CHAPTER 10

Digital Capitalism, Technological Determinism and the Emergence of Multipolar Powers

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Introduction

There are many debates about how digital capitalism – as an ideology behind the globally networked economies (Schiller 2000) – and digital technologies such as social media (Castells 2018) have enabled the emergence of numerous economically powerful countries. Many scholars argue that digital capitalism is an ideology propagated by digital technologies (Curran and Freedman 2016; Fuchs 2009). As a result of this propagation, powerful countries now boast of political and economic influence across the globe. Some have formed economic and political alliances such as the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Wekesa 2023). Both the emerging global powers and the alliances have led to multipolar competition with the US for global interests. This chapter analyses how digital capitalism and digital technologies are facilitating the global realignment of world powers, creating a multipolar entity that competes with the idea of the United States of America (US) as a superpower. It argues, by drawing theoretically on McLuhan's (1994) theory of technological determinism, that recent political, economic and technological developments around the globe are driven by the technological gains within the emerging multipolar world order. In his theory of technological determinism, McLuhan (1994) argues that "a medium is a message", meaning that the medium used to convey

a message is as important as the message itself. For example, when the US as a superpower displays its latest military technology, it sends a clear message to other countries about its superpower status. Similarly, when BRICS member countries such as Russia and China display their military prowess, they send a message about their emerging power and their intention to challenge the superpower status of the US. With the latest technological advancements across the globe, the chapter argues that today it is difficult or even impossible to clearly identify a particular country as a superpower, as was the case with the Union of Soviet States of Russia (USSR), and later the US, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In other words, there is now greater contestation around the complexities of the binaries reflected in how other actors perceive the location of Africa vis-à-vis how Africa desires to, or actually does, locate itself in the power shifts and fixes within the Global South. We see that digital capitalism, an ideology that has led to the massive use of digital technologies – consisting of new media technologies such as social media – has enabled globally networked economies and politics. This makes the globe easily accessible in virtual terms, in what McLuhan (1994) conceptualised as "a global village" in his theory of technological determinism. To understand the concept of the global village in the African context, we can draw on Guy's (2012) observation that indigenous Africans had basic political units called village assemblies, where village members gathered and deliberated on issues affecting their lives. The village assemblies were presided over by the headmen, whose role was to convene and moderate the people's deliberations. Contrary to the writings of many Western anthropologists, African headmen did not have more power than the people, and they ruled only as long as the people wanted them to (Mbiti 1969). If the people did not want them, they had several ways of ending the chiefs' tenure. For example, the people could leave the village to form a new one, and crown a new headman of their choice. Such an action could leave the previous headman vulnerable to attack. It was akin to an indirect death sentence, because indigenous Africa consisted of predominantly predatory entities (Mbembe 2001). This meant that any of the headman's enemies could kill him to take the land. The people also had the option of carrying out a ritual murder of the headmen they no longer wanted (Matolino 2016).

This could happen if the people did not want to leave the village for some reason. Such reasons could include if the gods said so, or if the village land they had was particularly productive and they did not want to leave.

We see that we can analogise McLuhan's (1994) concept of the global village with today's social media space, which we can compare with the indigenous African village assemblies. For example, both social media and village assemblies provide space for people to express their views on all issues that affect their lives. All over the world, people are using social media to stand up for their democratic rights and express their opinions on issues that affect their lives. This was the case with the Arab Spring in 2011 and the Gen-Z-led protests in Kenya in 2024. Similarly, countries perceived by established powers as 'smaller', such as India, China and South Africa, are using the ideologies of digital capitalism and digital technologies to force the perceived superpower – the US – to pay attention to the economic and political interests of these 'smaller' countries. This is made possible by the interconnectedness of countries' economic interests and activities, which was referred to earlier as 'the globally networked economy'. As a result, the networked economy has the net effect of creating larger economies in the countries perceived as smaller. For example, the US has embraced offshore manufacturing, where the production processes of US companies are exported to emerging economies such as Vietnam, China, India and Indonesia for cheap labour. Billion-dollar industries in the US, such as fashion and film, are heavily dependent on these populous countries for cheap labour and marketing. The emerging economies are also forging the aforementioned alliances, such as BRICS, which further consolidate their economic power to compete effectively with the US superpower. This study analyses how digital capitalism and digital technologies are influencing the global realignment of world powers, creating a multipolar entity that effectively competes with the US as a superpower. It is guided by the research question: 'How do digital capitalism and digital technologies influence the global realignments within the world powers competing with the US superpower status?' The chapter is divided into four sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis and conclusion.

