

## The Scramble for Asian Soft Power in Africa

*La ruée vers l'Afrique du Soft power asiatique*

*Titre en espagnol*

*Article mis en ligne le 3 octobre 2016.*

*This article is based on the author's chapter in the 2016 Palgrave book China's Media and Soft Power in Africa: Promotion and Perceptions, edited by Xiaoling Zhang, Herman Wasserman and Winston Mano.*

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### Abstract

The unprecedented global expansion of Chinese media and communication networks over the past decade, specifically in Africa, raises important questions about the changing media landscape in what is emerging as one of the major media markets in the world. This paper examines the media race for African by China and India, focusing in particular on the Indian presence on a continent where long established people-to-people connections favour the expansion of Indian political and economic interests. Then the paper suggests that with the growing digital connectivity, and with the convergence of mobile communications technologies and content via Internet, the Indian presence is likely to deepen. Will this lead to a competition with China or open up possibilities for cooperation, in such areas as development communication?

### Keywords

Soft power, Africa, news media, communication network, India, China.

## Résumé

L'expansion sans précédent des médias et des réseaux de communication chinois dans les dix dernières années et en particulier en Afrique, soulève des questions de fond sur le paysage médiatique changeant de l'un des marchés majeurs des médias dans le monde. Cet article étudie la course des médias chinois et indiens en Afrique, et se focalise en particulier sur la présence indienne sur un continent où des liens humains anciens favorisent la progression des intérêts indiens politiques et économiques. Ainsi l'article suggère-t-il qu'avec la progression de la connectivité numérique et la convergence des technologies de communication mobile et des contenus sur Internet, la présence indienne s'accroît. Cela va-t-il conduire, dans le domaine du développement de la communication, à une compétition avec la Chine ou ouvrir la voie à une coopération ?

## Mots clés

*Soft power*, Afrique, média d'information, réseau de communication, Inde, Chine.

## Resumen

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## Palabras clave

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## Introduction

The unprecedented global expansion of Chinese media and communication networks over the past decade, specifically in Africa, raises important questions about the changing media landscape in what is emerging as one of the major media markets in the world. In 2012, CCTV News set up a media hub in Nairobi for its pan-African operations. However, China is not alone in this endeavour, driven by geo-political and economic considerations. Apart from US, European, Japanese, Russian and Brazilian interests, India, the other Asian giant, is also deploying its hard and soft power in Africa. This paper examines the media race for Africa by China and India, focusing in particular on the Indian presence on a continent where long established people-to-people connections favour the expansion of Indian political and economic interests. Unlike the Chinese involvement, the Indian presence is largely based not on state economic support but on private and soft power, drawing on its cultural and diasporic connections with Africa (Roy, 2013; Sullivan, 2015). The Indian diaspora in many African countries – notably in South Africa, Kenya and Mozambique – has contributed to the popularity of Indian popular culture and commerce. Indian government and corporations recognize that people-to-people communication can be much more effective than government propaganda initiatives. After exploring this diaspora as a soft power asset, the paper suggests that the growing digital connectivity, with the convergence of mobile communications technologies and content via Internet, the Indian presence is likely to deepen. Will this lead to a competition with China or open up possibilities for cooperation, in such areas as development communication?

In her 2009 book, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, Deborah Brautigam argued that China's "embrace of the continent is strategic, planned, long-term, and still unfolding" (Brautigam, 2009: 311). China's rapid and escalating expansion in Africa has generated much interest in policy circles around the world, representing what Taylor has called "*new trading geographies and the emergence of non-traditional actors*" in Africa (Taylor, 2014: 1). In a three-part series published

in November 2013, the leading German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, reported that since 2000 trade volume between China and Africa grew 20-fold, reaching \$200 billion in 2012. There were 2,000 Chinese companies operating in the resource-rich continent, it noted, and more than a million Chinese citizens were living in sub-Saharan Africa (Grill, 2013).

