

ifa ECP Monitor Comparative Report

# Media

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## 1. Introduction

International broadcasting has been employed as a political tool for roughly a century, with the Soviet Union pioneering many of its early uses. After using radio to help spur the Russian revolution, the young USSR created Radio Moscow in 1929 and share the accomplishments of communism to a global audience in 11 different languages. Fearing Radio Moscow's encouragement worldwide socialist revolution, and with an eye toward solidifying worldwide imperial holdings, many other nations soon followed. The Netherlands, China, Germany and France, Britain and Japan all established their own broadcasters between 1927 and 1934. The US joined their ranks relatively late, with Voice of America beginning its broadcast only in 1942 (Rawnsley, 2016, pp. 43). The US further intensified its foreign media presence at the beginning of the Cold War.

International broadcasters are driven by several distinct, yet often overlapping, goals. They can aim to: provide international perspectives in areas without a wealth of local media, such as former colonies (i.e. France, UK, Germany); remain connected to diaspora populations (Poland); to preserve, protect, and promote local languages (Netherlands/Flanders); to counter Western media hegemony and political narratives (Russia, Turkey); and to proffer a positive image of a country, including its value and culture (China, US) (O'Keefe and Oliver, 2010, pp. 6).

Competition in global media has increased substantially in the last two decades. At the beginning of the 2000s, for example, there were only three foreign television stations in English. Ten years later, more than 30 stations from various countries were already courting an international audience, and the number has grown steadily since (Maaß, 2013, p. 13). These countries go far beyond the Anglo-American sphere; it is usually resurgent powers like Russia and China that use the English language to reach countries and target groups that are regarded as politically and economically important. Foreign media today are far more than just mediators of a national perspective or ambassadors for understanding and solidarity. They see themselves as actors in a global dialogue of values and competitors in a quest for international interpretative sovereignty.

## 2. Foreign media in action

While many foreign media outlets present themselves in a similar aesthetic fashion (Russia's RT, for example, deliberately mimics the look of larger broadcasters like CNN), their motives, methods, and objectives can vary substantially. International broadcasters typically seek "the power to purposefully alter the mix of voices in target societies, to affect the composition of their markets for loyalties, to destabilize, to help mold opinions among their public and otherwise to assert 'soft power' for the purposes of achieving the national ends of the transmitting state" (Price, 2003). At any given time, they may attempt one, several, or all of these goals.

Foreign media outlets fall into what is often described as "public diplomacy," a key aspect of international cultural power. Of course, what one country views as public diplomacy will be considered "propaganda" by others (indeed, such accusations are commonplace). To further define public diplomacy, Cull (2008) develops a taxonomy of concept, which includes listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting. Of

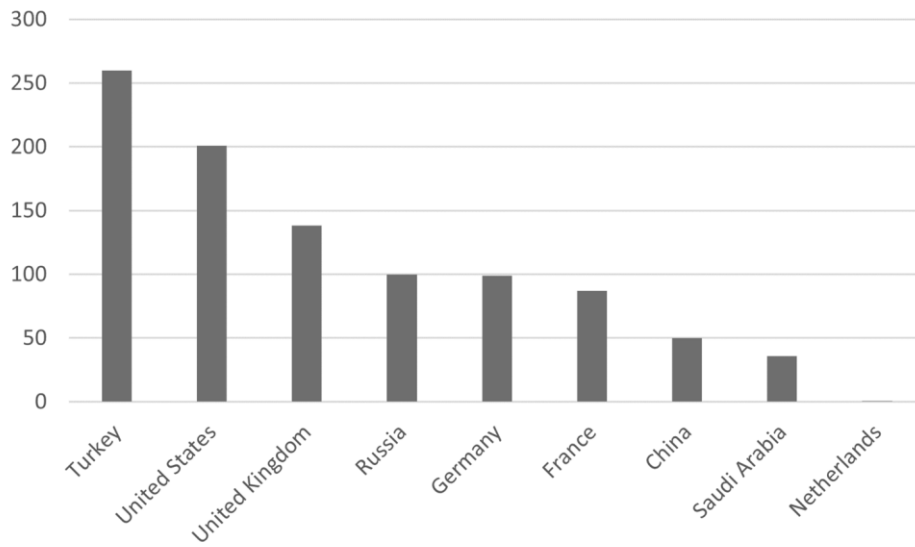
these five, international broadcasting may seem easier to quantify than more nebulous concepts like advocacy or listening, but analysis of foreign media presents its own unique challenges.

