

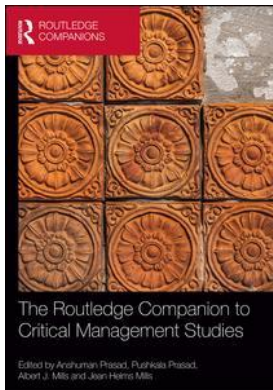
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 27 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies

Anshuman Prasad, Pushkala Prasad, Albert J. Mills, Jean Helms Mills

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Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch12>

Alexandre Faria

Published online on: 08 Sep 2015

How to cite :- Alexandre Faria. 08 Sep 2015, *Rethinking market-ing orientation from:* The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies Routledge

Accessed on: 27 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch12>

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Rethinking market-ing orientation

A critical perspective from an emerging economy

Alexandre Faria

Introduction

The concept of market orientation – a notion that may be seen as a condition as well as a consequence of neoliberal globalization – has become one of the most important in the field of marketing. Beginning in the early 1990s, influential marketing researchers argued that large business firms that followed the concept of market orientation – i.e. firms that focused on either the needs of consumers, the pattern of competition and intra-organizational coordination (Slater & Narver, 1990, 1998, 1999) or on the construction and use of market intelligence systems (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990) – achieved superior performance (measured in terms of profitability). While the popularity of market orientation helped raise the status of the field of marketing within large corporations and business schools, at the same time it also insulated researchers (1) from criticisms about the relevance of the discipline and (2) from developments in other scholarly fields concerning debates about different types of capitalism, the neoliberal features of management knowledge and the changing geopolitical and geo-epistemic position of emerging economies in the post-Cold War international context. Informed by a critical perspective that situates its locus of enunciation (Mignolo, 2000) in an emerging economy, this chapter proposes that market orientation reproduces assumptions that are particularly problematic for emerging economies, and, accordingly, that critique in marketing needs to be taken beyond the ‘comfort level’ of critical Anglo-American and/or European researchers.

Parallel to the territorial, material and ideological expansion of neoliberal globalization in the post-Cold War years and its transformation into what has been called a neoliberal empire (Harvey, 2003; Pieterse, 2004; Steger, 2009), market fundamentalism – i.e. an unquestioning belief in the efficiency, effectiveness and moral legitimacy of market-based exchange in virtually all spheres of human life – invaded different areas of the world, including business research and education. The marketization thesis – based on the argument that “non-market activity is a vestige of a pre-capitalist past” (Williams, 2006) – became dominant in industrialized economies and then was sought to be imposed on the rest of the world through the mobilization of both hard and soft power mechanisms. Since ‘non-markets’ were seen by the Western literature as a key feature of the rest of the world, the neoliberal representation of the market (i.e. the so-called free market) and corresponding policies were aggressively promoted by the West in the rest of

the world. The project to promote the neoliberal market became something akin to a civilizing mission informed by the idea of “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1989), which aimed to eliminate all vestiges of ‘non-market’ on the earth. Through the mobilization of both hard and soft power mechanisms, the project of promoting the idea of the market appears to have achieved considerable success in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War.

Within the business research and education system, it seems that marketing academics and institutions were among the first to embrace and disseminate the idea that globalization equals ‘free market’. Accordingly, wittingly or unwittingly, they also became participants in the project of *keeping invisible* the competing idea that globalization equals imperialism ruled by the only ‘superpower’, an idea advanced early in the 1990s by authors from Latin America (e.g. Santos, 1993) and elsewhere. Marketing literature, moreover, mostly ignored not only authors from the rest of the world but also Euro-American authors who portrayed globalization as a highly uneven process that “generates powerful sources of friction, conflict, and fragmentation . . . [with the result that] the interests of the few more often than not take precedence over the interests of the majority of humankind” (McGrew, 2008: 15), as well as those who highlighted the return of the militarization of markets after the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. as a reworking of the Cold War (Harvey, 2007) and the transformation of “market globalism” into ‘imperial globalism’ (Steger, 2009).

We may note that, at odds with the claims by Fukuyama (1989) and builders of what may be called the market-ing orientation project or design, the end of the Cold War was not framed as a discontinuity by a large part of the international relations community, including numerous practitioners as well as researchers. In his 25 April 2005 State of the Nation speech, for instance, President Vladimir Putin of Russia had declared that “the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century . . . the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself” (Putin, 2005). The growing nuclear weaponization of different areas of the world and the launching of the global War on Terror by the U.S. President George W. Bush after the events of 9/11 have also been portrayed by the international relations literature as evidence that the Cold War is not over and that history and the world order remain in the making (Cox, 2008) and that market fundamentalism does not quite enjoy global hegemony.

Hence, one of the major priorities of the market-ing orientation design has been the delegitimation of ideas that could block the trajectory of expansion of the neoliberal order. The extraordinary rise of market-oriented management institutions in the post-Cold War era has been pushed by the corresponding grand strategy based on the diffusion on a global scale of the idea that the defeat of communism resulted in the ‘natural’ unlimited expansion of the market-oriented neoliberal order led by the United States.

