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Towards a sociolinguistics of deglobalization

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ABSTRACT

This article advocates for a 'sociolinguistics of deglobalization' that focuses on the sociolinguistic impacts of major shifts in the world system that have taken place since 2008 and have become particularly salient amidst the covid pandemic. Drawing on case studies of China, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, we describe the period after 2008 as an emerging post-neoliberal epoch characterized by the intensifying of state power, constrained resistance, differential inclusion, and organized abandonment. Our article explores the theoretical, methodological, and ethical challenges of researching the sociolinguistic impacts of these developments. We also argue that our discipline's dominant approach to global-scale analysis—the sociolinguistics of globalization—has impeded our ability to perceive the emerging dynamics of deglobalization. Our call for a sociolinguistics of deglobalization is offered as both a provocation and invitation to our discipline to engage with the rapidly changing nature of world politics. (Deglobalization, sovereignty, neoliberalism, coloniality, securitization)*

DEGLOBALIZATION?

This article introduces a project we consider both urgent and necessary: a sociolinguistics of deglobalization. By deglobalization, we are not referring to a wholesale reversal of globalization. Instead, we define deglobalization as an epochal shift in the world system characterized by the increasing significance of state sovereignty, and the decreasing significance of the forces of the global market that have dominated the world system since the early 1990s. To explore what this means, we begin by looking at the covid pandemic.

If the covid pandemic is a portal to a new world (Roy 2020), then one thing we can see clearly through this still-open aperture is deglobalization. One manifestation of this was what philosopher Benjamin Bratton (2021) called the 'big filtering' of the global population, which sorted the vast majority of people back to the country of their passport and kept them sealed there behind closed borders. In addition to arresting human flows, the pandemic also undid global commodity flows, straining the sinews of global capitalism (Khalili 2021). Political theorist Paul

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Gerbaudo (2021) saw these demographic and economic events as part of a broader pandemic strategy of governance, adopted in differing ways by states around the world, involving drastically intensified expressions of state sovereignty and a 'great recoil' away from interconnection and interdependence. And even early in the pandemic, commentators were calling for these strengthened state powers to be used for tackling problems such as climate change (Malm 2020).

It might be tempting to think of this pandemic deglobalization as a temporary blip that we are now moving past. However, deglobalization's roots go deeper. Pandemic deglobalization would have been impossible without changes that took place in response to the financial crisis of 2008. Although this crisis certainly did not bring about the end of globalization, numerous commentators have noted how the events of 2008 shifted the relationship between the state, and the ideological and material core of 21st century globalization: neoliberalism.

Cox & Nilsen (2014), for example, see the 2008 financial crisis as heralding the 'twilight' of neoliberal globalization due to successful opposition by a range of alter-globalization activists. Others see neoliberalism's decline as a project of the state, aimed at creating new political forms—such as neoliberal nationalism (Harmes 2012), neo-illiberalism (Hendrikse 2018), or 'ambidextrous' governance (Peck 2010)—all of which subordinate market power and neoliberal globalization to state aims. Meanwhile, a third camp interprets the state's increasing role as a necessary (but not necessarily desired) intervention into the world system following the collapse of neoliberalism under the weight of its own internal contradictions, giving rise to a post-neoliberal world characterized by intensified expressions of state sovereignty (Peck, Theodore, & Brenner 2009; Davies 2016, 2021; Davies & Gane 2021). Regardless of their varied interpretations, there is broad consensus that 2008 represents a shift in the relationship between the state and neoliberalism that has permanently altered the form, trajectory, and goals of neoliberal globalization.

The years following this crisis and leading up to the pandemic saw massive shifts in the global political landscape that fundamentally repositioned the state in relation to globalization. These shifts began with 'Left populist' reactions to the 2008 financial crisis (Mouffe 2018), such as the Indignados in Spain or Occupy in the US. The anti-elitist rhetoric of these movements was soon co-opted by the Right, leading to the rise of anti-democratic populist governments under leaders such as Erdoğan, Orban, Dueterte, Modi, and Trump, as well as popular, xenophobic nationalist movements such as the Brexit campaign in Britain, the Proud Boys in the US, the rise of far-right parties such as 'Alternative for Germany' or the 'True Finns', and the increasing influence of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in India. This rise of populist far Right parties, movements, and governments has accelerated a trend, emerging in the 1990s, of global democratic decline (Crouch 2004; Brown 2019), leading to the emergence of new forms of non-democratic government such as 'competitive authoritarianism' (Levitsky & Way 2002), 'dirty democracy' (Foa & Mounk 2021), and the 'new despotism' (Keane 2020). At the

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heart of all these post-2008 forms of anti-democratic governance is an increasingly brutal and unfettered expression of the state's most fundamental right and source of power: sovereignty (Paris 2020).

Contemporary theories and practices of sovereignty can typically be traced to the sixteenth century French jurist and political philosopher Jean Bodin (Bodin 1992; Lee 2021). Writing just before the principle of sovereignty was enshrined as a legal norm through the Treaty of Westphalia, Bodin conceptualized sovereignty as the 'definitive quality of statehood' (Lee 2021:33): the state's legal right to ensure its own existence. This right was expressed as an 'absolute and perpetual power' (Bodin 1992:1) that placed the sovereign beyond the law of the state, 'answerable only to God' (Bodin 1992:4). Whether exercised through a monarch or 'the people', sovereignty is prior to the law that governs a state's citizens and regulates interactions between states. And while the end of the Cold War and the rise of neoliberal globalization saw scholars scrambling to declare an 'end to sovereignty' (Brown 2010; Negri 2022), the post-2008 era has seen a 'sovereign turn' across a range of disciplines (Bonilla 2017).