Digital capitalism, technologies and US superiority

This section anchors the conceptualisation of the chapter on two poles: technology and multipolarity. Technology here means both the technology of digital capitalism and new media technologies such as social media. Fuchs (2009) sees digital capitalism in Marxian terms, in the broad ontological, epistemological and axiological sense, as an economic mode embedded in the antagonistic capitalist society. These antagonisms also manifest in international relations, particularly in the tensions between emerging powers and the existing superpower (Fuchs 2009). These relations potentially allow the competing countries to 'dissolve exploitation and oppression in society' (Fuchs 2009: 74–75). For example, the competition between the US and other emerging global powers, including the BRICS countries, results in the exploitation of the less dominant global actors, such as the majority of African countries. The concept of digital capitalism was developed by Schiller (2000) in an attempt to explore the link between the spread of new computer and satellite technologies and the emergence of new capitalist modes of production and consumption. These capitalist modes are inherently based on the politics of dispossession, corporate control and the exploitation of immaterial labour.

The original intention of digital technologies was that they would be used by innovative individuals and groups to come up with ways to meet their needs (Curran and Freedman 2016). However, unscrupulous individuals and groups, including countries, infiltrate the innovations and corrupt them to their advantage (Brisset-Foucault 2018). For example, some people use the digital technologies for disinformation and misinformation, and to their own advantage. The unscrupulous groups are what this chapter calls 'digital capitalists', which includes the US, the BRICS countries and other groupings. These entities own the capitalist modes supported by the technologies of digital capitalism, especially computer and satellite technologies. These modes have enabled the shrinking of geographical space, where the traditional borders of countries no longer prevent people from engaging in economic and political activities. This includes allegations of manipulation of vote tallies, as we

saw with allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election. We have seen Cambridge Analytica, a software company from the UK, interfere in the Kenyan elections in 2013 and 2017 (Wefwafwa et al. 2025). The technologies of digital capitalism have made space and time immaterial to the organisation of human experience (Barassi 2016). Both the creative and the unscrupulous individuals and groups misuse the digital capitalism technologies, affecting the various countries they target, regardless of their geographical distance.

Globally networked economies were first critiqued by autonomous Marxists after a critical re-reading of Marx. Feenberg (2013) argues that technologies, including the digital capitalism technologies, are not neutral, but rather embody specific values that are shaped and used by those in power, to maintain their social, economic, political and ideological positions. Thus, we see the emerging economies and the US misusing digital capitalist technologies, including social media, for political mileage through misinformation and disinformation. The smaller economies, like Kenya, are lured by the multipolar players and the US to adopt the digital capitalist technologies. This enables them to establish economic relations with the smaller countries by supplying the technologies that support digital capitalism. These relations give the multipolar powers and the US immense social power, which is exercised over the smaller countries, especially in Africa. For example, the Kenyan government procures the technologies of digital capitalism from the multipolar powers such as China, the United Kingdom (UK) and the US. The technology for registering Kenyan citizens under Huduma Namba – Kenya's former national digital ID system – is an ideology of the multipolar powers, from where we see the idea of surveillance of the Kenyan citizens by the foreign powers who are funding the Kenyan economy through various initiatives including direct foreign aid (Wefwafwa et al 2025). Foucault (1977) examined the operation of power through Bentham's design of the circular prison, the Panopticon, arguing that its principles extend beyond the prison itself and function ideologically as a mechanism for governing society. We see that the multipolar powers and the US have global interests – economic and political – in the smaller countries. They use the technologies of digital capitalism to create conformity, which in

Foucault's thinking, make the smaller countries think and act in a certain way for fear of being denied foreign aid. We can metaphorically use Foucault's (1977) power trajectory on Kenya's Huduma Namba, thanks to which the Kenyan government, the multipolar powers and the US now have easy access to the digital records of the Kenyan people. This allows them to make political and economic decisions based on their interests. For example, the British company Cambridge Analytica used the Kenyan government's data to shape the country's electoral politics in a way that could benefit the UK economically and politically.

