators.

Although many Koreans still have a 1970s or 1980s image of China, on April 27 they saw a different reality. They saw that the

Chinese were unified, and after the event the South Korean media became more or less objective.

We asked if he'd seen tensions between Tibet supporters and Chinese on April 27 and he said there may have been some, but he didn't see any Tibet supporters. Nor did he see any fights. The event was important for those participants born in the 1980s and 1990s. They couldn't relate to the older generation's sacrifice, but could relate to the 2008 events and could tell the next generation about it. People like him don't understand why events like those in 2008 in Tibet and 2009 in Xinjiang occurred, and they think that things are not easy for the Chinese nation, despite China's rise. Altogether, April 27 was an event that made a huge impression and left the host country feeling the Chinese presence.

G. Organizers in Australia

Our latest interview was carried out in Sydney, Australia, where we met Australian Chinese Youth Council (ACYC) Chairman Wang Ran,¹²¹ an early planner for the Canberra rally to welcome the Olympic Torch. He also observed the Sydney demonstration after the Tibet riot broke out in 2008, and organized a demonstration against the Dalai Lama's visit to Sydney in December 2009. The ACYC is an organization that bridges Chinese student associations and the Chinese immigrant community organizations; its funding comes from young businessmen in the Chinese community in Australia.

Similar to our interviews in other parts of the world, Wang affirmed the autonomy of the organizing effort of the pro-China demonstrations in Australia. He did mention that the Chinese consulate in Sydney had met with some older Chinese community leaders and asked whether they could send a few people to welcome the Torch. But they had not proposed to hold any rally or

demonstration. For the Canberra rally, the Chinese consulate may have arranged the registration and supplied some flags. The original plan was for ACYC to send 20 to 30 people to welcome the Torch. Before the London and Paris incidents, few members of ACYC and the overseas students responded to Wang's call for participation. After seeing on TV the Torch Relay interrupted in London and Paris, however, people began contacting Wang. Around 20,000 people came from the Sydney area and about 10,000 came from Melbourne to welcome the Torch in Canberra, where there was also a rally, which was mostly peaceful aside from some pushing and shoving between a few rally participants and Tibet Independence supporters. Four Chinese students were arrested as a result, and Wang recalled that two had their student visas revoked.

The Sydney rally was motivated by the Chinese students' desire to tell the truth about what happened in Lhasa, after the world media misrepresented the street riots of March 14, 2008. The students were disillusioned with what they perceived as Western media's lies about the riot and the representation of China in general; they had come to Australia and had liked its political system, which they thought was better than that in China. They therefore did not make any effort to contact the mainstream Australian media about their rally. About 2,000 people, all students, participated; they mainly used the internet to mobilize and were not sponsored by any organizations. Wang recounted that the students had made it clear that they did not want Chinese community organizations involved, which allegedly were more closely associated with the Chinese Party and the Chinese government. They believed that collaborating with Chinese community organizations was a liability rather than a bonus.

Wang was the sole organizer for the protest against the Dalai Lama's talk in Sydney. He wanted to give Australians an alternative view of the Tibet Question, and managed to persuade many Chinese in Sydney that the Dalai Lama was in fact working against the

interests of Tibetans. About 1,000 people intended to participate in the protest, but the police announced they would only allow 300 people to be present at the venue. Wang subsequently invited only the leaders of the CSSAs, about 10 to 15 from each university, and community leaders. The Australian police also compelled him to obtain the Chinese consulate's approval for participants to hold Chinese flags at the protest site. The Chinese consulate gave no objection, and the protest ensued. Because of the protest effort, the Dalai Lama was blocked from entering the venue and arrived an hour late. Later, Kevin Rudd, who was the Australian Prime Minister at that time, decided not to meet the Dalai Lama, and the Dalai Lama cancelled his 2010 trip to Sydney.

