

# Chindia in the context of emerging cultural and media powers

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This essay aims to put the relationship of China and India – Chindia – in the context of other emerging cultural and media powers in a somewhat, but far from completely, transformed world or global system. It examines their globalization in terms of Appadurai's (1990) set of landscapes and of asymmetrical interdependence (Straubhaar, 1991). It explores their relations with the existing core powers, with each other, and with other less developed nations and cultures.

## Emerging powers and the global system

As recently as 30 years ago, China and India were seen as part of the periphery of a world system dominated by the central developed capitalist economies (Wallerstein, 1979). By some measures they might have been part of what Wallerstein called the semi-periphery, large developing countries which showed some growth and limited autonomy in some areas, but were still essentially dependent on the core countries, especially in economic matters. In a related assessment, Cardoso (1973) called the condition of countries like Brazil, or India, associated dependent development, associated with and dependent on the core countries. In some ways, China was off the global economic map, seen as a still largely socialist country deliberately disengaged from the world economic system seeking a more autonomous form of development.

However, by 2001, a Goldman-Sachs economist called attention to the fact that large emerging markets were growing faster than the G-7 'core' countries (O'Neill, 2001). O'Neill drew particular attention to what he called the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China. Depending on the measurement, those countries had about 8 per cent of global GDP then, which, again depending on the measure, has risen since then, particularly since the BRIC and other emerging economies seem to have

suffered less and recovered faster in the current Great Recession than have the G-7 countries. O'Neill called for incorporating the BRIC into global economic governance, which has happened as they became a central part of what is now the G-20 expanded group of 'core' countries.

This raises an interesting question of what it means to be a core country in the global system now. While useful in that it recognized the existence of regional sub-systems and strong national dynamics outside the capitalist core, Wallerstein's world systems theory came to be seen by many as too economistic, or estimating economic determinacy too highly, not taking sufficient account of cultural and other dimensions of globalization (Boyne, 1990). At about the same time, Straubhaar (1991) raised the question of whether countries could have different degrees of power and dependence, an asymmetrical interdependence, based on his analysis of how Brazil, for example, could be dependent on core powers in finance and technology, but increasingly autonomous in media production.

In an analytical approach that has shown enduring theoretical appeal, Appadurai (1990) launched 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 driven by economic forces. Those scapes of financial, technological, ethno/migration, media, and ideological globalization, provide an interesting starting point for analysing China, India, the rest of the BRIC, and other emerging powers like Mexico and South Korea, which subsequent Goldman-Sachs reports have tentatively added to the BRIC, for analytical purposes (Goldman-Sachs, 2007). Coupled with the theory of asymmetrical interdependence, in which countries may gain power in one global landscape more than another, this gives us several useful analytical or theoretical tools for understanding Chindia as an interaction of two powerful emerging cultural and media producers, as well as in terms of their interaction with other emerging powers, like Brazil, Russia, South Africa, etc.

### **Financial/economic landscape**

In the past, some current emerging powers were seen as perhaps important culturally, but not really economically. Brazil and India have long been major producers and minor exporters in television and film, respectively. China and India have both had enormous long-term cultural influence throughout Asia, and more recently, notable cultural presence globally. Economically, however, Brazilians used to joke about

themselves that they were the country of the future and always would be. While these three and other large developing countries had long been seen as potentially interesting markets for core powers, as well as sources of raw materials and cheap labor, their potential for any sort of major economic growth, let alone the accumulation of any real economic power, had always been seen as quite limited.

However, China began to emerge as an increasingly important economic partner for core countries and their major corporations. An economic analysis by the government of New Zealand notes, 'In a period of less than 30 years, China has evolved into one of the world's fastest-growing economies, increasingly outwardly-oriented and market-driven' (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 2010). India is seen as an emerging power in a more limited set of areas, notably high technology outsourcing and services, and its education system at the top is seen as a major economic asset producing many of the world's best regarded engineers. Brazil continues to be seen primarily as a major agricultural exporter, with recognition that its agriculture is increasingly industrialized and efficient, with some high tech exports in aircraft and metals.

In sum, perhaps the most striking aspect of the recognition since 2000 of China, India, Brazil and other emerging powers is now precisely in the global economic landscape, where their importance had earlier been doubted. However, their importance and growth has now come within a global system that all of the BRIC countries had in various ways resisted prior to the 1980s and 1990s. The USSR, along with the People's Republic of China, had been the primary alternative to the world capitalist system until the late 1980s, but Wallerstein (1979) had presciently anticipated that neither would likely be able to resist the draw of an otherwise completely dominant global capitalist system. Although not trying to challenge the world capitalist system, Brazil tried for semi-autonomy through import substitution industrialization. India did, too, coupled with a more socialized, government-driven overall economic structure. All four came to accept far more of the rules of an emerging global capitalist economy, but all four have continued to employ state capitalist enterprises, elements of state economic control and intervention, and, in the case of Brazil, increasing welfare transfer payments to the poor, more than the standard advice of the World Bank might prefer.