First, measuring the true influence of foreign media is notoriously difficult. One UK Foreign Office report described attempts at evaluation “like a forester going out to measure how far his trees have grown overnight without a ruler” (quoted in O’Keefe and Oliver, 2010). Countries have taken extensive measures to gain a better grasp of their influence, but often these efforts are costly and inconclusive. Still, it is widely acknowledged that time honored outlets like the BBC do play a substantial role in boosting their host nations’ image (*ibid.*).

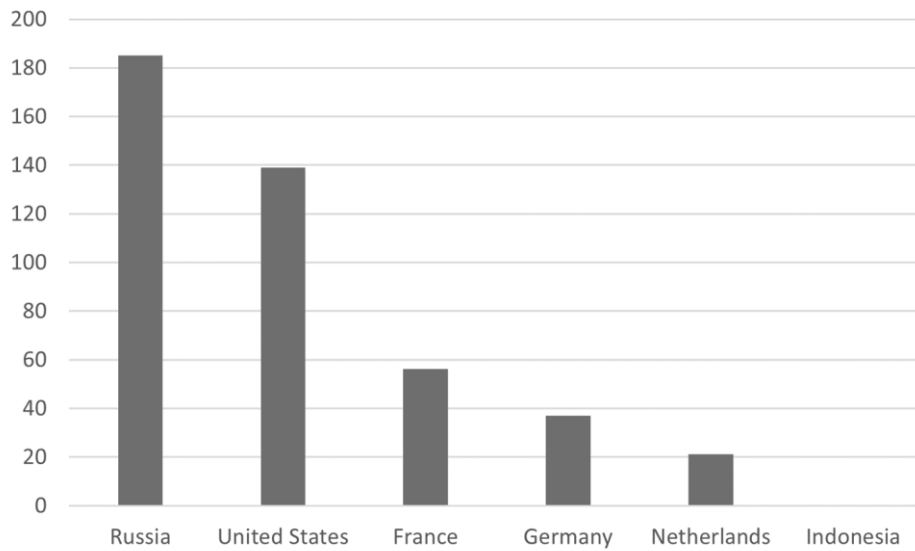
Additionally, although foreign broadcasters boast impressive viewership statistics, these must usually be taken with a grain of salt. As several researchers note, self-reported figures are notoriously unreliable and there is “no reliable evidence” to support either China’s or Russia’s viewership statistics (Rawlsey, 2016). This is not a new problem, either. In 1977 James Nason argued that international radio broadcasting statistics “must be used with caution” due to their unreliability. Nevertheless, viewership and listenership statistics do usually offer a rough estimate (or at least a broadcaster’s idea of its own reach) and are therefore presented where available in the following section.

Although more and more countries have been focusing on international broadcasting, investments often do not pay off. As Flew (2016, pp. 288) argues, “in the field of global news and information, [former Chinese broadcaster] CCTV is available in many parts of the world and in multiple languages, but struggles to get significant audience.” Indeed, research has found that the vast majority of CGTN viewers are Chinese (either expats or those within China). Despite RT’s relative success, Russia, too, has been frustrated by a lack of acceptance: Russians officials have allegedly been displeased with RT’s uptake in target countries (Rawlsey, 2015).

Why is there such a gap between how much respect various broadcasters earn? Journalistic credibility and perceived independence are paramount. As a report from the Lowy Institute finds, “different legal treatments and relationships to the state greatly affect the perceived credibility of international broadcasters” and “the perception of CCTV as a propaganda vehicle for the Chinese government jeopardizes its credibility and audience loyalty” (O’Keefe and Oliver, 2010). Indeed, “international broadcasters are credible when they adhere to journalistic ethics and are perceived to be separate from political influence,” a claim that is especially threatened when broadcasters are accused of active “disinformation” campaigns (Cull, 2010, pp. 13). Often, this perception favors Western outlets—although critics would be quick to point out that European and North American public broadcasters often still have their own forms of political bias.

