

學術對談

## 在多極世界中重思全球傳播： 知識不平等、數位主權與學科未來

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(Prof. Daya Kishan Thussu)

「歷史中有太多東西可以被調動。但這需要想像力，也需要持續的努力。西方理論不是一夜之間出現的；它們是在數十年裏，由很

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多學者逐步建構、反覆修正，再透過知識優勢與全球教學結構而穩固下來的。其他地方也需要同樣的時間。但我確實相信，這一天會到來。像你們這一代、乃至更年輕的一代學者，都可以作出極其重要的貢獻。所以，是的，我是樂觀的——非常樂觀。我認為，時機就是現在。」——達雅·基山·屠蘇教授

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Dialogue

## **Rethinking Global Communication in a Multipolar World: Epistemic Inequality, Digital Sovereignty, and the Future of the Field**

Discussants: Daya Kishan THUSSU <sup>a</sup>, Yu HUANG <sup>b</sup>, Anilesh KUMAR <sup>b</sup>

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### **Abstract**

In this academic dialogue, Professor Daya Kishan Thussu reflects on the intellectual development of international and global communication as a field, revisiting key concepts such as de-Westernization, de-Americanization, contra-flows, and digital sovereignty. The interview explores how historical power asymmetries continue to shape academic knowledge, why the rise of China and India matters for theory-building, and how platforms, artificial intelligence, and

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geopolitics are reshaping the communication order. It also considers the changing patterns of journalism, epistemic communities, and the need for more historically grounded and globally plural forms of scholarship. The conversation argues that the future of the field depends not only on responding to technological change but also on rethinking its conceptual foundations beyond established Western frameworks.

## 達雅·基山·屠蘇教授簡介

達雅·基山·屠蘇 (Daya Kishan Thusu) 是香港浸會大學傳理學院國際傳播學教授，為國際傳播與全球傳播研究領域的重要學者。曾任清華大學蘇世民書院訪問傑出教授兼首任迪士尼全球媒體講座教授；此前長期任教於倫敦威斯敏斯特大學，擔任國際傳播學教授，並創辦及共同主持印度媒體中心，同時兼任中國媒體中心研究顧問。屠蘇畢業於印度賈瓦哈拉爾·尼赫魯大學，獲國際關係博士學位，為 SAGE 期刊《全球媒體與傳播》(Global Media and Communication) 創刊人及主編之一。2014 年，屠蘇獲國際研究學會 (International Studies Association) 頒授「傑出學者獎」(Distinguished Scholar Award)，為首位獲此殊榮的非美國學者。其研究重點包括全球傳播、去西方化、軟實力、公共外交、印度媒體與文化，以及金磚國家傳播研究。

DT：達雅·基山·屠蘇

YH：黃煜

AK：阿尼萊什·庫馬爾

**YH：屠蘇教授，你已研究全球傳播數十年，你的研究也追蹤了從西方主導到新興媒體力量崛起的歷史轉變。在當前這一由數位平台、地緣政治緊張，以及全球南方媒體能見度日益提升為特徵的時刻的時刻，你如何理解今天的全球傳播秩序？我們是否真的正在邁向一個更加多極化的媒體景觀？**

DT：從某種意義上說，我在傳播學界一直都是一個相當特殊的人物，主要原因在於，我的學術背景並不直接來自傳播學。我受訓於歷史學、政治學與國際關係，同時也曾從事新聞工作。這樣的組合對我而言非常有用，因為它使我得以從一條頗為不同的路徑進入國際傳播研究。

當我還是一名記者時，我在印度報業信託社 (Press Trust of India) 的倫敦分社國際新聞部任職，當時它是印度最大的通訊社。與此同時，作為一名國際關係學生，我大量閱讀這一領域的文

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獻，參加各類研討會，並且即時追蹤全球衝突事件。例如在1980年代，兩伊戰爭就是我密切關注的對象之一，我會比較伊朗通訊社與伊拉克通訊社如何報導同一場戰爭，那是一段極具啟發性的經歷。我的學術背景來自國際關係領域，又從事著國際傳播工作，而在那個時候，同時結合這兩個領域的學者其實非常少。

後來，當我被任命為倫敦威斯敏斯特大學的國際傳播學教授時，我是英國第二位國際傳播學教授。第一位是利茲大學的菲利普·泰勒教授(Philip Taylor)，他本身受訓於歷史學，也是宣傳研究領域極為傑出的學者。這一背景對理解我的學術軌跡同樣重要。據我所知，我是英國該領域中第一位非西方背景的教授。

我的整個教育歷程，從基礎教育到博士階段都是在印度完成的，我始終對此感到自豪。1980年代的印度遠比今天貧窮，但學術標準卻非常高。當時的基礎設施普遍都很差，但教授們卻非常優秀。正是求學時的訓練塑造了我觀看世界的方式。我不是透過西方的稜鏡理解世界，而是透過另一種視角；這種視角受到印度歷史、其民主政治，以及其作為不結盟國家的位置所深刻影響。即便當時的印度尚不是一個主要強國，其外交政策話語仍始終強調獨立與不結盟。我想，這一切都影響了我對世界的理解方式。這種視角也體現在我那本被廣泛使用的著作《國際傳播：延續與變革》(*International Communication: Continuity and Change*)中。甚至這個書名本身都是有意為之的。它意在揭示：從19世紀至今，國際傳播領域存在著非常清晰的延續性。某些國家仍持續處於主導地位，而立足於這些國家的企業也仍在持續主導整個體系，但與此同時，變化也在發生。我們此刻身處中國；如果這場對話發生在三十年前，中國不會以今天這樣的方式進入討論。如今，情況當然已完全不同。

《國際傳播》的第一版出版於2000年，此後又陸續出版了三個後續版本，目前我也正在準備新版本。其中一個原因在於，出版社非常希望把一些新的討論納入進來，例如人工智能，以及它對傳播、全球傳播，乃至傳統意義上作為國家間互動的國際傳播所產生的影響。因此，這個領域已經發生了巨大的變化，變化的不

只是技術，也包括文化、基礎設施以及更廣義的信息系統。正因如此，我仍然認為「延續與變遷」這一主題很好地概括了這一學科。

至於國際傳播與全球傳播的區別，我認為這一點非常重要。傳統上，尤其是在冷戰時期，國際傳播主要被理解為政府與政府之間的傳播，因此才有了「國際傳播」這一名稱。那時大多數人根本不具備跨境傳播的手段。我成長的時候，我生活的地方甚至沒有電話。但今天，絕大多數人都有智能手機。傳播因此不再只是政府對政府，也包括人與人之間的傳播。社交媒體、TikTok以及其他平台，已經使跨境傳播成為日常生活的一部分。從這個意義上說，如今用「全球傳播」來表述更為準確。它不僅包括政府間傳播，也包括企業傳播與人際傳播。政府依然強大，但它們已經不再是傳播系統中唯一重要的行動者。

我的智識發展中的另一個重要面向在於，雖然我受訓於國際關係，但在那個學科內，傳播很少被視為核心議題，最多只是在宣傳研究中有所涉及。這種情況不僅存在於西方，也存在於其他地方。例如在美國，宣傳常常是在政治學系裏教授的，而且它未必總帶有第二次世界大戰後才逐漸獲得的那種負面含義。因此，在國際關係領域中真正嚴肅處理傳播問題的學者，其實非常少。在德里完成博士學位之後，我獲得了一個赴英國做博士後研究的獎學金。大多數拿到這類獎學金的人都會去牛津、劍橋、倫敦政治經濟學院或倫敦大學學院，但我想研究的是媒體與傳播。1988年的時候，英國認真教授傳播學的大學其實非常少。我最後去了英國公開大學，因為那裏有一個「第三世界研究」項目。那仍是一個「第三世界」尚屬通行說法的時代。在那裏，我開始看到一些自認進步、且帶有馬克思主義傾向的英國學者，是如何概念化所謂「第三世界」的。公開大學是一所進步主義的機構，而斯圖亞特·霍爾(Stuart Hall)就在那裏；事實上，我就是在那裏第一次見到他。但我漸漸意識到，「第三世界」這一類別本身就存在根本問題。在這一標籤之下，已經是富裕城邦的新加坡，以及幅員遼闊的中國，竟然可以被簡單地歸入同一範疇，這在我看來是荒謬的。作為一名年輕學者，同時也是一個局外人，我開始反對這類

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表述。這也構成了我對主導性思維方式最早的一種智識抵抗。不久之後，我在倫敦加入了傑米奈新聞社(Gemini News Service)，一家面向發展中世界的小型通訊社，如今已不存在。那段經歷使我得以真正接觸到西方之外的新聞實踐。我們在大約一百個國家擁有通訊員，而閱讀來自巴西、非洲與中國記者的稿件，對我而言極具思想啟發。儘管這家機構設在倫敦，但其取向明顯面向發展中世界。

綜合來看，正是這些背景為我提供了一種我所謂的「智識基礎設施」：它從定義上就是批判現狀的。這與很多發展中國家學者的經歷不同——他們去美國大學接受特定框架的學術訓練，並因這套框架成為其通向職業成功的路徑，而不斷再生產這套框架。值得慶幸的是，我與那種路徑之間保持了某種距離。如果回頭看我過去三十年的研究，我想，其中的確存在一種相當清晰的一致性，而其原因恰恰就在於此。

所以，回到你的問題，我會說，我們確實正在朝向一個更具多極化特徵的媒體景觀移動，但這需要附帶一些限定條件。毫無疑問，今天的體系比過去更具多元性。全球南方更加可見，新的媒體力量也已經出現。但我們不應把多極化誤認為平等。這個系統依然極不均衡。今天的全球傳播秩序確實更複雜、層次更多、爭議也更多，但它仍然深受權力不對稱的深刻制約。

**YH：**我還想請教你關於媒體研究去西方化的問題。你曾是這場討論的重要參與者之一，與詹姆斯·柯倫(James Curran)等重要學者一道推動了相關辯論，而這一議題大約在二十年前開始變得格外突出。今天回頭來看，你如何反思「去西方化」這一核心概念？你是否仍認為它是有效且富有生產力的？同時，你是否也看到它今天所存在的局限？

**DT：**是的，這是一個非常重要的問題。我曾在倫敦大學金史密斯學院教授一門碩士課程，叫作「全球媒體與跨國傳播」(Global Media and Transnational Communication)，這是英國第一門同類課程。我之所以得到這個職位，部分也是因為我在國際傳播方面的研究。差不多同一時期，柯倫於2000年共同編輯了《去西方化媒體

