EDITED BY
OLIVER BOYD-BARRETT
TANNER MIRRLEES

MEDIA IMPERIALISM

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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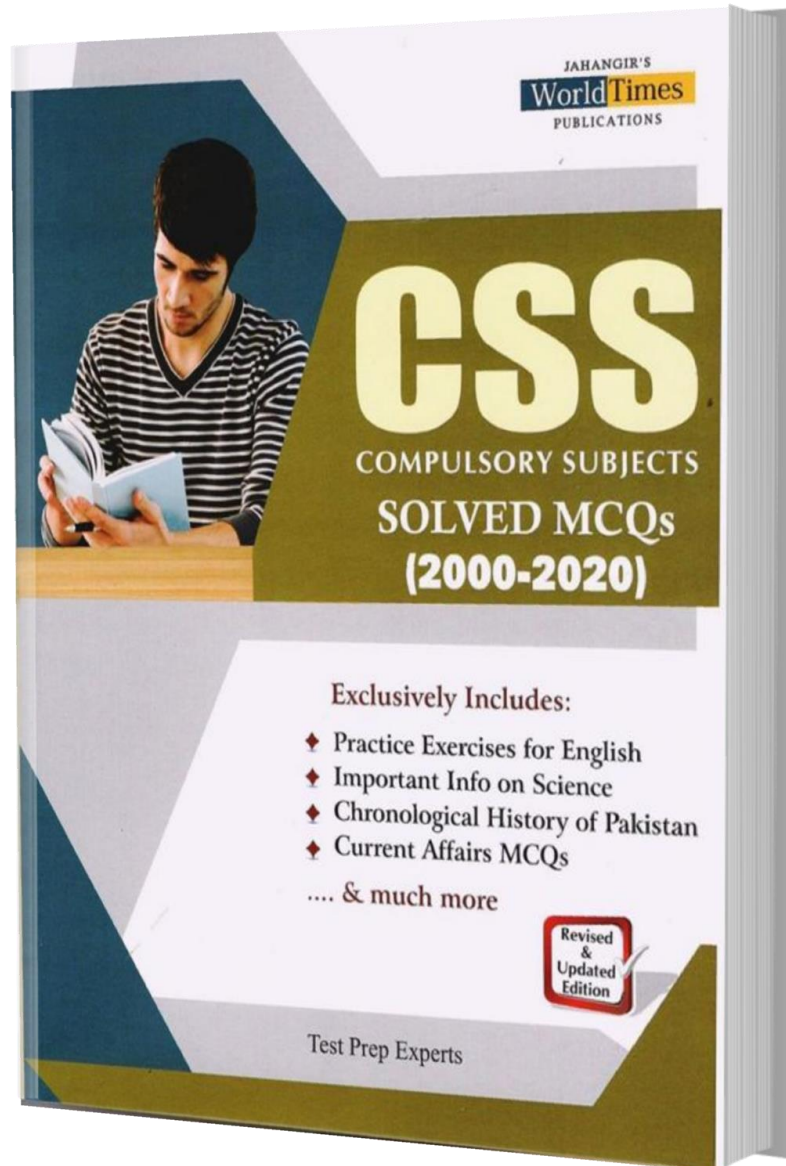
MEDIA IMPERIALISM

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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Introduction

Media Imperialism: Continuity and Change

Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Tanner Mirrlees

The term "media imperialism" was mainly fashioned by communication and media scholars in the 1960s and 1970s—a period when the US and Soviet superpowers battled for supremacy while the postcolonial non-aligned movement struggled for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) at the United Nations. Never was the concept of "imperial" in this context and research trajectory limited only to forms of imperialism that depended on the annexation of territory. Some early media-imperialism scholars were based in Latin American countries that were no longer colonies of any empire and had never been formal colonies of the United States. Other scholars conducted their research from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. During this time, "media imperialism" was principally applied to the media power and influence of the United States and was deployed in studies of the considerable influence of US-based media corporations in and on the media systems and cultures of other countries, especially those in the global South.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, a prevalent focus within media-imperialism literature on the United States reflects an understandable preoccupation with the actual economic, military, and media power of the United States. But scholarship on media imperialism has also extended to the expansive media systems, industries, and products of older empires (e.g., British, French, and Russian) and once subalternized or peripheral countries (e.g., China, India, Brazil, and South Korea). These little "media imperialisms" spread from countries that evince considerable media ownership, distribution, and impact within a given geocultural zone but are themselves structurally weaker than and shaped by stronger global imperial powers such as the United States. Just as there is no reason why media-imperialism scholarship should be limited to only one empire, there is also no reason why such research should be limited to only one period or phase in the history of an empire.

For more than four decades, some scholars have preferred the term "cultural imperialism" to "media imperialism" (and these terms are often used interchangeably). Sometimes, these terms were invoked to simply acknowledge that the media corporations (e.g., TV broadcasters) and media products (e.g., news stories and TV shows) of some countries were significant vehicles for economic and cultural influence in other countries. Other times, they flagged how the phenomena of imperialism extended well

beyond media industries and products to encompass economic models, patterns of governance, education systems, languages, ideas, norms, and values—"whole ways of life." Overall, research on media imperialism—whether focused on the media itself or the media within the broader compass of cultural imperialism—takes the "media" to be a diversity of complex social institutions. While most of these institutions are owned by corporations, some are also part of states and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). That is to say, a wide and growing array of private and public media institutions are the source of the "media" of "media imperialism." Some of these include the corporations that own the news, telecommunications, film and TV, advertising and public relations, music, interactive games, and internet platforms and social media sites. Frequently, these different media segments are owned by the same vertically and horizontally integrated global media giants: as types of media diversify, ownership centralizes.

In any case, the study of media imperialism in the twenty-first century should focus on the whole gamut of "the media" in the context of imperialism, old, new, and emerging. Points of focus when studying media imperialism may include media financing, media ownership, and intellectual property control; media-corporate business models (including advertising, subscription, sponsorship, and, increasingly, data aggregation); the organization and management of particular internationalizing media products, including cross-border media production, distribution, and exhibition; the integration of new hardware and software technologies with older media models and forms; the characteristics of specific media products (the form), as well as the cultural stories and images they carry (the content); and, of course, the complexities of cross-border media reception, interpretation, and use. Significantly, studies of media imperialism ought to pay more and closer attention to the intermingling of the economics of media corporations with the geopolitics of states, as well as to the global coordination and clash of propaganda campaigns and information operations.

Too often literature reviews of media imperialism—whether sourced to its defenders or caricaturized by its opponents—disregard the breadth and depth that this important area of study enables and requires. The coeditors of this volume support holistic research on the many dimensions of media imperialism. We have contributed to the literature on media and cultural imperialism over an extensive period and through many publications, and we are aware of and have given extensive thought to the many debates surrounding the discourse of media and cultural imperialism, particularly those that came of age in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the contributors to this volume also engage with these important debates in international communication and global media studies. While criticisms of the concepts of media and cultural imperialism have helped refine our thinking, we remain convinced of the enduring value of these concepts to critical research, even as we have, from time to time, sought to reconcile them with their major and more recent competitors—principal among them, media and cultural "globalization."

We have also been impressed by the steady stream of research that continues to find valence in the concepts of media and cultural imperialism. Not simply in our own works (see, e.g., Boyd-Barrett's *Media Imperialism* [Sage, 2015]; Mirrlees's *Global Entertainment Media* [Routledge, 2013] or Mirrlees's *Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry* [University of British Columbia Press, 2016]) but in numerous

other works (see, e.g., Dal Yong Jin's *Digital Platforms, Imperialism and Political Culture* [Routledge, 2015] and, most recently, Farooq Sulehria's *Media Imperialism in India and Pakistan* [Routledge, 2019]). While Jin documented the global dominance of US-platform corporations and asymmetrical digital power relations between countries, Sulehria's study of the development of the TV industries of both India and Pakistan demonstrated how so-called globalization ultimately exacerbated rather than reduced these two countries' dependency on the business models, technologies, and content flows of globalizing media conglomerates, especially those headquartered in the United States. Clearly, research on media and cultural imperialism is still important to international communication and global media studies, and it has flexibly adjusted itself to new media developments.

When collaborating on this volume, we considered it more than about time to invite our peers to revisit, complicate, and renew the concepts of media and cultural imperialism. As we approach the third decade of the twenty-first century—over half a century since the publication of Herbert Schiller's pathbreaking work *Mass Communications and American Empire* (Beacon Press, 1969)—our initiative is more than justified. This is demonstrated by a great deal of the evidence compiled and argumentation advanced by the tremendous contributors to this volume. Some are long-established scholars, while others are younger and have researched new aspects of media imperialism scarcely dreamed of in Schiller's time, yet whose findings lend support to his concerns. That said, the researchers included in this volume do not speak with one voice. The volume's twenty-one chapters reflect a spectrum of diverse and sometimes divergent perspectives, interpretations, and positions about the essence of media imperialism and current debates in the field. Nonetheless, all the chapters augment a critical study of media imperialism in the twenty-first century.

In brief, five of the main reasons for revisiting and reinvigorating the media-imperialism concept are as follows:

1. *The return of the United States and its major allies in and beyond NATO to more explicitly aggressive (they would argue "defensive") military interventions in the affairs of other countries under the banners, variously, of "democracy," "freedom," "humanitarian intervention," or "war on terrorism," and whose purpose is to support the foreign policy goals of the United States and its allies (and the interests of their economic elites).* All such interventions require expansive communications technologies and propaganda campaigns that in turn depend on pliable or co-opted media systems whose reach extends to the populations of the imperial powers, their allies, and their adversaries.

2. *The long-predicted decline of the United States (and its closest allies) as the globe's central empire, and its replacement either by China or by a bloc of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), while still conceivable, is still much further from fruition than most "declinists" acknowledge.* Even less likely in the near future is the displacement of a US-led global media sphere by a China- or BRICS-led media bloc. In chapter 21, evidence for the unparalleled global economic, military, and media-cultural power of the United States is presented by one of the coeditors, Tanner Mirrlees.

3. *The emergence of compelling evidence that state media and information agencies of the US empire and its allies, sometimes in cooperation with the large communications and media corporations that own legacy, popular, and digital media, strive to deliberately shape the content of news and entertainment media, overtly promote media imagery and messages that align with their interests, perform covert censorship, and, through digital hardware and software, utilize the internet and social media platforms for the purposes of surveillance, cyberwarfare, persuasion, and propaganda.*

4. *The declining potency of some of the criticisms of the media-imperialism concept that surfaced in the 1980s and 1990s.* For example, the idea that "globalization" had greater explanatory power than that of "imperialism" has been diminished: the processes of globalization are not agentless but often linked with and serviceable to states and corporations, especially the globe's most powerful ones. Additionally, the liberal cultural studies' idea that people actively select and interpret media content, while always a healthy caution against empirically unsubstantiated presumptions of media influence or direct effects, has been weakened by a growing and more sophisticated awareness of media framing in general and, more specifically, of algorithmic filtering techniques. The existence of active TV viewers never negated the existence of media imperialism; in the digital age, social media interaction is integral to and compelled by platform imperialism's business model.

5. *Increasing and disturbing evidence of the extent to which studies of media and cultural imperialism matter to the future of the world.* As global media propaganda campaigns sponsored by the globe's most powerful imperial countries distract and divert international attention and energy away from the progressive activists, social movements, and organizations struggling to save the globe from neoliberal capitalism, creeping authoritarianism, climate change, and the ever-looming threat of nuclear war, the possibility of the destruction of the human species, even within our own or our children's lifetimes, is more and more widely recognized and dreaded. In this regard, media- and cultural-imperialism research's normative concerns matter, and this tradition is a critical alternative to ignorance about or complacency with the status quo.

THE COLLECTION'S STRUCTURE

The volume is structured into six main parts, in addition to this introduction and the volume's concluding chapter.

Part 1, "Contextualizing and Conceptualizing Empire and Media Imperialism," comprises three chapters. Oliver Boyd-Barrett (chapter 1) chronicles the history of the concept of media imperialism—its rise, fall, and reemergence—to suggest that its relative overshadowing by postmodernist theories of globalization in the 1990s deprived the field at the worst possible moment of a suitably critical anchor with which to confront the increasing toxicity of global corporate media restructuring, challenge neoliberal policies of privatization and deregulation, and offer a return to the possibility of pro-citizen media at the service of democratic public spheres.

Marko Ampuja, Juha Koivisto, and Kaarle Nordenstreng (chapter 2) also engage with the history of the concept of media imperialism. They find some criticisms of the concept wanting, especially those related to "active viewer" research, gushing enthusiasm for the digital "revolution," and mounting evidence of cultural diversity in media production and media flows worldwide. Far from endorsing the revisionist tendency of the 1990s, the authors find the concept of globalization unequipped to address the gross power imbalances between global media corporations and citizens, and between the United States and other countries in the global system. Proposing that more attention should be given to global capitalist restructuring and the transnational export—as Schiller had understood—of the capitalist media model and media business practices, they conceptualize media imperialism as continuing in three different ways: the global market power of media corporations in and of themselves, the ways in which these corporations advance capitalist imperialism more generally, and the activities of these corporations as agents for geopolitical imperialism in the context of specific geopolitical and military projects. In distinction, perhaps, from chapter 2, Tanner Mirrlees (chapter 3) reasserts the importance of the state to reconceptualize cultural imperialism as a state-corporate project. After advancing a holistic conceptualization of the US empire and cultural imperialism, Mirrlees relays key moments in the institutional history of a symbiotic partnership between the US state and the cultural industries, from George Creel's Committee of Public Information in World War I to the formation of the Office of Public Diplomacy in 1990 and beyond. Collaborations between the US state and the cultural industries support the production and circulation of media messages and images that favorably promote "America" and US foreign policy to the world.

Part 2, "News, War, and Propaganda," comprises four chapters focusing on the nexus of the news and propaganda. The section serves as a reminder that media imperialism is not only about media industries but about how the frames constructed and agendas set by mainstream media corporations and journalists may align with those sourced to them by the information agencies of imperial states and their networks of foreign policy think tanks, especially when they are at war. This part makes specific reference to escalating tensions and information warfare from 2000 onward between United States–NATO and Russia (and Russian ally Syria). These reprise, in some respects, the standoff during the so-called Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union but in a newer context of triumphal neoliberalism and capitalist Russia and US abandonment of international regulations that had had some success reining in nuclear arsenals over several decades. Oliver Boyd-Barrett (chapter 4) analyzes Western news media collusion with US-NATO interests in privileging US-NATO accounts of the war in Syria—an ally of Russia, and in which Russia played a formative role in stalling overt Western invasion of Syria—from 2011 onward. Particular reference is made to claims and counterclaims of the use of chemical weapons, which in themselves represent a "weaponization" of discourses about chemical weapons that call into question the integrity of US-NATO narratives and relevant international regulatory bodies. Gerald Sussman (chapter 5) examines the collaboration between the US state and media corporations when constructing official enemies (in this case, Russia). He examines the neoliberal transformation of US mainstream media and scrutinizes

the hegemonic role of the news media in legitimizing the repressions of the state at home and its unending wars abroad. A related account of the US state and mainstream media's production of the enemy is presented by Oliver Boyd-Barrett (chapter 6), who examines the "Skripal" scandal. Following the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom in February 2018, every effort was made, in defiance of established journalistic norms for the collection and endorsement of compelling evidence, to vilify Russia as culprit and to marginalize or "disappear" alternative narratives. Concluding and extending this section, Piers Robinson (chapter 7) directs the conversation back to our evolving understanding of propaganda and the multiple organizations (not just news media organizations) that are involved in its production and circulation, including state bureaucracies, intelligence services, think tanks, NGOs, and academe. He concentrates on post-9/11 Global War on Terror propagandizing, the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, and the "Arab Spring" revolutions, especially as these concerned Libya and Syria.

Part 3, "Hollywood, War, and Militainment," comprises four chapters. Chapters included in this part update and extend cutting-edge research on the relationships tying together the US security state, major media corporations, and militarized entertainment products ("militainment"). Toby Miller (chapter 8) debunks the notion that Hollywood is a supreme example of laissez-faire capitalism by demonstrating the many ways the US state supports this pillar of US global media–cultural power with subsidies. Exemplifying this thesis in a way that leads—with assistance from the hacking of the computer network of Sony Pictures Entertainment in 2014—into what was once thought of as an inaccessible "black box," Paul Moody (chapter 9) shows how the US Department of State's embassies and diplomats actively boost Hollywood firms and products around the world. Roger Stahl (chapter 10) historicizes a symbiotic relationship between the Pentagon and Hollywood and analyzes the coproduction of filmic "militainment." Much of this state-subsidized content glorifies American soldiering with the goal of boosting recruitment and winning public support for war. In another deft analysis of Hollywood militainment, Erin Steuter and Geoff Martin (chapter 11) show how drone-warfare films legitimize and normalize the US imperial role as a "global executioner." They note that drone films are likely to receive US military in-kind support in the form of free access to military bases, personnel, equipment, training, and filming locations.

Part 4, "The Internet, Social Media, and Platform Imperialism," comprises four chapters. In strong contrast to the technological optimism that pervaded much of media studies' response to digitization and globalization in the 1990s, the authors of this section are far more somber and attuned to economic and geopolitical conditions. José van Dijck (chapter 12) deploys the term "platformization" to conceptualize a process that has started to uproot the infrastructural and organizational design of societies. She finds that the world is divided between two distinct, concentrated, and increasingly rivalrous platform ecosystems: those of the United States (Alphabet-Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft) and those of China (Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, Jingodon Mall, and Didi). Finding Europe to be mainly integrated with the US-platform ecosystem, she scrutinizes how the US model's unregulated capitalism and neoliberal market values leave little room for public alternatives. She asks what kind

of public values should be foregrounded in the development of platform ecosystems and who should be responsible for safeguarding and regulating their protection. Dal Yong Jin (chapter 13) examines the rise of a US-centric "platform imperialism" in his case study of Facebook, the largest social media company in the world. Despite competition from China, US-centered platforms such as Facebook seem to rule the global internet, and as they expand their reach around the world, they intensify power asymmetries between the United States and the rest of the world and greatly jeopardize stability, privacy, and security. In a fascinating case study of the linguistic dimension of platform imperialism, Christof Demont-Heinrich (chapter 14) examines top global and national weekly streamed songs on Spotify, a global digital music streaming platform. Except in selected primarily Spanish-speaking countries—and in one primarily Portuguese-speaking country, Brazil—English-language songs and Anglo-American pop music artists dominate. He proposes that the long-standing global hegemony of the English language—now on Spotify—can occur with instances of localization and hybridization. Tanner Mirrlees (chapter 15) traces the complex ways in which the US security state and Silicon Valley shape the internet and social media for strategic ends: through the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency, the US empire spies on the world with help from big data corporations; the Department of State's Office of Public Diplomacy harnesses social media platforms to interactively battle for hearts and minds; and the Department of Defense wages cyberwarfare against opponents across the digital media battle-space.

Part 5, "Development Communication, Global Divides, and Cultural Imperialism," comprises three chapters. Discourses of "development communication" have accompanied the study of international communication from its inception and, in the twenty-first century, interweave in complex ways with the concepts and practices of media imperialism and media globalization. Cees Hamelink (chapter 16) revisits and evaluates the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates of the 1970s. He discusses the goals of the project, investigates why it failed, and explores what its meaning could be in the twenty-first century. At its center, NWICO was a campaign for cultural justice, and its lessons continue to be significant. Mohan Dutta (chapter 17) examines how the US empire (the US state and US information and communication technology firms) instrumentalizes the literature and practice of "social change communication." Dutta shows how communication for "development," "participation," "engagement," and "culture" frequently stems from and serves the neoliberal capitalist agendas of the US state and US-based transnational companies in "developing" countries. By contrast, culturally centered struggles for communicative justice in the global South foreground the role of alternative communicative infrastructures in anti-imperial struggles. In implicit endorsement of Dutta's analysis but specifically with respect to women, Karin Wilkins (chapter 18) argues that many digital media development programs for women's empowerment subscribe to a neoliberal capitalist narrative and framework that obscures gendered power differences. By focusing on facilitating individual empowerment via commercial digital media tools—not transforming the economic, political, and gendered structures and contexts that limit or determine human agency——this neoliberal framework keeps many women in marginalized positions.

Part 6, "Rising Media Empires: The Case of China," comprises two chapters. Colin Sparks (chapter 19) conceptualizes China as an emerging cultural imperialist. While China is developing a media and cultural apparatus to support its nascent imperialist role, it has not yet achieved much in the way of worldwide popular acceptance, nor is it in a situation in which it can hope to supplant the United States as the world's leading power. But he does not dismiss the potentially longer-term significance of China's success in winning over many local elites in the so-called developing world or emerging economies. While he sees a possible future for the Chinese model or for some "third way" model of "doing journalism" in those countries disillusioned with Western journalism and its coverage of their interests, he holds out little hope that Chinese media culture or a "Chinese dream" will supplant Western media culture or the "American dream" in the foreseeable future. Graham Murdock's analysis (chapter 20) is compatible with that of Sparks. Murdock references the work of Rudolf Hilferding for understanding both the Chinese model of state-managed capitalism and its deployment in service of displacing the United States as the preeminent global power. His case study of one preeminent but, at the time of writing, potentially failed initiative in such a push—that of the Wanda Group—does not lead him to conclude that other more recent initiatives cannot achieve much greater success. He cites President Xi Jinping's encouragement of innovation-driven development in the digital economy, artificial intelligence, and big data; plans for a "digital Silk Road" of high-speed broadband connections to support e-commerce and smart cities; and robotics and the Internet of Things, as key foci for future research.

The volume concludes with a chapter by Tanner Mirrlees (chapter 21). It was initially envisaged as a concluding contribution to part 6 on China, and while the chapter picks up from there, the coeditors have determined that its broad scope justifies its placement as a concluding chapter for the volume as a whole. Indeed, we strongly recommend it to readers, as we believe it provides several highly significant reality checks against those who have exaggerated the certitude of the disappearance of the United States as the major power (economic, military, and in media and cultural domains), or its relative displacement either by China or by any combination of BRICS powers, or the speed with which these "global" transformations might occur. Mirrlees argues that "declinists" underestimate the solidity of the US global structural power relative to would-be contenders. The BRICS are very different countries, and they are not a united bloc against the United States, and even if they were, they would not yet come close to matching it. Only China might be considered an emerging rival to the United States, but current evidence does not show this. The US empire may be in decline, but at present it still exists and, as in the past, its cultural industries are part of the empire, widening the sphere of US influence and supporting its capitalist, military, and cultural-ideological expansion.

Part I

CONTEXTUALIZING AND CONCEPTUALIZING EMPIRE AND MEDIA IMPERIALISM

Media and Cultural Imperialism

Genealogy of an Idea

Oliver Boyd-Barrett

The disintegration of East European communism began with the election of Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Poland's first non-communist prime minister on August 24, 1989, and progressed quickly to the East German government announcing the opening of all East German borders on November 9. The superpower status of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union itself, diminished by the failure of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979–1989) and transformed by the Gorbachev reforms of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness), had entered its final chapter (terminating in December 1991). Among the first indications of how the United States might react to this momentous historical watershed was the US invasion of Panama in 1989–1990. Parroting Washington sources, mainstream media explained the invasion in terms of "safeguarding" the lives of US citizens, "defending" democracy and "human rights," combating drug trafficking, and preserving the "neutrality" of the Panama Canal. How valid were these pretexts? How far did the deaths, reportedly, of over four thousand Panamanian citizens (a number disputed by the United States) justify a military invasion (Peppe 2014)?

A year later, in January 1991, the United States launched a UN-sanctioned international invasion of Iraq on the pretext that Iraq had invaded the tiny principality of Kuwait, a province separated from Iraq in 1921–1922 when both Iraq and Kuwait were administered by Britain in the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. A White House–linked Hill and Knowlton propaganda campaign involving the mainly, if not completely, fabricated narrative of how Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait City had thrown babies out of their incubators helped swing Congress into passing a joint resolution of authorization on January 14 for military action in 1991 (Stauber and Rampton 2002). The decimation a few months later of Iraq's fleeing army was reinforced from 1998 onward with regular Western bombing campaigns whose end result was to further "soften up" the country in preparation for a second Western invasion in 2003—later declared by the UN Secretary General to have been illegal and in violation of the UN charter. The invasion was presented by mainstream media as a near-instant "success" so that President George W. Bush could pronounce "mission accomplished" on May 1. In reality it was prelude to hundreds of thousands more

deaths in the ensuing US occupation and beyond, and the displacement of several million citizens (Hedges and Al-Arian 2009).

In the interval between the first and second Gulf Wars, an entire European country, Yugoslavia, perhaps the then greatest exemplar of autonomous socialism in the world, was ripped apart by a series of ethnic and sectarian wars that were both provocations of and resistance to the Serbian-dominated federal system. Key players in this war included public relations companies hired to promote sectarian and ethnic nationalism, Western intelligence agencies who maneuvered jihadist warriors from Afghanistan to Yugoslavia to fight alongside Muslim forces, and US money dispersed by intelligence agencies to whomsoever could smash the federation fastest (Macedonian Truth Forum 2015). Under the watchful eye of UK intelligence agencies during this time, London became an incubation center and clearinghouse for an array of extremist clerics and radical jihadist movements in support of secessionist Muslims in Yugoslavia and on behalf of Chechnyan nationalists fighting against Russian troops, providing a European foothold for Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda–affiliated institutions and other terrorist adventurers (Ahmed 2006; Curtis 2010).

How much of this featured in media scholarship of 1990s media coverage of wars of "humanitarian intervention" and of media framing of 9/11 at the turn of the century? What clarity did media scholarship achieve ahead of the long-unfolding and now most compelling exposure (Griffin and Woodworth 2018) of the fraud and incompetence of the 2004 official 9/11 narrative and of the ways in which 9/11 was reported by mainstream media? Given that the most visible (but probably not the principal) perpetrators were predominantly Saudi, backed by Saudi government officials and Wahhabist charities (Shenon 2016), how well did media scholarship unpack the media-parroted rationale and progress of the US-led (but not UN-authorized) international invasion and occupation of Afghanistan? The invasion was ostensibly about the overthrow of an ethnic-based government under Taliban (mainly ethnic Pashtun) control, that had previously offered to give up Osama Bin Laden (Mashal 2011), and whose principal international backers were Saudi Arabia and Pakistan—both of whom the United States declared its allies in the "war on terror" (Curtis 2010). Pakistan provided shelter for Osama Bin Laden until his assassination by the United States on May 2, 2011 (Hersh 2015). Entities of both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (including Pakistan's intelligence service, ISI) were intimately involved in the 9/11 attacks (Cruz 2018).

How far did such troubling questions impact media scholarship? How prepared were media scholars for analysis of media coverage of the 2002 "Bush doctrine," which, among other things, established a US case for preemptive warfare wherever US hegemony was threatened? And how did this development prepare media scholars for analysis of the media propaganda blitz that preceded, accompanied, and served as later justification for both the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the ensuing decade-long occupation, at a cost, according to reputable sources, from half a million to two and a half million lives, and the displacement of many millions more (Keating 2018; Benjamin and Davies 2018)?

In the invasion and occupation of a sovereign nation, Western states (primarily the United States and United Kingdom) exploited their own mythologizing of 9/11 to provide a feeble, false, and illegal justification for aggression, in the absence of

any credible, immediate threat (Chilcot Report 2016). It was clear to many experts and parties to the "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) fabrication as a pretext for invasion that Saddam Hussein did not have WMD. Paul Wolfowitz, former deputy secretary for defense, often described as the "architect" of the invasion, explained that "for bureaucratic reasons we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on" (Usborne 2003). Former secretary of state Colin Powell has described his 2003 speech to the United Nations, in which he gave a detailed description of Iraqi weapons programs that turned out not to exist, as "painful" for him personally and said that it would be a permanent "blot" on his record (Weisman 2005). It later transpired that the invasion of Iraq was merely one step toward a game plan of regime change and/or dismemberment of several nations considered by Washington as obstacles to US interests (Goodman 2007).

Given the extraordinary humiliation dealt Western powers and their mainstream media by exposure of the lies that had underwritten the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the miserable course of the subsequent occupation (including the peremptory disbandment of the Iraqi army and Ba'athist regime, torture and other abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison, and the eventual emergence of ISIS) and its long aftermath, how well did media scholarship accommodate indications of deep-level collusion between Western mainstream media and their respective governments—ironically symbolized by the Pentagon's "television generals" (i.e., Pentagon-vetted former generals, many of them salesmen for defense industries, who were supplied as discussants to fully complicit mainstream television channels in return for sales opportunities) (Umansky 2008). Did this prepare media scholars for critical reaction a few years later to Western-originated narratives of the so-called Arab Spring, and Western mainstream media enthusiasm for social media as agents of progressivism in the Arab world (much of which was the expression of now-standard regime-change tactics supported by pro-Washington "NGOs") (Davidson 2016)?

Were media scholars alert to the false pretext used by a NATO coalition for the bombing of Libya in 2011? The purpose, it was said, was to stop a massacre—a massacre that it was falsely alleged Gadhafi would otherwise have perpetrated on the people of Benghazi. Bombing occurred under the authority, ostensibly, of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, whose intent was an immediate cease-fire and protection of civilians. The actual result was a bloody shredding of the country and a rendering of it back to medieval, sectarian fiefdoms practicing slavery (Hauben 2011).

Were media scholars skeptical as to the claims made about the Muslim Brotherhood's staging in 2011 of what Western authorities described as a grassroots citizens' movement of opposition to the Assad regime in Syria, and of the ensuing succession of contestable Western allegations of uses of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Army (Anderson 2016; Gowans 2017)? Did they track the complex and pernicious Western- and Saudi-supported jihadist movements that had occupied vast swathes of Syria on the pretext that they were fighting against ISIS? Were media scholars alert to the irony that both Libya and Syria had previously stood out in their respective regions as relatively non-sectarian, prosperous, and, above all, socialist states that practiced the nearest thing to gender equality that has likely ever existed in the Middle East (Boyd-Barrett 2015)?

How did media scholarship account for a decades-long propaganda campaign led by the United States and Israel with the support of Britain, France, and others to promote the idea that Iran, which had no nuclear weapons, no proven evidence of a nuclear weapons program, nor even proof of a desire for such weapons—but did have a nuclear energy industry—constituted a nuclear threat to the West (Dimaggio 2009; Porter 2014; Boyd-Barrett 2015)?

How did media scholarship deal with the development of anti-Russian demonizing by Western leaders and Western media following the demise of debauched but pro-Western Russian president Boris Yeltsin and his replacement by Vladimir Putin—a strong nationalist as well as capitalist (Gilman 2017)? Did they recall the lies and fantasies pedaled by Western economic experts in collaboration with idealist and naive Russian intellectuals about the nature of capitalism, in campaigns that suckered the Russian people into reckless abandonment of all the securities and the wealth accumulated in their name during the seventy years of the Soviet era (Baysha 2014)? How quickly did Western media scholarship move in to critically dissect mainstream media coverage of the Western-supported coup d'état that occurred in Kiev, Ukraine, in 2013, the Western propaganda assertions as to Russia's "seizure" of Crimea, its alleged culpability in shooting down civilian flight MH17 (Boyd-Barrett 2017), and its "assassination" programs directed against the likes of Alexander Litvinenko and Sergei Skripal?

These may sound like rhetorical questions. It is true that their author is underwhelmed by the performance of Western media scholarship across any of these integrated domains and has worked to demonstrate this in his own published research. But such questions are not altogether answerable objectively. Judgment as to how well an entire discipline has responded to the intellectual and moral challenges of a transformative historical era elude objective analysis. My purpose in the rest of this chapter is not so much to show that the discipline as a whole has failed in this or in that way. My purpose rather is to argue that the possibility of a robust and critical response to these challenges of the period 1989 to 2019 from the discipline of media studies—admittedly a somewhat fuzzy category that stretches across many branches of the social sciences—was already stillborn on account of long-standing deterioration in the critical advances that had been achieved in the 1960s and 1970s, coupled with an ironically odd dependence for the discipline's understanding of the world on the very politicized institutions (the media) whose business it was for them to critique.

CULTURAL AND MEDIA IMPERIALISM

The terms "cultural imperialism" and "media imperialism" date from the same period and have similar roots. They clearly interrelate theoretically and pragmatically. Relationships between processes understood as "culture" and processes understood as "imperialism" (however these are defined) often implicate one or more of the technologies and modes of communication that are denoted by the term "media." Media are constitutive of and constituted by the cultures from which they emerge.

The domain of culture is generally recognized as more pervasive and constitutive of social structure and process than that of media. Some scholarship broaches the subject of cultural imperialism from a broad perspective that may or may not embrace the media directly but which includes a wealth of other dimensions, many of which continue to be relevant to studies of media. These include language, approaches to knowledge and knowing, belief systems, ideologies, cultures of governance, education, economic activity, social structure, interpersonal relationships, technologies, and artifacts. Arjun Appadurai's (1992) postulation of five "scapes" for the analysis of culture and globalization—ethnoscape, technoscape, finanscape, mediascape, ideoscape—is an influential example. Christopher Alan Bayly's (2000) examination of the relationship between colonialism, information-gathering, and social communication in India is another. Oliver Boyd-Barrett (1977, 2015) explicitly favored the term "media imperialism," even though narrower than and encompassed by cultural imperialism, for its benefit of a focused discourse helpful in unpacking the complexity of media operations.

While the terms share some common roots and are sometimes used interchangeably, they also have distinctive histories. In the sociology of mass media, for example, the significance of the term "media imperialism" in the 1960s and 1970s was based in large measure on its contrast to the "modernization paradigm" that prevailed in the immediately preceding literature. Modernization theories proposed an essential, positive role for media in "national development," whereas media imperialism theorists regarded media infrastructure, institutions, and content as part and parcel of Western imperialism, working to groom peoples of the global South or developing world into willing acceptance of their continued exploitation regardless of whether they were politically "autonomous."

Cultural and media imperialism are sometimes referred to in the same breath as "theory"—as in cultural-imperialism or media-imperialism "theory." This might suggest that there is just one prevailing theory at play, even if it is one that evolves over time and that is subject to easy critique. In relation specifically to the concept of media imperialism, Boyd-Barrett (2015) argues that the term is better thought of not as denoting a specific theory, but as a field of study whose broad subject is the dense cluster of relationships of every kind between phenomena that are regularly described as "imperialism" on the one hand, and those that are regularly described as "media" on the other. This encompasses theories that talk about imperialism as the cause of cultural changes, for example, and theories about practices of cultural resistance against imperialism, of changes in the culture of the imperialist power upon its interactions with a colonial power, of the emergence of syncretic or hybrid cultures, and so on.

An oft-cited exemplary text from earlier literatures that deals with the relationship between communication and empires (as distinct from more recent ideas of cultural or media imperialism) is that of the Canadian economist and communications scholar Harold Innis (1950, 1951), who identified what he proposed were distinctive relationships between the physical properties of communication systems (e.g., stone, papyrus, or paper) and the structure and capabilities of power in ancient civilizations. The work of Innis had a direct influence on Marshall McLuhan, a fellow Canadian and a scholar of literature and culture, who developed Innis's ideas about the relationship between

prevailing modes of communication and evolving stages of social organization (see, in particular, Marshall McLuhan 1962, 1964, 1967). The works of Innis and McLuhan were contributions to a large and ever-evolving literature on causal and other modes of relationship between writing (manuscripts), printing (newspapers, books), electronic and wireless media (telephone, radio, television), and digital and social media, on the one hand, and society in general or particular aspects of society (such as childhood and, of course, imperialism), on the other.

Extrapolating from Boyd-Barrett (2015), it is important to be sensitive to the historical constancy of interrelationships between imperialism, culture, and media, as well as to the ever-evolving manifestation of each of these. Imperialism, he argues, is always about the exploitation of one community by another, but this can take many forms. Control over territory is dispensable. Cultures change upon contact, sometimes evolving hybrid or syncretic forms whose constituents are unequal. Media evolve most visibly in technological form but also in forms of their relationships to different centers of power, ownership, control, geographical and demographic reach, accessibility, genre, purpose, symbolic constituents, and audience. Across all of these dimensions is encountered the play of power and inequalities of power.

A clear distinction needs to be made between phenomena of cultural imperialism, the lived experience of actual human beings likely commensurate with humanity itself, and studies that fall under the explicit linguistic rubric of "cultural imperialism," which we can date from the 1960s. The currents of thought that emerged around this time and which intensified through the 1970s can be criticized for being insufficiently historical, lacking the nuance of a social anthropology of culture, overly focused on the particular case of the United States, and media-centric. But they are also a product of growing awareness in developing countries (or countries of the "Third World," sometimes referred to later as "the South," "post-colonial" societies, or "emergent" economies) that the achievement of nominal, political independence from the principal imperial powers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (especially Belgium, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and the United States) in the period after World War II was illusory, that the "former" imperial nations, singly or in alliance, continued to shape, mold, and control the destinies of "former" colonies and acolytes through military threat, economic ties, intelligence subterfuge, and the continuing reverberations of a not-so-distant imperial culture through ties of language, esteemed art and literature, political procedure, and so on.

Korean and Vietnamese wars from the 1940s to the 1970s exemplified threats of imperial invasion and occupation well into the post–Second World War era. A great many of these are chronicled in the now classic litany outlined in two books by William Blum (Blum 2005, 2008). Ruthless imperial suppression (covered up by mainstream media for many decades) of indigenous insurgencies in possessions such as Algeria, Kenya, and Malaysia exposed the deep-seated unwillingness of empires to relinquish their most prized conquests. Civil wars in the wake of independence, as in the Indian subcontinent, Congo, and Nigeria, shrouded the vaunted benefits of "freedom." Western-instigated or -supported destabilization and regime change in countries such as Guatemala (1952), Iran (1953), the Congo (1961), Indonesia (1965), Greece (1967), and Chile (1973), to name a few, instructed new nations of the "South" that

when "independent" nations chose paths of development (often entailing nationaliza-tion and redistribution of wealth, import substitution, socialism, and secularism) of which their "former" imperial masters disapproved, they would be subjected to brutal regime change and worse. These punitive impacts typically endured for decades. Throughout, media were increasingly indispensable weapons amid information and propaganda wars between hegemonic power and (less commonly) resistance to it.

Formulation of theories of cultural and media imperialism is particularly associ-ated with a cluster of Latin American scholars of communication in the 1960s and 1970s. They included the Bolivian journalist and communication scholar Luis Ramiro Beltrán (see, for example, Beltrán 1980), the sociologist Armand Mattelart (born in Belgium, but whose career spanned a decade in Chile during which he coauthored a significant 1975 study with Ariel Dorfman), and the Venezuelan scholar of social communication Antonio Pasquali (see his foundational 1963/1977 publication). Many North American, European, and other scholars embraced the term. With particular relevance for the foundation of cultural studies, the writings of Stuart Hall (Jamaican-British) have had incomparable influence. One of Hall's works, co-authored with Paddy Whannel in 1965, made the case for the serious study of film as entertainment. Relevant studies included the writings of Herbert Schiller (American; see, for exam-ple, his foundational 1969 work), of whom I shall say more in a moment; Jeremy Tun-stall (British; whose classic 1977 work proposed US primacy in media production and distribution worldwide); and Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's 1988 exposition of a "propaganda model" of disinformation in which mainstream media were central players, and which served to obfuscate the dynamics of (particularly US) imperialism. The propaganda model's first and principal target was the empire's domestic citizenry and then, courtesy of the broad influence of US media infrastructure and journalism worldwide, a global audience.

John Tomlinson (1991) considered "cultural imperialism" too broad a term to yield an easy or single definition, proposing instead that a definition "must be as-sembled out of its discourse" (3). A definition offered by Schiller touches on many but not all dimensions common to studies of cultural imperialism and which inform Schiller's own approach to media, namely "the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system," which Schiller identified as the United States (Schiller 1976, 9). This definition is consistent with world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974) and highlights modernity, agency, and inequalities of power and class structure. More controver-sially it presumes that the term is appropriate only for the "modern" age, deems that the United States is indisputably the system's dominating center, and concentrates its critical energy on advanced capitalism.

Examining processes of cultural imperialism from the top down, Schiller's consider-ation of processes of media reception was relatively primitive (in common with most of the media studies literature of the time). But at the macro level his model compellingly demonstrated the systemic interplay of the major components of an imperial system as it operated for much of the second half of the twentieth century: (1) advanced US-based

privately owned and for-profit media industries; (2) principally financed by advertising; that (3) promoted consumerism, a cornerstone of US economic strength; (4) while adapting new communications technologies (e.g., satellite, later the internet) initially developed by state-sponsored military and defense industries that also served goals of surveillance and military primacy; (5) simultaneously facilitating the global dissemination of US media, US-based multinational enterprise, and the US goods promoted through global advertising, all the while subject to (6) a national regulatory system and a US-directed global regulatory system that privileged the private, commercial media model and served US hegemony.

The term "media imperialism," emerging from this scholarship, figured as one component of a broader intellectual framework of "dependency theory"—a critical backlash not just against the "modernization paradigm" that had prevailed in developmental studies (exemplified in the works of Wilbur Schramm 1964, Lucien Pye 1965, and Daniel Lerner 1958) but more broadly against the democratic-pluralist model of thinking about media and society in general. The three basic presumptions at work behind the modernization paradigm were that (1) Western societies were democratic, pluralistic, and enjoyed media "freedom," and their economies were advanced (interdependent, positive attributes); (2) other parts of the world would benefit if they adopted this model; and (3) because the main components of the model were interdependent, the introduction of one component into a developing society (e.g., "free" media or even just "media") would facilitate appearance of the others. As the prevailing ideology of its time, informing the broad field of media scholarship up until the late 1960s and throughout much of the 1970s, democratic pluralism and its corollary of the modernization paradigm contributed to Cold War discourses fashioned through direct and indirect manipulation of knowledge production by political, intellectual, and intelligence actors.

Several of the field's leading scholars of media modernization had worked for US intelligence in one sense or another during World War II, and their ties to the intelligence establishment often persisted (Simpson 1996). Additionally, the objects of their inquiries—news and entertainment media—were themselves infiltrated and exploited by political and intelligence actors to a degree that was not acknowledged in media scholarship of the period. The findings of at least three congressional committees of inquiry into CIA operations during the 1970s are of great importance, exposing the CIA buyout of large numbers of both journalists and academics (Church 1975–76; Pike 1976; Rockefeller 1975). The history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom reveals the extraordinary lengths to which the CIA went in order to shape an intellectual environment that was favorable to the interests of the United States and its allies. In recent decades more evidence has come to light of routine manipulation of movie and television programming by US defense and intelligence establishments (Whitney 2016).

Reacting against modernization theory, dependency theory was influenced by the writings of Raul Prebisch (1962), Andre Gunder Frank (1979), and Immanuel Wallerstein (1974). Its major points of consensus were (1) that economic growth in wealthy countries did not necessarily lift the economies of poor countries; (2) this was a result of systematic political, economic, and cultural ties between countries whose operation

favored the rich and disadvantaged the poor; so that (3) relations between them (variously described as dominant/dependent, central/peripheral, or metropolitan/satellite) reinforced and intensified inequality. Frank ascribed this dynamic to capitalism specifically, others to power more generally. With respect to media scholarship, dependency theory undermined the argument of "modernization" theorists that aid for media in the "developing world" would, of itself, contribute to development. It suggested that the interests actually served by the growth of media in the dependent countries were (1) countries whose media systems were already strongest, (2) media owners who would most immediately benefit from international expansion, together with (3) corporations (principally Western-based multinationals) whose sales depended on advertising expenditure in media, as well as (4) corporations who built the infrastructures for global communication (cable, wireless, satellite, etc.) and the technologies of media production, distribution, and reception. All these interests subscribed to a general ideology of power, economic development, and growth (later referred to more generally as "neoliberalism") and stood to benefit from its broader dissemination and exemplification (the so-called demonstration effect) through media worldwide.

Dependency theory called attention to the role of media in facilitating and sustaining forms of imperialism. It demolished the idea that simple concession of "independence" by post-imperial to post-colonial countries was an especially meaningful sign of autonomy or an end to actual imperialism. The relevance of dependency theory to media was exemplified within media studies by research that demonstrated the dominance of Western, and in particular US, communications technologies corporations (in telecommunications, satellite, and computing) and content providers (notably in film, television, news agencies, and publishing) on global markets. This was consistent with:

1. Growing influence of "political economy" approaches to media that acknowledged that how media operated and the contents and services they provided were significantly shaped by their underlying business models (of which advertising dependence was the most important), the particular markets they served, their strategies for gaining market advantage, and the implicit and explicit understandings and relationships between mainstream media and other major centers of power, above all the power of governments and state agencies—including agencies whose function was to regulate the media for the benefit of a presumed "public interest," for the benefit of business efficiency, or for both. The rise of a political economy view of the media drew from similar currents of thought as those of dependency theory, among other sources of inspiration;

2. Revitalization of interest in the critical, dialectical approach of the Frankfurt School, especially as represented by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1947/2007) and Herbert Marcuse (1970), and its fusion of Marxism and psychoanalysis;

3. Development in Marxist or post-Marxist analysis of the prospects for European social democracy of the struggle for influence between publicly and privately owned media systems and the implications for culture and politics of processes of media concentration, conglomeration, and commercialization, during a period of relative detente in the 1970s when potential convergence between the systems of

Western social democracy and Russo-Chinese communism seemed less unthink-
able than it soon became;

4. Discourses of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)
within the context of a series of conferences organized by the United Nations
Education Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), also involving the
Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and which culminated in the 1980 publication
of UNESCO's *Many Voices, One World* report of a committee chaired by Sean
McBride. The concept of NWICO provided UN endorsement for the view that
resolving economic inequalities was not simply an economic but also a cultural
challenge. While eschewing talk of imperialism, the language of the report was
suffused with premises and concerns recognizable as emerging from ideas of de-
pendency and application of this concept to communication inequalities between
nations, the origination of these from within political, economic, and cultural
realms, and the identification of appropriate reforms of institutional structures and
processes that were both external and internal to nation-states.

THE FALL AND RISE OF A CONCEPT

The later demise of dependency theory and, with it, ideas of media imperialism, has
many roots. I shall identify some of the main ones. I shall then explain why the loss
of the critical edge represented by these ideas undermined the intellectual capacity
of media scholarship for sufficiently critical response to the ever more egregious
evidence of resurgent Western imperialistic intent from 1990 onward and to the col-
lusion of mainstream media with imperial power both within the imperial center(s)
and their dependencies.

There were some valid objections to dependency and media-imperialism theories
(both had several variants). I shall concentrate on those that relate to media. These
theories awarded primacy of concern to economic inequalities that they proposed
should be remedied at least in part by a strengthening of local media systems—an
"import substitution" strategy.

Many smaller countries lacked a sufficiently large internal population or market
for media systems that could compete economically against cheap imports of higher
production quality even at the expense of diminished cultural relevance. Even when
like-minded nations pooled resources in order to create more robust productions, as
did the nations of the Non-Aligned Movement when they formed the Non-Aligned
News Agency, the resulting market still did not compare—remotely—with the adver-
tising-abundant and media-affluent markets served by leading Western news agencies,
nor was the news product of sufficient appeal to those wealthier markets. Smaller,
less wealthy countries turned to their respective government or state agencies for
investment in media and media regulation, sometimes inviting unproductive tensions
between creative energy, business entrepreneurship, and political or bureaucratic con-
straints in the realm of entertainment media, while opening the door to greater politi-
cal control over news and information products. State involvement invited the ire of
Western critics who were generally blind to the limitations and informal but profound

de facto censorship of advertising-supported, commercially driven, privately owned media in their own countries (Boyd-Barrett 2001).

The dependency notion of "underdevelopment" posited a vicious spiral of inequality between nations of the center and nations of the periphery. Not only did this not always turn out to be the case in practice, but definitions of "development," once they extend beyond simple statistical aggregates to include softer, more experiential standards of what constitutes the "good life," become more controversial. Applied to media the term "underdevelopment" works unevenly, at best. The past half century has seen significant media development in many if not most countries of the world, including the quondam "developing economies"—the largest of these, such as Brazil, sporting media conglomerates (e.g., the Globo empire) that rival and perhaps surpass most of those of the United States, while even small countries have taken advantage of falling costs of media production and distribution to invest more in local media production. Yet the "media were American" thesis (Tunstall 2008) attributes insufficient attention to the near-universal neoliberalization of advertising-supported, hyper-commercial infotainment media as an exported Western and capitalist ideology and does insufficient justice to the new digital world of multimedia internet service providers, portals, and websites, which is dominated by a small number of countries. At the time of writing, the United States remains the world's single largest center of media power and wealth when all media domains are included: legacy and digital, hardware and software, across publishing, film, broadcasting, telecommunications, and computer-platform industries (Boyd-Barrett 2015; Mirrlees 2013, 2016).

Dependency theory prioritized the nation as the major unit of analysis in the study of processes that extended beyond national frontiers. Primacy of the nation-state came under increasing fire with the popularization of globalization theory from the 1970s into the 1990s and beyond. Perspectives of globalization theory encouraged analysis of the interlinkages between global, regional, national, intra-national, and local levels, and acknowledged how phenomena at any one of these levels could often only be explained with reference to other levels. Oftentimes the nation-state seemed to disappear as a significant entity. In practice nation-states retain great regulatory and legislative influence over media and communications industries, and major international regulatory bodies are in fact governed by the legal representatives of nation-states (see Jessop 2003 for broader discussion). De-prioritization of the nation-state inspired scholars to consider the role of media not so much in representations of nationhood and national institutions, nor, for that matter, of other expressions of place, but in the constitution of the imaginaries of any of these and of those whose interests they served. Globalization added fuel to critical scholarship of self-acclaimed "global media"—they usually turned out, on close inspection, to represent interests associated with particular nations or alliances of elite national interests—and of those corporations that built the infrastructures required by growing market demand for international or global communication facilities.

The demise of the Soviet Union and the East European countries of the former communist bloc from 1989 onward brought about the balkanization of a vast swathe of EurAsia. Former national identities—while never eclipsed during their history as components of the USSR and its Yalta-endorsed zone of influence—were elevated

in autonomous status through the lenses of media worldwide, even though some retained close links with the Russian Federation and others were coaxed or fled into the fold of the European Union and/or NATO. Equally important was the "capitalist road" adopted under the continuing stewardship of the Chinese Communist Party by Chinese leadership, notably that of Chairman Deng Xiaoping, following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and reaching apparent fruition in 2000 under Jiang Zemin when China was accepted as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Up until these events Western media scholarship had focused much of its critical gaze upon the media of the Western world and the worldwide influence of (mainly) Western media conglomerates (Curran and Park 2005). Japan was a "proxy" Western partner, an acknowledged leader in many domains, including animation and anime and, thanks largely to Sony, consumer electronics, not least in the form of the Sony Walkman (until the arrival of Internet music sharing—Napster ran from 1999 to 2001—and the appearance of the first version of the Apple iPod in 2001) and, later, the Sony PlayStation. Although open to Marxist and post-Marxist trends of thought, scholarship had shown little enthusiasm for and not much interest in communist models of media production and control, which scholars loosely dismissed as over-bureaucratized systems of state capital. The main media issue thought to be of interest, apart from the unsubtle theme of state censorship and control, was the adaptation of low-technology forms of anti-communist and other forms of resistance, such as Samizdat in Eastern Europe or post-Maoist wall posters in China, for example (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994).

The influence of dependency theory had peaked around 1980 with publication of the McBride report. The report's recommendations expressed considerable trust in the regulatory power and responsibility of governments to act in the best interests of the community of nations. That faith was undermined by the Thatcher administration that took power in 1979 in the United Kingdom and the Reagan administration that came to office in the United States in 1981. These administrations adopted the monetarism of Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics. They had no interest in subordinating their policies to UN bodies in which the influence of the "South" or dependent economies was becoming stronger in the wake of post-colonialism and the emergence of many new nations. The United States announced its intention to withdraw from UNESCO in 1983, followed by Britain and Singapore. This was the era during which the West steadily withdrew from goals of détente with Russia and adopted globalization policies of "free" trade and "free" flows of investment that principally favored the already wealthy countries. They began stalling or reversing policies of social democracy that had funneled aid to the distressed through welfare programs, sickness and unemployment benefits, health care, and the like. Such regressive policies seemed to have been endorsed by the collapse of the communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and by China's capitalist road.

For Marxist-inclined media scholars, these developments further undermined their already dwindling confidence that Marxism was still relevant to the modern world or that they could at least hope to establish academic careers on such a basis. They were also under fire from postmodernist cultural studies that hammered irreverently at the foundations of all such "grand narrative" or mega systems of

politics and philosophy. The reformist concept of "public sphere" that had emerged in the wake of the discovery and translation of the works of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1991) provided a substitute language appropriate for media criticism, up to a point, yet did relatively little to inspire vigorous appraisal of the rot of corrupt or partisan practices of corporations such as News International that had undermined democracy in Britain for several decades and supported extreme right-wing interests in the United States. Media scholarship was confused by the apparent contradictions between continuing "legacy" problems of market concentration and so forth, on the one hand, and the urge to celebrate an overhyped abundance and pluralism of the brave new era of digital media, on the other.

By the early 1990s the principal preoccupations of the field had largely bypassed Marx. The foci of attention included continuing attention to the study of "media effects"—agenda-setting and uses and gratifications theories, refinements of the concept of "active viewer"—and the role of media as constitutive or representative of popular culture. These latter coincided with theories originating in cultural studies of the polysemic text, and, in social anthropology, of the "interpretive reader" (not autonomous exactly, but whose understanding of a text was refracted through the interpretive communities of which s/he was a member) as well as in positivist social psychology study of viewing and reception (Livingstone and Das 2013).

These greatly complicated the already considerable challenge to media scholarship of proving "effects" in the presence of large numbers of intervening variables. The influence of the active/autonomous reader approach to media reception would be modified somewhat by growing interest throughout the 1990s and beyond in both "framing" (Entman 2003) and "indexing" (Bennett 2016) theories and in newer theories of propaganda and persuasion. These provided a much more sophisticated understanding (in a field whose previous grasp of the techniques for study of media content and of how content "works" were shockingly rudimentary) of the wide variety of ways in which texts are routinely modified to privilege certain meanings, by highlighting particular events, people, information, citations, arguments, allusions, and so on and the backgrounding or "disappearing" of others—and of how such influence could be compounded by the creation and exploitation of "echo chambers." Echo chambers exist when propagandists are successful in delivering the same message without significant challenge through multiple media outlets simultaneously. Where existing audience knowledge of a given topic and its motivation to acquire new knowledge were low, and where journalistic dependence on a limited range of "authoritative" sources was high, all of which frequently applied in the case of foreign affairs reporting, for example, then the scope for effective disinformation or propaganda was particularly high.

Postmodernism and ideas of the autonomous reader synchronized well with a shift in thinking about media and development away from top-down models represented both by the original "modernization paradigm" (which, though falling out of favor in academe continued to be quite popular in the policy field) and its nemesis, dependency theory. These attributed to the state a primacy of responsibility for determining what "development" should mean and how it should be implemented and resourced. Top-down approaches relied heavily on the inputs of external, approved "change agents" whose activities and recommendations presumed that innovation in itself was an

unquestionably "good thing." They were often tied to NGO or corporate funding whose agendas were extraneous to those of the communities they ostensibly served, and the products and processes they delivered were not always a good fit with conditions and needs on the ground (Melkote and Steeves 2015; Servaes 2008).

Seemingly more democratic, bottom-up models regarded "development" as something that communities at ground level should determine for themselves, perhaps with the technocratic input and resources of sympathetic nongovernmental organizations. Ideologically attractive to Western progressive intellectuals, this approach was hopelessly idealistic in those parts of the world (i.e., most) where initiatives at a local level were considerably impacted by local, regional, and national political and other state and non-state agencies, vulnerable to the play of market forces and subject to distinctly unmodern patriarchal and often racist local elites. Bottom-up models of development have yet to satisfactorily integrate with the single largest developmental push experienced since the Industrial Revolution, namely the industrialization of communist China and neoliberal India in the 1990s and 2000s. This has resulted from multiple, complex forces operating from global to local levels with the support of the state, and has elevated hundreds of millions from subsistence levels to something that more closely resembles "middle-class" status, albeit at the expense of massive environmental degradation.

Development theory has engaged in a fruitless quest to catch up with and provide meaningful input within the context of tectonic political, economic, and cultural shifts—veritable Schumpeterian "gales of creative destruction" (Schumpeter 2009). These resulted from the collapse of traditional communism, the gathering speed of global economic integration (or globalization), and the increasingly universal application of digital technologies. Starting in the developed world, digital technologies have decimated the print newspaper industry, and the recording industry has largely shifted online under the policing of Apple and comparable digital gatekeepers, while DVDs for filmed entertainment and the "network model" of traditional broadcasting are in the process of conceding to electronic streaming. Meanwhile, the advertising agencies, controlled by six major holding companies, fear Facebook- and Google-type platforms that can connect advertisers directly to consumers without middlemen (Auletta 2018).

Marxism provided an intellectual backcloth for continuing, critical analysis of media industries. But more than a strain of media political economy was already inching toward a less radical, industry-friendly study of media economics. The mass popularity of personal computing in the 1980s and the internet in the 1990s promised infinite potential for mediated communications that would be easily available in the home and the office and, later, in the street too, with the marriage of telecommunications, computing, and the internet. For a while, the lure of infinite communications capacity removed the sting from older concerns about market concentration and conglomeration. The monopolies of national landline communication collapsed before a seeming horde of local and mobile telephony companies offering telephony, television, and internet services. These variously linked individual households to the internet, established "portals" for safe or organized access online, and facilitated interaction via advertising-supported search engines. When the mist had cleared from the scrummage by the late 2000s, it became clear that new and bigger conglomerates more powerful

than anything seen before had formed, often incorporating older versions. There were fewer regulatory boundaries separating telephony, television, and internet, or hardware from software, or either hardware or software from delivery system. Attempts to preserve a "level playing field" in the shape of "network neutrality" for the benefit of ordinary users were weakening before the push of telecommunications behemoths that wanted the freedom to control what they chose to make available and the speed or convenience at which it was delivered and the freedom to favor their own products. Media scholarship was scarcely able to catch its breath let alone make sustained meaning from the rush of these developments.

The speed and pervasiveness of change in the media industries themselves increased pressure on scholarship toward ever-more media-centric analysis. Evidence of ability to scale both the complexities of media change and related transformations in the broader and momentous changes in global politics, economics, and culture were generally less than impressive, often naive, and senselessly trusting of mainstream media accounts. Take, for example, the excitement with which some scholars greeted media-originated narratives of the generally ill-fated 2010–2011 Arab Spring events as evidence of a Facebook or Twitter revolution or, in 2017 when scholars accepted as a serious argument that through abuse of social media the Russians had won the 2016 US presidential election for Donald Trump, an egregious example of a media-induced moral panic.

CONCLUSION

At least from the time of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, media studies was deficient in willingness or ability to update existing knowledge and to pursue sophisticated research investigation of the contemporary functioning of propaganda—whether through legacy or digital media, in the domains of entertainment, information, or infotainment—and of the absolute dependence of propaganda (perception management, public relations, organized persuasive communication, or whatever other nomenclature others use to disguise the fundamental essence of the practice), as always, on colluding mainstream media. Two of the newest manifestations of propaganda strategy in the digital era are the scandal of Cambridge Analytica that broke in 2018 and the ways in which the Trump Campaign of 2016, among others, was forged on the basis of "big data" exploitation of social media for micro-targeting propaganda, operating in gray legal areas and interlinked with shadowy intelligence services on behalf of regime-change strategies (all of far greater scale, significance, sophistication, and duplicity than anything that Russian agencies could be charged with).

Once again, media scholarship, typically slow to respond and process such developments, lagged behind other disciplines. Critical attention to the marriage of mainstream media and propaganda, to detailed dissection of how mainstream media content (mis)constructs and (mis)represents the world during prolonged global crises of governance, big-power conflict, and climate change, has been sidelined, not least in an effort to ingratiate media studies into the agendas of media corporations and their parochial battles for economic and institutional survival. Discourses of power, central

among them discourses of the relationships between media and imperialism, provide an essential itinerary toward the identification of new forms of communication appropriate to the scale of the challenges we face in what otherwise may well be the final days of the human species.

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Historicizing and Theorizing Media and Cultural Imperialism

Marko Ampuja, Juha Koivisto, and Kaarle Nordenstreng

Media imperialism and its close twin, cultural imperialism, are critical concepts that were developed in the 1960s and 1970s to study and theorize the expansion of capitalism and the political, economic, and cultural relationships of domination between the Western countries and "peripheral" Third World nations. This interest was fueled by a combination of factors arising from the changing contours of world political economy following World War II. The United States had become the predominant economic and political force among the advanced industrial countries, and under its leadership the international capitalist economy witnessed a rapid growth of foreign trade and investment. This led to a highly integrated global economic system characterized by complex interdependencies (Barone 1985, 3). Concurrently, the struggle led by anti-colonial liberation movements had resulted in the creation of dozens of new states, especially in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Rather than undergoing a benign, Western-style "modernization," as commonly assumed by liberal politicians and thinkers at the time, it was increasingly argued that these newly independent states had become adjuncts of an international order dominated by rich capitalist countries and their multinational corporations. The economic dependency of poor countries on the Western "core" countries led to the perception that, instead of the end of imperialism, new "neo-colonial" patterns of domination had emerged, preventing independent development in the Third World altogether or leading to industrialization without real democracy.

Scholars associated with the left became the leading exponents of studies on imperialism, including media and cultural imperialism. The role that the powerful Western countries and their media corporations played in neo-colonialism emerged as a topic of critical research and political debate, generating not only academic works but also a concerted international effort to establish a less Western-centric New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Nordenstreng 2013). However, by the 1980s and 1990s, interest in the study of media imperialism waned. For one thing, the collapse of state socialism in Europe challenged Marxist-inspired studies of imperialism, undermining the assumption that countries could achieve development without capitalism. For another, from the late 1970s onward, it seemed increasingly difficult to reconcile changes in worldwide media developments and flows with the image of

all-encompassing Anglophone media power—a view that was complemented with arguments about complex cultural practices of media reception that could not be captured by simplistic notions of Western "cultural invasion."

Such themes are not without interest, but the media-imperialism perspective cannot be reduced to questions concerning cultural power. The main substance of media-imperialism research consisted of its critical intent to study the broad social context in which cultural transactions take place, namely the expansion of capitalism through the actions of states and multinational corporations. While capitalism is culturally more decentered than when the media imperialism thesis was originally developed, media everywhere are increasingly commercialized, brought under the power of major corporations, and they contribute to imperial projects of major states that aim to increase their geopolitical power vis-à-vis other states. From this perspective, media-related developments worldwide should be understood as processes that involve organized efforts to maintain the hegemonic power of both major capitalist corporations and imperial states. This critical focus is especially relevant today, due to the globalization of capitalist imperatives and the rising geopolitical tensions between major states.

Keeping this in mind, we will first reconstruct how the theories of imperialism were originally connected to international communication research. After that we will assess various criticisms of the original formulations, some of which are warranted but are not sufficiently conclusive to suggest that we should discard the notion of media imperialism altogether. The final part will focus on the theoretical development of critical perspectives on current forms of media imperialism.

MEDIA IMPERIALISM: THE ORIGINAL FORMULATIONS

Theories of media imperialism (see Ampuja, Koivisto, and Nordenstreng 2018) are built on broader conceptualizations of imperialism. Historically, the concept of imperialism is associated with a political system of colonial rule, in which colonies are directly governed from an imperial center, such as the Spanish empire, which used slavery and political and military coercion to extract wealth from its subject territories. These forms of direct imperial rule were for the most part dismantled in the two decades following the end of World War II. Decolonization ended a specific form of imperialism, but it did not mean the end of imperialism as such. This was the starting point of Herbert Schiller's (1969) work on media-cultural imperialism, which investigated how international communication structures and flows supported new forms of imperial power, even though former colonial territories had been granted formal independence.

Taking his cue from Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy's theories of monopoly capitalism, Schiller (1969, 8) characterized the international capitalist system as a "power pyramid," with the United States at the top of the hierarchy and the exploited developing countries at the bottom. Thus, the post-war developments in international communication could not be understood as "modernization" that was supposed to benefit all countries equally. Such notions masked the fact that the "global extension of American commerce and its value system" (H. Schiller 1969, 7) through its communications apparatus served

"American expansionism" (ibid., 10). As an example of such expansionism, US foreign aid to developing countries, and also its material assistance to war-torn Western European countries, was conditional on the making of policy changes that opened up their markets to US media exports (H. Schiller 1998, 18–19).

From a related perspective, Boyd-Barrett (1977) identified four dimensions of media imperialism, whose empirical assessment showed that international media activities were heavily influenced especially by Western capitalist powers: 1) the shape of means of communication and its technological infrastructure; 2) the industrial and financial models of how media is organized; 3) the inculcation of Western-originated professional values in the training of media personnel; and 4) the export of media content. The general result of such unequal patterns was the "overall cultural dependency of many nations on a few" (Boyd-Barrett 1977, 132).

These views echoed the broader dependency theories of imperialism developed by Baran (1957) and Andre Gunder Frank (1969), which developed further classic Marxist analyses of imperialism provided by Vladimir Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Rudolf Hilferding. From the dependency viewpoint, the expansion of capitalism in the Third World benefited the metropolitan centers that exploited their satellites by subjecting them to unequal trade relations, which actually blocked independent economic, social, and cultural development in the developing world. A variant of the same theme was the center-periphery configuration articulated, for example, by Johan Galtung (1971). Baran and Frank concluded from this that Third World countries could achieve growth and development only outside the Western-dominated capitalist system. This political conclusion also had repercussions in discussions over decolonization and international media, inspiring the NWICO initiative by the non-aligned countries toward greater self-sufficiency in communication. Much of this was motivated by empirical studies on imbalances in worldwide media and communication flows that demonstrated Western domination.

The bulk of original media-imperialism research relied on statistical comparisons between nations. Later, this "national" reduction subjected the media-cultural imperialism perspective to blistering counter-critiques. As Garnham (2004, 180) notes, "the reason the more lurid versions of the US cultural imperialism thesis" did not come to pass is that they were "based upon the empirical observation of a period before locally generated revenues reached a level at which local production could be supported." What this means for the argument proposed in this chapter is that analytical attempts to give critical substance to the notion of media imperialism have to show that it has more to offer than empirical comparisons of international media flows and the subsequent claim that this or that nation is globally dominant in cultural terms.

What is typically downplayed in critiques of media or cultural imperialism is that such offerings were already present, although not necessarily in a highly developed form, in the original formulations. Even while Schiller spoke of an "American empire" in international communication, he singled out the spread of commercial models of communications throughout the world as the most important aspect of media-cultural imperialism, calling the largest television advertisers (such as Procter & Gamble, Gillette, and General Motors) "the engines of commercialisation in the West" (H. Schiller 1969, 99). Later, he wrote "that national (largely American) media-cultural power has

been largely (though not fully) subordinated to transnational corporate authority" (H. Schiller 1991, 13). Such formulations reflected the importance attached to the power of multinational corporations, and they perceived modern imperialism as capitalist expansion rather than as cultural "Americanization" plain and simple.

Yet such attempts to decouple the notion of media or cultural imperialism from a restrictive national frame did not guard it against criticisms coming from different quarters of international communication research. Many of these criticisms were substantial, but they also reflected an incapacity to fully understand the key aspects of theories of media-cultural imperialism.

GEOCULTURAL REGIONS AND GLOBAL CULTURAL HYBRIDS

Instead of "imperialism," "globalization" became the new watchword to refer to international relationships in media and communication in the 1990s, together with "contra-flows," "interconnectivity," "hybridity," and other associated terms. Such concepts suggest a picture of the global media sphere as a culturally decentered space, thus making the earlier media-imperialism perspectives seem outdated. The critiques of theories of media imperialism that were based on these concepts range from fairly uncomplicated empirical refutations to more advanced theoretical arguments, but all of them challenge the dependency view, according to which developing countries occupy a permanently subordinated position in the global power hierarchy. In discussing these criticisms we move from traditional cultural-anthropological perspectives toward more radical, post-structuralist theories of cultural globalization.

First, from the 1990s onward, it was increasingly claimed that "the old arguments based on Western media superiority and weakly developed systems in the South no longer work" (Sreberny 2005, 12). The rise of Brazil's and Mexico's media companies as successful regional or even international media exporters was cited in many studies as examples of growing multi-directionality of global media exchanges, out of which "new patterns" and "contra-flows" had emerged (Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham 1998). As a classic example of these, Latin American telenovelas had become globally popular, so that in 1999, one of their main producers, Brazil's TV Globo, exported media content to 130 countries, including Western Europe (Thussu 2000, 215–17). Yet, instead of such "global" successes, culturalist researchers wanted to direct attention to the division of the world into geocultural regions (such as Latin America), which are united by shared identities, histories, and language, and which structure media markets in ways that were overlooked in studies on media-cultural imperialism (Straubhaar 1997). Thus, countries belonging to the same geocultural region actively import media products from each other, which contradicts the image of a Western-dominated "one-way street" in worldwide media traffic. In an attempt to go beyond media imperialism, Straubhaar (1991) admitted that the global media economy as a whole is still "asymmetrical," dominated by corporations from the core industrialized nations; however, he stressed that local media producers enjoy an important comparative advantage in market competition vis-à-vis "global" producers, since they have

intimate, "culturally proximate" knowledge of their audiences' tastes and can thus better provide the kind of content that these audiences prefer.

Second, in culturally oriented studies of international communication, the argument regarding cultural proximity was linked to the notion of active audiences and the selective appropriation of meanings. Here the key work is Liebes and Katz's (1990) study of cross-cultural audience reception of *Dallas*, a popular US television melodrama. According to the study, while the series was exported to all corners of the world, its meanings were not: Audiences representing different ethnic groups interpreted the program in unpredictable and, from the Western viewpoint, sometimes overtly resistant ways. The broader charge in this regard was that critics of imperialism made "a leap of inference from the simple presence of cultural goods to the attribution of deeper cultural or ideological effects" (Tomlinson 1999, 83–84).

From an anthropological perspective, Hannerz (1997, 109) argued that those preoccupied with "the murderous threat of cultural imperialism" were guilty of patronizing attitudes toward other cultures, erroneously assuming that Western cultures could easily overrun "weaker" cultures. This perspective emphasizes that whenever "peripheries" are in contact with the metropolis, processes of cultural "indigenization" begin (Appadurai 1996, 32), meaning that people in the peripheries always resist and transform Western media influences, rather than accepting them in some uniform fashion. Such counterpoints led to a dialectical inversion of media-imperialism critique: The threat of "Americanization" or "cultural imperialism" could be invoked by authoritarian governments as a means of censoring a host of "foreign influences," the fear of which then serves such governments' own hegemonic strategies (Appadurai 1996, 32). Conversely, the import of "foreign" media-cultural products can have progressive functions in authoritarian states where they destabilize national power hierarchies by undermining officially sanctioned tastes and norms (Morley 1996, 331). References to such complexities intended to demonstrate that theories of media-cultural imperialism were too simplistic, unable to see the rich and colorful mosaic of the world's cultures and the complexities of cultural power relations within and between multiethnic nation-states.

Third, from such complexities we arrive at the core of cultural globalization theorists' position, which criticizes "media-cultural imperialism" based on the idea that cultures are continuously remaking themselves, especially due to the heightened interactions caused by the globalization of media and communications. This position needs to be analytically distinguished from the position taken by culturalist researchers, who emphasized the emergence of "geocultural regions" as a significant counterweight to Anglophone media power (see Straubhaar 1997, 285). By contrast, cultural globalization theorists want to radically challenge the traditional view of cultures as expressive of local, national, or regional authenticity and develop another kind of critique of media imperialism founded on post-structuralist theories of identity. Accordingly, Appadurai (1996, 178) claims that locality is produced in a world where local cultures are increasingly subjected to all kinds of "disjunctive" global flows, including migration and the media. As people and ideas are continuously flowing and coming into contact with each other around the globe, we witness a tremendous multiplication of "imagined worlds" (Appadurai 1996, 33), whereby identities have become increasingly

hybridized and deterritorialized—in other words, intermixed, and no longer attached to long-standing territorially defined spaces.

From such a perspective, the media are not instruments of (Western) domination but, instead, a major deterritorializing force, linking identity-formation to ideas, images, and narratives that travel great distances and which can no longer be controlled by the nation-state. According to cultural globalization theorists, the hybridization and deterritorialization of cultures destroy the foundation of theories of media-cultural imperialism. This is because if we think of nations as imaginary constructs, which are continuously culturally transformed through various flows (including media flows), and imagine the global culture as a "translocal" system without clear national or even local cultural boundaries (Nederveen Pieterse 1995), then it becomes impossible to conceive of them as belonging to the "core" or the "periphery." Following this logic, global cultural flows are radically decentered and thus cannot be understood through theories of media-cultural imperialism, which represent "boundary thinking" that remains impervious to the emancipation caused by mediated deterritorialization. Due to this, cultural globalization theorists tend to be far more optimistic about worldwide media-cultural developments, especially because these are seen to undermine nation-state power and national cultural homogeneity.

RETHINKING THE THEORETICAL
FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA IMPERIALISM

The criticisms discussed above were powerful enough to cause a paradigm change in the study of international (or global) communication (Ampuja 2013, 98). Overall, it is safe to say that as the media-imperialism tradition has been founded on the political economy of the media, which privileges structural developments, it has tended to oversimplify cultural phenomena (Straubhaar 1997, 286–87; Boyd-Barrett 1998). Accordingly, it did not pay enough attention to such issues as textual meaning or audience interpretation, and it downplayed the need to produce the kind of detailed descriptions of creative local cultural practices that cultural anthropologists, for example, emphasize.

