



Communication, Crisis, and Global Power Shifts: An Introduction

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This paper brings contemporary theoretical discussions on the nature of the evolving global order into dialogue with a set of transnationally, regionally, and nationally oriented studies addressing communication, crisis, and global power shifts. First, it brings in a class-centric perspective to complicate mainstream nation-state-centric narratives about U.S. hegemonic decline and global power shifts from the West to the Rest, especially China. Second, it draws upon anti-racist and anti-imperialist critiques of the racial construction of sovereignty and the concomitant Western-originated capitalist nation-state logic to supplement the class-centric analysis. The resulting social revolutionary perspective on communication and historical change encompasses the analytical lenses of class, nation, state, race, empire, gender, and knowledge/power paradigms, and it also emphasizes the analysis of various social forces and their interrelations both among and within nations.

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As this special section is first being published in January 2014, it seems fitting to start with a brief intellectual and geopolitical chronology. In 1990, with Soviet communism defeated, American futurologist Alvin Toffler projected the epochal changes that the "information age" would bring to the world's political, economic, and social power structure in *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century* (Toffler, 1990). In the vision of the "informational" or "postindustrial" paradigm that Toffler's work helped to popularize, "information society" was to transcend capitalist society, and knowledge was to surpass economic and military power to become the most important locus of power. In fact, knowledge was posited to assume such a transformative role that it "was supplanting capital and labor as the decisive factor of production" (D. Schiller, 2007, p. 6). Moreover, by taking the lead in riding the "Third Wave" of the informational revolution after the agricultural and industrial revolutions, it was posited that the United States, which had by then become a "wounded giant" in Toffler's view (1990, p. 445), would sustain its dominant position in the "Western" capitalist power triad of the United States, Europe, and Japan. As if to underscore his thesis about the power of knowledge, if not his own role in what Saunders (1990) calls "the cultural Cold War," Toffler prefaced *Powershift* with a discussion of how *The Third Wave* (Toffler, 1980, the second of his "information age" trilogy) was received in China and Poland. According to him, *The Third Wave* was initially accused of "spreading Western 'spiritual pollution'" in China; however, it quickly became a reformist intellectual's "Bible" and the second bestseller in the 1980s, after the selected works of Deng Xiaoping. Furthermore, then-Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang not only met Toffler personally, but organized conferences about *The Third Wave* and "urged policymakers to study it" (Toffler, 1990, p. xx).

Then, in 1996, Bill Gates, one of the most successful American capitalists of the "super-fast symbolic economy," took the utopian dimension of the "informational" paradigm to new heights by heralding the arrival of an Internet-enabled "friction free capitalism" (Gates, 1996). He would later famously laud China for creating a "brand-new form of capitalism" that benefits consumers "more than anything has in the past" ("Bill Gates," 2005). However, signaling a new crisis of the American empire, the 9/11 attacks inflicted damage to the Pentagon, the headquarters of American military power, and brought down New York's twin towers, symbolic centers of American financial and informational capitalism. By 2008, the information technology-driven and U.S.-centered global financial capitalism had imploded from within, as a devastating Wall Street financial meltdown unleashed "the mother of all crises" (Harvey, 2010, p. 6). Meanwhile, against the hype for a "super symbolic economy" that promises to transcend not only antagonistic social relations, but perhaps also the constraints of mother nature, a mounting ecological crisis has brought into sharp focus the materiality of human existence and the ecologically destructive nature of capitalism—be it industrial or informational. In early December 2013, as Chinese cities from Beijing to Shanghai choked in dark smog, leading to highway closures and flight cancellations, China's super-modern information highways and cyberspaces were flooded with reflections on the costs of China's leapfrogged developmental path.

Thus, not only did the demise of Soviet communism, the arrival of the "information age," and the reintegration of China and other countries in the "divided" postcolonial South into the neoliberal global economy not resolve the crisis of capitalism for long, but the crisis has also multiplied and deepened, leading to an explosion of political, academic, media, and popular discourses about rapidly shifting global power relations and the future shape of the global order. Communication scholars, after having been

immersed in the “information,” “network society,” “new economy,” and “media and globalization” paradigms, are only beginning to grasp the relationship between the new geopolitical economy and cultural politics of communication and these evolving global power structures—an enormously challenging, and yet urgent and compelling, topic this special section aims to explore.

However, even though I start this essay with Toffler’s *Powershift*, the articles in this special section were not explicitly invited to reengage with the “information age” paradigm, per se. Nor are they constrained by this particular book’s presumed modalities, locations, and logics of power. As was stated in the call for papers for the two trans-Pacific international conferences on “Communication and Global Power Shifts” that I was involved in organizing in Beijing (October 2012) and Vancouver (June 2013),² the broad scope of the topic not only entails interdisciplinary and multidimensional analysis, from the perspectives of political economy and policy, critical discursive and cultural analysis, and contextualized studies of technology and society; it also entails critical engagements with the analytical lenses of empire, class, nation, race, and gender, as well as postcolonial paradigms of knowledge/power. Moreover, although the neoliberal period, the collapse of Soviet Communism, the 9/11 attacks, and most importantly, the 2008 global financial meltdown, figure as pivotal moments in analyzing “power shifts,” the call for papers deliberately left open the temporal dimension and explicitly invited historical analysis.

This special section features 11 articles, originating mostly from the October 2012 Beijing conference.³ As these diverse pieces make clear, it is essential to be wary of any one-dimensional and one-directional narratives about communication and global power shifts. In fact, the ongoing restructuring of global capitalism is at once challenging and accentuating existing forms of dominative power relations. In this introduction, I will try to connect the broad literature on the nature and dynamics of the current global order to the communication field and intersect competing narratives of power shifts with discussions of different modalities of power in concrete historical and geopolitical contexts. In developing my arguments, I will cite examples from developments in global communication in the second half of 2013; the rapidly evolving nature of the global order has meant that articles can be rendered out-of-date very quickly. After offering some broad conceptual discussions in the first two sections, the articles are introduced in the third section, which is followed by a brief conclusion.

Theorizing and Communicating Global Power Shifts: Complicating Nation-Centric Narratives

The overarching narrative in scholarly and journalistic discourses posits a tectonic shift in the center of gravity of economic development away from the “West,” to the “Rest,” “East,” “Asia,” “Chindia,”

² These two conferences were hosted respectively by the Communication University of China (CUC) in Beijing in October 2012 and Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Vancouver in June 2013. For relevant conference literature, see <http://pages.cmns.sfu.ca/40years-conference>.

³ Although logistics and time constraints have prevented me from inviting any of the SFU conference presenters to contribute to this special section, I have benefited enormously from their outstanding presentations.

"China," or in one of newest narratives, the BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as the leading locomotives of the global economy. Along with such a shift is posited a concurrent transition of a post-Soviet world order of uni-polar American hegemony to a multi-polar global order. The circuits of global communication have registered notable discursive signs heralding the making of a new balance of power among the United States, Russia, and China in the last quarter of 2013 alone. For example, on September 11, 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin published an op-ed in *The New York Times* to challenge "American exceptionalism" by invoking the principles of national sovereignty and equality of nation-states in an attempt to persuade the United States not to pursue a potential invasion of Syria (Putin, 2013). Just over a month later, on October 13, 2013, China's Xinhua News Agency shocked the global media circuits with an unequivocal call for a "de-americanized world" (Liu, 2013) in response to a debilitating fiscal fight within the U.S. ruling elite that threatened a U.S. debt default, risking China's \$1.3 trillion U.S. debt holdings. Clearly, post-communist Russia is attempting to regain a leading position in global geopolitics, while China, under the leadership of a radically transformed Chinese Communist Party (CCP), is posited to assert its own power as the world's second-largest economy and America's largest creditor.