研究》(*De-Westernizing Media Studies*)，後來這本書也被譯成多種語言。在那門課的最後一堂，我常常邀請柯倫來給我的碩士生做講座，我們會討論「去西方化究竟意味著甚麼」、「為何它重要」等問題。柯倫是我很親近的朋友，也是一位了不起的學者，更是一位令人欽佩的人。但他自己有時也會半開玩笑地說，這是一個很有吸引力的題目 (*sexy topic*)。可見，這個說法本身確實很有吸引力。然而，如果仔細閱讀那本書，就會發現，除了〈導論〉之外，裏面其實並沒有那麼多對「去西方化」進行持續而深入的理論化討論。它更像是一系列以國家為單位的研究匯編。從這個意義上說，它其實並沒有系統性地理論化這一概念。但即便如此，它依然非常重要，因為它是少數幾次由一位重量級學者如此鮮明地把這個術語推到學術流通中心的時刻之一。我之所以對這個問題產生興趣，是因為我對西方主導話語原本就有一些基本的不滿。它的概括方式往往令人難以接受；其再現方式也存在深刻問題，且經常帶有殖民色彩。因此，我首先提出一個非常簡單的問題：所謂「西方」究竟是甚麼？保加利亞算不算西方？東歐算不算西方？這個範疇本身其實遠比人們通常想像的更不穩定。

在實際使用中，當人們說「西方」時，通常指的是一小群國家，主要是美國和英國。甚至德國在這場討論裏都往往不那麼重要。這便是我最初的關切：究竟是要去甚麼樣的「西方」？又是從哪一種「西方」中去除？這個說法之所以流行，是因為它具有智識上的吸引力。很多人引用、重複、接受它，但真正去拆解它的人卻很少。2008年，我試圖以自己的方式對這一討論做出貢獻，於是在威斯敏斯特大學組織了一場大型會議，主題是媒體研究的國際化 (*Internationalizing Media Studies*)。當時大約有250位參與者，以及40多位來自世界各地的教授。之後，我又編了一本同名書籍，並在羅特里奇出版社建立了一個同名書系。

我的基本觀點是，「去西方化」是一種負向表述。它可能會使人忽略大量在所謂「西方」所生產的重要學術成果。我所指的不只是實用性傳播研究，也包括心理學、宣傳研究以及許多其他領域的重要工作。因此，我問自己：為甚麼是去西方化，而不是國際化？

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在我看來，「國際化」是一個更具建設性的表述。這就是我在2009年出版相關專著時所推進的主張，而我也透過那一書系與期刊《全球媒體與傳播》(*Global Media and Communication*)延續了這條路線。自2005年以來，我一直是該刊的共同創刊人及執行主編，其基本原則在於：這一學科應當真正成為全球性的，而不是簡單地圍繞「西方/非西方」來組織。當時我提出的一個關鍵觀點是，影響最深遠的媒體轉型其實發生在亞洲，尤其是中國與印度。那個階段我對中國還不算特別了解，如今當然知道得更多了。但即便是在那時，我也很幸運能在威斯敏斯特大學同時接觸中國媒體中心和印度媒體中心。我經常參加由中國媒體中心組織的研討會，而我往往是房間裏唯一一位非中國人。中國學生有時會半開玩笑地問我：你到底是在研究印度，還是在研究中國？我總是回答：如果一個人真的對「全球」感興趣，那他就必須理解中國。

從今天回看，我認為那一判斷是正確的。全球媒體與傳播領域最重大的轉型，無疑就是中國的崛起；而第二個正在展開中的重大轉型，則是印度的崛起。從規模與重要性來看，這些都是全球性的發展。因此，我當時的介入不僅僅是對去西方化的批評，更是在試圖提出一種替代性的框架。

**AK：**讓我在這一點上再追問。在你的研究中，你還使用「去美國化」這一說法。年輕學者應當如何理解這些術語之間的關係？所謂去西方化，是否其實就是去美國化？還是它更接近去殖民化？抑或這些概念本身就是彼此交疊、甚至容易造成混淆？

**DT：**這是一個非常有意思的問題。正如我剛才所說，「西方」本身已經是一個相當不精確的範疇。相比之下，「去美國化」則更為精確，因為不管人們是否喜歡，美國仍然是全球媒體體系中最重要的一國。這一點體現在硬體、軟體、基礎設施，以及全球敘事層面。

如果我們真的想建立一種替代性的世界敘述，那麼我們就必須超越美國視角下的世界觀。這也正是我使用「去美國化」這一表述的原因。我在不同的語境下都用過這個概念。例如，在我關於軟實力的研究裏，我專門有一章討論「去美國化軟實力」。軟實力

這一概念起源於美國，後來世界各地的學者就直接照搬，卻沒有對它進行充分的反思。在我看來，這其實是一種智識依附。

隨著人工智能的到來，我懷疑這種趨勢可能還會變得更強。所以，在很多方面，「去美國化」是一個更精確的說法。在我們這個領域，支配形式絕大多數是美國式的。如果觀察國際議題如何被報導，你會發現很多人所接觸和消費的內容基本都源自美國。英國當然也有影響力，但英國外交政策話語很多時候又與美國高度一致。而缺席的，往往正是中國、印度、巴西或俄羅斯的視角。如果你回溯那些主導性敘事的源頭，你就會看到一個完全不同的圖景。這就是我所說的去美國化。

**AK：**與此相關，同時也涉及人工智能，你曾經把AI稱為不只是「artificial intelligence」，而是「American intelligence」。

DT：它來自哪裏？這才是關鍵。

**YH：**但這一推論是否必然成立？某個東西起源於某一國家，並不意味著它不能成為普遍性的知識。比如現代醫學，雖然發展於西方語境中，但今天它已經是全球性的知識。

DT：我當然同意這本身也帶有某種修辭意味。但如果我們看整個全球格局，美國公司仍然居於主導地位。DeepSeek是一個非常有趣的例外，我們或許稍後可以回到這個問題。但總體而言，基礎設施、平台以及治理邏輯，仍主要來自美國。這裏還有一個更嚴重的問題。如果某一方擁有影響人們如何思考、如何寫作、採用何種概念，乃至影響人們能夠想像甚麼的能力，那麼它就掌握了一種極為重要的權力形式。我記得在1990年代、互聯網早期的時候，我曾在微軟的一個詞典功能裏輸入「imperialism」這個詞，系統回覆我說這個詞不存在。因此，敘事的規訓其實可以是非常細微的。

當我看著現在許多年輕人的寫作，我常覺得原創性大不如前，因為越來越多的思考與研究工作都交給機器去做了。而這還只是早期階段，一旦這些技術變得更成熟，我們甚至可能會把自己的智力整體外包給機器。所以，這個說法聽上去或許有些戲劇化，但我的確對此感到擔憂。事實上，我不久後就要做一場題為

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「智能帝國主義：人工還是真實？」(Intelligent Imperialism: Artificial or Real?)的演講。

**AK：**智能帝國主義？

**DT：**沒錯。它極其智能。你甚至不會意識到，自己其實正在把自己的智力交給機器。當然，這也會進一步引出更廣泛的問題，例如監控以及新的控制形式。

**YH：**在進入下一個問題之前，我想提出一個更宏觀的歷史問題。大約五十年前，至少存在兩種有影響力的世界劃分方式。一種是主流的「三個世界」模型：第一世界是以美國為首的西方資本主義陣營，第二世界是蘇聯領導的社會主義陣營，第三世界則是其餘所有國家。後來，毛澤東主席又提出了另一種劃分方式：第一世界是美國和蘇聯這兩個超級大國，第二世界是西歐等先進資本主義國家，第三世界則是發展中國家。與主流模型相比，毛的框架似乎更多建立在支配、權力與影響力之上，而不是意識形態或社會制度之上。這就牽涉到全球南方的問題。一些中國左翼學者，如趙月枝，對這種思路表現出相當的共鳴，而你似乎也至少在一定程度上對此表示認同。所以我想請問：當你思考這些類別時，你是否仍把意識形態與社會制度視為最重要的區分依據？還是說，你更傾向於把它們放在一邊，而把重點放在權力、物質能力與全球影響力上？

**DT：**這同樣是一個非常好的問題。正如你所知，「第三世界」這個說法本身是1950年代由一位法國社會學家提出的，而它從一開始就極不精確。你不可能把兩大陣營之外的所有國家都放進同一個類別裏。

從這個意義上說，毛的劃分方式在某些方面確實比那種「自由資本主義對共產主義、其餘皆為第三世界」的簡單二元對立更接近地緣政治現實。那種傳統框架掩蓋了各陣營內部的重要差異。例如，蘇聯式共產主義從來沒有被中國原封不動地接受。中蘇分裂在中華人民共和國成立不到十年後就已經出現。蘇聯模式之所以未能完全適用於中國，是因為中國革命的基本單位是農民，而不是列寧主義經典意義上的工業無產階級。因此，即便是

馬克思主義，在中國也必須被加以本土化調整。同樣地，在所謂「西方」內部，西歐式資本主義始終與美國式資本主義不同。這一點直到今天仍然如此。即便是現在，歐洲某些地方仍然保有與美國截然不同的福利安排。因此，這些大而化之的類別，其實掩蓋了極其重要的內部差異。

至於南北框架，這同樣是西方提出的說法，與威利·布蘭特 (Willy Brandt) 及南北委員會密切相關。它之所以出現，部分是因為舊有的東西對立框架已不再充分。到了近年，這套說法又以「全球南方」的形式重新回來。由於「第三世界」過於冒犯，而「發展中世界」又過於寬泛與含糊，「全球南方」遂成為一個時興的替代詞。我也使用這個說法，不過我有時更願意稱之為「多數世界」，因為就人口而言，它確實如此。

然而，即便在全球南方內部，差異也極其巨大。所以，回到你先前提到的多極化問題，是的，世界變得更具多極性，但這種多極性同樣存在於全球南方內部。不同國家有不同的利益、軌跡與影響範圍，它並不是一個統一的集團。即便是在像金磚國家這樣的組合中，也存在巨大差異。例如南非與中國經濟規模之間的差距就是顯而易見的。印度與中國之間也存在深刻的政治差異。俄羅斯則又是一個特殊案例。所以，我最基本的意思是，「全球南方」本身也是一個有問題的術語。它也許有用，但必須被謹慎且精確地使用，而不是僅僅因為它很時髦就加以套用。