However, the international relations literature has asserted since the early 1990s that such market-ing orientation is misleading as it assumes that countries and regions in general, and the lone ‘superpower’ in particular, would be voluntarily willing to dispense with the notion of state sovereignty. Accordingly, it is not surprising that, especially after the events of 9/11 and the rise of U.S. unilateralism, the market-ing orientation design in general and the Washington Consensus in particular were at the receiving end of numerous critiques voiced not only from the rest of the world but from within the U.S. itself (Philo & Miller, 2001; Harvey, 2003). For different reasons, those critical accounts from other fields of knowledge and/or regions of the world have been overlooked or kept invisible by both mainstream *and* critical marketing studies. This situation has enabled the successful trajectory of the concept of market orientation on a global scale in general, and in particular the ‘invasion’ of emerging economies by a neocolonial/neo-imperial perspective after the events of 9/11.

Accordingly, adopting the perspective of an emerging economy – in particular Brazil – I argue in this chapter that critical researchers need to embrace critiques of the market-ing orientation design being offered by Latin American authors (as well as authors from various other non-Western regions of the world), and by a range of other fields of knowledge, with a view to co-constructing an international critical perspective that goes beyond current Anglo-American and/or European contributions. In the second and third sections of the chapter, the successful trajectories of neoliberal market-ing orientation design and the concept of market orientation are critically analyzed. The fourth section focuses on the importance of rethinking market orientation from the perspective of an emerging economy located in Latin America. The final section provides suggestions for further critical developments in Brazil and other emerging economies.

On market-ing orientation

Market-ing orientation is a Euro-American design (with the U.S. playing the leading role in its construction) that was then transformed into a global design. It is based on the idea that U.S. capitalism defeated communism because of its intrinsic superiority and that neoliberal globalization represents the end of history and the corresponding triumph of Eurocentrism. In other words, market-ing orientation represents the final victory of the neoliberal design based on ‘free market’ and ‘free enterprise’ mantras. Correspondingly, marketing institutions and researchers, especially (but not only) in the U.S. share and disseminate on a global scale the idea that the marketization of the entire world is not just ‘natural’ and beneficial for all but also necessary. According to marketing authors and institutions, everything that is not part of the market has to (or will) become part of the market (Achrol & Kotker, 2000).

Market-ing orientation ignores not only history and authors from the rest of the world (in particular Latin America) who equate neoliberalism with neo-imperialism or neocolonialism (e.g. Santos, 1993), but also a vast Euro-American literature (of international relations, for instance) which challenges the argument that the post-Cold War period signifies a discontinuity and posits instead that the end of the Cold War actually represents the rise of a problematic world order with many powers, marked mainly by a “return to the shift of alliances and instabilities of the multipolar era that existed prior to World War II” (Goldgeir & McFaul, 1992: 467). Market-ing orientation, moreover, is linked to an understanding within certain international relations circles in the U.S. that although it is ‘obvious’ that Western civilization and its corresponding ideology constitute the pinnacle of human history, there are still fierce opponents of the Western liberal order who remain to be faced. It is therefore seen as legitimate for Western institutions to ‘reform’ those rivals according to the precepts of the Western model of civilization (Huntington, 1996).

Huntington’s famous typology of civilizations which informs the market-ing orientation design is based on a neocolonial and racist dichotomy between Western and non-Western values: Western values supposedly represent liberalism, rationality, social equality and individual rights, whereas non-Western values are said to represent illiberalism, irrationality, social inequality and collective rights. Given such reasoning, the imposition of the market-ing orientation design on a global scale is regarded as a legitimate responsibility of the lone ‘superpower’. As Huntington (1993) declares:

[T]he promotion of democracy, human rights, and markets are [sic] far more central to American policy than to the policy of any other country. . . . A world without US primacy

will be a world with more violence and disorder and less democracy and economic growth than a world where the United States continues to have more influence than any other country in shaping global affairs.

(p. 83)

Correspondingly, the market-ing orientation design bestows on the West the responsibility of conquering the hearts and minds of opposing non-Western forces that allegedly represent 'backwardness' and 'threat'. Marketing academics and institutions, led by the U.S. and supported by Europe, have become completely enmeshed in the mission of transforming the market-ing orientation design into a global design. For them, even the notion of a different European capitalism (argued for by some) does not make sense in an era of global convergence. Although the concept of market orientation has been embraced and fostered by European researchers and institutions since the mid-1990s, there is no debate within this literature based on the theory of varieties of capitalism. Besides ignoring the *critical* marketing literature, researchers also ignore not only the disputes between Brussels and Washington regarding the making of markets and states in the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe (Bruszt, 2002) and between types of Western capitalisms (Morgan, Whitley & Moen, 2004), but also the strategic disputes between Oriental and Occidental globalizations (Pieterse, 2004) and between Western and non-Western capitalisms (Arrighi, 2007). Reinforcing in the post-Cold War era the subordination of the discipline to U.S. Cold War grand strategies (see Barksdale, Kelly & MacFarlane, 1978; Tadajewski, 2006), they fail to realize that the market-ing orientation design which informs the concept of market orientation has been fostered to a major extent by U.S. foreign policies and the neoliberal empire.

