



EDITORIAL

DEAR READERS

Greetings from the team of the Emerging Powers in Africa Programme. We wish you a fruitful 2011.

2011 promises to be a significant year in Africa's international relations and continental outreach. The year could not have started better for South Africa with membership to the BRIC club and assuming a two-year rotation seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Not only does this leverage the voice of the BRIC partners on the Security Council with India being the other BRIC country to assume a two year rotation, but it also means that their time on the Security Council will entail lobbying for one of the permanent seats on the reformed UNSC notwithstanding that they will also be judged by their performance.

From a continental perspective it also looks likely that India will be upping the ante in its African engagements. The second India-Africa Forum Summit will be hosted in New Delhi in the first half of the year. This will definitely open up spaces for more trade, investment and development assistance into the African landscape. But it also offers a significant opportunity for African researchers and activists to evaluate how many of the promises made at the 2008 Summit have been achieved and assess their impact on African societies in terms of what benefits accrued to improving the socio-economic plight of Africa's people.

At the same time it looks likely that China's deepening economic footprint has been strengthened by the release of the White paper on China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation. The release of white paper provides a much needed policy framework by which to understand China's burgeoning economic and trade relationship with

Africa as well as a base for African activists to assess China's intentions in African markets and to hold Beijing and African governments accountable to those benchmarks.

Therefore as we move into the second decade of the 21st century, we have much to assess in terms of Africa's increasing relations with the emerging powers. Not only does this pose new impulses to the way we should be assessing the emerging powers in Africa's landscape, it also enables to gauge how the emerging actors respond to the referendum results of Southern Sudan, questions of post-conflict reconstruction in countries like Ivory Coast and the regional integration processes as set out by the African Union.

Thus as we contemplate these and other more crucial issues related to Africa's development and the shifting emphasis towards South-South cooperation, we invite contributions to our newsletter from the many voices of Africa's civil society so that the capacity and voice of Africa's people can be strengthened and heard. But we also hope that this can harness exchanges and collaboration with counterparts from the South so that a People's Forum of the South can be effected.

We look forward to hearing your views and expanding the network.

Sincerely

Sanusha Naidu
Research Director
Emerging Powers in Africa Programme

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Ms Sanusha Naidu - Research Director
Emerging Powers in Africa Programme
Fahamu- Cape Town
Email: sanusha@fahamu.org

Ms Hayley Herman - Programme Officer
Emerging Powers in Africa Programme
Fahamu-Cape Town
Email: hayley@fahamu.org

Mr Stuart Rothgiesser - Layout Editor
www.stuartrothgiesser.com
Email: stuart@stuartrothgiesser.com

Ms Shifrah Perkel - Graphic Designer
www.insideout.co.za
Email: design@insideout.co.za

For further information on the Emerging Powers in Africa Programme, or submission of commentaries for the newsletter please email Ms Sanusha Naidu or Ms Hayley Herman.



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COMMENTARY

South Africa Joins the BRIC Club

By Sanusha Naidu

2011 HAS DEFINITELY started off on a high note for South Africa's foreign policy ambitions. With assuming its two year non permanent rotational seat on the United Nations Security Council and becoming the fifth member of BRIC, the charm offensive of President Zuma's 2010 BRIC foreign policy diplomacy has certainly paid off.

Of course for some analysts like Jim O' Neill who coined the term BRIC, South Africa was not seen as a suitable candidate to be included into this clutch of resurgent countries. O' Neill is noted as saying: "It is not entirely obvious to me why the BRIC should have agreed to ask South Africa to join. How can South Africa be regarded as a big economy? And, by the way, they happen to be struggling as well."

Likewise Razia Khan, Head of African Research at Standard Chartered based in London was bemused at South Africa's inclusion. According to her "It is not clear how South Africa fits very easily into the Bric group... And besides the size of its economy and its rate of growth, the most controversial aspect is South Africa's share of global GDP compared with the others."

Clearly then for O' Neill, Ms Khan and other skeptics the concern was really about whether South Africa's comparative economic advantage was on par with or complimented that of its fellow members to make the BRIC club a global economic hegemon by 2050.

Lets consider some of the economic facts.

First South Africa's economy, population and growth rate are much smaller than all the other BRIC members are. Second, the country's GDP last year was US\$ 286 billion, far less than the US\$ 2 trillions of India and Brazil, China's US\$ 5.5 trillion, and even Russia's US\$ 1.6 trillion.

Third, Pretoria has recorded sluggish economic growth. It has been a tepid 3 percent, less than Russia's 4 per cent, Brazil's 7.5 per cent, India's 9.7 per cent and China's 10.5 per cent.

Finally, its population of approximately 50 million people is dwarfed by that of China (1.36 billion) and India (1.2 billion).

Therefore it is understandable if the economists in the room are concerned that South Africa's entry

into the BRIC club could have been eclipsed by other better performing emerging economies like South Korea, Turkey, Mexico and Indonesia. These countries have GDP rates that are impressive and outstrip South Africa by a fair margin. South Africa's GDP is less than half of South Korea's US\$ 832.5 billion, Turkey's US\$ 617.1 billion and Mexico's US\$ 874.9 billion. It is two-thirds of Indonesia's US\$ 540.3 billion.

