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Welcome to Defense & Strategic Studies Online

A Message from the Editorial Board

Dr. Christopher A. Ford, Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Gary L. Geipel
Dr. Kerry M. Kartchner
Col. Curtis D. McGiffin, USAF (ret.)

Welcome to our new online journal – *Defense & Strategic Studies Online* (DASSO) – of which we are pleased to roll out the first edition with the document you are reading. DASSO is new, but Missouri State University's program in Defense and Strategic Studies (DSS) has been around for many years. It is our pleasure at DASSO to continue the DSS tradition of providing insight to the broader policy community – and encouraging deeper thought and debate therein – now through the new vehicle of an online publication in which to showcase work by Missouri State faculty and students, as well as by thoughtful guest scholars and experts.

The DSS program goes back to 1971, when Dr. William Robert Van Cleave (1935-2013) – a professor at the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California (USC) – established a new program there to provide graduate level education and training for students anticipating careers in national and international security affairs, policymaking, and teaching at the university level. As this description suggests, this was from its birth a program focused not upon increasing humanity's sum total of academic knowledge *per se*, but upon using academic study to support policy *praxis* – that is, to increase the sum total of *policy wisdom*.

Dr. Van Cleave's own career, after his service in the U.S. Marine Corps, was one that moved easily back and forth between the academy and policymaking circles. Among other things, for instance, he was a member of the U.S. delegation to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union, chaired an advisory committee for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), served as an advisor on strategic policy and planning in the Office of the U.S.

Secretary of Defense, and advised Governor Ronald Reagan of California on defense policy and then ran the Defense Department transition team after Reagan won the presidential election of 1980.

This extensive experience in and with government policymaking – coupled with his experience in academia and with think tanks such as Stanford's Hoover Institution, the National Institute for Public Policy, and the Center for Security Policy – taught Van Cleave the importance of interdisciplinary, practical, and policy-focused scholarship. He knew how critical it was for the knowledge-producers in the academic world to learn from those with actual experience in the complexities and responsibilities of statecraft and national defense, and how critical it was that scholarship provide actionable insight *to* such leaders as they work to protect and advance our country's interests, deter aggression, and promote international security.

A "practitioner" mindset and a policy focus are thus, as it were, in our program's "DNA," focusing us upon phronetic knowledge in the Aristotelian sense – that is, insight providing grounds for reasoned judgement and action in the world. Van Cleave carried these points of emphasis with him when he brought DSS with him from USC to Southwest Missouri State University – now Missouri State University (MSU) – in 1987. Today, while still proudly at MSU, now as part of the Reynolds College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (RCASH), the DSS program is physically located in northern Virginia just outside of Washington, D.C., thus both symbolically and physically close to the seat of national decision-making in defense and strategic affairs. (At a time when American universities seem to be all but falling over themselves to establish new outposts in the Washington, D.C., area, it's also worth noting that our program has been here for nearly 20 years!) This proximity to the locus of national security decision-making allows us to draw upon a faculty of scholar-practitioners with deep practical expertise in what they teach to DSS graduate students, continuing the Van Cleave legacy.

This legacy, we believe, is as important now as ever it has been. Today, as was also the case when Van Cleave established the program in 1971, America is politically polarized and divided against itself, roiled by domestic antagonisms and collective national self-doubt, and

half-convinced that our country and way of life are not worth fighting for. America faced such challenges in Van Cleave's day, moreover, at a time when American confidence, strategic seriousness, and steadfast resolution were essential in the face of threats from dangerous great power adversaries – as is once more, alas, the case today.

In the face of American self-doubt and strategic unseriousness, as noted by former Deputy National Security Advisor and former DSS faculty member J.D. Crouch, Bill Van Cleave "spent much of his career fighting such foolishness." In this fight, it was Van Cleave's objective to wed scholarly insight to a statesman's practicality. In response to Soviet threats of his own period, he "taught students to see the world as it is and through the eyes of the policymaker," and he "played a major role in mobilizing America to meet this threat and provided the intellectual guidance and wisdom to deal with it." As Americans and the other free sovereign peoples of the world struggle with contemporary challenges of defense and security, DSS is proud of Van Cleave's legacy and determined to carry forward the tradition he established of facing such problems head-on, with clarity, integrity, and – where needed – brutal honesty.

What DSS has hitherto lacked, however, is a vehicle through which to collect and publish work by scholar-practitioners that explores contemporary defense and strategic studies issues in this spirit, and through which to make such insights available to the broader policy community. And that's where DASSO comes in.

With this new online journal, we aim to collect and make available just such work, in the form of essays offering scholar-practitioner insights into issues of national or international importance, in an easily readable form, and of a length long enough to wrestle seriously with serious things, but not so long that they would struggle to catch or keep the attention of busy policymakers. We will thus be seeking essays of generally between 2,000 and 4,000 words – though as you'll see from this first volume, we can be flexible about that! – and publishing them here.

We are tremendously excited about this new venture, and hope that in the months and years ahead you will find DASSO both interesting and thought-provoking.

With our thanks,

The Editorial Board

Meet Your Editorial Board:

The Hon. Christopher A. Ford (Editor-in-Chief) *is Professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies with Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies, as well as a Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Oxford University's Pharos Foundation. In prior government service, Dr. Ford served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation, also performing the duties of the Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security. He is the author of* The Mind of Empire: China's History and Modern Foreign Relations *(2010) and* China Looks at the West: Identity, Global Ambitions, and the Future of Sino-American Relations *(2015).*

Dr. Gary L. Geipel *is a professor and director of the doctoral program at Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies (DSS), as well as a Senior Associate at the National Institute for Public Policy (NIPP). Together with DSS students, he hosts the "Deterrence School" podcast. Earlier in his career, Dr. Geipel worked in the Graduate Fellows program of the Central Intelligence Agency, as a Senior Research Fellow and Chief Operating Officer of the Hudson Institute, and as a communications and global corporate-affairs executive in the biopharmaceuticals industry. He is the author of hundreds of articles and monographs in major magazines and newspapers as well as online, think-tank, and peer-reviewed publications.*

Dr. Kerry M. Kartchner *has been a Distinguished Faculty member with Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies since 2007. He was formerly the State Department's Senior Representative to the START and ABM Treaty implementation commissions in Geneva, Switzerland, and Senior Advisor for Missile Defense Policy in the Bureau of Arms Control. He also served as a Senior Foreign Policy Advisor for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in the Office of Strategic Research and Dialogues. He is the co-editor of* On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century (2014) *and the* Routledge Handbook of Strategic Culture (2024).

Col. Curtis D. McGiffin, USAF (ret.) *is Per Course Faculty with Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies. He is a retired Air Force Colonel who spent most of his career serving, supporting, leading, or educating the nuclear weapons enterprise at various levels of command. Col. McGiffin is also a co-founder of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, and previously served as Associate Dean of the School of Strategic Force Studies at the Air Force Institute of Technology, where he led a portfolio of nuclear deterrence education programs for the Air Force's professional continuing education effort. His decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, two Aerial Achievement medals, and the Air Force Meritorious Civilian Service Award. Finally, Professor McGiffin has published numerous articles and a book chapter on deterrence and participates in a weekly podcast.*

The Ties that Bind:

A Data-Driven Analysis of Oceania's Dependency on China

Dr. Christopher A. Ford
&
Dr. Alex Memory

Successive U.S. Presidential administrations have raised alarm about an impending and gravely challenging period of Great Power Competition, posed by geopolitical revisionist threats from the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. This competition clearly has critical military components. This is true not merely because of the need to preserve strategic deterrence in the face of Russia's development of new nuclear weapons – perhaps even including space-based weapons – and China's extraordinary nuclear and conventional weapons buildup. It is also true because of other military (or potentially military) challenges that are both broader and more specific. Russian President Vladimir Putin, for example, claims to feel the Kremlin is at war with "Satanic" Western powers in a broad spiritual and civilizational struggle in which the ongoing fighting in Ukraine is merely "a local conflict … one phase in a global confrontation." For his part, Chinese ruler Xi Jinping has reportedly instructed his People's Liberation Army (PLA) to be ready to take Taiwan by force as early as 2027.

The strategic competition challenges the United States faces today are multi-faceted and involve far more than merely military confrontation. Indeed, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) explicitly considers itself to be in a competition across *every* aspect of what it has termed "Comprehensive National Power" (CNP), a conception (and contest) of composite national strength aggregating a range of economic, military, technological, political, and even cultural battlespaces.

In fact, PRC strategists assume that the outcome of this global competition will be *decided* by CNP, with victory ultimately going to the country able to generate the most of it, and with that victor able –

if its CNP is great enough – to reshape the entire global system around itself. In what one of the authors of this essay has described as "a stunningly ambitious project of world-building," Chinese strategists intend, if they can, to make *their* country that victor, permitting Beijing to forge a Sinocentric new order in place of the architecturally pluralist international system of the present day.

In the face of this full-spectrum challenge in what the Biden Administration has called a "strategic competition to shape the future of the international order," U.S. policymakers and thought leaders sometimes speak of the need to respond to China's "all-of-nation long-term strategy" with some kind of "whole of government" or "whole of nation" (WON) response of our own. What is less clear, however, is precisely *how* our leaders should approach these challenges on such a comprehensive basis, especially in a democratic policy where government officials (thankfully) cannot dictate priorities and simply *command* mass societal obedience, as our adversaries attempt to do.

Also daunting in the context of the need for counter-strategy is the question of *on what basis* to expect our leaders' decision-making to occur. In light of the staggering volume and complexity of available information, U.S. government leaders face challenges synthesizing and making sense of all this information to ensure well-informed decision making. It should be a high priority to develop and deploy effective decision-support tools and other analytical support for U.S. and other Western leaders engaged in competitive strategy policymaking.

This paper aims to help point a way forward in this latter respect. In the following pages, we will suggest – and begin to illustrate – some of the potential value that can be derived from using quantitative research methods to understand strategic competitive strategy vis-à-vis China.

In particular, we will describe the following data-driven insights from our study:

- China's relationships with the countries of Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) – and the trends

visible in those relationships – are notably different than those of other major countries with those same Oceanian states.

- Especially during the last two decades, the small states of Oceania have increasingly become dependent upon China, and this dependency has been more significant and has developed more rapidly and consistently than with other partners, even if one considers periods during which those non-Chinese countries were themselves enjoying periods of significant export-led growth analogous to what China has enjoyed in recent years.

- Where other countries' relational trends with the small states of Oceania show a degree of variability and volatility over time, these countries relationships with China are remarkably consistent, and trend always – and rapidly – toward increasing dependence.

- Indeed, China is almost unique in the consistent degree to which its relationships tend quickly to make its dyadic partners dependent upon it. Beijing gets more dependency "bang for the buck," as it were, out of increases in its relational "bandwidth" with other countries than does essentially anyone else, and China maintains almost *no* relationships that do not produce such dependency.

- These trends are most dramatic in the period since the year 2000.

These conclusions based upon our analysis of the database compiled by the Pardee Institute at the University of Denver on "Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity" (FBIC). On top of the above insights, the FBIC data point toward some further, albeit necessarily tentative, *policy* conclusions. Specifically, the stark trends and remarkable consistency in the data characterizing China's dyadic relationships – and the contrast between these relationships and equivalent data for other countries – suggest the possibility that this

Chinese consistency is not accidental, but rather the result of a deliberate grand strategy.

The data suggest that Beijing may seek out, build, and maintain relationships with other countries in significant part precisely *because* of the degree to which these ties make its partners dependent upon – and hence potentially manipulable by – China. The notable way in which these trends dramatically accelerate during the last 20 years, moreover, suggest the possibility that China's admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 may have provided Beijing with a critical opportunity to implement such a strategy of *relational weaponization*, enabling it to supercharge this approach over the subsequent two decades.

Relationships and Dependency

Weaponizing interdependence, of course, is hardly new.[1] Yet while the United States has long attempted to leverage the topology of global financial networks in order to disincentivize specific forms of comparatively objective wrongdoing – such as by imposing costs on narcotraffickers, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferators, military aggressors, and human rights abusers – China approaches such leverage differently, and with more blatantly political, even strategic, ends. Beijing uses economic and trading relationships for everyday political leverage in conditioning habits of conformity with CCP policy positions, employing what one of us has termed "leverage webs" to constrain the autonomy and independence of foreign persons, companies, and even entire countries. Beijing does this by bestowing rewards or inflicting punishments on the basis of whether or not entities take positions – or sometimes even use *phrasing* – of which the CCP disapproves.

There is a growing understanding, moreover, that China's weaponization of interdependence in these respects is not simply adventitious – that is, this manipulable dependence is not merely something that arose essentially by chance or as a result of other dynamics, but of which Beijing is now doing its best to take advantage. To the contrary, it seems increasingly clear that the deliberate

cultivation of dependency relationships for political leverage has been a part of CCP strategy for a long time.

