

Rising Soft Powers

INDIA

CPD

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PREFACE

As part of CPD's "Rising Soft Power in Emerging Markets" initiative, we are launching a companion e-reader series, with its first title focusing on the Indian experience.

The initiative seeks to provide a deeper understanding of public diplomacy practices and trends in emerging markets of different political persuasions, against the backdrop of increasing multi-polarity and shifting world order. It explores and examines the forces reshaping public diplomacy and cultural relations globally.

The "Rising Soft Powers" e-book series is a curated collection of research articles, essays, blogs, and interviews originally published by CPD. It intends to inform both public diplomacy academics and practitioners as well as non-expert audiences of the discourse and practice of public diplomacy in some of the emergent powers. The series takes a practice-based approach and draws from the viewpoints of both scholars and practitioners.

In the last two decades, India has emerged as one of the world's fastest growing economies and an important player in contemporary soft power. As Ian Hall has argued in the journal *Asian Survey*, India's newfound interest in public diplomacy has been driven by its perception of its own weak image in certain critical regions, and by the belief in integrating new technologies in the country's external communication.

The cultural resources India has at its disposal in promoting its soft power are quite abundant, from Bollywood films and heritage sites to yoga and cricket. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations, which was established by the government in 1950, has long been engaged in cultural promotion and exchanges. India has carved out a distinct brand identity as a tourism destination through the "Incredible India" campaign since 2002. To more effectively engage the more than 25 million Indian diaspora around the world, it created the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in 2004. And in 2006, it established a public diplomacy division within the Ministry of External Affairs, later merged with its publicity division.

The India soft power e-book draws together a wide array of contributions to explore the various facets of the country's public diplomacy concept and programs. Highlights include:

- A conceptual overview of India's soft power discourse by the leading international communications scholar Daya Thussu
- Reflections on the opportunities and challenges facing India's public diplomacy by two former joint secretaries for public diplomacy, Riva Das and Navdeep Suri
- A behind-the-scenes look at the "Incredible India" campaign by Leena Nandan, former joint secretary of the Ministry of Tourism
- An interview with Indian diplomat and best-selling author Vikas Swarup, whose book was adapted into the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, on the intersection between popular culture and public diplomacy

Other topics covered in the e-book range from India's cultural diplomacy and gastrodiploamacy, to the domestic dimension of public diplomacy and the historical role of public diplomacy in U.S.-India relations. We hope this collection offers you a comprehensive reference and view on India's soft power in action. Special thanks to Erica McNamara and Lauren Madow for their able assistance in compiling this ebook.

Jian Wang
November 2014



SPOTLIGHTS

De-Americanizing Soft Power Discourse?

By Daya Thussu

The notion of soft power, which is associated with the work of Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye, is defined simply as “the ability to attract people to our side without coercion.” The phrase was first used by Nye in an article published in 1990 in the journal *Foreign Policy*, where he contrasted this “co-optive power,” “which occurs when one country gets other countries to want what it wants,” with “the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants.”¹ In his most widely cited book, *Soft Power*, Nye suggested three key sources for a country’s soft power: “its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).”²

Despite Nye’s focus being primarily on the United States, and the vagueness associated with the rather amorphous concept of soft power, it has been adopted or adapted by countries around the world as an increasingly visible component of foreign policy strategy. It is a testimony to the power of the U.S. in the international arena that the phrase “soft power” has acquired global currency and is routinely used in policy and academic literature, as well as in elite journalism. The capacity of nations to make themselves attractive in a globalizing marketplace of ideas and images has become an important aspect of contemporary international relations, as has been the primacy of communicating a favorable image of a country in an era of digital global flows, involving both state and non-state actors and networks.

In the past decade, many countries have set up public diplomacy departments within their ministries of foreign affairs, while a number of governments have sought the services of public relations and lobbying firms to coordinate their nation-branding initiatives, aimed at attracting foreign investment and promoting other national interests. Unlike propaganda, which retains a negative connotation in democratic societies, public diplomacy has elicited little controversy as it is perceived to be a more persuasive instrument of foreign policy, i.e. not coercive but soft, and one which is conducted by states in conjunction with private actors as well as civil society groups. This shift has stemmed from a growing appreciation of the importance of soft power in a digitally connected and globalized media and communication environment. Since media remain central to soft power initiatives, it is worth briefly examining the global media scene, especially its televisual aspects.

Media in the Global Sphere

Despite the unprecedented growth of media and communication industries in the global South, particularly in such countries as China, India, and Brazil, the global media continue to be dominated by the U.S. Due to its formidable political, economic, technological, and military power, American or Americanized media are available across the globe, in English or in dubbed

or indigenized versions. The American media’s imprint on the global communication space, by virtue of the ownership of multiple networks and production facilities—from satellites to telecommunication networks, from cyberspace to “total spectrum dominance” of real space—gives the U.S. a huge advantage. As during most of the twentieth century, the U.S. remains today the largest exporter both of the world’s entertainment and information programs and

the software and hardware through which these are distributed across the increasingly digitized globe.³

In 2012, four out of the five top entertainment corporations in the world were U.S.-based (the fifth also had strong links with U.S.-based media corporations), evidence of the existence of Pax Americana, a trend which has become pronounced in the era of digital and networked entertainment. These corporations have benefited from the growth of markets in large Southern countries such as Brazil, China, and India. In almost all media spheres, the U.S. media giants dwarf their global competitors: from entertainment and sport (Hollywood, MTV, Disney, ESPN); to news and current affairs (CNN, Discovery, Time); and to much-vaunted social media (Google, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter). It is fair to say that these U.S. entertainment and information networks are movers and shapers of the global media and cultural industry, one of the fastest growing industries in the world, accounting for more than seven per cent of global GDP. The sources of such “soft” media power in the United States cannot be separated from its hard power, as it is the world’s most powerful country in economic, political, and military terms. This is expressed in its more than 1,000 military bases across the globe and its enormous defense budget (more than \$600 billion in 2013, according to the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies), unmatched by any other nation. American hard power has often been a vehicle for spreading the American way of life, though this process is supported by its formidable soft power reserves—from Hollywood entertainment giants to the digital empires of the Internet age. As Nye has remarked, U.S. culture “from Hollywood to Harvard—has greater global reach than any other.”⁴

This influence has a long history: as the home of consumerism and advertising, as well as the public relations industry, the U.S. has developed sophisticated means of persuasion – both corporate and governmental—which have had a profound influence in shaping the public discourse and affecting private behavior. During the Cold War years, “the selling of the American message” was central to U.S. public diplomacy, as Nicholas Cull notes in his history of U.S. Cold War propaganda. The U.S. Information Agency (USIA) was created in 1953 to “tell America’s

story to the world,” a story of freedom, democracy, equality, and upward mobility.⁵ Audio-visual media were particularly important in promoting American values. Voice of America (VOA), a radio station that went on air in 1942 and was a key part of U.S. information programming during the Second World War, became a crucial component of U.S. public diplomacy with the advent of the Cold War. Through a global network of relay stations, the VOA was able to propagate the ideal of “the American way of life” to international listeners. Broadcasting Americana, a staple of U.S. cultural programming during the Cold War years, persists today in the global media space.

**The exponential growth
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The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), the U.S. federal agency that supervises all non-military international broadcasting, remains highly active, especially in geopolitically sensitive areas of the globe, through the VOA, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio and TV Martí, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks—Alhurra TV (Arabic for “The Free One”) and Radio Sawa (“Radio Together”). In 2012, its various broadcasting arms reached 187 million people every week, while the VOA alone was broadcasting some 1,500 hours of news and information—including programs about American popular culture, celebrities, and sports—in 45 languages to an estimated worldwide audience of 134 million. Apart from having hundreds of thousands of Facebook fans, VOA also had a substantial presence on YouTube and Twitter.⁶

These government initiatives have been supported by a thriving and globalized private media. One reason for the U.S. domination of global media is that successive U.S. governments have followed a commercial model for its media. Broadcasting—both radio and television—had a commercial remit from its very inception. The commercially-driven trio of networks—CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System), NBC (National Broadcasting Corporation) and ABC (American Broadcasting Corporation)—provided both mass entertainment and public information. The entertainment element was strong in all three networks, with game shows and talent shows as well as glamour and celebrity programming becoming staples. In the post-Cold War world, the U.S.-inspired commercial model of broadcasting has been globalized, a phenomenon that

Hallin and Mancini have characterized as the “triumph of the liberal model.”⁷

Internationally, this has created a dynamic media, challenges to state censorship, and a wider public sphere, while at the same time also leading to the concentration of media power among private corporations. The exponential growth of multichannel networks has made the global media landscape multicultural, multilingual, and multinational. Digital communication technologies in broadcasting and broadband have given viewers in many countries the ability to access simultaneously a vast array of local, national, regional, and international television in various genres. As a recent UNESCO report notes: “While it is undeniable that globalization has played an integrative role as a ‘window on the world’ mostly to the profit of a few powerful international conglomerates, recent shifts prompted by technological innovation and new consumption patterns are spurring new forms of ‘globalization from below’ and creating a two-way flow of communication and cultural products.”

Global Media and “Rise of the Rest”

The media, especially broadcasting, retains an important position as an instrument of global influence, and ever since international broadcasting became a part of foreign policy agenda during the Cold War, control over the airwaves has been fought over. Until the globalization of television and telecommunication, international broadcasters filled an important information gap, especially in countries where media were under strict state control. With the deregulation and digitization of communication and the entry of powerful private providers, the broadcasting landscape has been transformed, offering new challenges and opportunities. There are various types of new media flows, some emanating from European nations, based on old colonial patterns (notably Britain’s BBC World Service and France 24), and other recent content emerging from the global South. Russia has raised its international broadcasting profile by entering the English-language news world in 2005 with the launch of the Russia Today network, which broadcasts 24/7 in English, Spanish, and Arabic, and claims to have a global reach of more than 550 million people. Ironically, its tag line—“question more”—indicates that the channel generally covers international affairs from an anti-U.S. perspective and therefore questions the dominant Western media discourses. But when it comes to domestic Russian political issues, RT is cautious, as it does not want to upset the Kremlin, where its ultimate

editorial control rests.

Qatar’s Al Jazeera and Iran’s English language network, PressTV, are other recent players to emerge, though the latter is perceived, accurately, as a propaganda channel reflecting the viewpoints of the Iranian government. The most significant example of a new network to appear from the non-Western world is of course Al Jazeera, which was launched in 1996 by the Emir of Qatar with a \$150 million grant, and has grown into a major global broadcaster with annual expenditure on the network’s multiple channels reaching nearly \$650 million by 2010. Based in Doha, Al Jazeera broadcasts news and current affairs in Arabic, English, Turkish, and in the languages of the Balkans. Al Jazeera English, in operation since 2006, reaches 260 million homes in 130 countries, and in 2013 launched Al Jazeera America, thus entering the lucrative U.S. television market.⁹ Qatar, a nation of just two million residents, of which only 250,000 are citizens, has leveraged this channel to increase its geopolitical leadership in the region. Al Jazeera’s coverage of the NATO-led invasion of Libya in 2011 and the campaign against the Syrian regime in 2012-2014, as well as recent support for Hamas in Gaza and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, shows how it has used its visual power to influence Middle Eastern politics. Al Jazeera English claims to privilege the global South in its coverage of international affairs, and its emergence as a broadcaster of substance has not only changed journalistic culture in the region, but has also provided a space for a wider conversation in the global communication arena.¹⁰

With nearly 200 round-the-clock news channels and a strong tradition of English-language journalism, Indian perspectives on global affairs are accessible via such private channels as News 18 India, part of the TV-18 group, as well as NDTV 24x7. However, the Indian state broadcaster, Doordarshan, remains one of the few major state news networks not available in important global markets at a time when global television news in English has expanded to include inputs from countries where English is not widely used, including Japan and Iran. The absence of Doordarshan in the global media sphere can be ascribed to bureaucratic apathy and inefficiency, though in an age of what Philip Seib has called “real-time diplomacy,” the need to take communication seriously has never been greater.¹¹

Paradoxically, Indian journalism and news media in general are losing interest in the wider world at a time when Indian industry is increasingly globalizing and international engagement with India is growing. For private news networks, the need for global expansion is limited, since, in market terms, news

has a relatively small audience and therefore meager advertising revenue. However, the Indian government is beginning to realize the importance of external broadcasting. An eight-member committee headed by Sam Pitroda, Advisor to the Prime Minister of India on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovation, has recommended that Prasar Bharati, India's public sector broadcaster, should conduct "global outreach."¹² Its vision is ambitious: Create a world-class broadcasting service benchmarked with the best in the world using next-generation opportunities, technologies, business models and strategies. The platform should be designed for new media first and then extended to conventional TV. Outline an effective content strategy for Prasar Bharati's global platforms (TV and Radio) focused on projecting the national view rather than the narrow official viewpoint.¹³

Arguably the most significant development in terms of "the rise of the rest" is the growing presence on the international news scene of Chinese television news in English for a global audience. This is an important component of what Joshua Kurlantzick has termed China's "Charm Offensive," which is the process of promoting the Chinese model of development with an extensive and intensive program of external communication: "As China has looked outside its borders, it has altered its image across much of the globe, from threat to opportunity, from danger to benefactor."¹⁴ The Chinese version of an image makeover, consistent with its rise as a global power, is rooted in an official discourse aimed at making Sino-globalization a palatable experience for a world not used to Chinese communication culture. As a civilizational state with an extraordinary cultural continuity, China wants to present itself as a peaceful and progressive nation and to ameliorate the country's image, especially in the West, as a one-party state which suppresses freedom of expression and individual human rights.

China is investing heavily in its external communication, including broadcasting and on-line presence across the globe. In 2011, two years after President Hu Jintao announced a \$7 billion plan for China to "go out" into the world, Chinese broadcasting has expanded greatly, with CCTV News's Beijing headquarters appointing English-fluent foreign journalists to develop a global channel. By 2012, CCTV News was claiming 200 million viewers outside China and broadcasting in six languages, including Arabic. In the same year, CCTV also opened a studio in Nairobi and has plans to increase the size of its overseas staff dramatically by 2016. New production centers in Europe, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East are also planned. Xinhua, among the largest news agencies in the world, with more

than 10,000 employees in 107 bureaus, has recently launched an English-language TV channel, CNC World, which plans to expand into 100 countries. However, Chinese television news has yet to acquire global credibility, as an observer noted: "The perception of being propaganda vehicles for the Chinese government is hard to shake off...CCTV has yet to be the international authority on China, let alone being a credible alternative to the BBC, CNN, or Al Jazeera on world affairs."¹⁵

These key examples of news from "the rest" provide an interesting foundation for an oppositional discourse on global news: Russia Today's coverage of the Syrian conflict, for example, is strikingly different from the dominant U.S.-UK media discourse, probably because the only military base that the Russians have in the strategically significant Middle East is in Syria. Similarly, Al Jazeera has contributed to improved coverage of the Arab world and of Africa on the global television scene. And yet, in terms of audience, news networks have a relatively small impact on global media flows, most of which are centered on entertainment and which continues to be dominated by the U.S. However, other players are increasingly visible.

Entertainment and Public Diplomacy

Leveraging its Ottoman legacy and its subsequent evolution as a modern democratic Muslim nation, Turkey has exerted its traditional influence in central Asia, the Balkans, and in parts of the Middle East. Sharing linguistic, religious, and cultural traditions and a long history with countries in central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Arab world, Turkey is increasingly using the power of its mass media to promote its geopolitical and cultural interests. Its television dramas and historical teleplays are very popular in the Arab world: one hugely successful example was the 175-episode soap opera *Gümüş* ("Silver"), renamed *Noor* ("Light") and dubbed into Arabic in 2008, which attracted over 85 million Arab viewers and triggered a new wave of tourism from Arab countries to Istanbul, where it was filmed. More recently, *Muhtesem Yüzyil* ("Magnificent Century"), a lavish costume drama set in Suleiman's Ottoman world of the sixteenth century, was broadcast in 47 countries. By 2012, more than 20 countries were importing Turkish television soaps.

Brazil's successful television industry centers on the telenovela format, and has spread to most of Latin America as well as internationally to more than 100 countries, where they have been dubbed into other languages and have inspired many television mini-

series. Japan's strong creative and cultural industries— notably in the form of anime—have a global presence and influence, as does its lucrative gaming industry. Since the late 1990s, interest in Korean popular culture, including television dramas, popular music, and films, has increased in Asia and around the world, triggering the “Korean Wave” or “Hallyu,” a “breath-taking export growth in its media cultural production.”¹⁶ The economic value of the Korean wave is estimated to increase from \$10 billion in 2012 to \$57 billion in 2020, according to Korean government sources. The global visibility and popularity of K-pop music was highlighted by the “Gangnam Style” music video by Korean artist PSY—the most downloaded video on YouTube in 2012.¹⁷ The success of media exports from South Korea has encouraged China to promote its own creative industries: already, the Chinese film and television industry has an international dimension with audiences in the global Sinosphere, including the world's largest diaspora, as well as regional centers in Hong Kong, Taipei, and Singapore. Such international hit movies as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers* have created a Chinese presence in the global entertainment arena.

The Soft Power of Bollywood?

The most notable example of global entertainment emanating from outside the Western world is perhaps the Indian Hindi film industry, popularly known as “Bollywood.” It remains the most prominent manifestation of Indian content in global media and is today a \$3.5 billion industry, which has helped to make the country an attractive investment destination. Its movies watched by audiences in more than 70 countries, Bollywood is the world's largest film factory in terms of production and viewership: every year a billion more people buy tickets for Indian movies than for Hollywood films. Though India has been exporting films to countries around the world since the 1930s, it is only since the 1990s and in the new millennium that Bollywood has become part of global popular culture. The rapid liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of media and cultural industries in the world's largest democracy, coupled with the increasing availability of digital delivery and distribution technologies, have ensured that Indian films are increasingly visible in the global media sphere.

At the same time, the unprecedented expansion of television—from a single state channel in 1991 to over 800 channels in 2013—was a massive boost for the movie industry, not only because of the emergence of

many dedicated film-based pay channels, but also because of the potential for coverage of the film industry itself, given the huge demand of the new channels for content. The ensuing corporatization and the synergies that it created made it possible for Bollywood to be available on multiple platforms, including satellite, cable, on-line and mobile, resulting in complex, globalized production, distribution, and consumption practices among the 35 million strong South Asian diaspora, which is scattered across all continents.

According to industry estimates, the Indian entertainment and media industry was worth \$29 billion in 2013. In addition to exporting its own media products, India is increasingly a production base for Hollywood and U.S. media corporations, especially in areas such as animation and post-production services.¹⁸ These growing cultural links with U.S.-dominated transnational media corporations also facilitate the marketing and distribution of Indian content. As international investment increases in the media sector, with the relaxation of cross-media ownership rules, new synergies are emerging between Hollywood and Bollywood: Indian media companies, too, are investing in Hollywood productions. In 2008, Reliance Entertainment, owned by Anil Ambani, one of India's



Bollywood by the Numbers:

In 2013, the Indian entertainment and media industry was worth \$29 billion

Bollywood is a \$3.5 billion industry

Bollywood films are viewed by audiences in more than 70 countries

Bollywood films outsell Hollywood films by 1 billion tickets each year

leading industrialists, invested as much as \$500 million in Steven Spielberg's flagship DreamWorks Studios, heralding a new era of partnerships. Their most prominent collaboration was the 2012 Oscar-winning film *Lincoln*. The changing geopolitical equation in Asia, which has led to a closer economic and strategic relationship between Washington and New Delhi, has given a boost to this process.

Beyond the Western world, and from a cultural diplomacy perspective, Bollywood is perhaps more effective than other countries of the global South. The promotion of family and community-oriented values, in contrast to Western individualism, has made audiences more receptive to Indian films in many other developing countries. Their

religiosity and gender representation make Indian films culturally accessible to Muslim audiences, for example in Arab countries and in south and Southeast Asia. Muslim-dominated northern Nigeria has a long-established interest in Hindi cinema. The mushrooming of Hindi-to-Hausa video studios, where Indian films are adapted or copied for the "Nollywood" market, indicates their value as cultural artifacts which can be reworked to suit local tastes and sensibilities. The visual affinities of dress, gender segregation, and the absence of sexual content in Hindi films are attributes which Nigerian audiences appreciate. In Indonesia, where Indian cultural and religious influence has a long history, Bollywood films and music are popular, influencing local music. *My Name Is Khan*, a 2010 film about the trials and tribulations of an innocent Indian Muslim man living in the U.S. who is accused of terrorism, was released in 64 countries and was listed by *Foreign Policy* magazine as one of the top ten 9/11-related films. Shashi Tharoor, India's Minister for Higher Education and a pioneering proponent of its soft power discourse, has consistently argued that India has a "good story" to tell and that its popular culture is well-equipped to tell that story.¹⁹

The Bollywood brand, adopted by India's corporate and governmental elite and celebrated by members of its diaspora, has come to define a creative and confident India. Gone are the days when diasporic communities felt embarrassed about the cinema of their country of origin, which was perceived by many in host nations as little more than garish, glitzy, and kitschy. Today, Hindi

films are released simultaneously across the globe, and its stars are recognized faces in international advertising and entertainment. There are many festivals and functions centered around Bollywood, and prestigious universities offer courses and conduct research on this form of popular culture. Indian industry and government have recognized and endorsed the potential power of culture at the highest level; as India's scholarly Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, told Indian Foreign Service probationers, the "soft power of India in some ways can be a very important instrument of foreign policy. Cultural relations, India's film industry—Bollywood—I find wherever I go in the Middle East, in Africa—people talk about Indian films. So that is a new

way of influencing the world about the growing importance of India. Soft power is equally important in the new world of diplomacy."²⁰

In the digitized world, film entertainment in India is no longer just an artistic or creative enterprise but a global brand, contributing to the reimagining of India's role on the

international stage, from that of a socialist-oriented voice of the Third World to a rapidly modernizing, market-driven democracy. The Indian government needs to learn from the State Department's promotion of American cultural industries internationally. As a major information technology power, Indian government and corporations could deploy new digital delivery mechanisms to further strengthen the circulation of Indian entertainment and infotainment in a globalized media world; in 2013 there was more material on YouTube about Bollywood than about Hollywood, and yet Hollywood has a substantially larger global presence.