So how should we judge this latest development in President Zuma's BRIC charm offensive?

Most analysts have claimed that it is purely geo-politics that informed China's decision to invite Pretoria to join the BRIC club.

From a cursory level and certainly from the economic evidence it does seem that geo-politics instead of geo-economics played a significant factor in driving the decision.

The geo-politics is really about having a voice at the table that can assist in lobby politics and leverage influence around significant decisions. As Mzubisi Qobo, the Head of the Emerging Powers and Global Challenges Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs highlighted about South Africa's role globally: "Its made substantial contributions to global governance issues and played a very active role in post-conflict reconstruction in Africa. Its voice has been fluent and it's seen as an honest broker in international relations. That would definitely have some influence".

But is it really only about South Africa's political leverage?

Some analysts (including myself) were inclined to believe that China's timing of the decision to invite South Africa to the BRIC club was strategic and master stroke on the part of Beijing's own diplomatic ingenious.

First, Beijing is moving expeditiously to make sure that it has significant political capital in Africa when it comes to taking tactical decisions that affect Africa's domestic and international affairs.

One of these is the referendum on Southern Sudan. Depending on the outcome of the referendum, Beijing has definitely gained an ally at the Security Council to support its views and

decision if things regress in Sudan as a result of the referendum results.

Therefore as a P5 member China played its trump card by being the country to actually extend and support Pretoria's BRIC membership. It was neither Russia nor Brazil, which clearly demonstrates how Beijing perceives its rotational chairmanship of BRIC.

And to this end, this indeed, makes Pretoria more receptive to Beijing. Consider that the underlying implications of such a move could well mean that there could be simmering tensions when it comes to conflicting views between India-China over issues at the UNSC, especially where New Delhi calibrates towards Washington's side and China is at the other pole.

It should also be mentioned here that South Africa's membership into BRIC has received a lukewarm response from New Delhi.

Second, the fact that South Africa offers a gateway into the Southern African Development Community Market and beyond also fits into Beijing's strengthening of its corporate strategy. The going out strategy of Chinese companies certainly will get a boost by joining South African corporates in exploring and exploiting market opportunities in African economies.

Third, it enables Beijing to demonstrate its global leadership qualities, especially in lieu of the South and the developing world. In fact this move reflects one of the four cornerstones of China's foreign policy priorities, namely its ensuing engagements with the Third World.

But while Pretoria may languish in the glory of its conquest, there are certain caveats, which have been identified that need to be assessed.

First, the Chinese newspaper, the People's Daily was quoted as saying that "By joining the BRIC countries, South Africa also hopes to become the gateway for the BRIC countries' entry into Africa ... South Africa has the ability to promote agendas related to Africa on the international arena ... This is an important factor that makes South Africa valuable as a BRIC country".

As much as this may reflect a normative and rhetorical approach to how South Africa is perceived by the outside as representing the African voice on multilateral fora, it is not clear whether the African bloc actually sees South Africa in this way.

Clearly the attempt to identify Pretoria as having the same agenda and pushing forward the African agenda could in reality create a backlash because of post-apartheid South Africa's own prejudices and xenophobia against African migrants. Moreover, the behaviour of corporate SA and its links to Southern

TNCs could easily be interpreted by what Patrick Bond calls South Africa's "sub-imperial agenda" in Southern Africa and across Africa.

So it maybe premature to assume that South Africa and the continent speaks with one voice.

Second, as South Africa contemplates its role and duties, it would be critical to evaluate how this will intersect with its interests in the India-Brazil-SA (IBSA) forum and the G20. By becoming a member of BRIC this definitely constitutes an overlap in membership and a contradiction in behaviour and outcomes. How will Pretoria decide which club takes precedence? Which decision will override the other? What kind of rationality and harmonization will there be between belonging to several groupings?

Surely these issues must be given consideration since it will affect the global governance issues that BRIC seeks to reshape and the polycentric world order that it wants to create.

Finally, is BRIC becoming the equivalent of the G8? Will membership to this premium club stop with South Africa? Or are we likely to see more members being added to the Club? There are definitely other countries waiting in the wings like those mentioned above. If so, then are we going to witness a new era of South-South cooperation where BRIC will be expanded and it will follow the same history and evolution of the G8? And will we see another set of countries challenging the dominance of the BRIC like we saw when the G8 invited the Outreach 5 countries to attend their Summits?

In whatever way South Africa's position within BRIC is interpreted, one thing is certain and that is Pretoria must certainly start punching above its weight. Moreover, not only does it need to demonstrate to BRIC partners the confidence they have shown in its membership, but it must also illustrate to the South African people the efficacy of being part of BRIC. Alliance politics should not only be about multilateralism and a kind of musketeer ideology. Rather it should be directly linked to how our domestic challenges and aspirations are going to be addressed through the BRIC Club, especially those related to unemployment, a viable industrial policy and social development.

Therefore, the greatest challenge for South Africa is to start making BRIC work for itself while at the same time reconciling the expectations its BRIC partners have, including the promises and trade-offs President Zuma may have made to his BRIC allies during his lobby visits to the BRIC countries last year.

