

# U.S. Empire and Communications Today: Revisiting Herbert I. Schiller

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## Abstract

This article revisits, refines and renews Herbert I. Schiller's theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism. Apart from one exceptional book-length examination of Schiller's life and work and a few excellent essays published following his passing, Schiller's theory is often rejected by scholars inside and outside of the political economy of communication tradition. Although important changes have reshaped the global communications landscape over the past four decades, Schiller's theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism continues to have conceptual, descriptive and analytical value for 21<sup>st</sup> century research. To show how, the article's first and second sections contextualize and explicate Schiller's understanding of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism. The third section highlights post-9/11 economic, military and communicational developments that support a refined and renewed theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism. Overall, the article highlights continuity and change in the operations of the U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism.

Herbert I. Schiller is a central founding figure in the political economy of communications tradition within the United States and internationally. Schiller was the first U.S. communication studies scholar to conceptualize, examine and do critical research on the United States as a unique post-colonial Empire that relied upon communications and media to materially support and ideologically promote its expansion.

Since Schiller passed away on January 29, 2000, there has been one exceptional book-length study of Schiller's life and scholarly work (Maxwell, 2003), a few engaging and heartfelt articles about Schiller's contributions to critical research (McChesney, 2001; Morley, 2006; Mosco, 2001, Murdock, 2006), and an elaboration of 'media imperialism' that categorizes Schiller as one of its four founding thinkers (alongside Harold Innis, Jeremy Tunstall, and Oliver Boyd-Barrett) (Boyd-

Barrett, 2015: 2). Notwithstanding these contributions, the value of Schiller's theory for 21st century work on U.S. Empire and communications has in the main, not been addressed. A few well-known political economy of communication scholars have respectfully cast Schiller's approach as antiquated (Downing, 2010; Garnham, 2010; Sparks, 2012), and numerous scholars inside and outside of communication and cultural studies have, for at least three decades, moved away from Schiller's cultural imperialism paradigm toward the newer paradigm of 'globalization' (Appadurai, 1997; Liebes and Katz, 1990; Thompson, 1995; Tomlinson, 1991, 1999).

The claims and counter-claims in the longstanding 'paradigm debate' between proponents of cultural imperialism and cultural globalization are numerous and well-documented (Boyd-Barrett, 2015; Mirrlees, 2013; Sparks, 2007). A few antinomies can be briefly summarized. The cultural imperialism paradigm's premise that the United States is an 'Empire' is countered by theories of a fundamentally "new" and "different configuration of global power" called "globalizing modernity" (Tomlinson, 1991: 175), or the 'global cultural economy' (Appadurai, 1997), or a postmodern biopolitical 'Empire' (Hardt & Negri, 2000). The core/periphery model of the US-dominated world system is contested by studies of 'asymmetrically interdependent' non-U.S. centered culture industries, audiences, and media goods, especially with regard to the BRICS (Curtin, 2003, 2007; Keane, 2006; Nordenstreng and Thussu, 2015; Straubhaar, 1991; Tunstall, 2008). The notion that non-U.S. states and culture industries are passive dependencies of the U.S. Empire's cultural industries cannot be assumed; some non-U.S. states use sovereign policy tools to protect and promote their own cultural industries (and dominant 'ways of life') against 'Americanization' (Grant and Wood, 2004). The assumption that cultural goods flow in only one way, from the U.S. to the rest of the world, is complicated by research which points out two-way and multi-directional media flows (Thussu, 2007). The concern that viewers may be ideologically influenced is challenged by reception studies which indicate the various ways people actually interpret American entertainment (Ang, 1985; Liebes and Katz, 1990). The supposedly 'essentialist' notion of 'national culture' is debunked by the concept of 'cultural hybridity' (Kraidy, 2005; Morris, 2002). The 'discourse of domination', inherent to theories of U.S. Empire is deemed to be paternalistic, and likely to reinforce and reproduce the prevailing power structure, namely American imperial domination of the planet (Tomlinson, 1991).

The multi-pronged critique of the cultural imperialism paradigm was a positive riposte to *some* of its gloomier, reductive and polemical articulations. Opportunities arose across the disciplines for novel and empirically grounded research on the economic, geopolitical and cultural dynamics of cross-border communication relationships, processes and products that were not substantively reducible to, or expressive of, the U.S. Empire (Mirrlees, 2013). Yet, while some scholars lost "interest in the actual historical phenomena of imperialism" in the switch to studies of globalization (Boyd-Barrett, 2015: 15), others have more recently returned to the seemingly out-dated problems surrounding it (Boyd-Barrett, 2015; Jin, 2007; Nordenstreng, 2013; Sparks, 2012). Boyd-Barrett (2015) says that theoretical and empirical research into the nexus of Empires and communications media remain important. Such studies, which also centre upon the differential and "unequal relations of power" between some nation-states, as well as between media corporations and others, reflect "an acquired heritage of at least half a century's thinking, research and debate". This points to the "incontestable" recognition of "empire as a long-established historical and institutional reality" that in both territorial and non-territorial forms of economic and military influence relies upon communications media to bring about "profound changes in commercial, social and cultural activity"(6). It would be inaccurate to suggest that Schiller offers the "one best way" to intervene in

the revitalized field of “media imperialism” that criss-crosses many disciplines and flags a plurality of approaches (Boyd-Barrett, 2015: 2). It can be argued, nevertheless, that the past of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism, theorized and documented by Schiller, still powerfully shapes the contemporary world.

This article revisits, refines and renews Schiller’s theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism. Although important changes have reshaped the global communications landscape over the past four decades, Schiller’s theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism continues to have conceptual, descriptive and analytical value for 21<sup>st</sup> century research. In support of this argument, the first and second sections revisit, contextualize and explicate Schiller’s theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism. The third and most substantive section highlights post-9/11 economic, military and communicational developments that lend support to a refined and renewed theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism. Overall, the article recognizes continuity and change in the U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism.

## **U.S. Empire, Cultural Imperialism and Cold War: 1945-1989**

This section revisits and explicates Schiller’s theory U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism with regard to its initial establishment within a Cold War historical context.