India has a "good story" to tell and its popular culture is well-equipped to tell that story.

— Shashi Tharoor, India's Minister for Higher Education

The Rise of "Chindian" Soft Power?

Jairam Ramesh, India's Rural Development Minister, is credited with coining the term "Chindia," a phenomenon representing what has been termed as the "rise of the rest" in a "post-American world."²¹ This neologism seems to be catching on; a Google search for the word "Chindia" shows more than 800,000 hits. Any meaningful discussion of global media and soft power ought to take into account the rapid growth of these two large nations and their potential to influence

the emerging global scene. Writing in 2010, a leading economist noted: "In 1820 these two countries contributed nearly half of world income; in 1950 their share was less than one tenth; currently it is about one fifth, and the projection is that in 2025 it will be about one third."²²

As in many other fields, the emergence of China and India, coinciding with the crisis in the neoliberal model of U.S.-led Western capitalism, will challenge traditional thinking and paradigms for international media and communication. The combined economic and cultural impact of China and India, aided by their extensive global diasporas, may create a different form of globalization, one with an Asian accent and flavor.

The growing globalization of media content from China and India – in terms of international television news emanating from China and the further globalization of Bollywood—offers new opportunities for soft power discourse, given the scale and scope of changes in these two countries. As the global power equation shifts, the increasing importance of China and India in global communication and media debates and the rise of Chindia pose a challenge to the current discourse of soft power as emanating from the West. As Fareed Zakaria notes: "On every dimension other than military power— industrial, financial, social, cultural—the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from U.S. dominance. That does not mean we are entering an anti-American world. But we are moving into a post-American world, one defined and directed from many places and by many people."²³ The peaceful rise of China as the world's fastest growing economy has profound implications for global media and communication, taking place in parallel with the transformation of international communication in all its variants—political, intercultural, organizational, developmental, and corporate.²⁴

Since 2006, China has been the largest holder of foreign currency reserves, estimated in 2012 to be \$3.3 trillion. On the basis of purchasing power parity (PPP), China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will surpass the United States by 2016, making it the world's largest economy, according to the International Monetary Fund. When the country opened up to global businesses in the late 1980s, its presence in the international corporate world was negligible, but by 2012, China had 89 companies in the Fortune "Global 500"—a traditional preserve of Western companies—just behind the U.S., which boasts 132. Moreover, in 2012, three of the top ten global corporations were Chinese. China is a key member of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), whose annual summits since

2009 have been increasingly noticed outside the five countries which together account for 20 per cent of the world's GDP. The BRIC acronym was coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, a Goldman Sachs executive, to refer to four fast-growing emerging markets and was joined by South Africa in 2011. In its 2013 summit, the group announced the establishment of a BRICS Bank, which will fund developmental projects and potentially rival the Western-dominated Bretton Woods institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

China, which is the driving force behind this idea, has been able to transform from a largely agricultural and isolated society into the world's largest consumer market. Much of this has been achieved without major social or economic upheavals. China's success story has many admirers, especially in the developing world, and already there is talk of replacing the "Washington consensus" with what has been termed the "Beijing consensus."²⁵ India's economic growth is no match for China's, but on the basis of purchasing power parity, it was the world's third largest economy in 2013. What is the relationship between the two Asian giants?

The millennium-old relationship between the two countries has always had a cultural and communication dimension, and Buddhism was at the heart of this interaction. An interest in Buddhist philosophy encouraged Chinese scholars, most notably Huen Tsang, to visit such places as Nalanda (an international Buddhist university based in eastern India between the 5th to 12th centuries) to exchange ideas on law, philosophy, and politics. Indian monks also visited China on a regular basis, and such cultural interactions led to the translation into Chinese of many Sanskrit texts. These exchanges continued for centuries, and even today Buddhism remains a powerful link between the two civilizations, though mutual suspicion remains. Apart from the contentious border dispute, the countries also vie for resources and the leadership role of the global South. And yet there are growing commercial and cultural links developing between the two: trade between China and India—negligible in 1992—had reached more than \$70 billion by 2012, making India's eastern neighbor one of its largest trading partners. Such economic flows, and Chindian globalization, rarely get noticed in the international media and, ironically, are neglected even in the Chinese and Indian media.²⁶

One area where a Chindian contribution will be particularly valuable is development communication. Despite robust economic growth, both countries continue to be home to a very large number of poor and

disadvantaged people—almost double-digit for nearly a decade in case of China—and in many instances, this inequality has increased under neo-liberalism. India was the first country to use television for education through its 1970s Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) program. SITE was designed to provide basic information on health, hygiene, and gender equality among some of India's poorest villages, and it is well-equipped to deploy new digital media technologies to promote sustainable development. However, these issues have continued to stunt India's progress. China's aid for developing countries in Asia and Africa, especially in such areas as telecommunications, may contribute to formulating a Chinese version of development discourse. It is a fact that Xinhua is particularly strong in the developing world, especially in Africa, and, unlike its Western counterparts, it avoids negative and stereotypical stories from Southern countries. Traditionally, development debates have been devised and developed in the West and conform to a Western sensibility of what constitutes development. Would a Chindian development perspective be less affected by the colonial mindset?

As the world becomes increasingly mobile, networked, and digitized, will Chindian cultural flows erode U.S. hegemony? In his 2011 book *The Future of Power*, Nye explored the shift in global power structures from state to non-state actors. In an age when, as he suggests, "public diplomacy is done more by publics," governments have to use "smart power," which is "neither hard nor soft. It is both."²⁷ They must make use of formal and informal networks and draw on cyber power, an arena where the U.S. has a huge advantage, as it invented the Internet and remains at the forefront of its technological, political, and economic governance.

However, the rise of China and India is also visible in cyberspace. At the beginning of 2014, according to industry estimates, only 42 per cent of China's 1.3 billion people were online and just 17 per cent of India's 1.2 billion population were using the Internet. And yet the world's largest number of Internet users were Chinese, while India was already second only to the U.S. in terms of visitors to key sites, accounting for about nine per cent of all visitors to Google and eight per cent each for YouTube, Facebook, and Wikipedia. Industry estimates suggest that the number of Internet users in India will surpass 500 million by 2016, increasingly driven by wireless connections. In China, growth is forecast to be even higher. It is interesting to speculate what kind of content will be circulating on the World Wide Web and in which languages when 90 per cent of Chinese and Indians are online. It is particularly striking in the context of

India's "demographic dividend," which refers to the fact that over 70 per cent of Indians are below the age of 30. As their prosperity grows, a sizeable segment of young Indians are increasingly going online, where they produce, distribute, and consume digital media, aided by their skills in the English language, the vehicle for global communication.

Will a Chindian media emerge as an alternative to the U.S.' or as a supplement to it? It is safe to suggest that, at least in the short term, the multi-faceted U.S. domination of the world's media is likely to continue. However, as Jack Goody has observed, "the Western domination of the world of knowledge and of world culture persists in some respects but has been significantly loosened. Globalization is no longer exclusively Westernization."²⁸ This suggests the importance of serious engagement with "the rest," especially with emerging media flows from large countries with old histories and new global aspirations, and of deepening the soft power discourse beyond its American remit.

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Engaging India: Public Diplomacy and Indo-American Relations to 1957

By Sarah Graham

The diplomatic relationship between the United States and India is known for the longstanding dynamics of misapprehension and distrust between the two governments. The lowest points in the relationship came during the first three decades of the Cold War. Washington's apparent inattention to its relationship with India and its courting of Pakistan in the 1950s, its spiral into the Vietnam War in the 1960s, and its rapprochement with China in 1972 were all episodes that engendered mistrust and resentment among India's leaders. For their part, U.S. officials in this period frequently found fault with the Indian leadership's commitment to Cold War neutrality and their tendency to articulate criticisms of U.S. foreign policy in public settings, often in very strident and biting terms. That these two states shared so many common political values—democracy, secularism, pluralism, freedom of the press, and open institutions—and still harbored such a difficult bilateral relationship poses an analytical question that can be approached in a number of ways. Existing accounts have highlighted the paucity of imagination and initiative in U.S. economic and strategic diplomacy, and some have assessed the degree to which cultural chauvinism structured U.S. foreign policy discourse in economic and strategic policy-making. But, with the exception of two articles examining the course and impacts of U.S. public diplomacy (PD) in India during World War Two,¹ the ways in which PD strategies used by both sides shaped the bilateral relationship—and whether PD initiatives influenced these dynamics of mistrust and ideological disagreement—has not yet been examined in detail.

This essay examines the role of PD in U.S. foreign policy toward India up to 1957, and in considering the 1947–57 period, it constitutes a first step toward analyzing the archival record of U.S. policies during the Cold War. In particular, this paper asks what kinds of PD strategies the United States adopted in engaging India, how consistently these strategies were pursued, and how they impacted the bilateral relationship. For context, this paper will begin by examining the contours of the PD relationship between India and the United States before World War II. This phase, perhaps surprisingly, is characterized by a carefully orchestrated Indian effort to influence U.S. public opinion, but no official government effort by the United States to cultivate Indian support. The case reflects the adeptness of the nationalist leader Mahatma Gandhi as a public diplomat, as well as the synergies between the Gandhian concept of political action through satyagraha, or “truth telling,” and public diplomacy as a method of international engagement. The paper's focus will then shift to the U.S. government's PD strategies in India, which began with stationing of American forces in India during the Second World War. The paper will then turn to U.S. PD strategies toward India during the post-independence decade, 1947–1957, basing this account on primary sources held at the U.S. National Archives and other locations. Given that this period was characterized by a deepening mistrust at the bilateral level, the paper asks: what was the scale and what were the aims of U.S. PD in India during this decade? How did U.S. public diplomats, who were professionally attuned to matters of national mood, characterize the sources and nature of Indo-American tensions in the period? It concludes with a look forward to the key questions that future work should ask in relation to U.S. PD in India during the 1960s.

To tell the fullest story possible, care was taken to also note the role of U.S. philanthropies in India and the ties between U.S. and Indian universities that were established in the pre- and post- independence periods. Both sets of institutions, U.S. philanthropies such as the Ford Foundation in particular, had an important role to play in shaping the climate of Indian opinion about the United States. A substantial review of Indian media, scholarly, and political responses to U.S. PD is beyond the scope of the argument presented here, however. To

partially address the issue of how to judge the ultimate impacts of U.S. PD on the Indo-American relationship, the discussion below notes how U.S. government agencies assessed the effects of their own PD policies. Particularly after the establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA), which undertook extensive assessment of program impacts, the U.S. government gathered comprehensive data on program impacts.

The 1947–57 period presents an interesting case for PD studies because it was a time of growing tensions between the two nations: India's leaders hewed to a policy of neutrality in relation to the Cold War, and were often forthcoming in their critiques of U.S. domestic and foreign policy. Set in the context of these difficult high-level relations between the two states, it is thus clear that at best U.S. PD was only capable of partially mitigating these high-level disagreements. Saddled with presenting unpopular U.S. policies, Indian critiques of racial discrimination in the U.S., and a slow start to its Indian operations after independence, U.S. PD struggled to make an impact. Washington also faced strong competition in India from Soviet and British public diplomacy programs. In previous work on the effects of U.S. PD in India during the Second World War, this author argued that U.S. efforts to cultivate Indian public opinion had the opposite effect to that which was intended.² The mismatch between the pro-independence ideals expressed in U.S. PD and the U.S. government's inconsistent support for Indian nationalism did great damage to the United States' reputation in India during and immediately after the war. While the United States government continued to face the charge of hypocrisy in the Indian media and by India's leaders during the 1950s, it is not clear if in 1947–1957 U.S. PD exacerbated these problems by setting up unrealistic or misguided expectations among India's public.

Missionaries, Mayo the Mahatma: Cultural Relations and Nationalist Public Diplomacy Before World War II

Political and cultural contact between the United States and India took place outside the sphere of government before the Second World War. The only formal American presence in India was its several consulates in the country's major cities: full diplomatic ties were impossible under the protocols of British imperial rule, and these posts existed to assist Americans living in or visiting India. They also hosted representatives that Washington had, from time to time, sent to India to investigate the promotion of commercial relations between the two countries. As a consequence, before the 1920s most of the Indian public's contact with the United States was through their exposure to American Christian missionaries.

The first of these evangelical groups had travelled to India early in the nineteenth century, but in relatively small numbers and, as far as the rates of Indians converting to Christianity were concerned, with limited success.³ Their educational and social works, such as the Reformed Church's Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital in the state of Tamil Nadu, established in 1900, had a more lasting and positive impact on Indian society. Despite the relative modesty of these activities, their positive contribution to Indian development was well regarded by Indians for decades afterward.⁴ The presence of Western missionaries in India during the late nineteenth century also had the unintended consequence of helping to spark India's

Hindu revival movement, and by the turn of the twentieth century one of its most prominent groups, the Ramakrishna Order, had established several Hindu missionary centers in the United States.⁵

Academic ties between the two nations were also established in the second decade of the twentieth century. The first American librarian to visit India with the purpose of advising Indian institutions was W. A. Borden, who travelled to Baroda State in 1910 and set up the basis for a statewide public library system at the behest of the state's Maharaja.⁶ A second, A.D. Dickinson, visited British India as a consultant to the Punjab University at Lahore in 1915-16, during which time he reorganized the library collection and supervised librarian training.⁷ These early contacts with India took place against the background of the U.S. library movement's enthusiastic participation in international congresses and a range of other overseas philanthropic projects in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁸

The Rockefeller Foundation began international grant-giving work in India around the same time, and while the scale of its program did not approach that in other countries, its work was well known for its contributions to medicine in India. In 1916 the Foundation dispensed its first grants for research through the School of Tropical Medicine in Calcutta. The Foundation subsequently embarked on the training of Indian medical personnel, sponsored malaria research under the American specialist Paul Russell in the 1930s, and provided funding for the establishment of an All India School

of Hygiene and Public Health in 1932. Rockefeller Foundation funding was also granted to various Indian educational institutions outside medicine, including schools and colleges focusing on the education of women and girls.⁹

Despite the absence of full diplomatic ties between the two nations, public diplomacy became an integral part of the Indo-American relationship between the end of the First World War and 1941. The Indian nationalist movement, led by the Indian National Congress (INC) and its leader Mahatma Gandhi, regarded international publicity as central to their cause—moral suasion was, after all, at the core of Gandhi's doctrine of satyagraha, or "truth force;" a term that has often been translated to mean non-violent conflict or passive resistance to violence. Satyagraha acknowledged the vital role of individuals and public opinion in the context of prevailing political forces—"every citizen silently but none the less certainly sustains the government of the day."¹⁰ Thus, for Gandhi the kinds of methods employed in public diplomacy were at the center of the struggle for Indian self-determination, as they should be for any political struggle legitimately engaged in the pursuit of justice. The promotion of dialogue through communication about politics and power was also highlighted through satyagraha's call for rhetorical, symbolic, and activist "disturbances" of the status quo as acts of truth-telling. Here, the Gandhian notion of truth as a position that must be arrived at collectively invested the Mahatma's efforts to forge dialogues with the American and British publics with a particularly clear political and moral significance.

Gandhi proved especially successful in cultivating personal ties with influential American writers, theologians, and journalists, who then wrote or spoke extensively on the injustices of British rule and the aims of Indian nationalism for U.S. audiences. Public opinion within the United Kingdom was the focal point of the INC's campaign for international public support. Nevertheless, the Mahatma's effort to engage U.S. opinion leaders was rooted in his belief that Americans would instinctively support his cause and, given their country's great power and political stature after Versailles, that their ability to pressure their own government could in turn lead it to exert significant moral pressure against the raj. The Indian nationalist movement had early successes in garnering publicity in the United States by cultivating ties with the American Anti-Imperialist League. Two of the League's most influential members—William Jennings Bryan, who visited India, and Andrew Carnegie—published writings in 1906 advocating an end to British rule. In 1907 a number of League members established an

organization solely dedicated to the Indian cause.

This Society for the Advancement of India was relatively short-lived. But its founder, Unitarian minister Jabez T. Sunderland, remained an active and prominent spokesman for the cause throughout the 1910s and 1920s.¹¹ Sunderland was one of a number of Americans with whom Gandhi maintained a personal correspondence in this period; a group that also included journalist Louis Fisher, philosopher Richard Gregg who later wrote bestselling books on satyagraha, and NAACP founder John Haynes Holmes. Sunderland's 1929 book on India's struggle, *India in Bondage*, was a powerful and widely read indictment of the colonial system that was quickly banned in Britain. Working against these early showings of pro-nationalist sentiment in the United States were former and current British colonial officials in India, who managed to ensure that U.S. media coverage of the repressive Government of India Act in 1919 was largely favorable. Their most notable success was ensuring that U.S. editorials on the subsequent massacre of unarmed protesters in the Indian city of Amritsar followed the colonial government's line that the shootings were a necessary response to a "riot." Beyond those with specialist knowledge of India, most Americans did not associate Amritsar with British colonial repression. But despite these efforts, Gandhi's non-violent movement nonetheless received favorable coverage, and from 1920 U.S. media coverage swung toward favoring the nationalist cause.

India's nationalist leaders had long appreciated the potential value of the small South Asian diaspora within the United States as spokespeople for the cause of Indian independence. Much of this activism had centered on Indian scholars and students at U.S. universities, particularly after the Indian National Congress leader Lajpat Rai was sent to the United States in 1914 with the express purpose of coordinating Indian nationalists living in the country. During his five years in the United States, Rai founded the Home Rule League of America and the Friends of Freedom for India, both of which benefitted significantly from the involvement of American intellectuals and journalists in the cause. For example, Sidney Webb, a supporter of the Indian cause, introduced Rai to Walter Lippmann. The veteran American journalist subsequently advised Rai on cultivating an advantageous media image, provided Rai with letters of introduction to a number of other influential American writers, and wrote in support of the cause himself.

Rai, along with Columbia University student Haridas T. Muzumdar, also established a journal for American

readers devoted to the cause of Indian independence called Young India and a society of supporters called the Young India Association. To represent the Muslim viewpoint on India's communal issues, the INC sent former Bombay Chronicle subeditor Syud Hossain to visit the United States, where he stayed until 1946.¹² This phase of pro-Indian activism in the United States peaked in 1920–22, paralleling the burst of enthusiasm among the American people in global pacifism and reform. Academic interest in India was also on the rise and U.S. scholars developed three separate proposals for the establishment of a U.S. research center on the subcontinent between 1922 and 1934. A fourth proposal, which was made under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies and involved the establishment of research headquarters in the Indian city of Banaras, gained support within the Council only to be placed on indefinite hold by the outbreak of the Second World War.

Gandhi made a particular effort to reach out to America in 1929 with the objective of attracting media interest in his Salt March campaign, which was intended to showcase the principles of satyagraha at work. The March was covered for the international press by a cadre of specially invited British, American, and European journalists; readers back home took an increasingly voracious interest in the brave, charismatic, and "near-naked" Indian leader and the epic struggle he was leading. In the United States, Negley Farson's famous dispatches from the front lines of the March described Gandhi's followers' fortitude and self-sacrifice in the face of British repression, as well as Farson's own daring efforts to circumvent British censors in transmitting his dispatches.¹³ The same year, the famed Indian poet and nationalist Rabindranath Tagore travelled to the United States for a lecture tour, but pulled out of his speaking engagements over insulting treatment he had received at the hands of a U.S. immigration official. The ensuing publicity "brought American [racial] prejudice to Indian attention," but also gave further publicity to the Indian nationalist cause within the United States.¹⁴

Whereas awareness of India's freedom struggle had

been limited to peace activists, theologians, liberal intellectuals, and the burgeoning African American civil rights movement during the early 1920s, by 1930 Gandhi and his cause was a mass media phenomenon in the United States. The "personality cult" of Gandhi was reflected in Time Magazine's choice to make the Mahatma man of the year for 1930. The New Republic expressed consistently strong editorial support for self-rule. Between 1930 and 1931 the New York Times published more than 500 articles mentioning the Indian campaign, which grew to more than 700 the following year.¹⁵ Gandhi was covered even more extensively in specialized newspapers such as the Christian Science Monitor and the pro-civil rights publications Chicago Defender, Crisis, and Negro World. As a counterpoint, in 1927 a bestselling travelogue by the writer Katherine Mayo called Mother India presented a scandalized account of the dirt, disease, sexual depravity, and superstitious backwardness of Indian society. Her book became one of the best-known American accounts of India of the inter-war period. Mayo's travel had been supported by the British government, and constituted part of a growing pro-imperial publicity effort to counter Gandhi's campaign in the United States. Its lurid subject-matter of child marriage, animal

sacrifice, teeming masses, cobras, illness, and death reinforced a number of the most pervasive negative stereotypes of Indian religion and society that had prevailed in the United States since the works of Kipling first appeared.

But while Mother India was sensationalist and widely-known, it was part of a much larger publishing phenomenon that encompassed a range of ideological positions on India during the 1930s: more than twenty popular books and many more articles with

positive messages about on Indian civilization and/or the freedom struggle were published during 1930 alone.¹⁶ While Mayo's account reinforced longstanding American perceptions that India was a backward, poverty-stricken, and superstitious society, these views coexisted with, and in some respects even strengthened, Americans' instinctive sympathy and admiration for the leadership of the nationalist struggle.

