



## **The Life and Times of “Chimerica”: Global Press Discourses on U.S.–China Economic Integration, Financial Crisis, and Power Shifts**

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“Chimerica” first appeared in the Anglo-American press in 2007, when it described an interconnected U.S. and Chinese economy in a neoliberal triumphalist tone just before the September 2008 Wall Street financial crisis. The term subsequently gained currency in the wider global English-language press as a particular way of understanding and solving this crisis, and as a means for discussing global power shifts and projecting the geopolitical implications of U.S.–China economic relations. Global English-language press discourses on the life and times of Chimerica reveal continuing Anglo-American ideological and discursive domination and joint ideological work performed by Anglo-American and Chinese opinion elites to sustain the neoliberal capitalist order during a moment of acute crisis. However, the globalist ideology underpinning such an order, though widespread, is also shallow and unstable; moreover, it is paradoxically intertwined with a salient nation-state-centric press frame.

*Keywords:* Chimerica, G-2, English-Language press, Niall Ferguson, financial crisis, United States, China, China Daily, neoliberal globalization

Close integration of the United States and Chinese economies has been a defining feature of the neoliberal global capitalist order. The 2008 financial crisis threatened to derail this order, intensifying discussions about shifting global power relations. This article offers an exploratory textual analysis of global English-language press discourses around “Chimerica”—a neologism that foregrounds the centrality of an interconnected American and Chinese economy—as an index to the ideological contours of global journalism at a moment of acute political economic crisis and structural change.

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Despite the proliferation of 24/7 transnational satellite news and the explosion of online media, the English-language press, with its historically dominant status in the global media system, remains a significant original producer of mass disseminated media content and an important means of communication among global elites. By focusing on the global English-language press, this article aims to make inferences about the mass-mediated construction of transnational elite understandings of the rapidly evolving world capitalist order. Newspapers have national and regional bases, and they play a role in constructing nations as "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991) and constituting capitalism as what Marx termed "the relations between producing nations" (Marx, 1858/1973, pp. 886–887, cited in Desai, 2013, p. 41). Meanwhile, the global media, and global English-language newspapers in particular, have taken the lead in promoting the ideology of globalization. In doing so, they may be contributing to the formation of a key factor in capitalism's globalizing tendency that Marx more famously noted in *The Communist Manifesto* (Desai, 2013, p. 38): a "transnational capitalist class" (Robinson, 2004; Sklair, 2001), with its attendant class consciousness and ideological cohesion. How does the tension between nations and classes, both "agents of capitalism's history" (Desai, 2013, p. 263), play out in global English-language press discourse around Chimerica?

Specifically, the article addresses the following questions: When and how did the Chimerica concept enter the global press discourse? How was it defined initially? How do press outlets based in different nations and regions accept, negotiate, redefine, and even reject the basic premises of Chimerica and discuss its implications? To what extent do Anglo-American "spins" on the concept still influence those of the rest of the world? What are the points of convergence and resonance, and of contention and dissonance, around the concept? Above all, how do Anglo-American and Chinese discourses on Chimerica converge or differ from each other?

The data consist of a sample of articles drawn from a LexisNexis search for "News, All (English, Full Text)," the *Financial Times* (London) Archive, and the Asia Africa Intelligence Wire digital and Global News Wire databases. The search term "Chimerica" was applied for the time frame January 1, 2007, to November 15, 2011, without further search restrictions. The sample inclusion criteria stipulated that at least 30% of a chosen article consist of discussion of the U.S.–China economic relationship and its impact on the global economy, politics, and society. Thus, although many articles contained the term, I was interested only in items that went beyond mere reference to substantively discuss the concept and its implications. The final sample is composed of 159 articles. Given the sample's modest size, qualitative discourse analysis is the most suitable methodology.

### **Neoliberal Globalization, the Triumph of Financial Capitalism, and Chimerica as a "Marriage Made in Heaven"**

Chimerica first appeared in an academic article published by Harvard University economics historian Niall Ferguson and Free University of Berlin economist Moritz Schularick in 2007 (Ferguson & Schularick, 2007a), before the 2007–2008 Wall Street financial meltdown. The authors used it to explain the then ongoing global markets boom. Thereafter, two articles in the Anglo-American press launched the term into the global press realm: a February 5, 2007, *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) article by the same co-authors (Ferguson & Schularick, 2007b), and a March 4, 2007, article by Ferguson in the British paper the

*Daily Telegraph (DT)* (Ferguson, 2007). In the *WSJ* article, the co-authors noted that the "rapid integration of the biggest economies of East and South Asia into the global economy" and the entry of two billion people into the global workforce had "resulted in a massive shift in the relative rewards to capital and labor." However, this shift of power between capital and labor was of no interest to the authors; rather, the "novelty is that higher returns on capital have not gone hand in hand with a higher cost of capital" (Ferguson & Schularick, 2007b, p. A17).

To explain this, the authors asked readers to "think of the United States and the People's Republic not as two countries, but as one: Chimerica," a place that "has accounted for around 60 percent of global growth in the past five years" and is characterized as follows:

West Chimericans are wealthy and hedonistic; East Chimericans are much poorer (even adjusting on the basis of purchasing power parity, their per capita income is around 16% of that in West Chimerica). But the two halves of Chimerica are complementary. West Chimericans are experts in business administration, marketing and finance. East Chimericans specialize in engineering and manufacturing. Profligate West Chimericans cannot get enough of the gadgets mass produced in the East; they save not a penny of their income and are happy to borrow against their fancy houses. Parsimonious East Chimericans live more humbly and cautiously. They would rather save a third of their own income and lend it to the West Chimericans to fund their gadget habit—and keep East Chimericans in jobs. (Ferguson & Schularick, 2007b, p. A17)