In the realm of global communication, this nation-state-centric narrative of global power shift has long found its resonance in a vast academic literature about the declining relevance of the "cultural imperialism" thesis and increasing "contra" or "reverse" flows—from soap operas from South America to Japanese and Korean "waves" of pop culture, to news by Al-Jazeera and more recent attempts by China and India to boost their respective "soft power" (Sun, 2010; Thussu, 2013; Zhao, 2013). While there are internal debates within the literature, the tenor of the academic argument has been buttressed by the well-known March 2, 2011, U.S. congressional testimony by Hilary Clinton, who, in her role as U.S. Secretary of State appealed for sustained U.S. state funding for global communication, stated that the U.S. is "losing" in "an information war," while "Al-Jazeera is winning," and the Chinese and Russians are opening up global English language networks (Committee for International Broadcasting, 2011, cited in Zhao, 2013, p. 18). Similarly, that *The Wall Street Journal* had, by June 2010, printed Xinhua News Agency director Li Congjun's article, "Toward a New World Media Order" (Li, 2011), seems to be yet another sure register of an ongoing power shift in global communication. As former U.S. National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's exposures of the U.S. state's massive information surveillance operations on its own citizens and foreign heads of state alike created one sensational global news headline after another since early June 2013, American state power, especially its moral authority as the world standard bearer and defender of human rights and freedom, has been further challenged. In the midst of a protracted economic crisis and the U.S. ruling elite's intensified struggles over the disposal of its overstretched military and financial resources, the "unravelling" of U.S. hegemony that scholars such as Giovanni Arrighi (2005a, 2005b) wrote about nearly a decade ago, seems to have accelerated.

The overriding centrality of the nation-centric narrative on global power shifts, especially in the way it is constructed around the decline of U.S. imperial power, seems to have brought the world back closer not to Marx, who envisioned international working class solidarity transcending capitalism, but to Adam Smith, with his focus on the "wealth of nations." Mainstream strategic analysis of the *Foreign Affairs* persuasion on how the West should deal with a power shift to Asia, especially China (e.g., Hoge, 2004), are not the concern here. Rather, contemporary critical scholars who have refocused on the centrality of

the nation-state in the analysis of capitalism have recounted how Smith regretted European colonialism's plundering and subordination of the native populations of both the "East and West Indies," and how he even envisioned a time when

the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or those of Europe may grow weaker, and the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at that equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another. (Smith, 1776/1961, p. 141, cited in Arrighi, 2007, p. 3; see also Desai, 2013, p. 34)

David Harvey, while advancing a powerful class-oriented analysis of neoliberalism as a project of restoring or creating the power of economic elites (Harvey, 2005), has also noted how an ongoing "unprecedented shift" in economic wealth "has reversed the long-standing drain of wealth from east, south-east and south Asia to Europe and North America that has been occurring since the 18th century" (Harvey, 2010, p. 35).

Critical scholars who work on the Global South have gone further, to theorize the current power shift from the "West" to the "Rest" in terms of either the historical rise of the Global South or the historical rise of the working class outside the West. For Amin (2011a, 2011b, 2011c) and Prashad (2007, 2012), who foreground a more nation-centric analysis but are always mindful of national and transnational class dynamics, the "Third World," or the "darker nations" (Prashad, 2007), had tried to rise once in the 20th century through the Non-Alignment Movement inaugurated in Bandung in 1955 during the Cold War. Underpinning this project is the hope to transcend colonialism and "the failures of capitalistic mal-development," as well as the demand for peace, bread, and justice (Prashad, 2012, pp. 1–3). However, this "first wave of independent initiatives of the peoples, nations, and States of the peripheries" collapsed, due both to its own internal flaws and to the "counteroffensive of neoliberal capitalism/imperialism" (Amin 2011c, p. 28). The demise, or, to use Prashad's word, the "assassination" of the "Third World" by what he calls the "Atlantic project" of the allied capitalist power bloc of the United States, Europe, and Japan, has been "catastrophic" (2007, p. xviii) for the "darker nations": Dominant classes were cut loose from "obligatory social solidarity" with the lower social classes, "forms of cultural nationalism" flourished, and "atavisms of all kinds," along with religious fundamentalism, racial hatred, and "unreconstructed forms of class power," "emerged to fill the space once taken up by various forms of socialism."

However, after a brief period of capitalistic and imperialist triumph between 1990 and 2008, "there are the beginnings of a second wave of independent initiatives by the peoples and States of the South" (Amin 2011a, p.1). In this view, this second wave has taken multiple forms, from "explosions aimed against those autocracies that have linked their fate to neoliberalism to challenges by 'emerging countries' to the international order itself" (Amin, 2011b, p. 28). Within this context, Prashad has identified the BRICS as "the first formation in thirty years to challenge the settled orthodoxy of the Global North" (Prashad, 2012, p. 12). To be sure, Prashad was quick to point out the limitations of the BRICS platform: Apart from the lack of a "new *institutional* foundation for its emerging authority," an "*ideological* alternative to neoliberalism," as well as an "ability to sequester the military dominance of the United States and NATO," continuing neoliberal orientation in the domestic policies of these countries has meant

the "obscene" situation of the supposed "locomotives of the South" pulling the "wagons of the North" with "sales of commodities and low wages to workers accompanying a recycled surplus turned over as credit to the North" (ibid., pp. 10–11, emphasis in original). Nevertheless, for Prashad, that the BRICS "are no longer willing to bend before imperial power" is significant, and "it is in this gap between neoliberal policy and imperial power that an opportunity presents itself for the bloc of the South" (ibid., p. 12).

Moreover, Prashad is radical in not resting his hope in the neoliberal states and "of the governments of the possible," i.e., "the South from above," but in the "potential of an internationalism of the South among social movements," i.e., the "South from below" (ibid., pp. 12–13). Nor does Amin (2011b), who foregrounds the anti-imperialist dimension in the movements in the Global South, completely foreclose the "socialist" potential in these movements, especially if and when these movements are converging with a "reawakening" of the working class in the capitalist core (ibid., p. 28). As I already discussed in a contribution to this journal's 2010 "China Media Colloquium" (Zhao, 2010), Li Minqi, who writes from a more class-centric perspective, has gone so far as to argue that the creation of a large Chinese working class and its rising bargaining power and organizational capacity will not only "turn the global balance of power again to the favour of the global working class," but will also put so much pressure on the capitalist rate of profit and accumulation that it will bring about the eventual "demise" of the capitalist world economy as we know it (Li, 2008, p. 92).