**“‘Gandhi’ became an icon:
studied, pictured, debated,
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As Sean Scalmer notes, “Mayo’s work was merely one voice in a rising, cacophonous exchange” in which “‘Gandhi’ became an icon: studied, pictured, debated, derided, genuflected to, worried over, celebrated, mourned. Even when the nationalist struggle suffered from temporary subsidence, the Mahatma remained ubiquitous.”¹⁷ Gandhi was an especially adept manipulator of the relatively new medium of photojournalism, no doubt partly because editors understood the noteworthiness of Gandhi’s brief style of dress: “During a period when leading broadsheets only rarely included photographs, Gandhi was frozen in a remarkable array of acts: cradling an infant, frowning, spinning, walking, reading, dictating, mourning, visiting, recovering from sickness, posing with celebrities, meeting with mill workers, speaking to crowds, raising funds, distributing alms, and disembarking on European soil. It is little wonder that the analogy of the ‘movie star’ beckoned for so many observers.”¹⁸

By the late 1930s, the success of the Indian nationalist movement’s public diplomacy in America had left British civil servants and pro-imperialists deeply concerned about the future stability of the raj. Amid the media frenzy over the self-rule campaigns of 1931, the British Foreign Office Permanent Undersecretary Sir Robert Vansittart complained of the “idealism” and the “facile but impractical recipes for expediting the arrival of the millennium” upon which the pro-India sympathies of the American people appeared to rest.¹⁹ Although India’s struggle left the American headlines for a time during the mid 1930s, as domestic concerns about the effects of the Depression took over the headlines, by the end of the decade the Indian nationalists, and their newly appointed political leader Jawaharlal Nehru, had once again reached out to cultivate favorable U.S. opinion.

In 1939 Nehru spoke out to the international media over the humiliating manner in which the British Viceroy had declared India at war with the Axis without consulting, or even forewarning, the Indian people. This provocation brought an abrupt end to two years of cooperation between the British imperial government and the Indian National Congress, which had come about after Britain granted administrative reforms allowing greater Indian self-rule in 1935. In response to the declaration of war, the INC issued numerous public statements questioning British war aims and the justice of its fight to preserve its imperial rule in Asia. In an appeal that resonated both with isolationists and liberal critics of empire in the United States, Nehru asked: “What of America, that great land of democracy, to which imperialist England looks for support and sustenance during this war? Does

Britain think that the people of the United States will pour their gold and commodities to make the world safe for British imperialism?”²⁰

In response to this attempt to appeal to American opinion, one of only two covertly run publicity projects at the British Library of Information in New York, which had been conducting publicity work on behalf of British interests in America since the First World War, was a counter-propaganda effort against Indian nationalism.²¹ After the outbreak of war the British government also brought Indian spokespeople, including the editor of the United Press of India T. A. Raman, to the United States to present the case for the continuation of the imperial rule. Both British authorities and the Indian National Congress thus clearly understood that that American opinion was central to the survival of the imperial enterprise in India. A matter of months before the Pearl Harbor attack, the nationalists appeared to have the upper hand. The British Minister of Information Duff Cooper remarked in the fall of 1941 that the nationalist movement had been remarkably effective in its cultivation of American sympathies.²²

The Constraints on Freedom: Washington’s Message to India in Wartime

The Second World War brought the United States government directly into the fray with Britain over Indian independence and the Allied struggle for hearts and minds in Asia. As the United States Office of War Information set about publicizing U.S. war aims after 1941, Washington’s official position on Indian self-determination would prove to be both less supportive than Nehru had called for and more anti-colonialist than the British had wished. A hundred thousand United States troops were ultimately stationed in or passed through India over the course of the war, and Allied air bases in the north and east were the source of vital supply lines for Allied fighting forces in China. At the height of Japan’s military advance in Asia its troops were occupying Burma, at India’s Eastern frontier. In this context, India’s survival as an Allied nation seemed pivotal to the success of the military campaign in the Pacific theater. Military pressures thus compounded for Washington the already difficult task of defining its political stance on Indian independence, and in designing PD strategies that could effectively communicate this stance to Indian audiences.

Diplomatic ties between the United States and India were opened in early 1941 as a consequence of Franklin Roosevelt’s lend-lease policy, which supplied economic assistance to the Allies before the United

States entered the war. Noting the public's sympathy for Gandhi and the administration's ideological position on colonialism in general, the upgrading of U.S. diplomatic representation prompted Roosevelt's foreign policy advisor Adolf Berle to remark that the United States should now "express concern" over British policy in India, since India's "status is of interest to all the surrounding nations" and thus to the war itself.²³ The administration's view that the United States had a stake in India's political situation deepened after Pearl Harbor, and the President and his representatives subsequently made several approaches to the British government through U.S. officials in London and via Roosevelt's personal correspondence with Churchill in support of the cause of independence. None of these intercessions were expressed in particularly strong terms, however. After Winston Churchill presented the Indian National Congress and Muslim League with a flawed independence deal in April, 1942—a deal which came close to agreement but ultimately collapsed—the U.S. administration's tentative efforts behind the scenes to advance the cause of Indian self-determination ceased. Between then and the ultimately successful independence negotiations after the war, American officials were spectators rather than interlocutors or facilitators in the attainment of India's freedom.

The Roosevelt administration's ambivalent policy toward Indian self-determination posed a significant problem for U.S. PD in India during wartime. Throughout the conflict, the Office of War Information served as the lead agency in setting and delivering America's message to the Indian people. Its challenge was to craft a message that could reconcile Allied war aims—which, according to Churchill, mandated that no independence offer could be made while the fighting still raged—with America's own traditions of anti-colonialism. The OWI's publicity work in India centered on print media, films dealing with themes relating to American life and the U.S. economy as well as the war, and newsreels. Policy guidelines for these forms of informational diplomacy to areas within the British Empire had instructed that materials must identify America as the "champion of democracy" and thus associate America's war aims with the cause of democracy worldwide.²⁴ Behind the scenes, this strategy had been crafted to express America's tacit consent for anti-colonial movements by linking their goals to a U.S.-led Allied victory, while at the same time retaining a veneer of non-interference in British imperial affairs.

American PD activities in India during the war also extended to the establishment of United States

Information Service (USIS) libraries in Mumbai and Kolkata as well as U.S. Embassy sponsored public events. Voice of America also prepared weekly radio segments that were transmitted via the BBC's All India Radio service. But in all its areas of PD operation the OWI's message suffered from the political constraints of U.S. foreign policy in general. The OWI advocated independence for colonized peoples in general terms and celebrated U.S. policies like the granting of independence to the Philippines. But at the same time, the OWI was not in a position to publicize any concrete, pro-independence policies on the part of the U.S. government after the failed talks of 1942 because none existed. Thus, the OWI's efforts to showcase the democratic traditions, economic prosperity, and cultural vibrancy of the United States rang hollow as Indians contrasted America's up-beat portrayal of its own democratic heritage with the unhappy circumstances in India. Whereas American newsreels and documentaries had reportedly reached "millions" of Indians and the United States Information Service libraries were very popular with the public, the U.S. diplomatic mission in New Delhi (Delhi) reported that U.S. war information had been undermined by the "lack of clear policies and objectives, against the complex political background."²⁵

U.S. cultural and informational diplomacy also faced a challenge in addressing the Indian public's curiosity about racial segregation within the United States. In 1943 the OWI had prepared materials for Indian audiences that presented images of racial harmony in domestic U.S. contexts and showcased the participation of African American soldiers in the U.S. military. But these were never shown or distributed. OWI materials of this kind had already provoked a backlash from Southern Congressmen, who objected to the promotion of a desegregationist message through U.S. wartime information. Racial harmony was also the message of an OWI-sponsored event in Mumbai in 1943, which brought the U.S. Forces Negro Swing Band to perform at a consulate-sponsored event. The initiative backfired, however, when the Bombay Chronicle reported that almost no Indians had been invited. The ensuing publicity drew further attention to racial tensions within the United States. Like its efforts to articulate a compromise position on democracy and freedom for colonized peoples, the OWI's handling of racial issues actually worsened the image of the United States in India rather than improving it.

Post-War Drift: Public Diplomacy Between War and Independence

Post-war cuts to the U.S. international informational and cultural diplomacy budgets, motivated by Congressional hostility to the OWI's perceived political bias, led to a drastic downscaling of operations in India. Only the most basic components of the U.S. PD program, such as the American libraries and news file projects, which were cheap to run, were maintained. In 1945, a weekly broadcast of the VOA program "America Today" via All India Radio was set up to replace the various wartime radio segments produced by VOA. "America Today" exclusively addressed the concerns of Indian audiences, with script advice prepared by the embassy in New Delhi. Each installment aimed to present "a dialogue built around a particular theme in explaining some aspects of American life."²⁶ But the program was discontinued at end of 1946 at the request of All India Radio, which cited scheduling difficulties. State Department correspondence on the matter does not verify whether deeper motives were at play, but given the climate of Indian opinion about the United States that year it is likely that All India Radio's decision was political. The OWI's circulation of American newsreels to India's numerous cinemas was also discontinued after the war, and was not replaced by peacetime government programs or via private distribution channels until the 1950s. The USIS American libraries, located at the U.S. Consulates in Mumbai and Kolkata, remained open, but were the targets of violent anti-American protests in 1946. In Mumbai the American flag was torn from the building and burned, and in both cities U.S. army personnel were attacked and injured.²⁷

The United States also faced a significant credibility problem among India's leaders. Jawaharlal Nehru stridently criticized Washington's hypocrisy in fighting a world war for democracy at the same time as lending what they regarded as "passive and sometimes even active support of British policy and British propaganda."²⁸ At the end of the war he had condemned the use of the atom bomb against Japanese civilians and criticized Washington's failure to support Indonesian nationalists; U.S. Consul Howard Donovan warned the Department of State that Nehru's statements resonated with the "great majority of Indians."²⁹ The U.S. cultural diplomacy program, which had remained outside the Office of War Information structure during the war, began talks with Indian scholars in 1944 to initiate educational exchanges between the two nations. The first educational visit sponsored by the State Department's Division of Cultural Relations occurred in January 1945. In a continuation of the U.S. government's ambivalent attitude to the independence issue, the Division instructed that the selection of candidates must be done with the political sensitivities of India's situation in mind, and

should not be seen as a de facto endorsement of the pro-independence side. That such "politically sensitive," pro-independence factions would shortly become the governments of India and Pakistan—and were in actual fact the very best individuals to sponsor for educational or short-term visits to the United States—is an obvious point that was apparently overlooked by the Division.

Nehru, Nationhood and Pakistan: U.S. Public Diplomacy and Independent India

The United States extended diplomatic recognition to India on the day of its independence on August 15, 1947 with a message of congratulations from President Harry Truman to India's (British) Governor General. In it the President articulated his intention to establish "close and fruitful cooperation" between the United States and the people and government of India.³⁰ But the statement expressed diplomatic niceties rather than the direction of U.S. national interests. While the end of India's long struggle for freedom was greeted with enthusiasm by an American press, which had retained fond feelings for Gandhi, the government of "the United States, in contrast with its earlier deep involvement [in the 1942 independence talks]" stayed in the "background" as a final settlement for Indian and Pakistani independence drew closer.³¹ It thus came as a dual irony when the former Viceroy and current Governor General, Lord Mountbatten, observed in a statement to the American people that "[i]n the Atlantic Charter, we—the British and Americans—dedicated ourselves to champion the self-determination of peoples."³² Britain had steadfastly refused to take Indian calls for independence seriously until a change of government brought the Labor Party into power, and thereafter it had rushed through a partition deal that dashed the hopes of many nationalists who had aspired to the twin goals of self-determination and religious unity on the Indian Subcontinent. This rushed settlement had, most tragically, caused the loss of millions of lives and the displacement of at least ten million refugees. For America's part, despite its joint-authorship of the Atlantic Charter, Washington had been completely disengaged from the negotiations over Indian and Pakistani independence.

This governmental indifference, as well as the hypocritical impression created by the OWI's wartime publicity on colonial and racial questions, created an inauspicious climate for U.S. PD relations with independent India. Prime Minister Nehru continued to feed this skepticism about America's degree of support for colonized nations. The new U.S. ambassador to Delhi, Henry Grady, acknowledged the

issue in his first press conference, when he assured his audience that his country had “no designs, economic or political, on yours or any other country,” and cautioned against reading “sinister motives” into his government’s “generous form[s] of assistance” to war-torn areas.³³ In fact, Washington’s broader strategy in South Asia during 1947-8 was a posture of impartial disengagement. The Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency ranked India and Pakistan as having only marginal importance to U.S. grand strategy in the short term. Washington thus decided it would defer to London in the setting of diplomatic imperatives to the region, and would in particular steer clear of any involvement in the bitter legacy of partition in Kashmir and the Punjab.

Thus, in 1947–8 Washington’s public diplomacy program remained much as it had in the interim between the dissolution of the Office of War Information and Indian independence. The USIS maintained its two outpost libraries and continued to send features, transcripts, and its news file of media items to Indian media outlets, with the addition of some India-specific content prepared by U.S. consular staff. In February 1947, and again in 1950, the U.S. Embassy in Delhi had reported that the news file material was being republished at a favorable rate.³⁴ The public affairs section of the Delhi embassy continued to monitor the Indian media and public opinion. A small but steady stream of scholars and visitors continued to travel between two countries under the auspices of the State Department’s exchange of persons program. But aside from this, U.S. cultural diplomacy struggled due to lack of funds. For example, in February 1947 the public affairs section at the Delhi embassy was forced to turn down a request for funds from the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society to present a roving exhibition of contemporary Indian paintings in the United States. U.S. officials agreed that the exhibit would be an excellent PD initiative, but were forced to direct the project to U.S. philanthropies instead of sponsoring the initiative directly.³⁵

The U.S. Congress passed the Smith Mundt Act in January 1948, and along with the general boost to PD funding provided by the legislation, it also prompted the Department of State to identify areas where U.S. PD had been particularly inadequate since the war. One of these areas was India. A month later the United States concluded agreements with India, and soon after with Pakistan, for bilateral educational exchanges funded by the sale of surplus war goods. An additional full service outpost library was set up in Chennai (Madras) in 1947—another would be established in New Delhi in 1950—and reading rooms were established in a further six cities by 1954.³⁶ U.S. philanthropic and university

activities in India also resumed: the Ford Foundation dispensed one grant to the Allahabad Agricultural Institute in 1948, and the Carnegie endowment gave funds to the University of Pennsylvania and Cornell in support of their anthropological and linguistic research work in India.³⁷

Radio remained the key weakness of Washington’s PD efforts. After being informed its programs were no longer wanted in 1946, Voice of America had continued to send transcripts to be used on All India Radio, but it lacked short-wave facilities of its own. In December 1948 an announcement was finally made that a dedicated Hindi, Urdu, and English service for India would be set up,³⁸ although this depended on establishing relay facilities in Sri Lanka and it took more than two years for these arrangements to be completed. In contrast, Radio Moscow had been maintaining a relatively well-developed India service since the war. In an expression of the fact that the USSR had always been “deeply interested in India,” as early as 1946 its broadcast languages included English, Hindustani, and Bengali. In this period it had also derived significant value from its well-founded criticisms of Britain’s handling of the independence issue.³⁹

Given the extensiveness of Soviet public diplomacy activities and the shock of the Chinese Communist revolution, anti-Communism became the overarching theme of a revived U.S. information policy for the Subcontinent in 1949. In this context, India assumed a special importance as the last hope for democracy in Asia: the American president’s special advisor Philip C. Jessup hoped that India would become Washington’s “most solid associate in the Asian area,” provided that Nehru could be made amenable to supporting U.S. interests.⁴⁰ At this time the State Department’s Office of South Asian Affairs advised that enhanced cultural and economic ties between the United States were necessary given the prospect of Communist agitation in India.⁴¹ In other memoranda, the Office discussed the potential contribution of U.S. labor groups in reaching out via PD activities targeting Indian trade unions, which were regarded as hotbeds of pro-Soviet sentiment in India.

Jawaharlal Nehru also made his first official visit to the United States that October, and he was feted in the American press for his statesmanship during the difficult transition to independence. On a PD level, the Department of State had hoped the visit would showcase American friendliness toward India and would provide an opportunity to cultivate Nehru so that he might correct the “vague but widespread suspicion” of the United States among Indian elites

and the public at large.⁴² Behind the scenes, however, Nehru's interactions with U.S. officials were soured by Washington's earlier refusal to offer substantial economic aid to India after Nehru transmitted his interest in such assistance earlier that year. His face-to-face meetings with the administration failed to produce a chance in U.S. aid policy, despite the fact that India's food production was demonstrably below the population's needs.

A binational foundation to administer Fulbright exchanges was established in 1950, with an expected annual budget of \$400,000.⁴³ The Fulbright program was fast becoming the United States' most successful PD initiative in India, although the program's direct impacts on high-level intellectual findings in this first decade was probably quite limited. The short duration and single-visit format of the program reflected a "lack of planned commitment to fundamental area research, especially in such a complex civilization as India's." Nonetheless, the program was widely appreciated and over the next twelve years it would send 534 scholars, ranging "from graduate student to veteran professor" from the United States to India, providing a stimulus to the disciplinary development of Indian studies within U.S. universities.⁴⁴ But reports on the impact of U.S. cultural diplomacy and information showed that the U.S. programs were consistently out-spent by the USSR, a worrying development in Washington in light of the recent loss of China to Communism.⁴⁵ The USIS news file also faced stiff opposition at home from the United Press, which regarded USIS as unfairly competing with it in the major Indian markets.⁴⁶

Despite the broadly positive image of the Fulbright program, it was also clear by 1950 that Indians and Americans were displaying a widening "difference of attitude" about the U.S. government's failure to offer economic aid to India and towards Communism as a threat to the global peace. U.S. analysts noted that the Indian public by and large supported Nehru's policy of neutrality, condemned racial segregation within the United States, and regarded Washington's anti-Communist foreign policy as a vehicle for neo-colonialism.⁴⁷ Worse, Washington's failure to provide economic assistance to India showed the callous treatment non-Western peoples could expect to receive if they exercised their sovereignty through a posture of foreign policy independence. According to the State Department's Office of South Asian Affairs, differences of attitude also influenced U.S. policies. According to a memorandum in March, the president's refusal to support economic aid was the "harvest" of "misinformation" about the Indian government's global objectives.⁴⁸ By the end of the year the Department of

State was recommending significant spending increases, a larger exchange of persons program, and an effort to develop an Indian service within Voice of America. The latter was especially vital since one "grievous omission" in the station's planning was its lack of any independent broadcasting capacity to India.⁴⁹

Public Diplomacy and the Indian Wheat Loan Bill, 1951

After the outbreak of war in Korea, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs George McGhee remarked that the "viability of a non-Communist Asia" now rested on India's shoulders. This new state of affairs placed the possibility of economic aid to India firmly on the administration's agenda. In August 1950 the president agreed, although at Secretary of State Dean Acheson's insistence the proposal held that aid would be provided in the form of a loan, with the U.S. repaid in cash and via concessional trade for strategic materials, rather than a grant. Truman agreed to the loan format, but deferred taking the request to Congress until mid 1951. In the meantime, McGhee engaged the Bureau of Public Affairs to set about correcting the "misinformation" about India among the American people, in the hope that enhanced understanding would improve the likelihood of Congress approving the plan. This domestic publicity effort failed. While the U.S. media expressed the American people's sympathy for India's predicament and endorsed the loan as a humanitarian gesture, Congress proved determined to extract the toughest terms possible. With the food situation in India rapidly deteriorating, consideration of the bill was moved forward to February 1951. But its passage was then slowed by Congressional criticisms of Nehru, with the Prime Minister exacerbating tension by publicly condemning the slow pace of the negotiations and the onerous loan terms that were under debate.

When the Emergency Indian Wheat Bill (PL 48) was finally approved in June, the final version included a substantial public diplomacy element. It instructed that the first U.S. \$5 million of India's interest payments be diverted to library development in Indian universities, to the acquisition of Indian materials by the Library of Congress, and to educational exchanges. The programs contributed substantially to U.S. educational diplomacy in India: in 1955 it was reported that the educational exchange component of the program was making "satisfactory progress" toward implementing its targets. By 1960 \$1.4 million had been spent on books for 36 Indian university libraries.⁵⁰ Throughout

the 1950s and 1960s the coordinating office for the Wheat Loan at the New Delhi embassy was also able to channel U.S. philanthropic funds into Indian libraries and educational institutions. The inclusion of library support provisions within the terms of the loan was a last-minute sweetener, and India's requests for economic aid had presented the U.S. administration with a much larger opportunity to reorient the tone of Indo-American relations, which it squandered.

Prompt action by the U.S. administration when Nehru first warned of famine in 1949, or at the very least the preparation of a proposal in the form of a food grant (which the United States could easily afford given its large surplus in food product) rather than a loan, would have greatly enhanced Indian public perceptions of the United States. Prompt and generous assistance would also have boosted Washington's image elsewhere in the developing world, but six months of wrangling over the terms of the loan while mass starvation loomed generated a great deal of negative comment in the Indian media as well as strident criticism by India's senior politicians. Acheson's decision to use India's aid request as a basis to pressure Nehru to alter his policy of Cold War neutrality was a strategy that discounted Indian, and global, public opinion and its value to U.S. national interests. The fault lay not just with Acheson, Truman, and Congress. The State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs also overlooked the public diplomacy implications of the loan. During Congress' delays in considering the bill the Office focused on mollifying Nehru's concerns about the process, rather than on convincing Congress of the public diplomacy benefit to be gained by providing prompt and generous humanitarian assistance.