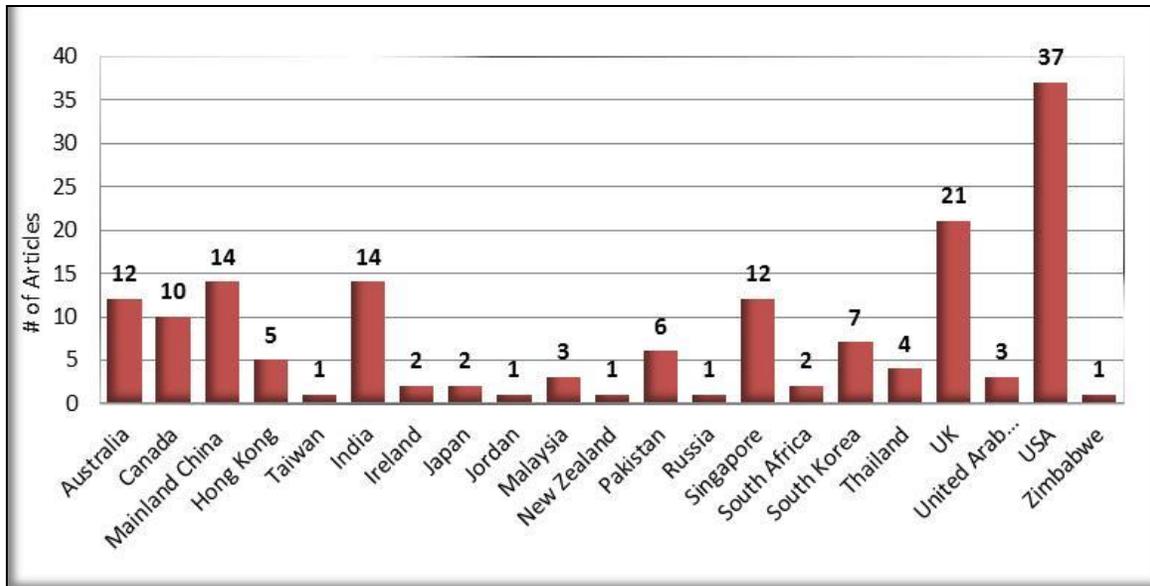
Although Chimerica "is an economic but not monetary unit" because China has the yuan and the U.S. the dollar, "the scale of the financial transactions between the two halves is comparable with the flows . . . within nation states rather than between them" (Ferguson & Schularick, 2007b, p. A17). The *DT* article, in a tone highly celebratory of neoliberal globalism, further asserted that this "supposed imbalance" between the two economies was "no more worrying than the doubtless very large imbalances between, say, California and Arizona" and thus their relationship "isn't necessarily unbalanced; more like symbiotic" (Ferguson, 2007). Ferguson also invoked the marriage metaphor: "As in all good marriages, the differences between the two halves of Chimerica are complementary." Moreover, whereas the *WSJ* article discussed the possibility of either U.S. trade policy or Chinese monetary policy going awry and showing Chimerica to be a chimera—Greek mythology's fanciful composite of lion, goat, and snake—the *DT* article reinforced its own celebratory tone by noting that "periodic flaps are unlikely to cause more than short-lived bouts of global financial volatility—mere rain showers compared with the secular summer of Sino-American symbiosis." Thus, "Chimerica, despite its name, is no chimera" (Ferguson, 2007). The *WSJ* cartoon in Figure 1 captures this image of Chimerica as a "marriage made in heaven:"



**Figure 1. The pre-crisis Chimerica as "A Marriage Made in Heaven."**

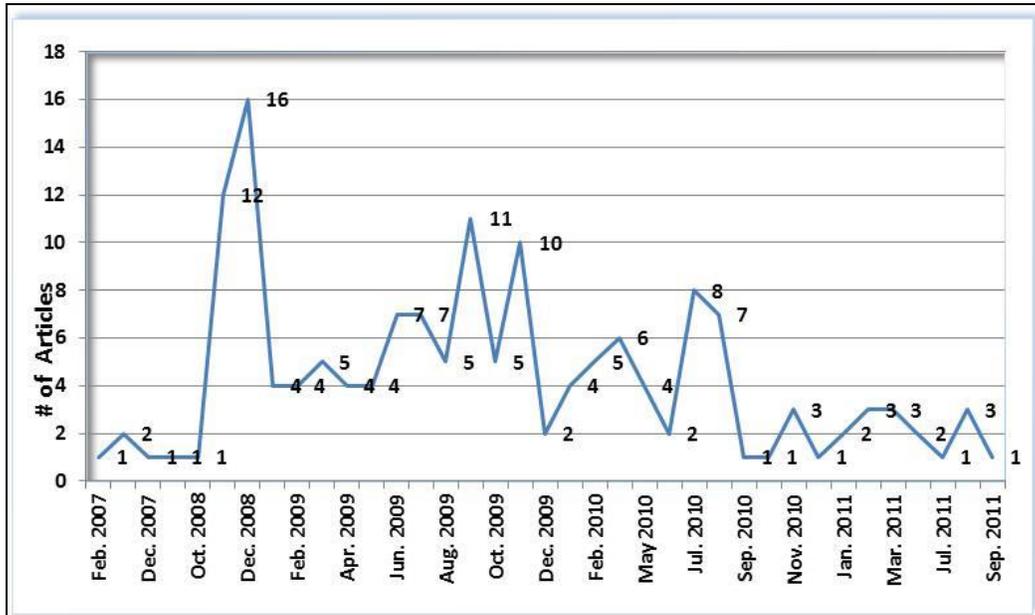
Source: Chad Crowe (artist), *The Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2007, p. A1.

These two articles, along with numerous reviews of Ferguson's (2008c) book, *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World*, which features the Chimerica idea prominently, effectively launched Chimerica into the global English press. The articles' geographical distribution reaches nearly every corner of the world, with the notable exception of Latin America, which has no English-language newspapers in the LexisNexis databases. This reach encompasses not only English-speaking Western countries (U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand), but also many postcolonial countries and regions where English remains an important elite language, as well as mainland China, Korea, Japan, and Russia. Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of the articles:

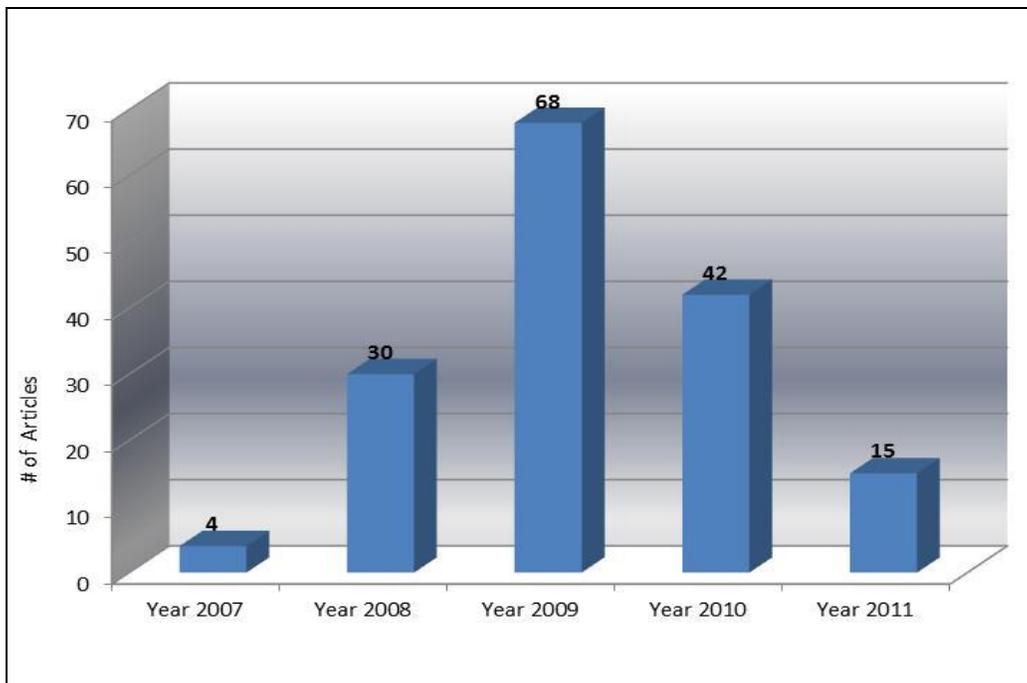


**Figure 2. Number of articles by country and region.**

At the end of 2009, the *Korea Times* reported that *Foreign Policy* had picked Chimerica and Barack Obama as "the big winners of 2009," because "in 2009, there wasn't a major challenge on the global stage that wasn't in large part defined by how these two powers chose to act" (Kim, 2009). As Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate, while the highest intensity of attention to Chimerica appeared during the last quarter of 2008, that is, the immediate aftermath of the Wall Street meltdown, 2009 witnessed the most articles on Chimerica. Thus, although Ferguson and Schularick had coined the term to explain the global market boom, it gained its traction after the bust.



