

Proposed Title: “The New Imperial Cultural Industry”

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ABSTRACT

Over the past six years, scholars have explored the economic, political, and military dimensions of the “new imperialism.” This book examines the structures, institutions, policies, practices, technologies, and media products that together, constitute a new imperial cultural industry. While liberal political and cultural theory posits a separation between the U.S. state and the U.S. media industry, this book examines the multiple points of convergence between the U.S. foreign policy establishment (the White House, the U.S. state Department, the U.S. Department of Defense, and other agencies) and the U.S. media industry (Hollywood, news corporations, and video game corporations) to highlight a complex and contradictory symbiotic (as opposed to inherently antagonistic) U.S. state-capital complex of cultural production—a new imperial cultural industry.

Through systematic chapter-by-chapter case studies of different dimensions of this imperial cultural industry (a Hollywood-Pentagon alliance, military-news media connections, a military-industrial-gaming complex, U.S. public diplomacy or soft power, and psychological and informational warfare), this book argues that the U.S. state facilitates and legitimizes the economic imperatives of the U.S. media industry in national and international contexts; the informational and image power of the U.S. media industry, in turn, is regularly mobilized to give political legitimacy to the U.S. state in national and international spheres. Although the book’s primary focus is the operations of the imperial cultural industry in the post-9/11 conjuncture (from 2001 to 2006) it emphasizes the 20th century antecedents to this state-capital form.

CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS

SECTION 1

Chapter One – The New Imperialism and the Cultural Industry

The first chapter is primarily methodological and theoretical. It begins with a review of scholarship on the new imperialism and presents media and culture as a “blindspot” in existing studies. From there, I develop a trans-disciplinary methodological and theoretical framework capable of examining the nexus of capitalist *and* state structures, institutions, policies, practices, mediums, and texts that articulate the geopolitical imperatives of the U.S. foreign policy establishment to the capitalist imperatives of the U.S. media industry. The U.S. state facilitates and legitimizes the economic interests of the media industry in both national and international contexts. The U.S.’s media industry, in turn, is regularly mobilized to facilitate and legitimize the political and geopolitical interests of the U.S. imperial state in national and international contexts.

Chapter Two – Building a Global Neoliberal Media Order

The second chapter examines the policies and practices employed by the U.S. state since World War II to assist the global economic expansion of the U.S. media industry, to universalize a global neoliberal media order, and eventually, to consolidate a U.S.-dominated global media and communications empire. Particular attention is given to the extra-economic apparatuses of the U.S. state and the ideological role of the U.S. state’s free-flow of information doctrine in facilitating and legitimizing the international expansion of U.S. communication and media industries. The chapter argues that the

decline of the U.S.-dominated media and communications empire—expressed by U.S. economic hegemony over the global media industries and U.S. political hegemony over global media and communication policies—did not occur during the 1980s and 1990s, and, despite mounting economic and political challengers, does not appear to be imminent today. The dominance of the U.S. media and communications empire continues with very few major rivals; informational inequalities and media dependencies persist, in new ways. Additionally, the chapter challenges arguments that state sovereignty has been jeopardized or undermined by the emergence of global informational and media flows; the U.S. state works with (and against) other states and supra-national regulatory institutions to superintend a global media empire.

SECTION II

While the first section of the manuscript examines how the U.S. state facilitates and legitimizes the economic interests of the U.S. media industry, the second section of the manuscript examines how the U.S. media industry legitimizes the geopolitical interests of the U.S. state to populations in the metropolitan centre. The U.S. media industry manufactures a national culture that supports and legitimizes U.S. foreign policy. I examine the structural basis of this new imperial culture through an institutional and discursive analysis of the links between the U.S. state and three sectors of the U.S. media industry: Hollywood, news media, and video games.