Wang reflected upon his experience as an organizer, participant and observer in the abovementioned demonstrations by emphasizing the improved working relations between the newer, post-1989 Chinese immigrants and the older Chinese immigrant community. These two generations of immigrants joined their efforts in a more conscious way in the December 2009 rally against the visit of the Dalai Lama; this led the older community to realize the power of the newer community, and the newer community came to respect the older one. According to Wang, when dealing with common issues, "Old people contribute money, while young people contribute labor," a model that seems to apply to the 2009 rally in Australia.

Wang also added that so far, Chinese protestors only have interacted with the Chinese-language media and lack contacts with the English-language mainstream media.

V. Conclusion

The 2008 demonstrations by Chinese overseas about the Olympics and Tibet issue was neither a one-off surge of nationalism nor a presaging of a sustained political movement of Chinese overseas.

They were instead a spontaneous, but also concerted, exercise in public diplomacy from below, one that is likely to continue, even if not always through the same kind of activities as in 2008. Whatever form subsequent public diplomacy from below by Chinese overseas takes, the protests of 2008 created a new situation for their communities of students, professionals and business people. Host populations have become more aware of the presence of ethnic Chinese, beyond Chinatowns and university labs, as people who can be expected to offer an alternative view that is at odds with denigratory views of China and disparagement of Chinese.

There have been similar, if smaller, protests by Chinese overseas since 2008, many related to the Dalai Lama or the Uygur émigré leader Rebiya Kadeer. They have been extensive enough for the Dalai Lama to state in Australia in June, 2009, “I have been followed by protestors—ethnic Chinese protestors, Han protestors – wherever I have gone.”¹²² Close to a thousand Chinese were reported to have demonstrated in Toronto in May, 2009.¹²³ In the same month, Chinese from 30 organizations in France protested against the Dalai Lama receiving “honorary citizenship” of Paris.¹²⁴ At about the same time, Chinese students and scholars in the Netherlands, representing 7,000 students and tens of thousands of graduates, issued a letter to protest against the Dalai Lama’s planned visit to the country. Chinese in the Netherlands demonstrated in Amsterdam in June, 2009 on the occasion of the Dalai Lama’s visit to the city. The 300 protestors had been organized by Wenzhou business people. Their protest was reported only in Chinese language media in the Netherlands. Mainstream Dutch media, not to mention international media, seem to have entirely ignored it, although the latter did report on the Dalai Lama’s meeting in Amsterdam that day with 30 Chinese émigrés.¹²⁵ In tiny Iceland, about 50 Chinese students held a protest around the same time against the Dalai Lama.¹²⁶ In August, 2009 Chinese in New Zealand demonstrated against a Maori television station planning to air a laudatory documentary film about Rebiya

Kadeer made by an American director.¹²⁷ In April, 2009 the United Chinese Association of New Zealand, which consists of 28 local Chinese organizations, wrote to the country's Prime Minister asking that he not grant the Dalai Lama a visa,¹²⁸ and in November, 2009 a group of 40 New Zealand Chinese organizations issued a declaration to protest the Dalai Lama's visit to that country.¹²⁹ In December, 2009 a Chinese government source reported that nearly 100 Chinese had demonstrated against the Dalai Lama's visit to Sydney. The protest was organized by Wang Ran, president of Australia Chinese Youth United Association.¹³⁰ In February, 2010 Chinese in Philadelphia¹³¹ and California¹³² organized meetings to protest against President Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama.¹³³ In October, 2010 Chinese in Toronto protested against the Dalai Lama both outside the venue of one of his major speaking engagements and at a meeting he held with ethnic Chinese.¹³⁴

Demonstrations and letters of protest have been but two ways in which public diplomacy from below has continued to be carried out after the 2008 rallies by Chinese communities in developed countries. Some members of those communities are, however, of the view that "demonstrations are not the only patriotic way" (*shiwei bu shi wei yi aiguo fangshi*), because, in some instances, these methods may be less productive in providing an alternative view to host populations than other approaches.¹³⁵ For example, when Rebiya Kadeer attended the showing of her biopic in Melbourne, Australia, Chinese students decided not to take collective action. A dozen or so did protest with banners outside the showing,¹³⁶ but the scale of the protest was deliberately muted, despite the Chinese government having vigorously condemned the showing. According to Xie Qingfeng, chairman of the Chinese Students Association at the University of Canberra, the students, in considering what action to take about Kadeer's presence, reasoned that most Australians have little understanding of China and thus nothing should be done

because it would only allow Kadeer to “increase her hectoring and bluster” (*zhangle tade qiyan he shengshi*).