**Figure 3. Number of articles by publication date.**



**Figure 4. Number of articles by publication year.**

If Ferguson's "aptitude as a phrase-maker has helped to give him a popular audience beyond the dreams of most academic historians" (Clarke, 2009, p. 2), then Chimerica is one such phrase. Ferguson has strategic institutional affiliations at the pinnacle of the Anglo-American academic world—Harvard, Oxford, and Stanford. In 2004 *Time* magazine recognized him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world (Elliott, 2004, p. 12). Global press outlets frequently mention this "media fact" as they amplify Ferguson's ideas, making him even more influential. The press's eagerness to interview Ferguson and other West-based scholars, and the tendency for newspapers in the rest of the world to print articles in the Anglo-American press and publish original pieces by contributors located in the U.S. or U.K., all contribute to the continuing global dominance of Anglo-American voices. Once it was born, Chimerica took on a life of its own in the global press in headlines ranging from "marriage made in heaven" to "marriage on the rocks," "Chimerica' is headed for divorce," "Chimerica suicide," and "Chimerica: R.I.P." As I will show further, the concept also benefits from similar new coinages such as a U.S.–China "G2" and "Superfusion."

Despite its elegance, the concept conceals and distorts as much as it reveals. To begin with, as a *Guardian* writer noted, the picture of "East Chimericans did the saving" and "West Chimericans did the spending" is flawed by "its ethnocentric assumption that the Great Republic lies west of the Middle Kingdom" (Clarke, 2009, p. 2). Moreover, even though Ferguson is an economic historian, the concept has no historical depth, that is, no sense of the historical status of the U.S. dollar as a global reserve currency backed up by U.S. global military power. Nor does it fully capture the complexity of U.S.–China relationships, including the U.S.'s continuing restrictions on high-tech exports to China. Furthermore, by foregrounding the financial realm and defining "Chimerican citizens" as Chinese savers or lenders and American borrowers or spenders, the concept obscures the nature of transnational production in the neoliberal global economy. It not only erases the role of Chinese workers but also conceals the place of transnational corporations, many U.S.-based, in China-based production and the major stakes Asian regional capital holds in the value-production chain. Also, by speaking of Chinese savers and American spenders, the concept flattens social structures and obscures the stakes that different Chinese and American social forces have in Chimerica as a particular form of transnational economic integration.

Most importantly, a Chimerica in which China serves as a lender and surplus country in the financial realm conceals China's massive social deficits: the suppression of wages and social spending, and environmental degeneration. In short, the concept underscores a neoliberal economic vision without a moral or social dimension. Ferguson explicitly brushed aside the moral dimension at the outset: "But isn't it kind of crazy for the Chinese to be lending money to Americans, who are on average roughly 25 times richer? Shouldn't it be the poor country that borrows from the rich to finance its industrialisation? Not any more" (Ferguson, 2007). Other influential Western press outlets followed suit. For Britain's *The Economist* (U.S. Edition), that "China, a developing country, lent vast amounts of money to wealthy America to feed its spending habit," only "appeared a little surreal" ("Round and Round," 2009). For the Canadian *Globe and Mail*, that "a country with a per-capita output of \$2,500 became the banker to one whose output was \$47,700" was just "a bizarre twist on financial history" (Gee, 2009, p. F1).

**The 2008 Financial Crisis and the Chimerica “Marriage on the Rocks”:  
Who Is to Blame and What Is to Be Done?**

By September 2008, not only did Chimerica appear “a little surreal,” but the entire U.S. financial system had gone bust. Ferguson and Schularick offered new spins, including the necessary “repairing” of their conceptual creation. Ferguson reversed himself by claiming that the term was coined to describe “the dangerously unsustainable relationship between parsimonious China and profligate America,” and that in doing so, he and Schularick “had identified one of the keys to the coming global financial crisis” (Ferguson, 2009b, p. 9). Whereas “imbalance” had not been an issue in the initial iteration, “correcting the economic imbalance between the United States and China—the dissolution of Chimerica—is now indispensable if equilibrium is to be restored to the world economy” (Ferguson & Schularick, 2009, p. 25). Chimerica, in its new incarnation as a galloping monster to be stopped by all means, as shown in Figure 5, was now the source of the problem.



**Figure 5. The post-crisis Chimerica as a monster.**

Source: O. Munday (artist), *The New York Times*, November 15, 2009, p. 25.

Moreover, the spotlight was on Chinese policy, even though the U.S.-China economic integration had hinged on concurrent developments in the West, specifically, the "normalization" of Sino-American diplomatic relations in 1979 and the subsequent flight of transnational capital to China in search of cheaper labor. *The Economist's* formulation has been particularly popular: "By lending America so much money, China helped inflate the asset bubble that has now burst so painfully" ("The Fragile Web," 2009). The *Globe and Mail's* Marcus Gee also consistently pursued this line: "Their [the Chinese] oversaving is partly to blame for American overspending" (Gee, 2008, p. A19). Consequently, though many articles prescribed more spending by the Chinese, including outlays to establish a domestic welfare system, and less consumption by Americans, "fixing the distorted Chinese model could be more crucial than reining in Wall Street or boosting Canada's auto sector," according to Gee (2008, p. A19). The need for appreciation of the Chinese yuan—an argument Ferguson has consistently championed—became the de facto party line of the Anglo-American press. In justifying this party line, Ferguson and Schularick did not hesitate to reevaluate what Chimerica meant:

Right now, Chimerica clearly serves China better than America. Call it the 10:10 deal: the Chinese get 10 percent growth; America gets 10 percent unemployment. The deal is even worse for the rest of the world—and that includes some of America's biggest export markets and most loyal allies.

For as long as the People's Republic has existed, the United States has been the principal upholder of a world economic order based on the free movement of goods and, more recently, capital. It has also picked up the tab for policing the oil-rich but unstable Middle East. No country has benefited more from these arrangements than China, and it should now pay for them through a stronger Chinese currency. Chimerica was always a chimera—an economic monster. Revaluing the renminbi will give this monster the peaceful death it deserves. (Ferguson & Schularick, 2009, p. 25)

Here Ferguson and Schularick no longer spoke of Chimerica as a mere financial relationship between lender and borrower, but in terms of Chinese "growth" and American "unemployment." Furthermore, they expanded the original Chimerica formulation's ahistorical and economic-reductionist framework to talk about a benevolent U.S. global role, even invoking the entire history of the PRC to claim it had always been a beneficiary—but omitting mention of the Korean War and the American embargo against China during much of the Cold War.