We situate our project of the sociolinguistics of deglobalization within this broader theoretical turn. In conceptualizing deglobalization as the resurgent assertion of state sovereignty against transnational capitalism (most recently in its neoliberal form), we view deglobalization not so much as a teleological trend that commands our attention with its immediacy and ascendency, but rather as a latent tendency in the modern world system which exists, and has done so since at least the sixteenth century, in constant tension with globalization (Arrighi 1994). Our discipline's dominant framework for thinking about languages at a world scale—the sociolinguistics of globalization—has thus not only put us badly out of step with developments in global politics over the past fifteen years, but, more problematically, has led us to fundamentally mis-recognize the broader political environment that people and their linguistic behaviours are responding to and shaping.

In order to help us move towards a sociolinguistics of deglobalization, in this article we make both empirical and theoretical contributions. Empirically, we draw on primary and secondary sources to offer descriptive case studies of major sociolinguistic developments in four countries—China, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Ethiopia—focusing on the post-2008 period. We have selected these case studies partly due to our respective expertise in China and Indonesia, but also because these are four populous, linguistically diverse countries, all of which are underrepresented in the sociolinguistic literature, which remains persistently focused on contexts of the Global North (Rudwick & Makoni 2021). Collectively, these four countries are home to just over two billion people, and over 1,600 languages, thus containing about one quarter of the global population, and a little over one fifth of its linguistic diversity. Nonetheless, we consider our case studies to be more illustrative than representative.

Before proceeding to our discussion of deglobalization in these four countries, the next section summarizes some of the significant features of the sociolinguistics

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of globalization, and in examining how key concepts in that field have been contested, we further strengthen the impetus for our project of constructing a sociolinguistics of deglobalization. We then move on to our case studies and explore four key themes that emerge in studying the post-2008 political history of these countries: intensifying state power, constrained resistance, differential inclusion, and organized abandonment. On this basis, we begin building a theoretical approach to the sociolinguistics of deglobalization, bringing together Foucauldian concepts of sovereignty and violence with decolonial approaches, and integrating recent sociolinguistic work on securitization (Khan 2017, 2020, 2022) to explore how everyday communicative practices can be studied in the context of deglobalization. Finally, we conclude with reflections on methods and ethics in studying the sociolinguistics of deglobalization.

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The sociolinguistics of globalization, as a highly influential paradigm in contemporary sociolinguistics, emerged in the early 2000s as our discipline began grappling with the post-Cold War rise of neoliberal globalization in the 1990s. The ideological roots of neoliberalism itself, however, go much deeper, and can be traced to the 1920s and 1930s, in ideologies that prioritized economic concerns over cultural, ecological, geographical, political, and psychological issues in society, and which were consolidated in the post-WWII period, and institutionalized within state and global politics from the 1970s onwards (Foucault 2008; Dardot & Laval 2014; Slobodian 2018; Davies & Gane 2021). The ideology and practices of governance that took shape at this time combine dueling liberal and conservative values, allowing free market competition to regulate society while protecting certain conservative institutions (like the family and the church) from these effects (Brown 2019; Davies & Gane 2021).

Neoliberalism's complex relationship with libertarianism and conservatism can be clearly observed in its approach to globalizing processes. Though subject to some debate, definitions of globalization used in sociolinguistics generally describe (primarily economic) trans-border relations coupled with increased mobility of goods, capital, people, and discourses around the globe (Blommaert 2010). Certainly, movements of goods, capital, and people are not new (Abu-Lughod 1989). However, manifestations of global connectivity have reached unprecedented levels, thanks to technological innovations in the areas of air travel, satellite communications, the internet, transborder production, and transworld migrants with transborder remittances that have all experienced quantifiable growth since the 1990s (Scholte 2017).

The neoliberal form of globalization is supported by two pillars: privatization and liberalization. Firstly, neoliberalism seeks to privatize everything from education to health services to humanitarian relief, based on the claim that market competition will generate better efficiency and quality of services (Scholte 2017).

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Neoliberalism's liberal pillar then prioritizes trade, finance, and industry in globalization policy by removing officially imposed restrictions of the movement of goods, services, money, and capital between nations, in an attempt to create a free and open market global economy. Though the liberal principle of mobility should in theory extend to the open migration of people, in practice few neoliberals call for this. Herein lies one of many inconsistencies and double standards intrinsic to neoliberal globalization policies, whereby states introduce protectionist measures in some sectors, while demanding unmitigated international market access in others. This has led some to argue that the liberalization of a region often goes hand in hand with protectionism towards the outside world (Scholte 2017).

Ultimately, neoliberal forces facilitate connectivity of institutions and (certain) individuals throughout the world (Mayer & Timberlake 2014), resulting in 'a tremendously complex web of villages, towns, neighborhoods, and settlements connected by material and symbolic ties in often unpredictable ways' (Blommaert 2010:1). Sociolinguists have addressed how language, culture, and identity are 'intrinsically connected to processes of globalization' (Blommaert 2010:2). Specifically, processes of globalization have made 'communication resources like language varieties and scripts globally mobile' (Blommaert & Rampton 2016:2). Trying to capture globalization's impact on language, Vertovec (2007) contended that globalization produces the diversification of diversity, not just in terms of the intermingling of people of a greater variety of ethnic and national origins, but also with regard to the plurality of each individual's identities, linked to various interconnected groups and spaces. This work has spurred claims of the emergence of *superdiversity*, a term coined by Vertovec (2007) to describe contexts where 'contact and interaction (physical or virtual) between nationalities, ethnicities, languages, cultural modes, media, and practices are the norm' (Creese & Blackledge 2018:xxviii).