Cai Yintong, a master’s degree student in communications at the University of Paris 8, is the main founder and secretary-general of the April Friends Association (*Les Amis du Printemps*), founded by Chinese overseas students and young professionals working in France who had participated in the Paris mobilization of April 9, 2008. After the 2008 pro-China demonstrations, Cai also led demonstrations of a couple dozen Chinese students and other ethnic Chinese over a three day period in February, 2009. They protested a Paris auction held to sell cultural objects looted by British and French troops from the imperial Summer Palace (*Yuanmingyuan*) before they burned it in 1860 during the Second Opium War. The Chinese government had also protested against the sale,¹³⁷ but the protestors had their own distinct analysis of the controversy, mainly based on international law, which they distributed to the French population through leaflets and the blog “Comment Comprendre la Chine” (How to understand China) written in French.¹³⁸ Later that year, however, Cai stated that “the most important thing is to find ways to influence local people in the long run, rather than holding protest marches that may be ‘one-shot deals’ (*yi chuizi mai mai*): We don’t hope to convince others all of a sudden, but through dialog and communications, we want to offer them a perspective, to tell them what the real China looks like.” Li Huan, chairman of the April Friends Association, who at the 2008 Paris rally had given a speech in French in which he said he could not stand to see his country constantly misrepresented, stated in 2009 that lack of communication and trust was the main problem between Chinese and French. However, as the Chinese saying goes that “constant dripping wears down the hardest stone” (*di shui chuan shi*), ongoing dialogues and exchanges, insignificant as they may sound, if pursued constantly, will mitigate this problem. For example, the April Friends and the Sino-French Youth Exchange Organization held a salon in July, 2009 to discuss the Xinjiang

issue and “French people from all walks of life and the media were invited.” Cai Yintong and another member of the April Friends were subsequently invited to testify before the French National Assembly and to provide reports about Chinese foreign policy and China-France relations to scholars at the France’s Ministry of Defense and other institutions. Cai has averred that “French think tanks are glad to hear voices directly from Chinese civil society and we also hope to be able to influence opinion leaders.”¹³⁹

From an internal document¹⁴⁰ circulated among the Paris demonstration organizers, Cai, the author, reflected on the organizing efforts:

The most valuable intellectual legacy of the “4.19” rally is, as long as we have the same beliefs and objectives, we can maximize the number of our compatriots into a unified, forceful entity to engage in struggles ... to help maintain a [positive] image of China and the Chinese overseas.... Chinese people must adopt reasonable and effective means to communicate and dialogue with the West. As China’s rise is beyond any doubts, there will be more frictions with other countries in the world; such a future compels more and more knowledgeable individuals to be involved in Sino-West dialogues. First and foremost, they need to have a tolerant and confident mindset, viewing misunderstandings and accusations by the West in a correct way. They also need to understand the Western way of thinking, and approach issues in the logical fashion that Westerners can comprehend. Last but not the least, they need to proactively take measures to communicate, producing and distributing large amount of publicity materials in French. These are the important means we gain support from public opinions in France.

