

Media Systems in the BRICS Countries: The Global Order under Challenge

Keynote presentation by Kaarle Nordenstreng, University of Tampere, Finland

2017 China Communication Forum, Xiamen University, Fujian, China

August 26, 2017

Dear hosts here in Xiamen and President of the Communication University of China:

We are very pleased and honoured to be here in the site of the forthcoming BRICS Summit.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me begin by looking at how the global order has changes in 60 years – since 1957, when the media scholars founded their international association, the IAMCR. The recent IAMCR conference in Cartagena, Colombia, held 60th anniversary celebration in which I reviewed the fundamental change of the world [SLIDE 2] – from the Cold War in the 1950s through decolonization in the 1960s and information technology revolution since the 1970s until the so-called collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. I reminded that in terms of wide geopolitics, the bipolar world was changed to something that first in the 1990s appeared as a unipolar world around one superpower, the USA. The Western side was largely seen as winner in the competition between socio-political systems and the end of history was declared by some to be at hand. However, Communism had not totally disappeared from the earth; it remained in place in Cuba, North Korea and above all China.

Moreover, in 2008 another crisis broke out in the heart of capitalism, demonstrating how vulnerable the system was, and 9/11 started a new war against terrorism inviting clashes between civilizations. Also ecological problems and climate change became more and more widely recognized.

Instead of an idyllic place of eternal Pax Americana, the world turned into a complicated place of disorder with immediate and hidden crises.

Although the world economy is still dominated by North American and European countries, it is obvious that China and India are making Asia the second or even first centre of the world. And this development should not be seen as the *rise* of Asia but rather as the *return* of Asia.

After all, in world history before the 16th century and the discovery of Americas, Europe – even the Roman Empire – was in the periphery, while the main trade routes went along the Indian Ocean and the silk route from Asia towards the West. At that time, wealth accumulated in India and China. Now the same is happening. The world is far from unipolar but increasingly multipolar, as shown by coalitions such as BRICS.

How wrong were the prophets of linear modernization and the end of history! Instead of linear history we are witnessing a cyclic history, as suggested by the old Indian and Chinese world view. Naturally the cycles do not bring back the same old history; it gets constantly renewed and brings new challenges. This is something that we all, and particularly the Western mainstream with its customary self-centred world view, are invited to take seriously in our soul-searching about where should we to go from where we are now.

Now in this broader context, let's move to the BRICS project [SLIDE 3] – its poster displayed in our program brochure. The project was launched five years ago with the financial support of the Academy of Finland to examine media systems in the BRICS countries – to map out their media landscapes and journalists, both in traditional media and new online media. We have produced until now one book *Mapping BRICS Media* (2015) and three theme issues of scholarly journals; two further volumes are still in the pipeline. It is early to present the final results and conclusions, but here are some lessons [SLIDE 4]:

Actually it was the first time that media scholars from these five countries were brought to a common platform. The project immediately showed that there have been very few contacts between media scholars in the BRICS countries – apart from Russia and China – and practically no community of scholars existed across all the BRICS countries. So the project automatically gave rise to a unique network of BRICS media scholars. Small Finland is pleased having facilitated the beginning of a big topic.

The project demonstrated that trendy talk about media systems is misleading unless it is complemented by specific features of each country and a critical analysis of the media system concept itself. As Colin Sparks has pointed out, it is a slippery concept which should not be taken for granted. But still it is a useful intellectual vehicle for understanding media in society as well as the relation of media and journalism to the international system and its conflicting tendencies.

And for this understanding the BRICS coalition [SLIDE 5], which connects different continents, has proved to be particularly useful. It pushes us towards big meta stories and invites us to pursue reflective de-Westernization.

The results also show that the BRICS media do not constitute a distinct brand on the world map but they are largely governed by the same tendencies as the rest of the world – albeit with different emphases and a desire to avoid Western dominance.

Thank you.

Fujian, China
Fujian, China



UNIVERSITY
OF TAMPERE

Media Systems in the BRICS Countries: The Global Order under Challenge

金砖国家的媒介体系：全球秩序的挑战

Presentation of Kaarle Nordenstreng

Professor Emeritus, University of Tampere, Finland

芬兰坦佩雷大学荣休教授

2017 China Communication Forum

Xiamen University, Fujian, China

August 26, 2017



UNIVERSITY
OF TAMPERE

World changed in 60 years

From Cold War between USA and USSR through decolonization and ICT revolution to post-Soviet era which first seemed as a unipolar world led by USA
However, after 2008, 9/11 and ecological risks the world has turned into a dangerous place of disorder
There seems to be a *rise* of Asia but actually it is a *return* of Asia

60年的世界变迁：从美苏冷战到民族独立运动和信息与传播技术革命，再到后苏联时代以美国为核心的单极世界。但2008年之后，因为911和生态危机，地球重新变成一个危险的、无序的地方。亚洲看起来是在崛起，但实际上确是在回归。



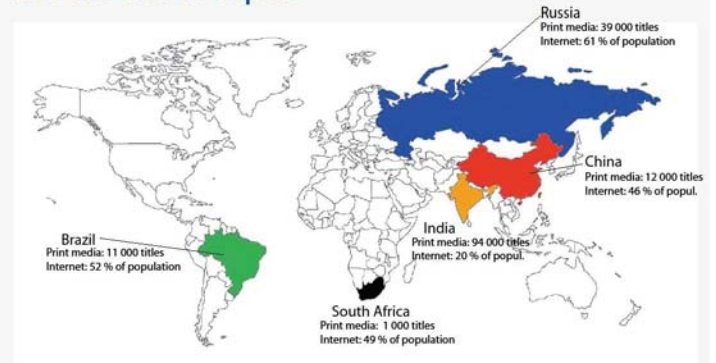
Media Systems in Flux: The Challenge of the BRICS Countries

This project is funded by the Academy of Finland in 2012-2016. It focuses on the new coalition in global politics made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, challenging the Western ways of approaching media and the role of journalism in society. With leading scholars from the BRICS countries it examines the theoretical concepts of a media system, freedom and democracy and the empirical situation of contemporary media landscapes, particularly journalists.



Launching workshop held in Tampere 2012, followed by conferences in Moscow, Dublin (2013), Hyderabad (2014), Rio (2015) and Beijing (2016)

Media landscapes



<http://uta.fi/cmt/tutkimus/BRICS.html>



UNIVERSITY
OF TAMPERE

Some lessons

First platform for BRICS media scholars, leading to a unique network

Media system is a slippery concept which needs to be critically examined

Nevertheless, media system is a useful tool for understanding media in society and the world

金砖国家媒体研究项目的经验：

- 首个金砖传媒学者平台：一个独一无二的网络
- 媒介体系这一概念需要重新审视，但依然是一个有效的工具来理解社会和世界



UNIVERSITY
OF TAMPERE

Push by BRICS

Compels our framework to be based on world order & political economy and pushes toward big meta stories

Invites us to take seriously postcolonial traditions and non-Western civilizations, towards de-Westernization

BRICS media are not a distinct brand but share the same features as media everywhere, in their own ways

金砖国家的力量：促使我们把视野放置在更广泛的世界格局和政治经济上，并要求我们思考宏观的理论问题；让我重拾后殖民主义传统和重视非西方文明，迈向一个去西方化的世界。但是，金砖国家媒体并不是一个独有的、清晰的概念，他们以不同的方式与世界其他地方的媒体共享相似性。



UNIVERSITY
OF TAMPERE

Thank you!

kaarle.nordenstreng@uta.fi

[http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/
kaarlenordenstreng/index.html](http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/index.html)