To be sure, not all newspapers blamed China. For example, some also reported that then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao "squarely blamed the U.S.-led financial system for the world's deepening economic slump" (Elliot, 2009, p. 12). But China clearly was seen as the primary source of the problem. In fact, independent of Chinese state policies, the Chinese cultural habit of saving, whereby the Chinese "stuff their renminbi under the mattress or put it in low-yielding savings accounts" (Gee, 2008, p. A19), was also to blame. But China was also assumed to have a more suspicious motive. *The New York Times*, for example, cast China as a guileful manipulator and Americans as innocent spenders in a front-page story: "China, some economists say, lulled American consumers, and their leaders, into complacency about their

spendthrift ways" (Landler, Barboza, & Bradsher, 2008, p. 1). Thus, while Chinese leaders made policies, the U.S. leadership was just as innocent as American consumers, having also been "lulled" by the Chinese. An August 2011 piece in the *Guardian* implied a deliberate Chinese design to undermine American supremacy: "This is more than cheeky for a nation that fed the debt addiction by buying a lot of US debt and by pegging its own currency to the dollar to create a destabilizing single currency zone that economists called 'Chimerica,'" because "without this Chinese policy, mimicked through much of Pacific-Asia, financial markets would have blown the whistle on US borrowing well before the actual turning-point of 2007" (Pratley, 2011, p. 23). That a British center-left newspaper invoked the term "addiction" is particularly noteworthy, as historically, in attempting to address its trade imbalance with the Qing Dynasty, Britain had fed opium addiction to the Chinese. Now, a British paper spoke of the Chinese as being "more than cheeky" for feeding the American debt "addiction."

### **What to Do With Chimerica? One Grand Narrative, Two Competing Visions, and One Overriding U.S. Strategic Imperative**

Fearful fantasies about the rise of China proliferated in the Anglo-American press during the most acute period of the financial crisis, from late 2008 and throughout 2009. Chimerica, which had initially designated a symbiotic U.S.–China relationship in a celebratory neoliberal globalist framework, was recast in a framework of national rivalry and a grand narrative of America's decline and China's ascent. Anglo-American elite opinion-makers became truly anxious about the extent to which the careening U.S. financial system was in debt to China. Again, Ferguson served as the "primary definer" of this contentious and sometimes incoherent discourse on the geopolitical implications of Chimerica and its potential unraveling. The following headlines reflect this grand narrative: "Harvard Historian: China Will be Next Superpower" (Kelly, 2009, p. A5); "Chronicle of a Decline Foretold" (Ferguson, 2008b, p. 2); "The Decade the World Titled East" (Ferguson, 2009b, p. 9). Other headlines amplify this view by stressing the U.S.'s dependence on China for its economic recovery: "Dollar Shift: Chinese Pockets Filled as Americans' Emptied" (Landler, Barboza, & Bradsher, 2008, p. 1), "Lifeline from Beijing: Why a U.S. Stimulus Plan Depends on China" (Zakaria, 2008a, p. A17), "It's Beijing—or Bust" (Zakaria, 2009, p. B01), "America Needs China" ("America Needs," 2009). The opening sentence of a *New York Times* article on the eve of July 4, 2009, underscores a preoccupation with China in the U.S. elite press: "On July Fourth, we Americans think about our country and its future. But these days it's impossible to think about America and its future role in the world without also thinking about China" (Brooks, 2009, p. 27).

But how were Americans "thinking about China"—as enemy, friend, or "frienemies"? Here, U.S. press opinions diverged along typical "China bashers" and "panda huggers" lines. This difference between the conservative and liberal internationalist perspective on U.S.–China relations is perhaps best captured in the similarities and differences between Ferguson and Zachary Karabell, the author of a book entitled *Superfusion: How China and America Became One Economy and Why the World's Prosperity Depends on It* (Karabell, 2009b). As one observer put it, Karabell's concept of "superfusion" is "pretty much identical" to Ferguson's concept of Chimerica, in that both recognize U.S.–China economic integration as "the real engine of the world economy" (Bernstein, 2009, p. 2). However, these two views differ in their respective assessments of the nature of this integration and its future prospects. Ferguson ends up not only blaming Chimerica for the financial crisis, but also warning of its dangers and fragility, and even envisioning new

conflicts and antagonisms replacing it. Specifically, Ferguson projects a Chinese "empire" option of opting out of Chimerica to develop its own domestic market, indigenous technology, and international and regional power structures (Ferguson, 2008a, P. B01); "by contrast, Mr. Karabell thinks that superfusion is both permanent and mostly good" (Bernstein, 2009, p. 2). Furthermore, while acknowledging that close economic ties do not preclude conflict, Karabell insisted that "there is no sign on either side that conflict is either desirable or feasible, and the economic fusion is the primary reason" (quoted in Bernstein, 2009, p. 2).

Nevertheless, Ferguson's alarmist prospects for Chimerica had greater resonance in Anglo-American papers. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, for example, wrote:

The frictions are building and will lead to divorce, conflict and potential catastrophe. China, Ferguson argued, is now decoupling from the United States. . . . Think of China, Ferguson concluded, as a Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany in the years before World War I: a growing, aggressive, nationalistic power whose ambitions will tear through pre-existing commercial ties and historic friendships. (Brooks, 2009, p. 27)

A mid-Atlantic U.S. paper reinforced this perspective: "Ferguson predicted that China, which holds 13% of all U.S. bonds and notes in the world, will stop buying U.S. Treasury bonds within the next 12 months. This will make it harder for credit-hungry Americans to survive" (Kelly, 2009, p. A5).

Thus, Anglo-American discourses around Chimerica in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis added a sinister spin to the grand narrative of American decline and Chinese rising. To be sure, this grand narrative recognized the vast unequal power between the U.S. and China, and that "the Middle Kingdom isn't really taking over the world," as the subtitle of a *Newsweek* article by Ioannis Gatsiounis (2010a, p. 0[sic]) put it. Nevertheless, as headlines such as "It's Beijing—or Bust" suggest China, despite being weaker both economically and militarily, is more autonomous in this relationship. In other words, elite Anglo-American opinion made it clear that China, unlike the U.S., has options. *Newsweek's* Fareed Zakaria, for example, argued that whereas one way for China to keep its economy growing is "to finance the American consumer," another is "to finance its own citizens, who are increasingly able to consume in large enough quantities to stimulate economic growth in China" (Zakaria, 2008b, p. 26). *The Economist* also recognized that sustaining growth in exports "was not as vital to China as many assumed" ("Round and Round," 2009).

Consequently, the Anglo-American press elite faced the urgent, overriding strategic imperative of persuading China's ruling elite to sustain Chimerica in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Within this context, the discourse of a G2—that is, a high-level dialogue mechanism between China and the U.S.—gained currency as the geo-political strategic and policy dimension of Chimerica. First proposed by former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the concept was subsequently embraced by other prominent U.S. strategists such as Henry Kissinger. On the one hand, this discourse acknowledges that insofar as the two countries' economies are far from equal, it makes little sense to talk about a G2. On the other hand, as *The Economist* made clear, the political motivation behind the G2 discourse is to influence China "to think that it is a partner with us and therefore it has certain responsibilities and should

listen to what we think is important" ("Round and Round," 2009). In this perspective, the purpose of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED), which the Obama administration set up in July 2009 on the basis of the Bush administration's two separate high-level dialogue mechanisms with China, was "to help cajole China into joining hands with America" ("Round and Round," 2009). *Newsweek's* interpretation was even more explicit: "We need China to see that its interests are aligned with America's. If not, things could get very, very ugly" (Zakaria, 2008b, p. 26). The press informally referred to the SED as "G2," although neither Chinese nor American official discourse used the term.

