

An Epistemological and Socio-Political Critique of Contemporary Open-Access Publishing Platforms and Author-Centric Dissemination Models in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comprehensive socio-political and epistemological critique of the contemporary global academic publishing complex, focusing on the structural transformation of knowledge dissemination within the global higher education sector. Guided by the theoretical frameworks of world-systems theory, cultural hegemony, and epistemicide, we deconstruct the political economy of multinational publishing conglomerates backed by global institutional asset managers. We argue that the widespread institutionalization of commercial metrics (e.g., CiteScore, h-index) does not measure genuine intellectual quality, but rather functions as a mechanism of bureaucratic surveillance and ideological gatekeeping. This system establishes an "epistemic monoculture" that systematically marginalizes alternative, non-linear, and indigenous knowledge paradigms of the Global South. Furthermore, we expose the "triple-pay" surplus-value extraction model, highlighting how state-funded research and voluntary academic labor are privatized to generate corporate capital, which is then sold back to public institutions. To secure national intellectual sovereignty, this paper offers strategic policy recommendations, including the systemic decoupling of academic rewards from corporate databases, the institutionalization of state-funded open-access infrastructures, and the integration of holistic paradigms such as the Eastern Yin-Yang philosophy to restore epistemological balance.

Keywords: Higher Education Policy, Epistemic Imperialism, Academic Publishing Monopolies, State Sponsorship, Institutional Trap, New World Order, Corporate Metrics, Yin-Yang Philosophy, Global South.

INTRODUCTION

The Epistemological Crisis: Universal Knowledge vs. Corporate Commodification

Knowledge, in its foundational and multidimensional essence, transcends geographical, cultural, and corporate demarcations. Historically, both Eastern philosophical systems and classical Western traditions conceptualized knowledge as an intrinsic pursuit of truth rooted in contextual human realities. However, contemporary hyper-globalization has systematically subjected intellectual discovery to the parameters of market-driven capitalism, a phenomenon conceptualized as the Political Economy of Knowledge (Wallerstein, 2004). Through this framework, global publishing conglomerates like RELX, sustained by massive institutional asset managers such as BlackRock, have orchestrated a shift where academic worth is no longer judged by societal value, but by conformity to rigid, commercialized structures. This corporate encapsulation of human thought results in what Santos (2014) terms epistemicide—the systematic liquidation of indigenous, non-linear, and alternative paradigms that fail to align with Western industrial logic.

The Illusion of Objectivity: Metricization as Hegemonic Control

Within the hierarchy of modern academia, concepts such as "Quality" and "Impact" are weaponized as absolute arbiters of intellectual validity. A critical epistemological deconstruction reveals that these metrics—including CiteScore, Journal Citation Indicator (JCI), and the h-index—are not objective measures of truth, but quantified social constructs engineered to maintain institutional power (Gramsci, 1971). This hyper-quantification creates

an artificial aura of scientific rigor while effectively masking the geopolitical and commercial biases of the gatekeepers. When sovereign state institutions and public university research councils unconditionally internalize these corporate-engineered indices as compulsory criteria for funding and evaluation, they commit a form of voluntary epistemic dependency (Alatas, 2003). Consequently, the research matrix functions not as an instrument of human liberation, but as a mechanism of bureaucratic surveillance and gatekeeping, designed to filter out paradigm-shifting insights that challenge the global academic monopoly.

The Political Economy of Academic Publishing

The Triple-Pay Corporate Profit Model

The operational architecture of multinational publishing conglomerates—such as RELX—presents a unique anomaly in the critique of contemporary capitalism. In a standard market economy, capital enterprises incur costs for raw materials, production labor, and quality control. However, the global academic publishing industry has engineered a "triple-pay" surplus-value extraction model that defies traditional market logic (Buranyi, 2017).

First, public funds and state resources subsidize the primary commodity production, which is the actual research conducted by academics. Second, the quality control mechanism—known as peer review—is performed voluntarily by global scholars without any financial compensation from the publishers. Third, the very institutions that funded the research and provided the labor are forced to buy back their own commodified output through exorbitant institutional subscription fees and databases controlled by monolithic asset managers. This structural configuration represents what Harvey (2004) conceptualizes as accumulation by dispossession, where public wealth and intellectual commons are systematically privatized to maximize corporate equity.

Exploitation of Academic Labor and the Rentier Economy

Through a Marxist lens, the relationship between the academic researcher and the multinational publisher reveals an acute form of labor alienation and exploitation (Marx, 1976). The modern scholar operates under an institutional compulsion—often dictated by bureaucratic taglines like "publish or perish"—which forces them to surrender the copyright of their intellectual property to private firms for zero capital return.

The publishing monopoly does not create value through technological innovation; rather, it functions as a rentier class that monopolizes the digital infrastructure of knowledge dissemination (Larivière et al., 2015). By locking human thought behind paywalls and digital rights management (DRM) barriers, these conglomerates extract monopoly rents from global academic systems. This mechanism ensures that while the risks and costs of scientific failure are entirely socialized (borne by the public and states), the financial rewards and data ownership are completely privatized, widening the asymmetrical power gap between the Global North and the Global South.

State Sponsorship and the Institutional Trap

The Neoliberalization of Higher Education and Policy Coercion

The integration of commercial indexing parameters into public university systems represents a structural capture of state apparatuses by global financial forces. Historically, state-funded higher education was designed to foster civic development, national industrialization, and localized problem-solving. Under the current neoliberal global architecture, however, international financial institutions and global ranking bodies have successfully altered national policy frameworks (Marginson, 2011).

