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Propaganda beyond state borders: the deployment of symbolic resources to mobilize political support among the Chinese diaspora

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ABSTRACT

Today, authoritarian states, such as that of China, strive to cultivate political allegiance among their diasporic subjects through state-run propaganda operations beyond national borders. Aiming to construct a stable, exclusive, and institutionalized diasporic network of influence within host societies, autocratic states use extraterritorial propaganda to amass integrative capacity by dispersing carefully tailored discourses, penalizing opposing voices, promoting a unified interpretive framework for conceptualizing socio-political reality, forming a standard meaning system for diasporic communities, coordinating collective action, and forging an integrated patriotic identity through the repetition of codified communication. The early 21st century has witnessed the rise of pro-regime solidarity among diasporic Chinese, a global force buttressing China's communist regime. In this article, we argue that this unprecedented forging of solidarity is the product of China's extra-territorial propaganda. The ruling party-state consistently uses concise, catchy, and carefully tailored symbolic resources, such as 'China insult' (*ruhua*) incidents, to extend its political influence beyond national borders. This poses novel challenges to the Westphalian sovereign state. The state's tactic overseas propaganda operations have facilitated the emergence of an extraterritorial Chinese 'symbolic state' that relies on shared symbolism and identity, rather than territorially defined Weberian coercion, to project control over a transnational socio-political domain.

KEYWORDS Diaspora; propaganda state; transnational governance; symbolic politics; authoritarianism; Chinese politics

Introduction

On April 9, 2008, thousands of people gathered at the San Francisco Bay waterfront, waiting for the Beijing Olympics torch relay. Many held in their

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hands the 'snow lion' flags in support of Tibetan independence. However, many more confronted them, waving the national flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and chanting patriotic slogans. That evening, Jack Cafferty, a television commentator for Cable News Network (CNN), described the pro-PRC protesters as 'the same bunch of goons and thugs they've been for the last 50 years' (CNN, 2008). Chinese communities in the United States were outraged by this provocative comment. Shortly after, diasporic Chinese groups organized a series of rallies in major cities across the United States to condemn the alleged affront to the dignity of their ancestral motherland. Excited by the outpouring of Chinese patriotism in the land of a significant Western power, the Chinese party-state proclaimed that 'together, we made the world feel the formidable power of the Chinese people' (Guangming Daily, 2008).

The events of 2008 were merely the beginning of a consistent pattern of immanent Chinese patriotic sentimentalism in favor of the ruling Communist regime on the global scene. The first two decades of the 21st century have witnessed the worldwide rise of pro-regime solidarity among Chinese people overseas.[1] This population has become a crucial force in buttressing China's current regime and defending its economic, political, and diplomatic interests on the international stage.

In 2009, Chinese communities in Australia staged a boycott of the Melbourne International Film Festival due to the presence of the Uighur separatist leader Rebiya Kadeer, with fanatical protesters urging the political exile to 'apologize to all Chinese people' (Levin, 2009). In 2012, overseas Chinese communities protested in major European cities from Madrid to Reykjavik in response to the Japanese government's plan to nationalize the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (People.cn, 2012). In 2017, Chinese people in Rome rallied to urge the Italian government to avoid 'any form' of contact with the Dalai Lama, another alleged separatist movement leader (Guancha Syndicate, 2017). One year later, the Chinese diaspora in southern California demonstrated at the gate of a hotel hosting Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, denouncing her independence agenda (Wang, 2018). In 2019, when anti-extradition-law protests erupted in Hong Kong, affronted mainland Chinese students studying in the West unflinchingly defended the central government's stance and confronted more critical students coming from the Special Administrative Region, sometimes with physical force (Cave, 2019; Meng, 2019). This global torrent of brisk Chinese patriotism has proved not only eye-catching but also politically significant.

The vast diasporic population's allegiance to and political support of the incumbent Chinese regime deserves careful scholarly attention. In the 20th century, Chinese people living overseas were known for their deeply-rooted rebellious and dissident heritage. They were actively affected by almost all

of the major socio-political upheavals in China from the 1911 Revolution, which toppled the last imperial dynasty, to the Tiananmen Movement of 1989, which gravely challenged the authority of the ruling Communist Party. With each revolutionary cataclysm, a tide of destitute, persecuted, and disbelieved people fled, reinforcing sojourners' distrust of the incumbent Chinese regime (Cheung, 2005). After the suppression of the 1989 Democratic Movement and the 1999 Falungong Movement, political exiles of the Communist regime formed international networks, manufacturing dissent and engaging in global anti-China activism (Chen, 2014a; Thornton, 2008). Indeed, the latest outpouring of pro-regime patriotic sentiment among Chinese people living overseas (particularly in the younger generation) is an extraordinary, puzzling phenomenon that demands empirical analysis (To, 2014).

Why are 21st-century authoritarian states, such as that of China, striving to cultivate extra-territorial political allegiance among their diasporas? How does the ruling autocratic regime in China manipulate representations of symbolic events to build pro-regime solidarity among Chinese people living beyond the nation's borders? How does the regime convert the mobilization around specific events into pro-regime political, economic, and diplomatic influence abroad? What can the party-state's strategic propaganda maneuvers tell us about the means through which autocratic regimes seek to extend their political control to their diasporic communities? In this research, we use China's extra-territorial propaganda as a case study to shed light on these important theoretical questions. We empirically explore accounts of alleged 'China insult' incidents by China News Service (CNS, or *Zhongguo Xinwenshe*), the external propaganda mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), from 2000 to 2017. We seek to demonstrate how the Chinese state uses symbolic resources, such as 'China insult' incidents, through extra-territorial propaganda to forge pro-regime political solidarity among its diasporic populations in the 21st century.

Combining content analysis and discourse analysis, we investigate 118 reported cases of 'China insult' incidents in 340 articles published by CNS over the abovementioned 17-year period. Triangulating quantitative and qualitative research methods, we categorize the 'China insult' discourses reported by China's extra-territorial propaganda apparatus, trace the evolution of the symbolic resources used in these discourses, identify the prevailing discursive framework, and explore the actual deployment of this framework to build up political solidarity among the population under its direct and indirect influence. Our research demonstrates that China's state-run propaganda is a crucial vehicle for the enhancement of state integrative capacity—the ability of a nation-state to construct pro-regime solidarity among its overseas subjects.

Propagandistic mobilization beyond national borders is not unique to China. Autocratic regimes around the world deploy symbolic instruments to advance their pro-regime political agendas and garner support from their overseas subjects. Russia deliberatively romanticizes its historical connection with the Russophone population in Ukraine to advance Moscow's diplomatic and military interests in Crimea (Kendall, 2015). The Iranian state promotes its shared nationalistic–religious identity with overseas Iranians, despite the longstanding hostility between the two, to earn their support and strengthen its domestic power (Pasetti, 2017). The Rwandan Patriotic Front government uses the population's traumatic memories of genocide to propagandize a connection with Rwandan people overseas (Reyntjens, 2013; Orjuela, 2018). In Syria, the Ba'ath regime leverages the foreign policy of Latin American countries through external propaganda targeting the Syrian diaspora (Galindo, Cecilia, & Elodie, 2014). In Ghana, the state is engaged in an ongoing campaign of cultural advocacy to its overseas citizens, seeking their assistance with national economic development (Kleist, 2013). Extra-territorial propaganda is a 21st-century tool for control by autocratic regimes that requires comparative political analysis.

