

The Transnational Geopolitics Issue

Introduction

If 2011 was the year of geopolitical protests, 2014 has been the year of geopolitical earthquakes – the shockwaves heralding the movement of tectonic plates. This edition of *Uplink* focuses on the question of what comes next for the world-system after the meltdown of Wall Street neoliberalism in 2008.

The time has come for a revolution in our understanding of the world-system. Instead of viewing the planet as divided into competing national spheres of influence (the neocolonial world-view of US neocons, energy-rent autocrats, and other assorted riffraff), we should be thinking of the power of transnational audiences and digital democracies.

This power is especially important for players and makers of videogames to think about, for the simple reason that videogames are one of the world's most planetary art-forms. As such, videogames directly transmit the utopian energies of the transnational era in ways which elude other mass media.

This essay is an attempt to map out one of the most important expressions of that utopian energy. This is the category of transnational political solidarity. Over the past twenty-five years, humanity has gone through one of the most sweeping social transformations in its history. Today, a majority of human beings live in cities, are literate in one or more national languages, vote in electoral democracies, and have access to digital interactive media.

Yet in order to grasp what new forms of solidarity might emerge from this networked world, we must begin by rethinking our understanding of neoliberalism. Most critics of neoliberalism identify it as the ideology and belief-system of the Wall Street plutocrats who ran the world-system from 1973 to 2008, shared with a junior cadre of EU bankstercrats and various comprador national elites. The problem with this definition is that the US no longer exerts hegemony over the post-2008 world-system. What this means is that in addition to critiquing Wall Street neoliberalism, we also need to critique *other neoliberalisms*. To see what this means, read on!

After the Global Minotaur: Transnational Capitalism, Transnational Class Struggle, and the 5-SEEAS

In 2001, Goldman Sachs analyst Jim O'Neill argued that the demographic weight and economic potential of the BRIC nations – Brazil, Russia, India and China – made them future growth poles of the world economy. Critics have long argued the term was little more than a marketing stunt, given the vast socio-economic differences between heavily urbanized Brazil, majority agrarian and multilingual India, China's dynamic manufacturing economy, and Russia's energy-rent economy.

Despite these limitations, O'Neill's thesis did provide one salutary service. It highlighted the necessity of rethinking our assumptions about the post-Cold War or multipolar world-system. The reason is that the United States today no longer exerts the sort of political, cultural and economic hegemony it exerted over the world-system between 1945 and 2008. Nor is today's world-system organized into the Cold War hierarchy of a fully industrialized and urbanized First World (Western Europe and the US), a partly-industrialized, partly-urbanized Second World (Japan, the former Soviet bloc, and parts of South America), and a lightly-industrialized and primarily agrarian Third World (parts of South America, and most of Africa and Asia).

For the first time in human history, the majority of human beings on the planet are literate, reside in cities rather than villages, work in offices and factories rather than on farms, are members of independent nation-states rather than colonies, are the citizens of electoral democracies rather than colonial despotisms or postcolonial autocracies, and have access to transnational forms of mass media and consumer goods.

While the dominant economic logic of today's world-system is neoliberal, it is not necessarily the neoliberalism embodied by the Wall Street plutocracy. Instead of thinking of US neoliberalism as the norm which is now the post-2008 exception, we should be more dialectical still, and think of the hegemonic phase of US neoliberalism – the period from 1973 to 2008 – as a most strange and unusual exception to the global neoliberal norm.

Put bluntly, Wall Street neoliberalism was the exotic, hothouse variant of something far sturdier and more prevalent, namely the various non-US neoliberalisms. While Wall Street neoliberalism continues to exist and retains significant power, these other neoliberalisms own and operate the bulk of our planetary economy. Rather than simply critiquing US neoliberalism, we must also critique these other neoliberalisms as well.

To make sense of this multiplicity of neoliberalisms, we must turn to Yanis Varoufakis, the economist who has given us the single most thought-provoking account of the hegemonic role of US neoliberalism in the world-system between 1973 and 2008.¹ Varoufakis calls this period of hegemony the era of the Global Minotaur.

In ancient Greek mythology, the Minotaur performed a scandalous sacrifice required for the perpetuation of King Minos' imperial rule on Crete. Tributary youth from the empire's colonies were secretly fed to the monstrous Minotaur in its labyrinth, in exchange for imperial stability and prosperity. Varoufakis updates this legend by referring to a rather different scandalous sacrifice, namely the existence of simultaneous large-scale US current account and trade deficits between 1973 and 2008.

Such deficits are normally the sign of economic underdevelopment or weakness. Yet the Global Minotaur – a.k.a. the system of financial speculation and transfers created by US neoliberalism – transformed these apparent signs of distress into the linchpins of a renewed hegemony. This renewed phase of US hegemony lasted for thirty-five years, before its ultimate

demise in 2008.

To understand why the Minotaur was invented, how it operated, and why it ultimately expired, Varoufakis takes us back to the zero-hour of the contemporary world-system in 1944. This was the moment when the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates established the US dollar as the world's reserve currency. Henceforth, all other national currencies – including the previous world reserve currency, the British pound sterling – would be pegged to the value of the US dollar.

For the next twenty-nine years, the US was the world's hegemonic political, cultural and economic power. The US had by far the single largest economy in the world, the highest level of productivity, the most advanced technology, the most prolific mass media, and the highest levels of per capita income of any other nation. While the Soviet Union did provide a modicum of military competition, it never came close to matching US levels of productivity, technological innovation or cultural dynamism.

One of the consequences of this economic might was that the US ran permanent trade surpluses vis-a-vis all other economies for most of these twenty-nine years. To prevent a recurrence of the Great Depression, when dysfunctional trade and current account systems led to trade wars and a breakdown into warring blocs, the US recycled its post-1945 trade surpluses into the Japanese and Western European economies, first via the Marshall plan and later via Cold War Keynesianism.

The result was a period of accelerated economic growth and undisputed US dominance which lasted until 1973, when the countries of Western Europe and Japan finally began to catch up to US levels of productivity. By the late 1960s, however, cracks began to appear in this US-centric system. US trade surpluses slowly but surely began to turn into trade deficits, making it more and more difficult to maintain the fixed exchange rates of the Bretton Woods system.

In response to these pressures, trade and financial flows were deregulated in 1973, and currencies began to float in currency markets. Enter the Global Minotaur, which can be viewed as the second half of the epoch of US hegemony.

The key mechanism of the Minotaur is surprisingly simple. Instead of running its *own* current account and trade surpluses and then recycling these into other economies, the US would now recycle *other* economies' current account and trade surpluses (originally the surpluses of Western Europe and Japan, and later the surpluses of the eurozone, East Asia and China) back into its own economy.

It is important to stress that these flows of non-US capital into the US did not occur because of US imperial diktat. They flowed in because the return on US financial assets was higher than that of other assets. This higher return was achieved not by increasing US productivity, but by reducing US real wages and thereby increasing profits, by a vast expansion of US private debt (especially the debt of financial corporations), and most of all by titanic financial speculations.²

The most characteristic form of these financial speculations, a.k.a. the labyrinth of the Minotaur, was what PIMCO analyst Paul McCulley famously dubbed the “shadow banking system”. This shadow banking system was not illegal or underground per se, but consisted of financial institutions which provided liquidity for genuine economic activity, i.e. engaged in leverage, but were not subject to the regulations governing banks and other financial firms. At its speculative peak, the US shadow banking system was slightly larger in total assets than the non-shadow US banking system, before collapsing in 2008 and declining significantly in size thereafter.³

Varoufakis points out that while the Minotaur's vast financial speculations were wasteful and destructive, they did generate the consumer demand necessary for the surplus economies of Europe and East Asia to flourish as exporters. That consumer demand created a new transnational consumer culture, based on media and electronics. Finally, that demand also underwrote the initial phase of European monetary integration, as well as the introduction of the euro in 1998 as a neo-mercantilist currency.⁴

The Global Minotaur reigned for thirty-five years, from 1973 until 2008. It expired for the simple reason that US consumers could no longer underwrite the Minotaur's exponentially-increasing financial speculations. When the mortgage securitization bubble burst in 2008, three decades of falling real wages meant that US consumers no longer had the capacity to purchase the exports of East Asia, China and the eurozone. The global recycling mechanism – the beating heart of the Minotaur – stopped. The shadow banking system, a.k.a. the Minotaur's labyrinth, fell into ruin.

Subsequently, the nation-states of the largest economies of the world stepped in with bailouts and stimulus packages, in order to prevent a repeat of the deflationary cataclysm of 1929-1933. However, the transformation of the world-system between 1973 and 2008 meant that the end of the Minotaur did not signify the end of capitalism or of human history. Rather, it signified the much less dramatic end of the second half of US hegemony, and the official beginning of the era of transnational capitalism.

Put bluntly, after 2008 US neoliberalism was simply one variant of neoliberalism (transnational capitalism) among others. While these non-US neoliberalisms (transnational capitalisms) borrow extensively from the political institutions, economic structures and cultural innovations of their US forebear, they are no longer subordinate to the US Treasury Department, ideologically enthralled by US culture-industries, or constrained by Wall Street plutocrats to the extent they were in the heyday of the Minotaur.

These non-US neoliberalisms are governed primarily by domestic elites, rather than by external actors. However, these elites do not have a free hand to conduct policy. They are significantly constrained by the political decisions of billions of literate, urbanized, and digitally connected citizens. The form of this decision-making varies widely, from the mechanisms of electoral democracy established by post-1947 India, post-1984 Brazil, post-1998 Indonesia and the majority of other postcolonial nations, to the forms of public accountability and mass civic participation typical of the technocratic one-party states of post-1979 China and post-1985 Vietnam. In turn, these new forms of mass political participation have enabled billions of citizens to begin to resist the policies of US neoliberalism, as well as those of the various non-US neoliberalisms.

One of Varoufakis' most important insights is that the project of European unification should not be written off as just another tool of Wall Street neoliberalism, for the simple reason that this unification signifies a tremendous expansion of mass political participation. Indeed, the European Union was a structural contradiction from the very beginning. While the economic goal of the EU's common currency, the euro, was to facilitate the Central European export of capital to the Minotaur, the political goal of the EU's "acquis communautaire" (community consensus) was the construction of a transnational democracy.

After the crash of 2008, these two goals are now in open conflict. While the Global Minotaur is dead, the national elites of the EU continue to pursue misguided monetary and fiscal policies which assume that austerity inside the eurozone countries can somehow coax the Minotaur back to life. As presently constituted, the euro functions as a deflationary quasi-gold

standard, or what can be termed the politics of Minotaurism.