The scholar Elizabeth Economy, for instance, has noted the degree to which China's "Belt-and-Road Initiative" (BRI) infrastructure project and investment relationships are invariably asymmetrical, forming a skein of bilateral relationships between China and smaller partners in the developing world rather than a system that facilitates cross-cutting relationships between such smaller players. One of the authors of the essay you are reading, moreover, has described China's networks of dependency relationships as reflecting CCP theories of social control that aspire to "train" both Chinese citizens and those in the outside world into habits of "harmonious" congruence with CCP preferences. Indeed, Anastas Vangeli has described how even the *diplomatic* formalities of Chinese-managed BRI relationships tend both to create and to manipulate subtle narrative frameworks that help socialize other diplomats into, and normalize, what are in effect quasi-tributary relationships with Beijing.[2]

Nor would it be in any way surprising for China to have a strategy of deliberate dependency-building in its global relationships, developing them at least in part for purposes of political manipulation and control. After all, influenced by the work of Qian Xuesen – a Chinese scientist who studied at MIT and worked for a time at Caltech before going back to China to help the CCP develop the atomic bomb and intercontinental ballistic missiles, and who brought concepts of cybernetics back with him – CCP leaders have focused for many years upon using systems theory as a "technology of organizational management" and of social control. In fact, one of Qian's disciples back in China, Song Jian, rose to head the State Science and Technology Commission and was appointed to the State Council in 1986. In his work, Song used cybernetics and systems theory to help Beijing develop its "one-child" policy, make state planning consistent with reliance upon private markets, and pioneer the sinister technology-facilitated surveillance-and-control mechanisms that the CCP uses today to maintain its vice-like grip upon the Chinese people.

Given this strong tradition of aspiring to ensure Party control of complex socio-political systems through approaches grounded in

systems theory, it is not surprising that Chinese strategic thinking often tends to emphasize not direct linear control but rather the setting of conditions that gradually shape and influence others' decision-making. In the words of Francois Jullien, the objective is to "set the conditions such that 'the process that leads to victory is determined so far in advance (and its development is so systematic and gradual) that it appears to be automatic rather than determined by calculation and manipulation.'"[3] In the context of this CCP enthusiasm for cybernetics-inflected management strategies in areas ranging from population management to public security, what would be more natural than for the Party also to see foreign economic, trade, financial, commercial, diplomatic, cultural, and security relationships at least in part as mechanisms for building social and political control?

So far, however, most discussions of these phenomena have been primarily *qualitative* in nature. Accordingly, this paper seeks to contribute to the Western policy community's understanding of such questions – and to catalyze additional research – by demonstrating that such dynamics (and their potential implications) can be explored with the help of *quantitative* analysis as well.

Our Approach

The analysis recounted in this essay was undertaken by a team at the Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory in mid-2024 – led by the authors – in order to explore how quantitative methods might help provide insight into the geopolitical environment and improve the understanding of leaders engaged in U.S. competitive strategy. This essay helps demonstrate how quantitative methods – and just such constructive teaming and intellectual cross-pollination across the analytical space – can put further flesh on the bones of the growing body of qualitative analysis of these issues that is already underway, and can inform public debate, policy community consideration, and academic exploration of competitive strategy.

Our approach builds on the seminal work done at the Pardee Institute on "Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity" (FBIC). They explain what they mean by the phrase "Formal Bilateral Influence" as follows:

> "**Formal** *indicates the state-sanctioned or state-sponsored and publicly acknowledged nature of the leverage we seek to measure. This includes interactions like diplomatic exchange, arms transfers, and goods trade but excludes actions like state financing of violent non-state actors or covert attempts to disrupt foreign elections.* **Bilateral** *highlights the country-to-country nature of the measures we examine. Multilateral and network effects can be examined by analyzing a collection of bilateral connections together, highlighting patterns such as spheres of influence. However, these are byproducts of the collections of bilateral interactions rather than explicit components of our measures of influence capacity. By* **influence**, *we intend to measure relational power between countries, where power refers to one country's ability to get another country to do what it otherwise would not do (or to refrain from doing what it otherwise would do). In other words, influence can play into strategies that involve both compellence and deterrence. Finally,* capacity *emphasizes the material-based foundation of our measures of influence, which exclude policymakers' willingness or ability to act."*

The FBIC index the Pardee Institute compiles and makes available to other researchers consists of a weighted aggregate of a range of data sources that together – they posit – provide useful insight into the influence potential of one country over another. As they recount, the data elements captured in this index include, for any given pair of national relational partners:

- Bilateral foreign aid (*i.e.*, official development assistance) as a share of the recipient country's GDP;
- Bilateral foreign aid as a share of the recipient country's total inward aid;
- Total bilateral goods trade as a share of the recipient country's GDP;
- Total bilateral trade as a share of the recipient country's total goods trade;
- Arms import stock as a share of the recipient country's total arms trade stock;

- Arms import stock as a share of the recipient country's total military stock;
- The average level of diplomatic representation between the two countries;
- The shared weighted IGO membership count between the two countries;
- Trade agreement between the two countries; total trade between the two countries;
- A military alliance index for the two countries; and
- The total arms stock transferred between the two countries.

Together, these variables are said to permit one to "characterize influence dimensions covering economic dependence, security dependence, political bandwidth, economic bandwidth, and security bandwidth." And indeed, the Center's analysis of this information has begun to receive wide attention. The British magazine *The Economist*, for example, cited the Pardee Institute's work in concluding that

> *"America has been the country with the most influence over the [countries of the "Group of 77" (G77) developing nations] since the 1970s. Its 'influence capacity' has been more or less constant even as the allure of Britain and France has waned. But it is increasingly rivalled by China, which after 40 years of relative insignificance saw its influence grow from around 2000."*[4]

To explore what FBIC reveals about global interdependence with China, we decided to dig a bit deeper in the relationship over time between what the FBIC data calls "dependency" and "bandwidth," focusing on data for a number of smaller countries in their relationships with a larger one, particularly (though not exclusively) China. As used in the FBIC data, as the Pardee Institute explains,

> "**Bandwidth** *measures the volume of interactions between countries, such as the amount of economic activity that flows across borders in a given year. Two countries that interact more frequently and across more dimensions of activity are more likely to have opportunities to exert influence on one another. All*

bandwidth values are the same for the 'sender' and 'receiver' in a dyad.

"**Dependence** *measures how reliant one country is on another for their economic activity or security services by measuring levels of trade as a share of total trade or as a share of GDP. Countries with high levels of dependence can be more easily manipulated. Dependence values differ within a dyad, where values depend on which is the 'sending' country and which is the 'receiving' country."*

Our analysis began by looking at such bandwidth and dependency relationships for the smaller and less developed countries of Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand. We recognize that these states of Oceania may be in some ways an idiosyncratic analytical target, given the diminutive size of their economies and populations in comparison to those of most developed countries. Nevertheless, we judged that it was precisely their small size and the stark asymmetry of more or less *all* their relationships with the rest of the world – and hence, presumably, the relative simplicity and manageability of the available data in comparison to what would be needed to evaluate larger and more complex relational dyads – that may make Oceania a useful region for which at least to *begin* developing quantitative analyses to inform competitive strategy.

Despite (or perhaps because of) their small size, moreover, the countries of Oceania have been increasingly the subject of competitive rivalry in recent years. Press accounts and think tank studies, for example, now commonly discuss jockeying and maneuvering for influence there between larger states such as China, on the one hand, and the United States, Japan, and Australia on the other.[5] Such signs of current contestation, too, increased the attractiveness of using these countries as our jumping off point. Perhaps, we reasoned, our application of quantitative methods could shed light on some of the dynamics behind and associated with this competition.

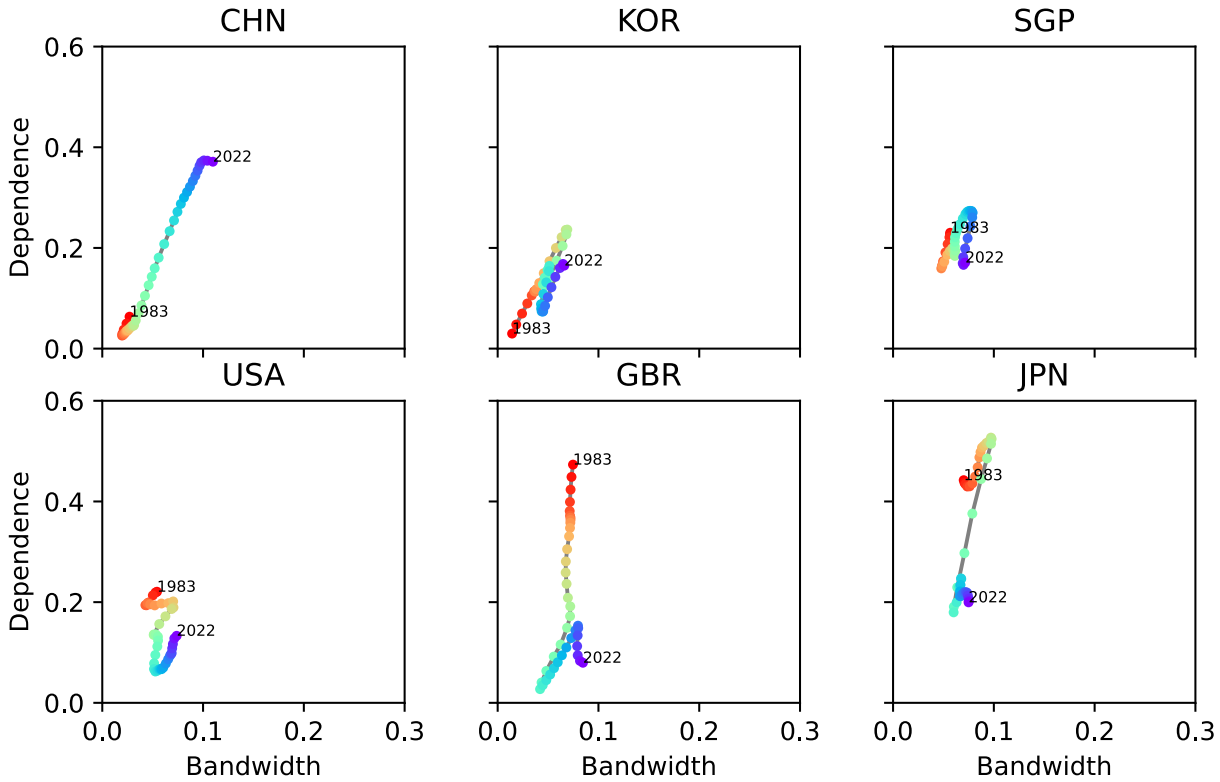

Figure 1. Dependence vs. Bandwidth. Influence capacity of selected countries over Solomon Islands, using a five-year rolling average. The color reflects the year.

Discussion

In any event, our team analyzed the FBIC data by focusing upon Oceania and its relationships. In our view, it suggested some interesting tentative conclusions, as will be explained below.

Our look at the FBIC data for Oceania began by simply trying to see what that data suggested about trends over time at a level far more granular than the Pardee institute's overall findings (noted above) about growing Chinese influence vis-à-vis the G77 countries overall.

Influence Trajectories

One example of this visualization can be seen in Figure 1. It shows the "trajectory" over time of the relationship between "bandwidth" an "dependency" – as understood by the coders of the FBIC database, at least – in the dyadic relations between the Solomon Islands (our first illustrative sample country) and a set of six major trading partners denoted by three-character trigraphs: China (CHN),

Korea (KOR), Singapore (SGP), United States (USA), Great Britain (GBR), and Japan (JPN).[6] We selected the six trading partners as follows:

- **CHN, KOR, and SGP**: To compare China to other fast-growing economies, we include two of the so-called "Asian Tigers": Korea and Singapore;

- **USA, GBR, and JPN**: To compare the United States to other established economies with historical global trading relationships, we include Great Britain and Japan.

We use this set of six countries throughout this paper to illustrate our analysis.

In the plot, movement along the horizontal axis indicates a greater degree of "bandwidth" in the relationship between the countries in question. To wit, movement to the right indicates a "thicker" (that is, higher-bandwidth) relationship. Similarly, movement along the vertical axis indicates a greater degree of dependence – movement up signifying a more "dependent" relationship, meaning that the country in question (here, the Solomons) is more dependent upon the developed economy in each small graph. The curves displayed cover the period between 1983 and 2022 – these dates being selected on the basis of data availability – with points on those curves shifting in color from red (1983) through to dark blue (2022) so the reader can track chronological progress visually despite the small size of the chart.[7]

By way of example, the U.S. graphic in Figure 1 shows relatively low scores, both for the bandwidth of the Solomon Islands' relationship with America and for their dependency upon the United States. It also shows a good deal of volatility in that dependency. Whereas bandwidth does not appear to change much, the Solomons' dependency upon the United States declines significantly for many years before turning around sharply in the mid-2000s. As of 2022, it was still rising.