Chapter Three – The Hollywood-Pentagon Complex

Chapter Three examines a symbiotic relationship between Hollywood and the Pentagon. I begin by reviewing the historical relationship between Hollywood and the Pentagon and then illuminate the structural *determinations* that link the U.S. foreign policy establishment to Hollywood in the present era. Hollywood co-produces film-scripts through Pentagon-Hollywood liaison officers in exchange for hidden subsidies; Hollywood self-censors due to an assumption of consumer patriotism; and, Hollywood's elite are influenced by hegemonic discourses of American national identity. These determinations have shaped the historic development of a symbiotic and synergistic relationship between the U.S. state and Hollywood. Different expressions of U.S. foreign policy, however, are represented in complex and contradictory ways, depending on the political context of the film's production and circulation. To account for "the relative autonomy" of popular Hollywood film, the second section of the chapter offers a reading of several films produced between 2001 and 2006 that legitimize core neoconservative principles of "the Bush Doctrine."

Chapter Four - War Making Media/Media Making War

Chapter Four assesses current scholarship on the role of the news media in manufacturing consent to U.S. foreign policy during war. Dissatisfied with text-centric approaches to media war, this chapter argues that the commercial media system often expresses elite foreign policy goals as result of the state's historically developed *propaganda* and *information warfare* policies, institutions, and strategies that bind the media to the state. The military makes war on the media and the media in turn, builds consent to war. The chapter highlights key U.S. military foreign policies on "information

operations” and presents an overview of the information operations agencies and strategies responsible for enacting such policies in the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003. Various information operations strategies and tactics were employed by the U.S. military in the lead up to and aftermath of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq including: 1) hiring public relations firms to build informational agencies to conduct spin campaigns; 2) deploying elite foreign policy opinion leaders to the media to shape the agenda; 3) orchestrating elaborate psychological operations and media spectacles; 4) sourcing the international media from informational outposts near the battlefield; 5) embedding journalists with troops; 6) coercing journalists and alternative sources of information; and, 7) censoring and controlling images of dead military personnel and civilians.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five engages with the emerging scholarly field of video game studies. The chapter argues that interactive video games, war-themed video games in particular, reflect the concrete historical development, dominance, and strategic imperatives of the U.S.’s military-interactive video gaming complex. Today, there is deep integration between the U.S. military and the U.S. video game industry. The geopolitical machinations of the U.S. military have been fused with the capitalist imperatives of the video game industry. Both spheres share financing, resources, technology, workers, ideologies, and strategies. Distinctions between war simulator and commercial console, leisure time and training time, imperial propaganda and entertainment, enjoyment and indoctrination, are increasingly blurred. As the “ideal commodities” of U.S. imperialism, war-themed video games express a particularly unique fusion of state and corporate power. U.S. video game

corporations rely on the strong extra-economic arm of the state to obliterate barriers to their expansion and to ensure their dominance by subsidizing and protecting them; the U.S. state, in turn, works with video game capitalists to develop war-themed simulation games to indoctrinate, recruit, discipline, and prepare civilians as virtual cyborg soldiers.

SECTION III

While section II examines the manufacture of an imperial culture within the U.S. national context, section III examines soft power, public diplomacy, and psychological and informational warfare as cultural-ideological fixes to the contradictions of U.S. foreign policy abroad. I highlight how the state finances, orchestrates, and conducts “Americanization” campaigns around the world. Such campaigns do not occur without contradiction. There is a salient contradiction between the reality of U.S. foreign policy and its Americanizing cultural-ideological fixes, a disjuncture between the ideal image of the American Way of Life expressed by the U.S. state and the lived realities of U.S. foreign policy.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six examines an emergent discourse on “American soft power”. Joseph F. Nye’s *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004), Leigh Armistead’s *Information Operations: Warfare and the Hard Reality of Soft Power* (2004), and Mathew Fraser’s *Weapons of Mass Distraction: Soft Power and American Empire* (2003). are exemplary of this intellectual tendency. I argue that the discourse of “American soft power” is an apologia for American cultural imperialism. The discourse of American soft power rationalizes and advocates the use of state communication agencies and corporate

media industries to re-establish and extend U.S. global hegemony through the export of American cultural values. Each author appeals to dubious moral, universal, and contextual criteria to rationalize the process and effects of American soft power. The discourse of soft power acts as an impoverished neo-liberal substitute for the critical discourse of American cultural imperialism and offers imaginary resolutions to the U.S. empire's crisis of legitimacy.

Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven examines the institutions, policies, mediums, practices, and texts of the U.S. public diplomacy. The relative autonomy of the media industry and from the state means that there is no absolute guarantee that media commodities produced by corporations will always represent the “American Way” in ways that correspond with U.S. foreign policy goals. The state attempts to resolve this tension between the exigencies of media capitalism and its own need for a means to legitimize its national image to the world through the development of ideological state apparatuses that deliberately challenge the cultural national sovereignty of other states for strategic geopolitical and pedagogical reasons. I present a case study of the Office of Public Diplomacy's struggle to brand “America” to the “Muslim World” between 2001 and 2005. The Office of Public Diplomacy's struggle to organize the consent of Muslims to a U.S. cultural-nationalist ideology and promote U.S. foreign policy has failed. Anti-American and anti-imperial sentiment continues to grow in the targeted region due to a contradiction between the brutal consequences of U.S. foreign policy and its cultural-ideological fix, a disjuncture between the lived effects of U.S. foreign policy and the ideal images of America that it conveys.

Chapter 8

Chapter Eight examines U.S. psychological warfare and information operations in Iraq. In a White House document entitled “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq”, U.S. President George W. Bush argues that the U.S. will provide “technical assistance and training to support a free, independent, and responsible Iraqi media (including television, radio, and print) that delivers high-quality content and responsible reporting throughout Iraq”(2005). Through an critical examination of U.S. foreign media policy and practice in Iraq from the March 20, 2003 U.S.-led invasion to the occupation scenario of January 2006, this chapter argues that the Iraqi media system that has emerged from the ruins of the Baathist party’s Ministry of Information is not free, independent, or genuinely “Iraqi.” I argue that what has emerged instead is an occupying imperial military-industrial-media complex. Media corporations rely on U.S. military support to facilitate and legitimize their capitalist accumulation strategies. The U.S. military, in turn, recruits media corporations to promote U.S. foreign policy interests and images of a new cultural-national identity to Iraqis.

Conclusion

The conclusion discusses the contradictions of cultural resistance to the new imperialism, particularly expressed by global anti-American sentiment. While criticisms of the United States and the American way of life are increasingly global, such cultural criticisms need to be articulated to and grounded in a more systemic critique of global capitalism.

PLACE OF THE WORK VIS-À-VIS DISCIPLINARY DEBATES/FIELDS

This manuscript puts into dialogue many different disciplinary fields, perspectives and approaches. I could not have produced this book without building upon and working within a number of fields including Marxist critical theory, globalization studies, international communication, cultural studies, postcolonialism, political-economy, technology studies, political communication, international relations, American studies, and critical cultural policy studies. I've tried to demonstrate what Douglas Kellner calls a "multi-perspectival approach."

The intended audience for my manuscript book is both academic and non-academic. Below, I outline the place of my manuscript in relationship to a variety of different disciplinary fields and concerns.

1. **New Imperialism/International Relations (IR)** - There is plenty of scholarly work on the economic, political, and military dimensions of U.S. imperialism. Less scholarship (particularly neo-Marxist scholarship) has explored how the media industries, state informational and cultural agencies, and popular media-culture might legitimize the U.S. state in national and international contexts. This manuscript illuminates the 'blindspot' in studies of the New Imperialism and IR and affirms that a study of media and culture is absolutely essential to understanding the New Imperialism.
2. **International Communication/Global Media Studies** –A paradigm dispute between proponents of the cultural imperialism hypothesis and proponents of cultural globalization has been going on for quite some time in the field of