In a different document Cai gave us, he laid out nine suggestions to improve Sino-French relations.¹⁴¹ He first points to the leading role of the Chinese embassy and consulates in France and encourages

the diplomatic staff to go out and participate in exhibitions, seminars, debates and other forms of exchanges. The second relates to the bridging role of the new and old Chinese immigrant associations and societies, who should, according to Cai, “make connections with civil society groups in France, and integrate into the French mainstream.” The third suggestion directly refers to the overseas Chinese students as “the most forceful and trustworthy ‘people’s diplomatic force’ (*minjian waijiao liliang*)...”. The Chinese embassy and consulates ought to be open to a wider range of students’ activities, instead of only being in touch with the All-France Chinese Students Federation or the Chinese Students Federation in Paris, which only have about one hundred members.” As the Paris demonstration was organized in a short period of time, mostly by non-affiliated Chinese students and young professionals in Paris, Cai and others did not receive any financial support from the Chinese embassy, to their dismay. Hence, in this document he urges Chinese government representatives in France to “support any valuable initiatives by the overseas Chinese students [in improving Sino-France relations], and to immerse themselves into the life of ordinary students”. He also advises the Chinese government to exploit the capacities of French companies to promote a pro-China political agenda, to engage French opinion leaders to influence French public opinion, and to help establish market-oriented French-language media owned and operated by the Chinese in France. The document was formally presented to the Chinese Ambassador to France, Kong Quan, in August 2008.

The post-2008 activities of Chinese abroad about issues such as Tibet conform to the characteristics of public diplomacy from below established in 2008. First, many Chinese student and community activists remain concerned with issues related to China’s territorial integrity, which in 2009–2010 continue to be the Tibet and Xinjiang questions. As in 2008, they fundamentally concur with the Chinese government on these issues, but often diverge from the government on the origins of the problems and ways to mitigate

them, as well as how to best counter pro-separatist sentiment at home and abroad. Second, the Chinese government, through its embassies and consulates, appears to be not significantly involved. Interestingly, in the case of Rebiya Kadeer's appearance in Australia the Chinese government made strong representations about the issue to Melbourne officials and likely played a role in the withdrawal of seven Chinese films at the film festival where Kadeer appeared; yet Chinese students took the opposite tack and chose to be low-key, i.e., to largely ignore rather than highlight Kadeer's visit. Third, Chinese student and community activists appeared to be interested not in the creation of a political consensus, but in establishing a modicum of institutionalized interaction with host populations in order to continue to present an alternative view of China and the Chinese to host populations. The last point we want to make echoes the historical antecedents of Chinese public diplomacy from below. Like their historical counterparts, the overseas Chinese students and community organizers have exhibited a far more nuanced understanding of the political and social realities of their host countries than the Chinese government and their official representatives outside China, so much so that they feel compelled to instruct Chinese officials in conducting diplomacy. To say that the overseas Chinese communities are brainwashed and manipulated by Beijing and Beijing's representatives in foreign cities is not only intellectually dishonest and politically misleading, but also socially ignorant and culturally condescending.

VI. Future Research Agendas

Our field trips in 2009 spanned three continents (North America, Western Europe and Asia/Oceania), covered 16 cities (six in North America, eight in Western Europe, one in South Korea and one in Australia) and involved 61 pro-China demonstration organizers and/or participants (33 in North America, 25 in Western Europe, two in South Korea and one in Australia), including both older and younger

generation Chinese immigrants, plus Chinese students and young professionals who study and work in their host countries. During the field trips, aside from collecting interview data we collected a great many photos, video clips, media clippings and internal documents from the organizers, in addition to various formal or informal publications. We also participated in and observed whatever community activities were happening at the time we were there, such as Chinese New Year celebrations and private group gatherings. We kept in touch with our interviewees and connected to their social media networks on Facebook, email Listservs, and online forums they frequent. We observed some common organizing patterns of public diplomacy from below that had been in the making, and/or are still on-going, before and after the pro-China demonstrations in 2008.

Worth noting is what we call the “Los Angeles model” that gravitates towards a showcase style of cultural activism by local Chinese immigrant organizations. The Chinese communities overseas use Chinese traditional holidays or the public holidays of their host countries, as well as other occasions such as parades and festivals, to engage in art and cultural performances for the purpose of introducing and educating the mainstream society in the host countries about China’s cultural and historical heritage, as well as to promote cultural and artistic exchange between the host countries and China. They receive logistical support mainly from Chinese businesses in their local Chinese immigrant communities, and from their professional connections in the PRC. This model of organizing has a broad grassroots base and is relatively established. We call it the Los Angeles model mostly because it is most institutionalized and most commonly practiced in Los Angeles, although it also exists in various scales and degrees of institutionalization in other major cities around the world, including Paris.

