

Geopolitics from Below: State-Diaspora Interplay and the Social Origins of Global China

Wednesday, May 7, 2025 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM Pacific Time

In-person Event Only | ERC Conference Room 115



Jiaqi Liu

Jiaqi Liu is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Singapore Management University. His research lies at the intersection of political sociology, international migration, digital technology, and Global China. His work has been recognized with five Best Article Awards and two Honorable Mentions from the American Sociological Association.

This talk expands the study of state-society relations into the global context by examining China's engagement with its overseas populations, or diasporas. While existing research on diaspora politics primarily explores how national governments mobilize emigrants for economic and political gains, this talk shifts the lens to everyday interactions among grassroots actors, especially hometown officials and diaspora leaders. Drawing on fieldwork in China and Europe, I argue that Chinese diaspora politics is fundamentally shaped by grassroots actors' pragmatic efforts to advance their careers and enhance symbolic capital. I conceptualize this interactive, reciprocal relationship as transborder symbiosis. This synergy constructs a façade of China's expanding overseas influence, but also provokes transnational repression and diplomatic tensions, such as allegations of "China Threat" and "secret police stations." By unravelling the social origins of Global China, I show how local-level relations and performative engagement underpin geopolitical transformations.

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