From the 1960s until the late 1980s, in the historical context of the U.S.-Soviet superpower rivalry for world economic, geopolitical and ideological supremacy and the tri-continental struggle for national liberation against the crumbling edifice of Western European colonial domination, scholars theorized the evolving world system. The concepts of capitalist imperialism/neocolonialism, and dependency were developed to illuminate and contest the inequities and asymmetrical power relations between rich and poor countries, and among social classes within and between countries (Frank, 1966; Wallerstein, 1975, 1979). Schiller was indebted to this field and an important contributor to it. He saw imperialism – in territorial and non-territorial forms – as a fact of a world system that had “existed for hundreds of years”. What he analyzed was “the transformation of that system – in its realignments of power centres, its changed sources of exploitation, and its modern mode of organization and control” (1976: 9). Working loosely with a centre-periphery model of Empire, Schiller focused on how following World War II, the U.S. had replaced old Europe (Great Britain, France, Germany) as the world’s capitalist, military and communications power centre (Schiller, 1969: 1976). Locked in a rivalry with “an expanded but defensive Socialist geographical and material base,” the U.S. struggled to contain, disrupt and deter Soviet developments and fundamentally shape the economies, politics and consciousness of those peoples who had moved from “total subordination, colonialism, to a condition of political independence and national sovereignty” due to the “breakdown of the Western European colonial system” (Schiller, 1992: 48). In the post-WWII period, the U.S. Empire did not pursue the *direct* domination of territories, economies, and politics like bygone colonial Empires, but rather, sought to build, integrate and police a world system of integrated states that shared its model: the capitalist mode of production, the liberal democratic state form, and the consumerist “way of life.”

For Schiller, the U.S. Empire’s post-WWII expansion of this societal model from its centre outward to “the second world” of the Soviet bloc and the “third world” of the post-colonial peripheries relied upon “cultural imperialism”, or, “the sum processes by which a society is brought into the modern [U.S.-centered] 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 centres of the system” (Schiller, 1976: 9). In Schiller’s original formulation of the concept, ‘cultural imperialism’ refers to the U.S. Empire’s coercive and persuasive agencies, and their capacity to promote and universalize an American ‘way of life’ in other countries without any reciprocation of influence. Cultural imperialism “pressured, forced and bribed” societies to integrate with the U.S.’s expansive capitalist model but also incorporated them with attraction and persuasion by winning “the mutual consent, even solicitation of the indigenous rulers” (Schiller, 1976: 16). In this regard, Schiller’s ‘cultural imperialism’ is a supple ‘relational theory’ of power in world affairs that is similar to later conceptualizations of ‘hegemony’ in international political economy (Cox, 1993; Harvey, 2003) [1] and the less class conscious concept of ‘smart power’ in liberal international relations (Nye, 2009).

Having posited this broad and general conceptualization of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism, Schiller focused in on three structural sources of U.S. power—economic, military-geopolitical and cultural—and explored how communications linked and connected all of them. He boldly declared that “American power, expressed industrially, militarily and culturally has become the most potent force on earth and communications have become a decisive element in the extension of United States world power” (Schiller, 1969: 206–7). How, then, did communications articulate U.S. capitalist, military and cultural power?

First, Schiller conceptualized American communications companies (entertainment, broadcasting, telecommunications and advertising firms) as the economic backbone of an immensely profitable capitalist sector at home and as agents of cultural imperialism abroad. As American communications corporations travelled across borders in pursuit of profit, they carried with them an entire “infrastructure of socialization” that spread the English language, capitalist institutions, values and practices, democratic ideals, a consumerist ethos, and so on (Schiller, 1976: 9). Moreover, U.S. communications firms established capitalist infrastructures in other countries, which enabled further investments and takeovers that were integral to the cross-border production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing imperatives of even larger U.S. corporations. American yet globalizing media corporations played a “vanguard role” in the “propagation and extension of the American business system and its values to all corners of the international community” (Schiller, 1992: 136). These corporations also promulgated and promoted the “the American system, the commercial model of communications, to the international arena” (Schiller, 1992: 95) while deterring or disrupting models that did not abide by or conform to the U.S. model’s dominance. Having shaped the social and media infrastructure of countless countries, the “American interest in overseas communications” extended “from direct ownership of broadcast facilities” to “equipment sales, management service contracts, and program exports” (Schiller, 1992: 125). The result was a power relationship between U.S. communications and media companies and those fledgling firms in developing countries. American companies were rapidly entering other countries without reciprocation, and there was a largely one-way flow of media, from the U.S. to its peripheries.

Second, Schiller outlined how the U.S. Government protected and promoted the proprietary and profit interests of American communications and media firms at home and abroad, directly and indirectly. For Schiller, the liberal pluralist notion of the U.S. state being “socially neutral” masked how the interests of corporate elites almost always prevailed over those of the working poor, labour unions and progressives. He lamented how “national policy” toward the American communications and media system had “drastically narrowed from designation of the collective needs and rights of all Americans to a kind of code word expression of the concerns of the private sector” (Schiller, 1989: 36). Schiller also highlighted “the crucial role of the government in creating and cementing

this corporate power” (McChesney, 2001: 48). He bemoaned how a government supposedly made ‘of the people, by the people, for the people’ so frequently aligned itself with the social class interests of the propertied few running the nation’s communications and media firms. In this regard, Schiller was one of the first researchers “to analyze in detail both the ascendancy of market thinking and the quickening migration of key decisions from public committees to company boardrooms” (Murdock, 2006: 210).

Schiller showed how Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulators and policy-makers committed public resources to propping up a privatized communication system driven by commercial as opposed to civic and democracy-nourishing values (Schiller, 1992: 63-75). Extending Eisenhower’s notion of the ‘military-industrial-complex’ (MIC), which involved symbiotic relationships between the military, corporations, and universities, Schiller identified the rise of a military-industrial-communications-complex (MICC) (McChesney, 2001: 48; Mosco, 2001: 27). He detailed how the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) supported U.S. communications corporations by subsidizing their research and development into new communications technologies, and by procuring their finished commodities. Media and PR firms were paid to act as surrogate war propagandists (1992: 75-122). Schiller further explained how, in world affairs, the US State Department wielded the free flow of information doctrine to roll back “state efforts to safeguard national film, television, and publishing industries” (Schiller, 1992: 23). Recalcitrant states were pressured to open up their borders, markets and populations to the commercial audio-visual products of the American media giants.