The second model, which we call the “Paris model,” grew out of 2008 pro-China organizing, with mainly Chinese Generation X and Y leadership that is multilingual, bi-cultural, media savvy and ideologically undetermined and/or flexible. This is the pattern of organizing observed most prominently in and after the “4.19” Paris pro-China rally, and to a lesser degree in the New York City rally. It follows an informal, non-hierarchical organizing style of public diplomacy from below, and is geared towards a sustained discursive presence in the popular discourse about China in the host country. As we briefly noted above regarding the various organizing efforts around the globe following the 2008 Olympics, the spontaneous, grassroots, self-organizing style of the overseas Chinese students and young professionals is not going to disappear, according to the most conservative estimates. In fact, we see this model as the emergent organizing style for years to come, one that will become perfected and more efficient as it integrates with the Los Angeles model and engages in more practice. Although in this current study we are not able to provide further details about these two models and their implications for China’s public diplomacy in the years to come, we expect to engage in future research as a corollary to this study.

Endnotes

1. “China Poem: an Awakening Message, by DL Lin,” Madam Miaow Says, July 4, 2010, <http://madammiaow.blogspot.com/2010/07/china-poem-awakening-message-by-d-l-lin.html>.
2. Our interviewees reported that non-Chinese participated in rallies in Vancouver, Toronto, New York, Hamburg, Berlin, and San Francisco. The official Chinese news agency claimed many non-Chinese attended a “Massive Rally in Amsterdam in Support of Olympics,” Xinhua (XH), May 11, 2008 and that many did so as well at a rally of “thousands” of Chinese in Stockholm, Sweden, “Overseas Chinese in Sweden Rally to Support Olympics,” XH, April 27, 2008.
3. About 40 German media outlets did cover the April 16, 2008 rally by 10,000 Chinese in Berlin, but did not explain its aims. Interview, Xiao Qingquan, organizer, Berlin rally, Berlin, July 19, 2009.
4. Li Hongmei, “Chinese Diaspora, the Internet, and the Image of China: a Case Study of the Beijing Olympic Torch Relay,” in Wang Jian (ed.), *Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 135–155. See also “Hundreds Gather in Tibet Protest,” BBC, April 19, 2008 (Cambridge University student remarks that BBC failed to report about thousands of people she observed in London supporting Torch Relay).
5. See C. Gopinath, “The Chinese Turn on their Nationalism,” *Business Line*, May 12, 2008 (Chinese embassies reportedly got students to do pro-China demonstrations); editorial, “Journey of Surprises for Olympic Torch,” *Straits Times* (Singapore), May 3, 2008 (“no question” that Chinese encouraged by embassies to display patriotism); Clifford Coonan, “Chinese Protest over Olympic Opinion in West,” *Irish Times*, Apr. 21, 2008 (“well known” that Chinese embassies maintain ties with overseas students). *Asahi Shimbun* (Japan), April 29, 2008, asserted that Chinese embassies worldwide organized Chinese students to stop anti-China demonstrations. Robert Koehler, “Chinese Embassy Organized Student Hooligans?” *The Marmot’s Hole*, April 29, 2008, www.rjkoehler.com/2008/04/29/chinese-embassy-organized-student-hooligans/.
6. Michael Fullilove, “Chinese Diaspora Carries a Torch for Old Country,” March 19, 2008.
7. Kate Hoey, “‘Olympic Ideals’?: It’s a Grotesque Charade,” *Daily Telegraph*, April 8, 2008.

