



THE GEOPOLITICAL COMPASS

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A monthly digest compiled by CIGA's staff researchers of important strategic reports, articles and analyses produced by multiple and myriad sources related to center's areas of interest. CIGA does not necessarily approve, endorse, or promote the conclusions or positions of the selections in the digest.

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WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Elizabeth Economy’s page at the Hoover Institution. Elizabeth Economy is the Hargrove Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. From 2021 to 2023, Economy served as a senior foreign advisor for China in the Department of Commerce for the current administration. Previously, she was at the Council on Foreign Relations, and she has served as an advisor or researcher for various institutions. Economy is an acclaimed author and expert on Chinese domestic and foreign policy. In June 2018, Politico Magazine named her one of the “10 Names That Matter on China Policy.” She has authored several books, with her most recent being “The World According to China” (2022).

Link: <https://www.hoover.org/profiles/elizabeth-economy>

Geopolitical Focus of the Month

A Conversation with **Elizabeth Economy**: “Navigating the Future of U.S./China Relations” at Teneo.(May 2, 2024, 66 min)

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZegrlsuO6M>

Title: Conflict in the Neo-Colonial Order in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia-Tigray

Author: Tunç Demirtaş



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Keywords: *Neo-Colonialism, Ethiopia, Tigray Crisis, Horn of Africa, The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)*

Brief:

This article analyses the Tigray crisis in Ethiopia through the lens of neo-colonialism. The author emphasizes that although colonialism as the preeminent international system has ended, the power struggle in Africa continues through neo-colonialism. The study aims to demonstrate a neo-colonial agenda in the indirect involvement of global and regional actors in the Ethiopian-Tigray conflict.

The study is divided into 4 axes:

In the first axis, Neo-Colonialism in the 21st Century?, the author attempts to clarify the concept of neo-colonialism by distinguishing it from colonialism and imperialism. He argues that the main difference between these concepts is the different forms of influence colonial countries hold over their colonies in general. Colonialism encompasses direct control over colonies, whereas imperialism can provide a wider sphere of influence. Neo-colonialism generally works through economic fields, through which colonial countries tries to indirectly control other countries. The term also refers to how governments control and exploit other countries even after the end of colonialism in Africa.

Neo-colonialism is when powerful countries and large corporations control weaker nations using global capitalism instead of ruling them directly. This pattern began emerging after African countries gained independence, showing how the concept has evolved.

The author chose to focus on Africa, considering it the continent most ravaged by colonialism in the past and one that still suffers from its repercussions.

He claims that the neo-colonial process in this continent was first carried out by actors with colonial pasts, such as the UK, France, and Italy, etc. However, later, global actors such as the U.S, China, Russia, and regional actors such as India, UAE, and Saudi Arabia started to participate actively in the geopolitical landscape of Africa.

After this conceptual first axis, Demirtaş moves on to study the case he selected in Africa. **The Ethiopian-Tigray Issue: A Proxy War in the Shadow of Neo-Colonialism**, returns to the history of Ethiopia, one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. The author considers the modern history of Ethiopia, as this country faced separatist movements in the 1960s, leading to fragility. Liberation movements based on ethnic origins, such as ELF, EPLF, TPLF, and OLF, emerged during this period and remain influential. These ethnic-based organizations are among the most pressing issues needing resolution.

Although Ethiopia does not have a colonial past, being only temporarily occupied by the European colonial powers, this independence it gained by fighting the occupiers. In the Tigray crisis, the author assumes that a war for neo-colonialism is being waged in Ethiopia through the Western media and the TPLF, whom Western government support.

The roots of the Ethiopian-Tigray issue trace back to when the Tigray region began gaining political power following the military coup in Ethiopia in 1974. In 1991, a coalition led by the TPLF played a significant role in overthrowing the Derg regime, which operated under a unitary state system in Ethiopia. The TPLF, along with other organizations like the EPRDF, aimed to establish a more inclusive and decentralized political system to accommodate the diverse ethnic groups in the country.

At the domestic level, the author identifies the conflicting parties as the TPLF troops and the central government. Regionally, in Africa, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea are notable in the context of regional power and economic rivalry. Egypt and Sudan may benefit from Ethiopia's instability, particularly due to their opposition to the Renaissance Dam project on the Blue Nile River, which helps maintain their regional power. However, the situation differs for Somalia and Eritrea. The Ethiopian Prime Minister allied with the then Somali and Eritrean Presidents. Nonetheless, there are claims that this alliance lost power with the election of Hasan Sheikh Mahmud instead of Farmajo in Somalia's presidential elections held on May 15, 2022.

Now, shifting to the third axis in the study titled **Neo-Colonial Competition in the Shadow of the New Cold War**, Demirtaş argues that countries such as the U.S, China, Egypt, Sudan, and Eritrea are actors that have the potential to influence the course of the conflict with the TPLF in Ethiopia. The study focuses on identifying the role of the United States as a key Western player, alongside the roles of regional states such as Sudan, Egypt, and Eritrea. It also compares the United States and the European Union in terms of how American policies contribute to the conflict against China in the region. Meanwhile, the author excludes Turkey from the neo-colonial perspective and includes it as an alternative regional player.

Starting by **The U.S.: A Complex Relationship**, with the emergence of the Tigray crisis, Ethiopia's relations with the U.S. and the West began to deteriorate, as the government came under strong criticism. While the U.S. and the West previously referred to Abiy Ahmed as their close strategic partner and a cornerstone of security, this shifted due to widespread international opinion that suggests the possibility of the U.S. using the TPLF as a proxy actor to undermine Ethiopia's stability, considering Ethiopia's historical role as an 'anchor state' in the Horn of Africa region. However, what benefit would the United States gain from supporting the TPLF?

The author argues that it is believed that the United States seeks to drag the Horn of Africa into an environment of turmoil and instability, with the aim of undermining China, one of its major competitors, and its influence in the region. On the other hand, it is known that the United States and the West still need an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative. In summary, when the instability in Ethiopia is considered in conjunction with the interconnected structure of the region, it is likely to impact the Horn of Africa and all of East Africa. It is known that the connection between the Belt and Road Initiative and Djibouti is of vital importance to Ethiopia.

As for the role of China in this conflict, in **China: A Strategic Partner**, the author argues that the Tigray crisis is crucial for China, which has more than four billion dollars' worth of sectoral investments in Ethiopia today. Nonetheless, it has an approach of non-interference in Ethiopia's internal affairs. However, the degree to which it supports the current government against the Tigray crisis is under question.

Against the U.S. and its allies, China has also stated that it will stick to its consistent position and will stand up to external powers that interfere in Ethiopia's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights. Nonetheless, this crisis poses serious risk to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), since China constantly emphasizes that development is only possible with security and stability.

In this context, the author claims that neo-colonialism appears, because China's economic presence in Ethiopia, including infrastructure projects and financing, reflects a form of economic influence that aligns with the neo-colonialist tendencies of exploiting resources and maintaining economic dominance.

Now moving to a regional actor and neighbor of Ethiopia, **Eritrea: Once an Enemy, Now an Ally**, Eritrea which sided with Ethiopia and China, is seen as siding with the Tigray Issue. Eritrea's recent involvement in the conflicts in the Tigray region is also interpreted as an attempt to reintroduce itself to the regional system. The author believes that the Tigray crisis presented two opportunities to Eritrea:

The first is ending Eritrea's long years of isolation from the international system; **the second** is re-influencing Ethiopia's internal affairs. Thus, the second opportunity also opened up Eritrea with an opportunity to take revenge on the TPLF. This suggests a desire for power and influence, which aligns with the neo-colonialist tendencies of powerful nations or actors.

The relations between the two countries are deep and interconnected, as Demirtaş claims that Eritrea's regional policies have been constantly influenced by Ethiopia. According to the periods, Ethiopia is sometimes an obstacle and sometimes an opportunity for Eritrea, and Eritrea currently sees the Tigray crisis as an opportunity.

Another important regional actor in this conflict is Egypt and Sudan, which the author discusses under the heading Frenemies: Egypt and Sudan.

In Egypt's search for geopolitical hegemony on the Blue Nile River, the continuation of the crisis in Ethiopia provides an advantage. Ethiopia's accusation that Egypt is supporting the instability in the country increased the already tense state between the two countries. This pursuit of dominance and control over the Nile River can be seen as a manifestation of neo-colonial tendencies, as it involves a powerful nation seeking to assert its influence over a neighboring country.

On the other hand, Ethiopia's moderate approach toward Sudan strengthens its position in the negotiations on the Nile basin, creating a disadvantage for Egypt.

Although Ethiopia's stability will keep Sudan from conflict zones, refugee influx, and human smuggling, there are uncertainties in Sudan's current political situation. Sudan, which had good relations with the TPLF in the past, brings about a complex situation. This can be considered neo-colonial, as neo-colonialism often involves using divisions or conflicts within regions to advance an actor's interests and maintain control.

Egypt and Sudan are not the only Arab countries concerned with this crisis, as we cannot ignore the role of the United Arab Emirates, which has increased its influence in the Horn of Africa in recent years and is an actor with high strategic flexibility. The UAE is trying to establish political and security systems in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region. This can also be perceived as a sign of behavior in line with the neo-colonial tendency to exert control or influence over the region to advance its interests.

After the author discusses the roles of regional and international actors, he moves on to the fourth and final axis in this study, **The Future of the Ethiopia-Tigray Issue: Is Turkey's Approach an Alternative?**

The author believes that Turkey, which has essential relations and investments in the Horn of Africa, will be adversely affected by the instability in the region. The fact that the U.S., the UK, and other Western countries act for their interests rather than the region's interests and international pressure on Ethiopia leads it to different alternatives, such as Turkey. Turkey, which has significant experience in regional and global crises, has established military and financial cooperation with Ethiopia. Increasing collaboration between the two countries strategically makes it possible for Turkey to create a balance of power, especially as an essential player in the Horn of Africa.

Demirtaş argues that Turkey's call for a 'peaceful solution' to the Tigray crisis and its willingness to mediate in the conflict between Sudan and Ethiopia shows that Turkey is the actor with the strongest desire for stability in the region.