Third, Schiller argued that American communications firms regularly supported the U.S. Empire’s persuasion campaigns, which were designed to win transnational consent for the American model and “overpower” countries “steeped in social misery if they give any sign of rebellion” (Schiller, 1992: 109). The U.S. Empire, facing “multiplying challenges in many hitherto hospitable areas,” developed “strategies for safeguarding its unstable and increasingly menaced global positions”. Consequently, “sophisticated communications technology” and “techniques of persuasion” and “manipulation” acquired as a result of “fifty years of domestic marketing expertise” all became “steadily more important and more deliberate, in the exercise of American power” (Schiller, 1976: 2-3). The corporate-produced media commodities exported abroad carried “a vision of a way of life” that was thoroughly consumer-capitalist and “patterned after the American model” while the U.S. State Department’s vast “complex” of propaganda or public diplomacy agencies—the United States Information Agency (USIA), the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe (RFE)—targeted publics around the world to build consent for American foreign policy (Schiller, 1992: 124). Corporate-generated media products glorified the American model (Schiller, 1976: 6) and U.S. state-propagandists sought to get “a grip on the minds of foreign audiences so that the foreign policies of the United States” were “admired, or at least, accepted and tolerated” (Schiller, 1976: 20).

Schiller’s discussion of the U.S. Empire’s state-corporate communications power structures and the impact on those it targeted was nuanced. He said that many people would be ideologically afflicted by cultural imperialism but also considered how top-down ideological influence might foster a “critical consciousness” and “arouse those who are now dominated to increase their efforts at resistance” (Schiller, 1976: 76). Transnational resistance to U.S. cultural imperialism was possible, even probable, and took diverse forms: the macro-political tactic of democratizing communications policy and the micro-political tactic of media activism. Schiller fought tirelessly to democratize communications and media policy from within the U.S. Empire and through the United

Nations' UNESCO, where he supported the Non-Aligned Movement's campaign for a New World Information and Communication Order (Maxwell, 2003). As a public intellectual, he challenged power by writing articles for progressive magazines, such as *The Nation*, collaborated on the Paper Tiger Video collective's TV show called Herb Schiller Reads the *New York Times* and supported the efforts of "individuals and groups outside the mainstream working with tape recorders, cameras, video recorders, film, music, print, radio, graphics and public art forms" (Schiller, 1976: 189).

In sum, Schiller forwarded the premier theory of cultural imperialism and enacted counter-resistance (Maxwell, 2004) by theorizing, analyzing and struggling against the economic, political and ideological barriers to a democratically-determined, socially just public communication system in the U.S. and elsewhere.

## **U.S. Empire and Cultural Imperialism: after the Cold War: 1989-2000**

From the end of the Cold War to one year before the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the U.S. Empire's subsequent Global War on Terror, Schiller attended to world-historical changes that had compelled some modifications to his initial argument. This section explicates Schiller's revised theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism in the post-Cold War context.

Between 1989 and 2000, Schiller flagged "global power shifts" such as the demise of the Soviet Union, the diminishing of the Non-Aligned Movement, the rise of China, and the European Union's consolidation. Nonetheless, he insisted that the U.S. "remains the center of a globally expansive system, one that still strives to eliminate critical opposition" (Schiller, 2000: 44). In the globalizing 1990s, the U.S. was still the world's capitalist, military and cultural power centre (Schiller, 1996: 6; Schiller, 2000: 43-45), and pushed its interests around the world on behalf of U.S.-based global enterprises "to extract privilege and prevent social change that might limit that privilege" (Schiller, 2000: 23). The U.S.'s "steward" and "enforcer" role in the world system was being "shared, at least partially, with others" but it was in the U.S. "where decisive world power remains vested" (Schiller, 1996: 139). The U.S. model of culture and economic developed gained greater prominence after the Cold War.

As of 1989, the U.S. Empire had defeated the Soviet model and the Non-Aligned Movement's variant of state-led social developmentalism. The American model, once particular and embattled, was fast being generalized worldwide even though each "national locale" had "its own specificities in this evolving pattern" (Schiller, 1996: 77). As ICTs criss-crossed time zones and networked different societies, pre-existing barriers to the American model's supremacy were consensually removed or forcefully obliterated by the business and political elites of the U.S. Empire in conjunction with those ruling social groups elsewhere who willfully pushed or grudgingly re-engineered their countries to align with the neoliberal mantra: de-regulate, privatize and liberalize (Harvey, 2003). The world system boasted *more* countries similarly oriented toward facilitating and legitimizing corporate profit-making and *less* countries contemplating radical alternatives. As Schiller said: "Ways of organizing projects other than by private initiatives and reliance on market forces have been put beyond the boundaries of political consideration" (1989: 5). Over this decade, Schiller shed light on the old patterns of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism and contemplated emergent developments that changed them.

Schiller observed how capitalist media industries were developing all over the world, but was adamant that the U.S. remained the world's major communications and media power center. He stated that "the U.S. media-informational sphere enjoys an uncontested, and still growing, global

primacy” (Schiller, 1996: 59) and that no “rival foreign film industry, TV production center, publishing enterprise, or news establishment” competes on “equal terms” with these U.S.-based companies (Schiller, 1996: 93). Moreover, Schiller documented how U.S.-based corporations continued to grow “greatly in size, breadth and productive capability” by “expanding, merging, and trans-nationalizing” to represent a “concentration of cultural power and influence, at home and in the world at large” (Schiller, 1989: 135). As a consequence, non-reciprocal media flows between the U.S. and other countries persisted. Schiller remarked that: “[T]he dollar and physical volumes of the outputs of the U.S. cultural industries flowing into the international market are higher than they were” in the 1970s and 1980s (Schiller, 1991: 12). American cultural products - films, TV shows, news programs – were said to be “flickering across French, Italian and other European screens” (Schiller, 1989: 127) as “the chief fare of national systems in most countries” (Schiller, 1996: 92). At the same time, once exclusively American media corporations merged and converged with non-U.S. firms, resulting in transnational media corporations (TNMCs) (Schiller, 1989: 38-40). They pushed “against nationally run communication entities, broadcast systems, and post and telegraph and telephone administrations (PTTs)” (Schiller, 1989: 115). Furthermore, they advanced the marketization of “institutional infrastructures in country after country” and increased and sped up the flow of “informational and cultural product[s] that pour mainly from American cultural enterprises” (Schiller, 1996: 115).