international communication/global media studies. Some scholars propose that cultural globalization theory's celebratory claims need to be challenged; others call for a renewal of cultural imperialism theory; Harindranath (2003), for example, suggests that "a cultural imperialism thesis that takes on board the essentially unequal relations that underpin the global capitalist system is vital for a proper investigation of the production and consumption of international communication"(167). A re-working of a critical theory of cultural imperialism in light of the "new imperialism" is a worthwhile endeavour. This manuscript builds on and goes beyond some of the limits of cultural imperialism and cultural globalization paradigms, particularly their economism, by accounting, in a more complex way, for the relationship between the state and the cultural industry in domestic and foreign contexts.

3. **Postcolonial Literary Studies/Postcolonial American Studies** –postcolonial scholars, frustrated by the text-centrism of much discourse in their field, have called for more a more grounded understanding of the political-economy and institutions of imperialism (Parry 2004). Additionally, Donald Pease, Amy Kaplan and other American studies scholars have pointed out that American studies as a discipline has been mostly silent on, if not oblivious of, the imperial nature of American foreign policies and their expression by commodity culture. Arif Dirlik (1994: 332) scathingly chastises what he perceives to be postcolonial critics' failure to focus on the contemporary version of U.S. imperialism. And Ella Shohat (1992) warns that postcolonial studies will be complicit in the "consecration of American hegemony if it focuses on European colonialism of the past and downplays current U.S. imperial practices". My manuscript presents both a

political-economic and textual study of imperialism and culture, and thus, is useful to the field of postcolonialism. My manuscript contributes to postcolonial studies by not only decoding texts, but also, by revealing the state-capital complex responsible for their production.

- 4. Cultural Studies** - James Curran (2002) points out how the 1980s marked “a watershed period” in the history of North American and British communication and media studies. There was “a general shift away from [. . .] the explanatory frameworks of Marxism; a re-conceptualization of the media audience as creative and active; a spate of redemptive studies of the popular media; and a new emphasis on identity”(125). Nicholas Garnham (2000) argues that the popularization of post-Marxist cultural studies approaches was not so much a revision or innovation, but a return to “pre-existing problems and [liberal] models of [audience] research rather than a revolutionary dawn”(120). A thoroughgoing deconstruction of most Marxist approaches to communication and media-culture occurred and with it, a theory of the state. This manuscript contributes to the re-establishment of a critical Marxist approach to media-culture and with it, brings an account of the state into the methodological fold.
- 5. Critical cultural policy studies** -- This critical cultural policy approach examines governmentality (modes of regulating and policing “the conduct of conduct” of a group of people as citizen-subjects), power (de-centered and fluid flows and relations between citizen-subjects and institutions), cultural technologies (the institutional and organizational structures and processes that articulate particular discursive configurations of knowledge and power) and discourses (the institutional intersection of knowledge and power resulting in differential “regimes

of truth” that govern conduct). A few scholars within this field have briefly considered some of the cultural dimensions and cultural expressions of U.S. foreign policy (Lewis and Miller 2003: 8; McGuigan 2004: 142). But overall, their work has yet to undertake a rigorous study of the domestic and foreign relations of cultural governmentality that are rationalized by the U.S. state on behalf of the new imperialism. This manuscript contributes to emergent critical cultural policy studies of imperial cultural governmentality.

A Few Questions the Book Answers

- What is imperial culture?
- Why, given the legal autonomy of the media industries from the U.S. state, does this industry nonetheless regularly legitimize elite foreign policy agendas?
- Why, in the age of so-called media globalization, does the media industry still commodify and project national symbols?
- What is the precise relationship between the U.S. foreign policy establishment and the media industry media during war?
- Does the U.S. state envisage popular commodity culture as a foreign policy resource, as a propaganda medium?
- Why does popular culture—film, television, and video games—represent the foreign policy goals of the state, especially in an era when most globalizing media corporations practice post-Fordist production and postmodern marketing strategies?