As one of the world's fastest growing markets, with abundant natural resources combined with serious economic and political problems, Africa has always been an area of interest for international powers, including those in Asia (Cheru and Obi, 2010; Mawdsley and McCann, 2011; Chan, 2013; Carmody, 2013; Taylor, 2014). Given the legacy of colonial occupation, exacerbated by the politics of the Cold War, the continent has well-established and deeply entrenched elite interests with European colonial powers - notably Britain, France and Portugal - as well as with the United States and Russia, a legacy that Asian nations such as China and India have to work around. However, there exist areas where the two Asian giants can collaborate and thus complement their efforts to provide a new model for development, using their substantial soft cultural and growing hard economic power.

Joseph Nye, who famously coined the phrase "soft power", defined it as "*the ability to attract people to our side without coercion*". In his book *Soft Power*, he suggested three main 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). Nye's focus was and remains primarily on the United States, and this is entirely understandable, since, apart from being a distinguished Harvard scholar, Nye has also held senior positions within the US Administration. However, given the intellectual hegemony that the US exercises around the world, the phrase "soft power" has acquired global currency and is routinely used in policy and academic literature, as well as in elite journalism. In contemporary international relations, the capacity of nations to make themselves attractive in a globalizing marketplace for ideas, has become a crucial component of foreign policy. In an age of a digitally connected and globalized media and communication environment, the primacy of communicating a favourable image of a country, involving both state and non-state actors and networks, is mostly important.

### Television news as Soft Power?

Despite the unprecedented growth of media and communication industries in the global South, particularly in large and economically fast-growing countries like China and India, the global media continue to be dominated by the US, given its formidable political, economic, technological and military power. The US media's imprint on the global communication space, by virtue of the ownership of multiple networks and production facilities - from satellites and cables to on-line networks - gives the US a huge advantage (Thussu, 2016). As Nye has remarked, US culture "*from Hollywood to Harvard - has greater global reach than any other*" (Nye, 2004b: 7). In an increasingly digitized globe, the US remains the largest exporter of the world's entertainment and information programmes. As elsewhere, American or Americanized media are enthusiastically consumed across Africa, in English or in dubbed or indigenised versions.

While the US remains 'number one country' in most of Africa in terms of media content, the former European colonial powers also have their strong imprint. British media presence within the Commonwealth countries in Africa is considerable: the BBC's Hausa service is one of its largest overseas broadcasting outfits, while entertainment programmes - including many such formats as game-and-chat shows and reality TV franchises - owe their origins to television companies based in London. Within the Francophone area, the French media are still prominent: Radio France International has a considerable following. The transnational television channel TV5 Monde reaches 230 million households around the world and is available in 13 languages, including Arabic. French foreign broadcasting has been strengthened with the launch in 2006 of France 24, a 24/7 international news channel which broadcasts - in French, English and Arabic - to 250 million TV

households in 177 countries around the world, and whose mission is to “cover international current events from a French perspective and to convey French values throughout the world”. The former colonial powers in Africa continue to have Africa-specific programming: notably France 24’s *Eye on Africa*, and *Focus on Africa* broadcast on the BBC World Service.

Broadcasting retains an important 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. Even in 2015, the African service of the Voice of America was broadcasting in 13 other languages apart from English, including French, Portuguese, Hausa, Shona and Kiswahili. New global broadcasters, such as RT (Russia Today) which apart from English and Russian, also broadcasts round-the-clock in Spanish and Arabic, claim to have a global reach of more than 550 million people. The Kremlin-controlled network covers international news, including African affairs, generally adopting anti-Western perspectives, questioning the dominant Western media discourses, shaped by such networks as CNN and the BBC. Qatar’s Al Jazeera English, since its launch in 2006, has grown into a major global broadcaster, reaching 260 million homes in 130 countries and claiming to privilege Southern news (Figenschou, 2014). Qatar has been able to use this formidable soft power tool to play an important geo-political role in the North African region: its coverage of the NATO-led invasion of Libya in 2011 and support for Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are two recent cases in point.

