

# The Imperialist Question in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

April 7, 2023| Columbia University, New York| 9am-5pm, 208 Knox Hall

*Organizer:* Matteo Capasso, MESAAS Marie Curie Fellow

For a long time, scholarly analyses, including those situated in a Western Marxist tradition, have approached the study of the global South's political-economic dynamics through theoretical lenses that fail to consider the imperialist dimension. Drawing on notions of 'state failure,' 'civil wars' or 'authoritarian capitalism,' these studies have progressively diluted—if not normalized—the centrality of the US-led imperialist system in shaping and transforming the global South. The social formation of the ruling classes and the progressive dismantlement of the sovereignty of many states in the periphery is abstracted from its subordinate integration in the dynamics of the world market. They present global North actors and its related financial institutions in (a)historical or marginal fashion, when explaining the developmental outcomes, and their constraints, of global South states. Historically, the role of the global North is confined to the colonial period or the Cold War interference, after which the rise of the US as a hegemon does not deserve further scrutiny in relation to the power of capital. Alternatively, when the role of the US-led domination is considered, it is done in a metrical way. That is, it is presented as a percentage, a probability or one among many elements influencing the socio-political formation of the South. Do such interpretations provide the necessary policy ground for these same US-allied actors to perpetuate their assault?

Against this backdrop, the aim of this event is to recentre the imperialist question as the principal contradiction to the analysis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century political dynamics of global South social formations. By doing so, we seek to reflect on the rise, transformation, and ongoing decline of US-led imperialism in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. We propose to study the changing forms of assaults—including, but not reduced to, military interventions, gunboat diplomacy, financial instruments—that have determined the progressive integration of the periphery into the US-led imperialist system. In doing so, we not only aim to analyze the emerging socio-political formations in the South of the world, but also ponder on how these transformations can help us diagnose the status of US-led imperialism globally.

The event will consist of three panels, where each speaker will give a presentation of 15 minutes followed by a discussion among participants.

**Introductory Remark (9.00-9.30am)**, Matteo Capasso

**PANEL 1: Imperialist Modes of Accumulation and Control (9.30-11.00am)**

Bikrum Gill, *The Global 'Rule of Property' and the Structure of Contemporary Imperialism*

Nina Farnia, *Imperialism, Fascism, and Legal Capture*

Corinna Mullin, *The "war on terror" as primitive accumulation*

Immanuel Ness, *Imperialism: Unequal Exchange and Migrant Labor in the Global South*

**Moderator:** Jeannette Graulau

**COFFEE BREAK – (11.00-11.15am)**

**PANEL 2: Rethinking Imperialism through the South (11.15am – 12.45pm)**

Max Aji, *Settler-Colonialism as Methodological Nationalism, or Settler-Colonialism and National Liberation*

Essam Elkorglhi, *Education and the production of functionaries of imperialism in Libya*

Lucas Koerner, *Eliding Imperialism? Methodological Nationalism and the Scholarship on Latin America's Pink Tide*

Faiq Mari, *Youth agricultural cooperatives in the Palestinian central highlands (West Bank): a model emerging from the contradictions of peripheralization*

**Moderator:** Immanuel Ness

**LUNCH BREAK (12.45-2.00pm)**

**PANEL 3: Imperialism in Crisis? What Future Lies Ahead (2.00-3.30pm)**

Patrick Higgins, *The Arab Cause and the US Question: Strategies for Liberation, Past and Present*

Manu Karuka, *The Necessity of the Future*

Nima Nakhaei, *Crisis of Neoliberal Imperialism and the Theoretical Terrain of Struggle*

Zhun Xu, *The crisis of imperialist order and the question of the national bourgeoisie*

**Moderator:** Matteo Capasso

**Roundtable (3.30-4.40pm): What is to be done?** (Closed session among speakers)

*List of abstracts:*

### **Settler-Colonialism as Methodological Nationalism, or Settler-Colonialism and National Liberation**

Max Aji, *University of Ghent (Belgium)*

This presentation engages with the theoretical underpinnings and programmatic consequences of the settler-colonial theory of Patrick Wolfe. It contextualizes the renaissance of the settler-colonial paradigm, scrutinizing its theoretical innovations. In doing so, the presentation traces Wolfe's work back to its origin in the work of Marcel Mauss and his notion of total social facts, discussing this theory's political orientation around anti-racism and liberal subjectivity. It then shows how Wolfe applies his theory to Palestine, erasing class divisions and imperialism, while militating against the theory and practice of national liberation. It concludes by reflecting on the use and limits of this theory for supporting anti-systemic struggle.