By focusing on class relations within and beyond the nation-state, and by analyzing the dynamics of global power relations either in terms of geopolitical blocs or the "world capitalist economy" as a whole, these discussions have complicated the dominant nation-centric narratives of power shifts. Clearly, it is inadequate to simply use the nation-state as the taken-for-granted unit of analysis in the study of global power shifts. William Robinson is definitely onto something when he challenges what he calls "[t]he stubborn Weberian problem of reification" of the "state/nation as a fictitious macro-agent" in "world system, international-relations, international political economy, and even Marxist paradigms of world political dynamics" (Robinson, 2004, p. 130). In advancing his theory of global capitalism, Robinson insists on a notion of the state not as just a set of apparatuses, but also as "the congealment of a particular historically determined constellation of class forces and relations" (ibid., p. 99). Furthermore, echoing Leslie Sklair (2001), Robinson has posited concepts of nascent "transnational capitalist state" and "transnational capitalist class" (TCC) formations—"an uneven, and unevenly developed process" that "unfolds through existing and new social hierarchies, forms of inequality, and relations of domination" (2004, p. 73). In this view, the "hegemonic baton" will likely be passed from the United States, not to a new hegemonic nation-state or even a regional bloc, but to a "new global-capitalist historical bloc:"

[T]he prevailing framework of hegemonic transitions, with its state structuralism and nation-state centrism, is inadequate to the current period of change insofar as new transnational social forces have emerged that are no longer grounded in particular states and the old dynamics of state and geopolitical competition. . . . [T]he problem with state-centric and nation-state centric analyses is that they do not allow us to conceive of an emergent global hegemony in terms of transnational classes and groups not necessarily bound to any one state or to specific geographies. (ibid., p. 130)

As well, in an observation that resonates well with that of Leslie Sklair (2001), whose analysis of a “transnational capitalist class” encompasses an important media and ideological dimension, Robinson writes the following:

The global corporate media play an essential role in producing the ideological and cultural bases for a hegemonic bloc that brings together the TCC and other classes, groups, and strata. The transnational socialization of the TCC is crucial to the extent that class formation is as much a subjective as an objective process and is complemented by the creation of transnational “epistemic communities” of organic intellectuals. (ibid., p. 128)

Such a transnational class perspective, of course, is not necessarily new to critical communication scholars. For example, not only was there an incipient transnational class dimension in an earlier more radical formulation of the “cultural imperialism” thesis (D. Schiller, 1996), but also Herbert Schiller challenged the nation-centric and individual consumer-centric rebuttals of this thesis by stressing transnational capitalist corporate, rather than *American*, domination in communication and culture more than two decades ago (H. Schiller, 1991).

Race and Empire: Complicating Class-Centric Analysis

Although class relations provide a needed corrective to nation-centric “balance of power” analyses of global power shifts, class relations do not explain everything. Many diversely situated scholars are foregrounding race and empire in analyzing global power relations and the role of communication and culture in these relations. Two recently erupted controversies between the U.S. and Chinese media provide interesting points of entry to such discussions.

On October 16, 2013, three days after China’s Xinhua News Agency published its call for a “de-americanized world,” U.S. television network ABC’s late-night talk show program *Jimmy Kimmel Live’s* Kids Table, in a typical postmodern fashion, aired a sketch featuring a gender-balanced and beautifully multiracial roundtable of four American kids satirizing U.S. congressmen acting like kids by discussing solutions to the U.S. government’s \$1.3 trillion debt to China while eating candies. When a six year old suggested the United States “kill everyone in China” as the solution, Jimmy Kimmel responded by asking the other kids, “OK, that’s an interesting idea. . . . Should we allow the Chinese to live?” (Stampler, 2013). Not surprisingly, this sketch provoked a huge controversy and a sustained campaign against racism not only by Chinese and Asian Americans inside the United States, but also by global Chinese communities. Even China’s official media and foreign ministry had weighted in by early November (de Moraes, 2013). This is, indeed, no funny stuff; nor is the outburst incidental. Building upon the provocative analysis developed by Chakravartty and da Silva on debts and the racial logic of global capitalism (2012), I argue that this particular instance of postmodern media outburst of racism against the Chinese, with the invocation of death as the ultimate solution to the American state’s indebtedness to China, allows us to enrich a racial/postcolonial critique of the ongoing crisis of U.S.-led financial capitalism by reading debt through the “dual lens of race and empire” (Chakravartty & da Silva, 2012, p. 364). Specifically, this requires us to draw connections among three different moments of crisis and three

different kinds of “debts” in the global circulation of capital across space and time: The first two, the Third World debt crisis in the 1980s and the U.S. domestic subprime crisis in 2007–2008, are analyzed by Chakravartty and da Silva in developing their argument. I add the U.S. government’s debt ceiling crisis in 2013 to bring out a fuller view of the racial logic of power underpinning the global circulation of capital in the neoliberal era.

Starting with, but also moving beyond the historical materialist perspective as represented by Harvey (2005; 2010) by drawing upon anticolonial and antiracist scholarly interrogations of historical materialism, Chakravartty and da Silva stress how “capitalism has lived off—always backed by colonial and national state’s means of death—of colonial/racial expropriation” (2012, p. 368). They go on to argue:

Race in the *naturalized* ways U.S. Americans deploy the term cannot be the privileged and sole critical descriptor of the variety of ways in which the racial/colonial logic of displacement, dispossession, debt, and death have visited the “others of Europe,” as conquered/colonized natives, enslaved Africans, Asian indentured laborers, and so on. (ibid., p. 369, emphasis in original)

As the keynote and plenary presentations of prominent aboriginal scholars Taiaiake Alfred, Glen Coulthard, and Andra Simpson at the June 2013 Communication and Global Power Shifts Conference in Vancouver made compellingly clear, racist/colonialist dispossessions (be they of land, natural resources, or cultural heritage) and violence of both the physical, emotional, and epistemic types, including death, remain ongoing means of racial subjugation in settler colonial capitalist societies such as Canada.⁴ In the Global South, several centuries of anti-imperialist struggles, as well as the also important Western capitalistic accommodation of the nationalistic inspirations of the colonized populations in the face of the communist threat in the Cold War context, had led to the creation of many postcolonial states by the mid-20th century.

However, by the 1980s, with the split and decline of the international communist movement, and as U.S.-dominated global financial institutions exported surplus capital—mostly “petro dollars” from the Middle East—by lending cheap credits to the poor countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (all the while knowing these countries’ inability to repay), a “debt crisis” had undermined the inspirations of many postcolonial “darker nations” for autonomy and self-determination. By 2007–2008, a “subprime crisis” had been created in the heartland of the U.S. empire itself by financial capitalism’s calculated lending of subprime mortgage loans to millions of “high-risk borrowers” who were mainly low-income African Americans and Latino/as. Thus, in both the geographical Global South and the sociocultural “Global South” within the heartland of the U.S. empire, “new territories’ of consumption and investment have been

⁴ In particular, Andra Simpson’s analysis of mainstream media and social media responses to Attawapiskat First Nation chief Theresa Spence’s December 2012 hunger strike for aboriginal rights in Canada adds a powerful antiracist feminist perspective on the sexist and racist power logics underpinning settler sovereignty.

mapped onto previous racial and colonial (imperial) discourses and practices" (Chakravartty & da Silva, 2012, p. 368). Moreover, as Chakravartty and da Silva argue, an examination of the onto-epistemological and moral assumptions behind neoliberal financial capitalism's extraction of "profits from *places* and *persons* as unsuitable economic subjects" or through "calculated 'mistakes' (like lending money to persons and nations precisely because they would *not* be able to pay it back)" (ibid., p. 364, emphasis in the original) reveals the ways in which the modern political economic architectures of capitalism have been accompanied by a racial logic of constructing the modern subject. Specifically, this logic "has transmuted the spatial 'others of Europe' into historical 'others of whiteness'" in two intertwined ways. First, it denies the others the moral attributes and intellectual "*capacities*" of self-determination and self-transparency. Second, it "seizes and undermines any possible *relationship* by establishing that the white/European alone is superior because he alone knows transcendence" (ibid., pp. 267–268, emphasis in original). As the two authors conclude:

The analytics of raciality allow us to see how, since the last third of the nineteenth century at least, modern political-economic architectures—in Europe and in its colonies—have been accompanied by a moral text, in which the principles of universality and historicity also sustain the writing of the "others of Europe" (both a colonial and racial other) as entities facing certain and necessary (self-inflicted) obliteration. (ibid., pp. 370–371)

Now, let me enter the Chinese nation as the racialized collective sovereign subject. I would argue that the racial logic of global capitalism as identified by Chakravartty and da Silva is also at play when it comes to the U.S. government's owing a large debt to China. Moreover, by bringing the U.S.-Chinese debt issue into this discussion, we can now see how the racial logic of global capitalism has intersected with the nation-state and class dimensions of power and accompanied the global flow of capital to its full circle. Under the conditions of the U.S. dollar as the global reserve currency and the U.S. military's imperial presence, and with the historical establishment of the U.S.-China diplomatic relationship in the context of the China-USSR split, the reform-era multiethnic Chinese state has engineered a multifaceted internal processes of class dispossession and cultural dislocation. These have included the dispossession of the indigenous rural population, the super-exploitation of the young and largely female migrant workers in the sweatshops, the privatization of state-owned enterprises and the displacement of their urban workers, as well as the further economic polarization between the Han majority and indigenous populations in borderlands such as Tibet and Xinjiang. At the same time, it has become the largest U.S. creditor in the so-called "Chimerica" order.

As my own contribution to this special section, which studies global press discourses on "Chimerica," reveals, U.S. elite opinions were seriously anxious about the mounting U.S. debt to China in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. The dominant conservative U.S. press frame not only constructed the financial crisis as a problem caused by the racial other—the Chinese with a cultural habit of saving or a more suspicious motive of undermining the United States—but also is not afraid of threatening war against China should China opt out of the "Chimerica" order and stop buying U.S. Treasury notes. It is precisely in this sense that ABC's satirized solution to the U.S. debt problem can be read as racist and even genocidal. Being a "creditor" in the U.S.-led financial capitalism does not mean

that the multiethnic Chinese nation as a collective sovereign subject has finally transcended the global racial logic of power. In response to the U.S.-China “marriage metaphor” that Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang had so famously invoked in his plea for the U.S. and China not to divorce at the 5th U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogues in July 2013, anti-imperialist-oriented Chinese netizens have added further credence to a racialized and gendered rendering of the Chinese nation as a collective sovereign subject in the global order of capital. In this view, China, with all the “sovereign funds” in her wallet, is the less powerful female—a wife, a concubine (with Japan as the “real wife” under the official U.S.-Japan security treaty), or even worse, a pathetic unwedded woman who insists on dressing herself up with a wedding gown after having been raped.⁵

For its part, the U.S. state, through its neoliberal economic and social policies, such as “the systematic and effective dismantling of welfare provisions, investments in the carceral system, the growing precarity in labor markets, and the attacks on affirmative action and other race-conscious policies” (Chakravartty & da Silva, 2012, p. 372), created the domestic conditions for members of its highly racialized and gendered lower social classes to become debtors. Internationally, Chinese and other sovereign or not so sovereign funds—from Japan as a client state under a U.S.-made “Peace Constitution” and Taiwan in East Asia to Arabic oil states such as Saudi Arabia, which are also U.S. client states⁶—have allowed the United States to wage preemptive wars against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and other “darker nations,” either in the name of fighting against terrorism or to ostensibly protect universal human rights.

Finally, Chakravartty and da Silva’s framework also allows us to shed new light on the other side of a nation-state-centric global power shift narrative centering on “China rising”: the concurrent and recurring “China collapsing” discourse. Among other things, this discourse has featured a China that is inflicted with corruption, human rights abuses, cultural genocides (in Tibet and Xinjiang), social unrest, lack of transparency and trustworthiness, a Maoist fanaticism that threatens to be revived by manipulative individuals such as Bo Xilai (Zhao, 2012). Above all, this is a China that is incapable of achieving political self-determination because of its stubborn and almost suicidal refusal to convert itself into a liberal democratic polity, which is superior and represents the “end of history.” In this discourse, the West is dealing with a “goon state” (*Economist*, 2011) in “The People’s Republic of Scandals” (Beech, 2012), where the question of “How Long Can the Communist Party Survive” (Anderlini, 2013) assumes perpetual and growing relevance. With the U.S. debt to China in mind, is it too far-fetched to speculate that a significant fraction of the U.S. political, media, and intellectual elite may have not only been betting on, but actively working toward, the collapse of China and its eventual “(self-inflicted) obliteration”?

At this juncture, let me turn to read the second October–November 2013 “communication war” between the Chinese and U.S. media through the lenses of race and empire. While ABC was still in the middle of the Jimmy Kimmel controversy, CNN, which had provoked major protests by active Chinese audiences in 2008 for its racist remarks against the Chinese, found itself in a new round of discursive

⁵ There are many versions of this interpretation. For one of the most devastating mockeries of Wang’s metaphor, see Li, Yang (2013).

⁶ As Sunera Thobani (2012) reminds us, one of Osama bin Laden’s objectives was the ousting of U.S. military bases from Saudi Arabia.

warfare with Chinese state media outlets. The case concerned a CNN online article asking whether the October 28, 2013, deadly car attack on Beijing's Tiananmen Square by the Turkic-speaking ethnic Uighurs from Xinjiang was an act of terrorism, as the Chinese state claimed, or "a hastily assembled cry of desperation for a people on the extreme margins of the Chinese state's monstrous development machine" (Roberts, 2013). Chinese official media voices, represented by a *People's Daily* editorial entitled "CNN has become an accomplice of violent terror" (Hua, 2013), and a *Global Times* editorial entitled "'Vile' CNN shows the world American's dark psychology" (Huaqiu Net, 2013), faulted CNN for double-standards which reflected a "Western bias for what amounts to favoring terrorism when it harms America's rivals" (Kern, 2013). The point about the exact nature of the Tiananmen Square attack is not my main concern here.⁷ Nor do I want to defend Chinese state policies, and indeed, its "monstrous development machine" in Xinjiang—this is the same machine that capitalism unleashes everywhere in the world. Indeed, as Wang Hui has argued, the globalization of the Chinese economy and the deepening of economic and social inequality in reform-era China have, indeed, posed a serious threat to the Chinese state's ethnic policy and its historical solution to the "national problem" (Wang, 2011). Rather, to the extent that the group that was blamed for the violence, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a transnational Muslim separatist group founded by militant Uighurs, which has been a U.S. officially recognized terrorist organization since 2002 "during a period of increased U.S.-Chinese cooperation on antiterrorism in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001" (Xu, 2013), at issue is, indeed, the American media's double-standard regarding terrorism and the "racial logic of power" underpinning the constitution of modern sovereignty.