Yet, there is a need for various reality checks. For one thing, arguments concerning the importance of audience sovereignty as a counterweight to media imperialism should be viewed with caution. The relations between audiences and media corporations (whether global or local) are far from being equal; the latter have the ultimate power to decide what is offered and in what forms for popular consumption. Today, media consumption activities are also increasingly appropriated by digital-platform companies and integrated into their data aggregation–based business models, which casts doubt on the power that interactive "prosumers" have over media giants. Furthermore, with regard to the emergence of "new patterns" in global media exchanges, while these have indeed become more expressive of cultural variation, this does not mean that the United States "is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (Appadurai 1996, 31). The cultural hegemony of the United States has declined, but world television and film markets

are still dominated by US producers (e.g., Mirrlees 2016, 103–30). Contesting excessive globalization optimism, Stuart Hall (1997, 28) insisted similarly that global mass culture "remains centered in the West," and while the producers of global mass culture do not aim to destroy local cultural specificities, they want to "absorb those differences within the larger, overarching framework of what is essentially an American conception of the world."

Such reality checks are worth making, but there is a sense that such counterarguments do not really represent an adequate analytical response to criticisms of media imperialism. This is because they tend to reduce media imperialism to a question of hierarchical cultural power play between nations, which, as we noted, is insufficient. The centers of global capitalism are subject to change over time in any case, in both economic and cultural terms. While it is certainly interesting to study shifts in this regard (or to empirically register the still-dominant role of the United States in different media-industry sectors), an exclusive focus on this theme ignores broader capitalist restructurings.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that Schiller already attempted to uncouple media imperialism from its cultural reduction to "Americanization." Instead of the export of various nations' media products, the key aspect of media imperialism is the export of capitalist business practices, which do not concern merely the economic sphere but have important cultural-ideological implications. In this regard it is noteworthy how Straubhaar (2015, 48–49) concedes in retrospect that he "severely underestimated the underlying power of increasingly global capitalism" and "the implantation of a mass consumer model," also through the telenovelas, which, via their function as a vehicle for advertising, helped "to pull [Brazil's] population into a commercial economy."

The worldwide implantation of the commercial media model indeed remains a central aspect of media imperialism. However, in line with Boyd-Barrett's recent work on media imperialism, we want to avoid recourse to a narrow understanding of media imperialism. For him, the analysis of media imperialism in a global context begins with the political economic analysis of media industries, but conceptualizations of media imperialism "must go beyond mere questions of market" and study also the ways in which the media support "the acts or agents of imperialism and imperial aggression" (Boyd-Barrett 2015, 11).

However, we would like to elaborate on this issue by proposing two theses, the common point of which is that imperialism and media imperialism are much more "ordinary" features of life in capitalism than what is apparent in Boyd-Barrett's formulations. First, when going "beyond mere questions of market," it is important to recognize how Marx's critique of political economy and his accompanying studies on developments in different parts of the world form "the basis of conceiving imperialism as a concrete form of capital's accumulation on the world scale" (Pradella 2013, 131) and how this "increases inter-capitalist and inter-state competition" (ibid., 143)—features later taken up by Rosa Luxemburg and Vladimir Lenin. Second, imperialism and media imperialism are indeed much more common and mundane features of various bourgeois hegemonic projects and discourses that try to win over the consent of subaltern groups than what references to "agents of imperialism and imperial aggression" bring to mind. This is because in the mainstream media we typically

meet these imperial agents as defenders of "freedom," "free trade," "civilization," "economic development," "the national interest," "women's rights," "human rights," "peace," and so on. Here Gramsci's work as well as the work of the German *Projekt Ideologietheorie* can provide a lot of help in analyzing how such hegemonic projects manifest themselves in elevated ideological discourses and everyday practices (Koivisto and Pietilä 1997; Rehmann 2014).

The study of media imperialism needs to take into account its different dimensions. For this reason, we find Sparks's (2012) recent defense of media-cultural imperialism analysis too restricting. He proposes that "the existence of competing large, developed, states is the condition for imperialism," which is why the term "imperialism" "must be used to describe actions of states, rather than what are essentially private economic activities" (Sparks 2012, 289–90). The "actions of states" surely refers to one crucial aspect of imperialism, but an attempt to anchor the concept of media or cultural imperialism exclusively to them is to ignore the very foundation of what gave impetus to theories of imperialism in the first place, namely the universalization of capitalist imperatives through the actions of both states and capital (Wood 2012; Nordenstreng 2013). States with strong military-technological capacities (the United States in particular) have been important in the forceful opening up of markets to capital accumulation, but this has also been advanced by global economic institutions and corporations, which have imposed market imperatives and neoliberal practices throughout the world (Harvey 2004, 70).

CONCLUSION: DIMENSIONS OF MEDIA IMPERIALISM

A more comprehensive theory of imperialism and media imperialism must take into account the dialectical and often tension-filled co-existence of "capitalist" (economic) and "territorial" (geopolitical) imperialism. These themes have recently been developed by theorists of "new imperialism" (e.g., Harvey 2004; Callinicos 2009), and to them we can add insights from Wood (2012). Recent decades have seen extensive "capitalist imperialism" in the form of neoliberal political measures that have served transnational class interests, but this has not ended geopolitical competition between major states. Based on the theories of new imperialism and the distinction made by Boyd-Barrett (2015, 11–14) between media *as* imperialists and media *for* imperialism, we propose three modes of media imperialism today.

First, the transnational media conglomerates, using their market power, suppress the viability of smaller media in different countries and thus influence and control audiences' access to a range of news, views, voices, and entertainment (Boyd-Barrett 2015, 14). In this way, the media themselves act as imperialists, seeking to increase their own economic and cultural power over other actors. Many other industries hold more economic power, including the fossil fuel or financial industries (Fuchs 2010), but the media transnationals control important aspects of social life, including the control of digital communications by a handful of mainly US-based platform companies (e.g., Google and Facebook) (Jin 2013).

Second, the market power of concentrated media corporations is inextricably linked to how they advance capitalist imperialism in general as the "missionaries of global capitalism" (Herman and McChesney 1997). In line with Schiller, Herman and McChesney (ibid., 10) argue that transnational media corporations exist, first and foremost, as industries that provide space for other corporations' advertising, "thereby facilitating corporate expansion into new nations, regions and markets." In addition, they "provide an informational and ideological environment that helps to sustain the political, economic, and moral basis for marketing goods and for having a profit-driven social order." From this perspective, researchers seeking to discredit media-cultural imperialism by referring to cultural variations in audience interpretations of Western media content miss the broader point concerning the globalization of capitalist social relationships in which both the programs and their audiences are increasingly embedded (D. Schiller 1996, 90).

The commercialization of the world's media does not generate a uniform capitalist monoculture: The capitalist drive to commodify everything is perfectly capable of catering to a variety of tastes and permits and even happily supports the kind of pluralistic cultural representations or hybrid aesthetics foregrounded by both culturalists and globalization theorists alike. There is also no need to deny that the variety afforded by commercialized cultural industries matters a great deal to individuals (Straubhaar 2015, 50). However, what is not emphasized by those who wish to dismiss the notion of media imperialism is that the new high-tech forms of communication, in the context of increasingly commercialized media systems, have globalized the "range of commodity aesthetics" (Haug 2005, 47). Inclusion in this worldwide culture of advertising and possessive individualism means, at the same time, that one becomes absorbed in the "over-corporate, over-integrated, over-concentrated, and condensed form of economic power which lives through difference" (Hall 1997, 31).

The globalization of commodity aesthetics means that media everywhere prioritize advertisers' interests, which translates into promotion of consumer-oriented lifestyles, business-friendly entertainment, and dominant neoliberal discourses. Because of the existence of such determinants—which indeed set limits, rather than directly dictate what is offered for popular consumption—it is misleading to argue (like Straubhaar 2015, 50) that the critical political economy of the media deals with the economic sphere, which is somehow separate from "culture itself." Advertising is, of course, the most explicit way for economic interests to control the production and consumption of cultural meanings, but they also guide cultural forms in more indirect ways in which commodity promotion is incorporated into media products. The ways in which data concerning people's daily use of smartphones is sold to advertisers and then relayed back to users in the form of targeted advertising offers another example of extensive commodification of culture today.

Cultural globalization theorists do not address the increasing social inequalities and the purposeful neoliberal class project that underlies "the unprecedented globalization of capitalist imperatives" (Murdock 2004, 27). They tend to discuss media and hybridity in terms of novel combinations that open up sources for expressing identity, rather than registering the fact that most of humanity, especially in the developing countries,

is materially incapable of realizing the dazzling promises of advertising in their daily lives (Haug 2005, 46–47). The same cannot be said, of course, of the growing number of increasingly affluent people in China, India, and many Southern nations. This, however, is no less problematic, since they aspire to join those who enjoy the consumerist practices of the "imperial mode of living" (previously restricted to the North), which are amplified daily by the commercial media and whose globalization poses a threat to human survival because of the effects of global warming (Brand and Wissen 2018). As if this is not enough, the globalization of capitalist imperatives via neoliberal policies has created much social disillusionment and resentment that have provided an ample ground for nationalistic and racist calls to return to strong, homogenized nations under powerful (typically male) leader figures, which undermines rational political responses to global threats. Such an authoritarian backlash represents the very antithesis of what cultural globalization theorists were expecting to happen with the help of supposedly radically decentered media flows. It constitutes a critical weakness in their analysis that needs to be countered by the notion of (capitalist) media imperialism.

Third, besides working as agents for capitalist expansion, media act as agents for geopolitical imperialism when they justify the political or military projects of major states. This happens not only "when they omit or marginalise details and perspectives that would serve to critique imperial power" (Boyd-Barrett 2015, 14) but is also linked to larger, often civil society–based processes and projects of building and maintaining a class-based hegemony. This state-related—"state" understood here in its wide Gramscian sense as the "integral state" (see Rehmann 2014, 136)—dimension of imperialism is part of the broader trajectory of capitalist development. It is not reducible to the workings of "global markets" because capital accumulation on a worldwide scale requires the power of many nation-states to "sustain the system of property and provide the kind of day-to-day regularity, predictability, and legal order that capitalism needs more than any other social form" (Wood 2012, 249).

However, there is no harmonious functional fit between what territorial states and different concentrations of capital want; in the same way as there are tensions between competing economic actors and hegemonic initiatives, there are "conflicts among states over security, territory, resources and influence" (Callinicos 2009, 74). Despite the rise of China and the relative decline of the United States in economic terms, the latter continues to act as the leading imperial hegemon, though increasingly as a hegemon without hegemony (see Haug 2012, 131–228). It controls and contains many smaller states, including "rogue states" that fail to conform to the US-dominated interstate system, and aims to ensure that the global South remains open to capital accumulation and investment. Yet the United States does not act on behalf of an alleged new form of "imperial sovereignty" (Hardt and Negri 2000) that transcends interstate conflicts. The attempt by different major states to protect and extend the reach of their own capitals creates constant geopolitical tensions, rivalries, and conflicts between them, in which they more or less try to gain strategic victories without resorting to overtly military solutions (Wood 2012, 261).

Such geopolitical dynamics of imperialism are played out in the international media sphere. Different powerful states' media, closely followed by the media in smaller countries that are politically aligned with them, regularly work as "mission-

aries" of their imperial political-economic projects, though in ways that shun references to "imperialism" and, instead, evoke energies of its ideological anti-matter in the form of some higher values. The recent conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, for example, involve ideological operations in different countries' mainstream media, such as giving the public different kinds of pretexts for going to war, which are complemented by omissions of information that militate against the official justificatory narratives. Discussing the case of Ukraine, Boyd-Barrett (2018) notes that it has been represented in a highly biased way in the Western mainstream media, which has downplayed US attempts to influence Ukrainian elections and a Washington-led neoliberal effort, supported by the European Union, to open up the country to international corporations and finance to the exclusion of Russia's economic interests. Many different nation-states' media exercise media imperialism, and the Ukrainian crisis also involves pro-Russian media propaganda that seeks to justify Russia's imperial actions near its borders. Nonetheless, insofar as we examine biased perceptions that favor US geopolitical interests, these are dominant in Western news media, and there is little evidence of, say, the BRICS countries' countervailing media power in this regard (Boyd-Barrett 2018, 2).

Taken together, these different dimensions of imperialism and media imperialism refer to issues that are omitted or downplayed in other international or global communication research perspectives. Theories of media imperialism that take advantage of broader conceptualizations of how contemporary dynamics of "new imperialism" work offer a unique entry point to critically understand and respond to current political, economic, cultural, and ecological realities and how they take form in the international media sphere.

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Chapter 3

US Empire and Cultural Imperialism

A Reconceptualization and Twentieth-Century Retrospective

Tanner Mirrlees

Throughout the 1990s, social theorists declared that the age of the US empire had come to an end, thanks to a new process called "globalization." Tomlinson (1991) said "globalizing modernity" heralded the end of US empire and the rise of "a different configuration of global power" (Tomlinson 1991, 175) supporting the "interconnection," "interdependency," and "integration" of all areas in the global system. Departing from theories of the world system, neo-colonialism, and dependency, Appadurai (1997) produced a popular "flow and scape" model of a "global cultural economy" in which "the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images, but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (ibid., 17). By the turn of the millennium, Hardt and Negri (2000, xiv) had conceptualized a totally new post-American empire: "The United States does not, and indeed, no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over." For these theorists, capitalism had outgrown the Westphalian interstate system, and competitions between corporations no longer propelled nation-states into geopolitical conflict: "The distinct national colors of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow" (Hardt and Negri 2000, xiii).

   In the years following the Cold War, "globalization" was a popular and pervasive way that many metropolitan academics imagined and described the novel happenings of a global system in flux. But in the early twenty-first century, the United States launched the Global War on Terror, and the value of globalization theory's speculations and projections of a fundamentally new and different world system began to diminish. For much of the twentieth century, the US empire was, following Innis (2007), "made plausible and attractive in part by the insistence that it is not imperialistic." But in the years following 9/11, neoconservative and neoliberal intellectuals insisted that the US empire was absolutely necessary for the promotion and protection of a neoliberal and global capitalist order. Max Boot (2001) penned a *Weekly Standard* story titled "The Case for American Empire"; Sebastian Mallaby (2002) published a piece for *Foreign Affairs* called "The Reluctant Imperialist"; and Michael Ignatieff (2003) wrote a much-cited *New York Times* op-ed called "American Empire: The Burden." More than a decade into the Global War on Terror—a war of aggression without territorial boundaries or temporal limits that has cost the US public over six trillion

dollars, killed over half a million people, and triggered transnational anti-American blowback—intellectual hawks continued to issue apologias for the US empire. In 2014, Robert D. Kaplan (2014) penned "In Defense of Empire" for *The Atlantic*, and in it, he declared the United States to be the only entity on the planet capable of providing and maintaining "global order" against mounting anarchy.

As troubling as these rationalizations and justifications for the US empire were, they brought to the forefront of public discourse a hard truth: The United States is indeed a unique kind of empire (Bacevich 2004; Blum 2004; Cox and Stokes 2012; Harvey 2005; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Innis 2007; Johnson 2010; Klein 2007; Mooers 2006; Panitch and Gindin 2012; Stone and Kuznick 2012). Moreover, the bombastic and hubristic rhetoric of the US empire's intellectual cadre re-opened the narrowing space inside and outside international communication and media studies for critical reconceptualizations of US media and cultural imperialism (Boyd-Barrett 2015; Jin 2007, 2015; McChesney 2014; Miller et al. 2005; Mirrlees 2013, 2016; Murdock 2006; Nordenstreng 2013; Schiller 1992, 2000; Sparks 2007, 2012). It perhaps even prompted some journalists to cast the United States as the only "acceptable face of cultural imperialism" in the modern world (Heffer 2010).

What are US empire and cultural imperialism, and what political and economic actors try to make them "acceptable"? This chapter begins by conceptualizing the US empire, imperialism, and imperial hegemony, and then reconceptualizes cultural imperialism as a state-corporate project that is integral to the expansion and projection of the US empire. The chapter then takes a brisk tour through some historic junctures in which the US security state and the cultural industries collaborated to produce and transmit media messages and images that put "America" and US foreign policy before the world in a positive light. As will be demonstrated, from World War I to the Global War on Terror, the US state orchestrated communications and media campaigns to organize consent to the American way of life and way of war across borders, and these interlinked with US cultural industries' expansion across transnational markets. In this regard, the state-corporate project of US cultural imperialism is advanced, materially and ideologically, by a symbiotic relationship between the communication and media agencies of the US state (which strive to win consent to dominant ideas about America and US foreign policy around the world) and the corporations of the US-based but globalizing cultural industries (which seek to make money by producing and selling media and cultural goods to consumers in global markets).

US EMPIRE, IMPERIALISM, AND HEGEMONY: EXCEPTIONAL COERCION AND PERSUASION

For hundreds of years, the global system has been structured to serve the geopolitical, economic, and cultural interests of powerful imperial countries at the expense of less powerful ones. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the most prominent imperial centers, aided by growing sophistication of ocean vessels and weapons technologies, included those of Amsterdam, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, and Saint Petersburg. But by the mid-eighteenth century, England had become the most

significant industrial capitalist empire in the world, and moving forward, it competed and collaborated with the important but less mighty French and Dutch empires. From the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the empires of the United States, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Japan emerged and clashed in the global system. From 1945 to 1991, the United States battled the Soviet empire, and in the early twenty-first century, the United States faces a new competitor in or possible rivalry with China. The history of capitalism and the Westphalian interstate system is part and product of the rise and fall of different types of empires—some colonial, others post-colonial—all of which have expanded in pursuit of their interests over land and sea, recently, into air and "outer space," and now, in "cyberspace." Empires are significant to world history and power, yet empires take different forms, so there is a need to be "sensitive to the historical particularity of different" empires (Colás 2008, 3). Though one may dispute hawkish arguments *for* the US empire, if one wishes to understand a significant source of global influence, one must recognize the US empire. How, then, is the United States an empire and what is its particular form and style of rule? What propels its expansion? What instruments of power does it possess? What ideas and beliefs justify it?

From the earliest days of the republic, the US empire has combined territorial and nonterritorial styles of rule and relied upon internal and then external colonization to expand its frontiers. Internally, it expanded across the North American continent, from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean, by purchasing Louisiana in 1803, annexing Texas in 1845, acquiring Oregon from Britain in 1846, and seizing the rest of the Western landmass and California after the 1848 Mexican war. Externally, it expanded by annexing Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine islands. Following World War II, the global system's center of gravity shifted from the colonial empires of old Europe to the United States, and the United States began to distinguish its style of rule from these crumbling forms. While colonialism involved one state's direct dispossession of a people's sovereignty and control of territory, the US empire strove to develop and superintend a global network of sovereign territorial nation-states integrated with and supportive of its overarching vision of order (Panitch and Gindin 2012). Unlike the European conquests of the previous four centuries, the US empire did not pursue the direct colonial domination of territories, but rather, using coercion and persuasion, sought to build a global system of client or proxy states that shared its core features and reproduced its model: the capitalist mode of production, the (neo)liberal state form, and the consumerist way of life.

The motor of the US empire's expansion is imperialism, and for over a hundred years, US imperialism has involved a close alliance between US corporations and the diplomatic and military agencies of the US state. While the political and economic spheres are formally distinct in capitalist society, and there may be conflicts and contradictions between particular blocs of US corporations and departments and agencies of the US state in any juncture, US imperialism (and cultural imperialism) entails a mutually beneficial convergence—as opposed to conflict—between Big Capital and Big Government. In this regard, US imperialism can be conceptualized as an articulation of the de-territorializing economics of capitalist accumulation (the production, trade, and investment practices of US-based and trans-nationalizing corporations as they seek to turn a profit in competition with rival capitals) and the geopolitics of the

US territorial security state (the diplomatic, military, intelligence, and communication and media activities of the US state and its many departments and agencies as they struggle to project American interests and achieve goals in conflict with other states) (Harvey 2005). US imperialism represents the US state's facilitation and legitimization of the interests of US-based corporations, and, sometimes, non-US corporations, legally, diplomatically, and, frequently, with military force, across the countries they wish to operate in.

The history of US empire and imperialism have never been coherent or peaceful because numerous non-integrated corporations and states exist, and they assert national interests and pursue them in ways that may unsettle Washington. For this reason, the US empire has routinely had to build and rebuild its *hegemony* in a complex and contested global system. "Imperial hegemony" refers to the efforts of the US empire's state (on behest or on behalf of its ruling strata) to get other states and publics in the global system to do what it wants using instruments of coercion and persuasion, or a combination of the two. The empire may force others to do what it wants with threats, bribes, punishments, or outright warfare, or it may persuade others to want what it wants by representing itself as a moral authority or necessary leader. In the former strategy, the empire attempts to subdue rivals and opponents; in the latter, it tries to attract and co-opt them.

To elaborate, the US state claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of coercive force within its territorial borders and regularly projects this power beyond its borders, declaring and waging wars; housing, training, and deploying soldiers in bases spread across more than one hundred countries; allocating public wealth to a sprawling military-industrial complex; and launching propaganda campaigns to justify its violence. Since 1945, the United States has *coercively* encircled the globe, bombed more than thirty countries, attempted to overthrow more than fifty governments, plotted to assassinate more than fifty foreign leaders, tried to influence the outcome of at least eighty-one foreign elections, threatened rivals, imposed sanctions, monitored populations via a planetary surveillance apparatus, undertaken extraordinary renditions, perpetrated torture, and attacked computer networks. In conjunction with its brute force, the US state, with the help of private groups, has *persuaded* others to do what it wants, and to want what it wants. To this end, it has built up and integrated allied nation-states, opened its own market to foreign direct investment by and doled out lucrative contracts to transnational firms, shaped the heads of neoliberal parties and educated foreign business leaders, guaranteed security to protectorates, established dollar dependencies, delivered development aid in return for compliance with neoliberal structural adjustments, launched Americanization campaigns, and opened the world to Hollywood, Google, and Facebook.

Using tools of coercion and persuasion, the US empire pushes and pulls other states, peoples, and cultures to integrate with the institutions, policies, ideas, values, and practices that represent its vision of global order. Though powerful, the US empire is not an omniscient or omnipresent entity that controls or dictates everything that is happening all over the world, all at once, all the time. Ongoing conflicts between the United States and China, Russia, Iran, and other countries highlight the asymmetrical autonomy of non-US states to pursue national interests that irritate and affront Wash-

ington's planners. When a potentially rivalrous state or bloc of states rejects the US empire's order and tries to rally others to the cause of a counter-hegemonic particularism, the US empire may try to contain, deter, or crush the movement. It might, for example, put its military boot down on recalcitrant groups and "rogue states," or give friendly others new incentives to keep obeying.

Furthermore, the states allied with the US empire are not hopeless and helpless "dependencies" because their own national business and political elites across the Americas, Europe, and elsewhere often chose to integrate with the US empire as a way to meet their own hegemonic interests. Perhaps these elites presume that the benefits of living within the US empire are better than living in separation from it. Although the power relationship between the US super-state and other states in its empire is asymmetrical, the US empire's integrated allies are best conceptualized as relatively autonomous dependents that are marginal economic and political competitors, and major collaborators; they do much for the United States, but do not always do what the United States compels or cajoles them to do. So, while the US empire places limits upon the sovereignty of others (integrated or not), disagreements and countervailing actions by non-US states are always possible, even probable.

The US empire is supported by American exceptionalism, an imperial culture-ideology that represents the United States as a unique liberal capitalist country in a world system of liberal and illiberal capitalist states. In the ideology of exceptionalism, the United States is an extra-special country that is qualitatively different from and superior to other countries, and as such, responsible for superintending or saving the globe (Holsti 2011). The ideology represents US foreign policy intentions and actions as always benign or benevolently committed to the global good (universal "freedom," "democracy," and "equality"), not selfish, and especially not driven by the social-class interests of those who own transnational corporations. While liberal internationalist institutions of global governance aim to prevent interstate conflict by curbing each state's sovereign power to act in whatever way it likes, the United States, in addition to trying to make the global governmental rules at the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), often takes exception to them, and with impunity. Remarkably, the US empire's history of monopoly, coercion, and persuasion is irregularly met with internationalist anti-imperialist resistance. But this is unsurprising given the power of American exceptionalism to make the US empire seem good, right, and necessary, and the power of the US state and cultural industries to sell this ideology to the world.

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AS A STATE-CORPORATE PROJECT

All of history's empires have been cultural imperialists, but cultural imperialism must be contextualized and explained with regard to the particularity of each empire responsible for doing it. How, then, might the US empire's cultural imperialism be conceptualized? I define US cultural imperialism as the US state and corporate sector's coercive and persuasive means and practices that aim to impose or elicit consent to a "way of life" (i.e., production modes, institutions, political and legal norms, policies, languages,

customs, and ideas) represented as "America" (or flexibly adjusted to national conditions) in other countries, with the goal of influencing their ways, and without reciprocation of influence. This holistic conceptualization averts political-centric *or* economic-centric foci by emphasizing the intertwining of the US state and US corporate actors that drive, lead, enact, and benefit from cultural imperialism. This is still a very broad conceptualization, though, and it has not yet addressed the role of "communication" and "media." To do this, I will distinguish between the US security state and the corporations of the cultural industries, and then elaborate, conceptually and empirically, upon the nexus of these two spheres in the US empire's cultural-imperialist project.

The cultural industries are the privately owned corporations that aim to turn a profit from the financing, production, distribution, promotion, and exhibition of technologies, media services, and cultural goods that convey meanings about the social world (i.e., publishers; advertising and public relations firms; news corporations; radio, music, and audio-visual entertainment studios and distributors; broadcasters and cable firms; video game companies; and internet-web and social media firms). The US security state refers to the federal governmental departments and agencies—the White House, the Department of State, the Department of Defense (including the National Security Agency), the National Security Council, and the Central Intelligence Agency—involved in making and pursuing foreign policy decisions. The cultural industries pursue profit for financiers, CEOs, and shareholders. The state advances national security interests and goals, as authorized by the president (and sometimes US Congress), in the name of the "people" it is supposedly beholden to. The state and the cultural industries are different types of entities, and the geopolitical interests of the US state and the business goals of the cultural industries do not always march lockstep, and at times they may even conflict. There may also be tensions between sectors and firms of the cultural industries, as well as flare-ups between the competing lobbies for these sectors and state agencies. Yet, when the US state and the US cultural industries come together in collaborations that aim to influence the internal political and economic affairs of other sovereign states, the thoughts and behaviors of other citizens, and the "ways of life" associated with other national cultures, the state and the cultural industries are jointly producing and advancing the "communicational" and "media" front of a cultural-imperialist project. In their synergistic (ad)ventures, this dimension of cultural imperialism will shore up the state's geopolitical goal of winning consent to America and US foreign policy in other countries *and* establish or support the economic dominance of the US cultural industries in other markets.

Having reconceptualized cultural imperialism as a state-corporate project, let us now focus on some historical junctures. Throughout the twentieth century, successive states of emergency and global war paved the way for the US state to build "communication" and "media" agencies that partnered and worked with the cultural industries to support the US empire's project of cultural imperialism.

On April 14, 1917, a week after the United States joined the Allied forces by declaring war on Germany, US president Woodrow Wilson used his executive power (Executive Order No. 2594) to establish the Committee on Public Information (CPI) for the purpose of rallying US and world opinion to the cause of winning the war, and to extol the virtue of American liberal democratic capitalism. In *How We Advertised*

America, CPI head George Creel (1920, 3) said the "recognition of Public Opinion as a major force" made World War I different "from previous conflicts" in that it necessitated a "fight for the minds of men." The CPI recruited Americans to war, got Americans to buy war bonds, and showcased the US military's power and burgeoning liberal capitalist society: "There was no part of the great war machinery that we did not touch, no medium of appeal that we did not employ. The printed word, the spoken word, the motion picture, the post, the signboard—all these were used in our campaign to make our own people and all other peoples understand the causes that compelled America to take arms" (Creel 1920, 4). Creel described the CPI's work as an "advertising campaign, though shot through and through with an evangelical quality" (ibid., 155).

The CPI's Division of Speaking deployed hundreds of influential opinion leaders to talk up America's war aims and social model abroad. The CPI also recruited professors, business owners, and religious leaders from other countries, filled "them up with" its "latest facts and figures," and sent "them out to talk to their own people" (ibid., 243). The CPI's Division of News issued the "official news of government" (ibid., 70) to the commercial news media and created "all news bearing upon America's war effort" (ibid., 71). The CPI also targeted the "foreign-language press" by opening press "offices in every capital of the world outside the Central Powers" (ibid., 9), sourcing war correspondents with stories, and operating a foreign news service that relayed "news and feature articles" and "government bulletins" (ibid., 262). The Divisions of Advertising and Pictorial Publicity worked with public relations and advertising firms to visually promote America worldwide. The CPI also opened up reading rooms in major international cities and supplied them (and schools and libraries) with "American books, periodicals and newspapers" (ibid., 244). The CPI's Division of Films worked with Hollywood studios to make motion pictures that conveyed US war aims and American liberal democratic capitalism "to every community in the United States and to every corner of the world" (ibid., 8).

At the end of World War I, the CPI was shut down, but throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, the US state and the cultural industries informally pushed capitalist trade, investment, and cultural goods across borders (Rosenberg 1982). World War II was the next occasion for the US state and cultural industries to collaborate. On July 30, 1941, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8840 to establish the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) and appointed Nelson A. Rockefeller to lead it (Cramer and Prutsch 2006). The OCIAA promoted the US "Good Neighbor" foreign policy in Latin America and deployed cultural attachés to cultivate relations with local opinion leaders, select people to study in America, and coordinate the distribution of US media products to foreign libraries, universities, and other institutions (Thomson and Laves 1963). The division of Press and Propaganda employed hundreds of journalists, editors, visual artists, and photographers to produce news stories, translate and disseminate presidential speeches, and create images for the Latin American media. The Motion Picture Division commissioned Hollywood studios such as Walt Disney to produce Good Neighbor policy–promoting animated films such as *The Three Caballeros* (1943) and *Saludos Amigos* (1943) (Telotte 2007).

Following the Pearl Harbor attack, the US state entered World War II on December 8, 1941, and on July 13, 1942, it established the Office of War Information (OWI) to

"formulate and carry out, through use of the press, radio, motion picture and other facilities, information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the government" (Summers 1972, 17–18). To do so, the OWI mobilized the US cultural industries to support the war and to spread an idyllic idea of America as the land of "Four Freedoms." The OWI's "Victory Speaker" Bureau hired opinion leaders to talk up America's war aims and capitalist society. The Radio Bureau worked with radio broadcasters to integrate war propaganda with commercial variety shows, comedies, soap operas, and news programs. The News Bureau linked with and leveraged private news companies such as the Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service, while the Visual and Graphic Bureaus hired the War Advertising Council to create images of America at war and promote its consumer society. The Publishing Bureau helped private publishing firms launch international editions of magazines such as *Reader's Digest* and also sponsored the development of Overseas Editions, a book distribution chain that released American books to each country involved in the war (Bogart 1995, xiii). The Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) collaborated with Hollywood studios to produce feature films and propaganda reels and distribute them to international theaters (Wagnleitner 1994, 39).

The end of World War II marked the beginning of the end of the old European colonial empires. Over the next three decades, these empires were defeated by sometimes peaceful and sometimes violent anti-colonial national liberation struggles. The post–World War II period was also marked by a new rivalry between the US and Soviet empires, and this battle of societal models and ideologies lasted from 1945 to 1991. The United States had not suffered nearly as much as the Soviets did fighting fascism and was the chief architect of the post–World War II global system, so it had the upper hand from the outset of the Cold War and moving forward. It was a primary architect, advocate for, and supporter of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (which later become the World Bank), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United Nations (UN). These structures and institutions formed the foundations of the "Pax Americana" (LaFeber 1994). The NSC-68 doctrine outlined the gist of US foreign policy in the years to come: actively extend and defend US-approved liberal democratic developments so long as they were capitalist, and defeat the Soviet Union and all related socialist developments. This project required a permanent persuasion campaign, and to produce it, the US state and the US cultural industries allied to promote and win consent to the American Way around the world (Cull 2008; Dizard 1961).

On January 16, 1948, the US Congress passed the Smith-Mundt Act to create a full-time persuasion agency (or, in contemporary parlance, a "public diplomacy" or "strategic communication" agency) (Snow 1998). Section 501 said the act's objective was "to enable the Government of the United States to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries." It authorized the secretary of state to prepare and disseminate abroad "information

about the U.S., its people and its policies, through press, publications, radio, motion pictures and other information media, and through information centers and instructors abroad" (Dizard 2004). While section 501 of the act gave the US state the legal power to propagandize foreign publics, it prohibited the circulation of the same propaganda materials in the United States: "any information [. . .] shall not be disseminated within the United States, its territories, or possessions." Interestingly, the act said that the state's communication agency must not compete with the profit-interests of US communication and media corporations, but instead should procure public opinion management services from them and also help to extend their business interests in other countries. Section 1005 declared that the agency must utilize, to the maximum extent, "the services and facilities of private agencies, including existing American press, publishing, radio, motion picture, and other agencies through contractual arrangements or otherwise." Furthermore, the act noted the agency must contract these corporations in each "field consistent with the present and potential market for their services in each country" it targeted.

Soon after, the Department of State created two new public diplomacy agencies: the Office of International Information (OII) and the Office of Educational Exchange (OEE). But thanks to Dwight Eisenhower's Presidential Committee on International Information Activities (chaired by William H. Jackson) pushing for one consolidated multimedia public diplomacy agency, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was established on June 1, 1953. The USIA's job was "explaining and interpreting to foreign people the objectives and policies of the United States Government"; "depicting imaginatively the correlation between U.S. policies and the legitimate aspirations of other peoples in the world"; "unmasking and countering hostile attempts to distort or to frustrate the objectives and policies of the United States"; and "delineating those important aspects of the life and culture of the people of the United States which facilitate understanding of the policies and objectives of the Government of the United States" (Hansen 1984, 17). Between 1953 and 1991, the USIA's operations and platforms of persuasion expanded alongside the US empire in order to bolster the US image, support US military incursions, and shuttle liberal democratic and consumer-capitalist media ideology around the world.

The USIA's Bureau of Information produced media content that supported the White House's official foreign policy positions and dispatched intellectuals to foreign countries to talk up US strategic interests. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (BECA) administered educational and cultural exchanges such as the Fulbright Program and the Foreign Leader and International Visitors Program to cultivate foreign leaders sympathetic to and willing to support US foreign policy. The USIA's Office of Research and Media Reaction hired public relations firms to run public opinion polls in other countries and customize public relations campaigns appropriate to local conditions (Sorenson 1968, 64). The USIA's Publishing Bureaus subsidized, produced, and distributed American books—a boon to the publishing industry. For example, the USIA's Information Media Guarantee (IMG) program gave US publishers an incentive to export and sell American books, magazines, and journals abroad by guaranteeing they would be paid in dollars in exchange for the foreign currencies they received from consumers of these products (Thomson and Laves 1963). In addition

to supporting the publishing industry's global growth, the USIA's libraries, reading rooms, and traveling exhibits served as distribution and exhibition points for all kinds of American works.

The USIA's International News Bureau ran a daily "Wireless File" that was a source of "official" foreign policy information for private news organizations, and it operated foreign press centers in major cities (Dizard 2004, 160). The USIA's Voice of America (VOA) was a radio broadcaster that projected the speeches of American presidents, as well as jazz and rock music licensed from the American recording industry, around the world. The USIA's motion picture and TV service commissioned private film and TV studios to produce documentary films in support of US foreign policy goals and distributed these and feature flicks through American libraries, commercial cinemas, and a film-mailing service (Dizard 1961; Elder 1968). In 1980 the USIA established Radio and TV Marti to directly broadcast anti-Castro and insurrectionary TV programs into Cuba, and in 1983 it built WORLDNET Film and Television Service, a global satellite TV operation.

The Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, bringing an end to the Cold War. In this unipolar moment, the US empire—led by the "New World Order" presidency of George H. W. Bush and then by the two-term neoliberal-globalization presidency of Bill Clinton—waged "small wars" while opening up new spaces for capitalist accumulation and promoting transnational corporate-servicing policies of trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. Throughout the 1990s, the USIA supported "the interest of U.S. trade and economic sectors by touting the superiority of U.S. commercial values and economic policies to elite foreign audiences" and selling a corporate version of America "to the influential markets of the world" (Snow 1998, 623–24). In this juncture, the International Broadcasting Act of 1994 established the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) to bring the VOA, WORLD-NET, Radio and TV Marti, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia under one centralized roof. The USIA also built a global network of "affiliated" radio and TV stations whose scheduled programming promoted an "essentially corporate version of the country" (Snow 1998).

The USIA was abolished on October 1, 1999, and all USIA bureaus (with the exception of the International Broadcasting Bureau) were folded into the Department of State's new Office of Public Diplomacy (OPD). Six months after the USIA's functions were transferred to the Department of State, Clinton signed Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-68 International Public Information (PDD 68) policy, guiding its mission to use communications and media to build "understanding and support for U.S. foreign policy initiatives around the world," counter "the growing hostile misinformation about the United States," and more effectively promote "U.S. policy, values and interests to foreign audiences." To ensure that the US empire's renewed communication and media agency aligned with neoliberal national security objectives, Clinton's PDD 68 called for the State Department, Department of Defense, and National Security Council to oversee its operations, setting the stage for the twenty-first century.

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the presidency of George W. Bush launched the Global War on Terror. For almost two decades, this war has been boundless and without end and has cost trillions of dollars. To establish the communication and

media front of the Global War on Terror, a 2002 Independent Task Force on Public Diplomacy sponsored by the Council of Foreign Relations titled "Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism" called for "the establishment of coordinating structure, chaired by a principal adviser to the president, to harmonize the public diplomacy efforts of government agencies, allies and private-sector partners" (Peterson 2002, 74). Described by *BusinessWeek* as the "Queen of Madison Avenue," Charlotte Beers was hired as the State Department's Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy. She pledged to rebrand America and recruited the US Advertising Council to help her do so. In 2002, Beers launched a campaign targeting the Muslim world called "Shared Values." It consisted of five TV commercials, a globalized version of *Sesame Street*, an Arabic magazine called *Hi*, ads in Pan-Arab newspapers, a website called "Open Dialogue," and virtual "American Rooms." The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) supported Beers's Shared Values with Radio Sawa and, soon after, Radio Farda. While the OPD's Bureau of International Information Programs (BIIP) and Bureau of Public Affairs (BPA) handled Shared Values's electronic and print items, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Exchange (BECA) coordinated educational and cultural exchanges. The OPD's Shared Values campaign was a flop. Perhaps recognizing the difficulty of "branding" the 2003 Iraq invasion, Charlotte Beers quit the State Department and returned to Madison Avenue.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A STUDY OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AS A STATE-CORPORATE PROJECT

The creation of the CPI in World War I, the OCIAA in the interwar period, the OWI in World War II, the USIA in the Cold War, and the OPD in the Global War on Terror established an immense transnational state-corporate apparatus for selling images and messages of the US empire to the world and opening up markets to the US cultural industries' business operations and commodity flows.

Despite temporarily inspiring hope for a substantive change to the US empire after Bush's controversial two-term imperial presidency, US President Barack Obama continued the Global War on Terror to make the world safe for neoliberal capitalism. Since 2016, the billionaire real estate–mogul and reality-TV star president Donald Trump has continued to expand this war. In this new twenty-first-century juncture, new partnerships between the US security state and the US cultural industries were forged, and the intricacies of the collaborations between the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the CIA, and the news media and entertainment industries have been documented elsewhere (Andersen and Mirrlees 2014; Alford and Secker 2017; Boyd-Barrett 2015; Boyd-Barrett, Herrera, and Baumann 2011; Jenkins 2012; Mirrlees 2016; Snow 2003; Stahl 2010). There will likely be more imperial media productions in the years ahead, and more critical research on the communication and media dimensions of the US empire's cultural-imperialist project is needed. By way of conclusion, I offer a few premises for future studies of this kind.

First, US state communication and media agencies originate in the executive branch, usually as the result of presidential national security directives related to

war, and these agencies are funded by Congress. The personnel of these state agencies routinely link and connect with the representatives of the privatized sectors and corporations of the cultural industries, and together, they (co)produce imperial media products. These agencies may source media corporations with prepackaged content reflecting their strategic agenda and elite frame of geopolitical reality, collaborate with entertainment firms on mutually beneficial militainment productions, and "outsource" jobs to public relations firms paid to work as clandestine persuasion surrogates. In these scenarios, governmental and corporate workers *routinely* work together to *intentionally* create imagery and messages in support of the US empire. More historical and institutional studies of these alliances are needed.

Second, the state-corporate personnel who produce and impart media for the US empire seem to hold an elitist view of ordinary citizens. They seem to assume that people in the United States and around the world need to be informed about America and US foreign policy because they cannot formulate a correct understanding of them on their own. The state and corporate workers who unite to make imperial media and cultural products seem to assume that critics of America and US foreign policy suffer "false consciousness," and they try to correct this with their partial and selective version of the "truth" of the nation and its security agencies. Yet, the messages and images they create and release are intended to do much more than "enlighten." They aim to change how people think and behave, and they aim to bring about internal changes to polities, economies, and cultures without even asking the people targeted if they want such changes. The US empire's media products that converge into opinion and behavior-influence campaigns meddle with and seek to transform the internal affairs of other countries, often in violation of a country's media and cultural sovereignty. If other nation-states, especially those deemed unfriendly to the United States, attempt such influence in the United States, intense shock and righteous anger among US elites and publics ensue.

Third, the state-corporate project of cultural imperialism via communication and media has never resulted in absolute "cultural domination," for non-US national identities continue to exist and flourish. The United States continues to be the world's dominant economic, military, and communications power, and the US-based globalizing cultural industries and their media and cultural products are dominant around the world (this is demonstrated empirically in my chapter "Not (Yet) the 'Chinese Century'" at the end of this book). Yet, US state and corporate cultural imperialists have never been able to totally "Americanize" national cultural industries or liquidate cultures, nor have they created a global cosmopolitan culture that hybridizes the world's many cultures (however constructed). In the early twenty-first century, the US empire's cultural imperialism exists in a global system of sovereign nation-states where "national cultures" are frequently constructed by elites through nationally based cultural industries to fulfill strategic economic and political objectives. Around the world, the state and business elites of 194 nation-states increasingly use national cultural policy to protect national cultural industries (and sometimes "cultures") from the United States. At the same time, they promote the internationalization of these industries and their products to the United States and across other countries—though such attempts are rarely very successful and often met with resistance, whether economic or political.

   Fourth, though contested, US cultural imperialism often leaves a mark within the countries it targets and pervades. The outcome of cultural relations between the United States and other countries is best conceptualized as "asymmetrical cultural hybridity" or "unequal cultural mixing," not "cultural domination." American culture is not an ethno-monolith reducible to "blood and soil," but rather a terrain of political struggle between US citizens, who battle over the meaning of America and construct it in various ways. Elsewhere, the "nation" is also a semiotic battlefield and site of contestation. But because Americans are in possession of the greatest communication and media resources the world has ever seen, they are better able to produce and circulate messages about and images of their national "ways of life" than non-US peoples are of their own. People on the receiving end of American media messages and images may perceive them as threats to their cultures, while others may embrace them as a welcome alternative to what their home state and cultural industries offer (or deprive them of). The "audience," "viewer," or "prosumer" of cultural imperialism may interpret, select, adapt, indigenize, mix, and redeploy its media messages and images in a range of localized ways. Yet, there may still be effects, some invisible and some obvious, that realize the original purposes of US cultural campaigns.

   All of history's empires leave a cultural mark, and the US empire has and will as well. The US empire's state-corporate project of cultural imperialism's marks may be multiple and diverse, but they do not represent a genuinely reciprocal cultural exchange, nor a mutually beneficial sharing of cultures.

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Part II

NEWS, WAR, AND PROPAGANDA

Western News Media, Propaganda, and Pretexts for Neoliberal War

Oliver Boyd-Barrett

Whether in the form of direct seizure of the assets of a rival or weaker power, indirect control over such assets through terms of trade, or simply the construction or maintenance of an international order that is generally beneficial to the imperial power, motives for imperial war (often multiple, sometimes controversial and conflicting) are generally camouflaged by such narratives as (1) self-victimhood ("they" did such-and-such to us), (2) other-victimhood ("they" did such-and-such to other people, perhaps even "their" own people—people who we like, are our allies, for whom we feel pity), (3) demonization ("they" are evil), and (4) self-glorification ("we" are noble, and what we do must therefore be done for the best of all possible reasons).

The pretexts for Western-originated imperial wars in the period since at least the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 are premised on important foundational myths, namely: (1) after World War II, Western powers magnanimously divested from empires; (2) Western powers are advanced/civilized; (3) Western powers are democratic; (4) Western powers permit freedom of speech as practiced by independent media; (5) Western powers are virtuous; (6) because Western powers are advanced/civilized and because they are virtuous, their interventions in global affairs can only be positive for those that benefit from such interventions or, at least, are positively intentioned.

It is not my intent in this chapter to debunk each of these claims but simply to propose that such claims can be easily detected among the premises supplied by officialdom for these wars. Such myths do not need to be believed by policy makers. It is a feature of the "machismo" of Western diplomacy that policy makers and their advisers slide effortlessly from vacuous, moral posturing to deceitful, aggressive maneuvers that they suspect would be shocking to their constituents if exposed. All that matters is that public policy discourse conforms to the foundational myths. This constrains how mainstream media—whose high status depends on the combination of their pretense at independence and collusion with the establishment—frames such events. It straitjackets public rationality.

Mainstream media, closely intermeshed with oligopolistic corporate and state interests, constitute principal forums through which foundational myths are disseminated and consolidated. Foundational myths underwrite the narratives of specific conflicts in ways that conform to fairly well-established scripts (whether or not the violations

of national sovereignty that they involve are sanctioned by international law). Such tellings strive for internal consistency, unanimity of voice, and an arc of moral engagement from awareness, through outrage, to restoration of the good society. The extent of popular perceived credibility, or at least suspension of popular judgment for the time that it takes for military implementation, is a key measure of propaganda success. Narratives must confirm foundational myths. This requires marginalization of nonconforming dimensions and actors, suppression of the complexity of rich historical context, and inaudibility of inconvenient voices and facts.

In providing examples in chapter 1, I referred to the 1989 invasion of Panama, the 1991 invasion of Iraq, the fragmentation of Yugoslavia through the 1990s Balkan Wars, the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the fracturing of Libya and Syria from or before 2011, Western meddling in Ukraine (2004, 2013), Western demonization and attempts to destabilize Iran (perpetual), and Western demonization and attempts to destabilize the former Soviet Union. There is copious literature on each of these conflicts and of the deceptions they have parleyed, even though it is a literature not drawn upon extensively in media scholarship. In previous publications I have dealt with the failures of Western mainstream media coverage of many of these conflicts, although each case will benefit from updating in the light of new knowledge and reflection.

Here and in chapter 6, "The Great Game for EurAsia and the Skripal Affair," I offer two case studies of Western media collusion with official narratives of pretext for war. They are components among many others of a twenty-year campaign of Western demonization of Russia since the death of debauched but pro-Western president Boris Yeltsin in 1998 and his succession by Vladimir Putin. Besides being a strong nationalist with an arguably more impressive record of success in containing attempts by Russian oligarchs to seize control of the Russian apparatus of "managed democracy" than Putin's Western counterparts have shown in clipping the corruption of their democracies by big money, he has also been a staunch advocate of capitalism. Continuing Western hostility toward a capitalist Russia after 1991 suggests there was a deeper level of US-Russian conflict behind the apparently ideological US-Soviet contest of capitalism versus communism. I have argued elsewhere that more than being a struggle between two superpowers for access to the material riches of the Third World, as some have suggested, it was and continues to be mainly a struggle over EurAsia as the path toward global hegemony.

This chapter concerns the Russian ally Syria and the trail of accusations by Western sources against the Damascus government for its alleged use of chemical weapons in Dhouma in 2018 (following several similar allegations from 2013 onward). My argument is *not* that the Syrian government could not possibly have used chemical weapons, but that the United States and its allies, with considerable—not total—support from their mainstream media, exploited partisan claims of such use to justify "retaliatory" measures long before compelling evidence could possibly have been available.

Relevant background was Russia's adept diplomacy in 2013 when it salvaged Western face from the embarrassment that resulted from the failure of both US and UK governments to secure popular support for a Western invasion of Syria. This would have occurred on what I and others have argued was the false pretext that the Baa'thist

and socialist regime of Bashar al-Assad had used chemical weapons against jihadist rebels in East Ghouta that year (Boyd-Barrett 2015). As a compromise measure, Russia successfully proposed that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) should organize the collection and destruction of all of the Syrian regime's stocks of chemical weapons. Russia's subsequent military intervention provided an effective counterthrust to the gains of ISIS, exposing US lack of seriousness and its duplicitous involvement in Western support for Al Qaeda–linked jihadist groups—alongside that of the West's Arab clients, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. In the meantime, the issue of chemical weapons—their removal from Assad's stockpiles notwithstanding (OPCW claims a success rate of detection of well over 90 percent)—has continued to be resurrected on a regular basis even as evidence has grown of the use of chemical weapons by Western-supported jihadist groups for the purposes of staging false-flag incidents that can then be used as leverage to boost Western support for the "rebels."

In the case of the chemical attack reported to have taken place in Dhouma in early April 2018, and causing forty-three deaths, subsequent evidence suggests there may have been no chemical attack at all, but possibly a conventional Syrian air force strike as Syria regained territory occupied by ISIS (Fisk 2018). This may have caused deaths from asphyxiation. Alternatively, the Syrian air force may have dropped chlorine bombs with a view not to killing, but to forcing the opposition out of buildings, even if on this occasion unforeseen deaths did occur (Harkin 2019). More likely, local jihadists staged evidence of a chlorine attack, as was asserted by a BBC Syria producer early in 2019 (ZeroHedge.com 2019) and endorsed by a leaked OPCW assessment (McKeigue et al. 2019).

As on previous occasions where allegations of chemical weapons have later been debunked or evidence for them was found seriously wanting, the United States and its allies, and Western mainstream media, quickly leaped to the conclusion that the Syrian army, answerable to the Assad regime in Damascus, was responsible. Both chlorine and sarin were alleged (as at Saraqib, Dhouma, and elsewhere previously). Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has referred to 1950s US research findings that nerve agents mixed with chlorine are immediately chlorinated and therefore ineffective (RT 2018a; see also Hersh 1968). The presence of non-chlorinated sarin in chlorine cylinders might indicate that degraded sarin samples were added later. Paul McKeigue, a professor of genetic epidemiology and statistical genetics at Edinburgh University, has noted that to be effective as a weapon, chlorine has to be released on an industrial scale, as at Ypres in 1915. He claimed that there was no evidence to show that chlorine had ever been used in aerial bombs or projectiles; to do so would be far less effective than using an explosive payload (McKeigue et al. 2019).

An OPCW report on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Ltamenah on March 24 and 25, 2018, concluded that both sarin and chlorine were likely used. Culpability was not assigned (OPCW 2018a). An OPCW report on the alleged use of chemical weapons at Saraqib (Idlib Province) on February 4, 2018, concluded that chlorine was "likely" to have been used, based on the discovery of two cylinders that previously contained chlorine (OPCW 2018b). Culpability was not assigned. The OPCW investigation's interim report (OPCW 2018) found no evidence of sarin and limited evidence

of chlorine. Its final report (OPCW 2019) corroborated this finding but placed greater emphasis on the likelihood that chlorine had been used as a weapon. This did not dispel reasonable doubt that containers alleged to have been the source—claimed by some to have been dropped by Syrian forces—had been moved from a site controlled by local jihadist forces to stage the appearance of a chemical bomb (Cartalucci 2019). The findings of such international investigations can be and often are politicized. The OPCW is a political creature, vulnerable to the machinations of the strongest powers and, in particular, of the United States, which is itself directly implicated in many of the most controversial war atrocities. A case in point is the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia used in Saudi Arabia's war against Yemen amid conditions of famine threatening many millions of civilians. The prospects for politicization were enhanced in the case of OPCW when the organization's overseers in June 2018 voted to adopt Britain's proposal to allow investigators to assign culpability (RTb 2018).

That Syrian government forces had used chemical weapons in Dhouma in April 2018 was unlikely, on the face of it, for the following reasons:

• The Syrian army well understood the "sensitivity" of Western nations to the use of chemical weapons and the likelihood that evidence or assertions of such use could lead to disproportionate retaliation.
• Additionally, the Syrian army in 2014 rendered up all its chemical weapons under the supervision of the OPCW (OPCW 2016), as had Syria's most powerful external sponsor, Russia (OPCW 2017).
• A prominent opposition outlet said that no "chemical attack" had taken place. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) in the second week of April did not confirm a "gas" incident. In SOHR's version of events, some forty people died after their shelter collapsed (Johnstone 2018).
• There is evidence that chemical weapons have been possessed and applied by jihadist groups in opposition to the Damascus regime; also, that jihadist groups have previously staged false-flag operations to invoke Western intervention in response to jihadist claims that the Syrian army has used chemical weapons (Strack 2017; Mackie 2017; Doornbos and Moussa 2016). In the aftermath of liberation from areas controlled by Failaq al-Rahman—one of several Al Qaeda–linked or Al Nusra Front–linked jihadist groups—witnesses recounted false-flag incidents as at Hamouriya, March 5–6, 2018, that involved the White Helmets (who were said to have delivered bodies for photos and videos), "media activists" and local "U.N. coordinators," and whose purpose was to activate intervention by the United States against the rapidly advancing liberation forces of the Syrian Arab Army (Beeley 2018). Beeley identified a sophisticated network of ground-level jihadist activists supported by sympathetic pro-NATO institutions, including Chatham House, the Toran Center, Syrian National Coalition, ARK, Mayday Rescue, Syria Campaign, and Violations Documentation Center (ibid.).
• The Syrian army was close to final expulsion from Dhouma of either or both ISIS or violent anti-government jihadist forces, including Saudi-supported Jaysh al-Islam; Failaq al-Rahman, which is supported by the Muslim Brotherhood and aligned with the (jihadist) Free Syrian Army; and Tahrir al-Sham, the latest incarnation of for-

mer Al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (Pitt 2018). It was winning the war and had neither reason nor other motivation for the use of chemical weapons, especially as this was territory they were about to recover. Jihadist groups, on the other hand, had substantial motivation to claim that the Syrian Arab Army had used such weapons (as this might buy them Western intervention) and may have staged the evidence (e.g., placement of canisters, video of children being treated) to support their claim.

- As has often been the case in these circumstances, Western governments, instead of presenting evidence from their own extensive surveillance systems—unrivaled in sophistication—have resorted to social media photographs and videos, in this instance attributable to the White Helmets and other such groups closely associated with jihadist forces in opposition to the Syrian army, or working in areas that are controlled by and subject to the rule of jihadists, and therefore lacking credibility. Mainstream media frequently cite these uncritically.

- When Robert Fisk, a veteran journalist with at least thirty years of reporting experience in the Middle East, and in 2018 reporting for the *Independent*, finally traveled to Dhouma within days of the incident, he could find nobody in the area in which chemical weapons were said to have been dropped by the Syrian air force who could testify to such use, not even among doctors who had treated the supposed victims. An account provided by one of the doctors suggested that as a result of Syrian air force bombs, a whirlwind of dust had blown into one or two buildings, causing respiratory problems for the inhabitants. These were attended to without the need for special protective suits that are required in the event of chemical weapon attacks. While doctors were attending to respiratory ailments, a White Helmet representative shouted "chemical attack" and took video footage of its alleged victims (Fisk 2018). This version was subsequently confirmed by an international news operation from Texas, One America News, and its reporter Pearson Sharp (Syrmopoulos 2018). Even the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights denied that a chemical attack had happened (Moon of Alabama 2018), although CBS reporter Seth Doane was able to interview witnesses to the attack and located the missile that was said to have been used to deliver chlorine (Pitt 2018). Reports skeptical of a chemical attack assumed that deaths that had apparently occurred in a nearby building were not the result of a chemical attack attributable to the Syrian armed forces, although evidence from later sources (Harkin 2019), even while remaining open to possible opposition "staging," casts some doubt on this presumption.

- Claims that the OPCW were prohibited by the Syrian army from entering Dhouma were discredited when a UN agency (United Nations Department of Safety and Security [UNDSS]) responsible for the safety of OPCW members explained that it had prohibited the visit on the grounds that UNDSS personnel had been subjected to gunfire while doing a reconnaissance of the site (Webb 2018).

- Amid similar doubts a year before, the United States had "retaliated" against Syrian army positions following allegations of chemical weapons use in Khan Sheikhoun. Here, OPCW inspectors, in violation of their own protocols, had accepted as genuine the ground samples, photographs, and other evidence provided by the White Helmets, failed to demand biological samples, and relegated to an appendix the appearance at a local hospital of "victims" who arrived there even before the

planes allegedly responsible for the attack had left their air base (Ford 2018). Once again, in coverage of US "retaliation" for the Dhouma allegations in 2018, Western mainstream media expressed little outrage that such retaliatory measures were taken before concrete evidence was available. Yet evidence was sufficient to warn that the original allegations were, at best, questionable and, at worst, entirely false. As Peter Ford, a former British ambassador to Syria and former representative of the Commissioner General of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), noted wryly, "to get the US, UK and France to go to war, a lower standard of evidence is needed than it takes to get a conviction for a parking ticket" (ibid.).

• Writers for the Atlantic Council had argued that Assad needed chemical weapons because they are cheap substitutes for conventional combat operations, are effective, and compensate for Damascus's lack of precision weapons (O'Brien and Stein 2018). Deconstructing each of these premises, Cartalucci (2018) reasoned that Syria's own air force, with the support of Russia and Iran, provided the precision weapons that Syria had needed on the battlefield. From February 10 to February 16, 2016, for example, Syria averaged seventy-four airstrikes per day—versus the four chemical weapons incidents in five years that were cited by O'Brien and Stein, or the roughly thirty-four incidents the UN Commission of Inquiry had estimated (attributing all of these, almost certainly erroneously, to the Syrian government). An overwhelming proportion of Syrian conflict had been conventional. And casualties of any kind of chemical weapon attacks (whether used by Syria or by "rebels") represented a tiny proportion of total casualties (perhaps 2,000 out of 120,000 civilian deaths since 2011 [Almukhtar 2018]). In three out of the four cases claimed by the Atlantic Council, three yielded no significant advantage to Syria and in two cases failed to dislodge militants.

Western press coverage of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria 2018 report on the siege of Ghouta from 2013 cast blame for atrocities and war crimes on "both" sides. There were in fact multiple "sides," including the anti-democratic, anti-secular, non-Syrian, jihadist movements of Jaysh al-Islam, Failaq al-Rahman, Ahrar al-Shan, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, not to mention all the Western and Arab powers that supported such movements, including but not limited to the United States and its allies—the United Kingdom, France, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Yet the 2018 report emphasized Syrian government culpability and downplayed that of the rebels (see, for example, Nebehay 2018). It acknowledged that between February and April 2018, the period of the liberation of Ghouta by the Syrian Arab Army, "besieged armed groups and terrorist organizations also relentlessly launched indiscriminate attacks against neighboring Damascus city and nearby areas, amounting to war crimes which killed and maimed hundreds of Syrian civilians. As they gradually ceded territory to pro-Government forces, the frequency and gravity of their attacks correspondingly increased" (United Nations Human Rights Council, UNHRC 2018). Former British ambassador to Syria, Peter Ford, criticized the commission for not investigating egregious violations of international law by Western occupation forces in Syria, one of whose goals appeared to be to prevent the Syrian government from reclaiming areas of its country that had substantial oil and gas deposits. But Ford

praised it for "standing firm and refusing to make premature pronouncements about the alleged use of prohibited weapons in Douma." He added: "The Commission obviously angered those in the US administration and elsewhere who are impatient to see the West bombing its way to regime change in Syria. Hence the petulant leaks to the *New York Times* of a rejected earlier draft of the Commission report, and hysterical accusations against the Commission" (Ford 2018).

The *New York Times* paid little attention to the main UNHRC report but focused on items that its sources claimed the report had edited out of an earlier draft (Gladstone and Haberman 2018). Allegedly omitted paragraphs made reference to the occasional use of Iranian-made artillery shells—conveniently demonizing another Western target for regime change, Iran, while acknowledging that the missiles (comparable to others that had been used by all sides to the conflict) were fired by Syrians. *Times* sources claimed that the shells were filled with a chlorine-like substance (a weasel qualification open to almost any interpretation), giving victims just a few minutes to escape. In other words, fatality was neither instantaneous nor certain, thus helping to explain the relatively low numbers of dead (low indeed, when compared to much larger numbers of victims killed by US conventional and "precision" bombing in Raqqa in 2017 during the US four-month liberation of that city from ISIS). The deleted materials had also asserted that symptoms were repeatedly said to be "consistent with" chlorine or other chemical agents.

Little attention was given by the UN report, or in press coverage of it, to the ferocious cruelty of ISIS, nor was outrage expressed against the complete illegality of the ISIS siege of Ghouta from 2013 to 2018, nor was voice given to the terrible violence endured by a large civilian population in that time, nor was interest shown in the valiant work of predominantly Syrian and Russian forces in setting up humanitarian corridors and other measures that allowed tens of thousands of civilians to escape despite ISIS resistance, a flight that left behind a population of concentrated ISIS forces that had now to be expelled. Nor was there reference to the persistent, well-substantiated allegations of US war crimes against civilians in the otherwise much-vaunted "liberation" of Raqqa from June to October 2017. Not least were the charges of Amnesty International in its report of June 2018. This found that the US-led coalition fired a vast number of imprecise explosive weapons in populated civilian areas, that even the precision bombs took a horrendous toll on civilians, and that hundreds of civilians were killed before "Islamic State" fighters were allowed to leave. Amnesty noted that the citizens of Raqqa, occupied by ISIS for four years, had been subject to brutal and illegal treatment by the occupiers during that period (Amnesty International 2018).

Hard on the heels of the UN report, but still prior to the OPCW determination, the *New York Times* (Browne et al. 2018) posted a video investigation of the Dhouma incident. The report was framed by anti-Syrian-government language and revealed no empathy for the suffering of a population that had been subject to ISIS rule for five years, nor appreciation of the achievements of the Syrian army, with or without Russian help, in recovering the territories and populations that belonged to Syria. There was no comparative reference, of course, to allegations of US war crimes in Raqqa. The video manifested unabashed dependence on footage provided by "first responders," "White Helmets," and "media activists." Assistance from Bellingcat.com was

mentioned but without reference to its problematic links to the Atlantic Council. Bell-ingcat may have helped "geo-locate" the street and the apartment building that was the report's focus and the airfield from which it alleged Syrian government helicop-ters had flown their missions that day. There was no reference whatsoever to Robert Fisk's reporting or to the One America News report that corroborated Fisk. The video claimed that the first media people able to reach the site were Russian. Yet the video was principally based on "first responders," who must surely have preceded Russian journalists. Russian reports of a staged event were cavalierly dismissed as lies. Most of the video attempted to establish that the casing of an exploded chlorine bomb had been found in the building, that the bomb must have been dropped from the sky by a helicopter (the video alleged that the "rebels" had no access to helicopters), and that victims' bodies showed symptoms "consistent with" a chlorine attack. The first two of these themes were emphasized; the third, the victims, was left to the final two to three minutes. Despite its promise that the video would invoke many witness accounts, hardly any could be detected other than the voices of first responders—the "White Helmets" and similar entities. The report was based not on an actual visit by *New York Times* videographers, but on a reconstruction of the building—a model—based on the secondhand videos received from first responders. The scope for fabrication was considerable. Out of respect for the delicate feelings of viewers, footage of victims concentrated on two or three close-ups of particular areas of the human bodies that "experts" claimed exhibited signs of a chlorine attack. Again, the scope for fabrication was considerable in view of known professional teams that simulate just such injuries for the alleged purposes of training. Nobody shown in the video washing down the bodies was wearing protective clothing.

The video claimed that the Assad regime had committed many such chlorine attacks, and particularly cited Aleppo (November 2016), Al-Lataminah (October 2018), and Saraqib (February 2018)—a total of six in the first half of 2018 (the UNHRC report cited four). The rationale for these was not explained (nor was refer-ence made to the very small number of victims that resulted, when contrasted with the much larger canvas of war deaths from conventional weapons). It was suggested that perhaps this building had been targeted because of its proximity to tunnel ac-cess to a nearby hospital. Alternative possibilities—a false-flag operation to name but one—were not explored.

The OPCW interim report on Dhouma was published on July 6, 2018, and based on on-site visits, witness interviews, and data collection. In a neighboring country the team gathered or received environmental and plasma samples. The team concluded that no organophosphorus nerve agents or their degradation products were detected in either environmental or plasma samples: in other words, no evidence of the use of nerve agents. The same report reached a judgment about two other incidents from 2016, at Al-Hamadaniya and Kaim Al-Tarrab: In neither case could the OPCW confi-dently determine whether or not a specific chemical had been used. But in Dhouma, the team did detect various chlorinated organic chemicals in samples from two sites (OPCW 2018). It made no judgment about these, deferring until its final report (OPCW 2019). This did not stop some media, including the BBC, from falsely claiming that the OPCW had found evidence of a chemical weapons attack. In fact, the family of

chemicals that the OPCW had reported finding—compounds, not pure chlorine—are common in fire extinguishers, insect sprays, and other common products, as well as in refrigerators, machinery, and cleaning products. They are found in drinking water and even groundwater in the United States. Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has argued that even where deaths and injuries can be attributed to chlorine inhalation, these are more likely to be the results of conventional bombing by government forces in which canisters of chlorine, stored in buildings for use in water purification, have been damaged in the attacks (Pitt 2018).

In January 2019 experienced BBC Syria producer Riam Dalati claimed that a six-month investigation that included interviews with many of those involved had led him to the conclusion "without a doubt" that the "hospital scene" footage from Dhouma that had circulated widely among media in April 2018 was indeed staged. This footage had shown children being hosed off and treated by doctors and White Helmets personnel as victims of the alleged chemical attack (ZeroHedge.com 2019).

The case of Dhouma is indicative of the preparedness of the United States, with the active or passive support of its principal allies, to justify military action against those it deems to be its enemies and as "reprisal" for its enemies' alleged war crimes—even when the evidence for such crimes has not yet been gathered and interpreted or, worse, where the evidence that is available casts significant doubt on US claims. In this instance the United States, along with some of its allies, was and at the time of writing is still acting in gross violation of Syrian sovereignty by maintaining forces directly and indirectly throughout swathes of Syrian territory. Because Syria's principal ally was and still is Russia, the staging of any pretext for war in Syria merely added to many such Western pressures that targeted Russian national security interests such as to magnify the real possibility of unpredictable blowback even provoking, whether by design or accident, nuclear confrontation and the end of the human species (Ellsberg 2018). That such incidents are frequent should of course serve as ample justification for all professional media to behave with maximum circumspection and skepticism in the face of any such attempts by parties to a conflict to smear their opponents with unsubstantiated claims of war crime. Nor should such circumspection and skepticism cease in the face of pronouncements from "authoritative" bodies before the credentials and histories of their investigators have been reviewed and their methodologies subjected to rigorous questioning.

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"RussiaGate"

The Construction of the Enemy

Gerald Sussman

> Therefore, my Harry,
> Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
> With foreign quarrels; that action, hence borne out,
> May waste the memory of the former days.
>
> —Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, *Part 2*

A rejuvenation of Western capitalism in the late 1970s augmented by the combined forces of digital technology and neoliberal austerity policies has come at the expense of labor security and the democratic polity. In the media sphere, the deregulation of broadcasting and telecommunications businesses accelerated with the 1996 Telecommunications Act, which its proponents promised would be a boon to an expanded, more competitive economy, and also, to societal uplift. And while broadband and internet services have increased the availability of important sources of information to large segments of the population, more than twenty-four million Americans were still without this service as of the end of 2016 (Federal Communications Commission 2018). The monopolistic corporations that control this sector have also moved with state support to restrict access through inequitable and rapacious pricing schemes, politically and commercially motivated new algorithmic protocols, the elimination of net neutrality, and direct exclusions of individuals and websites.

Indeed, while new digital media initiatives have opened up an array of news, information, and entertainment formats, the grip of the monopoly media institutions has gotten only tighter over time. Working with a surveillance state that spies on millions of citizens, the reality is that the mainstream media (MSM) heavily censor the most essential information needed to make sense of domestic and foreign affairs. The media giants have repurposed most of the radical democratic potential of new information and communication technologies toward intensified private accumulation and concentration of corporate power over all aspects of public life and focused their efforts (90 percent of airtime) on entertainment and advertising—their ticket to prosperity (Nader 2002, 161).

This chapter looks at the transformations of the US mainstream media in the neoliberal economic milieu and scrutinizes the role they play within the increasingly

repressive political order at home and in the state's hawkish and unending pursuit of global imperial power abroad. Some have characterized the current political juncture as "neo-fascist" (Foster 2017), inasmuch as central features of fascism include governance via the agency of a corporate state, a singular party (in the United States the two parties are largely identical in terms of their corporate-capitalist and deep-state imperialist agendas), the elimination of competitive elections (both US parties are dependent on corporate financing), a domestic paramilitarized police force, and an expansionist external policy built upon military aggression. Although racism is not necessarily a core element of fascism, as it was in the Third Reich, it is the case in fact that the United States has long used racist policies to seize continental territory from indigenous peoples, foster a system of slavery and post-slavery apartheid ("Jim Crow"), and engage in militarized white supremacist encroachments upon Third World nations. In recent decades, racist culture has led to the unleashing of brutal police tactics and other forms of violence against black youth, and it has stirred up anti-immigrant sentiments against Latin Americans, Arabs, Muslims, and Jews, paralleling current reactionary political movements in Europe that have raised the presence of right-wing parties in government (Lega in Italy, Sweden Democrats, Alternative für Deutschland, Front National in France, Fidesz and Jobbik in Hungary, People's Party in Switzerland, and Freedom Party in Austria, among others).

   Critical to understanding politics is the recognition of the relationship of the MSM to state power,[1] particularly in the realm of ideology and propaganda. The French philosopher Louis Althusser interpreted and elaborated upon Marx's notes on the meaning and influence of ideology in capitalist society. Drawing on Marx's conception of ideology as the composite of the ruling ideas of the state, Althusser cited the MSM, among other institutions (family, church, schools, clubs, the military), as an "ideological state apparatus" (ISA)—which some Marxists of different tendencies have found contentious (Wolff 2006). And though unsystematic in his explication of ideology, it is clear that Marx himself considered ideology to be a contested terrain lying within "the material transformation of the economic conditions of production" and the "legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic—in short, [as] ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out" (Marx 1859).

   The prevailing ideological claims of the state are transmitted, not without resistance, through various texts and vehicles of "education" (news channels, schools, religious organs, parents, etc.) that form the basis of its *legitimacy* in the conduct of its domestic and foreign policies. Indeed, ideological hegemony is not something that is left to happenstance. Among their several functions, the MSM serve as key instruments in the legitimation process, even when there exist intra-elite divisions about the appropriate tactics behind state pursuits. Herman and Chomsky (1988/1992) explained the disciplinary practices (control filters) that keep the MSM in line with overarching state policy objectives in the "manufacture of consent." For Althusser (1962), major state policies are derived and enacted through "overdetermination," the multiplicity of empowered, often intersecting, interests that, with little formal collaboration, tend toward a common objective—broadly one that advances their growth and accumulation of wealth and the greater power of the ruling class as a whole. This chapter applies these Althusserian constructs to an analysis of the assertion of US

imperial power vis-à-vis the one country that openly challenges its assumed unipolar position in international relations—Russia.

There are indeed multivariate (overdetermined) forces driving US foreign policy, including its requisite need as an imperial state to dominate the global energy, banking, and war production industries; to expand its industrial, financial, and service markets; to exercise unipolar and unilateralist control or exclusion of potential competitors; and to simply carry out its lust for world power. Of relevant interest here is the ideological compulsion to construct enemies in order to help resolve or at least distract public attention from crises of state legitimacy—and the function of the mainstream media in that regard. Writing in 1995, when Boris Yeltsin's Russia had been reduced to an economically weakened US client state, political historian Ronald Steel asserted: "Indeed, the days of allies are over. In a world without a single menacing enemy, alliances are deprived of meaning" (Steel 1995). Steel did not anticipate a major economic transformation of Russia under Vladimir Putin, starting in 2000, nor the continuation and expansion of NATO to the edge of Russian borders. His point, however, is relevant—that a world power needs an enemy and an alliance against its enemy. The "realist" school of political theory (see in particular Samuel Huntington, 1997) also posits a world in which there are virtuous states and rogue states, the latter of which must be vanquished by overwhelming force.

Of specific concern here is America's dangerous and atavistic Cold War polemics directed at Russia. The focus on US-Russia relations is based not simply on an interest in the long-standing tensions that have occupied these two countries and their allies, going back to the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent allied invasion (1918–1920). The larger problem is that the present decibel level of the rhetoric, for the most part drummed up by the US (and UK) mainstream media, has reached a point where a nuclear confrontation is quite conceivable, possibly even imminent. A NATO force currently positioned at the doorstep of Moscow and the pace of US war preparation (escalating to nearly ten times the size of the Russian military budget and almost fifteen times when NATO spending is included) is a situation that Russia has not had to face since the Nazi invasion. Efforts at restoring a post-Soviet Russian state—including the 2014 reacquisition of Crimea, and its support for Syria—under Putin's leadership constitutes for the US deep state an unacceptable assertion of power sharing, even though heavily stacked in America's favor. This geopolitical tension has led to a series of mainly undocumented charges against Russia of its alleged interference in US politics by both the Obama and Trump administrations, an embargo policy, and an intense propaganda war, particularly by the so-called opposition Democratic Party.[2]

Helping to explain America's Cold War obsession, the economist Seymour Melman (1970 and 1974) argued that in the immediate aftermath of World War II, an exaggerated threat of the Soviet Union to the United States and the "free world" served mainstream economic planners as an ideological rationale for the "military-industrial complex" or "military Keynesianism." The permanent war economy, based on high rates of military spending and the relentless public cultivation of threat, was designed by state planners as an alternative to wartime demobilization, according to Melman, as a means to ward off the existential threat of another 1930s-type Depression. The other existential threat was the rise of the USSR and "actually existing socialism" as

a challenge to US-led world capitalist hegemony. Militarist policies have not receded in importance and have been a fixture of America's efforts to protect and expand its interests to every corner of the globe, including the then newly emerging countries of the global South and more recently the former Soviet and Warsaw Pact states. Total US military spending for the year 2019 at $886 billion[3] is as much as the next fifty countries combined and amounted to 68 percent of federal budget discretionary spending, an enormous distortion in public-spending priorities.

