

## China: Godzilla or Gulliver?

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The countdown to the 2008 Olympic games in China provides a valuable case study in public diplomacy, especially with regard to the mix of planned, unplanned and unforeseeable elements. How did China juggle both the opportunities and the liabilities presented by the games? How did the pre-game political tensions impact on China's image both abroad and at home? More particularly, did the government's strong handling of the world-wide protests in the countdown to the games cast China in the role of Godzilla, king of the monsters; or should this large nation, which gave its all to host the games with unprecedented efficiency and extravagance, be seen as a Gulliver, tied down by the countless strings of Lilliputian activists?<sup>1</sup>

It is often claimed that the Olympic games are not a political platform, but a sporting event devoted entirely to endeavour, excellence and sportsmanship. Rule 51.3 in Chapter 5 of the Olympic charter states "No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas."<sup>2</sup> Despite this stipulation, the games have long been linked to politics in ways that exceed the ambiguous physical designation specified in the charter.<sup>3</sup>

The two political dimensions most relevant to public diplomacy concern nation branding and political protest. For the host nation, the games provide a high-profile branding opportunity in which the gains in terms of visibility and reputation are seen to outweigh the considerable costs incurred. For other nations, the games offer a platform for demonstrations of both solidarity and protest. Political protests by NGOs, activists and terrorists have, over the years, taken the form of rallies, boycotts, walkouts, terrorist attacks or other attempts to capitalise on the extensive media coverage associated with the Olympics in order to mobilise public opinion and put pressure on the host government.

The nation branding dimension of the Olympics is a concerted planning exercise, one in which the host nation is in control of every detail, from structural resources such as the Olympic stadium and other sporting venues, the athletes' village and facilities, accommodation for spectators, transport and other infrastructures, to cultural dimensions, including the opening and closing ceremonies, the hospitality of the stewards and locals, the availability of site-seeing excursions, and the promotion of history, language, art, music and cuisine. In the case of China, an environmental dimension also came into play with considerable efforts being made to reduce air pollution, with many measures involving long-term forward planning.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The presentation on which this paper is based was given three months prior to the start of the 2008 games and availed itself of anti-logos in order to illustrate the actors and issues involved. The "One World One Dream" logo of the Beijing games provided numerous opportunities for exposing the discrepancy between semblance and reality. Some of the anti-logos used can be seen on: [http://osocio.org/category/beijing\\_olympics/](http://osocio.org/category/beijing_olympics/) and [http://osocio.org/message/beijing\\_olympics\\_logo\\_alternative/](http://osocio.org/message/beijing_olympics_logo_alternative/)

<sup>2</sup> The Olympic Charter, Chapter 5, Rule 51. [http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en\\_report\\_122.pdf](http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The clause 'or any other areas' was added in the 2007 version of the charter and does not clearly state the physical scope of the prohibition: is it 'any other Olympic areas', or 'any other areas', to be designated by the powers that be? For an overview of political protests and past Olympic games see: 'Politics and the Olympics' in *The Guardian*: <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/politicspast/page/0,9067,892902,00.html>

<sup>4</sup> See for instance 'China in Olympics pollution drive' By Shirong Chen, BBC News, 26 February 2008: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7264957.stm>

In contrast to these public relations efforts, the activist dimension surrounding the games is obviously not planned by the host nation, though this does not mean that contingency measures are not developed in the event of foreseeable protests. However, even where protests are predictable, their scale, direction and duration are not. The cat-and-mouse game involving the route of the Olympic torch as officials tried to protect it from protestors in various cities is an obvious example of the interface between planned and unplanned elements. A similar mix of planned, unplanned and unforeseeable factors came into play with regard to protests over Darfur.

The linking of China's foreign policy over Darfur with the Olympics, and the labelling of the Olympics as the 'Genocide Games' is the best example of an unforeseen factor with public diplomacy repercussions. The players involved in shaping public opinion in this case were not government officials but film celebrities. They attacked China's involvement in human rights violations being perpetrated in Darfur through her supply of weapons to Sudan and her obstruction through veto of UN attempts to impose sanctions. Because China's policies were motivated by the need for raw materials, especially oil, this perceived promotion of self-interest at the expense of human values was deemed unconscionable by protestors.