Sociolinguists who took up Vertovec's notion argued that superdiversity addresses the limitations of previous approaches to language. For instance, Blommaert & Rampton (2011:3) suggest that superdiversity drives researchers to push beyond 'homogeneity, stability and boundedness as the starting assumptions', and instead embrace 'mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding' as the 'central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication'. Sociolinguists of globalization have sought to revise theories such as code-switching in order to better account for 'new' linguistic practices that emerged through globalization processes. Specifically, Blommaert (2010:12) argued that 'conventional treatments of such patterns of shifting and mixing (for instance, 'code-switching', where 'codes' are understood as artefactualized languages) fail to do justice to their complexity'. Blommaert & Backus (2013:5) argued that superdiversity, by contrast, pushes sociolinguists to explore 'new social environments in which we live as characterized by an EXTREMELY LOW DEGREE OF PRESUPPOSABILITY in terms of identities, patterns of social and cultural behavior, social and cultural structure, norms and expectations'. In such new social environments, 'the stability that

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characterized the established notions of language can no longer be maintained in light of the intense forms of mixing and blending occurring in superdiverse communication environments' (Blommaert & Backus 2013:6).

Various theories have been proposed to replace concepts such as code-switching and better capture language use in 'new social environments' (De Meulder, Kusters, Moriarty, & Murray 2019; Karlander & Salö 2023). For instance, the terms *translanguaging* (Baker 2001; Garcia & Wei 2014), *transglossia* (García 2013), *metrolingualism* (Pennycook & Otsuji 2015), and *polylanguaging* (Jørgensen 2008) each focus on different aspects of mobility and diversity of language under globalization. Among them, translanguaging has undoubtedly gained the most traction (Sabino 2018).

Translanguaging, first used by Baker (2001), originally described a pedagogy in which minority languages are used alongside majority language(s) in the classroom. It has since expanded to include everyday multimodal communicative acts in markets, libraries, and other public spaces (De Meulder et al. 2019). An oftencited recent definition is that translanguaging is 'the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for the watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named … languages' (Otheguy, García, & Reid 2015:281). García & Wei (2014:19) further suggested that the term now refers to 'both the complex language practices of plurilingual individuals and communities, as well as the pedagogical approaches that use those complex practices'. To wit, translanguaging can describe multilingual pedagogy, everyday multilingual language practices, cognitive processes, theory of language in education, as well as process of personal and social transformation (Jaspers 2018). The term can also reference the political project of alleviating linguistic inequality by legitimizing the mixing of diverse semiotic and modal repertoires (Garcia & Wei 2014).

Certainly, the concept of translanguaging has had a considerable role in deconstructing language boundaries and recognizing 'the far more complex linguistic repertoires of multilingual speakers' (May 2018:65). However, scholars have noted that the theory falls victim to many of the same shortcomings associated with earlier conventional treatments of language (cf. Blommaert 2010). For instance, May (2018:69) argued that translanguaging presumes that 'all choices are equally available to all multilingual interlocutors'. The concept fails to critique the wider sociohistorical and sociopolitical context that shapes marginalization of minoritized communities that it aims to champion (Bonnin & Unamuno 2021). Translanguaging ignores the constraints imposed by social structures that impact individuals' access to linguistic resources, and their ability and freedom to use them in 'novel and unpredictable ways' which ultimately reinforces existing linguistic inequalities (May 2018). Moreover, Jaspers (2018:2) has highlighted the limitations of translanguaging's social justice project showing how in some cases, it is 'becoming a dominating rather than a liberating force', portraying minority language activists as having rudimentary ideology-laden ideals and translanguaging as 'the only rational, ideology-free option'. He further claims that translanguaging research

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casts fluid language use as indexical of the postmodern ideal of 'being disruptive, critical, agentive, and in tune with a globalized world' (Jaspers 2018:8). By contrast, other linguistic practices are characterized as 'hopelessly outdated' (Jaspers 2018:8), implying clear value judgment on such linguistic practices and neglecting to consider the politics of access to linguistic resources that shapes such practices. Similarly, research by scholars such as De Meulder et al. (2019) shows that translanguaging practices can be harmful to the minoritized communities they are supposed to support, particularly when they are prescribed without considering structural and sensorial asymmetries.

These criticisms of translanguaging extend to the broader notion of superdiversity. Firstly, superdiversity shares translanguaging's ahistorical framing, in that both suggest that diversity and indeed 'complex language practices' (García & Wei 2014:19) are new phenomena, despite similar patterns being observed in various contexts for centuries (Canagarajah & Silberstein 2012; Makoni 2012; Ndhlovu 2016). Secondly, just as translanguaging overlooks the impact of broader sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts on linguistic practice, superdiversity research frequently neglects present political and economic realities. Specifically, superdiversity research typically describes at length patterns of international mobility and flow, without addressing the contexts that have created these movements and migrations (Flores & Lewis 2016). In particular, superdiversity has largely ignored the role of neoliberal forces that have manipulated markets and dispossessed and extracted wealth from minoritized populations, thus causing the massive migrations that shaped 'superdiverse' contexts (cf. Vertovec 2007). Superdiversity scholars' depictions of these contexts also often focus on the increased diversity of some communities whilst overlooking the segregation of many other impoverished and racialized communities (Flores & Lewis 2016).