Six years of Minotaurism have inflicted outright depressions on Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, and painful economic stagnation everywhere else in the eurozone. Still worse, Minotaurism has created a blood-curdling political backlash, in the form of the rise of Far Right and neo-fascist parties in France, Italy, Greece and other countries. Varoufakis' inarguable conclusion is that the European Union must consign Minotaurism as quickly as possible to the junk-heap of history, and employ the tools at its disposal – primarily the European Investment Bank and its structural funds – to transform the euro into a growth-boosting common currency.⁵ Of course, this will not happen without mass political mobilizations against the EU's austerity-obsessed elites. Put bluntly, the European Union is a site of a ferocious transnational class struggle between its elite Minotaurists and its half a billion citizens.

What is true of the EU's neoliberalism applies equally to all the other non-US neoliberalisms. Each neoliberalism is the site of unremitting transnational class struggles. Just as each neoliberalism is linked in complex circuits of political, economic and cultural exchange to all other neoliberalisms, so too is each transnational class struggle connected to all the others.

To be sure, these transnational class struggles vary widely in terms of their relationship to earlier and more localized forms of class struggle. They also vary widely in terms of the balance of local, regional, national, international and transnational forms of class power they embody, and the weight of their respective geopolitical locations and trajectories.

To make sense of this complexity, we will argue that most forms of transnational class struggle are organized around three specific sites. These sites are transnational citizenship (class identity), transnational governance (class power), and transnational wealth (class property).

The battle over citizenship ranges from the multiple civil rights struggles (the battle for secular, national and egalitarian identities, and against sectarianism, racism, sexism, homophobia, casteism, ethnic and linguistic chauvinism, etc.), to the struggles for mass political participation and against autocratic and plutocratic domination (dictatorships, oligarchies, and one-party states). The battle over governance includes the struggle for public investment in education, science, environmental protection and consumer safety, and against repressive, punitive state policies and state-assisted plutocratic looting. The battle over wealth includes the struggles for higher wages, for collective bargaining, for universal health insurance and social protections, and for taxation of the wealthy, and against the immiseration of the 99% for the enrichment of the 0.1%.

What makes these struggles different from previous forms of class struggle is the fact that they occur everywhere on the planet, and that they can communicate with, learn from, and potentially act with each other. Where 19th century farmers, peasants and craft-workers battled against the urban bourgeoisie, reactionary feudalisms, and imperial empires inside a single nation-state, and where 20th century anti-colonial peasant movements, national independence movements, and socialist and labor parties battled against international capitalists, divisional corporations, and colonial despotisms on the terrain of international alliances (colonial empires and neocolonial Cold War blocs), the struggle of the digital commoners of the 21st century against plutocrats and transnational corporations is taking place inside every village, every town, every city, and every nation-state.

Paradoxically, this ubiquity means that the category of geopolitical location weighs far more heavily on transnational class struggles than was typically the case for their national or international predecessors. To understand why location matters so much in the post-Minotaur era, we list the fifty most powerful of the world's neoliberalisms below, in approximate order

from more geopolitical influence to less. The neoliberalisms of the world are almost entirely organized in terms of geographical nation-states, with a couple of exceptions which only serve to reconfirm the rule that geography matters (the European Union is a nascent transnational state comprised of twenty-eight very specific countries, and Taiwan is a province of China).

In order to avoid excessive emphasis on crude metrics of demographic weight or economic output, geopolitical influence is calculated as a composite of total population (a maximum of 100 points, with China, the most populous nation, indexed at 100), GDP in billions of US dollars at current market exchange rates (a maximum of 100 points, with the EU, the world's largest economy, indexed at 100), and finally governance (a maximum of 100 points), on a scale of 1 to 300 points.

Governance is a metric of the total productivity of a given economy. It is defined as the nation or region's degree of overall democratization (30 points), internet access as a percent of the population (30 points), economic diversification away from raw materials exports (20 points), and net financial position (20 points). Sovereign currency nations receive an automatic 20 points for this last category, since they have the maximum possible freedom to issue debt in their own currency. Nations without fully sovereign currencies can receive a maximum of 10 out of 20 points (their external assets minus external debts are divided by GDP, and the result is multiplied by 10, i.e. anything above 10 means that total net assets are larger than GDP). Note that if the net position is negative, i.e. the economy is indebted to other economies, the points are subtracted from rather than added to the overall governance score.

Table 1. Geopolitical Influence of 50 Largest Economies and Regions in the Neoliberal World-system, 2014.

Country or Region	Population Index (China = 100)	GDP Index (EU = 100)	Governance Index (100)	Composite Index (Out of 300)
EU-28	37.44	100.00	92.9	230.4
US	23.33	96.82	92.3	212.4
China	100.00	53.25	46.9	200.2
India	92.25	10.81	45.0	148.0
Japan	9.29	28.25	92.9	130.4
Canada	2.60	10.53	96.8	109.9
Australia	1.73	9.00	94.9	105.6
Switzerland	0.60	3.75	95.6	100.0
Norway	0.38	2.95	96.6	99.9
New Zealand	0.31	1.05	95.0	96.3
Brazil	14.87	12.94	54.8	82.6
Taiwan	1.71	2.82	76.0	80.5
South Korea	3.69	7.52	68.9	80.1

Singapore	0.39	1.72	76.6	78.7
Mexico	8.75	7.27	48.6	64.6
Argentina	3.12	3.53	57.7	64.3
Malaysia	2.22	1.80	60.1	64.2
Indonesia	18.44	5.00	38.3	61.8
Philippines	7.34	1.57	52.8	61.7
Russia	10.68	9.51	39.8	59.9
Nigeria	13.05	3.01	43.5	59.5
Colombia	3.50	2.18	53.8	59.5
Turkey	5.61	4.73	48.6	58.9
Chile	1.19	1.60	54.8	57.6
Peru	2.25	1.16	50.7	54.1
Thailand	4.75	2.23	44.7	51.7
Kenya	3.25	0.25	45.2	48.7
Iran	5.69	2.13	40.6	48.4
Venezuela	2.11	2.53	43.6	48.3
Pakistan	13.75	1.37	33.1	48.2
South Africa	3.95	2.02	42.2	48.1
Saudi Arabia	2.25	4.29	41.1	47.6
Egypt	6.44	1.57	39.3	47.3
Ecuador	1.15	0.52	44.6	46.3
Vietnam	6.44	0.99	38.8	46.2
Bangladesh	11.50	0.75	32.9	45.2
Morocco	2.44	0.60	41.7	44.7
Algeria	2.83	1.22	36.0	40.0
Ukraine	3.14	0.86	34.4	38.4
Nepal	1.94	0.11	36.2	38.3
Uganda	2.59	0.11	34.4	37.1
Sri Lanka	1.48	0.39	35.2	37.1
Guatemala	1.16	0.31	35.2	36.6
Ghana	1.81	0.28	34.1	36.2
Uzbekistan	2.21	0.33	31.3	33.8
Tanzania	3.28	0.19	28.5	32.0

Mozambique	1.73	0.08	30.1	31.9
Kazakhstan	1.26	1.29	28.0	30.6
Myanmar	3.90	0.33	25.4	29.6
Ethiopia	6.33	0.27	22.8	29.4

While it should not be a surprise to argue that China and India both wield significant levels of geopolitical influence, some of the other success stories may be less well known. One of the most interesting of these is Indonesia. After its 1998 economic meltdown, Indonesians overthrew the Suharto dictatorship and established the world's third-largest democracy. Since then, Indonesia has become one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. It successfully diversified away from its former dependence on oil exports, and its 2013 GDP reached the respectable total of \$868 billion. Indonesia has also fully embraced electoral democracy. In the summer of 2014, a significant majority of Indonesian voters elected Jokowi, a progressive populist roughly comparable to Brazil's Lula or Argentina's Kirchner, to the office of the Presidency.

Conversely, Turkey is listed as having almost the same geopolitical influence as Russia, despite having only half of Russia's population. The reason for this approximate parity is that Turkey has a highly diversified medium-technology economy, whereas Russia's economy remains dependent on low-technology energy and raw materials exports. Turkey also has a significant comparative advantage in terms of the rule of law. On a scale of 100 to 0, with 100 signifying complete honesty and 0 signifying complete corruption, Transparency International ranked Turkey at 50 and Russia at 28 in 2013.⁶ Turkey's superior economic productivity is confirmed by analyst firm Gardner data on world machine-tools markets, which shows Turkey produced \$709.2 million of machine tools in 2013, whereas Russia produced only \$210.9 million. In per capita terms, Turkey produces six times as many machine-tools as Russia.⁷

No less important is the fact that Turkey has a functional (albeit highly imperfect) democracy. Over the past two decades, the Turkish authorities have become significantly less hostile and more inclusive towards Turkey's internal Kurdish and Alevite minorities. Turkey has also begun to pursue a policy of peaceful and productive coexistence vis-a-vis its neighbors, including the Kurdistan Regional Government of northern Iraq. By contrast, Russia's neo-imperial foreign policy has antagonized its post-Soviet neighbors, and Putinism's colonial invasion of Ukraine – unquestionably the single most egregious act of geopolitical suicide since the US oiligarchy's invasion of Iraq in 2003 – has triggered damaging global economic sanctions on Russia's extremely vulnerable energy-rent economy.

It is true that these rankings do have one crucial limitation. They are meant to measure the geopolitical influence of a single nation or region. However, none of the countries or regions listed above exist as completely independent or autonomous agents. All are closely tied to the world-market as well as to other nation-states and regions, through a complex array of economic institutions, cultural practices, and political histories.

How are we to make sense of this interdependence? To conceptually carve up the industrializing world into neocolonial zones, and thereby crown the four BRICs as regional hegemonies (the ideological dream of Putinism, Russia's tin-plated substitute for the golden epaulettes of the Romanov Empire), is worse than criminal – it is simply false. National neo-hegemonies are politically illegitimate, culturally unappealing, and economically disastrous in a world-system characterized by near-universal democratization, urbanization, and digital

mediatization.

Instead of retreating to dismal fantasies of vanished autarkies – including the political retreat from the rule of monstrous plutocrats to the far worse rule of the despots who would administer those autarkies – we should be thinking about the utopian possibilities of transnational integration. Against the plutocracy of the 1,645 billionaires, only the democracy of the 7 billion human beings who work for a living on this planet will do. This democracy will be as diverse, multifaceted, and compassionate as the collective imagination and productivity of that 7 billion can be.

One of the most interesting practical models of this transnationalism is the construction of the European Union, currently comprised of twenty-eight member states. For all of the problems of its poorly-designed common currency – problems, it should be emphasized, caused not by transnational democracy, but by the lack of a democratic counterweight to the power of austerity-minded European central bankers – the European Union has been remarkably successful at extending progressive norms of democratic citizenship, ecological sanity, and the rule of law to its more than five hundred million citizens.