The author concludes that the Tigray crisis in Ethiopia embodies a neo-colonial struggle, positing it as a zero-sum game for foreign entities. Resolving this issue necessitates robust diplomatic efforts and mediation. The persistence of neo-colonial dynamics within the Tigray crisis underscores the imperative for stability, both within Ethiopia and across the broader region, contingent upon the actions of foreign actors.

Conversely, the involvement of alternative players like Turkey, devoid of colonial legacies and refraining from neo-colonial interventions, could potentially catalyze crisis resolution. Their initiatives aimed at stabilizing the region and safeguarding state structures and territorial integrity, while respecting internal affairs, might contribute significantly to resolving the crisis.

By: Chourouk Mestour, *Ph.D. Candidate in International Relations*

Title: A Constructivist
Analysis of the Bilateral
Relations Between South
Africa and China

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Keywords: *China, Direct Foreign Investment, Asymmetrical Relations*

Brief:

In the 20th century, the prospect of establishing official diplomatic relations between South Africa and China, alongside other developing nations, seemed highly unlikely due to South Africa's apartheid system. Initially, there were limited diplomatic ties between South Africa and China from 1949, mainly between the National Party of South Africa and China's Nationalists. Despite having common interests in combating international isolation, relations remained limited to the consular level for almost three decades. However, a significant shift occurred in 1971 when the United Nations recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate representative of China, prompting South Africa to intensify its engagement with the Republic of China (ROC) based in Taiwan. This upgrade led to enhanced political and economic bonds, characterized by increased trade and investment. Furthermore, official visits and cultural exchanges further strengthened relations between South Africa and the ROC. Despite external pressures to align with the PRC, South Africa maintained its relationship with the ROC until the political transformations of the 1990s. Concurrently, the Communist Party of China (CPC) began forming connections with South African political groups, particularly the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), offering support in their anti-apartheid struggle.

However, tensions arose due to suspicions of clandestine trade with the apartheid regime and the Sino-Vietnam conflict. Relations between the PRC and the ANC-SACP alliance were later revived through diplomatic initiatives. Nonetheless, the ROC's ties with South Africa endured, as evidenced by significant contributions during South Africa's transition to democracy. Despite political changes, the ROC remained hopeful of preserving relations under the new ANC-led government.

Upon assuming power in 1994 following victory in the general elections, the African National Congress (ANC) under Nelson Mandela's leadership faced a twofold challenge regarding China.

The ANC had to decide whether to (1) maintain relations with the Republic of China (ROC), a legacy from the apartheid era, while establishing ties with the People's Republic of China (PRC), or (2) sever ties with the ROC and adhere to the One China policy advocated by the PRC. This deliberation was crucial given the ANC's historical ties with China, especially with Nelson Mandela as a highly esteemed figure in global politics. While the global community, which supported South Africa during apartheid, welcomed the new government, the ROC in Taiwan encountered mounting pressure as only a few states recognized it compared to the widespread recognition of the PRC. Despite years of engagement since the 1950s, relations between the ANC and the PRC faced challenges over time.

The PRC did not anticipate delays in formalizing relations with South Africa post-1994, given their shared history in the anti-apartheid struggle. Nevertheless, President Mandela's orientation towards a "dual recognition" policy of maintaining ties with both the ROC and the PRC took the latter by surprise. This shift was attributed to economic factors, including Taiwan's economic performance and contributions. Despite objections from the PRC, Mandela persisted in pursuing dual recognition. Over time, the ROC encountered increasing international isolation as more countries moved to recognition of the PRC. President Mandela's inaugural visit to China in 1998 marked the beginning of official South Africa-China relations. Subsequently, bilateral ties deepened, evolving into a comprehensive strategic partnership characterized by heightened trade, investments, and various exchanges. South Africa became a gateway for China into Africa, offering export opportunities and access to raw materials. In turn, South Africa viewed China as a critical partner in global politics, particularly amid the transition towards multi-polarity favoring developing countries.

Under President Jacob Zuma's leadership, South Africa-China relations gained further momentum, marked by frequent high-level visits and enhanced cooperation across sectors. The Inter-Ministerial Joint Working Group on Cooperation, established during President Xi Jinping's visit to South Africa in 2013, facilitated regular interactions between the two nations. Economic collaboration flourished, with China emerging as Africa's largest exporter and South Africa's top trading partner on the continent. However, critics argue that the relationship is highly lopsided, with South Africa heavily dependent on China. Concerns about subordination to Chinese influence arise due to South Africa's perceived lack of a clear strategy. The vast disparities in population, military expenditure, and overall capabilities between the two nations underscore the existing imbalance in their relationship. China's substantial investment in Africa is underscored by the exponential growth in China-Africa trade, surging from US\$155 billion in 2017 to US\$185 billion in 2018, according to the China-Africa Research Initiative. South Africa, being the primary African trading partner with China, contributes between a quarter to a third of China's total trade with the continent, as highlighted by Songtian in 2018. Torrens pointed out that Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Africa reached USD\$15.2 billion, establishing China as a prominent investor in the country.

By 2020, China's cumulative investment in South Africa exceeded US\$25 billion, creating over 400,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities according to Grobler. Augmenting economic ties with South Africa remains a focal point in the broader China-Africa relationship, as noted by Anikola and Tella. South Africa has been a significant recipient of Chinese state-funded loans, further solidifying economic cooperation between the two nations. Apart from state-funded initiatives, numerous Chinese private enterprises operate in South Africa. The establishment of a Fortune 500 company, the First Automobile Works (FAW) China Group Corporation, in South Africa in 2014 marked a significant milestone in Sino-South African economic relations. Former President Zuma lauded this investment as evidence of the strong partnership between the two countries, emphasizing South Africa's appeal as an investment destination.

Vice President of China FAW Group Corporation, Mr. Qin Huanming, expressed confidence in South Africa's political, economic, and infrastructural stability, citing these as catalysts for FAW's investment. The successful establishment of FAW's South African plant, financed by a US\$60 million investment from Chinese entities, further showcases the depth of bilateral cooperation.

South Africa reciprocates its investment in China, with companies like Naspers and South African Brewers Miller (SAB Miller) playing pivotal roles in the Chinese market. Discovery, Exxaro, Standard Bank, Sasol, and other South African firms actively engage in China's domestic markets. South Africa's FDI in China exceeded US\$700 million in 2016, positioning the country as the largest African investor in terms of both quantity and quality. While South Africa's trade with China is significant, other African countries like Angola, Egypt, and Nigeria also play crucial roles in China-Africa relations. Despite being Africa's largest trading partner with China, South Africa's exports primarily consist of raw materials, leading to trade imbalances. Critics have raised concerns about the asymmetrical nature of the Sino-South African relationship, particularly in economic terms. Some equate China's engagement in Africa to neo-colonialism and imperialism, fearing potential exploitation and domination. However, officials from both sides dismiss these concerns, emphasizing the mutually beneficial nature of their partnership. President Ramaphosa, for instance, views the relationship as a win-win scenario, where South Africa exports raw materials to China in exchange for manufactured goods. While debates about asymmetry linger, both countries remain committed to nurturing their relationship amidst evolving global dynamics.

By: Omar Fili, *CIGA Research Assistant*

Title: Towards a non-Western Model of Security Assistance: How Iran Assists Militaries

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Keywords: *Iran's Security Policy, Security Reform, Security Assistance, Strategic Thinking, Deterrence*

Brief:

This paper discusses a different perspective of the Islamic Republic of Iran's approach to its national security and its Security Assistance program. The authors propose an analysis of Iran's Security Assistance (SA) program as a distinct and non-western approach to security policy. According to the article, Iran's Security Assistance program illuminates its distinctive character and strategic divergence from mainstream international practices. Based on a conceptual understanding of SA practices, the paper constructs an analytical framework that distinguishes between two categories of practices within international SA programs: vertical and horizontal. Vertical practices encompass a range of activities, statements, negotiations, provision of materials and equipment, and disputes between SA providers and recipients. On the other hand, horizontal practices involve both competitive and cooperative interactions between SA providers and recipients. The article highlights how, unlike Western and international SA strategies, which predominantly emphasize stabilization, post-conflict reconstruction, or auxiliary tools within broader foreign policy frameworks, Iran's SA has evolved over four decades to constitute the linchpin of its military and regional policy. This profound difference in strategic objectives establishes a fundamental contradiction between Iran's SA methodology and the prevailing Western paradigms.

At the heart of Iran's SA strategy is a multi-dimensional construct that amalgamates narratives, networks, materiality, and institutional structures into a cohesive framework. While conventional international SA practices are often confined to technical considerations, procedural formalities, and institutional hierarchies, a paradigm encapsulated as 'technicism' by Young (2020), Iran's approach transcends these boundaries.

It interweaves religious narratives, personal loyalties, informal horizontal institutions, politico-economic interests, and a centralized policy-making apparatus with military-technical assistance. This holistic approach is deeply resonant with the intrinsic characteristics of Iran's political system, notably the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), reflecting the strategic culture and operational dynamics of its core institutions.

Central to Iran's Security Assistance architecture is its Islamic revolutionary narrative, a departure from Western approaches that prioritize the dissemination of liberal democracy. Iran leverages revolutionary Islam as an ideological cornerstone to cultivate connections with global Muslim communities, positioning the global Islamic community or 'Ummah' at its ideological core. This distinct ideological orientation imbues Iran's SA with an existential function under the purview of the Islamic Republic's duties, shaping its involvements abroad and potentially fortifying its resilience against external pressures.

A salient feature of Iran's SA calculus is its cost-effectiveness, approached with a unique logic compared to Western paradigms. While Western practices often aim to optimize outcomes with minimal resource expenditure, Iran's cost-effectiveness metric is anchored in mitigating existential threats to national security and preserving the ideological integrity of the Islamic Republic. Despite economic constraints relative to its Persian Gulf counterparts, Iran demonstrates strategic selectivity in its expenditure, prioritizing areas of heightened strategic significance. The authors maintain that Iran's substantial financial and political investments in Syria to support the Assad regime exemplify its willingness to bear the costs and endure resulting isolation to safeguard its regional interests.

The analysis also suggests that there exists a continuous learning trajectory within Iran's SA program which is characterized by adaptive strategies informed by past failures and insights gleaned from the experiences of other SA providers. Iran's strategic recalibration, exemplified by its focus on better-understood geographies like Yemen while refraining from interventions in less familiar terrains like Libya, illustrates its capacity to adapt based on operational knowledge and shifting geopolitical dynamics. Furthermore, the article contends that the parallels between Iran's hybrid war strategy and Russian approaches in Ukraine, Syria, and Libya suggest a symbiotic learning relationship between Iran and other SA providers.