### **Education and production of functionaries of imperialism in Libya**

Essam Elkorghli, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

Much of the discussion on imperialism in education is reduced to coloniality and its residue in our post-colonial epoch. Further, imperialism is either framed as a dead concept or conflated with full-fledged colonialism. This stance largely draws from the Saidian conception of imperialism as empire – the West comes with its canons and cannons. As an implication, the subjugated peoples interpellate Western subjectivities and develop inferiority complexes. Though this is fundamental in understanding the discursivity of imperialism-empire, it warrants us to ask: what are the political economic implications of such imperialism? By historicizing educational changes in modern Libya (with particular attention to post-2011), I argue that imperialism is not a term solely confined to the eras of empires and colonial conquests. Secondly, I attempt to show how imperialism—the linking (à la Samir Amin) of the periphery with the core to maintain the relation of dependency by all means necessary—is part and parcel of the West's vested interest in changing curricula and funding particular education programs. By analyzing textbooks and drawing from reports published by international non-governmental organizations, I argue that the projects and interventions promote liberalism and fund programs that diminish, downsize, and obliterate the role of the state with the goal of creating citizen-subjects that serve global imperialist interests.

### **Imperialism, Fascism, and Legal Capture**

Nina Farnia, *Albany Law School*

As U.S. imperialism continues its steady decline, the imperial metropole is rapidly shifting toward autocratic legalism, the fascist capture of the state through law. I track the incrementalist development of contemporary fascist legal capture in the United States and differentiate it from existing definitions of autocratic legalism, which center charismatic leaders. In so doing, I uncover the ways in which autocratic legalism obscures the repression of imperial subjects both globally and within the metropole. This paper interrogates the dialectical relationship between U.S. imperialism abroad and the rise of autocratic legalism in the imperial metropole, arguing that the most nefarious consequence of the law is not always its violence, but rather, its production and management of consent.

### **The Global 'Rule of Property' and the Structure of Contemporary Imperialism**

Bikrun Gill, *Virginia Tech*

As critical IR has increasingly confronted the “decolonial turn,” it is nonetheless the case that Western Imperialism has continued to violently intervene into the non-Western world. As examples, military interventions (Iraq, Libya, Yemen) and sanctions imposed upon states such as Iran, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, stand as particularly troubling cases of imperial violence that have not been sufficiently accounted for, or contested with the necessary urgency, by critical IR scholars who inhabit imperial states. This paper seeks to contribute to the “anti-imperialist” IR project (Agathangelou 2012; Morefield 2014; Wai 2014; Narayan 2018; Prashad 2018) by examining the role played by what I call the “rule of property” in both historical and contemporary imperialism. The “rule of property” here refers to the racialized global regime of ownership and capitalist accumulation that has secured first claim, for imperial core states and capital, upon the land and resources of peoples of the Global South. While anti-imperialism has centered upon the contestation to such a regime, via projects of nationalization and land reform, this paper argues that contemporary imperialism reveals the violent force necessary to contain such contestation and reaffirm the global “rule of property” underpinning the power and prosperity of the imperial core.

**The Arab Cause and the US Question: Strategies for Liberation, Past and Present**  
Patrick Higgins, *University of Houston*

