

Promoting Alternative Views in a Multipolar World:

# BRICS and their Evolving Role in Developing Media Markets



9th Symposium Forum Media and Development (FoME) 2013

Promoting Alternative Views in a Multipolar World:

# BRICS and their Evolving Role in Developing Media Markets

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Forum Medien und Entwicklung  
Forum Media and Development

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In collaboration with:

*Catholic Media Council  
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Concept and  
organisation of  
the symposium: Christiane Käsgen

*Views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors.  
They do not necessarily reflect the position of the FoME members.*

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Promoting Alternative Views in a Multipolar World:

BRICS and their Evolving Role in Developing Media Markets.

9th Symposium Forum Media and Development , 10/11 October, 2013, Berlin;

Stuttgart: Robert Bosch Stiftung; Aachen: Catholic Media Council, 2014

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# Preface

In the course of their economic expansion, the emergent powers have recognized the value of “soft power” in international relations. Especially the BRICS countries, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, are no longer leaving the field of global communications to Western nations. They are taking a more and more active role in the allocation of information and images on the Internet and on television screens, promoting alternative views on political, social, economic and cultural discourses globally or in regions that are of strategic interest for them.

China and Russia consider the expansion of international media as part of their public diplomacy and counterbalance to Western-centric perspectives. China is additionally involved, particularly in Africa, in media development cooperation, and offers media training, collaboration with local media, study trips for journalists, and investments for technological innovations. India and Brazil, on the other hand, influence the media and public-opinion market by way of their popular private film and television industries.

The 9<sup>th</sup> FoME Symposium in Berlin on 10 and 11 October 2013, organized by the Robert Bosch Stiftung in cooperation with the Forum Media and Development, illuminated the recent activities of the global players in international media markets.

Media researchers, journalists, representatives of media development organizations and political scientists discussed on what premises the

emerging states communicate in developing and transition countries. What are their strategies and concepts? Which journalistic standards are imparted? How does the way they report about developing countries differ to Western broadcasters? How are these new actors perceived in the target countries in comparison to Western organizations? And, in consequence, how do Western organizations react to changes in the increasingly competitive environment of media markets, as well as media development cooperation?

Global power structures are shifting not only through “hard factors”, like economic or military power, but also by interpreting world affairs and distributing cultural products. Nowadays, globalization includes “emerging media flows from large countries with old histories and new global aspirations” as Daya Thussu concludes in his key note. With this publication as a follow-up on the symposium, we aim to deepen the debate about BRICS, their evolving role in developing media markets and the further implications also for media assistance of Western organizations. We would like to sincerely thank all authors for their contributions to this conference report.

We hope you enjoy reading the latest FoME publication and look forward to constructive debates in the future.

Christiane Käsger  
Media and Journalism Programs, Robert Bosch Stiftung



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 9<sup>th</sup> symposium of the Forum Media and Development (FoME) invited academics and media practitioners to discuss the BRICS and their evolving role in developing media markets. The “leading emerging economies”<sup>1</sup> – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and since 2011, South Africa – receive global attention also for their political aspirations to gain more influence on global development agendas. Especially China and Russia consider media an important part of their public diplomacy aspirations, while the private media industries of Brazil and India are gaining increasing shares of the entertainment industries in developing countries.

The publication follows the structure of the symposium. In each of the country case studies the aims and strategies of using media as a soft power are explicated, the range of investments and perceived impacts are described from the perspective of the BRICS country, followed by the experiences of the “recipient country”.<sup>2</sup>

**Key Note:**  
**Soft power and emerging nations:**  
**Soft rise of the**  
**power of the rest**  
**Daya Thussu, University**  
**of Westminster**

In his keynote address, Daya Thussu, Professor of International Communication at Westminster University, London, describes the soft power of emerging nations as “The Soft Rise of the Power of the Rest

”. He outlines the new patterns of global and regional media flows, with new actors challenging US-dominance of news and entertainment contents and suggests the strengthening of a potential *Chindian* contribution, especially in development communication.

## Country Cases China and South Africa

**Chinese Media Development in Africa:**  
**From Charm Offensive**  
**to Charm Defensive**  
**Anbin Shi**  
**Tsinghua University**

Range and objectives of the state promoted inclusion of media in the Chinese “Go Global Strategy”, accounting for economic and strategic aims<sup>3</sup>, are outlined by Anbin Shi, Professor of Media and Cultural Studies, Tsinghua University, Beijing. Although China’s global *charm offensive*, so his résumé, yields eligible results with positive attitudes of African audiences towards China, he proposes readjustments of strategies into a *charm defensive*: The interaction between Chinese media outlets and local communities in Africa should be increased. This strategy should include private entrepreneurs of a broadcasting and film industry that generated 60bn dollars in 2013<sup>4</sup>, as well as non-governmental organisations “to enhance credibility and efficacy”, and “the conveyance of a consistent value system” to African audiences, to sell *the Chinese Dream* as an alternative to the *American Dream*.

**South African perceptions of**  
**Chinese soft power initiatives:**  
**A firm place for China on**  
**the news agenda**  
**Herman Wasserman,**  
**Rhodes University**

Herman Wasserman, Professor and Deputy Head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, illustrates the “firm place for China on the news agenda” and presents “South African perceptions of Chinese soft power initiatives”. South Africa, which joined the BRICS’ group in 2011, is considered an important regional actor, specifically in Southern Africa. The article focuses on the questions, how the relationship between South Africa and the other BRICS countries is reported in the media and how these changes are viewed by journalists and editors. Not surprisingly, “in a country with a robust

**“China’s perspective on Africa  
is not yet mainstream”**

**Jillo Kadida, *The Star*, Nairobi  
interviewed by  
Sergio Grassi,  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**

culture of free and open debate, Chinese investment in the media has been met with some controversy”. He introduces “preliminary research” on the coverage “which seems to be focused on China and has been fairly balanced, with the exception of Russia which tends to get negative coverage”. The research even shows that South African media have “already displayed an attitude of “cautious optimism” towards increased Chinese involvement on the continent”.

Jillo Kadida, Chief Reporter for *The Star* in Nairobi, where the state news agency Xinhua has opened the African regional office, cannot corroborate a broad impact of Chinese investments in the reporting infrastructure in her country. She confirms, that journalists invited by Chinese institutions, could not report attempts to influence their perceptions on media freedom or developmental models. Open discussion was stimulated among foreign guest journalists in a country that has a firm control on the media.

### **Country case Russia**

**Media as Russia’s soft  
power instruments:  
Improving international  
public attitudes  
Alexey Dolinskiy,  
Capstone Connections**

Alexej Dolinskiy, of Capstone Connections Consultancy, provides an overview of what he considers Russia’s “successful public diplomacy media development” with its flagship *Russia Today*. He concludes that it has not yet led to a changed attitude towards Russia internationally. Russia’s influence on world affairs is rather seen negatively among country leaders and media. The article focuses on the different types of media, targeting international audiences. It does not include the specific policy in the former Soviet republics, recently harshly criticized in a CIMA report as attempts “to manipulate their media environments in order to promote dependence on Russia and distrust of the West and to help Russia to pursue its political and commercial objectives.” (Satter, 2014, p.3)

**“Russia dominates the information  
market in Kyrgyzstan”**

**Elmira Toktogulova, Kyrgyz  
Media Consultant  
interviewed by  
Tamina Kutscher, n-ost**

Kyrgyz Media Consultant Elmira Toktogulova stresses the country’s level of freedom of expression and the high activity of civil society. She confirms the Russian dominance in the media market in her country, without attributing it to Russia’s attempts to control the Kyrgyz media landscape. But poorly resourced national media cannot compete with the variety and extent of Russian entertainment programming, and Russian is a language well understood in Kyrgyzstan.

**“Objectivity is just another  
word for Russia bashing”**

**Ivan Rodionov, video agency Ruptly  
interviewed by  
Tamina Kutscher, n-ost**

The video agency *Ruptly*, Russia’s federally funded international television network, selling video footage to broadcasters and websites, is part of Russia’s foreign media strategy. Ivan Rodionow, editor-in-chief of the Berlin bureau, refers the readers to the website to understand what exactly makes it an “alternative”. Himself not believing in the concept of objectivity, he considers Ruptly’s provision of “raw material” to be mirroring reality, which only gets a “twist” by re-cutting, “when narration is added and set into context”.

One has to remember that presentations and research findings stem from periods before the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the Ukrainian crises. Since then, the public perception of Russia’s foreign policy might have further declined, and the language in Western media, describing Russia’s attempts to influence public opinion, has become rather



martial, i.e. a BBC Monitoring Feature of 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014 talks about a “cyber army”, referring to trolls “bombarding” Western websites with messages about the conflict.

### Country case India

Focal points in the country cases of India and Brazil, are not news networks and states as actors in the execution of soft power, but private enterprises and the entertainment industry, constituting the main share of global media flows.

**The Indian entertainment  
and media industry:  
Bollywood as India’s soft power  
Daya Thussu,  
University of Westminster**

Although the USA still dominate the market, Daya Thussu, Professor at the University of Westminster, demonstrates how the Indian entertainment and media industry, branded as Bollywood, has risen to be a global player, facilitated by enabling economic provisions and the availability of digital television and online delivery systems. He argues that family and community oriented scripts have made Indian “Hindi” films more respective to audiences even in Moslem countries. In Afghanistan the relationship between Bollywood and the local population is described as “inseparable” (Sujeet Sarkar, 2012) and they constitute an important part of Afghan Television Culture, even more popular than Iranian soaps (Wazhmah Osman, 2012). Bollywood has become “a rage” in Pakistan, says Thussu, “in a country with which India has fought four wars and continues to have strained bilateral relations”. Hindi films are long established in Nigeria and Indonesia and are shown in mainstream cinemas in the Pacific and Europe.

Although “Indian governments have understood that this is a way to influence the world’s perception of the growing importance of India”, Thussu argues that there is “a good deal to be learned about how the State Department promotes American cultural industries internationally”. And he is sure that “the film entertainment industry in India is no longer just an artistic or creative enterprise, but a global brand contributing to the re-imagining of India’s role on the international stage from that of a socialist-oriented voice of the Third World to a rapidly modernising market-driven democracy”.

**Effects of Indian soft power on  
audiences in the Middle East:  
Favorable emotions  
and cultural images  
Naila Hamdy,  
American University in Cairo**

Naila Hamdy, Assistant Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication at American University, Cairo, exemplifies the “effects of Indian soft power on audiences in the Middle East”, exporting “favorable emotions and cultural images”. She recalls that Bollywood productions became mega hits in Egypt, as early as the late 1950s and 1960s, substituting US-content after state television boycotted American media and searched for alternatives. But the return of Bollywood films to Egyptian movie theatres took 25 years, marking a long phase of Western dominance and audience preferences in Egypt. She locates “notable effects” of Indian media in the MENA region, with India’s culture “increasingly known and attractive, but its political ideals and policies are still unfamiliar to the vast majority”. A fact that nourishes her conclusion that India’s media representation in her country is “not adequate”: “There are so many areas of shared interest and culture that could be capitalised on, other than the predominant basic emotional ones propagated by Bollywood.”

**Brazil's cultural export to the  
Lusophone world as soft power:  
Desire for shared cultural experience**  
Joseph Straubhaar,  
University of Texas

### Country case Brazil

Joseph Straubhaar, Professor of Communication at the University of Texas, Austin, considers a "desire for shared cultural experience" the main reason for Brazil's dominance in fiction exports to the Lusophone world. In Angola, Mozambique and Portugal, television programmes, movies and music from Brazil are more popular than those from the US. Most of the content originates from TV Globo, directing seven 'pay per view' television channels and a production and distribution division that sells Brazilian sports and entertainment content to more than 190 countries around the world.<sup>5</sup> Straubhaar concludes that the strong impact of the Brazilian image within its own cultural-linguistic sphere, "seems to be somewhat distorted in this process, both by what is broadcast and exported by TV Globo and in how those shows are then received and decoded by African audiences", and he wonders: "Do images 'distorted' in reception diminish the soft power of the country that created and sent them?"

**Brazilian Telenovelas and their  
public in Mozambique:  
Penetrating and  
influencing daily life**  
Ouri Pota Pacamutondo, CEMEC

Ouri Pota Pacamutondo, CEMEC, examines how Brazilian Telenovelas are "penetrating and influencing the daily life" of their public in Mozambique. He confirms and exemplifies that young people in urban areas, "tend to adopt social, cultural and linguistic aspects and attitudes presented on television", due to a strong identification with the fictional characters presented.

A. Sofie Jannusch (CAMECO)

<sup>1</sup> Foreword of BRICS. Joint Statistical Publication 2013, p. III

<sup>2</sup> The participants of panel discussions on China and Russia were subsequently interviewed by FoME members Tamina Kutscher and Sergio Grassi. For both countries, a representative of the state owned foreign media was invited. In the publication, only the perspective of Ivan Rodionov, Senior Editor of Ruptly Video News Agency, situated in Berlin, is included. The representative of Xinhua News Agency had not given consent to an interview.

<sup>3</sup> See also the analysis of Sergio Grassi (2014)

<sup>4</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Beijing, in English, gmt 9 Jul 14 referring to "an official paper".

<sup>5</sup> Globo and Telefe announce agreement, 30 June, 2014, <http://www.globotvinternational.com/newsDet.asp?newsId=414> (retrieved 16 July 2014)

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Soft power and emerging nations:

# Soft rise of the power of the rest

Daya Thussu, University of Westminster

The notion of 'soft power', associated with the work of Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye, is defined, simply, as "the ability to attract people to our side without coercion". The phrase was first used by Nye in an article published in 1990 in the journal *Foreign Policy*, where he contrasted this "co-optive power", "which occurs when one country gets other countries to want what it wants", to "the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants" (Nye, 1990: 166). In his most widely cited book *Soft Power*, Nye suggested three key sources for a country's soft power: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye 2004a: 11).

Despite Nye's focus being primarily on the United States, and the vagueness associated with the rather amorphous concept of soft power, it has been adopted or adapted by countries around the world as an increasingly visible component of foreign policy strategy. It is a testimony to the power of the US in the international arena that the phrase 'soft power' has acquired global currency and is routinely used in policy and academic litera-

ture, as well as in elite journalism. The capacity of nations to make themselves attractive in a globalizing marketplace for ideas and images has become an important aspect of contemporary international relations, as has been the primacy of communicating a favourable image of a country in an era of digital global flows, involving both state and non-state actors and networks.

In the past decade, many countries have set up 'public diplomacy' departments within their ministries of foreign affairs, while a number of governments have sought the services of public relations and lobbying firms to coordinate their 'nation-branding initiatives,' aimed at attracting foreign investment. Unlike propaganda, which retains a negative connotation in democratic societies, public diplomacy has elicited little controversy as it is perceived to be a more persuasive instrument of foreign policy, i.e. not coercive but soft, and one which is conducted by states in conjunction with private actors as well as civil society groups. This shift has stemmed from a growing appreciation of the importance of soft power in a digitally connected and globalized media and communication environment. Since media remain central to soft power initiatives, it is worth briefly exami-



Mr Daya Thussu is Professor of International Communication and Co-Director of the India Media Centre, the world's first academic centre dedicated to the study of media in India and its globalizing tendencies, launched in 2010 at the University of Westminster in London. A PhD in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, he is the founder and Managing Editor of the Sage journal *Global Media and Communication*. Author or editor of sixteen books, among his key publications are: *Communicating India's Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood* (Palgrave, 2013); *Media and Terrorism: Global Perspectives* (Sage, 2012); *Internationalizing Media Studies* (Routledge, 2009); *News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment* (Sage, 2007); *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow* (Routledge, 2006); *International Communication – Continuity and Change*, third edition (Bloomsbury Academic, forthcoming); and *Electronic Empires – Global Media and Local Resistance* (Arnold, 1998). Professor Thussu has been a consultant for UNESCO, and has trained journalists from Asia and Africa in the field of development communications, on behalf of the UNDP.

ning the global media scene, especially its tele-visual aspects.

### Surveying the global media scene

Despite the unprecedented growth of media and communication industries in the global South, particularly in such countries as China, India and Brazil, the global media continue to be dominated by the US. Given its formidable political, economic, technological and military power, American or Americanized media are available across the globe, in English or in dubbed or indigenized versions. The American media's imprint on the global communication space, by virtue of the ownership of multiple networks and production facilities – from satellites to telecommunication networks, from cyberspace to 'total spectrum dominance' of real space – gives the US a huge advantage. As during most of the twentieth century, the US remains today the largest exporter both of the world's entertainment and information programmes and the software and hardware through which these are distributed across the increasingly digitized globe (Thussu, 2014).

the \$1.3 trillion global media and cultural industry, one of the fastest growing in the world, accounting for more than 7 per cent of global GDP. The sources of such 'soft' media power in the United States cannot be separated from its hard power, as the world's most powerful country in economic, political and military terms, expressed in its more than 1,000 military bases across the globe and an enormous defence budget (\$852 billion in 2012), unmatched by any other nation. It is American hard power that impacts on many countries and helps legitimize the American way of life, promoted through its formidable soft power reserves – from Hollywood entertainment giants to the digital empires of the Internet age. As Nye has remarked, US culture "from Hollywood to Harvard – has greater global reach than any other" (Nye, 2004b: 7).

This influence has a long history: as the home of consumerism and advertising, as well as the public relations industry, the US developed sophisticated means of persuasion – both corporate and governmental – which had a profound influence in shaping the public discourse and affecting private behaviour. During the Cold War years, "the selling of the American message" was central to US public diplomacy, as Nicholas Cull in his history of US Cold War propaganda notes. The *US Information Agency* (USIA) was created in 1953, to "tell America's story to the world", a story of freedom, democracy, equality and upward mobility (Cull, 2009). The audio-visual media were particularly important in promoting American values. The *Voice of America* (VOA), first on-air in 1942 and a key part of US propaganda during the Second World War, became a crucial component of US public diplomacy with the advent of the Cold War. Through a global network of relay stations, the VOA was able to propagate the ideal of 'the American way of life' to international listeners. Broadcasting Americana, a staple diet of US cultural propaganda during



the Cold War years, continues to be present in the global media space.

*The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)*, the US federal agency that supervises all non-military international broadcasting, remains highly active in its propaganda efforts, especially in geo-politically sensitive areas of the globe, through the VOA, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, *Radio and TV Martí*, *Radio Free Asia*, and the *Middle East Broadcasting Networks – Al-hurra TV (Arabic for The Free One)* and *Radio Sawa (Radio Together)*. In 2012, its various broadcasting arms reached 187 million people every week, while the VOA alone was broadcasting some 1,500 hours of news and information – including programmes about American popular culture, celebrities and sports – in 45 languages, to an estimated worldwide audience of 134 million. Apart from having hundreds of thousands of *Facebook* fans, VOA also had a substantial presence on *YouTube* and *Twitter* (BBG, 2012).

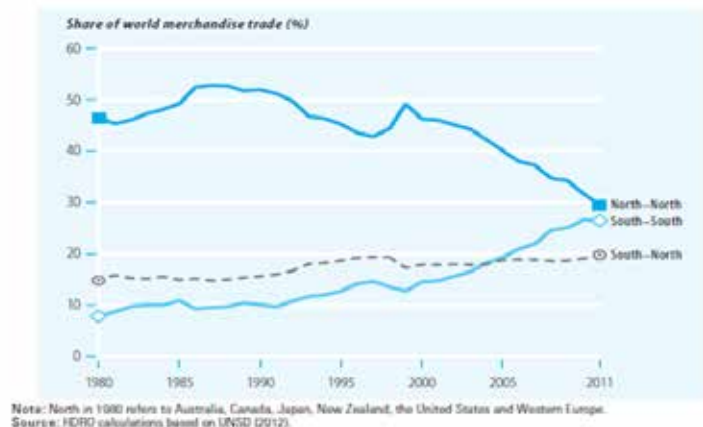
These government initiatives have been supported by a thriving and globalized private media. One reason for the US domination of global media is that the country has always followed a commercial model for its media industry – a venture in which the successive US governments have been a crucial factor. Broadcasting – both radio and television – had a commercial remit from its very inception. The commercially-driven trio of networks – CBS (*Columbia Broadcasting System*), NBC (*National Broadcasting Corporation*) and ABC (*American Broadcasting Corporation*) – provided both mass entertainment and public information. The entertainment element was strong in all three networks, with game-and-talent shows as well as glamour and celebrity programming becoming the staple diet. In the post-Cold War world, the US-inspired commercial model of broadcasting has been globalized, a phenomenon that Hallin and Mancini have characterised as

the “triumph of the liberal model” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 251).

Internationally, this has meant a dynamic media, challenging state censorship and widening the public sphere, while at the same time also leading to the concentration of media power among private corporations. The exponential growth of multichannel networks has made the global media landscape multicultural, multilingual and multinational. Digital communication technologies in broadcasting and broadband have given viewers in many countries the ability to access simultaneously a vast array of local, national, regional, and international television in various genres.

## The South-South Flows

As a share of world merchandise trade, South–South trade more than tripled over 1980–2011, while North–North trade declined



## Global TV news from the rest

The media, especially broadcasting, retains an important position as an instrument of global influence and ever since international broadcasting became a part of foreign policy agenda during the Cold War, control over the airwaves has been fought over. Until the glo-





balization of television and telecommunication, international broadcasters filled an important information gap, especially in countries where media were under strict state control. With the deregulation and digitization of communication and the entry of powerful private providers, the broadcasting landscape has been transformed, offering new challenges and opportunities. There are various types of new media flows – some emanating from European nations, based on old colonial patterns – notably Britain's *BBC World Service* and *France 24* – a more recent content emerging from the global South. Russia has raised its international broadcasting profile by entering the English-language news world in 2005 with the launch of the *Russia*

*Today* network, which, apart from English, also broadcasts 24/7 in Spanish and Arabic, claiming to have a global reach of more than 550 million people. Ironically, its tag line – “question more” – indicates that the channel covers international affairs generally from an anti-US perspective, and therefore questions the dominant Western media discourses. But when it comes to domestic Russian political issues, RT is cautious, as it does not want to upset the Kremlin, where ultimate editorial control rests.