The most significant development in African broadcasting, however, is the growing visibility of Chinese television news in English, part of what has been termed Beijing’s ‘Charm Offensive’. Kurlantzick notes: “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 [...] The sea change has been most dramatic among developing countries” (Kurlantzick, 2007: 5). Broadcasting is one key aspect of the heavy investment that the Chinese government has made in external communication, including setting up Confucius Institutes around the world, including in key African nations (Wang, 2010; Wheeler, 2014). 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. CCTV is central to this image makeover, consistent with its rise to a global power, and its projection of China as a peaceful nation which offers a different and very successful model for development.

By 2014, CCTV News was claiming 200 million viewers outside China and broadcasting in six languages, including Arabic. The biggest presence has been in Africa, where since 2012 CCTV has been operating an Africa-specific channel, based in Nairobi. As the *New York Times* reported:

*“At a time when most Western broadcasting and newspaper companies are retrenching, China’s state-run news media giants are rapidly expanding in Africa and across the developing world. They are hoping to bolster China’s image and influence around the globe, particularly in regions rich in the natural resources needed to fuel China’s powerhouse industries and help feed its immense population.”* (Jacobs, 2012: A1)

CCTV News’s *Africa Live* is a one-hour daily news programme, anchored by African journalists, while *Talk Africa* is a 30-minute weekly talk show that discusses current affairs. Apart from current affairs, the channel also regularly broadcasts Chinese dramas, on both contemporary and historical themes, as well as shows documentaries with more than a whiff of party propaganda: some recent examples include titles such as *Chinese Peacekeepers* and *Brothers hand in hand with Africa*. It has been suggested that CCTV Africa is gaining viewers as, “instead of airing the usual disaster reports, the station tends to broadcast ‘good news’ from Africa and portrays China as a ‘true friend’” (Grill, 2013). Supplementing this is the ongoing expansion of Xinhua, among the largest news agencies in the world, with 28 offices in Africa, more than any international news agency, which has recently launched the English-language TV channel, CNC World (Xin, 2012).

How effective Chinese networks have been in influencing policy remains to be seen, since it is still in the early days of their presence in the continent. Unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese news

networks tend to avoid critical journalism and claim to give a more positive coverage to African issues, though who is watching their programmes and with what effect remains an open question. As Zhu has maintained, Chinese television news “*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).

Unlike China, Indian television news presence in Africa is almost negligible, despite the country having more than 400 round-the-clock news channels and a strong tradition of English-language journalism. The Indian state broadcaster *Doordarshan* remains one of the few major news networks not available in important global markets, while private channels, notably News 18 India, NDTV 24x7, and Headlines Today, cater largely to the diasporic audience. For private news networks, the need for global expansion is limited, since, in market terms, news has a relatively small audience and therefore meagre advertising revenue. At a time when Indian industry is increasingly globalizing and international engagement with India is growing across the globe, Indian news media are losing interest in the wider world.

It appears, however, that New Delhi has finally woken up to promoting India’s external broadcasting. A high-level committee has recommended that Prasar Bharati, India’s Public Sector Broadcaster, should have a “global outreach” and create “*a world-class broadcasting service benchmarked with the best in the world using next-generation opportunities, technologies, business models and strategies. The platform should be designed for new media first and then extended to conventional TV. Outline an effective content strategy for Prasar Bharati’s global platforms (TV and Radio) focused on projecting the national view rather than the narrow official viewpoint*” (Prasar Bharati, 2014: 15).

### **The Soft Power of Bollywood?**

Although news is a crucial component of soft power, 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. Other players are increasingly visible, notably India’s Hindi film industry, popularly described as Bollywood. Indian television news might be largely absent from African scene but the most visible Indian media presence in Africa are the Hindi films, a prominent manifestation of Indian content in global media space and which has grown today to a \$3.5 billion industry. Watched by audiences in more than 70 countries, Bollywood is the world’s largest film industry in terms of production and viewership. 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 recent and rapid liberalization, deregulation and privatization of media and cultural industries in India, coupled with the increasing availability of digital delivery and distribution technologies, have ensured that Indian films are increasingly visible in the global media sphere (Schaefer and Karan, 2013; Thussu, 2013). At the same time, the unprecedented expansion of television – from a single state channel in 1991 to over 800 channels in 2015 – 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. The ensuing corporatization and the synergies that it created made it possible for Bollywood content to be available on multiple platforms, satellite, cable, on-line and mobile, resulting in a complex, globalized production, distribution and consumption practices, including among the 35-million strong South Asian diaspora, scattered on all continents (FICCI-KPMG, 2015).