From the very beginning of the modern European colonial project in West Asia, Arab resistance to it was relentless, characterized by cascading waves of demonstrations, mass strikes, sabotage, and guerrilla commando action, against British and French installations alike. These struggles of the early 20th century served cumulatively as a major cause of the deficit-driven withdrawals of Britain and France from the region, leaving, after the Second World War, a newly ascendant United States to seize control of the region. The US took advantage of the political divisions and military weaknesses Britain and France bequeathed to the Arab masses through the mandate system to put a new system in place, one upheld by a mixture of unequal trade agreements; dependency-entrenching economic aid projects; and military pacts guarding key trading posts and political hotspots. In the formulation of Atif Kubursi and Salim Mansur, the Arab region, through the surplus-value extracted from its bountiful oil reserves, is to the US empire what India once was to the British empire. Arab resistance to imperialism transformed in response to US power, producing increasingly radical movements dedicated to sharpening their guiding theories of socialism, nationalism, and, especially after the 1948 Nakba, anti-Zionism. In this presentation, I review the Arab cause and the successes and failures of its major strategies for liberation during the so-called “American century.” I periodize the history as follows. First, the “internal” class and social struggles of the early US period, namely the struggle between socialism and bourgeois nationalism. Second, the Arab unity projects, most importantly the United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria, which made the first concerted state-led attempts at confronting US-led imperialism using conventional warfare and economic boycotts. And third, the Palestinian revolution and accompanying commando movement, which turned to guerrilla warfare. I will conclude with some remarks on the present post-Soviet period, which presents a need for rebuilding amid destruction. This period is distinguished by, on the one hand, the US-led bowdlerizing of the Arab republican holdout states and, on the other hand, the emergence of heterodox popular resistance formations in Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen, for whom the call to solidarity from within the US remains paramount.

**The Necessity of the Future**  
Manu Karuka, *Barnard College*

1992 saw the publication of Francis Fukuyama’s book *The End of History and the Last Man*. Following the dissolution of the USSR, Fukuyama argued that humanity had reached the apex

of its political development. In this paper, I identify two broad trends during 1992: the reconstitution of imperialism, and the renovation of socialism. Leaders in the US and Europe discussed the reconstitution of the military, through the development of new weapons technologies, new forms of military organization, and new strategies, for the period after the "victory against communism." Many of their ideas drew on new developments in information technology, and in finance. At the same time, the governments of Vietnam and Cuba engaged in a process of the renovation of socialism, in the Vietnamese case, experiments with a socialist market, and in the Cuban case, a return to earlier experiments with socialist incentives driving work and policy. Within a few years, in Kerala, the Left Democratic Front government launched the People's Democratic Plan, an experiment in decentralized budgeting, rooted at the village and neighborhood level. Finally, in addition to the reconstitution of imperialism, and the renovation of socialism, we can glimpse in 1992 a sinister politics of restoration, whether in the fascist riots in Rostock, Germany, the US passage of the "Cuban Democracy Act," or the destruction of the historic Babri Masjid by Hindu nationalist forces in Ayodhya, India. Against the thesis of the obsolescence of class struggle, 1992 demonstrates the necessity of the socialist future.

### **Eliding Imperialism? Methodological Nationalism and the Scholarship on Latin America's Pink Tide**

Lucas Koerner, *Harvard University*

Critical historians of twentieth-century Latin America have long examined the predatory role of the United States in the region. Regardless of whether they employ the concept of imperialism, the fact of US political, economic, and military domination forms an inescapable part of these histories. In this paper, I argue that the same rigorous attention to US imperialism is, however, missing from the more recent left-aligned scholarship on Latin America's Pink Tide, particularly that interrogating the post-2014 "ebb." I begin by sketching out a working definition of imperialism, drawing on the latest pathbreaking work in this field. I go on to argue that the contemporary theoretical blind spot vis-à-vis imperialism results in the siloing of "internal" sociopolitical processes from "external" world-systemic constraints. I interrogate this methodological nationalism through the thematic lens of democracy and participation, resource extraction and economic development, as well as intra-regional geopolitics.

### **Youth agricultural cooperatives in the Palestinian central highlands (West Bank): a model emerging from the contradictions of peripheralization**

Faiq Mari, *ETH Zurich*

In the 2010s in the West Bank several economic initiatives of collective labor and property emerged. They came to call themselves cooperatives. This presentation argues that these cooperatives emerged from the contradictions of the colonial peripheralization of the West Bank. The proletarianization of the population produced alienated youth and fallow lands; from this reality, a small band of left-leaning youth—otherwise repressed in their activism—saw opportunity along with necessity, and utilized the land towards an alternative economy. This presentation traces the outlines of the peripheralization of the West Bank (WB), posing a view where the peripheralization of the West Bank's countryside as an urban phenomenon is understood as part of the colonial and imperial peripheralization of Palestine and the Arab Region as a whole. It ends by highlighting the importance of these cooperative experiments: their emerging practice, as it toils to understand and respond to the capital colonial nexus in Palestine, is productive for theory and practice in this context and elsewhere.