The China portion of Figure 1 shows changes in the bandwidth of the Solomons' relationship with and their dependency upon Beijing from 1988 to 2022. In contrast to the U.S. graph, however, this curve is quite straight, rising sharply and consistently over time both in bandwidth and dependency. As another point of comparison, the graphs for Britain and Japan show, on the whole, dramatic *reductions* in both bandwidth and (especially) dependency with the Solomons, though the islands became for a time more dependent upon Japan for a time into the 1990s, and their plunging bandwidth with and dependency upon Britain seems to have begun to turn around several years ago.

In any event, the reader can thus see how sorting and plotting the Pardee Institute's FBIC data can yield insights into – and help one visualize – potentially significant trends over time. Comparing such curves to event timelines, for example, may help depict and understand the impact of major events such as the global oil price shock of the 1970s, Britain's handover of Hong Kong to Chinese control in 1997, Japan's economically "lost decade" of the 1990s, regional natural disasters such as typhoons or tsunamis, the Vietnam War, the negotiation of free trade agreements or security arrangements with major powers, and so forth. Conversely, intuitively unexpected or surprisingly dramatic patterns brought out by such analysis may to point the researcher toward new insights by throwing a spotlight on issues warranting further investigation.

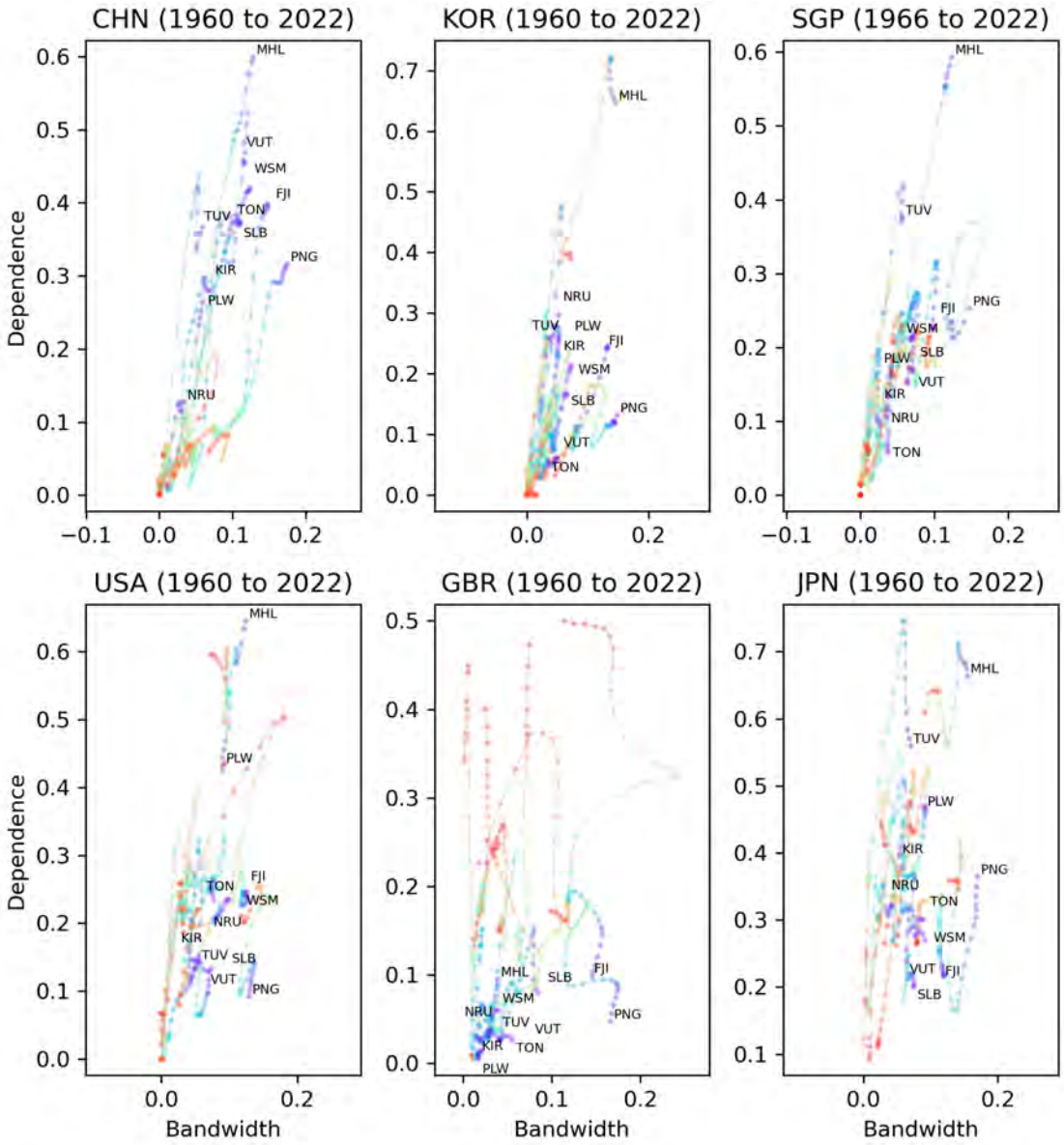

Figure 2. Bandwidth vs. Dependency for all of Oceania, using a five-year rolling average. The color reflects the year (red=earlier years and dark blue=later).

A further example of how one might sort the FBIC data in looking at Oceania's relationships with a selection of more developed economies can be seen in Figure 2. In the figure, we plot each such country vis-à-vis Oceania as a whole – with the various specific dyadic partner countries *within* that region each denoted by a separate curve. Note that we have fixed the horizontal and vertical axes on these charts in Figure 2 at a 1:1 aspect ratio, so that these displays – *e.g.*, the slopes of each curve – can be more easily compared to each other.

This visualization allows insight into the "dependency versus bandwidth" performance of individual countries in Oceania vis-à-vis each major power listed from 1960 to 2022. The individual curves for specific countries in Oceania are denoted here by their trigraphs: Fiji (FJI), Kiribati (KIR), Marshall Islands (MHL), Nauru (NRU), Tonga (TON), Palau (PLW), Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands (SLB), Vanuatu (VUT), and Western Samoa (WSM). Even the limited breakout images of Figure 2, therefore, convey a great deal of information, and demonstrate how the FBIC data can be used to visualize country-specific trajectories across the region.

And indeed, the patterns traced by these trajectories seem to vary considerably for the United States, China, and Japan. The U.S. patterns, for instance, show a considerable degree of volatility, with essentially all the tracks for individual states in Oceania each having periods of steep rise and precipitate fall in ways that – to the naked eye, at least – show little overall consistency.

The Japanese patterns are somewhat more consistent, particularly in that many of them display a very sharp period of rising Oceanian dependency for many years, but they too also show some volatility, as even here such ascent is still often followed by a turnaround. These turnarounds, moreover, seem to occur at varying points along the timeline, rather than coinciding in ways that would suggest some kind of overall exogenous shock to dyadic relations. Rather, each relationship seems to travel along its own rather independent course.

The data for the United States and Japan, however, differ even more dramatically from those for China. For Beijing, in Figure 2 there is essentially no such volatility. The curves for each country of Oceania show, vis-à-vis China, steady increases in bandwidth and even more dramatic steady increases in dependency over time. Nor is this phenomenon limited solely to China's impressive period of export-driven growth since the late 1970s, for these patterns appear to go back to 1960. The smoothness of this curve is to some degree affected by our use of 5-year rolling averages, though they affect the plots for all countries equally. China's pattern of relations with Oceania therefore

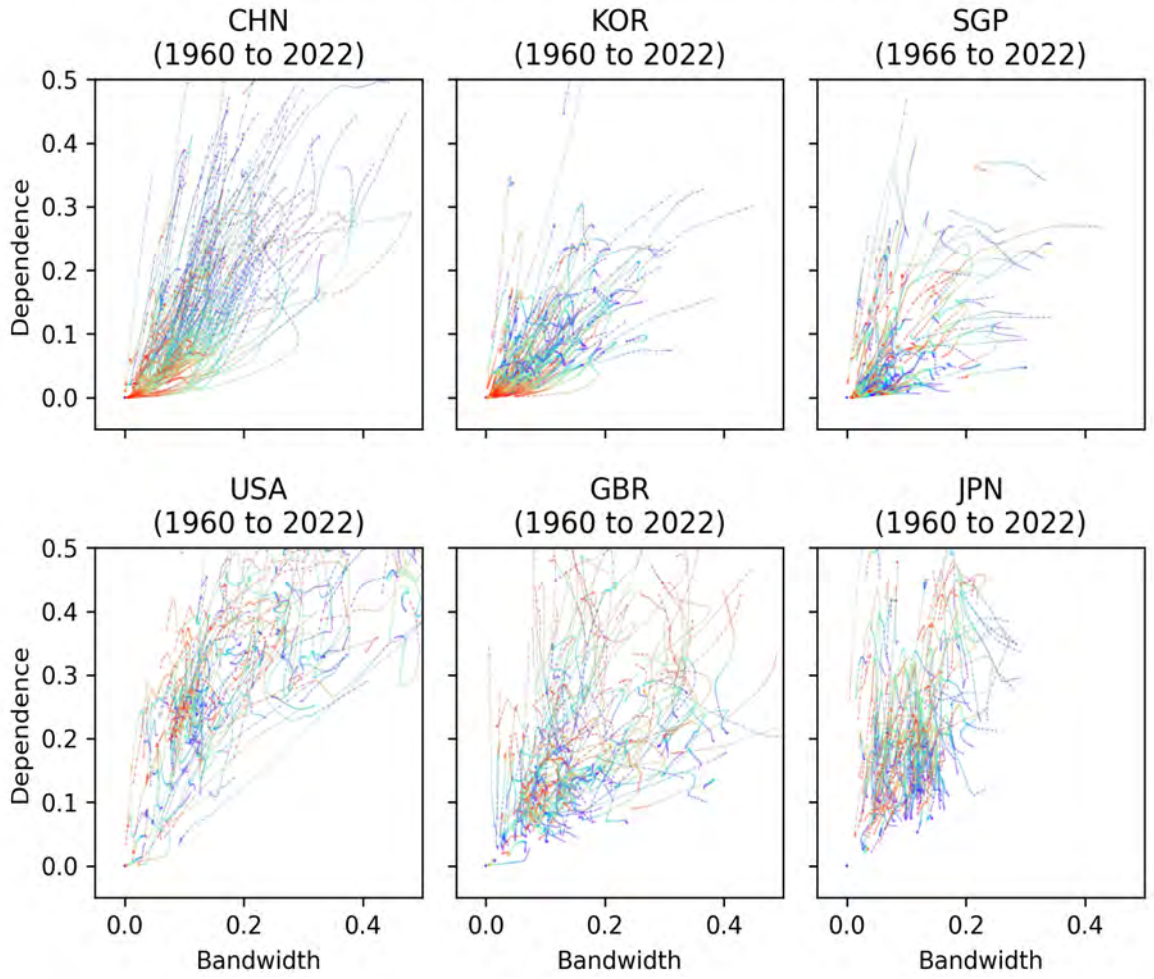

Figure 3. Bandwidth vs. Dependency for all countries of the world, except those in North America and Europe, with a twenty-year rolling average. The color reflects the year (red=earlier years and dark blue=later).

seems to be quite different from those of most of the other countries depicted in Figure 2.[8]

Control and Uniformity in Trajectories

Broadening our view beyond Oceania, in Figure 3 we plot trajectories for all countries in the world except Europe and North America. Despite the large number of trajectories plotted in the figure, the pattern of linearity in the trajectories for China are still visible, with the trajectories appearing as a large number of nearly parallel straight lines. Figure 4 offers an additional way to visualize such information, this time using a scatter-plot approach to depict the degree of linearity between dependency and bandwidth. This figure plots every state *in*

the world against each other on the basis of the linearity of their bandwidth-versus-dependency relationships with other states. Each point in Figure 4 depicts an average of *all other countries' curves* vis-a-vis the country depicted by that dot. The color of each point reflects the average bandwidth of each country.

In order to permit an "apples-to-apples" comparison between what are, of course, a great many highly individualized underlying curves, Figure 4 displays the Pearson correlation coefficient for each country. This is intended to convey the degree to which there is (or is not) a linear relationship between the bandwidth and dependency variables.