In March 2007, Mia Farrow, a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, attacked Steven Spielberg, in his capacity as artistic advisor to the 2008 games for turning a blind eye to atrocities in Darfur. "Does Mr. Spielberg really want to go down in history as the Leni Riefenstahl of the Beijing Games?" she asked.<sup>5</sup> This analogy with Hitler's propaganda film director, whose career after WW2 was thwarted by her work for the Nazi party, was a very sharp attack on a man whose concern for the holocaust had led him to direct *Schindler's List* and to set up the Shoah Foundation.<sup>6</sup>

After several failed attempts to exert influence on the Chinese Government, in February 2008 Spielberg resigned from the Olympic Committee as Artistic Adviser for the opening and closing ceremony. In a letter to President Hu Jintao, he explained that "my conscience will not allow me to continue with business as usual."<sup>7</sup> The Chinese embassy in Washington responded that attempts to connect Darfur with the Beijing games went against the Olympic spirit, and it fended off criticism of China's policies in Sudan with the following strongly worded statement:

As the Darfur issue is neither an internal issue of China, nor is it caused by China, it is completely unreasonable, irresponsible and unfair for certain organisations and individuals to link the two as one.<sup>8</sup>

Spielberg's resignation was a big PR loss for the Chinese and triggered a vociferous debate on China's human rights record and whether the Olympic games should be boycotted. Would

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<sup>5</sup> Ronan Farrow and Mia Farrow The 'Genocide Olympics', published in *The Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 2007. [http://www.miafarrow.org/ed\\_032807.html](http://www.miafarrow.org/ed_032807.html)

<sup>6</sup> In 1994, Steven Spielberg founded the 'Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation', known as the Shoah Foundation, a non-profit organisation established to record testimonies in video format of survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust. <http://college.usc.edu/vhi/>

<sup>7</sup> 'Spielberg Drops Out as Adviser to Beijing Olympics in Dispute Over Darfur Conflict' by Helen Cooper, *New York Times*, February 13, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/world/asia/13china.html>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

attendance, or any business involvement, make one “complicit” in human rights violations?<sup>9</sup> It is on these grounds that other film celebrities, such as George Clooney, also entered into the debate, putting pressure on Omega – the official timers to the Olympics and one of the brands that he fronts – to protest regarding Darfur and Tibet. Omega’s response to this embroilment of a corporate brand with international politics through the intermediary of a supposedly neutral sporting event is worth analysing in detail as it provides a valuable basis of comparison with the official Chinese response. Unlike China’s initial ‘hands off’ tone, Omega’s response epitomises the deployment of skilful diplomatic language to placate a variety of stakeholders while protecting and even further promoting the brand:

We have full respect for his [George Clooney’s] strong engagement in the fight for the good cause and share his opinion, especially concerning Darfur, and we are proud to work with a person who has such high ethical views.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than distancing itself from Clooney’s political protest, Omega expresses its full support for him and even takes credit by association for his ‘high ethical views’. By referring to ‘the good cause’, an idiomatic term with ambiguous referent, and by singling out Darfur (which has no power of reprisal against its brand), Omega avoids any mention of China and thereby avoids damaging its relationship with the Olympic host and an important market. Omega goes on to make the statutory statement concerning the independence of sports from politics, but in identifying sport as a vehicle for world peace, yet again wins credit by association:

It is our policy not to get involved in politics because it would not serve the cause of sport which is one of the most noble human endeavours for creating understanding and peace all over the world.<sup>11</sup>

From this statement we infer that since sports is such a noble endeavour and globally important activity, Omega, in sponsoring sports, is itself a key contributor, facilitator and mentor of international understanding and world peace.

When asked whether Omega would speak out on China's association with the Sudanese Government, Nicolas Hayek, the chief executive of Swatch Groups, said: “Of course, it is a continuous process but we do it the Swiss way of ‘little strokes fell great oaks’”. Once again, the reliance on linguistic ambiguity allows Omega to deflect criticism and defuse concerns while promoting its own image. The language used, far from being ‘bland’ (a charge usually levied against diplomatic pronouncements), is carefully crafted, and includes the following ambiguities:

- The ambiguous antecedent of the two iterations of ‘it’ in ‘it is a continuous process but we do it...’
- The ambiguous scope of ‘of course’: Does it mean ‘of course we will speak out’ or ‘of course it is a continuous process’? The former is implied in the context of the exchange, though the latter is the default reading within the sentence read in isolation.