State control beyond borders

The task of imposing state control on a transnational socio-political domain poses novel challenges to the traditional Weberian state, which is defined as a 'human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (Weber, 2004, pp. 310–311). Restricted by the presumptive scope of state power *juris et de jure*, the attempt to extend state control beyond national borders often leads to clumsy and counterproductive effects (Ragazzi, 2009; Moss, 2016). Legitimate state governments rarely carry out the direct physical persecution of rebellious subjects overseas. When they attempt such an undertaking, it often results in diplomatic crises and international sanctions (as in the case of Jamal Khashoggi). Imposing state control and political influence beyond national borders poses novel challenges to the Westphalian sovereign state.

When direct coercion is not possible, discursive and symbolic forms of control are applied (Collyer & Russell, 2015). Diasporas are geographically apart from their native lands and, in most cases, juristically free from the legal control of their home states. However, the political state can construct a symbolic 'home,' by forming a narrative of shared history, and claim itself as the owner and defender of the homeward memory. By doing so, it can establish an indirect yet powerful domination over its sojourning subjects (Collyer & Russell, 2015; Sökefeld, 2006). The potential efficacy of this

approach is due to the organic interpersonal fabric of transnational communities, which are manufactured by home-centric historical narratives and identity-based symbolic resources. If the official narrative and symbolism constructed and controlled by the state prevail in the existing diasporic networks, the ruling regime can forge extra-territorial support and propagate mobilizational resources.

In the 21st century, conditions are emerging that appear to be conducive to nation-states constructing transnational solidarity through the strategic deployment of symbolic resources. Technological developments in communication and transportation along with intensifying international trade and commerce have connected diasporic populations to the propaganda operations of their home states to an unprecedented degree (Hearn, 2012; Mullings, 2011; Anderson, 1992). International events and globally coordinated actions, such as national spectacles on the international stage, also help nation-states to extend their official discourses through a globalized network (Price & Dayan, 2008). Extra-territorial propaganda has become an important weapon for building the integrative capacity of nation-states today.

We define 'integrative capacity' as a nation-state's ability to construct pro-regime solidarity among its overseas subjects. It determines the extent to which a nation-state can effectively gather and deploy resources (material, political, or symbolic) to maintain solidarity among its diasporic population and thus manage major crises and threats, such as wars, catastrophes, or revolutions. While this research mainly focuses on the symbolic resource, the other two kinds of resources—namely, material resource (such as financial compensation) and political resource (such as access to the privileged political leadership to the home country)—are also significant constitutive components for the foundation of the Chinese state's integrative capacity. In practice, the three aspects of resources that form the foundation of a nation-state's integrative capacity are often interactive and intermingled. Globalization has encouraged nation-states to increase their integrative capacity and build transnational solidarity with their people living overseas. The governments of nation-states have two main concerns in this respect. They must prevent subjects living abroad, especially political dissidents, from threatening the security of the regime from the outside. They also seek to absorb the financial, political, and social resources of their growing diasporic populations into their national development projects.

In terms of China's large-scale state project, extra-territorial propaganda is used to aid the party-state in amassing integrative capacity in four ways. First, by dispersing carefully tailored discourses and sanctioning opposing voices, external propaganda promotes a unified interpretive framework for conceptualizing the socio-political reality of a country. This unified

framework subsequently forms a standardized meaning system that is centered around a series of key symbols shared among the diasporic population. Second, based on the shared meaning system, external propaganda instigates coordinated actions among overseas audiences in the form of demonstrations, state-directed spectacles, or even anti-government activities in foreign countries. Third, the mobilization of propaganda forges an integrated identity among the members of a diaspora through repetitive codified communications and coordinated activities. Last, in the long run, the extra-territorial state project aims to construct a stable, exclusive, and institutionalized diasporic network within host societies. Tactful extra-territorial propaganda operations effectively facilitate the emergence of a parallel 'symbolic state' outside China's legal boundaries. It is a phantom state that relies on shared symbolism and identity, rather than territorially defined Weberian coercion, to project control and influence on a transnational socio-political domain.

In China, momentum is building for extra-territorial propaganda operations that aim to forge patriotic solidarity among Chinese people overseas and use their political and diplomatic influence to the advantage of the ruling party-state. The purpose of this state project includes constructing a positive image of the PRC for the outside world and influencing other governments' foreign policy toward China. A Chinese party-state official responsible for diasporic affairs explained that:

> With the help of overseas Chinese, [we aim] to influence foreign governments and people, to build a friendly image of the [Chinese] state, to enhance our cultural 'soft power,' to create an international environment that is favorable to the safeguarding of national security and developmental agenda … and to protect the fundamental interests of China. (Chen, 2014b)

The essential goal of China's state project in nurturing pro-regime solidarity among its diasporic population has been documented by congressional commissions, think tanks, and the federal government of the United States. The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission warns that the Chinese party-state is facilitating 'overseas Chinese work' to 'use ethnic, cultural, economic, or political ties to mobilize sympathetic overseas Chinese communities—ideally of their own accord—to advocate for the interests of the CCP and marginalize its opponents' (Bowe, 2018, p. 7). The congressional commission continued that this effort is the 'CCP's subversion of democracy abroad'; as such, it poses a 'significant' challenge to the United States and other Western democracies (Bowe, 2018, p. 20). A report by the National Endowment for Democracy (2017), an important think tank, observed that 'what we have to date understood as [China's] authoritarian 'soft power' is better categorized as 'sharp power' that pierces, penetrates, or perforates the political and information environments

in the targeted countries.' (National Endowment for Democracy, 2017, p. 6).

'China insult' as a symbolic resource

Effective extra-territorial propaganda relies on the strategic deployment of symbolic resources that are concise, catchy, carefully tailored, and rich in implications. 'Symbolic resources,' as Zittoun and Gillespie (2013) argued, 'are cultural elements (i.e., created by people and loaded with meaning) that become resources in the process of being used by people to act upon the world, another person or themselves.' Usually, the meanings and implications of symbols take shape in dialogical processes between their manipulators and their users via two-way interactions. In contrast, the propaganda state always seeks to monopolize symbols for pro-regime ends. By repetitively and authoritatively applying such symbols, propagandists gloss over, or simply censor, all alternative definitions. They forge an implicit, orthodox definition for each symbol and possess it as a political resource.