**YH：**我想把問題再推進。你長期主張超越西方中心性。然而，塑造學術知識的許多結構——期刊、引文體系、研究評估機制，以及學術流通本身——至今仍然深深以西方為中心。你如何看待建構一種更加真正多元、更加全球性的傳播學術的可能性？

**DT：**問題是結構性的，而且是根本結構性的。知識組織的方式持續優先承認由世界某一特定區域所生產的知識，而這背後是有歷史原因的。像牛津、海德堡這樣的大學都極其古老，它們所體現的研究傳統，比我們今天所稱的全球南方還要早上好幾個世紀。再加上殖民歷史，這些國家曾在全球範圍內擴張存在，並在世界尺度上積累了檔案、制度與權威。

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例如，如果一個人想研究印度古代史，他今天仍然可能需要去牛津，而不是印度本土大學，才能找到關鍵資料。與非洲相關的知識生產，以及在一定程度上的中國研究，也存在類似情況。所以歷史很重要。

其次，一旦你在一開始就掌握了權力，你也就獲得了制定標準的能力。你決定哪些期刊是「頂級」期刊，哪些出版社被承認，哪些引文實踐重要，以及哪一種語言是學術承認的媒介。為甚麼幾乎所有所謂頂級期刊都是英文期刊？這是否意味著意大利人、德國人、北歐人、俄羅斯人等缺乏智識創造力？當然不是。但如果他們想獲得承認，就常常必須用英文發表。

因此，這裏既有歷史脈絡，也有語言脈絡。主導性的殖民強權曾是英國，因此英語成為全球語言；而後，隨著美國崛起，這種語言霸權又被進一步放大。今天，美國權力在很大程度上建構著整個系統。我與一些大型出版社有非常密切的合作，從那個角度來看，我可以說，這個系統至今仍深度扭曲。

**YH：**你所說的「扭曲」，具體是甚麼意思？

**DT：**所謂扭曲，是指我們今天對印度、中國等國家的認知，經常是透過第三手、第四手的來源中介而來的。知識流動是垂直的，而不是水平的。真正的水平性學術交流仍然太少。這才是問題的核心。說得更直白一點，至今仍存在一種根深蒂固的假設：權威性知識是與白人學者聯繫在一起的。我在許多語境中都見過這種現象。例如在中國學術空間裏，有時人們會下意識地認為，只要一位白人學者發言，那麼他說的一定是某種本質上重要的內容，即使其實那些話極其平庸。權威不只是附著在論證上，更附著在發言者及其背後那整套歷史聲望體系之上。

在印度，這種機制的運作方式略有不同，可能是因為我們對相關語言與話語本身足夠熟悉，因此更容易看穿它們。但核心問題仍在於：這些因歷史而形成的知識等級秩序，始終在不斷地自我複製。

我舉一個例子，我於2005年創辦了期刊《全球媒體與傳播》。從一開始，我就希望有中國學者能加入編委會。但在那個時候，

非常難找到在英語學術世界中具有能見度的中國學者。因此，我只能依靠那些常常身處香港或其他地區、並已經在英語學術網絡中具有能見度的人。可如果你把時間快轉二十年，情況就大不相同了。今天，中國學者用英語發表論文的數量已經非常龐大。如果有人做一個嚴謹的統計研究，我一點也不會驚訝：中國很可能已經在總量上位列世界前列。其質量當然參差不齊，但其規模無疑極大。

所以，我所描述的這種結構雖然在歷史上可以理解，但它同樣必須在歷史上被挑戰。第一步，就是必須擺脫這種假設：只有世界某一部分所生產的知識才算嚴肅知識。但這並不容易，因為這種等級秩序又與各類指標、排名與制度性把關緊密綁定。晉升委員會會問：你在某些期刊上發表了多少篇文章？但問題是，為甚麼偏偏是那些期刊構成了基準？為甚麼不是中國、俄羅斯、非洲或拉丁美洲的期刊？

因此，我的回答是：如果我們無法超越這套價值層級，那麼問題就會持續存在。與此同時，我們也必須承認，現實中的制度仍由別處所控制，所以你又不得不在這個體系之內工作。也就是說，你必須一邊進入它，一邊挑戰它。這也就是為甚麼我常常對中國同事說：當中國今天已經擁有如此龐大的資源、制度能力與知識生產條件時，還要在多長時間裏繼續停留在一種衍生性話語中？中國已經具備了做得更多的條件，不只是再生產現有框架。因此，這個挑戰不僅是結構性的，同時也是智識性的。

**AK：**那我接著追問。你剛才把傳播學術的主導格局描述為一個結構性問題。你也經常談到「知識共同體」。能否請你進一步說明，知識共同體是如何幫助維持這一結構的？年輕學者又應如何理解自己在塑造知識與理論方面的角色？

**DT：**知識共同體是根本性的。它們構成了這一領域的智識基礎設施。它們設定議程，界定合法性的門檻，告訴我們甚麼算理論、甚麼算證據，以及哪些案例應被視為核心、哪些又只能被當作例子。

這絕不是一件無足輕重的事。為甚麼某些大學會被視為天然具有權威性，而另一些則不會？為甚麼有些機構即使資源未必優

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於其他大學，也能自動賦予學術合法性？例如香港浸會大學，從財政與物質條件來看，其配置其實比我所接觸過的不少機構都更好。但資源本身並不能保證它自動生產出被國際承認的學術成就。問題更在於智識標準、學術文化，以及能否真正形成一個有生命力的知識共同體。

例如我在金史密斯學院的時候，那並不是一所富裕的學校，但我身邊幾乎每一位同事都在各自領域中有明確的學術存在感。因此，問題不只是錢，而在於你能否建立一個屬於自己的共同體，並由此設定標準，而不是總是向既有中心屈服。

這也正是知識共同體之所以如此重要的原因。它們塑造整個領域，界定甚麼理論重要、哪些討論值得進入。於是，來自印度、中國或其他地方的學者，就常常只是被帶進來作為經驗性例證，而不是理論生產者。他們因此被放在邊緣。但真正應該追問的是：為甚麼他們在邊緣？誰決定了中心在哪裏？這才是最根本的問題。

**YH：**你提出的文化流動觀念，對許多試圖超越「西方－其餘世界」媒體流動模型的學者產生了極大影響。在今天這個平台驅動的環境中，Google、Meta與TikTok等公司深刻塑造著全球傳播。你是否認為，文化流動這一觀念今天仍然有效？還是說，我們需要新的方式來理解今天全球媒介權力的運作？我還想補充一點：今天也出現了像微信這樣的中國平台，它們在國際上、尤其在年輕人當中，正變得越來越可見。因此，這不再只是西方媒體主導的故事。

**DT：**是的，完全如此。這其實可以追溯到我2007年出版的一本書：《流動中的媒體：全球流動與反向流動》(*Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow*)。但這一想法本身還要更早。就我個人而言，「反向流動」(contra-flow)這一術語最早出現在我1990年代初與奧利弗·博伊德－巴雷特教授(Oliver Boyd-Barrett)合作的研究中。1992年，我們出版了一部聯合國教科文組織文集《全球新聞中的反向流動》(*Contra-Flow in Global News*)。那項研究主要關注的是，在路透社、法新社等全球大型通訊社之外的新

聞機構，如何透過聯合國教科文組織當時所說的「新聞交換機制」彼此協作。那其實就是這個概念的起點。

此後，該著作的探討重點則轉向了電視媒體，其核心論點在於：那種傳統全球化論——即世界各地的人都只是在看美國電視——其實過於簡化。事實並非如此。當時已經存在其他行動者、其他回路，以及其他形式的流動。所以我不僅區分了由熟悉的美國大玩家所主導的支配性流動，也提出了所謂「次屬流動」(subaltern flows)：那些仍然處於邊緣或外圍、但正在逐漸變得可見的流動。

如果今天把視角快轉到社交媒體時代與TikTok這樣的平台時代，情況就變得更加複雜。只看中國和印度就夠了。今天，印度的網絡接入人口大約已達十億，中國也差不多。這些人當中的絕大多數都接入了某種形式的社交媒體，這當然會產生極其龐大的流量。同時，這兩個國家又在全球各地擁有龐大的僑民人口，因此，這些流動已無疑是全球性的。

再看看娛樂。韓流曾經主要是一種東亞區域現象，而今天它已成為真正的全球現象。TikTok是全球性的。微信雖然並非全球普及，但在許多中國具有重要經濟或基礎設施存在的地方中也更常被使用，它也正在變得越來越全球化。這些都不是西方平台，但它們如今都已參與全球流通。

這並不意味著原有的大玩家已經消失。就全球而言，最大的平台大多仍然來自美國。即便Meta最大的受眾可能已不在西方，Meta本身依然不是印度或中國的平台。這也恰恰說明了中國案例為何如此有趣：中國發展出了自身的平台生態，而隨著中國的全球化，這些平台也正逐漸向外擴展。因此，我們今天所面對的是一個遠比我當年最初討論反向流動時更具層次、也更為複雜的環境。

我唯一想補充的提醒是：我們不應把反向流動浪漫化為某種純粹的抵抗。這些媒體工業仍然運作於市場環境之中。它們仍然要建立受眾、銷售產品並創造價值。所以，雖然反向流動確實標

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誌著一種超越西方主導性流通回路的移動，但它並不必然意味著對其徹底對抗。

**AK：**如果我可以接著問，像中國和印度這樣的國家，如今不僅擁有龐大的用戶基礎，也逐漸擁有自己的平台。我想請你再進一步談談：除了內容層面的抵抗之外，基礎設施與內容提供者本身是否也構成抵抗？今天很流行的一個說法是「數位主權」。你能否解釋一下這一概念，並將其與你早先的反向流動理論聯繫起來？

**DT：**是的，這是一個非常好的問題。中國事實上已經在相當程度上實現了數位主權。它對Google與Meta等公司採取了一種高度策略性的處理方式。其基本邏輯是：可以讓你們進來；我們會觀察你們如何運作，學習你們的商業模式與技術模式；但最終你們不會支配這一空間，因為我們將建立自己的系統。相比之下，印度並沒有以同樣的方式做到這一點。因此，儘管印度是全球最大的傳播市場之一，它其實並未在實質意義上擁有數位主權。在那裏，數位主權更多仍是一種口號，或一種政治抱負。