Finally, translanguaging and superdiversity often reinforce rather than challenge normative assumptions about language. For example, Blommaert & Dong (2007) describe superdiverse linguistic practices involving 'bits' of language drawn from 'truncated' multilingual repertoires. Although Blommaert (2010:103) acknowledges that '[n]o one knows ALL of a language', Flores & Lewis (2016:108) argue that 'practices can only be truncated if there is a whole language that the truncation is intending to reproduce'. Even if this whole language is an ideological image (cf. Blommaert 2010) rather than a linguistic reality, it most often represents 'a national standardized language that continues to be used as an unmarked norm' (Flores & Lewis 2016:108) from which superdiversity researchers measure deviations, in effect (unintentionally) reinforcing a linguistic hierarchy. For instance, Blommaert (2009:423) describes how 'pieces' and '"bits" of languages' are assembled into a 'distorted repertoire', contrasted with a '"normal" repertoire'. Relatedly, harking back to the limitations that prompted the rejection of 'code-switching', while Blommaert (1999) theorizes many of the ideological dimensions of language, in practice superdiversity and translanguaging literature have failed to reject assumptions

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about language with regard to 'language dominance' and 'language proficiency' as supposedly objective processes (Flores & Lewis 2016).

For these reasons, Ndhlovu (2016:35) attests that superdiversity—whilst originally devised as a framework to address the limitations of 'traditional strand-based multiculturalism' popular from the 1960s to late 1990s—privileges and imposes the same Western worldview of languages and identities embedded in these earlier approaches. Building on Quijano (2000), we argue that concepts of superdiversity and translanguaging are still trapped in the 'colonial matrices of power' and 'global imperial designs'. Ultimately, superdiversity and translanguaging are products of neoliberalism, creating 'a careful concealment of power differences' and 'the illusion of equality in a highly asymmetrical world' (Makoni 2012:192) and offering limited practical benefit to meet the complex realities of diversity in people's real lives (Ndhlovu 2016).

These criticisms of superdiversity are particularly cogent if one considers that the objects of superdiversity research primarily focus on global northern contexts: the majority of the most germinal globalization and superdiversity literature primarily discusses contexts in North America and Europe (Vertovec 2007; Blommaert 2010; Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti 2015; Creese & Blackledge 2018). For example, *Language and superdiversity* (Arnaut et al. 2015), contains only three (out of thirteen) contributions focusing on contexts outside the global north, while *Engaging superdiversity* (Arnaut, Karrebæk, Spotti, & Blommaert 2017) contains only two (out of thirteen). Therefore, superdiversity is typically conceptualized as the product of the migration of global southern peoples into global northern space (Simic 2019), as 'asylum seekers, commuting migrants, working migrants, circular migrants, transitory residents, highly skilled labour forces, and the like' (Spotti 2015:262).

Superdiversity research has made important contributions to understanding the power dynamics impacting people inhabiting global northern spaces. And despite the focus on asylum seekers and other migrants within the global north, global southern spaces themselves remain critically understudied. This general pattern holds even within the context of recent growing emphasis on 'southernizing' sociolinguistics (Rudwick & Makoni 2021), and the existence of some work on some specific southern contexts, most notably South Africa. This perennial oversight is particularly galling considering that the effects of globalization have fostered asymmetric power relationships between the developed north and the underdeveloped south that subordinate the socio-economic and political structure of the south to serve the economic interests of the north (Irogbe 2014). In this sense, the failure of superdiversity research to meaningfully engage with global southern contexts renders invisible one of the key effects of globalization to date.[1]

As discussed in the introduction, the neoliberal world order that the sociolinguistics of globalization addressed is now fundamentally shifting. The 2008 global financial crisis (Wallerstein 2008; Altvater 2009), electoral upheavals in Britain and US in 2016 (Jacques 2016), and states' responses to the covid pandemic (e.g. Jones

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& Hameiri 2021) are all indicative of epochal shifts in the role played by the state within the contours of global politics. In examining these changes, some have argued that neoliberal strategies of governance have become strengthened and more deeply entrenched than ever before (e.g. Mirowski 2020), others have suggested that neoliberalism has merely adapted and shifted in its presentation in response to these events (Duncan 2022), while authors such as Davies & Gane (2021) point towards an emerging post-neoliberalism. Regardless of how we explain the altered relationship between states and neoliberal globalization, it is clear that the drastically changed circumstances we now find ourselves in require a sweeping reimagination of how people and language relate to each other. In order to do this, we consider it necessary to take seriously some of the theoretical contestations of key concepts in the sociolinguistics of globalization discussed above. But just as importantly, we also think it is necessary to ground our work in empirical realities of the post-2008 world. In order to do so, the following section examines significant trends and events in China, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Nigeria during the past fifteen years.