Thus, 'China Insult' incidents have become a salient symbolic resource welcomed by the propagandists of the party-state. The term 'China Insult' evokes the traumatic history of the 'hundred years of humiliation' following the First Opium War in 1840, during which China was repeatedly invaded by industrial powers, and diasporic Chinese communities in the West were commonly subjected to verbal or physical abuse. The recollection of such collective memories has helped to revive the historically formed common identity of Chinese-ness and effectively mobilize the overseas diaspora.

Scholars of Chinese culture and identity have long noted that discourses on national humiliation are a prominent and unique character of the nationalist and integrative narratives of the Chinese nation. Such narratives are built on stories of real or legendary national humiliation and continue to be vehicles for strengthening the integrative capacity of the ruling party-state over its diasporic subjects (Cohen, 2009). As Wang Gungwu (1993) observed, once the overseas Chinese feel insulted or discriminated against in their host society, they become 'defensive and proud' (Wang, 1993, p. 932), and they quickly respond by affirming their motherland identity (see also Setijadi, 2016). This insight has been shared and well absorbed by the party-state's propagandists. In 2002, a senior Chinese propaganda official wrote,

> I notice that the West, especially the United States, habitually defames the Chinese … This makes the overseas Chinese even closer to their homeland. They hope that China can become powerful so that their status can be improved. This is an important basis for our external propaganda. (Huang, 2002, pp. 381–382)

The 'China Insult' incidents generate mobilizational power and offer rich historical and political implications that benefit the Chinese party-state's claims of legitimacy. Political leaders make tactical analogies between current problems and historical issues to manipulate people into supporting certain conclusions taught by the events of history (Khong, 1992). The struggle against invasion and insult forges an image of a united Chinese nation standing against Western aggression. This image suggests that a unified, centralized, and powerful state must be established to defend the people from real or imagined hostility from outside. Thus, all ethnic Chinese who share a common ancestry must rally together in the struggle for national dignity and prosperity. Each 'China Insult' is loaded with rich discursive information ripe for the prudent manipulation of the state toward the unification of Chinese communities worldwide under the flag of the Chinese Communist regime.

The long reach of China news service

The main venue for the Chinese party-state's external propaganda for the diaspora population is China News Service (CNS). We choose the CNS as a representative case to study China's extra-territorial propaganda for three reasons. First, the CNS is one of only two national-level news agencies in the PRC (the other is Xinhua News Agency), and it is the largest professional institution for overseas propaganda (Xin, 2006; Nyíri, 2014). CNS was founded in 1952 to 'counteract "the imperialists" anti-China propaganda machines who defame China and alienate the overseas Chinese and their motherland' (Wang, 1987, p. 3). Since then, as Stephen FitzGerald, a former Australian ambassador to Beijing described it, CNS has worked 'as an effective instrument for communication as the Chinese government could hope for,' enabling 'almost all Overseas Chinese to receive news about China and the diaspora Chinese communities around the world' (FitzGerald, 1972, p. 44)

Second, institutionally, CNS is under the joint auspices of the CCP's Central Propaganda Department and the State Administration of Overseas Chinese Affairs.[2] With the Party's increasing emphasis on the 'holistic external propaganda' strategy (Shambaugh, 2013; Brady, 2015), CNS has gained prominence in recent years. Its rank among the central propaganda institutions has increased (Kuaibao, 2019) as has its budget (Nyíri, 2014). CNS is institutionally and financially integrated with the party-state (see Figure 1), and it loyally implements the CCP's instructions and guidance on external propaganda.[3] On June 22, 2020, CNS was listed by the U.S. Department of State as a foreign mission 'effectively controlled by the government of the People's Republic of China' (U.S. Department of State, 2020).

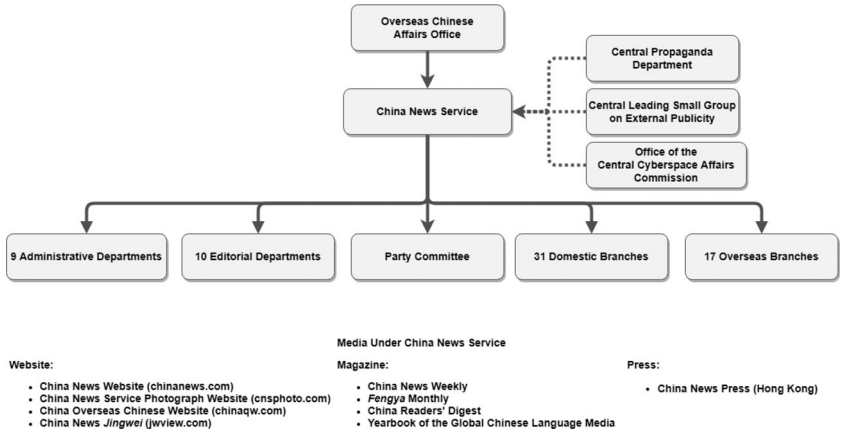

Figure 1. the institutional design of the CNS.
Source. Interview with Senior Official of CNS, July 3, 2018; CNS, "*About Us*".

Third, as a primary component of China's external propaganda machinery, CNS possesses considerable influence over the overseas Chinese. It feeds articles and news images to a wide variety of Chinese-language media outlets from traditional print newspapers to new forms of social media all over the world. In 2015, CNS had 31 domestic and 17 overseas branches and over 410 overseas media clients (CNS, 2020). These clients 'basically cover all of the mainstream overseas Chinese-language media—both traditional and online' (Lv, 2015, pp. 10–11). The diversity of publishing venues ensures that CNS exposure spans age- and occupational-groups among the overseas Chinese. CNS broadcasts about 100 news articles and 70 to 80 photographs per day, along with special features that total around 300,000 words of material per month. It also operates numerous websites, magazines, and presses (see Figure 1). Its website, *chinanews.com*, has around 200 million hits per day (CNS, 2020).

Typology of 'China insult'

Linguistically, the word *'ruhua'* in Chinese is a compound of 'humiliate' and 'China.' In practice, the term is a symbol of considerable flexibility and ambiguity. Our longitudinal examination of CNS reporting on 'China Insult' incidents, spanning 17 years, reveals that the definitions and uses of this symbolic resource have evolved along with China's increasing integration into the globalized world.

We coded every 'China Insult' case reported by CNS into five non-exclusive types, which were generated inductively to illuminate the scope of the concept in practice. A case could be categorized as more than one type, although most cases were straightforward examples of one type. In total,

we found 118 cases that CNS had reported as 'China Insult' cases since 2000. The five categories are as follows.

1) Hate speech: Hate speech or hate crime refers to racially based verbal abuse or a physical attack on ethnic Chinese people, without the use of a rational or quasi-rational argument or appeal. Other types of insults can accompany such speech.

2) Racial slurs or jokes: Racial slurs or racist jokes ridicule Chinese people with stereotypes or vilifications of China or Chinese people. These insults differ from hate speech in that they are not intentionally belligerent or aggressive. They are sometimes seen as harmless jokes until the Chinese propagandists censure them.