如果Meta突然把Facebook從印度撤出，那麼數以億計的用戶將無法獲得一個同等規模的本土替代方案。而這並不只是關於日常消費。這些基礎設施同時也涉及戰略傳播、情報以及許多其他功能。如果一個國家無法掌握其境內信息流動所依賴的傳播基礎設施，那麼主權問題就會變得極為現實。印度其實具備發展這類系統的技術能力，並且在某些領域已經開始這麼做，但它仍然有很長的路要走。相比之下，中國則提供了一個非常重要的範例，展示數位主權是如何被真正建構起來的。

**YH：**這麼說，從印度的角度看，中國是一個典範？

**DT：**如果我們談的是數位主權，那麼是的。就數位主權而言，中國確實是一個重要的範例。中國的互聯網在實質意義上是中國的：基礎設施是中國的，平台是中國的，而且在Google、Amazon、Facebook等幾乎所有在別處使用的平台背後，中國都有本土的對應物。更重要的是，這些平台如今也已不再只局限於中國境內，它們正逐步向外輸出，例如通過「一帶一路」的倡議。

**YH：**但如果是這樣，你是否仍然接受一種「全球－地方」框架？中國似乎以極高程度的控制，使其對外部平台相對封閉，同時又將自己的平台向外擴展。除了少數極為特殊的國家外，真的能成為其他國家的範本嗎？

**DT：**我不會這樣來框定它。恕我直言，這仍是一種相當西方化的理解。在我2018年共同編輯的一本關於中國媒體全球化的著作《中國媒體走向全球》(*China's Media Go Global*)中，我提出了幾乎相反的觀點。我當時主張，正是因為中國對大型外國平台進行了規管與限制，它才得以培育出自己的平台。在1990年代和2000年代初，中國還沒有今天這樣強大的全球力量，但它已經有了一種清晰的願景：它需要建立自己的自主系統。

今天，很多印度人也開始問同樣的問題。印度擁有龐大的IT產業，有能力極強的科學家與工程師，有巨大的國內市場，也有非常龐大的年輕人口。那麼，為甚麼它不能建立同等規模的本國平台？很多時候，答案其實是政治性的，因為印度政治階層中的某些部分仍然與美國利益高度一致。

因此，我的論點一直是：那種標準的西方話語——把中國簡單等同於審查、管制——其實忽略了一件極其關鍵的事情。恰恰是因為存在規管，中國才得以建立自己的平台。否則，這根本不可能發生。真正做到這一點、且規模可與中國相比的國家其實非常少。

**YH：**讓我再把這個問題推進一步。其他國家也曾試圖透過規管與隔離來塑造自己的媒體系統，但為甚麼只有中國在這一規模上取得了成功？規模是關鍵的原因嗎？中國今天是世界第二大經濟體，但蘇聯當年規模也很大。所以，規模似乎本身還不足以構成充分解釋。

**DT：**這背後有幾個原因。首先，當然需要技術能力。你需要具備能夠建構可服務十億級用戶規模系統的科學家、工程師與技術人員。例如，印度在數位支付方面就取得了非常重要的成果。它的公共數位支付系統非常成功，而且那是由國家而非美國企業所建立的。這本身也是一種數位主權的體現。

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其次，在中國的情況下，存在一種極具策略性的規管願景：也就是說，儘管中國當時尚無法直接與美國巨頭競爭，但它可以創造條件，使本土系統得以成長，直到強大到足以與之抗衡。今天我們所看到的正是這一過程的結果。中國如今已經在相當先進的技術層級上運作，並不是每個國家都能做到中國所做的事情。伊朗做不到，俄羅斯則是近年，尤其是在烏克蘭戰爭之後，才更積極地朝這個方向移動。其他一些國家或許可以實現部分自主，但我現在談的是大國。所以，是的，規模很重要，但技術能力、國家戰略與長期願景同樣重要。

**AK：**但這如何再與你最初的反向流動理論連接起來？數位主權能否也透過那個理論視角來理解？國際傳播學者能否把數位主權視為一個與反向流動相連的分析框架？

**DT：**問題在於，如果你看看我們今天在傳播院校裏真正教給學生的是甚麼，就會發現這些議題仍然沒有受到足夠重視。學生其實應該接觸像「主權」這樣的概念。每個國家為甚麼不應追求數位主權呢？當然，並不是每個國家都能做到，因為許多國家缺乏必要的基礎設施。有些國家仍將依賴更大的強權。但這種依賴恰恰說明了這一概念如此重要的原因。

如果你對很多傳播學學生說「主權」這個詞，他們往往只會一臉茫然地看著你。這一點其實說明了很多問題：傳播學這個領域尚未發展出它本應有的智識深度。它本來就是一門跨學科的學科，本應更系統地從政治學、經濟學與國際關係中汲取養分。但太多時候，它並沒有這樣做。

即便是國際傳播本身，在很多地方也並未被作為一個嚴格的學術領域來教授。在中國，近年來它變得更受重視，部分是因為中國政府非常關心中國在海外的形象。但國際傳播絕不能被簡化為「一個國家如何改善其國家形象」的問題。它遠比那更廣泛，也更複雜。

**YH：**讓我再轉向另一個問題。近年來，國際傳播與地緣政治的聯繫越來越緊密，無論是在數位主權、信息戰，還是戰略敘事等討論中

**皆是如此。從你的角度看，這一領域對此作出了怎樣的回應？學者們是否充分介入了這一地緣政治轉向？**

DT：簡短的回答是：沒有。我最近就這個議題出版了一本書《全球傳播的地緣政治變遷》(*Changing Geopolitics of Global Communication*)；據我所知，那可能是第一本明確把地緣政治與全球傳播聯繫起來的著作。所以我會說，這個領域的回應仍然遠遠不夠。這些問題今天依然常常被當作屬於另一門學科，彷彿與傳播無關。這也正是我先前之所以強調傳播與國際關係之間那道鴻溝的原因之一。由於我在這個領域中的角色——包括我擔任國際媒體與傳播研究學會(IAMCR)主席期間的工作——我對國際上正在發生甚麼有相當全面的了解，而真正有系統地處理這些問題的地方仍然非常少。

當然也有一些例外。例如在印度，有一所重要的大眾傳播機構最近才剛剛開設了戰略傳播碩士項目。其基本論點是：印度是一個大國，但它仍然不知道如何有效塑造與輸出自己的敘事。我曾去那裏做講座，但那只是一所機構。相比之下，我讀博士的那所大學——賈瓦哈拉爾·尼赫魯大學——至今仍有很多人在研究所謂的「硬國際關係」：核戰略、軍事事務、傳統地緣政治，而這些研究與傳播幾乎沒有甚麼聯繫。我的回應是：世界早就變了。

所以，這個領域在這方面仍然相當薄弱。對中國、印度這樣的國家而言，本應有更多把傳播與國際關係結合起來的戰略性思考。

**YH：我想把話題轉到新聞學。你在全球信息與娛樂的研究，早已指出新聞學日益與娛樂及商業媒體邏輯交錯在一起。今天，在演算法新聞流、網紅以及高度極化的信息環境下，新聞與娛樂之間的邊界似乎更加模糊。你如何看待今天新聞學角色的演變？**

DT：是的，我曾寫過《作為娛樂的新聞：全球資訊娛樂化的興起》(*News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment*)來討論這個問題，而那本書中包含了對資訊娛樂化的相當充分的歷史梳理。其實，這一現象並不新鮮。它有很長的歷史，而且最初就是

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從美國發展出來的。社交媒體時代，尤其是在TikTok式內容出現之後，這種趨勢被大幅度強化了。這當然正在影響新聞學，因為新聞工作者如今要面對的是一個24小時不間斷的內容流，它更短、更快、更具視覺吸引力，也更能即時抓住注意力。在這樣的條件下，記者能夠提供背景、深度與原創分析的時間與空間都變少了。

但與此同時，也存在一種反向回應。例如，在長篇新聞寫作的語境中，我們就可以看到這種反向趨勢。《衛報》(*The Guardian*)就有「長讀」(*The Long Read*)欄目，而且很多人確實會閱讀這類文章。因此，也存在一種反向趨勢。這部分或許與世代差異有關。我這一代人也許仍然願意閱讀幾千字的長文，而對某些年輕讀者來說，五十個字都嫌多。但無論如何，新聞學顯然正承受巨大壓力，且這是一個全球性現象。

更讓我擔心的是，人工智能將對新聞學造成何種影響。作為一種研究工具，AI可以非常有用；但就其對就業、專業權威與新聞功能的影響而言，它提出的是更大的問題。如果機器越來越能夠完成這些任務，那麼新聞學作為一種職業將何去何從？在我看來，這才是更為嚴重的挑戰。

**AK：**我想做一個簡短追問。正因為今天AI已經可以撰寫新聞、生成紀錄片，以及產出各種視覺與文本材料，人們慢慢會問：我們還需要記者做甚麼？但新聞學並不只是寫作，它也關乎思考。如果你要給年輕的國際傳播學者一些建議，你會如何看待「思考本身」的重要性？

**DT：**我首先會說，在社交媒體上少花一些時間，多花一些時間去思考。但思考本身並不簡單，它需要反省，而我懷疑，整整一代人正在喪失持續反省的能力，這一點與生活方式及媒體習慣都有關。

也正因如此，像我們現在這樣的對話才很重要，有同意，也有分歧；我們把問題的不同面向放到桌面上，於是就會引出反駁、更好的問題。這就是對思考能力的培養。我認為，這在我們所處的學術環境中尤為關鍵，因為很多時候存在一種非常強烈的工具主義傾向：發四篇文章，拿到一個職位，然後再往下一階段

走。在那種邏輯之下，一個人其實不需要更深地理解任何東西。但如果你去看那些真正產生思想影響的人——無論是在學術界、藝術界還是公共生活中——他們幾乎總是那些思考得更深的人。反省是重要的。

這也再次與我們先前談到的知識共同體有關。為甚麼有些共同體能生產出那麼多理論與概念創新？以印度為例，我很自豪的一點是，那裏長期存在一種辯論文化。你知道「慣於爭鳴的印度人」(The Argumentative Indian) 這句話嗎？人們爭論、分歧，並透過持續辯論來推進思想。如果你回看西方智識史，也會看到非常強的論辯傳統。在我看來，那才是思考。它不是看一個短小的線上教學影片就能學會的東西。