We will suggest that the industrializing world is best understood in terms of five large-scale geopolitical zones of potential transnational integration, each of which has the capacity to equal the achievements of the European Union. We will call these five zones the 5-SEEAS, an acronym for the industrializing nations of South America (S), Eurasia (E), East Asia (E), Africa (A) and South Asia (S).

It is important to stress that these five zones are not meant to signify enlarged neo-national empires or authoritarian power-blocs, but rather zones of democratic geopolitical transformation. As such, they are meant to resolve one of the most glaring weaknesses of contemporary sociology, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies. For decades, these fields of scholarship have devoted themselves to analyzing postcolonial nation-states, national economies, and national cultures, as well as the past and present diasporas specific to those nation-states.⁸

Anyone with the slightest familiarity with the daily lived reality of the industrializing nations will understand the basic problem with this national framework. Simply, no industrializing nation is organized in terms of the ethnic homogeneity, linguistic uniformity, and economic marketization characteristic of First World nation-states. India alone has twenty-two official languages, dozens of confessional and religious identities, hundreds of occupational identities (including professional identities, kinship identities, and caste identities), thousands of ethnicities, and tens of thousands of linguistic communities. Yet India is just one of one hundred and sixty other industrializing nations, each with their own complex precolonial, colonial and postcolonial histories.

This is why the time has come to enlarge the scale and improve the granularity of our theoretical toolkit, by decolonizing our models of culture, politics and economics. Instead of analyzing the industrializing nations on the basis of blueprints based on the wealthiest First World nation-states, we should begin by asking what the industrializing nations have in common with each other. We should also acknowledge that geography matters, and not just in the sense that no country can choose its neighbors or physical endowment of natural resources. Past histories of geography matter just as much as contemporary ones, and precolonial legacies matter just as much as colonial and postcolonial ones.

The basic demographic and economic statistics of the 5-SEEAS are described below. For comparative purposes, relevant data for the US, the European Union and Japan are also provided:

Table 2. The Five SEEAS.

Geopolitical Region	Population 2013	GDP 2013
South America (33 nations)	604.9 million (33% Brazil, 20% Mexico)	\$6.021 trillion (38% Brazil, 22% Mexico)
Eurasia (30 nations)	632.5 million (23% Russia, 12% Iran, 12% Turkey)	\$5.869 trillion (28% Russia, 14% Turkey)
East/Southeast Asia (25 nations and 1 province)	2.031 billion (62% China, 11% Indonesia)	\$13.433 trillion (69% China)
Africa (52 nations)	1.082 billion (16% Nigeria)	\$2.310 trillion (23% Nigeria, 15% South Africa)
South Asia (9 nations)	1.684 billion (74% India, 11% Pakistan)	\$2.400 trillion (78% India, 10% Pakistan)
<i>Memo item:</i> EU (28 nations)	506 million	\$17.35 trillion
<i>Memo item:</i> US	316 million	\$16.80 trillion
<i>Memo item:</i> Japan	126.7 million	\$4.902 trillion

To give readers a sense of the explanatory power of the 5-SEEAS, let us consider the case of the 2011-2013 Egyptian revolution. At various times, analysts have compared the Egyptian revolution to the French and American Revolutions, or to the Velvet Revolutions of Eastern Europe during 1989-1990. Other analysts have suggested that Egypt's transition is best compared to the political transitions of post-military Turkey or post-Soviet Russia.

Yet a moment's thought will show that the single most relevant model of Egypt's transformation is the struggle for democracy in postcolonial Nigeria. There are three reasons for this similarity, one precolonial, the second colonial, and the third postcolonial. The precolonial and colonial reasons are that Turkey and Russia were the ethnic cores of two multiethnic feudal land-empires, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire. While Egypt and Nigeria had their own indigenous traditions of political organization, their elites were displaced by the encroachment of other empires (the Ottomans and later British and French colonialism in the case of Egypt, and British colonialism in the case of Nigeria). This difference is visible even on the level of a national vernacular, e.g. Cairo's dialect of Arabic is one of several variants spoken within Egypt. This is unlike 20th century Russia or Turkey, where national authorities mandated the process of linguistic homogenization as far back as the 1920s.

The postcolonial reason is that Egypt and Nigeria are both former Anglophone colonies, ruled for decades by postcolonial military elites. Those elites depended on energy-rents to maintain their domestic political legitimacy (the World Bank estimated Egypt's energy-rents at 11% of GDP in 2012, and Nigeria's at 27.6%).⁹ The pro-democracy movements of Nigeria and Egypt were cultural expressions of dissent against military kleptocrats, as well as economic protests against the stagnation caused by the notorious "Dutch disease" of energy-rent economic stagnation.

In a similar vein, Indonesia's experience of indigenous Javanese feudalism, Dutch colonialism, and post-1947 decolonization is most usefully compared with the experience of

Vietnam (the Nguyen dynasty, post-1851 French colonialism, and post-1945 decolonization). Likewise, Argentina's historical experience of settler colonialism, formal national independence, 19th century British neocolonialism and 20th century US neocolonialism comes closest to the colonial and postcolonial trajectory of Brazil.

It should be noted that the precise boundaries of the 5-SEEAS are not set in stone. Rather, these zones are meant to spur new ways of thinking about the past and present legacies of colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial history. Rather than seeing nation-states as mere replicas of some primordial or more authentic First World essence, we need to grasp all contemporary nation-states as provisional moments in a much larger transnational framework.

Equipped with such thinking, some of the most puzzling paradoxes of the early 21st century suddenly become explicable. Consider the striking difference in outcomes between the Arab Spring uprisings in the northern African geopolitical zone, and those of the Eurasian geopolitical zone. In northern Africa, Tunisians overthrew Ben Ali's dictatorship in 2011, and after a period of internal turmoil, achieved stable democratic rule. Libyans overthrew the Qaddafi dictatorship in 2011, but remain mired in a low-level civil war based primarily on regional rather than sectarian or linguistic differences. Egyptians forced Mubarak from power in 2011, pressured SCAF to hold elections in 2012, and chased Morsi from power in 2013, but the so-called "deep state" of the Egyptian military retains its grip as the single most powerful political and economic institution in the country.

By contrast, Yemen is still locked in tense political conflict – not yet open warfare, but no longer merely electoral competition – between the Shiite Houthis of the north, and various Sunni groups in the south. Bahrain's underground democracy movement remains rooted primarily in its disenfranchised Shiite majority, while the Sunni minoritarian state continues to rule through overt repression. Both Syria and Iraq have imploded into civil wars waged primarily between Shiites and Sunnis.¹⁰

From a purely sociological standpoint, one could argue that the comparative success of the northern African uprisings was due to the fact that they were constructed primarily (though not exclusively) on cross-class mobilizations. By contrast, the Eurasian uprisings were built primarily (though not exclusively) on ethnic or sectarian lines, and to date have produced splinter variations of existing autocracies (to be sure, the emergence of the reasonably democratic, multiethnic Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq is the single shining exception to this rule).

What this does not explain, of course, is why northern Africa constructed cross-class mobilizations, precisely where the Eurasian uprisings constructed ethno-sectarian ones. This is precisely where the thesis of the 5-SEEAS shows its greatest relevance. From the standpoint of transnational regions, this difference in outcomes is not to be explained by cultural factors, religious differences, or even systems of local governance. Rather, it is the expression of something structural, namely the deep geopolitical divide between the Eurasian and African regions.

The difference is due to the fact that Eurasia is dominated by energy-rent autocracies, precisely where Africa is governed by a more sophisticated and diversified set of neoliberalisms. In fact, the baleful legacy of the energy-rent model is visible in the specific national trajectories of the post-revolutionary north African nations. Contemporary Tunisia has virtually no energy-rents, which facilitated its successful transition to full electoral democracy. Egypt's protracted transition is due at least in part to the fact that energy-rents were 11.2% of its GDP in 2012. This share is large enough to systemically distort the economy, but too small to finance domestic

growth for Egypt's large rural population. Meanwhile, Libya's extreme dependence on energy rents – 46.2% of GDP in 2012 – and small population meant that its post-revolutionary period was dominated by the struggle over energy-rents, rather than the implementation of democratic governance.¹¹ For all of their wonderful social media innovations, the northern African revolutions are still playing catch-up with the vast majority of other African nations, who had already overthrown their own autocracies and embraced electoral democracy during the 1990s and 2000s.

In fact, the rapid spread of democracy across the planet is one of the most compelling pieces of evidence that we need to rethink our Cold War-era assumptions about geopolitics. As late as the mid-1970s, one-third of all human beings on the planet lived in electoral democracies, and two-thirds lived in autocratic states, most of which were deeply repressive.

Four decades later, 63.9% of all human beings live in electoral democracies, as do the vast majority of the citizens of the industrializing nations (57.9%). Another 36.1% of all human beings live in nation-states which have profoundly democratized their economies, political systems and cultural practices (note that about half of this 36.1% live in China). Old-style autocracies have almost disappeared from the planet, and linger on solely in the remnants of the Assadist autocracy in Syria, and in North Korea's rusting hulk of a one-party state (a paltry 0.8% of the world's population):

Table 3. Governance in the 5-SEEAS: Democratic, Transitional and Authoritarian Forms of Governance in 2014. Note this table includes only the industrializing nations (all fully industrialized nations are electoral democracies).

Type of Governance	Population	Population as Percent 5-SEEAS	GDP	GDP as Percent 5-SEEAS
Democracy (102)	3.492 billion	57.9%	\$15.1 trillion	50.1%
Transitional (47)	2.492 billion (52% China)	41.3%	\$14.9 trillion (59% China)	49.5%
Authoritarian (2)	47.4 million (Syria and North Korea)	0.8%	\$85 billion	0.3%

The specific form of this democratization varied widely across nation-states and regions. In countries such as Brazil and Argentina, democracies were constructed on the basis of massive cross-class alliances and anti-neoliberal social movements. For the countries of Eastern Europe, democracy was founded on the dissolution of the Soviet one-party state and its Russophone neo-imperial rule, and on the construction of democracies modeled on the democratic institutions of the European Union. In countries such as Nigeria and Indonesia, cross-class alliances joined with cross-ethnic coalitions (loose coalitions of the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa elites of Nigeria, and a similar coalition of the Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese elites of Indonesia) to overthrow indigenous postcolonial dictatorships, and to create electoral systems comparable to those of post-1947 India.