CONFRONTING A WORLD OF DEGLOBALIZATION

Confronting these contexts initially presents us with a deceptively familiar picture: states imposing national standard languages. The 1.4 billion people in China, using around 300 distinct languages (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig 2023), are divided in state policy and discourse into a majority group, the Han, constituting 92% of the population, and fifty-five 'national minorities', including Tibetans, Mongolians, Uyghurs, and others (Mullaney 2011); Modern Standard Mandarin (*Putonghua*) is imposed on them all. In Indonesia, home to over 1,300 distinct ethnolinguistic groups using more than 700 languages (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia 2010), Standard Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*) is imposed. Meanwhile, English is promoted as the national language in the Republic of Nigeria, home to 213 million people and approximately 500 distinct languages (Adegbija 2004). And in Ethiopia, home to 120 million people who use more than eighty languages, Amharic is elevated as the state language.[2]

In each country, imposing a national language involves the legal and social subordination of all other languages. China's constitution provides 'minorities' with the freedom to use and develop their languages, but also enshrines Mandarin as the national language, which is backed up by a national language law established in 2000. The Indonesian constitution states that 'local languages' should be respected and preserved, while also enshrining Indonesian as the national language; the education system serves as the primary medium for its imposition (Goebel 2017). In Nigeria, English is imposed despite the fact that only 57.9% of the adult population is literate in the language (National Bureau of Statistics 2010:8; Adegbija 2004). And in Ethiopia, although the constitution declares that all

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languages receive 'equal state recognition', it also names Amharic as the working language of the federal government (Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1995).

In all of these states, the deglobalizing turn since 2008 has seen the deployment of intensifying state power to promote national standard languages and subordinate other languages. However, as the following sections show, this is only one part of a much more complex story.

Intensifying state power

In the post-2008 era of deglobalization, state power, involving both the ability to perpetrate violence and the control of institutional structures which regulate it (Jun 2019; Acheson 2022), has been deployed with increasing intensity. During this period, the four states we focus on have all subordinated the rights and interests of minoritized groups to intensified state-building activities, the violent maintenance of territorial integrity, and the consolidation of political unity through assimilation. Movements for both self-determination and succession have been violently suppressed, while civil society and human rights defenders have been attacked.

The Chinese government has become increasingly authoritarian under Xi Jinping, who came to power in 2013. Since that time, there has been a concerted crackdown on human rights defenders, as well as new legal restrictions on domestic and international civil society, which together heavily delimit possibilities for political change (Spires 2018; Howell 2019). As we explore below, this has been particularly prevalent in minority regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang. The state has also extended its control over the former British colony of Hong Kong, effectively crushing its democracy.

Indonesia has experienced democratic decline since 2014, characterized by rising populism, declining civil liberties, and increasing state violence against the nation's Indigenous peoples (Anderson 2015; Mietzner 2018; Aspinall Fossati, Muhtadi, & Warburton 2020; Tomsa 2022). The 'morality laws' introduced in December of 2022 restrict freedom of assembly and outlaw insults to the president, state institutions, and state ideology (Lindsey 2022). Intensifications of state power are particularly evident in West Papua, where violence and criminalization against Indigenous peoples have increased dramatically since 2018 (Siringoringo & Mambor 2020; Roche, Hammine, Hernandez, & Kruk 2023). Furthermore, the planned movement of Indonesia's capital to Kalimantan, set to begin in 2024, is already displacing Indigenous people from their ancestral lands (Washington & Hasibuan 2023).

In Nigeria, evidence of intensifying state power during this time includes the introduction of the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition act in 2014 and banning of Twitter from June 2021 to January 2022. A 2015 Cybercrime Act has been used to target journalists that are critical of the government, and a bill to regulate non-government organizations, under discussion since 2016, is widely considered to

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be a significant danger to civil society, as it gives the state increased surveillance and regulation powers. Finally, state military power has been increased throughout this period in response to the Islamist Boko Haram insurgency, beginning in mid 2009, and ongoing conflicts in the Niger Delta, particularly since 2016.

Finally, the most visible sign of intensified state power in Ethiopia in the period under consideration has been the 2020 war against the northern state of Tigray (Plaut & Vaughan 2023). The human rights violations and atrocities committed by the Ethiopian state during the conflict included forcing people in Tigray and adjoining regions to use Amharic, and the banning of Tigrayan and other languages (Human Rights Watch 2022). Across the longer deglobalizing period, we see the Ethiopian state repeatedly engaging in violence to repress protests (described in the following section), demonstrating the state's willingness to use violence and commit human rights violations to maintain its territorial integrity and continue carrying out its assimilatory project.

In all these cases, then, we see an increase in the state's legal and military apparatus since 2008, which it uses to curtail the rights and freedoms of minoritized populations.

Constrained resistance

If the period since 2008 has been characterized by intensifying state power, it has also been characterized by growing, but constrained, resistance. The decade from 2010 to 2020 saw more people mobilize in mass demonstrations that any other decade in history (Bevins 2023). In all four of our case studies, the years since 2008 have been characterized by intensifying but patchy and constrained resistance. To some extent, the intensification of resistance demonstrates the intensification of the grievances under strengthening state power: since 2008, resistance movements in these four countries have mobilized enormous numbers of people, who in some cases have taken up arms and even engaged in suicide protests against the state, in part to defend their languages.