### **The "war on terror" as primitive accumulation**

Corinna Mullin, *CUNY*

Coming on the heels of the destruction of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the dotcom bubble, the "war on terror" has been one of the principal responses to the crisis of capital

accumulation and a central mechanism of primitive accumulation in the twenty-first century. From Tunisia to Iraq, Mozambique to Cuba, this presentation will examine how “counter-terror” interventions shaped the economic conditions for unequal exchange and global South value drain. The paper will argue that these can be divided into two broad categories: 1) interventions targeting global South states broadly aligned to the US that are designed to reinforce and deepen their articulation within a US dominated imperialist security architecture through a process I describe as “security dependency”; 2) interventions designed to destabilize and ultimately depose global South anti-systemic governments deemed to threaten capitalist-imperialist accumulation. The first category entails overt forms of military intervention, including conventional wars, “special operations”, as well as inclusion on various neo-colonial disciplinary lists, such as the “state-sponsors of terrorism” list, which result in unilateral coercive measures. The second category is characterized by more subtle interventions ranging from arms sales and military bases to training and security “cooperation”. By requiring increased spending on arms sales, militarization and “security” systems designed to manage and control global South workers, peasants and the reserve army of labor, security dependency also contributes to the ballooning global South debt crisis. The second category often involves subjection to “counter-terror” financial mechanisms aimed at justifying and enabling economic surveillance and leveraging on the part of imperialist financial actors, including the IMF and World Bank. An example is the Financial Action Task Force’s *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Regime (FATF)*, which depends upon racist indices referencing claimed global South state ‘deficiency’ in regard to ‘state capacity’. Reinforcing the racialized hierarchies of colonialism, these forms of intervention have a range of intended effects, including destabilizing anti-systemic governments, de-development and entrenching the power of externally oriented ruling classes to the detriment of worker and peasant liberation. In this talk I will examine these modes of capital accumulation as they emerged during the “war on terror” years and will conclude by reflecting on change and continuity in the current conjuncture, including the emergence of a multipolar world order.

### **Crisis of Neoliberal Imperialism and the Theoretical Terrain of Struggle: Towards a Catharsis**

Nima Nakhaei, *York University (Canada)*

From the perspective of the dominated formations, Marx’s concept of ‘primitive accumulation’ has a qualitatively different significance compared to the metropolis. On the one hand, ‘primitive accumulation’ points to the ‘colonial moment’ of peripheral incorporation into the capitalist world economy in and through the rupturing of the very historicity of the dominated formations. As Balibar points out, “this event in their history is produced *in the time of their diachrony without being produced in the time of their dynamics*” (Balibar 2015, 302). On the other hand, ‘primitive accumulation’ is not just a transitory moment, but rather the constitutive element of the imperialist structure. Hence, the dynamics of class struggle in the dominated formations are permanently ruptured by the imperialist structure in forms which are not limited to “open and direct intervention on a massive scale” (Poulantzas 1976, 22–23). Put differently, historical disjunctions are inscribed on the terrain of hegemonic struggles in the dominated formations. What is central to my argument however is that these historical disjunctions also decisively extend into the domain of theoretical struggle in the dominated formation by imposing significant obstacles to the condition of intelligibility of the very imperialist structure that sustains these systematic ruptures. In other words, imperialism is antithetical to critical knowledge, *even of its own!* Hence, it follows that crises in imperialist relations may facilitate new spaces in the terrain of theoretical struggle for a more systematic theoretical engagement with the imperialist structure. On this basis, I will propose two major arguments; First, due to the frequency and intensity of direct interventions in the Middle East, the imperialist structure has historically imposed its probelmarique on the terrain of theoretical struggle in a particularly distorted manner. That is, the overt (e.g. colonial conquest, military interventions) marginalizes

the covert (domestic contradictions which are already overdetermined by the imperialist structure). Second, the crisis of neoliberal imperialism has led to a 'theoretical catharsis in the making' by posing the question of the relation between the 'external' and 'internal' in a radically new form. I will explicate this moment of catharsis by considering the regionalization of the hegemonic struggle in the Middle East.