For all their differences, these democratizations did have some common characteristics. First, they established genuinely inclusive forms of mass political participation based on self-organized, leaderless communities rather than hierarchical political parties. These communities

ranged from the massive crowds of Filipino citizens who demolished the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, to the piqueteros who chased multiple Presidents from office in Argentina during 2001-2002, to the multitudes who occupied Cairo's Tahrir Square in 2011-2013 and Kiev's Maidan in 2013-2014. They also included less visible but no less powerful forms of citizen mobilization and participation, e.g. mass social networks in Indonesia and China. Over time, these self-organized communities turned into popular coalitions designed to bridge regional, ethnic, linguistic, racial, occupational, confessional and economic divides – as with the diverse actors of Indonesia's post-1998 consensus around “reformasi” (reform, a.k.a. post-Suharto democratization), or the equally diverse actors behind Brazil's post-2002 national political consensus on reducing inequality and expanding social programs for the impoverished majority of Brazilians.

Second, these democratizations created a wide array of new cultural institutions. Poland's Solidarity-era democracy movement employed videotapes to counter the one-party state's propaganda, the democracy movement of Nigeria employed FM radio broadcasts and informal digital media (the compact discs, DVDs and thumb drives which were also crucial to the expansion of the Nollywood video industry), the Arab Spring movements transformed twitter feeds and digital citizen journalism into forces capable of toppling governments, while the Ukrainian revolution organized its own English-language twitter feeds and news service, in order to counter the English-language lies of Russo-imperialism's \$20 billion state propaganda machine.

Third, these democratizations openly theorized, discussed and critiqued neoliberalism. In country after country, indigenous kleptocrats and thieving postcolonial elites could no longer hide behind the facade of juntas, one-party states, or neo-feudal dynasties. Large numbers of citizens began to demand democratic political governance, economic justice, and cultural egalitarianism.

It should be emphasized that these democratizations are not, contrary to popular belief, anticipatory struggles over the terrain of some future transnational politics.¹² They *are* transnational class struggles, to their very core. They are a set of arguments, debates, practices and mobilizations which are no longer limited to national citizenship, national cultures, or national markets, but are connected to the transnational versions of these things. The classic example of this is the European Union, where a transnational neoliberalism – the project of a neoliberal common currency – is in overt conflict with nascent forms of transnational socialism (mass protests against neoliberal austerity, and mass mobilizations for increased public investment in education, renewable energy, mass transit and public infrastructure).

It follows that each of the 5-SEEAS has their own unique set of local, national and transnational class struggles. The following pages will examine each of these zones more closely, and analyze some of their key features and contradictions.

1. South America: From Neocolonial Dependency to Autonomous Neoliberalism

The unique feature of transnational integration in South America was that it was undertaken by some of the world's oldest nation-states, as well as by some of its newest anti-neoliberal mobilizations. This has not been the case in the other regions, where the politics of transnational integration are closely linked to the politics of postcoloniality and nation-state formation.¹³ While most South American countries won formal national independence in the early 19th century, their economies were reliant on agricultural products and raw materials

exports rather than manufactured goods. In consequence, they remained dependencies of British and later US neocolonialism.

From a geopolitical perspective, it is striking how little this dependency changed during the decades of the Cold War (we will see a similar dynamic somewhat later in the case of Eurasia, where the long-term trajectories of the Soviet republics-turned-nation-states and those of non-Soviet nation-states are virtually identical). This contradiction is epitomized by the fact that the single most radical political challenge to US neocolonialism, namely the Cuban Revolution, never developed an economic alternative to neocolonial dependency. It is important to stress that the long-running US trade embargo exacerbated – but did not cause – this failure. While Cuba's one-party state did deliver excellent educational and health care services to its citizens and maintained policies of income egalitarianism, its early economic strategy focused on intensified sugar extraction, culminating in the disastrous Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest (“la Zafra de los Diez Millones”) campaign of 1970. This was a self-defeating policy which only deepened Cuba's dependence on raw materials exports, while failing to jumpstart indigenous industrialization. The economy limped along on Soviet-era energy subsidies until 1991, and despite occasional attempts at diversification, remains dependent on tourist revenues and emigrant remittances to this day.

It is a cruel irony that the same dependent fate awaited the pro-US military dictatorships of Chile, Argentina and Brazil. In the 1960s and 1970s, these nations shelved their domestic industrialization initiatives in favor of neoliberal deregulation. This deregulation was supposed to generate autonomous industrialization, but did little more than enrich a handful of plutocrats while consigning the vast majority to stagnation and misery. Chile's per capita GDP collapsed during the Pinochet era and did not recover its 1972 peak until the mid-1980s, while Brazil's per capita GDP remained at one-tenth of the US level from 1980 to 2000.

The experience of most other South American nations was somewhere between the antipodes of autarkic Cuba and neoliberal Chile, e.g. Mexico's long-standing PRI government fulfilled many of the same neo-patrimonial functions as the Cuban one-party state, while its program of limited domestic industrialization was similar to that of Brazil. The only exception to this general rule was the experience of the South American energy-rent nations, who performed slightly better during periods of rising energy prices and slightly worse during periods of falling prices.¹⁴

To summarize, South America's transnational integration occurred in the context of the external cessation of Soviet energy subsidies for Cuba and the decline of the energy-rent model of accumulation elsewhere, and the comparative decline of US neoliberalism vis-a-vis Japanese, European, Chinese and other neoliberalisms. By 2014, only Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela remain energy-rent economies, while Bolivia, Mexico and Peru diversified away from their former dependence on oil.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, anti-neoliberal social and political movements emerged in numerous South American nations, ranging from the MST and Labor Party in Brazil to the popular movements which propelled Evo Morales to the Presidency of Bolivia. The two main goals of these movements were (1) democratic governance benefitting all citizens rather than South American elites, and (2) the redistribution of economic wealth from the pockets of the few to the hands of the many (e.g. sharing the government income derived from oil and gas exports in the case of Venezuela and Ecuador, and increasing popular access to land, education and job opportunities in the case of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Chile). Over the past twenty years, these social movements have begun to democratize the governance of the region and to reduce

economic inequality. The average Gini measure of inequality for the region (0 means completely equality, while 100 means one person owns everything and everyone else owns nothing) dropped from 53.4 in 2002 to 49.9 in 2010.¹⁵ By 2014, only Cuba retains its transitional form of governance.

Table 4. Governance in South America.

Type of Governance	Population	GDP
Democracy (32)	585.1 million	\$5.953 trillion
Transitional (1)	11.2 million	\$68.2 billion

Despite the region's recent reduction of inequality and improved democratic governance, South America remains one of the most inequitable and polarized regions on earth.¹⁶ Intriguingly, the region's limited gains have not resulted in a reduction in popular demands for further transformation, but their strengthening and expansion, or what amounts to a revolution of rising expectations among citizens from their national governments.

These rising expectations have driven the creation of a regional consensus on the benefits of further continental integration. This is most evident in the rise of regional institutions such as ALBA and UNASUR, as well as a significant increase in economic, cultural and political links between the various South American nations. Complementing powerful and effective national development banks such as Brazil's BNDES, South America is beginning to develop its own autonomous developmental institutions, in the form of the Development Bank of Latin America (\$27.4 billion in assets) and the Inter-american Development Bank (\$97 billion in assets).

2. Eurasia: End of the Energy-rent Autocracies, Rise of the Renewable Energy Democracies

The key geopolitical contradiction of the Eurasian region is the fact that the majority of its nations are reliant on energy-rents and are governed by transitional states, at the precise moment in world history when both energy-rent economics and autocratic governance are increasingly unviable strategies. It is no accident in this regard that every single energy-rent economy in Eurasia has transitional forms of political governance, i.e. no energy-rent democracies have yet emerged in the region (the one interesting exception is Kurdistan, about which more hereafter):

Table 5. Governance in Eurasia.

Eurasian Governance By Category	Population	GDP	Percent of Subregional Population in Energy-Rent Economies
Transitional (21)	460.7 million (73% of region)	\$4.45 trillion	86%
Democracy (8)	149.3 million (24% of region)	\$1.35 trillion	none
Authoritarian (1)	22.5 million	\$73.7 billion	none

At first glance, the energy-rent economies might seem to be more economically successful than their non-energy neighbors. In 2013, per capita GDP in the energy-rent economies of Eurasia averaged \$10,875, while the per capita GDP of their non-energy neighbors averaged \$6,616:

Table 6. Energy-rent Economies in Eurasia.

Eurasian Region	Population	GDP 2013
Energy-rent economies (14)	395.6 million (37% Russia, 20% Iran)	\$4.302 trillion (38% Russia)
Non-energy economies (16)	236.8 million (32% Turkey, 18% Ukraine)	\$1.567 trillion (52% Turkey)

In reality, this difference in wealth is a statistical illusion, and does not correspond to the underlying productivity of these countries. Energy-rents are produced by small enclaves of highly skilled employees, using advanced technologies for oil and gas extraction. The Eurasian countries do not have the capacity to produce those advanced extraction technologies themselves, nor do they have the managerial expertise to productively invest their energy-rents back into their domestic economy.

The economic results of the energy-rent model are massive internal corruption by kleptocratic elites, large-scale capital flight, and excessive reliance on imports which only deepen the dependency of the region's economies on foreign technology. The political effects of the energy-rent model are equally toxic, and all too frequently generate reactionary forms of energy-rent patrimonialism. This is most apparent in the “Presidential monarchies” of the Shah in Iran (1941-1979) and the dynastic Assad dictatorship in Syria (1970-2011), but also includes the rule of Qaddafi in Libya (1969-2011), Saddam Hussein in Iraq (1979-2003), Mubarak in Egypt (1981-2011), Saleh in Yemen (1990-2011), and Ben Ali in Tunisia (1989-2011). It is also visible in the autocratic governance structures and excessive military spending of Russia and Saudi Arabia. In 2013 energy-poor Ukraine spent only 1% of its GDP on its military, precisely where energy-rich Russia spent 4.2% and Saudi Arabia spent 8%.

At its most extreme, this patrimonialism has generated a number of indigenous Eurasian petro-colonialisms. These petro-colonialisms were always deeply ambivalent social formations, in the sense that they appropriated the populist rhetoric of decolonization, of Palestinian national resistance, and of anti-colonial Arab, Persian, and Russian nationalism, while serving the revanchist political goals of regional neo-imperialisms. During the Cold War, both the US and the USSR actively aided and abetted a number of these neo-imperialisms as regional proxies for their own larger imperial schemes.¹⁷

In addition to exacting a high economic and political toll on their own countries, these neo-imperialisms inflicted massive damage on the region. After Syria became a major oil producer in the 1970s, the Assad dictatorship purchased vast quantities of Soviet military equipment and proceeded to occupy part of Lebanon between 1976-2005. Baathist Iraq similarly employed its energy-rents to construct a vast army, which it used to invade Iran in 1979 and later to commit genocide against its own indigenous Kurdish population in the al-Anfar campaign of

1986-1989. Saddam Hussein finally overreached by attacking Kuwait in 1990, in a blatant attempt to steal enough oil money to pay off Iraq's massive war debts. Saudi Arabia's energy-rents financed al-Qaeda and a number of Wahhabite extremist groups for decades, and more recently, the Saudi authorities intervened to crush Bahrain's primarily Shiite pro-democracy movement in 2011 in support of Bahrain's Sunni minoritarian elite. Iran's energy-rents have been used to underwrite Assad's Alawite dictatorship, as well as Lebanon's Hezbollah militia. Most recently, Russia's energy-rent autocracy launched a nakedly colonial invasion of Ukraine 2014, while the Daesh (ISIL) of Syria and Iraq have been financing their predations with northern Iraq's oil.