In China, the dynamic interplay between repression and resistance during this period is most clearly seen in relation to Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Mongols. 2008 saw the most widespread protests amongst Tibetans in modern history. These protests demanded (among other things) greater state support for the Tibetan language. After these protests were violently suppressed, a grassroots Tibetan language movement appeared, pervading Tibetan daily life until it was criminalized in 2016. Meanwhile, between 2009 and 2023, 160 Tibetans carried out self-immolation protests, many calling for protections for the Tibetan language (Roche 2024). In Xinjiang, 2009 saw violent protests, leading to a spiral of securitization that culminated in the construction of a massive system of internment camps, where up to a million people were incarcerated; inmates were forbidden from speaking Uyghur, Kazakh, and other languages, and forced to speak Mandarin (Byler 2022). In 2020, Mongols engaged in school strikes, online protests, petitions, and eight suicide protests in

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response to enforced reductions to the use of Mongolian in schools across Inner Mongolia, followed by censorship and an intense propaganda campaign (Baioud & Khuanuud 2023).

In Indonesia, wings of *Organisasi Papua Merdeka*—the 'Free Papua Movement'—have staged protests and demonstrations advocating for West Papuan independence for several decades and have consistently been met with violent responses from the state, in the form of severe restrictions on civil liberties, including freedoms of movement, speech, and assembly (Anderson 2015). In recent years, violent repression of West Papuans has increased, with state responses to West Papuan activism in 2018 and 2019 causing the displacement of tens of thousands, and deaths of an estimated 300 people (Harsano 2018; Human Rights Watch 2019; Radio New Zealand 2019).

In Nigeria, national ethnic movements including Egbesu Boys of Africa, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), and the O'odua People's Congress (OPC) represent and protest for the interests of specific ethnic groups, with some even calling for separation from the Nigerian state (Salami 2004; Otuonye 2019). The government has responded by violently repressing such groups and related social movements, most recently the Pro-Biafra movements since 2015 (Otuonye 2019) and the 'EndSARS' demonstrations since 2017 (#EndSARS Movement 2021). Meanwhile in Ethiopia, protest by and state attacks on aggrieved ethnic groups seeking greater self-determination have characterized the last fifteen years, but particularly the period since 2015, when Oromo people in southern Ethiopia began protesting against the federal government. Further protests took place intermittently throughout 2016 and 2017, and again in 2019.

Although a clear dynamic of resistance and repression emerges here, what should also be noted is that in all of these states, resistance is restricted to certain groups: not all oppressed populations engage in explicit, organized, public resistance. Whether due to their demographic size, influence in elite politics, or mobilization by transnational diasporas, groups such as Tibetans in China, West Papuans in Indonesia, Hausa in Nigeria, and Oromo in Ethiopia have been more successful in mobilizing against the state. This, in turn, has led to a form of accommodation by the state that we refer to as 'differential inclusion'.

Differential inclusion

Yan Le Espiritu (2003:47) uses the term *differential inclusion* to describe a strategy whereby certain minoritized groups are 'deemed integral to the nation… only or precisely because of their designated subordinate standing'. Each of our case study states engages in differential inclusion to some degree, granting particularly minoritized groups recognition that it withholds others. This has, in turn, impacted how these states have governed languages in the era of deglobalization.

In China, the state engages in differential inclusion through a de facto policy of recognizing only a single language for each of the fifty-six 'nationalities', including

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the national minorities and the majority Han (Roche 2019). For example, in the case of Tibetans, the state recognizes only a single Tibetan language, though Tibetans use dozens of distinct languages (Roche 2024). Even then, only in the case of the larger 'minority' groups is any policy or materials support provided, meaning that beyond the promotion of the national state language, only a handful or languages receive any support at all.

In Indonesia, a limited number of regional languages (*Bahasa Daerah)* retain a minor position in the state curriculum and other public institutions (Dardjowidjojo 1998). One of the most prominent regional languages is Javanese, spoken by over 30% of the total Indonesian population. It is officially recognized as a regional language and is a compulsory local content subject in schools in Central Java, East Java and the Special District of Yogyakarta. There are also institutions that promote an expanded role for regional languages, such as the Dewan Bahasa Jawa (DBJ) 'Javanese Language Council' who work to develop policy and curriculum for Javanese, and alongside other school communities, activists, and educators, have historically pushed back on government proposals to remove regional languages from the curriculum (Kurniasih 2016).

In Nigeria, three demographically sizeable and regionally consolidated languages—Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba—are officially recognized as national languages. According to Nigeria's 'other tongue policy', Nigerians are required to learn at least one of these national languages whilst maintaining their mother tongue (Salami 2004). Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, differential inclusion is evident in the fact that in 2020, a proposal was put forward to recognize four additional official languages: Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali, and Afar (Getachew 2020).

Thus, the intensifying power of these states is used to provide limited recognition and support for some communities: 'national minorities' in China; 'regional languages' in Indonesia; Nigeria's three regional languages; and larger ethnic languages in Ethiopia. However, this differential inclusion is the exception, not the rule. Most linguistic communities in these countries have experienced the intensifying state power of the post-2008 period as a form of violence we term *organized abandonment*.

Organized abandonment

In each of our case studies, the majority of linguistic communities are subjected to programs of elimination through a condition of deliberate and harmful neglect that Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) terms *organized abandonment*. The broad impacts of this uneven oppression are seen in patterns of language shift. In China, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, language shift is primarily occurring AWAY from languages that are managed through organized abandonment, and TOWARDS not only national languages, but also towards other languages that are often minimally supported by the state via differential inclusion. Therefore, in the online Catalogue of Endangered Languages,[3] we find that some shift is occurring towards Lisu in China, towards

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Oromo in Ethiopia, towards Bugis in Indonesia, and towards Hausa in Nigeria, for example. The imposition of national languages is therefore only part of broader story: the intensification of state power aims primarily at the destruction of diversity rather than homogenization.