8. "Chinese Students Rally in Support of Homeland," CTVNews, March 29, 2008, www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/Canada/20080329/chinese-canadians_concert_080329/; "Bricks and People Fence Torch in," Sun Herald (Australia), April 20, 2008 (Tibetan activist in Australia "believes the Chinese embassy in Canberra has hired more than 50 buses to bring in pro-Beijing protesters, offering free food for participants"); "H.H. Dalai Lama meets Religious Leaders and Dutch Foreign Minister," States News Service (SNS), June 6, 2009 (Dalai Lama questions whether demonstrations by Chinese students abroad "were genuine or organized by the Chinese Embassy)."
9. A New Zealand journalist antagonistic to the Chinese government stated that "I believe that those sort of protests were organized by Chinese embassies," based on his claim of similarities of slogans at rallies with those used by the Chinese government. "The Long Arm of Censorship," The Press (NZ), April 12, 2008. A New Zealand newspaper published an article entitled "NZ Students 'Enticed by Free Food and Travel'," Dominion Post, April 26, 2008, but the Chinese language instructor who made this claim admitted he had no evidence. The Chinese embassy and a Chinese student organizer denied the Embassy had made contributions to demonstrators. Ibid. A New Zealand newspaper identified the organizer of a March, 2008 rally about Tibet-issue media bias and the pro-Olympics Auckland rally of April 22 as 22-year-old University of Auckland research assistant Johnson Yuan. "Local Chinese Plan Rally to Back Games," New Zealand Herald (NZH), April 22, 2008.
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11. "Australia Welcomes China's Investment, if not its Influence," Washington Post, February 14, 2010.
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14. Andrew Bolt, "Two Standards on Right," Herald Sun (Australia), April 30, 2008.

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20. "Students Rally for Torch Relay: Chinese Embassy Accused of Rent-a-Crowd Tactic," Courier-Mail (Australia), April 25, 2010. See also Christina Ho and Jenny Chio, "Temporary Transnationals? Political Engagements and Nationalism amongst Chinese Students in Australia," UTS: CCS, 2010, http://cosmopolitancivilsocieties.com/nodes/mcdara/chinpol/ho_chio/.
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 24. See Jessica C. Weiss, “Powerful Patriots: Nationalism, Diplomacy, and the Strategic Logic of Anti-Foreign Protest,” unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2008: Ch. 4. There were 27 demonstrations in China against US diplomatic outposts, some running almost continuously for 3 days.
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 26. See Pal Nyiri, “From Class Enemies to Patriots: Overseas Chinese and Immigration Policy and Discourse in the People’s Republic of China,” in Pal Nyiri and Igor Saveliev (eds.), *Globalizing Chinese Migration: Trends in Europe and Asia* (Ashgate, 2003): 208–239 (232). There were more than 1,500 protestors in Toronto, 110 in Vancouver, 1,000-plus in New York and “hundreds” in Los Angeles. “Chinese Join Bombing Protest at U.S. Consulate in Toronto,” *Associated Press* (AP), May 10, 1999; “Nato Denounces Troop Pullout Promise,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 11, 1999; “Chinese Community in New York Stages Anti-NATO Rally,” *XH*, May 14, 1999; “Chinese Community in USA Demands Formal Apology over NATO Bombing,” *XH*, May 13, 1999.
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33. Peter Sandby-Thomas, *Legitimizing the Chinese Communist Party Since Tiananmen* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 131; Susan Shirk, *China's Fragile Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 171–178.
34. Cheng Tai Chung, "New Media and Event: a Case Study of Power on the Internet," *Knowledge, Technology & Policy* 22 (2009): 145–153 (148); Justin Ramzy, "China Frowns on Patriotic Protests," *Time* (US), April 21, 2008.
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38. We do not argue that no Chinese embassies or consulates participated at all in organizing for the protests. Reportedly, a planning meeting for one of several New Zealand rallies took place at a Chinese consulate, where it was decided that "all Chinese organizations be involved with the rally and not just international students, as was