However, there is copious evidence to suggest 2014 marks a decisive break in Eurasia's geopolitical trajectory. Henceforth, Eurasia's petro-colonialisms have become both economically as well as politically unsustainable.

The economic reason is that the world economy is undergoing a decisive shift away from hydrocarbons, and towards renewable energy. The energy-rent states of Eurasia are thus facing a far deeper crisis than the one triggered by the fall in world oil prices in the thirteen years between 1986 and 1998 (incidentally, this fall was an important contributing factor to the collapse of the Soviet Union). This price decrease was temporarily quelled by the gradual exhaustion of some of the oldest and cheapest oil-fields in the world, as well as by the rapid urbanization of China, India and other industrializing nations in the early 2000s, events which reduced energy supplies and boosted demand. As a result, the world price of oil rose fourfold between 1999 and 2008. After a brief decline in energy prices in 2009 and 2010 due to the global recession, geopolitical anxiety over the effects of the Arab Spring drove the benchmark Brent oil price index above \$100 per barrel from 2011 to 2013.¹⁸

In late 2014, oil prices returned to a more reasonable level of \$70 to \$80 per barrel. This level is due partly to the spread of new extraction technologies, especially shale oil, but also to significantly decreased demand. The reason for this decrease in demand is a combination of sluggish worldwide economic growth, receding geopolitical risk (the stabilization of post-revolutionary Tunisia and Egypt, as well as the return of major oil producers Libya and Iran to world markets), and finally the economic effects of the renewable energy revolution.

It is worth emphasizing that some of the largest players in the renewable energy revolution are the industrializing nations themselves. Brazil already has vast hydropower resources, produces renewable ethanol to power its automobiles, and has unveiled ambitious plans to expand its wind and solar energy capacity. China generated a remarkable 31.1% of its total electricity from renewable sources in 2013, and plans to massively scale up its solar, wind and hydroelectric industries over the next ten years (e.g. two-thirds of all new Chinese power capacity in 2014 was renewable). For its part, India has an official goal of installing 15GW of solar energy by 2019, a fivefold increase over its current installation base, and is making public plans for installing up to 100GW of solar and wind by 2025.¹⁹

In addition to this permanent shift in the world economy, the energy-rent autocracies are also faced with an intractable political crisis. The reason is the senescence of energy-rent patrimonialism as an ideology, something most evident in the outbreak of indigenous democratic revolutions in the Eurasian region. In 2014, two of these revolutions erupted almost simultaneously, the first in Ukraine and the second in Kurdistan (a.k.a. the region controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq). Both revolutions quickly turned into wars of national independence against two Eurasian petro-colonialisms. These petro-colonialisms were Russo-imperialism or Putinism in the case of Ukraine, and ISIL (Daesh) neo-imperialism in

the case of Kurdistan. Far from significantly damaging or defeating those revolutions, the onslaught of Putinism and the Daesh ended up consolidating them.²⁰

The long-term significance of the Ukrainian revolution is that Ukraine's large population of Russian speakers, and its historic ties to Belarus and Russia, have transformed it into the permanent democratic alternative to Putinism's sclerotic autocracy. Indeed, the very first victory of the Ukrainian revolution against Russian petro-colonialism occurred on the ideological battleground. Polls conducted in September 2014 confirm that an overwhelming majority of Ukrainians not only reject Russian rule over their country, but also view Russia's political leadership with extreme negativity.²¹ Conversely, all credible opinion polls inside Russia show that the vast majority of Russians continue to reject any official military intervention in eastern Ukraine by Russian forces.²²

The long-term effects of the Ukrainian revolution are also beginning to be felt in Belarus, where Lukashenko's neo-patrimonial regime has politely but firmly distanced itself from Russo-imperialism and signaled a rapprochement with the European Union. Over the next ten years, Ukraine's democratic reforms will revitalize its economy, which means the Ukrainian revolution will defeat Putinism on the economic battlefield as well. This economic victory is likely to be the necessary prelude to the full democratization of Russia.²³

The Kurdish revolution will be equally influential, albeit among a rather different group of Eurasian nation-states. The reason is that Kurdish nationalism has always been staunchly anti-colonial and anti-imperialist in nature. The centuries-old Kurdish struggle for linguistic, ethnic and economic self-determination speaks directly to the anti-colonial struggles of Abkhazians in Abkhazia, Armenians in Armenia, Azeris in Azerbaijan, Georgians in Georgia, Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, and the Turkmen in Turkmenistan. If Kurdistan, with an estimated population of 8.35 million, achieves full national independence, it would become the very first energy-rent democracy in the Eurasian region. At the very least, this is likely to encourage the further democratization of other energy-rent nations such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It would also aid the reconstruction of a less violent and authoritarian post-Assad Syria, and accelerate the internal democratization of Turkey.²⁴

The key strategic challenge facing the Eurasian energy-rent nations is thus to stop wasting their energy-rents on neo-imperial wars and the luxury yachts of their kleptocrats, and to start investing in renewable energy, domestic infrastructure and regional trade integration.

3. East-Southeast Asia: Towards Maritime Union

The region of East-Southeast Asia saw some of the bloodiest anti-colonial national revolutions of the Cold War period, cf. the struggle between the two Vietnams, the two Koreas, and the three Chinas. The region also endured some of the most violent episodes of postcolonial nation-state formation, ranging from the catastrophic famines of 1960-1962 triggered by Mao's disastrous Great Leap Forwards, to the 1965 mass killings orchestrated by the Suharto military dictatorship of Indonesia, all the way to the 1975-1979 internal genocide carried out the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

Despite this grisly history, there were three factors which accelerated the process of transnational integration in the region. First, the region shed its dependence on energy-rents at roughly the same time as South America. In 1980, the countries of China, Malaysia and Indonesia were all energy-rent economies, whereas by 2014 all three had diversified manufacturing and services economies.

The second factor is the maritime geography of the region. Since most countries in the region are separated by the Pacific Ocean, there are comparatively few border conflicts between the region's nations (the exceptions are Vietnam's overthrow of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in late 1978 and early 1979, China's brief border incursion into Vietnam during the spring of 1979, and occasional skirmishes between Vietnam, China, Taiwan and the Philippines until this day over the tiny and uninhabited Spratly Islands). This maritime geography also meant that the region's shipping lanes were controlled by an outside player, namely the naval forces of the US. During the Cold War, many nations of East-Southeast Asia saw US maritime hegemony as infinitely preferable to the brutal colonialism of the Japanese Empire.

Thanks to the end of the Cold War and to the ever-increasing economic integration of the region through cross-border flows of trade, investment, tourism and mass media, this US maritime hegemony will slowly but surely accede to some indigenous regional security arrangement. However, this arrangement will not be governed primarily by China or any single nation-state, but by a loose consortium of the maritime nations of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the East-Southeast Asian region is the manner in which maritime geography makes any single nation's bid for regional dominance impossible. Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia are electoral democracies, and thus have every reason to cooperate with Vietnam and South Korea – both fiercely independent nations with long histories of indigenous resistance to past Chinese dynastic empires – to ensure political and economic stability in the region. Collectively, these five nations can fulfill the regional regulatory role which Japan could never play, due to Japan's problematic history of colonial conquest in the region.

Indeed, the ten members of the ASEAN organization may play the same catalytic role vis-a-vis some future East Asian economic union as the six founding members of the European Community played vis-a-vis the construction of the European Union. One of the factors making this possible is that democracy is far more prevalent throughout the East-Southeast Asian region than one might assume on the basis of population figures alone, due to the vast size of China. Currently, twenty out of the twenty-six countries and provinces of the region are democracies, while the one-party state governing Vietnam takes extreme care to guard its national sovereignty from undue Chinese influence.

Table 7. Governance in East/Southeast Asia.

East Asian Country or Province By Category	Population	GDP
Transitional (5)	1,475.8 billion (73% of region, 92% China)	\$9.452 trillion (97% China)
Democracy (20)	530.7 million (26% of region, 47% Indonesia)	\$3.956 trillion (32% South Korea, 23% Indonesia)
Authoritarian (1)	24.9 million (1% of region, North Korea)	\$25 billion

It is worth noting that the twenty democracies of the region, when combined with Vietnam, Japan and Australia, comprise a geopolitical group of 770.4 million people and a GDP

of \$10.590 trillion. The aggregate size and economic heft of this group gives them effective autonomy from China, as well as from the US and the EU.

The third factor which has enabled transnational integration is the democratization of key aspects of economic governance. Countries and provinces as diverse as China, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam have all successfully industrialized thanks to egalitarian land reforms, the taxation of landed and wealthy elites, significant public investment in infrastructure and education, financial systems which taxed short-term speculation and rewarded long-term investment, and a long-term commitment to fair and equitable trade rather than underwriting domestic or foreign monopolies.

It is important to emphasize that the success of these nations has nothing to do with one-party state rule or autocratic structures of governance. China industrialized precisely because it did *not* remain a Stalinist autarkic state on the North Korean model, but curtailed the monopoly power of state officials over economic decision-making and allowed companies, township-village enterprises, and ordinary consumers to interact and trade with other economies around the world. Just as the internal democratization of the economy paved the way for the eventual triumph of electoral politics in South Korea and Taiwan, so too did the triumph of democracy in the Philippines in the 1980s and Indonesia in the 1990s pave the way for their above-average economic performance over the past fifteen years.

The main challenge facing the East-Southeast Asian region is for its remaining one-party states and transitional regimes to embrace the institutions of electoral democracy, and for its existing electoral democracies to learn from and adopt the developmental innovations of its neighbors.

4. Africa: From Rural Neocolonialism To Urban Neoliberalism

To think of Africa as a geopolitical entity transgresses against three widespread stereotypes about the continent. The first stereotype is that Africa is a safariscap of flourishing wildlife and failed states. In reality, Africa has undergone a sweeping wave of political democratization, economic revitalization, and cultural transformation over the past twenty-five years. As late as 1975, only one African nation, Botswana, had a full-fledged electoral democracy. Four decades later, a total of 57% of all African citizens reside in electoral democracies, while the remaining 43% live in societies which have undergone significant democratization. Old-style autocracies have completely vanished from the continent:

Table 8. Governance in Africa.