3) Criticisms of Chinese Politics: The party-state propagandists sometimes label foreign criticisms of Chinese domestic politics, and especially of the country's human rights record, 'China Insult' cases. For example, the Australian politician Clive Palmer accused the Chinese government of 'shooting their own people,' referring to the Communist Party's crackdown on the June Fourth Movement in 1989. Although Palmer argued that his comment only targeted the CCP, CNS called his comment a 'China Insult'.

4) Historical humiliation: This type of case refers to comments or performances that deliberately evoke or represent the traumatic memory of the 'century of humiliation' (in the years following the Opium Wars, China suffered foreign invasion and defeat in war). One example of a reported case in this category included a play staged in France that was called *No Chinese or Dogs Allowed* (CNS, 2000, Dec 6). In another, in Japan, the mayor of Nagoya denied the validity of narratives about the Nanjing Massacre (CNS, 2012b, Feb 23). These incidents connoted historical trauma around China's suffering in the past century and were deemed intentional attempts to humiliate all ethnic Chinese people.

5) Scapegoat Identifying: Chinese migrants and China's foreign policies are sometimes accused of being detrimental to the political, social, and economic environment of other countries. Such comments are occasionally defined as cases of 'China Insult.' For example, a U.S. senator published an advertisement that blamed his competitor's policy for allowing China to 'take jobs from America' (CNS, 2012a, Feb 9). Likewise, Clive Palmer argued that China 'steals natural resources' from Australia (CNS, 2014a, Aug 20). In such cases, CNS often argues that China has been loathly and unfairly identified as a 'scapegoat' for the domestic problems of the host country in question.

The PRC's propagandists tightly control the right to define the contents of useful symbolic resources. They also exercise their power by determining which offensive incidents are *not* examples of 'China Insult.' We discovered 11 reported cases in which the public spontaneously identified an event as a 'China Insult' and CNS declared that it was not.

These 11 cases involved lines in movies or remarks by movie stars. These rulings show that the party-state does not deploy the label of 'China Insult' lightly. A Korean movie star claimed that 'whenever the budget was tight, my dad sent me to China,' suggesting that it was easy to earn money from Chinese people. Chinese Internet users censured this star for insulting China, but CNS's chair journalist, Yu Lingxin, defended her, writing that

> Chinese people should not over-interpret it, nor should they escalate it to be a national humiliation … Today, as China steps into the world, we should abandon narrow-minded nationalism, and treat others with more tolerance (CNS, 2009, Nov 20).

Likewise, an article from CNS directly criticized Chinese netizens who took offense at the movie *Mission Impossible III* for its antiquated scenes of Chinese cities. CNS accused them of having a 'Cultural Revolution mindset' and inappropriately exaggerating the incident. The commentator asked, 'is China that easily upset by an action movie?' (CNS, 2006, Aug 2).

On many occasions, CNS has shown reluctance in permitting public opinion to decide what constitutes a 'China Insult.' Unofficial sources had initiated all 11 cases that CNS explicitly denied as 'China Insult' incidents. Five were from netizens, two from overseas media, one from 'people in Singapore,' (CNS, 2010a, Jun 22) and three were anonymous ('someone said'). This pattern exposes how the party-state uses CNS to defend its monopolization of 'China Insult' symbolism by refuting others' use of it.

Evolution of 'China insult' propaganda

In terms of deploying alleged 'China Insult' incidents to the advantage of the party-state, the external propaganda apparatus has actively learned and adjusted its strategies. During the preparation and staging of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, CNS propagandists discovered that symbolic attacks on China from the West could incite nationalist and patriotic zeal domestically and abroad. Since then, the 'China Insult' discourse has become a prevalent theme in the state's external propaganda operations.

Figure 2 shows a stacked line chart that visualizes the evolving focus of CNS reports on different types of 'China Insult' cases across time. We describe these changes as shifts in 'media attention.' We define the media attention given to a specific type of 'China Insult' in a given year as a function of three main factors: 1) the number of events reported; 2) the number of articles published; and 3) the ratio of the length of published articles in the given year to the mean of all published articles. Therefore, we calculate media attention with the following formula, adapted from Andrews and Neal (2010):

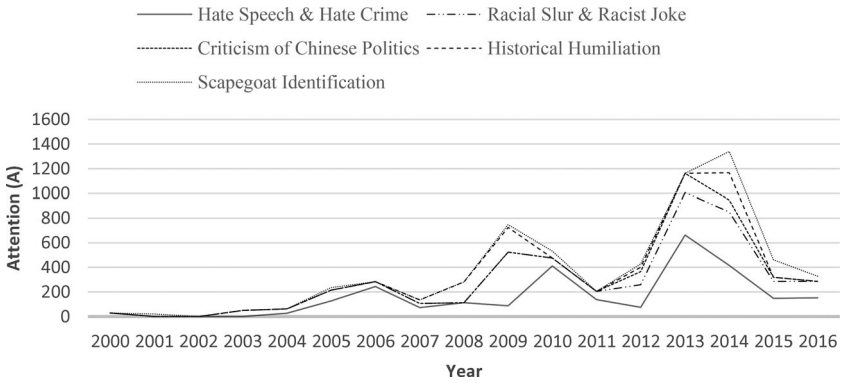

Figure 2. Attention by Year.

$$Attention_y = \sqrt{nEvent_y \times nArticle_y \times Length\ \ Ratio_y} \quad (1)$$

Figure 2 supports our argument, showing that there were three main phases in the evolution of 'China Insult' themed external propaganda. These phases reflected the learning process of the propaganda state. Before 2008, CNS coverage of 'China Insult' cases was anecdotal, sporadic, and dispersed. Investigations of the news articles revealed that they were simply factual reports of offensive events rather than instigative propaganda. They barely contained any attributional, interpretational, or agitational discourses. 'China Insult' was not yet used as a politically meaningful symbolic resource.

The second phase began in 2008 with the Olympic Games, which offered a watershed moment in the development of 'China Insult' propaganda. The party-state was dismayed by the worldwide boycotts and criticisms against it. However, the state propagandists learned that the overseas Chinese could be converted into valuable allies once they realise that the symbol of 'China' and all Chinese people were under attack. The propagandists began defining criticisms against the Chinese ruling regime as 'China Insult' incidents so that they could use them to encourage the overseas Chinese to defend the regime (CNS, 2008a, May 7).

Since 2012, the 'China Insult' discourse has become central to external propaganda, and propagandists have learned to apply it with finesse (Ding, 2015). Criticisms against the party-state are no longer a major source of alleged 'China Insult' cases. Instead, 'China Insult' incidents now involve local events that display racism and hate speech in foreign countries. Since 2012, the propagandists have continued to encourage the local Chinese community to defend its rights through street protests and election politics. The external propaganda effort is, in effect, facilitating political responses to non-political issues.