In other words, the authors believe that the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategic recalibration is evident in its selective focus on better-understood geographies, such as Yemen, while exercising caution and restraint in involvements in less familiar terrains like Libya. This selective engagement strategy underscores Iran's recognition of the importance of operational knowledge, contextual understanding, and informed decision-making in the success or failure of SA initiatives. By prioritizing engagements in regions where it possesses operational familiarity and strategic depth, Iran aims to mitigate risks, optimize resource allocation, and enhance the efficacy of its SA interventions.

Horizontal interactions with other SA constellations further enrich Iran's SA landscape. In Syria, Iran's multifaceted relationship with Russia extends beyond mutual learning, manifesting as a close security convergence. Despite occasional geopolitical tensions, the cooperative synergy between Tehran and Moscow, alongside their respective armed forces, remains instrumental in sustaining their shared ally, the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. This cooperative dynamic, characterized by a division of labor where Iran provides ground forces and Russia offers air support, underscores the pragmatic tenor inherent in Iran's SA approach.

Similarly, the authors argue that Iran's informal coordination with the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria against ISIS serves as another testament to the pragmatic dimension of Iran's SA. This pragmatic streak allows for cooperation with adversaries to counter shared threats, transcending traditional geopolitical animosities to focus on common strategic objectives.

However, Iran's SA program is not devoid of challenges and constraints. The sustainability of Iran's SA model remains precarious, given the mounting external pressures from global and regional powers that perceive Iranian activities as destabilizing regional security architectures. The paper claims that autonomy emerges as another pivotal challenge, with ambiguities surrounding Tehran's actual control over its SA recipients. The divergent interests and activities among Iraqi popular resistance factions and Yemen's resistance groups, which the authors describe as seemingly contrary to Iran's strategic objectives, illustrate the inherent complexities and potential pitfalls associated with Iran's Security Assistance approach.

In conclusion, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Security Assistance program epitomizes an idiosyncratic model that diverges significantly from Western practices, which the article describes as rooted deeply in its ideological imperatives and strategic necessities. While Iran's SA endeavors have undeniably bolstered its regional influence and deterrence capabilities, their long-term sustainability remains a subject of conjecture. External pressures, inherent uncertainties regarding recipient control, and challenges in forging horizontal coordination with other SA providers collectively pose a formidable obstacle to Iran's SA aspirations. The Iranian Security Assistance model, distinguished by its unique objectives and tools, presents a non-Western paradigm replete with complexities, uncertainties, and potentialities. As Iran continues to navigate this intricate SA landscape, developing efficacious methods to translate the outcomes of its practices into tangible political gains is poised to remain a critical and ongoing challenge in the geopolitical theater of the West Asian region and beyond.

By: Setareh Sadeqi, *CIGA Non-resident Researcher*

Title: Türkiye: The Implication of Iraq Conflict on the US-Türkiye Strategic Relationship

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Keywords: Turkish-American Relations, Turkish Foreign Policy, US Middle East Policy, US Invasion of Iraq

Brief:

This paper aims to understand the history of US-Türkiye bilateral relationship, and especially the role of Iraq in shaping their relations over the past thirty years. The authors argue that the US military intervention in Iraq coinciding with the end of the Cold War was one of the most enduring areas of disagreement and cooperation between the two countries. They state that disagreement over Iraq remained a focal point in US-Türkiye relations, particularly due to conflicting priorities. The policies of the two countries regarding Iraq have led to many agreements and disagreements between the two nations. While some disagreements have turned into crises, mutual interests have facilitated overcoming these differences. In this context, the brief examines US-Türkiye relations during the Cold War, followed by US post-Cold War Iraq policies and their impacts on US-Türkiye relations, divided into three sections and a conclusion.

The paper begins by mentioning that after the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership, Turkish foreign policy aimed at maintaining independence and protecting the new regime. Under İsmet İnönü's presidency after Atatürk's passing away, Turkey maintained its neutrality during World War II while seeking economic and military support. The demands of the Soviet Union on Türkiye are said to have encouraged close relations with the USA. During this period, the USA strengthened Türkiye against the Soviet threat by supporting Türkiye's NATO membership and Cold War policies. However, the 1964 Cyprus crisis and the subsequent US attitude towards Türkiye created crises in the relationship. The Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974 and the subsequent US arms embargo temporarily strained relations. However, relations revived with the lifting of the embargo in 1978. The 1980 military coup did not affect US-Türkiye relations, and

cooperation between the two countries continued. Although there were some changes in relations with the end of the Cold War, cooperation between the US and Türkiye continued.

Meanwhile, the Middle East occupies a significant place in US foreign policy due to its control over more than half of the world's oil reserves. Additionally, various national interests such as ensuring Israel's security, maintaining stability in the region, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and obstructing the rise of a hostile power to the USA are also important. During the Cold War, the main focus of the US in the region was to prevent Soviet dominance. However, with the end of the Cold War, US concerns shifted, and the rise of enemy regimes threatening US interests became a central concern for American policymakers. The brief examines US post-Cold War Iraq policy, starting from support during the Iran-Iraq War, through the invasion of Kuwait, to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. During this process, US military intervention in Iraq and subsequent policy decisions are also examined. In the changing international environment of the 1990s, US-Türkiye relations were reshaped. Relations between the two countries became even more important with the increasing instability in the Middle East after the end of the Cold War. Turkey strengthened these relations by supporting the US-led UN coalition in the 1990/91 Gulf War.

Türkiye's Iraq policy included supporting UN resolutions and resisting Saddam Hussein's pressures. Crises in Iraq and the threat of the PKK influenced Türkiye's regional policy. Türkiye improved its relations with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq while conducting operations against the PKK. The US and Türkiye worked together on developments in Iraq, but faced differences on some issues. US-Türkiye relations grew in complexity with the end of the Cold War. Disagreements over policies towards Iraq between Türkiye and the US led to tensions in their bilateral relationship. However, mutual interests maintained a strong relationship and helped overcome differences. Especially, a setback in relations occurred in 2003 after Türkiye refused to allow the US to use its territory in its invasion of Iraq, and Türkiye's support for the US weakened. Finally, the emergence of ISIS as a result of US Iraq policies affected relations and strained Türkiye's sensitivities towards US support for the YPG.

The relationship between Türkiye and the US has been crucial for Türkiye since the end of World War II. During the Cold War, the US was the mainstay of Türkiye security against the Soviet threat. While relations between the two countries began positively during the Cold War, developments throughout the period occasionally led to tensions, even to the brink of rupture. However, during these times of relaxation or near-breakdown in relations, developments in international conjuncture allowed for the re-establishment and development of relations between the two countries.

However, the end of this period has brought about uncertainties in future connections due to evolving global threats. Despite these changes, both countries have shared interests in various areas in the post-Cold War period. However, changing priorities have led to more frequent disagreements between the US and Türkiye. While both sides acknowledge that finding common ground in this fluctuating period may be challenging, these disagreements have not prevented cooperation on many important issues.

In March 2003, the consequences of the Turkish parliament rejecting a motion that would allow the US to open a northern front into Iraq from Turkish territory led to a deterioration in US-Türkiye relations. Despite Türkiye allowing the use of its airspace during the 2003 Iraq War, the dynamics between the two nations seemed to shift more towards necessity rather than a tight alliance.

The emergence of the ISIS terrorist organization as a result of US policies in Iraq influenced Iraq's territorial integrity and the course of relations between Türkiye and the US. The fundamental reason for this problem is that the US trained the YPG, the Syrian branch of the PKK, to fight ISIS in Syria without taking Türkiye's sensitivities into account.

Taking a long-term perspective on US-Türkiye relations into account, it is clear that relations between the two countries will continue to fluctuate. The key point to be noted here is that at the current time the US has not taken into account Türkiye's sensitivities, and therefore, relations between the two countries have deteriorated. Türkiye supported the US and took a stance against terrorism during the September 11 attacks, but the same sensitivity was not shown by the US, and the activities of terrorist organizations in the region since the start of the Iraq war process will also affect future relations between the two countries.

By: Dilara Özdemir, *CIGA Research Assistant*

Title: China, International Competition and the Stalemate in Sovereign Debt Restructuring: Beyond Geopolitics

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Affiliation: University of Queensland, Queen Mary University of London

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Keywords: *Chinese Debt-trap Diplomacy, Global South Development Financing, Global South Debt Crisis, Political Economy, Age of Choice*

Brief:

There has been a shift from an era of supposedly wide range of choices for development financing for sovereign borrowers in the global South to a current state of widespread debt distress. Despite expectations that increased competition among lenders, especially with the emergence of non-traditional providers like China, would benefit developing countries, the reality is starkly different. The recent surge in sovereign defaults, sluggish debt restructuring negotiations, and the lack of attractive bailout offers challenge previous notions of borrower empowerment. Thus, in this article, the authors question why the proliferation of lenders and heightened competition, once seen as advantageous, has now become detrimental. They suggest that geopolitical rivalries, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), may not be leading to expected outcomes like competitive restructuring terms or debt-trap diplomacy. This raises important questions about the evolving dynamics of global development financing and the complexities facing indebted nations today.

The authors challenge the prevailing geopolitical narrative of the "age of choice" in development financing, arguing instead for a political economy perspective. They find limited evidence to support the idea that traditional donors increased aid in response to Chinese competition, with commercial bond markets emerging as the primary competitors, suggesting that the lending boom was less about geopolitics and more about favorable conditions in China and global financial markets, including US-led quantitative easing. China's BRI lending was largely commercially driven, aiming to externalize overcapacity and capital accumulation.

Loose monetary policies post-2008 financial crisis encouraged riskier investments, while high commodity prices and debt forgiveness reduced perceived lending risks. As conditions changed, financing flows tightened, leading to increased debt distress for many countries. Both authors emphasize the role of commercial motives and fragmented governance within Chinese lending institutions in shaping China's stance on debt restructuring. They argue that the primary concern for Chinese lenders is economic competition with other creditors, such as multilateral development banks (MDBs) and commercial bondholders, rather than geopolitical rivalry with Western states. Chinese banks prioritized profitability in their lending practices and lacked mechanisms for accommodating loan "haircuts" or sharing restructuring losses, unlike Western creditors. This situation leads to prolonged negotiations and stalemates in debt restructuring, exacerbated by Western resistance to burden sharing with commercial lenders and MDBs.

