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Structure of the book

Part I of this book zooms in on China's domestic dimension. It first discusses language and power. It then looks at how propaganda in China is formulated, created and disseminated. It analyses the sender – the Party – and the receiver – the People/ the family/ society. It shows how the content of propaganda changes over time, and how it has evolved into the total propaganda scenario that China uses today, influencing how the Chinese perceive national and personal identity and how China is perceived on a global level. It studies contemporary Chinese propaganda from the ground up, starting from concrete messages in all kinds of formats in public life in China. It explores Chinese propaganda practices today, analysing organisation, text and images, patterns, topics, methods, content, symbols, formats of propaganda, locations and the changes in focus over time. It looks at how China uses propaganda and communication to influence and mould the Chinese mind, as well as trying to influence the image and perception of China on a global scale. It aims to reveal how official propaganda is created to conflate personal existential longings with central government goals, in China and abroad.

The topics presented in Part I represent the results of the analysis of thousands of slogans. This book does not recount a chronological story from Mao to today. Few things in China are chronological, and certainly not propaganda, which is the story of multiple overlapping topics put out simultaneously. Often the topic-focused slogans have multiple layers of meaning. Some campaigns last for more than 50 years, others are focused on one particular event, like the Olympic games or the Shanghai Expo. Many campaigns run over a period of many years, or are revived again and again. Some are created to maintain order in society or propagate practical topics like hygiene, safety or health. The majority however are about spiritual civilisation and about the way the Chinese should view identity, nation, the Party, and life itself.

This part looks at how propaganda is conceptualised and implemented, and at the variety of top-down discourses from the point of view of the creator of propaganda rather than that of its intended audience. We analyse physical forms like posters, digital screens, television, internet, complex constructions and installation, and investigate content, style, iconography, and locations where propaganda is set up. We look at format and content, underpinning discourses in text messages, symbols and icons. We look at who sends the message, who is addressed and who receives it, what is being said, how that changes over time, and how it is said.

Part II looks at the rise of China, its internationalisation and globalisation, and at the methods China uses to build global power. In this part, we discuss how Chinese and non-Chinese actors play an active role in producing discourse and in helping to spread it, both in China and worldwide.

The Olympic games in 2008 were a major event involving the entire Chinese population. It was a chance for China to show its strength. The official promise of the CPC to make China strong again motivated individual Chinese people to participate and contribute to successful Olympics. The Chinese were more than happy to follow the government in giving face to China and took it as a personal cause.

Although China had been building influence abroad over a length of time under previous presidents, many things changed when Xi Jinping came onto the stage. China's economy had grown spectacularly for decades. The scale of economic transformation had also resulted in the wasteful allocation of resources, manifested in over-building with roads leading nowhere, new airports with little activity, empty buildings in cities. To keep the economic motor running, China wanted to continue building. The OBOR was a brilliant idea.

Along with investments and infrastructure, Chinese propaganda and censorship spread across the globe. Not only are Chinese people now contributing to

the Chinese dream, but also non-Chinese actors are subject to what China wants. The establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the launch of the OBOR with its promise of seemingly endless opportunities immediately resonated with people, organisations, and companies across the world and resulted in eagerness to cooperate with China, turning a blind eye to potentially unwanted long-term consequences. This process is ongoing and seems to be accelerating, with international top academic publishers giving in to censorship, with innovative companies dreaming of becoming part of the Chinese success story, while even Chinese authors comment on the Western illusion of China's innovation.¹⁴

By now people across the globe dance for China when the CPC requests it. During the Chinese New Year Gala, pinnacle of Chinese propaganda, foreigners now dance for the Chinese. The Chinese New Year Dragon dances organised across the world in recent years invite foreigners to dance for China. People across the world show readiness to dress up like Chinese, to perform, dance, sing like Chinese, and to wave the Chinese flag. Foreigners dancing for China symbolise China's growing global influence. Chinese and non-Chinese are now producing power and spreading Chinese propaganda.

Chinese Propaganda Seducing the World offers a detailed and intensely researched study of the roots and development of China's national myth now flowering in the context of China's superpower status.