This shift in focus shows that the party-state propagandists noticed the potential risks of encouraging unruly nationalist protests around highly political issues. One such contentious topic was Japan's proposed nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, which led to major anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2012. Chinese officials realized that reacting to high-profile, politically charged incidents could backfire and generate domestic instability (Weiss, 2014). CNS began using more localized, mundane, and apolitical events from host countries, carefully coating them with 'China Insult' connotations, to strengthen pro-regime solidarity among members of the diaspora on the party-state's terms.

National distribution of 'China insult' cases

We find that geographically, the Chinese propaganda state's international reporting of 'China insult' incidents predominantly target audiences living in the West, especially the United States, Spain, Canada, and France. Compared with Southeast Asian countries, these Western powers host fewer overseas Chinese. The columns in Figure 3 indicate China's allocation of attention in its external propaganda efforts among countries accused of such offenses, as calculated by *Formula 1*. The line chart in Figure 3 shows the distribution of overseas Chinese among the major host countries. The mismatch between the attention of China's propaganda efforts and the size of diasporic Chinese communities in the targeted host societies is remarkable.

This geographical difference may be explained by the fact that overseas Chinese sojourning in Southeast Asian countries are more fully assimilated into local communities than their counterparts in the West are. The CCP has consistently encouraged diasporic Chinese populations living in Southeast Asia to integrate into their host societies since the 1950s. Additionally, compared with Western powers, Southeast Asian countries pose less of a diplomatic challenge to China and are thus less obvious targets for negative and agitative propaganda (Setijadi, 2016). Therefore, our hypothesis is that China's external propaganda outlets intentionally avoid reporting agitative 'China insults' to Chinese people living in Southeast Asia. However, further empirical research is needed to explore this hypothesis.

Toward a unified interpretive framework

For a political symbolic resource to be effective, it must be kept expressively simple and sentimentally instigative. However, simplicity in the propagandistic expression of symbolic resources can have dispersed and sometimes uncontrollable consequences for the state and societal

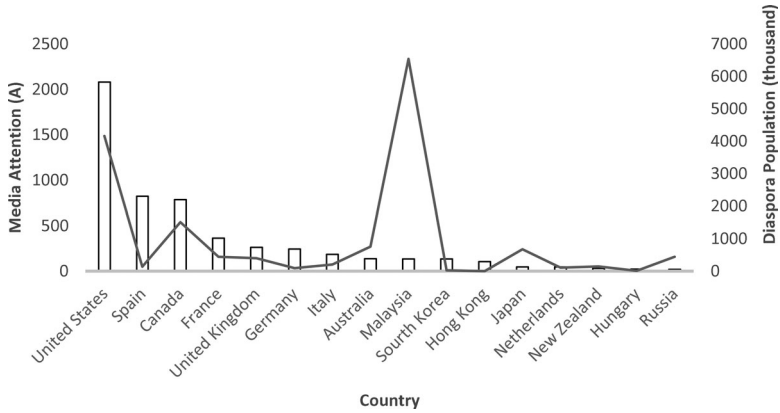

Figure 3. Attention by country.
Source. Poston Jr and Wong (2016)

stakeholders involved. Simple symbolic resources can be interpreted in various ways, and this variability implies contrasting political resolutions, which limit the potentiality of the symbolic resource to serve a given purpose. To streamline the implications of a symbolic resource toward a pro-regime end, the propagandists must control the power to design and develop a set of discourses around a central concept. The propagandists must control the attributive diagnosis of a discursive resource so that they can produce a consistent narrative and direct its impact toward a specific political goal.

The diagnosis discourse

Symbolic resources are always loaded with diagnoses of perilous socio-political realities. They involve the attribution of liability to certain societal or state actors, and they imply a seemingly definitive set of solutions to the targeted problems. The Chinese party-state's propaganda reporting of 'China Insult' cases has deftly constructed a discursive-narrative landscape that assumes a submissive nature of the Overseas Chinese communities, an historical memory of the old and weak China, the relative decline of the West and its attempts to demonize a rising Chinese nation.

In this discursive-narrative landscape, several layers of meaning are constructed and contested. Historically, this narrative indicates that the problem of insults to China dates to the late Qing Dynasty and that the Communist party-state is the chosen vehicle for the national mission to correct the wrongs of the past and restore China's dignity in a new era (Wang, 2014). In its news reports, op-eds, and editorials, CNS has insisted that foreign societies continue to inherit from previous generations their stereotypes of China as an undeveloped and inferior civilization (compared with the West) (CNS, 2013a, Nov 4).

Two significant implications are embedded in this carefully designed historical narrative. First, the hostility of the industrialized West toward China is a chronic problem that has plagued the nation since the Opium Wars (ca. 1840). Therefore, it cannot be blamed on the ruling party-state that took power in 1949. Second, contemporary China, in facing similar threats from the West, should learn from history about the traumatic consequences of having a weak, decentralized state. CNS implies that the outcome of this necessary learning process appears to be that the Chinese nation must maintain capable and protective state power in the form of the PRC party-state.

Globally, this diagnostic narrative emphasizes the so-called 'jealousy' of a declining West, as it faces a rising China. The West's insults to the Chinese people are deemed reactions to the changing balance of power. The propagandists claim that China today is no longer a corrupted patriarchal empire on the verge of collapse. Instead, it is a rising superpower that inspires envy and fear in the Western world. According to CNS, powerbrokers in the West are concerned that a thriving China could 'challenge their hegemonic status in the international system and affect their vested interests' (CNS, 2008a, May 7). One CNS story even argues that 'the Americans … very much fear that the world will become an 'Age of China,' so they curse China and degrade China's achievements with blatant insults' (CNS, 2013a, Nov 4). A more recent CNS article featured a 'homeless white male in Maryland' who verbally abused the overseas Chinese community, as he thought that skilled Chinese laborers had taken his job (CNS, 2013a, Nov 4). Many feature articles have portrayed Western society as being in a deep recession, and its people as increasingly destitute and desperate (CNS, 2014b, Jul 16). 'Insults derive from jealousy,' concluded one CNS commentator (CNS, 2007a, Apr 16).

The propagandists also argue that Chinese people are too apathetic and that diasporic Chinese communities are too disunited to fight back and defend their dignity. Thus, the argument goes that the overseas Chinese must rely on the leadership and organizational resources provided by the party-state for their own good. Only the PRC has the power to enhance community solidarity and protect the national dignity of all ethnic Chinese people. Because the overseas Chinese must be made to realize this truth, CNS repeatedly criticizes them for their isolated lifestyles, their reluctance to fight for their own rights and dignity, and their disinterest in local politics (CNS, 2013n, Nov 21). CNS propagandists often make comparisons between the diasporic Chinese community and other ethnic minority communities in the West to make the case that only a cohesive, united front of self-defense can protect the rights and dignity of Chinese people worldwide. CNS explains that 'dignity is earned, not gained through forbearance or

compliance' (CNS, 2013l, Nov 16). The party propagandists further elaborate in another article,

> The African and Hispanic ethnicities were long discriminated against by the mainstream society [of the West]. They often directly confront the Caucasian community … The overseas Chinese are nothing like the African, Hispanic, or other ethnic groups that are characterized by a strong sense of mutual aid and cohesion; because of this lack of solidarity, the hate crimes targeting us overseas Chinese are rampant (CNS, 2010b, Jun 25).