The emergence of an "age of choice" for developing countries in the early 2010s was marked by a significant shift in development financing sources. The authors highlight the rapid growth and diversification of funding, with notable increases in non-concessional lending from China and international financial markets. This shift prompted scholarly interest in competition among finance providers and its implications, particularly focusing on the dynamics between traditional aid providers and China amidst rising geopolitical tensions. Scholars explored how this competition empowered recipients vis-à-vis traditional donors and prompted traditional donors to counter China's influence by increasing generosity.

Western aid historically promoted economic liberalization through conditionalities, often seen as intrusive by recipient countries. In contrast, Chinese financing, primarily non-concessional, focused on large-scale infrastructure projects without stringent governance or economic reform conditions. This approach attracted recipients due to its speed and flexibility, contrasting with the slow-moving Western donors. China's behavior, seen through a geopolitical lens, sparked debates about its challenge to established practices and accusations of "rogue aid" or "colonialism." Western policymakers and scholars raised concerns about debt sustainability, governance, and China's influence on global development architecture, especially with initiatives like the BRI and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank seen as challenges to Western-dominated institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The notion of "debt-trap diplomacy" attributed to China, whereby Chinese loans allegedly lead countries into unsustainable debt to gain strategic advantages or extract concessions, is quite controversial according to the authors. Experts view the claim, which originated from Indian think tanks and is widely echoed in Western policy circles, with skepticism. US President Joe Biden labeled China's BRI as a "debt and confiscation program," while European leaders expressed concerns about Chinese hegemony and recipient countries becoming subservient. The authors argue that China's challenge prompted changes in traditional donors' approaches, leading to a "Southernization" of development assistance and a shift towards emphasizing economic growth and infrastructure development. Traditional donors, through initiatives like Japan's Partnership for Quality Infrastructure and the G7's Build Back Better World, aim to offer alternatives to BRI financing. This geopolitical competition is seen as empowering recipients by providing them with more policy space and reducing conditionality, although it also raises questions about governance and democratic effects associated with different sources of financing. The current sovereign debt restructuring stalemate in the context of the previous "age of choice" in development financing has a paradoxical nature. The authors question why the abundance of creditors, once seen as empowering borrowers due to geopolitical competition, has not translated into better restructuring deals for struggling debtor countries. Despite intensifying US-China geopolitical competition, with some heralding a new Cold War era, China's behavior in debt negotiations does not align with expectations of geopolitical strategies such as debt-trap diplomacy. For instance, it has not offered substantial debt relief or lenient terms, instead prioritizing full repayment and seizing collateral, resembling a yield-maximizing investment manager rather than a geopolitical power player. This approach has complicated IMF restructuring efforts and prolonged debtors' distress without evidence of asset seizures or extortion.

The authors propose a shift from geopolitical analyses to political economy perspectives to explain the lack of an "age of choice" in debt restructuring amid ongoing great-power competition. They argue that earlier Chinese lending stemmed primarily from economic and commercial motives, aiming to address domestic issues like overcapacity, falling profitability, and capital accumulation by externalizing demand for Chinese goods and services through loans. This lending was mostly commercial, facilitated by fragmented governance arrangements favoring approvals. The post-global financial crisis environment, along with high commodity prices, also fueled borrowing from China and international bond markets. Today, Chinese lenders remain commercially driven, prioritizing debt recovery and avoiding write-downs that would benefit rival creditors like MDBs and bondholders, rather than geopolitical rivals. The lack of systematic mechanisms to compensate or compel Chinese lenders regarding losses prolongs negotiations, leading to ad hoc restructuring processes.

China's lending practices are primarily driven by commercial motives rather than geopolitical ambitions. While China does have a smaller aid program driven by political and diplomatic goals, its larger non-concessional lending is mainly commercially oriented. This lending surge is a product of China's post-2000 "going out" policy, encouraging Chinese firms, especially state-owned enterprises (SOEs), to seek resources and markets abroad due to domestic saturation and dwindling supplies. The BRI was a strategic expansion of this pre-existing activity, with geopolitical considerations secondary drivers. China's economic challenges, such as overcapacity from years of investment-led growth and declining profitability, were key factors prompting these lending practices. The global financial crisis further exacerbated these challenges, leading China to prioritize infrastructure investments and overseas expansions. Thus, China's lending behavior is rooted in economic imperatives rather than solely geopolitical ambitions, shaping its approach to debt restructuring and global economic engagement.

Contrary to a purely geopolitical agenda, the BRI's development and oversight was led by China's National Development and Reform Commission, which emphasizes economic planning and industrial upgrading. Provincial governments also played a role in shaping BRI projects to align with their economic interests. The surge in Chinese development financing was facilitated by a permissive regulatory environment and fragmented governance, with multiple agencies focused on supporting Chinese businesses' global expansion. Key entities like Eximbank and CDB operated as profit-oriented, quasi-autonomous actors, making lending decisions autonomously based on market principles rather than government directives. China's political economic context, coupled with limited oversight of outbound financing and moral hazard assumptions regarding loan repayments, contributed to extensive commercial-rate lending with recipient-state guarantees, often misinterpreted as purely government-driven projects.

Lax oversight and favorable global conditions initially fueled Chinese lending, driven more by economic imperatives than geopolitical strategies like "debt-trap diplomacy." As such, the BRI projects were influenced by industrial overcapacity and provincial economic interests rather than official policy corridors. However, concerns over environmental issues, corruption, and debt traps led to regulatory tightening and reduced enthusiasm for overseas lending by Chinese policy banks. Simultaneously, developing countries benefited from favorable global conditions such as commodity price booms and post-financial crisis liquidity, which boosted their borrowing capacity and confidence in contracting Chinese loans. Yet, changes such as US quantitative tightening and currency fluctuations led to debt distress for borrowers, contributing to the decline in Chinese lending. Ultimately, the authors argue that the "age of choice" in lending stemmed more from China's economic challenges and global financial conditions than from geopolitical competition.

Chinese lenders prioritize repayment over geopolitical advantages, viewing rival creditors like MDBs and commercial bondholders as their main competitors rather than geopolitical adversaries. This stance, influenced by governance fragmentation, contributes to the deadlock in debt restructuring negotiations.

The authors emphasize that debt restructuring hinges on burden sharing among creditors, determining who will take haircuts to make debt repayments sustainable. This process traditionally involves assessments by the IMF, negotiations with creditors based on specified reductions, and eventual financial assurances to resume payments. The Paris Club norms aim for comparable treatment among creditors to address collective action problems, highlighting the complexities and challenges in debt restructuring processes involving diverse lender groups.

China typically only forgives interest-free loans, which are often financed through past fiscal allocations, according to the authors. For commercial loans, Chinese lenders prioritize full repayment of principals, occasionally offering payment pauses or extended maturities but rarely reducing interest rates. This stance reflects their profit-seeking nature and aversion to losses, evident in loan agreements that prioritize repayment safeguards and exclude loans from Paris Club provisions for comparable treatment in restructuring. Despite narratives of "debt-trap diplomacy," Chinese lenders are generally uninterested in taking over failing debt-financed projects, as this would burden them with unprofitable ventures. The fragmented financial governance in China allows lender motives to dominate, with no compensation system for loan write-offs and no clear decision-making process for negotiating terms with creditors, leading to prolonged negotiations and inter-agency conflicts. While some Chinese agencies recognize potential negative consequences for China's global reputation, they have limited influence in practical implementation, where lenders' self-interest prevails. Chinese lenders are concerned about unfair burden sharing in debt restructuring efforts, especially regarding private creditors.

While Chinese officials resist demands for extensive debt relief, citing the significant debts owed to MDBs and private lenders, they argue that private creditors often act in predatory ways, contributing to widespread debt distress. Evidence shows that official creditors have accepted larger debt reductions than private ones historically, with Paris Club agreements averaging 60% versus 40% for private creditors. Despite participating in the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) with repayment pauses, China emphasized rescheduling over debt write-offs, aligning with its commercial lending priorities. Chinese commercial banks, including Eximbank and CDB, claimed exemptions based on their lending classifications, providing less official relief than Paris Club lenders but more than private creditors, ultimately shaping debt restructuring dynamics and borrower-creditor relationships. Thus, the authors argue that there are challenges in implementing the Common Framework for debt restructuring due to the resistance of China's commercially-oriented lenders to significant haircuts. Chinese officials called for fair burden sharing among all creditors but faced obstacles as Western states expanded MDB lending without ensuring comparable treatment for private creditors. Private lenders often secured favorable terms, prompting Chinese lenders like Eximbank to hinder debt relief efforts. For instance, in mid-2021, Eximbank opposed a third round of commercial debt repayments, highlighting competitive dynamics. Similar tensions delayed Zambia's debt restructuring, with Chinese lenders pushing for prioritizing commercial debts. Bondholders resisted, fearing that their relief might benefit Chinese loans, eventually leading to Zambia defaulting. Although agreements were reached, Chinese debts remained commercially classified, underscoring the ongoing challenges in achieving fair burden sharing and comparable treatment among creditors.

The role of private creditor obstruction is significant in Chad's debt relief process under the Common Framework, initiated in January 2021. Chad faced challenges servicing a substantial loan from Glencore, a Swiss multinational, amounting to a third of its external debt and which was tied to oil export revenues that plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the IMF's proposed measures and agreement from official creditors, including China, Glencore resisted comparable treatment, extracting \$600 million in repayments until November 2022 when a compromise was finally reached due to rising oil revenues and ongoing debt repayments.

This case raised concerns about the accuracy of IMF Debt Sustainability Analyses (DSAs) and highlighted the unequal burden-sharing with private creditors, as seen in Suriname's restructuring in 2023 outside the Common Framework. Bondholders negotiated significantly lower haircuts and gained unprecedented rights to future oil sales, echoing criticisms of China's debt deals.