In addition to the misuse of digital capitalism technologies by the multipolar economies, the US and the smaller countries, there are some positive effects that arise from it. For example, there is the emergence and flourishing of the globally networked economies across countries, away from the 'saturated' national markets of the 1970s (Barassi 2016: 5). During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2021, the technologies of digital capitalism allowed people across the globe to continue to work remotely, keeping physical distance to minimise infections. People across the globe held virtual meetings, conducted global business, carried out regular work tasks from home and, most importantly, were paid electronically, regardless of the countries in which they worked. This was despite the challenges created by the new working environments, including physical isolation from colleagues and the potential for invasion of privacy, particularly by supervisors.

Ordinary people and small countries (mis)use digital technologies to advance their own interests, or to undermine the interests of multipolar powers and superpowers. For example, the people of Kenya observed that Cambridge Analytica interfered in the country's 2017 elections, so they (mis)used social media to gather evidence of electoral malpractice, which they presented to their Supreme Court, resulting in the annulment of the presidential elections. Globally, people (mis)used social media technologies to demand social justice during the #BlackLivesMatter protests in the US, as a form of resistance to the status quo (Bosch et al. 2020). Some Autonomous Marxists draw on Foucault's (1978) consideration that 'where there is power, there is resistance' to argue that individuals and groups (mis)use technologies as a means of resisting

exploitation and oppression, in what is referred to as 'technological power relations' (Mithun et al. 2016: 95). The postphenomenologists argue that adaptive and culturally influenced people interact with technologies and find new uses to solve existing problems (Ihde 2009; Lazzarato 2004; Negri 2008; Verbeek 2012). They believe that digital capitalist technologies enter society as a phenomenon and cause phenomenological societal changes without the influence of the aforementioned unscrupulous individuals. They argue that if the societal change brought about by digital capitalism technologies is negative, then people would not adapt to it, and it would not be culturally accepted. This implies that the technology is phenomenologically occurring without human intervention. However, Mouffe (2019) questions the postphenomenological stance that portrays social problems as solvable by such a simplistic singular logic.

Curran and Freeman (2016) call for greater reflection on what role we should assign to the technologies of digital capitalism, arguing that despite society's initial hopes for information and communication technologies (ICT), not all have been achieved. Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web (WWW) – on which digital technology sits – with humanitarian intentions (Curran and Freeman 2016). However, the multipolar powers, the US superpower and smaller countries misuse the technologies for their interests. Globally, the technologies of digital capitalism are misused to perpetuate self-interest – economic and political – including surveillance of citizens, competition among countries, unwarranted online marketing and online scam activities. McLuhan's (1994) theory of technological determinism suggests that the use of digital capitalist technologies is due to the cultural adaptation of technologies in society. A society with many vices would adopt the technology to do evil, while a society with good morals would adopt it to do good. Therefore, we see that the emerging countries intend to usurp the superpower status of the US. The use of the technologies of digital capitalism by these countries is intended to deprive the US of its power, as evidenced by the US' allegations that Russia interfered in its 2016 presidential elections as a 'challenge' to the US' superpower status.

Theoretical anchorage

Technological determinism, digital capitalism and superpower status

This chapter uses the notion of technological determinism to explain how the technologies of digital information capitalism are influencing the global realignment of world powers, creating a multipolar entity that is challenging the US as a superpower. The notion was first theorised by the sociologist Veblen (1857–1929) to explain how technology determines the development of social structure and cultural values (Carey 1967). Later, in the 1960s, McLuhan (1994), influenced by Innis (1894–1952), popularised the notion in his 'medium theory' (Carey 1967). The notion romanticises the idea that information vessels are a dominant force that must be understood to know how the media influence society and culture. McLuhan (1994) famously stated that 'the medium is the message'. This means that different information vessels differ not only in terms of content but also in how they evoke and modify thoughts and senses. The statement focuses on the characteristics of information carriers rather than what they convey or how information is received. The vessels of information in this case are the newspaper, radio, television or social media, and all other channels of communication. McLuhan (1994) argues that the vessels of information, other than the content they convey, influence individuals, societies and countries. People adapt to their environment through a particular balance of the senses, and the dominant medium of each era reshapes that sensory ratio, influencing how perception is formed. We can contextualise this through Wefwafwa's (2015) discussion of how the people of Kenya adapted FM vernacular radio to reflect their sense of civic duty, resulting in allegations of vote-rigging and violence during the 2007–2008 presidential elections.