After a hiatus in philanthropic activity during the war and immediate post-independence periods, the Ford Foundation began to survey conditions in India in 1950-1 with an eye to resuming its agricultural development work. Senior figures at the Foundation, particularly its president Paul Hoffman, intended that their investment in India would prevent the spread of Communism. Hoffman had determined that "India, one of the two Asian giants, and the non-Communist one, was to be a focus of serious investment... Assistance to India would demonstrate what free men with wealth and wisdom could do to help other men to follow them down the same...path of development." Poverty alleviation, according to Hoffman, would "put Indians firmly in the Western camp."⁵¹ Ford's first Indian national program director, Doug Ensminger, saw the role of philanthropy somewhat differently—as transcending government antagonisms through people-to-people understanding. He stressed the reciprocal function of the foundation's

work, noting that when India was mentioned in the United States "Congress is critical and the man on the street is either indifferent or cynical." Thus, as he saw it a key part of the Foundation's work was to "recognize the reasons for this situation and change...[America's] approach" to thinking about India.⁵²

By 1952 Ford had provided \$2.8 million dollars to the Indian government for an intensive cultivation initiative that aimed to reform planting practices in 15,000 villages within five years.⁵³ In 1952 it added an information program on agricultural techniques, began to dispense grants for educational institutions, and funded health initiatives including malaria research. The Foundation's return to India in 1951 coincided with the arrival of Chester Bowles as the third U.S. ambassador to India, and Bowles worked assiduously to rehabilitate the United States' public image in India. He wrote and spoke extensively on racial issues in particular during his 18 months in the post, warning the Department of State that while Indians generally knew little of real conditions in the United States they knew "enough to be convinced that, solely because of their color, many Americans are denied a full share in the life of the richest nation on earth."⁵⁴ Bowles advised the Ford Foundation that where possible it should employ African American personnel to lead its health and rural development programs to correct this negative picture of American racial attitudes.⁵⁵

Surveying the Damage: USIA and the Public Diplomacy Challenge in India

President Dwight D. Eisenhower's restructure of the administration of U.S. PD, leading to the establishment of the United States Information Agency, has been surveyed extensively in existing literature within the field.⁵⁶ The founding of USIA brought the U.S. government's informational diplomacy functions, and several of its cultural projects, under the umbrella of an independent Executive Agency, which was to receive direction from the President and the National Security Council as well as from the Department of State. Crucially for the India programs, the USIA's Office of Research and Analysis immediately initiated a number of projects designed to survey the impacts of U.S. PD in various contexts. Its findings on India were troubling.

The Office reported in 1953 that the USIS news file was unpopular with Indian media outlets,⁵⁷ while another survey the following year found that USIS pamphlets such as *Free World* and *The Negro in American Life* were regarded by their readers as "interesting" but not "fair or trustworthy." The Indian audience for the *Voice*

of America, which had finally established an English language service to India with good signal strength and coverage, overwhelmingly rated its broadcasts as “not objective.”⁵⁸ More positive responses were garnered from Indian elites for the Fulbright program and the USIS magazine *American Reporter*. The race problem was a key factor in the lagging credibility of U.S. initiatives. In contrast to Chester Bowles’ frank approach to the issue, USIS materials prepared for India presented a rosy picture of racial harmony in America that were immediately distrusted. Another USIA review identified a systematic failure in the Department of State’s handling of PD in the developing world, which applied especially to India: it had failed to take seriously the “neutralist” position of many governments.⁵⁹ But addressing the politics of the Cold War effectively through PD in India was no easy task. Engaging and persuading Indians to abandon neutralism brought with it the dilemma of how to engage the erudite Nehru, since Indian opinion leaders and elites in particular were sensitive to criticism and “to anything that sounded like ‘onesidedness’ or ‘propaganda.’”⁶⁰

No sooner had USIA turned its tools of policy evaluation to the problem of the U.S. image in India than the Eisenhower administration’s strategic decision-making foreclosed the possibility of any improvement, placing the Indo-American relationship on its worst footing since the Second World War. The administration’s move to extend military aid and formalize an alliance relationship with India’s rival, Pakistan, in 1954, presented the USIA and its officers in India with an exceptionally difficult task. The Truman administration had attempted to maintain an even-handed approach to India and Pakistan; even before assuming office, Eisenhower’s Secretary of State John Foster Dulles singled out Pakistan as a candidate for a strategic alliance in the context of the Eisenhower campaign’s “policy of boldness” in the Cold War. Whereas Nehru had always been unafraid—and some would have said he was all too willing—to criticize U.S. influence in Asia, Pakistan had courted U.S. military aid since its independence, working assiduously to impress its anti-Communist credentials upon the Truman administration. The Republican Cold Warrior Dulles was more receptive to Pakistan’s assurances, and even before the administration took office he had sent a U.S. military representative to Karachi to discuss bilateral strategic relations. Once in office, Dulles immediately ordered cuts to the additional economic aid funds the Truman administration had committed to India as additions to the Wheat Loan and appointed a pro-Pakistan former U.S. Army brigadier to the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

Dulles formally opened talks when he visited Pakistan in the spring of 1953, although when he went on to India afterward he assured Nehru that the United States would do nothing “unneutral” with respect to the Indo-Pakistani border rivalry. Nevertheless, talks with Pakistani representatives continued throughout the summer and in November the U.S. media announced that the parties were close to a deal involving a bilateral treaty, Pakistani inclusion in a Middle Eastern strategic pact, and substantial amounts of U.S. military aid. In response, Nehru complained bitterly that the “Cold War has come to the very frontiers of India” as the result of a decision that “represents great immaturity in political thinking.”⁶¹ The following January, Eisenhower signed a deal for a bilateral aid and security treaty with Pakistan, and the formalization of a multilateral pact—the South East Asian Treaty Organization—would soon follow. The President wrote to Nehru to assure him that U.S. weapons would “in no way [be] directed against India.”⁶² Nehru seemed to accept this, but soon hit out publicly at the administration’s sense of “superiority” in interfering with region through its “shamefully” bellicose foreign policies.⁶³

The State Department’s Office of South Asian Affairs faithfully charted the fallout in the Indian media. SEATO was branded a threat to peace and stability in Asia and an embodiment of America’s racist neo-colonial approach to Asia, while rumors swirled that USIA was responsible for any number of covert, subversive activities within India. In retaliation for the U.S.-Pakistan alliance Nehru threatened to curtail India’s participation in the Fulbright program and other bilateral cultural activities, including library work under the Wheat Loan provisions. He issued a request in 1955 that USIS close all but four of its cultural centers and reading rooms. At the same time, the Communist bloc enhanced its activities in India with Nehru’s apparent “sanction and support,” with 24 Indian cultural delegations travelling to the USSR or China in 1954-5 and none allowed to travel to or from the United States.⁶⁴ The USSR also gained the upper hand through its Peoples’ Publishing House in New Delhi, which produced low cost books, its English and vernacular language newspapers, and its numerous libraries and cultural centers. Correcting the record somewhat for the United States in PD terms were the ongoing activities of the U.S. foundations: Ford’s agricultural projects were well-regarded; Rockefeller had re-entered the educational field by 1954 and had extended funding to a linguistics program for American scholars in the city of Poona; and Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie all offered funds to U.S. universities to develop their South Asian Studies programs.⁶⁵

George V. Allen, former Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, became Assistant Secretary in charge of the Near Eastern Affairs bureau in 1955, and made a surprisingly upbeat assessment of U.S. PD in India despite Nehru's threats. Although U.S. diplomats would need to put additional effort in to "correct" Indian suspicions about the purpose of USIS,⁶⁶ he also received advice that the Wheat Loan library provisions and educational exchange policies were continuing to make "satisfactory progress" despite the political upheaval.⁶⁷ At the same time, while "negro inequality" remained Indians' most commonly voiced criticism of the United States in 1955,⁶⁸ the focus of U.S. PD was overwhelmingly on international Cold War issues. Washington's Cold War-focused PD initiatives were generally of a high quality—the worldwide touring exhibit *Atoms for Peace* was a hit in all four Indian cities it visited—but Nehru's visit to Moscow in June prompted some debate over whether the U.S. materials ought to tone down their anti-Communism in an appeal to Indian neutrality.⁶⁹ It would seem that U.S. PD had failed to make any dent in the Indian public's support for Cold War non-alignment.

According to one critic of the anti-Communist line, Chennai Consul General Henry C. Ramsey, contrary to the view in Washington that the claims of Communism should be continually refuted, the most popular materials distributed by USIS in India were actually reprints of articles that took a "scholarly and factual" approach to surveying the conditions within the Soviet Union and China.⁷⁰ Ramsey lamented that it was still necessary for U.S. diplomats in India to correct the assumptions of their superiors in Washington that Indian elites' support for Nehru's neutrality did not stem from a basic sympathy for Communism or a basic anti-Americanism. Rather, Cold War neutrality served India's national interests; Indian elites understood that "realistic considerations of national security and prestige" informed Nehru's ideological position. For this reason, he advised that USIS materials should avoid creating a "vituperative" impression and must recognize that India's current long term foreign policy objectives may not be 'too vitally different from our own, regardless of disagreements on methods and

certain conflicts of interest."⁷¹

The efforts of the Eisenhower administration to forge a more balanced approach to the subcontinent after 1956 reflect a growing sensitivity to the kinds of concerns Ramsey had raised. In 1956 Eisenhower proposed a program of economic aid to India to assist in its Five Year Plan for food self-sufficiency. A bilateral agreement under the PL 480 program, which diverted U.S. agricultural surpluses to developing countries, brought Nehru and Eisenhower together for several days of face-to-face talks that did much to clarify the nature

of the misunderstandings between the two states. But key members of Congress made it clear that they would be unwilling to authorize more substantial cooperation with a nation that could hardly be called an ally to the United States. The following year, with India's economy in dire straits, the administration worked assiduously to design a generous aid package to India through various channels within the U.S. Executive as well as through multilateral

agencies, thus avoiding a potentially damaging debate on an aid bill in Congress. The formal U.S. announcement of the administration's economic aid package in March 1958 was accompanied by a new direction in U.S. policy toward Pakistan, which involved a "halting, low-key effort to begin limiting, if not reducing, the U.S. military commitment to Pakistan."⁷²

The global U.S. PD program also faced difficulties in Congress, which slashed by more than a quarter the funds that Eisenhower had requested for the USIA in 1958-9, while USIS once again had to weather criticisms from America's media corporations over the perceived competition from its news file in international markets. It was curious that this charge was leveled in particular at USIS in India, given that the U.S. government's news file was in fact still quite unpopular with Indian newspapers. A lengthy USIA report on PD strategies in India that August noted that India's stability was decisive for the "preservation and growth" of the free world. While the USSR had been investing heavily and, as result, Indians regarded the Soviet government as more trustworthy than the U.S. government, the report insisted that nonetheless the "conceptual gap between Indians and Americans...is narrowing."⁷³ It

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also endorsed the administration's plans to promote rapid and substantial bilateral cooperation in the development area as a policy strategy that would have significant benefits in public opinion terms. For the first time, the PD implications of the administration's India policies were being considered during the course of policy-making rather than as an addendum to policy implementation. The report also noted that certain aspects of the U.S. PD program in India had achieved notable successes in the previous two years: its film circulation program dwarfed the efforts of all the other national efforts combined, and the market for U.S. books, particularly *Reader's Digest*, was vibrant.⁷⁴ The interest was reciprocal: the Library of Congress convened a meeting on improving its holdings on South Asia in same year.

With Ensminger still in place as the director of Ford Foundation programs in India, Ford continued to dispense aid for rural development and medical projects. By the end of the 1950s it had added a program of educational exchanges in the area of technical and management studies, which led, in the decade to come, to a collaboration with the MIT Sloan School of Management and the Harvard Business School for the establishment of the Indian Institute of Management Studies. In the coming decade Ford would also step into the urban planning area, offering extensive advice to the city of Kolkata in its efforts to implement a master plan for urban growth. Ford developed a harmonious relationship with the state government of Bengal despite the government's pro-Communist sympathies.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has analyzed the public diplomacy relationship between India and the United States prior to India independence in 1947, before going on to place the development of U.S. PD strategies in the context of U.S. foreign policy during the post-independence decade of 1947–1957. Drawing on previously unpublished sources on the planning and execution of U.S. PD in India, the author's analysis highlights the foreign policy constraints that hampered Washington's efforts to court hearts and minds in India during this foundational decade. Whereas the U.S. diplomatic staff in India appeared to do their jobs in an effective manner—Ambassador Chester Bowles, for example, was an outstanding contributor to Indo-American public engagement—PD policy planning in Washington suffered from a number of crucial shortcomings in the Indian context. Washington's Cold War policies, Congressional attitudes to India, racial

disparities, and the Eisenhower administration's turn to Pakistan as its major partner in the region were severe setbacks to U.S. public diplomacy.

Four key weaknesses, in particular, contributed to the stunted diplomatic relationship between the United States and India up to 1957:

1. Inattention to the PD implications of U.S. foreign policy in Washington. For example: Congress' delays and rhetorical attacks on India during the passage of the Wheat Loan Bill; the Eisenhower administration's alliance with Pakistan.
2. Slow development of certain key aspects of the PD program, particularly a VOA India service, after 1947.
3. Poorly crafted messaging in relation to American racial issues and global anti-Communism.
4. The ongoing absence of a constituency for improved relations with India among the American public and within Congress.

The archival record suggests that Soviet competition in PD terms was also substantial. U.S. assessments on the Soviet programs were generally free of hyperbole and well illustrated with evidence, and presented a picture of an effective (if not insurmountable) form of competition in India.

At the same time, the image of the United States was burnished by the steadily-expanding Fulbright program, by the government's substantial aid to Indian libraries under the terms of the Wheat Loan, its book and film programs, and most especially by the Ford Foundation's philanthropic projects. The Eisenhower administration's efforts to rebalance its approach to South Asia after 1957, when it began to plan a substantial economic assistance package, also constituted an auspicious development because, for the first time, the records of the USIA show that PD considerations were in play during the policy planning stages. In the years prior, and in both the wartime and post-independence contexts, public diplomacy had been an afterthought to policy-making rather than an ongoing consideration during policy-making. This suggests that research into subsequent phases of the relationship will reveal more positive contributions by U.S. PD to Indo-American relations.

Postscript: Looking Toward the 1960s: The Context

for PD in the Development Decade

Eisenhower's decision to extend substantial amounts of economic aid to India in 1957 prompted a spike in interest in Indian development both within his administration and in wider foreign policy commentaries. American development economists like Walt W. Rostow joined the bandwagon, elevating India to the status of a test case for the efficacy of aid and technical assistance in facilitating Third World modernization. This intellectual ferment garnered further political interest in India: a two-day meeting of the Committee for International Economic Growth, a private think tank, in May 1959 attracted a number of prominent attendees. Two of them, Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon, were future presidents of the United States.⁷⁵ Kennedy would soon enter office with a foreign policy team that included a number of officials that were deeply sympathetic to India; former Ambassador Chester Bowles and economist John Kenneth Galbraith chief among them.

His administration tilted toward India over Pakistan, and the warmest point in the entire Cold War bilateral relationship would occur as a result of Kennedy's decision to extend military aid to India after its brief border war with China in 1962. Kennedy also presided over a large increase in U.S. development assistance and general diplomatic engagement with the developing world. Under Kennedy, PL 480 funds extended into a range of areas with implications for U.S. public diplomacy, such as technical assistance, technical education, and educational exchange. The president had, furthermore, entered office with a campaign commitment to improving America's global reputation. Kennedy and his appointee to head USIA, Ed Murrow, facilitated a number of significant reforms to U.S. PD, including closer presidential involvement in PD policy-setting, higher funding for cultural activities, and more detailed policy and public opinion evaluation.⁷⁶

But race in America remained a divisive issue. While the global media depicted some of the worst excesses of the Southern backlash, under Murrow USIA sought to present the ongoing civil rights struggle in the most positive terms possible, highlighting the progressive stance of the federal administration on racial issues.⁷⁷ Nehru also visited the United States in 1961 to an enthusiastic media reception, although Jackie Kennedy's goodwill tour of India and Pakistan was a far larger media event. At the same time, escalating U.S. involvement in Vietnam, deepening tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir—which Kennedy wished to see settled—and India's ongoing

effort to maintain good relations with the USSR were obstacles to improved relations over the long term.

The making and implementation of U.S. PD strategies in India during the 1960s thus promises to be an interesting avenue of further study. Future research should consider whether the Kennedy administration really represented a new direction in the administration of PD in the case of India, or conversely whether the problems that beset U.S. PD in India under Truman and Eisenhower persisted in this period. Whether USIA's attempt to deal more frankly with race was a success in the Indian context, in which the public had great sympathy for African Americans and respected the civil rights movement's commitment to non-violent techniques, will be a key avenue for research. So, too, will be the question of how the structural tensions between India and the United States played out in terms of PD. Whether the Kennedy administration accommodated India's neutralist aspirations and its determination to exercise regional influence will be a guiding question for the next phase of this research into public diplomacy and Indo-American relations.

Author Biography

Sarah Ellen Graham is a lecturer at the University of Western Sydney, and was previously an adjunct lecturer at the University of Southern California. She was a postdoctoral fellow for 2007–8 at USC's Center for International Studies and the Center on Public Diplomacy. She has written a book on U.S. attitudes to public diplomacy in the 1918–1953 period and has published articles on U.S. public diplomacy in UNESCO (for which she was awarded the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations' Bernath Article Prize), on public diplomacy and the Indo-American relationship, and on Washington's prospects for effective track-two diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific. Her current project centers on the role of attitudes in the Indo-American diplomatic relationship from 1942 to the present, and while visiting the Center, Sarah intends to explore the public diplomacy aspects of this case in historical and contemporary contexts. Sarah also has an ongoing interest in International Relations theory, and hopes to engage in dialogue or workshops with the USC Master of Public Diplomacy program on the intersections between studies of public diplomacy and IR theory.

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FEATURES

Incredible India

By Leena Nandan

When the task of defining one word—beauty—is so vast, how much more difficult must it be to capture the spirit and essence of a whole country. A country that is both ancient and modern, which has passion and wisdom, that is unchanging yet ever changing—a country that veritably defies definition. This is the conundrum that the Tourism Ministry of the Government of India faced seven years ago when it embarked on the ambitious task of trying to brand the country for the first time.

What were the imperatives behind the branding exercise? Post 9/11, tourism all over the world had taken a downturn. There was pain, anger, trauma and disbelief; travel was far from everyone's mind. The tourism sector, never very robust in India, looked like it would be sucked into the maelstrom. The country had to overcome this, and to turn crisis into opportunity. The first step had to be to forge a new identity, one that would distinguish India in the minds of the global traveler, and create a strong, positive image under an overarching brand. For too long, myriad descriptions of "Magical India," "Ancient India," "Mystical India" and similar such hyperboles had been floating around; the time had come for out of the box thinking.

That was the genesis and within no time, the concept became a mission. The Tourism Ministry decided to involve the best artistic minds and introduced a countrywide creative competition to attract people who would bring to the table a perspective that was fresh and original. Ideas for branding came in droves so a committee was set up to evaluate, short-list and recommend. It was a time of frenzied activity as meetings metamorphosed into brainstorming sessions. The heady feeling of being caught up in something creative, something unique, made the

process worthwhile. And so it went until: Eureka: "Incredible India" was born.

Incredible India captured the imagination of everyone immediately. The logo, which cleverly played on the use of the exclamation mark, was finalized, and the euphoria was palpable. This was creativity at its best. The buy-in from all stakeholders was instantaneous. The Indian private sector, generally gloomily certain of the Indian government's dullness, were wide-eyed in admiration. A new era of partnership was born between public and private sectors.

The first campaign, rolled out in 2002-03, was based on the use of brilliant images featuring the different tourism attractions of India—whether wildlife or wellness, deserts or monuments. There was innovation in every presentation of the "!" of India—it could be the figure of the camel on the horizon gazing across the rippling golden sands, or the spire on the graceful dome of the Taj Mahal, eloquent in its somber silence. The imagery was startling and the choice of media was made with equal care. Readers of leading newspapers and travel magazines all over the world suddenly found themselves admiring a slick and glossy campaign promoting India—and it was ubiquitous. Incredible India had arrived on the world stage.

The next stage of the campaign sought to deliver the same message in a starkly different fashion, and to do so with bite. A tiger in a cenotaph blandly stated, "Not all Indians are polite, hospitable and vegetarian." To emphasize the country's spiritual heritage, there was an image of a Buddhist monk ascending the steps of an ancient university, while the caption was simple yet profound, "A step by step guide to salvation." Yet another was a study in contrast, where a surreal black-and-white image of the Taj bore a tongue-in-cheek

inscription, "And to think that men these days get away with giving flowers and chocolates to their wives." The ads invited you to laugh with India, and at India. It was a bold, confident, in-your-face campaign.

Branding India for a foreign audience is a challenge in every respect. India means many things to the outside world, ranging from "enigmatic" and "complex," to the not-so-complimentary "difficult." The most advanced research centers stand cheek by jowl with rippling green paddy fields ploughed by stolid oxen. Rockets take off into outer space and the moon mission is the subject of drawing-room discussions, while sturdy mules with tinkling bells on their stout necks sedately bring the farmer back to home and hearth in a million villages. It is a country of paradoxes, and no one can remain indifferent to it. All five senses come alive here—and this, in fact, became the source of inspiration for one of the campaigns.