As Thobani (2012) demonstrated through an analysis of Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1998) and Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000) and the U.S. justifications for both the war on terror and the bombings of Pakistan, Yemen, and Libya in an article entitled "Empire, Bare Life and the Constitution of Whiteness," "coloniality and race remain the foundation" for the U.S. empire. In Thobani's view, to the extent that *Empire* declares "imperialism is over" and celebrates U.S. "constitutional expansionism," it

easily lends credence to the reproduction of a number of incendiary fictions, namely that the "international" community is based on "shared" ethical values that structure the global order, a nationally disinterested de-terrorialized sovereignty mandates international intervention in the name of a universally recognized humani(tarian)ism; and international institutions, including the UN, are the locus of a "global" form of sovereignty equally assessable to all. (2012, p. 17)

Arguing that "colonial violence, imperialist domination, and racial hatred" have cohered around Islam and the racialized figure of the Muslim, Thobani identified three models by which "imperialist wars of the early 21st century are being fought in the Middle Eastern and Central Asian resource rich and strategically important countries" (ibid., p. 20). The first was demonstrated in Afghanistan and Iraq, where "the racial logic of power that re-inscribed their 'fanatic' nature (religio-cultural in the case of

⁷ The Chinese media, so long as it is state-controlled, will never be able to win the communication war in the United States, as U.S. media will always defend such articles as a mere expression of personal opinion, and thus a sign of American press freedom (see Kern, 2013).

Afghanistan and 'evil'-cultural in the case of Iraq) allowed for their 'sovereign' status to be disposed of in the same way" (ibid.). The second model was deployed in Libya, where

the West's definition of the postcolonial state as monstrous with a simultaneous identification of certain sectors of its population as "civilizable" (the freedom loving "rebel" groups) enabled the U.S.-NATO led coalition to intervene to destroy the state and instigate/escalate civil war by arming select forces within the population. (ibid., p. 21)

The final model involves covert Western support for strategically located states to crush popular movements within their countries, as is demonstrated in Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen (and with Syria in question), and when a pro-U.S. regime is unable to hold onto its power, as was the case in Egypt, covert aid is provided to "the new fractions within the old state who come to power by allying with these movements." This "support," in turn, "helps shape the particular agendas of the chosen factions and derails the possibility for revolutionary change" (ibid.).

Thobani's discussion thus resonates well with that of Chakravartty and da Silva, whose extended discussion of the racial construction of the modern subject demonstrates how racial and cultural differences have been deployed to reconcile a conception of the universal with a notion of the particular. They specifically identified how "the Cold War was followed by two simultaneous shifts that rendered the human a global (racial) signifier," i.e., "the elevation of the human rights framework into the new global ethical program" and the principle of the use of force to stop "humanitarian crisis" in international relations (Chakravartty & da Silva, 2012, p. 371). Thus, in Thobani's words, concepts such as "sovereignty," "global justice," or "global juridical order," which were "born in and work to reconsolidate the racial logic of power in response to the various crises coloniality give rise to within the global order," are "integrally flawed and deeply asymmetrical" in their meanings (Thobani, 2012, p. 22). Consequently, "[i]nvasions and occupations—widely treated by major Western intellectual traditions in the late 20th century as phenomena of a colonial order safely consigned to the past—emerged as central to global politics in the early twenty-first century" (ibid., p. 1). Because a racial logic of power is central to the constitution of sovereignty, contemporary struggles for emancipation need to transform this logic: "To do otherwise is to reproduce coloniality and its recuperation of whiteness-as-sovereign power" (ibid.).

The above discussions have a number of implications for understanding communication and the cultural politics of global power shifts: First, as it is well-known, since the U.S. state launched the war on terror following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the Chinese state had opportunistically jumped onto the American state's antiterrorist ideological wagon with the hope that it could be deployed against the transnational Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement separatists in defense of Chinese state sovereignty. With regard to the CNN/Chinese media controversy over the Chinese state's anti-terrorist claim in Xinjiang, at issue here is whether the U.S.-originated post-9/11 "global" anti-terrorist discourse, especially in the way that it has been constructed vis-à-vis the racialized figure of the Muslim, could be conveniently appropriated by the Chinese state. This is a particularly important issue now that the U.S. is shifting its strategic focus from anti-terrorism in the Middle East to containing China with its strategy of "rebalancing" in Asia. Clearly, as the latest round of the Chinese media and CNN dispute over the reporting of the

Tiananmen Square attack underscores, the Chinese media was frustrated that the Chinese state's deployment of the American-authored "global" antiterrorist discourse was not readily endorsed and supported in the United States. The problem is not some "American dark psychology"—as the *Global Times* identified it, but a racial and colonial ideology mobilized in the service of the American empire.

Second, more than 60 years after the founding of the CCP-led Chinese state and despite all the discourses about "the rise of China," even the basic issue of Chinese sovereignty cannot be taken for granted. The mainland China and Taiwan split problem has not yet been resolved. At the same time, the CCP-led Chinese state is facing transnational ethno-national separatist movements concerning Tibet and Xinjiang on the one hand and being caught in territorial disputes with a number of neighboring Asian countries on the other. Most importantly, not only is the U.S. state implicated either overtly and covertly in the Taiwan issue and in China's territorial disputes with neighboring countries, especially Japan, it continues to lend ideological and political support, and even judicial/sovereign protection for domestic Chinese dissidents and regime change efforts in the name of the "universal values" of liberal democracy and human rights. In a sense, the old question of "preserving China or of partitioning it," which Chinese revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen debated more than a century ago (Wang, 2011, p. 30), has not completely disappeared. This must serve as an antidote to any inflated rhetoric centering the "rise of China" as the most important register of global power shifts.

Third, in light of the return of overt invasions and occupations and what Thobani discussed with regard to the relationship between the U.S. empire and the Arabic world in the post-9/11 and post-Arab Spring era, any celebration of "global power shifts" in favor of the "Rest" or the "Global South" must be squared with an understanding of a profoundly uneven global geopolitical economy, the phenomenon of "failed" states in Africa, and destabilization of almost all of the major Arabic states in the Middle East. Nor should we ignore the return of old forms of dominative social and cultural relations—from indentured labor and human trafficking as modern day slave trade to retrogressive forms of cultural essentialism and religious fundamentalism. In the Middle East, this is the case despite (and perhaps even because of) the diffusion of social media, and particularly the influential regional discursive power of Al-Jazeera. Although it is an "Arab phenomenon" that "transcends the logic of the state" (El Oifi, 2011), Al-Jazeera is nevertheless established by Qatar, a small but pivotal U.S. client state and military base in the Middle East. As the tragic turn of events in Egypt in the summer of 2013 underscores, the toppling of an authoritarian regime does not necessarily usher in a stable democracy, let alone fundamental transformations of dominative power relations and social progress. As Desai has observed, "Crises teasingly hold out the possibility of dramatic reversals only to be followed by surreal continuity as the old order cadaverously fights back" (2013, p. 16). Thus, Amin is also quite correct in saying that "the second wave of the awakening of the peoples, nations and States of the peripheries of the 21st century starts out in conditions that are barely better, in fact even more difficult" (2011a, p. 11).