Qatar's *Al Jazeera* and Iran's English language network, *Press TV*, are other recent players to emerge, though the latter is perceived, accurately, as a propaganda channel reflecting the viewpoints of the Iranian government.

The most significant example of a new network to emerge from non-Western world is of course *Al Jazeera*, which was launched in 1996 by the Emir of Qatar with a \$150 million grant, and has grown into a major global broadcaster with annual expenditure on the network's multiple channels reaching nearly \$650 million by 2010. Based in Doha, *Al Jazeera English* reaches 260 million homes in 130 countries, and in 2013 launched *Al Jazeera America*, thus entering the lucrative US television market (Figenschou, 2014). Qatar, a nation of just two million of which only 250,000 are citizens, has been able to use this channel to play an important geo-political role in the region.

*Al Jazeera's* coverage of the NATO-led invasion of Libya in 2011, and the campaign against the Syrian regime in 2012-2013, as well as recent support for Hamas in Gaza and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, show how it has used its visual power to influence Middle Eastern politics. *Al Jazeera English* claims to privilege the global South in its coverage of international affairs, and its emergence as a broadcaster of substance has not only changed journalistic culture in the region but provided a space for a wider conversation in the global communication arena (Figenschou, 2014).

With nearly 200 round-the-clock news channels and a strong tradition of English-language journalism, Indian perspectives on global affairs is accessible via such channels as *News 18 India*, part of the TV-18, group, as well as *NDTV 24x7*. Both are private networks, while the Indian state broadcaster *Doordarshan* remains one of the few major state news networks not available on global television screens at a time when global television news in English has expanded to include inputs from countries where English is not widely used, including Japan and Iran.

Arguably the most significant development in terms of the “rise of the rest”, is the growing presence on the international news scene of Chinese television news in English for a global audience, part of what Joshua Kurlantzick has termed its “Charm Offensive”, promoting the Chinese model of development with an extensive and intensive programme of external communication: “As China has looked outside its borders, it has altered its image across much of the globe, from threat to opportunity, from danger to benefactor” (Kurlantzick, 2007: 5). The Chinese version of an image makeover, consistent with its rise to a global power, is rooted in an official discourse aimed at making the Sino-globalization a palatable experience for a world not used to Chinese communication culture. As a civilizational state with an extraordinary cultural continuity, China wants to present itself as a peaceful and progressive nation, and to ameliorate the country’s image, especially in the West, as a one-party state which suppresses freedom of expression and individual human rights. China is investing heavily in its external communication, including broadcasting and online presence across the globe.

In 2011, two years after President Hu Jintao announced a \$7 billion plan for China to “go out” into the world, Chinese broadcasting has expanded across the globe, with CCTV News’s Beijing headquarters appointing English-fluent foreign journalists to develop a global channel. By 2012, CCTV News was claiming 200 million viewers outside China and broadcasting in six languages, including Arabic. In the same year, CCTV also opened a studio in Nairobi and has plans to increase the size of its overseas staff dramatically by 2016. New production centres in Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East are also scheduled. However, the Chinese television news has yet to acquire global credibility, as an observer noted: “the perception of being propaganda vehicles for the Chinese government is hard



to shake off [...] CCTV has yet to be the international authority on China, let alone being a credible alternative to the BBC, CNN, or Al Jazeera on world affairs” (Zhu, 2012, 194). Xinhua, among the largest news agencies in the world, with more than 10,000 employees in 107 bureaus, has recently launched English-language TV, CNC World, which plans to expand into 100 countries.

These key examples of news from the rest discussed above provide interesting sites for an oppositional discourse on global news: the coverage of Russia Today of the Syrian conflict, for example, is strikingly different from the dominant US-UK media discourse (the only military base that the Russians have in the strategically significant Middle East is in Syria). Similarly, *Al Jazeera* has contributed to improved coverage of Arab world and Africa on the global television scene. And yet, in terms of audience, news networks have a relatively small impact on global media flows – most of which is centred on entertainment, which continues to be dominated by the US, though others players are increasingly visible. Leveraging its Ottoman legacy and its sub-

sequent evolution as a modern democratic Muslim nation, Turkey has exerted its traditional influence in Central Asia, the Balkans and in parts of the Middle East. Sharing linguistic, religious and cultural traditions, and a long history with countries in central Asia, the Caucasus and the Arab world, Turkey is increasingly using the power of its mass media to promote its geo-political and cultural interests. Its television dramas and historical teleplays are very popular in the Arab world: one hugely successful example was the 175-episode soap opera *Gümüş* (Silver) renamed *Noor* (light) and dubbed into Arabic during 2008, which attracted over 85 million Arab viewers and triggered a new wave of tourism from Arab countries to Istanbul, where it was filmed. More recently, *Muhtesem Yüzyıl* (Magnificent Century), a lavish costume drama set in Suleiman's Ottoman world, was broadcast in 47 countries. By 2012, more than 20 countries were importing Turkish television soaps.

Brazil's successful television industry, centred on the telenovela format, has spread to most of Latin America as well as internationally: exported to more than 100 countries across the globe – dubbed and adapted and inspiring many television mini-series. Japan's strong creative and cultural industries – notably in the form of Anime – have a global presence and influence, as does its lucrative gaming industry. Since the late-1990s, interest in Korean popular culture, including television dramas, popular music and films, has increased in Asia and around the world, triggering the Korean Wave or Hallyu and a “breath-taking export growth in its media cultural production”. The economic value of the Korean wave is estimated to increase from \$10 billion in 2012 to \$57 billion in 2020, according to Korean government sources. The global visibility and popularity of K-pop music was highlighted by Gangnam Style music video by Korean artist PSY – the most

downloaded video on YouTube in 2012 (Kim, 2013). Success of media exports from South Korea has encouraged China to promote its own ‘creative industries’: already the Chinese film and television industry has had an international dimension with its audiences in the global Sino-sphere, including the world's largest diaspora, as well as regional centres in Hong Kong, Taipei and Singapore. Such international hits as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers* have created a Chinese presence in the global entertainment arena. The most notable example of global entertainment emanating from outside the Western world is perhaps the Indian Hindi film industry, popularly known as Bollywood. It remains the prominent manifestation of Indian content in global media, and is today a \$3.5 billion industry, which has helped to make the country an attractive investment destination. Watched by audiences in more than 70 countries, Bollywood is the world's largest film factory in terms of production and viewership: every year a billion more people buy tickets for Indian movies than for Hollywood films.

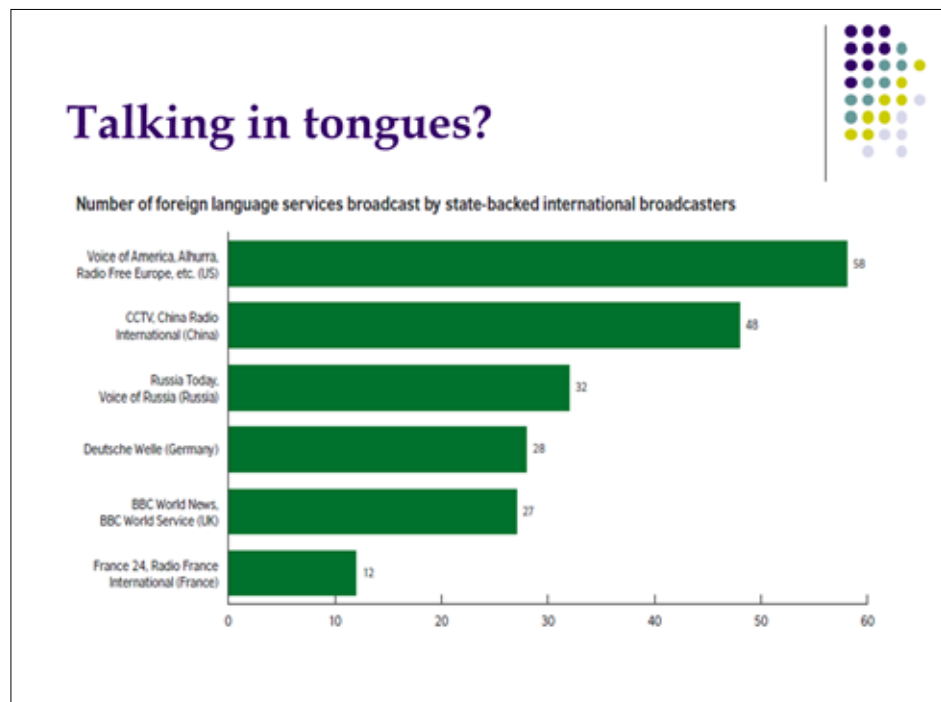
### The rise of Chindian soft power?

The growing globalization of media content from China and India – in terms of international television news emanating from China and deepening globalization of Bollywood – offers new opportunities for soft power discourse, given the scale and scope of changes in these two countries. The increasing importance of China and India in global communication and media debates, and the rise of Chindia, pose a challenge, as the power equation shifts. As Fareed Zakaria notes: “On every dimension other than military power – industrial, financial, social, cultural – the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from US dominance. That does not mean we are entering an anti-American world. But we are moving into a post-American world,



one defined and directed from many places and by many people" (Zakaria, 2008). The peaceful 'rise' of China as the world's fastest growing economy has profound implications for global media and communication, taking place in parallel with the transformation of international communication in all its variants – political, intercultural, organizational, developmental and corporate (Wang, 2010). Since 2006, China has been the largest holder of foreign-currency reserves, estimated in 2012 to be \$3.3 trillion. On the basis of purchasing power parity (PPP), China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will surpass the United States by 2016, making it the world's largest economy, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). When the country opened up to global businesses in the late 1980s, its presence in the international corporate world was negligible, but by 2012, China had 89 companies in the Fortune Global 500 – for long a preserve of Western companies – just behind the US (132). Moreover, in 2012, three of the top ten global corporations were Chinese. China is a key member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), whose annual summits since 2009 are increasingly noticed outside the five countries, which together account for 20 per cent of the world's GDP. The BRIC acronym, coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, a Goldman Sachs executive, to refer to four fast-growing emerging markets, announced in its fifth summit in South Africa in 2013 (which joined the group in 2011), the setting up of a BRICS Bank to fund developmental projects, to potentially rival the Western dominated Bretton Woods institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

China, which is the driving force behind this idea, has been able to transform its citizens from a largely agricultural self-sufficient society to the world's largest consumer market. Much of this has been achieved without major social or economic upheavals. China's



success story has many admirers, especially in the developing world, and already there is talk of replacing the 'Washington consensus' with what has been termed the 'Beijing consensus' (Halper, 2010). Though India's economic growth is no match to China's, on the basis of purchasing power parity, it was the world's third largest economy in 2013. What is the relationship between the two Asian giants? Jairam Ramesh, India's Rural Development Minister, is credited with coining the term Chindia, a phenomenon representing what has been termed as the "rise of the rest" in a "post-American world" (Ramesh, 2005; Zakaria, 2008). The idea of this neologism seems to be catching on – a Google search for the word Chindia shows more than 800,000 hits. Any meaningful discussion of global media and soft power ought to take into account the rapid growth of these two large nations with their potential to influence the emerging global scene. Writing in 2010, a leading economist noted: "In 1820 these two countries contributed nearly half of world income; in 1950 their share was less than one tenth; currently it is about one fifth, and the

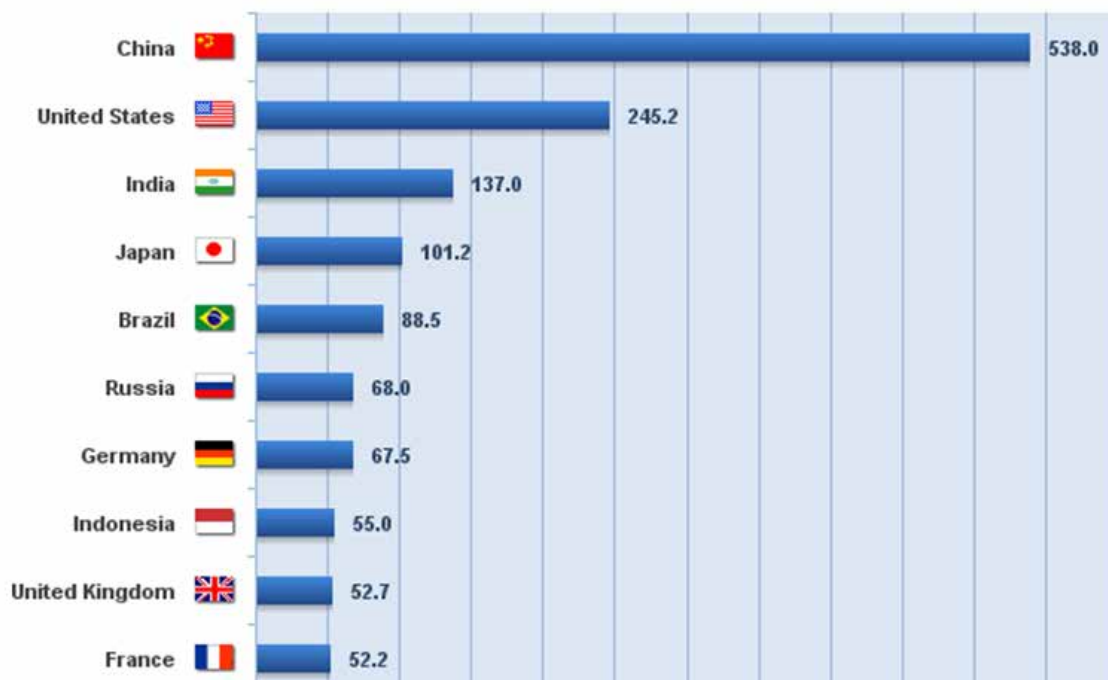
projection is that in 2025 it will be about one third” (Bardhan, 2010:1).

As in many other fields, the emergence of China and India, coinciding with the crisis in the neo-liberal model of US-led Western capitalism, will challenge traditional thinking and paradigms for international media and communication. The combined economic and cultural impact of China and India, aided by their extensive global diasporas, may create a different form of globalization, one with an Asian accent and flavour.

The millennium-old relationship between the two countries has had a cultural and communication dimension, and Buddhism was at the heart of this interaction. The in-

terest in Buddhist philosophy encouraged Chinese scholars, most notably Huen Tsang, to visit such places as Nalanda (an international Buddhist university based in eastern India between the fifth and twelfth centuries) to exchange ideas on law, philosophy and politics. Indian monks also visited China on a regular basis and such cultural interactions led to the translation into Chinese of many Sanskrit texts. These exchanges continued for centuries and, even today, Buddhism remains a powerful link between the two civilizations, though mutual suspicion remains. Apart from the contentious border dispute, both countries also vie for resources and the leadership role of the global South. And yet, there are growing commercial and cultural links developing between the two: Trade

## Top ten Internet users, in millions



between China and India – negligible in 1992 – had reached more than \$70 billion by 2012, making India's eastern neighbour one of its largest trading partners. Such economic flows and a Chindian globalization rarely get noticed in the international media and, ironically, even in the media in China and India (Thussu, 2013).

One area where a Chindian contribution will be particularly valuable is development communication. Despite robust economic growth – almost double-digit for nearly a decade in the case of China – both countries continue to be home to a very large number of poor and disadvantaged people, and indeed, in many instances, inequality has increased under neo-liberalism. India was the first country to use television for education through its 1970s SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) programme. It is very well equipped to deployed new digital media technologies to promote sustainable development. China's aid for developing countries in Asia and Africa, especially in such areas as telecommunication, may contribute to formulating a Chinese version of development discourse. It is a fact that Xinhua is particularly strong in the developing world, especially in Africa, and, unlike its Western counterparts, avoids negative and stereotypical stories from Southern countries. Traditionally, development debates have been devised and developed in the West, and conform to a Western sensibility of what constitutes development. Would a Chindian development perspective be less affected by the colonial mindset?

As the world becomes increasingly mobile, networked and digitized, will Chindian cultural flows erode US hegemony? In his 2011 book *The Future of Power*, Nye explored the nature and shift in global power structures – from state to non-state actors. In an age when, as he suggests, “public diplomacy is done more by publics”, governments have

to use “smart power” (“neither hard nor soft. It is both”), making use of formal and informal networks and drawing on “cyber power”, an arena where the US has a huge advantage, being the country which invented the Internet and remains at the forefront of governing it technologically, and dominating it both politically as well as economically. However, the rise of China and India is also visible in cyberspace. In 2013, according to the Internet World Stats, only 40 per cent of China's 1.3 billion people were on-line and just 14 per cent of India's 1.2 billion population were using the Internet. And yet, the world's largest number of Internet users were Chinese, while India was already second only to the US in terms of visitors globally to key sites: accounting for about nine per cent of all visitors to Google and eight per cent each for YouTube, Facebook and Wikipedia. Industry estimates suggest that the number of Internet users in India is expected to exceed 500 million by 2016, increasingly driven by wireless connections. In China, the growth is forecast to be even higher. It is interesting to speculate what kind of content will be circulating on the World Wide Web, and in which

### Visitors by Country 2012 (%)



Source: [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com)

language, when 90 per cent of Chinese and an equally high percentage of Indians get online. It is particularly striking in the context of India's 'demographic dividend': more than 70 per cent of Indians are below the age of 30. As their prosperity grows, a sizeable segment of young Indians are increasingly going online, producing, distributing and consuming digital media, especially using their skills in the English language, the vehicle for global communication.

Will a Chindian media emerge as an alternative to US or a supplement to it? It is safe to suggest that, at least in the short-term, the multi-faceted US domination of the world's media is likely to continue. However, as Goody has observed "the Western domination of the world of knowledge and of world culture persists in some respects but has been significantly loosened. Globalization is no longer exclusively 'Westernization'" (Goody, 2010: 125). This would argue for a serious engagement with 'the rest', and especially with emerging media flows from large countries with old histories and new global aspirations.

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## Media as Russia's soft power instruments:

# Improving international public attitudes

By Alexey Dolinskiy, Capstone Connections



Russian top level officials have only recently embraced the term soft power. Today, in absence of a coherent universal public diplomacy strategy, various media pursue different goals.

The idea of how countries' perceptions impact their international positions is of course no news. Russia consistently scores below other leading countries in various rankings of how countries are seen internationally. According to *GlobeScan* international survey, Russia's influence on world affairs is seen as negative rather than positive in most large countries, including all leaders of the developed world. *Monocle* magazine ranks Russia 28th in terms of its soft power. Simon Anholt ranks Russia's nation brand 22nd. *Edelman Trust Barometer* a few years ago concluded that companies headquartered in Russia are less trusted in the US and Germany than companies from other BRICS countries.

The main conclusion that is usually drawn from this kind of data in Russia can be described as a feeling of "undeserved unappreciation". Various attempts to improve the situation through media development have

become a backbone of Russia's approach to soft power.

Russian public diplomacy and media history are closely interrelated, as the *Voice of Russia* established in 1929 was the first radio station to broadcast internationally. The USSR considered public diplomacy a priority foreign policy instrument that received significant resources, both in terms of funding and political influence domestically.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, public diplomacy became one of the many foreign policy instruments, and priorities were limited in terms of funding. Firstly, with the end of the Cold War, the Russian government was less concerned with its international influence. Secondly, Russia's complicated economic situation in the 1990s limited its foreign policy potential, and public diplomacy was underfunded and understaffed. International broadcasting was essentially limited to *Voice of Russia* radio service.

A public diplomacy revival took place in the early 2000s. After a decade of economic struggles, the country managed to overcome

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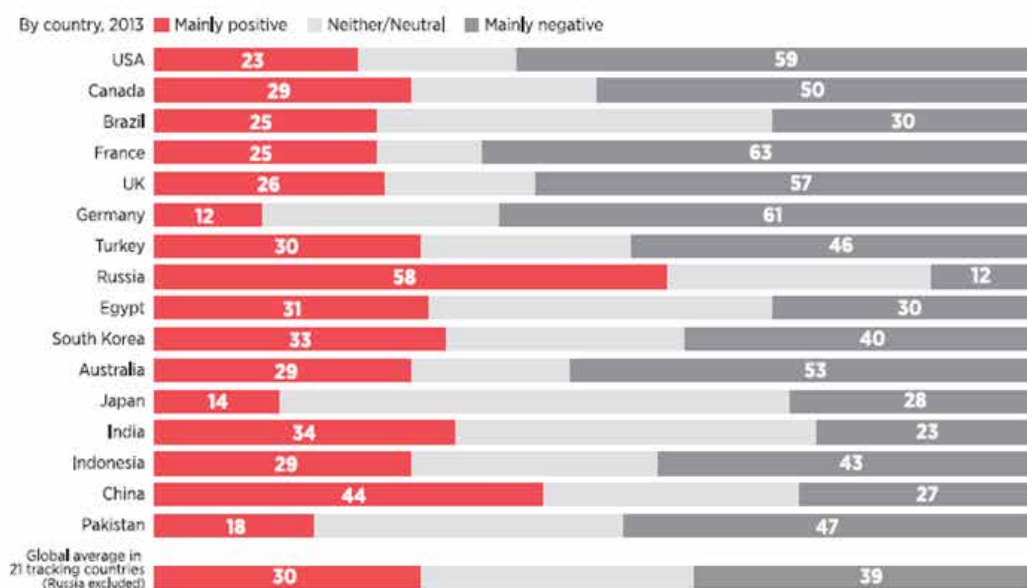


# Influence

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## Views of Russia's Influence



SOURCE: THE 2013 COUNTRY RATINGS POLL, CONDUCTED BY GLOBESCAN/PIPA FOR BBC WORLD SERVICE.

its difficulties and started investing in foreign policy. Russian leaders claimed that misperceptions of Russia abroad were one of the reasons for challenges the country faced in its international relations. Public diplomacy was viewed as a key instrument for improving the country's image.

*Voice of Russia*, one of the nation's oldest radio stations, continues broadcasting into 160 countries in 38 languages and develops a growing Internet audience as well. The station received additional funding and was partially restructured as part of the public diplomacy revitalization effort.

*Russian Information Agency (RIA) Novosti* is another long-existing institution that was revitalized for public diplomacy purposes. Besides running news wires in several foreign languages, and a broad network of international bureaus, the agency also publishes newspapers in foreign languages and is responsible for maintaining a second-track diplomacy project: *Valdai Foundation*, bringing international experts to meetings with their counterparts and decision makers from Russia.