To achieve the permanent war state, a stirring up of anti-Soviet and anti-communist public opinion, similar to what Wilson had done with the Creel Commission in the Great War, would be required. As the pro-Nazi German political theorist Carl Schmitt (1996, 27) observed, the "enemy" is "in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible." The generally favorable US wartime media treatment of the Russians during the "united front" period (1941–1945) had to be retracted to accommodate America's militarized economic regime. MSM were at the forefront in mobilizing the American public to the necessity of national preparedness for war (as US propaganda organs, such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, were doing abroad) in an anti-Soviet, anti-communist, and rather hysterical "crusade for freedom."

In 1977, Carl Bernstein (1977) exposed the propaganda functions (as opposed to the "independent" image) of the MSM by documenting the fact that the overseas branches of the major US news outlets, including more than four hundred of their journalists, had long served as the eyes and ears of the Central Intelligence Agency's "Operation Mockingbird," a covert project designed to disseminate CIA propaganda through domestic media. It's almost certain that many among the MSM ranks continue to remain agency assets. Back then, Philip Graham, publisher of the *Washington Post*, ran the agency's media industry operations (until his suicide in 1963), a detail not exposed in the eponymous 2018 film about the heroics of the paper's ownership family.

During the George W. Bush presidency, the Pentagon recruited over seventy-five military generals to spread propaganda in the mass media, fed *in camera* by officials in the Defense Department, the State Department, the Justice Department, and the White House. Their responsibilities included serving as "objective" foreign policy and war analysts for major network and cable news channels, many of them concurrently receiving pay by military contracting firms. The Pentagon referred to these on-air military propagandists as "surrogates" and "message force multipliers" (Barstow 2008). Currently, the major cable and network news outlets are employing former spies, such as ex-CIA directors John Brennan (NBC) and Michael Hayden (CNN) and former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper (CNN), using national TV channels as podia for "deep state" (unelected officials and their technocrats who make public policy behind the scenes) propaganda. Many more lower-ranking, technically "former," intelligence operatives are working in dual roles: as sources and as analysts for the broadcast and cable media—their loyalties almost certainly entwined with deep-state operations (Shafer 2018).

In February 2018, Brennan, the man who fed the Russian "hacking" story to the House Intelligence Committee, became a senior national security and intelligence analyst for NBC and MSNBC in what has become standard revolving-door practice between government and the corporate world. Brennan was a well-known advocate

for the CIA's "extraordinary rendition" and torture program, spying on the agency's critics, and the use of drone bombings and assassinations in the Middle East. And he certainly knows something about hacking, as he was forced to admit, after first lying about it, that his CIA administration hacked the computers of Senate staffers who were investigating the agency's role in torturing prisoners. This is a man the MSM apparently regard as having impeccable credentials for truth-telling.

The next part of this chapter discusses the problem of legitimacy as the ideological basis of state and capitalist reproduction—that is, "the reproduction of the conditions of production" (Althusser 1970). Mainstream media are essential to the maintenance of the imperial domestic and world order, helping to create an ideological consensus of ruling-class, albeit contested, ideas. Cultural hegemony (Gramsci 2011) within the imperial state is centrally important in its conduct of foreign interventions. Inversely, foreign interventions reconstruct the crisis of state legitimacy by creating a greater sense of insecurity. In the Trump administration, however, as with his predecessors, rather than "waiting for the crisis to impose his decree, his decrees get him the emergencies he needs" in a political culture that has gone mad (Meaney, citing German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, 2018). Former Homeland Security secretary Tom Ridge admitted that the Bush administration, which falsified the reasons for invading Iraq in 2003, forced him to issue color-coded "terrorist" alerts to frighten citizens on the eve of the 2004 presidential election (Associated Press 2009).[4] In the same manner, Trump launched missile attacks on Syria in 2017 and 2018 while under severe pressure because of unending allegations of colluding with the Russian government.

The focus on state and media legitimacy leads to the last part of the chapter, which discusses how the Democratic Party leadership, allied with the mainstream media and the "deep state" intelligence agencies and other unelected officials, blamed the 2016 election outcome on an alleged Trump-Putin conspiracy. The Democrats, particularly the Clinton wing of the party, pushed a story line that repeatedly named Russia as an existing cyber threat to American democracy, effectively creating a New Cold War with that country and its leadership. However, numerous respected independent investigative journalists and scholars (Glenn Greenwald, Chris Hedges, Stephen Cohen, Seymour Hersh, Masha Gessen, Noam Chomsky, Aaron Maté, the late Robert Parry, and others) have argued that no genuine evidence has surfaced to make a case for such a conspiracy, and that given their nefarious history of deceiving the public, the CIA and other intelligence organizations are not reliable sources for exposing it.[5] The conspiracy scenario, critics argue, is little more than an attempt to hide inconvenient truths about the failure of the Democrats to defend the working class and the party's ties to Wall Street financial and Silicon Valley elites.[6] The central concern of this chapter is with the performance of the US MSM in selling the "RussiaGate" trope and their motives for promoting a New Cold War.

THE STATE LEGITIMATION CRISIS

Clearly, the arrival of anti-establishment candidates, such as Bernie Sanders (whose presidential primary campaign was sabotaged by the Democratic National Committee) and Donald Trump, represents a crisis of state legitimacy. In 2016, the Democrats

experienced a devastating defeat, losing the White House, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, and also putting the Republicans fully in charge of thirty-three state legislatures with, over the past four election cycles, net gains of some one thousand legislative seats. The "RussiaGate" obsession stems from this humiliation, which led the Democrats, the MSM, and their allies in the intelligence community to blame "Russian interference" in the election and call for a full investigation of alleged collusion between the incoming Trump administration and the Putin government. Rather than acknowledge that the electoral losses derived from the actual failings of the party's neoliberal direction and austerity programs and its unwillingness to defend the interests of the working class, the so-called opposition party and their allies in the MSM and government bureaucracies turned to a strategy of building a case of treason against the new president. Of course, "RussiaGate" constructions in the MSM are nothing new. As the late Edward Herman pointed out: "Fake news on Russia is a [*New York*] *Times* tradition that can be traced back at least as far as the 1917 revolution" (Herman 2017).

The problems for the neoliberal state are the contradictory demands of unfettered capitalist growth and those of the working class, which has been increasingly marginalized over the course of the state's neoliberal austerity project. Indeed, this has led to increasing alienation over time, producing a crisis in state legitimacy (moral authority and collective sense of security) that augured the populist political message of Donald Trump (Sussman 2018). The presidential contest was ultimately won with working-class votes in the "rust belt" states of the Midwest, where traditionally Democratic voters turned against the establishment party leadership. But as longtime Democratic Party political-consultant Stanley Greenberg assessed the situation: "The Democrats don't have a 'white working-class problem.' They have a 'working-class problem.' The fact is that Democrats have lost support with all working-class voters across the electorate, including the Rising American Electorate of minorities, unmarried women, and millennials" (Greenberg 2017).

As the state attempts to establish its legitimacy, public acceptance of those efforts rests on the fulfillment of certain expectations (the general well-being of the citizenry). The growing working-class rejection of the Democrats, supposedly the party of labor, is based in recent years on such fundamental concerns as policy failures in health care, education, jobs, and housing and the erosion of privacy protections, areas widely seen as unfulfilled promises of Obama and his party. Extensive data on the effects of the neoliberal austerity program are provided elsewhere (Sussman 2017b). Obama steadily lost popularity in most of the states that he initially carried in the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns, which indicated that his economic policies were viewed as failing (Greenberg 2017). Six months after the 2016 election, the Democrats were regarded (67 percent), more than Republicans (62 percent) or even Donald Trump (58 percent), as being "out of touch . . . with the concerns of most people" (*Washington Post*–ABC News 2017).

In fact, neither party was trusted. Pew Research reported in December 2017 that only "22% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say they can trust government [the party in the White House normally gets higher ratings], compared to 15% of Democrats and Democratic-leaners" (Pew Research Center 2017). Turnouts in recent US presidential elections are far behind those of almost every other industrial-

ized country, including those in the Russian Federation, and voter registration (64 percent) numbers are even further behind those of comparator countries (e.g., 91 percent in Canada and the United Kingdom, 96 percent in Sweden, and 99 percent in Japan). According to a UN study (2017), low turnouts in the United States relate to "the perception that election outcomes will have no impact on the lives of poor people."

The Trump administration midway through its first term did not change these facts on the ground. Despite his "populist" image, Trump showed no inclination to improve the conditions of the American working class, and indeed he and his Republican allies in Congress showed a cynical disregard for working people with a December 2017 tax package of $1.5 trillion, which "overwhelmingly benefited the wealthy" (United Nations 2017). His was not, however, the first post-war administration to act on behalf of the tycoon class. Bill Clinton pledged to "end welfare as we have come to know it" with his anti-welfare bill in 1996; George W. Bush carried out large tax cuts for the top 1 percent of income earners in 2001 and 2003 (continued by his successor); and Barack Obama backed a massive bank bailout after the 2008 financial crash, largely ignoring the foreclosures, some nine million, of working- and middle-class Americans. His attorney general, Eric Holder, told prosecutors not to lay any gloves on the mega-bank HSBC for money laundering, and no indictments were issued against Wells Fargo after they fraudulently created false bank accounts. In 2015, there were a record number of corporate mergers and acquisitions, valued at $4.7 trillion (Stoller 2017). The underfunding of social protections in the Obama administration as part of his "trickle down" policies contributed to the rapid decline of state legitimacy—and ultimately to the Democrats' attempt to attribute the 2016 political disaster to an imagined Putin-Trump conspiracy, which is discussed elsewhere (Sussman 2017b).

Here, we can sum up the painful results of neoliberal policies affecting American workers and the poor. These include homelessness and unaffordable housing, skyrocketing health care and education costs, massive student debt ($1.44 trillion in 2017), creation of largely unskilled jobs with low wages, and a rapid increase in the suicide rate (30 percent, from 2000 to 2016), which suggest tangible reasons why the public has lost confidence in government. Both parties have pursued policy agendas that ignore low-income earners and further enrich the rich, with none of these issues reported regularly in the MSM. Trust in the basic organs of democracy in the United States is extremely low: In a Pew Research Center survey, just 18 percent of respondents believe that the federal government is doing the right thing always or most of the time (Pew Research Center 2017). Only 32 percent in 2016 (72 percent in 1976) had much or some trust in media, the lowest since 1972 (with a mere 6 percent saying they had a lot of confidence), according to an Associated Press poll. And that was before the Trump presidency (Swift 2016; Feldman and Swanson 2016). On the other hand, based on a June 2018 Gallup poll, among the issues that most concerned Americans, the "situation with Russia" registered as statistically insignificant (i.e., of concern to less than 0.5 percent of respondents). The biggest problem facing America, according to that poll, was "dissatisfaction with government/poor leadership" (Gallup 2018).

With untethered free (corporate) market doctrine as the norm, social-spending austerity and the growing corporatization and financialization of the US economy have

had the profound effect of shrinking the American middle class. The increased rate of poverty in the world's richest (measured by Gross Domestic Product) country, including the highest rate of youth poverty among the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, now encompasses 40 million people, with 18.5 million in dire poverty and "5.3 million living under Third World conditions of absolute poverty," according to a 2017 UN report (United Nations 2017).

Internationally as well, the US government has suffered an acute decline in the level of public confidence. According to a Pew Research Center poll in mid-2017 surveying thirty-seven countries, the expression of "no confidence" in the Trump administration was at 74 percent, while the general favorability rating of the United States as a whole slid from 64 percent to 49 percent since the close of the Obama administration. At the same time, the American *people* were seen favorably by 58 percent of those polled (that, too, not exactly a reassuring statistic) (Wike, Stokes, Poushter, and Fetterolf 2017). Another measure of international perception of the government is that, based on an end-of-2013 Win/Gallup poll in sixty-five countries, the United States was regarded as by far "the greatest threat to world peace," with 24 percent of the vote. Next in the negative rankings were Pakistan (8 percent), China (6 percent), and Afghanistan (5 percent), all far below the United States (Bennett-Smith 2014). Russia, the number-one adversary of the US establishment (though maybe not for Trump), was not named among the highly dangerous countries.

THE MEDIA PROPAGANDA WAR: THE RUSSKIES ARE COMING

It is not principally for fiscal reasons, therefore, that the MSM and the state as a whole are in crisis. It is rather that confidence in the country's basic organs of democracy is extremely low. A study by the Harvard-Harris polling organization in May 2017 confirmed this, finding that 65 percent of Americans consider the so-called free press biased, obsessed with scandal, and full of "fake news" (77 percent) and therefore cannot be trusted (Easley 2017). Among those concurring are a majority of both Democrats (53 percent) and Independents (60 percent), as well as 80 percent of Republicans. And among what's called the "informed public," general trust in American *institutions*—that is, the government, business, NGOs, and the MSM—is going through the worst downturn in recorded history, according to the marketing firm Edelman in 2018. The United States is the lowest rated of the twenty-eight countries surveyed by the firm on this measure. This is not consistent with the image of a functioning "democracy" (Edelman 2018). At the same time, as a 2018 Gallup poll has shown, while 84 percent of Americans see the existence of news media as "critical" or "very important" to democracy, only 28 percent see the corporatist mainstream news media as actually supporting democracy (Ritter and Jones 2018).

Apart from what the public sees as the "inaccuracy and bias" (Feldman and Swanson 2016) of the MSM, most Americans (63 percent according to Gallup) are unhappy about the "size and influence" of corporations in general on everyday life (Riffkin 2016). Media corporations, which have been consolidating ownership control over news and entertainment throughout the neoliberal era,[7] as existing

anti-trust regulation has been pushed aside by a neoliberal Federal Communications Commission, have increasingly turned to tabloid journalism and using social media and other unaccountable individuals for sourcing. The number of companies that together control the media that 90 percent of the public uses was fifty in 1983 and is currently down to five, possibly fewer in the near future. Finding a compatible relationship that is missing in most of the media, the Trump campaign in 2016 made a deal with the conservative Sinclair Broadcast Group to gain favorable TV coverage over the latter's 193 local TV stations (with another 42 pending approval) (Higgins-Dobney 2018). Sinclair's right-wing owners, headed by CEO Christopher Ripley, *require* all its stations to air "must runs"—stories that focus on global "terrorism," alerts that are directed against the Democratic Party, and allegations that the liberal MSM produce fake news (Ember 2017).

The dominant organs that purport to circulate international news in the United States are the major networks, their local affiliates, and cable stations, which are indeed largely liberal (CNN, MSNBC, NBC, CBS, ABC), with Fox the one major conservative TV outlet. But when it comes down to the question of allegiance to the corporate agenda and US overseas operations, both sides of this narrow spectrum align as the "Washington consensus." There are no major leftist media outlets to challenge this hegemony. Drawing in part on the work of Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci, Althusser argued that ideological state institutions take as their charge the interpellation of homegrown citizens as consumers, via media that serve state and capital interests and the mobilization of ideological consensus. If there were any doubt about the ideological leanings of the MSM, *New York Times* editorial page editor James Bennet made it quite plain, and undoubtedly spoke for all his colleagues in the mainstream media, when, in December 2017, he instructed his staff that "we are pro-capitalism" (Feinberg 2018).

Turning to the matter of "RussiaGate," there is an almost unanimous and one-sided concurrence of the MSM, with little tolerance of dissenters toward the Russian "hacking" narrative. Consider these headlines in leading US newspapers:

- *New York Times*: "Trump Campaign Aides Had Repeated Contacts with Russian Intelligence," February 14, 2017
- *New York Times*: "Trump Sows Confusion over Russian Hacking," July 11, 2017
- *Wall Street Journal*: "Russian Hackers Stole NSA Data on U.S. Cyber Defense," October 5, 2017
- *Washington Post*: "Russian Hackers Who Compromised DNC Are Targeting the Senate, Company Says," January 12, 2018
- *Washington Post*: "CIA: Russia Tried to Help Trump Win," December 10, 2016
- *Boston Globe*: "Russia Is Meddling in Elections around the World," February 19, 2018

The problem with all these headlines, apart from standing as established fact, is that not one of them is substantiated. On July 30, 2018, *Time* magazine (sister media organ of CNN), following the July 2018 Helsinki summit of Trump and Putin, ran a cover illustration that blended the faces of the two presidents, further promoting the conspiracy thesis that they colluded in the 2016 election. The hostility toward Russia and Putin is

predicated on the assumption that Russia, not the United States, is the world's leading aggressor nation, even though the Pentagon admits to having 300,000 troops in 177 countries and is carrying on at least seven wars simultaneously.

According to William Blum (2014, 11), from 1945 to 2014, "the US has attempted to overthrow more than fifty governments, most of which were democratically elected, and grossly interfered in democratic elections in at least thirty countries," including Russia. The list of US interventions in foreign elections just since 1948 (Italy) is voluminous (eighty-one times between 1946 and 2000 alone) (Levin 2016). In 2016, US special commando forces were operating in thirty-seven countries, including six in Bulgaria, three in Estonia, three in Latvia, three in Poland, and three in Moldova (Turse 2017). The US state and the MSM appear to see no contradiction in stationing NATO troops along the Russian border and in their broader interventionist foreign policy while accusing Russia of interfering in American politics.[8] Needless to say, Russia carries out no war games in America's near abroad, such as Canada, Mexico, Central America, or the Caribbean.

If the MSM lack perspective, perhaps they should listen to former CIA director James Woolsey. Interviewed by Fox News's Laura Ingraham, Woolsey was asked directly whether the United States ever interfered with other countries' elections. He initially said, "Probably, but it was for the good of the system in order to avoid the communists from taking over." Ingraham followed up with the question, "We don't do that now?" To this Woolsey responded, "Nyum, nyum, nyum, nyum, nyum, only for a very good cause" (Fox News 2018), a rather frank admission that merely amused Ingraham, who failed to follow up on this statement of clear-cut US double standards. After leaving the CIA, Woolsey became chairman of Freedom House, a right-wing government-funded private NGO that putatively supports human rights causes and has been active in regime-change operations around the world—far more active than the alleged Russian Facebook postings.

CONCLUSION

The Russia "hacking" narrative is neither verified nor contextualized within the US quest for global hegemony. The only hard and obvious evidence is that the MSM, which are supposed to be "watchdogs" (not lapdogs) of the government, are obediently performing their role as ideological state apparatuses. What is to be made of the Democrats' and their deep-state and media allies' obsession with Russia? For the Democrats, it's widely seen as self-serving scapegoating for their political defeats at the ballot box. For their intelligence agency allies, who incorrectly anticipated a Clinton victory in 2016 with hopes of remaining in power, there is a new career path as pundits and analysts, as discussed above, opened to them by the mainstream media.

For the MSM, there are also bottom-line considerations. John Bonifield, a CNN producer, was secretly filmed in a sting video by Project Veritas in June 2017 in which he admitted that his network kept promoting Russia hysteria simply for ratings and out of the overarching objective of maximizing audience share and profits, which are

rather low compared to network news, while ignoring major stories, such as climate change. Describing their Russian coverage as "mostly bullshit right now," Bonifield also admitted to the hidden camera that actually "we [CNN] don't have any big giant proof" of Russian interference in US politics and that most of his colleagues share his cynicism about the station's news reporting (Greene 2017).

Indeed, one of his CNN colleagues, liberal pundit Van Jones, who rails against Russia on air, was also secretly filmed and captured saying, "The Russia thing is just a big nothing burger" (Project Veritas 2017). This demonstrates that station management, not the reporters or pundits per se, calls the shots on what's considered newsworthy and that the type or amount of coverage bears no relationship to truth-seeking or importance to the country. For mainstream journalists and pundits, not to adopt the Trump-as-Putin's-puppet line would effectively be career-ending. A Harvard Shorenstein Center report found that mainstream media coverage of the 2016 US party conventions contained almost no discussion of policy issues and instead concentrated on polling data, scandals, campaign tactics, and Trump and Russia bashing (Patterson 2016). Leslie Moonves, CEO of CBS, spoke for the whole media establishment: "It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS. . . . The money's rolling in. . . . It's a terrible thing to say. But bring it on, Donald" (Bond 2016).

As the revered CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite used to say in his famous closing: "And that's the way it is."

NOTES

1. The "state" refers to the locus of political power at the national territory level—the actors and institutions that comprise and dominate the rule-making structures.

2. Much of the tension rests with US regime-change initiatives in the former Soviet states. For an analysis of US regime-change efforts in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, see Sussman 2010.

3. This includes the base budget, overseas contingency operations, and departments that support defense (Veterans' Affairs, the State Department, and other agencies), though not including the highly secretive CIA budget.

4. Obama didn't use these tactics but instead encouraged the National Security Agency to spy on millions of Americans without warrants, warning in 2013 that "we face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States," which can be construed as aimed at a broader spectrum of political dissidents than just alienated Muslims. And on the eve of his departure, he dramatically expanded seventeen government agencies' legal authority for that purpose. See *Washington Post* 2013 and Meinrath 2017.

5. I discuss the Russian "hacking" claim in a number of articles in *CounterPunch*. See Sussman 2016a, 2016b, and 2017a.

6. This position is well articulated by the journalist Glenn Greenwald in *Democracy Now!* (2018).

7. Ben Bagdikian, who wrote several editions of *The Media Monopoly*, in which he documented the growing concentration of corporate ownership of news organizations, is one of the best sources on this.

8. The refusal of the West to acknowledge Russia's legitimate security needs is discussed in Sakwa, *Russia against the Rest* (2017). Their security requirements include not only safe

borders but also the right to carry out commerce based on old-fashioned comparative-advantage principles, including their economic need, especially in light of non-market sanctions practices directed against them by the United States, to build the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline for energy deliveries to the European Union.

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The Great Game for EurAsia
and the Skripal Affair

Oliver Boyd-Barrett

Western pressure on Russia from the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union speaks to a new phase of long-standing rivalry for hegemony in EurAsia and further afield, pitching four mega-powers into dances of cautious alliance and precipitate disruption: the United States, European Union, Former Soviet Union (FSU), and China. I do not have space here to address the geopolitics of this situation other than to note that it involves four great powers in arm-lock on land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace, each of them in possession of nuclear weapons, the United States and Russia being the world's two greatest nuclear powers. Any major controversy between these four regional mega-powers, or between countries within or across them, has to be interpreted in the light not simply of its local specificities but also of this broader global context in which vastly well-resourced machineries of armed service, diplomacy, and intelligence entities strategize and manipulate for what they believe are their best interests or the best interests of their ultimate paymasters, whoever these may be—plutocratic, corporate, military, or political. To assume anything less is simplistic, dangerous, and disingenuous.

It is in this context of Western menacing of Russian security interests around the perimeter of the FSU—absorption of many former Eastern bloc and FSU countries into NATO in violation of the spirit of an understanding reached between US secretary of state James Baker and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on February 9, 1990, Western staged "color revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia, a Western-supported coup in Kiev in 2013, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 (a territory already largely populated by Russian speakers and Russian military), and Western irritation with Russia's elegant interventions in Syria to obstruct another Western invasion and attempted destabilization in the Middle East—that we must locate US claims of Russian "meddling" in the US elections of 2016 and the Skripal affair in the United Kingdom in 2018.

In both these latter scenarios there was evidence of intense maneuvering between US, UK, and Russian intelligence services (Boyd-Barrett 2019). In this chapter I focus on the Skripal affair as a manifestation of the intensity of official Western propaganda and demonization against Russia, whose purpose is to establish an information environment available at any time to serve as pretext for war against another nuclear power. The presumed aspiration is regime change in Moscow, obstruction of

alliances between Russia and China, opening up of Russian assets to further Western capitalist exploitation, control over critical sources of oil and gas, and assertion of hegemony over EurAsia.

THE SKRIPAL AFFAIR (1)

The Skripal affair is best divided into a two-part narrative based, overall, on charges against Russia concerning its alleged use of nerve agents in the apparent attempted assassination on March 4, 2018, in Salisbury, United Kingdom, of a former Russian GRU military intelligence officer, Sergei Skripal—who had doubled as a spy for British intelligence (MI6)—and his daughter, Yulia, visiting Sergei from Moscow. They were found in stressed condition on a park bench. A British detective sergeant was also contaminated but recovered. All three victims are reported to have survived, but the whereabouts of the Skripals were unknown at the time of writing. Linked to the Skripal case was the controversial figure of Christopher Steele, former head of the MI6 Russia desk, also the principal author of the notorious "Steele dossier," a report paid for by the U.S. Democratic National Committee and made public in January 2017. This provided some of the earliest allegations of links between Russian state interests and the 2016 presidential campaign of Donald Trump. Much of its content had yet to be substantiated with hard evidence at the time of writing.

Skripal had been recruited by MI6 as a double agent in the early 1990s, reportedly by agent Pablo Miller, then based in Estonia, at the time that Steele was working undercover for MI6 in Moscow (1980s) (Mendick, Dixon, Sawer, and Heighton 2018). When recalled to London to take charge of the Russia desk from 2006 to 2009, Steele would certainly have received Skripal's reports for MI6 up until the time that Skripal was arrested in Russia in 2004 (but released as part of a spy swap in 2010) (O'Neill 2018). Skripal's recruiter, Pablo Miller, worked for Steele and Steele's private intelligence company, Orbis. A security consultant has speculated that Skripal might also have worked for Orbis (Duell and Spillett 2018).

It was not possible at the time of writing to dismiss the Russian state as a potential culprit in the attempted assassination of Skripal and his daughter, but equally I will argue that as of the time of writing it was impossible to assert such a claim in an evidence-based way that was beyond reasonable doubt, even though the British government has not scrupled to do precisely that. Not uncharacteristically, the mainstream press generally failed to stay open to reasonable doubt and remain skeptical of "authoritative" claims. Some Russian media demonstrated greater alacrity in investigating the story than their British counterparts.

There are many reasons to doubt the official narrative.

The source of the poisoning was identified as the nerve agent Novichok (A-234), or a Novichok-like substance, said to be a potent Russian version of Anglo-American VX, was disclosed by Porton Down's Gary Aitkenhead, chief executive of the government's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) on April 2 (Morris and Crerar 2018). Possibly the first mention of the term "Novichok" in this context ap-

peared as early as March 8 in a blog post for Bellingcat.com from a writer associated with British "counter"-propaganda network Integrity Initiative (Klarenberg 2019).

Aitkenhead could not determine the source of this particular sample, whether from Russia or anywhere else. When the inter-governmental body the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed Porton Down's analysis a few weeks later, they were confirming an imprecise identification (Vaska 2018). The OPCW confirmation was problematic because it was based on the findings of its laboratory in Switzerland, the Spiez Laboratory. Russian foreign secretary Lavrov claimed knowledge of the Spiez findings independently of the OPCW, perhaps indicating that this knowledge was a result of espionage. This may have accounted for the expulsion of two alleged Russian hackers on March 26 by the Dutch government—the OPCW headquarters is based in Holland (Helmer 2018). Lavrov's statement in April indicated that the sample had contained BZ (3-quinuclidinyl benzilate), an incapacitating agent "manufactured in the West" whose effects can last several days. In addition, there was a highly potent, pure, and lethal form of Novichok. An implication was that the Skripals had been incapacitated by BZ and that Novichok had been introduced later. Lavrov's BZ information may have referred only to a control sample. Nonetheless the presence of a highly potent form of Novichok, suggesting high purity, was curious. Had it truly come from the sample applied on March 4 it should have lost potency, further suggesting that Novichok had been added after March 4. The Spiez Laboratory did not respond to Lavrov, deferring to the OPCW's statement confirming Porton Down's findings.

The British government concluded that Novichok was the likely responsible agent well before the OPCW investigation, raising the possibility of prior knowledge or even British involvement. Prime Minister Theresa May and British foreign secretary Boris Johnson, in the period from March 12 to March 14, claimed that the nerve agent thought to have been applied was Novichok, even going so far as to venture that it was "overwhelmingly likely" that Russian president Vladimir Putin had personally ordered the attack. By this time, and still well ahead of the OPCW report, the United Kingdom, United States, and many other countries were taking action against Russia, beginning with Britain's announcement of the expulsion of twenty-three Russian diplomats on March 14, followed by similar expulsions over the next two weeks from over twenty countries (Birnbaum 2018).

Well before March 12, Boris Johnson, speaking to the House of Commons on March 6, pointed the finger at Russia. The Salisbury hospital that treated the victims went into lockdown at eleven o'clock on the morning of March 5 (Sushi 2018). As this likely represented the time of first awareness that the Skripals had been poisoned from some source other than fentanyl, this would have left insufficient time for Porton Down to have prepared the blood samples necessary for identification, for the benefit of Boris Johnson, of the metabolites—structure of a poisoning substance after it has passed through a human body—especially given that the substance was supposedly not well understood. Yet Boris Johnson was boldly declaring against Russia on March 6, and on March 7 police confidently announced that the Skripals had been "poisoned by a nerve agent in a targeted murder attempt" (ibid.).

The OPCW team did not arrive until March 21, which would have been the very earliest opportunity for the OPCW to conduct environmental sampling. Their report did not appear until April 12. OPCW determined that the nerve agent was a highly pure sample. This made it difficult to pinpoint its origin but did suggest that production would have been in a highly competent laboratory, not in bulk, unlikely to be "military grade," as British sources ominously insisted, and unlikely to have been applied to a door handle (Sushi 2018). To have been correctly identified as A-234 by Boris Johnson on March 12 would have required a considerable degree of advance research and knowledge available, not on the part of Russia but of Britain, as well as some prior reason for Britain to have even suspected Novichok. UK eagerness to blame Russia in the absence of solid evidence may suggest either that it was the British who were culpable or that Britain exploited an unforeseen incident to smear Russia and recklessly exacerbate the gathering escalation of hostile Western rhetoric against Russia.

UK claims that the A-234 organophosphate compound Novichok could only have come from Russia were false. The president of the Czech Republic reported that his country had produced, tested, and destroyed a small quantity as recently as 2017 (Associated Press 2018). In late 2016, Iranian scientists succeeded in synthesizing a number of Novichok, in full cooperation with the OPCW, and immediately reported the results to the OPCW so that Novichok could be added to the chemical weapons database (Murray 2018e). Germany's foreign intelligence service secured a sample of the Soviet-developed nerve agent Novichok in the 1990s and distributed this knowledge to partners, including Britain and the United States (Associated Press 2018). Whereas some states, such as Israel and North Korea, had not ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, nor joined the OPCW, nor destroyed their chemical weapons stocks, Russia had cooperated in the OPCW destruction of all its chemical weapons stocks, completed in 2017, a process that entailed regular OPCW inspection of all the sites alleged to have been in the original Novichok program (Murray 2018e).

Porton Down's chief scientist did not deny that Britain had Novichok, but merely asserted there was no possible way whereby such an agent could ever exit Porton Down (Morris and Crerar 2018). It is likely that both the United States and United Kingdom had researched Novichok. The United States was party to the decontamination in 1999 of the chemical weapons facility at which Novichok were said by Vil Mirzayanov, former head of Soviet technical counterintelligence, to have been manufactured in Uzbekistan (Miller 1999). Mirzayanov claimed there was an understanding between the United States and Russia, presumably shared among OPCW members, that the existence of Novichok should be kept relatively secret and omitted from the "Annex of Chemicals" of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Knip 2018). Knip's evaluation of the Novichok evidence led him to conclude that "there are strong indications that the West has secretly started to synthesize the substances soon after discovery."

UK assertions that only Russia could have "weaponized" Novichok were equally false. The major inside source for this claim, Vil Mirzayanov, first revealed the existence of Novichok in 1992. His story was received skeptically by some contemporary scientists. After facing Russian charges—later dropped—he defected to the United States in 1996. Mirzayanov published relevant formulae in his 2008 self-published book *State Secrets: An Insider's Chronicle of the Russian Chemical Weapons Pro-*

gram. Credible sources cited by Knip suggest that the formulae were correct, although his assertions that such nerve agents were undetectable and incurable have been confounded by the Skripal case. Mirzayanov's credibility is compromised. In the 2000s he led a US-sponsored attempt to establish an independent Tatarstan, a republic of the Russian Federation whose capital is Kazan. On October 26, 2008, he was elected to the Presidium of the Milli Mejlis of the Tatar People and "prime minister" of the "government in exile."

Mirzayanov's claim that only Russia had developed Novichok was contested by Vladimir Uglev, a Soviet-era scientist involved in the development of nerve agents from 1972 to 1988. Uglev does not rule out the possibility that Novichok were developed by Britain or Germany. Whether or not it succeeded in weaponizing Novichok, Russia claimed to have suspended the program when it acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997. It is Uglev who revealed that Novichok had been used in the case of a Mafiosi-style killing in 1995, namely the poisoning of banker Ivan Kivelidi and his assistant by an associate of Kivelidi. Leonid Rink, who had headed the Soviet Novichok program, confessed that he had supplied the toxin through intermediaries (Serhan and Mahanta 2018). Rink was imprisoned in Russia for this sale.

UK assertions that Russia was the only country with motive to assassinate the Skripals were false. On the face of it, Russia had little motive. Why would it draw unwelcome international attention to itself at such a delicate time in Western-Russian relations, on the eve of its hosting the World Cup in St. Petersburg? Why would it disrupt the convention by which spies released in exchanges are left alone—an understanding that provides security for all sides? If Russia had wanted to punish Skripal for his past actions, notwithstanding that he had once languished in a Russian prison and could have been dealt with then, why did it wait for eight years to do so?

British intelligence, on the other hand, may well have had a motive. What if Skripal could have exposed UK and US collaboration behind fabrications of the Steele report? Suspicion was fanned by President Trump's threats in fall 2018 to publish the FBI documentation that had been used to obtain a FISA warrant to spy on campaign adviser Carter Page. As a double agent conceivably responsible for endangering many Soviet/Russian spies, Skripal would have had many enemies with motive to kill him, and perhaps the means, especially if they had access to Novichok vials sold by Leonid Rink to Mafiosi in the 1990s (samples whose potency would have been seriously compromised, accounting for the Skripals' survival).

Novichok were not included in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons's (OPCW) list of nerve agents, nor were they listed in the three schedules in the Annex on Chemicals at the time of the Skripal poisoning. Their inclusion had been discussed, but US representatives, following pressure from Hillary Clinton's State Department, discouraged such talk. Knip (2018) cites Wikileaks-exposed US cables following publication of Mirzayanov's 2009 book. The US embassy in the Hague was instructed to avoid any substantive discussion about the book and to "report all cases in which the book is discussed anyway." The motive, Knip suggested, was to protect the Chemical Weapons Convention; that is to say, it was thought better to have an incomplete convention rather than none at all, a view that seems to imply that powerful signatories to the convention had no intention of stalling the development of Novichok.

The likelihood that Skripal was a victim of Porton Down (whose history has included secret mass experiments on British citizens [Keys 2015]) or of British intelligence is arguably greater than that he was attacked by Russia. Amid scenarios largely sculpted out of thin air but not impossible, it was speculated whether Skripal had contributed to the Steele dossier and, if so, might he have revealed this to Russia, who in turn could have fed false intelligence through Skripal to the British. Might Skripal have exposed the dossier as a deceitful collusion between US and British intelligence agencies, one intended to discredit Trump on behalf of the US security establishment and/or provide a pretext for ratcheting up hostile anti-Russian rhetoric in preparation for destabilization or war?

British assertions to the effect that applied or weaponized Novichok could only be military grade were also false. Leading British toxicologist Alastair Hay, at Leeds University, discounted this as likely, and David Collum, a Cornell University professor of organic chemistry, claimed that graduate students could easily create Novichok in the university laboratory (SKWAWKBOX 2018). Had the Novichok truly been military grade and of the much-vaunted potency claimed of them, it is curious that only three people were affected and that all survived—even though two months later Dawn Sturgess, who came into accidental contact with a vial containing what was allegedly the same sample of Novichok, did die.

British government behavior in the weeks following the poisoning demonstrated what to some observers seemed an incapacity/unwillingness to establish the truth. Examples include the "door handle" narrative—the government's insistence that the poison had likely been applied to the front door handle of the Skripals' home. This would have required complex chemical adjustments and skill in application. There was no guarantee that some third party might not have had contact with the handle. Such risky application would be a curious deployment of a nerve agent into which millions of dollars of research and development had been invested and whose composition would then be exposed, so as to undermine its future usefulness. Potency of Novichok was said by some sources to be reduced by exposure to rain or humidity. Yet the most recent rainfall had occurred in the early hours of March 4, only hours before the alleged assassins arrived in Salisbury. If they had applied the poison on the day of their first visit (March 3), the Skripals would presumably have suffered the effects a day earlier. The substance would have taken several hours to dissolve upon contact with water—not in time, therefore, to have protected the Skripals had they been contaminated. And had they been contaminated, the Skripals should have exhibited distress long before they had time for driving, lunching, and walking in the park before collapsing.

There are two scenarios as to when the poison might have been applied to the front door handle. The more likely is that by the time the alleged assassins did in fact arrive in Salisbury on March 4 the Skripals had already left the house, not to return. Alternatively, a BBC Panorama documentary in November 2018 (BBC One Panorama 2018) indicated not only that the police still held to the door handle theory, but that they calculated that the poison had been applied/sprayed around midday on Sunday, March 4, while the Skripals were still at home, in full sight of the neighborhood and even though Sergei Skripal's office had a view directly onto the street and that Skripal was reportedly acting in a nervous, anxious manner in the weeks leading up to the

attempted assassination. In these circumstances, the likelihood that assassins could have approached the front door to conduct a delicate chemical weapons attack, possibly under damp conditions thought by some to break down Novichok, without being seen by the Skripals or by neighbors, was close to zero (Slane 2018). If the Skripals had actually been out at that time, they would have had to return home in order to be contaminated, but there is no evidence for this. The assassins could not have been able to predict that both Yulia and her father, Sergei, would actually touch the door knob if their intention was to kill both, or, if they intended to attack only Sergei, they could not have known whether it would be he and not Yulia who would touch the door knob (BBC One Panorama 2018).

No first responders, helpers, or investigators were contaminated. The very first responders, by extremely curious coincidence, included Colonel Alison McCourt, chief nurse of the British army, and her sixteen-year-old daughter, Abigail (RT 2019, Stevens 2019). They had physical contact with the victims. Sergei and Yulia Skripal later recovered. A third victim, and first to recover, was police sergeant Nick Bailey, who appears to have been contaminated upon exposure to a substance in the Skripal home. These circumstances fuel the suspicion that the poison was never A-234 in the first instance and that hospital and security services were lying or confused from the outset. On the first day they identified the opioid fentanyl as most likely the cause, until advised, possibly by the security services, to consider a nerve agent. A-234 could have been inserted into samples later on. Up to this time, neither first responders nor medical personnel appeared to use appropriate protective suits or to engage in the normal decontamination measures that accompany such use, such as a washdown (Sushi 2018). Despite some alarmist press reports to the contrary, no other members of the public were impacted (although a number did seek medical reassurance that they had not been harmed).

The substance that impacted the Skripals could have contained an "inhibitor" agent. Information from OPCW's Swiss Spiez lab conveyed to Russian foreign secretary Lavrov indicated that one sample, possibly a control, contained in addition to A-234 the NATO-produced agency BZ. This could have delayed onset of Novichok or simply incapacitated the victims for a period of time, perhaps until another poison could be applied (Agence France Presse 2018). In a curious side incident, OPCW's chairman publicly claimed that a relatively large quantity of the poison had been released—enough to wipe out a community—only to find himself contradicted by his own organization the following day.

Alternatively, the applied poison might have deteriorated if, for example, it was an aged sample taken from among those originally possessed by top Soviet scientist (once in charge of Russia's Novichok program) Leonid Rink. Rink is known to have sold several samples to Mafiosi figures—notably Artur Talanov and Andrey Ryabov—one of which was used in 1995 to assassinate prominent banker Ivan Kivelidi and his chauffeur. Kivelidi was the leader of the Russian Entrepreneurs' Round Table, an organization in conflict with a powerful group of directors of state-owned enterprises.

The Skripals' house was purchased by the British government at considerably above its market value, presumably to provide ample opportunity for further inspection. Its roof was later replaced—perhaps indicating that the source of the poison was

suspected as coming from within the home, a possibility that would undermine the theory of external assassins.

The cloistering of the Skripals from the press and from relatives, the refusal of a visa to a close relative (cousin) of Yulia Skripal's, the apparent lack of communication between Skripal and his mother, the refusal of the British government to provide ample and open information to the Russian government concerning the welfare of a Russian citizen (Yulia Skripal) (Janjevic 2018), and the alleged slapping of a D-Notice on the British press to stop reporting on at least certain aspects of the saga (especially relating to Pablo Miller) were indicative of extreme embarrassment and duplicity at the most senior levels of the British state (Durden 2018). A brief video interview with Yulia Skripal was publicly released in late May. It appeared staged—possibly even coerced. It was filmed in an unknown location in which she talked about the pain she had experienced, her wish to return to Russia eventually, and her decline of an offer of help from Russia (a statement that she bizarrely signed on camera) (Withers 2018).

Western media had previously constructed a narrative about Russian government predisposition to assassination, but on insufficient grounds. The fatal poisoning by polonium of former spy Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006 was often cited as though Russian government (even Putin) responsibility had been established beyond reasonable doubt. This was not the case. A public inquiry (not a court case as such) did blame the Russian government, even implicating Vladimir Putin (BBC 2016). The proceedings and conclusions had attracted considerable criticism, and not only from Russia (Mercouris 2017). Further discourses about assassination in relation to Russia conveniently ignore a long history of assassination-as-tool in the hands of Western intelligence agencies (MacAskill 2017) and fail to notice the staggering illegality and immorality of drone programs that routinely target victims for murder (alleged "terrorists") in numerous different "sovereign" countries on the basis only of "signature" data (i.e., no specific, individualized proof) and frequently kill numerous innocent citizens (with the possibility that many more innocents have been killed by drones than actual "terrorists") (Zenko 2016).

SKRIPAL 2: STURGESS AND ROWLEY

The curious and more tragic sequel to the Skripal case occurred when on June 30, 2018, a couple—Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley—were poisoned by exposure to a substance said to be Novichok. Dawn Sturgess died on July 8. The couple were found poisoned at a home in Amesbury, England (close to Salisbury). Rowley recovered, and he stated that he had picked up a Nina Ricci Premier Jour perfume bottle in a sealed cellophane wrapper. He could not remember the location where he had picked up the container—it could have been a charity bin behind a shop on Catherine Street. He had given it as a present to Sturgess. According to Rowley, Sturgess was exposed when she sprayed it on herself; Rowley was exposed from contact with the substance by hand, which he subsequently tried to wash off. Although he appeared to have recovered quickly, he was reportedly in poor health in September 2018.

Many UK commentators, political and media, linked this poisoning to the Skripal case—then three months old—finding in it further opportunity for demonizing Russia, once again with insufficient evidence. The fact that both poisonings occurred in close proximity to the UK's chemical weapons establishment of Porton Down, which might therefore have had something to do with experimentation or leakage of some sort, excited barely a murmur. Given that the entire area had been subject to intensive search by the British police, it was strange that a cellophane-sealed container apparently of an expensive bottle of perfume had not been spotted in the months subsequent to the Skripal poisoning. Novichok poison, assuming that is what it was, had now re-appeared in spray form, at variance with earlier official statements in the case of the Skripals that it had been applied in a gel-like form.

Since four out of five persons known to have been exposed to the substance had actually survived, this put into further question original claims as to the highly deadly nature of the poison and its "military-grade status." What logic would have led a professional intelligence agency to choose such an ineffective, outlandishly expensive, extraordinarily complicated yet highly incriminating method of assassination? Press denigration of the new victims as addicts (Dawn Sturgess's mother has denied her daughter was a drug addict, but did say she had experienced difficulties with alcohol [Morris and Bannock 2019]) seemed to reduce suspicion they could have had direct connection with the assassins but weakened Rowley's credibility as a source. Had the presumed would-be assassins been the professionally trained killers claimed by Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson (now resigned)—following a Russian manual for the application of Novichok that Johnson claimed was in the possession of British intelligence—how likely was it that they would have tossed this costly substance in a public place for anyone to stumble upon?

The UK Press Association, citing an unnamed source with knowledge of the police investigation, reported in July 2018 that investigators had identified the attackers through CCTV and had cross-checked this with records of people who entered the country around that time. It was said that police were sure the suspects were Russian. No evidence was supplied, nor was an explanation given as to why this should appear four months after the attacks. Nor was the claim endorsed by the police. Yet British media fell upon and embellished it with relish (James 2018).

These reports were apparently confirmed in September when the British prime minister announced that two Russian suspects had been identified: Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov. Their operation was said to have been approved by the GRU. The principal sources of evidence were said to include sequences of CCTV footage and Novichok traces left in the London hotel room where the Russians had stayed (though these traces were said to be so slight as to be harmless). Police had apparently discovered these traces early in May yet waited until September to publicly invite other guests at the hotel to come forward. Bellingcat.com, a controversial British entity that works in cooperation with the militantly pro-NATO Atlantic Council (a "think tank" that could also be described as a lobbyist or propaganda agency) claimed one week later to have acquired, through the cooperation of its Russian sister the Insider, passport histories showing that documentation relating to the men's passports carried serial numbers assigned only to Russian agents.

A week later the two men (safely resident in Russia) were formally charged by the British government. Russia denied all knowledge of the pair, who were soon thereafter interviewed by Russian TV news channel RT. Petrov and Boshirov claimed to be tourists who frequently traveled to the UK and to other European destinations in connection with their bodybuilding supply business. They appeared to have traveled under their real names (later contested by Bellingcat.com) and would have to have been issued entry visas for the United Kingdom—a two-day process at the very least. This undermined the claim by Bellingcat.com that the passenger manifest for their Aeroflot flight indicated that their tickets had been purchased only the day before travel.

The men had paid a weekend visit to the United Kingdom in March, staying for the nights of March 2, 3, and 4, and they traveled twice to Salisbury, on March 3 and 4. On their first visit, Saturday, March 3, the travelers claimed that they found Salisbury cold and slushy, and that access to Stonehenge, which they had hoped to visit, had been closed. The following day, the day of the attempted assassination, was sunnier, and the two men had walked extensively around Salisbury, passing within a few hundred feet of the Skripal home, visiting Salisbury cathedral and the town center.

There were a number of significant problems with the identification of Petrov and Boshirov as would-be assassins:

- It would implausibly suggest that Russian intelligence agencies routinely take the risk of "outing" covert agents by issuing serial numbers or other identifying information on passport files (for no detectable reason) even if such documentation was intended only for Russian databases (which might be hacked). Any such identifying features would likely be familiar to Western intelligence, and any traveler whose passport files carried such numbers could be identified as a subject for close surveillance.

- The logic of the official narrative requires us to believe that the travelers carried on their persons or in their baggage one of the most terrible of known poisons (though, strangely, not so powerful that it killed anyone to whom it was initially applied) and yet were so careless in their handling of this poison that they left traces in their hotel room (though curiously not of the "harmful" sort), applied it to a door knob (an operation that would have required considerable knowledge and skill) that could potentially have been touched by any of a wide range of people and then, mission completed, threw it away in a cellophane-wrapped perfume container, in a public place. In addition to the implausibility of this narrative, there is the significant problem that the two men are known to have arrived in Salisbury on March 4 close to midday, either at the time of, just before, or approximately two hours after Sergei and Yulia Skripal had left home. There is no evidence that the Skripals returned once they left the house that day.

- Had the Russians been sophisticated covert assassins they would certainly have prepared for the extensive CCTV surveillance that marks Britain as one of the most surveilled countries in the world. Yet they did nothing to avoid being filmed by CCTV cameras. They could have traveled by car rather than train, for example. It defies belief that Russian assassins are so poorly financed that they must use

public transport and stay at cheap hotels. They could have used disguises. As it is, released CCTV footage shows the two Russians in only a small number of locations and never closer than five hundred meters to the Skripal house. There is little or no footage of the Skripals. Why?

- An Israeli expert on international terrorism, Alexander Brass, has dismissed the entire official narrative, saying that it shows nothing of the detail and careful preparation that such an operation would require. After careful training and preparation, those charged with carrying out such an assassination would not do anything or go anywhere, would not appear on cameras or use public transportation, but would move about in rented cars that others had rented for them. Instead of hotels they would live in safe houses provided by a logistics group. Those involved would not travel under the passport of their country, nor would they go to the embassy to obtain a visa, nor would they leave fingerprints. Brass notes that "the GRU has always been and remains one of the most professional and most intelligent intelligence agencies in the world." They would not use such a clumsy weapon as Novichok, but would apply poison in such a way that no autopsy would show that the victim had been poisoned (News Front 2018).
- It took British authorities half a year to publicly identify Petrov and Boshirov even though the pair had visas, had traveled directly from Russia, and possibly had traveled under their own names (see below). Conveniently, in this space of time an actual relevant death did occur, though having no known direct connection with the Skripal affair and following a very intense search and surveillance of the entire district that should have uncovered anything as suspicious as a full bottle of perfume containing poison in a public place. Police had found traces of Novichok at the Russians' London hotel in early May yet waited until September to publicly alert other guests at the hotel.
- British authorities might have been expected to hold off from disclosure of the identities of the Russian suspects in the reasonable expectation that these same Russians might travel again to Britain or to some allied NATO country where they could have been apprehended.

In the meantime, US mainstream media appear to have found it of very little interest that the intended target was closely connected to persons associated with the compilation of ex-MI6 agent Christopher Steele's highly incriminating Trump dossier—made public in January 2017, paid for by the Democratic National Campaign, and running in parallel with similar reports issued by the US intelligence community.

In late September 2018, Bellingcat.com claimed what it described as evidence that Petrov's real name was Alexander Mishkin, a military doctor, and that Boshirov's real name was Anatoly Chepiga (Schwirtz and Barry 2018). There was nothing remotely "open source" about Bellingcat.com's data. The data could not possibly be verified and could easily be faked. Bellingcat.com alleged that both men had received the Hero of the Russian Federation award and that both were GRU agents. Most mainstream media neither challenged Bellingcat's findings nor queried its status as a source of such sensitive information or thought to remind readers of its links with the Atlantic

Council. Identification of Boshirov as Chepiga was based on what Bellingcat.com claimed to be a resemblance between an earlier photo of someone whose name was said to be Chepiga and photos of Boshirov. Bellingcat.com did not start with any prior intelligence that Chepiga was Boshirov, but basically looked for someone whose name could be said to be Chepiga, shared the same birthdate as Boshirov, and looked like Boshirov. One face-reading technology, Betaface.com, rated the probability that Chepiga was Boshirov at 2.8 percent. No evidence could be found that anyone called Chepiga had received the Hero of the Russian Federation award (Murray 2018b).

There were indications of photo-tampering: a Bellingcat.com photo of Chepiga appeared to hang on a wall in completely different lighting conditions than surrounding photos. Chepiga's alleged Hero award was the only one that hung in entirely the wrong temporal order of a series of such awards. Photos of the two men arriving at Gatwick Airport immigration show them arriving at exactly the same time, in the same space. Police claimed that the men had walked through separate channels of immigration control simultaneously, but the photo of the second channel turned out to be a doctored version of the first (Macilwain 2018; Bell 2018).

Many of the suspicions raised by Bellingcat.com concerned supposed anomalies in the men's passport histories, without taking into account that passports did not become mandatory until 1997 or that at one time there were separate databases, not a unified database, or that people serving compulsory military duty were not required to have passports. That the passports appeared to have been issued close to each other was indicative of nothing other than that the two men's applications were submitted simultaneously. Confirmation or disconfirmation of any of these details would certainly not suffice to determine whether either man had worked for GRU (Evdokimo 2018).

It is entirely possible, even plausible, that the two Russians were not who they claimed to be. There has been little by way of supporting evidence that gives depth to their identities. This in itself, however, is far removed from constituting evidence of membership in the GRU. It is equally plausible that they were patsies, chosen by the British because they could be made to fit a narrative of the government's choosing, perhaps assigned to some relatively simple task—the collection of documents, for example—that would later be used to incriminate them in something much bigger. Perhaps they were indeed Russian intelligence agents—Salisbury is at the heart of British military activity and must routinely attract espionage attention—but were deliberately misdirected so as to incriminate them with an assassination.

We can conclude that "evidence" cited by the British government concerning alleged Russian culpability had been clearly precipitate, many times wrong or fabricated. The British narrative would make it seem that the Russian spies were incompetent buffoons, scattering clues with unbelievable abandon. Was this a case of Freudian projection by a British government feeling profoundly foolish for needlessly imperiling the nation and its people over Brexit and the damage of a possible no-deal exit from the European Union? Or did the British need to make Russian spies look like fools so as to lend credibility to Britain's own implausible intelligence-constructed narratives, fed to complicit politicians and media outlets and designed to establish pretexts for war with a major nuclear power, a war whose outcome might be the end of the human species (Ellsberg 2018)?

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Chapter 7

Propaganda, Manipulation, and the Exercise of Imperial Power

From Media Imperialism to Information Imperialism[1]

Piers Robinson

The media-imperialism paradigm has performed an essential role in helping to elucidate the ways in which communication technologies and corporate media maintain a global system characterized both by stark social and economic inequalities and the extensive use of coercive and militaristic strategies by, in particular, the United States and its allies. Indeed, it is quite remarkable that, in the years since 9/11, the world has lived through the prolific use of force by Western nations that has spanned continents and involved massive levels of destruction in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen; and yet public awareness of and opposition to these wars, after an initial high point surrounding the invasion of Iraq in 2003, has been muted and frequently in disarray. The lack of political dissent among the elites of these purportedly "liberal" democratic states is made even more remarkable by the fact that many of these wars have been frequently argued to be "wars of aggression" and in violation of international law (e.g., Sands 2016). This state of affairs has only been possible because of the way in which the media industries, from news media to popular culture, have helped to maintain sharply delineated boundaries with respect to public debate and understanding about war and foreign policy, both globally and domestically.

Indeed, it is a testament to the importance of media as a tool of imperialism that it is only in the last few years that the stark reality of Western militarism and imperialism has started to see the light of day at the margins of academic and political debate (Griffin and Woodworth 2018). For example, it is only now, after years of war and destruction, that establishment voices, including politicians, academics, and journalists, are likely slowly being forced to engage with persistent questions regarding the nature of the catalyzing event of 9/11 itself (Griffin and Woodworth 2018; Hulsey 2019), the West's exploitative and almost continuous relationship with militant extremist groups (Curtis 2018), and the broader US-led regime-change strategy rolled out after 9/11 (Robinson 2017). It has taken increasing pushback from powers such as Russia and China, as well as the stalling of Western military "progress" in the Middle East, seen most clearly in the failure of the United States and its allies to overthrow the Syrian government, and prolonged pressure from non-mainstream media and activist groups and individuals, to bring it to this point.

For all its analytical strengths, however, I argue that the media-imperialism para-digm would do well to expand analytical attention beyond its traditional focus on media industries and media content, and onto the institutions, doctrines, and practices involved in shaping and manipulating, or *propagandizing*, the information environ-ment. This expansion involves a broader understanding of the ways in which informa-tion is manipulated and shaped through *propaganda* in the service of imperial power and going far beyond the media to analyze the full range of institutions and doctrines involved in the production of propaganda. This expansion of the analytical frame should also embrace a much broader understanding of communication and persuasion to capture the ways in which communicative power operates beyond the linguistic realm to include real-world acts of incentivization and coercion (Bakir, Herring, Miller, and Robinson 2018). Such an expansion would considerably strengthen our understanding of how imperial power is exercised, with and through the media and cultural industries, and the content of their products.

The chapter's first section discusses the limits of the media-imperialism concept. The second section introduces the concept of contemporary propaganda as a supple-ment to the media-imperialism concept and proceeds to document the institutions that create and circulate propaganda, including the state, NGOs (nongovernmental organi-zations), think tanks, academia, and the cultural industries. This discussion highlights the need to understand media imperialism much more broadly to include a fuller en-gagement with propaganda. To emphasize the importance of examining contemporary propaganda as part of media-imperialism research, the chapter concludes by discuss-ing examples of propaganda during the post-9/11 "Global War on Terror." Overall, the chapter contends that media-imperialism scholarship should pay closer attention to propaganda, an activity that encompasses a wide variety of institutions, doctrines, and tactics of persuasion that, together, support the exercise of imperial power.

THE LIMITS TO MEDIA IMPERIALISM
AS A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

The study of media imperialism has traditionally focused on the role of the media in-dustries in the exercise of imperial power. Of particular focus is the political economy of the global media industry and the ways in which imperial interests have been ex-tended and served by the dominance of major (usually Western-based) conglomerates throughout the world, "sometimes involving the direct exercise of market supremacy by media of powerful countries on media of less powerful countries" (Boyd-Barrett 2014, 4). Broadly speaking, the argument is that the ownership and control of the lion's share of media around the world by a limited number of powerful and usually Western-based conglomerates works against national, regional, and local media auton-omy and, ultimately, influences the structure and output of these media in a way that reflects the ideology and interests of Western states and capitalist elites (e.g., Schiller 1969; Tunstall 1977). Furthermore, media-imperialism scholars analyze how imperial interests and ideologies are promoted and maintained by the global media indus-tries, nationally, or on the "home front," particularly in the realm of war or so-called

"intervention." As Boyd-Barrett (2014, 7) notes, "interventions require significant manipulation of public opinion through control of or influence over the media." In sum, media-imperialism research focuses on the power of the largely Western-owned globalizing media industries to exert influence upon audiences around the world, as well as those populations directly subject to military intervention (Robinson 2014). Unfortunately, but significantly, the last eighteen years of the "Global War on Terror" stand as testament to the relevance and importance of the media-imperialism thesis, and this topic will be returned to later in the chapter.

While the media-imperialism concept's focus is on the role of privately owned media industries in facilitating and ideologically enabling the exercise of imperial power, this media-centric focus, while extremely important, can be limiting. It has much in common with other critical political economy of communication approaches in that the central focus is the structure, organization, operation, and output of the media itself. So, for example, Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988) focuses on how the media operate and the consequences of this for media output. None of their "media filters" speak directly to the organizations and processes that shape information before its arrival (via news sources or investigative journalism) in the media (Robinson 2018). Even the third filter, which identifies how the reliance on elite sources shape media reporting, does not explore how information is shaped and manipulated prior to being passed from officials to journalists. The same media-centric focus is identifiable in Bennett's influential indexing hypothesis (1990) and Hall et al.'s (1978) primary definers model. As I shall now argue, however, this focus excludes a large part, perhaps the bulk, of the processes through which information is managed and manipulated in the service of imperial power. This brings us to the matter of propaganda and its sites of production.

CONTEMPORARY PROPAGANDA

For many the term "propaganda" conjures up images of crude emotional and irrational messaging associated with the world wars of the twentieth century and, in particular, its use in Nazi Germany and other authoritarian political systems. In truth, propaganda has been a central feature of both democratic and authoritarian societies throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the first part of the twentieth century, leading thinkers such as political scientist Harold Lasswell (1927, 1935, 1951) and journalist Walter Lippman (1922, 1925, 1955) described the need for publics to be managed and manipulated in liberal democratic states. As Edward Bernays, considered by many to be the founding father of public relations (PR), famously described:

> The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. (Bernays 1928)

People realized, however, that "propaganda" involved manipulation and frequently deception. As Bernays explained, "propaganda got to be a bad word because of the

Germans . . . using it [during World War I]. So what I did was to . . . find some other words. So we found the words Council on Public Relations" (Curtis 2002). Since the birth of public relations, or PR, a large variety of terms have come to be used to explain organized approaches to persuading and influencing, including "political marketing," "promotional culture," "public diplomacy," "strategic communication," "perception management," "political communication," "public affairs," "information operations," "influence operations," "political warfare," and "advertising." To a large extent, these euphemisms, according to Taylor (2002, 20), have become an "industry" designed to obscure the fact that propaganda is alive and well in contemporary liberal democracies. Propaganda activities are also a good deal subtler than suggested by their association with historical examples such as Nazi Germany. As scholars have recently explained (e.g., Bakir, Herring, Miller, and Robinson 2018; Herring and Robinson 2014), manipulation through propaganda frequently involves subtle processes of omission, distortion, and misdirection, which, for all intents and purposes, obviates the need to tell crude lies; at the same time, persuasion strategies also frequently involve communicating incentives and threats that involve no deception whatsoever (Bakir et al. 2018). Overall, in a world imbued by "promotional culture," in which spin and exaggeration are accepted as routine and normal aspects of politics and society (Corner 2007), propaganda is ubiquitous to modern democracies.

Recognizing the importance of propaganda helps to draw analytical attention to a number of important processes and phenomena. Some media-imperialism scholars have explored these issues (Boyd-Barrett 2014; Schiller 1969; Mirrlees 2015), and their analysis highlights a number of important areas underexplored by much of the media-imperialism scholarship. The key point here is that media is but *one* institution involved in just *one* aspect of propaganda (i.e., its transmission and dissemination), but it has little to do with the actual production of propaganda. To understand this, one needs to look beyond media and explore the institutions that are involved in propaganda production, their doctrines and their strategies. For example, it is well known that governments and related state bureaucracies spend considerable resources on propaganda: a UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office report from 2002 confirmed that £340 million per year was spent on "public diplomacy" operations in London (Miller 2004, 80). At the same time the US federal government spent $16 billion on outside advertising and public relations contractors between 2002 and 2012 (Swarts and Solomon 2012). As part of the state bureaucracy, the intelligence services also play an important role in propaganda production. For example, it is now well documented that, during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, intelligence services became involved in the distribution of inaccurate information with respect to Iraq's alleged WMD (weapons of mass destruction) capability (Herring and Robinson 2014). In this case, vague and weak intelligence was used to bolster the claim that Iraq was an active and current WMD threat. The scale and import of this "information" campaign cannot be underestimated: Distorted intelligence helped to build support for the invasion of a country, which then resulted in many years of war, still yet to be fully resolved, and the deaths of hundreds of thousands if not millions of people.

Critically, however, it is not just apparatuses of the state bureaucracy that are involved in propaganda. Both think tanks and NGOs are implicated in the production and

distribution, intentional or not, of propagandistic information. For example, Amnesty International (AI) has been criticized for its role, perhaps unwitting, in the distribution of propagandistic information. Prior to the 2011 UN-authorized intervention in Libya, justified through the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine (R2P), allegations of human rights–related abuses by the Libyan government, including use of rape, imported mercenaries, and alleged threats to kill civilians, circulated widely. Some of these allegations appeared in a press briefing (Amnesty International 2011) prior to the intervention (Kovalik 2012). After the intervention, however, AI officials were unable to corroborate some of these allegations (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee 2016, 3, 15). A UK parliament report also concluded that the British government had represented "the scale of threat to civilians . . . [with] unjustified certainty" and that it was "overstated" by government officials (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee 2016, 3, 15). As such, it appears that Amnesty International had become caught up in what was a widespread misrepresentation of events in Libya (Boyle 2012).

In addition to well-respected NGOs, think tanks can also be important creators and communicators of propagandistic information. Indeed, scholars such as Parmar (2004) and Giles Scott-Smith (2014) discuss how think tanks have always played a key role in terms of promoting particular worldviews. Although not necessarily always contributing to manipulated and propagandized representations of particular issues, sometimes they are. For example, the Henry Jackson Society (HJS) is a think tank founded in 2005 and presented as bipartisan (Griffin et al. 2015); however, the HJS, funded by an array of undisclosed donors, is a neoconservative think tank that has been active in "promoting a strongly pro-Israel agenda, organizing anti-Islam activities . . . [and] advocating a transatlantic military and security regime" (Griffin et al. 2015, 74). Interestingly, and as revealed in a leaked document, HJS also planned co-ordinated activities aimed at discrediting Noam Chomsky via influencing mainstream media journalists (Sayeed 2016). Clearly, shaping the information environment and, arguably, manipulating opinions has been a central objective of this think tank.

Academia is not immune to propaganda activities and can itself become part of imperialism's broader propaganda apparatus. For example, Herring and Robinson (2003) argued that, to a large extent, the filters identified in the propaganda model as acting upon the media are also relevant to academia. Many scholars rely upon government and corporate grants for research projects, attempt to curry favor with official sources, and reproduce dominant ideological imperatives, and this all means that academia is far less free from the effects of power than is often assumed (see also Coser 1965; Mills 1968; Flaks 1991). For example, Simpson's *Science of Coercion* (1994) draws upon a variety of sources, including Freedom of Information (FOI) releases, to carefully document the relationship between the fledgling academic discipline of communication science/studies and US psychological operations (psyops). Simpson (1994) highlights the interdependence between the academy and the US government and makes a compelling case that, in a very fundamental sense, communication science/studies is shaped, to this day, by the imperatives of political power.

Finally, popular culture is an important site for the generation and dissemination of propaganda. Throughout the Cold War era, Hollywood movies were frequently implicated in state and military propaganda campaigns. For example, Graeme

Greene's *The Quiet American* criticized US actions in Vietnam during the 1950s, but the novel was radically reworked into a movie version, written and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, to tell a simplistic tale of good America fighting "evil" communism.[2] Others have argued the existence of a close relationship between Hollywood and both the CIA (Schou 2016) and the US Department of Defense (Secker and Alford 2017). On a much broader scale, Der Derian (2009) describes the existence of a "military-industrial-media-entertainment" network involving the creation of video games, TV series, films, and other entertainment forms, all of which reflect and reinforce particular US-centric worldviews and, in particular, the militarism of US society. Of course, because much of the population is unaware that popular culture can be so politicized, its effectiveness in terms of being utilized as a vehicle for propaganda is highly significant.

ANALYZING PROPAGANDA: AN ESSENTIAL COMPLEMENT TO THE MEDIA-IMPERIALISM PARADIGM

Understanding the interplay of propaganda and media guides us toward a much broader understanding of how imperial power is exercised through communication organizations, processes, and products. The study of propaganda and its multiple sites of production and diffusion, are complementary to the traditional focal point of media-imperialism scholarship. To put this as clearly as possible, when we broaden the media-imperialism thesis to include government propaganda, think tanks, NGOs, academia, and popular culture, we gain a better understanding of the multiple actors that are involved in shaping the "information environment" and that play a key role in the exercise of imperial power via deception, incentivization, and coercion (Bakir et al. 2018).

The chapter opened with examples of the regime-change wars that have dominated US foreign policy since 9/11. Taking a step back in order to gain a fuller view of the propaganda launched since 2001 helps us to appreciate the central argument made in this chapter, that studies of media imperialism need to look well beyond news media corporations and their products in order to understand the phenomenon it seeks to explain. As noted at the start of this chapter, since 9/11 the United States has been directly involved in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Pakistan, and Yemen, and it is possible that Iran is the next target for its imperial ambitions. Furthermore, both Russia and China continue to be targets for imperial interference.

Regarding propaganda, we know already that a good deal of the so-called war on terror has involved high degrees of manipulation and deception. For example, for a global campaign claiming to have been driven by the need to fight "Islamic fundamentalism," it became apparent in the subsequent run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 that the "war on terror" was about more than just that: Iraq's Saddam Hussein had no substantial connection to the alleged perpetrators of 9/11; indeed, his was a secular state fundamentally opposed to Al Qaeda, and yet Iraq was targeted and invaded, at huge cost in life, by a "coalition of the willing," led by the United States. Of course, propaganda was central to the promotion of war in Iraq, involving as it

did the manipulation of intelligence in order to present Iraq as a serious WMD threat when its actual WMD capability was next to nothing (Herring and Robinson 2014). But we also now know that the propaganda and deception goes much further than just exaggerated claims regarding Iraqi WMD. It was in 2006 that retired general Wesley Clark (former Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO [1997–2000]) declared twice in public that he had been informed, shortly after 9/11, that there were intentions to "take out seven countries in five years" (Clark 2007a, 2007b); according to Clark, these countries were Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran. However, it was not until 2016 that corroboration for Clark's claims emerged with the publication of the Chilcot Report, the UK official inquiry into Britain's involvement in the 2003 Iraq invasion. Information from Chilcot included the following documents: a British embassy cable, dated September 15, 2015, stating that "the 'regime-change hawks' in Washington are arguing that a coalition put together for one purpose [against international terrorism] could be used to clear up other problems in the region" (Chilcot Report 2016, 3.1: 65, 324);[3] a communication between US president Bush and UK prime minister Tony Blair that shows the existence of discussion over when to "hit" Iraq, Syria, and Iran; and a document titled "The War against Terrorism: The Second Phase," which discusses a total of seven countries (Iraq, Philippines, Syria, Iran, Yemen, Somalia, and Indonesia) (Blair 2001). In a nutshell, the Chilcot Report provided powerful corroboration of Wesley Clark's claim that the "war on terror" was intended to serve mainly, if not primarily, a regime-change strategy involving attacks on multiple countries, many of which were unconnected with Al Qaeda and "Islamic fundamentalism." Recently, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, Iraq war planner and chief of staff to Colin Powell, provided further corroboration of a regime-change plan, noting that he had seen documents, similar to those highlighted by Clark, prior to 9/11.[4] The extent of the propaganda and deception involved here should not be underestimated: It involved a truly global-level regime-change strategy targeting whole countries but misleadingly promoted as a fight against "Islamic Fundamentalist" terrorism.

Since this opening phase of the "war on terror," which has seen almost continuous war in Afghanistan and Iraq involving extensive Western military involvement, we have lived through the so-called Arab Spring (2010–2011), which, according to official and public perceptions in the West, led to pro-democracy uprisings in many MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries but also triggered wars in Libya and Syria. To date, the wars in Libya and Syria have been widely perceived in the West as linked only to the "Arab Spring" and, broadly speaking, both conflicts have been presented and understood in black-and-white terms. In particular, the war in Syria has been presented by both officials and "regime-change" advocates as a simple case of an evil and brutal dictator (President Assad) violently repressing a moderate, pro-democracy revolution: The war has also frequently been presented as an internal "civil war." Now, however, both of these "Arab Spring revolutions" would appear to have been highly propagandized and, as a result, severely misrepresented. In Libya, as already discussed, the initial US/French/UK intervention was justified under the so-called Responsibility to Protect Doctrine (R2P), which authorized a UN Security Council intervention to, it was claimed, prevent mass atrocities

by the Libyan government. Following the overthrow of the Libyan government, the country descended into civil conflict and strife, shaped significantly by the presence of militant and extremist groups, and has remained in a perilous state. As discussed earlier, a subsequent report by the British government, published in 2016, concluded that prior to the intervention, "the scale of threat to civilians was presented with unjustified certainty" and was "overstated" by government officials (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee 2016, 3, 15).

In Syria, whatever the origins and motives behind the initial anti-government protests in 2011 at present remain unclear to this author, and the conflict quickly evolved into one dominated by militant extremist groups. Moreover, the war has been far from simply an "internal" "civil" war. For example, the UK government has provided, via contractors, "public relations" support for opposition groups (Cobain, Ross, Evans, and Mahmood 2016), and it has been a major promotor of the controversial White Helmets, an organization presented as a search-and-rescue entity but which has also served, according to one government document, as part of a broader program (Conflict, Stability and Security Fund) aimed at supporting "the moderate opposition to provide services for their communities and contest new space"; the document also states that empowering "legitimate local governance structures to deliver services gives credibility to the moderate opposition."[5] Quite how "moderate" some of these groups are is also subject to debate. In 2017 a BBC Panorama investigation into UK government funding of the Syrian Free Police (FSP) claimed that some of the money found its way to "extremist" groups (BBC 2017). Also, some independent journalists argue that the White Helmets are, broadly speaking, closely associated with "extremist" and "terrorist" groups (e.g., Beeley 2015). From the US perspective, Operation Timber Sycamore was a joint CIA-Saudi covert operation that involved up to "$1 billion a year" (*Washington Post* 2015) to opposition groups, and again, according to some, has involved direct support for extremist militant groups. As historian Mark Curtis argues, Western support for extremist groups and "radical Islam" is a pattern detectable across much of the twentieth century (Curtis 2018). In recent years, substantive questions have been raised with respect to Western claims that the Syrian government has been responsible for the alleged chemical weapons attacks in Syria. Both the Syrian and Russian governments deny responsibility for such attacks and blame them on opposition groups mounting so-called false-flag attacks designed to blame the Syrian government and create the political momentum for a larger Western intervention (e.g., Hersh 2014; McKeigue, Mason, Miller, and Robinson 2018). Wherever the truth lies in all of this, there is certainly a prima facie case to be made that extensive propaganda has dramatically distorted public perceptions of the war in Syria (Blumenthal 2018). Most importantly, few seem to comprehend the fact that the war has involved extensive outside intervention by powers seeking to overthrow the Syrian government, and that Western states and their allies may have supported extremist militant groups, possibly involving false-flag attacks, in order to implicate the Syrian government.

Finally, there is substantive information now in the public domain that raises questions about 9/11 itself. For example, Senator Bob Graeme and CIA-associated Bob Baer have, for a number of years, argued that there is evidence of Saudi officials being

involved in 9/11.[6] At the same time, seven years of work have now come to fruition in the form of the 9/11 consensus panel (Griffin and Woodworth 2018). This work, involving twenty-three experts from fields including physics, chemistry, structural engineering, aeronautical engineering, piloting, airplane crash investigation, medicine, journalism, psychology, and religion has concluded, after rigorous review, that there are major aspects of the official narrative regarding 9/11 that cannot be true. In addition, a two-year study conducted by Professor Leroy Hulsey (University of Alaska Fairbanks) is shortly due to report that the official investigation into the collapse of World Trade Center 7, the third tower to collapse in Manhattan (which happened late in the afternoon of September 11) even though it had not been struck by an airliner, is significantly flawed. Finally, there are now two legal processes underway in the United States regarding 9/11, including a grand jury proceeding regarding unprosecuted federal crimes related to the destroyed buildings in New York and a lawsuit against the FBI.[7] Obviously, the fact that the United States was so quick to plan multiple regime-change wars immediately after 9/11, as discussed above, and the emerging material questioning the official narrative regarding 9/11, raise, in combination, serious questions about how far propaganda has been used by the United States and its allied states to blind Western populations to the reality of what has been going on since 2001.