We can illustrate how the 'sense of ratio' affects perception by using the idea of people's perception of BRICS and the US in terms of economic and political power. The media messages from the tools of digital capitalism, including social media, awakened people's sense of ratio in different ways. For example, people's (mis)use of the media to create perceptions about countries' military power depends on how the media awakens their senses.

BRICS countries such as China would use their snake festival coverage to project their 'mighty' power to their citizens and the world. Brazil would use its samba festivals to generate media content that portrays its self-sufficiency, contentment and power in the region and the world at large.

Different social media platforms, such as X, Facebook and TikTok, awaken different senses in different people around the world (Aldardasawi 2017). For example, Facebook aims at an amorphous mass anonymity of users whose senses are awakened (see McLuhan 1994). This means that social media users choose the medium that best awakens their senses according to their communication needs. In the case of the BRICS countries, their communicative needs are to project themselves as emerging powers that are stronger than the US (Aldardasawi 2017). Social media messages can, of course, be cross-posted on different platforms, with the messages moving from Facebook to X to WhatsApp to Instagram and to YouTube, generating different responses along the way. Let's say, for example, that screenshots of an X post are shared on Facebook and TikTok, generating different emotions and debates. In this case, the shared screenshots are not easily authenticated and cannot be easily traced back to the original message creator. This provides a conducive environment for those who misuse the technologies to generate controversial messages, especially about the superpower status of the US and competitors such as the BRICS countries.

Cross-posting allows social media messages to reach mainstream media such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable News Network (CNN). Using McLuhan's (1994) response to critics of his book *Prophecy*, we see that the mainstream media are reinventing themselves to complement social media rather than compete with it. McLuhan's (1994) prophecy is often cited as an example of technological determinism, in which he suggests that new technologies would eventually displace the book publishing process. Critics argued that McLuhan was wrong, because the technological development of the printing press allowed more books to be printed and their summarised versions shared on social media to maximise reach. Scholars acknowledge that the fact that more books were being printed than ever before, and social media used as part of the dissemination process shows that the traditional culture

of book publishing died. Thus, McLuhan (1984:82) had envisioned the high-tech printing press that would disrupt the existing print culture, in what he called the 'killing of the book publishing industry'.

When applied to BRICS and the US' superpower status, McLuhan's (1994) book can be applied metaphorically in two ways: First, it can be applied to increasing freedom of expression and liberalisation around the world, which means governments no longer monopolise the media. This allows private entities to invest in the media, resulting in better-quality content from emerging private media with immense opportunities, such as X, Facebook and TikTok. The second metaphorical application is that traditional media culture, like book culture, is being abandoned because of ICT developments. ICT around the world has reinvented itself to awaken people's senses in a balanced way, as the technology of digital capitalism does. Almost all major TV channels, radio stations and newspapers have adopted new ICT technologies to enable online subscriptions that allow global access and payments. The culture, roles and processes of the traditional media have therefore died, as predicted by McLuhan. We see that the death of the traditional media culture has widened the space for inclusivity and participation of many actors, thereby distributing economic and political power across the globe. We can combine McLuhan's (1994) concept of sense awakening with traditional media to argue that the complementarity between social media and traditional media is (re)awakening the sense of surveillance within the global powers. The US is constantly using surveillance technologies on the emerging powers, who are also surveilling the US. The global powers have sections and departments that are well-funded to ensure that they get information from each other about the technologies.