From a soft power perspective, Bollywood is perhaps more visible among other countries of the global South (Tharoor, 2012; Thussu, 2013). The promotion of family and community-oriented values in contrast to Western individualism has made Indian films receptive to audiences in many African countries. Their religiosity and gender representation make Indian films culturally accessible for Muslim audiences, for example in North African countries. Muslim-dominated northern Nigeria

has a long-established interest in Hindi cinema. The mushrooming of Hindi-to-Hausa video studios, where Indian films are adapted or copied for the ‘Nollywood’ market, indicates their value as cultural artefacts which can be reworked to suit local tastes and sensibilities. As Scaria has shown in his extensive study of copyright issues, Indian creative industries and particularly cinema is susceptible to infringement and piracy (Scaria, 2014). The ‘visual affinities’ of dress, gender segregation and the limited sexual or sexualized content in Hindi films are attributes which Nigerian audiences appreciate and view as what has been defined as an alternative modernity to the pervasive influence of Hollywood (Larkin, 2003). Bollywood music too is skilfully appropriated, it has been noted, by the musicians of the *Ushaq’u Indiya* (Society for the Lovers of India) who use ‘vocal harmonies’ from Hindi film lyrics and rework them into Hausa versions (Uba Adamu, 2010). Bollywood stars remain popular in many African countries. In 2012, Morocco’s King Mohammed VI bestowed the prestigious national honour, *L’Etoile d’Or*, to Indian superstar Shah Rukh Khan, the first Indian to be granted the accolade (Thussu, 2013).

### Diaspora as Indian Soft Power in Africa

One key reason for the popularity of Indian cinema is the existence of large South Asian diaspora in many African countries, their presence going back in some cases 150 years (Desai, 2013). During the British colonial period, indentured labourers from India was transported to British colonies in Mauritius and South Africa, who were encouraged to settle in their new surroundings and Indian labourers were recruited to build the East African Railways (Eisenlohr, 2006). Another category of migrants – Indian traders and professionals – moved to work in South and East Africa under the “free passage” system, which gave a free passage in return for a fixed number of years’ work there. In Kenya, the Indian presence has been significant, as Aiyar has shown in her new study, and formed what was described as “racialized network of trade” which evolved into a sizable professional and economic middle class in the colonial period, creating a “diasporic consciousness” shaped by “civilizational affiliations” (Aiyar, 2015: 11). This long association of Indians in East Africa has had a lasting impact, indicated in the fact that such Indian words as *hundi* (cheque), *chai* (tea), *chapati* (bread), *sambusa* (samosa) are today part of the Swahili language (Desai, 2013).

Other colonial powers too were responsible for this trans-continental migration: Indian communities from western India, especially Goa, under the control of the Portuguese empire, arrived in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique between 1890 and 1920 (Khouri and Leite, 2008). More recent migration also brought people such as Aquino de Braganca and Oscar Monteiro – both originally from Goa – who played key roles in anti-colonial movement in Mozambique and contributed significantly to the newly formed socialist state of Mozambique.

The most significant Indian diasporic presence remains in South Africa, home to more than 1.3 million South Africans of Indian origin, many of whom made major contributions in fighting colonialism and racism. Mahatma Gandhi, arguably an apostle of India’s soft power, who established the Natal Indian Congress in 1894, first experimented with nonviolent protest in South Africa. Gandhi’s South Africa years (1893-1914) were crucial in developing an anti-colonial consciousness among the South African peoples (Bhana and Vahed, 1996; Hofmeyr, 2013; Dickinson, 2015). His legacy still lives on: Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of the Mahatma, was an ANC parliamentarian for ten years from 1994 to 2004, representing the constituency of Phoenix, the site near Durban where Gandhi lived, today one of the biggest Indian cities outside India. Gandhi was also involved in founding the Transvaal-based British Indian Association, in 1903. During the same year, he started the newspaper *Indian Opinion*, published from Phoenix in four languages – English, Gujarati, Tamil and Hindi – in four different scripts, a novel experiment, which was to become the prime vehicle for the dissemination of Gandhi’s thoughts. As Hofmeyr has shown, Gandhi “*experimented with an anti-commodity, copyright-free, slow motion newspaper*” (Hofmeyr, 2013: 4). During the long and difficult years of anti-Apartheid struggle, many Indian-origin members of the African National