**YH：**如果我仍然簡短地回到新聞學問題本身，你能否更直接地說明，你認為今天新聞學的角色究竟是甚麼？

**DT：**這取決於新聞學所處的國家與政治制度。中國與英國的新聞學就非常不同。例如在英國的理想情境中，新聞學常被理解為民主的第四權力，用來監督與制衡權力。但在中國，情況顯然並非以同樣方式存在。所以，脈絡非常重要：政治、文化以及制度脈絡都重要。

如果按照教科書式的說法，記者的角色是提供符合公共利益的信息，並對其進行詮釋。這是理想狀態。但在實踐中，新聞學同時也是一門生意；它同時也與娛樂相連；此外，這種現象往往與機器人帳號、合成內容以及自動化流通並存。在當前涉及伊朗的衝突中，你其實已經可以看到大量機器人帳號在製造假影片與虛假敘事。所以，今天的新聞場域正在變得更不穩定，也更困難。

**YH：**讓我進入最後一個實質性問題。你在很長時間裏深度參與並塑造了國際傳播這一領域。那麼，你認為今天最值得學者們關注的核心智識問題是甚麼？換句話說，你覺得這個領域正走向何方？未來我們又需要更多甚麼樣的研究？

**DT：**這是一個非常重要的問題。簡言之，該領域正日趨技術化與數據驅動。因此，我的建議是往後退一步，不要忘記更大的脈絡——不要忘記歷史、意識形態與政治。

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我認為，在國際傳播領域內部也存在一種日益明顯的傾向：學界日益轉向性別、身分認同與性取向等微觀議題，卻往往因此忽略了更為宏觀的全局視野。這些問題當然重要，但我們不應因此忽視更廣泛的地緣政治變動。例如今天伊朗正在發生的事情，就具有重大的全球意義，它可能會重塑整個世界。然而，我們的課程中卻沒有足夠多地教授這類政治性問題。

如果我們追溯到國際傳播學的學科起源，可以發現它植根於國際政治與國際關係等更為寬廣的學科脈絡。政治始終位於其核心位置。但如今，在更寬廣的「全球傳播」傘形之下，這一領域正越來越轉向文化與身分議題。因此，我會提醒年輕學者，不要忽視脈絡與歷史。

我也想再次重申我先前說過的：我們需要一種「心智的去殖民化」，尤其是全球南方的學者更是如此。我們必須從自己的歷史中汲取智識資源。而這也意味著，我們需要在課程中放進更多歷史。我舉一個小例子，2004年我第一次來中國時，曾與我的兩位中國學生一起去頤和園。當時我看到一座雕像旁寫著「Rahul」這個詞，旁邊還有中英文對照。我問那兩位學生是否知道那是甚麼意思，他們說不知道。我之所以認得它，是因為「Rahul」是我外甥的名字。但當然，它同時也是佛陀之子的名字。於是我就問他們：這個詞是怎樣傳到這裏來的？幾個世紀以前，這樣一個概念是如何跨越空間流動的？這難道不也是一種傳播過程嗎？如果是，那麼為甚麼我們沒有傳播學者去研究這種長時段的移動、翻譯與交流史？這同樣是國際傳播的議題。

這只是其中一個例子，實際上還有無數類似案例可以被提出。事實上，我至今仍然很想推進一種更具歷史性與文明論視野的傳播研究方向。這又把我們帶回「延續與變遷」這一問題。延續性極其重要，尤其是在今天，當許多社會都在重新發現並重申其文明性過去的時候。

**AK：**讓我最後一個問題收束，回到你在整場對談中反覆強調的一點：所謂「大問題」的重要性。這些年來，你研究過許多大概念——流動、資訊娛樂化等等。如果把當下與你剛進入國際傳播

**領域的時期相比，你是否看到一些根本性的相似之處？現實政治是否始終具有如此強的延續性，以至於期待全新的理論也許並不現實？**

DT：理論建構需要時間。它總是從某種特定的歷史與地緣政治脈絡中生長出來。但我會說，當前這一時刻，恰恰是一個新的理論工作變得可能的時刻，因為不管人們喜不喜歡，西方正在衰落。這種衰落是可以被證明的。因此，對替代性視角的需求正在不斷上升。這些替代性視角將不得不來自那些不僅擁有物質力量、也擁有智識能力的國家。中國、印度都具備這一點，伊斯蘭世界的一些部分也具備這一點。例如伊朗，就是一個在智識與歷史上都極其重要的文明。一旦這些視角開始更有自信地從自身的歷史與經驗出發發聲，我們就會看到一種更為實質性的去西方化話語。

就以印度為例。在我成長的地區，從6世紀到12世紀之間，曾存在過一所也許是當時世界上規模最大的古代大學，但今天幾乎沒有任何印度之外的人知道它，這種缺席應由誰負責？再看摩洛哥：世界上現存最古老的大學就在那裏，而不在歐洲。那麼，為甚麼摩洛哥人沒有更有力地書寫這件事情？所以，是的，脈絡正在改變。我認為，西方主導正在衰落——不是消失，而是衰落。而隨著其他力量的崛起，新的機會也在打開。

這也就是為甚麼我一直強調歷史。歷史中有太多東西可以被調動。但這需要想像力，也需要持續的努力。西方理論不是一夜之間出現的；它們是在數十年裏，由很多學者逐步建構、反覆修正，再透過知識優勢與全球教學結構而穩固下來的。其他地方也需要同樣的時間。但我確實相信，這一天會到來。像你們這一代、乃至更年輕的一代學者，都可以作出極其重要的貢獻。所以，是的，我是樂觀的——非常樂觀。我認為，時機就是現在。

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Academic Dialogue with **Daya Kishan THUSSU**, **Yu HUANG**,  
and **Anilesh KUMAR**

## **Rethinking Global Communication in a Multipolar World: Epistemic Inequality, Digital Sovereignty, and the Future of the Field**

DT: Daya Kishan THUSSU

YH: Yu HUANG

AK: Anilesh KUMAR

**YH: Professor Thussu, you have been studying global communication for several decades, and your work has traced the shift from Western dominance to the emergence of new media powers. In the current moment, marked by digital platforms, geopolitical tensions, and the growing visibility of Global South media, how do you make sense of the global communication order today? Are we really moving toward a more multipolar media landscape?**

DT: In some ways, I have always been a rather unusual figure within communication studies, largely because my background is not in communication as such. I was trained in history, political science, and international relations, and I also worked as a journalist. That combination proved very useful, because it led me to international communication from a rather different direction.

When I was working as a journalist, I was on the foreign desk in London for the Press Trust of India, then the largest news agency in India. At the same time, as a student of international relations, I was reading widely in the field, attending seminars, and following global conflicts in real time. This was the 1980s, so one was, for instance, observing the Iran-Iraq war and comparing how the Iranian and Iraqi news agencies covered it. That was a very instructive experience. I came from international relations background, but I was working on international communication, and at that time there were very few scholars who combined the two.

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When I was appointed Professor of International Communication at the University of Westminster, I was only the second professor of international communication in the United Kingdom. The first was Philip Taylor at the University of Leeds, a historian by training and a distinguished scholar of propaganda studies. That fact is also significant in understanding my trajectory. As far as I know, I was the first professor in that field in Britain who was not from the West.

I was educated entirely in India, from school to Ph.D., and I remain proud of that. In the 1980s, India was much poorer than it is today, but academic standards were very high. The infrastructure was often poor, but the professors were excellent. That training shaped the way I looked at the world. I was not seeing the world through a Western prism, but through a rather different one, informed by India's history, its democratic politics, and its position as a non-aligned country. Even when India was not a major power, the discourse of foreign policy stressed independence and non-alignment. I think all of this influenced how I understood the world.

That perspective is reflected in my widely used book *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. Even the title was deliberate. It suggests that there are very clear continuities in international communication from the nineteenth century to the present. Certain countries continue to dominate, and corporations based in those countries continue to dominate. But there is also change. We are sitting here in China, and if we had this conversation thirty years ago, China would not have figured in it the same way. Today, of course, that is entirely different.

The first edition of *International Communication* appeared in 2000. I have since published three further editions and am now working on another, partly because publishers are keen to include newer debates, such as artificial intelligence and its implications for communication, global communication, and international communication in the traditional sense of state-to-state interaction. There has therefore been enormous change, not only in technology but also in culture, infrastructure, and information systems more broadly. That is why I still think the theme of continuity and change captures the field rather well.

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On the question of international versus global communication, I think this distinction is important. Traditionally, especially during the Cold War, international communication was understood primarily as communication between governments. Hence the term “international communication.” Most people simply did not possess the means to communicate across borders. When I was growing up, there were no telephones where I lived. Today, by contrast, most people have smartphones. Communication is therefore no longer simply government-to-government; it is also people-to-people. Social media, TikTok, and other platforms have made cross-border communication part of everyday life. In that sense, it is now more accurate to speak of global communication. It encompasses not only intergovernmental communication but also corporate and interpersonal communication. Governments remain powerful, but they are no longer the sole major actors in the communication system.

Another formative aspect of my intellectual development was that, although I was trained in international relations, communication was rarely treated as a major concern in that discipline, except perhaps through the study of propaganda. That was true in the West as well as elsewhere. In the United States, for example, propaganda was often taught in political science departments, and it did not necessarily carry the pejorative meaning it later acquired after the Second World War. So there were very few scholars in international relations who seriously engaged with communication.

After finishing my Ph.D. in Delhi, I received a postdoctoral fellowship to go to the United Kingdom. Most people with such a fellowship would have gone to Oxford, Cambridge, London School of Economics (LSE), or University College London (UCL). But I wanted to study media and communication. In 1988, very few British universities were teaching communication seriously. I eventually went to the Open University, which had a programme in Third World Studies. That was still the era in which “Third World” was current terminology.

There, I began to see how supposedly progressive and Marxist British scholars conceptualized the so-called Third World. The Open University was a progressive institution, and Stuart Hall was there; indeed, I first met him there. Yet, I gradually realized that there were

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basic problems with the category itself. Under that rubric, Singapore, already a prosperous city-state, and China, a vast continental society, could simply be grouped together. That seemed absurd. As a young scholar and an outsider, I argued against such formulations. It gave me an early form of intellectual resistance to dominant ways of thinking.