Thus, China would either pay the price of the global financial crisis to remain in the Chimerica order and keep peace with the U.S., or break away from Chimerica and threaten a replay of WWI. In this discursive contestation over the future of China, Ferguson did the bullying by invoking war:

Imagine a new Cold War, but one in which the two superpowers are economically the same size. Or if you prefer an old analogy, imagine a rerun of the Anglo-German antagonism of the early 1900s, with America in the role of Britain, and China in the role of imperial Germany. This is a better analogy because it captures the fact that a high level of economic integration does not necessarily prevent the growth of strategic rivalry and ultimately, conflict. (Ferguson, 2009a, p. 56)

Karabell, for his part, cajoled readers with a promise of peace. He also offered the more benign, albeit patronizing, metaphor of an adult-adolescent relationship. He wrote in a *Washington Post* article: "China is a bit like a newly muscular adolescent; it is gaining power but doesn't yet know how to wield it or to what purpose." Meanwhile the U.S., as the adult in this relationship, "must learn to use muscles it hasn't stretched for many year, muscles that are adept at collaboration rather than dictation, that are flexible rather than simply big" (Karabell, 2009a, p. B01).

***China Daily's* Chimerica, Chimerica's *China Daily*:  
A Convergence Between the U.S. Liberal Internationalist  
View and China's Official English Voice**

How has *China Daily*, the Chinese state's most most-established official English-language newspaper, related to Chimerica? To what extent does it accept the key themes of the Anglo-American discourse on international economics? Notwithstanding increasing Chinese efforts to project China's own "soft power" and speak its own voice (Sun, 2010; Zhao, 2013), is the *China Daily* perspective truly independent of the Anglo-American frame? Finally, how does it respond to the different strands of Anglo-American elite opinion on what to do with Chimerica? *China Daily*, mainland China's only paper in the databases, published a total of 14 articles on Chimerica—10 news stories and features, 4 letters and blogs. Even though Chimerica has never entered China's official foreign policy discourse, the paper's invocation of Chimerica as a central discursive trope in a significant number of articles of various genres indicates its serious engagement with this concept.

However, rather than understanding Chimerica in Ferguson's sense of an existing state of economic interdependency, *China Daily* understands it in a more nation-centric and geopolitical framework

where growing Chinese national power necessitates U.S.–China collaboration at the strategic level. Moreover, it is understood in the future rather than Ferguson's original past or present tense, thus reemphasizing the connotation of rising power and influence putting China on par with the U.S., that is, a party to G2. The following discussion is indicative:

If new terms such as "Chimerica" and "G2" have any meaning, their constant appearance in mainstream Western media must naturally lead people to consider China a rising power that will soon be the equal of the United States. China may not be that powerful yet, but 30 years' [sic] of rapid economic growth and its strong performance during the current global economic downturn may enable the world to rethink about [sic] the secret of its vitality. (Tian, 2009, p. 8)

This article, published on the eve of the PRC's 60th anniversary, crystallized the tenor of *China Daily's* approach to Chimerica: flattered and cautiously embracing. Not surprisingly, Chimerica equals G2; indeed, the two terms are often used interchangeably.

As if to speak to Ferguson's fear and the dominant Anglo-American press opinion that China may break up Chimerica as an economic union, *China Daily*, which published most of its Chimerica-related articles during the Bush-to-Obama transition period, clamored for a U.S.–China "strategic partnership." The paper championed the continuation and strengthening of the Bush administration's high-level U.S.–China dialogue mechanisms. Yuan Peng, director of a prominent Chinese government think tank, noted that whereas in the U.S. it has long been debated whether such a mechanism should continue or not, "the question on whether the SED should be kept into the future, however, has never become an issue in China," and "it is our hope that the high-level economic dialogue would push for a strategic partnership between the two countries" (Yuan, 2008, p. 8). Consequently, *China Daily* highly prized and frequently endorsed U.S. think tank and press opinions taking this line of argument, and G2 and Chimerica became favorite tropes in an almost formulaic way.

Echoing U.S. strategists' calculations that what was needed was a combination of bilateral and multilateral forums of governance for "Chimerica," Yuan Peng wrote: "The SED between China and the US can serve as an important supplement to the established global consultation mechanisms in dealing with the ongoing economic crisis" (Yuan, 2008, p. 8). Moreover, as if to provide an economic rationale supporting the liberal internationalist perspective as represented by Karabell (2009), Ni (2009), identified as a "Beijing-based scholar of international relations," came up with a novel economic theory of justification. In his view, "fierce competition and even rivalry typically surface between the old hegemony and merging powers," but they only reflect the "geopolitical patterns" of the era of industrialization. However, "with the West entering the post-industrial era in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century" and especially with the U.S. taking on "a virtual capital development road since the 1980s," "harsh competition between industrialized countries" has been replaced by the "increasingly interdependent and interconnected" "virtual economy developed by Western countries and the substantial economies developed by others" (Ni, 2009, p. 8). Consequently,

This makes it likely China and the U.S. in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will avoid confrontation. China has become the U.S.' largest product manufacturer and supplier. The mutual benefits and mutual trust enjoyed by the two countries is exactly what different big powers in the past lacked. Fortunately, this has been acknowledged by more and more people from both sides. (Ni, 2009, p. 8)

This is a novel restatement of Ferguson's original celebratory version of Chimerica. However, whereas Ferguson predicted Chimerica's post-2008 potential unraveling by acknowledging China's ambition to move up the global value chain, Ni's argument, with its dichotomies of "industrial" versus "post-industrial" eras and "substantial" versus "virtual" economies and its willingness to keep China in the realm of "substantial economy," posited that the era of inter-capitalist rivalry was over. That Karabell's *Superfusion* was translated into Ferguson's *Chimerica (zhongmeiguo)* when the book was published in Chinese was telling. Clearly Karabell's liberal international perspective and his celebration of U.S.-China economic integration as the grounds for global peace and prosperity resonated with *China Daily's* integrationist perspective.

Most extraordinarily, *China Daily* published two lengthy articles unabashedly promoting a book by American scholar and diplomat Patrick Mendis, who went further than Karabell in celebrating free trade by fusing American libertarianism, Freemasonry, and market fundamentalism. The title of his book, *Trade for Peace: How the DNA of America, Freemasonry, and Providence Created a New World Order with Nobody in Charge* (Mendis 2009b), says it all. In a June 11, 2009, book review, Thomas Bork, who "served as a visiting professor of international relations at the China Foreign Affairs University and the program director of the America Development Foundation in Beijing," related Mendis' ideas as follows:

America's founding mission has always been to promote trade to integrate global community for peaceful living and unity as it was the case for the original 13 colonies in the Union . . . the emergence of the U.S. and China trade relations is forging that American vision. (Bork, 2009)

The review went on to discuss how Mendis employed the Commerce Clause in the American Constitution "to explore the global mission of the United States as the Founding Fathers envisioned—and manifested once more by President Barack Obama, the Mercury of America's global revolution." In perhaps the best Chinese propaganda tradition, Bork even compared Mendis to "the famous French author Alex de Tocqueville" (Bork, 2009).

Then, on September 3, 2009, *China Daily* published an extensive article by Mendis himself, essentially repeating the same idea. Mendis (2009a) wrote that America's founding fathers had "established a blueprint for the American mission to promote international trade in order to peacefully integrate the global community" (p. 9). Now, "[c]onsciously or unconsciously," China had absorbed this lesson by "engaging countries with opposing views and conflicts through trade." Not surprisingly, the title of the article read: "Crossing Paths: U.S.' past, China's Future" (Mendis, 2009a, p. 9). In short, China was fulfilling the American destiny by following a path set by America's founding fathers. If the U.S. liberal

internationalist elite's objective was to "help cajole China into joining hands with America," then the tenor of *China Daily's* Chimerica discourse underscores the success of this U.S. strategy (Mendis, 2009a, p. 9).