the case with previous rallies.” “Clash Feared as Pro-China Rally Planned for City,” NZH, April 25, 2008. Police estimated that 2,000 people attended the rally in question. “Violence Disrupts Pro-China Rally,” NZH, April 27, 2008. We do, however, take issue with the view of a New Zealand scholar in generalizing about all the world’s 2008 “pro-China” demonstrations, that “These protests and the later demonstrations were genuine and popular . . . but it should be noted that they received official support, both symbolic and practical.” “Prepared Statement of Professor Anne-Marie Brady . . .” Hearing Before the US Economic and Security Commission on China’s Propaganda and Influence Operations . . . , April 30, 2009, www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/transcripts/09_04_30_trans/09_04_30_trans.pdf

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 84. Liu Hong, *Chinese Overseas*: 187.
 85. Interview with Chen Jun, Los Angeles, January 16, 2009.
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87. The numbers of demonstration participants given by the interviewees were all estimates, though some more accurate than others. Since by no mean we can find the real numbers of participants of those demonstrations and rallies, we advise the readers not take the numbers at their face value.
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89. Interview, January 10, 2008, Edmonton.
90. A Toronto newspaper said only that there were “thousands” of Chinese flags at Yonge-Dundas Square. “Rival Rallies Debate Turmoil in Tibet,” *Toronto Star*, March 29, 2008. Non-students were mainly from the Beijing Association and associations of ethnic Chinese migrants from Southeast Asia.
91. A Canadian news service reported 5,000 in attendance. “Thousands Rally for China,” *CanWest*, April 13, 2008; *Xinhua* reported 10,000. “Thousands of Chinese Canadians Rally to Protest against Tibet Riots, Media’s Distorted Coverage,” April 13, 2008.
92. Interview, Toronto, January 18, 2008.
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98. Lawrence Wang, New York, January 22, 2009; “Huge Rally: China’s Count is Questioned,” *New York Sun*, May 6, 2008.
99. MITBBS.com is “the most heavily visited Chinese online forum in the Untied States,” “China’s Missing Voice Rises Up from the Internet,” *New American Media*, March 31, 2008. It can thus serve as an overseas locus of so-called “Chinese cyber-nationalism,” defined as “a non-government sponsored ideology and movement that has originated, existed and developed on China’s online sphere” and may be quite different from state-sponsored nationalism, with

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100. New York, January 23, 2008.
 101. The rally at CNN's headquarters in New York was hardly mentioned in mainstream media. A Chinese source reported that it was attended by about 200 people and lasted for about an hour. It may have been organized by the New York Association for the Peaceful Reunification of China. "'Shame on You, CNN,' Say New York Chinese Protestors," XH, April 22, 2008.
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 105. Interview with Wang Zhiming, Wu Yaowen, Wu Jinyong and Li Ling, Dortmund, July 16, 2009.
 106. Interview with Dr. Karsten Krause and Dr. Wang Hongtu, Hamburg, July 17, 2009.
 107. See "Hamburg Attracts about 30 Chinese Firms every Year," China Daily, July 29, 2010.
 108. Interview with Liu Dan and Li Feng, students, University of Hamburg, July 18, 2008.
 109. The demonstration was scarcely covered, even in Germany. See "Chinese Protest 'Yellow Spies,'" November 12, 2007, benperry.net, www.tranzformer.de/blog/?p=621.
 110. See also interview with Fan Xuan, editor-in-chief, and Chen Mang, CEO, Hamburg, July 19, 2008.
 111. Interview with Krause and Wang.
 112. Liu and Li interview.

113. Interview with Fan and Chen.
114. Interview with Professor Hans van Ess, Department of Asian Studies, University of Munich, July 19, 2009.
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120. Photos on the “Voice of Loong” website, <http://vol-news.com/demonstration/england.php>, show discussions between Chinese students and Britons at the April 12 demonstration.
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122. “Observing the New Collusion between the Dalai Lama and Overseas Activists,” XH, Aug.ust7, 2009.
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128. “Key Silent on Meeting with Dalai Lama,” NZH, October 7, 2009.
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