Drawing all of these facts together, it is clear that 9/11 instigated the US-led "Global War on Terror" and the almost continuous cycle of violent conflict that followed. This state of perpetual imperial war has been sold to the public with propaganda that imagined Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, obfuscated Western support of jihadist and extremist groups in Libya and Syria, and perpetuated demonstrably inconsistent and false claims underpinning the official narrative regarding 9/11. What is so remarkable in all of this is how little serious attention mainstream journalists, academics, and politicians have paid to the propaganda that has supported the twenty-first century's imperial wars. The only way to understand this level of profound disconnect from reality is to appreciate the way in which dubious, false, and manipulative "information" is passed on to the public through the production and dissemination of propaganda across multiple institutions (i.e., government, NGOs, think tanks, academia, and popular culture), not just mainstream news media. It is simply not plausible to understand the multiple failures to grasp the realities of the post-9/11 "war on terror" as attributable solely to "media failure." Media "malfunction" can only plausibly be understood as part of a broader process of propaganda that extends well beyond media to include the propaganda activities of government and state bureaucracies, NGOs and think tanks, and popular culture. Disinformation on the scale we have been witnessing since 9/11, I contend, is only possible with the existence of extensive, pervasive, and *almost* all-consuming propaganda in service to US and Western imperialism.

CONCLUSION

Widening analytical focus of the media-imperialism paradigm to examine the organizational and institutional sources that produce and disseminate misinformation and disinformation, and examining how this propaganda operates often with and through

mainstream media firms, gives us an opportunity to grapple with the enormity and seriousness of the situation "we," and by that I mean Western democratic states, find ourselves in. Understanding propaganda helps us to understand how public compliance with recent imperial wars has been built and maintained through deception, and how big the gap is between public perceptions of what's going on and reality. Indeed, we may now be on the cusp of a growing realization, at least among critical researchers, that our worst fears regarding government complicity in acts of terror are coming true. Given that it remains a distinct possibility that the US imperial regime-change strategy will move on to attack Iran, as well as ratchet up tensions with Russia and China to levels that match or even exceed Cold War US-Soviet conflict levels, it is now urgent that academics, journalists, politicians, and publics become aware of and learn to better scrutinize the propaganda media of and for imperialism. Failure to do so will mean that the death and destruction witnessed over the last seventeen years is likely simply to continue and perhaps become even worse. These are dark days indeed.

NOTES

1. Some of the ideas in this chapter have been developed from the following publications: Robinson 2018 and Miller and Robinson forthcoming.

2. A more faithful rendering of Greene's *The Quiet American* was produced by director Kenneth Noyce in 2002.

3. For a fuller discussion of the Chilcot Report, see Robinson 2017.

4. See New York Megaphone interview, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULAk_u15yZU, February 14, 2019.

5. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630409/SyriaResilience2017.pdf. Accessed April 5, 2019.

6. See, for example, https://hammer.ucla.edu/programs-events/2015/09/911-the-saudi-connection-with-senator-bob-graham-and-robert-baer and https://www.c-span.org/video/?414563-1/senator-bob-graham-addresses-release-911-reports-28-pages.

7. See https://www.lawyerscommitteefor9-11inquiry.org.

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Part III

HOLLYWOOD, WAR,
AND MILITAINMENT

Chapter 8

Socialism by Stealth?

Governmental Subvention and Hollywood¹

Toby Miller

Film, television, and related media arts productions attract high-paying jobs and related businesses, but many of those jobs are being lost to other states or nations. In an effort to attract these opportunities to their own states, governors have enacted targeted film development strategies, including financial and tax incentives, film workforce development programs, and a wide range of business recruitment and promotional programs . . . infrastructure development tax credits, film and digital media investment loans, and a film and digital media worker job training tax credit.

—NGA Center (2009, 14)

[The] personal qualities of a producer are rather beside the point. Some are able and humane men and some are low-grade individuals with the morals of a goat, the artistic integrity of a slot machine, and the manners of a floorwalker with delusions of grandeur.

—Raymond Chandler (1945)

For decades, debates about media and cultural imperialism have been powerful contributors to everyday, political, and scholarly discussions of Hollywood. Yet the sense of this topic being a necessary element of studying film, television, and so on has diminished in recent times within the global North, to the point where I asked a decade ago, "Why Do First-World Academics Think Cultural Imperialism Doesn't Matter When so Many Other People Disagree?" (Miller 2010).

I suggested then that it had become fashionable in the Anglo academy to downplay Hollywood's importance, both domestically and internationally; to argue that US influence over popular culture was waning in a numerical sense, and never mattered much anyway in terms of its impact. The argument was a cultural correlative of neoliberalism—the fiction of the ratiocinative, calculating consumer who could make or break film and television drama thanks to the whimsical power of individual interpretation and cultural locale, and use a cell phone to break the bonds of cultural gatekeepers. That fiction was mobilized to caricature theories of cultural imperialism as a self-hating First World guilt trip that condescended to Third World audiences.

I found people in Asia and Latin America thinking very, very differently. And I still hold to the position that cultural-imperialist critique has great virtue, resonance, and timeliness, both politically and analytically.

It follows that we must understand how Hollywood in particular continues on its dominant way, transcending and corralling each threat of technological and regulatory change that comes along to its own ultimate advantage. TV, transistors, video cassettes, satellites, the internet, and cell phones have all become grist to the mill, along with other countries' policies designed to reinforce alternatives to our cinema.

One of the myths that shrouds the realities of US capitalism is that it is a truly private-enterprise system, with Hollywood an exemplar that is entirely sustained by its capacity to tell stories in ways that viewers pay to enjoy. Nothing could be further from the truth, in terms of both the nation's wider economy and its screen industries in particular.

The state is everywhere and nowhere in US capitalism. For example, commercial airlines are subsidized through the college education and military schooling of pilots who go on to work for United or Delta; post offices, telephone exchanges, public schools, airports, bus stops, freeways, and railway stations are created and sustained through the socialization of risk by governments; and the internet is a product of anxieties about Soviet missile attacks that led to the packet system of communication, developed by research schools with Pentagon subvention. In addition, one is never physically far from the long arm of the state in the United States. Military bases proliferate, college towns dot otherwise barren landscapes, ubiquitous police forces detain people on the grounds of DWB (driving while black), prisons controlled by private corporations incarcerate nonviolent offenders by the score, and on it goes.

Yet the fact that public money animates US capitalism is a rarely whispered secret in a land that madly prides itself on the phantasy that it has been built, developed, and maintained by private enterprise. Neoclassical-economics chorines, who helped generate and sustain the deregulation and income redistribution that caused the fiscal crisis, peddle such dogma in arrogant blog posts and bloated lecture halls across the country, their foundational *donnée* seemingly an inviolable fiction hiding as reality. But here's the scoop: It's bullshit.

Take the cell phone on which you may be reading these words. Surely it represents the magical operation of supply and demand, thanks to Schumpeterian producers who are dedicated to the invention of new devices in order to disrupt indolent legacy companies and satisfy customers' needs? Not really. Consider some of our so-called smart phones' constituent parts, such as click wheels, multitouch screens, global positioning systems, lithium-ion batteries, signal compression, hyper-text mark-up language, liquid-crystal displays, Siri, cellular technology, and microprocessors. That's quite a list. And these donations to our daily digital lives came from the US Defense Advanced Research Agency, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, the US Department of Energy, the CIA, the US National Science Foundation, the US Navy, the US Army Research Office, the US National Institutes of Health, the US Department of Defense—and US and western European universities. Nothing to do with the creativity of agile entrepreneurs, nutty inventors, or research-driven businesses; everything to do with military interests seeking to harness body and brain toward the

attainment of purposive goals. You ended up with the cell phone in your purse or tote because the Pentagon funded scholars to conceptualize and create its componentry, then essentially handed over the results to private interests as corporate welfare. The companies whose names appear as product placements on your devices each time you put them on display undertook the integration, design, manufacturing, marketing, and sales part of the commodity supply chain—not the expensive, inventive part (Mazzucato 2015). We therefore have socialism by stealth, the invisible investment of public funds in the economy, undertaken in the service of capital rather than the people whose labor and taxes underpin it.

Consider my topic here. Hollywood is supposedly the acme of laissez-faire business success, a beacon of the ability of US business to produce competitively and attract customers worldwide. And it's a big deal. The Motion Picture Association of America, the major studios' representative on earth/DC, says that in 2016, US cinema was responsible for 2.1 million jobs, $139 billion in wages, $20.6 billion in indirect taxes, $134 billion in sales, and $16.5 billion in exports, thereby generating one of the biggest trade surpluses in the economy (Motion Picture Association of America 2018).

The association used to release aggregated data on the budgets of its members' productions, but it no longer does so (Verrier 2009). We know from other sources that $100 million was required to produce and distribute the average Hollywood film in 2015, while blockbusters made since 2016 have cost between $250 and $380 million each ("How to Make" 2016; "Most Expensive" 2018). By contrast, the World Bank reports that West Africa's Nollywood productions average $15,000 dollars and India's Bollywood $1.5 million to make (Bauer 2015). Movies are a vastly expensive business when Hollywood is involved—which is the key to what follows.

A question, then, if I may: Why does our motion-picture industry film so often in the UK, Mexico, the former Soviet sector, and numerous other overseas locales? Is it out of a commitment to the realism of location shooting? No. Runaway production occurs in order to take advantage of government incentives, advanced technology, and compliant labor. Hence many TV shows being shot in Canadian cities masquerading as US ones, thereby benefiting from provincial welfare. Hollywood also thrives on funding attracted from overseas that is itself conditioned and guaranteed by state actions: early this century, French financing of US films came from firms enjoying public subvention in other areas of investment, such as cable or plumbing, while for its part, German money invested in the Southland frequently derived from tax breaks for dentists, doctors, lawyers, and their ilk (Miller et al. 2005; Morawetz et al. 2007, 436).

In addition to hundreds of publicly underwritten foreign schemes and deals, Hollywood benefits from domestic film commissions. Spread right across the country, they compete for producers and crews to pop over and visit, attracted by eviscerated local taxes, *gratis* policing, and the closure of putatively public way-fares (Maxwell and Miller 2011; Cantrell and Wheatcroft 2018; Miller 2008). In 2003, just a few US states offered production incentives. By 2010, forty-three of them sought to "attract" Hollywood, to the tune of $1.5 billion. Between 1997 and 2015, almost $10 billion was allocated. Although governments periodically cancel and then revive these schemes, this decade has seen a massive overall increase in subsidies. Initially stimulated by Louisiana and New Mexico upping the ante, Georgia

is the latest front-runner, providing \$800 million in certified credits in 2017 alone ("Unilateral Disarmament" 2011; Tannenwald 2010; Thom and An 2017; Foster et al. 2013; Mayer 2017; Maddaus 2018a). Nollywood is all privately funded, albeit with a certain promotional role fulfilled by the state (Bud 2014; Krings and Okome 2013). Bollywood has largely been so, but is increasingly lured by domestic and international subvention from willing governments (Athique et al. 2018; Sharma 2017; Bhat and Phadnis 2013). By contrast with these industries' minimal dependence on government handouts, I can go no further than guess at the total value of the subsidies provided to Hollywood at home and abroad each decade, but it has to be into the far reaches of the galaxy known as "billions."

The gullible domestic and overseas governments that engage in or countenance this largesse do so for a variety of reasons, such as generating precarious jobs for the life of a film or TV shoot, stimulating tourism, transferring glamor to politicians, justifying the lives of culturecrats, and meeting the needs of powerful if dependent businesspeople, from producers to hoteliers.

US state governments' incentives are often introduced as part of Keynesian counter-cyclical stimuli, but they essentially mimic fashionable programs elsewhere, and falling unemployment only occasionally brings them to a conclusive end (Thom and An 2017). Public programs are said to generate ongoing investment in new infrastructure—sound stages and skilled workers, for example—that provide ongoing attractions beyond temporary direct subvention ("The Money Shot" 2009), and are acclaimed for putatively encouraging "a 'clean' or 'environmentally friendly' industry" (Rollins Saas 2006, 3).

Systems of support for film production have moved from traditional forms, such as minimal credits against income tax, deductions based on losses, loan guarantees, free access to public services, and exemptions from hotel taxes, to much more expansive transferrable tax credits. A new business has sprung up in trading such giveaways. These transfers take tax credits that are afforded by governments to producers and sell them to wealthy people across the economy and country who don't feel like paying their share of tax. In this way, producers get their money faster than they would via refunds. What began in 2009 is already a multimillion-dollar business (Verrier 2013).

While subsidy programs wax and wane with political-economic changes in state politics and financial and sexual scandals (Maddaus 2018a; "Don't Cut" 2017), the system in general persists. Industry magazines merrily continue to offer guides on where to get the best government deals ("Uncle Sam" 2008), as the *Hollywood Reporter*'s map of 2018 schemes illustrates.

Negative reactions to these subsidies derive either from specific objections to support for film but not manufacturing and farming, or opposition to industry stimulation/policy in general. Such criticisms frequently come from an elite of coin-operated think tanks across the country that are funded by wealthy US foundations and families and ideologize extravagantly on everything from sexuality to foreign policy. Ghostwriters make their resident intellectuals' prose attractive to lay readers as part of a project that is concerned more with marketing opinion than conducting research—for each "study" they fund is essentially the alibi for an op-ed piece. Some loathe Hollywood for its supposedly liberal politics; others, for its reliance on public money.
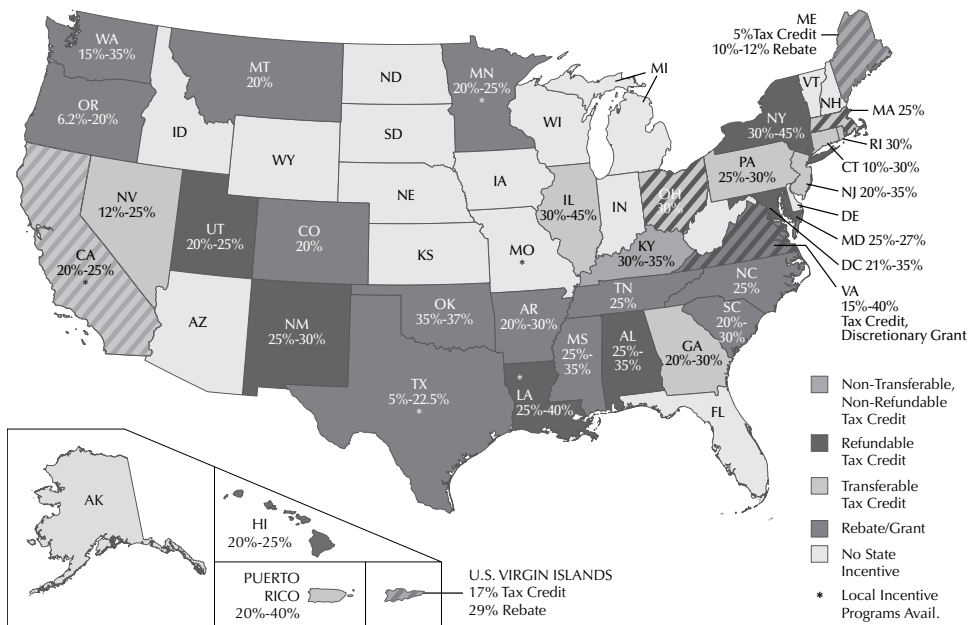
Figure 8.1.   Overview of US Production Incentives, Summer 2018
Source: Handel (2018)

We are familiar with the fantasies that simultaneously animate and derive from their neoclassical *nostra*. In this delightful, if rather simple, view, there are two principal economic actors: consumers and firms. Customers and companies allegedly produce nirvana via a magical invisible hand that allocates preferences by pulling and pushing the levers of supply and demand. It follows that the primary goal of conventional media economics is to organize resources in order to create capitalist goods. Workers are relegated to the submerged category of "x-factor inefficiency." This is not generally helpful for those of us on the left, who are concerned with work, justice, and equity. But there can be real points of engagement.

Pro-market think tanks oppose Hollywood subvention in telling and legitimate ways, if one can transcend their repellant cultural and redistributive politics. For example, the Heartland Institute disparages governmental assistance to "some of America's most-affluent businessmen at the expense of taxpayers" (Northdurft 2008). The Tax Foundation rails at "corporate welfare" that guarantees investors 15 to 20 percent returns on their investments and stimulates competition between states to provide more and more subsidies that are immediately lapped up and then quickly forgotten by Hollywood once alternatives beckon, leaving minimal if any ongoing benefit (Henchman 2008). Complaints are made that claims for economic development do not stand up because film and TV are not such sizable industries as automobile manufacturing, and the preponderance of revenue from film subvention lands in already-deep and well-lined Californian pockets (McHugh and Hohman 2008). These analysts obsessively sniff out subsidies that prop up lazy members of the bourgeoisie; they are very good at identifying and criticizing state film policies

that attract Hollywood through the promise of "free money."[2] They duel in the bourgeois media with arguments about the glamour, tourism, and jobs that supposedly accompany films as positive externalities (Sullivan 2007).

Consider less partisan studies emanating from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (Rollins Saas 2006), the Pew Charitable Trusts (2017), and academia. Researchers find minimal evidence that these subsidies pay for themselves in terms of private-sector expenditure during production or the establishment of ongoing local filmmaking infrastructure. Economic and sociological evaluations of incentives across the country between 1998 and 2013 suggest that transferrable tax credits had a derisory impact on film employment and none on wages; refundable tax credits offered no employment benefits and only contingent ones for wages; and no programs had clearly positive effects on either local media employment or the wider economy (Thom 2018a; O'Brien and Lane 2018). That evidence supports skepticism about the benefits versus the costs of tax breaks for movies as opposed to forms of longer-lasting job creation that do not have adverse effects on government receipts. It draws attention to the risk that filmmakers who might have come to particular locations anyway suddenly enjoy windfalls at ordinary citizens' expense. In that vein, neoclassical economics and radical political economy can agree on the importance of uncovering and problematizing state subsidies for SoCal capital (Miller 2005; Mayer and Goldman 2010; Grantham 2011).

Better results from film policies are unlikely, because of two factors: bidding contests between states, which ratchet up the terms they offer, and the longevity and desirability of the two big locations, Los Angeles and New York, as headquarters and residences. "Above-the-line" jobs (directing, writing, and acting) almost always go to LA-based people, who may be peripatetic due to state incentives, but spend most of their income—and are levied most of their taxes—far from the places where they briefly graze on location. Local workers, by contrast, are usually allocated "below-the-line" positions, as caterers and hairdressers—frequently low-paid, non-unionized, short-term, precarious jobs (Tannenwald 2010; Foster et al. 2013; Maxwell and Miller 2013; Mayer 2017).[3]

Picking up on the critiques, I take issue with the conventional logic that regards the mainstream US film industry as private. This chapter is designed to displace that *nostrum* with a counter-argument that sees the state coursing throughout moviemaking. I do this with reference to two sites: New Orleans and the military. They are both fecund sources of public money funding the majors, and hence enable Hollywood's capacity to export film and television at prices designed to fit other nations' capacity to pay, rather than to amortize the true cost of production or meet the needs of audiences. They are agents of cultural and media imperialism.

NEW ORLEANS

In 2013, New Orleans declared itself the "filmmaking capital of the world" (Scott, 2014). How so? Louisiana's Motion Picture Investor Tax Credit policy was established in 2002 and has enjoyed largely bipartisan political support. The legislation empowering the program has been renewed beyond its sunset clauses and expanded

into other types of cultural production. First proposed by a lapsed lobbyist for a California film-payroll firm, the policy was welcomed by the then-governor, Republican Mike Foster, an enthusiastic opponent of affirmative action and tort law and collaborator with David Duke, and his then–lieutenant governor, Mitch Landrieu, a Democrat who once ran the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and went on to become mayor of New Orleans. Landrieu hired a consulting firm to make the case on behalf of his department and continued to be a dedicated film-subsidy booster throughout his mayoralty, fearlessly championing problematic blueprints for a future creative class that he claimed would elevate the city's economy and reanimate everyday life (Christopherson and Rightor 2010; Miller 2016). As quoted by the wonderfully named Doug MacCash (2007) (a superb instantiation of nominative determinism), Landrieu avowed that: "If you build a place where smart, creative people live, you will create an economic engine." The only limiting factor here has been the near bankruptcy of the state, which sets (some) limits to the amounts that it could reimburse (Mayer 2017).

At the peak of Landrieu's boosterism, Louisiana offered funding for production budgets above $300,000. That figure was sufficiently low to attract TV drama and national advertising, yet high enough to exclude most independent work. So a block-buster film such as *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (Matt Reeves 2014) came to town to defray its cost of $170 million (Mendelson 2014), but local artisanal projects rarely qualified, due to their low budgets. Additional production incentives were allocated to wealthy out-of-towners by other means: the producers of *Top Chef* (2006–) negotiated to receive $375,000 of the money dedicated to stimulating tourism from BP's Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Trust settlement ("Deepwater Horizon" 2017).

For every dollar invested in Louisiana goods and services, the state has awarded production teams 30 percent of investment back through a resalable tax credit. As per the pioneering post-2009 trade in fictive capital mentioned earlier, these credits are quickly brokered through locally based firms and residents, who buy the credits to offset their own liability—the first benefactors of such credits were the accountants, insurers, and lawyers who managed their exchange. The incentives are packaged in $10,000 bundles and sold at 85 cents on the dollar (Miller 2017, 469). Local employment garners producers an extra 5 percent credit. Supporters of the policy have claimed that this creates skilled, green, well-paid work. Wealth was supposed to trickle down from generous energy and oil executives and the professional classes to caterers, truck drivers, and hotel maids (Mayer 2017).

Like other states, ever since Jimmy Carter's presidency, Louisiana has steadily lost federal funding to cover basic social services, even as its tax base has been eroded by industrial flight and closures, a stagnant middle class, and a political climate hostile to raising corporate taxes. Film revenues, said boosters, would provide the silver linings to this otherwise gloomy skyline. Adding together every conceivable economic multiplier that production might bring, the state claimed that the industry generated over $1.7 billion in revenues between 2010 and 2012. Meanwhile, the state was cutting spending on education, health, and social services (Mayer 2017).

In other words, government officials touted the putative creative economy, and the growth it promised, at the same time as ordinary workers back in the real economy

were suffering significant declines in living standards. This is hardly a shining exemplar of public incentives bringing value to the ordinary taxpayers who fund them. Yet even as the state confronted a budget shortfall in the hundreds of millions in 2018, Hollywood's handouts continued (White 2018).

THE MILITARY

Long before states began bidding to capture Hollywood's attention, the federal government was on the case in support of the film industry. Since before World War I, the Department of Defense has provided motion pictures at various times with money, diplomacy, technology, soldiers, and settings, in return for a jealously guarded right to veto stories that offend its sensibilities (Mirrlees 2017; Robb 2004). It has been equally active in television (Takacs 2017).

The Pentagon has principally involved itself through very open access to plenipotentiaries, locations, technologies, and extras—all for free. This support does not normally occur through direct subvention, as per the credits available in Louisiana; but it's impossible to imagine films such as *Top Gun* (Tony Scott 1986) being made minus our tax dollars underwriting Jerry Bruckheimer and his fun-filled storytellers and hellraisers using matériel and labor provided by their admiring and admired friends over at Defense (Galloway 2016). Film can thereby act "as a tool for recruitment, military public relations, and commercial profit" (Löfflmann 2013).

In addition to providing scenery, soldiers, and sidearms for action-adventure masculinity, the department also underwrites research that assists the cultural sector. Today's hybrid of SiliWood (Silicon Valley and Hollywood) articulates technology to storytelling through military funding. The interactivity underpinning this hybrid has evolved since the mid-1980s thanks to connections between Southern and Northern California semiconductor and computer manufacture and systems and software development (a massively military-inflected and -supported industry that thrived throughout the Cold War). Then Hollywood stepped in to exploit the detritus, as disused aircraft-production hangars became entertainment sites. The links are as much about technology, personnel, and collaboration on ancillary projects as they are to do with story lines. Steven Spielberg boasts the Pentagon's Medal for Distinguished Public Service; Silicon Graphics designs material for use by the empire in both its military and cultural aspects; and virtual-reality research veers between soldierly and audience applications, much of it subsidized by the Federal Technology Reinvestment Project and Advanced Technology Program. This has helped to submerge killing machines from serious public scrutiny. Instead, they surface superficially as Hollywood props (Directors Guild of America 2000; Hozic 2001, 140–41, 148–51; Burston 2003).

Defense sends scientists to film school to produce positive images of violent technocracy, while educrats and Hollywood elites reciprocate: They invite the military to town to explain its needy hopes for friendly ideological representations (Van Ness 2005; Wilson 2005; Halbfinger 2005). The state of Virginia, so proximate to the Pentagon, offers the usual raft of tax credits and grants, and in addition, easy access

to key military personnel and locations, from naval shipyards to the Pentagon itself ("Virginia Offers" 2018).

This relationship has become more systematic under the stimulus of media convergence and imperial conjuncture. In 1996, the National Academy of Sciences held a workshop for academia, Hollywood, and the Pentagon on simulation and games. The next year, the National Research Council announced a collaborative research agenda on popular culture and militarism. It convened meetings to streamline such cooperation, from special effects to training simulations, from immersive technologies to simulated networks (Lenoir 2003, 190; Macedonia 2002; Kundnani 2004).

The Institute for Creative Technologies[4] (ICT) at the University of Southern California (USC) was set up in 1999 to articulate film-school faculty, producers, and game designers to the defense budget. How very jolly. Inaugurated by the army and the Motion Picture Association of America, the institute was initially funded with $45 million of military money. That figure doubled in its 2004 renewal and trebled to $135 million in 2011. By the end of 2010, ICT products were available on sixty-five military bases (Deck 2004; Silver and Marwick 2006, 50; Turse 2008, 120; Hennigan 2010).[5]

The institute collaborates on major feature films, such as *Spider-Man 2* (Sam Raimi, 2004), and generates military recruitment tools that double as "training devices for military operations in urban terrain." The utility of these innovations continues in the field. The Pentagon is aware that off-duty soldiers play games and wants to invade their supposed leisure time in order to wean them from the skater genre in favor of what are essentially training manuals. It maintains that *Full Spectrum Warrior* was the "game that captured Saddam," because the men who dug Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti out had played it (Turse 2008, 122, 119).

Put another way, the ICT uses federal booty, scholarly innovation, and Hollywood diegeses to test out homicidal technologies and narrative scenarios, under the aegis of film, engineering, theater, and communications professors. To keep up with the institute's exciting, dynamic work, one can listen to the podcast *Armed with Science: Research and Applications for the Modern Military*, available via the Department of Defense.[6] Subscribers going back through time will learn that the Pentagon and USC developed *UrbanSim* to improve "the art of battle command" as part of Barack Hussein Obama II's imperial wars. This apparently commendable initiative was described as a small shift from commercial gaming by one institute scholar: "Instead of having Godzilla and tornados attacking your city, the players are faced with things like uncooperative local officials and ethnic divisions in the communities, different tribal rivalries."[7] Through further investigation, interested parties may discern from ICT propaganda that its followers are guaranteed to learn "How Science and Storytelling Come Together to Benefit Soldiers, Students and Society" (USCICT n.d.). Right.

In general, the military gets a free pass in domestic US politics, and public life more generally, by contrast with other arms of government. For one thing, it provides the only real jobs program in the country—massive welfare for the young (Reich 2010). And second, it eludes notions of tax wastage and the country's maniacal anti-government tendencies, because it is erroneously seen as somehow and somewhere beyond the state—a benevolent incarnation of the people (Kennedy 2016). As a consequence, the Pentagon's

cultural policies that favor Hollywood do not attract criticism from right-wing think tanks in the same way as do interventions by state governments.

CONCLUSION

We are forever told that Hollywood exemplifies laissez-faire economics, that its success is attributable to the capacity of its moguls and artists to meet the public's desires. Decades of political-economic critiques of the dominant logic have had little impact on this belief among practitioners, reporters, students, and theorists.

Until now.

We can discern an improbable contemporary confluence between libertarianism and Marxism. The reason is that both tendencies draw attention to cross-subsidies of capital by the state. So right-wingers attack US state governments for their subvention of Hollywood just as we do. Perhaps we'll finally have some success in drawing attention to the realities of the film industry's money machinery!

This convergence can only ever amount to a temporary, contingent confluence of views, especially as coin-operated think tanks tend to support military expenditure rather than a knowledge-health-and-ecology dividend favored by the left. But their work is useful in helping to account for Hollywood's success in ways that go beyond the textual and audience explanations favored by all and sundry, and as one component of the important work of unveiling the necessary, historic, ongoing, and future role of the state in propping up capitalism. They deem it aberrant. We recognize it as ordinary and vital—all too ordinary and vital.

That doesn't mean we must concur with our friends at *The Economist* calling movie subsidies "a stupid trend" ("Unilateral Disarmament" 2011). It *does* mean we can agree on the need to make such programs more visible, in the name of transparency and the inevitability of state participation in the economy—with the next move being a call for more democratic control of the privileged segment of Hollywood's workforce, and the stories those people choose to tell.

One more thing. In the rush to complete a draft of this chapter, I almost forgot Disneyland. So here's an addendum: how lovely that "a magical kingdom where you can sail with pirates, explore exotic jungles, meet fairy-tale princesses, dive under the ocean and rocket through the stars . . . where generations of families have made their Disney dreams come true"[8] has received over $250 million in tax credits from the good people of Anaheim and its environs (Maddaus 2018b). Party on, dude. But as you do so, let's work together to reform such socialism by stealth in the name of capital to make it something more honest, more straightforward—and more socialist.

NOTES

1. Some of the resources and ideas used here derive from work done with Vicki Mayer and Heidi Schmalbach on New Orleans and Richard Maxwell on screen subvention more generally. The chapter is the better for the editors' recommendations, patience, and generosity.

2. "Free money" is the term producers use for investors or bankers who will neither claim equity nor seek returns of any kind.

3. California's tax credits themselves have basically had no effect on employment, which appears to follow wider economic trends, as industry regulars continue to reside in the state regardless of where pictures are made (Thom 2018b).

4. http://ict.usc.edu.

5. http://ict.usc.edu/news/item/usc_institute_for_creative_technologies_receives_135_million_contract_exten. There is some skepticism about the value of such work to military training (Newsome and Lewis 2011).

6. http://science.dodlive.mil.

7. http://science.dodlive.mil/2010/03/page/3. Readers can also explore ICT's Twitter address (@usc_ict), blog (http://ict.usc.edu), and Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/USCICT). The day before writing my first draft of this chapter, I learned of "The Quantified Marine"—another ICT project. Hortatory remarks of the institute's self-regard proliferate, gleefully exported from USC to the world, extolling the virtues of work done behind its Pentagon portals. For example, the institute "is revolutionizing learning through the development of interactive digital media," because by "collaborating with our entertainment industry neighbors, we are leaders in producing virtual humans," thereby furthering "cultural awareness, leadership and health." If that isn't sufficient as a teaser, a quick trip to ICT's "Press Portal" will introduce eager beavers to a veritable cornucopia of white male experts ready to pass comment on all and sundry (http://ict.usc.edu/news/press-portal).

8. https://disneyland.disney.go.com/destinations/disneyland.

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Chapter 9

The US Embassy–Hollywood Complex

The Sony Pictures Hack and Twenty-First-Century Media Imperialism

Paul Moody

On November 24, 2014, one of Hollywood's biggest movie studios, Sony Pictures Entertainment, had its computer system compromised in what would become the largest hack of an entertainment company to date. The architects of this intrusion, the so-called Guardians of Peace, appeared to be acting in retaliation to the impending release of Sony's latest comedy, *The Interview* (Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg 2014), in which Seth Rogen and James Franco play two journalists who are traveling to North Korea to interview the country's leader, Kim Jong-un, but are intercepted by the CIA en route and tasked with assassinating him instead. The film's content and original release schedule[1] were perceived to be provocative by the North Korean government, and after threats of retaliation if the film was exhibited, eventually hackers uploaded several unreleased Sony films for free on the internet, followed by a deposit of tens of thousands of private documents online, revealing personal details of Sony employees and full transcripts of a large amount of their email correspondence from 2013 to 2014. By April 2015, WikiLeaks had acquired this material and placed over 30,000 documents and 174,000 unredacted email transcripts on its website.

While screenwriters such as Aaron Sorkin protested that there was not "even one sentence in one private email that was stolen that even hints at wrongdoing of any kind" (Sorkin 2014), the fallout led to Sony Pictures's then chairwoman, Amy Pascal, losing her job after a series of casually racist email exchanges with producer Scott Rudin were revealed[2] and the vast discrepancies in pay between men and women at the company were made public, leading to an industry-wide recalibration. Apart from these high-profile examples, there was little else from the hack that attracted serious media interest. However, this chapter argues that, in contrast to Sorkin's protestation, the leaked documents provide unique insight into the relationship between a Hollywood studio and the US Department of State, revealing how the US state uses its global network of embassies to geopolitically support the economic interests behind its most lucrative and recognizable cultural export: the Hollywood film. The leaked documents are analytically useful to this study, as they represent unguarded communications between US government officials and Hollywood business elites that are not normally circulated to the public and are infrequently open to public scrutiny. I argue that these leaked documents highlight a symbiotic relationship between the

US state and Hollywood, revealing examples of modern media imperialism in action and providing vital evidence in support of a theory that has often been criticized for lacking any empirical foundation.

MEDIA IMPERIALISM REVISITED

Media imperialism emerged in the late 1970s out of the pioneering work of Herbert Schiller (1969), whose concept of cultural imperialism was designed as a way of explaining the relationship between various cultural industries and the US state. As Sparks (2012) observes, Schiller claims that, first, "the media and cultural apparatuses of the USA, aided by the government, dominate the international trade in media" and, second, the "result of the continual consumption of this US-made material is effective propaganda for the ideas and values of the USA" (Sparks 2012, 284). These two propositions are at the core of most concepts of media imperialism, defined by Oliver Boyd-Barrett as

> the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected. (Boyd-Barrett 1977, 117)

After the end of the Cold War, new theories of globalization attempted to posit a post-imperial world and downplay the importance of nation-states in the wake of new international media conglomerates (see Appadurai 1997; Thompson 1995; and Tomlinson 1991). However, this chapter argues that the key proposition of globalization is overstated, and instead, that the Sony hack clearly outlines how the US state and Hollywood remain closely entwined in a mutually beneficial relationship in the twenty-first century. Importantly, whereas most research on these state-corporate links has focused explicitly on Hollywood's connections to the US Department of Defense and US intelligence services (see Alford 2010; Jenkins 2012; Robb 2004; and Valentin 2005), this chapter extends the media-imperialism thesis by exploring the symbiotic relationship between the US State Department and Hollywood, and the diplomatic agenda which has often been obscured by the focus on Hollywood's military connections.

I previously explored the geopolitical and economic relationships between the US state and Hollywood companies with an analysis of a cache of diplomatic cables from US embassies, released by WikiLeaks in November 2010. My first article focused on how the US State Department uses its embassies to monitor and challenge negative media portrayals of the United States and to establish film production bases in foreign countries, which will serve its political agenda (Moody 2017a). My second article demonstrated how the US State Department's embassies are used to monitor alleged breaches of Hollywood's intellectual property rights, enforce Free Trade Agreements (which are often detrimental to the countries with which they are ratified), and pursue punitive measures against countries that do not comply with its edicts (Moody 2017b). Together, these two articles provide a significant counterpoint to post-imperial globalization theory by empirically demonstrating that a modern form of US media

imperialism is in operation on a vast scale, and they can be placed within a small body of revisionist literature (Boyd-Barrett 2015; Maxwell 2003; McChesney 2001; Mirrlees 2016a, 2016b; Morley 2005; Murdock 2006) which in recent years has sought to engage with Schiller's original concept and reignite the wider projects of cultural and media imperialism for the twenty-first century. Thus, this chapter concurs with Mirrlees's restatement of the key claims of media imperialism in 2016, to the effect that

> the US culture industry is tremendously significant to the US empire as an engine of capitalist growth, a tool and source for PR, a space of war, a means of building a national identity inside the US territory and projecting it to the world, a shaper of public opinion, and a source of the strategic imagination. (Mirrlees 2016a, 63)

To make this case, this chapter takes the broad themes and methodology established in my earlier work and applies it to a case study of a modern Hollywood studio, albeit one that has a transnational dimension as part of Japan's wider Sony enterprise.[3] Of the 174,000 emails released by the hackers, 206 specifically mention the word "embassy" and 65 the word "consulate." I have reviewed all of these for this chapter, along with several hundred emails from specific US ambassadors to key Sony executives, in order to ascertain the level and variety of engagement between the US government and the company. I have not revealed any personal details in my analysis of the correspondence, nor have I named anyone who is not a senior Sony executive or US ambassador, although the references to the original documents may inevitably lead some readers to these details. By reviewing this material, I will produce an inside look at the mutually beneficial relationship between the US State Department and one of the "Big Six" Hollywood studios, and this specific case provides insight into the nature of media imperialism that is often not even captured in the classified embassy cables that comprised the sources for my earlier work. As Tony Shaw and Tricia Jenkins argue:

> While most American government agencies today have entertainment liaison offices that work formally with Hollywood studios, the Sony emails suggest that, as was the case with the "state–private network" during the Cold War, a significant amount of the political messaging that occurs in US popular culture is accomplished outside this framework, namely through the private communications of well-placed individuals with shared interests who prefer to hide their connection lest they be accused of propaganda or censorship. (Shaw and Jenkins 2017, 3)

Sony has many overt connections with the US government. Its then-CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment, Michael Lynton, was a member of two influential political think tanks: the Council of Foreign Relations and the RAND Corporation (Shaw and Jenkins 2017, 11), and Sony itself is a member of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), which has a long history of lobbying the US government. However, as Shaw and Jenkins demonstrate, Lynton would also regularly seek the advice of the US State Department when debating the release strategy for *The Interview*, the film that precipitated the eventual hack of Sony's data, and this relationship was reciprocated on several occasions with the US Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Richard Stengel (Shaw and Jenkins 2017, 13). This chapter will

now outline how this type of relationship extended further, and it will reveal how embedded Sony is in the US State Department and its global network of embassies.

EVIDENCE FROM THE SONY EMAILS

What is striking on initial viewing of the Sony emails is the picture they paint of the cozy relationship between the company and the US government. While this type of connection has been hypothesized since Schiller started writing in the late 1960s, evidence of this to date has been derived primarily from government archives, re-leased after many decades had passed and the issues depicted had ceased to have any political import. With this release, a significant realignment has taken place, with the documents providing insight into this process from the perspective of the media company itself, rather than the official government record, and via a more informal form of communication. As such, what is most significant about this release is the cumulative picture it provides of how this alliance operates on a day-to-day level, and how frequent these communications are. One of the earliest emails from the release identifies how Sony's promotional activities for its film products were supported by US embassies, establishing one of the key themes of this relationship that would be developed throughout the period covered by the hack. An email from April 2014 out-lines how a special preview of *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (Mark Webb, 2014) was held at the residence of the US ambassador in Madrid for several invited dignitaries (WikiLeaks Sony Files email ID#189008; hereafter referred to as WSF). While US embassy screenings like this might add some Hollywood glamour to an otherwise drab event, they also subtly promote US brands and interests. Other embassy film screen-ings were more overtly political. In January 2014, John B. Emerson, the US ambas-sador to Germany, wrote to Lynton to suggest that the German embassy could host an event "in honor" of *The Monuments Men* (George Clooney, 2014), a World War II film that was due to screen at the Berlinale festival in February that year. Emerson said:

> We do a traditional brunch on the 8th at the Embassy for a couple of hundred folks, and we could turn that into a Monument Men [*sic*] event. Fyi, I have already agreed to host a screening of the film for students on Feb 19th, the day before its official opening here. (WSF #119931)

It is clear from this example that *The Monuments Men*, a story of sacrifices made by a group of US soldiers to save notable artworks from the Nazi regime during World War II, was perceived to be a particularly important example of the US heroic image that the State Department wanted to promote widely. So much so, in fact, that Sony's vice president for worldwide government affairs, Keith Weaver, was arranging for *The Monuments Men* to be screened for German chancellor Angela Merkel that February (WSF #122601), and Sony provided it for discussion at a summit featuring President Barack Obama and King Abdullah of Jordan (WSF #116653). *The Monuments Men* was a US-German co-production, and its part-funding by the German Federal Film Fund explains the German embassy's enthusiasm to some degree. But as I noted pre-viously (Moody 2017a), US embassies use film screenings to inculcate students and

much of the local populace with US foreign policy ideas, and the German embassy screenings of Hollywood films like *The Monuments Men* suggest that this practice is still widespread. In fact, email correspondence from Chris Dodd, chairman of the MPAA, outlines exactly that, recounting the success of its "Innovating Contest" at the US embassy in Brazil, a competition in which Brazilian university students worked on a project focused on understanding the importance of intellectual property rights. The email from Dodd states explicitly how the MPAA and, by implication, Hollywood and the US State Department, will benefit from the program, calling it a "moment of discoursing about MPA's [*sic*] mission, its position on intellectual property and on the importance of working along with the [*sic*] academia" (WSF #199911). Similar US embassy uses of Sony's films for "educational" purposes can be found in Weaver's correspondence, in which he would outline his various contacts with government officials in regular emails to Sony's general counsel, Leah Weil. For example, Weaver told her of his plans for the premiere of another World War II drama, *Fury* (David Ayer 2014) at the Newseum in Washington, DC, where he prioritized a meeting with US assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs, Charles Rivkin, who would be in "India in November, so a good opportunity to brief him on our interests in the region" (WSF #107549). The marketing manager for Monolith Films, who was handling *Fury*, had already discussed with Sony in an earlier email that they were "negotiating US embassy support" for the film's release (WSF #196032), again presenting a pattern of behavior that suggests embassy engagement was a regular part of the company's release strategy.

This activity was also supported by the actions of the MPAA. Like Weaver, Dodd was in contact with Rivkin, emailing to thank him for hosting a screening as part of Rivkin's *Exploring a Dynamic U.S.-China Film Relationship* event in Beijing that he had organized, which focused on creating "open markets" and "robust intellectual property rights" between the two countries (WSF #131509).[4] Likewise, in an email from Dodd to Weaver in December 2013, he would boast of his friendship with Senator Max Baucus, who was due to become the US ambassador to China. Dodd believed Baucus would be supportive of the "multitude of issues" that the MPAA had with China, mainly around perceived abuses of intellectual property rights (WSF #101532). But a series of emails starting in October 2013 provide the clearest example of how the MPAA would leverage government support for its agenda, when it informed its members of a substantial increase on customs duties in Kenya for the importing of Digital Cinema Packages (DCPs), the protected digital movie files that distributors send to exhibitors for screenings (WSF #192896). The revised duties, if levied, would result in US distributors being charged $40,000 per DCP, a figure that could have resulted in costs for the distributor of hundreds of thousands of pounds for a large-scale release in the country. By January 2014, the MPAA would report that "sustained efforts last November through the US State Dept. [and] the US Embassy in Nairobi" had led to an agreement on a reduction in this fee, but that some customs officers were continuing to request the full amount, which the MPAA would challenge by "ramping up pressure through State in DC/US Embassy in Nairobi to find a more robust and permanent solution" (WSF #192896). By April, the MPAA was able to announce that "following added MPA [*sic*] pressure through the US Embassy in Nairobi and the US

State Dept . . . the [Kenyan authorities] held a meeting with Embassy officers, licensees, and (essential) customs officers" and that the duties had been rescinded (WSF #192896). It is clear from these exchanges what the benefits of US embassy support for Hollywood were, and how vital the US State Department's network of embassies had become for Hollywood's global business.

Likewise, the advantages for US embassies in partnering with Sony was stated explicitly by the ambassador to France and Monaco, Jane Hartley, who would write to Lynton in October 2014 to acknowledge that they had discussed over the summer how they could work together over the next few years. In this message, Hartley discusses how the mission of embassies could be supported by Sony's film celebrities:

> We have already started to think through ways your superstars could potentially help amplify some of the great work US Embassy Paris is doing. We'd love to include Sony names in events here, either as guests or performers, and would love the opportunity to leverage their popularity to promote the President's priorities and agenda overseas. (WSF #122518)

Hartley's email highlights the quid pro quo at the heart of the Hollywood/US State Department relationship, and to emphasize her enthusiasm further, she informed Lynton that she was already finalizing plans for a party in December that year at which elite French government and business figures would be in attendance, and that if Lynton knew of any Sony stars who would be in Paris on that date or who would be willing to travel for the event, to "let her know" (WSF #122518). Emails from Hartley's predecessor as US ambassador to France and Monaco, the aforementioned Charles H. Rivkin, reveal that he would also dine with the Lyntons on a regular basis (WSF #119053).

Lynton's close relationships with various ambassadors and US government officials, and the requests he received from international embassies, are detailed in a series of emails he received over the period covered by the hack. For example, Lynton would decline a meeting in December 2013 at the Canadian consulate in Los Angeles, to discuss "what Saskatchewan has to offer as a filming destination" (WSF #138405), although he would attend a meeting with the new UK ambassador, Sir Peter Westmacott, in October 2014 (WSF #134463). He was also personally invited to present the Sony film *Captain Phillips* (Paul Greengrass 2013) at a summit of US and Chinese ambassadors and military leaders, because of its "compelling story that details global challenges and cooperation" (WSF #130794). After the screening, Lynton was informed that it was a "huge hit" with the American and Chinese delegations (WSF #116653). In May 2013 Lynton would host a fund-raising event for Congresswoman Karen Bass (WSF #130193; WSF #112092), and for Senator Jack Reed at Lynton's own house in February 2013 (WSF #113001), with Reed repaying the favor by sponsoring Lynton for appointment to the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents in 2014. Regular communication can be seen between Lynton and the US ambassador to Prague, Norman Eisen, first recorded in the releases via an affectionate seasonal greeting to Lynton on December 26, 2013,[5] suggesting a long-standing connection between Lynton and the Prague embassy (WSF #116957). Eisen would reach out to Lynton to arrange a meeting when Eisen was next in Los Angeles in January 2014 (WSF #121368), and then the following month, Eisen arranged a call between Lynton, himself, and film director Wes Anderson (WSF #118426), whom he was in touch with as part of Anderson's research

on what would become *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (Wes Anderson, 2014). By May 2014, Eisen would put Lynton and his wife in contact with ambassadors in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, after Lynton, who was visiting there in July that year, had asked for travel tips (WSF #117286). Again, while nothing untoward is suggested in this correspondence, the frequency of the contact and the camaraderie expressed is indicative of a long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship.

On the one hand, Lynton's connections to ambassadors and government officials may not appear to be unusual. Lynton came from a background in finance and had already established contacts within America's political elite before taking on his role at Sony, dating back to his time at his alma mater, Harvard. His friendliness with Rivkin was also partly due to the fact that Rivkin was Lynton's cousin, although this familiar relationship was noted as of potential benefit to Sony by Weaver (WSF #107549). However, other emails released suggest that these connections were cultivated for his role and extended beyond the US political elite, such as his emails to the publishing magnate David Macmillan, in which he would joke that he would speak with the then UK chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, about replacing the then UK culture secretary, Ed Vaizey, with Macmillan, after first arranging the patronage of Charles Dunstone, the founder of Carphone Warehouse and prominent Conservative Party donor (WSF #129285). Other emails describe Lynton's lobbying of Vaizey in 2013 via email and telephone, in the wake of UK government proposals to install in UK law a private-copy exception, which would have effectively enabled individual UK citizens to make copies for home use of any movies that they had legally purchased (WSF# 138229; WSF #106890)—a measure that was ultimately not pursued, much to Sony's delight (WSF #108689). Lynton was part of the UK government's Film Policy Review panel, hence his acquaintance with Vaizey, but once again, the correspondence is indicative of the connections that he had developed with governments across the world. Vaizey would also solicit names from Lynton of Hollywood executives who were making significant investment in the United Kingdom, to invite to a dinner at Downing Street in May 2014 (WSF #131626), and he clearly was popular at Sony. For example, Weaver would email Lynton and Weil in July 2014 to say "congrats are in order" for Vaizey's promotion to minister for culture, media and sport, as this brought issues such as copyright control into his remit, and Sony believed that Vaizey was favorable to their opinion on this issue (WSF #113054).

These types of meetings between US embassy officials and officials representing foreign governments were by their very nature delicate politically, and one of the key insights from the hack is how these concerns, which normally would have not been formally recorded, would play out. For example, Weaver would prepare briefing notes for Lynton and Sony's chief executive, Kaz Hirai, before they met Obama at a roundtable in November 2013, along with other studio heads (WSF #106363). However, Hirai withdrew before the meeting due to concerns about how his involvement would be perceived with regard to US/Japanese relations, especially on the thorny subject of IP issues (WSF #111868). But while Hirai was cautious of being reported attending a public meeting with the US president, he was also in regular and convivial contact with US embassy officials. Lynton would regularly drop in to the US embassy in Tokyo before visiting Hirai for dinner on one of his many visits to Japan (WSF

#123249), but in May 2014 Lynton arranged for two other guests to accompany them; the president of Sony Corporation of America, Nicole Seligman, and the US ambassador to Japan from 2013 to 2017, Caroline Kennedy[6] (WSF #117788). A series of email exchanges depicts a close personal relationship between Lynton and Kennedy, suggesting that they were in regular contact with their respective families, and their conversation was comfortable enough for her to playfully chide him for not telling her about a promotion that Seligman received (WSF #133308).

The themes and main actors outlined above converged in a series of email exchanges in 2014, which are the clearest indication of how the relationship between Hollywood and the US State Department worked, and the respective benefits for both parties. Weaver would write to Lynton in March 2014 to outline a proposal from Dodd, then still chairman of the MPAA, to upgrade the screening rooms of several US embassies (naming Germany, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan as examples), to enable US ambassadors to screen films to dignitaries, with the intention that this would help to "inculcate a stronger will to protect our interests through this quality exposure to our content" (WSF #110589). However, Lynton declined to proceed for cost reasons (WSF #110589). Weaver would write to Lynton again in July 2014 to repeat the request, copying Weil, and informing them that Dodd would likely be contacting them on the matter. In this instance, the rationale was expressed as being "that key Ambassadors will keep U.S. cultural interests top of mind, as they screen American movies for high level officials where they are stationed" (WSF #110828). Dodd had suggested Sony to spearhead this operation in Japan, which, as Weaver would put it, was "for obvious reasons," but was also due to "Nicole's longstanding [*sic*] relationship with Ambassador Kennedy" (WSF #110828). Interestingly, Weaver pointed out that the request was "not unusual," and that Sony had sponsored similar activity in the past during the tenure of former president of the MPAA, Jack Valenti (WSF #110828), although he did not elaborate on what exactly this had involved. The proposal would cost $165,000 per screening room, although it is not clear whether the mooted scheme was merely for an upgrade to the main US embassy in Tokyo or whether it would include its additional five consulates in that country, which would have potentially taken the cost closer to $1 million. Lynton replied to Weaver that while he personally was "not inclined to do the embassy," he would discuss the proposal with "Nicole" (WSF #108342). The "Nicole" referred to by Weaver and Lynton was Nicole Seligman, and her long-standing relationship with Ambassador Caroline Kennedy dated from their days at college together.

CONCLUSION

The communications between the US State Department and Sony Pictures Entertainment depicted in these documents cover only a short period—effectively just over eighteen months—and yet they present clear evidence of the symbiotic connections between the global network of US embassies and one Hollywood studio. One can only speculate as to whether this type of activity is replicated at the rest of the "Big Six" Hollywood studios, but the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that similar

scenarios are likely and that, contrary to many critics of the media-imperialism thesis, the economic interests of Hollywood are in fact still intertwined with the geopolitical interests of the US state. The reasons for this relationship are complex and multifarious, but at their core represent the essential drivers of capitalism playing out in the context of the US cultural industries. On the one hand, the benefits to a company such as Sony of cultivating this relationship are clearly spelled out in this correspondence; from reducing duties levied on their product in international markets to protecting its intellectual property rights, US embassy support is crucial to the maximizing of Hollywood's profits. But as these documents also show, this is a reciprocal relationship, with the US State Department using Hollywood to help promote its foreign policy agenda to elite government officials throughout the world, with the intention of inculcating its cultural perspectives in the process. This chapter's analysis of state-corporate communications documents leaked by the Sony email hack exposes this mutually beneficial relationship and argues that this US embassy–Hollywood complex is a key example of twenty-first-century media imperialism in action.

NOTES

1. The film was originally scheduled to be released on October 10, 2014, which is a public holiday in North Korea to commemorate the founding of the Worker's Party of Korea. It is clear from emails released in the hack that Sony executives were unaware of this coincidence until a few months before the film's release date (WSF #103617).

2. The emails mocked then president Barack Obama by suggesting films about the black slave trade that Pascal could ask him about (WSF #60731).

3. While Sony's multinational nature may invite the question of why its activities should not be regarded as much a manifestation of Japanese media imperialism as it is American media imperialism, its ownership structure helps to explain the US State Department's enthusiastic support for it. Sony Corporation of America (SCA; a subsidiary of Japan-based Sony) is headquartered in New York City, and SCA owns Sony Pictures Entertainment (headquartered in Culver City, California). The company is very much part of global Hollywood's "Big Six," and its integration and headquartering in Hollywood can be read as evidence of the continuing power of a US-centered but globalizing Hollywood, not of the diminishment of its hold on global studios and screens.

4. Rivkin would remain assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs until 2017, after which he succeeded Dodd as chairman of the MPAA.

5. Although it was blind carbon-copied to all respondents, subsequent personal emails to Lynton suggest that he was the recipient at Sony.

6. Caroline Kennedy is former president John F. Kennedy's only surviving child, again suggestive of Lynton and Sony's connection to the US political elite.

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Chapter 10

Dispatches from the Militainment Empire

Roger Stahl

In 2009, *Avatar* became the most commercially successful film of all time thanks to its exotic sci-fi plot, but the tale of its relationship to the military is in some ways stranger. At the time, a range of commentators from across the political spectrum took the film to be an allegory for US imperialism, as either biting critique or unfair smear of everything from colonialism to the Iraq War. This was a curious interpretation given that nowhere in its intergalactic story line does the film mention nationality, much less the United States.[1] The major protagonists are private, corporate entities: the Resources Development Administration (RDA) out to mine indigenous land and a mercenary force called Secops that provides the muscle to do so. The closest the film comes to referencing American nationality is Jake Sully, the paraplegic protagonist identified in the film as a former marine.

This was enough, however, to rouse the ire of Col. Bryan Salas, the director of Marine Corps public affairs. Salas wrote in a widely circulated and scathing letter that "'Avatar' takes sophomoric shots at our military culture and uses the lore of the Marine Corps and over-the-top stereotyping of Marine warriors to set the context for the screenplay" (*Military Times* 2013). It was a strange accusation for a number of reasons. For one, Sully is the only member of the US military (former or otherwise) identified in the film. Moreover, he is a wholly dignified and sympathetic character from the beginning, when he endeavors to persuade the indigenous Na'vi to allow mining, to the end, when he heroically fights alongside them against the villainous Secops to protect their land. Regardless, Salas's critique advanced to the front lines of the public conversation about *Avatar*, armed as it was with the impenetrable armor of "support the troops" rhetoric. The wave of criticism forced director James Cameron into damage-control mode. He began by going straight to the source and scheduling a goodwill meeting with Salas. When he emerged, he publicly pled that Sully embodied the Marine Corps's noblest ideals (Agrell 2010; Nolte 2010). There it was, Hollywood and the military: two old foes at it again. Or so it seemed.

Fast forward to 2015 when a Freedom of Information Act request unearthed a trove of documents regarding the US Marine Corps Television and Motion Picture Liaison Office and their weekly activities, including extensive work on *Avatar*. The documents revealed that the marines met with director James Cameron on March 28, 2009,

with a deal that "offered courtesy support for verbiage in the script dialogue." The reports went on to note that the marines "expected to meet with Mr. Cameron again to continue with script changes," which eventually took place on-set in mid-April. As to the nature of the military's "courtesy support," the available weekly reports from the Liaison Office did not specify. (Was it the usual suite of consultants, uniformed extras, military hardware, and bases for film sets?) Nor do the reports detail the precise script changes granted in return. What we do know is that Sully utters a number of lines that might otherwise have come straight out of a recruitment ad: "I became a marine for the hardship. To be hammered on the anvil of life. I told myself I could pass any test a man can pass." Indeed, the marines enjoyed favorable mention on no less than a dozen occasions, each hammering public consciousness on the anvil of public relations. We also know that this finished script was worlds away from the lengthy scriptment that Cameron penned for the film in 1995, titled *Project 880,* which mentions the marines only once. Here the wheelchair-bound Sully confirms he was once a part of the corps, but when asked if he was wounded in combat, he replies, "Fell out a window, drunk, at a base party" ("Project 880"). By the time *Avatar* held its December premiere gala, all of that had been fixed. Cameron's production team even invited representatives from the Television and Motion Picture Liaison Office to join the usual A-listers on the red carpet. The marines returned the favor sometime in early February 2010 by hosting a visit by the film's actors and producers with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit as part of the Navy's Entertainment Program. Central Command loved the film so much that it issued a similar invitation ("USMC Television and Motion Picture Liaison Office: Los Angeles Weekly Reports," 2008–2013).

So here we find ourselves, amid sincere declarations of "I see you" and all the klieg lights in the world, confronted with something of a mystery. Why would Salas, whose own public affairs division had assisted in the film's scripting and production, publicly denounce the film as anti-military? And why would Cameron, suffering a hail of accusations, not defend himself by simply acknowledging that Salas's own office had assisted with the film? To what extent was this a legitimate controversy? Are we to assume that it was in some ways staged to cloak an otherwise cozy public relations relationship? How do we square such absurdities, and why did it take so long for us to learn of them? The questions only multiply from here, suggesting that, much like the passengers on the great ship in Cameron's *Titanic*, we are privy only to the iceberg's tip. Thankfully, researchers studying the relationship in the past decade have rescued us from the temptation to sink into speculation by providing reams of evidence to the nature of military-entertainment collaboration, the forces driving its interested parties, and the ways that it has shaped the public picture of both the military and war. In this way, the story of *Avatar*'s production and reception illustrates the vast chasm between what we knew even a few short years ago and what we know today. And as we will see, the film represents only one small peephole into the vast machinery of "militainment," the practices by which the most powerful military in the world leverages the most powerful entertainment industry in the world for public relations purposes.

This chapter proceeds in two parts. The first acquaints us with the operation of a typical deal, the major themes that have thrived in this environment of collaboration, and the history of this kind of military public relations. The second tells the story

of how major discoveries in the past decade have radically updated what we know about the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle penetration of military public relations into the entertainment industries. On the whole, this exploration underscores the primary role of the military-entertainment complex in the broader process that has sometimes gone by the term "cultural imperialism." Borrowing a quasi-martial metaphor, this concept has long been useful for recasting an otherwise frivolous and ethereal culture industry as a weapon in global capital's long march to reterritorialize planetary existence. The push to understand cultural commodities along these lines, however, has sometimes ignored the ways that the military, in a literal sense, has worked to shape the messages emanating from Hollywood, television, and other entertainment industries. Simply put, recent revelations have driven home the fact that that commercial culture not only *functions like* classical military power; in many cases it is a direct *expression of* military power.

THE WAR MACHINE BEHIND THE SCREEN

Most suspect that *Top Gun* (1986) was good for recruitment back in the day, but few have contemplated the fact that such a film would not have been made without a massive loan consisting of planes, bases, aircraft carriers, and extras to Jerry Bruckheimer and Tony Scott. Given that an aircraft carrier costs around a million dollars a day to run, Tom Cruise's high fives start to add up, and filmmakers are not immune to the iron rule that those who pay the piper call the tune. Even if the military is involved in such a film from conception forward, as was the case with *Top Gun*, it generally expects to be granted the ability to tweak the script with the goals of making the military look exciting for possible recruits, expunging unsavory historical details, pushing various weapons systems, and generally massaging the narrative so that the public will click its heels and salute the next time the president calls for military action in some part of the world. For a profit-driven enterprise like Hollywood, the enticement of this government subsidy is often irresistible, nudging producers and directors from the beginning to choose projects and write scripts with military interests in mind.

Let us consider a few specific examples to illustrate the forces at work, beginning with the 1994 film *Countermeasures*, starring Geena Davis. If it does not ring a bell, it is probably because it was never made. Production of the film was abruptly halted when the filmmakers could not entice the DoD to supply an aircraft carrier to set the action. The Pentagon denied assistance on the grounds that the plot involved a crime ring among the ranks, and there was "no need to remind the public" of the Iran-Contra scandal (Robb 2004, 46). Thus, in the end, we were not reminded. Most of the time, however, the script only requires some editing. In exchange for cooperation, for example, the DoD requested that the mad scientist in *The Hulk* (2003) be changed from military to ex-military and that the script eliminate all references to the US chemical weapons program in Vietnam that unleashed Agent Orange on soldiers and the population (Secker and Alford 2017, 8). Ultimately, we were not reminded of that either. Many supported films are just what the DoD ordered from the start, however. As a final example, consider the Tina Fey vehicle *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* (2016), a comedy

about the trials of being a woman reporter in US-occupied Afghanistan. The book from which it was adapted—reporter Kim Barker's memoir, *The Taliban Shuffle*—was highly critical of US motives and methods. Yet the script that landed on the desk of Phil Strub, then DoD's Hollywood liaison, was stripped of everything but a few harsh words about the reporter's bosses back home and a watered-down feminist message about backward Afghanistan that, in the long tradition of this orientalist frame, served to justify the occupation (Cloud 2004). The film received the DoD's full blessing and support. The backdrop of noble occupation greased the wheels, but the Pentagon cited the "primary motivation for providing support" as a final scene where a double-amputee vet, who has a well-adjusted and successful family life stateside, gives Fey's character some sunny life advice. Amid chirping birds on an idyllic farmhouse patio, he says that he misses Afghanistan, that he views the situation as an inevitable effect of historical forces beyond anyone's control, and that, like him, she should "move on." For the DoD, his don't-worry-be-happy attitude must have been a refreshing break from the reality of vets battling the VA and committing suicide at a rate of twenty per day (Kime and Shane 2017). No need to be reminded of that. The DoD did have one small request for a scene where a transport vehicle loses control and plows into a crowded marketplace, however: change the truck from army to NGO. Audiences may still be left asking WTF, in other words, but forces behind the scenes ensured that the question was aimed at targets other than the military and its forever wars.

The examples could continue ad infinitum, but these serve to demonstrate the quiet nature of the DoD's efforts to tilt the field of representation. As indicated by the strange case of *Avatar*, those involved in this collaboration generally do not go out of their way to announce its existence, which keeps the invisible hand invisible. There are some exceptions. When hyping the authenticity of the film, the navy was uncommonly explicit about its role in producing *Act of Valor* (2012), a series of recruitment ads expanded into a full-length film that featured real Navy Seals playing themselves. This probably backfired to some degree by stoking public suspicion regarding the White House's hand in penning and supporting *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), which erupted into a full-fledged political scandal, one of the few moments where government entertainment liaisons have come under real public scrutiny. And it likely threw shade on the CIA-assisted *Argo* (2012), which nevertheless went on to take the Oscar for best picture. By and large, however, even if the military appears in the "special thanks" section of the credits, theatergoers seldom are put in a position to wonder why they paid fifteen dollars for state propaganda. Lighting up the screen with a big celebration of US military power, in other words, most often involves leaving audiences in the dark.

Government attempts to influence entertainment media have evolved over time, beginning with President Wilson creating the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in 1914 to induce American popular support for entering World War I. Its chief, George Creel, called the agency "a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventure in advertising" (Creel 1920, 4). The CPI included a Film Division for working with Hollywood and eventually a Scenario Division for conceiving and pitching scripts to producers (Axelrod 2009, 151–53; Daly 2012, 164–67). Such efforts also

established practices and networks for projecting American influence abroad. In the following decades, this relationship solidified as Hollywood more frequently incorporated massive loans of military hardware and sometimes thousands of enlisted soldiers into epic scenes. The World War II successor to the CPI was the Office of War Information (OWI), whose Bureau of Motion Pictures represented another big surge into Hollywood territory. By 1949, what had become known as the Department of Defense had set up a permanent office called the Motion Picture Production Branch, headed by Don Baruch, a former off-Broadway producer and military public affairs officer, who manned the helm until retirement in 1989.

Around this time, the office expanded its directives on paper from simply promoting "accuracy" to anything that aids in recruitment and generally "contribute[s] to public understanding" ("Department of Defense Instruction" 1988). This was the charge of Baruch's successor, Phil Strub, who today remains the "Pentagon's movie mogul," as the *Chicago Tribune* described him in a rare 1996 exposé (Kemper 1996). Unlike his predecessor, Strub curates a public face through occasional and disarmingly meek press statements designed to ward off public suspicion and cultivate plausible deniability. When describing his job in 2010, for example, he suggested as usual that his office exists simply to make sure Hollywood depictions of the military are as "realistic" as possible (Strub 2010). He also is fond of suggesting the influence of his office is on the wane and nothing to worry about. In a 2012 *New Republic* profile titled "The Pentagon's Man in Hollywood: I'm a Eunuch," for instance, Strub explained how computer-generated imagery (CGI), among other things, has made him virtually irrelevant, a claim accepted at face value by the interviewer if the article's subtitle is any indication: "How the Pentagon Lost Its Hollywood Juice" (Bennett et al. 2012). Contradictory statements abound, however. Two years later he made the opposite case: "We're certainly no less busy than we were [before CGI]," he argued, "and it seems to me it's not just a matter of cost. There's something intangible they get from being surrounded by real military men and women and equipment and installations" (Tarabay 2014). In this way, Strub walks a tightrope between the will to boast about the efficacy of his office on the one hand and the need to minimize public perceptions of its influence on the other.

Until relatively recently, the story of this office was almost exclusively told by military historian Lawrence Suid in his definitive book *Guts and Glory*, first printed in 1978 and expanded in 2002. Although Suid (2002, 41–42) breezily admits that the Department of Defense sees the relationship with Hollywood as a public relations opportunity, he generally frames the relationship as frenemies entangled in a benign "mutual exploitation," an oft-recycled characterization that Strub "cheerfully confirm[ed]" in the *New Republic* interview with him (Bennett et al. 2012). It was not until 2004 that someone produced a critical history. In his *Operation Hollywood*, David Robb argues that although the relationship is a win-win for the military and Hollywood, it is a lose-lose proposition for the general public, who is the true exploited party. Suid and Robb (2005) quickly became the faces of a debate about the entertainment office's role, duking it out in a 2005 issue of *Film & History* over the extent of secrecy, the actual power that the liaison office exerts, and whether it counts as propaganda. In addition to these points of contention, this antagonism exposed the

deeper question of access to the source materials. Lawrence Suid enjoyed virtually unrestricted entrée to military archives. Although he maintains, perhaps anticipating reader skepticism, that neither Donald Baruch nor Phil Strub dictated "what to say or how to say it," their names appear at the top of the *Guts and Glory* list of acknowledgments (Suid 1978, xi; Suid 2002, ix). Robb's central struggle, on the other hand, was not fending off ghost editors but rather gaining access to the files in the first place. By his account, he encountered denial after denial, whereas Strub gave Suid full access "because he knew that Suid was writing a book that the Pentagon would like—a book about how movies never portray the military very accurately" (Robb 2004, 235). The question of access also haunts Suid's own rich collection of research documents and interviews housed at the Georgetown University library. To access this archive, one only needs Suid's personal permission, which he virtually never grants.[2] In this way, the DoD's alliance with such a historian acts as a first strike on potential public criticism, after which both close ranks against more critical researchers. The same dynamics that allow the DoD to shape Hollywood's story of the military allow it to shape the public story of its own Entertainment and Media Office. That is, if the office does not like the script, it will not grant access to the stuff, even if, in this case, the stuff ought to be part of the public record.

THE MORE YOU KNOW

Information wants to be free and has a way of finding its way through institutional firewalls, however. The cracks began to show in the mid-2000s. Until then, the available resources—Suid's book alongside a small set of officially released documents kept at the National Archives—indicated a rather modest list of 150 war films assisted by the US military since the beginning of the twentieth century. In the next few years, the story expanded somewhat, probably spurred by the DoD's decision to release an updated collection of documents to the Georgetown University library. These resources referenced many films well outside the war movie genre, from *The Three Stooges in Orbit* (1962) to *Jaws II* (1977) and *Armageddon* (1998). Robb's 2004 book provided additional glimpses into a whole undiscovered world of military-Hollywood collaboration. Shortly thereafter, perhaps in an attempt to keep up with the evolving story, Suid published his 2005 book *Stars and Stripes on Screen*, which presented a list of films, now including titles outside the war genre, that suddenly brought the number up to 575 (Secker and Alford 2017, 5).

   The biggest wave of revelations, however, came a decade later from a duo consisting of Matthew Alford, a lecturer at the University of Bath, and Tom Secker, a freelance journalist who maintains spyculture.com, a clearinghouse for information related to the security-entertainment complex.[3] In the course of their research, they encountered a frustrating loop. When they would send a request for documentation to the Entertainment and Media liaison office, Phil Strub would typically stonewall (once claiming, astonishingly, that his office no longer keeps paper or electronic records) and then direct them to consult with Suid's extant work as well as his archive, access to which Suid would deny. This pattern, Secker and Alford surmise, "serves

to highlight how the presence of Suid has helped insulate the DoD" (Secker and Alford 2017, 3–4). Driven to other strategies, the duo successfully turned up documents by filing dozens of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. In 2015, they unearthed the biggest cache of its kind to date, documents detailing the weekly activities between 2008 and 2015 of both the army and marine entertainment liaisons, which totaled around three thousand pages. In 2017, one of Secker's requests also yielded a lengthy but incomplete database of DoD projects. The new document cache painted an entirely new picture. Beginning with the numbers, Secker and Alford (2017, 5) counted 697 films that had received support. Even this is likely to be an incomplete count given that projects that appear in some official documents—including some of those mentioned previously, like *Countermeasures* (1994), *The Hulk* (2003), and *Avatar* (2009)—do not appear in the database. Some titles, such as *The Avengers* (2012), received support despite Strub's public statements to the contrary (Secker and Alford 2017, 6). Moreover, these numbers generally do not take into account security services like the CIA and NSA (Jenkins 2012; Willmetts 2017). For these reasons and others, Secker and Alford have more recently stated in personal correspondence that the number has been spiraling closer to a thousand, nearly twice that acknowledged by Suid in 2005. In retrospect, such figures make the official archival documents look very selective indeed.

Another takeaway from this new wave of disclosures is that the security state's influence sprawls well beyond the war film genre. In fact, some of its biggest projects in recent years have been the *Transformers* and *Iron Man* franchises, which Tanner Mirrlees (2013, 2017) has examined in detail. Other comic book and sci-fi titles are not far behind, from *Battleship* (2012) to *Man of Steel* (2013), *Godzilla* (2014), *Captain America* (2014), and more. Perhaps more significant is the unfolding story of DoD involvement as it sprawls beyond Hollywood. The definitive military-influence-in-TV-land history has yet to be written, but it is abundantly clear that the DoD has been actively involved in shaping the small screen as well. The official archives hint at this influence with scattered entries like *The Six Million Dollar Man* (ABC, 1973–1978), *The Greatest American Hero* (ABC, 1981), and *JAG* (1997–1998). Drawing from new documents, however, Secker and Alford tally at least 1,133 documented television productions that received support, a number that would perhaps double if individual episodes of consistently supported series (like *24*, *NCIS*, and *Homeland*) were counted. Unlike Hollywood, television's vast field allows producers to drill down on a theme. Take the celebration of military weaponry. We already knew that many Hollywood films have served as product placement venues for such weaponry, which can be seen in internal army memos that boast films like *Transformers III* (2011), "have depicted Strykers, Apaches, Blackhawks, Chinooks, Gray Eagle UAVs, Palletized Loading System (PLS) and an Army Fire Truck" ("OCPA-West Weekly Reports, 2010–2015" 2015, 8). Now we have a much better sense of the extent to which the military has turned television into a weapons demonstration expo. Perhaps the most prominent venue is the light documentary fare one encounters on the Discovery Channel (tour an Apache helicopter plant!), the National Geographic Channel (fire a Barrett sniper rifle!), the History Channel (watch Zephyr UAVs and howitzers in action on the Yuma, Arizona, proving ground!), and countless others ("OCPA-West Weekly

Reports, 2010–2015" 2015, 5, 106, 144). In addition to serving the advertising needs of weapons manufacturers and projecting a sense of US military might overseas, these programs have become conduits for forging emotional connections with weapons and galvanizing domestic public opinion around increased defense spending. Or, as the army liaison office likes to put it in its weekly entries, support for, say, a profile of the glorious M1 Abrams tank on the Discovery Channel's *How Do They Do That?* "supports modernizing the force" ("OCPA-West Weekly Reports, 2010–2015" 2015, 183).