Sanusha Naidu is Research Director of the Emerging Powers in Africa Programme based in Fohamamu, South Africa.

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COMMENTARY

Brasil e África: outro horizonte

By Alexandre de Freitas Barbosa

ESSE É O título - escolhido por Guimarães Rosa - da obra-prima escrita pelo historiador José Honório Rodrigues. Sua primeira edição é de 1961, tendo-a revisto José Honório para a segunda edição, de 1964. A terceira e última, de 1980, já daria conta das relações do Brasil com os novos países africanos, libertos do jugo salazarista.

O livro de José Honório é uma preciosidade sob vários aspectos. Em sua primeira parte, o autor empreende cuidadosa sistematização sobre a presença do africano no Brasil, para depois debruçar-se sobre nossas relações externas com a África, desde a independência até o final da década de 70 do século XX.

O Brasil seria alijado da África pela Inglaterra em meados do século XIX. Essa potência almejava, com o fim do tráfico, não apenas favorecer suas colônias, mas também deslocar o Brasil de seu comércio vultoso com o continente.

Conta-nos José Honório que se a África fosse para nossa elite branca dos tempos coloniais o reservatório de “um povo bárbaro e pagão”, condenado ao trabalho, depois do tráfico, ela ficaria no nosso inconsciente de país independente como uma “unidade geográfica e humana tão longínqua e afastada quanto os polos”.

Portanto, durante mais de um século, do fim do tráfico até 1960, o Brasil ficaria alheio ao que se passava na África, regionalizando a sua política externa e mantendo-se sempre dependente dos desígnios das potências ocidentais. Mesmo quando o país volta a ter uma política externa mais autônoma, esta se vê manchada pela influência nefasta da nossa relação com Portugal, o que só mudaria a partir de 1975, com o reconhecimento imediato da independência de Angola.

Sem “complexo de caiação”, a política externa se une à realidade de uma nação deliciosamente mestiça

Por meio dessa relação de distanciamento com relação à África, negava-se não apenas o passado colonial, mas também uma das bases da formação do povo brasileiro. O “complexo de caiação” de nossas elites teria se fundado no desprezo e vergonha pelos alicerces sociais da nação. Daí o caráter subordinado da nossa política externa.

O historiador José Honório mostra-nos como Jânio Quadros e seu ministro Afonso Arinos processariam uma verdadeira reviravolta nas

nossas relações com a África. Essa política externa independente seria continuada por João Goulart e San Tiago Dantas, para encontrar novamente seu rumo com Geisel e Azeredo da Silveira.

Fundava-se uma nova tradição de política externa com a descoberta da fronteira que temos do outro lado do Atlântico, fronteira econômica e cultural, forjada pela “unidade do mar, em cujas praias nos irmanamos”. O Brasil passaria a se assumir enquanto “nação continental que começa a pensar intercontinentalmente”, sem menosprezo pelo regionalismo hemisférico. Essa política faria ainda mais sentido, segundo José Honório, já que o mundo caminhava para o “fim do europeísmo”. Não custa lembrar que a última edição da obra é de 1980!

Do ocidentalismo entreguista e elitista, o Brasil processaria um realinhamento da sua política externa. Sem negar sua filiação ocidental, afirmava-se como aliado, porém não mais como satélite. Emergia de cheio no concerto das nações, colocando-se como representante da periferia e arvorando-se a atuar como elo entre o mundo afroasiático e as grandes potências ocidentais.

Apesar das mudanças de orientação da política externa, nosso historiador ressentia-se da ausência de uma política externa africana por parte da diplomacia brasileira. O que tivemos fora apenas “um impulso inicial, um apaixonado interesse pela África”, orquestrado por servidores públicos, além de um punhado de homens de negócios e algumas personalidades do mundo cultural.

Isso talvez explique o retrocesso que viria em seguida. Durante os anos 90, obcecado pelo ufanismo liberal pós-Guerra Fria, o Brasil deu as costas não apenas à África, mas a todo aquele ensaio de política externa soberana.

Nesse sentido, a primeira década do século XXI parece inaugurar o reencontro do Brasil com uma tradição de política externa, desagradando às “classes conservadoras”, cujos aliados em alguns veículos da grande imprensa, tal como nos tempos de José Honório, “iniciaram uma das mais vigorosas campanhas de que há notícia no Brasil”. O historiador, ao flagrar o destempero das elites do seu tempo, jamais poderia imaginar que a história se repetiria.

Obviamente que o nosso cenário é bastante diverso. Vivemos no mundo da ascensão chinesa, da crise financeira abalando os países desenvolvidos,

e dando novo gás a países como Brasil e Índia; num mundo que tem fome de commodities e, assim, recoloca a África no mapa da economia global, ainda que de forma subordinada, e muitas vezes perversa. Tudo, porém, parece indicar que os anseios por uma política externa brasileira pautada na crescente intercontinentalidade encontram um ambiente ainda mais propício.