From the set $C = (c_1, c_2, \ldots c_N)$ of all N countries in the FBIC data, we form pairs $(c_i, c_j) \in C \times C$, e.g., $(USA, Solomon\ Islands)$. For some pair (c_i, c_j), FBIC provides two time series $(b_1, b_2, \ldots, b_T)$ and $(d_1, d_2, \ldots, d_T)$ for bandwidth and dependency, respectively. The number T of available years of data vary by country pair. With those time series we calculate correlation as usual:

$$r_{i,j} = \frac{\sum_{t \in T}(b_t - \bar{b})(d_t - \bar{d})}{\sqrt{\sum_{t \in T}(b_t - \bar{b})^2}\sqrt{\sum_{t \in T}(d_t - \bar{d})^2}}$$

Then for each country $c_i \in C$, we calculate the correlation mean

$$m_i = \frac{\sum_{j \in C \setminus i} r_{i,j}}{|C| - 1}$$

which we plot as the horizontal axis of Figure 4. We calculate standard deviation (the vertical axis) with a similarly conventional method.

To simplify considerably but still grasp the essence, the farther right one moves along the horizontal axis in Figure 4, the "straighter" is the underlying curve for the country represented by each locational dot. The horizontal axis also moves from negative to positive numbers. A location in the "negative" zone means that the underlying bandwidth-versus-dependency curves in that portion of the graph

slope "downward to the right" – that is, dependency tends to decrease as bandwidth increases. Conversely, a location more on the right, in "positive" territory, indicates bandwidth and dependency rising together, on an "upward slope to the right." (Dots in the middle of the graphic square indicate countries for which the underlying datapoints form more of a random cloud than a clear trajectory.) The vertical axis reflects the uniformity of correlations, with a low standard deviation reflecting high uniformity.

The top half of Figure 4 depicts all this information for FBIC data covering the years from 1960 to 2000. The bottom half uses the same display protocol, but displays *post-2000* information so as to allow insight into how the linearity of countries' bandwidth-versus-dependency curves may have changed over time.

From the perspective of assessing PRC strategy and China's changing role in the world, the most interesting aspect of Figure 4 would seem to be twofold. First, it is noteworthy just how much the location of the "China dot" *moves* when one factors in post-2000 data – that is, the period after Beijing was permitted to join the World Trade

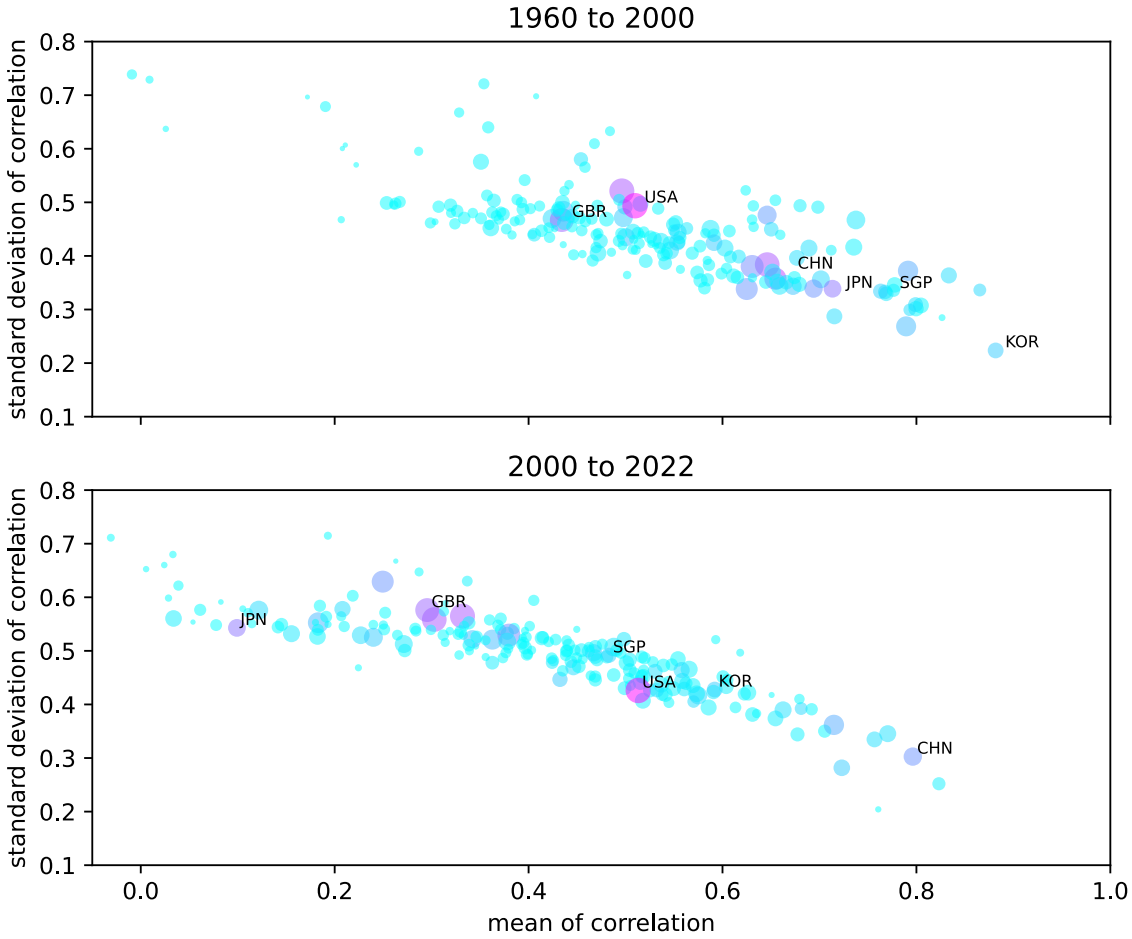

Figure 4. Correlation between Bandwidth and Dependence. Size reflects bandwidth and color reflects dependence (purple means high dependence).

Organization (WTO) in 2001. One can see this by comparing China's location in the chart on the top half of Figure 4 with its position in the chart on the bottom half.)

Second, Figure 4 is interesting in the degree to which, in the post-2000 period, China stands out as having an *extremely* high Pearson coefficient compared to almost all other countries. When one factors in data from the last two decades, therefore, China is truly exceptional in having consistently built up the "thickness" of its bandwidth relationship and the starkness of its dependency relationship with essentially *every other country* on the planet. It would seem to have done this, moreover, more significantly and with more control and uniformity than other countries, including those which themselves

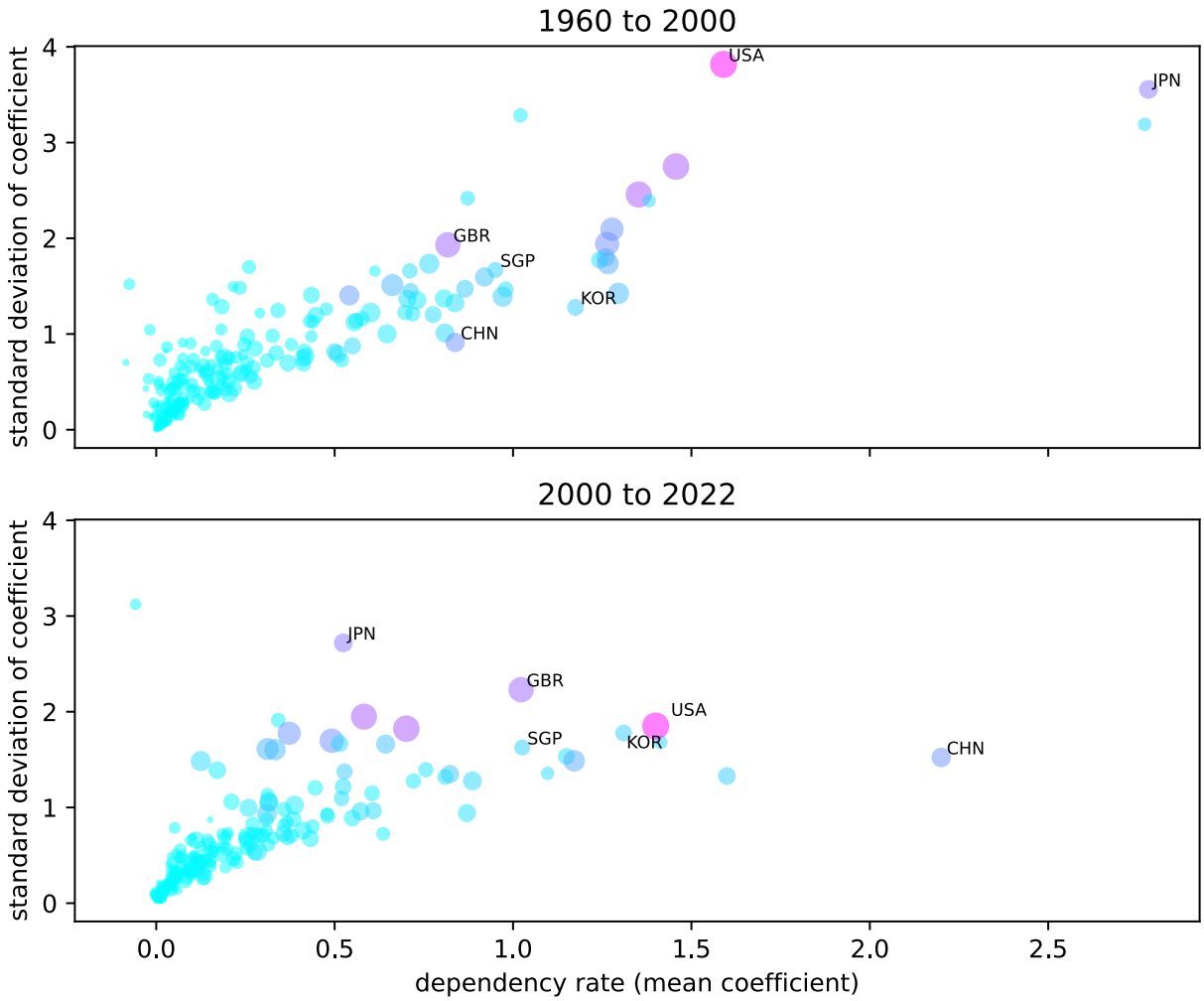

Figure 5. Coefficient between Bandwidth and Dependence. Size reflects bandwidth and color reflects dependence (purple means high dependence).

enjoyed – as has China – enormous periods of export-driven growth during the 1960-2022 period.

High Dependency Trajectories

China also stands out among other countries in the FBIC data by having trajectories in which the dependency component is especially large. For example, in Figure 3, compare the trajectories for China (CHN) with two other countries that have experienced rapid growth: Korea (KOR) and Singapore (SGP). While all three have some relatively linear trajectories, a large proportion of the China trajectories have a steep slope, revealing that the dependency component is large compared to bandwidth.

In comparison, Korea and Singapore's trajectories have slopes that vary: some are steep like China's tend to be, while others are shallow, having relatively small dependence compared to bandwidth. To explore whether China stands out in this way compared to all countries, we summarize the slopes of global trajectories in Figure 5. Like Figure 4, these scatter-plot graphs plot every state in the world against each other on the basis of the characteristics of their bandwidth-versus-dependency relationships vis-à-vis other states. In this case, however, rather than comparing the linearity of curves by using a Pearson coefficient, we calculated a *regression* coefficient. That is, given the two time series $(b_1, b_2, \dots, b_T)$ and $(d_1, d_2, \dots, d_T)$ for some country pair (c_i, c_j), we fit a model

$$d_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 b_t, t \in 1, \dots, T$$

for the purpose of associating the coefficient β_1 with pair (c_i, c_j). As we did with Figure 4 in the previous section, we calculate the mean and standard deviation of that quantity for each country c_i and plot them on the horizontal and vertical axes of Figure 5, respectively. This allows us to compare the *slopes* of the curves in question. (Data for the 1960-2000 period is given in the graph on the top half, and for the post-2000 period on the bottom.)

As one can see, China stands out in the years since 2000, shifting dramatically rightward on the chart in **Figure 5** for this time period compared to the previous one. We already know from Figure 4 that China has extremely straight bandwidth-versus-dependency curves in comparison to most other states, but this figure tells us that these Chinese curves are also notably *steep*. That is, when it comes to bringing other peoples into relationships of dependency upon it, China has had a "bang for the buck" ratio over the last two decades that is stunningly higher than that of any other country. Beijing, this data seems to show, gains more dependency over other countries per FBIC-coded unit of expanding relational bandwidth than do other states. In other words, in the last two decades, China makes its relational partners dependent upon it more rapidly and more "efficiently" than did anyone else.

Indicia of a Strategy?

With the caveat that additional analysis would be needed before one could draw strong or authoritative conclusions, this quick and illustrative look at China's bandwidth and dependency relationships suggests important possibilities that should presumably be investigated further.

First, it is hard not to be struck by the remarkable control and uniformity of China's bandwidth-versus-dependency curves for the small states of Oceania – and indeed, as suggested by Figure 4, the straightness of its curves with essentially *everyone*. This consistency over time stands in marked contrast with the curves of most other countries, which tends to have more fluctuations and more variability over time.

