

Corporate Diplomacy in China ^[1]

APDS Blogger: [Dao-Chau Nguyen](#) and [Danni Li](#)

Public diplomacy began in China when the Communist Party of PRC made relentless efforts, though in the name of “*duiwai xuanchuan* (external propaganda)”, to publicize the birth of new China, and later its achievements, to the outside world. Yet it is the current need of China that results in the popularity of the concept and its practices. As the nation of old civilization returns to the world stage with renewed vitality, it is greeted with suspicion, vigilance and even hostility. Perceived as a ‘threat’, China feels deeply wronged and has no alternatives but to justify itself via public diplomacy. In the words of Yang Jiechi, the Foreign Minister, “by actively engaging in public diplomacy, we should strive to establish an objective and comprehensive view of China in the international community... and seek to establish and maintain a global image of China as a responsible country committed to peace, development and cooperation.”

China’s impact on the global economy is increasing through a growing presence of Chinese companies in international markets. As part of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and the School of International Relation’s joint Public Diplomacy program, Danni Li and Dao-Chau (“D.C.”) Nguyen have set out to investigate China’s “corporate diplomacy” – broadly, the process in which corporations commit to society, the environment, and its stakeholders.

The convergence of interests between enterprises and government hence provides a strong incentive for the latter to call for a “public diplomacy role” on the part of the former. At the annual public diplomacy conference of the Chahar Institute in 2012, Zhao Qizheng, director of Foreign Affairs Committee CPPCC, underscored an inclusive approach of involving non-state actors in conducting diplomacy. Based on a relevant survey that studied the foreign investment and programs ran by the Chinese companies, Zhao proposed further expansion of Chinese companies but emphasized it as “justifiable” and “necessary” to expect them to shoulder a share of public diplomacy.

The main goal of this research project is to understand the opportunities and challenges of the current state of corporate diplomacy in China, which is not as institutionalized as its Western counterpart. This project seeks to create communication channels among businesses, governments, NGOs and society to discuss American approaches and Chinese approaches to corporate diplomacy. From here, this project will promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies as an integral part of the core business of a company.

This research project is part of a larger initiative to engage in dialogues with both Chinese and Western practitioners of public diplomacy in China. For any questions or feedback, please contact D.C. Nguyen at daochaun@usc.edu.

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