Type of Governance	Population	GDP
Democracy (35)	612 million (57% of region, 28% Nigeria)	\$1.475 trillion
Transitional (17)	469 million (43% of region, 18% Ethiopia, 18% Egypt)	\$834.6 billion

The second stereotype is the division of the continent into a northern, Arabic-speaking region and a sub-Saharan region. This flies in the face of centuries of cultural, political and economic ties between the two regions, and glosses over the fact that there is no such thing as a

homogenous, standardized Arabic language or culture.²⁵

The third stereotype is that Africa remains a continent of stagnant, tradition-bound villages. In reality, Africa has urbanized rapidly, and is host to some of the most dynamic and fast-growing economies on the planet. In 2013, about 40% of African citizens live in cities, a higher urbanization rate than South Asia.

Conversely, there are two good historical reasons for thinking of Africa as a single geopolitical space, one precolonial and the other postcolonial. The first reason is that Africa has a lengthy history of indigenous feudalism and mercantile accumulation, and was ruled by a number of agrarian land-empires quite comparable to those which ruled over other parts of the precapitalist world. Just one of those land-empires, the kingdom of Ethiopia, was not fully occupied until Italy's colonial invasion of 1936, and its guerilla forces effectively defeated Mussolini's troops by 1941.

In contrast to the settler colonialisms which inundated the Americas after 1492, or the plantation colonialisms and land-empires which swept over South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe after the 17th century, indigenous African cultures were remarkably successful at resisting European and Eurasian (primarily Ottoman) colonialism until late in the 19th century. Since the hegemonic rule of colonialism lasted approximately a century in Africa, rather than the three hundred years of Spanish and Portuguese rule over South America, the newly independent African nation-states could draw on their own indigenous political, cultural and social institutions in ways postcolonial Argentina, Brazil and Mexico could not.²⁶

The second reason is that the process of nation-state formation in Africa occurred primarily during the period 1960-1975. This near-synchronous experience of decolonization is markedly different from the much longer and variegated process of decolonization typical of the South American, Eurasian, East-Southeast Asian and South Asian regions. This simultaneity meant that whereas the majority of Africa's newly independent states experienced the same challenges of postcolonial state-building faced by all other postcolonial nations – neocolonial interventions by the former colonial powers, the economics of neocolonialism, the internal authoritarianism of predatory domestic elites, and explosive domestic conflicts between ethnic and linguistic groups, between feudal castes, and between capitalist classes – Africa's national independence movements had two advantages which previous anti-colonial revolutions did not have. First, they could learn from the successful as well as unsuccessful experiences of previous anti-colonial revolutions. Second, national independence movements could play off the US and Soviet variations of neocolonialism against each other.

This may explain the remarkable fact that whereas the postcolonial nations of the Americas required the better part of a century to forge functional nation-states (sixty-six years elapsed between Brazil's 1823 independence and the creation of the 1889 Presidential republic, eighty-two years elapsed between US independence in 1783 and its full unification in 1865, and ninety-nine years elapsed between Mexico's national independence in 1821 and the establishment of a stable national polity in 1920), most postcolonial African states achieved the same feat in the twenty years from 1975 to 1995.²⁷

Since 1995, Africa has grown significantly faster than the world average. Nearly African nations have exited the initial phase of nation-state formation, with long-running civil conflicts in Angola, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda ending in the construction of viable multi-ethnic nation-states (the remaining exceptions are DR Congo, Somalia and South Sudan, although these three nations have all made some degree of progress over the past twenty years). Finally, nearly all the autocratic regimes of the immediate postcolonial era have been cashiered. Today, a demographic

majority of Africans are now citizens of electoral democracies.

One of the best examples of this transformation is Nigeria. In 1999, Nigeria embraced electoral democracy, and proceeded to become one of the fastest-growing economies on the planet. According to World Bank data, Nigeria's per capita GDP rose from \$153 in 1993 to \$3,005 in 2013. While Nigeria remains overly dependent on oil revenue – energy-rents comprised 28.7% of its GDP in 2013 – its economy has diversified significantly. Particular note should be made of the government's post-2011 agricultural reforms, which have employed the country's thriving cellphone market and digital networks to reduce corruption and to revitalize the long-stagnant agrarian sector.²⁸

The process of transnational integration in Africa is taking a wide range of forms. Most obviously, the major oil-producing nations of Africa have the capacity to follow in the footsteps of China, Malaysia and Indonesia, by investing their energy-rents in domestic industrialization. These nations include Angola, Algeria, Chad, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Libya and Nigeria.

Other nations will pursue different strategies. One of the most pressing legacies of colonialism in West and Central Africa, for example, is the existence of the franc zone. The franc zone was created by France in 1945 as a form of neocolonial economic governance for its colonial African territories, but continues to exist in today's postcolonial world.

Fourteen African nations currently use the West African and Central African franc, currencies backed by the French Treasury. The eight members of the West African franc region include Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo, while the six members of the Central African franc region include Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Collectively, the fourteen nation-states of the franc zone have 148 million citizens, or 14% of the population of Africa.²⁹

Since the French franc has been superseded by the euro, these fourteen nations are now part of the eurozone. This is a problem, because any currency designed for highly competitive, fully industrialized nations is not suitable for nations just beginning to industrialize. Over the long term, most of these fourteen nations will have to either develop their own sovereign currencies, or else seek formal membership in the European Union (this would require the twenty-eight nations of the EU to invest significant sums into these African nations). The only three potential exceptions are Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, which have sufficient energy-rent wealth to finance their own industrialization while maintaining their link to the eurozone, if they so choose.

The East African nations form another distinct subgroup, due to the existence of Swahili, the lingua franca of approximately 140 million people in the region. The countries which speak Swahili include Burundi, the DR Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. In particular, Kenya and Tanzania stand out as stable and fast-growing middle-income nations, with democracies built on broad electoral coalitions of ethnic and linguistic groups, similar to the ones which operate in the democracies of India and Indonesia. Their success has been an indispensable local example for nations such as Burundi and Rwanda during their difficult years of internal conflict and nation-state formation, and are likely to inspire a similar process of nation-state formation in DR Congo. The existence of Swahili has also been a key driver of East Africa's indigenous digital media cultures, since it allowed artists to access national and transnational audiences in ways not possible for the smaller regional languages. This is most evident in the rise of flourishing genres such as bongo flava, a.k.a. Tanzania's Swahili-language hip hop, as well as East Africa's thriving television, radio, music and video industries.

The example of Swahili is also relevant to those northern African nations which speak multiple variants of Arabic. While these variants are different enough for most linguists to classify them as separate languages, they do share some characteristics which facilitate interregional communication as well as communication with the Arabic-speaking nations of the Eurasian region. One of the most important and enduring achievements of the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions, despite their frequent political failures, was the forging of new kinds of solidarities throughout the Arabic-speaking region based on transnational practices of citizen journalism, new modes of digitally-mediated mass political participation, and new types of digital media production capable of bypassing local autocracies.

Last but not least, the presence of colonial linguistic diasporas, mostly in the form of postcolonial educational systems which continue to teach in English, French and Portuguese, is another potential lever of regional integration. These linguistic diasporas include the English-speaking populations of the former Anglophone colonies, the French-speaking populations of the former Francophone colonies, and the Portuguese speakers of the Lusophone colonies. While the power of these diasporas are limited by the fact that the speakers of these languages tend to be either well-educated or wealthy elites, there are a number of cases where colonial languages have become popular vernaculars, e.g. a majority of contemporary Angolans speak Portuguese, while about half of all Nigerians, one quarter of South Africans, and one-fifth of Kenyans are estimated to have a functional degree of English proficiency.

5. South Asia: How the Postcolonies Co-invented Neoliberalism (And Also Anti-neoliberal Resistance Movements)

The history of transnational integration in South Asia is the most complex of all of the industrializing regions. This complexity is due to the fact that this integration predates the epoch of the Global Minotaur. Remarkable as it sounds, many of the key economic, political, and cultural strategies of neoliberalism were invented not by the Wall Street plutocrats after 1973, but by India's postcolonial elites during the 1950s and 1960s. In response, the citizens of India forged some of the earliest social, cultural and political critiques of neoliberalism in the historical record. Just as neoliberalism came first to the South Asian region, so too did anti-neoliberal resistance movements.

This paradox can be explained by the fact that South Asia has one of the oldest histories of indigenous feudalism in the world. Prior to British colonization, South Asia was ruled by some of the most sophisticated land-empires in the world, with a highly developed division of labor, proto-capitalist systems of financial accumulation and exchange, proto-national linguistic communities, and a number of written languages. British colonialism simply retrofitted these institutions to function within liberal-era colonial capitalism.

Part of this retrofitting was accomplished by employing large numbers of South Asians to work as clerks, employees and soldiers of the British colonial administration. Another part was achieved by refunctioning indigenous nobilestarian and commercial elites into a comprador bourgeoisie. To South Asian elites already accustomed to learning Urdu and Sanskrit and adopting the courtly mannerisms of the Mughals, learning English and Latin and adopting the Victorianisms of the British presented no challenge at all. It is no accident that the South Asian elites who led the region's anti-colonial nationalist movements were polylingual, cosmopolitan, and educated at some of the most prestigious British universities.³⁰

What makes postcolonial India especially useful as a case study is the capacity of its

indigenous elites to manage the country's explosive social contradictions through the mechanisms of electoral democracy. The multiple and overlapping conflicts between India's rural farmers and rural landlords, between urban capitalists, professionals and urban workers, between upper castes, lower castes and adivasis, between confessional and sectarian identities, and between proto-national linguistic groups never sparked nationwide civil wars or outright military dictatorship.

This is not to downplay the considerable violence of the civil conflicts which exist in India to this day. However, the internecine violence of the separatism racking the federal Indian states of Kashmir and Assam, the ongoing rural insurgencies in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, and occasional communal riots are not comparable to the apocalyptic violence of the 1947 Partition, the civil war which ripped apart neighboring Sri Lanka for three decades, or the large-scale political violence committed by postcolonial autocracies on the citizens of Pakistan, Myanmar, and post-1971 Bangladesh. What needs to be explained is why India's neo-patrimonial democratic federalism became the dominant form of governance in the South Asian region.

Table 9. Governance in South Asia.