To be sure, *China Daily* takes care not to go overboard with the Chimerica and G2 rhetoric. One article, a rare case, acknowledges that Chimerica was a controversial idea from the outset. It claims that "a situation in which one or two countries control the world or one in which a handful of countries deliberately cause a confrontation is not suitable and will not be supported by the people of the world." Consequently, "concepts such as 'Chimerica' and 'Eurafrica' all disaccorded with the tide of the era" (Zhong, 2011). However, the article's understanding of Chimerica as G2, and its main thrust of discrediting "Eurafrica" as reportedly a European counter-ideology to Chimerica, undermine the seriousness of its critique of Chimerica. In a related contradiction, it points out Europe's colonial legacy in Africa and discusses how some Europeans' thoughts are still "stuck in the colonial period" and how Europe-Africa relations still are not preconditioned on equality, respect and mutual benefits (Zhong, 2011); however, this critical perspective apparently does not apply to the paper's assessment of Chimerica.

In yet another manifestation of how *China Daily's* discourse on Chimerica is both dependent upon and complementary to the dominant Anglo-American discourse, its most substantive article aimed at toning down the "China's rise" discourse is a slightly reworded and abridged version of the above-mentioned *Newsweek* article by Ioannis Gatsiounis (2010a). Among its key arguments, this article observes that China's influence in Africa and Latin America through trade is often "undercut by America's"; that America's engagement is "deeper and more diversified" not only with Africa, but many other parts of the world, "via international institutions as well as humanitarian aid and military assistance," and that "despite high-profile ties with Zimbabwe and Sudan, China has little military presence in Africa and almost none in Latin America, and is still 'overshadowed' by the U.S. even within its own Southeast Asia 'backyard'" (Gatsiounis, 2010b). While the state propaganda strategy may have led *China Daily* to use a *Newsweek* article as an effective means to refute the "China threat" discourse, it is also likely that *China Daily* could not have produced an article with this level of analytical depth and empirical richness on its own.

#### **Chimerica's Peripheral Visions: The Centrality of Nations, the Marginality of the Social, and the Intersections between Class and Nation**

Like *China Daily*, other newspapers outside the Anglo-American core tend to inflect Chimerica with a stronger geopolitical connotation and use Chimerica and its more political G2 companion interchangeably. They invoke both positive and negative visions of global and regional orders. The positive visions foreground how China's rise within the Chimerica order will challenge America's unipolar global domination, and how the "Great Crash of 2008" was a "great geopolitical setback for the West" (Rahman, 2009, p. 7). The negative angle expects that other global power centers, from the European Union to Japan and other rising powers such as India or Brazil, will be "angered by any arrangement which keeps them outside a newly created 'magic circle'" (Eyal, 2009, p. 16). The self-proclaimed Asian regional perspective—though always posited by a paper located in a particular nation—is also mostly negative, insofar as Chimerica is read to mean a rising China and a stronger U.S.-China alliance in the region in the

form of a "G-2, a global condominium of two nations, whereby China could look after and 'manage' the Asia Pacific region" (Pant, 2011). However, "the idea of 'Chimerica' was always too good to be true . . . there is a clamour for American leadership in the region as none of the regional states want China to emerge as the dominant actor" (Pant, 2011). An article in India's *Hindu* is rather straightforward in its reading of China's rise as unfavorable for regional stability in Asia: "China's ascent . . . is dividing Asia, not bringing Asian states closer." Moreover, "as the U.S.-China relationship acquires a wider and deeper base in the coming years, the strains in some of America's existing military or strategic partnerships [in Asia] will become pronounced" (Chellaney, 2009).

Moreover, whether a marriage in heaven or on the rocks, Chimerica is an opportunity to be exploited—at least, this is the point of departure for many newspapers in the Asia-Pacific region. Papers from the region's economically more developed countries, including South Korea, Malaysia, and Australia, tend to emphasize the benefits that a continuing Chimerica order may bring to their own countries, and in a few cases, to the entire region. The *Korea Times*, for example, positions South Korea "to play a 'bridge and connector role' in Chimerica (Kim, 2010). Others see more opportunities in Chimerica's unraveling. In India, China's largest neighbor in Asia and a rising power itself, the press is wariest of Chimerica as a geopolitical order and most vocal when expounding the spoils of its potential unraveling. The most critical view, entitled "Hitler's Dead, Long Live Chimerica!" paints Chimerica as a sinister alliance:

There is not a shred of communism in China's system. That is why corporate America is so comfortable investing in China. China replicates Hitler's Nazi system. There is marriage between the full-fledged totalitarian rule and big private capitalism. Big business works best with dictatorships that can crush individual liberty. That was why Nazi Germany had the most spectacular economic transformation of its time. China is displaying something similar today. (Puri, 2010)

Whereas this particular Indian author labored to explain that "the America-China nexus was deep" and advocated a reappraisal of India's "entire strategy regarding policy and domestic development" by "looking beyond America" and building "self-reliance at home and independence abroad" (Puri, 2010), others found relief in the possibility of Chimerica's death and the opportunities this would create for India. One article, entitled "Chimerica R. I. P.," stated: "Chimerica are two of our largest partners. When their marriage is on the rocks, we must look for what's in for us" ("Chimerica R. I. P.," 2011).

A related nationalistic frame, articulated mostly by papers in less developed countries, casts Chimerica less as a national threat or opportunity than as a national inspiration. Within this discourse, China within the Chimerica formation becomes an example of sound national economic policy-making, self-reliance, and an anti-neoliberal model of national economic development, contrary to and as a critique of neoliberalism in both the U.S. and other developing countries. This framing is most evident in Pakistani newspapers. Most illustrative are two articles by Shamsul Ghani in the *Pakistan and Gulf Economist*. In a March 6, 2011, article, Ghani juxtaposed two opposing national economies. On the one hand was the U.S. economy in crisis, the result of "diehard proponents of free market economy" and "a total lack of government intervention and absence of regulatory mechanism that triggered the crisis." On the other hand was the Chinese economy, seen as guided by "rational oversight in the shape of timely state

intervention and well-designed regulatory mechanism." In this view, the "dominance" of the Chinese economy over the U.S. economy "belies all claims about the invincibility of free market capitalism," as does the fact that it is "the sound economy of China that lends a helping hand to the US economy," as "is beautifully described by Niall Ferguson" (Ghani, 2011). As if the "Third World" as a utopian project (Prashad, 2007) were still a viable option and the world economy were indeed constituted by "the relations between producing nations" as in Marx's description, Ghani effectively extracted China from the very neoliberal processes of U.S.-China economic integration and Wall Street-driven financialization that underpin the concept of Chimerica to begin with and thus ended up with a complete reversion of Ferguson's original formulation.