The following questions, which I posed in this journal three years ago, remain relevant in light of the above discussion of the intertwining logics of race and empire in globalized financial and informational capitalism and in consideration of the possible obstacles to any wish for a "reawakening" of the working class in "the imperialist core" (Amin, 2011b, p. 28):

If China's lower social classes were suppressed by the Chinese state while being bayoneted by a nationalistic discourse of China's triumphant rise in the world, can it be said that the American working class—whose bargaining power vis-a-vis capital has been undermined by transnational capital's mobilization of China's large and relatively well-educated reserve army of cheap labor—was materially (and temporarily) pacified by Wal-Mart consumerism while their sense of political and cultural superiority was reaffirmed by American media stories of Chinese censorship, human rights abuses, poor and dangerously made products, and discourses of "cultural genocide" in Tibet? . . . Can a necessary complement to the strategy of using U.S. nationalism to displace class conflict somehow be to find the discursive means of managing today's crisis and frictions (pre-eminently between the United States and China) on behalf of a transnational capitalist class in formation which contains both U.S. and Chinese members? In this context, perhaps it is also worthwhile to ask what the communication politics are behind the discourse of "China's rise"—a discourse that has been so prominent both inside and outside China? (Zhao, 2010, p. 548)

However, in foregrounding race and empire in analyzing global power relations, I do not wish to fall into an essentialist notion of race or any dualistic constructions of East and West, white and non-white, or for that matter, any uncritical acceptance of sweeping and necessarily reductive categories, such as Prashad's "darker nations," "poorer nations," "Global North," or "Global South." There was Japanese imperialism in Asia and its contemporary legacies. There are the "Fourth World" of indigenous nations in settler colonial states, such as Canada, the United States, Australia, or New Zealand. Even within the historically imperialist European states, such as Britain and France, there have been internal processes of colonization and "forgotten, lighter nations" such as the Irish and the Corsican (Nicolai, 2013, p. 14).

Thus, it is not any essentialist notion of race per se, but its historical imbrications with the modern, European-originated, capitalist, and expansionist "nation-state logic," a subject that the Chinese critical scholar Wang Hui has also written extensively about. In his book, the *Politics of Imagining Asia*, Wang traces the late-19th century Japanese notion of "shedding Asia" to the expansionist nation-state logic originated in Europe:

On the one hand, the bourgeois nation-state and its individualist notion of citizenship were political passages toward casting off the aristocratic hierarchies of ancient empires, while on the other, they were the best political forms for the expansion of capitalism (especially the formation of national markets, the expansion of overseas markets, and the system of private property), and this expansion was never limited to the territory within the borders of a single nation-state. (2011, p. 22)

Viewed in this context, "shedding Asia"/"joining Europe" was the Japanese path to independent statehood in the modern world—that is, for it to emerge from a despotic and agrarian "Asia" with traditional empires (as opposed to Europe, with its civil society and urban and commercial way of life) that European thinkers such as Hegel and Marx construed to occupy the "starting point" of world history or a pre-historical period because "it still lacked states and thus could not possess a historical subjective

agency" (ibid., p. 16). Thus, "shedding Asia," the embodiment of modern Japanese particularism turned out to be derivative from "European historical consciousness" and "European universalism" (ibid., p. 13). Because the European nation-state logic was wedded to capitalism from the onset, with its unique situation of "the concurrent birth of the nation and capitalism" (Amin, 1980, p. 20), and because capitalist expansion was never limited to the borders of a single nation-state, "there is no real contradiction between the theory of 'shedding Asia' and the reality of 'invading Asia'—both are grounded in the European context from which they derive" (Wang, 2011, p. 22). That is, they became the two sides of the same coin of the modern Japanese pursuit of a "state rationality" that is derivative of the European capitalistic nation-state logic, with its pivotal notions of equality among sovereign states and the balance of powers. Such a "state rationality" is fundamentally incompatible with the imperial Chinese tribute system, to which a rising modern and capitalistic Japan was historically linked and eager to cast off. As Wang Hui points out, it was precisely on the ground of this "state rationality" that Japan would appeal to "European 'international law' and its notion of formal equality among sovereign states" in both its 1874 invasion of Taiwan and its 1894 invasion of Korea (2011, p. 21). Fast forwarding to the post-World War II era, Japan was reconstructed political economically and re-imagined culturally as part of the "West" not because of race, but because of the Cold War anti-communist capitalist class interests.

Today, as we remember the one-hundred year anniversary of the outbreak of WWI against the drawback of a strained post-WWII inter-state system, and as domestic political economic and sociocultural stresses find their external expressions in highly emotive territorial disputes such as the ongoing ones between China and Japan in highly neoliberal, market-driven, and real-time digital communication contexts, how to learn lessons from history and fight against racist, cultural essentialist, and capitalist expansionist logics has become extremely important and urgent. Is the "China problem" so vexing and unsettling for the West because of the racist fear of the "yellow peril?" Or is it because the multiethnic historical empire turned Chinese nation-state is still governed by a political party that has the word "communist" in its name, and thus, there is always the fear that the word may, in the end, connote something real? Or is it because this is still a China that, as Theodore Hutters noted by way of introducing Wang Hui's idea, "fits neither into the nation-state system imposed on the world as a result of the rise of the West after the eighteenth century, nor into the concept of a traditional, agrarian empire," with the fit to the definition of the latter necessarily precluded by "the capacity for self-conscious participation in the making of its own modern history" (Hutters, 2011, p. 3). Perhaps the answer is "all of the above"? Japan ended up both "shedding Asia" and "invading Asia" during its capitalistic rise. On the contrary, 20th-century China developed an anti-imperialist and internationalist socialist version of nationalism in opposition to Western and Japanese imperialism and in tandem with a multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious "Pan-Asianism" that is antithetical to the mono-cultural Japanese notion of "Greater East Asianism" (Wang, 2011, p. 30). How will a 21st-century China deal with this historical legacy, which is still engraved on the Tiananmen Gate slogan, "Long Live the Great Solidarity of the Peoples of the World!?" Will China move up the global racial order if the country's reform-era reborn bourgeoisie, with its internalization of the American liberal democratic discourse and a bit of American political, ideological, and even judicial encouragement and support here and there, are finally able to establish an ideal liberal democratic capitalist state and thus (hopefully) secure capitalism once for all? Or is that scenario a dream (or nightmare, depending on the perspective) getting more and more delusional? That is, will the dialectic of China's capitalistic reform compels the CCP to either reckon with its socialist origins and risk a serious

confrontation with the domestic and transnational capitalist power bloc or further accommodate domestic and transnational capitalist interests by going down the fascist road with increased domestic repression? Or, to be even more anticlimactic, is the *global* Cold War against communism really over with the collapse of the Berlin Wall? Just as the "global" history of imperialism or anti-fascism has often been Western-centric and cast in West versus East or white versus non-white terms (with Japanese imperialism and the resistance against it so often downplayed), can it be the case that the "end of Cold War" master narrative has also suffered from a serious Euro-centric bias?

Introducing the Articles

Articles in this special section not only bring the communication field to bear upon current debates on the nature of the rapidly evolving global order, but they also offer a wide range of provocative insights that interrogate and complicate mainstream nation-centric narratives of global power shifts. Furthermore, they have done so from a wide range of conceptual orientations, geopolitical vantage points, and methodological approaches. Vera Fennell's article, "A Tale of Two Obits: Reading the Cold War Through the Obituaries of W. E. B. Du Bois and Chairman Mao Tse-tung," provides an invaluable historical vantage point and multifaceted conceptual lenses from which to reflect upon this special section topic. Constructed around a richly contextualized comparative textual reading of the obituaries of these two influential 20th-century figures on the *Peoples' Daily* and *The New York Times*, this article offers an insightful analysis about the role of the media in the racialized construction of geopolitical territories and individuals. Furthermore, in foregrounding the photo of Mao's meeting with Du Bois and discussing how their lives had interacted with each other, the piece brought back memories of a bygone era in which the potentiality for transnational and transracial solidarity was imagined and seriously pursued, even though in historically constrained, conflicted ways, and even though the specific conditions for the realization of such a potentiality were not fully available. As well, by explicating the different ways in which the political activism of Mao and Du Bois were constructed by the two papers respectively, the piece offers an interesting comparative perspective on the ideological construction of individual agency in projects of human emancipation. The piece's contemporary relevance is hard to miss as we read and compare the world media's obituaries of Nelson Mandela in early December 2013.