Soon after, I took a job in London with Gemini News Service, a small news agency oriented toward the developing world and now defunct. That experience gave me remarkable access to journalism beyond the West. We had correspondents in around one hundred countries, and reading copy by Brazilian, African, and Chinese journalists was intellectually eye-opening. Although the organization was based in London, its orientation was very much toward the developing world.

Taken together, this background gave me what I would call an intellectual infrastructure that was, by definition, critical of the status quo. It was different from the experience of many scholars from developing countries who went to American universities, were taught within a particular framework, and then reproduced that framework because it was the route to professional success. Thankfully, I was somewhat removed from that. If one looks at my work over the last three decades, there has been a certain consistency for precisely that reason.

So, to return to your question, I would say that we are indeed moving toward a more multipolar media landscape, but with qualifications. There is undoubtedly more plurality than before. The Global South is more visible, and new media powers have emerged. But multipolarity should not be mistaken for equality. The system remains deeply uneven. The global communication order is now more complex, more layered, and more contested, yet it is still structured by powerful asymmetries.

**YH: I also want to ask you about de-Westernizing media studies. You have been part of that conversation, together with major scholars such as James Curran, and the debate became especially visible roughly two decades ago. Looking back now, how do you reflect on this key concept of de-Westernization? Do you still see it as valid and productive? And do you also see limitations in it today?**

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DT: Yes, this is an important issue. I used to teach an MA course called “Global Media and Transnational Communication” at Goldsmiths, University of London and it was the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. I partly got that position because of my work on international communication. Around the same time, James Curran co-edited *De-Westernizing Media Studies* in 2000, which was later translated into a number of languages.

In the final session of my course, I often invited James Curran to speak to my MA students, and we would discuss, among other things, what de-Westernization actually meant and why it mattered. James is a dear friend, a remarkable scholar, and an admirable human being. But he himself would sometimes say, half-jokingly, that it was a “sexy topic.” The phrase clearly had appeal.

If you actually look closely at the book, however, apart from the introduction, there is not that much sustained theorization of de-Westernization. It is largely a collection of country-based studies. So, in that sense, it did not really theorize the concept in a systematic way. Yet it remained important because it was one of the first moments when a major scholar placed the phrase so prominently into circulation.

I became interested in the issue because I already had basic objections to dominant Western discourse. Its generalizations were often unacceptable. Its representations were deeply problematic and frequently carried colonial undertones. So I began by asking a very simple question: what exactly is meant by “the West”? Is Bulgaria part of the West? Is Eastern Europe part of the West? The category itself is much more unstable than people often assume.

In practice, when people use the term, they usually mean a very small group of countries, primarily the United States and the United Kingdom. Even Germany often does not matter very much in that conversation. That was my first concern: what exactly is to be de-Westernized, and from what?

The phrase gained currency because it was intellectually attractive. People cited it, repeated it, and often embraced it, but very few actually deconstructed it. In 2008, I tried to contribute to that discussion by organizing a major conference at the University of Westminster on Internationalizing Media Studies. We had around

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250 participants and some forty professors from around the world. I later edited a book with the same title and subsequently established a Routledge series under that title.

My argument was that “de-Westernizing” is a negative formulation. It risks dismissing a great deal of important scholarship produced in what is called the West. I do not mean only practical communication research, but also major work in psychology, propaganda studies, and many other areas. So I asked: why de-Westernize rather than internationalize? “Internationalize” seemed to me the more constructive term. That was the line I advanced in the related title published in 2009, and it is one I have continued through the book series and through the journal *Global Media and Communication* of which I am the co-founder and managing editor since 2005. The principle was that the field ought to be genuinely global, rather than simply organized around West and non-West.

One of the key points I made at that time was that the most consequential media transformations were taking place in Asia, especially in China and India. At that stage, I did not yet know China very well, though I know it much better now. But even then I was fortunate, at Westminster, to be associated with both the China Media Centre and the India Media Centre. I regularly attended seminars organized by China Media Centre. Often I was the only non-Chinese person in the room, and Chinese students would jokingly ask me whether I was working on India or China. I would tell them that if one is genuinely interested in the global, one has to understand China.

In retrospect, that argument was correct. The most significant transformation in global media and communication has clearly been the rise of China. The second major transformation, which is still unfolding, is the rise of India. In terms of scale and significance, these are global developments. So my intervention was not only a critique of de-Westernization, but an attempt to offer an alternative framework.

**AK: Let me build on that. In your work, you also use the phrase “de-Americanization.” How should younger scholars understand the relationship between these terms? Is de-Westernization really de-Americanization? Or is it closer to decolonization? Or are these overlapping and potentially confusing categories?**

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DT: That is a very interesting question. As I suggested earlier, “the West” is already an imprecise category. By contrast, “de-Americanization” is more precise, because whether one likes it or not, the United States remains the single most important country in the global media system. One can see that in hardware, software, infrastructures, and global narratives.

If we genuinely want to generate an alternative account of the world, then we have to move beyond the American view of the world. That is why I have used the phrase “de-Americanization.” I have used it in different contexts. In my work on soft power, for example, I devote a whole chapter to de-Americanizing the concept. Soft power originated in the United States, and then scholars around the world repeated it without adequately interrogating it. To me, that is a form of intellectual dependency.

With the arrival of AI, I suspect that this tendency may become even stronger. So yes, in many respects de-Americanization is a more precise phrase. In our field, the form of domination is overwhelmingly American. If one looks at how international issues are covered, one finds that much of the content people consume emanates from American. The United Kingdom is also influential, but often British foreign-policy discourse aligns quite closely with the American one. What is missing, more often than not, are Chinese, Indian, Brazilian, or Russian perspectives. If one traces the dominant narrative at its source, one gets a very different picture. That is what I mean by de-Americanization.

**AK: Related to that, and also to artificial intelligence, you once referred to AI not only as artificial intelligence, but also as “American intelligence.”**

DT: Well, where did it come from? That is the point.

**YH: But is that necessarily a valid conclusion? Something may originate in a particular country and still become universal. Modern medicine, for example, developed in Western contexts, but it is now global knowledge.**

DT: Certainly. I agree. It is partly a phrase, of course. But if one looks at the global landscape, American companies still dominate. DeepSeek is a very interesting exception, and perhaps we can return to that. Yet

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broadly speaking, the infrastructure, platforms, and governing logics still come from the United States.

There is also a more serious issue here. If one has the capacity to influence how people think, how they write, what concepts they adopt, and even what they are able to imagine, then one possesses a very significant form of power. I remember that in the 1990s, in the early days of the internet, I once typed the word “imperialism” into a Microsoft dictionary function, and the response was that the word did not exist. There are therefore subtle ways in which narratives can be regulated.

When I look at many younger people today and the way they write, I often feel there is less originality, because more and more of the thinking and research are being done by machines. And this is still only an early stage. Once these technologies become more sophisticated, we may begin outsourcing our intelligence to machines altogether. So yes, it is a dramatic phrase, but I do worry about it. I am in fact giving a talk soon entitled “Intelligent Imperialism: Artificial or Real?”

**AK: Intelligent imperialism?**

DT: Exactly. It is exceedingly intelligent. You do not even feel that you are, in effect, surrendering your intelligence to the machine. And of course, this raises broader questions about surveillance and new forms of control.

**YH: Before moving on, I want to raise a broader historical issue. Roughly fifty years ago, there were at least two influential ways of dividing the world. One was the mainstream “three worlds” model: The First World as the Western capitalist bloc led by the United States, the Second World as the Soviet-led socialist bloc, and the Third World as the rest. Later, Chairman Mao proposed a different framework, in which the First World consisted of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union; the Second World referred to advanced capitalist countries such as those in Western Europe; and the Third World referred to developing countries. Compared with the mainstream model, Mao’s framework seems to be based much more on domination and power than on ideology or social system.**

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**This brings us to the question of the South and the Global South. Some scholars on the Chinese left, such as Zhao Yuezhi, have shown sympathy for this way of thinking, and you also seem at least partly sympathetic to it. So I would like to ask: when you think about these categories, do you take ideology and social system seriously as the basis of division, or do you put them aside and focus more on power, material capacity, and global influence?**

DT: That is, again, a very good question. As you know, the phrase “Third World” itself was coined by a French sociologist in the 1950s, and it was always highly inaccurate. One simply cannot place everyone outside the two dominant blocs into a single category.

In that sense, Mao’s categorization was in some ways closer to geopolitical reality than the broad binary of liberal capitalism versus communism, with the remainder grouped together as an undifferentiated Third World. The conventional framework obscured important differences within each camp. The Soviet model of communism, for instance, was never simply adopted wholesale in China. The Sino-Soviet split itself emerged within a decade of the founding of the PRC. The Soviet model did not fully work in China because the basic revolutionary unit in China was the peasantry, not the industrial proletariat in the classical Leninist sense. So even Marxism had to be adapted to Chinese conditions.

Similarly, within the so-called West, the Western European model of capitalism has always differed from the American one. That remains true. Even now, in parts of Europe, one still finds welfare arrangements that are quite different from the United States. These large categories therefore conceal significant internal variation.

As for the North-South, this was also a Western formulation, associated with Willy Brandt and the North-South Commission. It emerged partly because the old East-West framework was no longer adequate. More recently, the phrase has returned in the form of the “Global South.” “Third World” became unusable because it was too offensive, while “developing world” is too broad and vague, so “Global South” became the fashionable substitute. I use it as well, though I sometimes prefer “Majority World,” because demographically that is what it is.

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Yet even within the Global South, the differences are vast. So if we return to your earlier question about multipolarity, yes, the world is more multipolar, but that multipolarity also exists within the Global South. Different countries have distinct interests, trajectories, and spheres of influence. It is not a unified bloc. Even within formations such as BRICS, there are enormous disparities. The difference between the South African and Chinese economies, for instance, is obvious. There are also deep political differences between India and China. Russia, too, is a special case.

So my basic point is that “Global South” is itself a problematic term. It may be useful, but it must be deployed carefully and precisely rather than simply because it is fashionable.