### **Technological landscape**

All of the BRIC countries have worked on improving their technological infrastructure rapidly. In 2009, Russia led with internet penetration of 42

per cent, followed by Brazil at 39 per cent, China at 28 per cent, and India at 5 per cent (ITU, 2009). Mobile phone penetration was increasing even more rapidly in all four countries (ITU, 2009).

While all are working hard, compared to many other developing economies, on technology infrastructure, the BRIC countries are beginning to specialize individually in different aspects of the global technoscape in ways that differentiate them. India has developed a very sophisticated telecom, industrial and personnel infrastructure for the outsourcing of technology-related services, such as telemarketing, telephone inquiries and tech support for users in other countries. This builds on unique strengths, such as a large population educated and relatively fluent in English, unavailable to other BRIC countries.

China and to slightly lesser degree, India, have emerged alongside some other smaller nations, like South Korea and Taiwan, as major producers of technological goods. All these have also now tried to move up the technological value chain from being efficient, low-cost centers for high tech manufacture, to being centers for research and development, design and other high value technological processes. Brazil tried early, in the 1970s and 1980s, under the earlier economic model of autonomous import substitution, to become self-sufficient in computers (Evans, 1992), but failed to anticipate that conditions in this area were shifting from autonomous national champion industries to a highly integrated globalized network of producers. In a way, their failed effort was decisive evidence that emerging markets in technology were having to cope with a global technoscape in manufacture that was far more integrated at a global level than could have been imagined in the 1970s.

### **Migration and diaspora**

While perhaps less visible than the emerging manufacturing might of China and the dominant services outsourcing role of India, both these countries exercise another strong role in another global landscape that differentiates them from other emerging powers. That is the visibility, economic and cultural power of their human diasporas across many parts of the globe, especially to other core countries. The Indian diaspora reaches many countries with a variety of types of emigrants, some highly skilled and educated, some working as laborers in a variety of nearby countries (Parekh, et al., 2003). The same is true of the Chinese diaspora, which is represented in the USA, for example, by a variety of people, ranging from high tech inventors and businessmen to small shopkeepers and working-class tradespeople.

Much of the literature on diaspora has to do with migrants' own ongoing formation of identity (Brazier and Mannur, 2003), which is clearly of central importance. However, it might be interesting to begin to think of the diasporas as a source of not only economic but cultural power, both on behalf of the migrants themselves, and the home countries they come from. In interviewing with and about migrants in Austin, Texas, for instance, we are beginning to find that the Indian, Chinese and Korean diasporas, for example, are coming to be highly regarded not just as very useful members of high-tech, higher education, and other important industries, but as cultural assets to their communities and as useful cultural links to their home countries.

Diasporas also represent a solid foothold in many other countries for the cultural industries of their home countries. This seems to increase with first satellite TV and now broadband internet. Taplin notes that, with increased broadband access,

the cultural Diasporas of the major competitive filmmaking powers (China, India, Russia and Latin America) would be able to access their country's movies regardless of location. The fact that there are 20 million non-resident Indians (NRI) dispersed in western countries with little or no access to Bollywood's output is a simple case in point. These NRI's are extremely wealthy (combined net worth of over \$20 billion) and retain strong cultural ties to India ... It seems like this is just the beginning of the Diaspora movement. It is clear that several Chinese companies, including a division of Phoenix TV had explored distribution possibilities for Chinese films in the US. This would seem like the next natural market development, given the size of the US Chinese Diaspora. (Taplin, 2007: 176)

### **Cultural and media exports and reach**

India, China and other emerging powers are also becoming important in the global mediascape. At first, the BRIC 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. The 1970s produced major research, such as Nordenstreng and Varis' report for UNESCO (1974), which concluded that most countries were importing most of their television, mostly from the USA, mostly entertainment, although other studies also showed an unbalanced news flow (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, 1980). However, even then, China, India and Russia did not fit that pattern. China and Russia resisted all imports, including most news. India imported news but much less film and music. Brazil moved during the 1970s to substitute its own music and television for most of what had been imported, but continued to be more

dependent on outside news and film. Furthermore, the size and affluence of the home markets of these rapidly emerging media producers is increasing faster than most of the existing core countries, which will add to the solidity of their home base for media production (Taplin, 2007).

Several of these countries not only protected and grew their own markets and cultural industries, but also moved toward export. Brazil has been a relatively major television program exporter, especially in telenovelas since the 1980s (Straubhaar, 1991), particularly in Latin America, where it has long been a dominant exporter (along with Mexico) (Marques de Melo, 1992), but reaching over 100 markets globally as well (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 contra-flows (Thussu, 2006), is perhaps more limited than initially expected (Biltreyst and Meers, 2000).

India had always produced and exported quite a bit of film and television in its near region (Pendakur and Subramanyam, 1996; Ray and Jacka, 1996). It began to go well beyond that in the 1990s, exporting film and television throughout many developing countries in Asia and Africa (Pendakur and Subramanyam, 1996). In the 1990s and 2000s, Indian film in particular began to reach much more global markets, following its diaspora, but going well beyond it, to draw in viewers from the larger audiences of many countries, including the USA (Taplin, 2007). China is going through a very similar process, building on a strong and growing home market, on a widespread and affluent diasporic audience, and on a cadre of stars and directors, including both those from Hong Kong and China, who are increasingly well known in Western markets, well beyond the Chinese diaspora itself (Taplin, 2007).