Schiller also showed how the U.S. Government continued to bolster the profit-interests of U.S.-based TNMCs: “the US (capitalist) state [ ... ] has acted frequently, with initiative and decisiveness, to assure the promotion of the ever-expanding communication sector—to what now has become a central pillar of the economy” (Schiller, 1998: 17). At home, the FCC sanctioned “unrestrained mergers and consolidations”, showed “total disregard of the long-standing broadcasters’ obligation to serve the public interest,” oversaw the “privatization of communication” and basically gave “the communication industry pretty much a free hand in their domestic and international communication activities” (Schiller, 1991: 11). The military-industrial-communications complex (MICC) was alive and well in the 1990s too, with the pseudo-libertarian high-tech sectors receiving massive handouts from the Department of Defense. Schiller stated that “[a]stronomical sums have been allocated by the Pentagon, from the public’s tax money, to underwrite technological developments” and the “fruits of these outlays” have “contributed incalculably to US ascendancy in information technology, computer networks, database creation, the special effects industry and worldwide surveillance systems: the underlying infrastructure of what now is benignly termed ‘the information age’” (Schiller, 1998: 20). However, the “main beneficiaries of the new capabilities in information production, transmission, and dissemination” continued to be “transnational companies, the intelligence, military and policing agencies” (Schiller, 1996: 62).

On behalf of TNMCs, the U.S. State Department cajoled and compelled the leaders of non-U.S. states to relinquish “national control over the information system” (Schiller, 1989: 118) and spearheaded the de-regulation and privatization of national broadcasters and telecommunication firms (Schiller, 1989: 115). It even leveraged the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to get poor countries to implement neoliberal policies encouraging “private capital investment in and private ownership” of communications as a condition of them receiving high-interest loans (Schiller, 1989: 116). The U.S. State also continued to extol audio-visual free trade bilaterally and multilaterally. It pushed the free-flow doctrine at the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property

Rights (TRIPS) (Schiller, 1989: 118; Puppis, 2008). In short, Schiller observed that “[t]he free flow of information has meant the ascendance of U.S. cultural products worldwide” (Schiller, 1996: 93) and “has been a construction which has made a universal virtue out of the ‘cultural industries’ marketing requirements” (Schiller, 1998: 18). Moreover, with its National Information Infrastructure (NII) and Global Information Infrastructure (GII) initiative, the U.S. State incubated and then unleashed a corporatized Internet and World Wide Web whose infrastructure “provide[d] the circuitry for the already immense, and still increasing, flow of the product of the (mostly but not exclusively) U.S. cultural industries” (Schiller, 1996: 112).

Schiller pointed out that TNMCs supported the U.S. Empire’s persuasion campaigns, but usually in a less obvious way than did American media companies throughout the Cold War. In the post-WWII period, cultural imperialist persuasion often took the form of direct ‘Americanization’, with the United States Information Agency (USIA) and allied American communications firms collaborating to produce and circulate media goods that carried to the world stories, sights and sounds that glorified ‘the American way of life’. But in the 1990s, TNMCs were not always or necessarily acting as ideological boosters of Americanization because the “mechanisms of consumer persuasion and titillation” were being “applied, sometimes with modification, to take into account national cultural specificities” (Schiller, 1989: 121). Nonetheless, Schiller qualified that the TNMC “objective, whatever the national setting” was “always the same—the creation of good consumers” and the delivering of consumer attention to advertisers (Schiller, 1989: 121). It was becoming evident how TNMCs glocalized commodity form and content, culturally differentiated their sales pitches, and segmented nations into niche and lifestyle markets. In Schiller’s view: “American cultural imperialism is not dead, but it no longer adequately describes the global cultural condition” because “transnational corporate culture” is now “the central force, with a continuing heavy flavor of US media know-how, derived from long experience with marketing and entertainment skills and practices” (1991: 14-15).

Yet, Schiller showed that despite the pervasiveness of this “transnational corporate culture,” the U.S.-based TNMCs still could be relied upon by the Department of Defense to beautify the coercive face of Empire. For example, TNMCs participated in the Department of Defense’s spectacular Gulf War propaganda campaign. Pro-war news and militaristic media products were rolled out within a frame of reference derived from two sources: the Pentagon and the White House (Schiller, 1992: 1). Schiller remarks that “[w]hen the United States Government put half a million troops in the Persian Gulf region in 1991, the national informational system closed its ranks—there were a few marginal dissenting voices—and unqualifiedly accepted and endorsed that decision” (Schiller, 1996: 124). Furthermore, TNMC representations “paraded before” global viewers an “army of invaders and secret operatives who perform, in full special effects regalia, dramas that numb the intellect and channel the passions” (Schiller, 2000: 45). They were also being tapped by the Department of Defense for commercial techniques that would advance information age ideological warfare (Schiller, 1998: 22-23).

In the 1990s, Schiller continued to present a supple account of structure and agency, balancing a concern about the U.S. Empire’s cultural-ideological influence with confidence in public resistance. He said that “[t]he worldwide impact of the transnational cultural industries, it can be argued, may be as influential as other, more familiar, forms of U.S. power; industrial, military, scientific” (Schiller, 1996: 115). Conversely, Schiller saw that people in the U.S. and around the world could challenge U.S. Empire and transnational cultural imperialism. He championed advocates for “vastly expanded public support and encouragement of non-commercial expression and creativity” that

included “[p]ublicly funded newspapers, magazines, television, radio, theatre and film”. These forms of creativity were supported by the state, but “insulated” from “the direction of the state” (Schiller, 1989: 173). Schiller also highlighted the “agency” and “resistance” of alternative cultural workers including “independent video-and filmmakers, small presses, regional and local theatrical groups, public access channels” as well as the “artists, performers, editors and journalists, teachers and librarians” who were skeptical and “questioning of the dominant institutions” and strived to “create and produce alternate images, information and understanding” (Schiller, 1996: 141). He even considered how waged “media workers” might “carry out their assigned responsibilities but retain their independent oppositional views” (Schiller, 1996: 141).

In sum, Schiller modified and extended his initial theory of U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism throughout the 1990s while challenging the global neoliberal capitalist status quo on behalf of non-commercial communications and culture.