*Russia Today (RT)* 24/7 news network has every right to be considered the flagship of the

## Not All Are Like That

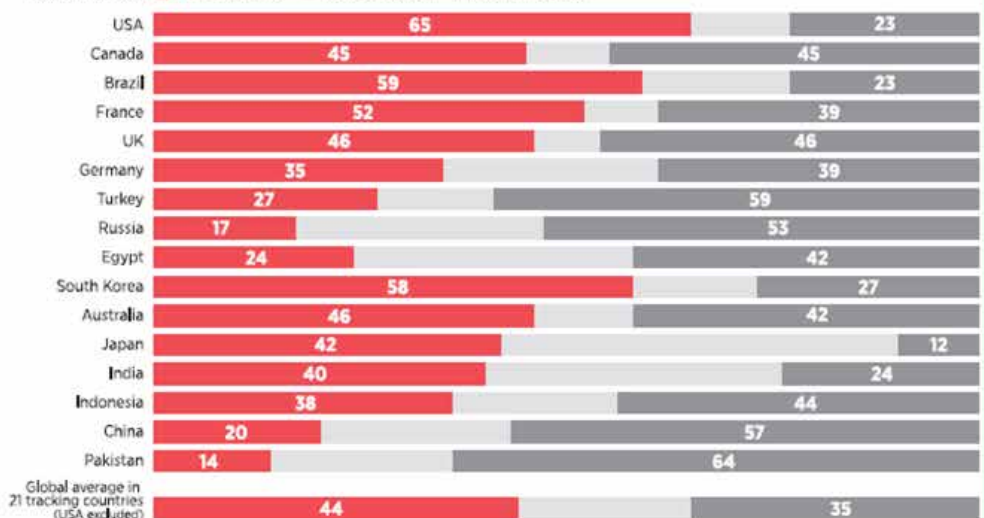
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### Views of the United States' Influence



By country, 2013 ■ Mainly positive ■ Neither/Neutral ■ Mainly negative



SOURCE: THE 2013 COUNTRY RATINGS POLL, CONDUCTED BY GLOBESCAN/PIPA FOR BBC WORLD SERVICE.

country's public diplomacy, both in terms of its budget and international and domestic recognition. Started in 2005 as a small Moscow-based channel broadcasting in English via Internet and several satellites, it grew into a large media organization with a sizeable campus in Moscow and international studios and bureaus, broadcasting also in Arabic and Spanish, and available via a broad range of cable networks. At the end of 2013, *Voice of Russia* and *RIA Novosti* were merged to form a new international broadcasting agency *Rossiia Segodnya* (translates as *Russia Today*) which will have the same editor-in-chief as RT. It is expected that the newly formed

agency will be more aligned with Russia's foreign policy priorities and resemble RT in its coverage although the merger process is still underway.

*Russia Beyond the Headlines* (RBTH) is yet another example of developing media projects for soft power purposes. State-owned *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* started it as a two-monthly English-language supplement to the *Washington Post* and the *Daily Telegraph*. In just six years, it grew to 27 joint projects in 21 countries (16 languages) with an estimated readership of over 30 million people. In one of its recent projects, RBTH launched

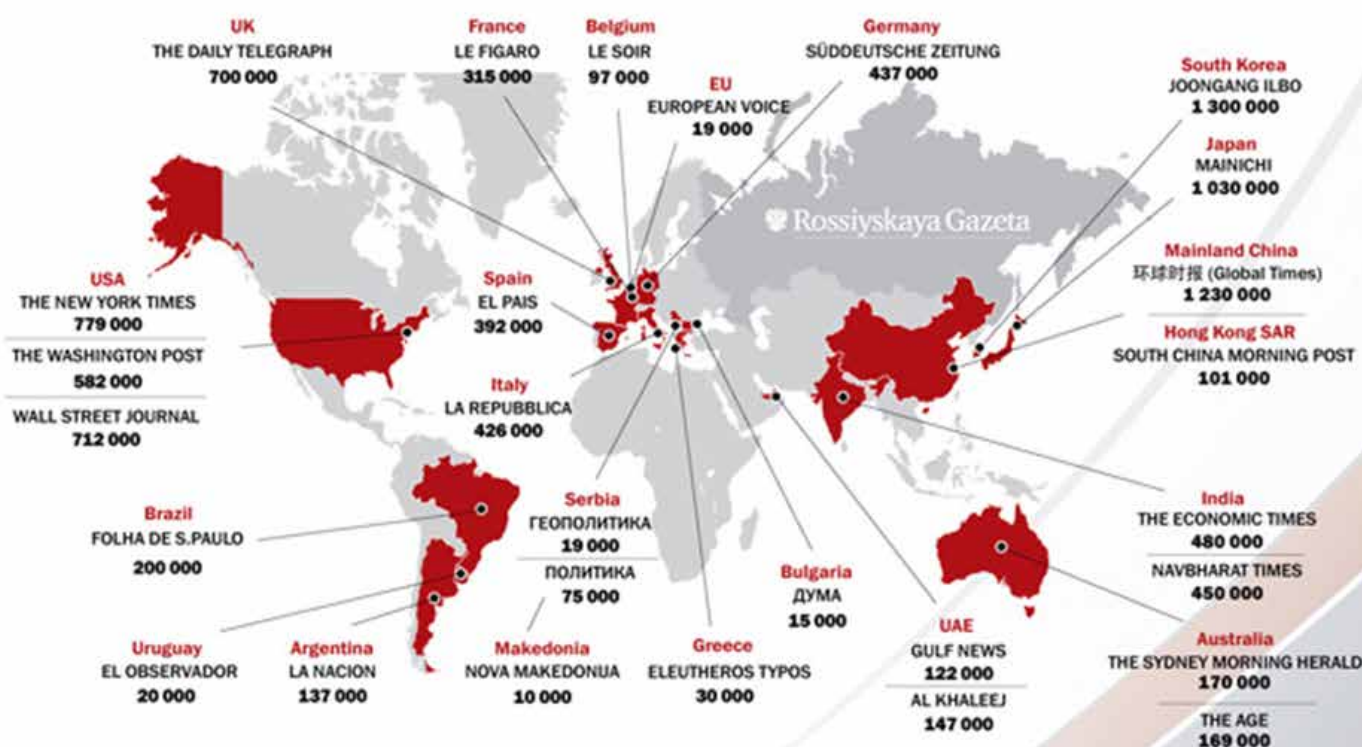
a joint project with *Foreign Policy* magazine, aimed at political analysts, scholars and decision makers.

All these media reach out to constantly increasing audiences, but the structure and substance of communication varies greatly – as there is virtually no cooperation and coordination between them. *Russia Today*, for example, evolved from an attempt to replicate the BBC with a Russian touch, to a network with core competences and best correspondents network in a specific region, and then to a network covering “alternative” news that escape major networks broadcasting. In most cases, its news content is more international than Russia-centered, and

many experts question this approach. But the network reports increasing international viewership and wins international awards. *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, on the contrary, focuses on Russian news or Moscow’s view of international affairs, which it covers jointly with editors from partnering media. Successful public diplomacy media development has not yet led to a changed attitude towards Russia internationally. Soft power of a nation is of course not purely a function of its media capacities. However, media aimed at foreign audiences can be an invaluable resource in a quest for soft power. Although Russia has still a lot to do to improve international public attitudes, its first steps on that path have already been made.

## RBTH Map

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## Perspectives

### *“Objectivity is just another word for Russia bashing”*

*Ivan Rodionov, Editor-in-Chief of the video agency Ruptly, was interviewed by FoME member Tamina Kutscher (n-ost) about his perception of the globalized news industry, Ruptly's specific place in it, and his understanding of the (soft) power of images.*



*FoME: Mr. Rodionov, congratulations on Ruptly's first birthday! In January 2013, the video agency was established as a Russia Today product in Berlin, and nearly a hundred new employees were hired. How is Ruptly today?*

*I.R.: Thank you, I appreciate this very much. It is still work in progress – to establish Ruptly as a globally recognizable news brand. Just over the weekend\*, Ruptly provided news coverage of the two top international stories, unchallenged both in scope and speed: Geneva talks (and eventual deal) on the Iranian nuclear program and protests in Kiev.*

*We also ensured running live coverage of the Greenpeace activists' trials in Murmansk and Petersburg, and were actually the first to deliver images of the Arctic Sunrise being escorted into the port of Murmansk. Only two of many examples which illustrate Ruptly's recent development and progress, particularly in live coverage of international key events*

*FoME: Meanwhile, the agency offers up to 30 videos or live reports for international media every day (current average daily output is 35, peak output 71) – and is much cheaper than Reuters TV or Associated Press Television News. At the same time, Ruptly repeatedly emphasizes its aim to “enrich the media, not to compete”. Where do you see the advantages of Ruptly, except for being cheaper than other agencies?*

*I.R.: The daily news output just reached 43 (see top stories above). Advantages of Ruptly stem from the fact that it incorporated all recent trends of the internet era, such as, emphasis on real time news coverage, multiple platform delivery, and direct easy access to footage. Ruptly's average newsroom age is around 27. This is in any sense the youngest and most cutting edge news agency, both in technology and workflow.*

*FoME: Russian President Vladimir Putin established RT explicitly as “a new actor who reports*

*Mr Ivan Rodionov is Senior Editor of Ruptly, an international news agency established in January 2013 in Berlin, Germany. Ruptly provides video news stories to clients around the world and is owned by the multilingual news channel RT, previously called Russia Today (RT). His extensive background in journalism stretches back decades. Before establishing Ruptly, Rodionov was the executive producer for RT's Berlin bureau and the German bureau chief for Russian TV and Radio Broadcast Company RTR. He has also covered major international news stories, including the war in Afghanistan, the Palestinian intifada and the war in Chechnya, for a variety of broadcasters and news agencies such as ZDF, TVS Moscow, and the Worldwide Television Agency, later owned by Associated Press Television News.*

*objectively on Russia and attempts to break the monopoly of the Anglo-Saxon media". Where does Ruptly draw the line between soft power and propaganda? In other words: How objective can a channel be, when it is — via RT — financed by the Russian state budget?*

I.R.: Frankly, I don't have the slightest idea where the line between soft power and propaganda could be drawn, I'm not even sure of either definition.

*Ruptly* provides international media with unvoiced unedited film footage. I think a brief look at *ruptly.tv* is the answer. If your question implies, *Ruptly* is the Kremlin's brainchild, then why is the Kremlin not giving all big Russian TV networks an order to unsubscribe AP and *Reuters* to the benefit of *Ruptly*, which is supposed to cover the news in the 'correct', non-Anglo-Saxon way? I would even venture to say, that there is no Anglo-Saxon and no non-Anglo-Saxon news coverage per se. News business is arguably the most globalized industry.

*FoME: Speaking of objectivity: In which way is Ruptly more objective than other foreign agencies, when it comes to reporting on environmental sins in Sochi, or on the Russian gay law?*

I.R.: I understand that "objectivity" is just another word for Russia bashing (*joking*), and have to refer you to *ruptly.tv* again. Please try a search using key words 'Russia', 'LGBT', 'gays'. And, again, a news agency's function is to cover news as it is: raw. It is broadcast and online media who give it their own twist by re-cutting, adding narration and possibly putting it in a certain context.

*FoME: How do you consider the fact, that Russia is listed at number 148 out of 179 countries in Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index?*

I.R.: Do you not question how objective an organization like *Reporter's Without Borders* can be, which — via *National Endowment for Democracy*, *International Republican Institute* and *Open Society Foundation* — is co-funded by the US Congress, George Soros and neo-cons? I think Russia has a lot of effort ahead to catch up with Afghanistan (placed 128th) and Libya (131th). By the way, I see Libya skyrocketing 23 places up, compared to last year. I am sure people, specifically journalists in Bani Walid, must be proud of such rapid progress. Had some price to pay, sure. But freedom comes at a cost, doesn't it? I love *Reporters Without Borders*.

*The interview was conducted via email on 26th November, 2013, and updated on 13th February, 2014*

## *“Russia dominates the information market in Kyrgyzstan”*

*Kyrgyz Media Consultant Elmira Toktogulova was interviewed by Tamina Kutscher (n-ost) on the influence of Russian media and the challenges of international media assistance in Kyrgyzstan.*



*FoME: Elmira, there is a very special political situation in Kyrgyzstan – compared with its neighbouring countries, such as Kazakhstan: Since 1991, the country has taken a course towards democratisation, it experienced two revolutions and changed its constitution several times. How does this affect media freedom in your country?*

Elmira Toktogulova: One thing is certain: the country's level of freedom of expression and the high activity of its civil society are extraordinary in the region. Kyrgyzstan's National Broadcasting Company achieved public (not governmental) status. Still, we face the government's influence and pressure on public media. The challenge of the current stage of media development in Kyrgyzstan is that we have media freedom, but lack professionalism.

There is only a small amount of high quality analytical genres, investigations and data journalism, and a very low level of TV entertainment and educational programmes. Especially local media (there are more than a thousand) should improve the quality of information – and be more competent, honest and objective. Furthermore, more than 80% of the media market is owned by

political and financial groups. This is definitely detrimental to the quality of media, and is affecting the people's trust in local journalism. Kyrgyzstan needs news coverage that is independent – from the government, political interest groups or business players.

*FoME: Since Russian is still an official language in Kyrgyzstan: How popular is Russian influence in local and foreign media today?*

E.T.: There is this Kyrgyz joke: “The first revolution was made by American financed media and the second one – by Russian”. Russia dominates the information market in Kyrgyzstan. More than ten TV-channels from Russia are available in Bishkek. The Russian social networks *Odnoklassniki*, *V kontakte* and *Mail.ru.agent*, are dominant in Kyrgyzstan.

According to the latest media research conducted in Kyrgyzstan, out of all foreign media, local audiences prefer Russian TV channels – First Channel, RTR, NTV –, and the American radio station Radio Liberty (*Azattyk* in Kyrgyz).

Only two years ago, Kyrgyz Public Broadcaster was replaced by the Russian TV channels as the most popular media in Kyrgyzstan.

Ms. Elmira Toktogulova is the director and founder of Media Consulting Foundation in Kyrgyzstan. She has previously worked as project coordinator and media expert for international aid organisations such as OSCE, UNICEF, Internews and UNDP, and the Kyrgyz government. She has held trainings and seminars for local journalists and editors. At the beginning of her career, Elmira Toktogulova worked as an editor for the state TV corporation KTRK, and for the Central Asian weekly Post. She holds an MA in journalism from the Kyrgyz State University. Furthermore, Elmira Toktogulova has published several articles on the situation of media in Central Asia, and a manual for journalists and editors, titled “How to cover the election process in Kyrgyzstan?”

About 40% of citizens watch Russia's First Channel. And most of them are young people. They watch Russian music and entertainment shows, and women prefer Russian soap operas.

The reason for this popularity is quite simple: Russian media deliver content in an understandable language – in Russian. Newly developing local media simply cannot compete with the variety and extent of content. And Kyrgyzstan pays for it from its state budget – with about one million dollars per year. This fact clearly reveals the nature of relations between the Kremlin and official Bishkek.

*FoME: Apart from its soft power in media – is Russia an active player in media assistance in Kyrgyzstan?*

E.T.: Russian media assistance projects appeared only recently (e.g. New Eurasia Foundation), but have not yet enjoyed large-scale development. There are US and European

donors, who finance media development projects. Japanese donors only support Public Broadcasting Corporation.

In Kyrgyzstan, a critical attitude is rising towards projects that are fully controlled and financed by donors, especially, since not all donor projects show visible and effective results. People simply have to understand that excessive foreign aid impedes independent development.

If we want to achieve visible results, regular and independent mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of media projects in the region are required. At least, this is what we need here in Kyrgyzstan. Donor organisations should relieve the heavy burden of bureaucracy and formal attitudes, which eats up part of the potential project. We have to keep in mind real objectives and results – not formal records. Without such changes, any new donor organisation will only tread the path of their forerunners, project by project.

*The interview was conducted via email on 28th January, 2014*

Chinese media's "Going Abroad" campaign:

# From charm offensive to charm defensive?

By Anbin Shi, Tsinghua University



Since the 2008 financial tornado and the 2010 "Occupy" movement, both of which exploded on Wall Street and later swept across the globe, the long-awaited Spenglerian prophecy of "the decline of the West"<sup>1</sup> has turned into reality. Not surprisingly, the end of the American Dream, declared by numerous Euro-American opinion-makers like the Harvard historian Niall Ferguson, coincided with the emergence of the Chinese Dream, promulgated by the new paramount leader, President Xi Jinping and his coterie. Emphasizing rising inequality and social stagnation in the present-day U.S., Ferguson poignantly lamented that the once-glorious American Dream had become "a nightmare of social stasis." Put in a more radical way, with reference to the sweeping "Occupy" movement in the autumn of 2010, the American Dream is merely accessible and feasible for the global 1%, namely, the transnational power elite who monopolized political, economic, technological, social and cultural resources. Since upward mobility in American society has become a bygone myth, both decline of the West in general, and bankruptcy of the

American Dream in particular, seem inevitable and irrevocable.

In many respects, the emergent Chinese Dream serves as an immediate alternative to the declining American Dream. As President Xi put it, the Chinese Dream is "the dream of the people." Interestingly, the all-encompassing Maoist discourse of "the people" is re-evoked to highlight the cosmopolitan dimension of the otherwise parochial notion of the "Chinese Dream." In other words, the Chinese Dream is not merely confined to the future of Chinese people, but also provides accessible and feasible prospects for the "global 99%", the core concept envisioned in the 2010 "Occupy" movement.

Another dimension of the Chinese Dream which significantly diverges from the American Dream is perception of the relationship between the self and the other. The American Dream is more of an individualist fulfillment than a collectivist goal and agenda. The outcome of the American Dream is incarnated in a "Great-Gatsby-styled" ascension for an indi-

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vidual, as well as the emergence of the U.S. as the one and the only superpower in the 21st century. In contrast, the Chinese Dream is more attractive to developing countries, because China, as the world's most populated nation, is rising with "the rest". The newly coined glossary of "BRICS" (a.k.a. the five major emergent economic powers), "Chindia" and "ChinAfrica", among others, all point to the beneficent orientation of "China's rise with the rest" in the foreseeable future.

Though a majority of scholars have agreed that China's replacement of the U.S. as No.1 economic powerhouse is merely a matter of time, it would be still too hasty and misleading to conclude that the world is ready

to embrace the Chinese Dream as the alternative to the American Dream. A recent BBC poll showed that the global attitude toward outgoing and incoming superpowers was not much different: half positive and half negative; namely, 45% of respondents were positive toward the U.S., 42% toward China; while 34% were negative toward the U.S., 39% toward China. If the Chinese Dream, as both government rhetoric and the BBC poll evinced, is more of a nebulous

illusion rather than a solid reality, how to win the hearts and minds of the global 99% remains an insurmountable challenge to Chinese leadership. It is no mere surprise that an ambitious "going abroad" campaign has been implemented since 2009 to counteract the Western media portrayal of China as a mystic player and rogue donor in the global community. Among others, six media organizations at the "central" level, namely, Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, China Central Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI), China Daily, and China News Service, have become the major beneficiaries of this campaign with tremendous investment and significant expansion of their global reach.

The promulgation of the Chinese Dream as "dream of the people" remains part and parcel of Chinese media development across the globe, particularly in the developing nations, wherein the global 99% are striving for a better life. Admittedly, Africa has been resurged as one of the target destinations for Chinese media's "going abroad" campaign with the heritage of the Maoist legacies of international communication since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. The historical affinity between China and Africa can be vividly evinced by the recent archaeological discovery of porcelain fragments and coins of the Ming dynasty (circa. 15th century) in Kenya's north coast, and also by Chairman Mao's humorous reference to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) entry into the United Nations (UN) in 1971 with considerable support from African allies, "We Chinese were 'palanquined' into the UN by our poor friends in Africa."

Accordingly, Chinese media development in Africa started immediately after the PRC was established. Since the opening of the Cairo branch of the Xinhua News Agency (hereafter Xinhua) in 1950, till the early 1980s, Africa has always been the continent with the greatest number of overseas media outlets



**The Making of Global Media in China**

- China's rise to world power and unmatched power in the sphere of international journalism
- Expanding the outreach of the six major media outlets and turning national media into "global media"
- Recruiting local media professionals and managers and adopting "format licensing" strategy
- Tsinghua, CUC, Renmin as the "talent pools" of international Journalists supported by the central government
- UNESCO's campaign for New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)



**CCTV NEWS**

- \* 2 overseas headquarters; 5 centers, 64 branch offices
- \* Over 600 international journalists (Including 160 non-Chinese citizens)
- \* Increasing on-site reportage (100% in 2012)
- \* Increasing exclusive reportage
- \* Increasing visibility in global video news transaction

and in-house journalists from China. In April 1986, Xinhua integrated its 22 branch offices into African headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, the first overseas epicenter among all Chinese media organizations.

Since the launch of the “going abroad” campaign in 2009, Chinese media development in Africa has covered all sectors and platforms ranging from print, broadcasting, digital and mobile, thereby substantiating their visibility, accessibility and feasibility for the ever-increasing number of affluent and middle-class readers, audience and netizens in Africa. A recent survey released by the U.S.-based Pew Research Center found that China was best liked in Africa, with 72% of respondents holding a positive attitude toward China, thanks to the “charm offensive”<sup>2</sup> implemented in recent years. On the other hand, the skyrocketing and all-encompassing “charm offensive” launched by Chinese media since 2009 has inevitably evoked doubts, challenges and even harsh criticism across the world, particularly the emergent “media imperialism” in Africa with reference to the Euro-American colonial legacies.

Obviously, China’s current “charm offensive” is intertwined with heavy investment for and voluminous expansion of the ever-growing African media market. As the first media organization deep-seated in Africa, Xinhua expanded its influence via the newly launched English news channel CNC, reaching 6.7 million subscribers to DStv, Africa’s largest digital satellite television platform. In addition, Xinhua also launched a mobile application in 2011, to make its news service available to the continent’s millions of mobile phone users.