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<sup>9</sup> Mike Blakemore of Amnesty International UK on BBC Radio 4 News at One programme, cited in ‘China calls Spielberg's resignation from Olympic role “unfair”’ by Matthew Weaver and Martin Hodgson, *The Guardian*, February 13, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/13/china.olympicsandthemedial>

<sup>10</sup> Cited in ‘Clooney's Darfur Fight Extends To Olympics’ CBS News, March 11, 2008, London.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/03/11/entertainment/main3925041.shtml>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

- The ambiguity of the ‘Swiss way’: Is this an internationally recognised national trait or a self-characterisation, in which case, how credible is it?
- The ambiguity of the idiom 'little strokes fell great oaks' in this context. Is little Switzerland planning to fell the mighty oak of China? Clearly not, so what is the great oak in question – the large problem of Chinese-Sudanese affairs? Or the still larger impediments to human rights and world peace? In either case, what are the small strokes that Switzerland, or Omega for that matter, wields? Since Omega claims not to get involved in political issues as a matter of policy, the most likely candidate for ‘small strokes’ is time – the strokes of hours and minutes and seconds as measured by Omega.

Omega capitalises on linguistic ambiguity to state a self-evident reality – that Omega measures time – through the elicitation of lofty sentiments which somehow (how exactly is intentionally left moot) encompass broader concerns and aspirations.

In contrast to Omega’s conciliatory and subtle response, China’s initial intransigence over her relations with Sudan did her no favours. However, as pressure mounted from across the globe (and the broad spectrum of voices involved characterises the dynamics of public diplomacy),<sup>12</sup> China was forced to rethink. The catalyst to action came with Spielberg’s high profile resignation over Darfur. Within a couple of days, in a concerted effort to reshape her image abroad, China announced the appointment of a special envoy on Darfur. Ambassador Liu Guijin introduced himself as follows:

Darfur is the focus of international attention and many Western nations want China to play a bigger role. This is why I have been appointed as the special envoy of the Chinese government on the Darfur issue.<sup>13</sup>

Liu Guijin retained a note of defiance when he warned that “Some individuals have been using some individual issues to try to defame the Chinese government through the issue of the Olympic Games. Those attempts will go nowhere.” But the remainder of his address differed markedly from previous government statements, by including the admission that conditions were deteriorating in Sudan and calling on the Sudanese to take responsibility for stopping the killing.<sup>14</sup>

At Chatham House in February 2008, Liu explained that the quiet diplomacy usually conducted by China was its culturally preferred *modus operandi*, and generally the more effective one, but that the spotlight on China’s relations with Sudan had forced a more public approach:

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<sup>12</sup> The organisation *Save Darfur* offers a compilation of quotes from notable individuals on the subject of China and Darfur under the heading ‘What others are saying about China’, with the following introduction: “Leading voices in government, diplomacy, media and celebrity have spoken out in recent weeks about China’s problematic relationship with Sudan, and China’s ability to impact the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.” [http://www.savedarfur.org/pages/what\\_others\\_are\\_saying\\_about\\_china](http://www.savedarfur.org/pages/what_others_are_saying_about_china)

<sup>13</sup> “China 'affected' by Spielberg Olympic protest”. Article by Richard Spencer in Beijing, *The Telegraph*, March 8, 2008 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1581039/China-'affected'-by-Spielberg-Olympic-protest.html>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

According to our original culture, we do a lot of things quietly. We do not like to speak everywhere. But the situation has *forced* me to speak out on what we have done and what we are going to do.<sup>15</sup>

Liu advocated “enhanced dialogue and consultation” in order to “build and strengthen mutual trust so that differences can be addressed and issues solved through political means.”<sup>16</sup> Dialogue is “the only viable solution” he emphasised, not sanctions and pressure. He concluded his oral presentation by hoping that he had provided “a better understanding of our philosophy, our way of doing things, our intentions and our good will.”