The many failures of the Washington Consensus and market fundamentalism which started in the mid-1990s (see, e.g. Stiglitz, 2003, 2008) created conditions for the recognition in the rest of the world that the market-ing orientation design aims not just to *eliminate* non-market forces in the rest of the world, but also to *keep invisible* Western non-market mechanisms which have informed the rise of neoliberal imperialism (Steger, 2009). Indeed, it also aims to preempt *alternatives* from the rest of the world in general and from emerging economies in particular. As pointed out by Pettigrew (1987), the higher-order strategic changes in a neoliberal world in which supposedly there is no alternative require the mobilization of power to both defeat and prevent competition "derived from the generation and manipulation of symbols, language, belief and ideology . . . through the possession, control, and tactical use of overt sources of power such as position, rewards or sanctions, or expertise" (p. 659). The legitimate mobilization of power to both defeat and prevent competitors has been reinforced by the unilateral diffusion, after the events of 9/11, of the idea that emerging economies represent a threat to the Western order (Jervis, 2003) and by the argument that the lone superpower should "eliminate them before they become legitimate challengers" (see Glosny, 2010: 104).

This dark side of the market-ing orientation design, which is crucially important from the perspective of emerging economies, has been addressed by critical authors from Latin America and in different fields of knowledge, such as international political economy, international relations, global sociology, geography and so on. Nevertheless, this literature has been ignored or successfully kept invisible by the marketing literature and corresponding institutions on a global scale. Interestingly and somewhat related to the reach and pervasive power of the market-ing orientation design, this literature has also been virtually overlooked by Anglo-American critical scholarship in both marketing and management studies.

How to explain this state of things? In the main, this chapter addresses three interrelated issues or ideas to explain this picture. In so doing, the chapter makes a scholarly contribution (from

an emerging economy located in Latin America) which aims to go beyond the existing Anglo-American contributions in critical marketing and management studies. The first such issue or idea is that the market-ing orientation design has been overlooked in the Anglo-American world because the dispute between communism and capitalism has been replaced in the post-Cold War era by a neocolonial dispute, led by the U.S. and backed by Europe, between types of Western capitalism (Campbell & Pedersen, 2007; Morgan, Whitley & Moen, 2004), *at the expense of alternatives and voices from the rest of the world* (Arrighi, 2011). The management of ideas and meanings in this neoliberal world has been grounded on geopolitical processes “designed to create legitimacy for one’s ideas, actions and demands, and to delegitimize the demands of one’s opponents” (Pettigrew, 1987: 659).

The second issue is that academic institutions in management, led by the U.S. and seconded by Europe, have been playing a central role in constructing and spreading the market-ing orientation culture from the West towards the rest of the world (Clegg & Carter, 2007; Philo & Miller, 2001; Thrift, 2005). The extraordinary expansion of management knowledge and institutions over recent decades as a global design led by the U.S. and supported by Europe is related to the increasing importance of soft power – a term coined in the U.S. by Joseph Nye – within international relations circles, i.e. “the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion” (Nye, 1990). In other words, Western academic institutions of management embody the grand strategy of fostering a necessary but less costly U.S. post-Cold War hegemony.

Finally, the third issue being introduced here is that the big emerging economies – in particular Brazil, China, India, and Russia – have been portrayed by Euro-American institutions and authors as a threat, capable of not only challenging the U.S. hegemony but also constructing and disseminating *alternative capitalisms* or alternatives to the Western order on a global scale (Kagan, 2009; Trenin, 2006). In this regard, although many authors used to hold in past years that “bandwagoning” with the U.S. was the only option to these emerging economies (Van Ness, 2002), the subsequent crises of the neoliberal order and the consistent rise (or return) of emerging economies (Arrighi, 2011) have led large numbers of analysts to conclude that, although “the old winners are still winning . . . the terms on which they are winning cede more and more to emerging forces” (Pieterse, 2008: 707). Correspondingly, developments such as Russia’s soft power strategies towards the Caucasus and Central Asia (Hill, 2006) or China’s soft power programs in Africa and Latin America have become major issues within Euro-American international relations circles and help explain why emerging economies – especially Russia, India and China – have been portrayed as a threat to the West by the main builders of the market-ing orientation design.