It is a short leap from such programming to reality television, which new documents suggest has been one of the DoD's greatest pivots. When I wrote *Militainment, Inc.* in 2010, these ventures had only broken ground. Between 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the military sponsored a series of lifestyle and elimination game shows, which included a spate that put average people through some version of boot camp. A much bolder experiment arrived in 2002 with *Profiles from the Front Line*, co-produced by *COPS* creator Bertram Van Munster and DoD ally Jerry Bruckheimer. The military screen-managed this spectacle of cameras following soldiers' house-to-house sweeps in the way it had all but perfected: by leveraging access for narrative discipline. *Profiles* was singular, moreover, because the DoD chose it as the template (perhaps "pilot") for the embedded reporting system that it eventually designed to manage war news coverage. The passing years eventually shed light on these endeavors. One of the field producers for the show contacted me in 2014 after reading my book to pass on the details of the show's arrangement with the military. The directives—"Instructions from Bert [Van Munster]"—stated plainly that the show was to be "pro-military and patriotic." Bert went on: "We got criticized when the show was first announced; people said 'You're going to do some propaganda fluff piece about soldiers'—this isn't going to be a fluff piece, this is down and dirty." That was reassuring; at least it would not be fluffy. He was less clear about the propaganda part, and he certainly added to the ambiguity when he directed his field producers to "make sure that we handle our military liasons [*sic*] with great care and courtesy. They will report to their bosses, and they will yank us out of the field if we misbehave. They are our biggest ally and liason [*sic*] to the project, we need their total support, and we have no business being adversarial with them" (Van Munster 2002, 1, 5). This was as clear a statement as any about how such arrangements work, and it was also descriptive of the news coverage of the Iraq invasion. Bert made sure his employees knew that they were "not 'the news media'" but rather entertainment (Van Munster 2002, 5). Following this model, it could fairly be said that the embedded reporting system that followed in the *Profiles* mold was not exactly the news media either but rather a kind of reality show writ large.

If the FOIA documents released in 2015 tell us anything, it is that the military fully embraced the entire spectrum of reality television thereafter. These include the military version of the dirty jobs genre such as the National Geographic Channel's *Bomb Hunters* in Afghanistan and Animal Planet's *Glory Hounds*, just one of the network's many collaborations featuring military working dogs. The DoD sponsored elimination-style shows like the Discovery Channel's *Surviving the Cut* about soldier training programs and the History Channel's *Top Shot* marksmanship competition. The army even pitched an idea for a show called *It Would Take an Army*, about military community construction projects, to reality-TV godfather, longtime military collaborator, and

producer of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, Mark Burnett. From here, the activity bleeds into broader lifestyle productions, especially those that deal with veterans and military family life. The DoD's jewel in this particular crown may have been the scripted drama *Army Wives* (Vavrus 2013), but its entertainment liaison office capitalized on the show's popularity with a reality-TV version: Lifetime's *Coming Home*. According to internal memos, this Burnett-produced program "captures their happy homecomings for the world to see." The DoD hoped that a planned Morgan Spurlock production for MTV called *Coming Home* would intensify the barrage of this particular image ("OCPA-West Weekly Reports, 2010–2015" 2015, 641).

Beyond obvious "military shows" such as these, one is struck by the sheer diversity of military-assisted projects in the reality-TV vein. There are those military-does-it-best moments, as in NBC's *Ammo and Attitude*, where soldiers help out with an AR-15 shooting competition; episodes of *Extreme Weight Loss*, *The Biggest Loser*, and the Spanish-language *Dale con Ganas*, where drill sergeants go to work on the obese; and shows that make use of military obstacle courses like *American Ninja Challenge* and *Breakthrough with Tony Robbins* ("OCPA-West Weekly Reports, 2010–2015,"2015; "USMC Television and Motion Picture Liaison Office" 2008–2013). The DoD is always on the hunt for opportunities to embed soldiers and their story lines in game shows and has assisted with *The Price Is Right*, *Minute to Win It* with Guy Fieri, *American Idol*, and *Catch-21* (an odd choice given the history of "catch-22"). Filling the audience with service members for a Thanksgiving episode of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, providing soldiers to rappel onto the stage at *The Colbert Report*, arranging a family reunion for *Ellen*, and coordinating the makeover of a military wife to surprise her homecoming spouse on *The Rachael Ray Show* are all part of the DoD's bread and butter. Military "shout-outs" abound. As the DoD moves further out into reality-TV land, the list spans from the mundane to the bizarre: invite ESPN Outdoors to interview the troops on what the fishing is like in Afghanistan; host Penn and Teller at the National Training Facility in Fort Irwin, California, to produce a *Secrets of the Universe* episode on IEDs; help Criss Angel execute a magic trick that reunites a deployed soldier with his family; and plug military personnel inspirational stories into dozens of cooking shows, from *Top Chef* to *Restaurant Impossible*, *Cake Boss*, *Candy Queen*, and more.

GET ON THE CUPCAKE BUS

Many of these public relations efforts might appear innocuous. Who cares if the Pentagon facilitates an episode of TLC's planned reality show *Nashville Cupcakes* where "Francois and family [take] the 'Cupcake Bus' on a trip to Fort Campbell, KY in February 2011 to meet Soldiers and share their confectionary delights with the Troopers of the 101st Airborne Division and their families" ("OCPA-West Weekly Reports, 2010–2015" 2015, 512)? For one, the Pentagon cares. As its documents state, 1.5 million people will view this cupcake-sharing event, and it will "support building resiliency," which we can read as code for building emotional bonds that might come in handy later should some controversy over illegal wars or shooting civilians make

it to the headlines. We should care, too, because these efforts, perhaps trivial in each instance, add up to a symbolic environment that takes the form of common sense. A long history of DoD-supported war films—from *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) to *Act of Valor* (2012)—has reinforced the war-as-soldier-protection frame by depicting one rescue operation after another. As such, "support the troops" tends to mean "send them off to war again" rather than "protect them from further abuse by resisting the call to do so." Another strand of DoD-supported films—from *We Were Soldiers* (2002) to *Lone Survivor* (2013)—depicts the most powerful military in the world as the primary victim. As such, it is harder for us to summon the notion of the United States as imperial aggressor engaged in numerous illegal occupations.

One could argue, moreover, that the militainment empire looms ever larger in the public consciousness. The traditional news cycle has veered away from covering US military activities overseas even as it fans out from Iraq and Afghanistan (to operations in Libya, Syria, and sub-Saharan Africa), builds a sprawling drone strike network, and feeds the planet's worst humanitarian crisis by supplying weapons to level Yemen. Despite this war-shaped hole in the news, however, representations of the military and war proliferate on our entertainment landscapes. The military as an institution seems more present than ever. We might say that the more recent insinuation of officially sponsored militainment into the capillaries of everyday culture—reality TV, talk shows, and an array of venues not discussed in this brief chapter, like sporting events, video games, and documentary films—mirrors the imperial strategy of multiplying into ever more granular theaters of operation. The public relations is in part aimed at domestic public opinion, of course, but to the extent that American media products have become the world's currency, militainment has become a vital mode of maintaining American empire overseas. This is as true for *American Ninja Challenge* and *American Idol* as it was for *Avatar* (2009), 72 percent of whose top box office take came from foreign audiences. Although the aims may change, the strategy remains the same as it was during World War I when the Committee on Public Information first began forging alliances with the media. As Emily Rosenberg notes, the CPI ensured that "American books, movies, and press dispatches by 1929 were becoming as familiar around the world as Gillette razors and Heinz ketchup," and the agency's efforts had "lasting effects on America's position in international communications" (Rosenberg 2011, 81). Lasting, indeed.

NOTES

1. See an exploration of this polysemic text in Mirrlees (2013a, 3–5).

2. Suid briefly opened the collection up to Robb for *Operation Hollywood*, a decision he obviously came to regret. Otherwise, there are startlingly few citations of the "Lawrence H. Suid Collection" in the literature, even though it has been around for many decades and is arguably the foremost resource on this subject. The author could locate only two references, a 2013 history dissertation wherein Suid is the only person thanked in the acknowledgments section and a 2016 book that lists the collection as among a dozen or so consulted (Dougherty 2013; Edwards 2016).

3. See Alford (2010) and Alford and Secker (2017).

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Global Executioner

Legitimizing Drone Warfare through Hollywood Movies

Erin Steuter and Geoff Martin

The term "media imperialism" admits a variety of interpretations, but there is widespread agreement that US imperialism is an important contemporary phenomenon and that the media and other forms of culture are important in enabling, legitimizing, and reproducing it. Today's empire looks different from the classic European model, but the term remains valuable because of continuing domination and the disregard for sovereign borders (Hardt and Negri 2000, 38). As Mirrlees (2013, 29) suggests, the media-imperialism paradigm was rooted in the identification of consumerist and capitalist values being exported from the United States, and the global North more generally, to the global South. Many of these past contributions could have put more emphasis on the use of cultural products, including popular film, to send geopolitical messages about foreign and military policy to both domestic and overseas audiences. As Fojas (2015, 13) says: "If empire is an opiate, its delivery system is popular culture." Since 1990, in a world with the United States as the single dominant military superpower, the cultural dissemination of these geopolitical messages has become even more crucial.

With the exception of Dorfman and Mattelart's (1975) *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, the earlier, pioneering media imperialism literature (Schiller 1976), could have been stronger in providing in-depth textual, ideological, or narrative analysis of how popular entertainment products—such as the Hollywood war film—glorified the US empire's foreign policy and militarism. In recent decades we have come to agree that cultural effects are not unidirectional—we cannot state for certain the precise effects of media messages on audiences, especially for those in cultures different from the United States. In recent years there has been a revival of research that deals explicitly with the imperial content of entertainment (Alford 2010; Boyd-Barrett 2015; Boyd-Barrett, Herrera, and Baumann 2011; Martin and Steuter 2010; and Mirrlees 2014, 2016, and 2017). In this chapter we seek to contribute to this burgeoning literature.

This chapter contributes to the refinement of the media-imperialism paradigm by showing how the interests of the US military and Hollywood converge in the production of films about drone warfare that extol the geopolitical ideology of US war and militarism, and how we need to pay attention to how popular culture supports this imperial ideology. We explore several films featuring drone warfare that present and

legitimize the US military with the support of its Western allies as a "Global Executioner," traveling the world with disregard for borders (continuing a long tradition in doing so), and searching for and destroying adversaries, both individual and collective, in the name of a "Global War on Terror." Media imperialism is a notable means of building domestic but also global consent, partly through the cultural presentation of militarism (Martin and Steuter 2010). As Boggs and Pollard (2007, 20) put it: "Never in history has a culture and ideology of militarism been so far-reaching, so sophisticated, and yet so illusory, dependent upon powerful myths."

THE "GLOBAL EXECUTIONER" FRAME

The story the empire tells is not well supported by facts (quite the opposite), but it does leave the viewer with a satisfaction factor or "feel-good" result, which is of great value in both contemporary entertainment and political culture. As Fojas (2015, 191) says: "Empire demands a story, and stories demand protagonists, objects, and spaces." In this story the United States and the Western world more generally position themselves as innocent victims that have been attacked by aggressors. Sturken (2007, 38) notes how the United States has consistently defined itself in relation to a sense of external threat as a state that is continuously endangered. A narrative is constructed that self-protection, including through preemptive attack, is a just and necessary response to "unprovoked" aggression. Drawing on the global outpouring of sympathy after 9/11 (Croft 2006, 73), the United States has positioned itself as a self-appointed executioner, unconstrained by borders, with the surveillance capacity, signals intelligence, and satellite-controlled military network and firepower to make the world its "global battlefield." As the Global Executioner, the United States is engaged in activities that have been characterized as targeted assassination and extra-judicial killing and that are illegal under our inherited tradition of international law as well as the domestic laws of many countries. While other states may be deterred from taking decisive counter-terrorist actions by ethical, legal, or political concerns, the United States now utilizes drone warfare (Martin and Steuter 2017) to act as a Global Executioner that can remove "high-value targets" from the global playing field with the conviction and the "right stuff" to see the mission through. This is rooted in the idea of "American exceptionalism," described by Alford (2010, 21) as "the belief that the US is an extraordinary nation with a special role to play in human history . . . unique but also superior among nations."

Compared to the global outrage that erupted fifty years ago when South Vietnam's chief of National Police, Nguyễn Ngọc Loan, was photographed executing a handcuffed prisoner on a public street, resignation or defeatism is a more common response to the "inevitability" of drone warfare as the "new way of war." Self-serving interpretations of international law, such as the Bush-era Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), have provided a blank check to wage endless war on ever more states. Obama's "disposition matrix" specified the process for the US military command to authorize an endless "kill list" of the world's most wanted or those who bore their "signatures" by being military-aged males or in proximity of known bad actors. This attempted to provide cover and comfort from inconvenient reminders of international law (Boggs and Pollard 2007, 36).

The elite (and they hope popular) surrender to the inevitability of the United States as a Global Executioner and the sense of futility in opposing drone warfare is part of neoliberalism's embrace of TINA—that "there is no alternative," made famous by UK prime minister Margaret Thatcher, and cheerfully adopted by President Ronald Reagan. It has proven to be a powerful rhetorical strategy that facilitates resignation and acceptance of policy measures as rational options when other choices have been marginalized or demonized. As Croft (2006, 107) points out, at every stage of the war on terror TINA is invoked, and it is hammered with such power that to challenge it is to side with freedom's enemies. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999, 41) say, "[c]ultural imperialism rests on the power to universalize particularisms linked to a singular historical tradition by causing them to be misrecognized as such." False universalism is at the heart of the TINA claim.

Frame analysis can provide an effective way to capture the imperialist narratives of the films discussed in this chapter. The pioneering work of Goffman (1974) began the development of this fruitful methodology in communications research. Goffman defines frames as "schemata of interpretation" that aid in our ability "to locate, perceive, identify and label" occurrences. These serve as primary frameworks because "they turn what should be a meaningless aspect of a scene into something meaningful" (Goffman 1974, 21–22). The means by which these frames are achieved is through a process of ideological legitimation that normalizes and naturalizes (Eagleton 2007) particular foreign policy positions and military actions. While a film may offer multiple readings to its viewers, dominant frames tend to support a preferred message (Hall 1980). This can happen through identification with a protagonist, rhetorical justification of particular actions, or the constructed "rationality" of points of the plot.

We suggest three ways in which contemporary films about drone warfare reinforce a Global Executioner frame. First, these films often legitimate and normalize this self-appointed judge, jury, and executioner role, including the notion that there is no believable alternative to the United States taking up these tasks. Second, the permanent war of the Global Executioner is a war that we don't see. Unlike the wars in Korea and Vietnam or other smaller-scale interventions, there are not hundreds of thousands of GIs returning with stories about what is happening on the ground in the many countries in which drone attacks are executed. Against this backdrop of invisibility, the media, including the movies, is at liberty to present a preferred image of what is happening—which is often not supported by the evidence provided by whistleblowers and human rights organization with firsthand experience of the attacks. Third, the films in the Global Executioner frame often receive US government in-kind support, in the form of free access to military bases, personnel, equipment, training, and filming locations. These resources are not made equally available, and they serve to increase the technical realism and the ideological impact of the films.

DRONE WARFARE AS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE

There are three recent films that, it can be argued, serve to legitimize and normalize drone warfare and reinforce the notion that "there is no alternative." *London Has Fallen* is a 2016 action thriller about a Pakistani arms dealer who has staged a dramatic

attack on London that has killed forty of the world's leaders and destroyed the city's major landmarks as retribution for a Western drone strike that killed his family. The US president and his bodyguard have to face overwhelming obstacles to take on "the United Nations of everybody that fucking hates us." After an extensive and bloody battle where the enemy has "more ammunition than the whole US army," the terrorists are defeated and their vengeful leader is killed by a drone strike that one reviewer described as "shown in sexy slow motion as insurgents (and only insurgents) burn. This is drone warfare justice, served hot, stylish and bloody" (Gregory 2016).

London Has Fallen is basically a 9/11 revenge fantasy, complete with dialogue from the American protagonists such as "Get back to Fuckheadistan or wherever it is you're from" and "Assholes like you have been trying to kill us for a long fucking time. But you know what? A thousand years from now, we'll still fucking be here." Nevertheless, the West is presented as vulnerable to attack by overwhelming numbers of well-armed infiltrators who "are impersonating us." Critics of the media-imperialism paradigm who argue for the need to give greater consideration to audience reception of the media's message (Katz and Liebes 1990) would nod to the potential vicarious pleasure derived from watching smug world leaders taken out in a spectacular barrage of rocket launchers and stinger missiles. Some reviewers of the film critiqued it for "red flag waving at potential jihadists bulls" (Film Review Daily 2016). The villain justifies his assault on those who "murder our families remotely from the sky," and many in the audience will know that the film's US drone strike on the Pakistani wedding party echoes many such real-world events (Engelhardt 2013). The terrorist leader maintains that he had never lifted his finger against the United States, but the US vice president, played by Morgan Freeman, censoriously counters that he has armed those who have. The vice president provides the concluding, and arguably dominant, message of the film:

> To those who threaten our freedom: America will rise up. And make no mistake, we will find you and we will destroy you. . . . There are those who will say this would never have happened if we would just mind our own business. We live in a dangerous world and we have few good options. But the worst option is to do nothing. We owe it to our children to engage in the world.

In this film the Western world is presented as vulnerable, and perhaps weaker because of its freedom, and the United States alone is seemingly capable of providing protection. As Boggs and Pollard (2016, 4) put it, this is another example of how the "Hollywood War Machine" has capitalized on the "post-9/11 sense of a wounded, vengeful, but still internally powerful nation ready to set the world straight, by military force where necessary." As the final speech suggests, the only choice is a stark one between isolation within Fortress America and "to engage in the world," presumably in the form of a massive US military presence over the whole planet.

The film *Zero Dark Thirty* continues the portrayal of the Global Executioner as dauntless in pursuit of its enemies, this time in the person of the CIA agent Maya, played by Jessica Chastain. The film's tagline is: "For ten years one woman never stopped searching for the most wanted man in history." She is a study in focus and competence as she tracks down Osama bin Laden using any means necessary to get her man, including rendition and torture. What Susan Faludi (2007, 139) says of tele-

vision in 2005 is true of this film: "the torturers, who in the past were almost entirely villains, were now often the shows' heroes." The inevitability frame is ever-present as the film clearly depicts torture as "necessary to protect America" (Greenwald 2012). The role of drone warfare in the execution of America's most wanted terrorist is showcased in the movie through the presentation of Langley's "Predator Bay" as a high-tech control room for the CIA drone program, which commentators have noted exudes a sense of surveillance mastery:

> the diegetic locus of monitors: screens upon screens of satellite images, spy plane photographs, and video feeds of the compound, along with glimpses of other indiscernible data and maps on a myriad of computer screens figure prominently in almost every shot. Analyzing these images over time helps the agents increase the probability of identifying Bin Laden, while also demonstrating the viability of this kind of information-gathering for making correct assessments. (Gilmore 2017, 292)

While the CIA has been criticized for its secret and devastating drone program, which has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians, and which many human rights organizations have claimed is tantamount to a war crime, the film provides an unprecedented opportunity to showcase the drones to a global audience as playing a significant role in strategizing the attack on bin Laden's compound. Writing for the *New Yorker*, Brody's (2012) review of the film also identifies a takeaway message of the film as a celebration of America's efficient Global Executioner:

> One of the merits of "Zero Dark Thirty" is that it takes government work seriously and recognizes that the use of force is one of its fundamental responsibilities. The movie shows government employees taking part in decisions regarding the deployment of mighty power and vast resources; the making of decisions of vast moment and immediate, possibly grave, even world-historical results.

This film can be seen as both a morale-boosting picture for the home front and an intimidating international display of the US global surveillance system. Astute observers have pointed out the violent biopolitics inherent in the drone programs' targeting and surveillance practices (Allinson 2015; Wilcox 2015). Falk (2012) comments that with a remarkable "posture of post-colonial insensitivity," this film shows that the United States can do what others must not dare to do, and can even provide for itself a legal rationale with the arrogant label "not for use by others."

Another drone film in which we are told there is no alternative is *Body of Lies* by Ridley Scott. It is about a culturally sensitive CIA agent named Roger Ferris (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) working primarily in Jordan who is being handled by a stateside manager in DC, Ed Hoffman, played by Russell Crowe. This is a movie that presents the US role in the region as politically and ethically ambiguous and questions the effectiveness of American tactics. Even though the US drone attack on the high-value target is foiled in a dramatic scene by the ingenuity of the terrorist masterminds, the last, decisive word is given to Hoffman, and it is pure TINA:

> So, what's changed is that our allegedly unsophisticated enemy has cottoned on to the factually unsophisticated truth . . . we're an easy target. We are an easy target and our world as we know it is a lot simpler to put to an end than you might think. What we're

dealing with here is potentially a global conflagration that requires constant diligence in order to suppress. We take our foot off the throat of this enemy for one minute and our world changes completely. What I need you to fully understand is that these people, they do not wanna negotiate. Not at all. They want the universal caliphate established across the face of the Earth and they want every infidel converted or dead.

In *Zero Dark Thirty* the heroic CIA agent could achieve great things even if the system was a mess. In this film the protagonist, Roger Ferris, can't achieve much of anything, caught as he is between Jordanian and US intelligence and of course the bad guys. But ultimately, we are left with the message that America can't stop its essential role as the Global Executioner or else the liberal Western world will pay a terrible price.

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

The second set of films are those in which the nature of drone warfare is invisible, and into that absence is inserted a version of reality that is more wishful thinking or propaganda than an accurate portrayal. The exemplar of this genre is *Eye in the Sky*. This film centers on a joint US-UK military operation in which the United Kingdom is the de facto client of the American drone assassination service. A fictional terrorist cell in Africa has been identified and an armed General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper drone is ready to strike on their hideout. The audience gets to see inside the workings of the counter-terrorism disposition matrix as military and political operatives from the two countries must decide whether to kill the terrorist cell if it means causing collateral damage to an innocent girl selling bread nearby. The US political leadership is portrayed as hard-nosed and decisive about executing the terrorists without concern for the civilian casualties, but the American drone operator who must carry out the command is distraught about the potential loss of an innocent life. The British uniformed military leadership is shown as levelheaded and laser-focused as they seek to make every effort to reduce civilian casualties while remaining resolute in their willingness to make the hard call. The British civilian leadership, however, agonizes and seeks to delay or abort the action, alternately citing objections based on the principles of international law with self-interested fear of public blowback and its impact on their prospects in the next election. The tension builds as surveillance footage from a micro insect drone reveals that the terrorists are preparing an imminent attack while the little girl remains in harm's way, and yet the military leaders are impotent to act without approval from the complex political chain of command. While responses to the film vary, the viewer is invited to sympathize with the military leadership in their frustration over the political leadership's unwillingness to take decisive action against an obvious terrorist threat. One film reviewer captures Alan Rickman's portrayal as the British lieutenant-general: "Hovering over it all, with a fine disdain, is Rickman. . . . His air of disbelief at civilian indecision lends the proceedings a tinge of black comedy" (Sragow 2016). A British military insider responded to the film online, saying, "I suspect anyone watching it with military experience will immediately identify with the British Army and US Air Force personnel and become frustrated at the politicians who pontificate, delay and pass the buck" (Bare Arms Blog 2016).

The film is an engrossing morality exercise that engages viewers in a high-stakes dilemma that one is led to believe is currently taking place at the top levels of military and political decision-making in the United States, United Kingdom, and other allied nations utilizing the drone program: "It's the most accurate and authentic portrayal of what actually happens" claimed the movie's military advisor (*The Journal.ie* 2016), and the *New York Review of Books* declared: "It may be the closest those of us on the outside ever get to the internal process behind the drone war" (Cole 2016). The problem with this type of portrayal is that despite the film's vaunted realism, all the evidence suggests that military decision-making and policy regarding civilian casualties of drone strikes is quite different. Viewers of the film would be surprised to learn of the Non-Combatant Casualty Cut-Off Value (NCV), which is the number of civilian casualties a military operation can sustain without seeking approval from senior military leadership. US policy in the Obama administration only required that strikes that would cause more than thirty civilian deaths had to be approved personally by the secretary of defense, and over fifty such strikes were proposed and approved. In the Trump administration the authority to approve Non-Combatant Casualties has been reduced even further down the military chain of command to the level of colonel (*Los Angeles Times* 2017). While the UK does not currently appear to have created such a specific calculation of the value of civilian life to aid in its disposition matrix, RAF drone pilots have revealed that civilians are regularly killed as a matter of policy (Cole 2017). A panel of former drone pilots who reviewed the film stated, "Our primary concern is that it may give uncritical theatergoers the impression that this form of warfare may be the most humane and precise way to fight transnational conflicts" (Westmoreland 2017).

In addition, the presentation of the accuracy of the military intelligence and the precision of the drone strikes in this and other films featuring remotely piloted systems of war is highly misleading. Writing in *Foreign Policy Journal*, David Swanson (2016) observes "*Eye in the Sky* is for US drone strikes what *Zero Dark Thirty* was for torture lies." Investigations by journalists and human rights organizations reveal that drone strikes have caused more than ten thousand deaths and injuries since 2001, the vast majority of which are civilian. An American think tank, the Brookings Institution, analyzed drone attacks in Pakistan and showed that for every militant leader killed, ten civilians also died, while watchdog organizations such as Reprieve suggest that in targeting forty-one high-value targets, the United States took on average three attempts to kill them, which killed over a thousand people, many of them children. Astute observers have noted the colonial legacies surrounding the drone program's tactics (Kumar and Kundnani 2014; Shaw and Akhter 2012; Neocleous 2013) and the way in which the victims of US and Western imperial military action are denied "grievability." As Butler notes (2016, 33), "If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those whose lives are already negated." Because so few people have direct experience with this warfare, the most idealistic portrayals can be inserted as fact, leaving little basis for most people to ask questions about the US and UK's global executioner policy of "kill not capture." Baudrillard (1991) famously argued that the Gulf War did not take place, meaning that since we were prevented from seeing it except through the filter of

embedded reporters and joystick images of aerial bombardment, it was not a meaning-ful reality for the viewing public but rather just "a simulacrum of war" produced by the "war sign industry." Similarly, the public does not have access to the imprecise and bloody reality of contemporary drone warfare with its indifference to civilian casual-ties and international law, yet, through the hyper-realism of the movie screen, people feel that they have experienced its clean precision as they share the actors' agony over the moral ethics of risking an innocent life to save hundreds.

HOLLYWOOD PENTAGON PRODUCTIONS

Given the globalized nature of contemporary entertainment production, it is rare for films to be solely "made in America" Hollywood products. Rather, today's movies are created and distributed through complex international partnerships, with any given film involving participants and financing from multiple countries and corporations. While a wide range of political messages can be found in films featuring drone warfare that are made by directors with multiple overt and unconscious agendas, nevertheless financial and political incentives can help to "green light" a film whose message rein-forces hegemonic ideas about power and patriotism. The most basic point, as Alford (2010, 3) says, is that "the film industry routinely promotes the dubious notion that the United States is a benevolent force in world affairs and that unleashing its military strength overseas has positive results for humanity. US intervention, furthermore, is rendered not pre-emptive but rather the only reasonable response to 'bad guys' and the best way in which the US can gain closure." American cultural imperialism, with its connection of Hollywood's global market power to the geopolitical power of the US state, can be quite overt. For example, Paul Moody's (2017) close analysis of the WikiLeaks cables shows how Hollywood's cinematic dominance is supported and maintained by the US State Department's global network of embassies.

The Global Executioner frame in globalizing Hollywood films is perpetuated as a form of media imperialism in part because the US military gives these films an advantage. The Pentagon routinely provides in-kind support for films with approved messages and scripts (Robb 2004). Why does it do this? One basic reason is that mili-tary shaping of film presentations is just another aspect of the military's struggle for supremacy. The US Army War College issued a study in 2017 titled *At Our Own Peril: DoD Risk Assessment in a Post-Primary World*, which maintains that the United States is facing a world where it may not be the dominant power and it should take action now to increase its and its allies' military power and ensure that they can maintain "unimpeded access to the air, sea, space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum in order to underwrite their security and prosperity." The military's interest in enter-tainment may be a psychological operation (PsyOp) not only to improve the military's reputation but also to divert people from seeing the real medium-term mission for US military policy. In a post-9/11 meeting between Hollywood executives and US govern-ment and military leaders, the entertainment industry promised to lend its support to the war on terror by burnishing the image of the United States globally. As one producer

said, "There was a feeling around the table that something is wrong if half the world thinks we're the great Satan, and we want to make that right" (Alford 2010, 14).

The film *Eagle Eye* is one such example. In this case a US Air Force special agent must regain control of the drone system that has been taken over by a rogue supercomputer with artificial intelligence that is planning to assassinate the president and most of the political leadership. The film was made with the cooperation of the USAF's Office of Special Investigations headquarters in Washington, DC, including aerial filming of an MQ-9 Reaper drone on location at Creech AFB, Nevada, and a UH-1N Huey landing at the Pentagon. "This was a great opportunity for the Air Force to be involved in such an action-packed thriller that reflects our core values through a prominent character in the story," said Lt. Col. Francisco Hamm, the Air Force Entertainment Liaison Office director, in an article on the USAF's official homepage (Airforce.mil 2008). Special Agent Jeffrey Anderson, US Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI), commented: "The movie was based on a potential or perceived threat to the country. . . . Being able to let people know who we are, what we do and that we are working hard to protect and defend the interest of our country is an important message" (Office of Special Investigations 2008).

Zero Dark Thirty was also a film that was well received at the script stage by the CIA and the US military and therefore also received official support. As Schou (2016) puts it:

> According to a report by the Defense Department's inspector general, the then-CIA Director Leon Panetta seemed to have stardust in his eyes over the prospect of a Hollywood version of the search for bin Laden. Panetta allowed [screenwriter Mark] Boal to attend a June 2011 meeting at Langley that was closed to the press and attended by all the major players in the operation. The CIA chief also gave Boal names of people whose role in the mission was still secret, and shared other classified information with the filmmakers. . . . In the end, the CIA's energetic cooperation with Boal and [director Kathryn] Bigelow paid off enormously, with *Zero Dark Thirty* serving as the most effective piece of propaganda for the agency's torture program since [the TV series] *24*.

CIA-sponsored movies have put the CIA and its capabilities, especially technological ones, in the most positive light, in order to have an upbeat impact on internal morale and improve the organization's standing with the global public and other intelligence agencies (Jenkins 2012, 96).

Captain Phillips is a movie based on the real-life US Navy rescue of an American merchant mariner from Somali pirates and serves as another example of military in-kind support for approved projects. In the case of this film, a US Navy admiral met with the film's executive producer and agreed to help showcase the navy's role in the war on Somali terrorists by providing highly valuable access to a variety of navy ships, the services of a Navy SEAL master chief petty officer, hundreds of real navy sailors as extras, and a ScanEagle drone. The film's plot showcased how Boeing's ScanEagle drone aircraft was used by the navy to provide the real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance imagery that contributed to the rescue of Phillips. Not surprisingly, the film effectively serves as an advertisement both domestically and

to the trove of international governments who bought the drone after the film, of the heroism and military value associated with these military technologies. As Galuszka wrote in the *Washington Post* (2013)*,* "This is all great for Hollywood, and also for the Navy, which, Phillips aside, is the hero of the story. They act professionally and efficiently and are deadly. Green light and 'pop, pop, pop.' Three headshots. The Somalis make easy villains." This is an apt example of Alford's (2010, 4) observation that "it is difficult for a film to emerge through the Hollywood system that criticizes US power at a systemic level, while it is relatively easy for an explicitly pro-establishment or status-quo film to be made, particularly one which is America-centric and at ease with the spectacle of US high-tech violence against villainous foreigners."

   Even when the military declines to participate in the making of a film, often because they are denied sufficient control over the portrayal of their personnel and practices, the drone program is regularly portrayed in a manner that reflects the public relations agenda of the military contractors, who laud the Predators and Reapers for their ability to "project power without vulnerability" (Gregory 2016). While some films provide a cautionary tale about the vulnerability of such a powerful system to be hacked and taken over by an enemy operative, the scope and effectiveness of the drone technology is generally presented as impressive and effective. In a memorable scene from *Furious 7* (2015)*,* the legendary high-velocity team of drivers must avoid a lethal MQ-1 Predator drone attack on Los Angeles using their most creative and skilled maneuvers. Even when the technology is in enemy hands, the techno-fetishism spectacle inherent in militainment invites us to be in awe of its relentless power (Stahl 2010, 30; Boggs and Pollard 2016, 173).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have suggested the importance of the frame that we refer to as the "Global Executioner." We argue that there are three ways in which contemporary films reinforce the Global Executioner frame. First, these films often legitimize and normalize the United States' self-appointed role as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner, including the increasingly hegemonic notion that there is no believable alternative to the United States taking up these tasks. Second, the permanent activities of the Global Executioner are part of a war that we don't see. Those populations untouched by drone attacks have little experience from which to judge the veracity of the movie presentations they are seeing and as a consequence may take comfort in its lies and fail to join those opposing it. Finally, the films in the Global Executioner frame are much more likely to receive US government in-kind support, in the form of free access to military bases, personnel, equipment, training, and filming locations. This illustrates the shared agenda of the military and entertainment industries for creative work judged to help the overall US mission. In doing these things this chapter fills a gap in the media-imperialism paradigm, showing specifically how the commercial entertainment products exported from Hollywood to the world carry content that extols the military violence of US-based empire.

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Part IV

THE INTERNET, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND PLATFORM IMPERIALISM

Guarding Public Values in a Connective World

Challenges for Europe

José van Dijck

Online digital platforms have deeply penetrated every sector in society, disrupting markets, labor relations, and institutions, while transforming social and civic practices; more than that, platform dynamics have affected the very core of democratic processes and political communication. After a decade of platform euphoria, in which tech companies were celebrated for empowering ordinary users, problems have been mounting. Disinformation, fake news, and hate speech spread via YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook poisoned public discourse and influenced elections. The Facebook–Cambridge Analytica scandal epitomized the many privacy breaches and security leaks dogging social media networks. Further compounded by charges of tax evasion and the undermining of fair labor laws, big tech companies are facing a serious "techlash." As some argued, the promotion of long-standing values such as tolerance, democracy, and transparency is increasingly compromised by the global "exports" of American tech companies, which dominate the online infrastructure for the distribution of online cultural goods: news, video, social talk, and private communication (Geltzer and Ghosh 2018).

The evolving digitization and "platformization" of societies involves several intense struggles between competing ideological systems and their contesting actors, prompting an important question: Who is or should be responsible for anchoring public values in platform societies that are driven by algorithms and fueled by data? This chapter tries to unravel this larger-than-life question, concentrating on the challenges Europe faces when trying to govern societies that are increasingly dependent on global networked infrastructures. I will first explore what position Europe occupies amid competing (Chinese and American) platform ecosystems in the current online world order. Next, I will zoom in on the American ecosystem and its mechanisms. After briefly elaborating on what public values should be anchored in this system and who are the responsible actors, I will focus on the challenges facing Europe. How can European citizens and governments guard certain social and cultural values while being dependent on a platform ecosystem whose architecture is based on commercial values and is rooted in a neolibertarian worldview?

A NEW GEOPOLITICAL ORDER OF PLATFORM ECOSYSTEMS

The global online world is dominated by companies and by states. Two platform eco-systems dominate the online world in terms of geopolitics: one is American, the other Chinese. China governs an ecosystem that is controlled by the state and is operated by its own Big Five companies: Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, Jingodon Mall, and Didi (the Chinese Uber). Alibaba and Tencent have lately become extremely powerful, branching out from their core businesses into every sector of society. They have become gatekeepers to the entire economy, wielding power over brick-and-mortar enterprises, pay systems, communication channels, social networks, groceries, pharmacies, and so on. America has its own platform ecosystem, which is dominated by the Big Five tech companies Alphabet-Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft (GAFAM). Over the past two decades, this powerful ecosystem has spread to the rest of the world, and it is dominant in Europe, most of Asia (except for China), Africa, and South America (Jin 2015). In terms of market value, the Big Five form the world's fifth-largest economy, after the United States, China, Germany, and Japan. Seven companies—the American Big Five plus Tencent and Alibaba—are in the top ten of public corporations ranked by market capitalization (Statista Portal 2018).

On the face of it, these two ecosystems are each other's ideological antipodes. The Chinese state exerts strict power over Chinese tech companies, protecting the internal market through its "firewall." In the American system, the market controls the online infrastructure, which the US government hardly seeks to regulate. Closer inspection reveals the two ecosystems are not as isolated as they appear. American tech companies are increasingly adjusting their technologies to be allowed to enter the Chinese ecosystem, caving in to the regime's censorship laws or aligning with Chinese companies. For instance, Google is developing a search engine (project Dragonfly) that adapts to Chinese censorship rules, and Chinese tech companies have obtained stakes in American companies (e.g., Didi in Uber). Although I cannot go into details, the two systems that appear to be entirely separate are actually interconnected at many levels.

Squeezed in between the United States and China is the European continent, which has few major technology companies and operates a relatively small percentage of all digital platforms.[1] By and large, Europe has become dependent on the American platform ecosystem, whose techno-commercial architecture is rooted in neoliberal market values. But beyond market value, the platform ecosystem revolves around societal power and influence. The Big Five increasingly act as gatekeepers to all online social traffic and economic activities; their services influence the very texture of society and the process of democracy. In other words, they have gained rule-setting power. There have been many clashes between American tech companies and European regulators as well as national legislators over public values, including privacy (resulting in the EU's General Data Protection Regulation), fair competition (resulting in the EU levying substantial fines on Google in 2016 and 2018), tax evasion (resulting in Facebook changing its tax-base policy), and the condemnation of fake news and hate speech (resulting in the German parliament imposing a twenty-four-hour deadline on social networks to take down such expressions). Fighting on several fronts, the EU tries to strictly enforce its laws in a new global networked space.

   We often hear from Silicon Valley CEOs that Europe is "cracking down" on American Big Tech out of "jealousy" (Solon 2018). I take a different stance on this issue: the American platform ecosystem hardly allows for public space on the internet and tends to favor commercial values and private interests over public ones. Therefore, Europe should articulate its own governance strategy based on its appraisal of a strong public sector, independent institutions, fair taxation, and the common good. Protecting the Rhineland model of a social market economy should not be considered an economic liability but rather an asset: a loss of public trust is ultimately a loss of business value.[2] In the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Facebook lost an estimated thirty-five to eighty billion dollars in market value. As Mazzucato (2018) argues, it is important to assess what constitutes *societal* value in addition to market value, because both types of values are integrally part of a nation's economic strength. Before getting back to my basic question—how can European societies guard public values and the common good in an online world—we first need to examine how the American platform ecosystem is structured.

HOW DOES THE AMERICAN PLATFORM ECOSYSTEM WORK?

Platformization is an enormously complex phenomenon that has disrupted not just markets and sectors, but has started to uproot the infrastructural, organizational design of societies (Helmond 2015; Plantin et al. 2016). It is crucial to study *how* platform ecosystems operate, because we still know too little about big platforms' technical operations, their governance and business models—partly as a result of those being trade secrets (Van Dijck 2013). Roughly put, the Big Five operate about one hundred strategic *infrastructural platforms*: social networks, web hosting, pay systems, login and identification services, cloud services, advertising agencies, search engines, audiovisual platforms, map and navigating services, app stores, analytics services, and so on (see also Van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal 2018, chapter 1). Together, these infrastructural platforms form the backbone of an ecosystem that is boundary-and-border-agnostic. In the meantime, nation-states increasingly rely on the global system's datafied and commodified mechanisms for their vital economic and democratic functions, such as Google's and Facebook's advertising systems and Facebook's and YouTube's role in the distribution of news and video content. Besides owning and operating the infrastructural core of platforms, the Big Five are also branching out in a variety of *sectors* that are progressively interwoven with this online infrastructure. Indeed, platformization affects *all* sectors in society, both private (e.g., transport, finance, retail) and public (e.g., education, health), hence also affecting the common good.
   The accumulation of platform power happens at two levels: (1) through ownership relations and partnerships between tech companies that operate both infrastructural and sectoral platforms and (2) through the invisible mechanisms underlying the platform ecosystem, such as the steering of data flows, envelopment of users, invisible selection criteria, and algorithmic lock-ins that facilitate path dependency.[3] At both levels, power is exercised *between* infrastructural and sectoral platforms, as well as *across sectors*. Tech companies leverage control over data flows and algorithmic

governance not just through a few major infrastructural platforms (e.g., Alphabet-Google in Search and Cloud services) but extend these powers across many sectors (e.g., Google Apps for Education, Google Health, Google Shopping). Unprecedented network effects across the global online ecosystem are thus gained through the potential of horizontal, vertical, and "diagonal" integration of data flows, creating user lock-ins and path-dependency.

The platform mechanisms underpinning the ecosystem are largely opaque and out of sight for users and governments. Platformization is overwhelmingly driven by commercial interests that often take precedence over societal values. Some of the main problems are an almost total lack of transparency into how data flows are steered within and between sectors, how algorithms influence user behavior, how selection mechanisms impact the visibility of content, and how business models favor economic transactions over the public interest. In addition, public sectors that historically serve and protect the common good, such as education and health, are rapidly encapsulated in the American platform ecosystem, where they risk being turned into privatized commodities. Platform companies inadvertently take over vital functions from state and public bodies once they become major gatekeepers in the circulation of health and educational data flows as well as in news and information cycles. Platforms thus increasingly become the new infrastructural providers. As Mark Zuckerberg observed in 2017, Facebook wants to be a "social infrastructure"—a term that resonates with the notion of public utilities. Global social infrastructures, as we know, come with awesome responsibilities not just for the welfare of the company and its shareholders, but for the well-being of the people as societal stakeholders.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC VALUES AND THE COMMON GOOD?

If European societies want to guard public values and the common good in an online world, they first need to articulate *what kind of public values* they want to foreground when designing an ideal digital society. Norms and values are often left implicit. Looking at regulators' disputes with tech companies over the past few years, it seems clear that values such as privacy, security, accuracy, and transparency are at stake; Europeans insist on protecting their private information, securing their internet access, relying on accurate information, and pursuing transparency in terms of service. But beyond these principles relating directly to the internet as a digital environment, there is also a need to articulate public values that pertain to much broader societal issues, such as democratic control of the public sphere, a level playing field for all actors, anti-discrimination practices, fairness in taxation and labor, and clarity with regard to (shared) responsibility and accountability. Public values are not a simple set of rules that you can buy "off the shelf" and implement in society; on the contrary, they are disputed and negotiated at every level of governance—from schools and hospitals to local city councils, and from national governments to supranational legislators.

The negotiation of public values is historically anchored in institutions or sectors, where it is moored in laws, agreements, or professional codes. For instance, in news

journalism, public values such as accuracy and fairness in reporting are (self-)regulated via professional codes; in education, the norms for privacy, fairness, and accessibility are controlled partly by the government and partly by a school's agreements with parents; urban transport is regulated by city councils and local governments. Remarkably, tech companies over the past decade have preferred to bypass institutional processes through which societies are organized—sectoral regulation, public accountability, and responsibility—by claiming their exceptional status. Facebook, Google, Uber, and other big platforms have argued they are mere "facilitators," connecting users to creators or producers, and connecting content to users. By insisting on their status as "connectors" and avoiding regular legal categories, platforms and their operators have avoided taking responsibility. Until 2017, Facebook firmly denied its functioning as a "media company," although more than half the news consumed by Americans comes to them through Newsfeed. And Uber's refusal to accept its status as a "transportation company" was fought all the way up to the European court, where it was finally confirmed in December 2017.

So who *is* responsible for guarding public values in a digital society? The simple answer to this question is: all of us. But that answer is not very helpful. Let me break down "all of us" into three *types* of actors we need to identify: market, state, and civil society. In the Chinese system, the state is obviously in the lead, minutely controlling market and civil-society actors. In the American system, market actors—from big corporations to micro-entrepreneurs—are left to themselves to organize a "fair" market, leaving a small role for state or civil-society actors. The European Rhineland model ideally balances the powers of state, market, and civil-society actors in multi-stakeholder organizations. Obviously, these multiple stakeholders do not have the same interests, so government bodies need to take the roles entrusted to them as legislator, regulator, moderator, and enforcer to negotiate the public interest. However, because the architecture of the American ecosystem is uniquely engineered by market actors—and its infrastructure is dominated mostly by the Big Five—it is difficult for state and civil-society actors in Europe to put their stamp on these negotiations. Governing the platform society has turned out to be a big struggle over public values and the common good.

Most visible to the public eye are the outcomes of a wide range of negotiation battles; the concerns underlying these negotiations involve a wide variety of public values, but it is not always immediately evident what the common denominators are. We read about EU regulators levying big fines upon American tech firms and understand this is about the principle of "fair access" and a "level playing field" of markets. We witness national governments such as Germany impose strict rules on social networks to ban hate speech and fake news; of course, such judgment involves a fine balancing act between the right to free speech vis-à-vis the public values of accuracy, fairness, and nondiscrimination. The cities of Amsterdam and Barcelona have set limits to short-term online rentals, curbing the free reign of Airbnb while protecting a fair housing market and livable cities. Municipalities, schools, and hospitals negotiate contracts with big tech giants such as Google to exchange data for platform services while bartering their citizens', students', and patients' right to privacy and accessibility. Each negotiation between (big) tech companies, government agencies, indepen-

dent institutions, and citizens discloses how interests sometimes clash and sometimes converge when negotiating public values. Many of these tradeoffs boil down to a set of fundamental questions, such as who owns and exploits data flows, who controls algorithmic governance, and who is *responsible* and *accountable* for their impact?

To be sure, there is not a single one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of responsibility and accountability in a platform society. The question of how Europe can live up to its preferred Rhineland model of protecting public values and the common good while lacking control over a corporately driven platform infrastructure is a thorny one. Therefore, we need to look at various (supra-)national, local, and individual levels of involvement to define which strategies may help Europeans tackle the multitude of complex challenges facing them in the online world. Below, I will articulate five such recommendations or strategies, directed at companies, governments, and researchers.

FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPE

The *first* recommendation is leveled at the supranational level, which is by far the most influential when it comes to countering the rule-setting powers of the Big Five and protecting public values in multisided platform markets: Europe should take *a comprehensive approach to regulating platforms and data flows, not just as markets but as societies*. The EU has energetically assumed its responsibility to govern digital markets, both as a regulator and as a policy maker. Over the past few years, we have seen an assertive enforcement of antitrust laws, resulting in two substantial fines for Alphabet-Google, the first one (in 2016) for giving preference to its own retail service (Google Shopping) over other services; the second one (in 2018) for forcing phone manufacturers to incorporate a dozen of its own infrastructural apps in mobile devices. On the policy side, the European Commission launched its Digitising European Industry (European Commission 2016a) initiative to achieve a "digital single market" in Europe. At the same time, the EU realized digital societies cannot simply be governed as *markets*; markets are integral parts of societies that also encompass public space and public services. In response to the pervasive spread of online fake news, the European Commission commissioned a comprehensive report, which in 2018 concluded the problem requires taking a multi-stakeholder approach and entering negotiations at various levels with the big tech companies (European Commission High-Level Expert Group 2018). After years of political deliberation, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) took effect in May 2018; the encompassing directive shows how the European definition of privacy fundamentally differs from the American one.

Despite its major efforts, the EU has not yet managed to articulate a comprehensive view on platform societies—a set of principles that would provide more clarity about what the EU expects from companies, states, and civil-society actors when it comes to fairness and democracy in a digitally connected world. In 2016, a survey among European stakeholders (market, state, and civil society) revealed a number of key issues concerning data flows and platforms, asking for more clarity about the legal status of platforms and the specific activities they are engaged in, as well as for better enforcement of existing legislation (European Commission 2016b). This inventory

has not yet led to a broad set of principles on the basis of which countries, municipalities, institutions, or citizens can rely on negotiating specific public values in specific contexts. Every single day, new platforms enter the daily lives of citizens, defining the conditions for local transport, schooling, health care, and so on. More principled guidelines concerning the status of platforms, the ownership of data flows, and algorithmic governance could help everyone negotiate public values from the stage of platform design to their implementation in daily practices.

This brings me to a *second* recommendation, leveled at companies: *public values need to become visible as part of a platform's architectural policy and design*. As a result of an avalanche of problems, Facebook and Google were forced by citizens, public opinion, advertisers, and governments to take responsibility over their role as "societal" influencers. The impact of Facebook in the Brazilian elections, the social network's role in fueling hate speech in Myanmar, Google's recent move to abide by censorship laws in China—each new controversy forces the Big Five to articulate where they stand on major societal issues such as hate speech, fake news, democratic control, and authoritarian censorship. Western European governments put increasing pressure on tech companies to acknowledge and accept the responsibility that comes with size; they demand transparency when operating in their markets.[4] Advertisers, for their part, have forced tech companies to adapt their algorithms to make sure their products are not associated with hate speech or fake news. And Google's own employees have critically interrogated their managers and CEOs to reconsider project Dragonfly as part of the company's disputable move to accommodate Chinese rulers.

The explicit articulation and endorsement of public values, however, should not have to be the result of external pressure and ad hoc remedies but ought to be discernably integrated into a platform's policy and algorithmic design. Transparency and accountability go hand in hand, and it is obvious that self-regulation of platform operators can never work if the most basic conditions for public oversight and accountability are lacking. Public values by design requires courage on behalf of platform owners, and it likely takes some pushing from state and civil-society actors to force companies to act responsibly. Eventually, a company's efforts to engage multiple stakeholders in its design lead to more public trust in platforms and their operators. If voluntary codes and public pressure do not work, additional regulatory efforts are necessary.

Which brings me to the *third* recommendation: *the need to update and retool regulatory frameworks*. The current national and supranational European frameworks for regulating platform societies may be adequate, but legal discourse often lacks the appropriate vocabulary to capture the techno-economic changes in the online world. Indeed, competition and antitrust laws protect a level playing field; privacy law concentrates on individual citizens' right to privacy; we have consumer protection law, taxation laws, and trade law that each deal with a specific piece of legislation and enforcement. But the sum of each set of laws may not be sufficient to deal with the platform ecosystem as a whole. For one thing, the increased significance of data-driven, platform-based, and algorithmically governed interaction is hardly reflected in legal discourse. Besides, the legal system is built on a division between infrastructures and distinct market sectors—distinctions that are no longer tenable in an ecosystem run by multihoming platform companies on top of a multilayered

inscrutable architecture. Neither do prevailing regulatory frameworks account for the data flows that run both between infrastructures and sectors and between sectors, nor for the algorithmic lock-ins between (partnering) platform companies and rivaling markets. Indeed, platformization is so powerful precisely *because* it is sector-agnostic, device-agnostic, and border-agnostic.

In order to update regulation within the EU, we need to look more principally at how platforms function in society and adapt our instruments accordingly. Mark Zuckerberg, defending Facebook in front of the American Congress and the Senate in March 2018, revealed that his company had recently changed its mantra from "Move fast and break things" into "Move fast with stable infrastructure." But the point is, the boundaries between infrastructure and sectoral products and services have become inherently fluid; the same holds true for the boundaries between private and public sectors. Mechanisms such as combining data flows, algorithmic selection, and user envelopment—adding another group of customers on one side and using those revenues to reduce the price charged to another side of the platform—steer the invisible "underwater" dynamics of the platform ecosystem. A handful of companies seem to have more power than nation-states over the digital infrastructure without the necessary checks and balances that come along. So the real question is: Are societies going to grant GAFAM infrastructural, rule-setting power or will tech companies collaborate with European governments and civil-society partners to define these principles, laws, and rules?

My *fourth* recommendation pertains to national governments: *stimulate and empower state and civil-society actors to develop nonprofit and public platforms.* The commercial ecosystem of platforms has currently no public space and very few non-private competitors. If European governments are serious about pursuing a tripartite balance between market, state, and civil-society actors, they have to seriously invest in the public and nonprofit sector. In order to prevent involuntary outsourcing of important—even democratically vital—public tasks to a corporately driven ecosystem, European states may need to stimulate civil society and public initiatives. Estonia has set an interesting example by launching its e-government services: a transparent online identification system that forms a portal to services for e-voting, e-residency, and other online facilities in the educational and health sectors. In taking the lead, the Estonian government not only articulates transparent public standards for an open digital society, but also promotes innovation. In other European countries, civil-society groups have initiated the development of public identification and authentication systems, such as IRMA in the Netherlands and Bank-ID in Sweden.[5] The Estonian, Dutch, and Swedish examples are very interesting types of platform innovation involving multiple stakeholders.

At the institutional level, this recommendation also applies to schools and universities, stimulating them to create and distribute their own open online course material, rather than adopting software and administrative monitoring systems that Google and Microsoft offers them "for free"—or, more accurately, in exchange for precious student data. If hospitals relied more on their collective, collaborative power to negotiate data-analytics systems with companies *before* adopting patient data exchanges, this might strengthen the public sector as such. Schools and universities also have a spe-

cific role in the empowerment of data-conscious citizens and skilled public servants. Digital innovation at institutions and local governments should be encouraged if only for the reason that this keeps the public sector an attractive and innovative place to work for. The recently published *White Paper on Digital Platforms*, published by the German Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (2018), argues that investing in public institutions to develop their own platforms and technologies is crucial for many reasons, but one important motive is to close the knowledge gap with companies and keep the public sector competitive for engineers.

Finally, my *fifth* and last recommendation is leveled at researchers at universities and engineering labs around the world: *to pursue a collaborative interdisciplinary approach toward designing a responsible platform society*. Scholars from various disciplines cannot solve the complex challenges facing Europe and other continents by keeping their technical, legal, philosophical, or social science expertise isolated from each other and from societal needs. More than ever, academics have to combine their expertise, both methodologically and practically, to tackle questions of privacy-by-design, algorithmic governance, and trust in data usage and storage. Researchers can help set the agenda for an interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach to the big questions we are facing in the age of datafication, platformization, and digitalization. Responding to urgent questions about (competing) public values and the common good in a platform society—such as issues of privacy vis-à-vis security, efficiency vis-à-vis surveillance—is conditional for successful multi-stakeholder efforts. Academics may need more incentives to collaborate with companies, civil-society actors, and public partners to experiment with new technologies and test policies—each while guarding their specific interests in the face of a common challenge. Exchanging best practices among stakeholders will certainly enhance the development of a uniquely European approach to creating responsible digital societies.

CONCLUSION

Europe can indeed do more to carve out public space in an online world. It needs to design and present a strategy that clearly explicates where its stands on public values, public sectors, and the common good. Needless to say, that requires political will and courage. The ideal platform society does not exist, and it will be hard to recalibrate the Western European Rhineland model to make it fit with the American ecosystem's infrastructural architecture that privileges commercial values over public ones. Indeed, its architecture is currently firmly cemented in an American-based neoliberal set of principles that defines its operational dynamics. If European countries and the EU as a supranational force want to secure their ideological bearings, they need to understand the ecosystem's underpinning mechanisms before they can start fortifying their legal and regulatory structures built on it. The implications of platformization on society are profound, as these systems are shaping not only norms and values, but the very fabric of society.

Governing digital societies in Europe takes a serious effort at all levels, from local municipalities to national governments, from schools to collaborating universities,

and from city governments to the European Parliament. Squeezed in between the Chinese ecosystem and the American one, European countries need to realize the limitations and possibilities of these competing networked infrastructures and articulate their position in the wake of these emerging online superpowers. Public values and the common good are the very stakes in the struggle over platformization around the globe. Viewed through a European looking glass, governments at all levels, independent public institutions, and nonprofits can and should be proactive in negotiating those values on behalf of citizens and consumers. Implementing public values in the technological and socioeconomic design of digital societies is an urgent European challenge that cannot be left to companies alone. If we want the internet to remain a democratic and open space, it requires a multi-level, multi-disciplinary, and multi-stakeholder effort from governments, companies, citizens, and researchers; after all, they are jointly responsible for building it.

NOTES

1. Europe has just a few "unicorns"—tech companies that are worth more than one billion dollars. Besides Spotify (Sweden, music streaming) and BlablaCar (Spain, ride sharing), there are a few other big tech companies, such as Adyen (Dutch, online pay service) and Transferwise (UK/Estonia, money-transfer service), whose names are not very familiar to most people and which dwarf in size compared to the Big Five American companies.

2. According to Peters and Weggeman (2010), the Rhineland model presumes an active government that is involved in major social issues, such as minimizing poverty and environmental protection, advocating a strong public sector, and government regulation and enforcement.

3. In the book *The Platform Society*, my colleagues and I have identified three types of platform mechanisms that mutually shape technology, economic models, and user practices: the mechanisms of datafication, commodification, and selection (Van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal 2018, chapter 2).

4. In 2016, the EU asked Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to sign a voluntary "hate speech code" that requires the companies to review and remove illegal forms of hate speech from their platforms within twenty-four hours and makes it easier for law enforcement to notify the firms directly.

5. IRMA (I Reveal My Attributes) is an app launched by the Dutch nonprofit organization Privacy-by-Design that allows for the selected authentication of private information, whose ownership remains squarely with the user. Bank-ID (https://www.bankid.com/en) is a joint initiative; it proposes a "citizen identification solution that allows companies, banks, and governments to authenticate and conclude agreements with individuals over the Internet."

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Facebook's Platform Imperialism

The Economics and Geopolitics of Social Media

Dal Yong Jin

In the early twenty-first century, several social network sites (SNSs), including Facebook and Twitter, search engines such as Google, and iOS and MacOS on smartphones have become significant profit-seeking businesses and digital platforms. As the number of global users of these platforms has rapidly increased over the past ten years, some of the largest US-based digital platforms have become part of a multibillion-dollar advertising industry that is interwoven with people's everyday lives (Jin 2015). With a market capitalization of $498.28 billion and over 2.23 billion users worldwide, Facebook is one of the most significant platforms on the planet.

As is well known, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook in 2004 as an online yearbook for students at Harvard University, but since then Facebook has become a business that sells several services. In May 2007, Facebook opened its platform to "enable hundreds of thousands of developers to create meaningful social experiences for use on Facebook.com" (Facebook 2008). Today, billions of Facebook users download and interact with Facebook applications and accessories developed by outside companies that partner with Facebook to turn a profit by exploiting the data of Facebook's large and ever-growing networked use base (Cohen 2008; Jin 2015). While "there is a striking tendency in contemporary academic and popular accounts of the emerging digital economy to overlook the political economy of the platform" (Andrejevic 2012, 82), this chapter employs a critical political-economy approach to examine how Facebook is a platform capitalist whose national and now global dominance extends and solidifies asymmetrical economic, political, and cultural power relations between the United States and non-Western countries. Overall, I argue that Facebook is the world's dominant "platform imperialist" (Jin 2015).

In this chapter's first section, I explain the meaning of platform and platform capitalism to contextualize Facebook's capitalist business model. In the second section, I define platform imperialism as an extension of media imperialism and show the US-based Facebook to be the world's dominant "platform imperialist." In the third section, and apropos platform imperialism as a geopolitical and economic process, I show how US state political actors support Facebook's global market power, and I explore how Facebook supports their political, surveillance, and warfare campaigns, drawing upon contemporary examples.

PLATFORM CAPITALISM IN SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS: THE CASE OF FACEBOOK

The digital platform is important in the early twenty-first century, but what is a digital platform? Gillespie (2018, 254) conceptualizes platforms as web business "sites and services that host, organize, and circulate users' shared content or social exchanges for them" but "without having produced or commissioned [the majority of] that content" and operate beneath that content production and circulation "an infrastructure for processing that data (content, traces, patterns of social relations) for customer service and for profit." Srnicek (2017) says digital platforms position themselves as intermediaries that bring together different users, customers, advertisers, and service providers. However, van Dijck (2013, 29) conceptualizes the digital platform is a mediator rather than a passive intermediary, because it actively shapes the performance of social acts by social media users instead of merely facilitating them. Indeed, a platform is not a "neutral infrastructure" but "a fast-changing and increasingly privatized infrastructure" that is "constantly tweaked by [its] private owners to maximize revenues and increase data collection" (Andrejevic 2012, 83). As digital platforms are shaped by market forces (van Dijck 2012, 162) and "social networking, always-on communication, and access to the information commons depend, increasingly, on commercially supported applications and privatized, commercial infrastructure" (Andrejevic 2012, 82), it is useful to conceptualize digital platforms as corporate mediators instead of intermediaries that intentionally gather individual users and gather data about individual users to turn a profit (Jin 2015, 2017). As corporations, these platforms not only provide opportunities for individual users to virtually meet and communicate with one another, but they also enable their owners, designers, and partner firms to sell commoditized services to users and sell the data that users generate as commodities to advertising firms (Jin 2015, 2017).

   In the early twenty-first century, Facebook is one of the most significant platform corporations. While Facebook offers users a horizontal way to communicate and virtually socialize with each other, it obscures the vertical economic and social relations that underlie its business model (Jin 2013). Indeed, Facebook accumulates revenue through several top-down means, but the most profitable strategy is by aggregating and selling its users' attention and data to advertising firms (Weissman 2018). Facebook often claims, "We don't sell your data," and while it is true that Zuckerberg does not hand global marketing firms a USB drive of data about user identities and consumer tastes and preferences in exchange for a fist full of cash, what advertising firms *can* do is use Facebook's endless stock of data to deploy some of the best and most targeted sales pitches the world has ever seen. Facebook does not sell the user's private information directly to advertising firms, but it provides a platform that makes the data in aggregate lucrative. In other words, the growth of Facebook relies on user data, and Facebook earns ample revenue from the advertising firms that pay it to reach targeted users. As Naughton (2017) explains, Facebook is an extractive company, rather like ExxonMobil: "It mines, refines, aggregates and sells its users' personal information and data trails to advertisers, who then use it to target ads at said users." Facebook's user data is a commodity, something with a price tag attached to it for sale

on the market. Facebook is estimated to earn "nearly $20 per user per year (in the US and Canada, anyway)" (Naughton 2017).

Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012, 145) argue that "advertising is *not* the most important source of income for Facebook" because there is not a "linear relation between the number of users and the advertising revenue that Facebook has been able to attract and investor valuations of the company." However, their assessment of Facebook's business cannot be supported as there is a clear relationship between Facebook's user base and Facebook's profit: as Facebook's user base grows, so does its advertising revenue. But the relationship between Facebook and its users represents a clandestine power relationship. As Fuchs (2012, 34–35) argues, Facebook's data collection "is not at all transparent: the single user does not know which data exactly it collects from which sources about him/her to whom these data are sold," and the user is often oblivious to the "surveillance and commodification of user data for targeted advertising that helps Facebook accumulate capital." Nonetheless, Facebook's process of user commodification is complex. "Users voluntarily engage in activities they enjoy on Facebook, neither buying nor selling a product," explain Jin and Feenberg (2015, 55), but "through searching for ads and clicking the keyboard, they unintentionally commodify themselves."

Nonetheless, Facebook has continued to "tweak its functionality not just to encourage more users to use it more often, but also to continually modify its privacy policy in ways that facilitate the development of its commercial model" (Andrejevic 2012, 83). After the Facebook privacy scandal stemming from revelations about its relationship to Cambridge Analytica in early 2018, Facebook (2018a) announced a change to its own privacy policy by saying that "it's important to show people in black and white how our products work—it's one of the ways people can make informed decisions about their privacy." Two of the most significant changes to Facebook's policy pertain to user data sharing and advertising. In the category of "What We Share," Facebook (2018a) says that "we will never sell your information to anyone. We have a responsibility to keep people's information safe and secure, and we impose strict restrictions on how our partners can use and disclose data." In the category of "Advertising," Facebook (2018a) states that "you have control over the ads you see, and we don't share your information with advertisers. Our data policy explains more about how we decide which ads to show you." Yet, Facebook continues to profit by bringing its technology, users, and advertising clients together. This implies that digital platforms like Facebook allow for micro-targeting to a degree undreamt by other information-communication technologies, which is interesting. In the old media, such as broadcasting and publishing, people witnessed and enjoyed the convergence of media content, users, and advertising. The trend toward audience segmentation and specialization in order to attract advertisers was one of the major trends of media growth, and this kind of old business model works very well in digital platforms.

FACEBOOK: THE WORLD'S DOMINANT PLATFORM IMPERIALIST

While many scholars have theorized the economic, technological, and cultural dimensions of digital platforms, the relationship between digital platforms and US and

Western imperialism is only beginning to be explored (Jin 2015). In a period in which a handful of Western countries are the world's dominant digital platform owners and operators and a large number of non-Western countries are digital platform users, it is important to examine how digital platforms intertwine with imperialism. In my book *Digital Platforms, Imperialism and Political Culture*, I conceptualize "platform imperialism" as "an asymmetrical relationship of interdependence between the West, primarily the US, and many developing countries" (Jin 2015, 12). This asymmetrical platform relationship between the United States and the rest is "characterized in part by unequal technological exchanges and therefore capital flows" and reflects the "technological and symbolic domination of US-based platforms that have greatly influenced the majority of people and countries" (Jin 2015, 12). Of course, each technology, including television and film, contributes to inequalities of power relations in somewhat different ways between the United States and the rest; however, the level of inequalities in digital platforms cannot be seen easily as American-based digital platforms, including Google and smartphone operating systems, consist of more than 90 percent share in their markets. As of January 2018, Facebook was also the largest social network site in 152 out of 167 countries analyzed (91 percent of the planet) (Vincos Blog 2018).

In this regard, platform imperialism clearly extends the earlier concepts of cultural imperialism (Schiller 1976) and/or media imperialism (Boyd-Barrett 2015) as platform imperialism is widening the economic and cultural gaps between the United States and the remaining countries in two different ways: one is that it extends the key areas of asymmetries, from the relatively limited cultural industry and media industry to platform technologies and industries, and the other is that it augments the imperialism discourse because the dominance of US platforms, including Facebook, Google, and operating systems, could not be seen two to three decades ago.

As of April 2018, US-based social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, in addition to Google and smartphone operating systems, both Android and iOS, dominated the global platform market. Several non-Western countries are home to digital platform companies, such as Japan (Mixi), Korea (Cyworld), Russia (VK.COM), and China (QQ), and these are significant, at least in their home nation-states, and also across virtual diasporas of social media users. But do these non-Western countries and their platform capitalists effectively compete with and counterbalance the current dominance of the global platform market by the United States? The international reach, market capitalization, user base, network effects, user activity, and advertising revenue of US-based Facebook is currently unparalleled.

FACEBOOK'S EXPANSION AROUND THE WORLD

The US cultural industries are driven to expand globally into non-US markets, and the concept of platform imperialism highlights how social media corporations such as Facebook are following suit, accumulating international users and ad dollars as their revenue source. This confirms a general trend in capitalism and imperialism theory that saturation of domestic markets creates pressure to extend globally.

However, as the infrastructure of global trade and communication, built primarily by Western-based transnational corporations, becomes more sophisticated it is easier for businesses, including digital platform firms, to look at global markets long before domestic markets in Asia and Latin America have been saturated. Facebook has rapidly penetrated the majority of non-Western countries around the world, including Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Turkey, Slovenia, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Korea, and this trend looks to be continuing in the near future (Jin 2015). Facebook is undoubtedly the world's dominant platform imperialist.

When in May 2012 Facebook appeared on the New York stock market, the initial price of a share was only $38; however, it subsequently soared to as much as $210.91 on July 23, 2018, a symbol of a new corporate sphere garnering revenues in multiple ways (*CNN Money* 2012). Fortune 500 also clearly proves the rapid growth of Facebook as one of the major companies. Facebook ranked 482 in a Fortune 500 list in 2013; however, it jumped to 98 in 2017 (Fortune 500 2018).

Social media platforms produce and are reliant on network effects: The more numerous the users who use a platform, the more valuable that platform becomes for everyone else (Srnicek 2017), and Facebook has become "the default social networking platform simply by virtue of the sheer number of people on it" (Srnicek 2017, 45). Facebook's domination of network effects, as represented by its increasing number of users, has continued since its establishment. Today, Facebook's user base continues to grow and its popularity cannot be denied. As the number of Facebook users globally soars, advertising firms in many countries have leveraged Facebook to match its billions of users with digital ads for a range of products and services (Jin 2015). About 1.52 billion daily active users on average visited Facebook in December 2018 (Facebook 2018b). Facebook users also generated an average of 6 billion Likes daily (about 4 million per minute) as of August 2015, up from 4.5 billion Likes daily as of May 2013 (Carey-Simos 2015). In contrast to this, China's QQ had 899 million active accounts at the end of June 2016.

Furthermore, Facebook has increased its advertising revenue, from $300 million in 2008 to about $40 billion in 2017, primarily based on its increasing number of registered users, from 140 million users at the end of December 2008 to more than 2.1 billion users in December 2017 (figure 13.1).

What is at stake is that Facebook has gradually increased its revenue from other countries since 2013 based on the increasing number of global users. In 2012, Facebook's revenue, encompassing advertising and payments and other fees, from the non-US markets accounted for 49.3 percent; however, it increased to 56.3 percent in 2017 (Facebook 2014, 2016, 2017b). Facebook's revenue soared from $17.9 billion in 2015 to as much as $27.4 billion in 2016, a 54 percent increase year-over-year. Of this revenue, 97 percent came from advertising, while only 3 percent was from payments and other fees (Facebook 2017a). Overseas markets bring in more revenue than the US market, and Asia is Facebook's largest market in terms of users. Google, another major US search engine platform, also stated that 57 percent of its revenue was from international markets in the first quarter of 2015 (Saba 2015).

As demonstrated above, Facebook has become the world's dominant platform imperialist. As Facebook has greatly expanded its dominance in the global market,
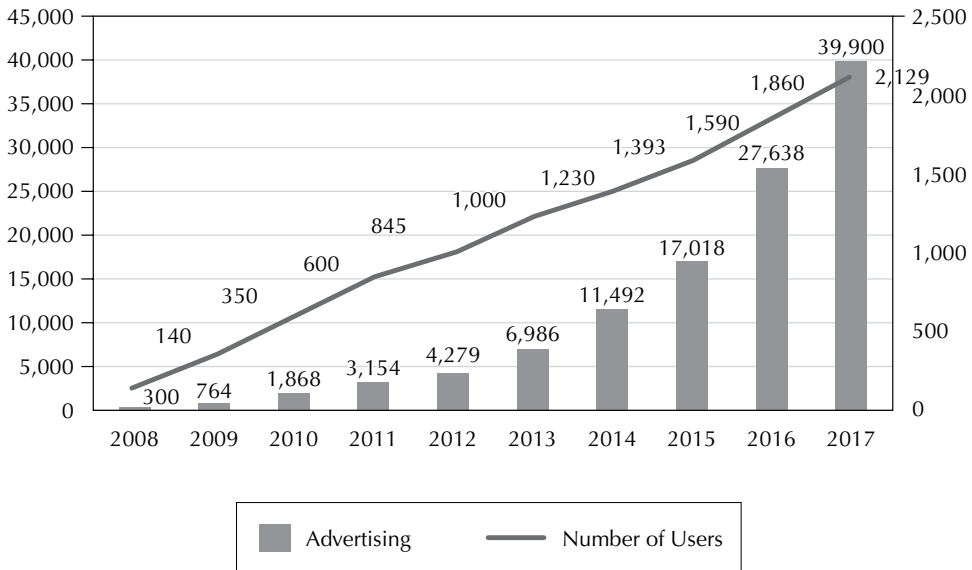
Figure 13.1.   Facebook's Revenues Based on Number of Users (in millions)
Source: Facebook (2014; 2016; 2017b)

this supports an asymmetrical power relationship between the United States and non-Western countries (Jin 2015). For example, Korea, as one of the most networked societies, had developed its own social network site, known as Cyworld (now defunct); however, Facebook finally replaced the local-based SNS to be the leader. Therefore, the increasing role of Facebook is not only about capital accumulation, but also about people's daily activities, as Facebook represents an American-based technology and culture. This is not what we expect in globalization. Unlike its promise, power is not equally dispersed, and only a few countries, in particular the United States, have expanded their global reach.

Facebook's Geopolitics: A New Nexus of the Nation-State and Platform Capitalism

To expand its position as the world's dominant platform imperialist, Facebook has built a close relationship with nation-states. As I demonstrate in this section, platform imperialism is a political, not just an economic, process. In the realm of public policy related to technology, research and development, and trade, companies such as Facebook are more than eager to step up, be seen and heard, and exercise influence to benefit their bottom line. Indeed, in pursuit of their interests, corporate leaders and lobbyists for them typically pressure governments to change the way they act. Of course, in capitalism, strong economies, strong businesses, and strong trade have required the formation of close ties between the leaders of government and the leaders of business (Marcus 2016). At the present time, platform firms such as Facebook have "achieved a kind of vertical integration with the government: a true public-private partnership" (Dayen 2016).
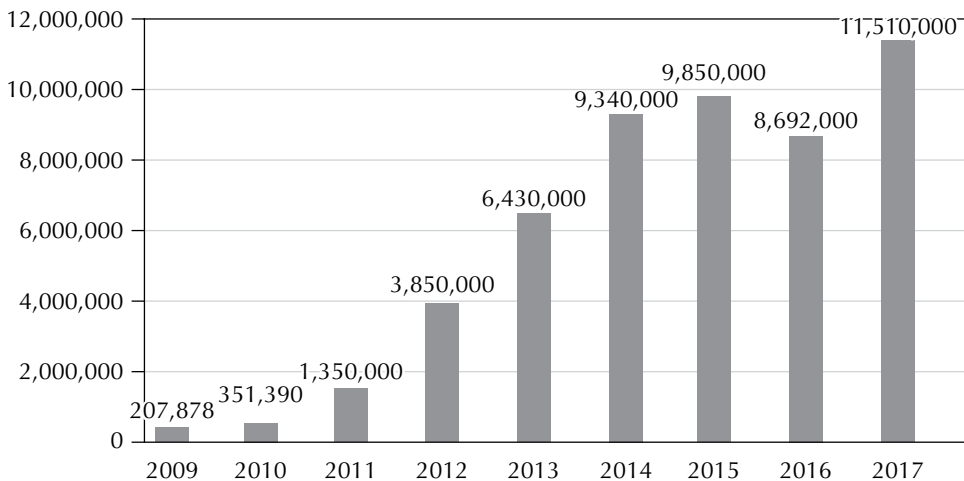
Figure 13.2. Facebook's Lobbying Cost, 2009–2017 (in US dollars)
Source: OpenSecrets (2018)

Facebook and other platform capitalists use a portion of the money they accumulate to try to influence the US government by lobbying it. Facebook lobbies the US government regularly, paying to try to produce policy outcomes that support its business interests in the United States and around the world. Over the past decade, Facebook has increased its lobbying presence in Washington, DC, and Facebook's expenditure on lobbying soared from $207,878 in 2009 to $11.5 million in 2017—55 times greater. In 2017, only two platform firms, Google ($18 million) and Amazon ($13 million), spent more money on lobbying than Facebook (OpenSecrets 2018) (figure 13.2). Prior to Mark Zuckerberg's testimony on Capitol Hill in early 2018, Facebook increased its lobbying presence in Washington. The company listed twelve policy-related job openings based in Washington as it faced increased scrutiny over its privacy policies following reports that Cambridge Analytica had obtained data on up to 87 million Facebook users (Jacobs 2018). The heightened public scrutiny of Facebook, including scandals around fake news, prompted Facebook to spend more money than ever to lobby the US government (Romm 2018).