On the print news front, China Daily, the nation’s leading English-language newspaper, aims to increase its influence over local power elite, urban middle class and opinion

leaders in Africa. With its opening of new branches in Johannesburg and Nairobi, China Daily has been publishing its African edition, plus a special supplement of “African Weekly” and a magazine called ChinAfrica, since December 2012, hitting the newsstand alongside with the established likes of the Daily Nation and the Standard in major African cities, and distributed on elite venues like Kenyan Airways.

In the sector of broadcasting media, China Radio International (CRI) established FM stations in five Central and East African cities, while its AM channels cover over 10 million listeners in sub-Saharan regions. It is also worthwhile to mention the soaring ratings and unprecedented popularity of Chinese family telenovelas translated by CRI, in countries like Tanzania and Kenya. As the first broadcast hub outside Beijing, CCTV Africa inaugurated in Nairobi in January 2012, and provided millions of satellite TV viewers with one-hour daily news programming from a Chinese perspective.



In addition to Chinese media's "going abroad", around 1,000 African journalists and media professionals were invited to China to attend workshops or training camps. Core coursework included lectures on Chinese political, economic, social, technological and cultural development, field trips and internships with media organizations. It is noteworthy that these AfrA Critical Review of Chinese Media Development in Africa Re-Orienting the "Charm Offensive" to the "Charm Defensive":

In response to the doubts and challenges as such, and by way of the newly-rising concept of "Chinese Dream" promulgated by the new supreme leadership, we can anticipate that the ongoing "charm offensive" should be readjusted and re-oriented into "charm defensive" in the foreseeable future along the following three dimensions:

First, since the "Chinese Dream" as "the dream of people" means to reinforce the solidarity of the global 99%, Chinese media development should transcend from the government-sponsored model and shed light on the relevance with local communities and the enga-

gement of the indigenous netizens, prosumers, and producers by way of the emergent social media and mobile phone platforms. It is noteworthy that, while less than 10% of households in Africa have gained access to broadband, over 60% are able to use mobile phone for their day-to-day communication. In this light, social and mobile media development would pave the way to increasing interaction and engagement between Chinese media outlets and local communities in Africa.

One feasible entry point is to increase the media flow and counter-flow between China and Africa. The South African media company Naspers, for instance, has been benefiting greatly from its investment in the social and mobile media platform Tencent in China, which now accounts for 80% of the media conglomerate's R200 billion (approximately USD 25 billion) market capitalization (Steyn 2012). This is a good case in point for media counter-flow, which is best exemplified by "China's rise with the rest".

Second, as previously indicated, the preponderance of state-owned mainstream outlets and government-sponsored projects in China's media development has drawn harsh criticism and increasing doubts upon the "charm offensive" as such. The "charm defensive", by contrast, will resort to the power and resources from the private entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations to enhance the credibility and efficacy of international communication.

One case in point is the miracle of StarTimes, a Beijing-based privately-owned digital technology company which, since it was licensed in Rwanda in 2007, has ascended to be the second largest digital TV operator in Africa. So far, StarTimes' services have been extended to nine countries with total subscribers of 2.1 million across Africa. The company targets





middle and lower middle class households, charging three to five dollars monthly fee, while providing more than thirty local, international and self-produced channels. Due to its conspicuous influence and voluminous success, StarTimes has been granted 150 million USD from the government-sponsored "China Africa Development Fund" since 2012 to expand its reach across the continent.

Last, and perhaps the most challenging, Chinese media's charm defensive needs to convey a clear-cut and consistent value system to African audiences. The aforementioned Pew survey indicated that a significant number of African respondents respected China on the basis of her economic, technological and commercial achievements, rather than popular culture, let alone any core value.

Over 70% of Africans still favor the U.S. as the epitome of liberal democracy, while China is considered "non-applicable" in the category of "ideas about democracy". Thus, the very connotation and denotation of the Chinese Dream need to be demarcated and crystallized in the years to come if the charm defensive can take effect to change the stereotyped mentality of the global public opinion, including that of Africans. In other words, China still has a long way to go to defend her position as the prospective leader for the developing world, rather than to "offend" or intimidate the world by launching a series of heavily invested and highly profiled projects.

To sum up, China's rise as a global power in the 21st century must be different from the Anglo-American-styled ascension as the world's leader in the past two centuries: not to rise as a lone power to rule the world, but to rise with the rest to engage the world. This brief SWOP analysis of China's media development in Africa and a subsequent call for a re-orientation from "charm offensive" to "charm defensive" are purported to ensure

China maintains her position as a respectful and respectable role model for developing countries and as a responsible player in the global community as well.

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## Rebranding Chinese News Media

- ★ Targeting at the Rest: enriching the global vision by knowing the non-Western World
- ★ Targeting at the "global 99%": building netizen-based journalism and promoting "citizen heroes"
- ★ Targeting at the in-depth: providing niche and big-data-based coverage of China's business and society



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South African perceptions of Chinese soft power initiatives:

# A firm place for China on the news agenda

Herman Wasserman, Rhodes University



A consideration of current developments and activities in the media development arena has to include a focus on the relationship between media development and public diplomacy. Media development efforts feed into the strategic efforts by nations to build their image internationally, find support for their political ideologies, and extend their influence. And, in turn, when public diplomacy efforts are considered in the current geopolitical context, the notion of 'soft power' – especially of the emerging nations in the Global South – have to receive special attention. No longer can media development be seen in terms of a one-directional flow from the well-endowed, metropolitan centres of the Global North to the 'developing' world in the Global South. The 'Rise of the Rest', as Fareed Zakaria has called it – the emergence of fast-growing economies like China and India – as well as the formation of the BRICS alignment of states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have created multi-directional flows of media content, media capital and media personnel. The flows and contraflows of media globally are taking on new patterns. The result is a media development landscape that poses challenges

for the traditional dominant powers in the media development arena. The support for media development provided by new players like China, should also be read in terms of what the American political scientist Joseph Nye called 'soft power': the means through which countries exert influence in the global arena through attraction and persuasion rather than through coercion or force. When we therefore consider the changing media development landscape in South Africa and the region, we have to consider these larger questions of new geopolitical shifts, the role of the media in achieving 'soft power' and public diplomacy objectives, and the significance of the rise of new global powers that have entered the terrain of media development initiatives.

## Media as a key player in public diplomacy

In these geopolitical shifts, the media is a key player in public diplomacy efforts and what can be called 'image politics' – the way that the representation of a country (sometimes called in corporate-speak the country's 'brand') in the global media has economic

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and political implications. The media itself – its role in society, its relation to government, the extent of press freedom – are also increasingly a topic for meta-debates in the media. The increased influence of China in the African mediasphere, for example, has given rise to debates about the effect the Chinese media presence will have on democratic cultures and freedom of speech on the continent. It is in these instances that we can see especially clearly how debates about the media are often actually debates about the key values of democracy. Unfortunately the complexities of these issues are often lost in popular discourses that portray Sino-African relations in panicked tones and in simplistic oppositions (China as ‘friend or foe’, ‘partner or predator’) rather than careful nuance.

What is becoming clear, however, is that the engagement between China and South Africa will increasingly be a mediated one.

The media’s role in public diplomacy efforts and in the new global geopolitical conte-

stations however goes beyond mere representation and debates – it also extends to the political economy of the flows of media capital. Not all these flows can be defined as ‘media development’ in the way that we have come to know the term in the literature of media assistance. The notion

of ‘media development’ is usually associated with some type of exogenous intervention in the media landscape of a country with the objective of effecting democratic outcomes. This definition would not readily apply to, say, the exchange programmes set up bet-

ween Chinese and African journalists, or the expansion of the South African satellite television platform Multichoice into other African countries, or the availability of the Chinese news agency Xinhua on mobile phones on the African continent. Yet these media flows and contraflows are shaping the global media landscape, and reconfiguring the relationship between countries via media exchanges. In other words, the current geopolitical shifts are increasingly being mediated, and this mediation has implications for the traditional notions of media development and media assistance. The prime example of how the mediation of geopolitics has impacted on the terrain of media development in Africa, is the process of what has been called (by the author Joshua Kurlantzick) ‘China’s charm offensive’. (Professor Anbin Shi from Tsinghua University in Beijing has however provided an alternative perspective on this process, calling it China’s ‘charm defensive’ – an attempt by China to counter negative representation and stereotyping from the West)

### The presence of Chinese media in Africa

The increased presence of the Chinese *Xinhua* News Agency, *Central China Television* (CCTV), *China Radio International* (CRI) and *China Daily* on the African continent since 2006 has widely been seen as an attempt to counter negative reporting and media stereotypes about the country. The appeal of these news platforms is also partly economic: *Xinhua* now has 23 bureaux in Africa, and offers a cheaper alternative to the Western news agencies like Reuters and AFP. *Xinhua*’s accessibility on mobile phones has broadened its reach significantly on a continent where mobile phone penetration has been phenomenal. CCTV has professionalized their broadcasts so as to appeal to a wider global audience, and Chinese investments in training programmes for African journalists can be seen as aimed at

#### Charm offensive in Africa



- Xinhua News Agency, Central China Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI), China Daily - increased presence since 2006
- African bureaux for Chinese broadcast, print, mobile media
- E.g. Xinhua 23 bureaux in Africa - cheaper alternative to Reuters, AFP; TV version carried on SA based satellite TV
- Use of mobile platform to broaden reach: Xinhua, CCTV app
- Investments in training African media
- Professionalizing international broadcasts of CCTV

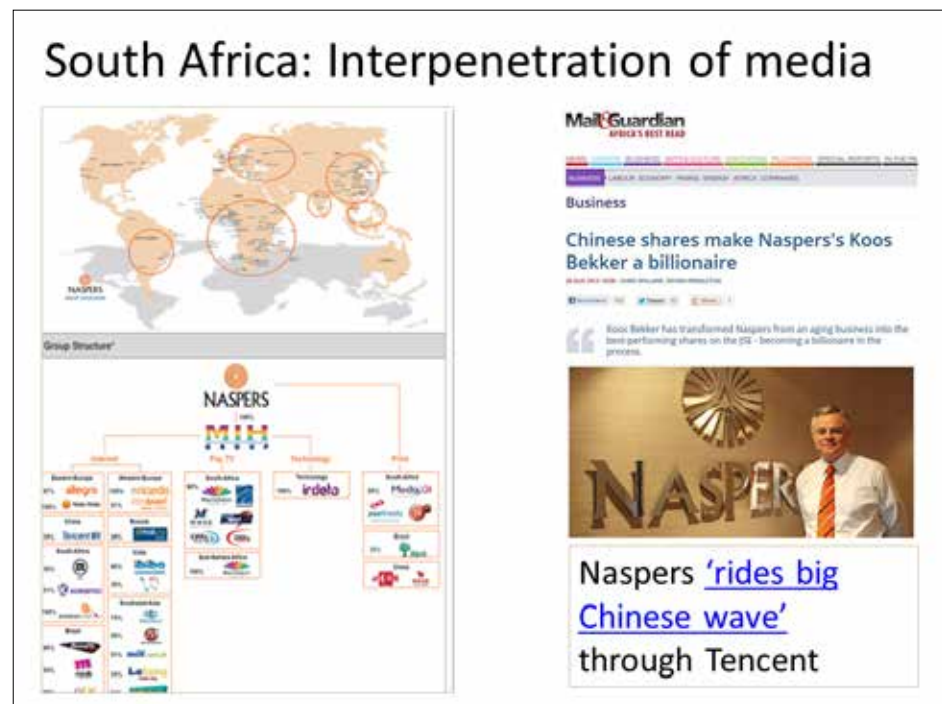


imparting alternative normative frameworks and professional values than those that have traditionally been inherited from the West. The potential for these efforts to contribute to Chinese 'soft power' on the continent is obvious. The response to China's efforts to create a positive image on the African continent will also differ across countries and regions. In countries with a healthy, democratic culture of debate and free press, it can be expected that China's engagement with Africa will continue to be debated.

In South Africa, a country with a robust media and a culture of free and open debate, Chinese investment in the media has met with some controversy. The inclusion of a stake by a Chinese business group in the recent purchase of Independent Media, previously owned by the Irish Independent group, as well as Chinese investment in the pay-television platform TopTV, have been the topic of debate in the media. Especially the purchase of Independent by the Sekunjalo group, headed by Dr Iqbal Survé, has been controversial – not only because of the Chinese involvement in the purchase deal, but also Survé's close relationship with people high up in the ruling party, the ANC. There are fears that both these sets of power relations will have a chilling effect on freedom of expression in the newspaper group – a fear that seems to have been confirmed when Survé fired the editor of one of his titles in December 2013. The editor of the Cape Times, Alide Dasnois, was fired after the newspaper reported on a finding by the country's Public Protector that a tender to manage the State's fishery vessels was unethically and improperly awarded to the same consortium that owns the newspaper (see <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-12-08-alide-dasnois-removed-as-cape-times-editor/>)

The relationship between China and African media has not been a one-directional affair, however. We increasingly witness what

Keyan Tomaselli (2009) has called the 'interpenetration' of media capital. An example of a contraflow from South Africa to other regions in the Global South is that of the media behemoth Naspers. The company has investments in the rest of Africa, India, Brazil



and several other regions. Its most lucrative investment in recent years has however been its 34% stake in the Chinese internet provider Tencent. This investment has made the CEO of Naspers, Koos Bekker, a billionaire.

Naspers also has an extensive media footprint on the continent, largely via its digital satellite television platform DStv. The South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC) is also carried on this platform to other African countries, and these expansions of South African content into the continent have not always escaped criticism of South African media imperialism.

The flows and contraflows of Chinese media capital in the South African media landscape have created quite some controversy

in the public debate. The former editor and media commentator Anton Harber remarked on these developments: 'That creaking sound you hear is the global see-saw tilting eastwards'. He is of the opinion that "Chinese media culture is not going to sit easily in Africa where we have been developing and hopefully entrenching much more open democratic media culture". However, a coun-

Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and others, and has also served as the launchpad for development projects that reached further into the region. An increased presence of Chinese media organisations and assistance to journalists in the region may add a new dynamic to these processes. Organisations within South Africa aimed at media development and training such as the *Media Diversity and Development Agency* (MDDA), the *Freedom of Expression Institute* and the *Institute for the Advancement of Journalism* (IAJ) are based on the premises of consolidating democracy and strengthening media's watchdog function in the region, also via collaborations with other organisations. China's foray into this region therefore poses a challenge to the normative underpinning of media development discourse as based on freedom of expression and media independence as these norms have come to be understood within Western contexts, even while it may add diversity to the range of perspectives and approaches. As Guy Berger argued in an article in *International Communication Gazette* in 2010, the notion of media development however remains poorly defined, and the assumption that media development would in any case contribute to democracy is open for debate.

## Media development in SA



- Premised on democratic principles, e.g. Media Diversity and Development Agency – working against historical marginalisation and exclusion, towards plurality of voices
- NGOs working in media development (e.g. FXI, MMP, OSISA, IAJ) also aimed at consolidating democracy and strengthening media's watchdog function in the region via collaborations
- China's foray into this region therefore poses challenge to normative underpinning of media development discourse (cf Berger 2010)
- But adds diversity?

ter-perspective has been offered by Hopewell Radebe, who, while in his position as secretary-general of the South African National Editors' Forum, remarked that "China is not a danger to media independence – Chinese investments will be business and nothing more than that".

The new sets of players and new relationships evolving in the African media landscape may pose challenges to more established media development actors. Since the arrival of democracy in South Africa, the country has been a location for media development initiatives sponsored by Western governments and non-governmental organisations such as the Open Society Initiative, the Konrad Adenauer

The entry of China into the broad area of media development and media training does however raise some key questions about what the implications will be for the African media sphere, such as the following:

- How are these changing relationships between South Africa and other BRICS countries, especially China, reported in media?
- How are these relationships viewed by journalists and editors?

### Preliminary research

In an attempt to answer these questions, a two-pronged study was conducted. Firstly,

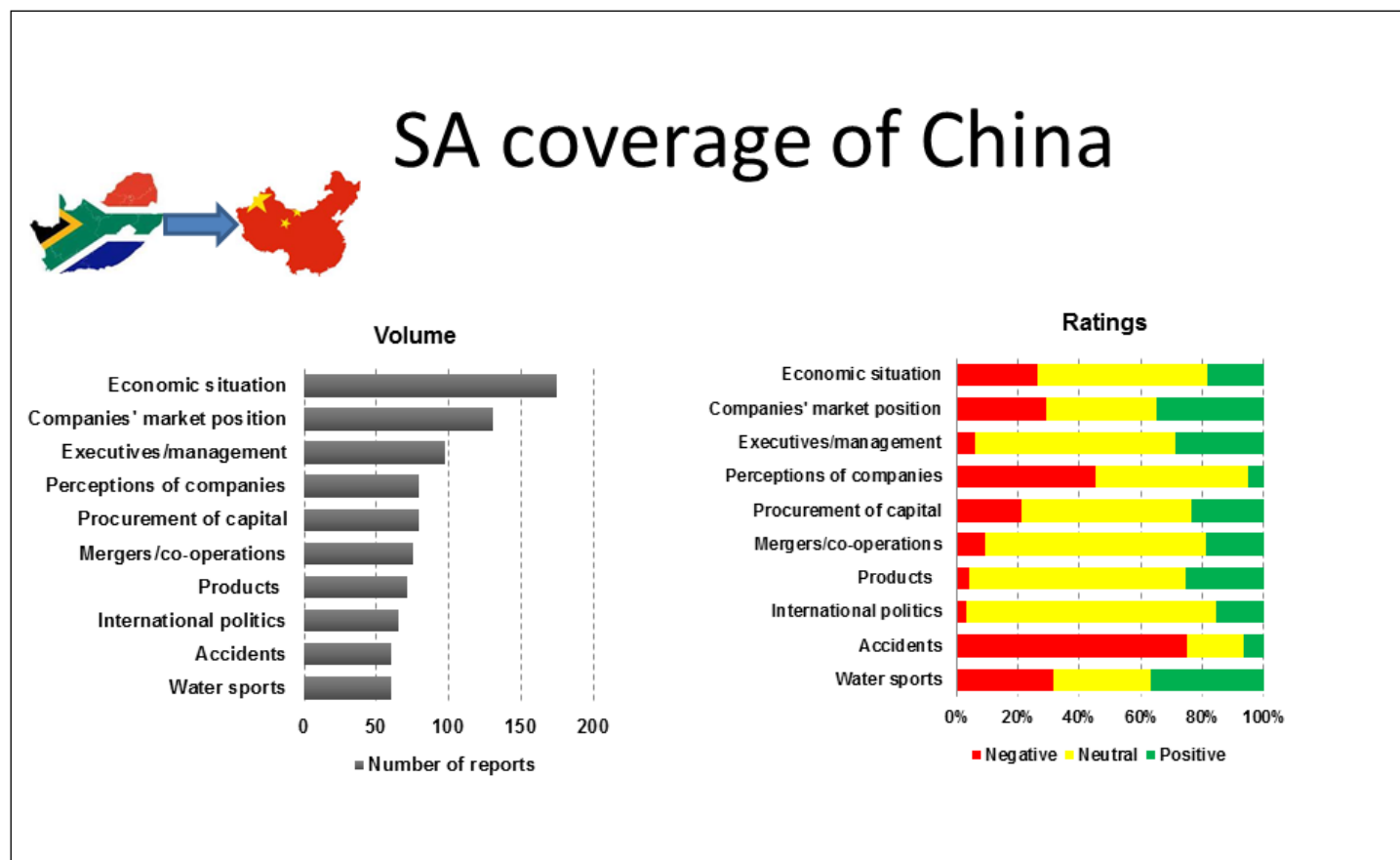
media content of major South African news outlets was conducted (by the media research company Media Tenor), to build on previous studies of representations of BRICS countries in the South African media. Secondly, an online survey of senior journalists and editors in major print and broadcast outlets was conducted to explore their views of the South African media within the new geopolitical shifts.<sup>1</sup>

Although it might still take some time for China's 'soft power' strategies to have an impact, the findings of this study<sup>1</sup> showed that, in contrast with what one might have expected based on the academic literature on Chinese stereotypical discourses, South African media on the whole already displayed an attitude of 'cautious optimism' towards increased Chinese involvement on the conti-

nent. China's presence in Africa is high on the news agenda in South Africa. China receives the most coverage of all the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries in the South African media. Over the past few years South African media's coverage of China has also been shown as not being overly negative, but on the whole quite balanced.

Stereotyping and fear-mongering are of course not completely absent in the media. But what is interesting is that these stereotypical representations are also being challenged by other South African journalists who present counter-perspectives.

On example of such stereotyping and a counter-response in the South African media is the spat between the investigative magazine



## Coverage findings



- Dominance of China compared to rest of BRICS
- BRICS coverage balanced (except Russia)
- Coverage of last 3 years shows balanced view of China emerging, becoming more positive
- Cautiously optimistic attitude in media – not pigeonholed as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ story
- China firm place on news agenda – but mostly as business story. Little social coverage
- Economic interest supersedes political or social issues (‘upstairs’ vs ‘downstairs’)

*Noseweek* and the online news and analysis website *Daily Maverick*. In November 2012, *Noseweek* published an article titled ‘Howzit [hello] China’<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.noseweek.co.za/article/2836/Howzit-China>), which contained crude stereotyping and generalisation of Chinese shopkeepers in South Africa. The article argued that Chinese shops have ‘popped up’ in every town of South Africa and amount to a ‘largely unlawful enterprise that threatens to destroy local commerce and cost the taxman billions’. The argument is a familiar xenophobic one: foreigners are stealing local jobs, Chinese are dishonest and are smuggling their way into the country and defrauding the government of its due tax revenue.

Soon after the *Noseweek* article appeared, journalists Kevin Bloom and Richard Poplak wrote a response in the online news site *Daily Maverick*<sup>3</sup>, pointing out the generalisations, factual errors and xenophobic stereotyping with which the *Noseweek* article is riddled. Calling the *Noseweek* article a ‘new low for South African journalism’, Bloom and Poplak drew on their own investigative fieldwork to counter the claims made in the *Noseweek*

article. They also point towards the dangers of such xenophobic reporting – reminding readers of attacks on migrants in South Africa in recent years.