These three interrelated issues help us understand the trajectory of the transformation of the market-ing orientation into a global design, as well as the successful trajectory of market orientation. Simultaneously, they also explain why researchers in Europe can freely point out that the mainstream fields of marketing and strategic management are non-neutral when it comes to U.S. interests (Knights & Morgan, 1991; Tadajewski, 2006), but those same researchers generally overlook the fact that *both* critical and mainstream versions of these fields remain *Euro-American* fields. European authors have been keen to point out that marketing and strategic management share a history of ethnocentrism and aversion to criticism and interdisciplinarity (Brownlie, Saren, Wensley & Whittington, 1999; Pettigrew, Thomas & Whittington, 2002), but the recognition of knowledges from the rest of the world and the corresponding provision of geo-epistemic conditions for the co-construction of a world in which many worlds and knowledges could coexist remain as gaps to be filled.

On the trajectory of market orientation

Given the geopolitical underpinnings and the successful trajectory of the market-ing orientation design, it is not surprising that the successful trajectory of the concept of market orientation within the marketing literature started as of the early 1990s. The first articles in the matter were published in the U.S. by two powerful institutional builders of the market-ing orientation design: the Marketing Science Institute and the *Journal of Marketing*. Those articles were based on statistical correlations and on the absence of market theorizing and showed that large business firms that followed the concept of market orientation achieved superior performance measured in terms of profitability (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Slater & Narver, 1990).

Influenced and enabled by the market-ing orientation design in general and in particular by the imposition of hard power by the Washington Consensus, those studies reinforced the Euro-American mission of transforming that design into a global design and belief in a free market world order (Slater & Narver, 1998, 1999). More importantly, it helped in delegitimizing competing or alternative ideas and keeping invisible the dark geopolitical side of the market-ing orientation design. As such, market orientation may be correctly understood as a successful neoliberal reworking (in the post-Cold War era) of the mobilization of marketing as a resource of soft power.

During the Cold War period, the U.S. imposed free market and democracy on the Third World through the mobilization of hard power and also by imposing management institutions and market-ing disciplines. At that time, the main justification was that management and market-ing disciplines were necessary to deter the advance of communism. Due to the enduring subordination of the discipline to U.S. grand strategies, the marketing literature has been silent on the extent to which this dark geopolitical side explains its successful trajectory in the Cold War period despite its low status within management academic institutions and large corporations. From the perspective of an emerging economy in Latin America, it is worth pointing out that the transformation of Chile into the first neoliberal experiment in the early 1970s, through the mobilization of free-market discourses, market-ing institutions, and military power by Euro-American great powers (Faria, Ibarra-Colado & Guedes, 2010; Harvey, 2007), has been kept invisible by the Euro-American marketing literature in particular and also by the management literature in general, in *both* mainstream and critical versions.

The concept of market orientation helped in establishing on global scale the idea of a new 'market-oriented world order' and also in keeping invisible the mechanisms mobilized by Euro-American great powers in the post-Cold War period. A few European authors dared to criticize the methodological assumptions and procedures followed by market oriented publications (e.g. Langerak, 2003; Henderson, 1998; Wensley, 1995), but, not surprisingly, they failed to recognize authors from the rest of the world who equated the market-ing orientation design with neo-imperialism or neocolonialism, as well as the embeddedness of those publications in the market-ing orientation design. In this respect what is even more interesting is that the concept of market orientation has been overlooked by critical marketing literature published in the Anglo-American world.

Spurred on by the dissemination of neoliberal discourses by the neoliberal empire, and by embracing the project of broadening the scope of marketing conveyed in the U.S. in the Cold War period (Kolter & Levy, 1969) to preempt the advance of communism, research in market orientation 'invaded' the realms of public as well as non-profit organizations. A large community of researchers from different countries, asymmetrically linked with U.S. researchers and institutions, applied the concept in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe (e.g. Hooley et al., 2000; Hooley, 2003), and both overlooked and helped in making invisible the dark geopolitical side of the market-ing orientation design.

Interestingly, this post–Cold War ambiguity involving neoliberals and neoconservatives which informs the rise of neoliberal empire was also a key issue in the Cold War. At that time U.S. liberals called on the U.S. “to stop supporting Third World dictators”, and conservatives and neoconservatives in the U.S. warned “that the dictators would be replaced by pro-Soviet communists” (Kagan, 2008: 101).

Allegedly for economic reasons, emerging economies (more specifically Brazil, China, India and Russia) were subsequently taken as major target for the expansion of research in market orientation in recent years, particularly after the events of 9/11 (e.g. Felix & Hinck, 2005). U.S. marketing academics and institutions overlooked the sequential crises of the neoliberal order and the rise of the neoliberal empire (Pieterse, 2004) and claimed that researchers should recognize the “institutional failures” of emerging economies (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006). This turn toward emerging economies from a neocolonial perspective was informed by the post-9/11 idea that the absence of market-oriented institutions in developing countries represented a global threat (see Faria & Wensley, 2011).