Congress played “outstanding roles” and, as Chan notes, “*a portrait of Gandhi sat alongside one of Marx*” in the home of the eminent anti-Apartheid leader Govan Mbeki (Chan, 2013: 142).

Even today, in the South African National Assembly, scores of Indian-origin MPs participate in decision-making processes. Prominent figures in public life, including Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel, build on a long association of Indians in the public life of South Africa, including such individuals as Frennie Ginwala, former speaker of the South African Parliament, and Professor Fatima Meer, close friend and biographer of Nelson Mandela. In the professions too, the Indian presence is significant: Navanethem Pillay, the United Nations human rights chief, a South-African of Indian origin, was the first non-White woman to become a judge at the High Court of South Africa, while Kumi Naidoo, the head of Greenpeace in London since 2009, was a prominent anti-Apartheid activist in South Africa (Thussu, 2013).

The close political ties between South Africa and India - not least via such political alliances as IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa, a grouping created in 2003, of the three major multicultural democracies, “*to contribute to the construction of a new international architecture*”) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) - are likely to become more important in the coming years (Carmody, 2013; Taylor, 2014; Nordenstreng and Thussu, 2015).

As India’s international profile has grown, many members of its diaspora are attempting to reconnect with an emerging economic powerhouse (Tharoor, 2012; Roy, 2013; Sullivan, 2015; Dickinson, 2015). In 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 (Sauvant *et al*, 2010). Thomas Hansen notes the phenomenon of “*roots tourism, whereby thousands of South African Indians each year travel to India in search of the village of their ancestors and for shopping and/or spiritual purification*” (Hansen, 2012: 23). Indian media is vital as a communicating tool among the diaspora and Indian television and telecom businesses are feeding the demand for a link to the home country: Tata Communications (part of Tata group, one of India’s largest corporations and a global conglomerate) has the most shares in Neotel, the South Africa’s largest fixed-line network operator. A number of Indian television channels are available via DStv, the largest pay television network in Africa. In addition, since 2008, a locally produced entertainment channel on DStv network called Saffron TV has been promoting the “*South African Indian experience*” at different levels. A Bollywood-driven lifestyle magazine, called *SA India*, is also popular among young ethnic Indians.

These connections have ensured that South Africa has become a regional hub of Indian presence in the continent (Dickinson, 2015). Many Bollywood films are filmed in South Africa, while South African actress, Ilene Hamann, appeared in a lead role in the 2005 film *Rog*. In 2001, the annual IIFA (International Indian Film Academy) awards - the Bollywood version of the Oscars - were held in Sun City, South Africa. India’s former Prime Minister Manmohan 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.”* (Quoted in Thussu, 2013: 134)

Among the policy elite in India, too, the diaspora is increasingly viewed as an important dimension of a country’s soft power resources (Tharoor, 2012; Dickinson, 2015). Traditionally, the attitude of successive Indian governments toward the diaspora was of distance and disengagement, even when Indians abroad were threatened: for example, in 1972 when thousands of Ugandan Indians were expelled by the military dictator Idi Amin Dada. This attitude changed with the coming to power of the pro-business Bharatiya Janata Party government in 1998, which announced the creation of a

*Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas* (Day of the Non-Resident Indian) celebrations, and the phrase “*Vishwa Bharati*” (Global Indian) was coined (Thussu, 2013). Since then the day is celebrated annually on 9 January, symbolically chosen to mark the return of Gandhi to India from South Africa in 1914 to lead the Indian nationalist movement. The creation of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in 2004, with its mission “*to promote, nurture and sustain a mutually beneficial and symbiotic relationship between India and its diaspora*” was another milestone in this diasporic diplomacy (Government of India, 2012).