One of the main reasons Facebook lobbies the US government is to ensure it will support its global market expansion with the free flow of information doctrine—the single most significant cultural foreign policy of the United States (Schiller 1976). The principle—vital to the worldwide expansion of US media corporations, American cultural exports, and the American way of life—of the free flow of information has become a universal virtue to both the cultural industries and the US government (Schiller 1999). It has long been recognized that the principle of free flow of information was ideologically useful to the United States post–World War II in its bid to distinguish between US power and Soviet power, and the previous British power, and to boost US media exports abroad in the face of national resistance. The free flow of information had been recently updated for the cyber age. As Lum et al. (2012, 10) point out, "US government efforts to promote and protect Internet freedom operate as a part of overall US cyberspace policy and programs."

> Released in May 2011, the President's International Strategy for Cyberspace outlines strategic and policy priorities for the global digital infrastructure and networked technology. . . . It stresses using diplomacy to build unified action for creating standards in regulating and operating global digital networks, employing national defense actors to oppose and protect against malicious actors in cyberspace, and focusing development resources on increasing and improving developing countries' digital system capacity and access to such systems by their populations. The Strategy sets out seven policy priorities focusing on opening markets, enhancing security, enforcing relevant law, ensuring military response capabilities, promoting Internet governance, developing capacity and security, and promoting Internet freedom. (Lum et al. 2012, 10)

By pushing this International Strategy for Cyberspace around the world, the US government has buttressed the global expansion of US-based platform firms, and these firms rely on the US government to pressure other governments to deregulate and liberalize their national markets. The hardware and software Facebook and other digital platforms rely on are not overseen by global governmental institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and nation-state regulatory structures are weak.

Sometimes, platform corporations directly encourage or pressure other countries to open their borders. For example, since 2009, Facebook has been banned in China and held behind the country's Great Firewall. In response, Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg has traveled to China and met with officials in hopes of getting Facebook unblocked and allowed into the world's most populous country. In October 2017, Zuckerberg and Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, visited China. Zuckerberg in particular has made a big show of courting the country's top political leadership in hopes of convincing China to relax its ban on Facebook (AFP 2017). Significantly, Facebook and other platform imperialists do not turn a profit by exporting material commodities to consumers in world markets, but rely upon aggregating and monetizing the data of user prosumers.

In addition to lobbying the US government and non-US governments to support its transnational business interests, Facebook is sometimes leveraged by data corporations linked with US political actors to conduct national persuasion campaigns that rely on the exploitation of user data. The Facebook–Cambridge Analytica scandal is a case in point. When the upstart voter-profiling firm Cambridge Analytica prepared to wade into the 2014 American midterm elections, it had secured a $15 million investment from Robert Mercer, a wealthy Republican donor, and wooed his political adviser, Stephen K. Bannon, with the promise of Big Data tools that could identify the personalities of American voters and influence their minds and behavior (Rosenberg et al. 2018). With an app called "thisisyourdigitallife" that offered personality quizzes to users, Cambridge Analytica and its counterpart SCL harvested the data of millions of Facebook users, including 1.1 million from the United Kingdom. When "Facebook users installed apps connected to the platform, they also exposed data from many of their friends to the app developer" (Lapowsky 2018). Using this app, Cambridge Analytica harvested private information from millions of Facebook users without their permission, making it one of the largest data leaks in Facebook's history. In April 2018, Facebook revealed that the data firm Cambridge Analytica gained unauthorized access to up to eighty-seven million users' data, mainly in the United States, which was far

higher than the fifty million users that were originally reported. The breach allowed Cambridge Analytica to exploit the private social media activity of a huge swath of the American electorate and develop voter profiling and targeted advertising techniques that supported Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign (Rosenberg et al. 2018).

Furthermore, what is also significant is how Facebook's global user data aggregation and exploitation intertwines with the US national security state's power to conduct surveillance and wage information-age warfare. Examples are the US National Security Agency's Prism and Upstream programs. The laws that authorize those programs were set to expire, but the US Congress renewed them with little difficulty in January 2018. According to them, "the Prism and Upstream programs exist to collect online communications of foreigners outside the US. Prism takes the communications directly from internet services like email providers and video chat programs, and Upstream taps into the infrastructure of the internet to pull in the communications while they're in transit" (Hautala 2018). Consequently, a massive amount of personal data has become accessible to both corporate and state institutions, especially with the advent of the US-led Global War on Terror.

Hardt and Negri (2000, xii–xiv) claim that the sovereignty of the nation-states is over, because no nation-state can be a world empire in the way that modern Euro-colonial states were in a previous age. However, relationships between digital platforms and states, both nationally and globally, exist and are being intensified. In particular, the nexus of the US nation-state and Facebook evidenced in Facebook's lobbying campaigns around the US government, the US government's support of Facebook's trade ambitions around the world, and the US government's leveraging of Facebook for surveillance and cyberwarfare, point to the continuing power of the nation-state.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the rise of a US-centric platform imperialism using the example of Facebook, the largest social media company in the world. As demonstrated, the global dominance of the United States is being helped by digital platforms, and Facebook is the world's leading platform imperialist. The emergence of non-US-based platforms around the world has provided some potential challengers to American-centric platform imperialism. China, for example, has developed its own SNSs, search engines, and smartphones, and presumably competed with the United States. Nonetheless, non-Western firms have not yet constructed a balanced global order. As US-centered platforms such as Facebook penetrate the global market and expand their reach around the world in the early twenty-first century, American media imperialism continues with platforms (Jin 2015).

As Mirrlees (2015, 11) aptly puts it, "in the early 21st century, the US is still an Empire and the world system's dominant capitalist, military and communications power center." Boyd-Barrett (2015), a lifelong media-imperialism theorist, also clearly confirms that despite the significant growth of a few non-Western powerhouses, including China and India, global hardware and software markets continued to be dominated by US-based corporations such as Apple, Cisco, Dell, IBM, and Intel. US-based

corporations remained exceptionally strong in computer software and internet services (including Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, and Twitter), nurtured as many of these are by the concentration of talent and capital in the United States.

This chapter's critical interrogation of the geopolitical economy and global hegemony of the US-centered Facebook platform proves that the dominant position of the United States continues and intensifies unequal power relationships between the United States and the rest. Digital platforms deepen global divisions between a handful of Western imperial states—in particular the United States—which have developed and supported their own platform corporations, and a vast majority of non-Western states, which do not have advanced platform corporations. Therefore, while the old forms of American imperialism supported by military, media, and culture continue, American imperialism has been renewed by digital media platforms such as Facebook as well. Unlike other forms of imperialism, platform imperialism will greatly jeopardize the stability, privacy, and security of the world, and this is more serious than in any previous era.

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Chapter 14

New Global Music Distribution System, Same Old Linguistic Hegemony?

Analyzing English on Spotify

Christof Demont-Heinrich

This chapter taps an empirical case study analysis of the comparative presence of English on the global music distribution platform Spotify in an effort to learn more about the global hegemony of English as it relates to the intersections between media, culture, globalization, and power. The global hegemony of English is the result of a variety of long-running and ongoing historic social, political, economic, and cultural forces with British colonialism playing the biggest historical role and post–World War II American-inflected neoliberal capitalism, which emphasizes the logic of profit and economic efficiency, playing a significant contemporary role. I also use this case study analysis of the comparative hegemony of English in Spotify Top 10 weekly streamed song lists from fourteen countries and in the Spotify Global Top 10 streamed songs to reflect on some of the differences and different (dis)advantages between *cultural and linguistic imperialism*—linguistic imperialism is a sub-category of cultural imperialism—and *globalization of culture/globalization of English* perspectives in media, global communication, and sociolinguistic studies.

I pose the following research question: *What sort of presence does English have on the national weekly Top 10 streamed Spotify songs from a variety of countries located in different geographic regions of the world as well as on Spotify's weekly global most streamed songs list?* Overall, I find considerable evidence of linguistic hierarchy and inequality, with English, and Anglo-American artists, dominating Spotify's most popular song lists in the Global Top 10 as well as on eleven of the fourteen Spotify national Top 10 lists studied. Spanish in Argentina and Spain and Portuguese in Brazil were the exceptions to this rule.

I begin this chapter by defining and reflecting on the perspectives of cultural and linguistic imperialism, cultural hegemony, and globalization of culture. After defining and examining these theoretical frameworks, I offer a brief overview of Spotify and an explanation about why I chose Spotify for this case study. Next, I provide a short summary of the history of the hegemony of English in global popular music. I then explain the methods I use in analyzing Spotify vis-à-vis the comparative presence of English on the world's most popular global digital music distribution platform. The following section focuses on what I found, empirically, on Spotify, with the section after that zooming in on some of the reasons for, and potential implications of, my findings.

I conclude by reflecting more broadly on the significance of my findings on the presence of English in the most popular songs on Spotify. I reflect in particular on what my findings can be said to demonstrate about the comparative utility of cultural and linguistic, cultural hegemony, and globalization of culture perspectives in analyzing global cultural and linguistic power relations.

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM, GLOBALIZATION OF CULTURE, AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY

Cultural imperialism refers to a global situation in which powerful culture industries and state actors located almost exclusively in the West and, in particular, in the United States, dominate other local, national, and regional cultures and actors (Boyd-Barrett 2014; Golding 1977; Mattelart 1979; Schiller 1976, 2000; Sparks 2007). I draw upon the cultural-imperialism tradition in this analysis as well as from Phillipson's notion of linguistic imperialism. Working from the field of critical applied linguistics, Phillipson (1992) developed a framework for understanding, analyzing, and explaining "linguistic imperialism" as related to the historical, and ongoing, global expansion of the English language. Leaning on Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung's conceptualization of cultural imperialism, Phillipson describes linguistic imperialism as a "subtype" of cultural imperialism. His working definition of "English linguistic imperialism" is "the dominance of English" as "*asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages*" (1992, 47; Phillipson's emphasis). In this definition, "*structural* refers broadly to material properties (for example, institutions, financial allocations)," while "*cultural* [refers] to immaterial or ideological properties (for example, attitudes, pedagogic principles)" (1992, 47; Phillipson's emphasis).

In contrast to cultural imperialism, which encourages scholars to concentrate on cultural domination and *cultural producers* as well as on the power of the latter to impose their ideology on others, *globalization of culture* or *"glocalization" theory* encourages researchers to focus on cultural resistance and *cultural consumers* as well as on the power of people, both on individual and collective levels, to read, appropriate, and use cultural products in a creative fashion. In the tensions between cultural imperialist–inflected and globalization of culture–inflected scholarship, we see disagreement about what level of analysis to focus on, with scholarship rooted in a cultural-imperialism approach generally concerned primarily with macro-level (global/national) *cultural production and distribution* questions and issues and scholarship grounded in a globalization of culture, or glocalization, approach tending to focus more on micro-level (local) questions surrounding *cultural consumption*.

Like a cultural-imperialism perspective, what I describe as a *cultural-hegemony* perspective foregrounds power differentials within the capitalist cultural production, distribution, and consumption system, though it does not see dominant cultures as necessarily determining culture in other places around the world. Cultural hegemony sees a small number of cultures, the United States in particular, as typically occupying more space at what might be referred to as a global table of cultural options. Writ-

ing about "Americanization" in France, Kuisel (2003) puts forward an apt and useful metaphor for culture in the global context, describing it as a "smorgasbord." Here, he tips his analytical hat to globalization of culture scholars, conceding that there are often many options on the global culture "smorgasbord," but he adds that these options still tend to tilt toward more American options.

The metaphor of cultural "smorgasbord" is particularly useful because it shows that those (Chalaby 2002; Kuisel 2003; Ritzer and Stillman 2003), including myself (Demont-Heinrich 2011), who hold what I define here as a cultural hegemony, or what Chalaby (2002) has referred to as a "cultural primacy" perspective, acknowledge that there is some—but also often quite limited—"choice" in terms of the cultural options available to cultural consumers in different places around the world. Under the larger header of cultural hegemony, I employ the concept of the hegemony of English. Here, I draw upon the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci saw language as central to establishing, and to understanding, the "organization of individual consent" to dominant social values and norms (Ives 2004). Indeed, "the spontaneous consent given by the great masses to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Gramsci 1971, 12) effectively captures the ways in which the global expansion of English has become largely a matter of heavily *directed* choice.

A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH IN GLOBAL POPULAR MUSIC AND SPOTIFY

Several studies have examined the global hegemony of English vis-à-vis popular music over time. They conclude that from the 1960s through the 1980s, first British and then American music—and the English language—dominated global music consumption (Achterberg et al. 2011; Burnett 1992; Ferreira and Waldfogel 2013). Of note here also is a study of global music on YouTube by George and Peukert (2014) that found American music hits continue to have substantial pull and presence on YouTube vis-à-vis music consumers in Europe. Some of these studies (Actherberg et al. 2011; Ferreira and Waldfogel 2013) also conclude that American domination of global music diminished notably beginning in the 1990s and has continued to drop up to the present day. To be sure, with American music once controlling up to 80 percent of some major European markets, control of 40 to 60 percent of many contemporary European national markets definitely represents less of a share than before. However, dominance is relative. No *other* (foreign) language, *comparatively* speaking, has near as much presence as does English on the various national popular music charts that these scholars examine—regardless of what percentage of a given national market American music, sung in English, holds. That is, *compared to* other languages such as German or French or Japanese or Swahili or Russian or Korean or Dutch or Ukrainian, English-language songs appear on many national popular music charts more often, and in larger numbers, than do any other "foreign" language songs.

Spotify, which began as a small Swedish start-up launched by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon in 2008, is currently the world's top distributor of digital streaming music and is available in sixty-four countries worldwide. Although not an American com-

pany, Spotify has been described as largely American in its approach to business by a number of different scholars and analysts (Fleischer and Snickars 2017; Vonderau 2017), meaning it is extremely focused on growing its revenues and its *global* market share, especially its share in countries such as the United States. Spotify generates revenue from subscriptions as well as from advertising. It generated $4 billion in 2017. However, the Swedish company has reportedly not turned a profit in its ten years of operation. As of June 2018, Spotify had 70 million paid subscribers globally and 170 million users overall. Its relative presence in the countries in which it distributes music is variable, and, unfortunately, impossible to quantify as Spotify does not provide data on the number of subscribers and users per national market. However, Statista.com has produced a bar graph that shows that in 2017 Europe had 37 percent of Spotify users, North America 32 percent, Latin America 21 percent, and "the rest of the world," including Africa and Asia, 10 percent. It is also still possible to get a general idea of Spotify's presence in a given national music market such as Germany, or Japan, based on total number of top weekly streams.

RESEARCH METHODS

For this analysis, I selected a geographically and linguistically strategic cross section of the sixty-four countries in which Spotify is available, taking fourteen of the sixty-four (22 percent) and analyzing them in terms of the (lack of) presence of English vis-à-vis their Spotify weekly national Top 10 most frequently streamed songs. I also examined the Spotify global Top 200 weekly streamed songs. I tightened my empirical net further by pulling national weekly Top 10 lists on a bi-monthly (once every other month) basis. The countries whose Top 10 weekly streamed Spotify songs I analyzed in terms of the relative (lack of) presence of English-language songs on a bi-monthly basis from January 2017 to June 2018 are: Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

I also examined Spotify's weekly global Top 200 stream lists across the same January 2017 to June 2018 time period on the same bi-monthly basis. Finally, I also surveyed the very latest Top 10 stream lists for each of the countries selected at the time of analysis, which was June 21, 2018. This means that, in total, I looked at ten weekly Top 10 national stream lists for most of the fourteen countries I selected *plus* ten *weekly* Top 200 global streams across a date range spanning from January 2017 to June 2018. In the case of the global Top 200, I *also* examined *all* of the 200 songs for the presence of songs sung in languages *other* than English or Spanish. This led to an interesting, and revealing, result: Just *two* songs sung in languages other than English and Spanish, one sung in German and the other in Korean, made it into the Spotify weekly *global* Top 200 songs for the ten weeks surveyed across the January 2017 to June 2018 time period.

Generally, the Top 10 out of the Top 200 most streamed songs in the fourteen national Spotify markets I examined contained a large percentage of songs sung in English (see figure 14.1). These were nearly always sung by Anglo-American artists.

That is, with the exception of Sweden, where several of the songs sung in English were sung by *Swedish* artists *in English*, the vast majority of songs sung in English that appeared in the various Top 10 weekly most streamed Spotify songs were sung by Anglo-American artists such as Ed Sheeran, Drake, Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift, Post Malone, the Chainsmokers, Eminem, and Ariana Grande, among others, with Anglo-American here referring to the so-called core English-language-dominant countries, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Indeed, for a variety of reasons, one of which is almost certainly the widespread nature of English-centric bilingualism (Demont-Heinrich 2010; Smit 2012), (a form of "multilingualism" in which people for whom English is not a first language possess a high level of proficiency in English but do not profess similar proficiency in any other foreign language), English-language songs often dominated the first ten spots on the various national Spotify weekly Top 200 lists examined.

ENGLISH AND THE SPOTIFY WEEKLY GLOBAL TOP 10/TOP 200 AND NATIONAL WEEKLY TOP 10

According to my data drawn from the Spotify *global* Top 200 streams from January 2017 to June 2018, English enjoys a dominance no other language does, with Spanish a clear second, and not a single other language has any regular or substantial presence in the global Top 200. Indeed, only twice in the ten weeks examined across an eighteen-month time span did a language other than English or Spanish crack the Spotify global weekly Top 200. The Germany-based group Bausa pushed itself into one global Top 200 (January 4, 2018) with the song "Was du Liebe nennst" ("What You Call Love"), which held the 183 spot, and the South Korean group Blackpink took position 47 on the Spotify global weekly Top 200 for June 21, 2018, with its song "DDU-DU DDU-DU," sung in Korean. Looking further at the Top 10 weekly streamed songs in the Spotify global 200, in six of the ten weeks surveyed all ten of the Top 10 global songs were sang in English. Spanish appeared in the Top 10 four times, with Justin Bieber's English/Spanish remix of Luis Fonsi's hit song "Despacito," which Fonsi originally sang in Spanish with Daddy Yankee, accounting for a couple of these appearances. The only song sung completely in Spanish to break into the Spotify global Top 10 weekly streamed songs was the popular "Mi Gente" by Colombian-born and US-based artist J Balvin. Overall, 94 percent of the one hundred songs in my survey of the Spotify Global Weekly Top 10 most streamed songs were sung exclusively in English.

At the national level, the most English-predominant weekly top streamed songs lists were in northern/eastern Europe (Germany, Poland, Sweden). Two of the ten Top 10 weekly stream lists examined from Germany contained four songs in German; one had three songs in German, and the other seven weeks surveyed saw just one German-language song break into the Top 10 weekly streams each week. Overall, across a hundred songs surveyed from Spotify Germany top weekly streamed song lists, 71 percent were sung exclusively in English. In Poland, an even higher percentage—93 percent—were in English. In Sweden, 90 percent of the hundred top weekly streamed songs were

in English, while eight of the ten weeks saw between eight and ten of the Top 10 weekly streamed songs sung in English, with never more than three songs on a weekly list being sung in Swedish. However, there were several instances of songs sung in English by Swedish artists, one by Swedish/Norwegian artists/DJs Tungevaag & Raaban, another two by Aviici, and one by Felix Sandman.

English's presence was also significant in the three Asian Spotify countries selected—Indonesia, Japan, and Taiwan (Spotify is not available in China). Spotify Indonesia was dominated by English-language songs, with these songs taking between eight and ten of the Top 10 weekly streamed songs in ten out of the ten weeks surveyed and with 90 percent of one hundred songs surveyed consisting of songs sung exclusively in English. Songs sung in Indonesian broke into the Top 10 only three times across the January 2017 to June 2018 time period surveyed. One song sung in Korean, "DDU-DU DDU-DU" by Blackpink, broke into the Indonesia Top 10, taking the number 1 slot for June 21, 2018. For the most part, English also dominated the Spotify Top 10 weekly stream lists surveyed in Japan, with English-language songs taking seven to ten of the Top 10 weekly stream spots across the time period surveyed and English accounting for 70 percent of the song titles surveyed. One trend apparent in the Japanese Spotify Top 10 weekly stream lists was songs that mixed Japanese and English. This occurred several times during the time period surveyed. English dominated the Taiwan weekly Top 10, with many weeks not seeing a single Mandarin-language song and most of the other weeks having just one or two songs sung in Mandarin, with a total of 87 percent of songs surveyed sung in English.

Spotify has no presence in the Middle East to speak of and no presence in Africa. However, it does offer its streaming service in Israel, where a small number of users have begun to stream songs from its music library. Additionally, Spotify is available in Turkey, which is not in the Middle East, but which is geographically, and to a certain extent culturally, proximate to the Middle East. Spotify has been in Israel since 2017. The Israeli Spotify weekly Top 10 streams surveyed, which only go back to March 15, 2018, rather than to January 2017, were dominated by English-language songs with only a handful of songs sung in Hebrew and 83 percent of songs surveyed sung in English. Probably the most interesting thing about Turkey's Spotify weekly Top 10 lists was the way that, over the time period from January 2017 to June 2018, the number of songs in English dropped from as many as eight of the Top 10 to as many as seven, eight, and even nine of the Top 10 being sung in Turkish by the spring of 2018. At the same time the number of songs sung in Turkish rose, the number of weekly streams overall also went up considerably. Overall, across the hundred Top 10 weekly streamed songs surveyed from Spotify Turkey, 46 percent were in English.

In the United States, across the time period from January 2017 to June 2018, just one song, which appeared in two of the ten Top 10 weekly streamed songs lists surveyed—Justin Bieber's remix of Luis Fonsi's "Despacito"—had both a non-English title and some non-English-language lyrics, meaning 98 percent of songs on the Spotify America Top 10 weekly stream lists were sung exclusively in English. Rather like in the United States, the United Kingdom Spotify weekly Top 10 streams assessed across ten bi-monthly selected weeks were dominated by English-language songs, with 96 percent surveyed sung exclusively in English. Indeed, only two songs,

"Despacito" and "Mi Gente," with Spanish in them, made it into the ten different UK Top 10 weekly streams examined from January 2017 to June 2018.

The countries most impervious to the hegemony of English on their Spotify weekly Top 10 streaming list were two heavily Spanish-speaking countries, Argentina and Spain, and Brazil, a country of more than two hundred million people, most of whom have Portuguese as their dominant language. In Argentina, Ed Sheeran's massive global hit "Shape of You" was the *only* English-language song to make it into the weekly Top 10 across the ten weeks surveyed, leaving Argentina with just 1 percent of one hundred songs surveyed sung in English. A couple of songs that mix Spanish and English, Justin Bieber's remix of Luis Fonsi's "Despacito" and Sofia Reyes's "1,2,3," also broke into the Argentinian Spotify weekly Top 10. Similarly, in Spain, English barely registered a presence in the weekly Top 10, accounting for just 6 percent of the one hundred most streamed songs in the survey. There were a few songs that mix English and Spanish—for example, "1,2,3" by Sofia Reyes. In addition, "Shape of You"—clearly the biggest global Spotify hit of 2017–2018, at least through June 2018, pushed into Spain's weekly Top 10 for two weeks. Overall, Spain mirrored Argentina: its Spotify weekly Top 10 lists were dominated by Spanish-language songs. Finally,
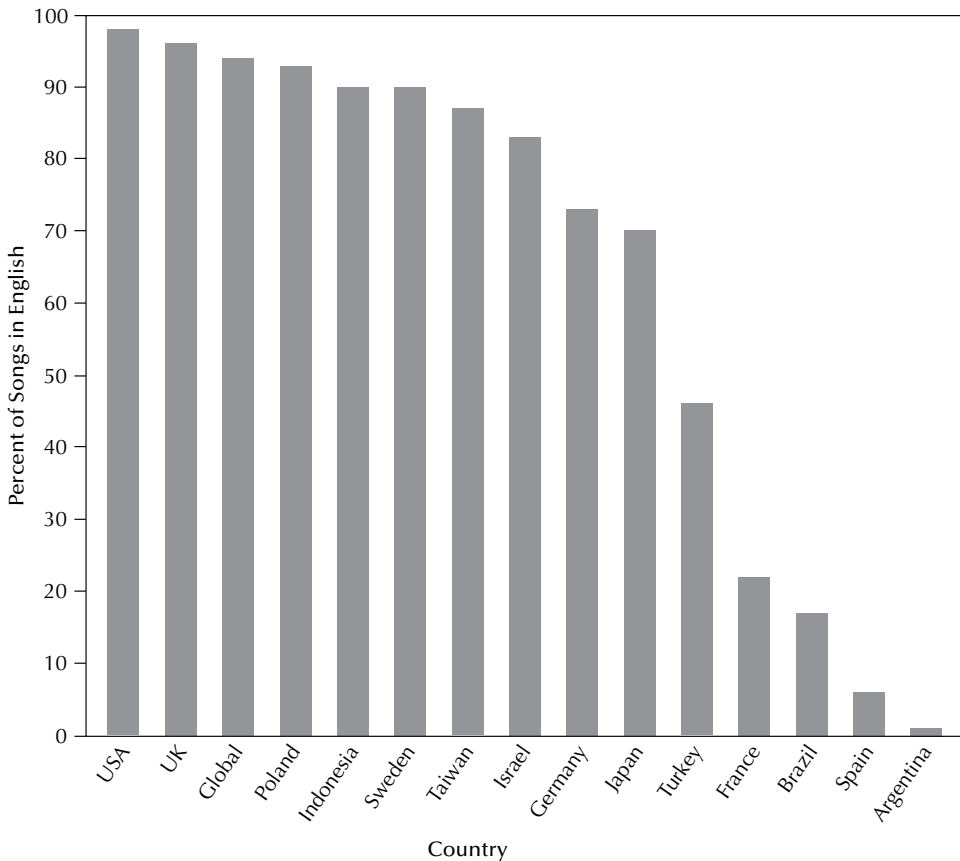
Figure 14.1. Spotify Top 10 Weekly Streamed Songs in English, January 2017–June 2018

Brazil saw more songs sung in English than did Argentina and Brazil in the hundred Top 10 weekly streamed songs surveyed, with 17 percent sung in English only.

ENGLISH CULTURAL-LINGUISTIC HEGEMONY ON SPOTIFY

With the exception of the Spanish-dominant countries and Brazil, generally my analysis of the Spotify weekly global Top 10 and Top 200 and the weekly Top 10 streams in fourteen strategically selected countries underscores the clear, and widespread, presence of English on Spotify. The overwhelming presence of English in the Spotify *global* weekly Top 10, and Top 200—just two songs sung in languages other than English or Spanish made their way onto these lists for the ten bi-monthly selected weekly top streams—reproduces the dominant presence/hegemony of English in global popular music in a comparatively "new" context, the digital music distribution platform. This platform is accessible to hundreds of millions of people around the world. In theory, these people could more easily and efficiently locate, and listen to, music sung in languages other than English, Spanish, or a language other than their own dominant language(s) than during the global music era running from the 1960s to the 2000s, which was dominated by radio and individually sold, and bought, CDs and, finally, individual mp3s. However, there was no evidence that large percentages of Spotify users in the surveyed countries were regularly tracking down songs sung in languages other than their own locally/national dominant language and English, as virtually no songs in languages other than English and, for example, German in Germany, French in France, etc., made their way into the weekly Top 10 streams, though Spanish and French did, one time each, crack the German Spotify Top 10.

In fact, the dominance of English in the Spotify weekly global Top 200, and within that, the global Top 10, appears to point to a reluctance on the part of music consumers to listen to music in a language other than their own dominant language and/or English, or sometimes in Spanish. English's dominance also points to a global music production and distribution system that itself both reflects and reproduces English's hegemony. That is, English's hegemony on the Spotify weekly global Top 200 leads to increased English hegemony in a self-fulfilling and rather circular cycle. Songs in English are pushed by Spotify because English is popular and English is popular in part because it is being pushed.

One could surmise that the primary reason that English-language songs, and, to a considerably lesser extent, Spanish-language songs, heavily populate the Spotify weekly global Top 200 is due to the large numbers of users in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom and Mexico and Argentina. And this is likely partly the case. A large number of Spotify's 170 million users do indeed seem to be located in English-language-dominant countries such as the United Kingdom and United States, as top weekly stream totals hit twenty-five million per song in the United States and four million per song in the United Kingdom. Add this to the fact that in many other Spotify countries users for whom English is a foreign language *also* often choose English-language songs over songs in their own dominant language(s) and the numbers pile up even more in favor of English.

It is important to reiterate that English did not dominate Spotify Argentina, Brazil, or Spain. That English-language songs, comparatively speaking, made only minor blips in these Spotify markets is hardly surprising. Latin America is arguably the global region that has been the most impervious to the global spread of English, especially among so-called average citizens. It is also important to note that some songs mixed English with other languages—Spanish, German, French, and Japanese in particular. Indeed, one of the most interesting trends was the substantial mixing of English and Japanese in many songs on the Spotify Japan Top 10 weekly stream list—for instance, in the song "What Is Love?" by TWICE.

The fact that English dominates compared to all other "foreign" languages in Indonesia, Japan, Germany, Poland, Sweden, and so on, is illustrative of a globalization trend in which some social and cultural actors and parts of their always already hybridized cultures have much more space on the global cultural-linguistic "smorgasbord" (Kuisel 2003) or enjoy more "cultural primacy" (Chalaby 2002) than others. Artists from the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom—who sing in "the" language of global pop, English—hold a clear advantage in shaping a "global music culture" over Bangladeshi artists who sing in Bengali, Vietnamese musicians who sing in Vietnamese, Slovenian artists who sing in Slovenian, or Native American artists in the United States and Canada who sing in their tribal languages.

One other notable finding is the way in which the United States embodies a cultural and linguistic status unlike that of any other country. While most other countries have been heavily impacted by an outward flow of American culture, including popular music songs by American artists sung in English and streamed on Spotify, most consumers within the United States are comparatively unlikely to have watched a foreign film, watched a foreign television series, or listened to popular music in any languages other than English or, perhaps, Spanish (Coates and Peaslee 2005; Goldsmith and Huang 2017; Phillipson 2008). That is, while the rest of the world opens itself to Anglo-American culture and English-language music, most cultural consumers in the United States do not return the favor—especially if the "foreign" culture or music is packaged in a language other than English (Demont-Heinrich 2010; Phillipson 2008). To be fair, American and British Spotify users are really not much more insular, linguistically speaking, than many of their compatriots in other parts of the world. As this analysis has shown, outside of the United States, Spotify users tend to expand the American-British language insularity by just one language, English + their locally/ nationally dominant language. They thereby plug into a growing English-centric bilingualism, which describes a one-dominant language + English and no other foreign languages model of linguistic orientation.

The linguistic insularity of US and UK Spotify users and the apparent English-centric bilingualism of users in other countries examined cannot be reduced only to the collective preferences of individuals. It is also a result of larger social forces. A long-running English-language hegemony in global popular music, in particular in Europe, stands as perhaps the most significant of these factors. It is interesting, and perhaps revealing, to note that Spotify itself appears to be quite aware of both the hegemony of English on its platform and of the ways in which it, as a truly international music distribution service, can promote, grow, and presumably also potentially capitalize on

this status. In fact, on September 28, 2018, between the time this chapter had been written and was being edited and awaiting publication, Spotify announced a "Global Cultures Initiative" whose stated aim is to grow "eclectic" playlists that reflect what Spotify calls an increasingly "interconnected" world. In one of its press releases, Spotify (2018) directly acknowledged the current prevalence of English on its platform:

> Top-ranked hits in the U.S. are still overwhelmingly focused on English-language and American-made songs—yet about 1 in 4 Spotify users around the world actively listens to artists from a culture (or country) different from their own. Thanks to our increasingly connected world, discovering the top hits and coolest beats from around the globe is now easier than ever—and relevant in an age where many communities and cultures live in countries far away from their homelands. For example, 15 million Lebanese live in Brazil—more than in Lebanon itself.

It is clear that perhaps much, or even most, of the impetus behind Spotify's "Global Cultures Initiative" and accompanying "Global X" drive, which seeks to put "crossover hits from all cultures around the world in one place," is the widespread presence of "diaspora" communities around the world, or groups of immigrants living in countries far away from their country of origin. However, Spotify does seem to tip its hat to the importance of global diversity and hybridization beyond diasporic communities. It does so via the words of a Spanish employee who works in New York City. Rocio Guerrero, identified as "Head of Global Cultures at Spotify," asks,

> Why is food from other countries so embedded in our culture and yet music isn't? Because streaming didn't exist. But now it's happening. Global X is the sound of a new era: rhythmic crossover hits from all cultures around the world, all in one place. We're creating a global brand that's going to represent hits from all countries around the world.

It will be interesting to follow Spotify's effort to encourage more diversity in music consumption among its users and to see if, or how, this might affect the hegemony of English on its global music distribution platform and, in particular, vis-à-vis its Global Top 200 songs.

CONCLUSION

There is a need for continued reflection on how best to examine, and study, culture—including language, which is almost entirely glossed over in media and international communication studies—in the global context. In fact, this case study highlights the continuing relevance of cultural and linguistic imperialism and cultural and linguistic hegemony as frameworks of analysis. The greatest strength of these perspectives is the way in which they force us to look at, unpack, and critique unequal relations of power, which continue to dog global humanity in the twenty-first century.

My empirical case study of top global, and national, weekly streamed songs on the global digital music streaming platform Spotify found that, except for in selected pri-

marily Spanish-speaking countries, and one primarily Portuguese-speaking country, Brazil, English-language songs and Anglo-American pop music artists dominated. The top/upper level of the global sociocultural order is precisely where one would expect to find the most pronounced level of English-language hegemony because it is here, at the top, where English has become *historically* most entrenched. The fact that employing a cultural hegemony/language hegemony perspective mostly found what was being searched for—English-language hegemony—does not disqualify this perspective from being used in this type of analysis. A globalization of culture perspective is also likely to find what it is looking for, meaning localization, hybridization, counter-flows, and the like as well. This is because it asks different kinds of questions, looks at different things, in different places, and at different levels of the global social order than cultural imperialism. This is symptomatic of the levels of the social order that researchers from these different perspectives tend to focus on, with cultural-imperialism and cultural-hegemony proponents mostly looking at macro/upper levels and globalization of culture proponents mostly looking at micro/local levels.

In fact, the hegemony of English—a global/macro phenomenon that I found to be present on Spotify—can, and obviously does, *co*-occur with instances of localization and hybridization. Indeed, researchers from both cultural-imperialism and globalization of culture perspectives might well agree that domination or hegemony and resistance and re-appropriation can, and do, *co*-occur. However, they are *also* likely to *disagree* about the level of domination/hegemony or agency/resistance in a given cultural instance, whether that instance is the Spotify global Top 10 weekly streamed songs, or the consumption of Ed Sheeran's global English-language hit song "Shape of You" in Germany, Sweden, or Indonesia. That is, cultural-imperialism and cultural-hegemony proponents are going to foreground inequity, power differentials, and domination while focusing primarily on *cultural production and distribution*. In contrast, globalization of culture proponents are likely going to seek to emphasize individual agency, re-appropriation, and resistance mostly through the lens of local *cultural consumption/*use.

While some (Kraidy and Murphy 2008; Rogers 2006), including me (Demont-Heinrich 2011), have previously called for a sort of happy/perfect melding of cultural imperialism and globalization of culture and/or an ideal "middle ground"—which is a bit what a cultural-hegemony perspective tries to do while also shading toward the powerful society end of the society versus individual power continuum I described in my introduction—perhaps there is no such place or space. Indeed, based on my case study analysis of the presence of English on Spotify's Top 10 weekly nationally and globally streamed song lists—which grounded the debate between cultural-imperialism and globalization of culture viewpoints in a real-world, empirical instance and which found substantial evidence of significant, and interesting, linguistic and cultural hegemony—it might be that locating an ideal "middle ground" between cultural imperialism and globalization of culture in every cultural instance is not really possible, and maybe not even advisable. Perhaps a more realistic approach might be for researchers across the cultural-imperialism–globalization of culture continuum to acknowledge the following: that researchers, and research, along the whole of the cultural-imperialism–globalization

of culture continuum could potentially benefit from recognizing the mutual, even inevitable, and often paradoxical, *co*-existence of domination and hegemony right alongside hybridization, localization, and agency.

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"Weaponizing" the Internet and World Wide Web for Empire

Platforming Capitalism, Data-Veillance, Public Diplomacy, and Cyberwarfare

Tanner Mirrlees

For the past decade, journalists and industry insiders have framed the internet, personal computers, smartphones, and social media as the basis of our "global village." In *Forbes*, Fenech (2018) wrote that our "truly global village" would spring from "social networks," and in a report for the multinational accounting firm Deloitte, Khoury and Maayeh (2015, 1) declared that social platforms have "transformed [the world] into a global village with people just one click away." Without a doubt, digital technologies do help some people form virtual "villages," but the endurance of the "digital divide" means that it is certainly not the case for everybody. Currently, a little under half of the world population does not have internet access, and only a little over 32 percent own a smartphone (Internet World Stats 2018; Statista 2018; World Bank 2016). Moreover, access to the internet and a smartphone is useless to the billions of people who do not know how to read or write, let alone do a Google search or manage a Facebook profile. Due to this divide between the digital "haves" and "have nots," a global village that is genuinely inclusive, participatory, and universally accessible remains a dream rooted in technological optimism more than a global reality. But even if this gap closes, it is unlikely that this would abolish inequalities between the world's rich and poor, much less create a friendly "global village" sans war, ecological crisis, and unmet needs.

For hundreds of years, technology has served the interests of the most powerful empires. The internet and World Wide Web are presently used by imperial states and corporations for profit and national security goals—not the provision of public goods or world peace. Far from integrating the various states, nations, and cultures of the world into an equitable and amicable global village, the internet and World Wide Web are currently linking with and expanding the US empire (Boyd-Barret 2006; Ebo 1999; Jin 2015; Winseck 2008). US internet and social media corporations are dominant in the global system, and they are crossing borders in search of new investments, markets, prosumers, and user data (Jin 2015; Jin 2019, chapter 13, this volume; van Dijck 2019, chapter 12, this volume).

Recently, catchphrases such as "weaponization of social media" entered the public lexicon. Google Trends indicates that worldwide search interest in the phrase "weaponization of social media" gained momentum in the second year of the Trump presidency, and interest in the phrase peaked between September and December 2018. This

phrase is often deployed by US political actors when criticizing attempts by non-US political actors—governmental, military, or civilian—to leverage the internet and social media sites to adversely influence US users, large groups of people, and even US society (e.g., Russia weaponized Facebook and Twitter to try to influence the outcome of the 2016 US presidential election).

The "weaponization" of any communications technology or media system to adversely influence a sovereign country's own election process is disconcerting, and the US empire has a long and wide track record of doing this. Between 1946 and 2000, the United States tried to influence the outcome of at least eighty-one foreign elections, supporting parties and politicians that favored US foreign policy while trying to roll back or neutralize the outliers (Levin 2016; Shane 2018). Apropos the history of US cultural imperialism as a state-corporate project (chapter 3), routine and deliberate public opinion and behavioral-influence campaigns coordinated by the US state and US media organizations are standard operating procedure when the US empire seeks to bring about small and large changes to other countries. In the twenty-first century, the internet, World Wide Web, and social media platforms are part of the US empire's toolkit for acting upon the world to bring about changes to it.

This chapter is a holistic overview of the US empire's instrumentalization or "weaponization" of the internet and the World Wide Web to act upon users, communities, and whole societies in pursuit of its strategic objectives. It highlights the US state's support for the economic dominance of US internet and social media firms around the world and addresses the US state's use of the internet to achieve geopolitical and cultural-ideological goals. It identifies the convergences between the US Department of State, the National Security Agency (NSA), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (OPDPA), the Department of Defense (DoD), and US internet corporations to show how the geopolitics of the US state intertwine with the economics of "platform capitalism" (Srnicek 2017). In an age when the prospect of US global internet domination is challenged by Chinese state–platform corporations (Tencent, Alibaba, Baidu, and JD.com) and some European states push for a "third way" between US and Chinese internet ecosystems (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal 2018, 27), the US state and US internet corporations are aligning to protect and promote a global internet order in which a US-centered capitalist model rules, over which the US state presides, and wherein American media-culture prevails.

PLATFORMING CAPITALISM: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S "GLOBAL INTERNET FREEDOM"

Today, US internet corporations and social media corporations globally advance a business model known as "platform capitalism" that is "centered upon extracting and using a particular kind of raw material: data" (Srnicek 2017, 38). For example, Facebook and Google aggregate user data, assemble this data into an approximation of a person (or demographic), put a price tag on it, and sell it to advertising firms (Fuchs 2017; Jin 2019, chapter 13, this volume). US platform corporations are the most significant in the world, and the US Department of State is taking concerted action to support their market power.

   The US state has long wielded the "free flow of information doctrine"—which frames the freedom to impart and receive information across borders, unhindered by state barriers, as a human right and means for building a global order of capitalist, liberal democratic, and peaceful states—to advance the interests of its cultural industries in the world market (Rosenberg 1982, 215). Throughout the Cold War, the US state, at the behest of US-based globalizing cultural industries, tried to roll back the protectionist cultural policies of other countries to make way for the free flow of American cultural products and services (Herman and McChesney 1997; McCarthy 2010; Schiller 1969, 1989). In the globalizing 1990s, the free flow of information converged with explicit arguments for a global audio-visual free trade regime set against national cultural policy protections, foreign ownership regulations, and content quotas. The US State pushed these at the World Trade Organization (WTO) through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and also supported the free flow of US internet hardware, software, services, and digital information with the Global Information Infrastructure (GII) initiative, which encouraged non-US states and corporations to privatize internet infrastructure, liberalize digital trade, and deregulate impediments to ICT competition (Schiller 1996, 112). In 1997, the Clinton administration launched the Framework for Global Electronic Commerce (FGEC) to "help accelerate the growth of global commerce across the Internet," leverage the United States' "international trading partners" and ensure the "development of a free and open global electronic marketplace" (White House 2013).

   For the last thirty years, the United States has championed the internet as a superhighway to increased American state and corporate power. Under the Bush administration, the US state consistently represented the internet as a means of "opening markets to U.S. capital" and projected a free-market internet would transform autocratic countries into liberal democratic ones (McCarthy 2010, 89). In 2006, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice established a Global Internet Freedom Task Force (GIFT) to "maximize freedom of expression and the free flow of information and ideas," "minimize the success of repressive regimes in censoring and silencing legitimate debate," and "promote access to information and ideas over the Internet" (US Department of State 2009). The GIFT also sought "to monitor and respond to threats to Internet freedom" and to expand "access to the Internet" by "coordinating its efforts with other U.S. Government agencies, the National Security Council and National Economic Council, and the technology industry" (US Department of State 2009). In 2008, US internet corporations including Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo pushed for a new Global Network Initiative (GNI), which sought to "protect" the "freedom of expression and privacy in information and communications technologies" and provide guidance for internet companies "when faced with pressures from governments to take actions that infringe upon these rights" (Global Network Initiative 2012).

   During the Obama administration, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton framed global internet freedom as a way of creating "one global community, and a common body of knowledge that benefits and unites us all." In the lead-up to the US Department of State's 2011 launch of the *International Strategy for Cyberspace: Prosperity, Security and Openness in a Networked World* (ISCPSONW)—developed in consultation with Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Yahoo—Clinton renamed the

GIFT the NetFreedom Task Force (NTT) (MacKinnon 2013). The ISCPSONW supports "the freedom to connect—that idea that governments should not prevent people from connecting to the Internet, to websites, or to each other." It frames "the freedom to connect" as tantamount to the freedom of expression and association (the First Amendment of the US Constitution) and a universal right (Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). As such, when non-US states try to restrict this internet "freedom" and "human right," the ISCPSONW legitimizes US state campaigns to oppose and subvert them. Indeed, the ISCPSONW advises the US state to leverage diplomacy, defense, and development (the three "Ds") to secure global internet freedom from state and non-state threats to it (White House 2011).

Yet, given that it relies upon an activist state *and* a close-knit relationship between the US state and US internet companies (Morozov 2011), is the US empire's global internet freedom agenda not contradictory? The US state chastised China, Russia, and others for banning and blocking US internet corporations and sites but contracted US corporations to develop firewall circumvention technologies, integrated internet freedom with the US Agency for International Development, and funded internet-freedom-activating nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Hanson 2012). While the US state chastises China for using "national security" discourse to control the internet, the US state has also tried to curb internet freedom when the digital information imparted and received on certain websites supposedly compromised its national security. After WikiLeaks published more than 250,000 US embassy cables that shed light on the realpolitik of US foreign policy and put "an egg on the face" of elites in the embassies, US state agencies prohibited their employees from accessing WikiLeaks and criminalized its operations. Republicans Sarah Palin and Bill Kristol called for Julian Assange to be tortured or assassinated. Moreover, some US corporations (such as McAfee-Intel) prioritized their freedom to sell internet-filtering software to Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other states that don't support the freedom to connect (Morozov 2011). As of late, some US internet corporations are bowing down to internet-censoring states. To get a foothold in China, for example, Google launched a partially censored search engine (Griffin 2018).

PLATFORMING DATA-VEILLANCE: THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY INTEGRATES BIG DATA

As the US empire's global internet freedom agenda aims to spread liberal democracy—and its underlying impetus of strengthening the business of US internet corporations around the world—it also integrates the world population of internet users into a massive surveillance complex administered by the US state and US data-veillance corporations (ACLU 2004). Today, the US state uses the internet to conduct surveillance of populations in almost every country on the planet, with help from the Big Data corporations that collect, process, commoditize, and sell access to user data to advertising firms.

The United States has used private communication firms and networks for similar ends before. During the Cold War, Project Shamrock compelled Western Union, RCA Global, and International Telephone and Telegraph to give the National Se-

curity Agency (NSA) access to all cables that went to or from the United States, enabling it to compile 75,000 files on citizens while the FBI and CIA covertly watched hundreds of thousands of people (including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.). Following Watergate, US senator Frank Church investigated the NSA, FBI, and CIA's surveillance campaigns, and in response to the public backlash, in 1978 the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and the FISA court tried to rein in and bring accountability to the state's surveillance powers. Although FISA was meant to be a "check and balance," it has always been limited in practice. Between 1979 and 2004, the FISA court granted 18,742 surveillance warrants and rejected a mere 4. Between 2004 and 2012, the FISA court granted 15,100 warrants and rejected only 7. All FISA hearings are closed to the public (only the federal representative and judge attend), its records are kept secret, and its attorneys tend to be pro-administration (ACLU 2004; Greenwald and Ackerman 2013a).

Following 9/11, the Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (PATRIOT) Act "vastly expanded the government's authority to spy on its own citizens, while simultaneously reducing checks and balances on those powers like judicial oversight, public accountability and the ability to challenge government searches in court" (Hills 2006, 196). Launched with the Global War on Terror, the PATRIOT Act empowered the US state to acquire data about a citizen's activity from third parties (any public or private organization that possesses information about its clients or consumers) (Section 215), to search private property without notice to the owner (Section 213), to conduct a physical search or wiretap on US citizens to obtain evidence of a crime without proving probable cause (Section 218), and to collect information about the origin and destination of electronic and digital communications coming to and going from the United States (Section 214) (ACLU 2010). The PATRIOT Act enhanced the US state's exceptional surveillance powers and emboldened it to permanently watch the world public, often without its knowledge or consent, and stripped the judiciary of its power to clamp down on such activities (Greenwald 2013a, 2013b; Greenwald and Ackerman 2013a, 2013b).

In 2001, the NSA started monitoring US telecommunications and internet corporations without warrant and collecting and analyzing a huge amount of user metadata (Flaherty 2013). In 2007, the NSA's PRISM electronic surveillance and data-mining program gathered emails, videos, voice chats, photos, and file-transfer data from Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, and Apple (Greenwald and Ackerman 2013a, 2013b). The DoD's Dynamic Twitter Network Analysis (DTNA) software sucks up all the data flowing through Twitter and makes inferences about users that potentially threaten US security (Davis 2012). The CIA's Open Source Center monitors social media sites to gauge global public opinion about America so as to help public diplomacy officials manage it. "From Arabic to Mandarin Chinese, from an angry tweet to a thoughtful blog, the [CIA] analysts gather the information," and "they build a picture sought by the highest levels at the White House, giving a real-time peek, for example, at the mood of a region" (Keller 2011. The US state's surveillance programs support a for-profit surveillance industry worth over $50 billion. The state buys surveillance technology commodities from this industry, and it also contracts out surveillance jobs to it (ACLU 2004; Proctor 2013; Shorrock

2013). The NSA, for example, outsources the work of watching to such companies as Lockheed Martin, Boeing Inc., Northrop Grumman, SAIC, Inc., and Booz Allen Hamilton (the former employer of Edward Snowden, the PRISM whistle-blower). The DoD, the CIA, and the Department of Homeland Security also contract out the labor of surveillance to corporations.

The line between the state's surveillance of citizens and the corporate data-mining of users is being blurred as the "Big Brother" of the US state and its many "Little Brothers" of platform capitalism monitor, collect, assemble, exchange, and use data about billions to achieve security and profit. The US state encourages platform corporations to sell, share, and hand over user data that it would have a hard time storing and retrieving on its own. Between 2009 and 2014, the US federal government made 720 data-management-related *purchases* from Big Data firms such as Acxiom, Oracle, Datalogix, and LexisNexis (Kaye 2014). The state may also *request* access to data that is stored in the databases of US telecommunications and internet titans (ACLU 2004). Indeed, AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint let the NSA eavesdrop without a warrant on international calls by clients suspected of terrorism (Gallagher and Moltke 2018). In the second half of 2011, Google complied with 93 percent of the 6,321 state requests to hand over its users' data (Greenberg 2012). In the second half of 2012, Facebook received 10,000 state requests for user data, and Microsoft received requests for information on 31,000 accounts (Menn and Shih 2013). Even if a telecommunication or internet corporation were to refuse to voluntarily comply with these requests, the US state can use the courts to compel them to release the target data. Between 2005 and 2007, the state used the FISA court to compel Verizon to release records of its customers' phone calls (Greenwald 2013a). In 2011, the Justice Department ordered Twitter to share information about three of its users under investigation for their possible ties to WikiLeaks (Sengupta 2011). In June 2013, Google was made to comply with an FBI demand for customer data (Paunescu 2013). Sometimes, state surveillance actors gather data about citizens without their knowledge by signing up for and creeping a targeted user's Facebook or Twitter page under the digital cover of a bogus profile (Lardner 2010).

In the early twenty-first century, the US state's centralized surveillance of the citizenry merged with the decentralized surveillance of users by internet corporations, and as the US empire's state-corporate surveillance complex travels the world in pursuit of security and consumer data to accumulate and monetize, it perpetuates and extends an already asymmetrical surveillance relationship between those who are doing the watching and those who are being watched, in the United States and worldwide. To temper the blowback, the US Department of State is platforming digital pro-American campaigns.

Platforming Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Office of Public Diplomacy Engages the World

The US Department of State coordinates its own $1.8-billion-a-year public diplomacy agency that pushes positive images of and messages about "America" to the world through the internet and social media. The current "mission" of the US Department of State's Office of Public Diplomacy (OPD) 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." The US Department of State's social media presence extends across Facebook (1.9 million followers), Twitter (5.16 million followers), YouTube (85,000 subscribers), and Instagram (263,000 followers)—an impressive quantity of followers given how recent the US state's mobilization of the internet is.

In 2000, the Clinton administration's digital commerce advisor, Ira Magaziner, called upon Department of State officials to use the internet to promote the American way of life around the world (Dale 2009). At a NetDiplomacy conference in 2001, chairman of the Republican High Tech Task Force and senator George Allen said the internet should be used "to disperse our ideas" about liberty, free markets, and democracy across borders (Dale 2009). In the years following 9/11, the Bush administration ratcheted up efforts to achieve this (Stephens 2005). In 2006, the OPD started to "set up 'virtual posts' where people can visit a Web site and chat online with U.S. diplomats" (Stockman 2006); in 2007, it established a web blog called Dipnote (Bain 2007); and soon after, it launched the America.gov website to enable OPD officials to directly engage publics in dialogue about US foreign policy and respond to comments (Curtain 2009). During his brief stint as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, James Glassman coined the term "Public Diplomacy 2.0" (Graffy 2009; Moran 2008). Declaring Web 2.0 to hold the key to effective twenty-first-century public diplomacy, Glassman (2008) argued that public diplomacy should be a reciprocal "platform for cooperation, mediation and reception—a mode of being informed as well as informing." An early example of the OPD embrace of Web 2.0 was the "Democracy Video Contest," which invited people to produce three-minute YouTube videos about what democracy means to them. Another was the OPD's mobilization of Alliance of Youth Movements (now Movements.org) to help Oscar Morales establish a Facebook group for "One Million Voices against FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia]," which sought to end FARC's violence in Colombia.

Throughout the "social media presidency" of Barack Obama, public diplomacy 2.0 came of age (Cull 2011; Katz, Barris, and Jain 2013). Obama's secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, the "Godmother of Digital Diplomacy" (Lichtenstein 2010), appointed Judith McHale, the former president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Discovery Communications, to be the undersecretary of public diplomacy and public affairs. McHale served as undersecretary from 2009 to 2011. In a May 2009 speech, McHale pledged to move the OPD away from an "old paradigm" in which it "speaks as one to many" to a new one in which public diplomacy supports many-to-many communication and engages and interacts with people directly in ways tailored "to particular circumstances," all in the "service of a larger strategy." Under McHale's direction, US embassies developed social media profiles for diplomatic use (Seib 2012). The head of the OPD's Digital Outreach Team (DOT), Moira Whelan, explained the strategy: "Every piece of work we do touches a digital platform," and "now ambassadors use social media and specific platforms to engage with specific populations" and also to "engage critics, instead of backing away" (Penn State 2014).

What was new about public diplomacy 2.0? During the Cold War, the Smith-Mundt Act prohibited the US state from targeting Americans with international public diplomacy and propaganda campaigns in order to distinguish America from Soviet societies as a liberal marketplace of ideas sans state control; but the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012 abolished this prohibition and accepted the internet's blurring of international and national communication spheres. Now, OPD campaigns that target the world may be picked up by US news agencies and platformed by US social media users (Hudson 2013). Also, public diplomacy 2.0 emphasizes a shift from monologue (transmissive one-to-many communication, talking at publics) to dialogue (many-to-many interactive communication, talking with publics) and reconceptualizes the public by moving away from notions of a passive, predictable, and easily influenced "mass" audience, to an interactive, unpredictable, and skeptical "niche" media user (Snow 2009). Additionally, public diplomacy 2.0 strives to get internet users worldwide to engage with and express themselves through its campaigns, and it embraces social media users as unpaid promoters of US foreign policy (Comor and Bean 2012). Given that OPD officials crowdsource public diplomacy tasks and collaborate with users to change public opinion about US foreign policy, not the nature or direction of US foreign policy, public diplomacy 2.0 is aligned with the persuasive exigencies of US cultural imperialism.

Donald Trump's presidency brought out the worst of America and tarnished the global leader image of the United States. Under Trump, the OPD nonetheless continued to spread its campaigns across the internet and social media platforms. The US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy's (ACPD) 2017 report "Can Public Diplomacy Survive the Internet?" highlighted how bots, trolls, and hackers manipulate the so-called marketplace of ideas with disinformation and said OPD officials would need to "better understand how social platforms are used and manipulated in specific contexts to be prepared for computational propaganda campaigns"; "ensure reliability of analytics; maintain human and institutional relationships"; and "work to establish norms of conduct for the information space" (Powers and Hensman 2017). Trump's OPD mobilized all media—including the internet and social media—to try to repair the broken image of the United States and advance US foreign policy goals. Apropos Trump's vision of running the state as a business, the OPD's leadership hailed from the private sector: Michelle S. Giuda (the former senior vice president of Global Corporate Communications for Weber Shandwick, a major public relations company); Marie Royce (the CEO and principal of Marie Royce, LLC, and a former senior public relations director for Alcatel-Lucent S.A., a French global telecommunications company); and Heather Nauert (a New York–based anchor and correspondent at Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Channel).

Trump's OPD oversaw the bureau of Public Affairs (PA), which "engages domestic and international media to further US foreign policy and national security interests as well as broadening understanding of American values." To this end, the PA deployed "strategic and tactical communications planning"; conducted "press briefings for domestic and foreign press corps"; pursued "media outreach" to enable people "everywhere to hear directly from key Department officials"; mobilized "social media and other modern technologies to engage the public"; ran "six international Regional Media Hubs"; answered questions about US "foreign policy issues by phone, email,

letter, or through social media"; arranged foreign policy town halls and "speakers to visit universities, chambers of commerce, and communities"; coordinated "audio-visual products and services in the U.S. and abroad for the public, the press, the Secretary of State, and Department bureaus and offices"; and prepared historical studies on "U.S. diplomacy and foreign affairs" (US Department of State 2018). Also, the OPD's US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) launched a Russian-language TV and digital network called Current Time in 2017, and its Voice of America and Radio Free Europe–Radio Liberty launched Polygraph and Factograph, English- and Russian-language fact-checking websites to counter "disinformation." Trump's OPD also ran the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP), which leveraged "digital communications technology to reach across platforms" and took a "strategic, data-driven approach to develop multimedia, digital communications products" with 700 American Spaces (interactive media and reading rooms) in more than 150 countries, TechCamps, and the online ShareAmerica platform. The OPD's Global Engagement Center (GEC) aimed to "direct, lead, synchronize, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining United States national security interests" (US Department of State 2018). Given that Trump "made 4,229 false or misleading claims in 558 days" (an average of nearly 7.6 per day since taking office), one wonders why the GEC did not start with @realDonaldTrump?

PLATFORMING CYBERWARFARE: THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S INFORMATION OPERATIONS

The internet's genesis in the military is significant: The DoD established the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to give the United States a cutting edge in global military technology. One outcome of this subvention was ARPANET, the world's first advanced computer network. Another was the core hardware and software of today's digital infrastructure: packet-switching, a digital computer, orbiting satellites, and GPS. Even the key components of the earliest of iPhones resulted from DARPA expenditure (Mazzucato 2013; Bienaimé 2014). Throughout the Cold War, the DoD allocated public monies to the research and development arm of its partner universities and corporations to bring military, security, and war-useful digital innovations into the world. But after publicly underwriting much of the digital infrastructure, the US state then facilitated its privatization in 1995, letting control of the internet shift from public to corporate hands. Now, the internet-corporate pursuit of maximal profit and the DoD's pursuit of cyber supremacy intertwine in significant ways, integrating the business of platforms with war's realpolitik.

Since the turn of the millennium, the DoD has imagined the internet and World Wide Web to be a "weapon" and a "battle-space" in which many state, corporate, and non-state actors produce and "deliver critical and influential content in order to shape perceptions, influence opinions, and control behavior" (Armistead 2004, xvii). The DoD's doctrine for waging war in this battle space is called "information operations" (IO), which originated in DoD directives *Joint Vision 2010* (published in 1996) and *Joint Vision 2020* (published in 2000), and was updated by former secretary of defense

Donald Rumsfeld's *Information Operations Roadmap* (IOR) (published in 2003). The DoD defines information operations broadly as the "integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own" (US Department of Defense 2012, vii). The DoD is the vanguard of war in the global information age, but for the past decade, official reports have suggested that US security is under siege by internet-savvy opponents of the US liberal capitalist way of life.

Upon assuming office in 2009, President Barack Obama said that "in today's world, acts of terror could come not only from a few extremists in suicide vests but from a few key strokes on the computer" (White House 2009). US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta warned of a "cyber–Pearl Harbor," or some kind of massive hack into US Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems to control or damage vital infrastructure (i.e., the electricity grid, gas pipelines, water lines, and transport and telecommunication systems) (Bumiller and Shanker 2012). Securing the vital infrastructure of a US-centered internet from enemy cyber-warriors is a strategic priority, but in 2010, the DoD's Fort Meade–based Cyber Command became operational. It "plans, coordinates, integrates, synchronizes and conducts activities to: direct the operations and defense of specified DoD information networks and; prepare to, and when directed, conduct full spectrum military cyberspace operations in order to enable actions in all domains, ensure US/Allied freedom of action in cyberspace and deny the same to our adversaries" (US Strategic Command 2011). "Cyberwarfare," or the "actions by a nation-state to penetrate another nation's computers or networks for the purposes of causing damage or disruption" (Clarke 2010, 3), has resultantly become an important component of the DoD's Information Operations (IO). Besides securing vital infrastructure, the DoD seeks to secure US full-spectrum dominance in cyberspace. "[We] consider cyberspace a war-fighting domain," says Bryan Whitman, a DoD public affairs officer. "We need to be able to operate within that domain just like on any battlefield, which includes protecting our freedom of movement and preserving our capability to perform in that environment" (Sanger and Shanker 2009). For the DoD, the internet and World Wide Web is a battle space, something to command and control, like land, sea, air, and space (Lynn 2010).

To command and control the cyber-domain, the DoD is supporting the growth of a "cyber-industrial complex" (Drew and Markoff 2009). DARPA, for example, outsourced the research and development and management of its $74 million Foundational Cyberwarfare project (Plan X) to six US defense companies: Northrop Grumman, Intific Inc., Aptima Inc., Apogee Research LLC, Raytheon Company, and Data Tactics. The DoD and its Plan X contractors aim to "create revolutionary technologies for understanding, planning and managing cyber-warfare in real-time, large-scale, and dynamic environments" and to "conduct novel research into the nature of cyber warfare and support development of fundamental strategies and tactics needed to dominate the cyber battlespace" (Lee 2013, 302). In a growing global market for "exploits," or software that helps hackers penetrate, infiltrate, and even control computers running software with design flaws, Netragard outsources the code design of exploits to hackers and then sells the exploits to corporations and government cyber-

war agencies for anywhere between $20,000 and $250,000 (*Economist* 2013). Booz Allen Hamilton, the former employer of whistle-blower Edward Snowden, runs a "Cyber Solutions Network" service, which sells advice to the DoD and US corporations on how they can secure themselves from cyber threats. Fears of cyberwar and projections of impending cyber-doom fuel the growth of a gigantic US-dominated cyber-industrial complex whose DoD-supported corporations, between 2013 and 2023, are estimated to take in $93.6 billion. To secure their networks, other states will likely try to catch up to US cyberwar primacy.

The DoD is recruiting and training all kinds of people to become twenty-first-century cyber-warriors. US CyberCommand head Keith Alexander says his agency aims to train thousands of cyber-warriors "to the highest standard we can [. . .] And not just on defense, but on both sides." Each year, the West Point military academy holds cyberwar games to train cadets to defend the US computer network from hackers and help them develop skills for hacking into the computer systems of other states. The DoD is also trying to recruit nonaligned hackers, cyber ninjas, and computer geeks at Defcon, the world's largest hacker convention, and its Defense Digital Service recruits cyber-warriors from private tech firms such as Netflix, Palantir, and Dropbox.

One of the DoD's cyberwar weapons is the computer network attack (CNA), a practice that aims to disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy "information that is resident in the computer networks of an adversary, or the computers and networks themselves" (Armistead 2004, 114). The US state often represents America as the victim of CNAs by China and Russia, and the DoD conflates CNAs with the "use of force" against America to give itself a casus belli for a defensive war against the perpetrator (Sanger and Bumiller 2011). In a declassified report called "Resilient Military Systems and the Advanced Cyber Threat," the DoD's Defense Science Board claims the DoD should be prepared to use traditional military force, including nuclear retaliation, in response to a CNA (US Department of Defense 2015). According to the US- and NATO-authored *Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare* (Schmitt 2013), a state can use cyber-attacks to counter cyber-attacks, and in response to any cyber-attack that results in death or severe property damage, can retaliate with violence against the state or non-state actors responsible for it. The next time a neoconservative needs a casus belli for a war against a "regime" they want to topple, will a computer hack or perhaps even a poorly designed Facebook advertising campaign be invoked? In this regard, the US cyberwar doctrine is itself a new tool for engineering public consent to war.

In addition to deploying CNAs, the DoD uses social media platforms to enhance the image of itself at war and to counter sources that are critical of its military incursions. As Rand Waltzman (2015), the former program manager for a $50 million DARPA study of "Social Media in Strategic Communication," writes: "the use of social media and the Internet is rapidly becoming a powerful weapon for information warfare and changing the nature of conflict worldwide." Indeed, DoD public affairs officers target, interact with, and challenge bloggers who hold negative opinions about it (Schachtman 2009). With Facebook pages, YouTube channels, and Twitter and Pinterest accounts, the DoD is spread across the platforms that intersect with the lives of billions of people every day. Using social media, the DoD bypasses the news media and the propagandistic or professional "filter" role it played, and directly and interactively manufactures public consent to war.

CONCLUSION

While liberal technological optimists often gush at the internet's power to create a global village, that oft-used trope belies how digital technologies are shaped in significant ways by the geopolitical economy of the global system. While China and Russia are regularly excoriated for meddling in American democracy with cyber-hacks and social media propaganda, the US empire continues to be the most significant "weaponizer" of the internet and World Wide Web. Currently, the US state's Global Internet Freedom agenda supports the global business freedom of internet corporations; the NSA, DoD, and CIA spy on the world with help from Big Data corporations; the OPD promotes "America" and battles for hearts and minds by functionalizing prosumers; and the DoD wages cyberwarfare against opponents. A geopolitical economy of the US empire, the internet and its social media platforms are useful for bringing the ideal of the global village down to earth, where states pursue security interests, corporations pursue profit, and war continues. Far from heralding the end of empire, for the near future, at least, the internet will continue to expand the US economic, geopolitical, and cultural imperium.

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Part V

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION, GLOBAL DIVIDES, AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

Cultural Autonomy in the 1970s and Beyond

Toward Cultural Justice

Cees J. Hamelink

During the 1970s a coalition of politicians, media activists, and communication researchers committed itself to the creation of a New International Information Order (NIIO), also referred to as New International and Communication Order (NICO) or New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The coalition aspired to build a new international communications arrangement that would be democratic, support economic development, enhance the international exchange of ideas, share knowledge, and improve the quality of life for all. This aspiration was first publicly expressed at a 1973 meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement's heads of state in Algiers. This meeting started a project that—after several years of commotion and anger and little concrete achievement—disappeared from the world's agenda. Yet, its central theme of "cultural justice" remains globally important. This chapter discusses the NIIO's goals, explains why it failed, and explores what its meaning could be in the twenty-first century.

CULTURAL RIGHTS AND CULTURAL JUSTICE

The global debate in the 1970s was at its core about cultural justice. Its focus was the need to respect fundamental cultural rights. The international Bill of Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Covenant on international economic, cultural, and social rights; Covenant on international civil and political rights) proposed to articulate entitlements in the area of culture as basic human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) formulated the right to culture in the sense of participation in cultural life. Article 27 provided that "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community." Article 22 stated that everyone is entitled to the realization through national effort and international cooperation of the economic, social, and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Participation in cultural life raised difficult questions about the definition of communities, the position of sub-cultures, the protection of participation rights of minorities, the provision of physical resources of access, and the links between cultural access and socioeconomic conditions. Underlying some of these difficulties was the tension between the concept of culture as the common heritage of humankind and

its concrete expressions in often privately held artefacts. The inclusive nature of human rights ("everyone") implied a shift away from an elite conception of culture to a view of culture as "common heritage." Actually, the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978, General Conference Res. 3/1.1/2) founded the right to culture on the notion of culture as "common heritage of mankind," which implies that all people "should respect the right of all groups to their own cultural identity and the development of their distinctive cultural life within the national and international context" (Article 5). Beyond participation in cultural life, the right to culture encompasses the protection of cultural identity, the development and sharing of culture, and international cultural cooperation.

In 1968, a UNESCO conference of experts considered the question of cultural rights as human rights (Paris, July 8–13, 1968). The participants in the conference stated that "the rights to culture include the possibility for each man to obtain the means of developing his personality, through his direct participation in the creation of human values and of becoming, in this way, responsible for his situation, whether local or on a world scale" (UNESCO 1970, 107). The Intergovernmental Conference on the Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies (convened by UNESCO in 1970) decided that the right to participate in the cultural life of the community implies the duty for governments to provide the effective means for this participation. The recommendation aimed to "guarantee as human rights those rights bearing on access to and participation in cultural life" and questioned the concentration of control over the means of producing and distributing culture. Regarding the mass media, the text stated that they should not threaten the authenticity of cultures and "they ought not to act as instruments of cultural domination." The preamble proposed that measures are taken against the harmful effect of "commercial mass culture" and recommended that governments "should make sure that the criterion of profit-making does not exert a decisive influence on cultural activities." There was strong US and Western opposition to the recommendation, especially the framing of commercial mass culture in a negative sense and the use of the term "people at large."

Several factors explain the emergence of cultural rights in the post–World War II era. In the historic context of decolonization, each newly independent state strove to develop a national identity liberated from historically imposed colonialism, one that emerged between their people's own traditional values and future-oriented aspirations. The newly independent states also saw the affirmation of their cultural identity as an instrument in the struggle against foreign neo-colonial domination. In their earlier battle with colonialism, cultural identity had played a significant role in motivating and legitimizing the national liberation movements. In this moment, the spread of a Western and US-dominated mass media represented the risk of cultural uniformity and the possibility of unprecedented cultural interaction. The global spread of a consumer society raised serious questions about the protection of cultural identity.

Cultural Domination and the Protection of Cultural Identity

The protection of cultural identity became a hot issue during the 1970s UNESCO debates on cultural imperialism. In 1973, the Non-Aligned summit at Algiers stated

that "it is an established fact that the activity of imperialism is not limited to political and economic domains, but that it encompasses social and cultural areas as well, imposing thereby a foreign ideological domination on the peoples of the developing world." Cultural domination and the threat to cultural identity were also treated by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (MacBride Commission). The commission saw cultural identity "endangered by the overpowering influence on and assimilation of some national cultures though these nations may well be the heirs to more ancient and richer cultures. Since diversity is the most precious quality of culture, the whole world is poorer" (International Commission 1980, 31). Yet, in its recommendations, the commission offered very little prospect for a multilateral response to the problem of cultural domination. Its main recommendation was for the various states to establish national policies "which should foster cultural identity" and "also contain guidelines for safeguarding national cultural development while promoting knowledge of other cultures" (ibid., 259). No recommendation was proposed on what measures the world community might collectively take. The commission proposed the strengthening of cultural identity and promoted conditions for the preservation of cultural identity, but left this to be implemented on the national-state level.

During this era, the concept of cultural identity was used in a somewhat cavalier fashion without much critical reflection on its possible flaws. The report proposed the move from principles to substantive action assuming there was clarity on the principles. However, there never was clarity on the principles of cultural identity, nor was there a clear consensus about "what a culture is." Questions remained about whether the global spread of capitalist modernity caused a loss of cultural identity. Capitalism was certainly spreading specific cultural symbols around the globe, like the McDonald's yellow arch or Disney icons, but it was unclear whether these symbols (and the goods that carried them) had a deep existential cultural impact in countries. Also, the spread of capitalist modernity seemed to be capable of both weakening identities and supporting the emergence of stronger but different local identities. Moreover, identity is a typical modern phenomenon, and the notion that the global spread of modernity threatened local cultural identities presumed that solid cultural identities existed before modern times. But did people ever possess this clearly defined individual and collective identity? From the historical record, it would seem that in pre-modern times, cultural identity was not such a central concern. For the above reasons, I propose to delete concerns about protecting cultural identity from the debates and focus instead on how cultural choices are made. Concerns about foreign media threats to cultural identity exclusively "focus[ed] on the contents of culture" and neglected "the more important problem of how people develop their cultural responses to the environment" (Hamelink 1989, 420). Yet, "the more pressing problem than cultural content" was the "social process in which people make their cultural choices" (Hamelink 1989, 420).

Cultural Imperialism, Cultural Synchronization, and Cultural Dissociation

The word "imperialism" refers to the politics of powerful states to expand their empires and thus their sphere of economic and geopolitical influence. The term "cultural

imperialism" refers to the historical fact that in a state's imperial expansion, culture has always played a significant role. Illustrations are Christian missionary activities, Western-style school systems, forms of colonial administration, modern conceptions of professionalism, and the use of European languages in overseas colonies. The essence of cultural imperialism is that in one imperial country's attempt to dominate others, cultural sources of power and influence are of key importance. Cultural imperialism has different names in the academic literature. It may be called "media imperialism" (Boyd-Barrett 1977), "cultural colonialism" (McPhail 1987), "communication imperialism" (Lee 1988), "cultural synchronization" (Hamelink 1983), or "ideological imperialism" (Mattelart 1994). The combination of "culture" and "imperialism" achieved common currency in academic and political debates on global North-South relations in the late 1960s and continued to be a recurrent topic on academic and political agendas throughout the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in Latin America (Pasquali 1963; Beltrán 1976; Matta 1977). The notion of cultural imperialism played a central activist role in the 1970s debates at UNESCO on the creation of NIIO, later to be renamed NWICO. But in the late 1980s, cultural imperialism lost its evocative attraction to the notions of globalization and alternative globalization.