Critical research in marketing overlooked this geopolitical turn, a key post–Cold War reworking of the historical enmeshment of marketing discipline and institutions with U.S. foreign policies. This Cold War phenomenon (see Tadajewski, 2006) was strengthened in the early 1990s in accordance with the international relations literature, which disclaims the neoliberal idea that the end of the Cold War represents a historical discontinuity. The discipline was concerned just with critiques from top executives of business corporations and academics from strategic management (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1999; Whittington, 2001; Whittington & Whipp, 1992). As a result, market orientation was framed and embraced by the marketing community worldwide as the best way to raise the strategic status of marketing as a discipline in order to enable business organizations and societies to catch up with requirements established by the market-ing orientation design.

As critique in marketing is supposed to come from researchers and institutions involved with Critical Management Studies (e.g. Brownlie, Saren, Wensley & Whittington, 1999; Burton, 2005) and as the concept of market orientation was overlooked by them, researchers in emerging economies faced special difficulties to address the successful trajectory of market orientation from a critical perspective. From the perspective of an emerging economy located in Latin America, it is arguable that a major feature of Anglo–American critique in marketing in particular, and management studies in general, has been the virtual overlooking of the dark geopolitical side of both the market-ing orientation design and Western neoliberalism (see Faria, 2013). An example of this kind of Anglo–American critique in marketing studies, which became a sort of global design, in tandem with the successful trajectory of the market-ing orientation design, follows:

In the world of business in the 1990s, the idea of marketing has central importance. . . . For Critical Theory, however, the myth of market freedom and with it the myth of marketing itself need to be unpacked. . . . Marketing is not a neutral way of looking at the world; it has distinctive power effects for organizations, managers, consumers and society as a whole. A critical approach to marketing will seek to reveal the conditions of possibility for marketing as a way of thinking about and doing particular social relations. In this way, it will link the critique of marketing to the critique of society.

(Morgan, 1992: 136)

This type of Anglo–American critical approach aims to reveal the ideological feature of free market and marketing from a problematic perspective of universality. Correspondingly, researchers fail to address the geopolitical side of the market-ing orientation design and geo-epistemic

and ‘ideological’ issues, which might help explain why ‘universal’ critique in marketing is invariably enunciated in the West, published in English, and informed by (almost only) European theories and theorists, all at the expense of criticalities and critical knowers and theorists from the rest of the world. It is arguable that this local design of critical marketing which emerged in the post-Cold War period in the Anglo-American world in the 1990s (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 1996; Morgan, 1992) and then became a global design represents a condition and outcome of the imposition of the market-ing orientation design on a global scale. In other words, from the perspective of the rest of the world, Anglo-American critical marketing can be also framed as an outcome and condition of the market-ing orientation design. Despite the intentions held by individual researcher and institutions, such critique is instrumental to the objective of ‘preventing competition’ from a perspective of geopolitics of knowledge.

It is not surprising that the publication of critical marketing literature in the United Kingdom, for instance, remains a privilege for a few academics and institutions (e.g. Saren, 2006; Saren et al., 2007; Tadajewski, 2010). Whereas it is correct to say that this critique has been ignored by the marketing literature in the U.S. and to a lesser extent in Europe, it is also correct to say that Euro-American critique has been instrumental for the reinforcement of the Western neoliberal order and corresponding subsuming of alternatives from the rest of the world.

In Brazil, where I live and work, the institutional and geopolitical conditions for the construction and legitimization of a critical perspective in marketing that addresses the geopolitical side of market-ing orientation design are not favorable, also for those reasons that have been overlooked by Anglo-American authors and institutions (there are important exceptions such as Cooke and Dar [2008]; Mills and Mills [2013]). It is not expected that academics and institutions from the rest of the world – when Brazil is portrayed as an ‘emerging economy’ rather than ‘Third World’ by Euro-American institutions, the notions of backwardness and threat assigned to the ‘other’ by Eurocentric ideas do not disappear – may question the ‘dominant’ literature (whether critical or mainstream). Such geo-epistemic obstacles have been reinforced in the post-Cold War period by the market-ing orientation design, and this helps explain the triumphant trajectory of market orientation in developing countries and the ‘invasion’ of emerging economies from a neocolonial perspective after the events of 9/11. Those selfsame geo-epistemic obstacles also explain why the trajectory of both the market-ing design and the concept of market orientation have been overlooked by Anglo-American critical marketing.

Arguably, Anglo-American critical management researchers are not just beneficiaries of such hegemonic design (Jack & Westwood, 2009) but also contributors for its diffusion as a global design that prevents alternatives from the rest of the world in general and in particular from emerging economies. Conversely, this picture supports the argument that critical perspectives from emerging economies which go *beyond* the Anglo-American contributions are necessary for the co-construction of a world in which many worlds and knowledges can coexist (see Faria, 2013; Cooke & Faria, 2013; Murphy & Zhu, 2012; Ibarra-Colado, 2008). Such international critical perspective might embrace the concept of geopolitics of knowledge. This concept has been uncovered and elaborated by academics from the rest of the world – in particular from Latin America – in the post-Cold War years as the colonial difference which started in the early 16th century with the ‘discovery’ of America by Eurocentric powers, a concept largely invisible to Euro-American researchers and institutions. In other words, it is correct to argue with Walter Mignolo that the geopolitics of knowledge “was not, and could hardly have been, a concern of Euro-American scholarships and thoughts” (2011: 119).