Both the content of Liu’s statements, and the fact that he made them at all, demonstrate a strong response to the demands of public diplomacy, namely the need to inform in order to influence. By presenting China’s position openly to a variety of foreign stakeholders he sought to secure their understanding and win their support. Liu’s statements further demonstrate a commitment to the spirit of public diplomacy, which advocates dialogue and consultation as a problem solving mechanism. China’s relinquishing of her traditional softly-softly approach, and adoption of a more open and outspoken stance, itself provides evidence of her willingness to adapt to the demands of the situation. This response to the surge of world wide protests over Darfur echoes Omega’s conciliatory and PR driven approach. One analyst referred to Liu’s London stopover as a “public relations roadshow.”<sup>17</sup>

The many voices heckling China over Darfur can thus be seen to have achieved a welcome change in Chinese attitude and policy. This unforeseen threat to the Olympics, which tarred the games with the slur of ‘genocide olympics’, was deftly dealt with by the Chinese through their decision to ‘show willing’. To the extent that the Western media and protestors registered China’s response, China’s handling of this public diplomacy crisis seems to have been effective. If they did not report Liu Jintao’s contributions as extensively as they might have, it is because the focus of protest had shifted to Tibet.

The Chinese reaction to the anticipated protests over Tibet took a very different course. Here too a diverse range of voices was heard, from famous actors to other public figures such as Prince Charles, who refused to attend the Olympics (though he left the reason open to speculation), and Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the United States House of Representatives who, in March 2008, visited the Dalai Lama and made a very strong public attack on China:

If freedom loving people throughout the world do not speak out against China’s oppression and China and Tibet, we have lost all moral authority to speak on behalf of human rights anywhere in the world.<sup>18</sup>

A few hours later came a sharp response from the Chinese ambassador to India, calling Tibet an “internal affair” and shunning interference. “We don’t allow anybody to meddle in China’s internal affairs,” Zhang Yan told reporters in New Delhi. “Any attempt to cause trouble to China is doomed to fail.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Liu Guijin’s spoken address (not the written transcript) on ‘Darfur and Sino-African Relations’, Chatham House, Friday 22 February 2008. <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/events/view/-/id/752/>

<sup>16</sup> Liu Guijin’s transcript of the same occasion: [http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/11105\\_220208guijin.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/11105_220208guijin.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Cited in ‘China speaks out on Darfur crisis’, article by Scott Baldauf, Peter Ford and Laura Winter, the *Christian Science Monitor online*, February 25, 2008. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0225/p01s03-woap.html>

<sup>18</sup> ‘On Visit, Pelosi Offers Support to Dalai Lama’ by Somini Sengupta for the *New York Times*, published: March 21, 2008. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/21/world/asia/21cnd-pelosi.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/21/world/asia/21cnd-pelosi.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

True to this injunction, all attempts to “cause trouble to China” were firmly dealt with. Abroad, the Olympic torch was protected from Free-Tibet activists by a phalanx of jumpsuit-clad officials who created a physically and linguistically impregnable human shield around the torch and man-handled any attempts to seize or extinguish it. Unfortunately, the perceived ‘presumption’ of Chinese authorities maintaining law and order in lieu of local police forces further fuelled the flames of anti-Chinese feelings.<sup>20</sup>

At home in Tibet, “trouble to China” was suppressed through the deployment of troops and the arrest of protestors, including the detention and incarceration of Tibetan monks.<sup>21</sup> On 10 March 2008, the anniversary of the 1959 uprising, fighting broke out in Tibet, and subsequently in neighbouring provinces. China had to strike a fine balance between maintaining law and order in order to show that the country was safe, yet not appearing brutal in the suppression of protests. The number of casualties rose to over 100, and included both Chinese and Tibetans. Since figures and footage were not released by the authorities, mobile phone films, eye-witness accounts and hearsay became hot currency on the internet. The web, rather than the streets of Lhasa, provided the primary battlefield for a sensationalist war of images.<sup>22</sup> Angry accusations and counter accusations were also exchanged. The Dalai Lama, for instance, was accused of inciting the protests by Chinese officials who dubbed him a ‘splittist’ and trouble maker disguised in a pacifist cloak, and the Western media was accused of propagandist reporting. Conversely, the Chinese government was accused of both overt and covert violence and intimidation, and of suppression and censorship.<sup>23</sup>

Despite appeals by a variety of Western politicians to resolve differences through dialogue,<sup>24</sup> and repeated appeals by the Dalai Lama for a cessation to hostilities and resumption of Tibet-China dialogues,<sup>25</sup> the Chinese government did not adopt Liu Guijin’s injunction that “dialogue is the only viable solution” with regard to Tibet. It is only in the aftermath of the totally unforeseeable earthquake which struck Sichuan on 12 May 2008, killing over 60,000 people, that a date for the resumption of dialogue in July was agreed upon.