Like the Indian government, Indian corporations have also, belatedly, recognized the value of the large and well-established Indian diaspora as a useful tool for promoting India’s economic and trade interests in Africa. For many members of African elites, India is seen as an emerging non-Western economy and in some cases a bulwark against growing Chinese investment and influence in the resource-rich continent (Roy, 2013; Sullivan, 2015).

### ‘Chindian’ Hard and Soft Power?

The growing globalization of media content from China and India – in terms of international television news emanating from China or produced in Africa by Chinese networks, and the 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’ offer challenges and opportunities, as the global power equation shifts. The peaceful ‘rise’ of China as the world’s fastest growing economy has profound implications for global media, taking place in parallel with the transformation of international communication in all its variants – political, intercultural, organizational, developmental and corporate (Wang, 2010). “*No longer is China an emerging great power*”, observes a commentator, “*it is a ‘risen’ one*” (Layne, 2012: 212). Since 2006, China has been the largest holder of foreign-currency reserves, estimated in 2015 to be more than \$3.3 trillion. On the basis of purchasing power parity (PPP), China’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpassed that of the United States in 2014, making it the world’s largest economy, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2014). When the country opened up to global businesses in the late 1980s, its presence in the international corporate world was negligible, but, by 2014, China had 95 companies in the *Fortune Global 500*, just behind the US (128), while three of the top ten global corporations were Chinese (*Fortune*, 2014).

China is a key member of BRICS, whose annual summits since 2009 are being increasingly noticed outside the five countries, which together account for 20 per cent of the world’s GDP. At their sixth summit in Brazil in 2014, the group announced the setting up of a BRICS Bank to fund developmental projects, potentially to rival the Western dominated Bretton Woods institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF (Carmody, 2013; Taylor, 2014; Nordenstreng and Thussu, 2015). 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 Africa, and already there is talk of replacing the ‘Washington consensus’ with what has been termed the ‘Beijing consensus’ (Halper, 2010). Brautigam has counselled that the West has to recognize that “*China’s model of consistent non-intervention may be preferable to a China that regularly intervenes in other countries’ domestic affairs, or uses military force to foster political change*” (Brautigam, 2009: 311).

Though India’s economic growth and prowess is no match to China’s, on the basis of purchasing power parity, it was the world’s third largest economy in 2014 (IMF, 2014). Bilateral trade between India and Africa has escalated from \$961 million in 1991 to \$70 billion in 2013. India has also emerged as an important investor in Africa with cumulative investments of nearly \$50 billion (Government of India, 2014: viii). Some Indian commentators have argued that Africa should be a

major focus area for India in both economic and political terms: “*India cannot match China in terms of investible resources and aid for Africa but its own equities are not inconsiderable: human resources, health and medicine, soft power, institution building, low cost technology-driven solutions*” (Khilnani, *et al.*, 2012: 35).

One notable example is the Indian government’s \$125 million Pan-Africa E-Network (PAN) project with its hub in Senegal, improving Africa’s tele-medicine and tele-education services by linking educational centres and hospitals in Africa with universities and specialty hospitals in India (Government of India, 2014: 55). India has an increasing global corporate presence in health and pharmaceuticals: in volume terms, the Indian pharmaceutical industry has grown to be one of the biggest in the world by producing and selling generic medicines much more cheaply than the global giants in Europe and the US, by exploiting a ‘flexibility’ clause in the WTO agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights that allows generic manufacturers to produce a patented drug. As the ‘pharmacy of the developing world’ the cheap generic drugs produced in India could feed into the multilateral bureaucracies - both governmental and NGOs - active in health and humanitarian assistance to African countries. India’s investment in agro-business in Africa is also increasing (Sauvant *et al.*, 2010; Mawdsley and McCann, 2011; Carmody, 2013).

Such initiatives are useful instruments for promoting a country’s influence: while these are government projects, they are aimed at helping Indian businesses to strengthen their operations in Africa. As Nye has observed, ‘governments are often mistrusted. Thus it often behoves governments to keep in the background and to work with private actors’ (Nye, 2004a: 113).