### **Imperialism: Unequal Exchange and Migrant Labor in the Global South**

Immanuel Ness, *CUNY*

In the neoliberal capitalist era, international financial institutions—such as the IMF and World Bank—have praised the development of the Global South, as socialists in the Global North since Andre Gorz have declared the irrelevance of industrial labor and emergence of post-work. This paper argues that the application and expansion of neoliberal capitalism in the Global South has expanded the global working class across labor market sectors. In fact, there are far more industrial workers in the South than in the heyday of industrial capitalism in the west in the post-war era. Today, more than 800 million workers labour in manufacturing worldwide. However, the conditions under which Southern workers live are precarious and unstable, and most do not have regular employment or social welfare protections. All classes in the Global North are beneficiaries of the expansion of the global workforce in the South, as a consequence of unequal exchange, a concept developed by Arghiri Emmanuel in the early 1970s. The theory of Unequal Exchange has been applied by world systems scholars and is gaining significance in research of the global political economy. In essence, as Clelland asserts, Global Workers produce dark value, which is unaccounted for by global finance, MNCs; yet, integral to advancing accumulation and providing inexpensive consumer goods to workers of the North. This paper will demonstrate the prescience of unequal exchange through appraising global labour migration, which can be viewed as part of economic imperialism.

### **The crisis of imperialist order and the question of the national bourgeoisie**

Zhun Xu, *CUNY*

The national bourgeoisie used to be an important term for Marxist analyses of imperialism and anti-imperialist struggles. Developed at the margins of imperialism, this group of business elites based in colonial and semi-colonial nations had a different interest from the compradors and feudal lords. Even though they were politically and economically weak, the national bourgeoisie sought to gain national independence and develop national industries. However, such national projects had huge setbacks after the 1970s and the term national bourgeoisie mostly lost relevance in the West-centered neoliberal globalization. However, neoliberal globalization is now at a dead end, and the status quo is shaking. With a crumbling imperialist order, what will be the potential of the national projects and the long-disappeared national bourgeoisie?

*Participants Bios:*

**Max Aji** is Senior Fellow at the Department of Conflict and Development Studies, Ghent University, Belgium. He has written for *Monthly Review*, *Jacobin* and *Viewpoint*. He has contributed to a number of journals, including the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Review of African Political Economy* and *Globalizations*, and is an associate editor at *Agrarian South & Journal of Labor and Society*.

**Matteo Capasso** is Marie Curie Global Fellow between Columbia University and University of Venice, Italy. He is the author of *Everyday Politics in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya* (2023, Syracuse UP) that reconstructs the last two decades of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, leading up to the 2011 events that sanctioned its fall. His current research focuses on the study of US-led imperialism, the political economy of war, and contemporary Libya.

**Essam Abdelrasul Bubaker Elkorghli** is a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He completed his BA at St. Olaf College (Minnesota), majoring in economics, Norwegian, and social studies education. His MA from the University of Washington's Department of Scandinavian Studies focused on the impact of neoliberal globalization on Norway's teacher education. His PhD focuses on Libya's modern political history, state ideology, and the education system. His research interests also include South-South solidarity, Pan-Africanism, and contemporary imperialism.

**Nina Farnia** is a legal historian and scholar of Critical Race Theory. She is an Assistant Professor at Albany Law School. Her research examines the development of civil rights, civil procedure, and national security law over the twentieth century. She is especially interested in the impacts of U.S. imperialism on domestic lawmaking. Her scholarship has appeared in a range of academic journals and popular media outlets including *Stanford Law Review*, *UCLA Women's Law Journal*, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and others. Her forthcoming book is entitled *Imperialism in the Making of U.S. Law*.

**Bikrum Gill** is a scholar of International Political Economy. He is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Virginia Tech, where he is also part of the core faculty in the ASPECT doctoral programme. His research is generally centered on the global intersections of political economy, race, and ecology, and he explores these themes more specifically as they bear upon issues of agriculture and development, the climate crisis, and decolonization. His work has appeared in journals such as *Environment and Planning 'A'*, *Politics*, *Globalizations*, *Canadian Food Studies*, and *Sikh Research Journal*.

