

Daya Kishan Thussu, **Changing Geopolitics of Global Communication**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2025, 264 pp., \$39.95 (paperback).

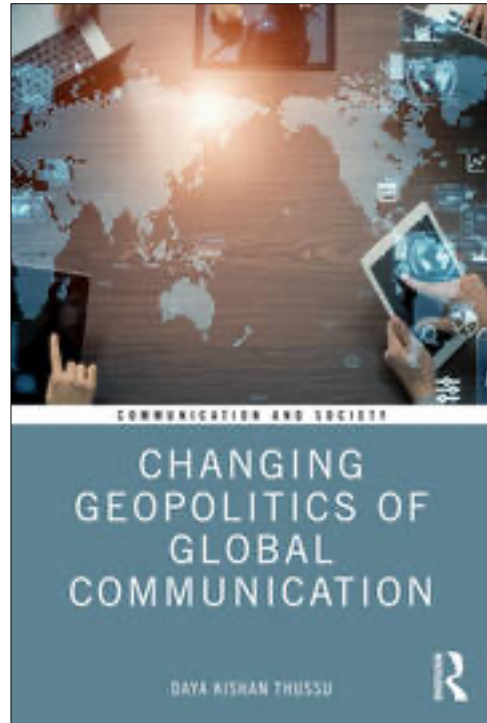
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Daya Kishan Thussu's book, **Changing Geopolitics of Global Communication**, explores the disruptive events that have reshaped the geopolitics of the 21st century. Key events discussed in the book include the 9/11 attacks, the War on Terror, the 2008 global financial crisis, the rise of Trumpism in the United States, the U.S.–China trade wars, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and several regional conflicts and civil wars in the Global South.

These geopolitical transformations coincide with rapid advancements in digital technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), especially over the past decade. This evolution necessitates a critical reassessment of the long-standing discourse surrounding media and cultural imperialism as the intersection of geopolitical shifts and digital innovation continues to redefine global communication. The implications of these developments compel scholars and practitioners to reconsider how emerging technologies might be leveraged to advance dominant powers' geopolitical and economic objectives. Thussu argues that the enduring power asymmetries led by the United States, rooted in 19th-century European imperialism, have morphed into "digital imperialism."

Central to this discussion is the unraveling of the U.S.-led Western world order established after World War II. In response, several non-Western powers—notably those aligned under the BRICS group, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—are advocating for a more inclusive global framework that addresses their diverse needs and interests. The term "BRIC" was first coined by British economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 to describe key rising markets. It later evolved into a forum for multilateral economic cooperation, with the first summit held by Russia in 2009 and South Africa joining the group in 2010. Recently, BRICS expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia. This coalition of major emerging economies seeks alternatives to Western-dominated institutions and narratives, accentuating the need for a nuanced understanding of how these rising voices are reshaping global relations and communication hierarchies.

In this unfolding narrative, Thussu's analysis provides a timely exploration of the evolving relationship between global communication and geopolitics. Drawing on his experiences in London, Beijing,



and Hong Kong, alongside his academic and professional background in international relations and journalism from India, Thussu offers a distinctive perspective on these shifts. The book targets scholars, policy makers, and students engaged in international communication, media studies, and international relations, as it critically interrogates prevailing Western narratives, particularly regarding so-called rest nations.

Thussu adopts a decolonizing approach that critically engages with the Western-centric narratives that have traditionally dominated global communication and geopolitics. He examines how these prevailing narratives—whether concerning the “imperial West,” the homogenizing effects of globalization, or specific events like the Hong Kong protests against extradition legislation—often overlook the complexities and indigenous struggles of non-Western nations. Therefore, Thussu aims to offer a de-Westernizing perspective that reflects today’s multipolar realities by challenging established paradigms.

Thussu revisits the Western colonial legacies that shaped contemporary media infrastructures, contrasting the cultural and political norms historically imposed by Western powers with emerging voices from non-Western countries—including China, India, and other BRICS members. He argues that these emerging economies are not merely reacting to U.S.-led Western dominance; rather, they are actively constructing alternative or decolonizing communication infrastructures—such as China’s Digital Silk Road—while also pursuing collective economic strategies like de-dollarization. Yet in Russia’s case—particularly following its invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022—Thussu notes a fine line between genuinely decolonizing the current world order and reviving an imperialist legacy.

This transition, as Thussu suggests, requires a rethinking of the global order that goes beyond the simplistic view of Western hegemony. Ultimately, he advocates for the decolonization of the academic study of geopolitics and communication, promoting a more pluralistic discourse that embraces diverse insights from the “rest nations,” which struggle to reclaim agency within a truly global dialogue.