Methodology

The chapter used content analysis and observation to analyse how the technologies of digital capitalism are influencing the global realignment of world powers, creating a multipolar entity that challenges the US as a superpower. It drew on existing literature and social media posts to identify how digital capitalism has enabled the growing influence of emerging

economies. The literature, social media, author observations and lived experiences could not be meaningfully expressed in numerical terms. The authors collected and analysed the literature on how digital capitalism is influencing global realignments within world powers, creating a multipolar entity that competes with the US as a superpower. To obtain current literature, they attended and participated in international conferences on digital capitalism, emerging powers and superpower status. They also observed the media coverage on how digital capitalism enhances and/or limits the emerging powers and the superpower status. This took place between November 2024 and February 2025. The authors also followed the social media platforms of prominent political figures, including the former and current presidents of the US, and the presidents of Brazil, China, Russia, India and South Africa. The authors did not set any limits on when the leaders of the selected countries posted on social media. This is because the struggles for global power are ongoing, and setting limits would leave out some important perspectives that were posted years ago. The authors then organised the data sets into codes, which they analysed and interpreted. Social media is a relatively new platform, and the adoption of the platform by leaders for use in public communication is even more recent. Therefore, this methodological approach may seem somewhat unusual. However, the authors encouraged themselves with the thought that it is the courage to try new methodological approaches that leads to new rigorous methods. They purposively selected 100 posts and interacted with them as part of the research. The posts consisted of video clips, audio clips, and text. They thematically analysed the posts alongside observations and the literature review (see Kelle 2000). These provided the triangulation necessary to verify/validate the methods (Fielding 2012). The themes that emerged included the shrinking of the world into a global village, multipolarity/self-projection of emerging powers as equals to the US, economic strength of emerging powers and weakening of the US economy, and election-rigging and name tainting.

The authors have divided their observations into two parts: The first was the observation of online comments posted on the presidents' social media. The second was observing the presidents and the people during the news coverage. They observed the language and body language of

the people as they commented in the media on the issues surrounding the rising powers and the superpower. The observations were intended to provide a panoramic view of how people perceive the concepts of emerging powers and superpower status. The authors developed and used an observation schedule with guiding questions derived from the research question. The schedule also served as a coding sheet during the thematic analysis. The main challenge of the methodology was the different languages used by the presidents. The authors come from English-speaking countries, while almost all the BRICS countries do not speak English. They used basic language interpretation to understand the meanings and context.

Analysis

This section analyses how the technologies of digital capitalism are influencing the global realignments within the world powers, creating a multipolar entity that challenges the US as a superpower. The authors attempt to analyse the global events from an Afrocentric perspective to offer the perspectives that the authors consider to be African, even though they may not be the most popular (see Busia 1967; Guy 2012). The intention here is to offer an alternative view away from mainstream thinking. The chapter informs us about the Afrocentric perspectives on how digital capitalism enables the emergence of multipolar powers in the world. The Afrocentric perspectives are pursued by comparing the technologies of digital capitalism with indigenous African practices.

The shrinking of the world into a global village

From the literature reviewed in this chapter, the framework adopted, and the observations made, the authors see that digital capitalism has enabled the globe to appear as a metaphorical village (McLuhan 1994). McLuhan theorised that technology could make the world seem like a village, because we could know simultaneously what was happening in all corners of the world. Today we see that a single event in one corner of the globe, such as the attempted assassination of then-US presidential candidate

Donald Trump and his subsequent re-election as US president, instantly captures everyone's attention. We saw world leaders sending messages of goodwill – and, later, congratulations to Trump on his election as president. Perceptibly, we see that world leaders also tried to align the interests of their countries with the US, to establish bilateral relations in economic and political fields. But we also see that world leaders have been careful not to recognise the US as a superpower. Rather, they presented an image of an equal partner with whom they were interested in working. For example, during the period after the attempt on Trump's life, Russian President Vladimir Putin said:

> "I impressed by his behaviour when there was an attempt on his life. Of course there was some adrenaline rush, but [Trump] showed his true colours during the emergency. He emerged as a man. As I said before, we are going to work with the head that will garner the trust of the American people and this shall be in practice. If he wins, I will not call him … you see, Washington was calling almost every other week, and they stopped. If they want to rebuild contacts, as I said, we have nothing against them" (Times of India 2024).