In *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications* (1983), I proposed to use the term "cultural synchronization" rather than "cultural or media imperialism." The term "cultural synchronization" implied that the process of imperial control was not a linear, one-way street, and that domination was the result of the perverse interaction between producers of cultural products and audiences that actively interpreted these products in their own ways. Cultural synchronization was used both by colonizers and colonized in exercising exploitation and in facilitating this. "Cultural synchronization implies that the decisions regarding the cultural development in a given country are made in accordance with the interests and needs of a powerful nation and imposed with subtle but devastating effectiveness without regard for the adaptive necessities of the dependent nation" (Hamelink 1983, 22). In this conceptualization, the commercial media were seen as accomplices to imperialism and not as imperial masters in their own right. By and large, mainstream media corporations served the continuation of colonialism by ideologically justifying the actions of its extractive political and economic institutions. The imperial legacy in many former colonial territories was retained by media-supported elites who, like the colonial rulers that came before them, offered little space in the society for cultural justice.

I proposed "cultural dissociation" as the normative principle for the achievement of cultural justice. This was inspired by Senghaas (1977), who claimed that the dissociation from the metropolis-centered economy offers a way to an adequate development process. "Only dissociation will make the satisfaction of Third World basic needs possible. If they do not choose this option Third World countries will become only more dependent" (Hamelink 1983, 95). With autonomy as a crucial objective, "dissociation means the conscious choice against the delusory offer of integration in an international order which appears to respond to all the interests of developing countries, but which, in fact, represents almost exclusively the interests of the powerful" (ibid., 97). My conclusion was that "without cultural dissociation, all proposals for cultural emancipation are bound to remain new wine in old vessels" (ibid., 97).

Cultural dissociation—or, autonomous cultural development—requires the establishment of independent means of local cultural production, adequate infrastructures for meeting local collective cultural needs, and the full mobilization of available human resources. But asymmetrically structured power relations between imperial centers and peripheries make this impossible, even when developing countries have all the resources they need for cultural autonomy. Their chance to culturally develop cooperatively across the global South is possible only if they dissociate from the global Northern imperial-power centers that define development conditions according to their interests. Yet, the project of cultural dissociation posed a formidable challenge for the ruling economic and political elites in the countries that had built strong links with metropolitan interests. Dissociation does not mean autarchy or isolation, but it implies that in international economic and cultural exchanges, sovereign states will decide what is the best path to self-reliant development. The goal of cultural dissociation is a globally interdependent system in which states develop self-reliantly with sovereign control over their resources, including information. Dissociation creates the space to breathe and think for yourself, and it creates space to become independent economically and culturally without the threat of external imposition. To emancipate themselves from unequal power relations, the dominated parties need to break away from the dominating entities and create a future for themsleves.

CULTURAL JUSTICE IN RETROSPECT: WHAT WENT WRONG?

At the time, it seemed obvious that "a key requirement in the process of cultural dissociation is a national information policy which establishes a new pattern of internatiomal information relations" and that countries would start with the "principle of self-reliance" and select "elements that are conducive to long-range autonomy" (Hamelink 1983, 100). Giving further expression to the goal, the McBride Commission stated, "We recommend establishment of national cultural policies, which should foster cultural identity and creativity, and involve media in these tasks. Such policies should also contain guidelines for safeguarding national cultural development while promoting knowledge of other cultures" (International Commission 1980, 80). However, the establishment of national cultural policies turned out be a failure. A more intense cultural dialogue in the world did not emerge. As Golding and Harris (1997, 81) summarize:

> The recommendation was highly unrealistic, given the enormous confusion and tension in many countries about the issue of national cultural integration against the background of the existing variety of ethnic cultural expressions. Nor did the reommendation take into account the realities of the international media market in which the dominance of one type of programming is hard to avoid. The promotion of a universal homogeneous visual code probably fostered global cultural integration rather than cultural dialogue.

In many countries, burgeoning national media industries became more interested in plugging in to others involved in the creation of global culture than in fostering autnomous local cultural development. Moreover, the national cultural policies

developed by many states were never about people's interests: people did not matter! The ostensible effort to democratize communication in the 1970s was never a democratic process that included the broadest spectrum of ordinary people, but rather, it entailed high-level discussions among governmental and business elites. The whole project for cultural justice was engineered "from above" by political and commercial-intellectual elites, and little or no attention (neither in politics nor in research) was given to people's interests or to the need to involve ordinary people in the project, from the "bottom up." This was largely due to the flawed embedding of the cultural justice agenda in the realist paradigm of international relations, which conceived the world as a state-centric system and failed to account for non-state actors such as nations, people's movements, or individual citizens. The 1970s debate never addressed the question as to whether the effective protection of democratic rights could be guaranteed under the prevailing interstate system, and the state push to build a new international order never became a national people's movement.

EPISTEMIC COLONIALITY

Cultural dissociation was conceived of as a tool of liberation and was primarily motivated by the aspiration of a decolonization that never took place. Many of us in the Western academic community did not see how much a part we were (and still are) of an "epistemic coloniality." Our overzealous attempts to do good obscured the analysis of our biases. Our colonial minds formulated the world as we thought it should be. It was a formulation through the lenses of a global coloniality that "operates as an invisible power matrix that is shaping and sustaining asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and the Global South" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 244). At the time, the colonization of knowledge meant "the systematic repression of the specific beliefs, ideas, images and symbols constitutive of the colonized people's indigenous knowledge systems" (Quijano 2007, 169). In the synchronization process, many scholars in the global South took part in what Ndlovu-Gatsheni refers to as "epistimicide" (2018, 62): the burying of the beliefs and representations of indigenous people in exchange for foreign cultural constructs. We could have used more intense soul-searching into the extent to which colonial ways of knowledge production influenced our theories, methods, and models. This soul-searching could have resulted in a more reflexive, self-critical way of thinking about deep epistemic differences and hybrid modes of knowledge production.

DEVELOPMENT AS INTERVENTIONIST PROJECT

In the 1970s debates on the global communication divide (as later during the 2003/2005 UN World Summit on the Information Society on the global digital divide), it was not critically questioned whether rich-poor divides could at all be resolved within the framework of the prevailing development paradigm. In this paradigm, development is conceived of as a state of affairs that exists in society A and, unfortunately, not

in society B. Therefore, through some project of intervention in society B, resources have to be transferred from A to B. Development is thus a relationship between interventionists and subjects of intervention. The interventionists transfer such resources as information, information and communications technology (ICT), and knowledge as inputs that will lead to development as output. In this approach, development is "the delivery of resources" (Kaplan 1999, 5–7). This delivery process is geared toward the integration of its recipients into a global marketplace. There is no space for a different conceptualization of development as a process of empowerment that intends "to enable people to participate in the governance of their own lives" (Kaplan 1999, 19).

The conventional wisdom about development was and continues to be based upon the colonial mental model that assumes that one can develop others and that social change can be achieved through external intervention. However, real development is always something that comes from within. It is an inherent process, and "in that sense, you cannot grow potatoes. Potatoes grow themselves" (Sankatsing 2016, 34). Genuine internal development is a process of natural evolution that has been largely obstructed by externally imposed development projects. As Sankatsing (2016, 35) proposes, "Development is the mobilization of inherent potentialities in iterative response to challenges posed by nature, habitat and history to realize a sustainable project with an internal locus of command." Against this, what has been called development by Western international development agencies and development communication scholars is better described as "envelment." As Sankatsing (2016, 38) defines it, "envelment is the paternalistic, disempowering control of an entity by an external locus of command at the expense of its internal life process and ongoing evolution." Contrary to a process of unfolding inherent human potentialities, development as envelment became a "unidirectional process of transformation by incorporating the other into an alien destiny" (Sankatsing 2016, 38). And this process of envelment is disruptive "since it prevents a community from responding in a natural way to contextual conditions and environmental challenges" (Sankatsing 2016, 39).

In the 1970s and 1980s, many development projects—including media and cultural development projects—were really envelment projects that seriously obstructed positive social change in the evolutionary sense. It is tempting to counter this reasoning by pointing to successful "empowerment through communication" projects, but also here the focus is usually more on the empowerment of the other and not on the self-empowerment of the other. Empowerment projects often take place in asymmetrical power relations and hamper "a process in which people liberate themselves from all those forces that prevent them from controlling decisions affecting their lives" (Hamelink 1994, 142). We could have escaped the development trap if development had been conceptualized as an evolutionary, complex, and adaptive process, and if we would have accepted non-linearity in thinking about cultural development. A serious omission in the development debates of the 1970s was also the lack of a critical institutional analysis. There was no analysis of the institutional factors that caused the continuation of colonialism. The NIIO agenda would have been more realistic if we had distinguished between and attended to the actions of "extractive" and "inclusive" development institutions. Extractive institutions as the guideposts for colonial exploitation are instrumental to extracting wealth from one subset of society to benefit

another subset (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013, 76). Inclusive institutions encourage people's participation in economic and political activities and guarantee the rule of law, public services, and a level playing field (ibid., 74).

OBSTACLES TO AND PROSPECTS FOR CULTURAL JUSTICE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Cultural justice has essential building blocks: the protection and promotion of cultural rights, which would require people's participation on a level playing field.

A crucial problem to address when considering the key obstacles to cultural justice is the absence of a global regulatory infrastructure that can implement a normative framework for cultural justice. In the twenty-first century we have to begin with the transformation of the only serious global body for world communication politics: the United Nations. Although the preamble of its charter (1945) announces, "We the peoples of the united nations," the organization never became an association of nations. The UN became an association of states. And states and nations are very different entities, although the odd notion of the "nation-state" suggests otherwise. A state is an administrative unit with a monopoly on the use of force, whereas a nation (from "natus," the place where you were born) refers to people sharing a common heritage and a common cultural understanding. Real nations are the Inuit, the Maori, the Australian aboriginals, or the Zapotec Indians. An association of states is inherently problematic for a world communication politics "as if people mattered."

States are by and large self-centered and practice only a limited form of altruism. They tend more toward competition than to cooperation. Their interests are primarily provincial and not global. States are often unreliable as they are masters in deception and propaganda. States are minimally interested in cultural diversity. They would like their polities to be homogeneous with one language, one culture, and a single moral framework. States have little interest in change. There may be revolutions, but once enough people have been killed everything goes back to business as usual. Since the seventeenth century, states have been the most defining and coherent form of human association. In order to understand the behavior of states, it is necessary to see that the ethics of groups is different from the ethics of individuals. Although groups are obviously made up of individuals with their personal psychological characteristics, the collective behavior of large groups manifests its own specific psychological dynamics. All individuals in societies relate—to a greater or lesser degree—to groups that are essential in the development of their identity, their existential meaning, and their future perspectives. Groups give answers to such questions as "Where do I come from?" "Who am I and what is the sense of being me?" and "Where do I go, what is my destiny?" The collective answers to such questions render people vulnerable to the manipulation of their collective identity. The more the group cohesion grows, the more the individual members of the group will tend to ask ever less critical questions and identify with the suggested collective identity. The more cohesive in-groups become, the greater becomes the external disconnectedness to out-groups. Individuals in groups develop a strong dependence on social approval and concede to social pres-

sures. An illustration comes from the Japanese kamikaze pilots during World War II. We now know that many of them preferred not to kill themselves but found it shameful to disobey orders. In the in-group, "groupthink" is pervasive, and this discourages members of the group to ask questions, raise objections, or be dissidents.

As any student of history can observe, states are selfish, advance their own interests, and are responsible for a long trail of broken international commitments and breaches of earlier contractual arrangements. There may be groups of citizens who resist this or warn against these, but usually they are not powerful enough to guide the state toward more ethical politics. "Perhaps the most significant moral characteristic of a nation is its hypocrisy" (Niebuhr 1932, 95). "The dishonesty of nations is a necessity of political policy if the nation is to gain the full benefit of its double claim upon the loyalty and devotion of the individual, as his own special and unique community and as a community that embodies Universal values and ideals. The two claims, the one touching upon the individual's emotions and the other appealing to his mind, are incompatible with each other and can be resolved only through dishonesty" (Niebuhr 1932, 96).

From Darwinian biology, we know that altruism, cooperation, diversity, and change are essential conditions for the survival of species. It seems fair to assume that the same goes for institutions. From this perspective, the United Nations is very unfit to manage global affairs in a sustainable way. The organization urgently needs transformation from a global association that presents statal interests to a global association that represents people's interests. This kind of global institution is essential for a politics of global communication that features fair play and serious attention to people's interests and fundamental communication and information rights. The violability of basic cultural rights should be taken seriously. With the benefit of hindsight, we should focus on inclusion, space, and skills, as these offer hope for cultural justice in the twenty-first century.

Inclusion

The core of all human rights standards is that their normative implications pertain to everyone. The protection of a right to communicate, for example, requires concrete measures for the inclusion of all people. The "divides" that exist today in terms of availability, accessibility, and affordability of the technical infrastructures for public interaction do exclude large numbers of people across the globe. Exclusion from the public dialogue is also the case whenever deaf people have inadequate access to the use of sign language. Exclusion also occurs when there are insufficient language provisions for migrant communities. In these communities, people need the linguistic capacity to converse both with the dominant culture of their new homelands and with their own "roots." Exclusion from the public dialogue also affects people in mental institutions and prisons, and in many societies both the elderly and the young are excluded. Inclusion is increasingly obstructed by the tribalism of nationalist movements that base their identity politics upon exclusionary political beliefs manifest in slogans such as "We are the people." The cultural nationalist identity debate in many countries is today kidnapped by right-wing populist politicians and their constituencies who plead for cultural dissociation not as a tool for decolonized liberation but

as an instrument for the hierarchization of cultural identities and for the exclusion of cultural subgroups constructed and perceived as inferior.

Space

Cultural justice needs spaces where it can be celebrated. This is increasingly a serious problem in societies where the privatization "fever" transforms formerly public spaces into privately owned properties. What used to be the public marketplace has now often become the modern shopping mall where private guards control people's expressions and movements. The internet offers new "public spaces" in the virtual world, but—however important—virtual reality can not completely replace the need of physical space for people to engage in genuine dialogical exchanges.

Skills

A right to cultural justice provides for participation in cultural developments and activities. This requires the skills to question one's own judgments and assumptions, to listen and to be silent. For the training of such skills, public resources need to be allocated to formal and informal educational institutions. This is not helped by the lowering of educational standards around the world and the emphasis on competition rather than on cooperation. Serious engagement with the cultural dialogue would demand the willingness to change ideas, viewpoints, and even convictions. The participants in really interactive communication processes emerge as different persons. This collides, however, with a strong human natural tendency toward conservatism. The intellectual and mental positions we feel comfortable with are difficult to give up. In fact, most people are inclined toward the certainty of fundamentalist positions. Humans combine a sense of adventurism with a natural fear of the unknown. The adventurers have always been a minority. Most people prefer to stay home!

CONCLUSION: INSTITUTIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

For the changes we contemplated in the 1970s, like more equilibrium in information flows, less external imposition of values and symbols, more independent professionalism, or sharing of technological resources, the crucial test for success or failure was the quality of political and economic institutions. For much of the global South these were, in the 1970s (as they are still today to a large extent), very robust and stubborn remnants of colonial history as they are trapped in the vicious circle of colonial rule. There was too little critical analysis of how, in the phase of administrative decolonization, essential institutions as centers of power would have to be decolonized. "The solution of the economic and political failure of nations today is to transform their extractive institutions toward inclusive ones. The vicious circle means that this is not easy. But it is not impossible, and the iron law of oligarchy is not inevitable. Either some preexisting inclusive elements in institutions, or the presence of broad coalitions leading the fight against the existing regime, or just the contingent nature of history, can break vicious circles" (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013, 402).

The traffic of information, data, and knowledge and the capacity to communicate with others is, just like the transport of people and goods, dependent upon an infrastructure. The quality of that infrastructure will largely determine the quality of a society's information provision and social communication. Characteristics of the global dominant infrastructures are privatization, monetarization, and oligopolization. It is questionable whether this infrastructure can function as a public service. There is today an increasing concentration of control over the infrastructure of global communication. The five most powerful consumer technology companies are Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Alphabet (parent company of Google), and Microsoft. These "frightful five" own most of the world's valuable platforms that are essential for what individuals and corporations do on the internet. Runners-up to these "frightful five" may be very innovative start-ups, but in all likelihood they will not replace the big five and will exist alongside them or be acquired by them. In any case they need to buy the apps to download their contents from the app stores of Apple and Facebook. In the global entertainment industry, two companies call the shots: Netflix—intent on controlling the global entertainment business—and Disney, which in 2018 bought 21st Century Fox. The core impediments to realizing cultural justice are infrastructural conditions. Carriers, transporters, producers, and processors that are organized around profit-making, with primary responsibiliy to private stakeholders that trade cultural goods and services as any other commercial commodity, and large-scale economies that inevitably create oligopolies (if not monopolies), are not driven by the collective interest of human flourishing. This infrastructure cannot achieve the key requirements of cultural justice: participation, access, and freedom.

Cultural justice means the freedom to create one's own future, both individually and collectively. This requires the courage to dissociate from dominant forms of colonial globality and the retaining and resuscitation of the optimist belief that this freedom can be achieved.

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Cultural Imperialism and Development Communication for Social Change

Mohan J. Dutta

Historically, the theory and practice of communication for social change links with US empire, having been constituted amid the propaganda exigencies of the post–World War II geopolitical and economic climate (Dutta 2011; Simpson 1994). The Cold War, shaped by the tensions between capitalism and communism, incubated the field of social change communication (Melkote 1991). The post–World War II discipline of communication studies was driven by the goal of bringing about social change within developing countries—namely, a planned change instigated by the American empire within the decolonizing and newly independent nation-states of the global South, especially those seen by US foreign policy strategists as potential threats to the American way at risk of converting to communism. The socialist momentum of anti-colonial struggles in the global South was perceived by US planners as a threat to their dream of a liberal capitalist order. The goal of social change communication thus was to bring about economic and social developments in the countries of the global South along lines dictated externally by the US empire, thus serving the geo-security interests of the US state and simultaneously opening up new markets for US-based globalizing capitalism (Dutta 2011).

For US planners, development was conceptualized as the linear progression of traditional societies to modern ones, and this transition was enabled by new communications technologies and electronic media disseminated by US state and market actors, such as media corporations (Melkote 1991; Melkote and Steeves 2001). Programs of development communication were historically framed as efforts of expanding and implanting the model of US liberal capitalism around the world and opening up the newly independent nation-states of the global South to this societal model. In the American imperial imaginary, the twin notions of capitalist development and liberal democracy served as the chador of US military incursions across the global South. Communications technology and electronic media not only served the economic exigencies of capitalist production and consumption but were also conceptualized as geopolitical instruments of development and tools for transmitting the development ideology into the global South. The promotion of development was also thus promotion of US-based communication technologies and media industries, based on the notion that these would bring about development. The conceptualization of development

as linear progress from tradition to modern was built on imperial notions of technologies of development, framed as tools of transforming the "primitive personality types" of the global poor that held them back into "modern personality types" that aligned them with US-style consumers of development solutions delivered through capitalism.

In this chapter, I offer an overview of the interplay of the US empire and its imperial project of communication for social change, particularly attending to the ways in which planned social change has served as the instrument for the hegemonic consolidation of US economic and geopolitical power. Through various technologies of development interventionism, communication for social change projects has been deployed by development agencies, private foundations, transnational corporations, and transnational civil society to disseminate the imperial push for free markets. The power of the media has been formulated within the structures of promoting private interests. Development interventions have systematically promoted market opportunities for transnational capital, deploying the framework of development to build new market opportunities in the global South. The neoliberal turn in development from the 1970s onward is grounded in the marketization of the foundations of the development industry and imagines development as synonymous with the market (Millen and Holtz 2000; Millen, Irwin, and Kim 2000).

The neoliberal transformation of global political economy has been organized through the communication for social change industry (e.g., communication for social change interventions sponsored by private foundations; entertainment-education programs sponsored by the US Agency for International Development [USAID]; and participatory development programs pushed by the World Bank), with development interventions specifically tied to the global promotion of transnational capital (Harvey 2001, 2005). The turn to the cultural development framework in the 1970s and in accelerated ways since the 1990s further enabled the global penetration of transnational capital, couched in logics of cultural sensitivity and reworked nodes of power and control (consider for instance the Asian turn, the celebration of the re-alignment of power in the twenty-first century to Asia, packaged as Asian values that marry capitalism with authoritarian control). Participatory projects of social change communication, formulated within neoliberal logics of individualization and empowerment, emerged as the new tools of the imperial project, co-opting communities into top-down interventions for the dissemination of market ideologies. Paradoxically, the framing of neoliberal development interventions as poverty-alleviation solutions was integral to the creation of extractive projects that impoverished the poor and catalyzed the unequal patterns of distribution of resources that fundamentally threatened human health and well-being (Gershman and Irwin 2000). Entertainment-education programs such as *Hum Log* in India and the *Radio Communication Project* in Nepal, often funded by development agencies such as USAID, pitched as democratic tools for social change, were carried out on target populations with the goals of pursuing a privatization agenda. Even as the global anchors of imperialism have shifted with the newly emerging roles of Asian empires (consider China in Africa and the Indian extractive industries in Australia), the deployment of communication as a site for social change is carried out by the reworked arrangements of global imperial power, all the while erasing communicative infrastructures for securing social justice. Against

this backdrop, the chapter concludes with a proposal for communication for social change from the margins, rooted in culturally centered communicative infrastructures grounded in imaginations of radical democracy.

COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE:
IMPERIALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Communication for social change theory and practice conceptualizes social change as the transformation of individual thought and behavior to align with the logics of the market (Dutta 2011). The earliest forms of communication for social change advanced population control and agricultural technologies as the key instruments for development, and it was tied to the goal of expanding markets for the operations of US transnational corporations. The exponential growth of Third World subjects was perceived by US security state planners as a threatening catalyst for Soviet-supported communist revolutions in the global South; family planning was thus promoted as an antidote to communism and as a way to control the Third World masses that threatened the geo-security of empire. Simultaneously, agricultural technologies were utilized by the United States to address growing food insecurity and hunger in the global South. The individualized agenda kept intact the mechanisms of capital, producing new markets for capital configured in the form of population control and agricultural solutions (see, for instance, Schramm and Lerner 1976).

Development and Imperialism

The transition from the West's direct imperial control of societies through the establishment and occupation of territorial colonies to control through the incorporation of post-colonial societies into a global capitalist system was enabled by the development industry. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) was a key player in this sector, setting the terms for development aid and, through development aid, influencing the internal development processes in countries across the global South. Marked as primitive and labeled the Third World, the new post-colonial societies were configured as the targets of US-led development interventions (Peet 2003). Inherent in the framework of development was the depiction of the Third World as lacking in development as compared to the developed United States. Many early development interventions served the US empire's Cold War propaganda exigencies (Dutta 2011).

A largely US-based development communication industry worked alongside the US security state to establish and expand US hegemony around the world. From Nicaragua to Indonesia to El Salvador to Chile, US-led development interventions supported neo-colonial interests, disrupted local democratic processes, and often propped up puppet authoritarian regimes that served the interests of US capital. The US post-colonial imperialism exerted influence in the global South to shape local political and economic processes, aligning these processes to enable the extractive and exploitative goals of US-based transnational capital. In the post-colonial countries, or the Third World, US-based petrochemical corporations, military-defense

corporations, media industries, and manufacturing industries produced new sites for mineral exploitation, new spaces of labor exploitation, and new markets to offload goods, and these capitalist logics were supported by the ever-expanding work of development communication.

Development communication also worked to distract people from or diminish the violence of the US empire. The altruistic face of development supported the broad public relations work of an ugly US empire, circulating an image of the United States as a benign power and a savior of the global South's poorest and most immiserated peoples. At the same time as the United States' ostensibly humane development agenda was rolling out across the Third World, the US military was using violence globally as a means for subverting democratic processes in many post-colonial and socialist-leaning societies. The socialist Allende government in Chile was actively targeted, subverted, and destroyed, not only through an Anglo-American-supported military coup, but also through the US sponsorship of civil society organizations under the chador of democracy promotion. Similarly, while the United States supposedly promoted democracy in Indonesia, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) actively supported a military dictatorship that led to the massacre of over 500,000 Indonesians suspected of being communists. In these instances, the rhetoric of "development" and "democracy promotion" were integral to whitewashing the violence of US empire.

The US development industry has played a key role in promoting the interests of American corporations abroad. USAID has promoted the US biotechnology industry and its products as helping to solve the problem of global hunger, and US educational institutions abroad have worked to spread this technology around the world. The creation of a global market for agricultural biotechnologies then paved the way for US company Monsanto to promote US agro-capital globally. By segmenting and targeting specific audiences with messages of development pegged to these biotechnologies, development communication campaigns diffused US agro-capitalist techniques and helped their owners turn a profit. Subsequent development communication campaigns targeted US-based transnational agro-capital, exerting control over peasant farm lands, with common lands being turned into privatized spaces for growing commoditized crops. Losing their sovereignty, farmers in the global South have been turned into precarious laborers without protection. Development communication has helped US-based globalizing agro-capitalism colonize local food systems and supported the transformation of food into a privatized commodity that is bought and sold in markets.

The development sector has therefore reproduced long-standing core-periphery relationships, reflecting the imperial patterns of global power and control in a world system (Boyd-Barrett 2005). The US core continues to exert power and influence in defining what counts as development, and the profit-interests of US corporations have been supported by the development industry (Frank 1969). The production of the periphery is thus discursive and material; the discursive construction of the periphery as being in need of development by the core justified the interventions the core state and its corporations carried out. The development interventions in turn served as the anchors to neo-colonial expansion (Wallerstein 1979). The periphery's supposed dependence on the core was continually constructed through development communication discourse, which helped the US state and US capital expand there.

The role of development communication in this reproduction of the core-periphery relationship is salient, as it constructed development in the periphery along a US-centered trajectory. Paradoxically, the solutions recommended by the US state and its development industry to the problems of development work to maintain as opposed to challenge an unequal power relationship between the core and peripheral countries. They further impoverish the global South by reproducing a relation of dependence on US corporate-owned, -provisioned, and -sold development technologies, knowledge systems, and commodified solutions.

Foundations and Imperialism

The landscape of development communication was in addition being shaped by the hegemonic role of private foundations (Dutta 2011). Funding development research programs, conversations, interventions, conferences, and policy papers, foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation played influential roles in shaping the agendas of development alongside private interests. The interplay between the foundations and the development agencies ensured that the interests of the US state and those of private foundations were closely aligned, shaping development agendas around the interests of capital. For instance, the Rockefeller Foundation was a key player in shaping the population-control agenda and funded academic programs linked to it. Integral to the US empire's attempt to create and control spaces of democracy through top-down diffusionist communication (Frank 1969) was the framing of the Third World as in deficit and the foundations as helping them. Real problems such as mass hunger and poverty were flagged to justify foundation involvement in post-colonial countries and in privatizing public solutions.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

Integral to the project of the global growth of the US empire are international financial institutions (IFIs), such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These IFIs are largely influenced by the United States (Payer 1974). Under the guise of giving out development aid in the form of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), IFIs imposed neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and the liberalization of trade upon nation-states in the global South. In order to qualify for IFI-supplied development aid, for example, the states of the global South would first have to agree to align themselves with the interests of global capitalism. The depletion of public welfare and social expenditure, the privatization of public resources, and the opening up of local-national markets to global trade were the consequences of receiving development aid.

The Role of Communication

In the US-centric modernization framework of communication as development, messages crafted by experts based in the core of global power in conjunction with elites in the peripheries are circulated strategically through appropriate channels to the target

audiences (Lerner 1967, 1968; Schramm 1964; Schramm and Lerner 1976). Critical to development is the role of communication (Schramm 1964). This framework imagines the United States to be the apogee of development and the rest to be totally underdeveloped, and it was integral to the establishment and expansion of a US-centered development communication industry. The image of the Third World poor as passive, lazy, and primitive is intrinsically tied to the projection of a need for development by the US-led First World, which then sets the stage for the US-derived economic and social development solutions being launched and imposed. Whether intended or not, the early US development communication framework reproduced the racist Anglo-European colonial ideology of a white man's burden to save and civilize brown Third World bodies. Additional US-centered theories of communication—the diffusion of innovations model, reasoned action, and the health belief model—were established on this colonial framework of a primitive Third World other being in need of development by the First World (Rogers 1962, 1971, 1973, 1974). Moreover, media firms and technologies were conceptualized as instruments and agents of this process, and from radio to television to new digital technologies, development communication has been integral to the opening up of new markets for US-based globalizing media corporations. Driven by capitalist logics, and aligned with the structures of state power, media corporations enable the extraction of resources, the exploitation of workers, and the creation of new markets, resulting in ongoing displacements and expulsions of the poor from their spaces of livelihood (Marx 1970, 1975, 2007).

THE NEOLIBERAL TURN: PARTICIPATION AND CULTURE

The post–Cold War neoliberal turn to global governance, and the concomitant capture of public resources, spaces, and infrastructures by private corporations, is an extension of the market ideology promoted by development communication. In this sense, neoliberal hegemony is the culmination of the market promoting logics of development. The individualization of problems and the promotion of market solutions as the only solutions to these problems have long defined development communication, and this continues to be the case today. Indeed, development communication now frames citizens as consumers who help themselves and self-actualize through the communication and media technologies, sold on the market.

The Participatory Turn

The failure of US top-down transmissive communication models and neo-colonial development campaigns to improve the economic and social conditions of peoples in the periphery led to a turn to participatory communication within the hegemonic networks of development. The challenge to the US-centric and established development industry by newly independent post-colonial states of the global South under the umbrella of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) threatened the hegemonic structures of development. The movement of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) worked through the structures of UNESCO to put forth the idea of

communicative equality on the agenda of global communication and also articulated the idea of communicative rights. The decolonizing agenda of the NWICO threatened the US grip upon global communication markets and unsettled the unrestrained capitalist interests of US media corporations. The withdrawal of funding and support from UNESCO by the United States (under Reagan) and the United Kingdom (under Thatcher) in the early 1980s marked a critical turn for the anti-colonial movements on the global stage.

Having stripped the UN of the capacity to pursue the structurally transformative goal of social justice and equality hitherto embedded in the anti-colonial thrust of NWICO, the United States and global development agencies incorporated participatory communication into development communication agendas. Packaged as a radical departure from the traditional development communication frameworks (Chambers 1983, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c), participatory communication was conceptualized as a means for incorporating "hard-to-reach" populations into the development agenda by establishing participatory and bottom-up communication channels such as community meetings and listener groups. From this point forward, US imperial development projects that aimed to motivate people to partake in individual ownership behaviors through participation in the market actively framed themselves as grassroots and deployed participatory techniques to co-opt and instrumentalize the democratic aspirations of local communities. A mode of development in service to US foreign policy and US-based transnational capital was now being grounded in communities through newly designed participatory communication campaigns and initiatives.

The neoliberal turn to participation in development communication planning encouraged the privatization of state resources, a weakening of the public sector, and a diminishment of the state's role in provisioning public goods by framing development as individual participation in the free market. An example of this participatory turn is the engagement industry and a number of engagement programs that push empowerment as an individual and privatized pursuit. Often, engagement programs are designed to gather and incorporate community inputs to design effective development campaigns oriented to moving people to the market. For-profit consulting agencies and corporations bid for engagement work in communities, and they deploy focus groups, group consultations, and town-hall meetings to make development planning for the market more effective. Although these programs appear to be participatory, the framework, structure, process, and texture of participation are shaped by the public and mostly private organizations steering and setting the overarching development agenda. Ironically, the catalytic growth of the participation and engagement industries following the neoliberal turn occurred alongside the consolidation of power by a global elite, the subversion or co-optation of democratic spaces, the growth of inequalities at unprecedented rates, and ecological threats to the human species.

New Market Opportunities and Participation

The participatory turn gave a democratic face to the development agenda, normalizing the language of the free market as a participatory opportunity (Avahan 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). For instance, the Avahan campaign on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment

promoted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in India sought to normalize market actors as integral to building the public health infrastructure of India (Avahan 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). Through market-based technological solutions to HIV/AIDS, the campaign co-opted public health programs and turned them into a potential source of profit for private interests. The Avahan campaign also integrated precarious workers (such as sex workers and truck drivers) to frame participation in preventing HIV/AIDS as an individualized choice and act of consumerism in the market. The Avahan campaign fostered community participation to spread a pre-given message: public health problems can be solved by individuals, who choose the best market solution. Thanks to campaigns like this, the overarching ideology of privatized individual behavior is colonizing the public health framework in India and reshaping public health infrastructures on behalf of private interests and commercialization.

The popularity of participatory communication is intrinsically tied to the growth of community-based participatory research projects, community-action research projects, and community-grounded projects, and while these may look positive, they further solidify and reproduce imperial development agendas. For example, pharmaceutical products and technologies are pushed through participatory communication initiatives as a solution to health problems, and this serves the bottom line of global pharmaceutical corporations. The Gates Foundation and the Clinton Foundation regularly launch participatory communication campaigns that aim to get their target audience to support privatized interests. Foundation-driven programs pick up and co-opt the language of participation and local embeddedness while pushing specifically the colonial logic of capital. For instance, even as indigenous communities and their livelihoods are threatened by state-corporate-driven development projects, the projects of displacement through land acquisition are given the face of participation and engagement. Mining corporations, for instance, displacing indigenous communities from their livelihoods, run a wide array of engagement programs from schools to hospitals framed as participatory spaces for community engagement in development.

The Cultural Turn

The cultural turn to development emerged as a response to the challenges posed by the NAM and NWICO. The key element of the cultural turn was the acknowledgment that culture played a key role in constituting development processes, with the cultural decade of development signaling the arrival and acknowledgment of culture as a key element in the development process. This turn to culture within the dominant development structures was constituted as a response to the critique of development as Euro-centric/Western. However, the co-optation of cultural spaces into the neoliberal structures of development interventionism meant that culture served to legitimize the imperial structures of development and create new pathways for market penetration. Culture, categorized as a collection of superficial characteristics, offered the instruments to development interventions to further consolidate the reach of the market in hard-to-reach communities. The industry of cultural sensitivity interventions developed around the notion of extracting cultural characteristics to be incorporated into market-promoting development interventions in order to render them effective.

The notion that cultural characteristics can be extracted, decoded, and incorporated into development planning became the basis for planning smart or intelligent cultural development (Pérez de Cuélla 1995). Concepts such as cultural intelligence emerged on the global landscape to enable the penetration and reach of global capital. Moreover, cultural characteristics and traits, extracted into development logics, and measured in terms of neoliberal categories of market orientation and profits, are integrated into the broader ambits of neoliberal development. Measures of public culture, culture industries, cultural heritages, cultural resources, ambient culture, and cultural participation, entered into the logics of neoliberal management, are tied to the profits they generate. Cultural characteristics are measured within the overarching neoliberal framework and are then promoted through instruments of the market.

Within structures of global knowledge production, the turn in cultural studies toward cultural policy, cultural metrics, and cultural development erases the radical possibilities of cultural articulations, instead incorporating them into the imperial strategies of market promotion. Paradoxically then, culture as a tool of development enables development through the very colonization of the cultural lifeworld in the hegemonic principles of the market. Terms such as "post-ideology," "audience agency," and "audience reception" are offered as anchors for describing the cultural contexts within which neoliberal market principles find their anchors, disrupted from their radical possibilities of transforming overarching capitalist logics of market promotion. For instance, USAID-led entertainment-education programs disseminating market-based agendas of population control are reformulated as participatory, driven by the cultural studies logic of active audience interpretation, simultaneously obfuscating the colonial market agendas that are served by these programs. "Sustainable cultures," "cultural participation," and "cultural engagement" are offered as new terms of cultural development policy-making, obfuscating the very colonial nature of capitalist agendas they serve.

New Forms of Imperial Development

The Asian turn in the twenty-first century marks the reformulation of the imperial arrangements in the realm of global capital (Thompson 2001). The "Asian values" conversations emerging in the development landscape in the 1970s and 1980s rendered explicit the authoritarian forces of neoliberal development, offering as Asian culture authoritarian strategies of power and control that enabled the entrenchment of capitalist extraction. The placing of the conversation on Asian values on the development stage opened a new space for authoritarian techniques in development interventionism, labeling these techniques of power and control as Asian and deploying the term "Confucianism" to monolithically depict Asian forms of governance. The new forms of colonial interventions reflected in the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIDB), the Silk Road, and Chinese colonial formations in Africa depict the ways in which imperialism is being redeployed to serve the agendas of capital, albeit under new geographic formations. The terms "culture," "context," and "difference," emerging from spaces of radical critique of colonial structures, are incorporated into colonial formations precisely to justify new forms of market penetration. Languages of de-Westernization and decolonization are deployed to uphold the logics of the market.

CULTURALLY CENTERED COMMUNICATIVE INFRASTRUCTURES

Set against the backdrop of the dominant communication structures of neoliberal capitalist development that continue to consolidate power in the hands of a largely US-centered transnational elite, culture-centered processes of social change seek to foreground the role of communication infrastructures at the margins of development. Carrying forth the underlying philosophy of anti-colonial struggles that fundamentally seek to undo colonial structures and their overarching capitalist logics, culture-centered processes of social change seek to build infrastructures of democracy at the global margins (Dutta 2011, 2013). Inherent in these infrastructures is the co-creation of spaces of participation that are rooted in the grassroots and that explicitly seek to transform the structures of colonialism. The ideology of capitalist expansion through the instruments of the market is disrupted by the presence of subaltern voices that offer other imaginations for political and economic organizing. The co-optation of de-Westernization and decolonizing tropes toward serving the agendas of colonial capitalism are disrupted through the collective organizing of anti-colonial resistance that foregrounds socialist values.

Subaltern Communication Infrastructures

The erasure of communities from spaces of representation and recognition is intertwined with the reproduction of colonial processes of development. Subalternity as the condition of erasure of the raced, classed, gendered position that is disconnected from pathways of mobility is tied to the crafting of policies that colonize subaltern spaces by incorporating them into the hegemonic logics of capital (Beverly 2004a, 2004b). For instance, in the community collectives put together by communities of the Dongria Kondh, the framing of the sacred mountains they reside on as the "mountain of law" resists the neocolonial state's construction of the mountains as rich in minerals to be extracted by displacing the Dongria Kondh from their spaces of livelihood. Similarly, the spaces of voices of workers in precarious industries in the global South challenge the overarching logics of capital imposed on spaces in the global South. These communication infrastructures are owned by subaltern communities, thus challenging the logics of capitalist development.

Spaces of Resistance

The role of communication at the grassroots is to imagine spaces of resistance that challenge colonial formations and their inherent capitalist logics (Pal and Dutta 2008a). The organizing of spaces in alternative logics of/from the subaltern margins directly challenges the colonial expansionism of capital. Resistance, embedded in collectivized notions of community desires for solidarity, challenges the overarching framework of neoliberal development (Kapoor 2011). Resistance frameworks offer alternative logics of communication, placing on the global discursive space other imaginations of organizing societies, politics, and economics. Resistance narratives offer alternative visions of development, grounded in people's democracies, people's

ownership of development decision-making processes, and people's participation in debating the various aspects of development, continually challenging organizing structures that consolidate global inequalities.

Connecting Collectivization, Movements, and Politics

The co-creative spaces at the margins emerge as sites for transforming imperial formations of development by, on one hand, seeking to undo them, and on the other hand, seeking to imagine them through frameworks of democratic ownership and participation (Dutta 2011). The participation of communities in processes of collectivization creates collective anchors for bargaining for minimum wage, decent working conditions, and equitable work policies (Pal and Dutta 2008a, 2008b). Unions are centered in conversations on social change as the bases for representing worker voices. Similarly, social movements circulating voices of indigenous communities, women in precarious jobs that are unorganized, transgender workers, and other groups that have historically been disenfranchised by colonial processes of capitalist accumulation offer alternative anchors to global organizing. Ultimately, the resistive power of social movements and unions is channeled through the everyday work of politics in challenging structures of colonial capitalism and in seeking to transform them.

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the ways that the US empire and neo-colonial capitalism are embedded in social change communication, and it also attended to how communication for development, participation, engagement, and culture frequently stem from and serve the agendas of the US state and US-based transnational capital. Working through different moments and modalities of social change communication, the chapter foregrounded the neoliberal capitalist agendas that are served by many development communication interventions. In this backdrop, culturally centered struggles for communicative justice in the global South foreground the role of alternative communicative infrastructures in anti-imperial struggles.

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Mapping Power in Women's Empowerment Projects in Global Development

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Women's empowerment may seem to be a valuable goal of global development initiatives, yet this relatively uncontested agenda is worth contesting. The concept of media imperialism is useful for critically examining how the seemingly worthy goal of women's empowerment is a way by which powerful nation-states, corporations, and media industries create and impose upon the world a problematic development narrative that valorizes women's empowerment via financial markets, individual entrepreneurship, and digital communications technologies while obscuring forms of disempowerment rooted in structural inequities. Feminist critiques of global development remind us of the weight that these structural inequities bring to strategic interventions, asserting the importance of context.

Global development is more than a set of isolated interventions. When treated as a more comprehensive project, development serves as a set of practices that may reinforce inequities between people, across nations, and within communities. If we take social justice seriously, then we need to scrutinize the development narratives that render inequality invisible when asserting individual empowerment as optimal. The development narratives that focus narrowly on women as individual agents of social change impede a more comprehensive understanding of the structural barriers to achieving it. When proposing empowerment as an individual accomplishment, these development narratives downplay policies that might support collective amelioration.

Mediated narratives of development situate women's empowerment within broader imperialist narratives that support global elites, with resources based in wealthy states and corporations. These global elites are sustained through the narratives that privilege entrepreneurialism, consumer freedom, and free markets, powered through the projected strength of digital media. The concept of media imperialism offers an analytic framework for this exploration of dominant narratives that legitimize development agency interests. Following a description of media imperialism as it pertains to this analysis, I consider privatization as an important economic dynamic within the Asian region. Next, I consider development narratives broadly, and then more specifically with reference to women's empowerment. Examples are used to determine how empowerment is articulated as a development goal, how women are positioned as part of

the development process, and how digital media are assumed to contribute to empowerment. Finally, I explore implications of these dominant narratives.

MEDIA IMPERIALISM AND NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENT

The key contribution of media-imperialism theory to international communication scholarship is its recognition of global power dynamics—economic, political, and cultural—that structure the processes of media production, distribution, and access (Boyd-Barrett 1977, 2015). This framework has been applied in a variety of contexts, considering multiple mediated venues and processes with diverging consequences (Boyd-Barrett 2015; Sparks 2007). In this chapter, I focus on the media narratives that justify a neoliberal development agenda that perpetuates the positions of wealthy countries, corporations, and development agencies.

Global media industries primarily serve the elite interests not only of wealthy nation-states, but also the corporations that are clustered within these nation-states and that benefit from global capitalism. Dominant nations and agencies headquartered within them are able to control communication through structuring the norms and resources that facilitate creation of and access to media sources. For example, the Women's Economic Opportunity Initiative (WEOI), described as "ExxonMobil's signature initiative," intends to support women's economic resources through "mobilizing technology" (Golla et al. 2011). Structural imbalances of power radically undermine the potential for equal access to the means of imparting and receiving media and information (Couldry 2010; Sparks 2007). While some advocate a conceptual shift away from "imperialism" toward "globalization" (e.g., Kraidy 2010), the central insight of media imperialism theory—that those in power are able to influence hegemonic narratives, even in the context of actively engaged media users and diverse audiences—remains significant. This process is neither linear nor simple, instead composing a more dynamic and complex set of assertions across groups with varying levels of power. Recognizing complexities and variations in media usage and interpretations does not mean that all have equal access to the production of media texts.

Whereas early research (such as Schiller 1976) focused on the role of the United States as the world's dominant media imperialist, over time, scholars focused on the corporate agenda of globalized media (and other) industries as key agents of media imperialism. Continuing US financial dominance in the production of news, film, interactive games, and other media connects American national interests with transnational capital accumulation. US dominance of digital and computing corporations exacerbates this dynamic (Boyd-Barrett 2015). Currently, the United States asserts its power in the world directly through its militaristic foreign policy, and indirectly through the globalizing US-based commercial media enterprises (McChesney 2015; Herman and Chomsky 1988) that produce and circulate commercial ideas, symbols, and narratives. This indirect source of influence can be understood as the "soft power" described by Nye (1990) in his analysis of global power, foregrounding the importance of communication and organizational skills. US soft power (Nye 2004) contrib-

utes to justifications of public diplomacy and other strategic communication programs targeting citizens outside of the United States.

In contrast to the hard power of US military intervention, US-centered development agencies wield soft power through development communication programs, whether ostensibly for humanitarian purposes or dedicated to nation branding (Pamment 2016; Pamment and Wilkins 2018). Development agencies create projects that are designed to improve people's lives, through interventions that are funded by wealthy countries or organizations as donors and implemented in communities with comparatively fewer resources. Although the articulated intentions of development programs are toward the social good, donor organizations are able to take advantage of the power imbalance to assert their interest in solving some problems and not others, in ways that benefit donors.

Communication for development emerged as a form of strategic intervention within the larger development project. US programs tend to be more interested in using communication through social marketing and through digital media, whereas other large donors, such as Japan, support communication infrastructure, such as building radio stations. Social marketing, targeting individuals to change their behaviors in response to media campaigns, fits within a dominant approach to development, emphasizing hierarchical transmission models of communication as well as inevitable and linear paths to development. Modernization guided this dominant approach to development, though it inspired serious critiques, which led to concerns with promoting participatory and dialogic communication as well as claims of cultural imperialism.

Many types of donors contribute to global development, including bilateral and multilateral donors as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations, corporations, and foundations. Although most of the development project is funded through bilateral and multilateral sources, private donors are growing in number and proportion, often with interests linked with those of wealthy governments (Wilkins 2018). Although the landscape of development has become more diverse over time due to the emergence of an increasing number of bilateral and regional agencies, at the expense of multilateral development agencies, the privatization of development is an important trend (Boyd-Barrett 2015, 178; Wilkins and Enghel 2013; Wilkins and Lee 2016). Privatized development embraces "partnerships" between public bilateral agencies, such as USAID (US Agency for International Development), and corporate donors (Cha 2014).

Sustaining its role as the world's most powerful nation-state, not least in the sphere of global financial capital, the United States has been able to dominate media narratives of global development, registering assertions of even the most militaristic foreign policies as acts of beneficent if not selflessly heroic feats of goodwill, perhaps most egregiously in the conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan, but extending to interventions in Libya, Syria, Iran, and Ukraine (Boyd-Barrett 2015), to identify some among the most recent. This hard power works in conjunction with soft-power articulations of US development communication programs in the Middle East (Wilkins 2004). Accompanying media narratives promote US exceptionalism through their framing and construction of problems and solutions, and they rely on US officials or authority-sanctioned

sources of information (including mainstream media firms that are well known for their ideological support of the "Washington consensus").

Boyd-Barrett introduces the term "mediatized imperialism," signifying "an approach that highlights the extent to which the actions of human beings in a material world are shaped reflexively by the media and are in turn constantly re-represented and re-interpreted to shape the material world" (2015, 180). Development narratives are expressions of mediatized imperialism, in that the interpretations of problems and their projected solutions are produced by US-centered public and private development agencies, with consequences for the allocation and direction of key resources. These development narratives are complicit with the project of the US empire, as they work "to 'normalize' and 'naturalize' this state of affairs of inequality and oppression" (Boyd-Barrett 2015, 181).

ASIAN PRIVATIZATION

The cases of mediatized imperialism considered in this chapter center on women's empowerment programs in South (India, Pakistan) and West Asia (particularly the Arab region). This region suffers narrow characterizations of women in the public and private development discourses produced by organizations located in the United States and Western Europe (Abu-Lughod 2013; Cornwall 2007; Mohanty 1991), deployed with the appreciable resources of global development programs (Wilkins 2015). The popularity of women's empowerment programs in Asia, funded by development agencies, serves as a useful justification for the selection of these examples. These accompany the emergence of digital media industries in the Asian region. Trends toward economic privatization in the region are manifest through the growth of digital media industries, in accordance with global economic interests. The US-based Washington Consensus guided development policies that supported transforming public agencies into having closer collaborations with private agencies (Thomas 2012).

South and West Asia include a wide range of countries with vastly divergent economies. An early optimistic World Bank report from 2006 credits privatization reforms in the 1990s with improving economic growth in South Asia (Devarajan and Nabi 2006), though other analyses suggest the growth of resource inequities within privatized economies. India has been recognized as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, often referred to in the context of the BRICS, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (Westhead 2009; Zakaria 2008). Although government policy in India has done much to support economic liberalization and privatization with a view to integration into the global economy (Thomas 2012), poverty remains a central concern (Chakravartty 2014). India has been documented as having an extremely high divergence between wealthy and poor, with 1 percent of the country controlling over half of its resources (Agrawal 2016). Pakistan also began its integration into the global economy through establishing digital commercial banking and communications services, "making Pakistan one of the most competitive and interesting markets in the world" (Chen 2013). Economies within the Arab region are noted to be increasingly disparate across income and wealth, with trends toward privatization

emerging since the 1980s in North African countries. Complex ownership structures problematize divisions between state-owned enterprises and private agencies in Arab nations (Amico 2015; WEF 2017). Women's participation in the formal economic sector in these regions remains low (UNESCO 2018), but they are invited to participate in strategic development programs that teach digital media skills that are intended to enhance business practices and result in more women contributing to the economy.

Digital media industries have been strengthening within the Arab region (Salem 2017), and they are seen as "powerful levers for diversification" and competitiveness because they facilitate the development of digital networks that build capacity for global trade and business (WEF 2017). Tunisia's hosting of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2005 was intended to attract recognition given the government's investment in telecommunication infrastructure, but instead contributed to local protests against government censorship and restrictions on citizens' use of digital media (Zayani 2015). Online service providers, such as Maktoob in Jordan, Talabat in Kuwait, and Souq.com in UAE, are recognized for contributing to economic growth (WEF 2017). Corporate agendas appear to guide public policies in India in terms of public-sector software regulation (Thomas 2012) and telecommunication industry privatization (Chakravartty 2012; IITM 2005; Westhead 2009). The broader region's increasing reliance on digital media (WEF 2017) contributes to their integration within an "increasingly digitalized" global economy (IMF 2018).

DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVES

The connection between national states and global corporations means that the shared interests of these powerful agencies in organizing development initiatives are difficult to question (Enghel 2015; Escobar 1995). Mediated narratives support this dynamic. Boyd-Barrett explains:

> Media become agents for imperialism when they frame their narratives in a manner that presents imperialistic activity in a positive or benign light, when they prioritize the voices, justifications and discourses of imperial actors over the voices of victims, dissidents and alternatives, and when they omit or marginalize details and perspectives that would serve to critique imperial power. (2015, 14)

In relation to development narratives, projects are asserted as beneficial and beneficent, masking inequalities in wealth across donors, recipients, and host communities (Dutta 2011; Escobar 1995; Sparks 2007; Wilkins 2015). In Li's analysis of a World Bank project dedicated to empowerment, she highlights its implementation as emblematic of neoliberal strategies that "bear striking resemblance to colonial interventions a century ago" (2007, 67). Others have also raised concerns with neoliberal approaches to development that target individuals for social change at the expense of holding elite institutions and wealthy individuals accountable (Dutta 2011). Development narratives of women's empowerment are narratives in the service of contemporary media imperialism.

These narratives limit critique through their assertion of women's issues as though these had nothing to do with the construction and maintenance of gender divisions, and through their privileging of the idea of social change as simply a matter of individual transition of status. Development projects that encourage women to consider digital media skills as essential to their economic mobility, social status, and political power commodify women's concerns. For example, access to digital media can be framed as a way for individual women to sell crafts and to purchase products. Moreover, development projects that value digital media mask the connection between the sale of these technologies and the wealthy countries and companies that benefit. World Bank attention to information and communication technologies (ICT) used to promote women's employment and entrepreneurship builds on support from Microsoft (Peiris 2015), clearly a wealthy corporation that could benefit from increased used of digital technologies. A recent Free Basics campaign funded by Facebook has been critiqued as favoring the transfer of information to private entities over the potential for this platform to be a meaningful resource to local communities (Solon 2017). As corporations, US-based digital technology companies have financial incentives to elevate the status of the digital media products they produce and sell as instruments of development, rather than acknowledge the potential and frequent use of these tools for government surveillance, loss of privacy, and commodification of relationships.

NARRATIVES OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Next, I explore how development narratives articulate women's empowerment to markets, entrepreneurship, and digital media technologies. Through this analysis, I consider how empowerment is considered as an approach to development; how women become visible in relation to gender dynamics; and how digital media are believed to propel empowerment. Following this review, I explore the implications raised between neoliberal narratives of development and global power structures.

Empowerment

The idea of development generally engages with state and corporate proposals for strategic intervention whose justification lies in their contribution to development and public benefit. The concept of empowerment tends to be applied to development projects that focus on ways of enhancing the social mobility of individuals by helping them to acquire skills and resources that enable them to engage actively in their communities. This articulation shifts the responsibility for change to individuals, seen as having the potential to improve their lives through merit and action. In contrast to previous critiques of modernization strategies, said to have conceptualized their supposed beneficiaries as passive targets of intervention, the assertion of empowerment appeals to an interest in foregrounding the agency of individuals as active, not passive, participants.

However, this agency is limited to particular domains, more often economic than political or social, and privileges individual characteristics at the expense of consid-

ering normative or structural constraints. For example, the underlying model of one popular form of social change—investments in small businesses run by women—is celebrated as a way to leverage financial resources needed to enhance consumption.

Ideas of empowerment are therefore often coupled with micro-enterprise programs. They assume that the problem of poverty can be solved by market solutions, through a model of "creative capitalism" that sees the poor as a lucrative market (Roy 2010). As a development strategy, micro-enterprise works within a neoliberal framework privileging economic growth as a global development enterprise (Nederveen Pieterse 2009; Sparks 2007). The very mission of microfinance elevates this approach to "paradigmatic" status, "of a new moment of development, one characterized by an interest in poverty alleviation and focused on ideas of self-help and empowerment" (Roy 2010, x–xi).

Empowerment strategies therefore are often aligned with development programs that articulate women's interests as an area of central concern. Kristof and WuDunn connect women's empowerment in microfinance programs as an exercise of capitalism whose premise is that this economic system is best able to "bolster the status of women, and to protect them from abuse, (better) than any laws could accommodate. Capitalism, it turns out, can achieve what charity and good intentions sometimes cannot" (2009, 187). The development approach underlying these more broadly conceived concerns assumes that women's empowerment serves as an intermediary step between poverty and economic health and is susceptible to development intervention. Overall the central goal of micro-enterprise is to fight poverty through women's empowerment, which can be conceptualized as economic benefit through financial gain; a personal sense of confidence; social respect from others; or political gain in terms of rights and position. Despite the potential for empowerment to be operationalized in these various ways, economic goals dominate this discourse (Wilkins 2015).

To illustrate, a recent (since 2014) and highly funded development initiative ($3 million), WOMENA, is devoted to supporting women as entrepreneurs in the commercial sector in the Middle East region (WOMENA 2018). Their stated aim is "to support the MENA entrepreneurship ecosystem by empowering and educating investors and entrepreneurs." They have received funding from nine private investors to fund competitively selected projects. They describe "WOMENA®" as "a platform dedicated to encouraging gender diversity and inclusion in the regional entrepreneurship ecosystem" (WOMENA 2018). The registered trademark is important to note, ascribing commercial value to the rhetoric dedicated to this mission.

Empowerment as a development strategy privileges economic potential, particularly through private-sector action. Women's empowerment becomes central to these development missions, conceptualized as a significant step away from poverty and toward financial gain. Next, I consider how this articulation of women avoids attention to gender.

Women

Women have been a popular target of global development efforts since the 1970s, when multilateral agencies, then having a more central role in setting development

agendas, devoted a year and then a decade to announce their dedication to women. What has become known in the development field as a focus on Women in Development (WID) enabled women to move from relative invisibility to more visible roles (Wilkins 1999). This visibility, however, did not come with voice. Nor did these concerns address power differences in gendered norms and rights that limit the potential for women to reach equity with men in terms of economic opportunities and benefits, political rights and access, and social status and roles. Feminist critiques have pointed to the importance of considering gender, and not merely women, in articulations of social change (Wilkins 2015).

While the focus of women's empowerment, as described above, highlights economic over other domains, this agenda also determines mobility as something applicable only along an individual path. These programs encourage women to own, manage, and sell products through small businesses. The World Bank (2012) suggested that entrepreneurship might be appropriate for women, given that small businesses require neither the "physical skills" of men nor a capacity to administer large organizations. US and UN development agencies couple corporate strategies to women's programs, explicitly "target(ing) the poorest women through effective marketing strategies" (US Department of State 2004), or "investing in girls" (UNDP 2014).

The case of WOMENA described above clearly highlights women's value as entrepreneurs. This assertion finds historical and contemporary resonance in a variety of global development programs. CAWTAR, the Arab Women Center for Training and Research, has promoted women's empowerment since its inception in 1993 in Tunisia. This program is funded not only by private investors, with a clear orientation to profit, but also by a variety of public (such as the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], and the European Union [EU]) and private agencies (International Planned Parenthood Federation [IPPF]), situated in regional (Arab Gulf Development Fund [AGFUND]; the Tunisian government) as well as global contexts. Their mission statement highlights a formal economic market as a solution to women's concerns, including gender-based violence.

This reference to violence rooted in gendered conflict marks a relatively rare recognition of power differences that have significant consequences for women. These development programs target women as individuals, conceptualizing access to the right resources and skills as the way to enable them to improve their lives. This characterization of social change as motivated through choices, projecting the agency of these individuals, renders invisible the agency of those who create policies and programs that structure these very choices. Without considering broader cultural norms such as those that do not punish violence against women, or policies that could require equal salaries, benefits, and opportunities, development programs focusing on women neglect a more comprehensive understanding of gender and of social change.

Digital Media

Development communication builds on an assumption that communication serves a valuable role in social change. In the specific area of women's empowerment, communication tends to foreground media as technologies, such as telephones and then

more recently digital media such as computers, smartphones, and websites in micro-enterprise programs. Regardless of the particular communication technology invoked, these models of social change align with the private sector. Media may be used in development through social marketing, inspiring consumption, or infrastructure, conceptualized as integral with modernization. Emphasis on a corporate approach to media industries, as opposed to potential community, public, or political approaches, serves global industries, which have vested interests in privatizing public-sector software and media industries.

In line with women's empowerment being an identified goal of development programs funding micro-enterprise projects, this approach to development clearly indicates digital media as contributing to the process of empowerment. These discussions describe women's economic empowerment as generating income, through access to formal banking services offering credit and savings (de Gobbi 2005). As an illustration, two programs position digital media as enabling women to work from home, creating and selling handmade products: Women's Digital League in Pakistan supports "women-owned digital services . . . that (empower) Pakistani women—even in the most remote areas of the country—without them having to leave their homes"; and Sitat Byoot, translated as "Women of the Home," offers an online portal to Jordanian women to market and sell their goods from home. An Arab female entrepreneur is congratulated for having "combined her entrepreneurial endeavors with the power of social media in building her business" (Ashraf 2017).

In descriptions of the Network of Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (NEED) program in India, women work together to market and sell their crafts through digital media. Targeted women are "primarily from poor, dispossessed, marginalised, or unreached sectors," becoming "empowered" through these sales (Singh 2003). In another project funded by the World Bank and Microsoft, Seelampur targets women in poverty to learn to market and sell their handmade crafts, such as embroidery and candles, through digital media (UNESCO 2004). Digital media are understood as a necessary mechanism to alleviate poverty, with formal assessments noting increases in proportions of women with experience using computers over time (UNESCO 2004).

The WOMENA program rewarded projects that proposed using digital media mostly for management, marketing, and selling of their products in their recent selection of applications from women in the Arab region in 2018. Two exceptions to the nine funded projects proposed to use digital media to monitor farming conditions and to transform plastic into sustainable construction material. This program acknowledges that the businesses they target are intentionally small, but believes that their program will build "the largest network of female entrepreneurs and investors in the Middle East" (WOMENA 2018).

In addition to considering digital media as a means to economic benefit, this program encourages women to consider media as a marketing tool, not only for their products but also to promote themselves as individuals. WOMENA notes that women with funding must be "willing to be featured on media and appear on camera throughout the program." And in concert with a neoliberal framework for social change, women are applauded for their individual accomplishments. Public marketing of the Gender and Arab media program, sponsored by AGFUND, cheers Elissa Freiha as

a founder of WOMENA, for "effective harnessing of social media," and for her investments that have created "change among women entrepreneurs." Another female entrepreneur, Haneed Dabain, garners attention for founding the website Pricena, facilitating comparative product pricing online.

In addition to welcoming the role of digital media in facilitating production, marketing, and consumption, these development programs consider their potential in establishing networks and in promoting constructive images of women. Although the creation of opportunities for networking could conceivably link people in political strategies as well as cultural practices, the networks privileged in these narratives connect investors and creditors with businesses, and sellers with consumers (CAWTAR 2009). And the positive images promoted, as described above, reference women's individual accomplishments rather than consider whether groups of women are experiencing similar circumstances and opportunities as men. Without drawing attention to gender inequity, "social media" are believed to have "tremendous power to transcend geographic boundaries, traverse gender differences and embrace the beauty of hope in all its glory. And it is no surprise that many profound women in the GCC are spearheading that hope—one word, one dream and one smile at a time!" (CAWTAR 2009). Evaluations of these programs transpose this enthusiasm into indications of self-confidence and self-identified social respect.

IMPLICATIONS

The dominant narrative engaged through development programs devoted to women's empowerment subscribes to a neoliberal framework, which does not question power differences in global economies or across gendered divides. The approach to empowerment focuses on individual change, avoiding recognition of the contexts that limit potential. Centering development programs for women on empowerment skirts more complex concerns regarding how women's conditions contrast with those of men, as well as how gendered and sexual identities contribute to navigations in our social worlds.

Highlighting women, singularly, as having value through economic contributions serves to reinforce a capitalistic framework that privileges formal economies over political or cultural connections. Focusing on women as small-scale entrepreneurs and as consumers keeps women in marginalized places, working at home so as not to disrupt public spaces or gendered expectations. This articulation avoids considering structural barriers in regulation, such as policies preventing women from inheriting or divorcing, as well as normative constraints, which limit aspirations and opportunities. Social norms favoring boys over girls in India, for example, lead to millions of girls bearing the consequences of being "unwanted" (McKirdy 2018). And despite considerable investment in Egypt through development programs, this country has one of the worst records for gender equity (136 out of 145 countries) in the world (Hanlon 2017). Highlighting the stories of individual women who became successful entrepreneurs masks the broader conditions that inhibit gender equity.

Media would have the potential to offer narratives of resistance that might counter these gendered stereotypes. Communications interventions have the potential to pro-

mote a variety of messages with normative consequences. Yet in this framework, the overzealous articulation of the value of digital media as a tool of commerce supports the work of private industries and capital. These programs assume rather than question the benefits of privatized bank services, reducing women's roles to those of bank borrowers and small-scale entrepreneurs who contribute to global finance capital.

The theory of media imperialism asserts the importance of connecting the concrete interests of powerful Western and US organizations with the soft power of media narratives that serve to justify rather than question the motives and consequences of these agents of power. Within the global development industry, neoliberal narratives of women's empowerment as individual digital-savvy entrepreneurs and consumers quell questions that might turn attention toward structural inequities. This neoliberal narrative has transcended previous attention to modernization within nation-states, benefiting global capitalism. Roy refers to this trend as the "post-WWII transnational capitalist project of development (which) . . . has unified the world—so-called developed and developing nations alike—in a total subservience to the market, to capital, to the products of our own work" (2010, 107). The development industry has privileged economic privatization through what became known as the "Washington Consensus," constructing "geographies shaped by neoliberalism . . . celebrated as places of progress rather than of devastation" (Roy 2010, 20).

The case of women's empowerment in development confirms the importance of understanding power dynamics in a global context. While many wealthy bilateral agencies still dominate the development industry in terms of amount of funding circulated, emerging private donors, through foundations, corporations, and individuals, not only are contributing more proportionately over time, but also are infiltrating and reshaping the dominant narrative of development. Wealthy governments and corporations are able to produce and sustain these dominant narratives, which draw attention away from broader issues and concerns by privileging individuals as responsible for social change.

The concept of media imperialism helps us relate and connect the concrete interests of organizational actors—powerful nation-states, corporations, and nongovernmental agencies—responsible for instigating development initiatives centered on women's empowerment, to the narratives these actors produce and circulate to justify these campaigns. More critical research is needed to understand the ways that narratives may benefit the development industry, not the people such narratives represent as being empowered by this industry.

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Part VI

RISING MEDIA EMPIRES:
THE CASE OF CHINA

China

An Emerging Cultural Imperialist

Colin Sparks

Since the early years of the twenty-first century, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been engaged in a massive program of international media and cultural expansion. Xinhua, the official news agency, has grown its network of foreign correspondents. The main international broadcasters, China Central Television (CCTV) and China Radio International (CRI), have increased the number of channels and the number of languages in which they broadcast. The main official paper, *People's Daily*, and its companion papers *China Daily* and *Global Times*, have launched ambitious international editions and exploited the resources of the internet to make their news and views available around the world. There have been efforts to promote Chinese culture and language through organizations like the 500-plus Confucius Institutes worldwide.

At the same time, the growing political visibility and economic influence of the PRC on the global stage has led to the informal diffusion of Chinese culture throughout the world. Chinese contemporary art commands high prices internationally. Many people seek treatment from traditional Chinese doctors. Older people practice Tai Chi to maintain their mobility. Younger people study martial arts like Kung Fu. Both young and old enthusiastically engage in that central aspect of Chinese culture: eating Chinese food (or, at least, something remotely related to Chinese food).

This chapter attempts to answers two questions: How do we understand China's international media and cultural activities, and what are their prospects of succeeding in promoting Chinese culture and a Chinese view of the world? It starts with a comparative review of the explanatory utility of concepts of soft power and cultural and media imperialism and discusses whether "imperialism" applies to contemporary China. It then summarizes China's international media and cultural activity, particularly with regard to Africa. Finally, it assesses the prospects of China not only being able to promote its media and culture but also its chances of enjoying any substantial success.

SOFT POWER VERSUS CULTURAL AND MEDIA IMPERIALISM

Much of the discussion about China's international media and cultural expansion, both in China and around the world, takes place using the concept of soft power

(Shambaugh 2013, 210–13; Yang 2018; Edney 2014, 101–21). This concept has been taken up widely in China, sometimes as an aspect of "comprehensive national power" (Ding 2008; Li and Hong 2012; X. Zhang 2016, 3–10). As is well known, the term was coined by Joseph Nye and has been used, in various incarnations, to conceptualize and identify the persuasive aspects of US power, as opposed to the coercive hard power exercised through military and economic strength (Nye 1990; Nye 2011).

The concepts of cultural and media imperialism date back at least to the work of Schiller, Tunstall, and Mattelart in the 1970s (Schiller 1969; Schiller 1976; Tunstall 1977; Mattelart 1979). Even more than soft power, these concepts have been subject to multiple definitions. As Boyd-Barrett remarked, "the term 'media imperialism,' . . . should not be thought of as a single theory" (Boyd-Barrett 2014, 14). Nonetheless, media-imperialism researchers commonly analyze how cultural and media artefacts, originating in specific powerful states, come to command international currency and the ways in which these artefacts are tied to the geopolitical and economic strengths of the nation-state in which they originate.

Political connotations aside, there is little to distinguish the concepts of soft power and media imperialism (Sparks 2015). The two theories look at the ways in which the cultural products of a powerful nation, in both cases taking the United States as the prime example, are exported, accepted, and enjoyed around the world and thus help to ensure that US ideas, values, and policies are embraced by the population of other countries. One substantive difference between the concepts, however, is important in the case of China. Nye stresses that hard power originates in the state machine while soft power derives from the activities of non-state agencies, whereas theories of cultural and media imperialism see it as a phenomenon closely linked to the state machine. Nye overstates this separation even in the US case. There are certainly real distinctions to be made between the US state and many American cultural activities, but there are much closer links than Nye is prepared to acknowledge. In the case of Hollywood, government agencies—from the Department of Defense to the Department of State—routinely collaborate with the studios (Moody 2017; Redmond 2017). Other soft power programs, like scholarships for international students, are closely linked to US government funding and priorities. The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) is an example: according to its most recent available financial statement, it received $67.5 million from the US federal government, which constituted more than 90 percent of its total income (Grant Thornton 2016, 5). In the case of China there is an even closer link between the government and culture: almost all of the international media and cultural campaigns are state-directed and integral to the party-state's overall aims (Edney 2012). In this regard, the concept of cultural and media imperialism seems to represent a better starting point for examining the case of China than does soft power.

The concept of cultural and media imperialism, however, can only be appropriate if China can meaningfully be termed "imperialist." This is difficult because the main usage of the term stems from the Marxist tradition, which developed it to account for the close links between the capitalist state and large corporations that turned economic competition into military conflict (Callinicos 2009; Harvey 2003; Brewer 1990; Smith 2016). Yet, the PRC officially claims to embody not capitalism but socialism, albeit

"socialism with Chinese characteristics." The PRC leadership, and probably most citizens, would angrily deny that there is anything imperialist about its international activities. We cannot explore such issues in detail here, but we can examine aspects of the PRC's internationalization of its media and culture to determine whether or not the evidence is consonant with the behavior of an imperialist power.[1]

One important feature of imperialism as classically defined is the "export of capital." For many years, China was a recipient of inward investment, but since the turn of the century, there have also been significant outward investments. The current Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which involves more than sixty countries, has increased the sums involved (National Development and Reform Commission 2015; Hurley, Morris, and Portelance 2018). Foreign direct investment (FDI) by China was virtually zero for most of the 1990s but after 2006 began to grow sharply. China is still a major recipient of inward direct investment, and the total stock of its foreign investments is much smaller than that of the United States, but it nevertheless has substantial capital exports. The flagship BRI policy is a major conduit for both the state and businesses to export capital, labor, and raw materials (Hart-Landsberg 2018). In some areas—Africa, for example—it is the largest source of direct investments (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2018; Ike Dibie 2017).

A second dimension of imperialism is the integration of state and big capital, and the consequent inter-relationship between their policy goals. This is a given in China, where big private capitalists and big state capitalists co-exist and the state facilitates the development of both private and state-owned companies. The close links between individuals and organizations from both the state and the private sector are well explained by Graham Murdock in his study of the rise and fall of the Dalian Wanda Group in chapter 20 of this book. Other good examples of such relationships can be found in the development of Chinese internet companies. While in most of the world Google is the leading search engine, in China it is Baidu, a national company. This is partly because the Chinese government forced Google to withdraw as part of its "Great Firewall" policy of restricting access to some international material it judges a threat to its rule. While the state had powerful political motives for these restrictions, it also allowed a national company to build a strong position behind a screen that protected it from international competition. In return, the search engine facilitates the blocking of "subversive" content and has entered an alliance with the People's Liberation Army to develop artificial intelligence with both commercial and military uses (Hille and Waters 2018). Similar relationships exist between the state, which prohibits Facebook and Twitter in China, and the indigenous alternatives Wexin (WeChat) and Weibo.

Alongside these economic indicators of a developing imperialist economic profile, both foreign and military policy have taken on a more assertive international dimension. China has been the leading force in establishing a relatively loose diplomatic alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), with the intention of challenging US domination of the international order. Similarly, it has embarked on a major military expansion, notably involving the construction of a "blue water navy," in order to project its power far from home. It has asserted control over a large and disputed area of the South China Sea and built military facilities on islands and reefs that it claims. It even has its first foreign military base, in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.

The unmistakable evidence is that China is evolving into an imperialist power. True, it is still a very small imperialist power. Its export of capital is tiny compared to that of the United States. Its network of alliances is thin compared to that of the United States: the BRICS grouping, unlike NATO, has no military dimension. China's military forces remain much weaker than those of the United States. At the time of writing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy had one small aircraft carrier, one almost ready for service, and one under construction, while the US Navy had eleven large carriers already in service. It is against this background of a nascent imperialism that China's cultural expansion must be analyzed.

CHINA'S MEDIA AND CULTURAL EXPANSION

There has long been an international dimension to the PRC's cultural policies (Porter 1992; Ungor 2009). Xinhua began exchanging news with other international agencies in the 1950s, and by 1967 it had agreements with twenty-two foreign partners (Xin 2012, 41–45). China Radio International (CRI) can trace its origins back to 1941 (Huang 2018). Even China Central Television (CCTV) initiated some very modest international links in the 1950s (Hong and Liu 2015, 428–32).

The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) damaged formal international links between the PRC's media organizations and the world, and it was not until the "opening up" period got underway after 1978 that they were able to fully resume their international expansion. These initiatives accelerated once China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. The then president, Jiang Zemin, launched the "going out" strategy at the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in November 2002. CCTV, CRI, *China Daily*, an overseas edition of *People's Daily*, and Xinhua all launched new initiatives in the aftermath of the policy announcement (Xin 2012, 112). With the growing internationalization of the Chinese economy, and a conscious desire by both President Hu Jintao and his successor Xi Jinping to develop China's global influence, funding continued to be made available for the expansion of broadcasting, the press, and broader cultural organizations (Glaser and Murphy 2009; Jirik 2010, 290–91).

There is some debate within China as to the exact objectives of these initiatives (Shambaugh 2013, 211–15; Ran 2016). We can, however, make a distinction between what we might term the "tactical" objective of changing the nature of news about China and the "strategic" agenda of promoting the rich heritage of Chinese culture throughout the world. The first of these involves developing alternative international news channels. The second involves the promotion of the Chinese language and various elements of the official "national culture."

The News Providers

The motivation for building international news providers has been a strongly held, and substantially accurate, perception that the existing international news media misrepresent China in significant ways (Sparks 2010). As two Chinese commentators put it:

> Chinese government officials believe that global media narratives rigidly stereotype China as an oriental nation-state, offering a biased and largely negative perspective that overlooks many of the positive accomplishments and aspects of Chinese society. (Hu and Ji 2012, 32)

In order to redress the balance, China has developed its own international mass media, particularly news media. The reasoning is that only by building international news organizations that can challenge the "orientalist" reporting of CNN and the BBC can China hope to be properly understood. In contrast with the Western media, Chinese media are intended to promote a fuller and fairer picture of China's enormous achievements and positive international intentions (Li and Wu 2018; Nyíri 2017; Gorfinkel et al. 2014, 82; Rawnsley 2015).