O governo Lula não partiu do nada. Soube aproveitar um novo contexto internacional e continuar uma tradição da diplomacia brasileira. Deu um passo à frente. Abriu novas embaixadas, fez crescer os fluxos de comércio, apoiou novos investimentos e ampliou os espaços de cooperação técnica e cultural. Reconheceu a dívida que o Brasil tem com o continente africano, de onde provém metade da sua população, e acenou para um “outro horizonte”.

Apesar dessa nova reviravolta, algo me diz que o mestre da história da política externa do Brasil, relutaria em afirmar, de maneira contundente, que possuímos “uma política africana propriamente dita”.

Embaixadas e viagens com pompa e circunstância, a criação de representações de nossas instituições públicas e de novos instrumentos de financiamento para o continente africano; além do apoio muitas vezes incondicional do governo - sem exigências de cláusulas sociais e ambientais - ao estabelecimento de grandes conglomerados privados, as novas multinacionais brasileiras,

que José Honório não conhecia; isto por si só não constitui uma política africana.

O que quer o Brasil com a África? Mais mercados e mais votos nas Nações Unidas? Em que nos diferenciamos das potências ditas imperialistas? Queremos ocupar um novo papel no cenário internacional às expensas da África? Ou pretendemos nos associar, de maneira soberana, com os governos e sociedades desse continente tão diversificado e com tanto potencial? Será possível que recriemos sobre o túmulo das carreiras bilaterais que fundaram o trato dos viventes um intercâmbio de bens, serviços, tecnologias, produções culturais e projetos alternativos de desenvolvimento, que flua nos dois sentidos? Se isto é o que queremos, precisamos ousar muito mais.

Ao lançar essas questões, faço uma espécie de tributo ao mestre José Honório, professor, historiador e nacionalista que ao pensar a África propunha um tipo diferente de Brasil, sem complexo de caiação, a política externa se unindo à realidade de uma nação deliciosamente mestiça.

Alexandre de Freitas Barbosa é professor de História Econômica e Economia Brasileira do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros (IEB/USP).

Alexandre de Freitas Barbosa is a member of the Emerging Powers in Africa Programme Steering Committee.

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REVIEW

Comments on “Winds from the East”¹

By Deborah Brautigam

IS THE CHINESE government trying to “fundamentally reshape much of the world’s media in its own image” as a recent report released by the Washington, DC-based National Endowment for Democracy, Center for International Media Assistance charges? I sympathize with any effort by Westerners to analyze the overseas activities of the Chinese, particularly Westerners without any background on China. The Chinese are notoriously untransparent. Their government is run by the Communist Party, which is a secretive and authoritarian organization. They do not have freedom of the press, and they restrict access to alternative viewpoints through the Great Firewall of China that blocks internet sites (my blog, for instance). Their economic and military expansion presents a number of real and potential challenges to United States’ interests abroad. It is critical to understand what China is doing as accurately as possible in order to establish a base for our own policy making and efforts to influence China or counter its influence if we deem that necessary for our own security or national interests.

So efforts like the National Endowment for Democracy’s sponsorship of a study on China’s support for media activities in developing countries are welcome. We need careful analysis and reporting of what China is doing overseas, and its impact. Much of what is written in the report is helpful in fleshing out a picture of China’s soft power efforts in the area of media: public diplomacy, public relations, efforts to mold public perceptions of China’s rise. But there are other parts of this report that I find troubling.

My remarks will focus on three areas: First, what do we learn from this report, and what evidence is being presented to back its claims? Second, what do we not learn, and in particular, what opportunities were lost? Finally, third, why does all this matter?

The Claims of the Report

The first paragraph of the executive summary of the report contains some alarming claims. I was immediately curious to see what evidence would be presented. Let’s look at three of these claims (all found on p. 4), and the evidence marshaled to support them.

(1) **“The Chinese government seeks to fundamentally reshape much of the world’s media in its own image...”**

This is one of the strongest claims in the report. Yet I would venture to say that the report provides no evidence at all for this assertion. The report gives considerable space to Chinese efforts to expand their public diplomacy and the reach of Chinese media, including the provision of Chinese media content, news sharing, training programs and visits to China for journalists, a significant expansion of Chinese media abroad, and the establishment of “Confucius Institutes” that teach the Chinese language and host cultural events. And it notes that China is hosting media summits and conferences, including the World Media Summit in 2009, attended by the BBC, AP, Reuters, Turner Broadcasting System, and others. Yet rather than providing evidence of Chinese goals to “reshape much of the world’s media” in China’s image, these are clearly efforts to boost China’s soft power: present a more favorable image, and bolster public opinion, while giving Chinese views more prominence. What the Chinese government seeks to do is reshape public opinion, not “the world’s media”.

Claims that the Chinese government is seeking to “reshape the media” in much of the world “in its own image” need to be supported by evidence. Do we know of systematic, relevant, media-related conditions applied to Chinese loans or assistance? Chinese purchases of local media outlets in other countries? Programs that offer training to government officials in how to censor the media, or technicians on how to block users from accessing critical blogs or websites? Nothing like this was presented in the report.