Using Guy (2012) and Busia (1967), we can analyse Putin's narrative above from an Afrocentric perspective, noting that – similarly to how people viewed headmen in indigenous African political leadership – Putin recognises the US as just another country, not *the* superpower. Casting the globe as an indigenous African village (Guy 2012; McLuhan 1994), we can liken Putin to a headman who is cautiously trying to extend an olive branch in the hope of working with Trump – another headman in another village – on issues affecting their countries (in this analogy, their villages). But he is careful not to recognise the US and the US people as more powerful than Russia and the Russian people. This is typical of indigenous African peoples, who have always emphasised equality (Busia 1967). This consistent diplomatic and sometimes militaristic refusal to recognise the US as a superpower can be seen in all the BRICS countries, and even in smaller countries around the world. Drawing from the 1970s, we see how Vietnam fought a spirited military war with the US for a long time

until the US withdrew its troops because they were suffering unnecessary casualties. In 2003, Iraq's military war with the US also exposed the US as not so powerful. Although the US successfully deposed the then-Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, we argue that this militaristic and sometimes diplomatic portrayal of the US as not so powerful was exacerbated by the technologies of digital capitalism. These militaristic confrontations have been shared across the globe through digital capitalist technologies such as social media, allowing citizens from different countries to analyse them and create perceptions and beliefs about how the US is not as powerful as it claims to be.

Multipolarity and self-projection of the emerging powers as equals with the US

We see that emerging powers such as China and India are projecting themselves as equally powerful and capable of challenging the superpower status of the US. We argue that the emerging powers recognise the multipolarity of global power and are therefore careful not to challenge the US for superpower status in the world. In his congratulatory message on Trump's presidential victory in November 2024, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted:

> "Heartiest congratulations my friend @realDonaldTrump on your historic election victory. As you build on the successes of your previous term, I look forward to renewing our collaboration to further strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership. Together, let's work for the betterment of our people and to promote global peace, stability and prosperity" (Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi).

The tweet shows that Modi is keen to project the idea that the US and India should work as equals to improve the lives of their people. He sees the US as a peer, not a superpower. We also see India projecting itself as a rising power worthy of constituting a multipolar entity, rather than as

an underdog to the US. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa also tweeted his congratulations to US President-elect Trump:

> "I had an opportunity this afternoon to personally extend South Africa's well wishes and congratulations to President-Elect @realDonaldTrump on his election as the 47th President of the United States of America. During our telephone call, we both agreed on the need to strengthen our trade and political ties. We also look forward to hosting President-Elect Trump during the #G20 Heads of State Summit next year" (South African President Cyril Ramaphosa).

Ramaphosa was at the time set to host the Group of Twenty (G20) in Johannesburg in 2025. Alongside the congratulatory message to Trump, we see the tone of Ramaphosa's invitation, with the tweet careful not to portray the US as more powerful than South Africa. The invitation came shortly before Trump's later accusation that South Africa was illegally dispossessing white-owned land in South Africa. The South African people and Ramaphosa understood Trump's February 2025 launch of his anti-South Africa messaging as a belittling of them – in the manner of a country claiming superpower status. Both the South African people and their president used the technologies of digital capitalism, particularly social media (Schiller 2000), to respond categorically, arguing that South Africa has its own ways of resolving internal conflicts and does not need US intervention. This portrays the US as having limited power – within its own territorial boundaries – and therefore as not being a superpower. It is a reminder to the US that the globe consists of multipolar powers, with no single country able to claim superpower status. We can further compare South Africa's portrayal of the US to the indigenous African people who left the villages to form others (Guy 2012). Here we see that countries around the world are willing to move away from the norm – the superpower status of the US – in order to forge their own paths, in what I discuss as the emergence of multipolar powers.