In China, unrecognized languages receive no support in policy or practice, while the languages used by minority nationalities that received de facto recognition are legally and materially subordinated to the national language, Mandarin Chinese, giving rise to widespread, rapid language shift, endangering about half of the country's languages.[4] Various estimates now suggest that rapid language shift is happening for at least half of China's languages (Xu 2013). In Indonesia, smaller (non-indigenous) languages like Chinese Teochew and Khek, spoken in West Kalimantan, have no recognition as regional languages and no official role in any educational context (Birnie-Smith 2022), while the multitude of Indigenous languages in West Papua are unsupported; endangerment rates stand at approximately forty percent of all languages.

In Nigeria, languages other than officially recognized national languages experience official neglect at regional and national levels evidenced through their low development status, absence of political and economic power, limited space in education, and their speakers' subjection to discrimination (Adegbija 2004; Salami 2004; Ogunmodimu 2015; Acheoah & Olaleye 2019). In effect, the government is implementing a two-stage assimilationist project, merging diverse ethnolinguistic groups into the three majority ethnic/language groups (Ogunmodimu 2015; Acheoah & Olaleye 2019). This has produced an endangerment rate of approximately thirty-five percent. In Ethiopia, despite making small concessions to some of the country's larger minoritized languages, the Ethiopian state has consistently promoted Amharic and English at the expense of other languages. The Endangered Languages Catalogue lists forty-five endangered languages in Ethiopia (i.e. around half of the country's languages), most of which are small and not represented by political movements, meaning that the state can continue oppressing these groups with impunity.

Thus, despite the intensifying resistance of some groups, the state's assimilatory projects are clearly working, particularly in eliminating groups that are targeted for organized abandonment. This accounts for the patterns of massive language loss described above. In each of our case study countries, language reclamation is primarily taking place among those groups that are subjected to differential inclusion, and even that exists in tension with ongoing and intensifying repression. What we therefore see is a clear pattern of intensifying destruction of diversity. However, rather than leading to total homogenization and the dominance of single national languages, this is leading to a situation where national languages exist in tension with several regionally or ethnically dominant languages, while large swathes of other languages are eliminated.

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CONCLUSION: THEORIZING AND DOING THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF DEGLOBALIZATION

Sociolinguistics' enduring fascination with globalization has poorly equipped us to engage with significant developments in world politics over the past fifteen years. During this time, globalization and sovereignty—always in tension within the modern world system—have realigned in an ongoing reformulation of global politics that, for now at least, sees the sovereign state ascendant over neoliberal globalization. We conclude with some thoughts on how to theorize and carry out research on the sociolinguistics of deglobalization.

In building a theoretically informed understanding of the sociolinguistics of deglobalization, we draw on work from the 'security turn' in sociolinguistics (Khan 2017, 2020) including recent theorization of (in)security and sovereignty (Rampton, Silva, & Charalambous 2024). In doing so, we also suggest that the sociolinguistics of deglobalization should follow anthropologists in taking a 'dark' turn to focus on 'power, domination, inequality, and oppression' and 'the harsh and brutal dimensions of human experience, and the structural and historical conditions that produce them' (Ortner 2016:47, 49). The sociolinguistics of deglobalization would thus focus on the many ways that states, through increasingly muscular expressions of sovereignty, wield various forms of violence to constrain and coerce linguistic choices in ways that drive destruction and cause harm.

Doing so requires us to draw selectively from the sociolinguistics of globalization: the concept of securitization we use below originally emerged from the sociolinguistics of globalization. At the same time, however, advancing a sociolinguistics of deglobalization suggests we need to invert many of the central concepts and guiding principles of the sociolinguistics of globalization. Instead of focusing on the consumer-citizen floating freely in the market, we must now attend those who the state labels 'enemies, terrorists, inferior races' (Rampton et al. 2024:303): to the immobilized subject entombed in the state. Rather than choice amongst linguistic resources creating commodifiable repertoires, we should examine how coercion and violence constrain available options and consider how language acts as a shibboleth: a source of risk and vulnerability for marginalized communities (Khan 2020, 2022; Roche 2022). Instead of various forms of volitional mobility and flow, we should focus on forced displacement and relocation, concentration and internment, and the role of 'walls and fortifications' (Rampton et al. 2024:303). And finally, instead of attending to the unprecedented conjunctures and novel emergences of globalization, we must dig deeper to expose the enduring legacies of colonial violence.

Key to this shift is a focus on sovereignty as a structure that suffuses communicative practice. Beyond the 'classical' theories of sovereignty already discussed above, we consider Michel Foucault's work on this topic particularly fit to task for its capacity to analyse the violence inherent in sovereignty. His central work on this topic is the lecture series *Society must be defended* (2003), in which he

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argues that although the modern state typically exercises power in order to manage life (a capacity referred to as biopower), it does so by strategically deploying the sovereign power to kill against targeted, racialized populations. This insight has been developed by Achille Mbembé (2003) through his work on necropolitics, which explores how the state unevenly distributes death via the creation of 'death worlds': 'forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*' (Mbembé 2003:40, italics in original). Recent work has shown how these death worlds operate through a combination of direct physical violence and more diffuse forms of slow violence, with the deliberate aim of structuring sociolinguistic choice in ways that drive destruction of both diversity and bodies (Roche 2022).