The exchange between these journalists make for fascinating reading because they emphasise the need for a nuanced, factually accurate and well-informed debate about the implications of China’s presence in Africa. Broad generalisations and stereotypes are just not good enough in a context where the media should be relied upon to explain the complexities of Sino-African engagement in a changing global landscape. What is also made clear in this exchange is that the media will increasingly be a central space where battles for representation, struggles for perceptions and jostling for influence over audiences will take place.

The analysis conducted by *Media Tenor* of South African media content over the last 3 years has given us a picture of how coverage of China and the other BRICS countries are covered in major news outlets in the country. It found that China dominates coverage compared to the rest of the BRICS countries, but that coverage of the BRICS alignment – of which South Africa is a member since 2010 – has on the whole been fairly balanced, except Russia which tends to get negative coverage.

Over the last 3 years, a more balanced view of China has been emerging, with coverage generally becoming more positive. China’s presence in Africa has therefore not been pigeonholed as either a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ story, but it has received a firm place on the news agenda mostly as a business story. Coverage seems to focus on Chinese investment and what these activities might mean for the economy and development generally, or for political issues such as human rights and freedom of expression. Little news on the social and cultural implications of increased Sino-



African exchanges seem to make the news (although this could partly be explained by the choice of media to analyse, namely mainstream news with an emphasis on business). In other words, coverage tends to concentrate on what Yoon Jung Park and Chris Alden have described as the 'upstairs' dimension of Sino-African relationships, rather than the 'downstairs' dimensions of everyday life.

An analysis of coverage can give an indication of the major discourses around China in the South African media, but such an analysis may not be enough to uncover the attitudes and perspectives of journalists and editors themselves. To establish the latter, a survey was conducted among editors of major print and broadcast news outlets in South Africa. They were asked, among other things, to give their opinion about South Africa's membership of the BRICS alignment of emerging economies, which BRICS countries are the most important to cover, and how their views of China's involvement in South Africa has changed in recent years. Participants were also asked whether they use Chinese media sources such as Xinhua or CCTV, whether they have participated in any exchange programmes with China, and if so, how that participation has influenced their reporting of China.

The findings reflected a generally positive view of South Africa's membership of BRICS. As one respondent remarked, this membership gives South Africa a 'seat at the big table' of emerging nations. Editors confirmed the findings of the content analysis, namely that China is seen as the most important of the BRICS countries to cover because of its influence, although it was remarked that India might have more 'democratic relevance' for South Africa as a young democracy. Editors also indicated the preference for trade and industry topics that was reflected in the content analysis.

## Conclusion



- Coverage of China-Africa within BRICS alignment cautiously optimistic
- Increasing nuance at least partly due to exposure to Chinese media – 'soft power' among hierarchy of influences
- Media likely to remain space for battles over attitudes and perceptions
- 'Upstairs' still has to be followed by 'downstairs'

What is interesting from the point of view of public diplomacy and its role in the shifting geopolitical relations, is that almost all respondents indicated that they have developed a more nuanced understanding of China in recent years, due to them having access to more information. This change in attitudes can be seen as a result of soft power initiatives by China. One respondent remarked in this regard:

*I refer to both Xinhua and CCTV from time to time, both for a sense of what the official Chinese line is on key issues, and for a sense of where Chinese interests lie. It is also interesting to get a sense of what is possible in China's heavily controlled official media.*

*We use them to try give a context on how things are reported and represented there, but we are very careful to declare the nature of the paper, whether it's partisan and aligned to the ruling party.*

It seems clear that the greater accessibility of Chinese media to journalists in South Africa

will lead to more nuanced reporting, and in that sense it could be seen as a successful outcome for soft power exercised through media.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, then, it can be said that media development initiatives in the South African region have seen the emergence in recent years of new entrants in the landscape. The shifting geopolitics marked by the rise of the BRICS countries, but especially the increased presence of China on the continent, is impacting on the way that media development initiatives can be used for public diplomacy objectives. Media investments in the region are also increasingly multi-directional, with local and foreign players competing in the same markets, and interpenetrating each other's environments.

In years to come, the media are likely to remain a space for battles over attitudes and

perceptions in the global public diplomacy arena.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> (reported in more detail in: Herman Wasserman (2013), *South Africa and China as BRICS Partners: Media Perspectives on Geopolitical Shifts*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, first published on December 16, 2013, <http://jas.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/12/15/0021909613514191.abstract> (retrieved 17 June 2014))

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.noseweek.co.za/article/2836/Howzit-China>

<sup>3</sup> <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-10-30-nosedive-chinese-shopkeeper-cover-story-a-new-low-for-south-african-journalism>

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## Perspectives

### *“China’s perspective on Africa is not yet mainstream”*

*Interviewed by FoME member Sergio Grassi (Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation), Jillo Kadida, Chief Reporter for The Star in Nairobi, talks about Chinese media presence in her country, the differences between Western and Chinese reporting on Africa, and the experiences of colleagues invited to participate in journalism training offered by Chinese institutions.*

*FoME: Is China’s increasing media presence in Africa complementing the picture by offering the South-South perspective on developments in Africa and in the World?*

Jillo Kadida: China’s perspective of Africa is not yet mainstream — it appears to feature more in boardrooms for now. If the intention is to have the South-South perspective, then the channels are not yet up.

*FoME: What are the main differences in the approach of Chinese and Western media in Africa?*

J.K.: China’s footprint is not yet very visible, and its voice limited to those with privileged access. In most African towns, the man on the street wouldn’t know where he could get to see how China media has covered him. The opposite is true for Western media. Maybe it’s a case of Western media having a history of cultural dominance afforded through their global socio-economic power.

*FoME: How important is the factor South-South cooperation, and how important is the price factor for African media houses to use media footage from Chinese news agencies?*

J.K.: The world is economic, everyone seems to be just looking for supportive associates to get them going, however this may be clothed/packaged. On price factor, content is expensive yet most African societies are not economically endowed — in such a context, price becomes very important.

*FoME: Is the approach by Chinese media to emphasise more positive stories of development in African countries, and on friendship between China and African countries, appealing to the local audience?*

J.K.: Local audiences don’t seem to be central in their focus, at least, not yet.

*FoME: Chinese media in Africa is often criticised for focusing only on positive aspects and*



Ms Jillo Kadida is Chief Court Reporter with The Star newspaper in Kenya, which she joined in June 2011. Apart from writing articles, she manages and heads a team of six court reporters. Jillo’s career was born out of her passion for human rights, and much of her work highlights the plight of minority groups, such as intersex people, refugees and internally displaced persons. In 2009, she won the David Astor Journalism Award, which came with the opportunity to work for three months at Mail & Guardian in South Africa. Between 2003 and 2011, she worked as a reporter for East Africa’s biggest newspaper, Daily Nation, where her main beat was legal and human rights issues. She was born in Sololo, a remote village on the border between Ethiopia and Kenya. Her love for journalism evolved when she experienced TV and newspapers during her first visit to Nairobi in 1999. This was when she discovered journalism as a powerful tool in the fight for human rights, and decided to pursue it as a career. She studied print and radio journalism at Magenta Training Institute.

*not on domestic issues or challenges in bilateral relations. Is this justified?*

J.K.: Well, it is consistent with the overall China policy for engagement with Africa: ask no questions, everybody takes care of their ends and the implications to them. African societies are complex; depending on the power arrangement, it may be seen as a good thing to not “interfere” in domestic issues, yet, at other times, you’d be seen as a caring friend for being concerned with domestic issues. But Africa is also very social/comunal, even if you wanted to show you are caring as a friend, you cannot be exuberant/arrogant about it – something the West has not done very well.

*FoME: How do Kenyan/African journalists perceive trainings from Chinese media organisations?*

J.K.: My answer is based on what friends and colleagues say who benefitted from such trainings. According to them, the trainings are usually based on the basic news values of journalism, such as proximity, prominence, etc. Journalism ethics are also keenly looked at. They usually critically examine how the West covers itself, Africa and China. I would say, at the end of it all, trainings are usually about making Africans more open-minded, and not swallowing what they read hook, line and sinker. They also focus on Media Literacy, by understanding how media works and the various viewpoints or voices that are either silenced or given space and airtime. Case studies on Western media coverage are usually carefully scrutinised. However, professors encourage free discussions, and students are not caged into thinking in a way the Chinese would like them to think. Different opinions are usually encouraged.

*The interview was conducted in  
January, 2014*

## The Indian entertainment and media industry:

# Bollywood as India's soft power

Daya Thussu, University of Westminster

One thing which strikes a chord with people the world over when thinking about India, is its colourful cinema. The most prominent manifestation of Indian content in global media is India's \$3.5 billion film industry, *Bollywood*, which has helped to make the country an attractive destination for both tourism and investment. Though India has been exporting films to countries around the world since the 1930s, it is only since the 1990s and in the new millennium that *Bollywood* has become part of the 'global popular'. The rapid liberalization, deregulation and privatization of media and cultural industries in the world's largest democracy, coupled with the increasing availability of digital delivery and distribution technologies, have ensured that Indian films are increasingly visible in the global media sphere.

At the same time, the unprecedented expansion of television – from a single state channel in 1991 to over 800 channels in 2013 – was a massive boost for the movie industry, not

only with the emergence of many dedicated film-based pay-channels, but the potential for coverage of the film industry itself, given the huge demand of the new channels for content. Digitization and the growing availability of satellite and cable television have ensured that Indian films are also regularly shown outside India and distributed via many different modes, defining popular culture among the 35million strong South Asian diaspora, scattered on all continents.

According to industry estimates, the Indian entertainment and media industry was worth \$29 billion in 2013. In addition to exporting its own media products, India is increasingly a production base for Hollywood and other US media corporations, especially in areas such as animation and post-production services. These growing cultural links with the US-dominated transnational media corporations also facilitates the marketing and distribution of Indian content. As international investment increases in the media

sector, with the relaxation of cross-media ownership rules, new synergies are emerging between Hollywood and *Bollywood*: Indian media companies too are investing in Hollywood productions. The changing geo-political equation in Asia, which has led to a closer economic and strategic relationship between Washington and New Delhi, has given a boost to this process.

To what extent has India's popular culture contributed to its global presence and prestige? Has the greater volume of circulation of Indian cultural products through global

digital superhighways changed external perceptions of India, enhancing its soft power? Indian industry and government have recognized and endorsed the potential power of culture at the highest level, as India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh observed in 2011, while addressing the

annual gathering of Indian diaspora: "India's soft power is an increasingly important element of our expanding global footprint [...] The richness of India's classical traditions and the colour and vibrancy of contemporary Indian culture are making waves around the world". Shashi Tharoor, India's Minister for Higher Education and a pioneer proponent of its soft power discourse, has consistently argued that India has a "good story" to tell and its popular culture is well-equipped to tell that story.

### **Bollywood as a global cultural industry**

The term *Bollywood*, coined in a journalistic column in India – and contested and com-

mended in almost equal measure – refers to a major cultural industry which dominates all media in India, including television, radio, print, on-line content and advertising. Films also contribute to the massive popular music industry. For some, the connotation of the word is that it is a derivative, imitative and low-quality version of the world's richest film factory – Hollywood – but in terms of the production of feature films and viewership, India leads the world: every year on average 1,000 films are produced. *Bollywood* is seen both by government and industry as a soft power asset for India – one of the few non-Western countries to make its presence felt in the global cinema market.

Cinema in India has a strong pedigree: within months of the invention of the motion picture by the Lumière brothers in France in 1895, films were being shown in Bombay, and film production in India started two years later. In 1913, the first full length feature film *Raja Harishchandra*, based on the life of a mythological king of ancient India, was released. In the silent era (1913-1931) more than 1,200 films were made in India. In 1931, India entered the sound era and within a year 28 full-length feature films in three languages were released. Even before India became an independent nation, films from India were being exported to south-east Asian and African nations. One reason for the popularity of Indian films among other developing countries was their larger-than-life characters, escapist melodramatic narrative style, and song and dance sequences. The anti-colonial and progressive ideology which defined the formative years of Indian cinema was also attractive for governments in the communist world. The 1946 film *Dharti Ke Lal* (*Children of the Earth*) produced by the *Indian People's Theatre Association*, was the first film to receive widespread distribution in the Soviet Union. It has been suggested that one candidate for the title of the "most popular film of



In 1913, the first full length feature film *Raja Harishchandra*, based on the life of a mythological king of ancient India, was released in Bombay.



all times" is *Awaara* (*Vagabond*, released in 1951), directed by Raj Kapoor, one of India's most popular actors, as it was very successful in the Soviet Union and China, as well as in many other countries. In Russia, Indian films continue to attract interest: the state-owned channel *Domashny* (*Home*) broadcasts *Bollywood*, while *India TV*, a corporation owned by the Moscow-based Red Media Group, has been showing Indian films and other programming in that country since 2006.

The deregulated and privatized global broadcasting environment and the availability of digital television and online delivery systems have ensured that Bollywood content is available to new and varied international audiences. Expansion, particularly into the lucrative US and European markets during the 1990s, was made possible by the availability of satellite platforms: Indian channels including *Zee*, *Star*, *B4U* (*Bollywood for You*) became available in Europe on Sky's digital network, and in the US, on Echostar DISH system and DirecTV. Indian films are now being watched in more than 70 countries – from Egypt to Nigeria and Russia to Thailand – and exports account for nearly a third of industry earnings. With the growing convergence between television and the internet, these channels now have a global viewership.

In 2000, the Indian film industry was formally given the status of an industry by the Indian government, authorizing the Industrial Development Bank of India to provide loans to filmmakers, thus ensuring it could become a major source of revenue as well as an instrument for promoting India's soft power. Such a move was also aimed at encouraging foreign investors to engage with the Indian entertainment industry. One outcome of such official support was that investments began to flow from telecom, software and media sectors into an industry hitherto operating within an opaque financial system.

This corporatization and the synergies that it created made it possible for *Bollywood* to be available on multiple platforms, satellite, cable, on-line and mobile, resulting in a complex, globalized production, distribution and consumption practices.

The *Bollywood* brand, co-opted by India's corporate and governmental elite and celebrated by members of its diaspora, has come to define a creative and confident India. Gone are the days when diasporic communities felt embarrassed about the cinema of their country of origin, perceived by many in host nations as little more than garish, glitzy and kitschy. Today, Hindi films are released simultaneously across the globe; its stars recognized faces in international advertising and entertainment. There are many festivals and functions centred around *Bollywood*, and prestigious universities offer courses and research into this form of popular culture. In 2008, Prime Minister Singh told Indian Foreign Service probationers, that the "soft power of India in some ways can be a very important instrument of foreign policy. Cultural relations, India's film industry – *Bollywood* – I find wherever I go in Middle-East, in Africa – people talk about Indian films. So that is a new way of influencing the world about the growing importance of India. Soft power is equally important in the new world of diplomacy".

The 1946 film *Dharti Ke Lal* (*Children of the Earth*) produced by the Indian People's Theatre Association, was the first film to receive widespread distribution in the Soviet Union.



The primary market, though, remains the diasporic one, the UK/US segment of which has been revitalized in the past two decades. Given the importance of London as a global media centre, *Bollywood* has invested heavily to make its presence felt there: Britain accounts for a fifth of the global revenue for *Bollywood's* international releases. *Eros International*, the world's leading producer and distributor of *Bollywood* films, is headquartered in the British capital. However, from a soft power perspective, it is not so much about the box office figures – though they are important – but the perception of India that its popular cinema creates among diverse foreign audiences and the attributes that appeal across cultures.

In recent decades, a transnational attitude has been seen in terms of production values, themes and actors as well as investment in sub-titling in various languages to widen the reach of Indian films beyond the traditional diasporic constituency. Since 2002, Melbourne-based *M. G. Distribution* has been distributing Hindi films in mainstream cinemas, raising the profile and visibility of *Bollywood* in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, and such media visibility has made a household name in many countries. In South-east Asia, where the cultural and diasporic networks are a keen audience for Indian popular culture, many recent films were shot on location in the region. The promotion of family and community-oriented values in contrast to Western individualism, has made audiences in Muslim countries more receptive to Indian films. Given the large Indian diaspora in the Arab world, the region is a major overseas market for *Bollywood*: many blockbuster films hold their glitzy premiers in Dubai, a cosmopolitan city which is also setting up a *Bollywood* theme park. Until the 1980s, one third of all film exports from India were for the diasporic and local populations in the Arab Gulf states. Even now, with the availabi-

lity of a myriad entertainment programming from across the globe, Indian films continue to be popular in many Arab countries, as evident from the success of such channels as *B4U Movies* (Middle East). One indication that “*Bollywoodized*” content is now specifically produced for Arab audiences, is the launch of Arabic channels by Indian media companies: *Zee Aflam*, *Zee's* first dedicated movie channel – airing *Bollywood* films dubbed into Arabic – has been in operation since 2008.

*Bollywood's* soft power in the region has also been used to sell military hardware, as illustrated by the short video which leading Israeli weapon's manufacturer, *Rafael Advanced Defence Systems*, produced in 2009 to coincide with the defence trade fair in India. The video with lyrics in English featured a *Bollywood*-style dance number, where Israeli actors in Indian costumes sing and dance around mock-ups of *Rafael's* products, about the Indo-Israeli defence ties. Geo-politics plays a role in the reception of *Bollywood* in Pakistan too. Indian films were banned by the government there for nearly four decades, though smuggled counterfeit copies of VHS tapes and pirated DVDs were widely in circulation – often via transnational circuits within south Asian diaspora in Gulf countries – and *Bollywood* films were also accessible due to increasing availability of satellite television. Since the lifting of the ban in 2008, *Bollywood* films have become a rage in the country with which India has fought four wars and continues to have strained bilateral relations. With its religiosity, gender representation and family-oriented scripts, the *Bollywood* version of „modernization“ seem to be more amenable to the Pakistani audience. In neighbouring Afghanistan, Indian films remain hugely popular. When the Indian foreign minister Jaswant Singh visited Kabul after the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, he reportedly carried with him *Bollywood* films and music tapes for his new

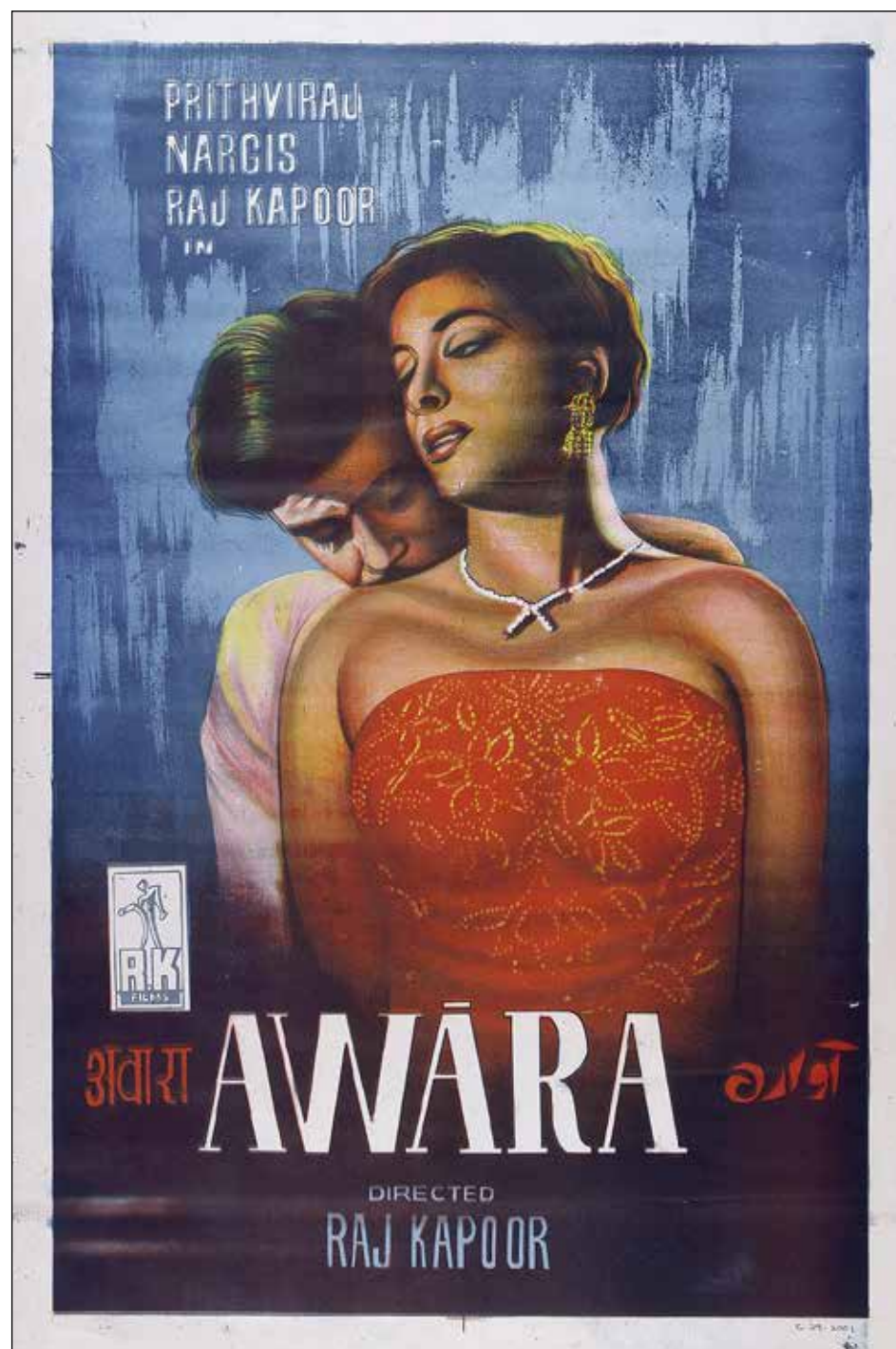
Afghan hosts. US government cables released by WikiLeaks pointed to the potential role of *Bollywood* in promoting anti-extremism across the world, and peace in Afghanistan. A US cable from March 2007 said that high-profile *Bollywood* actors could play a key role in Afghanistan. "We understand *Bollywood* movies are wildly popular in Afghanistan, so willing Indian celebrities could be asked to travel to Afghanistan to help bring attention to social issues there," it said.