This is even true, by the way, for China compared to the "Asian Tigers" on whose booming economies in the 1960s and 1970s Deng Xiaoping's China modeled so much of its own approach to export-driven growth after 1978, during the period of "reform and opening" that kicked off after Mao Zedong's death. Those "Tigers," too, had many years of explosive growth in which they built much deeper trading relationships with other countries, yet their curves are still less hypertrophic than China's.

To our eye, this suggests the distinct possibility – though of course it does not yet "prove" the proposition – that the extraordinary consistency of China's increasing relational bandwidth with the rest of the world (Oceania included) and the rapidly increasing dependency

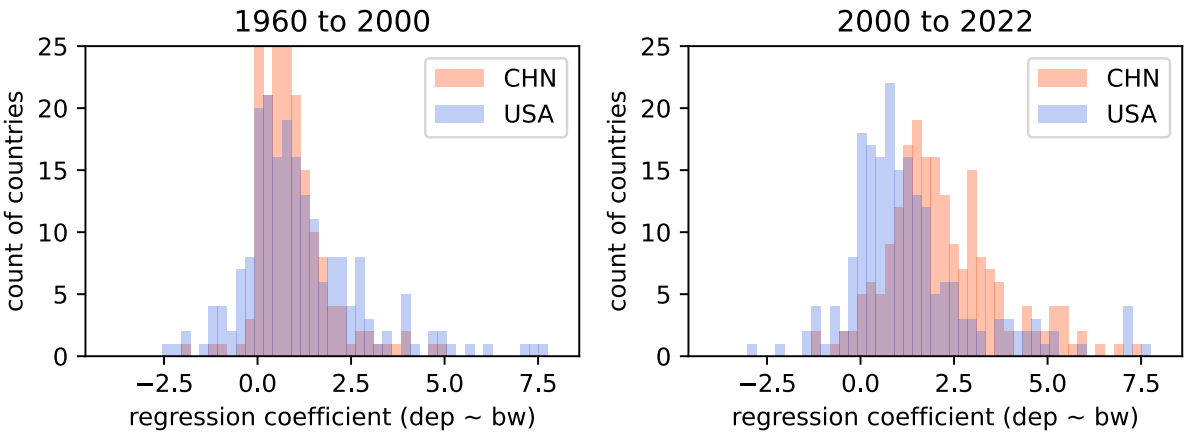

Figure 6. Distribution of Regression Coefficient

of other countries upon China is no accident. Instead, this consistency might be the result of a deliberate and systematic *strategy* of enmeshing the rest of the world in "leverage webs" that may be expected to expand the Chinese Communist Party's ability to influence and control other societies.

Where other countries' dependency-versus-bandwidth curves seem to display something of the kind of variability one might intuitively expect from the contingencies of heavily market-driven interactions, in other words, *China's* relationships point essentially in only one direction: toward ever-growing dyadic relationships of dependency. This consistency in the data cannot in itself *prove* the existence of a deliberate grand strategy, of course, but it is certainly suggestive.

Figure 6 offers a chance to look further at China's exceptionalism in these regards. As noted above, China seems to gain more dependency over other countries for each FBIC-coded unit of expanding relational bandwidth than do other states with their own dyadic partners. Figure 6 compares how the *distribution* of the regression coefficients for China across the range of its relationships compares to that for the United States.

This graphic plots the regression coefficients for all other countries' relationships with China (in orange) and with the United States (in blue) as a histogram. A country relationship having a regression coefficient plotted in "positive" territory (more towards the

right) is thus one in which there is a positive relationship between bandwidth and dependency, with the degree of this positivity being reflected in the size of the coefficient. (A very high-coefficient relationship far to the right, in other words, is one in which the addition of even a *little* bandwidth produces quite a *lot* of additional dependency.) Conversely, a coefficient in "negative" territory means that the trading partner in question actually becomes *less* dependent on the reference country as the bandwidth of the dyadic relationship increases. (That would be, in effect, a "*negative* bang-for-the-buck" situation.) In turn, relationships plotted in the middle are basically "neutral" with regard to the connection between bandwidth and dependency. To compare years before and after 2000, we again plot those data separately in the left and right plots, respectively.

The Sino-American comparison, once again, is striking. On this histogram, the United States has a great many near-zero-coefficient relationships, whether before or after 2000. Indeed, its distribution of country relationships approximates very loosely a normal distribution almost – though not quite – *centered* on zero. (It has a peak in the middle – in "neutral" territory where there isn't a pronounced relationship between bandwidth and dependency – and smaller "tails" on both the "negative" and the "positive" sides.) This U.S. distribution looks and feels like an essentially "normal" one, the kind of pattern normally associated with a degree of random variation.

China, by contrast, shows a distribution that skews to the right in the years before 2000, along the horizontal axis, into positive-coefficient territory. Moreover, it is not merely that there are here, for China, a much larger number of positive-coefficient relationships, in which Beijing rapidly gains dependency over its relational partners as it increases the bandwidth of those relationships. It is also the case that China has extremely few *negative*-coefficient relationships. In years after 2000, the distribution for China's relationships shifts even *further* to the right, towards high dependency.

One possible interpretation is thus that China systematically seeks out and invests in relationships that make its partners maximally dependent upon Beijing and *avoids* relationships that do not provide high payoffs in terms of the rapidity of other countries' entanglement.

Once again, it would be too much to say that these figures alone prove the existence of a PRC strategy of enmeshing the rest of the world in relationships that are specifically tailored to maximize the CCP's leverage over other countries and thereafter perhaps influence their behavior. The patterns we have seen in the FBIC data, however, are at the least suggestive of this – and hence worrisome.

Another point worth making is suggested by referring again to the differences shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 when one factors in data from after the year 2000. If indeed our suspicion is correct that the FBIC data contains the fingerprints of some sort of Chinese strategy, that data may also suggest the degree to which China's admission to the WTO that year gave Beijing an unprecedented opportunity to "weaponize" its foreign economic relationships in service of such a strategy – an opportunity about which some critics of that step worried at the time, and which Beijing may indeed have seized with gusto.

Definitive answers to such questions, however, must be left – if they can be had at all – for another day. For now, we hope merely that this essay will stimulate thought, offer a further demonstration that quantitative methods have the potential to provide real value to policymakers in competitive strategy, and encourage further inquiry.

Conclusion

This project was always intended to be more suggestive than definitive, aiming more to signal the *kind* of analysis that it is possible to do – and to offer some tentative observations – than to provide truly authoritative answers. There is surely a great deal more that can (and should) be done using more complex techniques and drawing upon the potentially much more comprehensive data that may be available from the wide range of open-source and fee-for-service data aggregators the today exist. The FBIC data upon which we have drawn here is only a comparatively modest subset of what can be had, but we think it a useful set nonetheless – and it has the great virtue of being both publicly available and free.

We hope that our work has helped suggest at least some of the kinds of analysis that can be done with such data, and that it has at least begun to shed additional light upon the dependency relationships that China may be deliberately and systematically cultivating, particularly among the countries of the Global South. Whether one wishes to understand the nature and depth of such Chinese relationships, to provide senior leaders with better decision-support tools in competitive strategy policy-making, or simply to understand the world with more fidelity, we submit that there's a great deal more interesting work to do.

* * *

About the Authors:

Dr. Christopher Ford *is Professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies with Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies and a consultant for the Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory. In prior government work, he served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation, also performing the duties of the Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security.*

Dr. Alex Memory *is a senior research scientist at the Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory whose research interests include statistical and symbolic artificial intelligence applied to security-related problems. His research has also been applied to insider risk, cybersecurity, and malign influence, with funding from DARPA, IARPA, and other US Government agencies.*

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Notes

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(1) The idea of weaponizing economic interdependence, in particular, has also been thoughtfully explored at the theoretical level by Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, beginning with a seminal 2019 article on the topic. *See* Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, "Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion," *International Security* 44, no. 1 (2019): 42-79.

(2) *See* Anastas Vangeli "Global China and Symbolic Power in the Era of the Belt and Road,'" in *Soft-Power Internationalism: Competing for Cultural Influence in the 21st-Century Global Order*, ed. Burcu Baykurt & Victoria de Grazia, (Columbia University Press, 2021), 226-33.

(3) Kyle Marcrum, "Propensity, Conditions, and Consequences: Effective Coercion Through Understanding Chinese Thinking," China Aerospace Studies Institute (July 2022), 9, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Research/Other-Topics/2022-07-18

Coercion and Propensity.pdf (quoting Francois Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking*, trans. Janet Lloyd, University of Hawai'i Press (2004), 26).

(4) "Who's the big boss of the global south?" *The Economist*, April 8, 2024, https://www.economist.com/international/2024/04/08/whos-the-big-boss-of-the-global-south.

(5) In recent years, there has been a great deal of work looking at such competition. *See, e.g.*, Meg Keen and Alan Tidwill, "Geopolitics in the Pacific Islands: Playing for advantage," Lowy Institute Policy Brief (January 31, 2024), https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/geopolitics-pacific-islands-playing-advantage; Ben Westcott, "Why US and China Compete for Influence With Pacific Island Nations," *Washington Post*, September 25, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/09/25/how-us-china-seek-influence-with-solomons-and-other-pacific-island-nations/b8e2b832-5b74-11ee-b961-94e18b27be28_story.html; Mihai Sora, "Geopolitical Competition among the Larger Powers in the Pacific," *Columbia Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2022), https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/content/geopolitical-competition-among-larger-powers-pacific; Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, "China-Solomon Islands Security Agreement and Competition for Influence in Oceania," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (December 2, 2022), https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/12/02/china-solomon-islands-security-agreement-and-competition-for-influence-in-oceania/; Shane Bilsborough, "The South Pacific Influence Challenge: Sage Dragon Game Report," MITRE Corporation (September 2023), https://www.mitre.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/PR-23-1169-Sage_Dragon_Game-Report_0.pdf.

(6) The trigraphs are ISO 3166 country codes.

(7) Note that we have attempted to make these graphics easier to read by plotting the results not on the basis of raw data for each year, but rather using 10-year rolling averages. A data point given for 2020, for instance, is thus the result of the raw data for that year averaged with every *other* year back to 2011. One could do this for varying "rolling" time periods – the Pardee Institute, for instance, apparently tending to use three-year rolling averages – but we have chosen 10 years here in order to make the curves as "clear" as possible for purposes of this essay. More detailed research focusing on some particular question would presumably wish to shorten the "rolling" period in order to provide more granularity, or even work with raw data, but for present purposes we have stuck with the simplification involved in plotting on the basis of a 10-year average.

(8) Vietnam and Korea would seem to be exceptions in the respect – both showing country-by-country Oceanian relationships in **Figure 2** that look somewhat more like the China pattern of consistently growing bandwidth and (especially) dependency. Even Vietnam and Korea, however, still display a degree of greater volatility over time than does China, whose patterns seem quite unique here. (Note also that the Vietnam data only begins in 1977, *after* the end of the Vietnam War and the unification of South Vietnam and North Vietnam.)

The Impact of Sea Versus Land Power in a Taiwan Conflict

David Sarabia

With Xi Jinping reportedly having directed the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to be ready to invade Taiwan as early as 2027 – and with Washington committed by the Taiwan Relations Act to "maintain[ing] the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan" – it is not surprising that defense planners seem very focused upon what such a conflict might look like and what the outcome might be. Today, both think tanks and government institutions are reported to be conducting wargames and scenario exercises for a Taiwan conflict to explore such questions.

Yet the contest between the United States and the People's Republic of China's (PRC) is only the latest example of Great Power Competitions that have occurred throughout history and that have frequently presaged armed conflict and wider global transformations. Today, it is the forceful unification of Taiwan with mainland China that has the greatest potential to bring the U.S. and the PRC into armed conflict, and it therefore must be studied closely. The PRC military objective would be to rapidly take Taiwan by asserting regional military superiority before the U.S. and its allies and partners could provide support.[1] To that end, China has modernized its naval and land forces. While the U.S. arguably maintains overall superiority in military forces[2] – and while some observers, and perhaps even Chinese officials, still question whether the PLA will be fully prepared for such a conflict in the near future – American military dominance may not be enduring, correctly postured, or sufficient to meet this challenge.

Capabilities in the sea and land domains likely will be decisive in any Sino-American competition over Taiwan, despite advances in

new domains of warfare, and it is important to understand how such capabilities would interact in time of war. While it is understandable that much emphasis is now being placed upon contemporary wargames, however, there may also be things we can learn about such a potential future conflict from the study of history.