**Chart 1: TV Audience in million, 2019**

Source: ECP Monitor

**Chart 2: Radio Audience (or potential reach) in million, 2019**

Source: ECP Monitor

### 3. Key players in foreign media

Historically, the large imperial powers dominated foreign broadcasting. Empires like Britain, France and the Netherlands used radio to share the view of the world and keep distant colonies connected to the metropole. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States and USSR fought the ideological struggle of the Cold War through dueling propaganda campaigns. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the number of important international broadcasting players has increased, with rising nations like Turkey taking up a larger role and resurgent great powers like Russia and China seeking to influence the global conversation. As Arceneaux and Powers find, “the past two decades have seen the substantial growth of networks such as Qatar’s Al Jazeera, Russia’s Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik, Japan’s NHK, Israel’s Kol Yisrael, India’s New Delhi Television (NDTV), Singapore’s Channel News Asia, and China’s Global Television Network (CGTN)” (2020, pp. 50).

Seven of the most important current foreign media powers are discussed in this section.<sup>1</sup> They are grouped into two categories: older established, global Western-based media players and newer arrivals (or re-arrivals) to the scene.

#### 3.1. Traditional broadcasting powers

Although structures, funding levels, and geographic focus differ across the four most prominent legacy broadcasting powers—the UK, US, France, and Germany—they share some broad goals. Typically, their strategies center around spreading a sense of shared values in the form of support for liberal democratic capitalism. Despite lofty rhetoric, however, even a quick glance at the regional focus points for Western foreign media reveal a close link with their darker colonial past. Squaring their support for universal ideals with the harsh realities of history and power politics remains an ongoing challenge for the most venerable international media institutions.

With its renowned broadcasts during WWII, the United Kingdom served as one of the early models for foreign broadcasting, a mantle it largely retains to this day. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is the UK’s main public broadcaster and is one of the world’s best-known and oldest of its kind. It is financed primarily through the collection of TV license fees and is legally separate from government interference (although in practice that can be endangered by government threats to its funding). BBC World is the main foreign arm of the BBC and was originally founded in 1932 as the BBC Empire Service. As of 2019, the station’s radio, television and online services were available in a total of 40 languages (CPF, 2019). According to the station’s own figures, its weekly audience has risen from 320 million (2015) to 426 million (2019).

As part of the post-financial crisis austerity programs, UK government reduced funding for the BBC. Hundreds of offices and five language services were completely closed. The number of languages offered by the BBC World Services had already declined significantly; the total number of languages offered fell from 44 (1998) to 29 (2016) (BBC, 2016, p. 28). However,

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<sup>1</sup> While there is no clean distinction between “major” and “middle” or “minor” players, this report groups countries into two different sections to allow for an in-depth discussion where relevant, without excluding smaller countries.

soon after, a massive expansion of the language offering to 40 languages from 2017 was announced and major investments were approved.

The UK's close ally, the United States, lacks a state-funded institution of the same caliber as the BBC, but remains an important player in international broadcasting. In the field of foreign media, large private institutions like CNN International or the foreign reach of newspapers like the New York Times is substantial, but due to their lack of government support they are outside the scope of this report. State-run US foreign broadcasters focus clearly on American strategic objectives, as their geographic range (Cuba, the Middle East, formerly Eastern bloc countries) makes clear. They focus on countering narratives in "unfree" countries (in practice, typically geopolitical rivals, or countries that be susceptible to their influence) and offering pro-American viewpoints in regions where the US may be unpopular.

Many American foreign broadcasters originated during the Cold War and are overseen by the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM). USAGM in 61 languages, reaching an audience of 350 million people in 2019 (USAGM, 2019). It has an annual budget of \$807 million and over 3,700 employees (APCD, 2020). 5 networks fall within its remit: Voice of America (VOA), Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), and Radio Free Asia (RFA). The USAGM was created from the bi-partisan Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) in 2017, dissolving the BBG and its supervisory capacity and replacing it with a single executive under the USAGM who is appointed by the President.

France retains a sizeable global broadcasting capacity, as well as close ties with former colonies in Africa. France Médias Monde (FMM) is the overarching organization responsible for French international broadcasting and consists of France 24, Radio France International, and the Monte Carlo Doualiya Arabic-language radio. FMM broadcast in a total of 18 languages, has journalists from over 66 countries, and attracted over 200 million weekly contacts across radio, television, and digital media in 2019 (France Médias Monde, 2020).