Echoing yet another Pakistani author's view that, within the Chimerica order, "China is no longer the most despised nation in the USA and the stereotype associated with the 'yellow' race, has changed" (Rahman, 2009, p. 7), a July 17, 2011, article in South Africa's *Sunday Independent* ("Africa Needs to," 2011) also gave this national, inspirational understanding of Chimerica a transnational and racial twist. Here, Ferguson's concept, which the author himself had by then rearticulated to mean "a less-than-happy marriage of economic convenience" (Ferguson, 2011, p. 68), was inflected with a much larger global sociocultural meaning. China, now a creditor of the U.S., had become an inspiration not just for a particular nation, but for the "bottom billion."

Entitled "Africa Needs to Shade Savage Image," the article starts with an inspirational objective: "There are times when the need arises for Africans in South Africa to ponder their collective responsibility in challenging the negative image of Africa in the minds of peoples of the world" ("Africa Needs to," 2011, p. 17). Conscious that the derogative conceptions of African nations have evolved from "savage" to the "bottom billion," a term used by former World Bank economist Paul Collier to refer to "developing countries that are at the bottom of the global economic system," the article calls upon South Africa to establish a "deeper appreciation" of the nation's "competitive advantage in the world" by boosting the public education system, among other things. The article starts by recounting that the Japanese adopted "the Fundamental Code of Education" in 1872 so that "there shall, in the future, be no community with an illiterate family, nor a family with an illiterate person," then goes on to say that "the people of Japan become so educated that no one would dare call them 'savages' or 'the bottom billion,'" and that the case of China is proving the same:

We all know how despised the Chinese people have been, especially by white people. When Americans were in serious financial trouble, during the 2008 global economic crisis, who did they run to for rescue, China! Due to the inextricable connection between the Chinese and American economies, leading academics in the U.S. such as Niall Ferguson have even suggested that China and the U.S. have now merged virtually to form a new country called "Chimerica." Americans do not make such startling admissions because they love the Chinese; they do so because China made a strategic decision to improve its economic standing in the world—to the extent that the U.S. now has to run there to borrow money. ("Africa Needs to," 2011, p. 17)

Because this racially inflected perspective underscores both the uneven nature of global capitalistic development and the uneven logic of global racial power, like the nationalist perspective it rules out thinking about either transnational class interests or social divisions within the nation-state. Unsurprisingly, this particular framing of China in the Chimerica formation as a national and even racial inspiration sits uneasily with several competing perspectives. The social perspective, to begin with, is virtually absent in both the American press and the *China Daily*—nominally the English mouthpiece of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Instead, newspapers in Chimerica’s periphery are more likely to address the social dimension as secondary to the economic and geographical dimensions of Chimerica, with occasional reference to the plight of Chinese workers and China’s underdeveloped welfare programs, or to discussions of China’s environmental problems. However, this discussion of the social is to be further qualified.

First, this social gaze over Chimerica is almost exclusively cast on China, not the U.S., with China’s lower social classes figuring as a source of social instability. Second, and revealing that the location of the social is still firmly grounded on the plane of the national, this discussion of the Chinese social problem is cast in a typical national framework. Moreover, such discussions are laden with subtle or not-so-subtle expressions of outside superiority, ranging from the assertion that China’s lack of a welfare program is due to the “immaturity” of its market economy—as the headline of a September 14, 2009, *New Zealand Herald* article put it, China is “the world’s economic adolescent” (Arcus, 2009) to the most obvious observation that China is not a democracy. Again, the most illustrative example of the tension between national and class perspectives can be found in the Indian press. Unlike other articles in the sample, a September 30, 2009, *Indian Express* article by Kent G. Deng foregrounded the social dimension of Chimerica as the overriding theme (Deng, 2009). Deng took issue with the Western media’s hype about China’s “miraculous growth in recent decades,” noting how it “has even speculated on a new world order of G-2, called ‘Chimerica,’ believing “that it is a matter of when, not if.” Asserting that the “heart of the problem” was that China is not a democracy, Deng espoused a blatant anti-Mao and anti-China view by casting Mao-era China as a complete disaster and post-Mao-era growth as achieved at the cost of environmental damage and social inequality, asking: “Has China’s particular path to modernity been worth it?” (Deng, 2009).

However, perhaps true to its reputation as one of the world’s most diverse presses, the Indian press occasionally also features a perspective that rises above the nation to foreground class, even transnational class concerns. Such a perspective presents China as a dependent economy that sacrifices the interests of its lower social classes to the Chimerica formation. A related leftist perspective casts both Chinese and American workers as losers in Chimerica. One article, while speaking of China’s and India’s national economies as “still doing comparatively well” vis-à-vis the Western economies, ends up wondering whether “perhaps humanity was always under assault by the kind of rampant fundamentalist Capitalism that led to the financial slow-down,” and whether “the crisis has simply made it visible to more of us” (Khair, 2009).

Contrary to this hope for a critical awakening against capitalist fundamentalism in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, however, resignation to the global neoliberal social outcome of “running to the bottom” is detectable in papers in other corners of the world. The *Zimbabwe Financial Gazette*, for example, spoke

of a post-Chimerica "New Normal" in which "China and other emerging markets are playing a bigger role in shaping the global economy" (Jongwe, 2010). This new economic order, in which "state capitalism will supplant market capitalism," will be characterized by "high unemployment" and "depressed wages." The article cites a business professor as saying that the "old model where 'wage awards that were driven by what employees needed to survive rather than their productivity' is not sustainable." Referring to a World Bank report estimating that the industrial wage for casual labor in Zimbabwe (\$215 per month) is higher than in Zambia (\$129) and Malawi (\$67), the article concludes that Zimbabwe now "has to live within its means" (Hawkins quoted in Jongwe, 2010).

### **Discussions and Conclusions: Chimerica Is Dead, Long Live Chimerica!**

The exploratory nature of this study precludes the drawing of overarching, definitive conclusions. Nevertheless, an observation can be made regarding the conservative Anglo-American perspective's apparent discursive domination of English-language international economic journalism, with Ferguson as one of its most powerful symbolic manipulators—in analogy to his characterization of the Chinese state as a currency "manipulator." At the time of its birth, Chimerica described an epoch-defining economic globalization process and underscored a global integrationist vision on behalf of a triumphant U.S.-centered financial capitalism. When this vision quickly went dark with the 2008 Wall Street meltdown, global press discourses around the concept not only amplified Ferguson's condemnation of Chimerica as the source of the crisis but also revealed Anglo-American opinion elites' anxiety about America's financial dependence on China and China's option to withdraw from the Chimerica order. Thus, Anglo-American opinion leaders tried to mobilize ideologically to keep Chimerica going. Ferguson led right-wing opinion, dropping alarmist symbolic bombshells of a coming conflict with China should it opt out of the Chimerica order, while liberal internationalists "cajoled" China to sustain Chimerica through free-trade ideology and the G2 machinery. *China Daily*, inasmuch as it reflects the official Chinese position, appears all too willing to sustain the order. *China Daily's* view and the American liberal internationalist perspective represented by Karabell (2009) unequivocally resonate with each other. Both favor continuing U.S.–China economic integration, and both characterize it as a foundation for global peace and prosperity. Even more surprisingly, *China Daily* went above and beyond to unabashedly promote a libertarian global free-trade doctrine, depicting China as fulfilling the American founding fathers' manifest destiny. This unreserved embrace of the Chimerica mindset both manifests the global neoliberal newspeak that has dominated the transnational financial media (Chakravartty & Schiller, 2010) and articulates an incipient transnational capitalist class consciousness. As I have noted elsewhere (Zhao, 2008, 2012) and as Wu (2013) further demonstrates, this transnational capitalist class consciousness, centered around the presumed "universal values" of liberal democratic capitalism, provides a shared ideological framework for a "transnational discursive alliance" constituted by mainstream Western media, China's market-oriented media outlets, and the online voices of (neo-)liberal Chinese intellectuals and their urban middle-class followers.