There is color in every aspect of Indian life—the clothes, the spices, even the homes. The concept was tweaked imaginatively, so "red hot" became the description of chilies drying in the sun while "pure white" perfectly described the purity of love that the Taj Mahal symbolizes. This creative route was a huge hit, and, when carried over to television, the result was breathtaking. Audiences discovered the different facets of India through vibrant colors, right from the fiery gold of the setting sun to the glowing red sandstone of intricately carved monuments.

Insofar as the campaign focuses on India as a tourism destination, it also keeps pace with the outside world. Beyond photography, kitsch art-style illustrations were also used effectively. One ad illustration proclaimed, "Get rid of 21st century stress. Stand for 5000 years," and featured an artist's impression of a woman standing upside down in a yoga posture. If style is influenced by international trends, so too is the content. The global meltdown of 2008 had plunged the world into a mood of doom and gloom, so the Incredible India campaign commented on it through a visual of a bullock-cart race, pictured above, with the caption "A different kind of bull run." It made everyone sit up, take note and smile.

After the Mumbai terror attack, a conscious decision was taken that the campaign had to make a strong and compelling statement about the entire country. So the ads showing a tiger close up included a message that reflected the mood of the country through a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence: "I want all the cultures of all the lands to blow about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." It expressed forcefully the strength,

resolve and resilience of this incredible country.

In this era of communication and globalization, outreach cannot be confined to the print and television media alone. The Ministry's campaign has taken into account FM radio and Internet, including the increasingly popular You-Tube. A new direction has been forged with the Incredible India events worldwide, which revolve around the soft power of India. This soft power is drawn from the graceful forms of classical music and dance, the robust and earthy folk culture, the exquisite craftsmanship of artisans and weavers who nurture the craft traditions of the country, and above all, the cuisine. The cultural expositions began in 2007 in Berlin where India was the partner country at the International Tourism Bourse. The grey environs of Berlin vanished in an explosion of sound and color as 200 artists stormed every venue with pulsating beats and rhythms. Winter appeared to have sulkily retreated to a corner when faced with huge outdoor brandings of a crystal clear sea under a dazzling blue sky that provocatively stated "In India it is 36 degrees centigrade."

Buoyed by the success of the Berlin experience, the Ministry zeroed in on two new venues, especially as 2007 marked 60 years of India's independence. "India Now" in London and "Incredible India@60" in New York had indoor as well as outdoor events. The size and scale of both were in proportion to the vastness of India.

In London, all of Regent Street was pedestrianized; every store had an India display, there were dance performances going on while spicy food tickled the palate of all visitors as they savored the balmy weather and festive mood. A special campaign was unveiled under the tag line, "India is closer than you think." The standard images of everyday London in an Indian setting made people do a double take. There was "Elephant & Castle" written across an image of a richly caparisoned elephant posing in front of a palace. "Oxford Circus" had people perching precariously and happily on an auto—what the image denoted was the quintessential chaos of India that both beguiles and exasperates visitors.

Meanwhile, New York had never envisaged that Bryant Park could boast a sand sculpture of the Taj Mahal in front of which Bihu dancers from Assam would weave their magic. The Lincoln Center was filled to capacity with an audience who sat mesmerized through the choreographed performances that included a medley of classical and folk dance. The photography exhibition and the fashion show on the sidelines of the event, all

gave New Yorkers much to talk about.

In 2008, after having wowed Europe and the U.S., Incredible India decided to focus on Asia—Singapore and China, to be exact. The Orchard Plaza, a commercial hub of Singapore, was enthralled by the beats of Bhangra and the whirl of Pungcholam dancers who twirled around the stage even as they beat their drums. In China, the subtle flavors and aromas of India food and the kaleidoscope of colors of the cultural presentations were a resounding success. The food festivals, enthusiastically organized by leading hotels in Beijing and Shanghai, drew people in like a magnet.

This year, Russia and Los Angeles have been at the receiving-end of our cultural diplomacy. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, the exposition of Indian culture has been a great success, so too in Los Angeles. The print and outdoor signage campaign in Los Angeles had Hollywood as the theme. “Toy Story” was tagged on an image of attractive Indian toy dolls. Meanwhile, “Natural Born Killers” was captioned with a Bengal tiger giving its trademark killer look. In September 2009 the Hollywood Bowl was transformed into something quite different with the “India Calling” event. Music and graceful dance competed with the colorful pavilions of village artisans. It was a lively, noisy, crowded atmosphere—a microcosm of India itself. The main program, with classical, fusion, pop, folk and Bollywood numbers had people tapping their feet and breaking into dance.

The focus of the Incredible India campaign is innovation. The Ministry has been able to come up with new, stylish inspirational and creative ideas, that draw from the a country that has drama and spirituality, chaos and serenity. You can lose yourself here and find yourself here because the discovery of India is nothing less than a journey of self-fulfillment. But to truly understand India, one lifetime is not enough.

Author Biography

Leena Nandan has extensive experience in destination promotion and marketing. During her tenure in the Ministry of Tourism, the “Atithi Devo Bhavah” campaign was launched with the purpose of generating social awareness all over the country. She looked after the Incredible India Campaign in overseas markets where it has won several international awards. She has handled several international marketing events such as “India Now,” “Incredible India@60” and “India Calling.” In addition to promotion and publicity, Nandan’s responsibilities included creation of tourism infrastructure and development of niche products like rural eco-tourism and cruise tourism.

This article first appeared January 2010 in [PD Magazine](#).

India Is—Old & New

By Navdeep Suri

The start of a new year is the time for people to forget the old and welcome the new into their lives. Most times, you don't forget the old...you just take stock of the all that has been learned and tried in the past year and implement it onto a new, bigger and more exciting canvas.

The [Public Diplomacy Division](#) started an important new initiative in October 2011. I had written about it for the [CPD Blog](#) in October. After three months of submissions, the phase 2 (voting) for the [India is ... Global Video Challenge 2011 goes live](#) from February 1, 2012. This is a new game altogether. So far our efforts have been in collecting submissions and creating a buzz, but it is now time to use all the steam created to chug forward at full speed. Let me start by telling you that the response garnered by the initiative so far has been heartening if not straight out joyful. The social media initiatives and strategies carried out by "[Skarma](#)" have been widely successful in achieving and surpassing earmarked milestones. Let's just say the 24 year olds did it.

Beginning with the entries, we received a whopping total of 245 eligible entries through the three months of submission. But the best part of this is that 123 of these were received internationally from 40 different countries. Though 75% of the international entries were received from Europe and North America, the highlight of our entries lay in original perspectives of India received from nations like Peru, Romania, Armenia, Serbia, Belarus, Palestine, Moldova, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Chile, Lithuania & Panama.

In the short period starting 1st October and ending 31st December 2011 our website received more than 27,000 hits with up to 16,000 unique visitors from 149 countries in 6 continents. Pushing this forward have been our social media campaigns operating on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Fortunately this is just the start. The India Is brand has successfully found its feet with more than 45,000 followers on its Facebook page, with the top 10 countries being Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, Malaysia, the United States, Canada, Bangladesh,

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

In an attempt to engage such a large base of followers and keep things active, we hosted various contests and games on the social media platform. The winners got some fun India Is merchandise along with Indian Diplomacy CDs and books, which worked like a charm. The guys at Skarma also tested a viral campaign idea, wherein they invited people to share a particular image with their friends on Facebook in an attempt to win a Lomography camera. This was quite a push as it led to followers sharing the image across multiple platforms and various networks.

As a direct result of the social media push, India Is was independently written about on 48 different websites in 15 countries and in 4 newspaper articles with no involvement at all from our team. The momentum gained so far has made India Is a brand poised to collaborate with companies, institutions, brands and products with global outreach, not only on a sponsorship basis, but also as a great form of cultural exchange. In fact, we are already talking with potential partners from various different industries. This list of probable partners has been growing at a steady pace, encompassing magazines, production houses and various products and brands. One of the best results we received from the viral campaign was that it brought with it an opportunity to collaborate with Lomography directly for sponsored prizes.

Another direction that seems to be arising is the opportunities this is providing for media students globally. Creating a connection with film and art schools all over the world and allowing for cultural exchange between the students may be one of the few resultant activities on the ground that India Is will foster in the future.

All of this has been great, the achievements have helped us create a solid base to build and grow this brand. The changes and the positive results of all the social media initiatives seem to be making their way to us with the onslaught of the voting period upon us.

With our jury members at the cusp of announcing the 30 finalists (10 per category) we are looking to create partnerships and collaborations within the very first year of our campaign without having to wait until the next year for these chances.

The voting phase in itself will see tremendous growth in our online presence owing to collaboration with a global online and mobile video content company. This collaboration and partnership will allow participants to vote on both our website and the collaborators which has - drumroll here....260 million subscribers. This has allowed us to be assured about a positive response even as we continue our efforts at promoting and marketing the brand. With all the activity occurring on India Is, all I can say is: join the party...VOTE!

Author Biography

Navdeep Suri is a member of the Indian Foreign Service since 1983 and currently heads the Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of External Affairs. Mr. Suri has a Masters degree in Economics, and is an alumnus of the 2010 USC Summer Institute in Public Diplomacy. Navdeep is also co-author of the study Development Strategy as a Determinant of Foreign Policy: A case study of India and Pakistan. His authoritative work on Indo-African relations has been published in India's Foreign Policy, while his study titled "Outsourcing and Development" was presented at the Inter-Government Experts Meeting organized by UNCTAD and has been published in a recent U.S. book on the winners and losers of globalization.

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Q&A with CPD

Riva Das



Read CPD's interview with Riva Das, head of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries Division at the Indian Ministry of External Affairs:

How did you first become aware of the field of public diplomacy?

As a professional diplomat, I became aware of public diplomacy when the concept started getting attention as an important tool by Foreign Policy establishments all over the world. We in India set up the Public Diplomacy Division in the Ministry of External Affairs in 2006 and as a career diplomat, I have naturally closely

followed and practiced public diplomacy in my various assignments abroad.

The last few years have witnessed an incredible change in global communications as well as politics. In an era of 24/7 media and Internet, governments sometimes struggle to get their message across. Public diplomacy is an extremely important tool for conducting diplomacy in today's world. We feel that given the virtual explosion of traditional media, combined with availability of new technologies, governments have to constantly reinvent the ways in which they communicate with publics within their geographical boundary (domestic publics) and people residing outside their geographical boundary. Public diplomacy allows us to engage with people from all over the world in innovative ways.

There are various definitions and practices of public diplomacy. If you had to define public diplomacy in a couple of sentences, how would you go about doing so?

Broadly speaking, public diplomacy can be defined as the framework of activities by which a government seeks to influence public attitudes so that they become supportive of foreign policy and national interests. As far as Indian public diplomacy is concerned, our mission statement is our own understanding of public diplomacy in the Indian context, which is: "To create a better understanding of India and its foreign policy concerns. We intend to put in place a system that enables us to engage more effectively with our citizens in India and with global audiences that have an interest in foreign policy issues."

What do you see as the biggest challenge for public diplomacy in India?

In today's globalized world, people's interest in foreign policy issues has grown. However, diplomacy by its very nature is rather complex and does not lend itself to easy generalizations. Sometimes oversimplification and generalization of complex issues can be a challenge to public diplomacy. Through our public diplomacy

efforts, we want to encourage a more informed debate and discussion within India of foreign policy issues.

Why is public diplomacy critical for India?

Public diplomacy is extremely critical for a country of India's size and stature. We are intensely engaged with the world. We have a position, a point of view on global issues. Diplomacy is no longer an elite issue far removed from people's lives. Today everyone is interested in foreign policy issues. Public diplomacy plays a very important role in explaining to both domestic and foreign audiences our foreign policy initiatives.

Can you give an example of what you consider a successful public diplomacy program?

I would like to give the example of "India is..." as a successful public diplomacy program. We have been conducting an online photography competition for the last two years. We have just started the third edition of the competition. We have been able to engage thousands of youth from several countries to come up with their ideas on India under this competition. Along with a photography competition we also have a video competition. As a result of this program, we have received entries from more than 40 countries and youth in very large numbers have engaged themselves in creatively thinking and talking about India. This, in my view has been a very successful public diplomacy exercise done by us.

What movie, book or piece of music best represents India, in your opinion?

India is a very large and diverse country. It is, therefore, not possible to come up with the name of any one book or a movie or a piece of music which best represents India. There are a lot of well-known Bollywood films which represent India very well. I definitely feel that our documentary films made by the Public Diplomacy Division, available on our YouTube channel, represent India very well. Through these documentaries we have tried to present every aspect of Indian life from our vibrant democracy, history, culture, architecture, music to our people.

What advice would you give to students of public diplomacy?

Public diplomacy is a new discipline that has tremendous potential. There are so many aspects of public diplomacy that we don't understand. Students of public diplomacy can play a very important role in helping governments understand how to optimize the various PD tools to one's best advantage.

This article first appeared April 2014 as part of the [Q&A with CPD](#) interview series.

Vikas Swarup

This interview was conducted by Patrick J. Linehan, U.S. Public Diplomat in Residence, USC Center for Public Diplomacy. For two years (2011-2013), Indian diplomat and best selling author of *Slumdog Millionaire* Vikas Swarup and Linehan served as fellow Consuls General for their respective countries in Osaka, Japan. Linehan asked Vikas to talk about his dual roles as senior diplomat and best-selling writer and his views about the role of public diplomacy in international affairs.



How do your novel Q&A and its film version *Slumdog Millionaire* as well as your novels *Six Suspects* and *The Accidental Apprentice* shape the global image of India?

I would like to believe that they convey the image of an India that is vibrant, energetic and industrious. My books try to capture the vitality of life in our cities. How people, even those living in the slums, are trying to make a better life for themselves. How everyone is optimistic about their future being better than their present.

Slumdog Millionaire was not a documentary on slum life. Dharavi just happened to be the backdrop of telling a compelling human story about the ultimate underdog. Eventually it is a tale of hope and optimism which conveys the message that even someone who is given no chance in life can beat the odds and triumph.

More broadly, what do you see as the role of popular entertainment and the arts in public diplomacy?

I think they have a very important role to play. Very often it is a country's films, music, cuisine and books which offer a window into its culture to outsiders. So the more popular a nation's culture, the more is its soft power. Take Bollywood, for example. These glittering, glitzy films have long been popular in certain regions of the world such as the Middle East. Over the past decade, however, Bollywood has been making inroads elsewhere. One of the most popular entertainers in Tajikistan is a man who sings Bollywood songs. When I was posted in Addis Ababa, whenever my car would go out, Ethiopian street urchins would run after it singing Hindi film songs, without, of course, knowing a word of Hindi. I think the great thing about Bollywood is that these movies can be understood even without knowing the language and they mesmerize audiences with their songs and dances and emotional scenes. In Afghanistan, an Indian TV serial became so popular that you could not try to call in Afghanistan at 20:30 in the evening when the Indian television soap opera *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* dubbed into Dari was telecast on Tolo TV.

The same is true of Indian music, of our dance, of our art, our literature, yoga, ayurveda, even Indian cuisine, which has become very popular the world over, and especially in the United States.

Are there lessons for the United States and other countries in India's successful use of public diplomacy soft power?

I think the USA's soft power is unrivaled. Everyone already knows McDonald's, Microsoft and MTV. Hollywood films have been ruling the roost for decades. A village bumpkin in some remote outpost of the world might be sporting a 'New York Yankees' T-shirt. The whole world is going crazy over the latest iteration of the iPhone. You just

have to leverage these ubiquitous icons to your advantage.

On your website you describe yourself as “a diplomat who writes, not a writer who masquerades as a diplomat.” Could you say a few words about what it means to be a diplomat who is at the same time a successful writer? How does being a writer inform your role as a diplomat, and how does being a diplomat shape you as a writer?

For me work comes first and writing comes second. Unlike other writers with day jobs who are able to write in the crevices of the day, I can only write when I have a clear horizon in front of me, meaning several hours without any interruptions. So I usually write on weekends and holidays. I try to strike a balance between my life as a writer and my role as a diplomat.

The Indian government is very liberal and gives complete freedom for artistic expression to civil servants. So technically speaking, there is no bar to what you want to write as long as it is made clear that the views expressed are personal. The only conflict, I suppose, is that as a bureaucrat you are supposed to work behind the scenes and neither be seen nor heard in public whereas as a novelist you have to be out there, promoting your work.

I think the security of the day job gives me the freedom to write in my spare time. I don't feel I am under any kind of “pressure.” Moreover the tremendous success of Slumdog Millionaire at a global level has opened up many more doors for me as a diplomat. So I believe the two roles complement each other rather well.

Do you have any advice for our students who are studying public diplomacy?

Just like me, you are also going to be ambassadors of your country, promoting its soft power. For that, the most important thing is to be fully conversant with all aspects of that soft power. So immerse yourself in your culture – politics, art, films, music, technology, cuisine....everything under the sun. Be as curious as you can be. Only when you know your country and culture well will you be able to interpret it for a foreign audience.

This article first appeared November 2014 as part of the [Q&A with CPD](#) interview series.



ITEMS & IDEAS

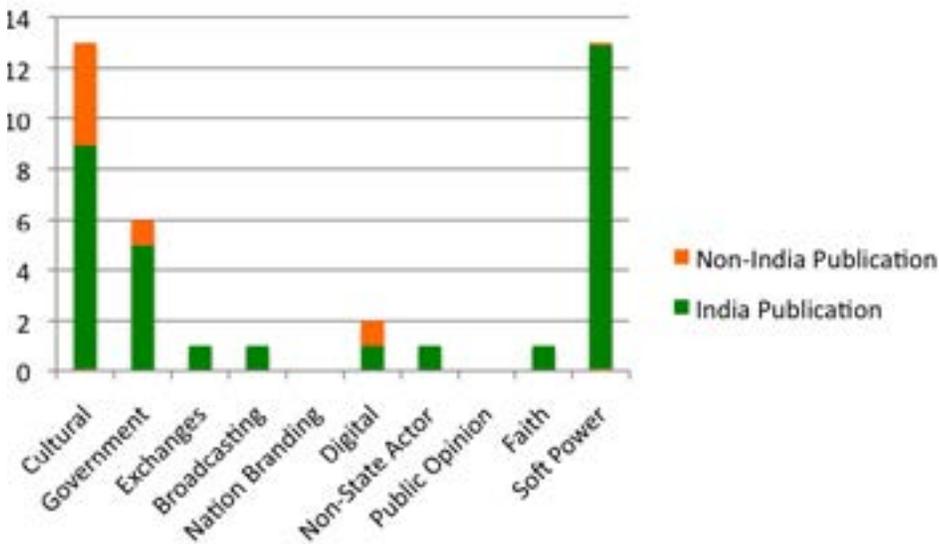
India Inside Out – A Case Study in Indian Public Diplomacy

By Maya Babla

In November 2010, President Obama said on his inaugural visit to New Delhi, “[India is not simply emerging, it has emerged.](#)” In many ways, of course, this is true. India endured the economic collapse with resiliency, hovering between [seven and nine percent GDP growth in 2011](#); it is speculated that the country has a chance at [permanent-member status on the United Nations Security Council](#); and with its young population, India is perfectly poised on a trajectory to world leadership. On the other hand, India still [lags behind on several key human development indices](#), ranking 134 of 187 in the most recent UN report, a challenge compounded by rapid [urbanization](#). For all these reasons and complexities—and a few more—India makes for a fascinating case study in public diplomacy, and in December 2011, six of my colleagues and I journeyed to New Delhi, Vishakapatnam, and

Mumbai with the goal of appraising India’s public diplomacy strategy. Over the course of two weeks, we met with Indian government and civil society leaders, explored the culture, and experienced the sights, sounds, and smells of two of India’s largest cities. And along the way, we shared our conversations with people from around the world through the website, [www.IndiaPublicDiplomacy.com](#). Our key deliverable was a report that summarized our findings in six key areas: government public diplomacy, development, urbanization, citizen diplomacy, media, and Indo-Arab relations. The report will be available publicly in the coming weeks.

In approaching this project, my core question was one that required reconciliation, rather than an answer. How can India boast such high levels of economic growth, yet sustain some of the worst rates of child malnutrition, poverty, and gender inequity in the developing world? It’s a question that media coverage of India is beginning to ask: [is India’s rise as a “new world power” both true and a “false reality”?](#) Development was a key research area for us, and yielded a clear finding: [Indians are hands-on when it comes to addressing the development challenges the country faces.](#) They are engaged and invested in their own development, and this message was palpable in our conversations with a host of



Articles on Indian public diplomacy from Indian and non-Indian publications.

NGOs, social justice activists, and graduate students. Yet these groups may not be representative of all Indians; one of our Indian interviewees proposed that Indians' "cultural tolerance of inequality is tremendous."

Thus, while we found that India has a robust civil society that in many ways is filling in the gaps that the government cannot due to a shortage of manpower, the Government of India could be doing much more to engage its own citizens in development, and for that matter, in public diplomacy.

By seeing a large population as an opportunity—a strength to be leveraged—India would achieve both its internal and external public diplomacy objectives. In our conversation with Anita Rajan, who is a part of the office that advises the Prime Minister on the National Council on Skill Development (NCS), she described India as being "on the brink," and ready to excel in the next decade, provided that India's youth population is equipped with the right skills. NCS uses a public-private partnership model to provide vocational training, with the goal of skilling 500 million people by 2022, and these partnerships, it became clear, are paramount in enabling large-scale change.