Unified Pan-Chinese identity under the patronage of the party-state

A state with strong integrative capacity actively cultivates, captures, and deploys a communal identity to build in-group solidarity. It propagates a shared traumatic collective memory and warns of real or imagined danger from a common foe or potential enemy. It brands and claims itself to be the sole patron and caretaker of the security, dignity, and prosperity of the constructed community. Then, it deploys this forged identity to solicit political support beyond its national borders and advocate its political agenda by manipulating its target audience's thoughts and behaviors.

The concern over cases of 'China Insult' serves as a discursive instrument for cultivating a pan-Chinese identity. This propagandistic focus connects the ill-treatment of Chinese people worldwide to their shared memory of China's 'century of humiliation.' The propagandists imply that there is a consistent historical pattern of Western imperialists persecuting the Chinese. The Chinese party-state claims that it is the patron of the newly constructed pan-Chinese community, and as such, it purportedly stands ready to protect the whole Chinese diaspora from discrimination and humiliation (CNS, 2012c, Jan 14). According to one CNS article, the Chinese state will 'pay great attention and offer aid as much as possible to … all its overseas descendants around the globe' to ensure they 'are not to be bullied' (CNS, 2013d, Nov 11a).

The party-state also deploys a pan-Chinese identity to advance its own political agenda. The claim of protector of the global Chinese population is meant to justify the party-state's political infiltration and diplomatic intervention overseas (CNS, 2007b, Jul 16). A CNS article commented on a 'China Insult' incident that 'brings a palpable sense of discrimination to the overseas Chinese.' The article went on the describe, 'they feel hurt; they are not pretending it … Now they pound the table and stand up, not only demanding fair treatment from American society but also asking for help from Chinese people all around the world and the Chinese government (CNS, 2013d, Nov 11a).

The forged pan-Chinese identity also plays a crucial role in the party-state's discourse on Taiwan, creating a symbolic unification with the de facto self-governing territory. CNS often presents a shared sense of victimhood over a foreign offense, such as Japanese politicians' denials of the Nanjing Massacre, as a sign of shared cultural and moral roots and, thus, a constructed image of fraternity across the Taiwan Strait. These messages imply the ultimate emotional and political unity of the Chinese nation (CNS, 2012b, Feb 23).

Discourse on china's national rejuvenation

A method often used by propagandists to build integrative capacity for their states entails the construction of a grand state project in which every intended audience can find a role and feel involved (Kenez, 1985). In presenting such projects, the propagandists carefully indicate the roles for all members so that they can recognize themselves as part of the great mission and integrate with others in meeting the solemn call of the state. As Harold Lasswell (1938) argued, 'the call to unity is essentially a call to history' (p. 56). In 1997, the Chinese party-state initiated a large project called 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' (*zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*). 'Rejuvenation' implies that there was a glorious past before a setback occurred and indicates that strong momentum is necessary for the return to greatness. This slogan reminds people of the depressed 'century of humiliation' while also reiterating the central role of the CCP in the national dream of reviving its past glory.

Another recurrent theme in CNS external propaganda is that the world has changed its demeaning attitude toward China because of the pressure applied by the ascending Chinese party-state. For example, a CNS article reviewed the history of Japan's official appellation of China, from 'Cina' (*Shina*) to 'China' (*Chūgoku*). This article argued that in history, Japan has always used the derogatory word 'Cina' to address China. Only after Communist China 'defeated' the American imperialists in the Korean War, China finally earned the respect of the Japanese people, who then began to use the more cautious term 'China' (CNS, 2012b, Feb 23). Likewise, CNS external propaganda hailed the official apologies of the U.S. and Canadian governments for the humiliating Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Head Tax collected between 1886 and 1923 as signs of recognition of 'the development and rise of China' (CNS, 2012d, Jun 20). CNS associated the welfare of the diasporic communities with the ascending of China's power status, claiming that 'China's rise is fascinating—the time that the overseas Chinese could be humiliated at will by the Westerners has passed' (CNS, 2012d, Jun 20).

To the extent that the rise of the party-state has improved the conditions of diasporic communities, the overseas Chinese are encouraged to devote themselves to the development of the motherland. This devotion is described as the 'fundamental way' and the 'best choice of action' for tackling humiliation and discrimination (CNS, 2013i, Nov 15a).

Preventing propaganda from backfiring

'Party propaganda,' as Elizabeth J. Perry argued, 'does not always strike a chord with its intended audience. Even worse … officially approved symbols and slogans can be hijacked for alternative purposes' (Perry, 2017, p. 47). Persuasive propaganda materials must be carefully structured if they are to have the intended effects. Facts and opinions must be arranged and presented to construct a public 'pseudo-environment' (Lippmann, 1997, p. 10). This semi-fictional environment exaggerates certain aspects of the facts and removes others from the picture to serve the designated political aim. It is uncommon for propagandists to tell blatant lies, but it is necessary for them to decide what should or should not be propagated and to manipulate the storytelling (Ellul, 1973). To prevent the coverage of 'China Insult' incidents from backfiring on the regime and to help the symbolic resources remain effective for integrating and mobilizing the overseas Chinese, CNS has developed two discursive strategies: tailoring stories and defaming information sources.

Omitting and reshaping the story

Since the 1980s, the Department of Propaganda has frequently warned CNS external propagandists not to reprint news from Western media without careful tailoring. The aim has been to avoid jeopardizing the image of the Chinese government among the overseas Chinese. In the *Internal Guidance* (*neibu tongxun*) of the Department, this instruction is reiterated as a principle: 'Do not unwittingly promote the incorrect viewpoints of the West' (Internal Report, cited in Brady, 2008, p. 99). A comparison between the 'China Insult' stories reported by CNS and those covered in the non-Chinese media reveals that Chinese propagandists omit information that challenges the views of the regime or may reach China and spark domestic protests there.

The external propagandists are careful to censor all sensitive information, such as reports about the Tiananmen Movement or the Chinese government's ethnic policies. In 2014, CNS reported on Clive Palmer's public criticism that the Chinese were 'mongrels' who 'shoot their own people,' who 'haven't got a justice system,' and who 'want to take over Australia' (ABC,

2014). Although this incident, defined as a 'China Insult,' received expansive reporting and criticism on CNS, all clues of the politician's implicit references to the Tiananmen Movement were carefully erased (CNS, 2014a, Aug 20).