With both the Darfur and the Tibet protests, China was faced with one of the central dilemmas of public diplomacy, that between diktat and dialogue. If one wants to build trust one has to yield control, yet in yielding control one runs the risk of pandemonium. China adopted an open and collaborative stance with regard to Darfur, emphasising the need for trust-building,

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<sup>20</sup> See for instance ‘Australia warns Olympic torch guards over tough tactics’ by Haroon Siddique, in *The Guardian*, Wednesday April 16, 2008.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/16/olympicgames2008.australia>

<sup>21</sup> See for instance ‘China admits Tibet monk protests’, *BBC* March 13, 2008,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7294014.stm> and ‘Tibetan monasteries empty as China jails monks to silence Olympic protests’ by Jane Macartney, *The Times* July 7, 2008.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/olympics/article4281932.ece>

<sup>22</sup> See for instance ‘Images and News of Tibet Riots Seep Onto Web, Despite Chinese Authorities’ Clampdown’, by Sarah Lai Stirland, *Wired Blog Network*, March 17, 2008 <http://blog.wired.com/27bstroke6/2008/03/images-and-news.html>

<sup>23</sup> For a generous selection of articles from either side on a number of disputed issues, see ‘Public diplomacy and the Beijing Olympics: narratives and counter narratives’, by Meg Young, October 8, 2008. [http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/specialreports\\_detail/public\\_diplomacy\\_and\\_the\\_beijing\\_olympics\\_narratives\\_and\\_counter\\_narratives/](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/specialreports_detail/public_diplomacy_and_the_beijing_olympics_narratives_and_counter_narratives/)

<sup>24</sup> See for instance the compilation of quotes from G8 leaders on the Tibet issue in ‘A report on the G8 action as the Toyako G8 Summit ends’, Free Tibet Team Japan. [http://fttj.org/news/080715\\_action\\_report.html](http://fttj.org/news/080715_action_report.html)

<sup>25</sup> ‘Dalai Lama calls for end to anti-Olympic protests’ by Riayat Butt, Mathew Weaver, Peter Walker in *The Guardian*, May 21, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/21/tibet.religion>

and demonstrating its willingness to engage in dialogue. But with regard to Tibet, the position adopted was intransigent, asserting the inviolability of sovereignty and non-intervention in domestic matters.

As a result of the suppression of protests, deafness to criticism, unwillingness to engage in debate and censorship of the web over Tibet, a Godzilla-like image dominated foreign public opinion.<sup>26</sup> Demonisation escalated until attacks on China appeared xenophobic and hysterical, reminiscent of earlier fears of China as the 'Yellow Peril'.<sup>27</sup> Reasoned debate on foreign and domestic policies was undermined by an emotional 'us versus them' diatribe. Until the Sichuan earthquake, the world around the Olympics seems to have become polarised into the goodies and the baddies, with the baddy role attributed by each side to the other party.<sup>28</sup>

The effect of this polarisation was to undermine the middle ground where dialogue could take place. An example of this was the Chinese reaction to the Duke University student Grace Wang who, standing between pro-China and pro-Tibet protest groups at a demonstration, called for dialogue and understanding. She was labelled "traitor to your country" and sent hate-mail. Her photograph, name, identification number and contact information made the rounds of Chinese student internet forums, along with directions to her parents' home.<sup>29</sup> Such threatening reprisal for an attempt at dialogue and conciliation provides a measure of just how visceral and vicious attitudes had become. Although this more blinkered brand of patriotism was not endemic, it arose as a strong reaction against the demonisation of China. Another example is the pop song entitled "Don't be Too CNN" by Xuan Murong which became a national hit and spearheaded sentiments against the Western media, and the West in general.<sup>30</sup>

If we compare the Darfur and Tibet cases, we can identify several significant similarities and differences, all of which are relevant to public diplomacy. The protests over Darfur were unexpected, as was the spotlight turned on Chinese African policies by film celebrities. Spielberg's resignation forced China to address these concerns and condemnations openly and systematically through a specially appointed spokesman whose job it was to inform the world of China's philosophy, policies, intentions and good will. This largely defused China's Godzilla image to those who cared to listen, and can be seen as a public diplomacy victory.