**Jeannette Graulau** is Associate Professor of Political Science at Lehman College, CUNY, where she teaches undergraduate courses on classical political economy, Latin American development, and globalization history. Her scholarly work focuses on the relation between mining and capital accumulation in Marxist and world history perspective. Her book *The underground wealth of nations: on the capitalist origins of silver mining, A.D. 1150-1450* (Yale University Press), discusses the capitalist breakthroughs contained in the earliest feudal mining contracts of continental Europe. She is a member of the Editorial Board of BRILL Series *Studies in Political Economy of Global Labor and Work*, and a current collaborator to "2022-2023 Post/Extractivisms Working Group," a research network sponsored by the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

**Patrick Higgins** is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of History at the University of Houston's Arab American Educational Foundation Center for Arab Studies. He is working on a history of U.S. imperialism in West Asia as told primarily by those who struggled against it in the movement to liberate Palestine from colonialism and military occupation. This



dissertation focuses on Palestinian and Arab revolutionary perceptions of U.S. imperialism in the Arab world from the 1940s to the 1970s, and how those perceptions shaped theory and strategy around the Palestinian cause.

**Manu Karuka** is the author of *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (University of California Press). He is an assistant professor of American Studies at Barnard College, New York. His work centers a critique of imperialism, with a particular focus on anti-racism and Indigenous decolonization.

**Lucas M. Koerner** is a Ph.D. Candidate in modern Latin American and Caribbean History at Harvard University. His research focuses on populism and the bottom-up construction of charismatic bonds in Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution. Lucas is also a contributing editor with the Venezuela-based independent news outlet *Venezuelanalysis.com*, where he previously worked for five years.

**Faiq Mari** is an architect and researcher. His research studies the spatiality of Zionist colonialism in Palestine, as well as Palestinian anticolonial and socioeconomic struggle, particularly the concept of *masha'* and collectivity in labor and property within Palestinian liberation struggle. He is an editor of the magazine *Arab Urbanism*. Faiq is currently a doctoral candidate at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta) at ETH Zürich and a visiting research fellow at Brown University's Center for Middle East Studies. Prior to joining the gta Faiq practiced architecture and taught at Birzeit and Al-Quds universities in Palestine.

**Corinna Mullin** is Professor of Political Science and International Political Economy at John Jay College and Brooklyn College (CUNY). Her research examines the historical legacies of colonialism, the role of capitalist expansion and imperialist imbrications in shaping global South security states, with a focus on labor exploitation and natural resource extraction and other forms of value drain. She is currently working on a monograph for Brill: *Race, Class, Empire and the (Re)making of the Tunisian Security State*. Corinna has also researched and published academic works on anti-/decolonial theory and praxis, the colonial-capitalist university, land and labor struggles, and popular education with a focus on the Maghreb, West Asia, and the United States.

**Nima Nakhaei** is an adjunct faculty in the Department of Politics at York University, Canada. His research sits at the nexus of Marxist political economy, Poulantzian state theory and Gramscian discourse analysis. Within this approach, he explores the ways in which the political economy, state formations and identity discourses in the Middle East have been structured by the interiorization of imperialist relations and their crises. He is particularly focused on how the 'crisis of the neoliberal world order' has opened up spaces for new projects of domination and emancipation in the region.

**Immanuel Ness** is a Professor of Political Science at City University of New York and Visiting Professor of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg. He is author of numerous books and articles on labor, workers' movements, migration, and the political economy of the global South. He is editor of the peer-review periodical, *Journal of Labor and Society*. His most recent publications include *Organizing Insurgency: Workers Movements in the Global South* (Pluto, 2021), *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Imperialism* (2022), *Global Rupture: Neoliberal Capitalism and the Rise of Informal Labour in the Global South* (Brill 2023), and *Migration and Economic Imperialism* (forthcoming Polity 2023).

**Zhun Xu** is at John Jay College and the graduate centre, City University of New York. His research interests include political economy and Chinese economy. He is on the editorial boards of *Science and Society* and *Journal of Labor and Society*. His recent book is *From Commune to Capitalism: How China's Peasants Lost Collective Farming and Gained Urban Poverty* (2018).