When it comes to Sri Lanka's debt dynamics, the authors challenge the 'debt-trap diplomacy' narrative regarding China's lending practices. They note that while Chinese loans did contribute to Sri Lanka's debt distress, the country's commercial borrowing and high interest costs were equally significant factors. Contrary to the narrative of asset seizure, China facilitated a lease agreement for Hambantota Port, directing proceeds toward debt servicing without a debt-for-equity swap. Despite Sri Lanka's subsequent debt distress and significant commercial creditor burdens, China did not provide substantial rescue funding, unlike India's proactive assistance. In debt restructuring talks, Chinese lenders prioritized loan recovery and resisted burden-sharing, leading to delays in IMF disbursements and exacerbating Sri Lanka's economic crisis. This commercial stance contrasts with geopolitical narratives, emphasizing Chinese lenders' self-interest over strategic leverage or client support, while other actors like India gained geopolitical influence through more generous aid.

The authors in this article challenge the realist perspectives on lending and debt politics, arguing that the assumption of coherent, geopolitically driven state actions is flawed. They assert that economic and commercial logics play a stronger role, given that state logics are more fragmented. The rise of commercial lenders, both Chinese and Western, in the global South is attributed to economic conditions and fragmented financial governance in China. The authors highlight Chinese lenders' primarily commercial motives as they navigate competition with MDBs and bondholders, impacting China's standing in the global South. Despite alleged geopolitical ambitions, China's fragmented governance often leads to outcomes that are inconsistent with national interests, hindering multilateral cooperation and eroding public support. Western states' refusal to address reckless commercial lenders further perpetuates the standoff, limiting progress on multilateral debt relief. This dynamic suggests that developing countries remain vulnerable to international capital movements, with the potential for the poorest societies to suffer the most in a more 'realist' world, reminiscent of Cold War dynamics.

By: Sara El Souhagy, *CIGA Research Assistant*

Title: Women, Peace and Security as Deterrence? NATO and Russia's War Against Ukraine

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Brief:

This article assumes that the context of Russia's war against Ukraine has imposed a new reality for NATO that calls for it to enhance its participation in the field of women, peace and security and its further development in the field of deterrence and defense.

Initially, the article discusses the pragmatic feminist approach to security organizations and deterrence theories. In this regard, the writer decides to rely on the pragmatic feminist approach to security that believes in the possibility of gradual institutional changes through the investment of the "women, peace and security" (WPS) system within NATO rather than the Western feminist approach that is totally opposed to militarism as a gender-biased institution that promotes violence and wars. The author therefore believes that a pragmatic feminist approach to security could contribute to greater acceptance of the WPS system and open up new opportunities for it. Especially as more feminist activists join international security institutions whose role is to promote women's goals for peace, justice and sustainability. However, feminist literature criticizes NATO for militarizing "WPS" standards and largely dominating male gender norms. This was seen as evidence of women's underrepresentation in coalition processes.

On the other hand, the paper draws attention to the paucity of feminist literature about the perception of deterrence, with its understanding limited to only criticizing the realist theory of nuclear deterrence

as justifying the production of nuclear weapons. Especially after NATO's attention has now shifted eastward, the author believes it is necessary to ensure a locally informed understanding of insecurity in the region. However, in the author's view, deterrence studies are evolving beyond military deterrence and are focusing more on standards, ideas, identity, speeches, rituals and others. The author refers to Malxo's example that the NATO Social Deterrence and Defense Strategy in the Baltic reflects the symbolic cooperation of the Allies, which collectively stands out, more so than the military component. The author believes in the importance of deterrence practices and extends his studies to many other areas such as hybrid threats, cyberspace, and social and political practices that can open the doors of a feminist perspective within NATO.

The article then turns to the institutional difficulties facing NATO's politicized external approach to the "women, peace and security" system. It clarifies how these factors impede a more inclusive participation of the women's and peace protection system in deterrence and defense. The "WPS" agenda has been formally institutionalized on the political and military sides of NATO across different institutional classes following Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014. The WPS system was considered essential to achieving NATO's shared values: individual freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other sources of international law. In 2012, the first Women, Peace and Security Office was established and the first Special Representative of the Secretary-General was appointed. However, structural difficulties in the implementation of the WPS system continued in the areas of deterrence and defense. The article refers to a number of factors and reasons, including: firstly, the failure of Democrats to pursue the WPS agenda and instead trying to implement it as a non-politicized and low-priority external military agenda. Secondly, to upgrade the system of protection of women and peace to the strategic level while ignoring the practical application of deterrence and defense. Third, treating the WPS partnership with Ukraine as a one-way transfer of knowledge on women, peace and security rather than an opportunity for mutual learning.

The author argues that linking women's issues, peace and security to the agenda of combating insecurity and stability outside the Alliance has led to their separation from the alliance and their non-politicization. By contrast, there are Member States that we find to be leaders in women, peace and security, such as Norway and Sweden. After 2014, NATO has gradually begun to develop complex gender advisory structures to revitalize and follow up the "Women, Peace and Security" system internally. To cite a few examples, the Gender Adviser's Office was established, whose mission it is to guide and advise on gender issues. However, the writer believes that this progress does not guarantee immediate changes in NATO's daily institutional culture.

Although NATO reassessed its security strategy due to Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territory in 2014 through the renewal of the principle of "internal deterrence and defense", difficulties and challenges remained in the face of the WPS system in translating the new policies into practice because they remained low-priority and non-politicized political changes. In 2022, the WPS system emerged in the NATO Strategic Concept, which provides for the promotion of good governance, the integration of climate change, human security and the women's and peace and security agenda into all its functions. However, this concept did not specifically mention the WPS system in the Deterrence and Defense Section. The author warns that the absence of a WPS system has become a new threat and challenge for NATO because of Russia's use of gender and excessive masculinity as a weapon against liberal Western values. The writer cites the example of the rejection of the Istanbul Convention in Ukraine in 2017 due to the aforementioned. The latter part focuses on the boundaries of NATO's one-way partnership with Ukraine in the WPS deterrence approach, and how NATO is slowly responding to the widespread attack. The writer believes that Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 revealed NATO's unclear approach to the WPS system in the area of deterrence and defense. The WPS agenda was ignored with the alliance solely focused in the early months on providing military aid to Ukraine.

Thus, the writer criticizes the discrepancy between NATO's stated commitments on the security and safety protection regime and the reality of war reflecting the institutional obstacles discussed, which identifies the partnership between NATO and Ukraine as a one-way transfer of NATO knowledge on the security and safety protection system to Ukraine. In this context, the writer describes NATO's response to Ukraine since 2014 as slow and unprepared for such a security crisis. Accordingly, the article calls on the Alliance to seriously reflect on the importance of the WPS system. In particular, Ukraine was already developing strategic and practical steps for the alliance in multiple ways. This includes providing new opportunities for the WPS system as a means of deterrence and defense.

In conclusion, the author tries to present the consequences of the future trajectory of NATO's WPS system and the world and suggests avenues for further research. Among the implications are the complexity of looking for new opportunities to localize the WPS system in deterrence and defense and reducing NATO's position on the WPS system in deterrence and defense to mere speeches with no substance. For this reason, the article proposes revisiting women's concepts of deterrence by focusing on deterrence practices, focusing on military and political deterrence and also on societal and institutional resilience. For example, it permits the practice of the Women and Peace Protection System as a deterrent to anti-gender policies as part of NATO's identity.

By: Ryma Meddah, *MA in IR and International Law*

Title: The Meanings of Internationalism: A Collective Discussion on Pan-African, Early Soviet, Islamic Socialist, and Kurdish Internationalisms Across the 20th Century

Author: Dilar Dirik, Musab Younis, Maria Chehonadskih, Layli Uddin, Miri Davidson



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Keywords: *Internationalism, Anticolonialism, Empire, Communism, Marxism*

Brief:

Through a series of insights from four different scholars studying four non-Western political movements over the course of the 20th century, this article aims to situate the definition of internationalism in a more historical context. That is to say, this article tries to depart from the more abstract notion of internationalism, which could stand out of any historical context, and instead offer a more operative understanding of the concept through four different internationalisms. These four movements are anticolonial pan-African thought in the interwar period, Soviet socialist internationalism with a focus on Alexander Bogdanov, who allied with Lenin during the October Revolution before defecting, Islamic socialism through Maulana Bhashani, and the Kurdish liberation movement. In that vein, the article tries to pinpoint some common characteristics among these diverse movements and their broader contexts.

First, the article makes a further conceptual distinction between internationalism as a revolutionary concept, which reshapes both the national and international, from internationalism as enlightenment-era cosmopolitanism as put forth in Kant's world peace theory, which proposes human reason as the foundation of all human civilization and therefore the key to world peace. Moreover, the article distinguishes between internationalism as a revolutionary concept and internationalism as a capitalist notion, where international relations are oriented towards the goal of accumulating capital.

In the case of pan-African thinkers in the inter-war period, the focus for Musab Younis was to reverse the project of European hegemony over Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America, or "the problem between the lighter and darker races of mankind."

While it is no wonder that all anticolonial thinkers across the ideological spectrum were critical of imperialism, uniquely pan-African thinkers viewed imperialism as a racial project, which was not of much interest to Marxist thought that heavily influenced anti-imperialist thought. Younis further remarks that, while this perception did not pick up much traction initially, it became more widespread as more scholars started to point out non-economic factors, again in divergence from classical Marxism and communist forces, while also acknowledging the economic factor. For instance, pan-African thinkers highlighted the question of why Australia and New Zealand were treated differently and operated under different economic models from those found in Ghana and Nigeria, even though both regions fell under the British Empire.

In other words, black thinkers tried to articulate the Marxist dismantling of imperialism with an African-centric mindset. Lamine Senghor, a prominent Senegalese anticolonial thinker figure who was involved in the French Communist Party, called for having a specifically black organization focused on the question of Africa. Senghor believed that Communist movements, despite advocating for universal values centered around the idea of supporting the proletariat, would never center Africa because they did not expect Africa to lead a global revolution. The pan-African movement in the interwar period, Younis further notes, was also disenchanted with the claims that the world was more progressive and freer in the wake of WWI. Indeed, almost all of Africa was increasingly exploited by imperialist forces at the time, so much so that an article in the Sierra Leone Weekly News called the League of Nations the “League of White Brotherhood.” In that sense, these ideas poured into an understanding of internationalism through Third Worldism, which “sees the structure of imperialism as creating a common interest amongst the racialized subjects of the European imperial order.” Accordingly, anticolonial pan-African thinkers were interested in connecting with movements and schools of Asia and Latin America.