The protests over Tibet, in contrast, were expected and a policy of suppression and non-negotiation was firmly maintained. China retained this intransigent attitude despite mounting criticism, aggravating hostility towards her and reinforcing her Godzilla image. However this situation was not altogether detrimental to the government. On the contrary, the strong popular reaction against attacks on the sovereignty and reputation of China mobilised the Chinese both at home and abroad to defend the government. Solidarity against the aggressors replaced the cynicism which had been rumbling in response to entrenched corruption and growing social inequalities. "This is what we can achieve when we pull together" was the domestic message of the Olympics, and the achievement was impressive indeed. On the domestic front, China therefore achieved a considerable public affairs victory.

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<sup>26</sup> Satirical cartoons and anti-logs surrounding the Beijing Olympics capture this anti-Chinese sentiment. See for instance [http://osocio.org/category/beijing\\_olympics/](http://osocio.org/category/beijing_olympics/) and <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/politicalcartoons/ig/Olympics-Cartoons/>

<sup>27</sup> For a historical overview, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow\\_peril](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_peril)

<sup>28</sup> Social Identity Theory provides an insight into the psychology behind such group behaviour. See for instance Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour*. (Cambridge, England: CUP) 1982.

<sup>29</sup> See for instance 'Chinese Student in U.S. Is Caught in Confrontation' by Shaila Dewan in the New York Times, April 17, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/17/us/17student.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzbbSwnYu7s>

The tragedy of the Sichuan earthquake muted the cross-fire, and ultimately, the outstanding success of the 2008 Beijing Olympics saw China pull through victorious from this massive public diplomacy exercise. This outcome was by no means guaranteed in the months preceding the games, when in the popular imagination China appeared increasingly in the guise of a Godzilla-like monster rampaging over the world regardless of human rights and sensitivities.

The polar opposite of the Godzilla guise is the Gulliver image. This portrays China as a developing country overcoming all manner of setbacks in order to host the Olympics and showcase its rising influence and prosperity. Yet all these good intentions were, as we have seen, restrained by a host of different stakeholders and activists. From this perspective, no sooner had China made concessions over Darfur than the focus was shifted to Tibet, and just as that crisis came to a head, a natural disaster struck, provoking yet another crisis over corruption, which overlapped with growing concerns over pollution as the games loomed, which in turn yielded to the security challenges surrounding the influx of foreign visitors. China can therefore equally justifiably be depicted as a Gulliver figure tied down by Lilliputians.

I conclude with two observations concerning the impact of public diplomacy on dialogue. One of the much lauded advantages of public diplomacy is that it emphasises the virtues of trust and dialogue. The relative success of China's public diplomacy management over Darfur as opposed to Tibet can be attributed to the focus given to visible dialogue. It might however be argued that public diplomacy, by giving a voice to everybody, risks being counter-productive in failing to discriminate between those voices in a cacophony which need to be singled out, and those which are best held in abeyance.

George Bush, in a BBC interview with Matt Frei, acknowledged the presence of these opining little people in the following words:

There's a lot of issues that I suspect people are gonna, you know, opine, about during the Olympics. I mean, you got the Dalai Lama crowd. You've got global warming folks. You've got, you know, Darfur...<sup>31</sup>

Significantly, he goes on to say "I am not gonna you know, go and use the Olympics as an opportunity to express my opinions to the Chinese people in a public way 'cause I do it all the time with the president." The public platform is good enough for others, for players without direct access, he is saying, but heads of state can speak to each other in private whenever they want: "I have a little different platform than Spielberg so, I get to talk to President Hu Jintao." This description epitomises traditional diplomacy, which takes place quietly, behind closed doors.

For all the transparency of public diplomacy, we should not forget that there is likely to be a counter-veiling secrecy. We must therefore recognise first that there is a need to discriminate between dialogues since they can't all be attended to simultaneously, and second, that not all dialogues will be public. The spotlight may be on the open stage of public diplomacy, but those with access to the wings and backstage corridors will certainly resort to them while attention is detained by the song and dance of the public show.

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<sup>31</sup> Transcript of BBC correspondent Matt Frei's interview with George Bush, 'In full: George W Bush's BBC interview'. 14 February 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7245670.stm>