We found that many Indians unknowingly act as [citizen diplomats](#); take, for example, the leadership team at Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), an organization that trains women community leaders—from entrepreneurs to lawyers—in conflict transformation. They take on the challenging process of tough relationships like Kashmir and Pakistan: areas many people cast aside as too touchy. One aspect of their programs is facilitating dialogue between these women leaders, the military, and government bureaucrats. WISCOMP's approach is another model that can be replicated, and the more these types of collaborations happen, the closer India comes to achieving its public diplomacy objectives.

One challenge the Government of India will face along the way is the diluted citizen trust in its activities. A recent Times of India poll found that [60% of Indians feel that corruption is the country's biggest weakness](#), up nearly 20% from a Hindu Times poll conducted in February 2011. This is a critical problem because if India is perceived as corrupt on international indices as well as amongst its own people, then her credibility is damaged, and her ability to conduct public diplomacy is diminished, if not demolished. The government gets this, as evidenced by the comprehensive e-governance plan produced under the leadership of Abhishek Singh in the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology. India's e-governance initiatives are promising on two fronts: first, the plan is

accelerating the rate at which rural India becomes Internet-connected, and further accelerates the debate India must now face over Internet freedom; second, India's expertise in e-governance creates an opportunity to share its expertise with other countries facing similar issues.

India's relationship with the Arab world was an interesting case study for understanding the country's foreign relations, and where public diplomacy fits in—or doesn't. On the surface, Indo-Arab relations can be characterized as a strong business partnership. Given the many cultural and religious ties and a large Indian diaspora community in many Gulf countries, not expanding on this is a missed opportunity. But what is more promising, and more quietly pursued, is India's engagement with countries working to re-build their governments post-revolution; here, India can offer its expertise as the world's largest democracy, which will perhaps be more warmly welcomed than the American variety.

It became clear to us that India has much to offer the world besides its economic prowess. Indians' work towards solving their country's challenges is promising; the next step for India is in leveraging both the work of government and Indian civil society to do international knowledge sharing and capacity building. In doing so, India will rightly find its role in world leadership.

Author Biography

Maya Babla received both her Master's degree in Public Diplomacy and her B.A. in Communication from the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University of Southern California. A California native, she is currently based in Washington, DC working in the field of international development. Follow her tweets: [@mayababla](#).

This article first appeared January 2012 as part of the [CPD Monitor](#) series.

No More Fun and Games for Delhi

By Babeeta Kaur Dhillon

The 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi highlighted some of India's best and worst traits and revealed the sad truth that the country may not yet be poised for superpower stature. Due to a number of [rough-ups](#) before the Commonwealth Games began on October 3, India must now choose whether to learn from its mistakes or gloss over them over like they never happened. Be that as it may, in order to stay a player in the race against China, Brazil, and South Africa, it is advised that India place its thinking cap swiftly on and be ready to seek guidance if it wants to be a leader in the global arena.

The Commonwealth Games were a chance for India to leap onto the world stage and strikingly demonstrate its power – at least many Indians thought this would be the case. It was seen as the country's first chance to unleash its [soft power on a global stage](#) and soak up the praise after it was all done. Instead the Commonwealth Games exposed India's corruption, lack of infrastructure, and an inability to take care of its people.

New Delhi's infrastructure had undergone much rehabilitation in order to accommodate the high flow of traffic for the Commonwealth Games. However, two weeks before the Games started, the footbridge connecting to the main stadium (bridge number three) [collapsed](#) injuring 23 workers. [Press coverage](#) around the world attacked India and its inability to correctly implement its infrastructure and shed light on accusations that illegal permits and corruption had taken place in order to give New Delhi a time-sensitive facelift. The ultimate cost for this facelift is still unknown, but is [estimated](#) around \$4.6 billion dollars, nowhere near the budget of \$500 million dollars approved by the Indian Government in 2003. Additionally, according to the Housing and Land Rights Network, a research group, 100,000 families were [evicted](#) from their dwellings in order to grant space to new buildings for the Games.

Amongst a string of unfavorable press, the BBC



Photograph by [Ravinder Singh Gill](#)

[broadcast photos](#) from the athletes' village depicting dirty bathrooms and other unhygienic living conditions. Some athletes from Scotland and New Zealand called their accommodations "unfit for human habitation" and were ultimately relocated. [Empty seats](#) and high ticket prices also stained the reputation of the Commonwealth Games organizers, and weigh-in troubles for the Boxing matches did not help either. But perhaps the biggest faux pas for India was a slip of the tongue made by the Games' Organizing Committee Chairman Suresh Kalmadi, calling Prince Charles' wife Camilla Parker-Bowles, Princess Diana instead. In the mere two week span of the Commonwealth Games, around 300 complaints of corruption were

made to India's Central Bureau of Investigation.

Given India's impressive [opening and closing](#) galas and its enormous soft power potential, the fallout from the Games is especially [disappointing](#). When people reminisce about the days of the 2010 Commonwealth Games they will likely not remember India's soft power displays: the vibrant fashion, the Bollywood performers, a terrific sporting match or even the hypnotizing performance of A. R. Rahman. Instead they will remember the [headlines](#) and [images](#) that branded India as just not up to par.

Author Biography

Babeeta Kaur Dhillon is a graduate of the USC Master of Public Diplomacy program. Her topics of research included cultural diplomacy, nation branding, corporate diplomacy and development, while her regions of focus are India, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. She was born in Harrow, United Kingdom, and speaks Punjabi and Hindi.

This article first appeared October 2010 as part of the [CPD Monitor](#) series.

Cultural Diplomacy in India and Pakistan: Moving Beyond the Empty Gesture

By Rob Asghar

Much has been made of the potential for cultural diplomacy to ease the tensions between Pakistan and India. Given those nations' nuclear posturing, their complaints against each other for fomenting cross-border terrorism, and the potential for that area to destabilize the rest of the world, every possible tool should be tried.

I spent a portion of the past year working with one cultural diplomat, Pakistani rock-star and UN Goodwill Ambassador Salman Ahmad, serving as an unpaid communications adviser for his efforts to bring peace and stability to Pakistan. I came away sensing that cultural diplomacy inevitably runs the risk of being naïve about deeper sources of conflict.

Writer Salma Hasan Ali [examined Ahmad's life](#) in a recent CPD Blog piece, offering this assessment:

"With more than 30 million record sales, Salman went on to become an international rock star – often called the 'Bono of South Asia'. More importantly, he used the power of music to challenge the status quo, bring attention to sensitive issues, and galvanize millions to believe in new ways of thinking."

My own assessment would be a bit more sober.

I was in a State Department office with Ahmad and a team of allies when I first sensed that the "music will show us the way" approach could only go so far. We had finagled an audience with Obama administration special envoy Richard Holbrooke, hoping we could get him excited about our cause and open the necessary doors for us to carry out our cultural and public diplomacy mission.

Holbrooke offered some unsolicited advice to "the Bono of South Asia," telling him that what makes Bono successful as a celebrity diplomat isn't his fame but rather his rare command of facts and policy. By the time we left, some of us realized he didn't see great

hope in our approach but was willing to wish us the best and perhaps even open a door here and there.

Ahmad soldiered on, organizing a "United Nations Concert for Pakistan" as a relief and awareness event; then a memoir entitled *Rock & Roll Jihad*, which he promoted in the U.S. and Pakistan. In a [blog post](#) entitled "Following the Music... to Nowhere" for Pakistan's popular Dawn newspaper, writer Aroosa Masroor offered a sense of disappointment,

"The least Salman could have done yesterday was establish a connection with the youth and given them something concrete to look up to, rather than vaguely quoting the poet and Sufi mystic Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. 'If you follow the music, it'll show you the way,' he quoted repeatedly, each time someone from the audience posed a serious question....'I was so not impressed by what he had to say,' remarked a medical student I spoke to during the tea break. 'He should have been more realistic.'

Pakistanis and Indians share a common culture that goes back centuries."

There is a reason the campfire song "Kumbaya" went from being a communal anthem to a snide swipe: Positive intentions without tangible action make cynics of most of us.

One other form of cultural and public diplomacy has attracted even greater attention - the potential for Indian Bollywood films to improve cultural ties between Pakistan and India. Here again the potential exists to miss the real opportunity. Islamabad-based freelance journalist Saad Khan wrote recently in the Philadelphia Inquirer that,

"The division between India and Pakistan has been compared to the split between East Germany and West Germany during the Cold War, but the situations are widely divergent. Whereas Germany's division after World War II was largely peaceful, if tense, the

subcontinent's partition in 1947 into separate Hindu and Muslim territories was followed by a fratricidal bloodbath. More than a million people were killed and 12 million uprooted."

A recent [Foreign Policy](#) article by Anuj Chopra covers similar ground about the Bollywood bond, although it adds some crucial nuance,

"the most common trait attributed to Pakistanis in the Western media is that they hate India and would not hesitate to destroy the world's largest democracy given the opportunity." He claims, with some validity, that this actually reflects Pakistani leaders' efforts to stir up hatred against external threats as a distraction from internal problems.

And he claims,

"Indian movies have played a crucial role in bringing the people of the two countries closer. Indian movies are watched in virtually every Pakistani household, transcending boundaries between rich and poor, liberals and conservatives.

Cultural diplomacy inevitably runs the risk of being naïve about deeper sources of conflict."

It's this fact that makes the notion of a healing Bollywood bond laughable. Most Pakistani and Indian households represent extended families, populated with elders who have vivid memories of the massacres perpetrated against their side purely on account of religious or ethnic differences. Yes, Pakistanis and Indians share a common culture that goes back centuries. But many Hindu nationalists (who ran the Indian government only a short time ago) believe that local Muslims should convert back to the religion of their forefathers, before invaders from Arab lands arrived. Many Muslims are still able to thrive



within India, but the ones in Pakistan remain jumpy, and not merely because their leaders may incite anti-Indianism. Within this context, Bollywood storylines and dance routines are, in fact, not enough to overcome the animosity. This shouldn't be too surprising: In a pinch, Jerry Lewis does little to improve America's relationship with France.

Perhaps a more helpful and hopeful development involves religious diplomacy, or interfaith dialogue modeled at the highest levels. One such moment arrived with the recent [W](#) held in New Delhi. Given that religious identity, not dancing or fashion, is a core issue in the subcontinent, both Hindus and Muslims must be called to the better angels of their respective religions.

This involves the difficult work of post-independence forgiveness and reconciliation: seeking forgiveness for the collective guilt shared by one's own side, and offering genuine forgiveness for the real hurts imposed by the other side. Few leaders have stepped forward to model this sort of religious diplomacy. It requires more than warm feelings or a shared love of Sufi-rock music or musicals.

It also is not an end in itself, but a step along a path. Real peace involves managing a society's devils. If Indians and Pakistanis can reduce the religious hatreds (seeing one another as the devil) long enough to find ways to compete together against others in economic enterprises (seeing others as a devil, albeit in the spirit of friendly economic competition), then they have a chance to invest their enormous human capital wisely.

Author Biography

This month's feature piece was written by Rob Asghar. A CPD University Fellow, Asghar is a Pakistani American political writer whose essays and commentaries have appeared in more than 30 newspapers around the world, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Denver Post*, *Orange County Register*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Jordan Times* and *Japan Times*. Asghar has also been a columnist for *Creators Syndicate* and the *Ashland Daily Tidings*, and is currently a regular blogger for *The Huffington Post* and the *Los Angeles Daily News*. He is a member of the *Pacific Council on International Policy* and the *Los Angeles World Affairs Council*.

This article first appeared March 2010 as part of the [CPD Monitor](#) series.

On Indian Food in the Diaspora:

An interview with Indian Restaurateur Anita Jaisinghani

Public Diplomacy Magazine editors Jocelyn Coffin, Emily Schatzle, and Colin Hale sat down with Anita Jaisinghani, chef and owner of Indika and Pondicheri in Houston, Texas, to discuss the growing influence of Indian food in the United States. Since its opening, Pondicheri has earned two James Beard Award nominations for Best Chef of the Southwest 2011 and Best New Restaurant 2011. Based on her experiences growing up in Gujarat, India and emigrating to the United States in 1990, Jaisinghani talked to PDM about her views on Indian cuisine in the United States and the incredible potential for a formal Indian gastrodiplomacy program.

Public Diplomacy Magazine: You run two successful Indian restaurants in Houston, Texas and you have two James Beard Award nominations. Can you tell us a little about your career and the inspiration behind it?

Anita Jaisinghani: I was always into cooking, but I never thought I'd get into a business like this. And the main reason I did was because I couldn't find the food I was looking for. I was appalled by the quality of Indian food in America.



PDM: If we define gastrodiplomacy as a means of communicating culture and national identity, do you believe that Indian food and your work in particular qualifies as gastrodiplomacy? If so, how?

AJ: My hunch is that people see India as a very third world country with a lot of poverty. They don't think of Indian cuisine as an elegant cuisine like French food or Norwegian food, which is really hot right now. They think Indian food is cheap and should be readily available and not be high quality or high art. I feel like my food at Indika is very authentic, not traditional. I don't want it to be traditional because in India, the way we eat is different than how we eat in America. I want to bring it to Americans in a way they would recognize... I do think that the perception of Indian food is rising. I don't think it's rising as fast as Korean, Japanese, or even Vietnamese are. Indians are just not as vigilant at showing where we come from. We all love our food but it's not a documented cuisine. There are no rules to follow. It is a very personal, family inspired cuisine so when you say how do you like daal, it means curried lentils, and there are a thousand different ways to make it, and a hundred different lentils to make it with.

I feel like food is certainly a point where people can come together and sit to enjoy a meal without fighting about their cultural differences. I am a big believer in putting out what I think is cross-cultural. I was born a Hindu and it's okay to eat beef. In America that's what we eat and we are living here.

PDM: Do you think there is an Indian-American fusion cuisine? If so, what do you think that represents?

AJ: I am in the interest of getting Indian food to be more recognizable. I don't care if they take samosa and naan as being the epitome. Look at what David Chang does in New York with his Korean food. It's not Korean food, it's totally fusion. But at least people are recognizing the fundamental basis of Korean food. I think fusion food is great as long as you have food that ends up tasting good. As long as people are eating Indian food, I am happy. I don't care how they're eating it, as long as they are eating it.

PDM: You focus on using fresh, locally-sourced ingredients that you can find in Houston, where your restaurant is located. Do you think that using ingredients local to Texas undermines the authenticity of your Indian food?

AJ: Not at all. I found just about every ingredient and spice that I needed [in Houston] and I didn't need to use local ingredients. I chose to. I could've stuck to only what I would eat in India, but to me that's like living in Texas and not breathing the air. How could I live in Houston and not use the great seafood I was getting at my door and use something that's only in India? That's why I wanted to use local ingredients. To me there was no other way to cook.

PDM: You said it has been easy to find Indian ingredients in Houston, where there is a large Indian community and there are many Indian grocery stores. Do you think that says something significant about U.S.-Indian relations?

AJ: I hope it does. Now you can get Indian food at Trader Joe's. A couple of my customers tell me that the best frozen Indian food is from Trader Joe's. Indian food is very addictive. I think people come to our restaurant on a daily and weekly basis because they just love that flavor. People are into health and eating vegetarian, and South Indian cuisine provides them with a healthy option. Indian food is really good for you and it has so much more flavor than eating just potatoes or any other vegetable.

PDM: Immigrants to the U.S. bring their own cuisines and flavors, but sometimes the food gets homogenized and the nuances get diluted. For example, many Chinese restaurants in Los Angeles serve the same dishes, such as orange chicken, lo mein, etc. What are your thoughts on this?

AJ: That happens with any culture. I think Indian food will come and is coming into its own. I certainly hope that in my lifetime I see it becoming as mainstream as Japanese or Chinese cuisine. The problem with Chinese again is also that it is very diluted. I think this has to do with self-preservation for a lot of immigrants. They'd rather do something that's safe, tested, and tried.

PDM: India does not have an official gastrodiplomacy program. Do you think they should? If so, what do you think that program might look like?

AJ: I think it would be a great idea for India to launch an official gastrodiplomacy program. I think it's about bringing Indian food to the street level in the U.S. It's not about a highfalutin cuisine. It's about taking something basic and putting it out there. I don't know what the other countries do to actually bring it down to an everyday, every person's level, because really you want to hit everybody – not just the foodies – because the food has universal appeal.



This article first appeared in Winter 2014 in [PD Magazine](#).



STUDENT DISPATCHES

Kicking Away the Ladder: Indian Civil Society in Action

By Hend Alhinnawi

MUMBAI – In a country that is home to 55 of the world’s billionaires, it is hard to imagine that India, like many other developing countries, faces great challenges when it comes to poverty, homelessness, and development-related issues. In a nation with an estimated population of 1.21 billion, how does one go about solving these problems? Many are tempted to point the finger at the government, and while they have a responsibility to provide basic ne-

cessities to their people, I am interested in the role of civil society in addressing development challenges. As one official at the United States Embassy in Mumbai put it: “young Indians are acutely aware that India has become a world power, and they are also aware of its shortcomings.”

Previously, I had examined India through the United Nations lens, reading reports of UN data and looking



Photograph by [MM](#)

at various UN-sponsored projects. However, through the India: Inside Out trip, I was able to see the impact ordinary people are making on international development issues in India. The government has caught on to this idea, too. Navdeep Suri, Head of the Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of External Affairs in India, expressed that: "one way of addressing India's development is through creating smart partnerships between the government and civil society."

During our visit to Visakhapatnam, our group had the chance to meet and speak with graduate level students at Gitam University. Most of them were pursuing Master's degree in Business Administration or Management. All of them were involved in causes related to India's development. Students spoke to us about topics ranging from reducing child beggars, to environmental conservation and working with the disabled. As one student put it: "every person is required to give back to India, in any way they can."

Their latest project? Working with a local orphanage, providing essential goods and financial support through fundraising campaigns. As they spoke, I saw a genuine commitment to working in underserved communities. These students are firm believers that every Indian citizen has a role to play and a responsibility to give back to India. All their extracurricular activities are part of a personal initiative taken by the students, who are invested in tackling certain development related issues and promoting volunteerism as an essential role of civil society.

After speaking with this extraordinary group of individuals, I wondered about the rest of Indian civil society, and how they felt about India's development. As our group continued to meet with government officials, professionals, and NGOs, it became clear that India's development issues were on everyone's mind, and all were taking a proactive approach to being part of the solution.

One of my favorite meetings was with Harsh Mander, an Indian writer, social worker and activist. He is the Director of the Centre for Equity Studies in New

Delhi, and while he is involved in various causes, the one closest to his heart is working with homeless families, many of which lack access to food and basic nutrition. During our meeting, he stated that: "No child should have to sleep hungry...whatever the costs, we'll have to find resources to do it." Mr. Mander works with these kids to build trust and help them regain control of their lives, at the same time collaborating with government officials to create laws that protect their rights.

Mr. Mander's work is a perfect example of my core learning about development in India: Indians are hands-on when it comes to their own development. They are not waiting for the United Nations, or anyone else for that matter, to come in and solve their problems.

Indians are proud of their heritage, history and democracy. As Mr. Mander put it: "In India, we don't have to make references that are international, because they are included in our constitution." Considering that human capital is a great asset in India, it makes sense to create partnerships between government agencies and civil society. Building these partnerships increases opportunity for the exchange of information, capacity building and sustainable development between organizations, groups, individuals and government officials. In that process, everyone is a winner, especially the beneficiaries.

Perhaps the most powerful statement made throughout this trip was by Mr. Harsh Mander, when he said that ordinary people have "exiled the poor from their conscious" and only when we are able to see them as people, can we start to solve the problem of poverty.

India is unique in its problems, from its large population, colonial history, poverty levels and ideological divisions. Therefore, the solutions must be as varied, and perhaps, must come from the Indian people themselves. Strengthening partnerships between the government and civil society is essential because it creates a population that is engaged in its own development, and also, in creating policies that promote democracy and equality. As the world's largest

"No child should have to sleep hungry...whatever the costs, we'll have to find resources to do it."
—Harsh Mander, director of the

Centre for Equity Studies in New Delhi

democracy, India has the power to set the standard for its own development through using its greatest asset: human capital. Through engaging civil society and governments in smart partnerships, great strides can be made in education, agriculture, technology, industrial development that advance both the social and political divisions in the country. By effectively addressing and managing the country's development issues, India can then provide leadership and guidance to other developing countries, through creating a model for sharing information and best practices. Ultimately, that has the potential to positively strengthen India's image and influence abroad, thereby, enhancing its nation brand and public diplomacy efforts.

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Photograph by [Vinoth Chandar](#)

Commonalities and Complexities

By Jessica A. Castillo

India is a complex nation.” These are words I heard many times throughout my short two-week span in India, and after much reflection, I believe I may have finally gained a speck of clarity about what this statement means, and why it became a recurring theme in conversations about where India is today and where its future lies. I set out to examine the state of India’s urban issues; to determine whether the strength of the nation is stemming from its megacities, urban populations and local innovations. What I found is that identifying India’s strengths and weaknesses is a complex task, and often, they are one and the same.

In New Delhi, our team met with Harsh Mander with the Center for Equity Studies (CES). CES conducts research and advocacy for social and economic justice, and under their umbrella, the Dil Se campaign was established to provide services to street children in Delhi. After visiting a school for boys that was established as part of the Dil Se campaign, and hearing about the vast needs of urban children in Delhi and throughout India, it was obvious that great efforts are being taken to correct a growing problem that has left many children without proper education, health, and other basic needs and opportunities.

Our conversation with Mr. Mander revealed several things: collaboration with government on urban social issues is a must; societies must reclaim responsibility for their citizens; and populations must understand the issues that are common to us all in order to find solutions to the problems that unite us.

In this case, small NGOs in India seem to be taking on a monstrous task, not only to address the needs of the urban poor, but also to stress to local, national and international communities that social issues such as lack of education and health services, poor nutrition, and homelessness are not merely problems of Delhi, nor of India alone, but rather they are issues that concern much of the developing and even developed world alike.