France 24 is a 24-hour news channel that broadcasts its programming on four language-specific channels: French, English and Arabic, and Spanish. It now has network of 160 correspondent bureaus located in nearly every country (France 24, n.d.). France 24 was founded in 2006 as a "CNN à la française" to report on current world affairs from a French perspective. Radio France Internationale (RFI) was founded in 1975 in response to the growing popularity of channels such as the BBC World Service and Voice of America. Although French is still at the heart of RFI, radio broadcasts and websites can now be listened to and used in 15 other languages (up from 12 in 2015), including all the main European languages, Kiswahili, Hausa, Mandingo, and Fulfulde (RFI, 2019). Monte Carlo Doualiya (MCD) is a radio station whose Arab programming is broadcast in the Middle East and parts of Africa (Djibouti, Mauritania, South Sudan). Its total weekly listenership is nearly 10 million.

Germany is actively in a number of smaller cooperative initiatives (see next section), but Deutsche Welle (DW) is its flagship international broadcaster. DW works to promote the both German language and cultural and social exchange at "eye level." DW is financed via the German government and had a TV weekly audience of nearly 100 million in 2019 and a global reach across all platforms of 249 million, a substantial jump from the 2019 figure of 197 million (Deutsche Welle, 2020). Around 1,500 permanent employees and 1,600 freelancers from 60 nations work at the DW head office in Bonn and at the Berlin location (Deutsche Welle,

2019). Additionally, DW cooperates with over 5,000 partner stations (*ibid.*). The radio programs, which are broadcast in 9 languages, attract an especially large listenership in Africa. Its budget totaled €413 million in 2019 (Deutsche Welle, 2019).

As a reaction to political developments in Eastern Europe—including democratic backsliding in EU states and Russian incursions into Ukraine—DW has expanded its offerings accordingly. For example, the services in Russian and Ukrainian were broadened and, in addition to the studio in Moscow, a further correspondent office was set up in Kyiv (Deutsche Welle, 2016, p. 2).

### 3.2. Rising media players<sup>2</sup>

Newly emergent and resurgent media powers like Qatar, China, and Russia lack the same (relatively) cohesive values and goals as Western broadcasting nations. What these three countries have in common is a shared aim of shifting the international conversation away from Western-dominated narratives. They take different approaches to achieve this goal, whether it is to diversify the discourse, paint a positive national image, or directly take on US-led perceptions of the world. In all of these efforts, they often face headwinds, however. A direct approach to tackle perceived Western bias risks backlash and a perceived loss of credibility. At the same time, merely echoing the themes of stations like Deutsche Welle or the BBC is perceived by governments as a waste of resources. How to square these conflicting tensions will remain the primary challenge for rising media powers in the coming years.

As part of China's "going global" strategy, foreign media have become some of the most important instruments of Chinese foreign cultural policy. Indeed, China's media presence was substantially increased at the beginning of the millennium. On the one hand, this reflected the opening of the Chinese market to foreign media in 2001 (Zhao, 2013, p. 19). However, the expansion of foreign media was also aimed at establishing direct communication channels to the outside world in order to strengthen confidence in China's peaceful growth (Hefele et al., 2015, p. 69). At the same time, China has resisted the entry of some foreign narratives into its own country, with blanket bans on many Western media and websites.

The fact that this strategy did not achieve the desired success became clear in 2008 when negative reporting before and during the Olympic Games in Beijing dominated the Western media (Sun, 2015a, p. 126). Li Changchun, head of propaganda of the Communist Party, concluded: "We must become global, strengthen our foreign-language channels abroad, expand our partnerships with foreign television stations so that our images and voices reach thousands of living rooms in all parts of the world" (Sun, 2015b, p. 404). The aim was to "talk back" by countering Western media with their own reporting. In order to expand Chinese media accordingly, their financial support was drastically increased once again. The global financial crisis increased the impact of this decision. While Western media companies massively reduced their investments in the wake of the economic collapse, the Chinese media were largely able to fill the vacuum. Since 2009, the Chinese government has invested around \$8.7 billion (approx. €7.8 billion) in the expansion of state-owned foreign media (Hefele et al., 2015, p. 68). It now spends roughly €2 billion per year. In addition, the Chinese state media are increasing-

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<sup>2</sup> China and Russia (see introduction) were traditionally substantial players in international broadcasting, yet due to their lapse and then recent resurgence, they are discussed here as "rising" powers.

ly concluding partnership agreements with foreign media. Such cooperation can be particularly attractive for many newspapers under financial pressure (Ohlberg, 2016, p. 6).