Maria Chehonadskih focused on socialist projects and how they understood internationalism. More particularly, she focuses on the socialist legacy outside the sphere of the Bolshevik revolution. First, Chehonadskih challenges equating the Soviet space with Russia, with both having their own different and complex understanding of internationalism, and in this context, imperialism. Chehonadskih looks at Bogdanov, a Russian socialist figure who defected from the Bolsheviks and founded the Proletarian Cultural Enlightenment Organization, or “Proletkult”. As nationalism was on the rise across Europe in the interwar period, socialist movements in the continent started supporting their governments leading up to WWII. However, Bogdanov opposed the “nationalization” of the social movement. This juxtaposition exposes a tension between the universalism of the proletariat in conventional Marxism and the fact that laborers exist in national contexts. Instead, Bogdanov focused on the mental and psychic structures that pushed the nationalist agenda onto society, which made him one of the first to draw a line connecting knowledge and power in the mode of economic oppression. Such ideas were found more prominently in the writings of Frantz Fanon and Michel Foucault, two well-known anticolonial thinkers. To Bogdanov, this issue reduces the laborer to a task executer dominated by the factory owners who are the decision-makers. More broadly, the state apparatus thinks for the rest, and patriotic feelings are the result of an imposed structure of authority and authoritarian thinking. As such, Bogdanov envisioned that Marxism would shift from internationalism to what he called comradeship in the factory, family, with a focus on education, science, and activism. Chehonadskih remarks, however, that those ideas led to an adversarial working-class purity and purging the middle class from the movement of Proletkult – “This is, nonetheless, a problem with any kind of universalist project, which always includes by excluding, and diverges as it enters the realm of actual practice.”

In addition, Chehonadskih notes that the Soviet Union was a project intended to free the world from capitalist modernity. While it had complex imperialist aspects, it was different from Western-style imperialism.

For instance, the Soviet Union gave the population of its republics citizenship status, as opposed to the British Empire who created hierarchical types and forms of British nationality. Another notable difference was that the Soviets wanted to create a nationless state-form of working-class citizens (all citizens for instance received the same education), whereas the British Empire gave consideration to accents, ethnicities, and regional characteristics in its controlling and policing of its populace. In summary, the Soviets sought to erase local identities and replace them with Soviet citizenship. On a massive scale, this created a form of socialist imperialism.

Layli Uddin focuses on Maulana Bhashani, also known as Red Maulana, who offers a unique case of subaltern internationalism in 20th century Asia. A third world activist and a Sufi figure, Maulana Bhashani placed great emphasis on peasants and workers, and tried to harmonize between Islam and socialism. His understanding of internationalism can be understood through three phases: 1. His Muslim identity and Muslim internationalism and the understanding of Umma; 2. Anticolonial politics with the Khalifat Movement against the British rule; and 3. His most complex phase which saw a convergence of socialism and Islamism. Over the course of his activism, he contributed to the founding of both Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971. In his understanding of internationalism, he focused on subaltern internationalism, meaning “an international political thought and practice grounded in the life worlds and everyday practices of groups such as peasants and industrial workers.” In the second half of his career, he travelled to China, and was deeply influenced by Maoism, as well as his meetings with other leftist forces. A notable aspect of the marriage of Islamism and socialism was his using of the concept of Bay’ah, the Islamic oath of pledging allegiance, to demand his followers take a pledge to abolish feudalism, capitalism, and imperialism, while also asserting their belief in God and Prophet Mohammad, all at once.

Dilar Dirik goes over the Kurdish Movement, highlighting a shift in the understanding of the Kurdish question and internationalism. First, the Kurdish nation was seen as an internal and external colony –with the Kurdish nation being split between Türkiye, Iran, Syria, and Iraq, and externally being splintered into different Cold War camps. The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) was founded along Marxist-Leninist terms and envisioned that liberating the Kurds would be a launching pad to liberate all proletariat in the region and beyond, and as a second step a federal union for the Middle East. However, by 1995, guided by the writings of Abdullah Öcalan, the movement shifted to “democracy without and against the state”, focusing instead on a bottom-up, confederal socialist non-state form of self-determination. Today, the movement focuses on women’s liberation, ecology, and radical democracy as the three pillars of the freedom paradigm introduced by Öcalan.

In the four movements, one can find two main common characteristics of this revolutionary understanding of internationalism. First, despite drawing upon classical Marxist concepts, these movements aimed to challenge, refine, and reshape these ideas. This involved delving into the roots of nationalistic fervor and colonial domination, aspects often overlooked by purely economic frameworks. Additionally, they sought to revive the ethos of internationalism, recognizing that understanding nationalism and internationalism were inherently linked endeavors in a process of mutual constitution.

By: Hamza Ghadban, *CIGA Research Intern*

Title: NATO in the Multi-order World

Author: Trine Flockhart



Affiliation: European University Institute

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Keywords: NATO, Multi-order World, LIO

Brief:

The article discusses NATO's enduring relevance at its 75th anniversary amidst evolving global challenges, particularly Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It highlights NATO's transformation into a more dynamic alliance, necessitated by changing global dynamics, including the emergence of a multi-order world. The article emphasizes NATO's dual roles as a military alliance and a community of shared values, stressing the need for adaptation to sustain its effectiveness. It suggests that NATO must redefine its role within the new global order, maintaining its commitment to liberal values while establishing interest-based relationships. However, challenges such as the rise of illiberal nationalism within member states complicate this transition.

The first section discusses the significant shift in the global order following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, marking the beginning of a new era. It highlights Putin's challenge to the liberal international order (LIO) and the existing global rules-based order (GRBO), which gained momentum with China's alignment. The invasion signaled the end of the GRBO, ushering in a period of transformation characterized by uncertainty and geopolitical shifts. While many anticipate a return to multi- or bipolarity, the author argues for the emergence of a new, more complex global order. NATO's future role hinges on understanding and adapting to this evolving landscape, considering changes in global relations and distinguishing between the LIO and the GRBO, as failure to grasp these nuances could undermine NATO's relevance in the future global order.

A. This section discusses the evolving structure of global relations, which are shifting from a European/Western core-periphery model to a decentralized structure with emerging clusters of relationships along cultural, ideological, or ethnic lines. This decentralized structure is further transitioning into a more clustered one, where relationships converge based on shared characteristics. The current global structure combines clustered and decentralized relationships, with swing states positioning themselves between emerging clusters, including the American-led liberal order, a Russian-led order, and a Chinese-led order. This shift undermines the notion of a return to bipolarity or multipolarity, as the new structure is more pluralistic and complex. NATO's future role must adapt to this multi-order world, managing relationships within the liberal international order (LIO) and between different international orders. Ensuring a resilient LIO will be crucial for influencing the direction of the multi-order world, with NATO playing a significant role in fostering constructive relationships between orders. It is imperative to acknowledge NATO's role within this multi-order framework rather than clinging to outdated notions of polarity when considering its future.

B. In the second topic in this section, the author explores the distinction between the liberal international order (LIO) and the global rules-based order (GRBO) within the context of NATO's evolving role. Historically, NATO's roles were shaped by Cold War dynamics or under conditions of US hegemony, where the assumption of the LIO's global reach was prevalent. However, in a clustered and multi-order context, it is crucial to differentiate between the GRBO, which is universal and state-centric, and the LIO, which is founded on and bound to liberal values. While both are intertwined, the LIO prioritizes individual rights, while the GRBO focuses more on state sovereignty and equality. As NATO navigates its future role, it must incorporate this distinction into policy-making, ensuring that liberal values guide actions within the LIO, while recognizing the limitations of influence within the GRBO. The growing contestation against Western influence on the GRBO underscores the need for NATO to strategically differentiate between the two orders and prioritize liberal policies within the LIO.

The second section delves into NATO's dual structure, comprising its role as both a military alliance and a community of shared values. While NATO's founding document emphasizes its military capabilities, it also underscores its commitment to democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. Over its 75-year history, NATO has oscillated between prioritizing its role as a military alliance and its role as a community of shared values, responding to changes in the global order and political dynamics among member states. This oscillation has been reflected in NATO's strategic concepts, operational guidance, and narrative. Three distinct patterns of alignment between these roles have emerged throughout NATO's history, corresponding to shifts in the global order. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO faces the challenge of reconfiguring the relationship between its dual roles in response to the evolving global order.

C. During the Cold War era from 1949 to 1991, NATO was primarily perceived as a military alliance focused on countering the Soviet Union. Military capabilities, including conventional and nuclear forces, were paramount, with the alliance's strategic goal being to deter Soviet aggression and defend NATO territory if necessary. The notion of NATO as a community of shared values was secondary, primarily serving to demonstrate the alliance's cohesion, especially regarding the credibility of NATO's extended nuclear deterrence. However, maintaining cohesion within the alliance was challenging due to differing interests among member states and European members' geographical proximity to the Soviet Union. To address this challenge, NATO adopted a strategy of strategic ambiguity, emphasizing consensus decision-making to demonstrate shared values despite internal differences. Yet, NATO faced legitimacy issues within member states due to discrepancies between its foundational values of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law, and its practices. The inclusion of authoritarian regimes among NATO's founding and full members raised concerns about its legitimacy, particularly regarding extended nuclear deterrence.

Despite these challenges, NATO managed to maintain cohesion by outwardly emphasizing its role as a military alliance while internally upholding shared values. This delicate balance relied on strategic ambiguity and relatively low public interest in security policy among member state populations.

D. Following the Cold War, the global order shifted, prompting a reassessment of NATO's role. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, NATO faced questions about its purpose and future. Transitioning from its Cold War military focus, NATO's post-Cold War role evolved to emphasize democracy promotion and enlargement, positioning itself as a community of shared values. This shift was exemplified by NATO's commitment to democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law, coupled with its role as a promoter of democratic norms through enlargement. However, some viewed NATO's expansion, particularly the controversial prospect of admitting Georgia and Ukraine, as a power move rather than a commitment to democratic ideals. Despite its pronounced political role, NATO remained militarily active, engaging in operations such as peacekeeping in the Balkans and crisis management, evolving into what Lawrence Freedman termed "liberal wars," notably in Afghanistan. This period witnessed NATO's adaptation to a fundamentally altered global order, retaining a military role focused on crisis management and peace operations in out-of-area theaters. While managing a dual structure, NATO's practices, associated with both a military alliance and community of shared values, underwent substantial reconfiguration, transforming the organization into a fundamentally different entity from its Cold War roots.