Moving to a current historical juncture, several articles address the political economic and discursive/argumentative power of transnationalized media and global news flows vis-à-vis the power of the nation-state. In his article, "Puzzle of Media Power: Notes Toward a Materialist Approach," Des Freedman aims to develop a "materialist approach to media power." Freedman's orientation is more theoretical than geopolitical, and the main thrust of his argument invites a multifaceted understanding of both the modalities and locations of media power. At the same time, the article's empirical engagement with the power of Rupert Murdoch in the context of the British phone-hacking scandal supports an interpretation of a shift of the central locus of media power from the nation-state—even in the case of a former imperial state where the institutions of liberal democracy are well-entrenched—to highly influential and increasingly unaccountable media organizations or private capitalists, such as Murdoch and his News Corporation. Moreover, that Murdoch and his News Corp.—perhaps the single most well-known media capitalist and global media corporation in advancing neoliberal global capitalism (one recalls Murdoch's alliance with Margret Thatcher in the late 1970s and early 1980s in their joint assault on British working

class power both inside and outside the British media industry)—should structure Freedman’s theoretical exploration on media power is perhaps not accidental.

Shifting the geopolitical focus to a politically, economically, and culturally disjointed and troubled European Union (EU), and with a special attention to Italy, Laura Alberti and Thomas Hollihan, in their article entitled “Market Panics and the Limits of National Power and Authority: An Argumentative Analysis of the 2011 Italian Debt Crisis,” advance a more explicit argument about the overriding power of transnational financial capitalism, especially transnational financial news flows, in offsetting both an incipient regional, and especially national citizen-oriented political agenda in the discursive contestations over solutions to the European debt crisis in 2011. The article highlights the complex interplay between the formation of the EU as arguably “the most visible expression of the global power shifts” away from individual nation-states to “emerging regional powers, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, multinational business, and global finance” and “recent shifts in the practices and norms of cross-national and interinstitutional argumentation.” In doing so, it not only further complicates the dominant power shifts narrative centering on the “balance of power” between nation-states, but also raises important questions concerning the viability of a European regional political public sphere and the future evolution of the nation-state logic, which originated in Europe in tandem with the rise of capitalism.

By focusing on the Internet, Dan Schiller’s contribution, “Rosa Luxemburg’s Internet? For a Political Economy of State Mobilization and the Movement of Accumulation in Cyberspace,” addresses a subject that lies at the heart of neoliberal “informational” or “post-industrial” capitalism. On the one hand, as Schiller demonstrates, in the pivotal realm of Internet system development and governance, a single state in the global system, the United States, continues to wield disproportionate power by adhering to its policy of “unilateral globalism” and trying all means to neutralize mounting challenges by other states in the global Internet governance area. At the same time, by conceiving capital as a two-sided and constantly mutating social relation between capital and labor, Schiller underscores the importance of class analysis and raises crucial questions concerning the 21st-century (re)making of the multifarious working class as a collective historical agent. Schiller’s analysis, along with the critical questions he poses regarding the national or global nature of the working class, can be brought into fruitful dialogues with the above-discussed theses of William Robinson and Li Minqi.

Complementing Schiller’s analysis, Jack Qiu’s article, “‘Power to the People!’ Mobiles, Migrants, and Social Movements in Asia” highlights the paradoxical ways in which information technologies have both empowered and disempowered the working class in Asia, especially China. On the one hand, Qiu recognizes how Asia has become “the epicenter of global power shift to ICTs, to migrants, and to the Global South” and highlights what he calls the “Asian beginning of the global history of mobile-facilitated social movements” in the Philippines, South Korea, and China. On the other hand, Qiu also cautions against any ICT-centered narrative of power shift by noting a disjuncture between the extremely uneven geography of ICT development across Asia—with Hong Kong and Singapore on one extreme, and Myanmar and North Korea on the other—and the uneven geography of power transformation by noting how Myanmar (with the world’s lowest mobile phone penetration) has undergone a tremendous transfer of power from the military junta, “much more so than what mobile-facilitated social movements have achieved in neighboring countries, including China.” Methodologically, Qiu’s insistence on foregrounding

the Asian beginnings of the global history of mobile-facilitated social movements has an implicit resonance with an ongoing scholarly "deimperialization" (Chen, 2010) ferment surrounding "the politics of imagining Asia" (Wang, 2011) in general and the attempt to pursue "deep dewesternization" in media studies through an engagement with "Asian modernities" (Shome, 2013).

The articles by Colin Sparks, myself, Wu Changchang, Pradip Thomas, and Sunera Thobani engage the dominant nation-state centric power shift narratives by dissecting the BRICS formation and examining the transnational and domestic political economic and discursive power relations underpinning the Chinese and Indian nation-states, two of the most populous and culturally diverse BRICS countries. Colin Sparks' article, "Deconstructing the BRICS," contributes a communication and media dimension to BRICS literature. Sparks acknowledges that the very concept registers a power shift away from the West to the Rest. However, comparing with Prashad, Sparks is even more dismissive of the BRICS as a collective project. Moreover, by drawing attention to the high level of inequality and corruption in the BRICS countries, and by pointing out that all these states "rest upon systems that at the bottom ruthlessly suppress the majority of their populations," Sparks does not seem to leave much space for any progressive role of the BRICS states. Furthermore, Sparks argues that the BRICS concept deflects "attention away from the unique way in which China's development is influencing the rest of the world, and most notably the USA."

Sparks' article provides a good lead for introducing my own piece, "The Life and Times of 'Chimerica': Global Press Discourses on U.S.-China Economic Integration, Financial Crisis, and Power Shifts." My earlier-cited Xinhua call for a "de-americanized world" registers the Chinese state's assertiveness vis-à-vis the United States. However, the Anglo-American originated "Chimerica" concept betrays China's dependent "rise" by making itself the largest exporter and creditor to the United States at tremendous social and environmental costs. Moreover, that this concept should have been so willingly endorsed by the *China Daily*, China's official English-language newspaper, is itself a powerful indication of not the "rise of China" vis-à-vis the United States per se, but a testimony to the allied power of the Chinese and American ruling classes across the board. As my paper demonstrates, coordinated ideological work was performed by Anglo-American and Chinese media elites to sustain the neoliberal global capitalist order in the middle of an acute global financial crisis. Here, one witnesses the working of the kind of "transnational 'epistemic communities' of organic intellectuals" that William Robinson spoke of in a passage I cited in an earlier section. Furthermore, to the extent that the dominant voices from other countries in the Global South—with the exception of Latin America—expressed either envy or admiration for China's place in the "Chimerica" order, there is adequate ground to support an analysis on the dominance of "neoliberalism with southern characteristics" in Global South (Prashad, 2012).