## **U.S. Empire and Cultural Imperialism: 2001-present**

Schiller did not live to see the U.S. Empire’s expansion in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, but as this section will show, the economic, geopolitical and communicational structures of U.S imperialism that he identified still haunt the world system, in old and new ways. I focus here on the 21<sup>st</sup> century persistence of U.S. Empire, cultural imperialism, along with the U.S. state and military support for TNCs.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the U.S. is still an Empire and the world system’s dominant capitalist, military and communications power center. With approximately 4.4 percent of the world’s population (319 million people on a planet of 7.1 billion), the U.S. accounts for about 22% percent of the world’s total nominal GDP and 17% of purchasing power parity GDP (IMF, 2015). China ranks second in nominal GDP and first in the purchasing power version of this measure (IMF, 2015). The rapid rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), which constitute about 30 percent of world GDP, is sometimes framed as a challenge to U.S. economic power (Isimi, 2014; Layne, 2012). However, the BRICS do not currently or coherently rival the U.S.’s economic might (Sparks, 2014; Starrs, 2014). The U.S. is much richer on a GDP per capita basis (\$54,597) than all of the BRICS countries combined (Brazil: 11,604; China: 7589; Russia: 12,926; India, 1627; South Africa: 6,483) (United States: \$54597; BRICS total: \$40,229) (IMF, 2015). In 2013, GDP per capita in the U.S. was \$53,000; in China, it was nearly eight times less, a mere \$6800 (Bremmer, 2015). With over 80% of all global financial transactions being conducted in dollars, the U.S. dollar is still the world’s reserve and most used currency (Bremmer, 2015). The U.S. recently overtook Saudi Arabia and Russia to become the world’s largest producer of oil (Katakey, 2015) and has surpassed China as the biggest magnet for foreign direct investment (FDI) (*Forbes*, 2014). Additionally, *Forbes Global 2000* rankings from 2007 and 2013 show the U.S. to be home base for 543 of the world’s top 2,000 largest global corporations; it headquarters more than double the number of these based in Japan (251) and nearly quadruples the total of those based in China (DeCarlo, 2013; Starrs, 2014: 136). American based yet globalizing corporations are dominant in all major sectors: aerospace and defense, business and personal services, casinos, hotels and restaurants, computer hardware and software, conglomerates, financial services, healthcare equipment and services, media, pharmaceuticals and personal care, and retail (Starrs, 2014: 87). A “transnational ruling class” is emerging (Robinson, 2004), but nineteen of the world’s twenty-five richest people are U.S. citizens: Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Larry Ellison, Charles Koch, David

Koch, Christy Walton, Jim Walton, Alice Walton, S. Robson Walton, Michael Bloomberg, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Sheldon Adelson, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Forrest Mars Jr., Jacqueline Mars and John Mars (Peterson-Withorn, 2015).

Enormous economic might is coupled with continuing global military preponderance. The U.S. accounts for nearly 40 percent of the world's total military expenditure (a \$640 billion defense budget in 2013; \$610 billion in 2014; \$601 billion in 2015) (Gould and Bender, 2015). The defense budget is almost three and half times larger than China's, the world's second largest military spender, and more than seven times the size of Russia's, the third biggest spender (Gould and Bender, 2015; Rosen, 2014). A portion of the defense budget goes to U.S.-based war corporations, which research, develop, and sell weapons technologies as commodities to the Department of Defense (DOD) (Ruttan, 2006; Turse, 2008). Six U.S.-based corporations rank among the top ten biggest war corporations in the world: Boeing, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Precision Castparts (*Forbes*, 2015). In 2014, their top ten war companies - Lockheed Martin, Boeing, BAE Systems, Raytheon, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Airbus Group, United Technologies, Finmeccanica, L-3 Communications - together took in \$201 billion from the Department of Defense, which was about 41% of the U.S.'s total defense budget that year (Ausick, 2015). Moreover, the U.S. Department of Defense controls a stockpile of about 5,000 nuclear warheads (compared to China's 250 and Russia's 1,500) and maintains hundreds of military bases. By some reports, these number almost 1,000 across more than sixty countries, many of which are protected by a Status of Forces Agreement (Johnson, 2004; Vine, 2012). Russia has bases in nine countries (the most recent implant is in Syria) (Piven, 2015) and China is said to be building some floating bases on islands in the South China Sea (Bender, 2015). Clearly, neither Russia nor China come close to rivalling the U.S.'s military base superiority.

The unrivalled economic and military strength of the U.S. Empire is complemented by and intertwined with capitalist concentrations of communications and media power. Indeed, the U.S. continues to be the dominant centre of the world communications system. It is home base to the most significant TNMCs, and is the largest market for entertainment goods, and the wealthiest media corporations.

The 2015 *Forbes Global 2000* list ranks the world's biggest companies in four metrics (sales, profits, assets and market value), and this data set highlights how "the U.S. reigns when it comes to the largest media companies in the world" (Le, 2015). Eight of the world's top ten media companies are based in the U.S., and these are: Comcast, Walt Disney, Twenty-First Century Fox, Time Warner, Time Warner Cable, Directv, CBS, and Viacom. The two non-U.S. companies on this top ten list are British (WPP and British Sky Broadcasting). Moreover, the U.S. in 2015 was home to: five of the top five biggest broadcasters and Cable TV firms (Comcast, Walt Disney, Time Warner, Time Warner Cable, and DirecTV); two of the top five telecommunication firms (Verizon Communications and AT&T); three of the top five publishing companies (Thomson Reuters, Nielsen Holdings, Gannett); two of the top five computer hardware firms (Apple and Hewlett-Packard); four of the top five software firms (Microsoft, Oracle, VMware, Symantec); three of the top five computer service firms (Google, IBM, Facebook); two of the top five recreational game firms (Activision-Blizzard and Electronic Arts); and two of the world's top five ad corporations (Omnicom Group and Interpublic Group). Large and profitable non-U.S. communication and media companies certainly exist in China, Japan and across Europe, but in nearly every industry segment in the *Forbes Global 2000* list, U.S.-headquartered companies rule. Additionally, Netflix rules the on-demand Internet video streaming service and boasts more global subscribers than American ones

(Hamel, 2014). According to Alexa (2015), seven of the top ten most visited websites are controlled by the U.S. giants Google, Facebook, Youtube, Yahoo, Amazon, Wikipedia and Twitter. This data further substantiates the U.S.'s new platform imperialism over the global Inter-Web (Jin, 2013).