However, this transnational discourse is shallow and unstable. Moreover, it intersects with nation-state-centric discourses in complicated ways. With the onset of the 2008 crisis, Chimerica—a term that had initially described the most salient feature of an integrated global economy—quickly morphed into an evocative discursive trope for nationalistic framings and the grand narrative of American decline and Chinese ascendancy, thus exposing the limits of the hype about globalization and the triumph of the global

over the national. Nationalistic framings are evident not only in Ferguson's post-2008 revisionist renderings of Chimerica and the dominant China-versus-U.S. narrative in the Anglo-American press, but also in many Asian countries' interpretations of Chimerica as either a national opportunity or threat, as well as in its invocation as a national inspirational trope for Africans to "shave" their "savage image" and in Pakistani voices yearning for independent national development via a Chinese road to presumed national power and prestige. Such framings, as offered by press outlets in Asia and Africa, contain residual fragments of the "Third World" as a utopian project (Prashad, 2007) and the self-reliance path of a bygone era; however, they seldom manifest what Prashad calls "old Nationalism" anchored in a postcolonial third-world state committed to "the national liberation ideas of socialism and the collective good" (Prashad, 2013, p. 6). Rather, the Chimerica-as-national-inspiration framing appears to represent "impatient elites" from the Global South who "wanted to set themselves apart from the obligations of the postcolonial state" (ibid.) by pursuing the Chinese path of Chimerica-style capitalistic integration. Whereas the South African author's advocacy of education as the road to national economic power and, ultimately, racial uplifting may appear narrow and naive, the argument from Zimbabwe reveals the extent to which the neoliberal dystopian mentality of "running to the bottom" has become entrenched as the post-2008 "new normal" in the Global South, with Latin America as a possible exception. As I noted at the outset, the databases used for this study held not a single newspaper from Latin America. Perhaps this is simply a matter of limited data, but one can also argue that this lacuna reflects the distinct colonial and linguistic legacies of Latin America and also underscores the contemporary fact that this part of the Global South is the vanguard of the resistance to neoliberalism, where socially more progressive governments, propelled by bottom-up popular struggles, "have established for the first time a significant degree of distance from the United States," thereby becoming a "relatively autonomous geopolitical force" (Wallerstein, 2010, cited in Halimi, 2013, p. 12).

Back at the core of Chimerica, where neoliberal globalist and nationalistic visions intersect with and imbricate each other in a moment of confusion over its fate, the social dimension of Chimerica is marginalized with striking consistency in both Anglo-American newspapers and *China Daily*, adding further credence to the continuing neoliberal domination of both sides of the Pacific. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is India's leftist press that has put forward the most critical, socially conscious, historically sensitive reframing of Chimerica, posing questions about equality and the lives of workers in China and the U.S. alike. Even so, this marginal leftist, anti-neoliberal perspective is overshadowed by a vocal Indian national capitalist perspective that casts China as the ultimate rival in a neoliberal global capitalist order.

Five years after the 2008 financial meltdown, Chimerica lives on as both a political-economic formation and a discourse. In fact, despite Ferguson's alarmist predictions about its unraveling at the onset of the 2008 crisis and in many of his subsequent widely circulated remarks, he acknowledged as early as the end of 2008 that Chimerica "not only survived the crisis but gained from it" (Ferguson, 2008b, p. 2). To borrow a point that Desai (2013: 139) made in a different context, this admission seems to further confirm Samuel Huntington's (1988: 96) suggestion that the chief function of declinist writers is "preventing what they are predicting." After trying to curb its purchase of U.S. debt in 2011, China ended up significantly increasing its U.S. debt holdings throughout 2012 and early 2013, reaching a total of \$1.3 trillion by May 2013 (Luo, 2013). Moreover, consistent with the neoliberal thrust of the Chimerica discourse, a *People's Daily* (Overseas Edition) article reported this development under a headline implying

that the decision to increase or decrease China's U.S. debt holdings is a matter of "pure market behavior" and that "any politicized interpretation is surely unwarranted" (Luo, 2013). Given that it would be naive to assume that China's leaders sincerely believe such decisions involve no politics, the *People's Daily's* disclaimer has to be understood as indicative of official communication politics. The same applies to the above-analyzed *China Daily* discourse about Chimerica. It is beyond the scope of this textual analysis to infer the Chinese ruling elite's "true" understanding of Chimerica. Moreover, the dramatic power and ideological struggles surrounding the downfall of former CCP politburo member Bo Xilai reveal that China's ruling elite, and for that matter the Chinese official media, are not monolithic but engage in intensive contestations over the future of China and its position in the world (Zhao, 2008, 2012; Wu, 2013). It is highly likely that even the *Global Times*—the *People's Daily's* English-language tabloid that sees itself as *China Daily's* rival but has yet to find its space in the databases used for this study, has a different take on Chimerica. Nevertheless, and perhaps precisely because of the ongoing domestic Chinese struggles, it is noteworthy that by the time of the 5th annual U.S.–China SED in July 2013, Chinese Vice-Premier Wang Yang—widely perceived as the chief political rival of the now imprisoned Bo Xilai in the power struggles leading to the CCP's 18th Party Congress in 2012—had famously taken the Chimerica discourse to new heights by applying the marriage metaphor to the U.S.–China relationship and pleading against any costly divorce. Although Wang did not use the Chimerica term explicitly, his remarks were widely seen as closest to an official expression of the Chimerica mindset. Even more astonishingly, in a clear violation of the authorship and national origin of the term, an August 29, 2013, article on the *People's Daily's* English-language website listed "Chimerica," alongside such banal "Chinglish" terms as "no money no talk!" as "English expressions contributed by China in recent years." Further, it claimed that "linguistic contribution reveals national power" (Du & Chen, 2013).

Chimerica simply is not a Chinglish expression. Moreover, I would argue, it speaks of neither Anglo-American power nor Chinese national power, but rather the allied power of the ruling classes across the Pacific. As Hung (2009) observed, the dominant faction of the Chinese elite and the American ruling class have established a "symbiotic relation"; moreover, "despite occasional squabbles, the two élite groups on either side of the Pacific share an interest in perpetuating their respective domestic status quo, as well as the current imbalance in the global economy" (p. 24).

Meanwhile, the highly successful May 2013 premiere of *Chimerica*—a widely reviewed play in London's West End about an idealistic American photojournalist in search of the "tank man," the lonely young protester confronting a column of tanks in an iconic transnational media image that continues to symbolize June 4, 1989, and frame transnational media audiences' ideological understandings of China—suggests that the concept could still be rearticulated around a more political and social dimension. Yet this approach to a more political and social understanding of Chimerica via an American journalist's obsession with finding the young urban male protester of the 1989 era seems already to limit the subject matter by including the transnational media's initial framing of 1989 as a Chinese struggle for American-style liberal democratic capitalism. This, of course, is beyond the scope of this article.

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