

Emerging global divides in media and communication theory: European universalism versus non-Western reactions

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What Wallerstein (2006) described as European universalism dominated media and communication theory until the end of the 20th century. The three-tier divide of the global economic system—center, semi-periphery, and periphery—explicated in world-system analysis was equally applicable to the global academic/scholarship structure. The non-traditional fields of study, such as media and (mass) communication, inherited the full flavor of European universalism because they originated in the academic institutions of the center countries.

The turn of the century saw a dramatic reaction to the Euro-American rhetoric of power. Organized groups of scholars have begun to question the presumption of European universalism in media and communication theory, encompassing its axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Global divides in media and communication studies have emerged with some Asian scholars going back to the philosophical genius of Buddha, Laozi, Confucius, Nagarjuna, and others to derive relevant theoretical frameworks.

This paper explicates this momentous phenomenon.

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