### **Even stronger in key transnational spaces**

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, that is, geographically dispersed but culturally and linguistically linked markets or spaces like the widely dispersed Anglophone or Lusophone cultural markets (Straubhaar, 2007).

While India is a rising film export power globally, it has long been dominant in South Asia (Ray and Jacka, 1996). The same is true with Brazil and Mexico in Latin American television (Sinclair, 1999). While Japan previously grew into a dominant regional exporter of cartoons, comics, games, pop music, etc. (Iwabuchi, 2002), South Korea is now making strong inroads across East Asia as part of what has been called 'the Korean Wave' (Dator and Seo, 2004; Taplin 2007).

## Conclusion

It might be theoretically interesting, therefore, to think of emerging media and cultural powers as those who work first from a strong home base, either large or affluent or both. Secondly, it seems that emerging powers build next on an important regional or cultural-linguistic market base in which they are to some degree also dominant. Then, thirdly, we may see them emerging as truly global media or cultural export powers, reaching first to diasporas, then to more truly global audiences in the case of China and India, or moving directly to export as in the case of Brazilian television.

It is also worth considering that while the idea of Chindia, as a pairing of two of the most important markets that are both regional and global rivals and trading partners, is definitely interesting, it is also worth considering them both within the BRIC context, particularly as expanded to include Mexico and South Korea. They have several key interests in common, including their relationship to core industrial countries, essentially those of the OECD. China has perhaps changed its relationship to the older core most clearly, in some ways emerging as the world's second most important economy, after the USA, and pushing to re-establish different bases for that relationship, in everything from trade to culture and media. China is one of the few countries that can directly challenge and limit the power of global media conglomerates like Murdoch's News Corporation (Curtin, 2005; Shi, 2005). It will be interesting to see if other emerging powers gain a measure of this position or if China is uniquely powerful given its size, market, regulatory power, industrial base, etc.

The BRIC and other newly emerging economic, cultural and media powers also have to work out how they relate to each other and to least developed countries (LDCs). Within the BRIC, Goldman-Sachs (2007) speculates that China and India might emerge as relatively stronger in industry and manufacturing, while Brazil and Russia might end up as fairly powerful resource exporters to the other BRIC members as well as

other core countries. In fact, recent evidence shows that Brazil is moving to reduce its growing dependence on China, diversifying exports and rebuilding the key industries required to be competitive with China in economic terms (Pomfret, 2010), similarly to the complex ways in which India confronts its need to both compete and cooperate with China.

Much like Brazil's complex reaction to both supplying China with raw materials while competing with it in other areas, including media and culture, other LDCs are also trying to sort out their relations with the BRIC, Mexico, South Korea, etc. All the BRIC countries had made political and economic overtures to other LDCs for a long time – India through the Non-Aligned Movement and Brazil, China and Russia by supporting independence and autonomy movements in Africa and Latin America. Brazil, India and South Africa have met to discuss their common interests as large emerging democracies. Lastly, to many smaller countries, all these emerging countries, BRIC plus South Korea, Mexico and a few others may well look like regional or cultural-linguistic hegemony in terms of cultural and media exports and presence. India has a dominant position in South Asia and parts of the Arab Gulf and Africa. Brazil has a large, almost hegemonic presence in both Latin America and diverse parts of the Lusophone world, including Portugal itself. China has been a cultural hegemon in East Asia for millennia. So the position of these countries may look 'emerging' to the core nations, but well established, even dominant to others.

In theoretical terms, we see them as achieving various levels of asymmetrical interdependence with each other, with traditional developed economies, and with less developed countries that may well be dependent on the emerging powers in both economic and cultural terms. We can see the asymmetry of their relations by comparing them in terms of Appadurai's scapes. The BRIC countries were so named as emergent economic powers related to what Appadurai called the finance-scape, but China has achieved a very different, less asymmetrical, relationship with the core. They are all progressing in the technoscape, but in different, somewhat specialized ways, where China now has a more symmetrical relationship as a hardware supplier while India has developed a strong role in services. In the ethnoscape, the large, affluent diasporas of both China and India distinguish their roles, particularly in media export, giving them a certain built-in global audience. In a different way, however, Brazil can call upon a combination of ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties with both Latin America and the former Portuguese colonies, as well as Portugal itself.



Although not directly addressed in the original formulation of the BRIC, Brazil, China and India, and perhaps to lesser degree Russia, are all emerging powers in the global mediascape. They are also already dominant powers in regional or cultural-linguistic mediascapes that extend transnationally rather than globally. So the mediascape is overall one of the areas in which this group is most powerful, indicating that more work needs to be done to examine the implications of this power as soft power for the more political or ideological roles of these nations in the global ideoscape as well.

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