(2) **“A great deal of emphasis is placed on forming alliances that are anti-Western and on promoting an anti-Western media model to combat what the Chinese regularly portray as part of an imperialist plan to distort the truth.”**

In the executive summary and several times throughout the report, we find statements that the Chinese are working to create “a global media alliance against the West” (p. 9). The main piece of evidence here is a story, “Third World Needs Vibrant Media to Counter Propaganda,” carried in a Nigerian newspaper, *This Day*, whose reporter Funso Muraina attended a conference for 94 journalists from developing countries, hosted by a provincial Chinese TV station: Guizhou Television. Here is a longer excerpt from Muraina’s story:²

A virile media and vibrant journalists who are sufficiently trained in journalism are all the developing world requires in this era of globalisation to counter propaganda of the western media that take delight in

over reporting or slanting insignificant events about third world countries. ...

[T]he seminar viewed the propaganda against developing nations with serious concern and concluded that the best way to stop media offensive of the west was for the aggrieved nations to network in the area of collaboration to establish a global multimedia agency capable of matching the established stations.

Participants said that media should always be used to tell the truth but instead of presenting facts to the people, western media take advantage of their network to blackmail the developing world.

The only story good to report about Africa, Asia, Latin America and other developing countries, said the participants in their various contributions, is famine, starvation and war. They, however, admitted that there was no point blaming the west for deploying its tools to its advantage and advised that it was time for the third world to wake up to its responsibility [and establish] a global network in the mould of CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera and others.

It is no surprise that the Chinese – and many Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and so on – believe that the Western media, with its own ideas of newsworthiness, portrays them in a negative light. Africans have pressed this claim for decades, and academic analysts have supported their claim. The region is frequently depicted as a chaotic stew of failed states, rifle-toting children, mass rape:

“famine, starvation, and war”. It is clear from the quotations above that it was the participants from developing countries who voiced their resentment of these norms. So, was this conference (or others like it) evidence that the Chinese are trying to form “a global media-alliance against the West” (p. 9)? I don’t buy it. This is clearly not an alliance against “the West” but an outburst of resentment against the Western³ media’s depictions of the developing world.

Indeed, Washington Post journalist John Pomfret, was quoted by the authors (p. 6), and makes his own thoughtful assessment: “The Chinese want to change the way people think about them. They have a belief they don’t get a fair shake in the Western media, and they want to get out the message of how well China is doing.”

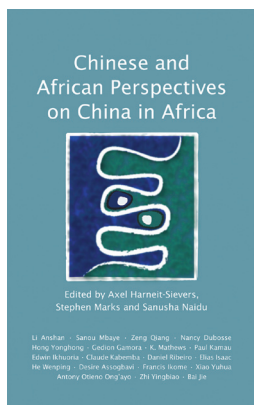
(3) “Chinese efforts often result in helping authoritarian governments expand control of their local media, while working to undermine the Western model of an independent, adversarial media.”

“China has made media aid ... a high priority. ...China’s media assistance ... rejects the Western media’s role as watchdogs holding governments accountable.”

Despite the statement that media aid is “a high priority” there are in fact very few examples of this kind of media aid, and they occur in a variety of different kinds of African states. On the one hand,

Chinese and African Perspectives on China in Africa

Edited by Axel Harneit-Sievers, Stephen Marks and Sanusha Naidu



- Focuses on the dialogue between Chinese and African civil society organisations rather than states
- Provides new data and real insights into the burgeoning relationship between China and Africa
- Notable contributions from African and Chinese scholars and activists

The deepening engagement of China in Africa since the end of the cold war has led to debates about the evolving nature of this relationship. Yet the focus

of analysis has largely been confined to the interactions between states. Little attention has been paid to the growing dialogue between Chinese and African civil society organisations. This collection of essays, written by scholars and activists, explores the interaction between African and Chinese non-state actors and argues that the future of Africa-China relations rests on including such voices if a robust and vibrant engagement and a meaningful relationship are to be sustained. Chinese and African Perspectives on China in Africa assesses China’s activities in Africa through patterns of investment, legal cooperation, effects on the environment, trade, aid and labour links, questions of peace, security and stability, the African Union response, possible regulatory interventions and the future strengthening of an Africa-China CSO dialogue.

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Oxford OX1 3HA, UK
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www.pambazukapress.org
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99 Wallis Road London E9 5LN
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Agent
Global Book Marketing
99B Wallis Road London E9 5LN
Tel +44 (0)20 8533 5800
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the report provides clear evidence that Chinese assistance has helped some governments strengthen their own broadcasting systems, but it presents very little evidence that could plausibly be interpreted as China's efforts to undermine existing independent media, or to unilaterally export its own model of censorship and media controls, in a manner parallel to the way that western democracies try to export their model of press freedom, liberal democracy, and market freedoms.

The report provides several cases where the Chinese sold media-related hardware to clearly authoritarian governments: Sudan, Gabon, Guinea. In at least one notorious case, Zimbabwe, these Chinese technologies were indeed used to expand a government's ability to repress radio broadcasts coming in from outside the country (independent media).⁴ In Venezuela and Bolivia, both of which have seen considerable pressure on independent media and assaults on freedom of information, the Chinese sold communications satellites to the governments. These could certainly bolster both governments' abilities to saturate the airwaves with government propaganda and counter the embattled independent media in these countries.

