

## **The Geopolitics of Information: A Call For Book Manuscripts**

“The Geopolitics of Information” is a new book series published by the University of Illinois Press. The Series Editors are Professors Dan Schiller, (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Yuezhi Zhao (Simon Fraser University), and Amanda Ciafone (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). We are now soliciting book manuscripts in the 60,000 word range – short, well-documented, critical studies of topical issues and trends.

### *Aims of The Series*

As the “unipolar” moment of the 1990s and early 2000s went into eclipse, geopolitics acquired sharply increased importance. From the dispensation of energy resources, to contests for strategic influence in and offshore of East Asia, to the race to develop and exploit new lead-edge industries, geopolitical conflicts today are omnipresent. Who will shape the global political economy, and along which lines?

The geopolitics of information has moved to the center of this encompassing and increasingly conflicted question. Not only have information systems and services formed an overarching aspect of the recent rapid transnationalization of the market system. Not only is information a central element in the endless contest between states for political advantage and international power, as well as a vital domain of contemporary military strategy. Information markets also constitute a much-coveted pole of economic growth, encompassing everything from media entertainment, telecommunications and specialized business and professional data services, to education, biotechnology and the mass digitization of cultural heritage records and traditional knowledge. Information systems and services, in short, lie at the heart of the conflicted developmental impulse of today’s transnational capitalism. That the global political economy has fallen into a new period of stagnation only accentuates this trend.

The importance of the geopolitics of information is, broadly, twofold. The dispensation of the world’s communication systems and information resources constitutes both a domain of political-economic rivalry conducted by states and corporations, and a complex field of social contestation involving a wider set of social actors. If, on one hand, the status of the United States as the world’s dominant power in information thus faces renewed opposition by other states, then, on the other hand, social and political struggles also are breaking out over the control of information and communication between social groups and within countries across the globe - from China to Ecuador and from India to South Africa and, indeed, to the United States.

“The Geopolitics of Information” is broadly demarcated, to foreground both political-economic rivalries within the interstate system, and struggles within and across societies. The Series encompasses both emergent pressure points and envioning social-historical dynamics; and both states' efforts to project power extraterritorially and the wider, more multifaceted, political-economic processes to which state policies contribute.

## *Call for Manuscripts*

The issues are both timely and complex; they require careful, often revisionary, scholarly research. The field of Communication and Media Studies is well-placed to undertake this work. To do so, however, it will need to move beyond its longstanding conceptual separations between media systems, content, uses, and effects, and its fixation on individual media users as consumers abstracted from environing social relationships; and it will need to eschew knee-jerk praise for new media as presumed agencies of emancipation. “The Geopolitics of Information” seeks research that cuts against the grain.

Because domination and inequality persist as shaping forces in today’s information sphere, both the structural mechanisms of power and the patterns of resistance to it require scrutiny. We will emphasize communication and information *production*, signifying not only the formal activities of states and corporations, but also the production and circulation of mediated speech acts by interacting social agents and power groups. Put differently, we will situate historically changing systems of information and communication within more encompassing societal relations, which are not only power-laden but also animated by contestation and struggle.

The sites of political-economic (re)construction around information and communications are numerous, and we hope to attract authors and works engaging several broad themes:

Communication and Class: Social Struggles as Communicative Dramas  
Involving Multiple Social Forces, Nationally and Transnationally

Traditional Knowledge and Communication Systems, and Digitization and New Media

Commodification Initiatives and Transnational Reconstructions of Information and Communications

State Strategies, International Power Structures, and Information Systems and Services in an Internet-Centric Era

Books in the series may assess information-related developments and policies within individual countries or regions; or engage international policy issues and trends; or study concrete local, national, or transnational social struggles that bear on the developmental path of information and communications. Many important questions need to be engaged - for example:

How is Internet governance being exercised, nationally within particular countries and internationally?

How are social movements engaging with the political economy of information, and to what effect?

What issues have arisen over how the electromagnetic spectrum, basic to all forms of wireless communication, is allocated and used as between regions, nations, and services?

What is the status of different leading nations' "soft power" programs and initiatives?

What policy shifts around information are being pursued by the several South American countries that have moved out of the orbit of overwhelming U.S. influence?

Is a transnational communications infrastructure still a necessary element of increased extraterritorial power in an Internet-centric era and, if so, how is China trying to realize this objective?

What policies are shaping cyber-war initiatives?

How has Wikileaks changed the practices of journalism internationally?

How are corporate-commercial search engines and social network sites interacting with states?

How and why has data mining become a domain of political-economic construction?

How are the world's stocks of information resources - from books, TV programs, search and social network sites, to scientific articles, software, traditional knowledges, and plant gene banks - organized?

What conflicts have arisen over the control of metadata, and what may we learn from these conflicts?

Which are the most important bio-informational commodities, and how are they being produced and distributed?

What political economic processes are shaping programs for mass digitization of cultural heritage?

What are the stakes involved in developing rival satellite-based Global Positioning Systems?

Which technical standards and standards-setting processes harbor the greatest implications for control over the Internet and new media?

These questions are illustrative rather than comprehensive.

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