E. During the period from 2008 to 2022, NATO underwent a gradual realization of the transformation in the global order, marked by events such as the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the financial crisis that exposed weaknesses in the liberal international order (LIO). This phase saw divergent threat assessments among member states and a lack of consensus on priorities until the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The adoption of the 2010 Strategic Concept highlighted NATO's traditional dual-track approach, recognizing collective defense and crisis management as core tasks of the military alliance, while characterizing its role as a community of shared values as "cooperative security." Despite this, NATO's expeditionary role in crisis management faced internal contention, particularly from allies on the eastern flank, leading to a refocus on collective defense after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, challenges emerged as domestic political changes in member states, such as the election of Donald Trump and Brexit, shifted the focus towards illiberal nationalism, challenging NATO's liberal internationalist outlook. This internal contestation has created a divide within NATO regarding its shared values, potentially undermining cohesion and its role as a community of shared values. Despite criticisms, NATO's dual structure, encompassing both military and value-based dimensions, has provided flexibility and relevance throughout its history. Whether this structure remains relevant in the face of the new challenges posed by the multi-order world remains a question for NATO's future.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO has undergone significant changes, leading to the adoption of a new Strategic Concept at the Madrid summit in June 2022 and further decisions at the Vilnius summit in July 2023. These decisions marked a return to prioritizing NATO's role as a military alliance, particularly evident with new defense plans to bolster NATO's capacity on its eastern flank. While the focus has shifted towards collective security and territorial defense, concerns have emerged about NATO's role as a community of shared values, especially amidst the possibility of a second Trump presidency and changes in the global rules-based order (GRBO). Despite initial efforts to strengthen NATO's political dimension and reaffirm its values, the strategic environment has evolved due to the conflict on NATO's borders, leading to a greater emphasis on the military alliance aspect and a lesser focus on shared values in the new Strategic Concept. This shift is concerning given the ongoing challenges to NATO and the liberal international order (LIO), indicating the need for NATO to address these issues while navigating the complexities of a multi-order world.

Conclusion:

In brief, the challenges facing NATO in the evolving global order are complex and multifaceted. While the alliance has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, recent developments, particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have highlighted both strengths and weaknesses within the alliance. Despite efforts to bolster its military role, concerns persist about NATO's ability to uphold its values and navigate the complexities of a multi-order world.

The current geopolitical landscape underscores the importance of NATO's role as a bulwark of the rules-based international order. However, internal divisions between member states with differing ideological outlooks threaten NATO's cohesion and effectiveness. This internal cleavage, exacerbated by populist movements and illiberal nationalism, undermines NATO's ability to articulate a clear narrative and respond effectively to the challenges posed by the multi-order world.

Moving forward, NATO must prioritize democratic resilience and unity among its member states. Clear articulation of shared values and a nuanced understanding of the global ordering architecture are essential for NATO to navigate the complexities of the contemporary geopolitical landscape. Without addressing internal divisions and reinforcing its commitment to liberal values, NATO risks being ill-prepared to meet the challenges ahead and may become vulnerable to exploitation by its adversaries. Therefore, as NATO approaches its 75th anniversary, it must confront these challenges head-on and adapt its policies and strategies accordingly to remain a relevant and effective force for global stability and security.

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Title: Racism, Stereotypes
and War

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Brief:

Racism distorts policymakers' analyses of allies and adversaries' capabilities, potentially leading to costly decisions in war and peace. One example is the Russo-Japanese War, where racist beliefs influenced inaccurate predictions. Despite its potential impact, international security scholars have largely overlooked racism's role, assuming that decision makers are rational agents. The author however challenges this assumption by demonstrating how racist beliefs systematically influence policymakers' perceptions.

Focusing on two key characteristics of racism, Mercer examines its impact on policymakers' explanations and predictions. Using the Russo-Japanese War as a case study, he explores how racist beliefs affected assessments of Japan and each other, while also considering how reputations easily become stereotypes, and the broader implications of intolerance in international politics.

The article is divided into seven parts. **The first part** emphasizes how the credibility of policymakers is determined by their assessment of each other's capabilities, interests, and determination regarding a given conflict or issue. Evaluating whether a state can uphold a commitment involves considering its economic size, military strength, interest in the specific issue, and willingness to risk war. Racism consistently shapes how policymakers perceive these aspects of credibility. By identifying characteristic patterns of racism, the author establishes two expectations regarding how policymakers' racial biases affect their interpretations and forecasts of their allies and adversaries' actions.

As for the first expectation, racist policymakers tend to attribute behavior to inherent traits rather than external circumstances, shaping their views on military capabilities and governance. Despite the decline of biological racism, racial categorizations persist, influencing perspectives on various groups such as the "inferior yellow races." This mindset can lead to dismissing the interests of racially categorized groups, as seen in George Kennan's doubts about the capacity of black South Africans for self-governance and his suggestion that African Americans were unfit for voting. Additionally, the second expectation indicates that racist policymakers rely on stereotypes to predict and explain behavior, offering perceived predictive and explanatory power based on assumptions about certain types of individuals. Confidence in these beliefs significantly influences their impact, with stereotypes enduring due to assimilation, a pervasive cognitive process described by Robert Jervis. Despite their often-inaccurate nature, stereotypes persist, distorting analysis and perpetuating a cycle of ignorance, contributing to the enduring influence of racist stereotypes on credibility assessments.

The second part of the article suggests how security experts have often overlooked racism's influence on credibility assessments, even in cases involving historical racist policymakers. Policymakers tend to evaluate credibility based on objective assessments of capability, interests, and resolve, often disregarding their own biases. While this argument may seem improbable, it provides a theoretical explanation for downplaying racism's impact. Another less realistic view suggests racist policymakers have never existed, hindering the study of racism's influence. Despite this oversight, normative or rationalist decision-making models advocate for assessing behavior without preconceptions, promoting objective interpretation known as "updating." Unlike assimilation, which uses beliefs to interpret data, updating uses data to inform beliefs. Reputations, unlike stereotypes, rely on updating, allowing policymakers to revise their assessments based on behavior. Over time, divergent reputations converge and become more accurate. Unlike stereotypes, reputations change as policymakers update their beliefs.

Evidence opposing Mercer's argument would support the rationalist view of credibility, suggesting that both racists and non-racists assess credibility similarly. Rational choice arguments apply best when the stakes are high and the players few, according to Morris Fiorina, thus expecting similar and objective credibility assessments from both racist and non-racist policymakers. To test these theoretical expectations, the author chose the Russo-Japanese War for its historical significance and extensive research, enabling examination across different states and policymakers. While some may critique the selection, arguing that it appears straightforward or of solely historical interest, the conflict's depth offers insights into the impact of racism on credibility assessments. Despite views that racism is outdated, its persistence underscores the importance of studying how strongly held beliefs, racist or not, can shape policymakers' perceptions and decisions.

In the third part, the author delves into the Russo-Japanese War and how it shocked the West. Japan, often dismissed as part of an "inferior yellow race," defeated powerful Russia in nineteen months. Japan's triumph included seizing Korea, capturing Port Arthur, and defeating Russia's Baltic Fleet, marking a significant naval victory and one of the largest military engagements to date at the Battle of Mukden.

The conflict, sparked by Japan's westward expansion conflicting with Russia's southeastward expansion in Manchuria and Korea, saw Japan cut diplomatic ties with Russia in 1904. Despite warnings from Russian military attachés, Japan's capabilities were underestimated, leading to surprise at Japan's victory. The perception of the Japanese as an inferior race had emerged recently, given that earlier European travelers had described them as "white." By 1900, racial categorization was common, contributing to misconceptions about Japan's capabilities and leading to global celebrations of its victory over white supremacy.

In the fourth part, Mercer elaborates on the Russian "interpretation" of Japan. Racism led Russia into a war it did not anticipate or win, as policymakers relied on dispositional explanations and stereotypes to assess Japan's behavior, fostering unwarranted confidence in Russia's analysis. Initial accurate assessments by Russian attachés in Japan were later overshadowed by racist evaluations embraced by policymakers in St. Petersburg.

The study reveals contrasting perspectives among Russian policymakers regarding Japan's military capabilities before the Russo-Japanese War. While some, like Lt. Ivan Ivanovich Chagin, Maj. Gen. K. I. Vogak, and Col. Nikolai Ivanovich Ianzhul, provided unbiased evaluations, recognizing Japan's formidable forces, others, like Col. Gleb Mikhailovich Vannovskii, relied on racist stereotypes, leading to an underestimation of Japan's strength. Racism among Russian leaders, perpetuated by derogatory attitudes and a belief in white superiority, fueled dismissive attitudes towards Japan's protests and threats, contributing to a failure to understand Japan's interests and escalating tensions. Despite initial confidence in a swift victory, Japan's relentless attacks and naval victories, coupled with delayed responses fueled by racist beliefs, led to humiliating defeats for Russia. However, individuals like Jacob Schiff, rejecting racism, accurately predicted Japan's victory and played a crucial role in supporting Japan's success by securing loans, emphasizing the impact of racial biases on credibility assessments and diplomatic efforts.

We see in the fifth part, that in 1900, Germany encouraged a conflict between Japan and Russia, believing it would distract Russia from European affairs and prevent a potential two-front war. The policy aimed to strengthen Germany's position and undermine the possibility of an Anglo-Russian alliance. However, German attitudes toward Japan and Russia were influenced by racism, with fears of Japan's "yellow peril" and stereotypes portraying Russians as culturally inferior. Despite evidence of Japan's military capabilities, German confidence in Russia's victory persisted, reflecting deeply ingrained racist attitudes among German policymakers and military personnel.