It has been argued in other fields of knowledge that the neo-liberal market-oriented project that was transformed into neo-liberal empire has been engendered through the asymmetric diffusion of market-ing oriented academic discourses – especially from the field of management. It

has been clear for authors from those fields since the first moments of the post-Cold War years that the 'free market' was designed to benefit only a tiny minority, in detriment to a large majority (Câmara Neto & Vernengo, 2002; Chang, 2002; George, 1997). Their unheard claims suggest that the broad notion of 'critical marketing' is too important to be accepted by the rest of the world as a sort of niche to be mobilized and kept by a few Anglo-American researchers and institutions. Analogous critical arguments have been voiced by authors from different fields in Brazil since the early 1990s (e.g. De Paula, Ferraz, & Iooty, 2002; Oliveira, 1998; Paulani, 2005; Santos, 1993; Sola, 1993). but they remain virtually ignored by both mainstream and critical researchers not only in the Euro-American world but also in Brazil.

The darker geopolitical side of the market-ing orientation design helps explain why geopolitics of knowledge is so important and why it has been kept invisible. In the post-Cold War era, soft power has become as valuable as hard power to U.S. foreign-oriented policies and strategists. The U.S. post-Cold War hegemony in management knowledge in general and in marketing in particular can be explained in terms of the increasing deployment of soft power, especially after the events of 9/11 and the corresponding decay of the legitimacy of U.S. hegemony as a result of the launch of the global War on Terror.

Geopolitical management of knowledge has become even more important to the institutional builders of the market-ing orientation design after the Western neo-liberal crisis precipitated by Wall Street in 2008. A number of authors and institutions now share the idea that the victories of the neo-liberal order against non-Western opposing forces should not be framed as 'natural' or inevitable as proposed by the 'end of history' thesis. There is an understanding within international relations circles in the U.S. that the "reemergence of the great autocratic powers, along with the reactionary forces from Islamic radicalism, has weakened [the (neo-)liberal order] and threatens to weaken it further" (Kagan, 2008: 105). Neo-conservative strategists argue now that "the great fallacy of our era has been the belief that a liberal international order rests on the triumph of ideas and the natural unfolding of human progress. . . . What reason was there to believe that after 1989 humankind was suddenly on the cusp of a brand new order?" (Kagan, 2008: 102–104). Such reworking of the market-ing orientation design helps explain the 'market-oriented' invasion of emerging economies from a perspective of neocolonialism or neo-imperialism.

On emerging economies

After the events of 9/11, strategists of global corporations, large consultancy firms and management institutions raised the argument that a major challenge for business organizations in emerging economies is that their markets are still mired in problems/constraints that have long been mobilized by Western institutions to differentiate and hierarchize the West and the rest, civilization and barbarism, developed and underdeveloped, North and South. The marketing strategies of large Western corporations focusing on high-income consumers were taken by corporate strategists and strategic management researchers as the main target. They first asserted that products and strategies of large corporations aimed at the middle class in their home countries are not suitable for the huge base of low-income consumers in emerging economies, i.e. the so-called bottom of the economic pyramid (Brugmann & Prahalad, 2007).

This rather surprising concern with the mismatch between 'universal' knowledge from the Euro-American world and the institutional particularities of emerging economies in an era of convergence was led by strategic management authors and corresponding institutions. The marketing discipline responded promptly by admitting that large corporations bring to these markets not only their products, technologies and skills but also, implicitly, "the understanding of market structures from the context of developed countries" (Dawar & Chattopadhyay, 2002: 460). Both

strategic management and marketing researchers kept untouched and invisible the market-ing orientation design and its dark geopolitical side.

Subsequently, strategic management authors and institutions asserted that strategic management concepts in general and 'global strategy' in particular were not working properly in emerging economies because of *institutional failures* in these contexts (Hoskisson, Eden, Lau & Wright, 2000; Khanna, Palepu & Sinha, 2005; Wright et al., 2005). They claimed that the "pre-capitalist" characteristics of emerging economies – in particular poverty, technological backwardness and corruption – largely explain the huge base of low-income consumers in those countries, and that these causes can and should be eliminated by the reinforcement and reworking of market-oriented institutions and corporate strategies. Influential scholars and institutions pointed out that although the concept of market orientation explains the performance of companies in emerging economies, researchers should recognize national specificities in "the world out there" in order to make the concept more effective (Despandhé & Farley, 2004; Liu, Luo & Shi, 2003). In order to rework market orientation, they also suggested that longitudinal research could provide a comprehensive understanding of how the concept actually works in those business organizations with superior performance in emerging economies (Kirca, Jayachandran & Bearden, 2005; Noble, Sinha & Kumar, 2002).