The political and ideological dimension of "Chimerica" as a central component of the neoliberal global capitalist order and its tensions with the Chinese state's socialist legacies is further revealed in Wu Changchang's article, "Inside-out and Outside-in: The Making of a Transnational Discursive Alliance for the Future of China." Built upon analyses I had developed elsewhere (Zhao 2008, 2012), Wu describes the making of a transnational discursive bloc consisting of both inside and outside forces and offers a further case study of the "transnational 'epistemic communities' of organic intellectuals" in action. Outside China, this bloc includes the U.S. government, transnational business corporations, foreign journalists, and

human rights activists. From within, this bloc includes domestic liberal media professionals, public intellectuals, and neoliberal-oriented state officials. In a series of media and Internet-based discursive mobilizations, one witnesses the Chinese internalization of exactly the Western-constructed and universally-elevated human rights and liberal democratic discourse, as well as the acting out of the political agency of the Chinese liberal subject through this discourse. However, as Wu's paper also makes it clear, not only has the political objective of this alliance been repeatedly frustrated by the Chinese state so far, but also, the alliance's class base is fundamentally at odds with the "worker-peasant alliance" that is supposed to be the constitutionally sanctioned power foundation of the Chinese socialist state. Here, perhaps I should add that the Chinese liberal subject not only looks to the U.S. state as the ideal model, but also is blind to the racial logic of power underpinning the constitution of both individual subjects and state sovereignty. Consequently, it is doomed to be exposed for its pale nature or even rendered "speechless" in the kind of U.S.-China media controversies that I discussed in an earlier section.

Although the Chinese and Indian political and ideological landscapes are rather different, as Pradip Thomas reveals in his contribution, "The Ambivalent State and the Media in India: Between Elite Domination and the Public Interest," contradictions and the push and pull of different social forces are, like China, also the defining features when it comes to the antimony of the Indian state and its relationship with its diverse constituents as it pursues increasingly neoliberal policies. Externally, although China's role in the "Chimerica" order is unique, the question of whether India is to become "the subordinate partner in an alliance with the United States" is also rather real, despite India's non-alignment legacies (Prashad, 2011, pp. 48-49). According to Thomas, while the Indian government backed UN control over global telecommunications in 2012, it backtracked from its support for a Russia- and China-supported UN Committee on Internet Related Policies as an alternative to the U.S.-dominated ICANN. However, Thomas made it clear that this was also partly in response to the pressures of India's transnationally-linked domestic IT sector and civil society. Building upon this example, Thomas makes a compelling case for connecting analysis of global power shifts with studies of the shifting balances of power within nation-states. Thomas not only demonstrates the contradictory nature of the Indian state in the allocation of communicative rights and resources at the national level, but also delves deeper to reveal sub-national level differentials in communication access within India's diverse polity.

If Thomas provides an analysis of the Indian *state's* contradictory class and regional constitution and its contested allocation of communicative resources and rights among its different social classes, then Sunera Thobani, whose theoretical work on race and sovereignty I have referred to extensively in an early section, offers a complementary analysis that foregrounds the highly conflicted and even violent making and remaking of the Indian *nation-state* in her contribution to this special section, "Performing Terror, Mediating Religion: Indian Cinema and the Politics of National Belonging." Thobani's paper demonstrates the painstaking ideological and cultural work that the Indian cinema has performed in (re)making the Indian national subject out of the deep and complicatedly intersecting religious, gender, regional, and class cleavages of Indian society in the wake of the collapsed secular socialist "third world" utopian project and the resurgence of the cultural nationalism, atavism, and religious fundamentalism that I discussed with reference to Prashad's work. By highlighting the ongoing impact of the violent partition at the founding of the Indian nation-state, and by foregrounding the role of both "real world" and "reel world" violence in defining Hindu/Muslim and gender relations, Thobani offers a set of highly provocative

arguments. Specifically, she maintains that Indian cinema has been complicit in the Hinduization of Indian national culture and constructing Islam as unsecularizable and Muslims as outsiders inside an Indian nation that is assuming its role as a major power within the early-21st-century geopolitical order.

One of the methodological lessons of the papers in this special section is that any bird's-eye view of global power shifts must be complemented with contextualized analysis on the intricacies of power relations and cultural politics within particular nation-states, and on the complicated articulations between transnational, regional, national, and even sub-national social forces and discursive formations. Thus, while the papers can be read for their substantive arguments, many of them can also be read for comparative insights with similar studies concerning other countries, regions, and issues. A call for a more historically engaged mode of knowledge production and social transformation lies at the core of the final paper in this special section, Katherine Reilly's "Developmental Bodies and the Occupation of Time: Theorizing Gender Solidarity in Times of Global Power Shift." Along with, and against, the dominant neoliberal knowledge-power regime, the era of informational capitalism has also generated powerful counter-movements in knowledge production and engendered new modes of theorizing transnational solidarity across various geopolitical and social-cultural boundaries. In the area of feminist theorizing, Reilly argues that attempts have been made to first imagine solidarity through "transversity," and then through "intersectionality." However, according to Reilly, both conceptual apparatuses have shortcomings: While the former tends to "reify historical sedimentations of power," the latter lends to "emphasize collective identities at the expense of transformation agenda." Reilly offers a theoretical alternative that "asks not how to ensure women's inclusion in historical processes, nor how historical processes shape women's experience," but "how we want the world to be, and how we, as women, do the work of reformulating history to make it that way." Thus, if Thobani's concluding remark, "partition remains ongoing" is a haunting and a powerful plea for a historical process-oriented perspective; Reilly's concluding call for "occupying power shift" is inspiring. Meanwhile, reading Reilly's theoretical work through Thobani's grounded studies either in her contribution to this special section or elsewhere (Thobani, 2008) drives home the daunting challenges of solidarity-building both within and across national borders in the ruins of the neoliberal counter-revolution.

Concluding Remarks

Since I started this essay with the American futurologist Toffler, let me close it with American socialist John Bellamy Foster for a contrast. In a leading essay in the October 2013 issue of *Monthly Review*, entitled "Epochal Crisis," Foster notes how "dangerous and disruptive intersection" of economic and ecological contradictions of global capitalism have meant that nothing short of a "historical transition to a new mode of production" (Foster, 2013, p. 1) is needed for humanity to confront the enormous challenges it faces. Inspired by Harvey (2010), Foster envisions a kind of "co-revolutionary struggle . . . embodying an alliance of gender, race, class, indigenous, and environmental movements" and "the rise to prominence of an environmental working class (an ecological peasantry) capable of initiating a broad, counter-hegemonic struggle for the fulfilments of human needs in line with the fundamental biogeochemical processes of the planet" (Foster, 2013, p. 11).

Without having to endorse the inflated power of knowledge in Toffler's *Powershift*, information and communication has everything to do with this project. By complicating nation-centric or class-centric perspectives in the analysis of communication, crisis, and global power shifts, my purpose in this essay has been to challenge the kind of nationalism, statism, culturalism, or classism that, too often, are static, categorical, or even totalistic, rather than relational, dynamic, and political—that is, carried out with an attention to subjective agency and an emphasis on the study of various social forces and their interrelations both among and internal to nations. This is the kernel of Wang Hui's "social revolutionary perspective," which he develops for analyzing "Asia" as a progressive scholarly praxis (Wang, 2011), and I believe it is equally applicable at the global level.

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