By revenue, the U.S. is the largest media-entertainment market, followed by Japan, China, Germany and the UK (Statista, 2015a). The U.S. market is singularly "larger than Asia, Europe, Latin America, or the Middle East-North Africa" (Department of Commerce, 2015: 3) and "America's entertainment revenues are 3.3 times larger than China's and with a fraction of the population (Department of Commerce, 2015: 4). The U.S. is the largest adspend market in the world as well (Sparks, 2014: 400) and by 2017, it is projected to retain its top adspend position, followed by China, the UK, Japan and India (Statista, 2015b).

Profiting from the global success of U.S.-based TNMCs, which depends upon the exploitation of cultural workers in the new international division of cultural labour (Miller et al, 2005), are some of the world's highest-paid media CEOs (Kerber, 2015; *New York Times*, 2015; Rothwell and Nakashima, 2015). In 2014, the CEOs of Comcast, Walt Disney, News Corporation, Time Warner, CBS and Viacom, pocketed a median annual compensation of US\$32.9, a sum much higher than CEOs in any other industry group in Standard & Poor's 500 index (Kerber, 2015; *New York Times*, 2015; Rothwell and Nakashima, 2015). In the U.S., the media CEOs each make approximately 257 times more than the average American worker (Rothwell and Nakashima, 2015). In a world system in which approximately 2.8 billion people try to survive on less than \$2 a day (a mere \$730 a year), the concentration of wealth in so few hands is astounding: one American media CEO makes about 45,000 times more than someone from the world's working poor.

A corollary of the capitalist concentration of communications and media power in the U.S. is the continuing non-reciprocal flow of cultural goods between the U.S and other countries. When it comes to exporting films and TV shows, the U.S. "consistently generates a positive balance of trade in every country in which it does business" (MPAA, 2014a, 2014b). According to the United States Trade Representative, the U.S. audio-visual trade "surplus totaled \$13.6 billion in 2012, with countries in Western Europe, Canada, and Australia ranking as the top markets" (USTR, 2014: 45). Hollywood studios accounted for nearly 80 percent of North American and 60 percent of global box office receipts in 2012 (USTR 2014). In 2014, *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, was the highest grossing film worldwide and was ranked among the top ten highest grossing films at the box offices of the BRICS, and even in Nigeria (Box Office Mojo, 2015). Eighty-five percent of the TV shows exported across borders ship from the US while a mere 7 percent are from the UK, the world's #2 TV exporter (Willens, 2015). Four of the top five global bestselling video games of 2014 - *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* (war), *Madden NFL 15* (sports), *Destiny* (sci-fi) and *Grand Theft Auto V* (crime) - were sold by U.S. video game firms (Kain, 2015).

The U.S. continues to be a unique Empire and the pillars of its structural power - economic, military and communications media - remain firmly entrenched around the globe. It continues to rely upon cultural imperialism to get its way, combining coercion and persuasion to influence, change and integrate other societies into its ambit in a world system. The ultimate purpose is to ensure its key interests are not just 'secured', but supreme.

Since 1945, the U.S. state has facilitated and legitimized the capitalist expansion of its core industries with a liberal internationalist foreign policy that expresses the optimistic notion that the global spread of liberal democracy is good for all and that cross-border capitalist networks of markets, companies, and trade will unite the world in peace. In pursuit of these objectives, the U.S. Empire has waged a permanent war with no clear boundaries or foreseeable end (Bacevich, 2004,

2005, 2010; Blum, 2004; Johnson, 2004, 2010; Turse, 2008, 2012). Following the events of September 9, 2011, the U.S. initiated the Global War on Terror and controversial wars in Afghanistan (2002-present) and Iraq (2003-present). Over the past fifteen years, the U.S. has: directed covert operations in Haiti to oust its president Jean-Bertrand Aristide (Sachs, 2004); supported a short-lived coup of Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez in 2002 (Vulliamy, 2002); funded front groups to destabilize and subvert Chavez, prior to his passing in 2013 (Friel, 2014); toppled former Guatemalan President Otto Perez (Menchu and Pretel, 2015); conducted the Congressionally unapproved and thus 'unconstitutional' bombing of Libya (to oust its President, Muammar Gaddafi) (Ackerman, 2011); and deployed 'special ops' in Syria (to bring down its president, Bashar al-Assad) (Beutler, 2014). The U.S. has also carried out 674 military actions across Africa in 2014; and is pivoting bases to contain a rising China before it can become an actual rival (Reed, 2014). Global peace is not forthcoming because, as per the *U.S. National Military Strategy of 2015*, Russia, Iran, North Korea and China are perceived to be "acting in a manner that threatens" the 'national security interest'. In general, "the probability of U.S. involvement in interstate war with a major power is assessed to be low, but growing" (Feaver, 2015).

The U.S. Empire's permanent wars abroad are coupled with a permanent persuasion campaign. From World War II to the post-9/11 period, U.S. government and private media corporations have routinely collaborated to inform, influence and change the attitudes and behaviors of foreign publics concerning U.S. national security interests around the world (de Grazia, 2005; Comor and Bean, 2012; Cull, 2008; Dizard, 1961, 2001, 2004; Hansen, 1984; Snow, 2003; Taylor, 1997; Wagenleitner, 1994). Following 9/11, the Department of State's Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs formed alliances with TNMCs to unleash media and informational products upon the world to organize consent to the American Way. Currently, it seeks 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" (2014). This office coordinates the Bureau of Public Affairs, which runs foreign press centres, hosts press conferences, monitors the media, operates websites, manages regional media hubs, pitches interviews with officials to news outlets, places editorials about U.S. strategy in newspapers, makes TV content, and plans social media events. The Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs also coordinates the Bureau of International Information Programs (which orchestrates face-to-face and virtual people-to-people dialogue about America and U.S. foreign policy), and the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (which organizes communications activities that counter terrorist-generated information about America across a wide variety of old and new media platforms). This Office also oversees the operations of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which is responsible for managing a global network of multi-platform media firms such as Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio and TV Martí, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Alhurra TV, Radio Sawa, and Afia Darfur), which together deliver audio-visual content about America to millions of people around the world per week (BBG, 2012).