Creating this common understanding among communities across the world could be the key to developing more unified and effective approaches



Photograph by [Dennis Jarvis](#)

to the issues that plague many. As Mr. Mander suggested, many developed nations are tending to steer away from socialized states and abandoning the notion of responsibility to their citizens. But perhaps recognizing this approach as a problem for sustainable development is where India will be a step ahead of the rest as it continues to progress. Perhaps India will be able to establish itself as a nation with a sense of responsibility to its citizens and set the example for other nations.

The paradox of this concept as an opportunity and simultaneous weakness became apparent to me when one day in Mumbai, we drove down a street and saw the 27-floor home of a billionaire, and the next day drove down another street and saw the overcrowded slum dwellings constructed of plastic sheeting and

scrap wood. It is true that there is a long road ahead to creating a socially inclusive and equal nation. Addressing the diverse needs of the growing urban population has put strains on the government, non-profit organizations and all citizens who inhabit these areas. But starting out with a proper foundation is a step in the right direction and a step that India may be able to embrace with the help of its ambitious NGOs and citizens.

The work of CES and other organizations such as Sesame Workshop—which works to improve educational opportunities for children and helps ensure that they develop into adults who respect diversity and the needs of others— may provide the first step toward harnessing the immense power of a megacity in an international arena. Building strong communities strengthens nations and society as a whole and raising globally aware citizens in the process will help to ensure that the commonality of many social issues is recognized from city to city, across the world.

I see so many efforts in urban India that are similar to the efforts of the cities in which I have worked; they continue working to educate the marginalized, address the needs of the homeless and impoverished, empower women, improve quality of life. It is an ongoing effort and a common effort indeed. In some ways, I felt that the cities we visited were not so different from my own home and not so ‘complex’ at all. The real complexity, perhaps, is communicating to those abroad that India is its own nation, and is determined to resolve old and new problems in its own way. In New Delhi and in Mumbai, what little I saw of an expansive country, it was obvious that strategic action by the government and non-profit organizations is underway to effect change and improve the lives of many. What remains to be seen is whether the rest of the world will recognize the accomplishments that have been made amidst and despite the complexities of a nation such as India.

Author Biography

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Glorious Delhi: A Melting Pot for Religious Diplomacy

By Hend Alhinnavi

NEW DELHI – Walking through the streets of New Delhi, it is hard to resist a city with such a unique combination of old charm and modern features. Whether you're looking for cultural, social or religious diversity, you're sure to find it in Delhi. On December 12, 2011, [New Delhi celebrated 100 years](#) as India's "spanking new capital." On that same day in 1931, King George V announced the shifting of the Capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi. So, what makes New Delhi so special? For one, there are many religions represented, including Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, the Baha'i faith and Christianity. In one day, our group visited Akshardham, Jama Masjid and the Lotus Temple– all sites with magnificent structural appeal and a good story to tell.

Our first stop, [Akshardham](#), is located in the heart of New Delhi and represents 10,000 years of Indian culture that is show cased through breathtaking gardens, structures and artwork. The Swaminarayan

Akshardham embodies Indian culture, art, wisdom, heritage, values and serves as a tribute to Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830). It is an enlightening journey through India's values and contributions for the progress, happiness and harmony of mankind. The temple was built in five years, and was inaugurated on November 6, 2005, with the blessings of HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS).

The term Akshardham refers to the eternal, divine abode of the supreme God, eternal values and the virtues of Akshar as defined in the Vedas and Upanishads where divine bhakti, purity and peace forever pervades. However, Akshardham is much more than a place of worship. It provides a space where Indian and non-Indian visitors can learn more about India's history, cultural heritage, achievements, inventions and scientific contributions. It is a powerful public diplomacy tool because it tells a story that people from different faiths and backgrounds can understand and relate to. As an individual learning about this particular Hindu sect for the first time, I left Akshardham with a greater understanding and appreciation for the religion, and was able to relate many of the core concepts to my own faith.

Next, we visited Jama Masjid in Old Delhi, the largest mosque in India. It was built between 1644 and 1658, and is one of the last architectural works done by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. The mosque has a grand entrance and was built using red sandstones and marble. It has the potential



to hold thousands at one time. Originally, it was called the Masjid-i-Jahan-Numa, which means mosque commanding view of the world. Our group, covered with shawls, walked around Jama Masjid admiring the views, magnificent arches and prayer halls. The Masjid stands at the center of the capital city of the Mughals, Shahjahanbad, now Delhi. Jama Masjid has three gateways with verses from the holy Quran [inscribed in its walls](#). For Muslims, the second largest religious population in India, this mosque is particularly significant because it houses a cabinet which contains a collection of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) relics, including a red beard-hair of the prophet, the Quran written on deerskin, and his sandals and footprints, implanted in a marble block. For individuals wanting to learn more about Islam, or for Muslims looking for a place to worship, Jama Masjid provides a welcoming environment for both. Although it is located in the middle of a busy Old Delhi market place, once you enter the mosque, there is a certain serenity that overcomes the insanity outside. Individuals from all faiths can pray or meditate in the mosque's spacious courtyard overlooking Old Delhi.



speaks volumes about the people of India, and their tolerance and acceptance for diversity. From a public diplomacy perspective, religious institutions, such as Akshardham, Jama Masjid and the Lotus Temple are great tools that help build mutual understanding and mediate conflicts because they provide a space where individuals can learn about the respective religion, and interact with its followers, hence breaking the cycle of fear and ignorance.

Finally, our group made the journey to the Lotus Temple. Symbolizing peace, and surrounded by gardens, this temple represents the Bahai faith and was completed in 1986. It stands at more than 40m in height, and its distinct features are 27 giant white petals of white marble in a lotus shape. The central theme of the Bahai faith is unity through diversity, and a great emphasis is placed on prayer and meditation. Once our group entered the temple, we sat in a large prayer hall, where we meditated and reflected for a few minutes before exploring the temple. Bahai's believe that prayer and meditation is important to the progress of the human soul, both in this world and the next. There are more than two million [Bahai's](#) living in India and representing the diverse regions all over the country.

In my opinion, the spiritual diversity is what unites New Delhi and is one of its main attractions. Combined with a vast history, rich culture and people representing many faiths, New Delhi gives new meaning to faith diplomacy. The presence of these different religions and their ability to exist harmoniously in the same space

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Corruption and Its Discontents

By Maya Babla

NEW DELHI – Yesterday the Lok Sabha, India’s lower house of parliament passed the Lokpal bill by a voice vote. This high-profile piece of legislation has been advocated by Anna Hazare, a social activist whose movement has recently come to symbolize Indian citizens’ frustration with government corruption. India [ranks 87 out of 178 in Transparency International’s 2010 Corruption Perception Index](#), which measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption, and 134/183 in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business survey.

Recently, a series of scandals have ravaged the country: a telecommunications scandal, a housing loan scam, and the disastrous Commonwealth Games. Amplified by a feisty media, the result was a tarnishing of India’s reputation abroad and a disheartening of Indians at home. Not surprisingly, then, in February 2011, a public opinion poll carried out by the Hindu Times found that [41% of Indians thought corruption was the biggest problem facing the country](#).

Corruption in India is so entrenched within Indian society that corrupt action is often looked upon with nonchalance. For example, in his book, *India: A Portrait*, Patrick French interviews a “facilitator” or semi-professional person hired to dole out a “Montblanc pen here, a bottle of Blue Label there,” as situations—and voters—may require. According to one senior election facilitator in Mumbai, “a ‘big’ candidate would have trouble spending less than \$2-3m to win a constituency in the 2009 election (officially, each candidate was allowed to spend \$55,000).” Yet it is more than power-hungry politicians that engage in bribery. From a student slipping a Rs. 1000 note to the registrar in order to get his transcripts expedited, to a mother paying off a police officer when caught for a traffic violation en route home, these sometimes-small and oft-bigger acts have become the norm in India. (For some intriguing stories on bribery, check out www.ipaidabribe.com, a citizen-powered initiative.)

If India is perceived as corrupt on international indices as well as amongst its own people, then her credibility

is damaged, and her ability to conduct public diplomacy, diminished, if not demolished. And without that ability, India’s capacity to assert herself as a major global power is compromised. Preliminary evidence already shows this: according to a Goldman Sachs report published in 2007, *India’s Rising Growth Potential* [PDF], corruption was rated as one of the top ten restraints on investor confidence, scoring just higher than the developing country mean. Before coming to India, it was my opinion that if the country wants to continue to enjoy its high rate of economic growth, or assert world leadership, then it must face up to its problem of corruption. Yet in the past few weeks, I am seeing this challenge in a more nuanced light

41%

of Indians say corruption is India’s biggest problem

\$2-3 million

is the MINIMUM amount a ‘big’ candidate would have to spend to win a constituency in the 2009 election

\$55,000

is the MAXIMUM amount candidates were allowed to spend

Corruption is a problem that has not gone unacknowledged by government leadership. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said of corruption in February, “[it dents our international image and it demeans us before our own people.](#)” After our conversation with Abhishek Singh, Director of [E-Governance](#) programs in the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology (Department of Information), and Vineeta Dixit, Principal Consultant for the [National e-Governance Plan](#), it seems India has positioned itself to actually export tools of anti-corruption. The Department is working to leverage information communication technologies to increase transparency, accountability, fairness, citizen trust in government as an individual bureaucrat’s level of discretion decreases.

Examples include the Bhoomi Project, which makes proof of land ownership available in kiosks throughout rural areas, and the eSeva initiative, which provides government to citizen services and is a project of the Government of Andhra Pradesh. A total of [27 Mission Mode Projects](#) provide myriad services to citizens and initiatives like the network of 100,000 Internet enabled Common Services Centers (kiosks) makes the National e Governance Plan the “largest program of its kind in the world,” according to Abhishek Singh, during our conversation in Delhi.

What’s also promising about these programs in terms of public diplomacy is that the Department of Information Technology is doing tremendous international knowledge-sharing around ICTs, such as the [Pan-African e-Network Project](#), which creates linkages in tele-medicine and tele-education between India and Africa, or partnerships like the [Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT](#), which supports research and practical application of ICT4D. In these ways, India is demonstrating leadership in the field, and frankly, playing to its strengths. Continuing to build international partnerships in this way is smart public diplomacy. If these techniques are also applied to address India’s problem of corruption, I would be optimistic for its future.

Author Biography

Maya Babla received both her Master’s degree in Public Diplomacy and her B.A. in Communication from the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University of Southern California. A California native, she is currently based in Washington, DC working in the field of international development. Follow her tweets: [@mayababla](#).

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VIEWPOINTS

Public Diplomacy in India: Engaging the Domestic Audience

By Sanjay Srivastava and Sonali Singh

India's growing transregional influence and advancements in communications technology have led to increased foreign policy awareness among the Indian public. To this end, Indian public diplomacy has been focusing on foreign policy with domestic audiences through its "[Distinguished Lecture Series on India's Foreign Policy](#)" (DLS). The DLS lectures are mostly delivered by retired Indian ambassadors at university campuses in India (some lectures have been organized [overseas](#) also).

The Distinguished Lecture Series

The series began in February, 2010 at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and has been extensively covered by [local news](#) media. To date, more than 95 DLS events have been organized across the country, giving students and faculty members the opportunity to interact with Indian ambassadors. The lectures are based on the dialogical model of public diplomacy: interactive sessions after the lectures may provide relevant feedback to the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy division (XPD) of the [Ministry of External Affairs](#) about people's hopes and anxieties regarding various foreign policy issues.

The DLS lectures have covered diverse themes. Some lectures have demonstrated India's political optimism in bilateral relations with the major powers and demystify its strategic interest in [international relations](#); others have offered [positive narratives](#) about India's past and strong historical ties with various regions of the globe.

Our research suggests that through face-to-face interactions with Indian diplomats, the DLS has been able to inform and influence "wondering minds" in the audience. Our recent survey study on two DLS lectures organized at BHU indicate that both lectures increased the knowledge and understanding level of the audience. Most survey respondents followed the speaker's line of discussion and gave more precise responses in a post-lecture test than on a pre-lecture test consisting

of the same set of questions. Both students without any background in international relations and foreign students studying at BHU reported that they found the lectures interesting, and that they enhanced their understanding of foreign policy issues. Jean Bosco, a Rwandan student studying at BHU, said, "Even though the lecture was very short, I gained tremendous knowledge about India's foreign policy. The lecture has given answers to many of my questions like: How India is trying to make the Indo-Pak relations better? How much efforts India is putting in for this? And how India is developing and pursuing its goal to become a major power?" A few students also stated that the lectures have generated curiosity and interest among them on foreign policy issues and have led to informal discussions of these issues.

Appraisal of the DLS initiative must consider two questions: First, to what extent do the lectures contribute to the knowledge, understanding, and perception formation of the target audiences on India's foreign policy issues? And second, to what extent were the ideas expressed in the lectures transmitted to other networks by audience members?

Efforts to dispel misconceptions about India's foreign policy has been a major focus of the DLS. Speaking at BHU, Ambassador Achal Malhotra remarked that India does not behave like a big bully in the region. To paraphrase his remarks: "India advocates the policy of constructive engagement, despite serious provocations

in the past (the attack on Parliament, Mumbai terrorist attacks, etc). We believe that violent retaliation and confrontation can only complicate matters. This applies in particular to Pakistan, the origin of state-sponsored terrorism targeted at India. This policy must not be misunderstood as weakness, however. India sends strong and loud messages every time our patience is tested.” Our post-lecture survey indicates that most respondents found this argument convincing.

Author Biographies

Dr. Sanjay Srivastava is Professor of Political Science at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India. He teaches international relations and his research interests include public diplomacy, trade diplomacy, India’s foreign policy, and emerging powers.

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Suggestions for Future Action

Through the lecture series, the XPD needs to generate more effective outcomes than those already discussed. Our recommendations:

1. Follow-up actions might establish long-term relations with the audiences and universities by creating virtual communities and facilitating consistent discourse on foreign policy (to their credit, the XPD posts the text of the lectures on their website). Repeated DLS events in the same institution could lead to lasting interest and informed debates.
2. Lecture organizers should prioritize certain issues on which India takes a firm stand, such as climate change, nuclear non-proliferation, agricultural subsidies, and India’s relations with Pakistan and China.
3. Finally, venue location should be taken into account when choosing lecture themes, for example, a lecture on Indo-Bangladesh relations in West Bengal (an Indian province which shares a common border with Bangladesh) might be well-received.

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Cooperation with India: An Option or A Must?

By Mona El Hamdania

It is a fact that India's booming economy and population will result in a substantial increase in need of energy resources and global partners. Many countries around the globe are recognizing India's rising power and are working to strengthen their economic, political, and social ties with her. Partnering with India has been increasingly present on the agendas of many Arab states, particularly those in the Gulf, but not as a priority. Despite the awareness of the importance of India as a strong potential ally and trade partner, Arab states are still not fully engaging with India, especially on the public diplomacy front. The current efforts primarily revolve around trying to agree on bilateral trade and energy agreements. Diplomacy between the Gulf nations and India have not involved their respective publics and have remained at the government level.

A few cooperation agreements have been signed between Arab states and India, while many others are slowly being negotiated. In 2004, the GCC countries (Gulf Cooperation Council) signed an initial framework agreement with India in efforts to advance multilateral relations. This framework led the two parties to enter negotiations and sign a FTA (Free Trade Agreement) that would open the door to more significant cooperation opportunities. FTA negotiations have not been going well because of disagreements between India and the GCC countries around petroleum products in the negative list of the FTA. This agreement opportunity has been met by lots of pessimism and predictions of failure, as the disagreement between the FTA parties has been described to be irreconcilable. However, this disagreement does not mean the end of the negotiations. Nevertheless, it will impact public diplomacy efforts, pushing

ing them aside until the differences are resolved.

On another front of cooperation, in a rare move in 2006, King Abdullah Ben Abdul-Aziz of Saudi Arabia conducted a four-day visit to India to strengthen bilateral ties. The Saudi King and the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed two major agreements. The first agreement provided India with a "stable and increased" supply of crude oil; the second agreement improved cooperation between the two nations to combat terrorism. Both nations described the visit as "heralding a new era in India-Saudi Arabia relations and constitutes a landmark in the development of increased understanding and cooperation between the two." This visit has benefited the economy of both countries and increased their export and import rates. However, it was not significant to the average citizen in India or Saudi Arabia. It remained just one of many official visits they heard about in the media, without feeling its real impact in their daily lives.

The follow up to the Saudi Kings' visit was a bit late. It was not until 2010 that the Indian Prime Minister visited Saudi Arabia. The three-day visit was described as historic since it was the first of this magnitude since the visit of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1982. The main goal of this tour was to boost India-Saudi cooperation efforts to a higher level, particularly in the field of energy. Eight agreements were signed during this visit in the fields of energy, science and technology, and extradition. Manmohan

Singh stated that "I am conscious of the fact that this will be only the third visit by an Indian prime minister to Saudi Arabia. My visit reflects the strong mutual desire of both countries to reinvigorate our relations, as manifested in King Abdullah's historic visit to India

"India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have enjoyed special relations based on several millennia of civilizational and cultural linkages and people-to-people exchanges."

**— Manmohan Singh,
Indian Prime Minister**

in 2006 as the chief guest at the Indian Republic Day (...) India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have enjoyed special relations based on several millennia of civilizational and cultural linkages and people-to-people exchanges.” Religion is a major area of connection between India and Saudi Arabia, as every year, around 140,000 Indians visit Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage.

Developing strong and sustainable relations with India should not be considered by Arab states as an option, but as a must. India’s regional and global role is changing, growing very rapidly, and its say in global matters is becoming more significant. For instance, India is one of the world’s major nuclear powers and has the third largest armed forces in the world. It has the ninth largest world economy and it is a member of the G20 and the BRICS. Therefore, Arab states should seize the opportunity and engage India more aggressively to boost and build relations based on cooperation, mutual respect, and friendship.

There are many fields that can be explored by both Arab states and India to improve their current relations. In addition to trade agreements, the two parties should consider other public diplomacy venues to develop substantial social and cultural exchanges, and boost larger people-to-people relations. Cultural public diplomacy is one of the promising venues through which the Arab states and India can develop more relations. Activities can be organized around religious dialogue, student exchanges, and other cultural and educational issues that would bring both states and publics closer together.

Author Biography

Mona El Hamdani earned her professional degree from the Master of Public Diplomacy program at the Annenberg School for Communication at USC. She was a Fulbright Scholar from Morocco. Mona previously worked as a Country Program Manager for The Media Diversity Institute (MDI) in Morocco. Mona was also a Program Coordinator at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and was in charge of program evaluation and monitoring. Through her work with NDI, she encouraged youth and women to participate in Moroccan politics.

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India and the Internet: An Ambiguous Relationship

By Jerry Edling

India is often celebrated as a contradiction in terms, so it may not be surprising to learn that even though the country has only about 10% Internet penetration, it is very actively moving into e-governance while at the same time struggling with the issues of Internet freedom that are confronting most democracies. Spearheading the effort to achieve a more transparent and digital mode of government is Abhishek Singh, the Director of E-Governance at the Department of Information Technology in the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology for the Government of India, who met with our group on December 13. The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) is designed to expedite such tasks as applying for a passport, registering a business, and processing land records. To quote the promotional brochure, “No queues. No multiple windows. No delays. The beginning of the NeGP marks the end of all that.” That’s quite a goal for a nation renowned for an often opaque and confusing bureaucracy.

In that sense it is perhaps not surprise that India has been struggling with issues of Internet freedom even as it uses online technology to ease the lives of its hundreds of millions of citizens. Case in point: sections of an information technology law, passed in 2008, requiring intermediaries, such as Internet service providers and social networking sites, to police the Web for objectionable content. In April, the Indian government released a draft amendment to the Information Technology Act requiring search engines and web hosting services to block inflammatory content, defined as content that “threatens the unity,

integrity, defense, security or sovereignty of India, friendly relations with foreign states or public order.” As Vikas Bajaj noted in The New York Times, “The rules highlight the ambivalence with which Indian officials have long treated freedom of expression. The country’s constitution allows ‘reasonable restrictions’ on free speech, but lawmakers have periodically stretched that definition to ban books, movies and other material about sensitive subjects like sex, politics and religion.”

During our meeting, officials of the Department of Information Technology noted that freedom of speech is constitutionally guaranteed in India and said no one had been arrested under the amendment. They also argued that the U.S. has also been wrestling with issues of Internet monitoring. Indeed, such laughable schemes as requiring libraries to release the checkout lists of patrons to authorities have been at least floated as trial balloons in the U.S. before failing to pass constitutional muster.

The issue of Internet freedom is a surprisingly delicate topic in U.S. – Indian relations. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has staunchly defended Internet freedom, most recently in her remarks at the Conference on Internet Freedom, held at The Hague. While she and other officials readily condemn heavy-handed Internet censorship in nations such as China and Syria, they are more circumspect in their criticism of democracies such as India, with which the U.S. is carefully trying to nurture warmer relations. When asked about India and the Internet during our visit to the U.S. Consulate, Mumbai, for example, one official,

10%

Internet penetration in India

77th

India’s ranking on the 2011 Freedom House ‘Freedom of the Press’ report (US is #17)

122nd

India’s ranking on the 2010 Reporters Sans Frontiers ‘Freedom of the Press’ report (US is #20)

while reiterating the Secretary of State's position on Internet freedom, characterized India as a "vibrant democracy" that is wrestling with Internet issues openly. Similarly, after India said it planned to find ways to ban offensive content before it is posted, AFP reported that Department of State spokesman Mark Toner said, "We are concerned about any effort to curtail freedom of expression on the Internet... while carefully avoiding direct criticism of any proposals in India."