Specifically, I believe that analysis and comparison of sea versus land power in three case studies of conflicts in the past – Athens-Sparta, Great Britain-Germany, and United States-Japan – can help U.S. policymakers understand the need for a robust combination of sea and land power, as well as both diplomatic and strategic engagement with U.S. allies and partners, and even with the PRC itself. This essay will integrate lessons from each of the case studies and provide recommendations to U.S. policymakers on how to prevent a repeat of such outcomes. By applying lessons about sea and land power, about interdependence, and about fear, honor, and interest to a potential conflict with the PRC over Taiwan, the U.S. can improve its chances of ensuring peace in the Western Pacific.

Athens vs. Sparta

The Peloponnesian War occurred from 431 to 401 BC between the Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta. Earlier, the Greek city-states had formed an alliance in which Athens, the dominant sea power, and Sparta, the dominant land power, coordinated defensively to repulse Persian invaders. Following the defeat of the Persian Empire, however, Athens and Sparta began a competition for control of the Aegean Sea. Despite the goodwill gained and interdependence that developed while facing an external threat, their rivalry turned bitter.

The Peloponnesian War that resulted has been likened to a struggle between a "whale" and an "elephant."[3] During the early part of the conflict, Athens relied on sea power while hiding behind its walls under the "Periclean strategy." The Periclean strategy – so called after the Athenian statesman Pericles – employed strategic patience, knowing that the Spartan military could not cut off the Athenian civilization without sea power. Being an agrarian society, Sparta did not have the finances to develop a robust sea power and had to rely

upon allies who did. Even with allies, however, Sparta was not able to effectively threaten Athenian sea lines of communication. Conversely, Athens did not have the capability to invade Sparta, not only because Athens had focused its energies primarily upon naval power, but also because the famously militarized society of Sparta then fielded what was perhaps the best army in Greece. Such a struggle highlighted the inherent difficulty of gaining an advantage when each side was only a land power or sea power but not both.

During the latter period of the Peloponnesian War, Athens forsook the Periclean strategy and overextended itself in attempting to take over the island of Sicily. Thereafter, Athens lost much of its capability as it suffered defeats and abandonment by allies. Athenian adventurism alarmed Sparta, however, and spurred the Spartans to conclude that they must take the (for them) radical step of committing themselves to sea power to ensure the continuation of their regime. Persia, Greece's old enemy, offered naval resources and basing to Sparta in order to reduce the capability of Athens to control the Aegean. As a result, Sparta was able to defeat the Athenian naval forces and eventually forced the capitulation of Athens, as the sea no longer served as a means to sustain its war effort. The turning point was a commitment by Sparta to developing and employing a force that could control the sea while still maintaining its formidable land force, demonstrating the need to have both capabilities in order to resolve the conflict in its favor.

Three lessons can be learned from the competition between Athens and Sparta. First, developing and employing *only* sea or land power may result in a stalemate – that between a whale and an elephant – because each side lacks the ability to gain decisive advantage against the other's most important capabilities. Second, although interdependence, whether political or economic, can provide a hedge against conflict, such a relationship can still be broken through increased competition. Lastly, as the great historian Thucydides stated, "fear, honor, and interest" can lead to engaging in such competitiveness.[4] Athens' geostrategic interest and Sparta's fear spurred their conflict. The Peloponnesian War may thus offer lessons for a developing conflict between the U.S. and China. Nevertheless, that conflict occurred thousands of years ago. A competition in Europe

during the beginning of the 20th Century, though, can also provide lessons applicable to a Taiwan scenario.

Great Britain vs. Germany

World War I, which began in 1914, had many causes. One of the leading causes, however, was the threat perceived by Great Britain from the rise of Imperial Germany since the late 1800s. Desiring what Kaiser Wilhelm II called a "place in the sun," Germany sought to expand its status and sphere of influence around the globe, fueled by the newfound political and technological power of industrialization and the pride of the Wilhelmine regime and the recent unification of Germany under Prussian domination.[5]

During this time period, an American naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, wrote his seminal work, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*. Mahan advocated the use of blue-water naval forces to ensure control of the seas as a "commons," thus ensuring the continued flow of goods to sustain the growth of industrialized nations while denying their use to enemies.[6]

Kaiser Wilhelm II, although personally an Anglophile, fully adopted Mahan's reasoning, fixated upon the importance of (and status conveyed by) sea power, and empowered Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz to develop and employ a naval force that could contest Great Britain's hitherto almost all-powerful Royal Navy on the high seas. Germany, at this time, had already developed into a formidable land power on the continent of Europe, having easily defeated both the Austrian Empire and France in Otto von Bismarck's wars of German unification, and with historic rivalries still persisting against France and Russia. Germany's relations with Great Britain prior to its naval buildup had been one of interdependence, for example in steel production and extensive commercial trade, rather than rivalry.[7]

However, once Imperial Germany began building its naval forces, Great Britain began to view Germany as an existential threat. In response, Great Britain developed next-generation battleships, the "Dreadnoughts," and sought to employ them on the high seas to guarantee its continued dominance. Germany, a latecomer to naval

ship building, appropriated the Dreadnought design to produce its own warships and set about building a formidable fleet. As a result, Great Britain and Germany were set for rivalry on the sea and on the land, driven – as Thucydides might have predicted – by fear and honor respectively.

Interestingly, when conflict actually came both Germany and Great Britain were reluctant to risk losing the large investments they had made in their naval forces. During multiple engagements, and most prominently in the Battle of Jutland, the admirals chose to back off rather than fully engaging their forces, in part due to the threats presented by relatively new countervailing technological developments, in particular the torpedo and the submarine. Just as on land after 1914, where trench warfare on the continent had resulted in a stalemate with millions of casualties, the seas thus also reached a stalemate.

Such a situation favored Great Britain as an essentially *status quo* maritime power, however, as the standoff prevented the German fleet's access to the high seas as Mahanian theory required; Germany could only control portions of the North Sea. As a result, the Allied powers could continue to receive support from neutral powers – including, before it too joined the war, the United States, from which convoys steadily braved German submarines to bring essential supplies to Britain and France.

Unforeseen to the powers at the time, such submarines, through an unrestricted German campaign, would have greater impact upon naval affairs than the vaunted Dreadnought. Eventually, Allied use of the convoy system, using destroyer escorts, would negate the campaign's effectiveness and preserve Britain's critical supply lines, but Germany's U-boats demonstrated the potential power of novel technology and methods to transform the nature of warfare in any given battlespace. In part because of these technological changes, sea power remained vital to the war effort, as the eventual Anglo-German naval stalemate ensured that Britain avoided strangulation by the Kaiser's navy while Germany remained cut off from global trade by the Royal Navy blockade. With the arrival of U.S. military forces in 1917 and support from America's vast industrial capacity, the Allied

effort would eventually result in the capitulation of Germany. Although Great Britain dominated the maritime environment during World War I, it was thus the commitment of land forces to the European continent that ultimately decided the outcome of the war.

Thus, World War I highlighted the importance of factors of land and sea power, interdependence, and competitiveness much like those seen in connection with the Peloponnesian War, despite the thousands of years separating the two cases. Before the Peloponnesian War, Sparta, the land power, and Athens, the sea power, were interdependent and neither had a balanced combination of land and sea power.

In the same way, Germany, the land power, and Great Britain, the sea power, were initially friendly and neither contended with the other in its primary sphere of military power. When one state sought to balance land and sea power, however, dynamics of fear, honor, and interest helped produce a great power conflict. In that conflict, the side that ultimately achieved the best balance or combination of capabilities across those domains was the one that prevailed. Even with the introduction of technologies such as the submarine and the airplane – both of which would surely have appeared all but magical to the Athenians and Spartans – these earlier ancient Greek lessons still apply to the British and the Germans. A few decades later, moreover, the world would see another war with even more impressive technologies, also offering similar lessons.

United States vs. Japan

World War II lasted, for the United States, from 1941 to 1945, as Allied and Axis powers contended in Europe and in the Pacific. U.S. forces were late entries into the conflict, brought in by the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Imperial Japanese Navy. Imperial Japan had risen in prominence as an East Asian country that had adopted Western means of production and that desired colonies to fuel its continued industrialization and feed its militarized imperial pride. Japan had initially depended on the West for much of the technology for industrialization and destination markets, but Japan later increasingly

turned away due to its desire for self-sufficiency while pursuing its expansion.

Japan's growing power resulted in part from its ability to secure resources in the Western Pacific, and before long it began to appear – to both Japanese and American leaders – that only the United States could staunch Japan's expansion. Up to and through World War I, Japan had developed a dominant position in the region, expanding into Korea, China, and Siberia. Due to commitments in the Washington Treaty System and London Treaty, Japan was constrained in the tonnage of battleships it could produce, limiting Tokyo to a second-place rank globally, even though it still enjoyed a privileged regional position in East Asia.

Since Japan also ascribed to Mahan's theory, and because naval capability (*e.g.*, as used in the crushing defeat Japan had inflicted upon Russia in 1905) was considered a key element of Japan's prestige as a modern power, these overall limitations were considered an affront to Japanese pride. The conviction that the U.S. wished to limit Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" and Tokyo's belief in its own naval strength led Japan to attack the forward-deployed American Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor – and to invade the (then) U.S. colonial possession of the Philippines – as a matter of Thucydidean honor and interest.

With the initiation of hostilities during World War II, the conflict in the Pacific marked a dramatic change in which land and sea power alone did not secure victory. At sea, the new technology of the aircraft carrier would prove to be the dominant naval capability in the Pacific. Although battleships remained part of the fleet, air forces – and more specifically, air forces deployable from mobile naval platforms – would prove to be the critical capability to secure victory. After the Battle of Midway, the Japanese slowly lost the ability to control the sea lines of communication providing supplies to fuel their war effort. As U.S. naval air power gradually destroyed the Japanese fleet and U.S. Army and Marine forces retook Japanese-held island enclaves, American submarines ate into Japan's maritime trade. As such Allied naval, land, and air power grew relentlessly, backed by the abundant

industrial capacity of the United States, it ultimately overwhelmed the Japanese.

Although this was primarily a contest at sea, the U.S. employed a strategy of "island hopping" to take strategic islands that would extend U.S. land-based air cover and sea basing, and ultimately also provide bases for long-range bomber attacks on the Japanese homeland. As a result, the U.S. developed and employed amphibious operations capabilities in order to move from the sea to the land. Unable to stem the tide of the Allied advance, the Japanese even turned to suicide attacks against Allied invasion forces and prepared for a similarly suicidal, latch ditch resistance on the Home Islands. U.S. leaders decided to use atomic weapons against Japan, however, and thereby force a capitulation. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ushered in the nuclear age and arguably brought about the resolution of World War II in the Pacific. Ultimately though, the U.S. still needed a combination of naval and ground capabilities and the intent to use them to control the sea and land to end the war. (Even the use of atomic bombs was ultimately tied to land and sea power dynamics, in that U.S. officials decided to employ them in hopes of avoiding an invasion of Japan itself, which would have been extremely costly in light of lessons learned about Japanese resistance during the "island-hopping" campaign.)

Again, the lessons here are much like those of the Peloponnesian War and World War I, despite their different time periods, technologies, and geographies. At the turn of the 20th Century, the United States, the naval power, and Japan, the land power, created something of a "whale versus elephant" dynamic. However, honor and interest pushed Japan to develop its naval power, overtaking the U.S. as the dominant naval power in the Pacific. Eventually, this competition – and Japan's perceived interest in capitalizing upon its naval strength before U.S. industrial advantages could change the balance – led to the attack on Pearl Harbor, heralded by the deteriorating interdependence between the two countries. The U.S. ultimately achieved victory by balancing land and naval power. The use of the aircraft carriers, long-range bombers, amphibious operations, and the introduction of nuclear weapons facilitated the resolution of the conflict even over vast distances. Still, some

fundamental lessons remained despite all this revolutionary technology, echoing the previous case studies. These lessons may still be of use today, many years later, as the United States now again faces Great Power Competition, particularly from the PRC. The lessons from these case studies are as applicable to the most likely flashpoint, a cross-Taiwan Strait conflict, as they were to past conflicts.

United States vs. China

A critical component of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) enduring pursuit for power and domestic legitimacy is unification with the Republic of China.[8] President Xi Jinping has made "re-unification" with Taiwan a goal for at least 2049, as a means to restore Chinese honor after what is said to have been a "Century of Humiliation" China faced at European and Japanese hands beginning in the 1800s.[9]

By the late 1980s, Taiwan had successfully transitioned from an autocratic regime to a vibrant democracy upheld by a strong economy with several especially impressive industrial sectors, particularly microelectronics. Today, the existence of a democratically-elected government in Taiwan poses what may be perceived as an essentially existential threat to the CCP, not just by confounding the CCP's narrative of its duty to "re-unify" all of "China," but also by demonstrating that ethnically Chinese people are more than capable of living, and thriving, under democratic rule and free of Communist autocracy. Although Washington is not a treaty ally and does not provide Taiwan formal diplomatic recognition, American interests have committed the United States to support Taiwan through supplying arms according to the Taiwan Relations Act, communiques,[10] and assurances.