Muslim-dominated northern Nigeria has a long-established interest in Hindi cinema. The mushrooming of Hindi-to-Hausa video studios, where Indian films are routinely adapted or copied for the *Nollywood* market, indicates their value as cultural artefacts which can be reworked to suit local tastes and sensibilities. The "visual affinities" of dress, gender segregation, and the absence of sexual content in Hindi films, are attributes which Nigerian audiences appreciate. In Indonesia, where Indian cultural and religious influence has a long history, *Bollywood* films and music are very popular, influencing local music. Since the late 1990s, the Indonesian popular music form *dangdut* has borrowed and copied songs from *Bollywood* films, setting *Bollywood* tunes to words in Indonesia's official language Bhasha. Even in East Asia, in countries with large, sophisticated and commercialised film and entertainment industries, Indian popular culture has made inroads: in Japan, for example, the Tamil films of *Rajinikanth*, the icon of Tamil cinema, were extremely popular, while in South Korea an internet-based service, TVing, broadcasts such Indian entertainment channels as *Zee TV Asia*, *Zee Cinema*, and the *Bollywood* music channel *Zing*.

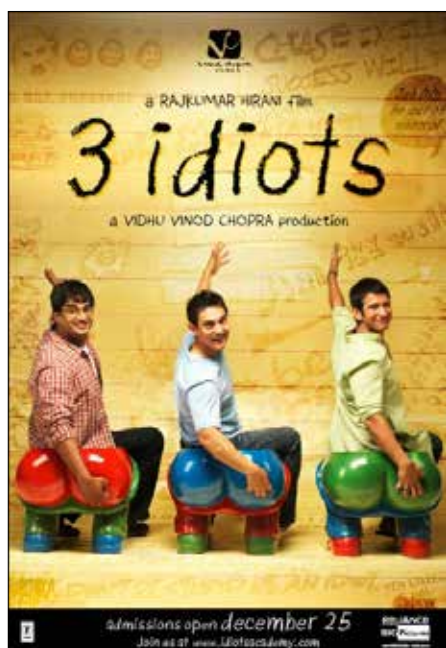
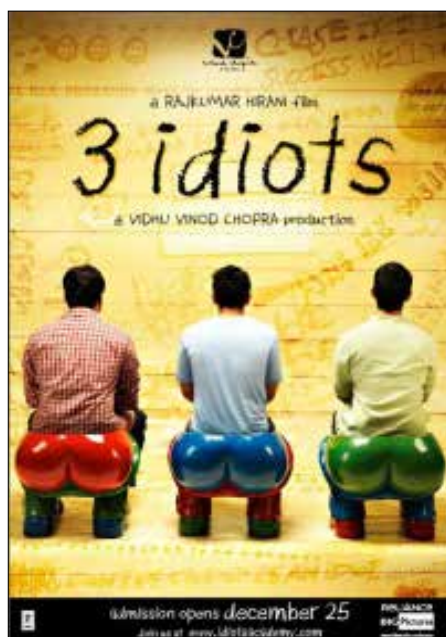
Although Indian films were popular in communist China, as a useful alternative to state propaganda and a cheap substitute for a Hollywood extravaganza, they had almost

disappeared after China opened up to the West and rapidly developed its own cultural industries. A decade ago, this changed when a shortened, digitised and dubbed version of the *Bollywood* film *Lagaan* (Land tax) was released across 25 theatres in China, the first Indian film to be imported by the *China Film Group*. The success in China of the 2009

*Awaara* (*Vagabond*, released in 1951), directed by Raj Kapoor, has been suggested as candidate for the title of the "most popular film of all times", as it was very successful in the Soviet Union and China, as well as in many other countries.







A version of *3 Idiots*, dubbed in Mandarin was released in 2011 in theatres across China. An Indian correspondent in Beijing reported the reaction of a senior Chinese official: "The film entirely changed mindsets, of even Ministers and entire Ministries. It mesmerised people and convinced them that there was a lot in common between both countries, and that Indian entertainment did have a market in China".

campus-based comedy *3 Idiots* has brought *Bollywood* back into Chinese popular consciousness, especially among the younger generation. Though the film had made its mark through DVD sales, as well as on-line viewing, a version dubbed in Mandarin was released in 2011 in theatres across China. An Indian correspondent in Beijing reported the reaction of a senior Chinese official: "The film entirely changed mindsets, of even Ministers and entire Ministries. It mesmerised people and convinced them that there was a lot in common between both countries, and that Indian entertainment did have a market in China". Leveraging *Bollywood's* popularity in Tibet, and increasingly elsewhere in China, could be a useful soft power asset for India in its dealings with Beijing.

*Bollywood's* expansion into uncharted territories such as Latin America is an indication of the growing recognition of the soft power of Indian popular culture. A prominent example is the successful Brazilian soap opera *Caminho das Índias* (*India - A Love Story*), screened in prime-time on *TV Globo*, and winning the 2009 International Emmy Award for Best Telenovela. One of the most expensive productions in *TV Globo's* history, it attained an audience share of 81 per cent for its last episode in Brazil, and was distributed to countries around the world, including South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, Russia and Portugal. The 206-episode soap was set in India and Brazil and dealt with Indian themes, including caste, gender and class, with Brazilian actors playing the Indian characters. The series used various cultural props from *Bollywood*, including the musical score.

In another unfamiliar territory – Spain – the success of the 2011 film *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, (*You only live once*) a road movie about the coming of age of three young men, which featured the *La Tomatina* (tomato) festival in the small Spanish town of Buñol,

demonstrates the global ambitions of a cinema to tell stories which have a universal resonance. The film, supported by the Spanish Tourism Ministry, has also contributed to the growth of Indian tourism to that country. In Switzerland, where many Indian films are shot, the number of Indian tourists has also increased. Though *Bollywood* is relatively new to the German-speaking world, its popularity is indicated by the existence of a German-language *Bollywood* magazine called *Ishq*, in operation since 2006. *Don 2*, released in 2011, and partly financed by the *German Film Promotion Fund* and the *Berlin-Brandenburg Media Board*, became the first *Bollywood* film to be shot in the German capital and was given a prominent place at the 2012 Berlin Film Festival – the *Berlinale*, with a special screening.

## Synergies with Hollywood

The growing visibility of *Bollywood* outside India, as outlined above, and its increasing acceptance as a form of soft power, cannot be understood without taking into account the synergies between the world's largest film industry and its richest. Apart from the US, India is the only other major film market in the world where the majority of the box-office is dominated by domestic films – more than 80 per cent in the case of India.

Given the size of India's market and its growing economic prowess, Hollywood mandarins are extremely keen to forge business ties with India. The changed geo-political situation, with India becoming a close ally of the US – pursuing a neoliberal free-market economic agenda – has contributed to facilitating this relationship. Since Hollywood is arguably the world's most effective instrument of soft power, having contributed significantly to winning the ideological battle against communism during the Cold War, this collaboration could provide Indian policy makers with

useful lessons on how to successfully promote popular culture.

*Hollywood-Bollywood* collaboration started in earnest in 2002 with the release of the action thriller *Kaante (Thorns)*, the first mainstream Indian film to employ a Hollywood production crew, while *Mangal Pandey: The Rising*, became the first Indian-made movie to be released worldwide by 20th Century Fox. Since then, major US studios, notably *Columbia Tristar (Sony Pictures)*, *Warner Brothers*, *Disney Pictures* and *Fox*, have started investing in *Bollywood*. One transnational player who has succeeded where others have failed is Rupert Murdoch with *Fox Star Studios*, benefiting also from the extensive presence of *News Corporation*-aligned companies in the Indian media sphere, notably *STAR Plus TV*. It also distributed *My Name Is Khan*, a film almost entirely set in the US, which addresses a global audience about the issue of anti-Muslim discrimination as a result of 9/11— a sign of the maturing of mainstream Indian cinema. *My Name Is Khan* was the highest-earning *Bollywood* film in the US. The film about the trials and tribulations of an innocent Indian Muslim man, living in the US, who is accused of terrorism charges, was released in 64 countries and was listed by *Foreign Policy* journal as one of the top ten 9/11-related films.

On the other side of the coin, Indian companies have also started to invest in Hollywood. *Reliance Entertainment*, owned by Anil Ambani, one of India's leading industrialists, in 2008 invested as much as \$500 million in Hollywood flagship *Dreamworks*, founded by Steven Spielberg, heralding a new era of partnerships. Their most prominent collaboration was the 2012 Oscar-winning film *Lincoln*. Indian directors are certainly capable of making films of ambition and for a global viewership: back in 1998, an Indian filmmaker, Shekhar Kapur directed *Elizabeth*, a

quintessentially English feature film and its less successful 2007 sequel *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, while Manoj Shyamalan, better known as M. Night Shyamalan, won an Oscar for direction for the internationally successful *The Sixth Sense*, released in 1999.

Increasingly, Hollywood films are being dubbed into Indian languages for distribution in India. The *Bollywood* machinery is also ruthlessly „adapting“ successful American films, indigenising them with a dose of additional melodrama and song-and-dance routines. Given these synergies, underpinned by growing geo-political and economic convergence between the US and India, is *Bollywood* an alternative to or appendage of Hollywood? The Indian government sees popular films as part of its public diplomacy effort in which closer ties with the US may benefit India's creative and cultural industries, given the formidable power and expertise that the US retains in this arena.

Nevertheless, *Bollywood* has yet to produce a film with the international impact of Ang Lee's Chinese film: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Ironically it was Taiwan-born Lee's 2012 Oscar-winning offering *Life of Pi* that again brought Indian stars into a global spotlight. Sections of *Bollywood* are extremely keen to develop a formula which will provide the necessary ingredients for a globally acceptable film. At the annual Frames conference of media professionals organized by *Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICCI)*, an entire section is devoted to 'Cross-Over Cinema'. However, one may ask why should Indian films be measured on the yardstick of the Western filmmaking conventions and



Though *Bollywood* is relatively new to the German-speaking world, its popularity is indicated by the existence of a German-language *Bollywood* magazine called *Ishq*, in operation since 2006.





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codes? Indian cinema has its own distinctive personality, rooted in India's varied cultural and musical traditions, its languages and lingos, its religions and folklore. Although, over the decades, the cinema has been transformed by the changing nature of India's huge domestic market, as well as the pressures of catering for a globalized audience, it retains an Indian sensibility and character.

The Indian government needs to learn a good deal from how the State Department promotes American cultural industries internationally. As a major information technology power, Indian government and corporations could deploy new digital delivery mechanisms to further strengthen the circulation

of Indian entertainment and infotainment in a globalized media world: in 2013 there was more material on *You Tube* about *Bollywood* than about Hollywood. To mark the century of feature film production in India a digital archive of all Indian films was set up in 2013 – [www.indiancine.ma](http://www.indiancine.ma) – with support from the *Goethe Institute* and the New York-based *Bohen Foundation*. I

n the digitised world, film entertainment in India is no longer just an artistic or creative enterprise but a global brand, contributing to the reimagining of India's role on the international stage from that of a socialist-oriented voice of the Third World to a rapidly modernizing, market-driven democracy.

Effects of Indian soft power on audiences in the Middle East:

# Favorable emotions and cultural images

By Naila Hamdy, American University in Cairo



India, with eighteen per cent of the world's population, should be in a position to enjoy recognition in the MENA region, and elsewhere, for its growing economy, military strength, nuclear power (controversial, as India is not a signatory to the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*), and a thriving foreign exchange. It should by now have a developed country status and image, but has it?

Not yet.

Despite its strength, enormous cultural, social, economic, and geographical diversity, and the richness of its people, it is not necessarily perceived as such, or at least not uniformly throughout the MENA region.

With both its hard power (in terms of military and economic means) and its soft power, which is that power based on intangible influences such as culture, values and ideology, you would think that India should be able to entice much of the greater Middle East region. However, this is seldom the case.

Actually, Indian media products have been accessible to audiences for many a decade.

The emergence of *Bollywood*, more than a century ago, resulted in the production of hundreds of blockbuster movies, many of which were successfully released in the Arab region. As early as the late 1950s and 1960s, mega hits such as the films *Singham* and *Mother India* (they may have other titles in Hindi) were box office successes. These films, produced during the golden age of the Indian film industry, had universal themes that won Arab audiences' hearts, with their recurring ideas of good triumphing over evil, of love and hope. They also became staple fare as reruns for many consecutive years on state television.

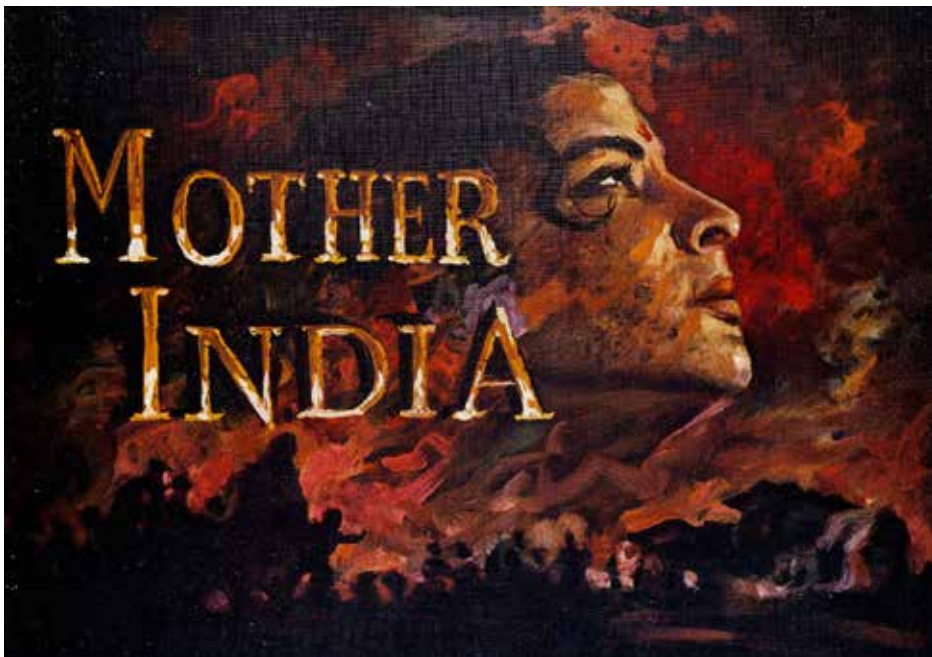
But the Hindi film techniques were not the only reason they were a favorite of state television. And almost all television was state owned in those days.

Media content was being used as a soft power way before the term was coined by the Harvard University Professor Joseph S. Nye Jr. in his 1990 book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Not only leaders of western nations recognized that power. One great example to prove this point could be

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seen when Egypt's relations with the US hit rock bottom in the 1960s, and state television boycotted American media and searched for alternatives.

There were local media productions, but that was not sufficient; Russian films and Eastern European media were unpopular and did not suit the Arab palate, but Indian media did.



As early as the late 1950s and 1960s, mega hits such as the films *Singham* and *Mother India* were box office successes. These films, produced during the golden age of the Indian film industry, had universal themes that won Arab audiences' hearts, with their recurring ideas of good triumphing over evil, of love and hope.

The commercial Indian films shown in Egypt were mostly filled with song, dance, romance, emotions and non-violent action, fitting very comfortably with the larger Arab culture. To boot, Nehru and Nasser were key players in the non-aligned movement, and they both recognized the importance of media as a soft power.

This may be an Egypt specific example, but Egypt itself has an influential culture in the region, so what becomes popular in Egypt does amplify in the region.

When Egypt took a political U-turn during the Sadat era in the 1970s, western media returned. Interest in Indian media waned but did not end. Around that time, the establishment of Amitabh Bachchan's position as a leading

actor in Indian movies, following films such as *Sholay* and *Zanteer*, did not go unnoticed. Quickly, and in many ways, he single-handedly created a market for commercial Indian media throughout the late 1970s, into the 1980s, and beyond.

The Bachchan persona, as packaged by film-makers Salim-Javed, was a creation of the times. Essentially an urban creature, he was a loner, born and bred in the slums. Bachchan became a symbol of protest against India's ills – and his popularity triggered a decline in the traditional rural romances that dominated Hindi films. That persona resonated with audiences in the MENA region, and particularly with those in large urban centers such as Cairo and Damascus. The popularity of Amitabh Bachchan is matchless. In fact, I personally witnessed his visit to Egypt in the mid-1990s, when his presence practically caused riots.

Today, Amitabh Bachchan is still recognized, but has been joined by Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan, as symbols of modern Indian cinema, in Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and other countries. However, their popularity is not as widespread as it was during earlier decades.

The 1990s brought satellite delivered television to the Arab region. It gave audiences new choices of global television content, but it also accelerated the decentralization and liberalization of broadcasting systems. With that change, came the introduction of private satellite stations and PayTV, and a need for much larger amounts of programming.

Very quickly, four PayTV networks appeared, competing for regional viewership: *Orbit*, *Star Select*, *Arab Radio and Television* (ART), and *Showtime*, each bringing a bouquet consisting of films, sports, series and news. Although these packages depended mostly on



transnational media (Egyptian, for example) and global media (predominantly American), Indian media emerged as a significant component of that global media content. Channels such as *Zee TV*, *Star India Plus* and the very popular *MTV India* became available to those who could afford the package. With time, these packages struggled to gain large audiences in the less affluent countries of MENA, and competition from free to air content grew.

Today, the success of Indian entertainment media has been concentrated in the Gulf countries, but is no longer solely dependent on PayTV.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the affluence of the audience meant that larger numbers could afford the initial PayTV packages and develop a taste for the Indian content; secondly, the immigrant/diaspora communities from India and other South East Asian countries constitute a large base of viewers; thirdly, that part of the Middle East had closer historical economic and trade ties with India, generally boosting the acceptance of Indian culture.

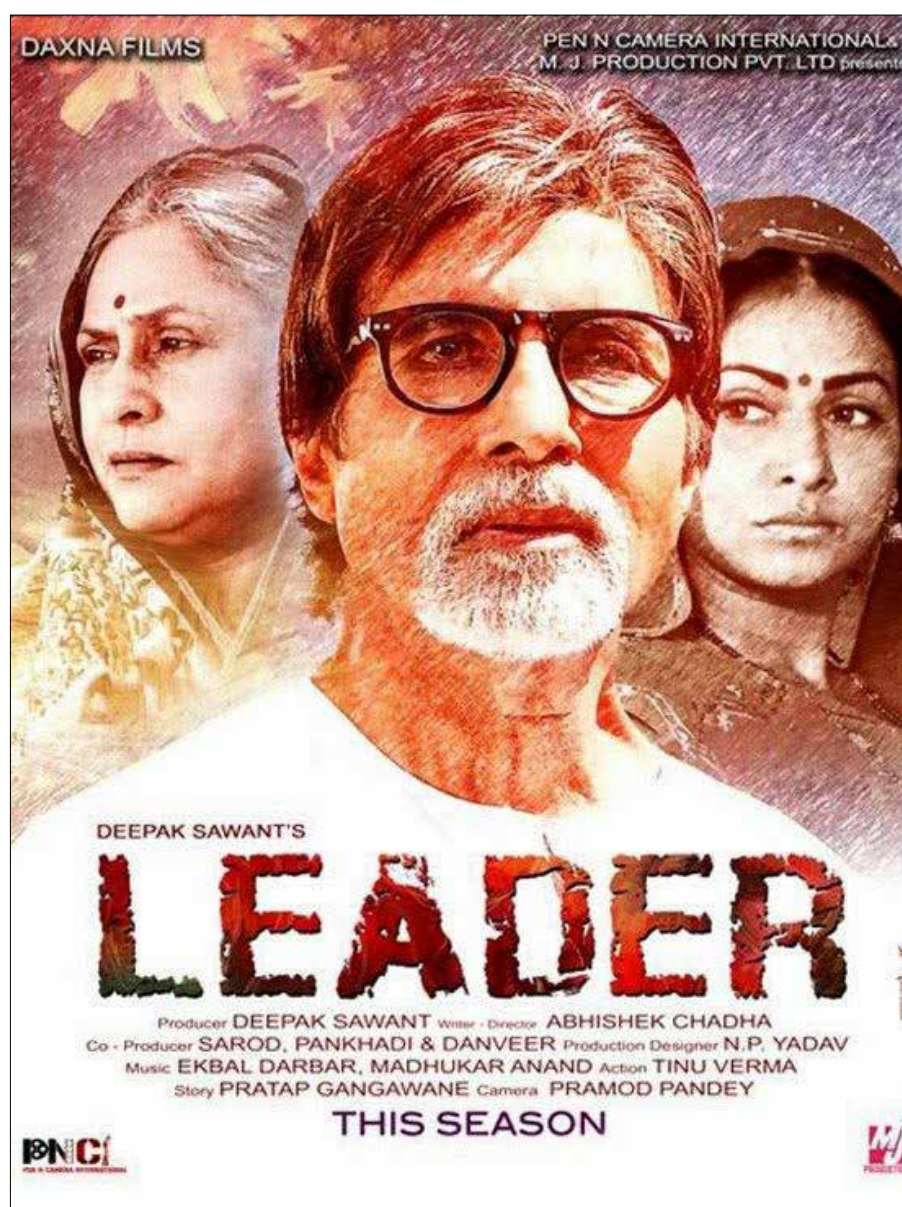
In fact, interest and increasing appeal of Indian media lies not just within the diaspora community, but also amongst Arab audiences. Indian media content can be defined by the nature of its appeal. And the most popular releases have traditionally been family-centered, romantic movies and dramas. Their success was due to cultural underpinnings. Indian content speaks to certain segments of the Middle Eastern audiences in ways that western media doesn't.

These audiences enjoy watching films and drama centered around large, extended families – a characteristic of Indian media similar to their own family formations. The culture may be different, particularly in its portra-

yal of spiritualism, but India's family values are more familiar and acceptable than those featured in western products. For example motherhood as a symbol is always powerful and recurring in Indian media, something that Middle Easterners relate to.