Anchoring his decolonizing approach in a comprehensive historical analysis, Thussu meticulously traces the evolution of Western colonial legacies and imperial ambitions into contemporary media control and cultural hegemony frameworks. He establishes a solid foundation for understanding the continuity of Western media and cultural dominance by linking historical contexts with current media and digital developments. Thussu critiques the role of neoliberal economic policies in shaping global media landscapes, illustrating how media conglomerates and market forces perpetuate power structures that sustain the existing communication order favoring established capitalist nations. His foregrounding of decolonizing perspectives enriches the discourse on global communication, emphasizing the importance of understanding the geopolitical dynamics influencing contemporary mediated communication in the digital age.

In addressing traditional media and cultural imperialism theories, Thussu highlights their limitations in the current multipolar and digital environment. While helpful during the Cold War era, these frameworks are often constrained by Western-centric assumptions, focusing on a unidirectional flow of cultural influence from the West to the rest of the world. Thussu asserts that they fail to sufficiently acknowledge the agency of non-Western nations, which actively construct alternative media

infrastructures and narratives. He emphasizes that the rise of digital technologies has transformed global communication, making older models of media imperialism increasingly less relevant. Concepts such as “digital imperialism” or “digital colonization” must consider how data and digital platforms reshape power dynamics. Therefore, Thussu calls for a revised framework incorporating historical legacies, addressing the realities of the digital age and recognizing the dynamic, multipolar nature of global media flows.

Furthermore, Thussu’s analysis is enriched by examples from various non-Western nations, especially often-overlooked cases like Ethiopia, which has faced “invisible wars” leading to significant loss of life, eclipsing the death toll of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rather than depicting BRICS as a uniform bloc, Thussu analyzes the internal differences within the group that may impede a unified vision among China, India, Russia, and other member countries. He explores the varying media models within BRICS, emphasizing the dynamics between Russia and China’s state-controlled or state-owned systems, India’s pluralistic and politicized media landscape, South Africa’s postapartheid reforms, and Brazil’s media oligopolies. Instead of viewing these differences as failures, Thussu suggests that they represent dynamic tensions that foster meaningful discussions about digital decolonization.

Writing before the 2024 presidential election in the United States, Thussu identifies Trumpism as a clear indicator of America’s diminishing global influence. Trump’s 2016 election—marked by an outsider persona and deep skepticism of mainstream media—ushered in a major shift in how political elites connect with the public. By dismissing traditional outlets as “fake news” and relying on social media for direct outreach, Trump fundamentally altered domestic political discourse and eroded the soft power historically associated with the U.S. presidency. Thussu warns that this erosion is particularly concerning given the prospect of Trump’s return in early 2025, which could further undermine America’s global leadership. Now that Trump has taken office again, his warning resonates even more, rendering Thussu’s analysis especially relevant to today’s rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape.

However, Thussu’s analysis is not without limitations, which in turn present opportunities for deeper scholarly engagement. In particular, the book’s discussion of China—especially regarding its ongoing internal challenges—relies predominantly on Western academic references and data. This reliance may reflect linguistic barriers and issues of accessibility, but it can also reinforce some of the Eurocentric frameworks that Thussu aims to critique. A more thorough engagement with scholarship from within China would likely have yielded richer insights into China’s historical trajectory, its still-unfinished pursuit of decolonization and reclaimed agency, and the external geopolitical pressures—such as U.S.-led containment strategies—that shape its global positioning. Integrating these perspectives would enhance the book’s decolonizing approach by offering a more nuanced and contextually informed critique.

Thussu compellingly underscores the urgency of decolonizing global communication studies by examining pivotal historical milestones—most notably the 1955 Bandung Conference—and their enduring influence on decolonization and national independence movements in Asia and Africa. However, the book would benefit from a more comprehensive historical foundation that explores how nations like India, Indonesia, and the newly formed People’s Republic of China collaborated in anti-imperialist efforts—

whether in opposition to Western or Soviet pressures—and during their independence struggles shaped by the “Bandung Spirit.” Such an expanded perspective would highlight their shared anticolonial and anti-imperialist legacies, as well as the collective struggles that predate today’s BRICS framework.

This shared heritage helped establish the principles of nonalignment and peaceful coexistence among many Bandung participants. Even amid ideological, geopolitical, geoeconomic, or territorial tensions, these foundational ideas can still inspire established, revisionist, and emerging powers alike to pursue peaceful coexistence in an increasingly multipolar world.

Although these omissions merit further inquiry, they do not overshadow the book’s broader contributions. Rather, they highlight areas where future research could enrich Thusu’s analysis by incorporating a wider range of non-Western perspectives and engaging more deeply with local histories and struggles. Ultimately, Thusu’s work lays a crucial foundation for understanding the decline of Western hegemony and the emergence of a multipolar media landscape, shaped by evolving global geopolitics and swift digital transformations.