China enjoys a long broadcasting history, but it could not be classified as a truly global player until relatively recently. China Radio International, (CRI), one of the oldest Chinese media outlets, was first founded in 1941. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China increased its television efforts with China Central Television (CCTV), one of the main players in China's early media strategy. In the early 1990s, CCTV opened an Overseas Broadcasting Center and began broadcasting Chinese television programming for Chinese people abroad, with an English channel following in 2000. CCTV also offered channels in French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian since the end of the 2000s (Zhang, 2011, p. 59).

In December 2016, the new global media platform China Global Television Network (CGTN) went live, bringing together six foreign broadcasters, including an English-language documentary channel, and other multimedia offerings from CCTV (Public Media Alliance, 2017). In 2018, it was funded with nearly €2 billion per year and is active in 171 countries. It includes 6 TV channels, 3 overseas sub-stations, 1 video news agency and “new media clusters” (Xinhua News Agency, 2016). The Chinese government intends to create a media behemoth by merging CCTV, CGTN, and CRI (Feng, 2018). Like other institutions, CGTN has received pushback in Western countries. For example, the US has deliberately delayed the visas for many reporters, forcing them to leave (Chen, 2020). In the EU however, CGTN may soon be able to return to the airwaves after being banned by Britain. It is due to set up new operations out of France (Bermingham, 2021).

One of the best-known foreign media outlets is the RT television channel, which is often described as the most important element of Russia's soft power strategy. The station was founded in 2005 as Russia Today and reorganized in 2009 as RT. It broadcasts 24-hour news channels in English, Spanish and Arabic, RT America from Washington, RT UK from London and two documentary channels in Russian and English. Online platforms are also offered in English, Russian, French and German. According to its own figures, the station reaches over 100 million viewers, up from 70 million in 2016. RT calls itself the “the top non-Anglo-Saxon TV news network in terms of traffic”, with over 190 million visits per month at the end of 2018 (RT, n.d.). Between 2005 and 2013, the channel's budget increased tenfold from €22 million to over €220 million (Smits, 2014, p. 9). In 2019 federal subsidies to “ANO TV-Novosti”, the legal entity behind RT, amounted to €305.1 million (Roskazna, 2020). A key objective is to counter the narratives of Western media and undermine confidence in the American and European political systems. Despite this aim, television channels such as the CNN or BBC are regarded as role models: RT's music, moderators and informational videos are very similar to their Western counterparts.

Sputnik News was founded in 2014 as an online news agency and radio station by Rossiya Segodnya. According to its own figures, 130 editorial offices in 34 countries produce 800 broadcasting hours per day, in 32 languages. The editorial offices in Washington, Cairo, Beijing and Montevideo operate 24-hour news programming. Sputnik News is financed by the Kremlin with approximately €100 million annually (Godzimirsk and Østevik, 2018). The Kremlin's influence on the news page has been repeatedly criticized abroad. In March 2016, for example, the Latvian Sputnik website was banned by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on charges of propaganda (DRWN, 2016).



Russia Beyond the Headlines, founded by the Russian government in 1990, publishes newspaper supplements in international newspapers. The aim of this medium is to “contribute to a better understanding of Russia in the world” (Russia Beyond the Headlines, 2020). The content appears once a month, for example in *The Daily Telegraph* in Great Britain, the *Global Times* in China and *Le Figaro* in France. It is active in a total of 22 countries (Missiroli et al., 2016).

Although it is not generally considered a major player in ECP, Qatar is the known international base for the Al Jazeera Media Network (AJMN). The royal family is part owner of the private network (Cooper & Momani, 2011). AJMN includes numerous television stations that broadcast news, documentaries and sports coverage in Arabic, Turkish, English and in the Balkans in Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian. AJMN is one of the largest media groups in the Middle East; the Arabic-language news channel is one of the most frequently watched channels in the region (Middle East Monitor, 2014; Al Jazeera, 2013).