In fact, Indian media is produced, for the most part, as family entertainment, filled with themes of jealousy and unrequited love, punctuated with song and dance sequences, full of playfulness and containing little straightforward vulgarity. Melodramatic and

The popularity of Amitabh Bachchan is matchless. During his visit to Egypt in the mid-1990s, his presence practically caused riots.



prudish, yes, but culturally similar and, therefore, appealing to Arabs.

In addition, Indian directors were often bound by strict rules laid down by India's censorship board. Amongst other "don'ts", filmmakers are mostly banned from glorifying drinking, drug abuse and smoking, or including scenes that degrade women. This may not be true of every single production, but much has been produced under these rules. For the Arab media buyers, this material has an eastern flavor, compatible values, and would easily make it past their own censorship boards.

To add to the picture, in the last decade or so, Indian cinema has entered a transitional phase – backed by experimental genres, scripts and screenplays formulated by fresh filmmakers and writers. Romance and action are still the most favored forms, but any Arab

movie buff knows that Indian films have come a long way, introducing innovative stories and new technical advancements.

There's also been a notable acceptance of traditional Indian movie themes combined with modern themes, as apparent in the cross-over movies made by international movie production houses. Think *Slum Dog Millionaire* or *My Name is Khan*. In fact, it may seem unusual, but that particular film held its world premiere in Dubai. Because its makers recognized that the GCC (Gulf) region has become one of today's largest overseas markets for *Bollywood*. Since the success of that

movie, there have been plenty of *Bollywood* stars strutting their stuff at first show screenings at neighborhood cinemas in the Gulf.

Although films have been most popular, many Indian serials and television programs have avid followers, not just in the Gulf region, but beyond. *Koffee with Karan* is one talk show that comes to mind. A sassy English language talk show that has a following amongst audiences, and has also influenced Arab television productions. Or *MTV India*, that preceded *MTV Europe* on Arab screens, and directly influenced the producers of Arab pop music video clips.

The story of India and the MENA region is exemplary of all four aspects of globalization; the movement of goods, capital, technology and people across borders. And Indian entertainment media has had a long history of presence.

Today's Indian entertainment and media industry is a five billion dollar industry, with a lot of support, whether from regulations that allow foreign investment, impetus from a growing economy, stimulus from digital lifestyles and consumer spending habits in India and worldwide, or the advancements that technology have to offer. All that the industry needs to do is continue to cash in on its own growth, to continue to create world class content, and to capitalize on its ability to reach wider audiences with new delivery media.

Not to be forgotten is the fact that recent Indian governments have also paid attention to use of cultural products as "soft power" and its implications, therefore further valuing growth of the industry.

None-the-less, *Bollywood* and other Indian entertainment media products have not yet cracked open global markets, production, distribution and retail needed to function

When *Bollywood* has a hit in the West, it in turn reaches cosmopolitan viewers in Egypt, like *Monsoon Wedding* and its homage to all song and dance of Hindi films.





in unison with the market. Hollywood and other media production centers in the US still command eighty if not ninety percent of the global market. Putting this fact into perspective helps us to understand its impact in the MENA region.

So, does Indian media have a notable effect on the MENA region? The answer to this is: yes, but it also depends on the geographic region and the audience segment.

The Indian or Indian origin diaspora represents a large potential portion of the MENA market. Workers range from engineers, doctors, and lawyers, to construction workers and unskilled laborers. The number is estimated at more than six million, mostly concentrated in the oil-rich countries of the Gulf region of MENA. To boot, this audience can be targeted directly with advertising. However, Indian communities comprise a small portion of the market. Indian media has always been able to strike at the core of Arab audience values too, and *Brand India* has gained shares, but mostly in the Gulf region.

In other parts of MENA, the growth has been minimal. For instance, in most of North Africa's French-speaking countries, audiences prefer local productions, which have increased exponentially in this era of channel multiplicity and privatization of media. Then, of course, there is content that is transnational (such as Egyptian films and drama). As for a global choice, these North African audiences gyrate toward European (French) content.

Rarely will you walk past a cinema that shows Indian films, or would you notice mention of Indian stars on local programs. Although, both in Tunisia and Morocco, Indian films are readily available in the form of pirated DVDs, and you will find the public well-informed about new releases, thanks again to the satellite channels from the Gulf countries,

where Indian media is very popular.

Egypt tells a different story; a very important market, not just in terms of its size (the largest market in the region), but also in terms of its own export of cultural products to the transnational market. As a matter of fact, as I noted earlier, Egypt has been engaged in the use of soft power since the 1960s. Egyptian audiences enjoy plenty of local content. They also have access to transnational content, such as Syrian drama and Lebanese shows. All of which is Arabic content.

The more cosmopolitan privileged segment of the audience always preferred western media. Such content was regularly subtitled, and available to those who were well educated, cultured, and preferably spoke the foreign language. American media is the most popular, but British, French and other European content has a share.

Rarely does Indian media make the cut, at least not with its romance/action/song formula. Indian media is only attractive when

The hit Turkish soap "Noor" which is being aired on MBC has sparked a rash of divorces in countries across the Middle East as women compare their real-life husbands to the TV heart throb, according to Al Arabiya News.



it comes back via the western loop. Meaning, when *Bollywood* joins up with Hollywood or when *Bollywood* has a hit in the West, which in turn reaches cosmopolitan viewers in Egypt. So, when America falls in love, let's say with *Monsoon Wedding* and its homage to all song and dance of Hindi films, some Egyptians will see the same film. These are people who live and share the global media content that has shifted away from the West in recent years, and overlaps, circulates and intersects in a different way than in the past.

Indian media is mostly viewed by lower and middle class audiences who have been captured by the Hindi imagery. Similarly, a country like Syria has a good sized media market, and Indian media is popular for the same reasons as stated for Egypt, but again, there are plenty of other local and transnational choices.

Not to be overlooked is the arrival of Turkey, a new entrant and competitor in the MENA transnational media market. In 2008, the Saudi-owned, pan-Arab satellite television network *Middle East Broadcasting Center* (MBC) aired a failed Turkish soap opera, *Gümüş*, as the Arabized *Noor*. This created an overnight sensation and led the way for a continuous stream of Turkish drama. For many reasons, Arab audiences accepted the Turkish drama; the dubbing and Arabization was one reason. But strong political and historical ties with the region were other factors. It must be noted that Turkey has been aggressively pursuing the Arab region, both in terms of soft and hard power, over the last five to six years.

It's not that Indian media has had no following, because it has. It's just that competition is high. As we have seen, the MENA region has local media, transnational media and global media readily available to its viewers. The transnational market is hard to break into.

The most popular of the transnational content has been locally produced expressions of Arabness like *Bab el Hara* (a Syrian mini-series) or *Arabs Got Talent* and *Star Academy* (Pan Arab Talent Competitions). A space never captured by non-Arab contenders until Turkish dramas showed up. Making the same observation, MBC has changed strategy and is about to launch an MBC *Bollywood* channel, employing exclusively Arabized content, with the purpose of reaching a wider audience. It remains to be seen whether the Arabization of content will attract viewers.

Another interesting trend has been the Arabic production of hybrid Indian media such as "Hindustani"<sup>1</sup>, a show using Arab actors but incorporating Indian film techniques.

Both trends are important and may increase market shares, and create a more favorable environment of Indian culture acceptance. In fact, I would recommend more efforts. It wasn't till last week that I saw an article in *Al Ahram* (Egypt's top government newspaper) about the return of *Bollywood* films to Egyptian movie theaters after a 25-year hiatus. That really struck me. Had it been that long? With the introduction of multiplex cinemas to Egypt and other countries, it is certainly a good time for the re-introduction of *Hindi* films.

India is a technologically advanced nation. With the growing popularity of alternative delivery systems and the digitization of film distribution, India is in a position to increase its content. And, as the number of internet and mobile broadband wireless users increases in the MENA market, one should expect more reach and a larger variety, which could include online games and animation.

If you are going to view entertainment media through its potential as a soft power, then it's not just about reaching media markets alone.

I believe that India is not doing enough in the Arab world to utilize the clout originating from its cultural and political attractiveness. For instance, I find it almost sad that the well-developed Indian news industry is practically non-existent outside the diaspora community. In addition, there is hardly any effort by this vast country to get itself into Arab media coverage. Sure, audiences watch large breaking news stories like the Mumbai bombings, but that's it.

What's the use of this soft power if it only leaves its recipients with favorable images of human emotions and cultural images of beautiful people in far-away lands? It's just not adequate.

There are so many areas of shared interest and culture that could be capitalized on, other than the predominant basic emotional ones propagated by *Bollywood*. There is, of course, the obvious, such as the unprecedented economic growth of India, or the production of technological patents and innovations that have been eye-catching. But I would argue that India, with its pluralistic society, free

mass media and successful democracy may actually offer an exemplary global model for others to follow.

The attention of the people of the MENA region can be grabbed by India's democratic experience. This can be particularly interesting for countries of the Arab Spring, and other countries with transitional political systems. India has a different model than seen in the West, which is in any case mostly rejected in the Middle East. After World War II, India created the world's largest middle class, but, contrary to democratic development in the West, this middle class arrived after the onset of democracy. In addition, the stability of India's democracy over more than sixty years, especially in a neighborhood rife with ethnic conflicts, has demonstrated that unity in diversity was possible in a democratic format, perhaps a model more befitting of the Arab region.

There is India's success in journalism, its ability to embrace freedom of press without threatening national sovereignty, and so much more.

Another interesting trend has been the Arabic production of hybrid Indian media such as "Hindustani", a show using Arab actors but incorporating Indian film techniques. (Screenshot, retrieved 14 June 2014)



Of course, soft power needs to accompany diplomatic and political maneuvers. India is not visibly involved in the MENA region's most salient issues. Topping that list is the Arab/Israeli conflict/religious extremism, and the threat that comes therewith. In light of expected rises of countries like India from regional to global powers, we should also expect more shift in cultural flows, also heading in the direction of the MENA region.

When Joseph Nye defined the concept of soft power, he was referring to "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies." (Nye, 1990:166). India's culture is becoming increasingly known and attractive to the MENA region, but its political ideals and policies are still unfamiliar to the vast majority.

India's entertainment business can continue to play a positive role in the relationship between this BRIC nation and the Middle East, but that role has not been tapped to its fullest. In addition, this role needs to be played in unison with the export of its political values and policies, which have also not been exploited in terms of soft power maximum.

<sup>1</sup> <http://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/tv-hybrid-hindustani-brings-bollywood-core-values-arab-world>

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## Brazil's TV fiction export to the Lusophone world: Desire for shared cultural experience

Joseph Straubhaar, University of Texas



Thinking of Brazil and the rest of the BRICS countries as multilayered powers builds somewhat on Appadurai's five scapes of globalization (1990). He created a highly influential argument that globalization could be seen as consisting of five crucial landscapes or scapes, which, while related, were also to substantial degree disjunct; which is to say that they had their own separate dynamics and trajectories, not necessarily primarily determined or driven by economic forces (1990). Those (land)scapes consisted of a financial scape, in which financial flows moved ever more quickly around the world and penetrated more and more places, strengthening the reach of the global market, capitalist economy. So I broaden the idea somewhat to refer to the even larger landscape of the world economy, where Brazil and the other BRICS tend to be important because of their growth rates, size and scale. There is also a technoscape, which facilitates various kinds of global flows of information, from financial flows to Facebook, by building out a technological infrastructure that increasingly reaches all countries, although excluding many parts of their populations in what

is often called a global digital divide. This technoscape includes Internet penetration (particularly broadband Internet, which facilitates many of the newest services), but also the rapid growth of mobile phones to reach most of the world's population, according to research by the International Telecommunications Union. All of the BRIC countries have worked on rapidly improving their technological infrastructure. In 2009, Russia led with Internet penetration of 42%, followed by Brazil 39%, China 28%, and India 5% (ITU 2009). Mobile phone penetration was increasing even more rapidly in all four (ITU 2009).

Appadurai's (land)scapes of financial, technological, ethno/migration, media, and ideological globalization, provide an interesting starting point for analyzing Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, the rest of the BRICS, as well as other emerging powers like Mexico and South Korea, which, for analytical purposes, subsequent Goldman-Sachs reports have tentatively added to the BRIC (Goldman-Sachs 2007). These nations have long been among those considered increasingly important in the world economy. The

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focus on this specific group came from Goldman Sachs economist Jim (James) O'Neill (2001), who felt that these large emerging economies and political powers deserved more attention. Some (Sparks 2013) have questioned the utility of the BRICS concept, arguing that the countries are too disparate in their size and power, particularly China, now the world's second largest economy and political power, to be usefully grouped together. We want to argue here, however, that one of the ways that it is useful to group these countries and compare their trajectories in the global system, is as emerging global media powers, who dominate certain regions and cultural-linguistic spaces, as well as increasingly adding diversity to global media flows and discourse.

### BRICS as multilayered powers

Brazil, India, China and other emerging powers are also becoming important in the global mediascape as exporters of cultural products with broad global reach, beyond their diasporas, reaching more general audiences in multiple continents. At first, the BRICS countries and others were notable for being among the first to produce many of their own media and cultural products, effectively doing import substitution for the television, music, and/or films of Hollywood.

Bollywood and regional film industries in India actually make more movies than the U.S., and increasingly distribute many of them globally, too. So, too, are the telenovelas (prime time soap operas) of Brazil, the martial arts series of Hong Kong and China, and the Bollywoodish prime time soap operas of India.

Brazil and India are also significant global exporters of music. China and India export games and other software. While perhaps not global exporters on the same scale, Russia and South Africa are very significant as regional media exporters and powers in their regions, Central Europe and Asia, and Southern Africa.

One important theoretical and analytical point is to disentangle what is national, what is global, and what is perhaps most clearly seen as transnational. It seems clear that emerging global media powers are usually even more powerful in a specific regional or cultural linguistic market that is culturally proximate (Straubhaar, 2001) or geographically proximate, or both. Several of the emerging media and cultural exporters discussed here are even stronger in markets or cultural spaces that are regional (geographically contiguous spaces or markets like South or East Asia) or cultural-linguistic, i.e. geographically dispersed but culturally and linguistically linked markets or spaces like the widely dispersed Anglophone or Lusophone cultural markets (Straubhaar 2007).

### Geographic proximity and cultural commonalities

One of the main arguments about geo-cultural and more geographically diverse cultural linguistic spaces is that they are usually based on the cultural and linguistic traces of old empires, which continue to define current transnational cultural-linguistic spaces and markets, including geographically contiguous spaces like Latin America or the Arabic Middle East, geographically dispersed spaces like the Anglophone or Lusophone worlds, as well as semi-contiguous spaces with huge diasporas, like Greater China.

The BRICS nations are particularly important as emerging cultural and media powers within other layers of power, or relatively

### BRICS as multilayered powers

Includes layers of power, or relatively autonomous action, that are not necessarily fully global.

- Regional political, ideological power
- Regional media/cultural export
- Transnational cultural linguistic space exports
- Translocal connections to other cultures
- Diasporas as power



autonomous action, that are not necessarily fully global. They are particularly powerful in their respective regions, which could be defined as geo-cultural regions. There the BRICS countries are the base of film, television and Internet producers in regional spaces, based on shared languages, histories, and geographic proximity. These kinds of BRICS producers are particularly prominent in the television schedules of some countries, which belong to large geo-cultural groups, like Spanish speaking Latin America (Sinclair, Jacka et al. 1996; Straubhaar 2007).

In these regions that link geographic proximity and cultural commonalities, several of the BRICS are emerging strongly as dominant regional powers. India is the dominant producer for South Asia (Pendakur and Subramanyam 1996), and one of the dominant producers for Central Asia, along with Russia. Brazil is one of the dominant producers, along with Mexico, for Latin America, showing also that historical and cultural ties can overcome linguistic differences, since Brazilian programs have to be dubbed into Spanish for Latin America (Sinclair and Straubhaar 2013). The Hong Kong region of China has been a major exporter to much of Asia for decades, and China also increasingly exports to neighboring countries. Russia is a less prominent global exporter, post 1991, but focuses on its neighbors in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Dolinskiy, 2013). South Africa has become a major exporter of TV programs and satellite TV channels to Africa, particularly southern Africa (Wasserman 2011). This regional cultural power, or soft power, can sometimes also translate into political, ideological power, especially in a region where the BRICS country is already seen as a powerful, even dominant neighbor.

Some BRICS countries are also powerful in transnational cultural-linguistic television producers and spaces, consisting of for-

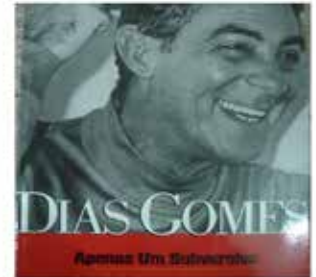
mer colonial powers and colonies, and their migrants elsewhere, like the Anglophone or Spanish-speaking spaces (Sinclair 1999). Brazil is the dominant cultural exporter to the Portuguese-speaking or Lusophone world: Angola, Mozambique, Portugal and several smaller countries, where its television programs, movies and music are more popular than those of the U.S. (Sinclair & Straubhaar 2013). India and China both have significant diasporic populations spread worldwide, who receive much of their media intake from exports, channels and websites from the home countries.

### Media exports and soft power

When we look at media exports and flows as soft power, it seems likely, from the US and other experiences, that independent commercial cultural industries, such as Hollywood, Bollywood, TVB and other Hong Kong broadcasters, TV Globo (Brazil) and the private or privatized media of South Africa, may have more appeal to potential audiences than the state media of China and Russia, which might be more suspect of having a direct propaganda role. Commercial media may benefit from greater credibility and perceived authenticity. In terms of their productive abilities and amount of output, they also benefit from greater entrepreneurialism and risk-taking, leaning to a great ability to employ the creative resources they have at their disposal, as well as their financial and intellectual resources, according to recent

### Media exports and soft power

- Commercial cultural industries vs. state media
  - Credibility, authenticity
  - Entrepreneurialism, risk-taking,
  - Ability to employ creative resources
  - Financial, intellectual resources,
    - Advantages to large countries, like BRICS
    - What of Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan?
  - Ability to use resources to maximum



- Narrativizing culture for national audience, then exporting it vs.
  - Delocalizing national products for export
    - Observable at periods, economically risky
  - Deliberately creating export products
    - For economic advantage as product
    - For facilitating specific or general consumption
    - Versus propaganda, controlled soft power

### Media exports and soft power, 2

Ex. USIS documentary on US – FEB relationship in WW II



work (Curtin 2007, Sinclair and Straubhaar 2013).

It also seems that there are large advantages to large countries, like the BRICS, as cultural exporters (Straubhaar 2007). However, a number of smaller countries, such as Hong Kong, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Qatar and South Korea, have also done extremely well as either regional or global exporters. So, much of the advantage of key emerging media powers comes not just from size, like Russia, but also their ability to use their cultural resources to maximum advantage as media exports for soft power. For example, the different abilities of emerging media powers in creating narratives about their culture for a national audience, then exporting them, instead of delocalizing national products for export.

### The space of Lusophone media

The space of Lusophone media, especially TV fiction, is one of the world's most important non-geographically defined media spaces,

following the Anglophone media world. The Lusophone space, like others, is based on shared language, shared colonial and subsequent history, often on shared religions, intellectual/ cultural paradigms, etc. Increasingly, these spaces continue to be united by modern cultural industry exports, especially TV fiction, music, and, more and more, the Internet. There is an ongoing tension with nationalizing, localizing forces, so that markets once dominated by a major cultural linguistic space producer, like Brazil in Portugal, might gradually increase their own production, substituting it for what had been imported. It seems likely that, while cultural-linguistic forces and cultural proximity can bring linked countries together, these same forces are stronger within national boundaries than beyond them, even with countries closely linked by language and culture.

Forces of such cultural proximity can include media stars, fashions, ethnicity, dialect, subtleties of humor, political/topical references, ethnic markers, and maybe religion, beyond language and directly defined colonial traditions like legal systems or patterns of education.

## The space of Lusophone media



Brazil has been a relatively major television program exporter, especially in telenovelas (or prime time serials) since the 1980s (Straubhaar, 1991), particularly in Latin America, where it has long been a dominant exporter (along with Mexico) in the Latin American geo-cultural market (Marques de Melo 1992), as well as being a global force reaching over 100 markets globally (Rêgo and LaPastina 2006). However, compared to the continuing television exports of the USA, the Brazilian and Mexican role in what have been called global media counterflows (Thussu 2007), is perhaps more limited than initially expected (Biltereyst and Meers 2000). However, as we will explore below, Brazil's strongest impact is within its own cultural-linguistic sphere, the Lusophone world.

## Globo expansion abroad

The expansion of Brazilian soft power abroad through TV Globo starts in Portugal. TV Globo exported a couple of telenovelas, including *O Bem Amado* (The Well Loved) to Latin American countries, starting in 1974. It started its Lusophone dominance in 1976, when TV Globo exported *Gabriela* to Portugal. By several accounts collected by Isabel Ferrin Cunha since the 1970s, *Gabriela* dominated prime time and dinner time (Cunha 2011). People without television sets watched in cafes. It was a sensation in the press, becoming the focus of much discussion and controversy over its linguistic and cultural impact on Portugal.

In 1985, 10% of TV Globo's income came from exports. In 1986, it was exporting its products to 130 countries, including *O Bem Amado*, the first Brazilian telenovela exported to Mozambique in 1986. TV Globo expanded abroad in classic media multinational form: primarily as an exporter of telenovelas, secondarily with targeted investments in Portugal, and thirdly with satellite channels aimed at Portuguese speaking audiences worldwide. Brazilian TV program exports are still strong. A recent TV Globo hit, *Avenida Brasil* ('Brazil Avenue'), was licensed to 106 countries by 2013.

There is an increasing tendency toward co-production, script and format sales instead of direct, finished program sales and flows in worldwide television trade. We can see an example of that between Globo and SIC Portugal, of which TV Globo has been a part owner since its beginning in the 1980s. This has included the creation of Portuguese adaptations of several classic telenovelas, including the 1976 hit *Dancing Days*, recently remade in Portugal. So, to some degree there is a movement beyond direct TV flows to co-produced, more hybrid or negotiated narratives.