CNS also carefully edits commentary on the Tibetan policy out of its reports, because it is a sensitive topic for the Chinese party-state. In 2008, a CNS article reported that Sharon Stone, an American actress, had apologized for calling the Sichuan earthquake, which caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people, 'karma.' The article claimed that the quick apology by the actress showed 'the astonishing power of Chinese people' (CNS, 2008b, Jun 2). However, the article omitted that the actress had said that the earthquake was 'karma' for 'the way the Chinese treated the Tibetans,' and 'when you are not nice, then bad things happen to you,' hinting the party-state's control of the region (TVB, 2008).

Defaming the information source

When meeting the requirements of journalistic professionalism conflicts with the goals of party-state propaganda, propagandists try to balance their reporting of the facts with added background information that is conducive to the party-state's aims.

The Chinese external propaganda machine realizes the pressure to demonstrate journalistic professionalism. Its officials understand that if the reporting does not meet professional standards, the credibility of the propaganda will be compromised. The growing concern with credibility is reflected in an observation published in the journal *International Communications*. This journal provides official guidelines for external propaganda and notes that 'we seldom quote the 'target' of our criticism—this has considerably compromised our credibility;' the concern is that the propaganda is not presenting the views of both sides (Han & Ping, 2009, pp. 21–22). Quoting both sides of a debate is a requirement of journalistic professionalism, but this practice must be held in tension with the requirements of propaganda, which reaches its maximum effect when only the 'correct' opinion is allowed (Meerloo, 2015). Therefore, the authors in the *External Communication* article recommended that journalists should quote their opponents, but they must also provide guiding information to invalidate the other side.

On March 18, 2009, an article presenting a 'China Insult' incident quoted in full a comment by Thomas Mann, a former member of the European Parliament, that China's celebration of a 'Tibetan Serfs' Emancipation Day' was 'an unprecedented humiliation' for Tibetans. However, the Chinese propaganda agent clarified for the readers that this Western politician had

'boycotted [the] Beijing Olympics' in the past year (Han & Ping, 2009). Although these pieces of information were seemingly unrelated, the mention of this rejection of Chinese pride suggested an allegedly persistent anti-China bias and, thus, weakened the politician's criticism. A similar strategy soon became standard practice among CNS journalists (CNS, 2013j, Nov 15b; CNS, 2014d, Jul 17; CNS, 2015, Jun 7). By reporting seemingly unrelated incidents from the critics' backgrounds, CNS could portray the individuals as irrational, abnormal, or prejudicial. The conflict between journalistic professionalism and propaganda was attenuated by the deliberate defamation and delegitimization of figures representing the 'wrong' side of the debate.

Mobilization and de-mobilization

The deployment of symbolic resources in external propaganda can be undertaken for practical goals. CNS's tactical reporting on 'China Insult' incidents reveals how events become news, news informs propaganda, propaganda frames the discourse, discourse instigates action—and action plays to the state's advantage. The party-state's propaganda apparatus drives the mobilizational process that creates and maintains long-term, identity-based, action-ready, pro-regime networks outside its territories. In this section, we examine one influential 'China Insult' incident to scrutinize the cycle of mobilization.

On October 16, 2013, a six-year-old child on Jimmy Kimmel Live (a late-night ABC television show) said that the solution to the U.S. debt crisis was to 'kill everyone in China.' The talk-show host responded by saying that 'it was an interesting idea' (CGTN, 2013). After several days of a 'window period,' this incident resulted in mass protests in major cities all over America for roughly a month. The mobilization of the overseas Chinese in response to this incident displayed the typical cycle of mobilization that follows a 'China Insult' case.

At first, the CNS did not take the incident seriously; but it soon came to utilize and organize the public indignation. Three days after the incident, CNS discussed the event in an amused tone, saying that the child's comment was 'very funny' and that 'Jimmy Kimmel is widely popular with audiences because of his humor and wit' (CNS, 2013o, Oct 19). However, the incident fermented in seeming silence, it eventually enraged many Chinese people living overseas. Appeals to protest began to circulate in online forums frequented by ethnic Chinese in the West, and the propaganda apparatus of the PRC realized the potential political value in this incident. The propagandists quickly began evoking nationalist sentiment among the diasporic population (CNS, 2013p, Oct 22).

From October 26 to November 9, increasingly intense street protests by overseas Chinese communities erupted across the U.S. In this wave of collective action, CNS served as an advocate, agitator, and adviser for the protesters. In its reporting, CNS intentionally blocked or tailored information about the apologies from ABC and Kimmel. It published a timetable for the upcoming protests and provided an interpretive framework to amplify and rationalize the outcry. The mobilization of the external propaganda apparatus proved effective. On November 9, large demonstrations took place in 27 American cities. CNS claimed these events to be 'the greatest in scale ever organized by the American Chinese since the establishment of the United States 200 years ago' (CNS, 2013b, Nov 5).

However, the mobilization of social protest denotes a call for a new, more just arrangement of society. This objective requires that the mobilization move into a de-mobilization phase, which involves a dampening of street protests and a redirecting of mobilized resources toward a more permanent, institutionalized political shift in relations. The ABC 'China Insult' incident entered the de-mobilization phase when CNS began highlighting the apologies issued by ABC—some even before the mass movement but were deliberately underreported then—and the extensive support and sympathy for the anti-humiliation protests among ordinary American people (CNS, 2013c, Nov 8; CNS, 2014c, Jul 7). The voices that proposed escalating the boycott campaign were soon lost in a series of CNS reports claiming that the *majority* of the diasporic groups had accepted the apologies (CNS, 2013f, Nov 12a; CNS, 2013g, Nov 12b).

According to CNS, the prevention of future 'China Insult' incidents required strengthening the overseas Chinese community's political power through four strategies. First, CNS emphasized that overseas Chinese people needed to establish an institutionalized network for collective action against potential 'China Insult' incidents in the future (CNS, 2013k, Nov 15c). CNS argued that the overseas Chinese had long lacked a 'credible and representative organization.' Therefore, 'their power is dispersed and their appeals inconsistent' (CNS, 2013h, Nov 12c). In response, during the de-mobilization phase, a 'Federation for the Rights of All-American Chinese' (*quanmei huaren quanyi lianmeng*) was established upon the organization of overseas Chinese leaders (CNS, 2013m, Nov 18).

Second, CNS advocated that overseas Chinese actively participate in local elections to fundamentally advance their own interests (CNS, 2013e, Nov 11b; CNS, 2013q, Oct 29). One CNS article cited the suggestion by Samuel Tinsing Mok, a Chinese American Chief Financial Officer of the U.S. Department of Labor, that the diasporic Chinese communities should 'help qualified and talented overseas Chinese to be high officials in American government so that the Chinese could have a say in decision making' (CNS, 2014e, Nov 1).