Understanding sovereignty's role in deglobalization requires us to examine how it is embedded within and sustained by broader systems that transcend individual states. Theories of coloniality are well-suited to this end, as they show how the sovereignty of individual states is embedded within the conceptual and material matrices of colonial modernity (Quijano 2000). Although this brings our approach into broad alignment with sociolinguistics' growing emphasis on coloniality (Heugh, Stroud, Taylor-Leech, & De Costa 2021; Antia & Makoni 2022), we also diverge somewhat in emphasizing the crucial importance of going beyond the widespread emphasis on coloniality primarily as an epistemic phenomenon. Instead, our approach demands that we focus on coloniality's materiality as expressed through control of land and bodies (Tuck & Yang 2012).

Tracing connections between sovereignty and coloniality is complex. Previous scholarship suggests we need to be alert to how colonial forms of domination are reproduced by state elites in the absence of 'foreign' colonizers (Woldeyes 2017) and in contexts beyond those canonically considered colonial (Stoler, McGranahan, & Perdue 2007). Doing so also entails remaining conscious of the argument of Foucault, Mbembé, and others that racism is integral to sovereignty, and hence wherever we conduct our research, we must attend to local, contextually specific raciolinguistic practices (Wong, Su, & Hiromoto 2021). We must also be attentive to how coloniality manifests in resistance movements when they aim to appropriate rather than undermine state discourses and power (Roche 2019). This is particularly the case amongst those marginalized yet dominating groups that are subjected to 'differential inclusion', and understanding this is key to distinguishing their plight and predicament from those of populations subjected to organized abandonment.

Finally, to move beyond these larger concerns with violence, sovereignty, and coloniality, we turn to the concept of sociolinguistics and (in)securitization to explore how the dynamics of deglobalization manifests in everyday communicative practices (Khan 2017, 2020, 2022; Rampton & Charalambous 2020; Rampton et al. 2024). This work looks at how state efforts to ensure their own security produces insecuritization for populations deemed threatening. In this context, communicative practices become one of many venues whereby individuals are subject to

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surveillance and forced to undertake ameliorative 'facework' to demonstrate their innocence or mark their resistance to state power. We suggest that the sociolinguistics of deglobalization can fruitfully extend the study of these (in)securitization dynamics by focusing on the figure of the 'petty sovereign' (Butler 2004; Roche 2024) in these interactions: the interlocutor who wittingly or otherwise acts as an agent of state power. This might include not only formal state agents such as teachers, police officers, and border officials, but anyone who speaks from a position of privilege beyond the state's death worlds.

We also wish to offer some final practical and ethical suggestions about studying the sociolinguistics of deglobalization. Attempting to understand the violence of increasing expressions of state sovereignty, its impact on restricted linguistic choice, and its destructive trajectories, will require innovative methods to work in such challenging contexts. Researchers in adjacent disciplines have grappled with the important questions of field access, research methods, and researcher positionality in authoritarian and other nondemocratic contexts (Unger 1987; Yusupova 2019; Käihkö 2020; Stroup & Goode 2023). A sociolinguistics of deglobalization needs to learn from these lessons.

In undertaking research in sites of repression and violence, ethical concerns should be central to any sociolinguistics of deglobalization. We advocate for a partisan approach (Greco 2016) that unambiguously takes the side of the marginalized and oppressed. Specifically, given the dynamics of uneven oppression and ongoing destruction described above, we advocate for undertaking research for the benefit of, and from the standpoint of, those whom the state targets for 'organized abandonment'. An ethical commitment to the plight and standpoint of these groups places the sociolinguistics of deglobalization in conversation with recent calls to 'southernize' the discipline, by shifting our focus to the 'people, places, and ideas that have been left out of the grand narrative of modernity' (Rudwick & Makoni 2021:259) and 'have systematically suffered injustice, oppression, and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy' (de Sousa Santos 2018:1). Doing so will enable us to not only become better attuned to the realities of a rapidly changing world, but will also help fulfill the vision of a more just and decolonial study of sociolinguistics that works to resist the uneven necropolitical consequences of deglobalization.

NOTES

*Gerald Roche would like to acknowledge that this work was written on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people, and to also note that the institution where he wrote this article, La Trobe University, is named after Charles La Trobe, who played a key role in the dispossession and genocide of Aboriginal peoples in what is today the state of Victoria. He hopes the university will change its name. Jess Kruk would like to acknowledge that she is a settler living and working on unceded Wadjuk Noongar Boodja. Both authors thank the reviewers and editors for their input into the article.

[1]In encouraging greater focus on the global south in sociolinguistic research, we are not advocating for 'parachute research' whereby 'international scientists, typically from higher-income countries, conduct

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field studies in another country, typically of lower income, and then complete the research in their home country without any further effective communication and engagement with others from that nation' (Stefanoudis, Licuanan, Morrison, Talma, Veitayaki, & Woodall 2021:R184). Instead, we call for more collaborative research with scholars from the global south.

[2]Whilst the Ethnologue currently records eighty-seven languages (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig 2023), previous government censuses in 1984 and 1994 have listed eighty-four and seventy-seven languages, respectively (the most recent census, in 2007, did not record data on language; Central Statistical Authority 1991; Hudson 1999).

[3]See https://www.endangeredlanguages.com/

[4]Total numbers of languages are taken from Eberhard et al. (2023) and the number of endangered languages is taken from the Catalogue of Endangered Languages via https://www.endangeredlanguages.com/.

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