Prior to the 1990s, the PLA focused on providing layered ground defenses and defense-in-depth approaches allowing an adversary to spend its strength trying to penetrate to the interior of the mainland. The Gulf War of 1991 and the 1996 Sino-U.S. tensions over Taiwan demonstrated to the CCP and the PLA, however, that a conscripted force with low technology would not meet China's geopolitical needs. As a result, the PLA began a decades-long process of "mechanization"

and "informationization" in order to be able to counter a high technology foe such as the United States,[11] and to win a "local war under informationized conditions."[12] A local war for China is considered to occur in the "near seas" close to the coastline, which fits the specific conditions necessary to unify Taiwan with mainland China.[13] The interest and ability to control the Taiwan Strait is directly linked to the qualitative improvements seen across the PRC's military forces.

In the most recent U.S. National Defense Strategy, the Biden administration continues to follow the longstanding U.S. policy of not taking a position on the future of Taiwan and urging both sides to resolve their differences peacefully, while President Biden has repeatedly said in news interviews that the United States will defend Taiwan.[14] For the United States, Taiwan represents a critical location within the "First Island Chain" that runs from the western coast of the Philippines up past Taiwan to southern Japan, thus controlling China's access to the Pacific and transit through the East and South China Seas.[15] Although having military forces based in Japan and South Korea, the United States does not have military forces on Taiwan (except for training missions) to provide a deterrent to invasion, and must therefore contend with the "tyranny of distance."[16]

To allow the United States, its allies, and partners time to deploy, the Taiwanese aim to use a "porcupine strategy" to delay PLA efforts to take the island.[17] Unfortunately, U.S. forces might require weeks if not months to deploy adequate sea and land power to the Taiwan Strait.

Analysis

By current estimates, the U.S. still holds an advantage in sea and air power vis-à-vis the PRC, particularly outside the First Island Chain;[18] however, it does not contest for land control in China. For China, although it can likely control the near seas around Taiwan and its forces have been steadily improving, the PLA probably still cannot successfully take the island at present, given its air, land, and sea capabilities and the difficulty of mounting such a large operation across a long expanse of open water against armed resistance.[19] The

current situation therefore favors a continuation of the status quo—in other words, a stalemate. This situation parallels the early stages of the rivalries covered in the case studies above.

By 2049, however, the PLA will likely have transitioned to a "far seas" capability enabling global operations in order to secure PRC's sea lines of communication, ensuring continued access to resources.[20] The PLA will also have realized its anti-access and anti-denial (A2/AD) strategy to keep the U.S. beyond the "Second Island Chain" – running, loosely speaking, from Japan down through Guam and to West Papua – which will prevent forces from deploying in support of Taiwan. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) may by then also have provided forward basing across the Pacific, extending its sea and land power.

As for the economic interdependence of China and the United States, that relationship will likely continue at some level despite mutual suspicions. The U.S. and China mutually benefit from the interdependence in their global commercial relationship, and both also depend upon Taiwan's huge semiconductor industry. As a result, interdependence can provide a hedge against conflict over the Taiwan Strait. However, just as our case studies demonstrated with the initial interdependence among the rivals in each case, interdependence between U.S. and China is not a guarantee of future stability.

Already, the United States and China are taking steps to insulate supplies of critical component technologies from dependence on foreign adversaries, reminiscent of Japan's drive for self-sufficiency prior to World War II. By 2049, if China's BRI is successful in creating commercial and infrastructure ties separate from the United States and the PLA can assure access to resources on the land and the sea, then conflict will more likely occur.

The lessons from Thucydides concerning "fear, honor, and interest" are particularly relevant to avoiding a conflict with China. The CCP has staked its legitimacy on unification with Taiwan. Therefore, a formal Taiwanese declaration of independence would constitute a PRC red line that would likely cause military action. In such an instance, Chinese honor and geostrategic interest would likely

override any economic interests that would otherwise tend to prevent conflict, as well as any fear of U.S. intervention.[21] Meanwhile, China's rising power and assertiveness have begun to provoke a counterreaction in the United States, which is now much more focused on competitive strategy with China than it was eight years ago. Just as fear, honor, and interests spurred the great powers in the case studies to compete and ultimately war with each other, China and the United States would be more likely to enter into a conflict if these attitudes could not be managed.

Each of the case studies demonstrates factor relevant to this current geopolitical dilemma. Irrespective of time, distance, or technology, conflict has repeatedly occurred between great powers based on those factors. It is an open question whether the new domains of space and information, or capabilities such as nuclear weapons, will change the applicability of the lessons from the three case studies. However, such new domains and capabilities do not obviate the need both to control the sea lines of communications and to occupy territory in order to impose a state's geopolitical will, just as new technologies in the past such as aircraft and submarines did not change these fundamentals in WWI and WWII. As can be seen, over thousands of years, over thousands of miles, and despite great leaps in technology, the lessons from the case studies have endured. Consequently, U.S. policymakers may have options available based on how well they learn such lessons.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In each of the case studies, conflict ensued when one state attempted to create a strong naval and land force, just as China is working towards by 2049. The U.S. must therefore maintain its military advantage to deter, and if need be, prevail against PRC aggression. Using sea and land power, the United States must maintain sea lines of communication across the Western Pacific, as the U.S. rebuilt its own in the face of Japanese power through "island-hopping" in World War II, to allow continued access to resources and markets as well as secure supply lines if a conflict arises over Taiwan.

This is an enduring truth, but the capabilities and technologies needed to ensure such lines of communication evolve with the times. In practical terms, this means today that America cannot place all its trust in "legacy" capabilities – with aircraft carrier battle groups here perhaps standing in for the Dreadnaughts of old – and must instead invest in smaller, long-endurance surface vessels, no larger than frigates, and undersea combatants with multi-mission capabilities such as anti-submarine, coastal-bombardment, anti-air, anti-submarine, and anti-ship armaments. In the air, high-endurance air vehicles armed with long-range, guided missiles for use against air, ship, and land targets should be developed and deployed. Such platforms may be manned or unmanned, but they must be networked and supported by a robust command, control, communications, and intelligence (C^3I) architecture, as well as surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities to ensure accurate targeting. These capabilities would become the modern-day equivalent of the long-range bomber escorts during World War II and destroyer escorts of World War I.

U.S. policymakers must also ensure that Taiwan receives weapons capabilities it needs to deny the PLA sea access to the island. Aerial- and submarine-launched mines and improved cruise missile defenses with countermeasures, for example, can provide a barrier around points of embarkation to the island and around key amphibious landing objectives on it, and measures can be taken to make Taiwan "indigestible" to any invader that does reach its shores. Lastly, the U.S. must deploy at least a battalion-sized unit of U.S. military members to Taiwan, in addition to the 200 trainers augmenting the special operations forces already on the island.

Such an inclusion of U.S. military members on the island is not to provide a capability to repel the PRC, but rather to provide a clear deterrent signal that the United States will honor its support commitments to Taiwan. Much as with the U.S. Army brigade stationed in West Berlin from 1961 until 1994, such a deployment would make clear to China that it could not hope to undertake aggression in Taiwan without imperiling the lives of American servicemembers, thus increasing the odds that Washington would be drawn into any fight. Without such a signal, the United States would

repeat Great Britain's mistake preceding World War I in not committing to the continent.

The capabilities outlined for sea and air power will require basing to be effective in the Western Pacific. In addition, such basing would provide an umbrella for economic ties and security with allies and partners. As such, the U.S. policymakers must seek opportunities for basing and commerce with strategically located states across the Western Pacific that could be used in defense of Taiwan. The U.S. should continue to court such partners – as has been done, for instance, with Palau – and, when prudent, even enter into alliances,[22] while also creating useful fora for discussion and policy coordination, such as with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Micronesia.

Such moves will help counter the military implications of the PRC's BRI as well as preventing a vacuum for PLA Navy deployments to fill in the future. In terms of interdependence, the United States could invite the PRC into select fora as an equal partner on a case-by-case, region-by-region basis. The result would be a strengthening of ties with the PRC on the part of U.S. allies and partners as well, who would also increase their influence with the PRC. More such "mesh" interdependence would enable greater bonds than the bilateral interdependence that fractured with each of the case studies in this essay. Although interdependence cannot guarantee prevention of a U.S.-China conflict over Taiwan, meshed interdependence can provide additional off-ramp opportunities, dampening escalation by increasing the number of potentially countervailing strategic considerations, such as Chinese concern over alienating BRI partners providing access, basing, or overflight to PLA forces seeking to keep China's lines of communication open.

Both the United States and China are likely to misunderstand or confront each other, as have so many rivals in the past, based on dynamics of fear, honor, and interest. U.S. policymakers must move beyond "Track 1.5" and "Track 2" dialogues, which are unofficial meetings between PRC and U.S. private citizens. The U.S. must continue to attempt engagement with the PRC through official diplomatic, economic, and military channels. U.S. members selected

for such interactions, moreover, must be well-versed in Chinese culture, ethics, language, and current national interests, and must coordinate strategy prior to engaging their PRC counterparts. The fora outlined for creating interdependence are a good place to start, in particular with concerns for securing sea routes against piracy and other threats. Only through opportunities to enhance communications, can the U.S. diminish any misunderstandings with regard to fear, honor, and interest. In so doing, the U.S. will help alleviate the fear, honor, and interest issues of previous power competitions.

Drawing upon the insights of history, U.S. policymakers can help reduce the risks of war suggested by the abovementioned case-study rivalries, by applying lessons about sea and land power, about interdependence, and about fear, honor, and interest to a potential conflict with the PRC over Taiwan. Such approaches require clear communication, a consistent approach, and humility to ensure that the prevailing winds of history lead away from conflict rather than into it.

* * *

About the Author:

David Sarabia *is a doctoral student in Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies. He is a retired United States Air Force intelligence officer and a veteran of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. The views he expresses herein are entirely his own, and do not necessarily reflect those of anyone else in the Air Force or the U.S. Government.*

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The Weaponization of Integrity:

How the West's Enemies Try to Leverage its Ethics Against It

Dr. Christopher A. Ford

This essay explores what might be called the *weaponization of integrity*. By such weaponization, I refer to instances in which one party engages in unfriendly or aggressive acts against another party in ways that either (a) take advantage of the latter's ethically-driven unwillingness to respond in like manner or hesitancy in responding vigorously enough to be effective, or (b) somehow stigmatize the ethical manner of the second party's response. (For present purposes, I am referring to the behavior of state and non-state actors in international affairs, though I suppose the idea could apply in broader contexts as well.)

This perhaps counter-intuitive phenomenon of weaponizing another party's integrity against it seems pervasive enough in modern international affairs as to merit its own categorization as a type, or at least sub-category, of competitive strategy all of its own. In a sense, in fact, this should be in no way surprising. After all, in an age in which it seems increasingly to be the case that adversaries and rivals maneuver against each other through "the weaponization of everything," why not?

Historically, of course, adversaries of the Western democracies have not infrequently sought to play to, and to leverage, those democracies' purported internal weaknesses and divisions. Think, for example, of how pleased the Nazis doubtless were to take advantage of Western anti-war sentiment – *e.g.*, in the form of the infamous 1933 resolution at Oxford that the English should not fight for their king and country, or the Nazi-sympathetic isolationist enthusiasms of "America First" activists such as the aviator celebrity Charles Lindbergh. During the Cold War, moreover, the Soviet Union, moreover, worked hard to encourage and bankroll Western anti-nuclear peace movements, just as Russian President Vladimir Putin

today both encourages and benefits from far-right European political activism and modern "America First" isolationists.

What is perhaps less common, at least until relatively recently, is the phenomenon of freedom's adversaries seeking to leverage the West's very *strength* against it – that is, specifically, its moral strength, ethical rectitude, and generally commendable discomfort with and aversion to rule-breaking, ruthlessness, and transgressive self-aggrandizing skullduggery. Such efforts have been lately made the subject of a growing body of literature, at least where they specifically relate to compliance with international law.

I would submit, however, that even beyond such examples of what has become known as "lawfare," this moral leveraging actually constitutes a broader strategy of asymmetric competitive maneuver, to be employed against the more ethically and morally scrupulous by those who are notably less so. The following pages will explore this further.

Dynamics of "Lawfare"

As indicated above, the phenomenon of "lawfare" – which I suggest is, in effect, a lesser-included subcategory of the weaponization of integrity – is now a fairly well-studied one. According to Orde Kittrie, who wrote a whole book on the topic, the term "lawfare" was introduced by then-U.S. Air Force Colonel (and now professor) Charles Dunlap in 2001. Dunlap defined the term as "using – or misusing – law as a substitute for traditional military means to achieve an operational objective."