Third, CNS urged diasporic communities to support political candidates with Chinese backgrounds. The external propagandists published soft advertisements to promote candidates with Chinese backgrounds by highlighting their contributions during anti-discrimination struggles. With its reports of the protests in the U.S., CNS disseminated and promoted the names of Chinese American politicians, such as Judy May Chu, Ed Chau, Ted Lieu, and Grace Meng. When elections approached, CNS propaganda highlighted the names of 'veterans' and 'new stars' among the Chinese American candidates, arguing if they were to be elected, it would 'make history' and 'bring positive influence to future political participation of the Chinese ethnicity' (CNS, 2014e, Nov 1). CNS urged the overseas Chinese community to vote as a 'fundamental way' to improve their status in American society (CNS, 2014f, Nov 3). Senior party-state officials also echoed this policy. He Yafei, then Vice Director of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, suggested in 2013 that

> The overseas Chinese need to take part in mainstream political parties, participate in local elections, join the governments in their respective host societies, and make claims through activities, such as lobbying or petitioning … We have to do a better job in exerting a positive impact on the legislatures, mass media, and think tanks in these foreign countries. We should also influence the influential people in these foreign societies through our diasporic population. (He, 2013)

Fourth, CNS emphasized that the fundamental solution to prejudice against Chinese people was to build a strong motherland. Therefore, the political alliances cultivated in foreign countries should come to the aid of the PRC regime when needed. The party state's external propaganda linked the well-being of the overseas Chinese to stability and prosperity under the ruling regime (CNS, 2005, Nov 22). According to CNS, the frequency and intensity of 'China Insult' incidents largely depended on Beijing's determination to press the American media with diplomatic resources (CNS, 2013d, Nov 11a). Therefore, the 'essential way' for the overseas Chinese to protect the rights and interests of their community was to identify with the PRC and contribute to the development of their motherland (CNS, 2013q, Oct 29).

Conclusion

In this article, we explore the PRC's deployment of symbolic resources to enhance its integrative capacity and build solidarity among diasporic Chinese. We discover that through extra-territorial propaganda, the Chinese state has successfully extended its political influence and constructed pro-regime political solidarity beyond its borders. The findings of this investigation are significant in three ways. First, our research helps to answer

seminal yet relatively under-studied questions about international aspects of regime survival. The PRC is actively seeking to integrate the many Chinese diasporic communities worldwide as part of its blueprint for rejuvenating the country. The regime also aims to prevent diasporic Chinese from opposing the regime from abroad. The concept of integrative capacity captures this crucial aspect of state capacity in serving the survival of the regime, which has long been understudied. Second, our research contributes to the study of state mobilization by demonstrating how a state organizes and elicits support from social groups that are not directly under its jurisdiction. As Marlies Glasius (2018, p. 179) pointed out, 'authoritarian rule should not be considered a territorially bounded regime type, but rather as a mode of governing people through a distinct set of practices.' Third, this research offers a valuable empirical investigation of the operation of China's external propaganda system.

'China insult' discourses represent a systematic packaging of symbolic resources and historical analogs used by the party-state's external propaganda apparatus to cultivate pro-regime transnational solidarity. The party-state monopolizes the rhetorical potential of evocations of the nation's historical trauma to frame contemporary political incidents. In doing so, it seeks to control the timing and intensity of the discursive sanctioning of specific political incidents, actions, comments, and individuals. Once a political incident has been identified as a 'China insult,' external propaganda is used to mobilize overseas Chinese to sanction the insult.

The repetition of such political maneuvers creates a pro-regime force outside the boundaries of the party-state. 'China insult' discourses imagine a pan-Chinese identity to cement the ties between ethnic Chinese people from all over the world and cultivate transnational solidarity among them. This solidarity is based on the construction of a common historical trauma, the common suffering of humiliation, and a common contemporary enemy. Accordingly, the CCP presents itself as the patron of the pan-Chinese identity and proposes that it alone can protect the dignity, interests, and well-being of all ethnic Chinese, regardless of their nationalities. The CCP purports to stand ready to act, whether discursively or substantially, to defend Chinese people abroad. Finally, the CCP claims that the global pan-Chinese community recognizes the legitimacy of China's patronage. This assertion is based on the alleged reliance of overseas Chinese communities on the CCP to handle the threat of insults to all Chinese people and CNS's publicity of the regime's responsiveness to the needs of diasporic communities.

The influence of external propaganda extents from discourses to political practices. Accentuating the severity of threats from foreign societies, as reflected in the frequency of 'China insult' incidents, the party-state

encourages the establishment of an international pan-Chinese and pro-China network. This network nurtures and practices its solidarity through repetitive mobilization against 'China insult' incidents, which can only be identified by the external propaganda apparatus of the party-state. The party-state gradually molds an overseas pro-China force that is networked, organized, and ready to mobilize resources in support of the regime. The external propaganda effort is a state-mobilized meaning-making process that actively yet discreetly forges a pro-regime system of interpretation. This system is located outside China and is deeply embedded in host societies. Once activated in response to a 'China insult' incident, it can swiftly mobilize and organize to develop significant political momentum. This network has been cultivated to defend and support the PRC regime from within diaspora-hosting countries.

Our research finds that from 2000 to 2017, the CCP significantly refined its strategies for extra-territorial propaganda. The state did not deliberately mobilize China's diasporas until their political potential was fully manifested during the 2008 Olympic Games. Since then, the CCP has been actively approaching its diaspora for political reasons through extra-territorial propaganda. Over time, China's propaganda has become increasingly covert and apolitical, but at the same time more systematic and effective. This clearly reveals the processes of learning and adaptation of China's propaganda state in its dealings with overseas Chinese communities. In all, China's discreet extra-territorial propaganda operations construct a 'symbolic state' outside its sovereign territory that projects control and influence over a transnational socio-political domain through symbolism and identity politics.

Our research has two main limitations, which suggest directions for further research. First, we do not study the receiving end of extra-territorial propaganda. We only study the CCP's various strategies in terms of approaching overseas Chinese who, regardless of nationality, can and do consume Chinese news. We by no means wish to claim that all ethnic Chinese people without Chinese nationality have automatic loyalty to the Chinese state. We will explore the effects of propaganda in our follow-up research. Second, public opinion on China among overseas Chinese is highly divergent. The anti-Beijing international dissent network has not lost its appeal; it remains a major competitor and challenger to the ideology, discourses, framing, and solidarity advocated by the extra-territorial propaganda operations of the party-state. We hypothesize that in communities with higher concentrations of new migrants from China, it is more difficult for the dissenting network to maintain its influence. However, again, further empirical research is needed to explore this contentious process.

Notes

1. Wang Gungwu (1993) distinguished between 'overseas Chinese' (*huaqiao*; Chinese nationals temporarily residing overseas) and 'Chinese overseas' (*huaren*; Chinese descendants who are not Chinese citizens). In this research, we consider diasporic audiences who can consume Chinese language media content. Pursuant to Wang (1993), our definition does not include people from Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan.
2. Interview with CNS Senior Official, July 3, 2018. [*HREC Reference Number: EA1703070*].
3. Ibid.

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