The U.S. state supports the profit interests of TNMCs by protecting and promoting their intellectual property rights (IPR). They depend on the U.S. state to recognize and legally enforce their copyright, which gives them an exclusive right to enable or prohibit others from using or copying their cultural goods and gives them the right to sell, license, or trade these rights to others. The U.S. state aggressively secures the intellectual property rights of TNMCs with the force of law,

at home and abroad. The White House's Washington-based Office of the United States Trade Representative, for example, monitors copyright infringing activities all over the world and pressures violating states to enforce within their own territories U.S.-derived legislation (USTR 2015).

The U.S. state also supports the business of TNMCs by allocating public wealth to them in the form of subsidies. The U.S. Federal government and state-level governments, for example, use tax credits to keep television and film production in the United States territory and to deter Hollywood studios from "running away" to countries like Canada or New Zealand, where labour costs are lower, subsidies more plentiful and currency exchange rates a boon to business (Miller et al, 2005). In 2012, U.S. states collectively spent a whopping \$1.5 billion on tax credits/subsidies to TV show and film producing entertainment corporations (Story, 2012). This strategy for building creative industries across the nation's rustbelt regions and cities has many critics, but states still compete to outmatch each other by provisioning maximal public wealth to attract and appease the Hollywood studios. In 2015, Warner Bros' *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* was shot on location in Detroit and East Lansing with the assistance of a \$35 million subsidy (WSJ, 2015).

Additionally, the U.S. state orchestrates a global free-trade regime befitting TNMCs (Fitzgerald, 2012: 150). In response to UNESCO's launch of the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (CPPDCE), which since 2005 has empowered non-U.S. states to exempt 'culture' from multilateral free-trade deals, the U.S. moved to negotiate bilateral free-trade deals with Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Singapore, the Dominican Republic, Australia, Morocco, and South Korea (Jin, 2011). The US has also sought to expand their "services trade through rules-based liberalization in the WTO, bilateral free trade agreements, and other regional venues" (USTR, 2015a). Since 2013, the U.S. state has spearheaded new global free-trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). The TTIP is a bilateral free trade agreement between the U.S. and European Union that aims to eliminate "unnecessary 'behind the border' non-tariff barriers" and to "bind the highest level of liberalization that each side has achieved in trade agreements to date" (USTR, 2014: 110). With the TTP, a multilateral agreement between the U.S. and eleven countries including Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the U.S. state aims for a "consensus, in principle, on a text related to cross-border trade in services which would include fair, open, and transparent markets for services trade, including services supplied electronically" (USTR, 2014: 110). And, through the TISA, a multilateral service sector trade agreement, the U.S. state is working to get fifty countries (responsible for 70% of global service trade) to "address major and fundamental barriers to trade in services" and "modernize international rules governing services trade to reflect the reality of services trade in the new millennium" (USTR, 2014: 110).

While the U.S. state bolsters free trade in services abroad, at the domestic level the Department of Defense fuses military priorities with capitalist profit-making through the intensive research and development of weaponized ICTs. For example, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) brings together military agencies, universities and corporations to "advance knowledge through basic research and create innovative technologies". The purpose is to "prevent strategic surprise from negatively impacting U.S. national security and to create strategic surprise for U.S. adversaries by maintaining the technological superiority of the U.S. military" (DARPA, 2015). Through DARPA, the Department of Defense provisions physical space in military colleges and elite universities and allocates public monies to corporations which bring militarily-useful ICT

developments into world markets (Ruttan, 2006; Schiller, 2008). In 2015, for example, the Department of Defense allocated \$171 million to a consortium of Silicon Valley high-tech companies (including Apple) to support research and development into wearable technology (Hennigan, 2015). Furthermore, the Department of Defense is a significant consumer of the commodified goods and services that TNMCs produce and sell through procurement arrangements. Almost every major U.S.-based company has at some point since 2000, been a Department of Defense contractor. With the exception of Facebook, Electronic Arts and Activision-Blizzard, all the listed media companies have been Department of Defense clients. They have been sold commercialized video production services, radio and television equipment, telecommunication networks, antennas, processed film, engineering technologies, research know-how for software, iPhones, central processing units, and public relations services (InsideGov.com, 2015). These companies have raked in millions individually and billions collectively from the Department of Defense, and this undermines the neoliberal notion that private wealth accrues purely as result of free markets set apart from public outlays.

Although they are favoured recipients of U.S. government largesse, TNMCs do not always repay the state by making media and cultural export products that glorify official notions of America. They know that the sale of overtly ‘Americanizing’ media and entertainment products to countries around the world is not always a solid business strategy, so they increasingly de-Americanize the content of their cultural wares so that they may more easily capture and control global, national, and trans-local lifestyle markets (Mirrlees, 2013: 207). Global Hollywood, for example, engineers blockbuster films that downplay American ‘nationness’ and play up universality. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the highest-grossing of these releases worldwide were not explicitly about ‘America’: *Avatar* (2009), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *Shrek 2* (2004), *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (2006), *Spider-Man* (2002), *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009), *Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005), *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) and *Spider-Man 2* (2004). While a few of these globally profitable sci-fi/fantasy flicks briefly represent American people, geography, and culture, many of them downplay recognizable American-ness in order to obtain cross-border resonance. The TNMCs have also adopted a strategy known as “think globally, act locally” to maintain and/or expand their dominance (more) effectively (Jin, 2007: 763). For example, Viacom Media Networks owns a large number of regional and country-specific MTV channels elsewhere in North America and in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. Globalized or glocalized, culturally differentiated or hybridized, the TNMCs uniform commercial logic remains.