Economic strength in the emerging powers, and the weakening of the US

The globally networked economy, facilitated by the US policy of offshore cheap-labour production, helps emerging economies to grow faster. While the US exploits cheap labour in the emerging economies, the emerging economies' population are engaged in gainful employment and economic development. For example, working-class people in emerging economies, including China, invest their resources in the stock markets, where their resources increase with compound interest (Schiller 2000). Because of the large working-class population in China, resources can be pooled more quickly than in the US, where the lower numbers of working-class people struggle to maintain jobs under high taxation. Working class here means gainful employment. Logically, China's 1.4 billion people have more people in gainful employment that US's 349 million people (Statista 2026). As a result, many investors would like to invest in emerging markets, where there are higher returns due to cheap labour and lower taxation. As a result, China and India are experiencing higher economic growth than the US, because they have higher numbers of working-class populations that have a culture of investing their resources in the stock market. The emerging economies are, therefore, powerful economic entities that effectively compete with the US' 'superpower' status. These entities make up the multipolar formation. In March 2025, the U.S. President Donald Trump, issued an ultimatum through twitter to force BRICS member states to abandon efforts to create a rival currency. The BRICS members are exploring alternative payment systems and domestic currencies to reduce global reliance on the U.S. dollar Trump tweeted:

> "The idea that the BRICS Countries are trying to move away from the Dollar while we stand by and watch is OVER. We require a commitment from these Countries that they will neither create a new BRICS Currency, nor back any other Currency to replace the mighty U.S. Dollar or, they will face 100% Tariffs and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful U.S. Economy. They can go find

another "sucker!" There is no chance that the BRICS will replace the U.S. Dollar in International Trade, and any Country that tries should wave goodbye to America" (US President Donald Trump).

We can analyse Trump's tweet using Schiller's (2000) view that the networked economy is stimulating economic growth around the world, away from the saturated national economies of the 1970s. Economic growth within the emerging powers appears to be threatening the US dollar in a way that has caught Trump's attention. This economic weakening of the US is accompanied by a reduction in its political influence around the world. Notably, the BRICS countries targeted by the US president's tweet were left unscathed.

Election-rigging and name tainting

There are public allegations that some of the BRICS countries, including Russia, are using the technologies of digital capitalism, such as new media technologies, to politically influence the US presidential elections. In another tweet during his first term, Trump wrote, 'Russia, Russia, Russia! That's all you heard at the beginning of this Witch Hunt Hoax … And now Russia has disappeared because I had nothing to do with Russia helping me to get elected. It was a crime that didn't exist' (US President Donald Trump).

The tweet was in response to public accusations that Russia hacked the US electoral system and rigged the election in Trump's favour. While Trump denied the allegations, the Russian president responded sarcastically, saying that even a lazy child sitting on a couch could hack into the US electoral system. This was Russia's way of downplaying the US's superpower status. In the eyes of the public, if Russia can interfere with its electoral processes, it implies that the US is not the superpower that the technologies of digital capitalism project to the world. Separately, the US projected itself as not in control of global affairs when the BBC reported that Trump sarcastically referred to COVID-19 as the 'Chinese virus' that caused 'stigmatisation of China'. China's president urged the US to

correct its mistake and stop making groundless accusations against China because it was tarnishing its name. We observed that Trump's reference to COVID-19 as the 'Chinese virus' is a way of surrendering to China. This is because the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic was so huge that if the US is attributing its outbreak to China, this suggests that China is very powerful.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that the idea of the US as a superpower is no longer viable. The idea is contestable, especially around the complexities of the binaries reflected in how other actors perceive the location of Africa vis-à-vis how Africa desires to, or actually does, locate itself in the power shifts and fixes within the Global South. The idea that the US is a superpower was created by the technologies of digital capitalism. However, that same digital capitalism has enabled the emergence of a networked economy, especially social media such as X and Facebook, which has facilitated the emergence of powerful formations such as the BRICS. The BRICS nations are effectively competing with the 'superpower' status of the US. The networked economy allows US industries to prioritise offshore production processes. These industries export jobs to countries such as China and India, where labour is cheap and taxes are low. This increases the number of working-class people in emerging economies while reducing the number of working-class people in the US. Since the culture of the working class in emerging markets is to invest in the stock markets, we see that the emerging markets have increasing shares in the global stock markets, while the US has decreasing shares. Social media also allows leaders and people to follow economic and political events around the world simultaneously and easily. Leaders exchange communication as a measure of power, allowing people to perceive that emerging economies are as powerful as the US. This creates a multipolar entity that leaves no room for superpower status.

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