The Arabic-language news channel of Al Jazeera was founded in 1996 by Emir Sheik Hamad Al Thani, who supported the channel financially with \$150 million (approx. €168 million) in the first five years of its existence. According to this, the station was originally intended to finance itself (Zayani, 2005, p. 14). Since the early 2000s, however, AJMN has continued to receive financial support from public funds; the exact amount is not made transparent (Brown et al., 2012; Salama, 2012). In 2010, the annual budget was estimated at \$650 million (approx. €490.8 million) (Dickinson, 2014, p. 6).

Until the Arab Spring (2010-2012), AJMN’s audience grew steadily and the station was praised for revolutionizing the Arab media landscape. AJMN was the first media group to target its offerings at a pan-Arab audience and not just local audiences (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 122). Additionally, the station broke the pattern of traditional Arab news broadcasts: AJMN provided space for open and critical debates, reported live from conflict areas and offered other innovative formats carried by highly professional journalists in state-of-the-art studios (Peterson, 2007, pp. 732-733). But above all, AJMN gained credibility by presenting itself as an independent, private media company, publicly criticizing Arab governments and presenting different, often conflicting opinions (Kessler, 2012, p. 47).

AJMN is rated by some analysts as Qatar’s “most impressive diplomatic achievement” (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 122). Nevertheless, with the station’s credibility, the number of viewers of the station also fell and in March 2016 the station had to lay off 500 employees and thus more than 10 percent of its workforce (Chronicle of the Middle East and North Africa, 2016). At the same time, the Saudi Arabian channel Al-Arabiya, founded in 2007 and also supported by the Royal Family, has become increasingly important and is therefore a serious competitor for AJMN in the pan-Arab market (Brown et al., 2012). In 2016, AJMN had to close its American offshoot Al Jazeera America after only three years because the station could not win enough viewers for itself (New York Times, 2016). This is part of a larger trend: it was active in roughly 150 countries in 2015 but now only broadcasts in 100 (Al Jazeera, n.d.).

## 4. Additional foreign media players

Whereas the truly global international broadcasting players strive for multiple strategic aims as part of larger ECP approaches, a second tier of smaller global media players adopts a more targeted and specific approaches. This can include protecting a local language, reaching a diaspora community, fostering multiculturalism and social cohesion, or seeking to project regional influence. While these categories are not mutually exclusive, examples from countries are used to illustrate how these approaches are tackled in practice.

### 4.1. Regional or limited global role

First, there is a group of countries that seeks to have global influence but does not possess the resources of the major powers. One example is Turkey. Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) is a venerable institution in Turkey, having been established in 1964. TRT was a founding member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in 1972. It operates 18 TV channels and 14 radio stations in Turkish, English, Arabic, Azeri, and Kurdish. Much of its revenue is levied by taxes, similar to the license fee-based model of the BBC in the UK. Its budget is roughly €180 million (US Department of Justice, 2019). Legally, it is required to pursue the national goals of the country. In practice, this has been reflected by increasingly pro-government views.

TRT World is the main foreign broadcasting component of TRT (TRT World, n.d.). It was founded in 2015 and broadcasts in English 24 hours per day through broadcasting stations in Washington D.C., London, and Singapore. It has been criticized as government propaganda, particularly following a series of layoffs after the failed 2016 coup (Stockholm Center for Freedom, 2019).

India's public broadcasting corporation, Prasar Bharati also runs the foreign broadcaster All India Radio—the Indian radio station with the most comprehensive domestic reach, known for broadcasting in 23 languages and 179 dialects. Due to India's colonial ties to the United Kingdom, All India Radio started broadcasting internationally through its External Services Division shortly after the BBC in 1939, functioning as a propaganda tool for the Allies during World War II. In recent years, the station has been communicating “the Indian point of view on matters of national and international importance” (Prasar Bharati, 2019, p. 89). Its foreign services are available in 28 languages—13 Indian, targeting the diaspora and India's neighborhood, and 15 foreign languages—which are broadcast to 150 countries overall (ibid.). All India Radio, targeting the diaspora and India's neighborhood, is considered an essential part of India's foreign policy agenda.