As in other fields, the emergence of China and India as serious global players (according to the IMF, Indian economic growth will outpace that of China after 2016), coinciding with the crisis in the neo-liberal model of US-led Western capitalism, will challenge traditional thinking on Africa (Brautigam, 2009; Mawdsley and McCann, 2011; Layne, 2012; Chan, 2013; Patey, 2014). The combined economic and cultural impact of China and India, aided by their extensive global diasporas, may create a different - Asian - form of engagement with Africa. Apart from their border dispute, both countries also vie for resources to meet their rapidly escalating energy needs (Cheru and Obi, 2010; Patey, 2014). And yet there are growing commercial links developing between the two: Trade between China and India - negligible in 1992 - had reached more than \$70 billion by 2013, making India’s eastern neighbour one of its largest trading partners. These economic flows and a Chindian globalization, rarely get a mention in the international media nor even, ironically, in the media in China and India themselves (Thussu, 2013). The trend they represent is significant, as noted by the UNDP *Human Development Report* titled *The Rise of the South*:

*“Economic exchanges are expanding faster ‘horizontally’- on a South-South basis - than on the traditional North-South axis. People are sharing ideas and experiences through new communications channels and seeking greater accountability from governments and international institutions alike. The South as a whole is driving global economic growth and societal change for the first time in centuries”* (UNDP, 2013: 123).

One area where a Chindian contribution could be particularly valuable is in development communication. Despite robust economic growth - almost double-digit for nearly a decade in case of China - both countries continue to be home to a large number of poor and disadvantaged people and, indeed, in many instances the 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. As home to one of the world’s largest IT hubs, India is well-equipped to deploy new digital media technologies to promote sustainable development. Africa’s telecommunication equipment industry has been profoundly dominated by such Chinese conglomerates as Huawei and ZTE, which receive liberal credit line and low-interest loans by Chinese Exim Bank and National Development Bank, as part of China’s ‘Going Out’ strategy. Their presence has drastically brought down the costs of the African telecommunication industry, especially

mobile services. Anbin Shi has suggested that ‘social and mobile media development will pave the way for increased interaction and engagement between Chinese media outlets and local communities in Africa’ (Shi, 2015:138). Will such enhanced interactions contribute to formulating a Chinese discourse of development? Traditionally, the development debates have been devised 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 digitised, it is possible that Chindian media flows might erode the 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’, making use of formal and informal networks and drawing on ‘cyber power’, an arena where the US has huge advantage, though the Chinese and Indian visibility in cyberspace is growing steadily. At the end of 2014, according to industry estimates, nearly half of China’s 1.3 billion people were on-line and only a fifth of India’s 1.2 billion population were using the Internet but the world’s largest number of Internet users were Chinese, followed by India, which surpassed the United States, in 2015, to become the second largest user of Internet. With the explicitly pro-business government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the push for digital commerce and communication is likely to increase. Industry estimates suggest that the number of Internet users in India is expected to cross 500 million by 2016, increasingly driven by wireless connections, making it the world’s largest ‘open’ Internet.

As the government’s vision of ‘Digital India’ – a public-private partnership to bring connectivity to every village within the vast country – begins to take shape, an Indian cyberspace is likely to expand exponentially. 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 language when 90 per cent of Chinese and equally high percentage of Indians get on-line. It is particularly striking in the context of India’s ‘demographic dividend’: more than 65 per cent of Indians are below the age of 35. As their prosperity grows, a sizeable segment of young Indians are increasingly going on-line, 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 presence in Africa or a supplement to it? In the short-term the multi-faceted US domination of the world’s media is likely to continue. However, in the long run growing media flows from large countries with old histories and new global aspirations will redress the balance and perhaps change Africa’s engagement with the world at large. As Chan has suggested: “*those who seek to dominate the post-colonial world still cannot bear to see the relationships of the colonial world unduly disrupted.... The West had simply better get used to China in Africa, and also to the surge in Indian presence there as well*” (Chan, 2013: 143).

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