At the same time, a small number of democratic governments such as Mauritius, and "partly free" governments such as Nigeria, have also purchased Chinese hardware, technologies or received assistance from China to bolster the reach of their public radio stations. Mauritius, which has a robust multi-party democracy and a free and vibrant private media, received Chinese aid to construct a new headquarter building for the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. The Nigerian government purchased a Chinese telecommunications satellite financed on a soft-loan basis. (Nigerian accounts emphasize that they expect mobile phone capacity to be boosted by the satellite, not media per se.) The Chinese also provided assistance to the imperfect democracies of Zambia and Liberia to boost their state-owned

broadcasting. In Liberia, where Africa's first female president, former World Bank official Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, will stand for re-election in 2011, the report says a host of independent radio stations "offer Liberians a variety of viewpoints" but the Liberia Broadcasting Service is used primarily as a non-independent tool of the government.

The report expands this little list to include a handful of other media-related aid projects over the past sixteen years in a mixture of African countries: Eritrea (1994), Sudan (1997), Guinea (2001), Lesotho (2003), and Gabon (2004). Most of these were hardware sales or infrastructure projects. This list hardly qualifies as a major thrust to make media assistance a "high priority". Further, Chinese aid is unusually ownership-driven, that is, they are known to respond to the requests of the host government for assistance rather than proposing their own projects. Rather than interpreting this modest list of projects as a major thrust of Chinese assistance, it seems obvious that, out of more than 900 aid projects in Africa financed by the Chinese over the past five decades, in 52 countries, media assistance is a relatively small sector of interest. Further, there is no evidence in the report (or elsewhere) that the sale of broadcast equipment, its maintenance, or the construction of new buildings for state-owned broadcasters is stimulated by a Chinese campaign to undermine independent media or the role of journalists in those countries.

Finally, the report states (p. 11) "there is concern that the Chinese are exporting a form of journalism that resembles their own, far less free and independent than media in democracies." Without providing evidence for this, the report then asks (p. 11): "If the Chinese government is propagating a less-than-free model of journalism, or is propping up friendly regimes by supporting media that buttress them, do advocates of free media and democratic government need to find a way to counter such moves?" In fact, as the Nigerian report quoted at length above notes,

Launch of the Change Online Platform

Fahamu in partnership with Society for International Development (SID) and the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA) wishes to announce the launch of the Change website (www.fahamu.org/change).

The change site is an open platform for the Kenyan people and friends of Kenya to interact and share information.

The site is one of the outputs of the Change Conference held in October 2009 in Nairobi, and is aimed at increasing access to resources and encourage dialogue towards realizing change at the national level be it through

government institutions, NGOs or at the community level.

The site highlights activities taking place under the Change project of Fahamu including Citizens' Forums across Kenya and showcases documentaries including "Making Change" by Maina Kiai.

Everyone is invited to write articles to be posted on the blog as well as share your views on change in Kenya.

Please visit: <http://www.fahamu.org/change/>
Kindly forward your comments to patita@fahamu.org or paul@fahamu.org

the Chinese Guizhou Television conference for media emphasized the role of a “virile media” and “vibrant ... well-trained” journalists. This glimpse into the Guizhou Television conference as one effort to influence journalists, and the sparse examples of media assistance, do not add up to a picture of “propagating a less-than-free model of journalism”, or (with the important exception of Zimbabwe) “propping up friendly regimes” via assistance to their public broadcasting stations. These days, most governments in Africa would qualify as “friendly regimes” for the Chinese.

The Larger Picture: Public Relations, Public Diplomacy and CNN

The report implicitly compares Beijing’s efforts to promote Chinese media content and influence public opinion, with Western governments’ public diplomacy efforts. For example, after a discussion of China’s efforts to beef up its state-owned media companies, including CCTV and New China News Agency (Xinhua), which owns China’s news wire service and its new global television company CNC World, the report states: “Most countries are cutting back on this type of activity due to financial constraints ... while the PRC is devoting billions of dollars” (p. 10).

This is clearly not the correct comparison, however, because it leaves out of the picture the enormous world-wide influence of Western media corporations. In 2008, U.S. funding of media assistance might have been \$124 million, and the EC \$81 million, but the Chinese (and the conference participants from developing countries quoted above) are not concerned about countering Voice of America. They’re concerned about CNN, Sky News, Fox News, MSNBC, ABC, CNBC, and so on.

Across Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, television and print media are overwhelmingly dominated by Western content. Across much of Africa, for example, flip on a television and you have a choice of CNN, BBC, MSNBC, Sky News, and so on. Pick up most newspapers and you will read international articles coming from Thompson Reuters, Bloomberg, Dow-Jones Newswire, AP, and so on. These are the budgets we should juxtapose against that of China in expanding its media enterprises. Again, as John Pomfret told the authors: “it is also a business proposition. They want to create international media conglomerates to compete with Thomson-Reuters, the BBC, and AP” (p. 6). I agree with Pomfret: this is about influence, and Chinese entry into the business side of global media -- not control. Chinese companies will not morph into global media giants any time soon, but the intention is clear. We can consider China as following in the footsteps of France and Qatar.⁵ Leaders in these countries also believed that the dominant international media gave too little attention (or not the right attention) to their country or region. Qatar launched al-Jazeera, and France launched France24 in 2006.