Type of Governance	Population	GDP
Democracy (8)	1.684 billion (76% India)	\$2.401 trillion (74% India)
Transitional (1)	53.3 million (Myanmar)	\$56.4 billion

In hindsight, India's comparative success as a postcolonial state was the product of three institutions, each of which has spread throughout the industrializing nations. The first is a host of neo-patrimonial political parties, ranging from the Congress Party and the BJP to smaller regional parties. These parties channeled various forms of federal largesse to their respective voting banks, by means of infrastructure projects, rural development schemes, and the state-owned banking sector (most Indian banks were nationalized in the 1970s and remain heavily regulated to this day). While this neo-patrimonialism generated massive insider corruption, India's citizen mobilizations, independent parties, and crusading free press put significant constraints on the ability of Indian elites to plunder the country's resources.³¹ The early arrival of Indian neoliberalism also generated a wide range of powerful anti-neoliberal resistance movements. These ranged from the peasant uprisings of Tebhaga and Telangana to the Naxalites, to ubiquitous social movements organized around issues of rural land reform, environmental protection, union organizing campaigns, and neighborhood-level activism, to name just a few, all the way to significant forms of anti-neoliberal intellectual and cultural production – the lineage from the IPTA to today's independent filmmakers, digital artists and media producers.

The second institution was regional federalism. The federal states of India were given considerable autonomy to run their own affairs, and excessively large or ungovernable states were subdivided into more manageable and accountable units. This federalism was backed by large-scale federal investment, distributed by the neo-patrimonial political system described above. Here are India's states and territories, in order of their establishment by the British colonial administration or by the independent government of India:

Table 10. Colonial and Postcolonial Federalism In India.

Indian Federal State or Union Territory (2011 population in millions)	Year Of Foundation
Uttar Pradesh (199.6)	1805
Assam (31.2)	1912
Orissa (41.9)	1936
Bihar (103.8)	1947
Kerala (33.4)	1949
Tamil Nadu (72.1)	1950
Andhra Pradesh (49.4)	1953
Karnataka (61.1) Madhya Pradesh (72.6) Rajasthan (68.6) West Bengal (91.3)	1956
Punjab (27.7)	1966
Gujarat (60.4) Maharashtra (112.4)	1960
Nagaland (2.0)	1963
Haryana (25.4) Chandigarh (1)	1966
Himachal Pradesh (6.9)	1971
Manipur (2.7) Meghalaya (3.0) Tripura (3.7)	1972
Sikkim (0.6)	1975
Arunachal Pradesh (1.4) Mizoram (1.1) Goa (1.5)	1987
Chhattisgarh (25.5) Uttarakhand (10.1) Jharkand (33)	2000
Telangana (35.3)	2014

The process of regional federalization is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. There are a host of regional movements calling for Indian federal statehood, the most prominent of which are calls for the subdivision of Uttar Pradesh, an extremely large state with a population

of 200 million, into four smaller political units.

The third institution is postcolonial India's thriving culture-industry, one of the largest on the planet. India's big-budget Bollywood (Hindi-language) national cinema, along with its flourishing regional film industries, generate one quarter of the world's feature films. India also produces vast quantities of regional-language television, broadcast media, digital media, and popular music. Postcolonial India also has one of the best-developed traditions of auteur cinema and independent media production, ranging from the films of Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak, all the way to independent contemporary producers such as Aamir Khan (e.g. Khan's *Satyajamev Jayate* documentary series is a landmark production for Indian television).

Each of these three institutions – neo-patrimonial electoral politics, democratic federalism, and pervasive cultural diversity – helped anchor India's postcolonial state. Collectively, they stabilized India's potentially fractious polity, by allowing anti-neoliberal mass mobilizations to check the power of local, regional and national political and economic elites. This stability is not the deadly stasis of a repressive autocracy, but the result of myriad small-scale political uprisings, cultural innovations, and community-level actions at the ground level. Consequently, India is certain to become one of the most productive centers of anti-neoliberal political contestation, cultural mobilization and economic innovation over the next decade.

6. Towards The Transnational Commons

Where are the 5-SEEAS headed in the future? The regions of South America and South Asia have largely completed the transition to electoral democracy, while Africa is close behind. Democracy is also flourishing in the vast majority of the countries of East and Southeast Asia, while China has democratized significantly over the past fifteen years. The last region where a demographic majority of citizens live under systems of transitional governance is Eurasia, and this is certain to change over the next fifteen years, due to the impending end of the energy-rent economy and rising levels of internal dissent.

This slow but inexorable political transformation means one thing. The class struggles of the age of monopoly capitalism have acceded to the class struggles of the age of transnational capitalism. To paraphrase Marx, the lofty ideals of national or international socialism have given way to the concrete task of realizing the transnational commons.

To be sure, this concrete realization will vary according to one's specific location in the transnational world-system. For US citizens, transnational class struggle means struggling against the toxic legacies of the United States' sixty-four years of world hegemony (1944-2008) – i.e. against its Minotaur-based financial system, its excessive military spending, its criminalization of drug addicts, its despotic Terror War, its privatization of education and social services – and for public investment in education and infrastructure, for publicly-owned banks and other services, and for the increased taxation of plutocrats and corporate elites. For the citizens of the EU, it means struggling against EU neoliberalism and its permanent austerity, and for massive European-wide public investment and the true European-wide solidarity of a full monetary, fiscal and political union.

For the citizens of the 5-SEEAS, transnational class struggle means participating in local and national struggles as well as with the struggles of their geopolitical region (South America and East-Southeast Asia offer some of the clearest case studies of this dynamic, but the trend is becoming increasingly visible in the other three regions as well).

That said, there are two other significant transformations of the world-system which need

to be discussed before we are in a position to grasp the potential of the transnational commons. The first is the rise of the renewable energy economy, while the second is the rise of the transnational media. Both transformations are large and complex enough to require an additional essay in its own right. For now, *Uplink* leaves readers with this closing parable:

*“In neoliberalism's Wild Hunt to come
we all are Witches become.”*

1. Yanis Varoufakis. *The Global Minotaur: America, Europe and the Future of the Global Economy*. New York: Zed Books, 2013.
2. One of the common critiques of Wall Street is that bankers created exponentially increasing financial bubbles during the neoliberal era – the US savings and loans bubble and bust of 1980-83 (\$200 billion in losses), Japan's real estate bubble and bust in 1986-1991 (\$750 billion in losses), the dotcom boom and bust in 1996-2000 (\$1 trillion in losses), the US mortgage boom and bust of 1995-2005 (\$3 trillion in losses), and finally the global securitization boom and bust of 2003-2007 (\$5 trillion in losses). Varoufakis' indispensable insight is that these financial bubbles did not cause permanent US trade and current account deficits. In fact, it was the latter which inadvertently created the former. Bubbles were the result of too many goods chasing too few consumers, and vast quantities of debt being issued to paper over – as well as to speculate on – the difference.
3. The best single postmortem of the shadow banking system was provided by the New York Fed. See: Zoltan Poszar, Tobias Adrian, Adam Ahayley Boesky. “Shadow Banking.” *Staff Report 458*. Federal Reserve Bank of New York, July 2010. http://www.newyorkfed.org/research/staff_reports/sr458.pdf.
4. It is truly astonishing how so many otherwise inexplicable economic phenomena are suddenly made explicable by the thesis of the global Minotaur. For example, Varoufakis emphasizes that Japan's late 1980s bubble economy was the inadvertent byproduct of Japan's export-led mercantilism, which dovetailed perfectly with neoliberalism's global strategy of creating global consumer demand by running permanent US trade and current account deficits after 1973. Similarly, the project of European monetary union laid out by the Maastricht treaty was perfectly consistent with the logic of the Minotaur. It was designed to turn Europe into a gigantic version of Germany's export-led mercantilism. Without the US as a source of final consumer demand, however, both Japan and the eurozone had to fall into permanent stagnation – which they indeed have. More recently, China's post-2008 growth slowdown is an even clearer case of an export-led mercantilism which has outpaced the ability of overburdened US consumers to finance its expansion. Varoufakis' compelling conclusion is that the fundamental structural flaw of the eurozone is that it was dependent on the recycling function of the Minotaur, and had no recycling mechanism of its own. Without that mechanism, the trade and current account deficit countries of the eurozone lack the capital to resolve their banking crises and to restart domestic economic growth, and the trade and current account surplus countries lack the growing external markets needed to purchase their exports, resulting in a permanent eurozone recession. Once the Minotaur keeled over and expired in 2008, that is precisely what happened. The eurozone stopped growing, and has not recovered in the five years since.
5. The details of Varoufakis' proposal are available here: <http://yanisvaroufakis.eu/2014/09/21/revisiting-the-modest-proposal-qa-with-a-sceptic-fall-2014-version/>
6. Transparency International (2013). <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results>
7. Gardner (2014). “The World Machine-Tool Output & Consumption Survey 2014.” http://www.gardnerweb.com/cdn/cms/2014wmtocs_SURVEY.pdf
8. The list of reasons for this lack of transnational thinking include the widespread repression of critical intellectuals, artists and citizens by postcolonial states which were often just as autocratic as the colonial tyrannies they replaced. They also include the neoliberal corporatization of the US university system which produces so much of the world's scholarship, a transformation which systematically

reduced the funding which supported the humanities and all forms of critical thinking.

9. World Bank (2014). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PETR.RT.ZS>. World Bank (2014). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.NGAS.RT.ZS>.

10. Iraq's civil war, to be sure, was at least partly due to the 2003 US invasion, which deposed Saddam's secular-Sunni Baathist regime and replaced it with Maliki's Shiite-fundamentalist government. That said, Syria's civil war was created entirely by the minoritarian dictatorship of Assad's Alawites, who refused to share power with the majority Sunnis (Syria's prewar population was 70% Sunni, 12% Alawite, 10% Kurdish, and 8% Christian, Druze and smaller communities). Currently, the Alawites are slowly but surely losing a bloody, fratricidal civil war to a massive Sunni insurgency, which has taken control of much of northern and southern Syria. Complicating matters still further, the Sunni insurgency is splintered into various factions, including secular nationalists, conservative Islamists, and the fascist Daesh (the ISIS, now rebranded as the IS). The term "fascist" is not pejorative, but accurately describes the Daesh's authoritarian organizational structure, peasant-provincial cadre, and murderous ethnic cleansing of Shiites and Kurds from Sunni-majority regions. In early 2014, the Daesh controlled parts of eastern Syria. In June 2014, they attacked and overran a third of the Iraqi army in the Sunni-majority regions of northern and western Iraq, capturing enormous amounts of US-provided military equipment and creating a quasi-state with a population of about 9 million. They promptly used this equipment to expand their campaign of ethnic cleansing to northern Iraq, triggering a massive humanitarian crisis. As of November 2014, the Shiite government of Iraq retains control over Baghdad and southern Iraq, Shiite-majority regions with a population of about 19 million. However, its disorganized and deeply corrupt military forces have not been effective against the Daesh. Fortunately for the people of Syria and Iraq, the majority-Kurdish region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq, numbering about 8.5 million people, has been fighting vigorously and effectively against the Daesh. Syrian Kurds have also been resisting the Daesh effectively inside Syria, and control the Syrian district of Rojava as well as the Syrian city of Kobane.

11. The key factor driving Libya's current low-level civil war is neither sectarian, linguistic nor ethnic differences, but the struggle of each regional militia, faction and grouping to control as much of the nation's energy-rents as it can.