CCTV has developed its international arm, now known as China Global Television Network (CGTN), into a wide range of international services, in English, Spanish, Russian, French, Arabic, and Mandarin (Hu, Ji, and Gong 2018, 69–72; Geniets 2013, 66). China Radio International today broadcasts around the world in sixty-five languages. It also has around 130 international radio stations and about 160 international cooperation agreements with other radio stations (Huang 2018). The various broadcasting organizations concerned with "telling the country's stories to the world," CCTV, CRI, and China National Radio (CNR), were grouped together as "Voice of China" in March 2018 in order to improve their performance (CGTN 2018).

There is a similar story of expansion in the newspaper sector. The flagship English-language publication, *China Daily*, was founded in 1981 and until 2009 was published only in Beijing. Thereafter it expanded into a daily edition in North America and weekly supplements in Europe, Asia, and Africa (Hartig 2018). In the same year, it was joined by an English-language edition of the popular newspaper *Global Times*, published in Beijing and aimed at the growing English-speaking audience in the city. These publications enjoy, through the internet and World Wide Web, a much wider international circulation than their print editions alone. Many other Chinese newspapers and magazines have set up international editions, but these are mostly aimed at expatriate Chinese communities and are consequently produced in the Chinese language (Mi 2018).

Relatively little is known about the success of these different ventures. There is some evidence from Africa, which we examine below, but other studies reveal a patchy audience. Two recent studies of the audience for CCTV's Spanish-language service (CCTV-E) showed it has a very small audience in both Spain and Latin America (Morales 2018a; Ye and Albornoz 2018). When asked which international TV channels they recognized, students from Mexico and Brazil all knew the BBC and CNN, but "most participants had never heard of CCTV" (Morales 2018b, 95). A similar picture can be painted about the newspaper initiatives. Although the European edition of *China Daily European Weekly* had a circulation of more than 90,000 in 2014, 88,000 of those copies were distributed free. In the same year, the actual retail sale was, on average, 660 copies daily, of which 309 were in Britain and Ireland and 351 were in other European countries (Hartig 2018, 134–35). Overall, the evidence, while admittedly patchy, suggests that the audience for this substantial investment in news and current affairs has been very limited.

Spreading Chinese Culture

The longer-term, strategic view starts from an assumption that Chinese culture has something uniquely valuable to contribute to the world and aims to spread knowledge about these riches. This is a more diffuse project than building news organizations. Some of it—for example, the attempt to spread Chinese language and culture through formal education delivered by the Confucius Institutes—is every bit as state-sponsored as the news organizations. The institutes have broad aspirations to promote the learning of Chinese language and culture in the educational institutions with which they partner (Hartig 2016, 100–101). Other instances of initiatives that have a broader "cultural" rather than a narrow "news and information" remit include the development of an international dimension to the film industry, the entertainment-oriented international activities of CCTV and other Chinese broadcasters, as well as the more "high culture"–oriented activities of the Chinese Cultural Centers, and the heavy investment in elite sport, including staging the 2008 Olympic Games, designed to promote the international image of China as a modern country (Madrid-Morales 2017; Sun 2017; Rosen 2010; Zhang and Guo 2017; Lu and Hong 2013; Flew 2016).

These officially sponsored cultural activities have been numerically quite successful, but they have frequently provoked political storms. The Confucius Institutes, for example, have been embroiled in a succession of crises over staffing and teaching content (Hartig 2015; Sahlins 2015). Similar problems face attempts to produce internationally successful films. Some movies, like *Hero* (2002), might contain a strongly propagandistic element and still attract a significant international audience (Zhao 2010). More generally, however, domestically successful films like the comedy *Lost in Thailand* (2012), the very obviously propagandistic *Beginning of the Great Revival* (2011), or the more subtly propagandistic *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017) have failed to reproduce the same success internationally.

This less institutionalized cultural influence is more difficult to study. There are certainly some aspects of Chinese culture that have a significant following in the outside world. In 2016, 3.71 million people in the United States participated in Tai Chi (Statista/Ipsos 2018; Statista/Technomic 2018). Chinese food appears to have wide recognition: there are more than forty thousand Chinese restaurants in the United States (three times the number of McDonald's), and more than ninety-one million people had, in 2017, eaten in one in the last thirty days (Life in the USA/Chinese Restaurant News 2014; Statista/Nielsen Scarborough 2018). Although it is not possible to determine the number of participants, the International Kung Fu Federation counts eighty-one national associations as members (International Kung Fu Federation 2018). While none of these figures amount to *substantial* international impact for Chinese culture, they suggest that there is a definite current of individuals for whom some aspects of it have a genuine appeal.

At the same time, the growth of the Chinese economy means that cultural consumption inside China itself has become an attractive target for Western media companies. There are state-imposed limits on the ability of foreign companies to exploit this market: for example, the Chinese state controls the number of foreign films that can be imported each year, and it is also impossible for foreign companies to control media production houses. The inventive use of co-production deals can help evade these

restrictions, though, as Graham Murdock discusses in chapter 20. Some international media producers have attempted to modify some of their material in order to make it more accessible to Chinese audiences. DreamWorks, for example, has made a couple of attempts to use a Chinese icon as the center of *Kung Fu Panda* (2008) and *Kung Fu Panda II* (2011). Similarly, Fox incorporated a famous Chinese actor (and tax evader), Fan Bing Bing, into the cast of *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014). In some cases of Chinese-US co-productions, Hollywood companies have even modified scripts in order to accommodate Chinese sensibilities (Brady 2015, 57). Since these films command audiences around the world, they bring aspects of Chinese culture to new viewers, and may thus be seen as an indirect form through which the culture spreads.

CHINA IN AFRICA

Africa has been the second-largest recipient, after Latin America, of Chinese foreign direct investment (Wolf, Wang, and Warner 2013, 29–32; Hannauer and Morris 2014). It has also been one of the places where China has been active with media and cultural initiatives. These activities have attracted comparison with the history of European colonialism, and there has been criticism that both the overall strategy and specifically its media components are essentially predatory (Botma 2013; Wasserman 2012, 341–44; Campayo and Zhao 2016). Chinese initiatives in Africa have been more closely studied than those in other areas, and we can gain a better sense of the success of the overall project from a closer look at this instance (Wasserman 2018).

China's engagement with Africa long predates the current "going out" strategy, dating back to the "anti-imperialist" phase of Chinese foreign policy in the 1950s, in the media as much as in politics and economics (S. Li 2017, 76–83; Bräutigam 1998, 44–60). Recently there has been substantial investment, and Africa is now the site of major initiatives across both broadcasting and the press (Ran 2016). CCTV Africa launched a network center in Nairobi in 2012 and produces news and other programming in English and, to a lesser extent, French (Marsh 2018, 106). *China Daily* launched its English-language *Africa Weekly* in 2012, and by 2014 it was circulating in Kenya (the main base of China's media operations in Africa), South Africa, and Ethiopia, with plans to expand to Nigeria (S. Li 2017, 104). Xinhua News Agency and CRI both also have highly developed presences in Kenya (S. Li 2017, 107–8, 114–17). These African operations, although led by Chinese journalists, have recruited substantial numbers of Africans to help in their work: sixty out of seventy of CCTV's Africa Office staff are Kenyans (S. Li 2017, 111). Alongside these organizational initiatives, China has also played an increasing role in providing journalism training, professional development, and scholarships (Jiang et al. 2016, 2).

The impact of these efforts has not been satisfactorily studied, partly because it is so complex. Africa is not a uniform space but a continent of different nations, cultures, and languages, and the impact of China might be expected to differ across such diversity. Secondly, the "impact" of news products can be understood to operate in at least three ways: impact upon the governing elites; impact upon journalists and journalistic practices; and impact upon popular consciousness.

With regard to the impact upon the elites, in particular the political elites, it is difficult to distinguish between perceptions of China based on media exposure and that based on economic and political factors, which are often closely intertwined with the media (Rønning 2016). A study of Kenya argued that "China's soft power in Kenya has largely to do with China's capacity to attract the Kenyan political leaders, without coercion, to get what they want from China-Africa relations" and that China's media presence is relatively unimportant (Mwende Maweu 2016, 132–33). More broadly, the evidence is that a positive elite attitude toward China is widespread. For example, although China does provide many scholarships for students, in 2011, 14,428 out of 20,744 African students studying there, or 70 percent, were privately funded and thus must mostly have been the children of the wealthy elite (King 2013, 103).

The impact upon journalists and journalistic practices is contradictory. Journalists who work for indigenous news organizations do not use Chinese media sources very extensively, and they frequently express skepticism as to their reliability (Mwende Maweu 2016, 130–31; Wasserman 2016; Madrid-Morales and Wasserman 2018). Similarly, journalism students in universities in Kenya and South Africa reported little contact with, and influence from, Chinese media (Wasserman and Madrid-Morales 2018, 2219–20). Reports on the impact of China upon journalistic practices are more mixed. It has been argued that China's lack of historical baggage allows it to develop a new journalism based on "South-South Connectivity" (Wagner 2017). This new "constructive journalism" is similar to existing developmental journalism in that it seeks to promote solutions to the problems that it covers (Zhang and Mattingwina 2016). There is indeed evidence that reporting in this vein varies somewhat from that of leading Western news organizations covering the same African issues. However, when important China-centered events occur, like the African visit of then–Prime Minister Li Keqiang in 2014, they get "relentlessly positive" coverage from CCTV (Marsh 2016, 65; Gagliardone 2013).

The position of African journalists working for Chinese news organizations provides an explanation for these different kinds of coverage. Many of the African journalists working for Chinese organizations are recruited from leading local media and bring with them their own professional concerns, which do not necessarily match those of the Chinese employees, and merging these different traditions remains difficult (Gagliardone and Pál 2017). A study of the power relations in the African newsrooms of CCTV and *China Daily*, however, found systematic inequalities in editorial responsibility between African and Chinese journalists, with the latter making the decisive decisions (Umejei 2018a). This would account for the fact that although there appears to be a degree of recognition of the merits of specifically Chinese journalistic approaches, which are thought to have some utility in the African context, the coverage of China follows very closely official Chinese policies. The result, it has been argued, is the emergence of a "hybrid" journalism that has potential to influence journalistic practices outside of Chinese-sponsored news organizations (Umejei 2018b; Wasserman and Madrid-Morales 2018, 2223–35).

The evidence with regard to popular attitudes is also contradictory. One study, re-analyzing survey data about attitudes toward China from six countries, collected in 2007 and 2013, concluded that "the results of this analysis suggest that China's post-2006

media expansion on the African continent may be having the desired effect on African public opinion," and more recent evidence from the same survey series suggests that China is close to overtaking the United States as "the more favored nation" (Snow Bailard 2016, 468; Vice 2017). More detailed studies of individual countries, however, paint a different picture. In Zimbabwe, respondents overwhelmingly stated that China was exploiting national resources, a majority were opposed to the teaching of Mandarin in schools, and they overall had a negative view of China (Mano 2016). Respondents in Kenya, the center of the African activities of China's media, were similarly negative (Mwende Maweu 2016). Studies that asked both general and more specific questions found generally favorable reporting and perceptions of China together with considerable criticism of concrete issues involving China in Africa (Nassanga and Makara 2016; Wang and Elliot 2014; Hanusch 2012). While overall perceptions of China may be improving, it is still a long way from being a model that is regarded wholly positively.

CONCLUSION: THE PROSPECTS FOR CHINA'S SUCCESS

There is widespread agreement that China's efforts to project itself internationally via its media and culture face difficulties because of the undemocratic Chinese regime (Nye 2012; Zhao 2005, 214). The evidence presented here is that, while China is developing a media and cultural apparatus to support its nascent imperialist role, it has not yet achieved much in the way of popular acceptance. It is certainly not yet in a situation in which it can hope to supplant the United States as the world's leading power, neither in terms of political and military, nor media and cultural, power. It is, however, a mistake to conclude that the critics are right and that all of this investment in broadcasting, print, and the internet is money wasted. For one thing, it is early days yet, and cultural influence takes a long time to build. More importantly, such a judgment drastically simplifies the issues at stake.

We saw above how it is better to examine the impact of Chinese media and culture with reference to particular social groups. Of particular importance are the local elites, not just in Africa but also in many of the other countries that are part of the Belt and Road Initiative. For these elites, many of whom preside over undemocratic regimes, there is little to lament in the politics of China and much to admire in its real economic achievements (Bräutigam 2009, 11). As Herbert Schiller argued in the case of US media and cultural imperialism, winning elite groups into becoming what one might term a "comprador bourgeoisie"—a local capitalist class integrated into and dependent upon imperialism—is an important element in any imperialist strategy. China is certainly making gains in this respect.

With journalists and other media workers the results are less clear-cut. Western models of journalism, buttressed by training schemes and career paths, still retain a dominant international position, and it is unlikely that in the short term they will be replaced by a Chinese model identical to that operating in the PRC. Western journalism has, however, long been criticized in developing countries, and the evidence suggests that the presence of Chinese organizations provides support for a third kind of journalism that, its advocates argue, better fits their national situations.

With regard to popular perceptions, however, there are strong reasons for thinking that China will find it very difficult to replicate the success enjoyed by US media and cultural imperialism. The material groundings of the latter's attractive power were, and remain, twofold. First, for the last century, the United States has not only been the richest country in the world, but it has also enjoyed the highest standard of living. At the same time, it was, for part of this time, a society marked by considerable social mobility. Both of these advantages were very strongly present in US cultural artefacts, notably films and TV programs, and constitute the material basis of the country's attractions. Unlike at home, you could be an ordinary person in the United States and have a large house, at least one car, domestic goods, and a big television set. Unlike at home, it was at least credible that you could step off the boat at Ellis Island penniless and end your career running MGM. American decline is eroding both of these advantages, but China is in no position to mount a convincing counter-narrative. China will almost certainly surpass the United States in total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but its huge population means that the per capita income will remain relatively low for some time to come. It is possible in China to move from relatively humble origins to running Alibaba, but personal advancement in China, from long before 1949, has at least as much to do with family connections as personal talent. The "Chinese Dream" does not (yet) translate into popular entertainment nearly as well as does the "American Dream."

NOTE

1. There is a wide range of opinions about the exact nature of the present Chinese system, and indeed about the system prevailing in the first thirty years after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. One very clear exposition of the major contemporary views concluded: "Today's China has all the basic pillars of a capitalist system: the promotion of the market system, the integration of the Chinese economy into the imperialist-dominated world economy, the privatization of land and property, and the commodification and casualization of labour" (Kerswell and Lin 2017, 52). This judgment of the present seems correct to me, although I would not agree with the characterization of the pre-reform period as "socialism." At no point in its history did workers and peasants control the levers of social and political power in the People's Republic, and I find it impossible to see how one might term a society that does not meet that criterion "socialist" or even "a workers' state" (Gluckstein 1957).

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The Empire's New Clothes

Political Priorities and Corporate Ambitions in China's Drive for Global Ascendency

Graham Murdock

Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard, with its striking red pagoda entrance and multiple handprints of cinema celebrities embedded in the concrete of the forecourt, has been an iconic celebration of American film and popular cultural supremacy since its opening in 1927. In 2013, in a move commentators saw as signaling a wider shift in global influence, naming rights were purchased by the Chinese electronics firm TCL, and the theater was rebranded as the TCL Chinese Theatre.

China's reemergence as a major power with increasing global reach has introduced new elements to the continuing debate on whether or not theories of imperialism are still useful. After revisiting the discussion and arguing that selectively employed theories of imperialism are essential in understanding the escalating rivalry between China and United States, I explore how China's global cultural ambitions have been shaped by the shifting relations between the Communist Party's domestic and international priorities and the commercial ambitions of privately owned Chinese companies. I take the rise and precipitous fall of the Wanda Dalian Group (until recently a major force in the film industry in both China and the United States) as a case study.

THE AMERICAN HALF CENTURY

The concepts of media and cultural imperialism entered the analytical vocabulary during the Cold War as part of a wider exploration of the strategies the United States was pursing to consolidate its position as the preeminent global power. The end of World War II saw the Allied nations, led by the United States, establish a suite of agencies designed to install capitalist relations as the modal form of national and global economic organization outside the Soviet Bloc. The International Monetary Fund demanded "structural adjustments" to extend markets as a condition of loans and bailouts, while the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) policed a new international free-trade regime. Alongside economic pressure, the United States employed its preeminent military power to engineer invasions, coups, and interventions that undermined the governments in post-colonial countries that pursued

policies contrary to US interests. While coercion may have secured compliance, it did not encourage admiration and attraction. Cementing long-term support for a US-derived social order also required persuasion and co-option.

From the 1960s onward, researchers investigated how the United States used mass communications to combat the appeal of communism in newly independent nations and promote a market-driven future. Alongside overt propaganda organized through the Voice of America and other state-funded media agencies, Hollywood films and commercial TV shows presented enticing images of the opportunities for personal expression and fulfillment delivered by consumer capitalism. As Schiller (1969, 3) noted, American popular media celebrated a culture based on "a mountain of material artefacts, privately furnished and individually acquired and consumed." This vison did not go unopposed. There were powerful counterappeals to collective solidarity and mobilization. Communist iconography was dominated by images of workers marching together toward a shared future, while citizens in newly de-colonized countries were exhorted to make sacrifices in the service of nation building and modernization.

The cultural assault of the United States also encountered material barriers. Hollywood dominated the international trade in movies, but despite exerting continual pressure through the GATT, Hollywood's trade lobby, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), was unable to effectively counter arguments that films were a means of symbolic and cultural expression, and, as such, legitimately exempted from the general rules governing trade in goods. Moreover, Hollywood was unable to liquidate the national screen quotas and import limitations that states employed as legitimate defense of national cultures (Murdock and Choi 2018). There were problems, too, with generalizing the American way of organizing broadcast television, as an advertising-funded commercial system in which game shows and other popular program formats fit seamlessly into a continuous flow of product promotion was not desirable. A number of newly independent nation-states, led by India, launched state-financed (and often directed) public broadcasting systems, often with little or no regard for the principle of relative autonomy.

Despite the national barriers to its global dominance, the United States remained unrivaled as a military, political, and media-cultural power outside the communist bloc. For this reason, Schiller (1976, 5) and other researchers presented the United States as the center and architect of a radically unequal world system whose "terms and character are determined in the core and radiate outwards." The 1990s saw a series of developments that promised to extend US cultural reach. In December 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, removing the main source of ideological opposition to the universalization of a US-backed societal model. The arrival of commercial cable and satellite television services in leading emerging economies opened new markets for the export of American programming. In 1995 the launch of a new international body, the World Trade Organization (WTO), went beyond GATT's exclusive focus on physical goods to cover services, including cultural services, and intellectual property rights, for the first time.

The terms of cultural competition were shifting, however, with new challenges to US global dominance. India was building on its long-established strength in film pro-

duction to consolidate its cultural presence in a range of emerging markets, and the early 2000s onward saw a rising Korean Wave (Hallyu) with South Korean pop music (K-pop) and television dramas becoming increasingly popular in Asian markets, including China, where the government responded by imposing limits on the number of imported television programs permitted. At the same time, China was re-entering the global economic system, and it joined the WTO in 2001.

HILFERDING IN BEIJING

Commentators have tended to incorporate these shifts into the dominant interpretive framework of globalization, which sees the notion of imperialism as outmoded and totally unsuited to explaining an emerging world system of multiple power centers and pluralistic flows. This is a major conceptual mistake. The core/periphery model of the world system may have run its course, but recent developments have invested older concepts of imperialism with renewed relevance.

In 1910, the Austrian Marxist Rudolf Hilferding's (1981) *Finance Capital* was published, which analyzed capitalism's changing organization. While Marx had based his account of capitalism almost entirely on British sources and experience, Hilferding saw a new order emerging in Germany, the main contemporary challenger to the British supremacy. He highlighted three pivotal developments: the increasing concentration of corporate ownership; the growing economic importance of banks, further cementing links between industrial and financial capital; and the increasingly interventionist role being played by the state. As Sparks (2012, 289) has noted, it is this "introduction of the role of the state into international competition that represents the core of Marxist theories of imperialism." At the time Hilferding was writing, protectionist measures shielded domestic markets from foreign competition while military adventurism sought to underwrite capital's incessant search for cheap labor and materials by extending the colonial annexation of territories, a process Hilferding saw as inevitably bringing Germany into conflict with rival capitalist powers, paving the way for armed conflict. World War I, which erupted four years after the book appeared, offered a stark demonstration of this logic of imperial rivalry in action. Hilferding's general model remains a useful starting point for interrogating the current economic and cultural rivalry between the United States and China. As a framework, it has two advantages. First, it replaces the outmoded center/periphery model that underpinned early accounts of cultural imperialism with a concerted focus on the competition between major economic powers. Second, it insists that the strategies pursued by those powers can only be fully understood as the products of shifting relations between corporate enterprise and state intervention. Hilferding envisaged the increasing state management of capitalism preparing the ground for a transition to a socialist economy. He did not anticipate movement in the other direction. While state-owned enterprises (SOEs) remain central to the organization of the Chinese economy, the reform process has opened significant space for the growth of capitalist investment and profit generation.

CHINA GOING GLOBAL

It is now clear that the major axis of competition in the global arena is between the United States and China. It remains, for the moment, an unequal contest, with the United States retaining historic advantages that ensure its continuing pre-eminence, at least in the short term (Mirrlees 2015). But China's economic reach has been steadily increasing. China has made significant investments in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America to ensure access to raw material and guarantee food security. It launched the hugely ambitious "Belt and Road" initiative to construct a new land corridor linking China with Europe following the old Silk Road routes across central Asia and a new sea passage to India. This project makes extensive use of loans to enable countries along the two routes to build or upgrade ports and other infrastructural installations on condition that default on payments will result in ownership reverting to China. China furthermore extended its intervention in global finance in 2016 when the Chinese-inspired Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) opened in Beijing. With eighty-six approved members worldwide, the AIIB is widely seen as a competitor to the IMF and the World Bank. Since 2005, China's investments in emerging economies have been accompanied by a growing volume of acquisitions in advanced capitalist nations, including the United States (Zhu 2018). Between 2009 and 2013, Chinese investment in the United States increased from less than $1 billion to around $13 billon (Tang and Kuanchin 2015, 13).

Alongside China's moves to strengthen its global economic and financial reach, the Chinese state has pursued a concerted international cultural policy aimed at winning hearts and minds. Following Nye's (1990) influential model of the key "soft" and "hard" dimensions of power, Chinese planners have adopted with enthusiasm the "soft power" of cultural attraction and view this as a necessary support for "hard" economic and military power. Nye (1990) insists that relying solely on "the command power associated with military and economic strength" is not enough to ensure supremacy and that it is necessary to get "others to want what you want" by mobilizing "intangible power resources such as culture" (Nye 1990, 31–32). Nye's argument about the importance of "soft power" has long roots in Chinese strategic thought. As the celebrated military strategist Sun Tzu noted in *The Art of War*, "the best strategy is to attack the enemy's mind rather than to attack the fortified cities" (quoted in Peng 2015, 22). Two years before Nye's book was published, Zheng Bijian, a former policy advisor to Chinese president Jiang Zemin, promoted "cultural power [as] an important component of comprehensive national power" (quoted in Peng 2015, 22). Unlike Nye's exclusive emphasis on competition in the international arena, for Chinese strategists, pursuing comprehensive national power involves promoting the party's political priorities at home as well as projecting a positive national image abroad. This double ambition immediately opens space for tensions and slippages between corporate ambitions and party requirements.

The drive to promote understanding, admiration, and respect for China's intellectual and artistic traditions and recent achievements has been spearheaded by the major state-owned print and audiovisual media, supplemented by an array of cultural institutions and interventions. As Colin Sparks explains in the preceding chapter,

despite deploying considerable institutional resources, available evidence suggests that China's media and cultural campaign has met with only limited success among general audiences overseas. Recent research in Latin America, a major target market, confirms that viewers of China Central Television's Spanish-language news service continue to see it as strongly "linked to the Chinese government, thereby undermining perceptions of the channel's trustworthiness" (Morales 2018, 76–77). This perception is likely to be reinforced by the Chinese state's decision in March 2018 to merge and rebrand the leading state radio and television organizations into a single entity, the Voice of China. This intensification of direct, branded communication is not the only strategy, however. Recent years have also seen an increase in regular paid-for inserts appearing in leading Western newspapers. This project of "borrowing a boat to go out to the ocean" of transnational audiences involves around thirty titles, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in the United States and the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* in the United Kingdom (Lim and Bergin 2018, 11)

Not all China's globalizing media are news media, however. Could commercial entertainment media, which Schiller saw as central to US cultural imperialism, prove more effective as a vehicle for Chinese soft power? At its peak, the Dalian Wanda Group was routinely promoted in the Western business press as spearheading a concerted Chinese push to challenge US cultural dominance. It had acquired major cinema exhibition chains in North America, Britain, and Australia, purchased a Hollywood studio, begun construction of a major new film-production complex on mainland China with the aim of attracting inward US investment, and announced a series of theme parks across China to counter the attraction of the newly opened Disney park in Shanghai. Detailing how Wanda achieved this central position, and accounting for its sudden decline, offers an instructive case study of the complex and layered nature of relations between corporate ambitions, political connections, and policies designed to secure and legitimate the party's "authoritarian leadership" of economy and culture (Yeung and Liu 2008, 61).

WANDA'S NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

Both parents of Wanda's founder and president, Wang Jialing, were veterans of the revolutionary war and Long March, and this guaranteed his admission to China's exclusive group of "princelings." The connections opened by Jialing's privileged status were cemented by his own sixteen-year service in the People's Liberation Army, during which he reached the rank of colonel. On returning to civilian life, he worked in local administration in Dalian as general manager of the district's residential development agency, acquiring a reputation for administrative efficiency and completing projects on time. In 1998 Jialing took advantage of the relaxation in the government's monopoly control of land in cities to move into the residential real estate market on his own account. An amendment to the constitution, introduced that year, separated land ownership from use, allowing private investors to obtain land use permits and transfer them to third parties (Yuan 2004). Most permits went to state-owned enterprises. As Wang later explained, he was only able to enter the market when an old army comrade

who was the president of one of Dalian's largest SOE's agreed to let him use his quota (Jianlin 2016, 28). The company's commercial ambitions were clearly signaled in the change of operating slogan from "Creating Prosperity through Serving the Community" to "Allow Business to Make Money."

Expansion, however, required a wider base of political support. As Forsythe (2015a, 2015b) documents, between 2007 and 2011, "Wanda was a private company and rarely sold shares to outsiders," but opportunities to invest were opened to a carefully chosen group of individuals with connections to the highest reaches of the party. They included "a business partner of the daughter of former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, and relatives of two other members of the ruling Politburo at the time" (Forsythe 2015a). The sister and brother-in-law of China's current president, Xi Jinping, also held a substantial block of shares purchased through a holding company. In a "white glove" maneuver designed to conceal the hand holding the shares, they were transferred to an employee before the company's stock exchange launch in 2014, raising speculation that they retained beneficial ownership (Forsythe 2015b).

Over Wanda's formative period, the value of shareholdings increased significantly as the company branched out into operating shopping malls (the Wanda Plazas), generating escalating returns from the increase in spending on leisure and consumption alongside continuing profits from the property boom. The shares held by the family of the former Politburo member Wang Zhaoguo, purchased for less than $500,000 in 2007, for example, were worth $500 million by the time of the stock market flotation, a thousand-fold increase. There is no evidence that the politicians linked to the family members and business associates with Wanda shares intervened directly on the company's behalf, but the associations undoubtedly helped to cement Wang's ability to secure the permissions and raise the finances needed for new ventures (Forsythe 2015a, 2015b). It is likely that "without his political background," Wang would never have had the "first mover advantages" that allowed him to "become a global billionaire in less than two decades" (Xiao 2018, 18).

Wanda's expansion into shopping malls in 2004 coincided with two fundamental state interventions in the film industry aimed at reinvigorating cinema exhibition. In 2002 chain ownership was imposed on the sector, and the following year investment in new cinemas was opened to private companies alongside state-owned enterprises. Wanda moved quickly to incorporate cinemas into its malls, establishing the only major cinema chain not controlled by a state-owned conglomerate, a further signal of the company's privileged political position (Lu 2016, 6). Installing state-of-the-art multiplexes was mutually beneficial to both the company and the government. It expanded Wanda's ability to capitalize on China's rising per capita gross domestic product, which "grew from less than £1,000 in 2000 to over $7,500 in 2014" (O'Connor and Armstrong 2015, 5), while providing an ideal space for the "Chinese state to promote consumption and display its modernity in the midst of the country's transition to capitalism" (Lu 2016, 3). By 2016 the Wanda Group owned 117 Wanda Plazas and 71 hotels, generating an estimated market value of more than 220 billion HK dollars (He and Hu 2016, 152).

The Wanda Plazas anchored the official encouragement of consumption as an essential engine of growth in cities across China and promoted purchasable goods as primary markers of personal success and merit. They were arguably unintended agents

of US cultural imperialism by stealth, installing the Great Mall alongside the Great Wall in the popular imagination of national strength.

WANDA'S OVERSEAS EXPANSION: STORMING HOLLYWOOD

The returns from property and mall development provided the base that enabled Wang to take advantage of the government's encouragement of companies to "Go Global" and pursue his ambition of "turning Wanda from a domestic enterprise into a world-leading international enterprise" generating "20%–30% of future revenues from overseas markets" (Jianlin 2016, 84, 81). Initial forays overseas built on Wanda's established expertise with prestigious planned property developments in London, Australia, Chicago, and Beverly Hills, and in 2012, in a move that announced Wanda's entry into the heartland of the US media market, the acquisition of the country's second-largest cinema chain, AMC. This was followed by expansion into other major English-language markets with the purchase of the leading Australasian cinema group, Hoyts, in 2015 and the Odeon chain in the United Kingdom in 2016, making Wanda the world's largest cinema owner, with 7,600 screens. In a classic strategy of vertical integration aimed at commanding production as well as exhibition, Wanda then bought the Hollywood studio Legendary Entertainment for $3.5 billion in 2016. This was followed by announcements of a multimillion-dollar fund to invest in productions in all six major Hollywood studios, the planned acquisition of Dick Cark Productions, responsible for staging the Golden Globe award show, and a possible bid for Paramount studio. As Wang told a reporter in 2016, "I wanted to acquire one of the big six, but whether we can is a different story—it's uncertain" (quoted in Brzeski 2016).

By that time, doubts over Wanda's long-term financial viability were beginning to surface, with growing perceptions that the company was overreaching and carrying too much debt. The purchase in 2012 of the British yacht-maker Sunseeker, featured in the James Bond films, and a 20 percent stake in the Spanish soccer team Atletico Madrid in 2015, appeared as trophy acquisitions, vanity displays of Wang's personal wealth, with little relation to the company's core operations. The huge investments Wanda required to make concerted moves to engage the major Hollywood film studios in the United States and media groups on the Chinese mainland did little to dispel these uncertainties. These engagements were both collaborative and combative. Planned collaborations centered on the construction of a massive new film production complex, the Oriental Movie Metropolis, in the coastal city of Qingdao. Combat centered on plans to counter Disney's planned theme park in Shanghai with a series of theme parks across China.

THE POLITICS OF CO-PRODUCTION:
WANDA'S COLLABORATION WITH HOLLYWOOD

The Hollywood blockbuster *The Fugitive* arrived in China in 1994 and was an immediate success with audiences, earning $3 million at the box office and confirming

official perceptions that to compete effectively in international markets, Chinese film-making skills needed to "catch up" with America. Over the next decade and a half, Chinese screenings created a major new market for US producers while boosting the state's drive to revitalize the domestic cinema industry. Since 2008, Hollywood movies have generated more than a quarter of total yearly Chinese box office receipts (O'Connor and Armstrong 2015, 6) but remain hamstrung by the quota system. In 2009, a WTO panel ruled that allowing only twenty imported films a year violated WTO rules on trading rights, but it was not until 2012 that China signed a new agreement with the United States increasing the quota to thirty-four. While this agreement raised the share of revenues going to foreign—mainly US—film producers from 13 percent to 25 percent, China's domestic authorities still retained control over release dates and permitted contents. There are signs that ideological vetting is becoming more stringent. In 2018, *Call Me by Your Name*'s sympathetic portrayal of gay life resulted in its removal from the Beijing Film Festival (Yang 2018). Restrictions like these have fueled Hollywood's increasing interest in developing film co-production agreements with the Chinese film industry.

Wanda's Qingdao Oriental Movie Metropolis, where construction work began in 2013, was designed to be a first port of call for these US-China co-production arrangements. In addition to major production and post-production facilities, the complex included a range of facilities to encourage visiting actors and crew to become temporary residents rather than simply visitors: eight resort hotels, a shopping mall, a nightlife zone, and a hospital. Its launch expressed the Chinese state's long-held ambition "to build a feature film juggernaut that could compete with Hollywood both domestically and worldwide" and deliver productions that match the "focussed attention generated by the orchestrated rollout of a Hollywood blockbuster" (Curtin 2016, 64).

US-China film co-productions offer three potential benefits to Hollywood studios. First, they are counted as domestic productions, and thereby sidestep China's national screen quota restrictions. Second, they may attract generous state subsidies, and third, US partners receive 50 percent of box office revenues, double the figure for imports. Wang's control of a major cinema chain and his access to political connections that could help broker "government approvals, favourable release dates, and promotional opportunities" added to Qingdao's attractions as an operational base (Curtin 2016, 64). In return, Hollywood's Chinese partners enjoy two very substantial benefits. First, film professionals gain access to the skills needed to match Hollywood's production of blockbusters. As a senior US executive involved in co-producing with Wanda noted, the Chinese "wanted to learn how we do what we do [and] were on the set and involved in production, post production, marketing, everything" (quoted in O'Connor and Armstrong 2015, 6). Second, co-productions present opportunities for Chinese filmmakers to integrate Chinese symbolic materials and storytelling into Hollywood films with the potential for global distribution. In addition to casting a Chinese actor and shooting at least one scene in China, US-China co-produced films are required to display positive Chinese characteristics. As one senior Chinese film executive told a US-China film summit in 2013, "We want films that are heavily invested in Chinese culture, not one or two shots" (quoted in O'Connor and Armstrong 2015, 9). Meeting this demand has commercial consequences.

The Great Wall (2016), the first film produced in Dalian's Qingdao complex, was the costliest ever shot in China. Directed by the celebrated filmmaker Zhang Yimou, featuring American and Chinese actors in the lead roles, shot in China and with a story centered on Western mercenaries and heroic Chinese warriors battling monsters besieging China's most celebrated landmark, it met every government requirement. The world box office returns of $334.5 million were more than double the production budget of $150 million, but US receipts contributed only $45.9 million, suggesting that the core audiences outside China lay outside the United States, in emerging economies. Yet, Hollywood's willingness to trade creative flexibility for access to the world's largest film market in this and other film co-productions may mark "a watershed moment that is changing the nature of global media for everyone" (Kokas 2017, 27).

CONFRONTATION: WANDA'S BATTLE WITH DISNEY

Joint ventures were also coming to play a central role in another key sector of China's expanding leisure industry: theme parks. Disney had opened its first park in greater China in Hong Kong in 2005 in partnership with the Hong Kong government, which held the controlling interest. After a difficult start, requiring adaptations to meet local expectations, Disney generated significant revenues, providing a template for the much larger project planned on the mainland (Matusitz 2011). Disney's Shanghai Resort, a joint venture with the local government-controlled Shanghai Shendi Group, which holds a majority 57 percent interest, opened in June 2016 in a blizzard of publicity. When asked in a TV interview about its chances of success, Wang was dismissive, remarking that "one tiger is no match for a pack of wolves."

The "wolves" were Wanda Group's own planned theme parks, which were set to roll out across China and designed to capitalize on the rapid increase in domestic tourism, which had risen from 615 million in 1995 to 3.3 billion in 2013 (Cavell 2015, 9). The group's first Cultural Tourism City opened in the eastern city of Nanchang, a month before Disney's Shanghai launch, offering an outdoor amusement park with the country's highest roller coaster flanked by an interactive cinema complex, hotels, a mall, and a commercial zone. Buildings shaped like teacups reflecting the region's porcelain production referenced China's historic cultural strengths, but two days after its opening performers dressed as well-known Disney characters—Snow White and Captain America—were seen greeting visitors, prompting Disney to threaten legal action for violations of its intellectual property rights. Borrowing from Disney underlined its competitive advantage and the continuing attraction of American popular iconography.

Nanchang was the first of a dozen planned parks, a massively ambitious program that added to the growing consensus that Wanda was overstretched financially. This perception intersected with rising Chinese government concerns over high levels of corporate debt and the flight of capital overseas. Wanda exemplified both trends and was subject to the full force of re-regulation. In July 2017 financial institutions were instructed to cease lending money to fund the group's overseas acquisitions, and in December the National Development and Reform Commission issued a new code of practice instructing companies to stay within their core competencies.

RETRENCHMENT: RETURNING HOME

Wanda was forced to cancel planned projects and sell substantial parts of its port-
folio, including core media interests. A 22 percent stake in the AMC cinema chain
was sold to a US investment company, and the Quingdao Oriental Movie Metropolis
and the theme parks were bought by the Chinese property company Sunac China
Holdings. Wanda declared that it would now focus on the Chinese home market.
It was an abrupt ending to an overly ambitious overseas expansion that had under-
mined Wanda's political support and reaffirmed the primacy of party priorities in
determining the commercial operating environment. As Wang told a journalist, "the
big picture is the state policy and macroeconomic environment. Companies have to
follow the lead" (quoted in Chow 2017).

ARENAS AND PLATFORMS

Chinese buyers for Wanda's domestic assets included the county's two leading internet
companies: Alibaba and Tencent. In January 2018, Tencent led a consortium acquir-
ing a strategic stake in Wanda's core commercial property division, and a month later
Alibaba, in partnership with the Beijing municipal government–controlled Cultural
Investment Holdings, purchased 13 percent of the Film Holdings division control-
ling the domestic multiplex cinema chain and production and distribution operations.
These acquisitions underline the privileged position the internet majors now occupy
in the Chinese economy and their relative insulation from the strictures on expansion
that prompted Wanda's retrenchment.

Both companies have benefited from state drives to nurture national champions
by restricting the presence of US competitors. Facebook and Google have been ef-
fectively locked out of the market, and Amazon's share of China's e-commerce busi-
ness is less than 2 percent. This protected space has enabled Tencent and Alibaba to
become both dominant digital platforms and significant content providers. Alibaba
holds a 31.5 percent stake in the micro-blogging site Weibo. In 2014, it bought China
Vision Media. Renamed Alibaba Pictures, it is China's biggest film company. The fol-
lowing year it acquired the Youku video-streaming platform. Its growing involvement
in original-content production aims to build on its established strength in e-commerce
by integrating "entertainment into [an] overall offering to consumers" (quoted in
Frater 2018). Tencent operates China's most popular social media platform, WeChat,
and controls the country's leading music-streaming services, as well as the world's
largest video gaming complex.

Both companies also have significant overseas communications interests. Alibaba
holds a minority stake in Steven Spielberg's Amblin film group. Tencent owns 10
percent of the Hollywood independent producer Skydance and has strategic stakes in
Spotify (7.5 percent) and Snap (12 percent), key Western competitors to its platform
and streaming businesses. As with Wanda, however, the operating strategies of both
Tencent and Alibaba are framed by the priorities set by the party-state and the pres-
sures these exert. Tencent's content divisions are subject to continual government

oversight. Posts on WeChat are stringently vetted for politically dissident material while party employees work within online communities to promote official views (Guo 2018). Tencent's games, its major profit source, have attracted interventions ostensibly aimed at protecting the physical and moral health of young people. Blood was recolored green, and in March 2018, with no explanation, the government froze all new game releases. By December 2018, Tencent's share price had fallen by almost a third from its peak at the start of the year.

In 2016 Jack Ma, the head of Alibaba, bought the *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper and frequent critic of government policy. Interviewed on his motivations for acquiring the paper, he pointed to the multiple "misunderstandings" in world perceptions of China and the need to "take the responsibility to report on China in a broader and deeper way" (Chow 2016). This reiteration of long-standing official complaints of Western bias was unsurprising given that Ma is a party member and the purchase was at the behest of the government. The interests of Tencent and Alibaba go some way beyond content, however. Both are active in developing electronic systems linking purchasing to payment and offering a range of financial services. Again, the government has intervened to reduce competition with state-owned banks (*Economist* 2018a). But arguably the most important assets they command are their extensive databases of users' online activity and profiles.

CONCLUSION: NETWORKED IMPERIALISM

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that Rudolf Hilferding's work offers a useful starting point for understanding both the Chinese model of state-managed capitalism and its deployment in the service of the push to displace the United States as the preeminent global power. The relative lack of success so far enjoyed by China's state-sponsored media corporations in overseas markets, the problems encountered by the Wanda Group's drive to rival Hollywood, and the continuing appeal of American popular culture suggest that China's soft power project is battling strong headwinds. Recent developments, however, suggest that a new front is now emerging.

In May 2017, President Xi Jinping announced a policy of "pursuing innovation driven development in frontier areas such as digital economy, artificial intelligence . . . and advanc[ing] the development of big data" (quoted in Wenyan 2018). This ambition requires interventions in three key areas. First, there are plans to supplement the physical transport links of the Belt and Road initiative with a "Digital Silk Road" of high-speed broadband connections to support e-commerce and smart cities. Second, robotics, the internet of things, and artificial intelligence have been designated as key foci for research and new arenas of rivalry with the United States (Lee 2018). Commentators already see this as heralding a new "neo-imperial order" emerging, in which other countries wanting to "tap into vital applications will have to become vassal states of the AI superpowers" (*Economist* 2018b, 79). Third, developing these technologies successfully depends on access to data to perfect systems. This is an area where China has a competitive edge due to the huge volumes of user information generated by online activities, the majority hosted by Alibaba and Tencent (Lee

2018). As noted earlier, both companies are significant content producers as well as major digital platforms. They combine the potential for soft power with the hard edge of digital control and direction across the full range of everyday activities. Future analyses of the role of Chinese communications companies in contests for global power will need to match their reach and ambition.

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Not (Yet) the "Chinese Century"

The Endurance of the US Empire and Its Cultural Industries

Tanner Mirrlees

More than four decades have passed since American and international political economy of communication scholars coined the term "cultural and media imperialism" to conceptualize, describe, and attempt to redress the asymmetrical and unequal power relations between the United States and post-colonial countries that primarily benefited the American cultural industries. During the period in which the cultural- and media-imperialism paradigm came of age, the US empire was regularly said to be in decline. From the 1970s to the present day, declinism—the idea that the United States is experiencing a significant and possibly irreversible decline as the global system's superpower—has been a recurring theme in elite US foreign policy discourse, and sometimes, in popular opinion.

In the 1970s, deindustrialization, the loss of the war against Vietnam, the Watergate scandal, the oil crisis, and stagflation indicated that the US empire was in decline. Throughout the 1980s, the rise of West German and Japanese capitalism—and their industries' successful bid to strip the United States of its crown as the king of global manufacturing—combined with military overstretch contributed even further to the image of a declining US empire. In the 1990s, postmodern theorizations of "globalization"—represented by the breakup of the Soviet Union, the consolidation of the European Union, and new developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs)—heralded a fundamentally new global system that was post–US empire. The Bush administration's post-9/11 launch of the Global War on Terror momentarily revived talk of the US empire, but as the Great Recession of 2007–2008 sank US fortunes, and during the entirety of Obama's presidency, the US empire was once again said to be imperiled. Fareed Zakaria (2008b) declared that in "every dimension other than military power—industrial, financial, social, cultural—the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from US dominance," and as result, the world is not becoming "anti-American" but thoroughly "post-American." In the early days of the Trump presidency, the US empire was still said to be in jeopardy. A January 2017 National Intelligence Council (2017, 6) report noted that the US "post–Cold War, unipolar moment has passed."

For contemporary declinists, the "US domination of the world" has been thwarted by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, the United States faces economic problems (i.e., an account deficit of $779 billion, a trade deficit of $40.2 billion, and radical social inequality) and major geopolitical challenges (i.e., military overstretch as result of trying to make the global system amenable to its neoliberal capitalist model with permanent and boundless wars, blowback, and growing anti-American sentiment). Externally, the rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (the "BRICS"), which together account for about 30 percent of world gross domestic product (GDP) and about 45 percent of the planet's population, are said to represent the massive shift in concentrations of economic, military, and "soft" or cultural power away from the United States and toward the Rest, resulting in a multipolar global order (Chomsky 2012; Harris 2016). Strategic thinkers say an authoritarian-capitalist "Beijing consensus" might be replacing the neoliberal capitalist "Washington consensus" (Halper 2012). For declinists, the unified power of the BRICS is providing a counterbalance to the United States' weight in the global system while also integrating with it (Bond and Garcia 2015).

For the past four decades, international communication and media researchers—even those who disputed the very idea of US empire and rejected the cultural- and media-imperialism paradigm—have nevertheless expressed the idea of declinism.[1] Subsequently, researchers have conducted "de-Americanized" and "de-Westernized" studies of the economic, political, and cultural histories, characteristics, and practices of the global system's many national media systems and highlighted the growth of ICT and cultural industries across Europe, Latin America, Asia, and, most recently, the BRICS. The "multi-faceted US domination of the world's media is likely to continue," says Thussu (2014a), but the "creation of a global market has not only contributed to the globalization of [. . .] American media around the world, but also opened up the media and communication sectors in large and hitherto highly regulated countries such as China and India" (Thussu 2014a, 31).

New research on the developments in and interdependencies (some asymmetrical and some mutually beneficial) between the states, media corporations, and cultures of the BRICS, and studies of the BRICS's cross-border financing, production, distribution, and exhibition of information, news, and entertainment is of great value (Nordenstreng and Thussu 2015; Straubhaar 2010; Thussu 2014a, 2014b). This research represents a serious engagement with media developments that are happening outside of the United States and the West. It shows how "Brazil, China and India, and perhaps to lesser degree Russia, are all emerging powers in the global mediascape" and highlights how these countries are becoming or are already "dominant powers in regional or cultural-linguistic mediascapes that extend transnationally rather than globally" (Strauhbaar 2010, 261). By studying media-cultural relations in the global system that are irreducible to the US empire and cultural imperialism, new research has encouraged scholars to think outside of the box of the old paradigm. Cultural and media imperialism may not always be an appropriate description of the relations between states, ICT and cultural industries, media products, and audiences, so the creation and assessment of new paradigms with grounded research is tremendously important.

Yet, as this volume has shown, there is still a need to examine how the old, new, and emerging geopolitical, economic, and technological structures of empire and media imperialism haunt the global system. The relevance of the cultural- and media-imperialism paradigm becomes especially apparent when we survey the overwhelming structural power of the US empire and the ICT and cultural industries of the United States in the twenty-first-century global system. While attention to "what's new" and changing is important, this chapter demonstrates the continuity of the US empire's economic, military, and communications-media power. To this end, the first section presents an up-to-date overview of the US empire's structural power. Old and new powers are rising in the global system, but the United States is still number one with regard to its grip on the lion's share of key power resources vis-à-vis the BRICS and China. The BRICS collectively and China singularly do not "rival" the combined economic, military, and media-cultural power of the United States, which is preeminent and still expanding. To encourage US researchers to see the United States as others see it, or at least to imagine what it might be like for the billions of people around the world who are on the receiving end of the US ICT and cultural industries, the conclusion imagines a future scenario in which China presides over the US media market.

THE US EMPIRE ENDURES: ECONOMIC, MILITARY, AND COMMUNICATIONS POWER

Discussions of the US empire being in decline tend to be accompanied by projections of a radically different future in which the United States is not an empire and the global system is post-unipolar. Often, the future of the global system is constructed as multipolar (the United States and the BRICS) or "bipolar" (the United States and China). A multipolar global system is one in which more than two countries have nearly equivalent amounts of economic, geopolitical-military, and media-cultural power. A bipolar global system is one in which two roughly equivalent or "rival" empires compete and ultimately share economic, geopolitical-military, and media-cultural power resources (along, perhaps, with their allied states). A genuine "rival" to the US empire might be a country that is able to compete for superiority with, or be equal or comparable to, the United States with regard to its total structural power. The US empire is indeed beset by serious problems, and the global system is undergoing significant changes, but does the United States currently exist in a global system that is multipolar or even bipolar? Does the United States face a substantive rival in the BRICS together, or in China alone? Relative to would-be contenders for primacy—the BRICS united or China solely—the combined economic, military, and media-cultural power of the United States remains intact, even preeminent.

In terms of economic power, the United States is still numero uno. As of 2018, it continued to be the world's dominant economic power, though China was making massive and steady gains. The US's share of global gross domestic product (GDP) has been falling for the past fifty years or so, from about 40 percent in the 1960s to about 23 percent in 2017. Yet, the US nominal gross domestic product (GDP) is today

around $19.39 trillion, a sum that is larger than the entire GDP of the European Union ($18.8 trillion) and much bigger than China's ($12.24 trillion). With a mere 4.4 percent of the world's population (325 million people on a planet of 7.5 billion), the grip of the United States on almost a quarter of the world GDP is impressive, and unparalleled. China's economy is growing, but the US dollar is still global financial capitalism's reserve and most used currency, as most central banks and corporations still look to the Federal Reserve to back their holdings (Wallace 2017). In fact, the dollar accounts for over 60 percent of global reserves, the euro makes up about 20 percent, and China's yuan is a mere 1.4 percent. In 2016, cross-border business transactions in US dollars amounted to $28.2 trillion: the US dollar accounted for almost half of the world's total (50 percent), the euro was second (29 percent), and the yen was third (6 percent) (Smith 2018; Wallace 2017). In 2017, the dollar, not the euro or the yuan, was used in almost 90 percent of foreign-exchange transactions (Moss 2018).

Additionally, the United States is still the global system's central headquarters for *most* of the largest global corporations, and it dominates in the ICT and cultural industries especially (Starrs 2014). The 2018 *Forbes Global 2000* ranks the world's two thousand largest corporations in four metrics (sales, profits, assets, and market value), and US companies still crown the list (Touryalai, Stoller, and Murphy 2018). The United States and China are evenly matched when it comes to the top ten largest global corporations (US: JPMorgan Chase, Berkshire Hathaway, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Apple; China: ICBC, China Construction Bank, Agricultural Bank of China, Bank of China, Ping An Insurance Group). But overall, the United States is home to nearly double the world's largest corporations as compared to China (US: 560; China: 291) (Touryalai, Stoller, and Murphy 2018). Together, the BRICS total 405 of the world's largest corporations—Brazil (19), Russia (25), India (59), China (291), South Africa (11)—a sum that is 155 short of that of the United States (Touryalai, Stoller, and Murphy 2018).

Moreover, much of the world's transnational bourgeoisie is US-centered, as most of the planet's super-rich elites are American citizens. As of 2018, the United States was home to the most billionaires (585), but China was catching up (373). Seven of the world's top ten richest billionaires are American citizens, and they own significant corporations: Jeff Bezos (net worth: $112 billion; owner of Amazon), Bill Gates ($90 billion; Microsoft), Warren Buffett ($84 billion; Berkshire Hathaway), Mark Zuckerberg ($71 billion; Facebook), Charles Koch ($60 billion; Koch Industries), David Koch ($60 billion; Koch Industries), and Larry Ellison ($58.5 billion; Oracle) (Kroll and Dolan 2018). But Chinese billionaires are becoming major players on the world stage, and they grow wealthier each year by controlling China's ICT and cultural industries: Jack Ma ($34.6 billion; Alibaba Group), Ma Huateng ($32.8 billion; Tencent), William Ding ($13.5 billion; NetEase), Robin Li ($14.6 billion; Baidu), Lei Jun ($11.9 billion; Xiaomi), Colin Huang ($11.25 billion; Pinduoduo), and Tony Zhang ($11.5 billion; Tencent).

The transnational capitalist strength of the United States is coupled with its continuing transnational military dominance. Since 9/11, the US-led Global War on Terror has continued without boundaries or an end in sight, resulting in the death of over half a million people. Overall, this war has cost over $1.7 trillion, and the ongoing war in Af-

ghanistan alone costs the United States approximately $45 billion each year. The US Department of Defense (DoD) wars across Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya. It has pivoted to East Asia to "contain" China's aspirations for regional hegemony (the "One Belt, One Road" initiative), launched the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), and enhanced its naval presence in the South China Sea. The DoD also surrounds Russia. On the eve of the 2018 World Cup, the United States led its NATO allies in war games ("Sabre Strike") in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, all countries bordering Russia (Baynes 2018). No BRICS country has engaged in anything close to the scale and scope of the US wars, nor have they tried to "contain" the ongoing US economic and military expansion. Global peace is not forthcoming because, as per the US *National Military Strategy* of 2015, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China are supposedly "acting in a manner that threatens" the US "national security interest." Signaling the possibility of a World War III, "the probability of US involvement in interstate war with a major power is assessed to be low, but growing."

The US DoD's budget continues to grow in preparation for the increasing likelihood of a war with a major state power. In 2018, the DoD's budget was about $700 billion, and in 2019, it reached $716 billion. This sum almost doubled the combined military budgets of the BRICS and reflected about 35 percent of the world's total defense expenditure (SIPRI 2018; Stein 2018). Incredibly, in 2018, the DoD's budget was much larger than the combined budgets of the globe's next top four military spenders. It more than quadrupled China's ($175 billion), the world's second-largest defense spender; was over ten times Russia's ($66 billion), the third-biggest spender; was over twelve times Saudi Arabia's ($56 billion), the fourth top spender; and was over fifteen times India's ($46 billion), the fifth top spender. Wars are costly to society, but they are profitable to US-based defense and aerospace corporations, fourteen of which rank among the top twenty-two biggest defense corporations in the world: Boeing, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Rockwell Collins, L3 Technologies, Dass, TransDigm Group, Huntington Ingalls Industries, Leidos, Motorola Solutions, United Aircraft, and Spirit Aerosystems (*Forbes* 2018). US allies—the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands—are home to seven of the top twenty defense corporations. None of the world's largest defense corporations are based in Brazil, China, India, or South Africa; Russia—with its major corporation United Aircraft—is the only BRICS country with a defense corporation on *Forbes*'s 2018 list.

US-based defense corporations net billions each year by selling their war-servicing commodities to the DoD and to US client states and proxy militaries around the world. In fact, the United States is the biggest exporter of arms to the world, accounting for about 34 percent of all weapons exports (Brown 2018). Between 2013 and 2017, the US military-industrial complex sold weapons to at least ninety-eight countries, and its leading purchasers were Saudi Arabia (18 percent of all sales), United Arab Emirates (7.4 percent of all sales), and Australia (6.7 percent of all sales) (Brown 2018). The global system's second-biggest weapons exporter is Russia (which accounts for 22 percent of all weapons exports), the third is France (6.7 percent), the fourth is Germany (5.8 percent), the fifth is China (5.7 percent), the sixth is the United Kingdom (4.8 percent), the seventh is Spain (2.9 percent), the eighth is Israel (2.9 percent),

the ninth is Italy (2.5 percent), and the tenth is the Netherlands (2.1 percent) (Brown 2018). Basically, the United States sells more than double the weapons sold by Russia and China combined, and the US North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies account for most of the remaining sales. In terms of firepower, the United States controls an estimated 6,550 nuclear warheads (compared to Russia's 6,850, China's 280, and India's 135) (Davenport 2018). Russia is the only BRICS country that possesses nuclear weaponry on par with the United States. The United States maintains almost a thousand military bases across an estimated eighty countries, but Russia has bases in only nine countries, and China, lagging behind, is only just building floating bases on coral islands in the South China Sea (Slater 2018). Clearly, the BRICS do not come close to matching the number of wars the United States is waging, nor do they rival the astronomical defense budget of the United States, its military-industrial complex, or its global footprint of border-crossing bases.

The immense economic and military power of the US empire is coupled with the power of its gargantuan ICT and cultural industries, which are also unrivaled across every major industry segment related to "communication" and "media." According to the 2018 *Forbes* Global 2000 list, the United States is home to:

- nine of the sixteen largest broadcasting and cable TV companies (Comcast, Walt Disney, Charter Communications, Time Warner, Dish Network, CBS, Viacom, Discovery Communications, and News Corp); BRICS: one (South Africa's Naspers).
- two of the six largest advertising firms (Omnicom Group and Interpublic Group); BRICS: zero.
- one of the two largest computer and electronics retailers (Best Buy); BRICS: zero.
- five of the eight largest communications equipment firms (Cisco Systems, Corning, Harris, Arista Networks, Palo Alto Networks); BRICS: one (China's ZTE).
- four of the largest ten computer hardware firms (Apple, HP, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise, and Dell Technologies); BRICS: three (China's Legend Holding, Lenovo Group, and Focus Media Information Technology).
- four of the ten largest computer service firms (Alphabet-Google, IBM, Facebook, and Cognizant); BRICS: four (China's Tencent Holdings and Baidu, and India's Tata Consultancy Services and Infosys).
- two of the three largest computer storage device firms (Western Digital and NetApp); BRICS: zero.
- two of the two "diversified" media firms (20th Century Fox and Live Nation Entertainment); BRICS: zero.
- four of the eight largest internet and catalog retail firms (Amazon, Netflix, Quarate Retail, and eBay); BRICS: three (China's Alibaba, JD.com, and Vipshop Holdings).
- two of the seven largest printing and publishing companies (S&P Global and Nielsen); BRICS: zero.
- seventeen of the thirty-one largest semiconductor firms (Intel, Broadcom, Micron Technology, Texas Instruments, Applied Materials, Qualcomm, NVIDIA, Lam Research, Analog Devices, Skyworks Solutions, KLA-Tencor, ON Semiconductor Corp., Xilinx, Maxim Integrated Products, Microchip Technology, Advanced Micro

Devices, IPG Photonics); BRICS: two (China's Sanan Optoelectronics and Longi Green Energy Technology).

- seventeen of the twenty-six largest computer software and programming firms (Microsoft, Oracle, Adobe Systems, VMware, Salesforce.com, Fiserv, Intuit, CDW, Symantec, CA, VeriSign, ServiceNow, Red Hat, AutoDesk, Workday, Square, Match Group); BRICS: three (India's HCL Technologies, and China's Security Technology and Shanghai Ganglian E-Commerce Holdings).
- seven of the fifty-three largest telecommunication firms (AT&T, Verizon Communications, CenturyLink, Crown Castle International, Liberty Broadband, Frontier Communications, SBA Communications); BRICS: eight (Brazil's Oi; Russia's Sistema; India's Bharti Airtel; China's China Mobile; China Telecom, China Unicom, China Communications Services; and South Africa's MTN Group).

As above, the *Forbes* 2018 list identifies a total of 172 corporations across the many "communication" and "media" sectors that constitute the largest global ICT and cultural industries: broadcasting, telecommunications, advertising, computer electronics retailers, computer hardware, computer software, computer services, diversified media, internet and catalog retail, printing and publishing, and semiconductors. Of this total, the United States is home to seventy-six of these corporations (44 percent), the BRICS together are home to twenty-five (14.5 percent), and China singularly is home to sixteen (9.3 percent). Evidently, the United States totally outmatches the BRICS combined and China alone as the global system's headquarters to the world's largest "communication" and "media" corporations. In fact, the United States has three times the number of the world's largest corporations as the BRICS, and over four times the number of the world's largest corporations in these industries as China.

The global power of the US ICT and cultural industries is further demonstrated by Hollywood's oligopolistic grip on the global entertainment market. Between 2000 and 2017, over 90 percent of the top ten highest-grossing films worldwide released each year were owned by one of the six major Hollywood studios: Warner Bros., 20th Century Fox, Paramount Pictures, Universal Pictures, Sony Pictures, and Walt Disney Studios (Box Office Mojo 2018). In 2018, the US-based globalizing multimedia conglomerates that own Hollywood were behind all but *one* of the twenty highest-grossing films worldwide: Walt Disney Studios (*Avengers: Infinity War*, *Black Panther*, *Deadpool 2*, *Incredibles 2*, *Ant-Man and the Wasp*, *Solo: A Star Wars Story*); AT&T–Warner Media–Warner Bros. (*Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, *Detective Chinatown 2*, *The Meg*, *Ready Player One*, *Rampage*, *A Star Is Born*); Comcast-Universal (*Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, *Dr. Seuss's The Grinch*); Sony Entertainment (*Venom*, *Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation*); 21st Century Fox's Fox Entertainment Group (*Bohemian Rhapsody*); Viacom-Paramount (*Mission Impossible: Fallout*). China-based Bona Film Group's *Operation Red Sea* was the only non-Hollywood-controlled property that made it into the top-twenty list. But while *Operation Red Sea* topped China's national box office in 2018, it did not make a splash in US cinemas. Despite the Chinese state's limiting of Hollywood's presence in China to a maximum of thirty-four films each year, four of the top ten films at the Chinese box office were Hollywood

properties: *Avengers: Infinity War* (Walt Disney), *Aquaman* (Warner Bros.), *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* (Universal Pictures), and *Ready Player One* (Warner Bros.). Incredibly, the Walt Disney–owned Marvel Studios blockbuster *Avengers: Infinity War* placed among the top ten highest-grossing films across the BRICS and brought millions of spectators into cinemas across São Paulo, Moscow, New Delhi, Shanghai, and Cape Town (Box Office Mojo 2018). No corporation in any of the BRICS countries produced a comparably globally profitable and popular film. As a headline for the India-based *Hindustan Times* (2018) put it: "Every box office record *Avengers: Infinity War* has broken, in India, and the world."

Furthermore, in 2018, eleven of the global system's top twenty most visited websites were owned by US-based corporations: Google.com, YouTube.com, Facebook.com, Wikipedia.org, Amazon.com, Yahoo.com, Twitter.com, Live.com, Google.co.in, Reddit.com, and Instagram.com (Alexa 2018). China may be catching up to the US global social media dominance, though, as it is home to nine of the world's top twenty most visited websites: Baidu.com, Qq.com, Taoboa.com, Tmall.com, Sohu.com, Vk.com, Jd.com, Weibo.com, and Sinca.com.cn (Alexa 2018). Nonetheless, billions of people around the world access the internet using hardware and software owned by US-based corporations such as Apple, Microsoft, and Dell. They shop online at Amazon.com and eBay.com. They retrieve and send email messages on Gmail, Outlook, and Yahoo, socially network and virtually chat through Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp, and search for information about the world and entertainment for pleasure on Google and Yahoo. They post photos to Instagram and Pinterest, listen to streaming music on Apple Music and Amazon Music, and watch videos on Netflix and YouTube. Users discuss and get into heated debates about the world on forums such as Reddit. They also play video games produced and distributed by powerful US corporations. In 2017, the United States was home to eight of the biggest fifteen video-game publishers in the world (Sony Interactive Entertainment, Apple, Microsoft Studios, Activision Blizzard, Google, EA, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, and Take-Two Interactive). China, by comparison, was home to two (Tencent Games and NetEase) (Geoshen 2018). With revenues between $6 billion and $10 billion a year, the US porn industry is also globally dominant.

Globalizing media, ICT, and entertainment corporations certainly exist outside the United States, in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, some Nordic countries, and the BRICS (Birkinbine, Gomez, and Wasko 2016; Nordenstreng and Thussu 2015). Yet, most of the world's largest media, ICT, and entertainment corporations are based in the United States. The US empire's ICT and cultural industries are globally dominant, and they do not currently face a genuine rival. In effect, they are the most central and most significant owners of the global system's technological infrastructure, the means to service and access this infrastructure, and the lion's share of the means of producing, distributing, and platforming the informational, media, and cultural goods pulsing through it each day. Together, the US empire's ICT and cultural industries support an annual US service trade surplus in the billions, and they maintain and expand long-standing asymmetrical economic and media-cultural power relations between the United States and the Rest. The global

power of the US cultural industries is further propped up by additional revenues that accrue to it over time and place via the infinite exploitation of intellectual properties.

That said, a rigid center-periphery model of the global system may not effectively capture the growth of strong and prosperous ICT and cultural industries (or, "media capitals") and cultural-linguistically proximate media products, markets, and audiences in hitherto "peripheral" countries around the world (Curtin 2003; Straubhaar 1991). Non-US states and ICT and cultural industries are not weak or subordinate dependencies of the US empire. This is because strong and active non-US states, often in partnership with the owners of the nationally headquartered media and entertainment corporations, use cultural policy tools to protect their incipient or established industries, media cultures, and dominant "ways of life" from the supposed threat of "Americanization," and they also promote these capitalist industries, their media-cultural products, and "soft power" internationally (Curtin 2003; Nordenstreng and Thussu 2015; Straubhaar 1991, 2010; Thussu 2014a, 2014b).

Nonetheless, the United States is undoubtedly the global system's "dominant" center of the ICT and cultural industries, and as such, it is able to exert influence within and upon the ICT and cultural industries of other countries and of the markets and audiences based there, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by them. This is not necessarily a "coercive" process. Rather it is one in which the US ICT and cultural industries (and lobbyists for each of the key industry sectors) try to attract and integrate non-US cultural industries into their ambit with the carrot of cross-border ownership deals (mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, and equity alliances), cross-border media and entertainment co-production partnerships, and lucrative content licensing deals with exhibitors. If they refuse to integrate, the US media titans may then move to contain or roll back their expanding national, regional, and international market power.

At present, hardware and software, TV shows and films, interactive games, music videos, sports entertainment, social media websites, and ads radiate from the United States and blanket the planet. Many of the US media and cultural products traveling the globe carry one-dimensional consumer-capitalist and militaristic ideologies, but many also carry a plurality of stories about the social problems of the American Way of Life and Way of War. At the same time, US-based globalizing media corporations are designing globally popular products to overcome the "cultural discount" associated with the particularities of place, people, and culture, and to capture the attention of a lucrative transnational as opposed to American audience. Global TV formats such as *Idol*, fantasy blockbusters such as *Avatar* (2009) and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), and glocalized brands like MTV-International all exemplify the US cultural industries' transnationalized product line.

US EMPIRE AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM, TO BE CONTINUED?

This chapter began by addressing the argument that US empire is declining, due in part to the rise of the BRICS together, or by the rise of China alone. Yet, declinists too hast-

ily bypass the solidity of the US global structural power relative to would-be contenders for the mantle of "empire," "hegemon," and "superpower." The BRICS are very different countries, and they do not currently constitute a united bloc against the United States (Hunt 2017; Sparks 2014). Even if the BRICS were a unified bloc and aspired to counterbalance the structural power of the United States, they would not yet come close to matching it. In this regard, the global system does not seem to be multipolar. Of the BRICS, only China might be considered an emerging "rival" to the United States and its ICT and cultural industries, and some may agree with FBI director Christopher Wray's claim that "China's goal, simply put, is to replace the U.S. as the world's largest global superpower." Yet, current evidence does not indicate that China is now a substantive rival to the United States. Currently, the United States outmatches China, economically, militarily, and in terms of the centrality and scope of its ICT and cultural industries. Nonetheless, China is expanding its military, integrating new allies with the Belt and Road initiative's cross-border investments, infrastructural developments, and partnerships, and strengthening the reach and influence of its "soft power" (Sparks, this volume) and ICT and media corporations (Murdock, this volume). So while we may not yet be living in the "Chinese Century," China's military, economic, and cultural rise suggests that the global system may be shaping up to be bipolar.

In the near future, China will continue to grow and strive to develop and deploy its economic, military, and media-cultural resources more extensively and with greater influence than in the past. If China ever achieves comparable structural power to the United States, it would then be a genuine rival to the United States. But what would China do with such power? Will China's state and capitalist leaders imagine themselves to be the superintendents of a new empire, just as US strategic security planners did following World War II? Will China's leadership choose to embrace an exceptional role in the global system comparable to the role that the United States has historically played, and act as the promoters, managers, and enforcers of a new post-American order that primarily benefits China? The future is without guarantees, but if the past is any guide to the future, the US empire will not loosen its grip on the global system's order without first exercising the optimal level of persuasive and coercive power to tighten it. For this reason, the future of the global system is likely to be shaped and reshaped significantly by mounting tensions and conflicts between the United States and China. The political economy of communications will therefore continue to play a significant role in analyzing this system and producing critical knowledge about the significance of "ICTs," "media," and "culture" to the US empire, and to those new empires that are rising to challenge and possibly displace it. It is important that researchers study these developments with an eye to challenging the asymmetrical and unequal power relations—economic, military, and media-cultural—within and between countries and social classes, in the United States, in China, and around the world.

The US empire may be in decline, but at present, it still exists, and so does cultural imperialism. Currently, as in the past, the US ICT and cultural industries are part of the US empire, widening the sphere of US influence and supporting its capitalist, military, and cultural-ideological expansion. Yet, the US empire's structural power does not always translate into relational power, or the US state's ability to win the hearts

and minds of people around the world to its strategic interests. US president Donald Trump might wish for everyone to applaud his "Make America Great Again" project, but the opposite has happened, as the Trump White House has "gained a reputation for corruption, mistruth and an arbitrary exercise of power that goes against everything America wants to be known for in the world" (Dillen 2018). Two years into Trump's presidency, Gallup reported that support for US global leadership fell to an all-time low in almost every part of the world (Ray 2018). The Pew Research Center's study of global attitudes found that "Donald Trump's presidency has had a major impact on how the world sees the US as it is 'broadly unpopular around the globe, and ratings for the U.S. have declined steeply in many nations'" (Wike, Stokes, Poushter, and Fetterolf 2017). A year following Trump's election, *U.S. News and World Report*'s 2017 "Best Countries Ranking" noted the United States slipped from number 4 in the previous ranking to number 7, rousing some liberal business journalists to ask "Is Brand America tanking?" (Levine 2017). According to the Anholt Nation Brands Index (NBI), the answer is a firm "yes." While the United States took the number 1 nation brand spot in 2015 and 2016, it now is number 6 for the second year in a row (Volos 2018). In the age of Trump, the US empire's structural power persists, but this power is not always translating efficiently or effectively into global approval of US leadership, cross-border attraction to the American Way of Life, and consent to US foreign policy in world affairs.

But still, there are not yet signs, at least not within the United States and among its integrated neoliberal client states, that China is now the dominant cultural imperialist and that the "media" dimension of US cultural imperialism is old news. If this were the case, international communications and media researchers, especially those based in the United States, might observe one or a combination of the following:

- A majority of Americans, for the first time in history, consuming a daily diet of news, TV shows, and films owned, produced, distributed, and exhibited by Chinese media corporations.
- A near one-way flow of media products from China to the United States, and an imbalanced audiovisual trade relationship between the two countries weighted in the former's favor.
- American cinemagoers spending more money to watch blockbuster films owned by Chinese studios, starring Chinese actors, and about Chinese peoples, places, and culture, than they spend to watch films made by Hollywood about American peoples, places, and culture.
- American teenagers paying to play Chinese-made first-person-shooter war video games that virtually enlist them into the People's Liberation Army and put them in the virtual boots of a heroic ground force soldier to defend mainland China against American invaders.
- Millions of Americans accessing these and other Chinese media products before, during, and after a hard day of waged work using Chinese-owned and Chinese-serviced digital technologies purchased at Chinese-run electronics retailers and online shopping sites.

- An uptick in promotional rhetoric about the affordances of Chinese-made smartphones and personal computers to an increasing number of American users, and celebrations of the positive, irreversible, and revolutionary changes Chinese ICTs brought to US society.
- An increase in the number of Americans who routinely chat with friends about their passion for Chinese romantic comedies and who create online fandoms around Confucianist storytelling.
- Mass compliance with the exploitation of American "digital labor" on the Chinese-owned social media sites and platforms that collect, commodify, and sell user data (and transfer it to the Chinese state whenever the security-surveillance agencies request it).
- A majority of American scholars affirming the dominance of Chinese entertainment products in the US market, and these mainstream scholars caricaturizing the minority of scholars who express worries that Chinese entertainment is a tool of Chinese cultural-ideological influence, or "soft power," as old-fashioned, curmudgeons, or "conspiracy theorists."
- A large number of Chinese-sponsored communication and media-studies conferences and symposiums focused on the "uses and gratifications" of China's commercial entertainment to America's sovereign consumers, as well as bountiful opportunities for Chinese media industry–supported research on the complex and contradictory relationship between the texts of globalizing Chinese media products, local-American cultural-reception contexts, and the active (and interactive) meanings that American viewers make of such texts in their "everyday lives" and as related to their cultural identities.
- The US state, concerned about a Chinese corporate takeover of a crucial part of the overall US economy, and pressured by the owners of US media corporations to opt out of bilateral and multilateral free-trade agreements so they can recalibrate, launching a cultural nationalist policy framework (with foreign-ownership prohibitions, domestic-content subsidies, and screen quotas) to protect the US ICT and cultural industries and the "American Way of Life" from the Chinese media corporations and Chinese media products that threaten to erode, transform, or displace "culture."

None of these trends currently exist in the United States, or in any of the US empire's integrated ally states. But if they did, we might be able to conclude that the age of US empire and cultural imperialism had ended, and that China's empire and cultural-imperialist project had at last prevailed, and in the United States as well.

But this is not the world we live in, as the United States continues to be the global system's unrivaled empire and dominant cultural imperialist. Empires exist, rise, and fall, and ICTs, media, and cultural industries play a role in supporting their growth, maintenance, and expansion. In this regard, Herbert I. Schiller and Oliver Boyd-Barrett's formative contributions to the cultural- and media-imperialism paradigm, the many revisions to and renewals of this paradigm over the past four decades, and, hopefully, the new contributions to the field enclosed in this volume, will be indispensable to the political economy of communications, and guides to understanding and changing the world.

NOTE

1. For a systematic overview of the previous four decades of criticisms made of the cultural- and media-imperialism paradigm, and "a critique of the critique," see: Boyd-Barrett (2015), Mirrlees (2013, 2016), and Sparks (2007, 2012).

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