Similarly, South Africa's international radio channel “Channel Africa” does not pursue a global mission but an African one. The station's mandate is to “support South Africa's national interests through the production and broadcast of innovative, dynamic and stimulating content and contribute to the development of Africa” (Channel Africa, n.d.). It is available via satellite in all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (approx. 46), with even wider reach through its internet broadcasting. By offering an African perspective on the continent's political, cultural and socio-economic developments—notably in Chinyanja, Silozi, Kiswahili, English, French and Portuguese in alternating time slots—the station pursues the mission to be “The Voice of the African Renaissance” (Channel Africa, n.d.). In the name of Channel Africa, the

South African Broadcasting Corporation has entered a strategic cooperation with Deutsche Welle, which aims at fostering staff exchange and training opportunities (SABC, 2020).

Although Spain is a mid-size country, the hundreds of millions of Spanish speakers provide its foreign broadcasters with a large potential audience. Radio Exterior de España (REE), which dates back to 1942, is the international service of the Spanish public broadcaster (RTVE). It is available worldwide, but is primarily intended for Spaniards and Spanish-speaking listeners abroad. It broadcasts in seven languages (Spanish, Arabic, English, French, Russian, Portuguese, and Sephardic Hebrew) (RTVE, n.d.). TVE Internacional is the Spanish international television with the mandate to present Spain in the world and disseminate the Spanish language.

## 4.2. Diaspora communication

Other countries primarily focus on citizens living abroad—for instance Indonesia or Poland. In line with its mission of public broadcasting, the Polish Television (Telewizja Polska S.A.) provides information for the Polish communities abroad via its channel, TVP Polonia (since 1993). With the motto “Everywhere Poles are”, the channel, broadcasting via satellite and cable networks, is mainly targeting the large Polish diaspora worldwide. The station’s main task is therefore preservation of Polish identity, language and culture, as well as dissemination of news from the homeland. The second aim is to enhance the image of Poland abroad, for example by highlighting the tourist potential of the country or various contributions of Poles to the world (National Centre for Culture, 2016). Polskie Radio dla Zagranicy serves a similar function, while Polskie Radio dla Zagranicy’s is directed more at foreign audiences. Its online offering is available in six languages: Belarussian, English, German, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian, with a dedicated website in each of the languages.

## 4.3. Resource pooling

Particularly when it comes to countries or regions that share a language, resource-pooling in the field of foreign broadcasting has been a popular measure to enhance bilateral or multilateral ties and strengthen their reach abroad. Perhaps the most notable example is TV5MONDE, a francophone cooperation between five regions and countries: France, Canada, Québec, Switzerland and Wallonia-Brussels. Through the joint investment and collaboration, the expansive network is able to offer ten different channels in the French language, available worldwide but particularly popular in French-speaking African nations (TV5MONDE, n.d.).

Similarly, though on a smaller scale, the Dutch government cooperates with the Flemish government on the broadcaster BVN (het beste van Vlaanderen en Nederland, or “the best of Flanders and the Netherlands”). The cooperation not only pools resources but follows explicit linguistic goals to make Dutch and Flemish language programming available to viewers worldwide (BVN, 2020). It was supported with over €1.5 million from the Dutch MFA in 2019 and has about 700,000 weekly viewers (OCW, 2018).

Germany is also active in a series of international broadcasting initiatives to pool resources with European partners. The channel Arte is jointly run by the French and German public

broadcasters and has recently expanded to operate in six languages (Arte, 2018). 3sat offers a platform for cooperation among the main three German speaking countries—Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (and formerly the German Democratic Republic, before unification)—which offers primarily cultural programming.

#### 4.4. Foreign broadcasters for social integration

Sweden is a relatively unique case, with its focus on foreign language media as a way to integrate new arrivals (Germany and others have similar programs, but they are part of a larger media apparatus). The public service broadcaster Radio Sweden (Sveriges Radio, SR), and its international and multicultural channels support this goal. The history of international operations (SR International) dates back to 1939, at the start of World War Two, with an initial purpose to inform Swedish nationals abroad.