12. The three most common versions of this mistaken belief are the notions that these democratizations are: (1) completely natural and politically neutral phenomena (the ideology of Wall Street neoliberalism, where politics is reduced to the consumer choice between corporate brand names); (2) that they are a CIA-New World Order-Illuminati conspiracy (the ideology of the few remaining pure autocracies, extremist crackpots, and revanchist ethno-nationalisms in the world today); or that (3) they embody Hardt and Negri's radical multitude, whose sheer heterogeneity resists the counterposing force of Empire. While Hardt and Negri come closest to the mark, their definition of Empire is limited to Wall Street neoliberalism. We will argue that these democratizations have been struggling against a far broader range of neoliberalisms, for at least three decades now.

13. For example, the Ukrainian and Kurdish revolutions of 2014 were alliances between state-of-the-art anti-colonial national revolutions, and anti-neoliberal mass mobilizations.

14. We define energy-rent state as any nation whose energy-rents – the world price of gas and oil minus the costs of production – are equal to or greater than ten percent of its domestic GDP, as reported by World Bank data on energy production and GDP. In 1980, the South American members of this group included Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. World Bank

(2014). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PETR.RT.ZS>. World Bank (2014).
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.NGAS.RT.ZS>.

15. Gasparini and Cruces (2012). “Pobreza, Desigualdad y Políticas Públicas en América Latina.” *Evaluación de resultados y agenda futura*. CEDLAS (Center for Distributive, Labor and Social Studies).

16. Oxfam International has provided an excellent research summary on the challenges facing improved governance and increased equality in the region: Oxfam (2014). “Fiscal Justice To Reduce Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean.” September 10, 2014.
<http://www.oxfam.org/en/research/fiscal-justice-reduce-inequality-latin-america-and-caribbean-0>.

17. One of the truly astounding ironies of the region is that the Eurasian neo-imperialisms were always the shadowy, distorted mirror images of Israel's settler-colonial Zionism. It is not merely that autocratic states were the perfect foil to justify US support of Israel, or that those autocratic states were guaranteed to invest their energy-rents in US dollar assets. It was also that their inter-cine conflicts offered the perfect excuse for constant US and Soviet military intervention. The classic case of this congruence is post-WWII Iran. The US empire turned a blind eye to the murderous brutality of the Shah, and did not overly trouble itself about the brutality of the post-1979 theocracy, beyond arming Saddam Hussein's Iraq sufficiently to ensure a stalemate in the Iran-Iraq war. What the US empire could not tolerate was the possibility of a democratic Iran under Mossadegh. In the most literal sense imaginable, the Eurasian autocracies are the prison-houses of US empire.

18. This is data from the US Energy Information Administration.
<http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=RB RTE&f=A>

19. The global renewable energy industry (the ensemble of solar, wind and battery markets and technologies) has been growing exponentially for almost fifteen years, to the point that it is large enough to begin to systematically constrain hydrocarbon prices. Simply, the exponential growth of the industry means that the average prices of wind and solar power have been dropping 10-15% per year, just the opposite of the rising cost curve of non-renewable hydrocarbons. By 2017, solar and wind grid parity will be achieved for 80% of the world's population, i.e. it will be cheaper to invest in solar and wind technologies than in hydrocarbons.

20. It is striking how this defeat is an accelerated microcosm of the centuries-old process of decolonization and anti-colonial national revolution. From a military perspective, Ukrainians successfully rebuilt their armed forces and stopped Russia's invasion of the Donbass in its tracks. As of mid-November 2014, ten to fifteen thousand mercenary Russian soldiers backed with hundreds of Russian Army tanks, artillery pieces, heavy weapons and advanced anti-air systems have been unable to control more than 3% of Ukraine's territory. Politically, Ukrainians decisively rejected both Russo-imperialism as well as its indigenous echo, Far Right Ukrainian nationalism. In free, fair and impartial elections, Ukrainians overwhelmingly chose a pragmatic centrist, Peter Poroshenko, for President. They also elected the most plebian, pro-democracy, and pro-EU Parliament in the nation's history. Culturally, the media and information war launched by Putinism's state-owned television networks to discredit and smear the Ukrainian revolution ended up angering Ukrainians, who proceeded to create their own English-language news channel (Ukraine Today) and other independent news sources.

The Kurds experienced a similar sequence of an existential national threat, followed by an anti-colonial national mobilization. After halting the initial Daesh onslaught – at their peak, the Daesh numbered roughly 30,000 soldiers and controlled a quarter of the combined territory of Iraq and Syria –

the Kurdish YPG and Peshmerga forces have begun to liberate Kurdish regions from Daesh control. The Kurdistan Regional Government now has effective autonomy vis-a-vis the state of Iraq, as well as the support of nearly all the democratic and postcolonial nation-states of the world. The Kurdish communities of Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq, along with the various branches of the Kurdish diaspora, have finally set aside their internal disagreements in order to create a united front to defeat the Daesh, and to guarantee the continuation of the peace process between Ocalan's YPG and the Turkish authorities.

21. In a September 2014 poll conducted by Gallup, an overwhelming 89% of Ukrainians rejected Putinism's invasion of the Donbass. See: International Republican Institute. "Public Opinion Survey, Residents of Ukraine, September 12-25, 2014." <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20October%202014%20Survey%20of%20Residents%20of%20Ukraine,%20September%2012-25,%202014.pdf>. The same survey shows 66% of Ukrainians see Russia negatively, 17% are neutral and only 15% are positive. This is a dramatic reversal from early 2013, when nearly all Ukrainians regarded Russia in positive terms. An October 2014 poll by GfK Ukraine found that most Ukrainians regarded Putin negatively, whereas only four percent admired him: <https://news.pn/en/public/116212>. These findings have been confirmed by large numbers of other polls, as well as by the outcome of the October 2014 Parliamentary elections.

22. The overwhelming majority of Russians (68%) polled in November 2014 by the Levada Center say they do not want the Russian Army to invade the eastern districts of Ukraine, while only 13% approved of such an invasion. See: <http://www.interpretermag.com/two-thirds-of-russians-dont-want-their-sons-to-fight-in-ukraine-levada-center-poll-finds/>

23. The most likely onset of this democratization is 2024. By playing on popular memories of Russo-imperial glory, Putin is almost certain to win office again in 2018 (the presidential term was extended by Putin's rump Parliament to six years) and rule unchallenged until 2024. However, at some point between 2018 and 2024, four factors will trigger systemic political change. First, energy-rent patrimonialism is dead as an economy strategy. As early as 2008, it had become clear that Russia's energy-rents were no longer large enough to power its middle-income economy, or to pay for the social needs of its 146 million citizens. Yet Putinism has consistently failed to diversify the Russian economy away from the energy-rent model, either by encouraging energy conservation in factories and housing infrastructure, by investing in the renewable energy economy, or by reducing national energy subsidies. As a result, Russia remains one of the most energy-inefficient economies on the planet. The recent fall in the world price of oil from \$110 to \$80 per barrel has exacerbated the situation, by plunging Russia from uncomfortable stagnation into painful contraction. The second factor is that Putin will be 72 years old in 2024. Russia's average life expectancy of 70 means that very few Russian voters in 2024 will have adult memories of the Soviet era, or nostalgia for Brezhnev-era Russo-imperialism. The third factor is that only half of Russia's citizens had access to the internet in mid-2014, a fact which enabled Putinism's state-controlled television and radio to whip up war hysteria by means of the most shameless and evil lies about Ukraine. This war hysteria will become impossible in just a couple of years, due to the fact that access to the internet will become far more ubiquitous. The fourth and final factor is that Russia's civil society will continue to develop, thanks to the high educational level of its population. This civil society first rose up and demanded genuine democratization in 2011, and also contributed significantly to the success of Ukraine's Maidan protests. Democratic Ukraine will return the favor, by providing shelter and support for Russian dissidents and pro-democracy activists. If Putin tears up the last shreds of the Russian Constitution and proclaims himself Emperor-for-Life in 2024, Red Square will erupt in a protest which will make Kiev's Maidan look like a kindergarten picnic.

24. The first sign this is occurring is Kazakhstan's polite but firm refusal to become a client state of Russo-imperialism. In a recent speech, Nazarbayev has called for Kazakhstan to move away from energy-rent accumulation and towards high-technology services:

http://www.akorda.kz/en/page/page_218343

25. What most foreign observers think of as standard Arabic is nothing but the Cairo dialect of Egypt, while millions of Egyptians also speak the Libyan version of Arabic in the west of the country, the Nubi version in the south, and the Badawi version in the eastern Sinai. In fact, the twenty-six largest dialects of Arabic are so different that they function as separate languages.

26. This discontinuity is highlighted by the case of the Brazilian quilombos, independent city-states created by escaped slaves deep inside Brazil's vast internal frontier. These cities flourished for centuries, but were systematically destroyed by the colonial authorities. This destruction meant there were no direct links between the quilombo's economic model of free peasant labor and its political model of mass peasant mobilization, and Brazil's early nationalist movements. The only places in the South American region where indigenous peoples could mobilize for nation-building were in parts of Central America and the Andean countries (e.g. contemporary Bolivia).

27. To take only the most obvious cases, Brazil did not ban slavery until 1888, while Brazilian democracy did not develop true popular legitimacy until 1984. For its part, Mexico experienced a violent revolution and subsequent civil war from 1910 until 1920, and was ruled by the one-party rule of the PRI from 1929 until 1997, when the PRI lost control of Mexico's Congress (the PRI's hegemony did not fully end until it lost the Presidency in 2000).

28. For additional background on the strategy of Nigeria's rural transformation, see this interview with Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, the current Nigerian Minister of Agriculture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbIiswsrvG8>

29. The franc zone is broadly similar to the dollar zone in Central and South America, with the key difference being that the latter is a much smaller percentage of South America's population. The South American countries which utilize the US dollar as their official currency include Bermuda, the Bahamas, Ecuador, El Salvador, the islands of the Netherlands Antilles, and Panama, countries with a total population of 26.6 million – only 4% of South America's 604.9 million people.

30. This cosmopolitanism is exemplified by Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian Congress Party, India's first prime minister. Nehru was educated at Britain's Trinity College, and was conversant with Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, English, French, Latin and Bengali. Nehru's *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1929) and *The Discovery of India* (1946) are touchstone works of Indian Anglophone writing.

31. A case in point is the public response to revelations of the corrupt sale of India's 2G cellphone spectrum to a few well-connected insiders for much less than the spectrum was worth. The subsequent scandal was a major factor in discrediting the Congress Party's ruling parliamentary coalition in the 2014 national elections. India's Outlook magazine has published online the taped transcripts describing these rigged deals: <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/The-Radia-Tapes/268214>