While U.S.-based TNMCs are adept at selling transnational consumer culture to the world, there is no guarantee their commodities will directly correspond with the exigencies of the U.S. Empire’s war propaganda. To encourage TNMCs to routinely roll war-glorifying cultural products out to the world, the Department of Defense operates a giant public affairs office that sources TNMCs with content that puts military personnel, policy and practice in the most positive light. War propaganda content-generation jobs are outsourced to subsidiaries. The Department of Defense’s Public Affairs Office coordinates “public information, internal information, community relations, information training, and audiovisual matters” (2014). Recent reports suggest that their expenditures range from \$4.7 billion to \$15 billion annually on everything from national recruitment ads to transnational psychological operations to military Facebook pages (AP, 2009; Trento, Waltemeyer and Gaskill, 2013). The Public Affairs Office runs the Defense.gov News and Defense.gov News Photos to source news companies with Department of Defense-promoting press releases, images, audio files,

publications, and video news releases. The office also has a Department of Defense Special Assistant for Entertainment Media to support Hollywood productions of spectacular war-themed music videos (i.e. Katy Perry's 'Part of Me') (Warner, 2012). Also supported are reality-TV shows (i.e. *Stars Earn Stripes*) (Yahr, 2012), films (i.e. *Man of Steel*) (Mowry, 2012), and video games (i.e. *America's Army*) (Allen, 2014; Barbaro, 2008; van der Graaf and Nieborg, 2003). Furthermore, the Department of Defense's media activity connects millions of military service members around the world via a specialist news channel, the American Forces Radio and Television Service broadcasts, the American Forces Press Service, the Stars and Stripes news service, and websites (Trento, Waltemeyer and Gaskill, 2013).

Because of its unrivalled economic, military and communications power, the U.S. Empire is better able to produce and circulate imagery and messages about its national military prowess than are other countries (including those BRICS countries who are now developing their own 'soft power') (Thussu, 2014). Some people on the receiving end of the U.S. Empire's global over-flow of pop commodities, public diplomacy campaigns and militainments may call for their home states to protect their way of life from Americanization. Others may embrace American productions and see the stories and spectacles they carry as a welcome alternative to what their home country's corporate media cartel sells to them (or deprives them of). Yet, there may be cultural-ideological effects, some invisible and some more manifest. People on the receiving end may at once love and hate America, admiring some of the values and principles it stands for and loathing the country when these values and principles are undermined. Some may enjoy American entertainments yet despise American capitalism and war policy. The total impacts of the U.S. Empire, however, are certainly not based on a reciprocal exchange or the mutually beneficial meeting of equals. As Elteren says, cultural mixings do not take "place on a level playing field" and instead have "frequently been conducted within the language and culture of the greater power, and within a global economic structure in which the other party command[s] only a little power" (2006: 351). Because the U.S. Empire possesses the greatest power to produce and distribute representations of culture to the world, cultural mixing between the US and the rest remains unequal and asymmetrical. The effects of U.S. Empire, however, are complex and contradictory rather than predictable. To explain how and why this is the case, transnational ethnographic research is required.

## Conclusion

Herbert I. Schiller passed away on 29 January 2000, and did not live to see the U.S. Empire's expansion in the post-9/11 period. However, as this article has demonstrated, the U.S. Empire and cultural imperialism that Schiller theorized, documented and critiqued continues to haunt the world, in old and new ways. As unpopular as Schiller has become in some quarters, we should take his theory seriously, for it is still analytically valuable for the political economy of communications tradition. The U.S. Empire, cultural imperialist coercion and persuasion, state-buttressed media corporate power, and the military-industrial-communications complex persist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As argued, the U.S. continues to operate as an Empire and the pillars of its structural power - economic, military and communications - remain firmly entrenched around the globe. The U.S. Empire still relies upon cultural imperialism to advance its objectives, and at present, it continues to combine coercion and persuasion to influence, change and integrate other countries. Despite the

remarkable rise of the BRICS over the past four decades or so, none of these countries rival the U.S. with regard to economic, military and media power.

Although the world system has many nation-states, media industries and culturally proximate markets, the U.S. is still the world's most significant center of TNMC financing, production, distribution, exhibiting, marketing and consumption. The U.S. state secures TNMC property rights, subsidizes their operations and promotes a global electronic, computer, audio-visual, telecommunication free-trade regime. With its free-flow policy of liberalization, de-regulation and privatization, the Federal government continues to support the capitalist interests of U.S.-based electronic, audiovisual, computer and telecommunication services firms. They presently constitute the world's largest service industry and prop up a U.S. service trade surplus of \$7.1 billion (USTR 2014c). Behind the TNMCs' supposed apolitical 'free-market' system, is the Department of Defense. They link with, subsidize, support and shape their operations and output. Although the cultural effects of the U.S. Empire may vary, from country to country, locale to locale, and person to person (Brooks, 2006), the Pew Research Center reports that global popular opinions about America "remain mostly positive" (Wike, Stokes and Poushter, 2015).

Although the U.S. Empire exists, it cannot shape or control everything that is happening all over the world, all the time. Mounting tensions between the U.S. and Russia, Iran, North Korea and China highlight how non-US states can pursue their own sovereign interests aligned with non-U.S. media organizations. So, while the U.S. Empire strives to influence other nation-states, media organizations, publics and cultures, oppositional and resistant practices against the U.S. Empire are always possible. From a planner's perspective, 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. cultural imperialism is not necessarily effective or productive.

## Author Bio

Tanner Mirrlees is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Communication and Digital Media Studies program at the University of Ontario IT (UOIT). His research examines the geopolitics, economics and ideologies of communications, digital media and popular culture. He is the author of *Global Entertainment Media: Between Cultural Imperialism and Cultural Globalization* (Routledge, 2013), *Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry* (University of British Columbia Press, 2015), the co-editor of *The Television Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and co-author of *MOOCS for Sale: Informational Capitalism and the Edu-Factory* (Paradigm Publishers, under contract). Mirrlees' writing has appeared in scholarly and popular venues.

## Endnotes

- [1] International political economists take hegemony to mean the following: dominant states such as the U.S. struggle on behalf of the dominant social class (i.e. capitalists) for hegemony (or dominance) in the world system and attempt to attract, integrate, and incorporate subordinate others (i.e. the working class, the precarious poor). The tools of persuasion and coercion and even brute force are employed to elicit or compel consent.
- [2] Nye's (2009) liberal concept of 'smart power' advises and encourages U.S. foreign policy elites, in their struggle for world leadership, to balance hard power strategies (making others do what you want by coercing them) with soft

power strategies (getting others to want what you want by attracting and co-opting them).

- [3] Furthermore, in 2014, the primary customer of most of these companies' was the Department of Defense, the percentage figures are as follows: Lockheed Martin 88%, Boeing 32%, BAE Systems 92.8%, Raytheon 97%, General Dynamics 60%, Northrop Grumman 76.7%, Airbus Group 18.1%, United Technologies 20%, Finmeccanica 54.2%, L-3 Communications 81%.

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