State research councils and ministries of higher education, particularly in developing nations, have been systematically conditioned to link institutional funding and national prestige to corporate-owned databases like Scopus or Web of Science. This alignment creates a system of institutional coercion, where public universities are no longer incentivized to address indigenous socio-economic crises, but are instead forced to expend public tax revenues on publishing models that alienate their own national academic workforce.

Metric-Oriented Surveillance and Ideological Bureaucracy



Through the lens of Foucault's (2008) conceptualization of governmentality, the internalization of these metrics functions as a highly sophisticated form of bureaucratic surveillance and self-regulation. Academic institutions have transformed their administrative infrastructure into what Althusser (2014) calls an Ideological State Apparatus, where numbers, rankings, and standard indexes replace actual intellectual substance.

University administrators, acting as the local enforcers of this global hegemony, implement promotional structures and evaluation matrices that penalize alternative or localized dissemination pathways. This structural trap induces a state of academic docility; scholars willingly alter their research trajectories, vocabulary, and methodologies to satisfy the arbitrary standards of Eurocentric journal editors. Consequently, the state effectively finances its own intellectual colonisation, transforming the academic professional from an independent critic of society into a compliant data-producer for multinational publishing monopolies.

Global Hegemony and the Standardization of Knowledge: A Socio-Political Critique

Epistemic Monoculture and the New World Order Architecture

The ultimate trajectory of global publishing monopolies extends beyond mere financial rent-seeking; it operates as an ideological apparatus for the stabilization of a hyper-globalized, unipolar world order, often conceptualized as the New World Order architecture (Wallerstein, 2004). Within this geopolitical framework, knowledge is not allowed to remain diverse, indigenous, or localized. Instead, global financial actors—leveraged by institutional entities like BlackRock over corporate engines such as RELX—enforce a rigid standardization of academic output.

This mechanism forces the global intelligentsia to adopt a uniform vocabulary, linguistic style, and conceptual taxonomy (Santos, 2014). Scholars across diverse continents are systematically conditioned to frame human experience through a singular, Eurocentric epistemological paradigm. This artificial creation of an academic monoculture functions as a highly effective mechanism of global psychological and cultural harmonization, ensuring that alternative socio-political consciousness is preemptively neutralized before it can challenge the transnational status quo.

Cultural Hegemony and the Complicity of the Intelligentsia

Through Gramsci's (1971) formulation of cultural hegemony, the global standardization of knowledge occurs not through overt physical coercion, but through the manufactured consent of the dominated. The modern globalized university system serves as the primary incubator for this consent. By dangling structural carrots—such as inclusion in the arbitrary "Top 2% Scientists" lists, rapid career advancement, and corporate prestige—conglomerates transform local academics into active accomplices of their own epistemic subjugation.

The global intellectual elite, caught in this prestige-driven loop, becomes unable to think outside the boundaries of the digital databases they serve. They validate only the knowledge that uses the "approved" vocabulary, thereby acting as gatekeepers who suppress indigenous truths and non-linear dynamics (Alatas, 2003). This systemic complicity effectively traps the human mind within a corporate-controlled simulation of truth, making the contemporary academic industry one of the most powerful vectors for the consolidation of global corporate dominance over national and cultural sovereignty.

CONCLUSION & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: Deconstructing the Monolith

The contemporary globalized academic publishing sector operates not as a conduit for human enlightenment, but as a sophisticated, corporate-driven rentier mechanism designed to commodify thought and enforce global epistemic homogeneity. As demonstrated throughout this paper, the convergence of transnational financial asset management, multi-billion-dollar publishing cartels, and submissive state policy structures has successfully trapped the global intelligentsia within an artificial metric-oriented simulation of validity. This structural capture results in systemic epistemicide, effectively marginalizing indigenous paradigms and alternative knowledge systems of the Global South.

To break free from this cycle of intellectual dependency, contemporary academia must transcend the illusion of corporate metrics and reclaim knowledge as a universal, de-commodified public good. This epistemological reclamation requires a shift toward cognitive pluralism, embracing holistic frameworks such as the Eastern Yin-Yang philosophy, which conceptualizes truth not through rigid, linear quantification, but as a dynamic, balanced, and context-dependent reality where divergent perspectives coexist and complement one another.

Strategic Policy Recommendations for Sovereign Nations

To actively dismantle this corporate hegemony and secure national intellectual sovereignty, state regulatory bodies, ministries of higher education, and public research councils must implement the following structural transformations:

Decoupling from Corporate Metrics: National funding structures, institutional rankings, and academic promotional criteria must be radically decoupled from corporate-owned databases like Scopus and Web of Science. State institutions must establish localized, qualitative evaluation frameworks that measure research value based on its tangible socio-economic and cultural impact rather than arbitrary citation numbers.

Institutionalization of Open Access Infrastructure: Sovereign states must completely redirect public tax revenues away from expensive institutional database subscriptions and toward the development of decentralized, state-funded National Open Access Repositories. Intellectual output generated through public funding must be mandated to remain free and accessible to the global public, bypassing commercial paywalls entirely.

Democratization and Decolonization of Language: Policy shifts must incentivize the preservation and utilization of indigenous languages in scholarly dissemination. Public university systems should establish rigorous, peer-reviewed local journals that accept alternative methodologies, non-linear narratives, and contextual problem-solving designs, thereby safeguarding the intellectual ecosystem from Anglo-centric standardization.

South-South Epistemological Alliances: Developing nations must actively form regional academic coalitions to establish independent, non-commercial indexing networks. By sharing resources, collaborative publishing standards, and cross-border peer-review mechanisms, the Global South can build an autonomous intellectual front strong enough to challenge and negotiate against Eurocentric academic gatekeeping.

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