Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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“Rethinking Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class: A Corporate Network Approach toward the China-U.S. Trade War and Inter-Imperialist Rivalry”

Department of Sociology

Friday, September 11, 2020
2:00 P.M.
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. William Carroll, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Min Zhou, Department of Sociology, UVic (Member)
Dr. Martha McMahon, Department of Sociology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Feng Xu, Department of Political Science, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Carmen Galang, School of Business, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The arrest of Meng Wanzhou and the Huawei prosecution have revealed a mounting battle for high-tech supremacy between the United States and China. The ongoing technology war and the trade war are merely one dimension of a far-reaching and accelerating imperialist rivalry. The changing reality on the world stage has urged a reconsideration of the thesis of transnational capitalist class (TCC) and theory of globalization in general. By reviewing the historical debate between the globalist and critical realist schools, I argue that William Carroll’s theoretical frame of global capitalism grounded in corporate network research through emphasizing a dialectical process of the ‘making’ of the TCC is better equipped to explain the unfolding Sino-U.S. conflict. Following Carroll’s multilayered approach to corporate network research, I conduct a corporate network analysis to examine the directorate interlocks of 40 Chinese transnational corporations (TNCs) selected from the Fortune Global 500 list. My study has found that the transnational networks of Chinese TNCs have remained considerably sparse, contained within condensed national networks. The globalization of Chinese capitals has been modest and has not undermined or replaced the national base. This is due to two crucial reasons: the statist character of Chinese capitalist class and the regionalized development of global capitalism and class formation. In concordance with Carroll’s network research of Western companies, my study of corporate China reaffirms the fragility of the TCC, its internal friction, and potential decomposition. It also provides a material ground for analyzing the Sino-U.S. inter-imperialist rivalry as a structural development out of global capitalism and its class relations. My thesis study, therefore, offers the first attempt to draw a direct linkage between corporate network formation and geopolitical conflict.