**YH: Let me push the issue a little further. You have long argued for moving beyond Western centrality. Yet many of the structures that shape academic knowledge—journals, citation systems, research evaluation, and the circulation of scholarship—remain deeply centered in the West. How do you see the possibilities for building a more genuinely plural and global communication scholarship?**

DT: The problem is structural. It is fundamentally structural. The organization of knowledge continues to privilege knowledge produced in one particular part of the world, and there are historical reasons for this. Universities such as Oxford or Heidelberg are very old institutions. They embody research traditions that predate what we now call the Global South by centuries. Then, of course, there is colonial history. Those countries were present globally, and they accumulated archives, institutions, and authority on a world scale.

If one wants to study the ancient history of India, for example, one may still have to go to Oxford rather than to an Indian university to locate key materials. Similar patterns exist in relation to Africa and, to some extent, Chinese studies. So history matters.

Second, if one begins with access to power, one also acquires the ability to define standards. One decides which journals are “top-ranked,” which presses count, which citation practices matter, and which language becomes the medium of recognition. Why are almost all the so-called top journals in English? Does that mean that Italians, Germans, Scandinavians, Russians, and others lack intellectual

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originality? Of course not. But if they want recognition, they often have to publish in English.

So there is a historical context and a linguistic one. The dominant colonial power was Britain, and its language became global. That linguistic dominance was then amplified by the rise of the United States. American power now structures much of the system. I work very closely with major publishers, and from that vantage point I can say that the system remains deeply distorted.

**YH: Distorted in what sense?**

DT: Distorted in the sense that what we know about countries such as India or China is often mediated through third- or fourth-hand sources. The flow of knowledge is vertical rather than horizontal. There is still far too little horizontal scholarship. That is the real problem.

To put it bluntly, there remains a deeply ingrained assumption that authoritative knowledge is associated with the white scholar. I have seen this in many contexts. In Chinese academic spaces, for example, one sometimes senses that when a white scholar speaks, people assume that something inherently important is being said, even if the content is banal. Authority attaches not only to the argument, but to the historical prestige of the speaker and the system behind him or her.

In India, this works somewhat differently, perhaps because we know the language and discourse well enough to see through them more easily. But the larger point remains: these historical hierarchies have been continually reproduced.

Let me give one example. In 2005, I founded the journal *Global Media and Communication*. From the beginning, I wanted Chinese scholars on the editorial board. But at that time it was very difficult to identify Chinese scholars who were visible in the English-language academic world. So I had to work with people who were often based in Hong Kong or elsewhere and were already visible within English-language scholarly networks.

If you fast-forward twenty years, however, the picture has changed dramatically. Chinese scholars are now publishing in English in very large numbers. If someone conducted a proper statistical study, I would not be surprised if China ranked among the top countries

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globally in terms of sheer output. The quality may vary, but the scale is undeniably large.

So the structure I am describing is historically understandable, but it must also be historically challenged. The first step is to move beyond the assumption that serious knowledge comes only from one part of the world. That is not easy, because the hierarchy is tied to metrics, rankings, and institutional gatekeeping. Promotion panels ask how many articles one has published in certain journals. But why are those journals the benchmark? Why not Chinese, Russian, African, or Latin American journals?

So my answer is this: unless we get beyond that hierarchy of value, the problem will remain. At the same time, one has to work within the system as it exists, because the system is still controlled elsewhere. One must make inroads into it while also challenging it.

That is why I often say to my Chinese colleagues: how long can one continue with a derivative discourse when China now has such immense resources and so much to offer? China has the scale, institutions, and intellectual capacity to do more than reproduce existing frameworks. So the challenge is not only structural; it is also intellectual.

**AK: A follow-up question, then. You have just described the dominance of communication scholarship as a structural problem. You often talk about epistemic communities. Could you please elaborate on how epistemic communities help sustain this structure? And how should younger scholars think about their own role in shaping knowledge and theory within it?**

DT: Epistemic communities are fundamental. They are part of the intellectual infrastructure of the field. They set the agenda. They define the threshold of legitimacy. They tell us what counts as theory, what counts as evidence, and which cases are to be treated as central and which merely as examples.

This is not a trivial matter. Why are certain universities treated as inherently authoritative while others are not? Why do some institutions automatically confer legitimacy even when other universities may be better resourced? Consider Hong Kong Baptist University. In financial and material terms, it is better equipped than many institutions I have

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known. Yet resources alone do not guarantee internationally recognized scholarship. The issue lies in intellectual standards, scholarly culture, and the ability to generate a genuine epistemic community.

When I was at Goldsmiths, for example, it was not a wealthy institution. But almost everyone I worked with was known in his or her field. They had intellectual presence. So the issue is not simply money. It is whether one is able to build a community that sets standards of its own rather than simply deferring to standards established elsewhere.

That is why epistemic communities matter so much. They shape the field. They define what theory matters and what conversations scholars must enter. Then people in India, China, or elsewhere are often brought in only as empirical illustrations rather than theoretical producers. They remain at the margins. But then one has to ask: why are they at the margins? Who decides where the center is? Those are the real questions.

**YH: Let us move on. Your idea of cultural flows has been highly influential for scholars trying to move beyond the traditional West-rest model of media flows. In today's platform-driven environment, where companies such as Google, Meta, and TikTok shape global communication, do you think the idea of cultural flows still holds? Or do we need new ways of thinking about how media power now operates globally? I would add that there are now major Chinese platforms, such as WeChat, that are increasingly visible internationally, especially among younger users. So this is no longer only a story of Western media dominance.**

DT: Yes, absolutely. This goes back to a book I published in 2007, *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow*. But the idea itself goes back earlier. From my own perspective, the phrase “contra-flow” first appeared in work I did in the early 1990s with Professor Oliver Boyd-Barrett. In 1992, we published a UNESCO volume entitled *Contra-Flow in Global News*. That grew out of research on how news agencies outside the major global players—Reuters, AFP, and others—were collaborating through what UNESCO then described as “news exchange mechanisms.” That was really the origin of the term.

The later book was more concerned with television, and the point I made there was that the conventional globalization thesis—

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that everyone was simply watching American television—was too simplistic. That was not actually the case. There were other players, other circuits, and other forms of movement. So I distinguished not only dominant flows, in which familiar American players still figured strongly, but also what I called subaltern flows: movements that remained marginal or peripheral, but were becoming more visible.

If one now fast-forwards to the age of social media and platforms such as TikTok, the picture has become even more complex. Just consider China and India. Internet access in India now reaches roughly a billion people, and something comparable is true in China. Most of them have some form of social media access. That obviously generates enormous volumes of content. Both countries also have large diasporas across the world, which means these are undeniably global flows.

Then consider entertainment. The Korean Wave, which was once primarily a regional East Asian phenomenon, has become genuinely global. TikTok is global. WeChat, while not universal, is increasingly global in many contexts where China has substantial economic or infrastructural presence. These are not Western platforms, yet they now participate in global circulation.

This does not mean that the major players have disappeared. Globally, most of the largest platforms are still based in the United States. Even when Meta's largest audiences may be outside the West, Meta itself is not an Indian or Chinese platform. That is precisely why the Chinese case is so interesting: China has developed its own platform ecology, and as China globalizes, some of these platforms are moving outward as well. We are therefore dealing with a far more layered and complex environment than when I first wrote about contra-flow.

The one caution I would add is that contra-flow should not be romanticized as pure resistance. These media industries still operate in market environments. They have to build audiences, sell products, and generate value. So while contra-flow signals movement beyond dominant Western circuits, it does not necessarily mean total opposition to them.

**AK: If I may follow up, countries such as China and India now have not only large user bases but also, increasingly, their own platforms. I would like to ask you to reflect further on resistance**

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**not only through content, but also through infrastructures and content providers. A phrase that is especially popular now is “digital sovereignty.” Could you explain that idea and perhaps relate it to your earlier work on contra-flow?**

DT: Yes, that is a very good question. China has already achieved a substantial degree of digital sovereignty. It handled the Googles and Metas of the world very strategically. The basic approach was: yes, you may enter; we will observe how you operate, learn from your business and technical models, but in the end you will not dominate this space, because we will develop our own systems. India, by contrast, has not done that in the same way. So despite having one of the largest communication markets in the world, India does not really possess digital sovereignty in any substantive sense. There, it exists more as a slogan or aspiration.

If Meta were suddenly to withdraw Facebook from India, hundreds of millions of users would be left without a domestic alternative of equivalent scale. And this is not simply about consumption. These infrastructures matter for strategic communication, intelligence, and many other purposes. If one does not own the communication infrastructure through which information travels, then sovereignty becomes a very real issue. India has the technical capacity to develop such systems, and in some areas it has begun to do so, but it still has a long way to go. China, by contrast, provides a very important model of how digital sovereignty can actually be built.

**YH: So from the Indian perspective, China is a model?**

DT: In terms of digital sovereignty, yes. If we are speaking specifically of digital sovereignty, then China is an important model. The Chinese internet is Chinese in a substantive sense: the infrastructure is Chinese, the platforms are Chinese, and for almost every platform used elsewhere—Google, Amazon, Facebook, and so on—there is a domestic Chinese equivalent. And these are no longer confined to China itself. Some of them are increasingly being exported, for example through the Belt and Road Initiative.

**YH: But then do you still hold to a global-versus-local framework here? In China, one could argue that the state has maintained such a high degree of control that the country has effectively become closed to outside platforms while sending its own platforms**

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**outward. Can that really serve as a model for other countries, unless they are highly exceptional cases?**

DT: I would not frame it that way. With respect, that remains a rather Western interpretation. In a book I co-edited in 2018 on China's media globalization (*China's Media Go Global*), I made almost the opposite argument. I suggested that precisely because China regulated and restricted large foreign platforms, it was able to cultivate its own. In the 1990s and early 2000s, China was not yet as globally powerful as it is now, but it already possessed the vision that it needed autonomous systems.

Many Indians today are beginning to ask exactly that question. India has a huge IT sector, highly capable scientists and engineers, a massive domestic market, and a very large youthful population. So why does it not have platforms of its own on the same scale? Often the answer is political, because sections of the political class remain closely aligned with American interests.

My argument, therefore, has been that the standard Western discourse—China equals censorship, China equals regulation—misses something crucial. Precisely because there was regulation, China was able to build its own platforms. Otherwise, that would never have happened. Very few other countries have done this at a comparable scale.