German assessments of the Russo-Japanese War were heavily influenced by racial stereotypes and dispositional explanations rather than situational factors. Despite acknowledging Russia's logistical challenges, German observers attributed Japan's victory to racial characteristics and morale, depicting Japanese soldiers as zealous and spirited while criticizing Russian passivity. Stereotypes about Russian officers as lethargic and lacking willpower reinforced dispositional explanations. Even when evidence contradicted German beliefs about Japan, they revised their views to emphasize racial types over situational factors. This racial framing persisted, leading the Germans to predict Russia's future weakness based on perceived incompetence, eroding Russia's reputation in Germany. Figures like Friedrich von Holstein and Alfred von Schlieffen expressed confidence in Russia's inability to pose a threat due to inherent deficiencies, influencing German military strategy, notably the Schlieffen Plan. Despite evidence of Russian reforms, German officials remained entrenched in racial stereotypes, underestimating Russia's capabilities and resolve, with detrimental consequences in World War I.

In the sixth part, the author demonstrates that British assessments during the Russo-Japanese War were steeped in racial stereotypes and dispositional explanations, reflecting bias against Japan's capabilities despite its victory over China in 1895. Even after allying with Japan in 1902, British officials remained skeptical and underestimated Japan's military prowess. Key figures like Neville Chamberlain and Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice expressed confidence in Russia's superiority, echoing biases that permeated British observations, naval assessments, and predictions of Japan's defeat by Russia.

Japan's victory in the war challenged British perceptions of race and power, shifting from derogatory labels to admiration for Japanese bravery. Racial interpretations downgraded Russia's race and upgraded Japan's perceived whiteness and civilization, with the British military attributing Japan's success to Bushido and national resolve. Despite the shift, policymakers still viewed Russia as a threat, overlooking the broader implications of Japan's victory and signaling a turning point in global race dynamics with the rise of non-white nations on the world stage.

The final part underscores that stereotypes in policymaking can lead to biased interpretations of evidence, reinforcing preconceived beliefs rather than objectively assessing behavior. While both stereotypes and reputations involve generalized character judgments, stereotypes rely on assimilation, where existing beliefs drive interpretations, while reputations depend on updating based on objective assessments of behavior.

Policymakers often assimilate information to fit stereotypes, particularly in assessments of race, gender, and religion, which can significantly influence credibility assessments. Encouraging policymakers to recognize stereotypes as distinct from reputations may help them critically evaluate their reliance on generalized beliefs. Racism and bigotry have historically distorted policymakers' analyses and predictions, leading to unwarranted confidence in their assessments, highlighting the need for objective assessment and critical analysis in international relations.

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Title: Kissinger and the True Meaning of Détente: Reinventing a Cold War Strategy for the Contest with China

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Brief:

Niall Ferguson in this essay advocates for détente as the best approach for the US to deal with China, taking inspiration from Henry Kissinger's legacy. Kissinger is closely associated with the concept of détente, which gained prominence in the late 1960s and 1970s. As U.S. national security adviser and later secretary of state, Kissinger championed détente as a means to ease tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Détente aimed to prevent the Cold War from escalating into a hot conflict, rather than fostering friendship between the two superpowers. Kissinger believed it was essential for the two to acknowledge their ideological rivalry while navigating the nuclear age. His approach balanced deterrence and coexistence, seeking to engage the Soviets on various issues like arms control and trade while remaining vigilant against their expansionist ambitions. As Kissinger himself put it, détente meant embracing "both deterrence and coexistence, both containment and an effort to relax tensions."

Today, policymakers in Washington seem to be adopting a similar approach towards China, emphasizing the importance of preventing competition from escalating into conflict and recognizing shared global challenges. This shift towards détente-like strategies suggests a pragmatic acknowledgment of the need for coexistence amid rivalry.

Despite its historical significance, détente fell out of favor over time. Critics from both the left and the right accused Kissinger of prioritizing realpolitik over human rights and enabling Soviet expansionism. Critics like Ronald Reagan condemned détente as appeasement, arguing that it conceded too much ground to the Soviets without gaining sufficient concessions in return. By the time of Reagan's presidency, hawks across the political spectrum were disillusioned with Kissinger's approach, viewing détente as a failed policy that favored the Soviet Union. As a result, détente became a discredited concept even before Kissinger's tenure ended.

In the first part of the article, the author distinguishes détente from the appeasement policy adopted by Great Britain in the 1930s towards Hitler's Germany. Détente aimed to contain Soviet expansionism in the 1970s, unlike the appeasement of the 1930s. It successfully prevented a world war and increased cooperation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. As Washington confronts a new cold war with China, there is a risk of hawks derailing détente-like efforts adopted by the Biden administration or future administrations, echoing past criticisms. Republicans often accuse their opponents of being soft on adversaries, reminiscent of Reagan's critique of détente. However, advocating for uncompromising containment may overestimate U.S. power, while avoiding escalation could underestimate the importance of deterrence. Kissinger's strategy combined engagement and containment effectively in the 1970s, adapting to the prevailing economic and public opinion landscape. Ferguson argues that a similar approach is needed today, especially considering China's advantageous position compared to the Soviet Union.

In the second part, the author points to Henry Kissinger's detractors who argue that his Cold War lens led to a myopic approach, seeing every issue as pivotal in the struggle against the Soviet Union. Critics suggest that Kissinger prioritized containing Soviet power above all else in U.S. foreign policy. However, this overlooks the real threat the Soviet Union posed, particularly in the Third World. Despite his awareness of Soviet ulterior motives, Kissinger pursued détente to avoid the brinkmanship of the past and the looming threat of nuclear war. Kissinger emphasized the moral imperative of coexistence, understanding the catastrophic potential of nuclear conflict.

Kissinger's stance on nuclear arms stirred controversy, especially within conservative circles. He balanced his interest in limited nuclear war scenarios with horror at the prospect of full-scale conflict. Kissinger's approach to arms control talks drew criticism from the Pentagon, with accusations of ignoring Soviet violations of agreements. Officials in the Pentagon were especially infuriated by how Kissinger approached the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, which began in November 1969 and paved the way for the first major U.S.-Soviet arms control agreement. By September 1975, intelligence reports alleged Soviet duplicity in flouting SALT commitments to bolster nuclear supremacy. They suggested Moscow's pursuit of nuclear superiority, contradicting the parity premise of the talks. Accusations swirled among government officials, asserting that Kissinger was aware of these developments but opted to disregard them. However, Kissinger's perspective on nuclear parity differed, believing that U.S. economic and technological superiority would eventually undermine Soviet nuclear dominance.

Ultimately, Kissinger's focus on diplomacy aimed to reduce the risk of nuclear catastrophe. Despite criticisms, his strategic calculations were driven by a deep understanding of the complexities and dangers of nuclear conflict.

The third part of the article covers the other achievements of Kissinger's détente during the Cold War despite the fierce criticism. In addition to concerns over Soviet nuclear parity, conservatives criticized Kissinger for what they perceived as his acceptance of the unjust nature of the Soviet system. This criticism stemmed from Kissinger's reluctance to address issues like Soviet restrictions on Jewish emigration and the mistreatment of political dissidents such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Kissinger's decision not to meet with Solzhenitsyn during his visit to the United States in the 1970s further fueled conservative opposition.

Solzhenitsyn, among Kissinger's staunchest opponents, condemned détente as enabling Soviet communism's expansion. Events like the fall of Saigon and the rise of communist regimes in Cambodia and Angola seemed to validate conservative criticisms. However, Kissinger defended détente as necessary to avoid nuclear conflict, even as he acknowledged Soviet threats to U.S. interests.

Despite Kissinger's concerns about Soviet expansionism, the Ford administration faced limitations in countering Soviet military maneuvers, especially without congressional support. Kissinger emphasized the need for flexibility in resolving conflicts but recognized the domestic constraints on U.S. action.

Kissinger's strategy sought to curtail Soviet influence while maintaining diplomatic engagement. Détente, under his leadership, contributed to positive outcomes. By easing tensions both in Europe and across the rest of the world, détente helped improve the lives of at least some people under communist rule. For example, détente increased Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union and by getting the Soviet Union's leaders to commit to respect certain basic civil rights of their citizens as part of the Helsinki Accords, the deal ultimately eroded the legitimacy of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe.

Although Kissinger's government career ended with the Ford administration, his strategic approach continued to influence U.S. foreign policy under subsequent administrations, including those critical of détente like Carter and Reagan. Even as Reagan pursued policies beyond détente, elements of Kissinger's approach persisted, with Reagan adopting reductions in America's nuclear arsenal like those proposed by Kissinger.

In the last part of the article, Ferguson advocates for a new version of détente in the midst of US China rivalry, inspired by Kissinger's legacy. Kissinger's concept of détente, implemented in the 1970s amid the United States' internal and external challenges, aimed to acknowledge the limits of U.S. power while reducing the risk of nuclear conflict through a blend of incentives and deterrence. Détente did not mean embracing, trusting, or appeasing the Soviets. Nor did it mean allowing them to attain nuclear superiority, permanent control over Eastern Europe, or an empire in the Third World.

Despite criticism, détente proved successful, allowing the U.S. to stabilize its Cold War strategy, and providing the Soviets enough rope to stumble in costly interventions like the Afghanistan invasion. Kissinger believed these lessons apply to the current U.S.-China competition, warning of an impending "cold war", because of advances in technology, such as artificial intelligence, that threaten to make weapons not only faster and more accurate but also potentially autonomous. He also urges cooperation to mitigate existential threats, notably over Taiwan.

However, contemporary debates over U.S.-China policy diverge. Some, like Elbridge Colby, advocate for a "strategy of denial" to deter China's challenge to Taiwan's autonomy. Occasionally, the Biden administration has raised doubts about the long-standing Taiwan policy of strategic ambiguity, where the United States refrains from explicitly stating whether it would resort to military action to protect the island. Furthermore, there is nearly unanimous agreement across party lines that the past approach of engaging with Beijing was flawed. This strategy was built on the misguided assumption that heightened trade relations with China would automatically lead to political liberalization within the country. Yet, like its predecessor, this approach faces criticism, with proponents of a new détente arguing against prolonged brinkmanship, advocating for negotiation across various domains, including arms control, trade, and technology.

A new détente, akin to its predecessor, would not entail appeasing China but rather engaging in negotiations to manage tensions. While détente is not a panacea, it offers a framework to address current challenges. The Biden administration has adopted a new term, "de-risking," to describe its approach, reflecting the complexities of the current geopolitical landscape. Despite differences from the past, particularly in economic interdependence between major powers, the optimal strategy may resemble détente. Critics must accurately evaluate this approach to avoid repeating historical misrepresentations akin to those faced by Kissinger during his tenure.

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