Strategic management researchers pointed out that, especially because of corruption, it is "impossible to do well in emerging economies without an understanding of how formal and informal institutions affect their firms and consumers" (Wright et al., 2005: 6). These researchers, however, have ignored and kept invisible the vast literature that points out that large corporations and market-oriented institutions explain a great deal of the problems observed not only in developing countries but also in developed economies (e.g. Block & Evans, 2005; Block, 2011). They also keep invisible the argument that corruption has achieved a *legal status* in the U.S. (Mahbubani, 2009) and that the neoliberal call to defend or impose the market-ing orientation design on others from a perspective of soft power and through the mobilization of neo-liberal imperial mechanisms has been a key issue in the U.S. foreign policy (Thomas, 2007). Corruption has been framed in the U.S. as a major feature of authoritative governments in emerging economies (especially China and Russia), which is supposedly encouraged by national institutions controlled by local elites. A major concern in the post-9/11 West is that the institutionalization of corruption in emerging economies could lead to the spread of global terrorism and disorder. This helps explain why authors and institutions in the U.S. claimed that the concept of market orientation had to be reviewed in order to become effective in emerging economies by transforming it into "emerging market-oriented strategies" (Dawar & Chattopadhyay, 2002: 472).

From the internal standpoint of the discipline, such a 'strategic' neocolonial approach on emerging economies was taken as necessary to build legitimacy of marketing within large corporations and management academic institutions. This invasion of emerging economies from a neocolonial perspective has been ignored by Anglo-American critique not only in the field of marketing but also in management studies. It is arguable that the virtual absence of dialogue between critical marketing and Critical Management Studies in the Anglo-American world is explained by the low status of marketing. An international critical perspective on management studies enunciated in an emerging economy in Latin America and through a perspective of pluriversality is necessary to challenge the pseudo-universality of Euro-American critique. Contemporary Euro-American literature points out that the hegemonic position of the U.S. in the field of management can largely be accounted for by political and ideological issues (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002; Locke, 1996; Tadajewski, 2006). The neutrality of U.S. academia has been questioned by a growing number of researchers associated with Critical Management Studies (Clegg & Palmer, 1996; Cooke 2004; Frank, 2002; Mills & Hatfield, 1999; Prasad, 2003). However, Critical Management

Studies in general and critical marketing in particular have failed to address the dark side of geopolitics and recognize the pressing importance of creating conditions for the construction and legitimization of criticalities in management and marketing studies from the perspective of emerging economies.

Critical researchers in Brazil should not complain about this state of things. They/(we) should not wait for their/(our) colleagues from the Anglo-American world to address the dark side of the market-ing orientation design and recognize this invasion of emerging economies from a perspective of neocolonialism. Instead critical researchers in Brazil might take this as an opportunity and assume some further responsibility and propose the co-construction of an international critical perspective in marketing (and management studies) from a perspective of *pluriversality*. Emerging *economies* should be framed by us as ‘emerging powers’, as pointed out by some authors from the field of international relations. The main characteristic of emerging powers, from a theoretical perspective in international relations focused on transformation rather than on maintenance of the status quo (see Cox, 1981), is their capacity to challenge to some extent the hierarchy of the world system. From such a perspective, emerging economies can challenge the dominant position of the U.S. in the contemporary international context and also promote the revision of positions of countries which have been classified as developing countries. To quote MacFarlane (2002):

Emerging powers are specific because their identity is dynamic; their position changes as their power grows and, at the same time, their capacity to shape results. They have some potential for systemic revisionism – a challenge for the hierarchy in the system in which they exist.

(p. 42)

From a Brazilian standpoint, the extreme notion of revisionism attributed by some to emerging economies should be replaced by a perspective of pluriversality. From such a perspective, the international system should be challenged but not through the replacement of one ‘universalism’ by another ‘universalism’. We should not reinforce Eurocentric universalism by presenting such international critical perspective (from an emerging economy located in Latin America) as a threat being mobilized by irresponsible ‘barbarians’ from the rest of the world. Rather, we are talking about a co-constructed international perspective which opens up possibilities for the co-construction of a world in which many worlds and critical knowledges can coexist.

While engaging with the dark side of geopolitics, we should be aware that institutional builders of the market-ing orientation design, such as the World Economic Forum and the Institute for International Economics, have claimed that emerging economies should not behave as ‘free-riders’. The main idea here is that in an increasingly interdependent world the policies and strategies of emerging economies impact not only their own economies and those of neighboring countries but also the global economy (Boyer & Truman, 2005). From such a neocolonial or neoconservative perspective, emerging economies should behave as allies, not as U.S. competitors or opponents. This helps to explain why gurus in the field of marketing and strategic management claimed just after the events of 9/11 that large emerging economies are greatly important not only to the expansion of large corporations but also to ensure the security of the market; the reworking of market-oriented strategies and institutions are needed to eliminate not only corruption in emerging economies but also the threat of global terrorism (Prahalad & Hart, 2002).