**YH: Let me push that further. Some other countries have also tried to regulate and isolate their media systems, yet only China has succeeded at this scale. Why? Is size the key reason? China is now the world's second-largest economy, but the Soviet Union was also huge in its time. So size alone does not seem sufficient.**

DT: There are several reasons. First, of course, one needs technological capability. One needs scientists, engineers, and technicians capable of building systems that can operate at the scale of a billion users. India, for example, has achieved something significant in digital payments. Its public digital payment system has been very successful, and it was built by the state rather than by American corporations. That too is a form of digital sovereignty.

Second, in China's case, there was a highly strategic regulatory vision: the idea that although China could not yet compete directly with the American giants, it could create the conditions under which

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domestic systems could grow strong enough to challenge them. That is precisely what we are seeing today. China now operates at a very advanced technological level.

Not every country can do what China has done. Iran cannot. Russia has moved toward greater autonomy more recently, especially after the war in Ukraine. Other countries may achieve partial autonomy, but I am speaking here about major powers. So yes, scale matters, but so do capability, state strategy, and long-term vision.

**AK: But how does this connect back to your original theory of contra-flow? Can digital sovereignty be understood through that prism as well? Can scholars of international communication use digital sovereignty as a framework connected to contra-flow?**

DT: The problem is that if you look at what we teach in communication schools, these issues are still not taken seriously enough. Students ought to be introduced to concepts such as sovereignty. Why should every country not aspire to digital sovereignty? Of course, not every country can achieve it, because many lacks the necessary infrastructures. Some will remain dependent on larger powers. But that dependence is precisely why the concept matters.

If one says the word “sovereignty” to many communication students, they will simply stare blankly. That tells us something important about the state of communication studies. The field has not developed the intellectual depth it ought to have. It is an interdisciplinary subject and should be drawing more systematically from politics, economics, and international relations. Too often, it does not.

Even international communication itself is not widely taught as a rigorous field in many places. In China, it has become more fashionable in recent years, partly because the Chinese government is concerned with China’s image abroad. But international communication cannot be reduced to the question of how a country improves its image. It is a much broader and more complex field than that.

**YH: Let me move to another issue. In recent years, international communication has become much more closely tied to geopolitics, whether in debates about digital sovereignty, information warfare, or strategic narratives. From your perspective, how has the field responded to these developments? Are scholars engaging adequately with this geopolitical shift?**

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DT: The short answer is no. I recently published a book (*Changing Geopolitics of Global Communication*) on precisely this issue, and as far as I know it was the first book explicitly to link geopolitics and global communication in this way. So I would say that the field has not responded adequately.

These questions are still often treated as though they belong to another discipline altogether. That is why I earlier emphasized the gap between communication and international relations. Because of my role in the field, including within International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) as its President, I have a fairly good sense of what is happening internationally, and there are still very few places where these issues are being addressed systematically.

There are some exceptions. In India, one major institution in mass communication has recently launched a Master's programme in strategic communication. The argument is that India is a major country but still does not know how to shape and project its narratives effectively. I visited and spoke there. But that is one institution. By contrast, the university where I did my Ph.D., Jawaharlal Nehru University, still has many people doing what one might call "hard" international relations—nuclear strategy, military affairs, conventional geopolitics—with very little connection to communication. My response is: the world has moved on.

So yes, this remains a neglected area. For countries such as China and India, there should be much more strategic thinking that connects communication and international relations.

**YH: Let me turn to journalism. Your work on global information and entertainment has shown how journalism increasingly intersects with entertainment and commercial media logics. Today, with algorithmic news feeds, influencers, and highly polarized information environments, the boundary between news and entertainment seems even more blurred. How do you see the role of journalism evolving in this context?**

DT: Yes, I wrote an entire book on that subject (*News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment*), and it included a substantial historical discussion of infotainment. In fact, the phenomenon is not new. It goes back a long way and originally emerged from the United

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States. What has happened in the age of social media, and especially in the age of TikTok-style content, is that the trend has intensified dramatically.

That is clearly affecting journalism, because journalists are now competing with a twenty-four-hour stream of content that is shorter, faster, more visual, and more immediately appealing. Under such conditions, there is less time and less space for journalists to provide context, depth, or original analysis.

At the same time, there is also a reaction to this trend. One sees this, for example, in the context of long-form journalism. *The Guardian* has its “The Long Read,” and many people do read those pieces. So there is a counter-movement. This may partly be generational. People of my generation may still be willing to read several thousand words, whereas some younger readers may find even fifty words too much. But in any case, journalism is clearly under pressure, and this is a global development.

What worries me even more is what AI is likely to do to journalism. As a research tool, AI can be extremely useful. But in terms of employment, professional authority, and journalistic function, it raises much bigger questions. If machines can increasingly perform these tasks, then what happens to journalism as a profession? That, to me, is the more serious challenge.

**AK: Let me ask a quick follow-up. Precisely because AI can now write news stories, generate documentaries, and produce all kinds of visual and textual material, people increasingly ask why journalists are needed at all. But journalism is not only about writing; it is also about thinking. If you were advising younger scholars of international communication, what would you say about the importance of thinking itself?**

DT: I would say, first of all, spend less time on social media and more time thinking. But thinking is not simple. It requires reflection, and I suspect that an entire generation is growing up with less capacity for sustained reflection, partly because of lifestyle and media habits.

That is why conversations such as this matter. We agree and disagree; we put different dimensions of a problem on the table; and that, in turn, encourages counter-arguments and better questions. It cultivates thinking.

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I think this is especially important in this part of the world, because there is often a very strong instrumental orientation: publish four articles, obtain the job, and move on. Under that logic, one does not need to know anything more deeply. Yet if one looks at the people who genuinely make an intellectual impact—in academia, art, or public life—they are almost always those who think more deeply. Reflection matters.

This also relates to the earlier discussion of epistemic communities. Why do some communities generate so much theory and conceptual innovation? In India, for instance, I am proud that there has long been a culture of argument. You know the phrase “The Argumentative Indian.” People debate, disagree, and work things out through contestation. If one looks at Western intellectual history, one also sees strong traditions of argumentation. That, to me, is what thinking is. It is not something one learns from a short online tutorial.

**YH: If I may still return briefly to journalism, could you state more directly what you think its role is today?**

DT: That depends on the country and the political system in which journalism operates. Journalism in China is very different from journalism in the United Kingdom, for example. In the British case, journalism is ideally understood as a fourth pillar of democracy, holding power accountable. In China, that is clearly not the case in the same way. So context matters: political context, cultural context, and institutional context.

In textbook terms, journalists are supposed to provide information in the public interest and to interpret that information. That is the ideal. In practice, however, journalism is also a business; it is also entertainment; and increasingly it exists alongside bots, synthetic content, and automated circulation. In conflicts such as the current one involving Iran, one can already see large numbers of bots producing fake videos and false narratives. So the journalistic field is becoming more unstable and difficult.

**YH: Let me come to the final substantive question. Having helped shape the field of international communication over many years, what do you see as the key intellectual questions scholars should be paying attention to today? In other words, where do you think the field is heading, and what kinds of research do we need more of?**

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DT: That is a very important question. The simple answer is that the field is becoming increasingly technology-driven and data-driven. My advice, therefore, would be to take a step back and not forget the larger context—not forget history, ideology, or politics.

There is, I think, a growing tendency, including within international communication, to focus more and more on micro-level questions of gender, identity, and sexuality, often at the expense of the larger picture. Those are important issues, certainly, but one should not lose sight of broader geopolitical developments. What is happening in Iran right now, for example, is of major global significance. It could reshape the world. Yet we do not teach enough of these political questions in our classes.

If we think about the origins of international communication as a field, it emerged within the broader subject of international politics. Politics lies at its core. Yet increasingly, under the wider umbrella of global communication, the field is becoming more culturally and identity-driven. So I would remind younger scholars not to lose sight of context and history.

I would also repeat what I said earlier: we need a kind of decolonization of the mind, especially among scholars from the Global South. We need to draw intellectual resources from our own histories. That in turn means bringing more history into our courses.

Let me give a small example. When I first came to China in 2004, I visited the Summer Palace with two of my Chinese students. At one point I saw a statue with the word “Rahul” written in English and Chinese. I asked them whether they knew what it meant. They said no. I recognized it because Rahul is the name of my nephew, but it is also, of course, the name of the Buddha’s son. So I asked them: how did this word travel here? How did such a concept move across space centuries ago? Is that not also a communication process? And if so, why do we not have communication scholars studying these long histories of movement, translation, and exchange? That, too, is international communication.

This is only one example, but one could multiply such cases many times over. Indeed, one of the projects I would still like to pursue is a more historical and civilizational approach to communication. It brings

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us back, once again, to continuity and change. Continuity matters profoundly, especially now when many societies are rediscovering and reasserting their civilizational pasts.

**AK: Let me ask one final question, returning to something you have emphasized throughout: the importance of the “big question.” Over the years, you have worked on large concepts—flows, infotainment, and others. If we compare the present moment with the period when you first entered the field of international communication, do you see fundamental similarities? Has *realpolitik* remained so constant that expecting entirely new theories may be unrealistic?**

DT: Theory-building takes time. It always emerges from a particular historical and geopolitical context. But I would say that the present moment is precisely one in which new theoretical work becomes possible, because, like it or not, the West is declining. That decline is demonstrable. As a result, there is a growing need for alternative perspectives.

Those perspectives will have to come from countries that possess not only material power but also intellectual capacity. China has that. India has that. Parts of the Islamic world have that. Iran, for example, is an important intellectual and historical civilization. Once such perspectives begin to speak more confidently from their own histories and experiences, one will see a more substantive de-Westernization of discourse.

Take India. In the region where I come from, there existed between the sixth and twelfth centuries what was arguably the largest university in the world, and almost no one outside India knows anything about it. Who is responsible for that absence? Or take Morocco: the oldest surviving university in the world is there, not in Europe. Why are Moroccans not writing about it more forcefully? So yes, the context is changing. Western domination, in my view, is declining—not disappearing, but declining. And because other powers are emerging, opportunities are opening.

That is why I keep emphasizing history. There is so much to draw from. But it requires imagination and sustained work. Western theories did not emerge overnight. They were built over decades, by many

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scholars, refined over time, and stabilized through epistemic advantage and global teaching structures. The same process will take time elsewhere. But I do believe it will happen. Younger scholars, including those in your generation and beyond, have an enormous contribution to make. So yes, I am optimistic—very optimistic. I think the moment is now.

披露聲明

本文研究者未報告潛在的利益衝突。

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