Word came during our visit that the country had decided to scrap at least some of its effort to require intermediaries to monitor the Internet and delete objectionable content. Nevertheless, serious challenges remain as India wrestles with these issues. In an analysis ("Freedom on the Net 2011"), Freedom House listed India as "partly free" and said that following the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, "the need, desire and ability of the Indian government to monitor, censor, and control the communication has grown" and that, "[g]iven the range of security threats facing the country... many Indians feel that the government should be allowed to monitor personal communications..." India ranks 77th (along with Bulgaria and East Timor) in Freedom House's 2011 Freedom of the Press ranking and is listed as "partly free." (Finland is #1, and the U.S. is 17th.) Reporters Sans Frontieres ranks India at number 122 on its press freedom index for 2010. (Finland is #1, and the U.S. is 20th.)

I see India as a conservative society with a democratic tradition. It will be interesting to see how such a complex nation develops a *modus vivendi* in cyberspace. When Indian Communications Minister Kapil Sibal insists that the world's largest democracy supports free speech, but adds that Websites such as Facebook, Google, and Yahoo has "had images which could be an insult to Indians," it dilutes the claim that India is the world's largest democracy and hurts its public diplomacy, especially in comparison to China.

Joseph S. Nye, Jr. suggests that soft power is about narratives. It will be fascinating to see whether the next chapter in the Indian Internet narrative consists of many voices speaking freely or regulations clamping down on it.

Author Biography

Jerry Edling earned a professional degree from the USC Master of Public Diplomacy program. He was also the Editor in Chief of "PD Magazine" and an editor at KNX, the CBS Radio all-news station in Los Angeles.

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Not Simply a Festival: Looking Beyond India by the Nile

By Navdeep Suri and Abu Mathen George

For a few years now, Spring in the Arab world comes with a number of political connotations that have now become part of standard vocabulary. In Egypt, amidst constant political change, we thought of infusing a dose of Indian culture into this Spring – a festival of arts and music that would arrive seasonally from the East. The idea was conceived in 2013, and the first edition of the festival turned out to be resounding success, with enthusiastic responses from different walks of life, and active collaboration with Egyptian artists. By the end, the event was billed as the largest foreign festival in Egypt since the 25 January Revolution. In 2014, the India by the Nile festival was even bigger, with more than 13 different events spread across three different governorates. Every event of the festival, whether it was the Bollywood musical, the classi-

cal Indian dance Kathak or the conversation between writers, received tremendous responses.

One of the principal objectives of the festival, along with presenting Indian culture in all its myriad forms, was to establish lasting relationships between artists and performers from both countries - to provide a platform for them to collaborate on their work and to share experiences. What had been a seed of an idea last year blossomed in unexpected ways - the Bollywood workshop at Medan Hanager attracted some six hundred people, of all age groups, and the talented dancer Gilles Chuyen even visited the Awladi Orphanage to conduct a workshop for the children there. A leading trainer from India, Puneeta Roy held a workshop with children of the New Horizon school



Photograph by Sunil Krishnan

on the topic of Being HuMan. One of India's most famous cartoonists, Sudhir Tailang collaborated with the Egyptian Caricature society – overcoming barriers of language and politics, both sides talked and worked on common issues affecting their countries. The Rajasthani folk music group even stayed back after their event to participate in the Drums Festival being held in Cairo.

Two particular events stand out as symbols of what future collaboration between the two countries in the cultural domain could look like. On a windy April evening in Cairo, the Embassy honoured eleven Egyptian and Indian women for excellence in their respective fields, from diplomacy and arts to business and government. These 'Women of Substance' took home with them not only the Indian saris they had so gracefully accepted to wear, but the belief that Indian women stood shoulder to shoulder with them in facing common challenges in their societies. The conversations that began that night would carry on till the final event of the festival – Words on Water – in which a galaxy of leading intellectuals from both countries would debate 'Societies in Transition' – notions of freedom of expression and satire, women's rights and patriarchy, and the difficulties of doing business in emerging economies. These conversations built friendships, away from the glare of the media or the formalities of Government, and will continue even as the festival becomes a valuable memory until its next edition.

From a public diplomacy platform, the responses to the festival were overwhelming. The Bollywood crew performed a flash mob at the airport on their arrival setting the tone, followed by a Facebook party with some 600 young Egyptians. The media coverage was unprecedented. More than 90 articles in newspapers and magazines, around 130 on online editions appeared about the different events. The festival itself received some 5 hours of prime time television over the course of its three weeks, with news reports on major state and private run channels. The number of followers of the Indian Embassy's facebook page even jumped from 30,000 to 70,000 during its course. Approximately 10,000 people came in touch with India by the Nile, and brought home with them a memory of India. But perhaps the most important response for us were the questions at the end: "When is the next festival? What are you planning?"

Many years ago, when the Nile used to flood and then recede, it would leave the land fertile for a fresh season of planting and growth. As the second edition of India by the Nile closes, this ancient analogy comes to mind – a seasonal festival of arts and culture that leaves in its

India by the Nile ran for 3 weeks and received

10,000

visitors

90

print articles

130

digital articles

5

hours of primetime
TV coverage

wake enduring friendships, lasting partnerships and the continuing belief that while the cultural relations between India and Egypt may be historic, its future is made in the present.

This CPD Blog was submitted by Ambassador [Navdeep Suri](#) and Second Secretary [Abu Mathen George](#) from the Indian Embassy in Cairo.

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Outward Bound – A Proposal for Indian Public Diplomacy

By Jerry Edling

India has been described as a land of contradictions, a place that assaults the senses with all the colorful vehemence of a Bollywood dance. The world's largest democracy is a collage of brilliant hues and stark contrast, which makes it all the more ironic that India's image as a world player is somewhat hazy and its public diplomacy is still a bit unformed. Professor Philip Seib of the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, in a blog published in December of 2010, wrote, in many respects, this exotic, chaotic country remains geopolitically undefined. . . . More and more, India is a significant player in world affairs, and yet it lacks a consistent profile that it can present to the rest of the world." Perhaps the problem is that while India has made great strides in defining its character and image, it has yet to define its role as a player in the world. That's a subtle but important distinction. The central question is not what India is but what it can become.

Take Norway. Its national character and image are defined, to a large extent, by its adjacency to the sea; but its public diplomacy is centered on peacemaking. Its capital is the namesake of the Oslo peace process, and it is the home of the annual Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. While it is true that, as Alan K. Henrikson notes, some of Norway's peace activities originated with missionary work by the Lutheran Church years ago, there is nothing that geographically singles out Norway for peacemaking. "Now, more than ever," wrote New York Times correspondent Frank Bruni, "Norway seems to be the international capital of peace." As Mark Leonard and Andrew Small note in their commissioned study "Norwegian Public Diplomacy," "Norway might be only 115th in the world in terms of its size, but it is leading the world as a humanitarian power." In other words, Norway has added a global role that draws from its culture and is designed to enhance its soft power, rather than simply drawing attention to its heritage. India can do the same.

Consider China's efforts at public diplomacy. While it is true that its Confucius Institutes are designed to

draw attention to Chinese language and culture and are somewhat inward looking, the growing ubiquity of the Xinhua News Agency is not. It aspires to become a world class news service rather than just a vehicle for China's positions on issues of national and global importance. It has covered the mining accident in Chile, the shootings in Seal Beach, California, the Global Green Growth Forum in Copenhagen, the Conrad Murray trial and the wedding of Paul McCartney as well as developments in China. The implicit message is that China's perspective on the world matters, but it's a soft sell that does not attempt to put everything in the context of Chinese culture or politics. India, which is at least as media-rich and media-savvy as China, should be a major player in the same realm.

As a burgeoning, boisterous democracy and a growing economic power with a tradition of nonalignment, India has tremendous assets that can be put to work in its public diplomacy; but it should re-orient its strategy to reach out to the world in a way that leverages its strengths and national values rather than simply inviting other nations to sample its rich culture and diversity. As Professor Seib notes, it has been doing some work in that direction by, for example, helping Senegal and Ghana with projects including rice production and information technology development; but it needs to do more. Some suggestions:

India should establish a Gandhi Academy of Peacemaking that would function as a global think tank for conflict resolution and that would convene an annual general assembly at which delegations from nations and non-state actors around the world could brainstorm new modalities for peace. India's leadership in technology would position it well to come up with innovative solutions involving new media as well as traditional paradigms of peace. India should start a Peace Corps – type program that would enlist recent university and technical institute graduates in service projects around the world. Tuition waivers and forgiveness could be used to create a burgeoning corps

of highly skilled volunteers. India should establish a global news service that not only provides an Indian perspective on world affairs, but also establishes the nation as a player in an increasingly competitive field. India's public diplomacy has already established the nation's image as incredible. The challenge in the next phase is to make its imprint on the world indelible.

Author Biography

Jerry Edling earned a professional degree from the USC Master of Public Diplomacy program. He was also the Editor in Chief of "PD Magazine" and an editor at KNX, the CBS Radio all-news station in Los Angeles.

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India's Lead in Government 2.0

By Abhay K

What is Gov 2.0? Gov 2.0 is all about a new culture of open governance, greater citizen involvement through the judicious use of web 2.0. Gov 2.0 is about interactive democracy against representative democracy, it is about open administration that involves citizens participation against closed administration and it is about spirit of voluntarily sharing information against closely guarding it.

The world has started moving towards Gov 2.0 without even being conscious about it. What has made Gov 2.0 possible is the widespread availability of Internet connected desktops and hand held devices. At present India has 80 million Internet connections, and over 50 million people use social media. But the number of mobile phones in India is more than 700 million, and growing at 15 million per month. Thus there is the possibility of a great leap in numbers of Indians using Internet in the next few years on mobile platforms. The use of new media channels by government organizations and high ranking officials is on the rise. Here is a brief chronology of the use of New Media by Indian government organizations and high ranking officials:

2009

- Shashi Tharoor, then Minister of State of External Affairs starts tweeting

Oct 2009

- India Post joins Twitter becoming the first government department to use New Media

March 2010

- Indian Embassy, Argentina joins Facebook

April 2010

- Goa Tourism Development Corporation joins social media to attract tourists.

May 2010

- Delhi Traffic Police launches a Facebook page.

June 2010

- Indian Embassy Argentina joins Twitter
- Karnataka State CID joins Facebook & Twitter.

July 2010

- Public Diplomacy Division of MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) launches its Twitter page followed by Facebook, YouTube, Scribd, Issuu & Blogger

Nov 2010

- Leader of Opposition Sushma Swaraj joins Twitter

Dec 2010

- Kanpur Police joins Facebook.
- Kanpur police lodges its first complaint through Facebook.
- Hoshiyarpur (Punjab) Police joins Facebook.

Jan 2011

- Embassy of India, Sofia joins Twitter
- Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) launches its Facebook page to ensure effective monitoring of garbage lifting at areas under its jurisdiction.
- J&K Traffic Police launches its Facebook page.
- Census 2011 joins Facebook.

Feb 2011

- National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) makes a debut on Facebook.
- Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao joins Twitter.
- Indian Embassy Washington DC joins Facebook.
- India's biggest jail Tihar launches its Facebook.

March 2011

- Official Spokesperson Ministry of External Affairs joins Twitter
- Head of the Consular, Passport & Visa Division joins Twitter
- Indian Ambassador to Bahrain joins Twitter and becomes the first Indian Ambassador to have an official Twitter account

This is a very representative list of organizations and individuals from various cross-sections of the

government making valuable use of new media to take governance closer to the people. As stated earlier, India has over 750 million mobile phones and each month it adds 15 million new ones. Internet connections are now available at much cheaper rates than even a year ago. Thus in a few years the whole adult population will have Internet-connected mobile phones.

These numbers put things in perspective. Government organizations and officials across the country will need to adapt to these changing realities with mind-boggling advances in communication and information technologies. In the process old and rigid hierarchies would give way to team spirit, culture of closely guarding data would give way to the spirit of sharing information as and when things happen and culture of exclusive privilege to corridors of power would give way to spirited zeal of crowd-sourcing i.e., directly involving public in policy making.

India's public diplomacy efforts have gained a huge boost from the use of the web 2.0 channels of the Public Diplomacy Division. The YouTube channel has over 60 very interesting short films. Over 2,1000 people across the planet have visited these films on wide ranging topics from culture to the economy, from ancient India to contemporary India. Several viewers have left positive comments. Thus new media has truly helped the Indian public diplomacy efforts reach a new global audience. Facebook page of the Public Diplomacy Division is a little window to the cultural universe of Indian diplomacy. It hosts photographs & videos of various cultural and business events happening at Indian embassies across the world. Indian Public Diplomacy uses Issuu to e-publish "India Perspectives," a magazine that is published in 17 languages. Though the print version is available only at the Indian missions and posts, the e-version can be accessed by any interested reader on the Indian Diplomacy website.

Several Indian embassies are already on Facebook: Argentina, Bulgaria, France, Suriname, USA and more. Each one has several hundred followers with whom they not only share information but also engage in dialogue.

The use of Twitter during the Libya crisis proved to be immensely useful in keeping instant channels of communication open, responding to queries on real time basis as well as implementing some of very valuable suggestions coming from the people on the ground. Some sample tweets:

simarpSimarpriit Singh

@IndianDiplomacy Great Service to the nation, perfect communication too

manivel_gk Manivel K

@IndianDiplomacy Its amazing to see the efforts you guys are making in helping Indians and keeping us updated. You guys rock!

samirsaran Samir Saran

Kudos to the Indian Govt's effort, transparency and professionalism in the entire Libya episode....@indiandiplomacy

These are just a few examples of the attention generated by India's lead in the Gov 2.0 sphere.

Author Biography

Abhay K. is an Indian poet-diplomat. He received the Gov 2.0 Award 2011 on behalf of the Public Diplomacy Division, Ministry of External Affairs, India. Winner of the SAARC Literary Award 2013 and nominated for the Pushcart Prize 2013, he is the author of eight books, including six poetry collections. He has contributed to a number of poetry anthologies. His poems have been translated into a dozen languages and published worldwide in literary journals. "The Earth Anthem," written by him in eight languages, has won appreciation and is being considered by UNESCO to be made into a global initiative. "The SAARC Song," also written by K., has spurred the search for an official SAARC Anthem. His forthcoming books are The Seduction Of Delhi and The Eight-Eyed Lord Of Kathmandu (Bloomsbury).

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Aid Diplomacy: 50 Years of USAID in India

By Hend Alhinnawi

LOS ANGELES — What is the best form of United States public diplomacy? The type that promotes American values, such as the right to peace and prosperity, through building strong ties directly with people. U.S. Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Ann Stock, expressed that, “The mission of American public diplomacy is to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world.”

For the past 50 years, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been the face of the American people overseas, carrying out its humanitarian mission through “saving lives, building partnerships, and promoting peace and prosperity for the developing world and the American people.” These definitions suggest that the U.S. uses foreign aid as part of its public diplomacy strategy. USAID funds infrastructure, cultural preservation projects, public works, and economic investment initiatives in many developing countries, including India.

Aid diplomacy is an important part of the overall U.S. public diplomacy strategy. As a global power, the U.S. is part of international efforts, contributing about 1% of the U.S. federal budget, to alleviate poverty, provide humanitarian relief, support economic and social policies, and address global problems. In the case of U.S. aid dollars to India, funds are largely used to assist with counterterrorism efforts in the region. The Congressional Research Services’ report to Congress states that the current USAID program aims to further Indian economic development in order to enhance the country’s rise as an influential U.S. partner in the international system. This program serves the poorest segments of the population, in order to mitigate economic and social conditions that may give rise to political extremism. The threat of terrorism is reduced when aid is invested in strengthening and empowering communities in India through education,

gender equality, and the ability for farmers and others to generate income to support themselves and their families. Providing aid to this otherwise marginalized community serves U.S. foreign interests and positions India as its key ally by enabling a more productive, powerful population.

In October, 2011 the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires, Ambassador Peter Burleigh, announced that USAID will be providing \$81 million towards its total commitment of \$479 million over five years in bilateral assistance to India. These funds will be used to strengthen the U.S.-India strategic partnership, working in the health sector and serving India’s most vulnerable populations. In 2011, USAID celebrated its 50th anniversary of its humanitarian work in India. Through assistance provided by USAID, since 1961, eight agricultural universities have been established, 20 thermal and hydroelectric power plants have been constructed, and the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur and Kharagpur has been created.

Another important milestone in Indo-American relations came on December 24, 2009, when the Senate confirmed Rajiv Shah as the new Administrator of the USAID. This is important because Mr. Shah now represents the highest ranking Indian-American official in any presidential administration.

As India looks to establish itself as a regional and global power, it will be interesting to examine how the foreign aid it receives could inhibit those ambitions. In 2011, India announced the creation of a central foreign aid agency with the hope of reducing corruption and preventing delays in the delivery of aid. According to the Secretary General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Rajiv Sharma, “The creation of an aid agency is a recognition by the Indian establishment that India has arrived as a global player with strategic interests. In the past we have ducked this issue because we were one of the largest recipients of aid.” However, not much has changed. India is still a large recipient of foreign aid, and as long as they continue to receive it, may never be an equal partner to the United States. Looking at Indo-

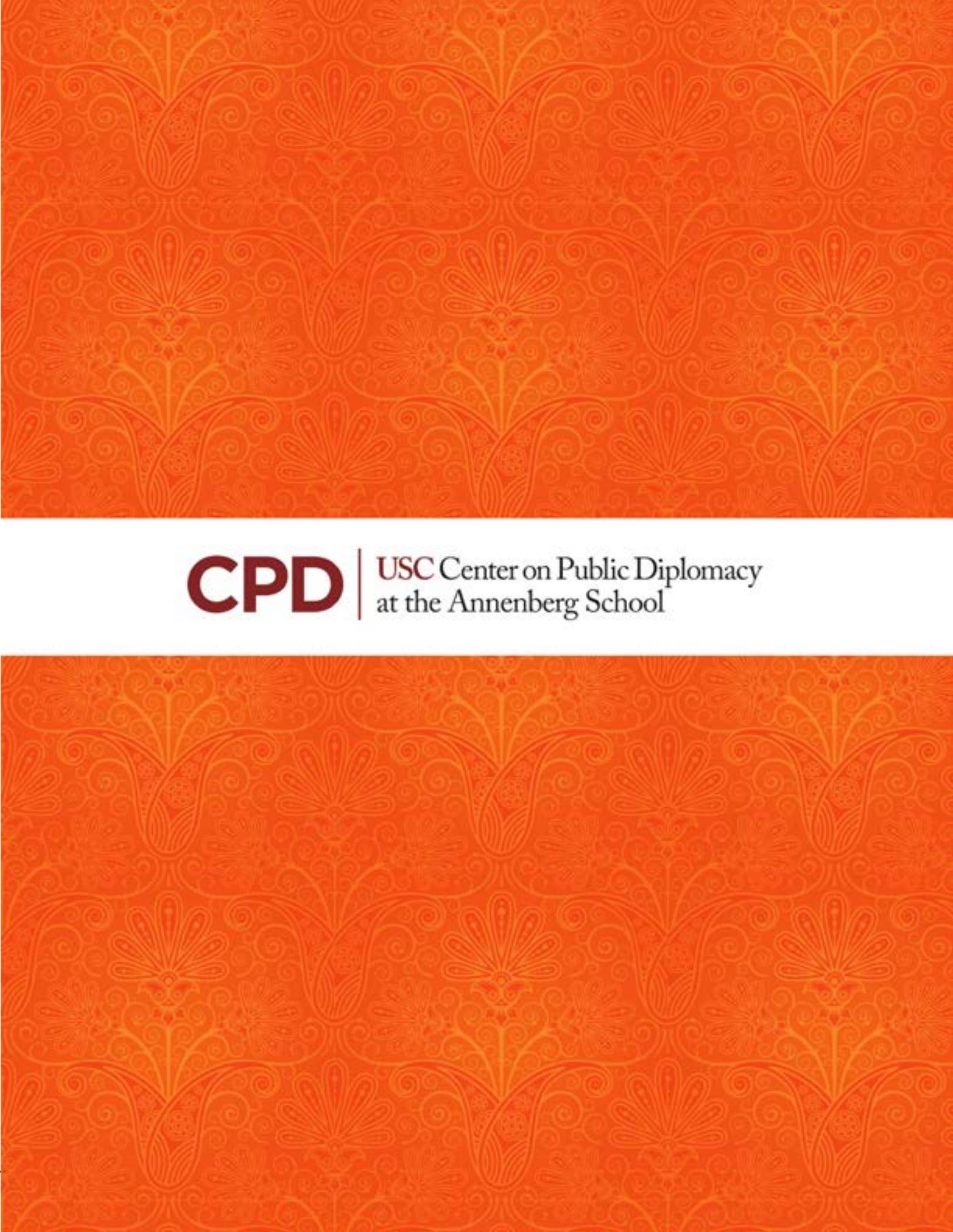
American relations and each country's public diplomacy objectives in the coming years, it will be interesting to examine how the central foreign aid agency will impact India's position in the world.

Through the India: Inside Out trip, I am looking forward to meeting with USAID officials to discuss U.S. aid diplomacy initiatives in India, and what they consider to be the best practices.

Author Biography

Hend Alhinnawi earned her professional degree from the USC Master of Public Diplomacy program. In the past, she worked with the United Nations and AMIDEAST in the Middle East and Africa on international development and resource mobilization related issues.

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The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of stylized orange and yellow floral motifs. The pattern consists of vertical stems with fan-shaped leaves and small circular accents, creating a dense, textured appearance.

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