It seems like there is a certain amount of searching for greater telenovela proximity within Lusofonia. Portugal is adapting Brazilian scripts to bring the resulting production closer to its reality. Portuguese telenovela exports to Africa have also been increasing since 2000, by RTP International, TVI, SIC. A Portugal telenovela co-production with Angola has been very successful. It has generated huge social media, blog reactions. Another interesting factor in the larger picture of Brazilian influence in Portugal and Africa is the expansion into these areas


by Rede Record, now the number two network in Brazil, owned and operated by the Universal Church of the Reign of God. Their strategy integrates stations and networks owned by the church in developing nations, as well as Portugal, and channels aimed at their members plus the Brazilian diaspora. The number two network in Mozambique is also owned by Rede Record and Universal Church of the Reign of God. But, in 2013, the church is pulling back on its deep financial support for television production of expensive programming like telenovelas, so its role in the future is unclear.

## The impact of telenovelas

The import of telenovelas from Brazil seems to have had considerable impact in Mozambique. On my first visit, in 1992, I noticed from observation and conversation that quite a few children and markets were named after Globo novela characters. In a 1996 visit, which gave me more opportunity to talk to television industry directors, I observed that novelas were deeply ingrained in the schedule of TVM (TV Mozambique), and, according to the television professionals, as well

**Early Globo export expansion**

- In 1986, TV Globo was exporting its products to 130 countries,
- In 1985, 10% of its income came from exports
- *O Bem Amado* first Brazilian telenovela in Mozambique 1986





## Beyond TV flows to negotiated narratives

- Script exports, television formats
  - Old and new meaning negotiated in production



as regular audience members I spoke to, were very popular. People talked about how you could see the impact of Brazilian accent in the way that the Portuguese language was spoken in Mozambique, as well as in fashions and popular culture.

### Negotiated narratives

We know from ethnographic research that audience readings of media, including the ‘reading’ of television, often differ from what their creators might have intended them to “read” (Katz, Hall 1980, Morley 1980). When we look at the reading of Brazilian telenovelas, one factor that stands out is the consumer narrative. It is pretty clear and well established that TV Globo’s telenovelas are intended to create consumer desire and consumer behavior in Brazil, both with direct advertising and with product placement built into the telenovelas’ narratives and visuals themselves (La Pastina 2001). But if the consumer narrative was intended for Brazilians, how is it read in Mozambique? Does the global, Lusophone, or national specific reading vary? What of products not available, etc?

### Image of Brazil via telenovelas

In terms of some of the larger issues connected more directly to soft power, national images carried abroad by television are subject to (mis)reading. For example it is interesting to see the image of Brazil acquired back by Luso-African students who have come to study in Brazil. A study in Brasilia showed that such Luso-African students (and, by their account, their friends back home) expected to see a country dominated by samba, soccer, beauty, telenovelas, extensive consumption, constant social life, constant proximity to the beach, and more open sexual relationships (Mendes 2012). The researcher asked African students in Brasilia, “What did you know about Brazil before you came here?” Their answer was “What is shown by your telenovelas.” In the telenovelas, they saw Brazil as a country of samba, soccer, beauty, and fashion. They had images from telenovelas of beautiful people, lots of parties, close proximity to the beach, of specific products, clothes, jewelry, hairpieces. They also expected “liberated” sexual behavior (Mendes 2012). They said that, back home, if a woman wears sexually daring clothes, someone might say to her that “Wow, you are being very Brazilian.”

Brazilian music is also very popular, at least in some part due to telenovelas. Telenovelas frequently feature both national and international hit music very prominently, both as theme music and, frankly, as another form of product placement, since TV Globo’s own record company sells millions of copies of the soundtracks to the telenovelas, achieving a substantial industrial synergy for the company, much the way that Disney has in the US, cross-selling television programs and the music featured in them.

Apparently, one of the largest areas of impact is indeed upon consumer behavior. In the telenovelas, audiences in Africa see shopping



centers, credit cards, and hire purchase (payments parceled out over several months), modes of consumption that may not be available to them. African students in Brasília reported that friends and family back home made fairly precise requests for the students to buy them specific items of fashion, in particular, hair extensions, clothes, etc., that people had seen on Brazilian telenovelas shown in Mozambique or Angola (Mendes 2012).

## Conclusions

It looks as though TV Globo is still globally present with over 100 placements of Avenida Brasil, etc. It also seems that it is still dominant in Lusophone TV space. For the foreseeable future, Portugal's television or other cultural exports are likely to be restrained by its limited market size and wealth.

It does seem that there is a continuing desire for shared cultural experience across the Lusophone space via television, music, etc. A currently concluding Portuguese research project at the University of Minho shows that there is something of a Lusophone-wide blogosphere, but that its reach is very limited, compared to the ongoing massive reach of television. It is, however, also more horizontal and open, with African participants able to generate content that Brazilians read, not just the relatively one-way flow of television.

It also seems that Brazilian telenovelas have created an audiovisual canon that people will want to continue to watch, not unlike the effect of the years of US film export upon Europe, where many people were socialized over decades into an American audiovisual canon with lasting effects (Gitlin 1999). Both Gitlin and Buonanno observe that US popular has become the second culture of much of the world, particularly in Western Europe (Buonanno 2004). It seems fair to wonder whether Brazilian popular culture has

become the second culture of the Lusophone world. From my own observation, I would say that it has, perhaps more than US popular culture, in those countries. How long will this last if national preference for national culture in both Portugal and Lusophone Africa is growing? Perhaps the final result could be the one noted by Buonanno (2004), that, while European countries have come to prefer their own national culture on television, at least in prime time, their second preference is not the cultural products of their neighbors, but those of the US. That seems likely to be the case in Portugal, at least, a preference for national production, followed by a still strong preference for Brazilian productions.

The Brazilian image seems to be somewhat distorted in this process, both by what is broadcast and exported by TV Globo and in how those shows are then received and decoded by African audiences. Do images "distorted" in reception diminish the soft power of the country that created and sent them

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Brazilian telenovelas and their public in Mozambique:

# Penetrating and influencing daily life

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The introduction of telenovelas on Mozambican television goes back to 1986, at a time when television broadcasting services in Mozambique were under the monopoly of the current TVM-EP. Back then, the media's main objective was to broadcast government programmes in all different fields of government intervention.

With the implementation of the Press Act of 10th August 1991, which strengthened freedom of expression and the media, and brought about a number of new television stations, *Record Moçambique* (nowadays named *TV Mira Mar*) was founded. Its programme was a replica of Brazilian *Record do Brasil* and, from then on, Mozambique had two TV channels which broadcasted telenovelas. *TVM-EP* no longer held the television monopoly, and other TV channels were born which included Brazilian telenovelas as a central element of their programmes. The present article aims to analyse the impact of Brazilian telenovelas in daily life in Mozambique. I will briefly review press history with a focus on the Mozambican television system, and would subsequently like to present a

comparative analysis elaborated on the basis of the programmes of *Televisão de Moçambique* (TVM-EP, the public channel), and *SOICO TV* (STV a private channel), proceeding to a description of their programme logic.

## Television history in Mozambique

Over the years, the media have served particular interests in Mozambique. This history is closely linked to the national political development. We therefore have: I) the press serving the capital; II) the critical press; III) the post-independence press; and IV) the current press or the market economy press.

Data from the *Gabinete de Informação* (Information Office)<sup>1</sup> indicate that there are currently twelve free-to-air TV channels, five of which can be considered as belonging to the main channels, out of which four are national and one is Portuguese.

Television broadcasting in Mozambique goes back to 1981, when it started as a project under the name of *Televisão Experimental de Moçambique* (TVE, Experimental TV of

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Table 1: Main TV Channels Operating in Mozambique in 2013 (© Ouri Pota Pacamutondo)

Name	Acronym	Est.	Owner	Financed	Seat	Origin
Televisao de Mocambique	TVM.EP	1981	State	State	Maputo	National
Radio Televisao	RTK actual KTV	1996	Media Eventos	Advertising	Maputo	National
Record Mocambique	Record Mocambique	1998	Igreja Universal do Reino De Deus (IURD)	Advertising & Contributions from IURD faithful	Maputo	National
Radio Televisao Portuguesa p/ Africa	RTP Africa	1998	State	State of Portugal	Maputo	Portuguese
Soica TV	STV	2002	Soico Sociedade	Advertising	Maputo	National
Televisao Independente	TIM	2005	Anonymous	Advertising	Maputo	National

Mozambique). *TVE* worked under this experimental regime until 1989, when it became *Televisão de Moçambique (TVM)* and was from then on under the control of the Ministry of Information, and later, in 1994, transformed into the public sector enterprise *TVM.EP*. However, television dates back to 1979, when an Italian firm presented television production and transmission equipment at the *International Fair of Maputo (Feira Internacional de Maputo, FACIM)*<sup>2</sup>. This equipment, initially installed in an improvised studio on the fair premises, was used from 1981 for training of the first Mozambican television professionals. The same station also served as a test centre for the launch of a national television chan-

nel. According to *Magaia* (1994:58-59) "at the beginning of the 1980s *TVE Experimental Television* was created as a corollary, with huge/big technical and human difficulties. There were many weaknesses at executive level, of which some resulted in unnecessary disagreements with staff members. However, the foundation was laid for *TVE* to develop into a national school for television production.."

### Development of the TV system

In accordance with technological developments, *TVM-EP*, after its transformation from a state into a public entity, defined its

mission as follows: Delivering high quality television broadcasting services, I) trying to constantly enhance both quantity and quality of national and international information, II) presenting a programme which would be more in line with the cultural interests and values of Mozambicans and III) contributing to guaranteeing citizen's access to television services<sup>3</sup>.

The Mozambican broadcasting services are considered to be of a generalist nature, transmitting round the clock, with a schedule dominated by entertainment, information, sports and educational programmes within the partnerships with Brazilian channels: *Rede Globo* and *Canal Futura*. The films, music clips, telenovelas and children's programmes were among the programmes which once captured the TVM audience.

### Television regulation

One of the tools for regulating the TV system is the constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, which was approved on 16th November 2004 and in chapter II (rights, obligations and freedoms) of article 48, emphasizes the right to freedom of speech and information. In this context, freedom of the press includes freedom of expression and creation for journalists, access to sources of information [...] and the right to produce newspapers, publications and other means of information dissemination.

The Press Act of 1991 is another tool which complements the Constitution of the Republic. However, the internet brought new ways of communication and information to society. Hence, the government should consider journalists concerns about the drafting of a new law. According to Magaia (1994), communication laws change to accommodate developments in society, but this has not happened in Mozambique since the 1991 law. It is

important to note that, to date, radio broadcasting is not regulated by a specific legislation for radio and television. Its regulation is also based on legal instruments at regional, national and international level.

### Rationale behind the programme

The Mozambican TV system is of a totally generalist nature. However, advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) throughout the world, plus multiplicity of current offers, forces managers of TV broadcasters to rethink the programme rationale. It is not the sole aim to guarantee an audience large enough to be of interest for economic players looking to advertise their services and products. "We can emphasize that, the more generalist the programme of a generalist channel is, the better the chances of capturing the interest of the audiences, offering an opportunity for communication and a link for participation and not only transmission" (Brandão, 2005:79). Relating to Brandão's vision of generalist television, Popper assures that those who are currently responsible for TV programmes have the task to capture the attention of the audience and keep it for a sufficient period of time so as to ensure that the audience can subsequently pass on the advertised message. In this competition for audience/economic players, the TV broadcasters "forget" their real role, which is informing, educating and entertaining.

Brandão (2005:19) underlines that it is in this context that the television screen shows everything which involves dramatic and spectacular aspects, regardless of any informative nature, as it is important for pictures to be full of "affective/emotional excitement". Brittos and Miguel (2004) underline that, in the TV industry, the final result of the work is the programme offered to the television viewer, which is also the reason why investments made by television channels aim to satisfy



the viewer (client), in order to subsequently broadcast advertisements to obtain profits. Due to its nature as public service broadcaster, and being the first of its kind in the country, TVM-EP maintains links to foreign TV

purchased by private channels. What is at stake is topicality. The fact that TVM-EP dedicates a reduced number of hours to Brazilian telenovelas is also due to the introduction of novelas that are Mexican productions dubbed in Brazilian Portuguese and, more recently, of Angolan telenovelas.

Table 2: Broadcast of Brazilian Telenovelas 30.06 – 06.10.2013  
(©Pacamutondo)

Channel /Day	TVM	STV
Monday	1 hour	4 hours
Tuesday	1 hour	4 hours
Wednesday	1 hour	4 hours
Thursday	1 hour	4 hours
Friday	1 hour	4 hours
Saturday	1 hour	6 hours 20 minutes
Sunday	-	6 hours 20 minutes
Total	6 hours	32 hours 40 minutes

channels, which facilitate the retransmission of foreign programmes. Also notable over the past years has been the growth of STV. Some of its programmes are part of the partnerships with the Brazilian TV channels *Rede Globo* and *Canal Futura*. These cooperations guarantee an audience during prime time and more broadcasting time for the respective recent novelas and series.

Table 2 shows that some of the elements for STV which enable them to be self-sustaining, are the novelas, since its programme emphasizes the Brazilian novelas, on air for up to 4-6 hours per day or around 32h 40min each week. Contrary to that, on public television channel TVM-EP they only amount to 6 hours a week. Part of the reason behind this is the acquisition price of telenovelas. Novelas acquired by public television companies are relatively low-cost compared to those

### Telenovelas' influence on daily life

According to researcher Teresinha da Silva, in-depth studies on the impact of the media on the construction of identities practically do not exist in Mozambique, however, in her study on gender identities and sexual behaviour, she verifies that educators, young people, parents and teachers often attribute films and Brazilian novelas with the responsibility of swaying young people to become sexually active at an earlier stage, and influencing the way they dress. "The novelas have come to liberalize sex, nowadays there are no secrets in terms of sex..." – confirms an elderly lady in an interview conducted within that study.

Choosing novelas in order to attract a larger audience is an essential element for those responsible for the programme, since the content presented is accessible for the Mozambican viewer, due to the linguistic proximity of the Portuguese language, as well as the interest in getting to know another "reality" of a country that creates high expectations due to its population, soccer and samba, as well as the bonds of friendship between the two countries.

Since the transmission of the first novela on Mozambican television in 1986, when the telenovela *O Bem Amado* was presented, 27 years of consuming this Brazilian product have gone by. Meanwhile, there have been traces which can be considered the result of contact with telenovelas. We will indicate some of these traces which we consider to be relevant.

## Linguistic influences

The question related to linguistic expression, both oral and written, is one of the main elements: the simplicity of the phrase construction of the Portuguese spoken in Brazil, as well as its intonation, are sometimes adopted by the viewer. "Some of the characteristics are: short phrases, simple in terms of grammar, few subordinate clauses and pronouns and the constant assumption of a prior and mute understanding, expressed by "Você sabe" (You know) "Você compreende" (You understand) (Ginja s/d). The same can be found in communication, i.e. in one out of four viewers, the use of colloquial language from the novelas can be found, above all the use of the gerund, e.g.: *Estou pintando*, which in Portuguese spoken in Mozambique would be *Estou a pintar* [in the present tense]. The same applies in cases of the speaker saying *Estou a caminhar em direcção ao Hospital*, instead of the gerund *Estou caminhando para o hospital*.

## Absorbing the favourite character

Be it "O Bem Amado" (1986), or "O Roque Santeiro" (1987), the Mozambican viewers chose their favourite characters. "Four times a week and six hours a day, Mozambicans incorporated characters such as Odorico Paraguassu, Zeca Diabo and Viúva Purcina into their imaginary worlds." (Wane, Revista Electrónica, Edição 35, 2010). The viewer will absorb various influences into this imaginary world, from their styles of dressing, their ways of communicating, even the habits of this or that character, hence establishing a creative dialogue of new meanings. The telenovela O Roque Santeiro, also left a lasting impression, due to its main character Roque Santeiro (José Wilker), a man with a calm way of speaking, wearing a white hat and clothes, always neatly dressed, representing a charming man with convincing ideas. This behaviour can still

be observed, however, the glasses for which he became famous must also be highlighted. Many viewers do not know the brand name, and refer to them as "Roque Santeiro glasses". Even though the broadcasted novelas generally present topics related to racial prejudice, homosexuality, alcoholism, drug trafficking and prostitution, it is necessary for the viewer to maintain his critical view, as the novelas, apart from being educational within a certain society, are also a commercial product.

## Influences in fashion and art

In women's fashion, low-rise jeans influence the brands for beauty products, as is also reflected in hairstyles and extensions, tourism to Brazil, sassiness, and sensuality – all largely instilled through the telenovelas.

In the arts, practicing and creation of capoeira movements is another element which can be seen as a legacy of Brazilian telenovelas. Even though this form of expression has existed since 1999, its expansion can currently be observed, especially among young people in public spaces, on television, as well as in private and state schools.

The participants and those responsible for these groups confirm that involvement in this art is a paramount element for understanding this philosophy of life. This also finds expression in clothing, where the male capoeirista is bare chested, with baggy, preferably white, trousers, and plays instruments such as the berimbau (similar to the Xitende from Mozambique) or light percussion on drums (djembe), accompanied by chanting and clapping.

### Influences and impact

#### Style:

Current use of old styles related to characters on novelas.  
Ex: Use of the hat of Zeca Diabo (O Bem Amado), and of the hat and the sunglasses of the character Roque Santeiro.



### Influences and impact (2)

- A preoccupation with the body F/M (dress, style)
- The aesthetics of hair (tissagens)
- Opening a discussion of themes previously taboo in Mozambican society such as homosexuality, sex, surrogate motherhood, etc.
- Tourism = Sao Paulo, Rio Janeiro, Copacabana (names that began to rise from the margins of awareness via the telenovelas)



### Influences and impact (3)

- Telenovelas have an audience via the language used
- The question of linguistic expression : orality versus written (Examples)
- The simplicity of the construction of phrases, short phrases, grammatically simple, few subordinate clauses or pronouns, and constant suppositions from previous understandings and events, expressed in terms of "You know" ("Você sabe") and "you understand" ("Você compreende").
- The use of verbal cases for time in the gerund:
- Ex1: "Estou pintando," which in spoken Portuguese in Mozambique would be "Estou a pintar" in the present progressive tense
- Exploration of new thematic universes in daily life: such as individual liberties, family, social and professional relations.

Apart from fashion, a phenomenon also emerged of using human hair extensions, the quality of which is designated by the term “o Brasil”. However, the most notable influence of Brazilian telenovelas on daily life in Mozambique is to be found in oral communication, which automatically influences written communication. These influences are mainly seen and heard in urban zones, where the content presented in telenovelas is subsequently marketed, whereas, in more rural areas, the main influence is on oral communication.

### Concluding remarks

Brazilian telenovelas are present on Mozambican television, with a stronger representation in the private/independent media. Due to market competition, these media tend to present new telenovelas in order to attract a mass audience. This factor is a major source of income for sustaining television channels because advertisers see there the greatest potential for dissemination of their products.

The permeation and respective influence on certain fields, such as fashion, forms of oral and written communication, are associated with the plots presented by telenovelas. These are elements which, in their entirety, compare with the reality dreamt of by the viewer, and his or her idea of experiencing the same situations. And it is from here that questions related to love, hate, old age, youth, false behaviour, and betrayal penetrate the psyche of the viewers. These are aspects which demonstrate the possibility of how cultures can meet beyond borders. It is obvious that telenovelas do not provide a true image of Brazilian society. This should be motivation for parents and educators to promote discussion about issues raised in the media, particularly on television, where visual impressions are stronger and more immediate. In conclusion, at least for the

moment, we can confirm that telenovelas have been penetrating and influencing daily life in Mozambique, particularly in urban areas, where young people tend to adopt social, cultural and linguistic aspects and attitudes presented on television.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> GABINFO is a legally independent and an administratively autonomous authority. It answers to the Prime Minister and is bound by norms and regulations applicable to public organisations. GABINFO oversees, amongst others, Rádio Moçambique, Televisão de Moçambique, Agência de Informação de Moçambique (the state news agency) and the Escola de Jornalismo (Journalism School).

<sup>2</sup> Until 2010, the annual fair took place in the centre of the capital, Maputo.

<sup>3</sup> However, according to Miller and James cited by Mário (2008) terrestrial television broadcast by the twelve TV stations only reaches 15% to 17% of the Mozambican population.

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## Legislation

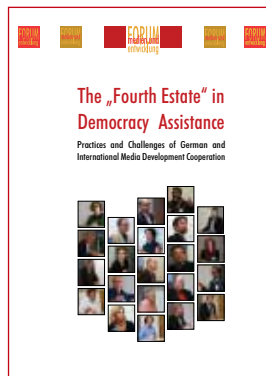
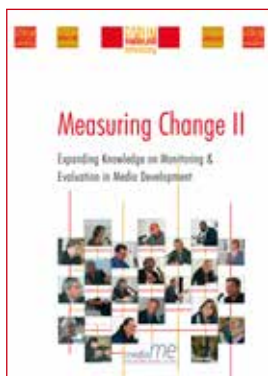
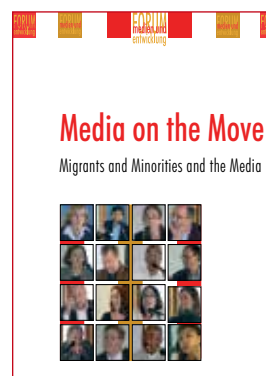
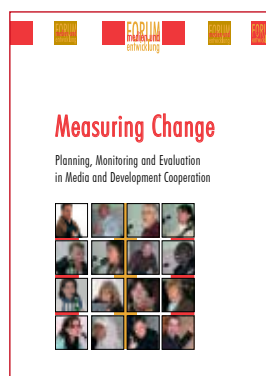
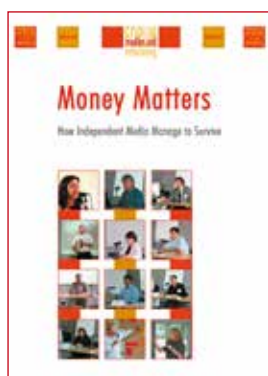
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Decreto nº 19/94 de 16 de Junho - Transformação da TVM em Empresa Pública

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