What do we not learn?

What opportunities were lost?

What else could we have learned that we do not presently know? The report cites several interviews with journalists in Latin America that provide an interesting look into media competition between Taiwan and China, with statements that both finance visits by journalists, with the expectation that favorable articles will be written. More detail on how, if at all, this is enforced would have been useful. But there is not much primary research like this in this report. For example, we learn that China conducts an annual workshop in China for African correspondents, host visits by African media officials and editors, and includes broadcasting training among its varied training activities. But we do not learn how many workshops have been held, or what proportion of the 15,000 Africans sent to China for short-term training sessions between 2006 and 2009, were trained in media as opposed to poverty-reduction, industrial skills, public sector management, or the other topics. We do not have any interviews with African journalists who have attended these workshops, or any ideas about the workshop content.

The Zambia Story Retold

It is very difficult to do research on China’s activities overseas. But in several points, the report was insufficiently credulous about secondary sources.⁶ One of the report’s main stories about China “propping up” an African leader with media assistance comes from South African professor Fackson Banda, who wrote that China had provided Zambia with FM radio transmitters in 2002, and financed additional transmitters in 2006. The report, quoting Banda, states that this assistance was both times given in election years, “timed to support the pro-Beijing ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in its electoral campaign effort, especially in rural Zambia.”⁷

However, a closer look at the timing of these projects, and the two elections, casts some doubt on this interpretation. China has been assisting Zambia’s state-owned broadcasting station for decades, starting in 1971. In the first two decades of this assistance, Zambia was ruled by a single party, UNIP, under pro-Beijing President Kenneth Kaunda. The Chinese continued to be active in broadcasting assistance after Kaunda stepped down, and Fredrick Chiluba’s opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) took power in 1991. At least one new transmitter was installed between 1994-1996. In July 1998, the Chinese carried out a feasibility study for a project involving new FM transmitters in seven of the country’s nine provinces.⁸ A contract for this project was signed in October 2000; the installation of the new transmitters was completed nine months later.⁹



Zambia's presidential elections occurred at the end of December 27, 2001. However, rather than providing a loan "timed" for the elections, this project was in the works for almost four years. In 2005, two additional FM transmitters were provided and installed by the Chinese.¹⁰ A reporter for the Canadian newspaper *The Toronto Star* commented on one of the results of the radio expansion: "In Zambia, a radio-based training system is now delivering primary education to out-of-school children, about a third of whom are orphans; radio programs cover not only traditional skills like reading and math but also life skills like hygiene and nutrition."¹¹ Presidential elections were held more than a year later, in late 2006. Boosting the state-owned radio no doubt helped the incumbent government get out its message better during elections. But neither of the two Chinese loans was actually awarded during election years, as it turns out.

Conclusion: Why Does It Matter?

The NED report is strongest in its documentation of two things: (1) China's efforts to build up a position in mainstream multimedia (one part influence; one part business); (2) Chinese efforts to influence public opinion outside of China. Both of these are clearly happening. But they need to be seen in their proper context.

As I was reading the report, and in particular the more alarming claims that were not well substantiated, I couldn't help but reflect on the context in which it was being written and now disseminated. The report was released on November 2, the day of the United States mid-term congressional elections, in a climate in which both of our political parties found that raising the China-threat helped raise money. Three days earlier, political comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert held a "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear" in Washington DC. Fear is a part of the political/media climate in the United States, and, apparently, a big part of that fear involves China. On October 29th, journalist John Pomfret beautifully captured the impact of this climate in a *Washington Post* article entitled "A Fearful View of China." Pomfret began his article with a recap of

"The Chinese Professor", a political ad financed by Citizens Against Government Waste. The short ad is set in 2030, twenty years in the future, and takes an ominous look a future where, because of policy mistakes, the United States has lost its economic preeminence, and Americans are "working for China". While supporters of this ad may see it as an accurate portrait of the "end of empire" risks we face in the aftermath of years of economic and regulatory mishandling, it is clearly intended to press the button labeled: the China threat.

As Pomfret and others, most notably Cambridge University professor Emma Mawdsley in her brilliant article on the West's media coverage of China's rise in Africa: "'Fu Manchu' and 'Dr. Livingston' in the 'Dark Continent'? Representing China, Africa and the West in British Broadsheet Newspapers,"¹² have pointed out, paid ads and media coverage in the West of China's actions overseas tend to be negative and stereotyped. We've been in this kind of situation before: recall the McCarthy era response to the Cold War Soviet threat (particularly in the 1950s and 1960s) and the later response to perceptions of a Japanese economic threat in the 1970s and 1980s. Because it combines security fears and fears of economic dominance, the alarmist portrayal of the China threat has the potential to be even more potent than these other two. For the developing world, China's rise presents a number of challenges: lack of transparency, poor labor and environmental standards, industrial competition, and so on. We should be figuring out how to work on these very real concerns. But overreacting to threats that are barely visible, or painting a picture of a deliberate Chinese program to reshape the world's media in its own image, is not in our national interest, or in the interests of those in developing countries who also need an accurate picture of Chinese activities abroad.