Today, radio programming is aimed at both international and domestic audiences bringing news about Sweden, Swedish society, and Sweden’s role and reputation in the world. The SR conducts its operations independently from the state and other interests. The broadcasting license stipulates that its foreign program should reflect different cultural circles and contain programming for different parts of the world. Among other things, the broadcast should strengthen the Nordic cultural community. At home, via 4 national and 25 local channels, Sveriges Radio has the responsibility to promote the Swedish language but also provide content in national minority languages (Finnish, Sami, Meänkieli, Romani Chib and Yiddish). The programming in immigrant languages aims to contribute to the integration process and peaceful coexistence of many cultures (Swedish Government, 2020). As a part of Ekot<sup>3</sup>, SR publishes news about Sweden every weekday in 6 languages that are native to many immigrant communities (Arabic, English, Kurdish, Farsi, Somali, Tigrinya<sup>4</sup>) (Sveriges Radio, 2020a).

Estonia also focuses on social integration and cohesion, albeit with less focus on immigrant groups. ETV+ is broadcasted in the Russian language as an attempt to combat misinformation within the Russian community. The Netherlands former broadcaster Radio Netherlands Worldwide (RNW) now operates an online service to support social movements (Wardany, 2012; RNW, 2011).

### 5. Developments in foreign media

We can see that the number of countries with concentrated foreign media strategies has increased substantially and that their range of activities and strategies is substantial. Also visible is a decline in spending from Western nations (with countries Austria, Canada, and the Netherlands severely cutting services) while non-Western nations (like Turkey, Qatar, and China) increase their investments. Despite massive financial support from new ECP players, foreign broadcasters are far from a panacea to achieve global influence. In reality, this spending often happens without a dedicated and localized strategy. Indeed, “the risk of expanding initiatives in fields such as international broadcasting and film co-productions with little attention being given to reception contexts of cross-cultural communications is that nation states will be com-

<sup>3</sup> Ekot (Dagens Eko – “Echo of the day”) is the news service of Sveriges Radio.

<sup>4</sup> Tigrinya is a Semitic (Afro-Asiatic) language. It is spoken by many immigrant communities around the world, including Sweden. Sveriges Radio Tigrinya is a temporary investment.

mitting significant resources to these cultural initiatives to little tangible effect, as has arguably been occurring with the international expansion of CCTV services by the Chinese government over the last decade, at least in the advanced industrial nations” (Flew 2016, p. 291).

Even among resurgent powers, strategies vary. Compared to Russia, China employs a more diffuse strategy to increase understanding and improve China’s image, while also limiting the inflow of information. By contrast, Russia mainly targets Western narratives without expending much effort to portray Russia itself in a positive light and has done relatively little to restrict information flow (although it has considered targeting US social media) (Rawnsley, 2015, pp. 276; Brunnersum, 2020). Turkey’s approach is somewhat of a mix of the two. As countries experiment with different foreign media strategies, we can expect the range of approaches to increase in the coming years, with some countries adopting a “trial and error” method as particular methods succeed or fail.

Budget cuts are a major issue facing foreign media outlets. As the Lowy Institute finds, “when budget pressures bite, the public diplomacy budget is very vulnerable within the broader Foreign Affairs budget: its benefits are often intangible and distant, do not lend themselves to precise measurement, and require long term and consistent effort, focus and investment” (Lowy, 2010, pp. 39). Notably, the BBC has been exposed to cuts and further threats of defunding, threatening perhaps the most venerable and respected foreign broadcaster (Rawnsley, 2015, pp. 279). Notably, this trend has been most pronounced in Western countries—including Canada, the Netherlands, and Austria—allowing rising powers to fill the void.

What changes can we expect from foreign media in the coming years? Clearly, social media and internet offerings will become more prominent, as they are already for many broadcasters. More important than shifts in the method of information dissemination, however, is the increasingly multifaceted approach that foreign media strategies must take. As Rawnsley finds, “it is essential for public diplomacy to align the message with policy, and to consider the experience, perceptions and expectations of individual audiences” (2015, pp. 281). In this context, broadcasters have multiple targets: influential policymakers, foreign publics, their own diaspora, and domestic constituencies are all important audiences, yet are hard to focus on simultaneously. As nations reevaluate their spending priorities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can likely expect changing priorities, intensifying focal points, and a continued diffusion of power away from traditional forces in international broadcasting in the coming years.

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