An international critical perspective from Brazil should foster the engagement of colleagues from the Anglo-American world. Otherwise, as suggested by the notion of geopolitics of knowledge, such a critical perspective – even if it is enunciated in Brazil instead of China, India or

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Russia – will inevitably be framed and classified by the market-ing orientation design as ‘anti-market’, ‘anti-marketing’, ‘anti-U.S.’ or ‘anti-West’ and then be eliminated or used as a justification for the mobilization of further soft power mechanisms by a neo-liberal empire paranoid about “whether non-Western countries such as China and India will seek to use their rising power to usher in a substantially different sort of international order” (Ikenberry, 2009: 83). As the ‘benefits’ provided by the Western neo-liberal order have become more problematic even for the Euro-American world, and the Critical Management Studies community has showed an increasing concern with neocolonialism, it is more likely that such international critical perspective is becoming feasible.

Building the legitimacy of such initiative should be considered a priority, as the lone ‘superpower’ is not expected to share its responsibilities with ‘others’ without reluctance and perhaps a bit of resentment. Conservative and neoconservative voices in the U.S. share an understanding, which is backed by an unbeatable amount of hard power mechanisms and resources, that there is no alternative to the market-ing orientation design (the so-called liberal order). There will always be a mission for the lonely ‘superpower’ in the post-Cold War era as the rest of the world in general and emerging economies in particular are framed as not being capable of taking major world-making responsibilities. As Kagan (2008) declares:

[W]hether American [sic] power and expansiveness will continue to be the most pressing problem in the years to come, or whether it is the most pressing problem even today, is increasingly debatable. In a world heading today toward a more perfect liberal order, an old-fashioned superpower with a sense of global mission might seem a relic of the past and an obstacle to progress. But in a world poised precariously at the edge of a new time of turmoil, might not even a flawed democratic superpower have an important, even indispensable, role to play?

(p. 86)

Final considerations

I have argued in this chapter that market-ing orientation is a powerful Euro-American design which has been transformed into a global design mainly by Western neoliberal forces and mechanisms. This design has been overlooked and kept invisible by *both* mainstream and critical marketing studies literatures and to some extent also by Critical Management Studies. The market-ing orientation design also explains the successful trajectory of the concept of market orientation, as well as the recent focus of market orientation on emerging economies from a neocolonial or neo-imperial perspective. From the perspective of an emerging economy located in Latin America (Brazil in particular), it has been argued that critical researchers in different parts of the world should embrace the vast critical literature on the market-ing orientation design put forward by different fields of knowledge and embrace the co-construction and legitimation of an international critical perspective in marketing and management studies that goes beyond the Anglo-American contributions.

The chapter is undergirded by three key interrelated issues. First, the dispute between communism and capitalism has been replaced in the post-Cold War period by a neocolonial dispute, led by the U.S. and seconded by Europe, between types of Western capitalism and orders, at the expense of alternatives and voices from the rest of the world. Second, academic institutions in management, led by the U.S. and seconded by Europe, have played a central role in the construction and diffusion of the market-ing orientation culture from the West towards the rest of the world from a perspective of soft power. Third, big emerging economies have been portrayed

by Euro-American institutions and authors as a threat, capable of not only challenging the U.S. hegemony but also of constructing and disseminating alternative capitalisms or alternatives to Western capitalism and order on a global scale.

Given their increasing concern with the rise of Russia, India and China, institutional builders of the market-ing orientation design have framed and classified Brazil as “neither a military nor an economic hegemony capable of coercing its neighbors” (Armijo & Burgess, 2010: 36). According to these circles, the so-called Brazilian style is portrayed as “non-confrontational and consistent . . . [with] the viewpoint of the unipole and . . . status quo great powers, [and] greater inclusion of Brazil . . . [is regarded as] a congenial option” (Armijo & Burges, 2010: 36–37). Correspondingly, an international critical perspective enunciated in Brazil represents an important opportunity for a legitimate transformation of the market-ing orientation design and our engagement with the dark geopolitical side through the co-construction of a pluriversal perspective. By going beyond the Euro-American contributions, such an international critical perspective in marketing and management studies is aimed at further enhancing the conditions of possibility for the co-construction of a world in which many worlds and knowledges could coexist. I hope this chapter has showed that the field of marketing has become too important to be overlooked or marginalized by other fields of knowledge, including Critical Management Studies. Among other important outcomes, rethinking market orientation through such a perspective is an important step towards challenging the neocolonial logic that developing countries in general and emerging economies in particular represent ‘backwardness’ and a ‘threat’.

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