The Report reviewed above can be accessed at the following link: <http://cima.ned.org/publications/research-reports/winds-east-how-peoples-republic-china-seeks-influence-media-africa-lat>

*Prof Brautigam's blog, *China in Africa: The Real Story* can be accessed at: <http://www.chinaafricarealstory.com/>*

¹ Revised comments by Professor Deborah Brautigam, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC on Douglas Farah and Andy Mosher, "Winds from the East: How the People's Republic of China Seeks to Influence the Media in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia," A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance National Endowment for Democracy Washington, DC, November 2, 2010.

A video of the launch event can be found at <http://cima.ned.org/events/upcoming-events/winds-east-how-peoples-republic-china-seeks-influence-media-africa-latin-amer> [accessed November 24, 2010].

² Funso Muraina, "Third World Needs Vibrant Media to Counter Propaganda," *This Day* (Lagos, Nigeria), December 7, 2009, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200912071256.html>

³ I also did not see any evidence in the report that the Chinese are labeling the West as the "imperialists" – this notion is a bit dated

⁴ The report cites the respected watchdog group Reporters Without Borders which charged in 2005 that the repressive Mugabe government in Zimbabwe was using Chinese technology and expertise to jam short-wave radio broadcasts from Zimbabweans living in exile. They allege that the Chinese government provided assistance for this, and there is no reason to doubt this story.

⁵ On this, see Eric Olander's posting on China Talking Points: "Three Lessons France can offer

China about government-run media," <http://www.chinalkingpoints.com/3-lessons-france-can-offer-china-about-government-run-media/>, July 17, 2010.

⁶ On p. 12, the report states that "In 2007, China offered Malawi aid and investment worth \$6 billion, in every significant economic sector." They provide a source: a much-criticized report by the Congressional Research Service. This figure can be traced to a media "urban legend" that has circulated around the internet for several years. I discuss this further in *The Dragon's Gift* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷ Fackson Banda, "China in the African Mediascape," *Rhodes Journalism Review*, September 29, 2009, p. 52.

⁸ Joe Kaunda, "China, Zambia Sign Aid Agreement," *Post of Zambia* (Lusaka), July 28, 1998.

⁹ A team of Chinese officials from the China Radio and Television Corporation for International Technical and Economic Cooperation arrived in Lusaka in October 2000 to sign the contract. <http://www.queensu.ca/samp/migrationnews/2000/october/zambia.htm>

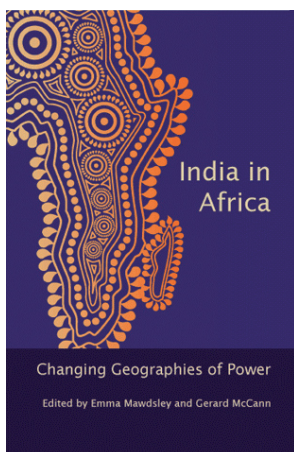
¹⁰ "China provides FM transmitters for Zambian broadcasting body," *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, September 8, 2005.

¹¹ Alexandra Samuel, "How radio, cell phones, wireless Web are empowering developing nations," *The Toronto Star* January 17, 2005.

¹² *Political Geography*, 27, 5, June 2008: 509-529

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China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation White Paper

Information Office of the State Council, The People's Republic of China, December 2010

Text can be accessed here: http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2010-12/23/content_1771603.htm

China in Africa: a new approach to media development?

Written by Iginio Gagliardone, Maria Repnikova and Nicole Stremmlau, report by The Programme in Comparative Media Law & Policy-University of Oxford and the Stanhope Centre

Report can be accessed at:

http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/sites/pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/files/China%20in%20Africa_2010.pdf

Winds From the East: How the People's Republic of China Seeks to Influence the Media in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia

Written by Douglas Farah and Andy Mosher, a report to the Center for International Media Assistance

Report can be accessed at: <http://cima.ned.org/publications/research-reports/winds-east-how-peoples-republic-china-seeks-influence-media-africa-lat>

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MS SANUSHA NAIDU presented a paper entitled: **African and Chinese Civil Society** at the International Seminar Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) hosted by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in South Africa, South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University (IASZNU)

and Sinosteel Corporation, 18-19 November 2010, Pretoria and Johannesburg (South Africa).

Ms Sanusha Naidu presented a paper entitled **India and South Africa: Strategic Partners in Africa?** at the International Seminar on India and South Africa: Political, Strategic, Economic and Diaspora Relations, India International Centre (IIC) and Centre for African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2-3 December 2010, New Delhi (India).



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www.fahamu.org

UK office:

2nd floor, 51 Cornmarket Street, Oxford OX1 3HA

Tel: + 44 (0)1865 727006

Fax: + 44 (0)1865 727909 Email: info@fahamu.org

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Fahamu Kenya:

PO Box 47158, 00100 GPO, Nairobi, Kenya

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