To be sure, it isn't by any means a new idea to use legal arguments for tactical advantage in international competitive strategy. Arguably, in fact, it began centuries ago. The seminal Dutch legal thinker Hugo Grotius, for instance – whom some have described as the "father" (or at least *one* of the fathers) of modern international law – wrote some of his most famous work on the law of the sea as an advocate for the interests of the Dutch East India Company in its dispute with Portugal over access to sea lanes in the Indian Ocean, seeking to win acceptance for the Netherlands' right to wage "private

war on its own account to redress injuries and protect its legal rights."[1] Nevertheless, Dunlap appears to have coined the term itself, and played a key role in popularizing the idea of legal contestation as a form of competitive strategy.

As Kittrie describes it, "lawfare" includes:

(1) "instrumental lawfare," in which legal tools are used to produce equivalent effects to "kinetic action"; and

(2) "compliance-leverage disparity lawfare," in which one party's actual battlefield action is calibrated in order to gain advantage from the application (to the other party) of legal rules.

This definition certainly covers some important aspects of lawfare, but Kittrie's definition tends to focus heavily on "combat"-equivalent applications. The use of legal argument and legally-informed posturing for asymmetric advantage can cover more than that, however, suggesting that "lawfare" should be understood to have broader political and strategic applications as well.

Either way, lawfare as a tool of strategy relies heavily upon asymmetry. It is usually essential to lawfare applications that the parties opposing each other do not care equally about fidelity to the law: it is this differential that the *less* scrupulous of them seeks to leverage against the *more* scrupulous. In this respect, lawfare should be regarded as a subcategory of the broader phenomenon of the *less* moral party seeking to weaponize the integrity of the *more* moral party against it. With lawfare, the moral or ethical strength of which an adversary seeks to take advantage is one's commendable devotion to legal compliance.

In this regard, Western democracies – and arguably the United States in particular – would seem to be particularly vulnerable. Realpolitik-minded observers of international behavior commonly assume that major powers make foreign policy and national security decisions solely on the basis of self-serving interest, only offering legal

rationalizations afterwards, assuming they bother to provide them at all. And this, no doubt, often occurs. But not always.

In the U.S. case, in particular, it is hard not to be struck with how much we are sometimes willing to tie ourselves in knots in order not to feel like we are crossing some legal line. Opinions likely vary about the degree to which the United States in fact always ends up complying with legal rules as properly understood, but we obviously do care *hugely* about questions of legal propriety – even in circumstances in which a *Realpolitikal* observer might expect us to be *least* abstemious.

The reader may recall, for instance, the infamous March 2003 memorandum on "Enhanced Interrogation Techniques" against international terrorists that was prepared by the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Most commentators probably cite that document disparagingly, as demonstrating the moral bankruptcy of the decision-makers involved. In some ways, however, the so-called "torture memo" controversy also stands as sort of paradoxical monument to America's almost fanatical devotion to legal propriety.

After all, the United States had recently seen more than 3,000 of its citizens butchered by terrorists in a single morning, and its intelligence operatives had captured some of the terrorist leaders who had planned that atrocity and were preparing others. Yet what did these operators – presumably a notably ruthless and steely-eyed lot – do when reportedly holding terrorist masterminds at secret "black sites" abroad? They sought legal guidance from higher authority on what they were *legally allowed to do* to those men to get them to reveal their terrorist secrets, and then (as far as we know) *complied* with the strictures the lawyers thereupon provided.[2]

Even if one thinks the various resulting legal memoranda were abhorrent and unconscionable, as many observers clearly do, it should be clear why I think this episode is also – in an admittedly strange, backhanded way – a testament to just now remarkably law-abiding Americans try to be. Where else could such a sequence of events possibly have occurred? (In most other countries, a safer bet would

surely have been on "torture at will, and only ask legal questions later, if at all.")

One might disagree with the content of all the resulting high-level U.S. legal guidance documents, therefore, but their very existence is in its own curious way remarkable and commendable. Ours is a country in which even secret terrorist-fighters in time of crisis must obtain legal approvals for their activities – and in which counterterrorism agencies can expect to face legal, and indeed public, accountability for their choices.

Weaponizing integrity, of course, is only possible against parties who *have* integrity. Lawfare is only possible against parties who care about the law, who wish to be seen as caring, or whose strategies and policy agendas depend to some degree upon support from those who do. This presumably does not entirely preclude using lawfare against a scofflaw, inasmuch as it still might be useful to peel comparatively scrupulous would-be supporters away from such a bad actor. But it does mean, in general, that the primary victims of lawfare are likely to be states which care about legal propriety and in which leaders may be held democratically accountable at the ballot box. That means us.

Our adversaries certainly recognize this. In China, for example, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly understands legal rules to be mere instruments of Party policy, which are to be employed, adjusted, or ignored in whatever ways most usefully serve CCP objectives. This is explicitly the case in how the Party governs China, insofar as the CCP and its directives are juridically antecedent and *superior* to the constitution and laws of the PRC, with the latter merely deriving from and being obliged to conform to the former.

Internationally, moreover, the CCP has made the legal argumentation part of its approach to gain advantage for China in the world, not least as part of Beijing's "Three Warfares" concept. In this respect, CCP thinking on the instrumental and opportunistic employment of legal discourse conforms perfectly to what some People's Liberation Army (PLA) writers have called "beyond-limits combined war" (or "unrestricted warfare"). In that construct, warfare is seen to "transcend[] the domains of soldiers, military units, and

military affairs, and is increasingly becoming a matter for politicians, scientists, and even bankers."[3]

Orde Kittrie, for example, quotes an international law handbook from the PLA that

> "[w]e should not feel completely bound by specific articles and stipulations detrimental to the defense of our national interests. We should therefore always apply international laws flexibly in the defense of our national interests and dignity, appealing to those aspects beneficial to our country while evading those detrimental to our interests."[4]

Similarly, observers of Russia's all but routinized commission of war crimes in Ukraine will not be surprised to learn that Vladimir Putin's regime cares little for international legal rectitude – except perhaps when it can be weaponized against the West. As Dima Adamsky has recounted in his brilliant recent book on Russian strategic culture and concepts of deterrence, for instance, Russian strategists are keenly interested in how "formal, legally binding international regulations" can be employed as part of "'informational pressure' on the adversary, its armed forces, state apparatus, citizens, and world public opinion" in order to produce "favorable conditions for other forms of coercion."[5]

The techniques of lawfare are perhaps best known in connection with wartime targeting where – most recently, the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas has become notorious for hiding military facilities quite literally underneath civilian locations such as hospitals and even a compound run by the United Nation agency for supporting Palestinian refugees. As noted in the U.S. Department of Defense Law of War Manual, the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) is quite clear that

> "Parties to a conflict may not use the presence or movement of protected persons or objects: (1) to attempt to make certain points or areas immune from seizure or attack; (2) to shield military objectives from attack; or (3) otherwise to shield or favor one's own military operations or to impede the adversary's military operations."[6]

It is unquestionably a war crime for Hamas to deliberately endanger Palestinian civilians by using them as human shields to help protect its fighters from Israeli attack – or perhaps in an attempt to "draw the foul" by eking propaganda advantage out of civilian casualties if and when the Israelis *do* attack legitimate military targets that Hamas has intentionally hidden behind civilians.[7] Despite this, however, Hamas has been gaining international propaganda benefits from the casualties its own human shield strategy has ensured will be inflicted upon Palestinian civilians in Gaza.[8] This is thus something of a *locus classicus* for modern lawfare, since Hamas' callous and (literally) criminal strategy has been disturbingly effective.

Beyond Battlefield Lawfare

But the use of lawfare – or indeed the weaponization of an adversary's ethical integrity against it more broadly – need not be limited simply to "tactical" applications, nor has it been. Somewhat more "strategically," for example, a great many countries came together in 1977 to adopt the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, which among other things sought to give special status to groups said to be "fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist régimes."[9] This is one of the reasons the United States has not ratified that document, but in its effort to resist the strategic lawfare of other governments trying to give politically-favored insurgents special legal privileges vis-à-vis regular armed forces, Washington has remained *subject* to lawfare-type criticisms for its very refusal to give terrorists and other such irregular fighters full combatant status.

During the Cold War, it was also routine for the Soviet Union and its allies to use arms control proposals as propaganda weapons, proposing specific agreements that would privilege the Warsaw Pact in various ways while excoriating the United States for "rejecting arms control" when it understandably refused such daft ideas. After the USSR had finished deploying a new generation of strategic and intermediate-range nuclear missiles in the late 1970s, for instance, Moscow began offering "nuclear freeze" resolutions at the United Nations that aimed to fix the existing nuclear balance in place before

Washington could respond with its own nuclear deployments. Similarly, at a time when Warsaw Pact forces outnumbered NATO, the Soviets promoted a nuclear "no-first-use" (NFU) treaty that would have precluded a Western nuclear response to an overwhelming Warsaw Pact conventional invasion of Western Europe.

After President Ronald Reagan announced his desire to develop space-based missile defenses in 1983, moreover, the Soviets proposed a treaty to prohibit weapons in space, and as Reagan oversaw a U.S. defense buildup intended to match Soviet advances of the 1970s, Moscow proposed talks on reducing military expenditures.[10] And, of course, as Thomas Rid has ably chronicled, the Soviets spent hundreds of millions of dollars to help fund anti-nuclear movements in the West, seeking to weaponize Western publics' anxieties about war and earnest desires for peace, manipulating such groups to stigmatize and erode domestic support for U.S. and allied nuclear weapons policies that helped deter Soviet aggression.

This is a game which is still being played by geopolitical revisionists against the United States today. As Adamsky has observed, in connection with the Russian concept of "informational struggle" or "informational warfare" (*informatsionnaia bor'ba* or *voina*), "[s]cholars tend to agree that since confrontation with the collective West began to intensify in 2014, Moscow has rather accurately identified Western strategic phobias, values, strengths, and vulnerabilities, and then designated the relevant tools to exploit them for political purposes."[11]

Such approaches are echoed, for instance, in China's recent suggestion of its *own* nuclear NFU treaty that would prohibit the Americans from having the option of a nuclear response to China's invasion of a U.S. ally in the Western Pacific. Such games are no-lose propositions from the perspective of Beijing or Moscow: if the Americans accept the offer, they are legally bound to rules carefully designed to disadvantage them; if they refuse, they are pilloried for supposedly being hostile to arms control. Strategic lawfare indeed.

There are numerous other examples of America's adversaries employing such gamesmanship in recent years. China today attacks

the United States for failing to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), for instance, even while itself ignoring an UNCLOS arbitral decision handed down against China (which *did* ratify that convention and thus should be bound by its terms). After the United States decided to leave the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002, moreover – lawfully following the specified withdrawal provisions rather than choosing either to violate that treaty or to leave America unprotected against growing North Korean and Iranian missile threats – Russian propaganda made much of America's supposed contempt for arms control, notwithstanding Moscow's own longstanding violation of the ABM Treaty.

Vladimir Putin has also criticized the United States for taking a long time to dismantle its Cold War chemical weapons pursuant to Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) procedures, and has spuriously accused the country of Georgia of hosting a secret U.S. biological weapons lab, even as Russia itself brazenly employed illegal chemical weaponry on British soil and continues to maintain an illegal biological weapons program. Russian officials have also criticized the forward deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons on NATO territory for years, depicting it as a violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, even though the Soviets had accepted those arrangements when they were established and had in fact also maintained their own "nuclear sharing"-type arrangements with at least one Warsaw Pact ally during the Cold War[12] – and even though Putin has now *himself* deployed Russian nuclear missiles to Belarus.

Moreover, Russia successfully weaponized America's political and ethical discomfort with the idea of withdrawing from arms control agreements by violating the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty for the better part of a decade before the United States finally chose to withdraw in response. During that period, the Kremlin was able to bring an illegal cruise missile all the way from initial flight testing to deployment in the field before the United States was able to muster the political willpower to respond. Additionally, Russia – and perhaps also China – seems to have been conducting secret low-yield nuclear explosive tests for years. If such testing represented the Kremlin's gamble that political and legal scruples would keep the Americans from following suit, that bet seems to be paying off: to this

day, the United States continues to forswear learning for itself whatever it may be that Russia is able to learn about nuclear weapons maintenance or development from such small-scale explosive tests.

At the same time, we are not well informed enough about history to understand the degree to which the Putin regime's contemporary geopolitical stompings-around and aggression against its neighbors have important connections to themes and tensions that present in Russian history for a very long time. Despite the growing availability of thoughtful English-language works quite accessible to the non-specialist,[13] most of us know too little about Russia's long traditions of personalized absolutist autocracy dating from at least its years under Mongol rule, its conceit since the days of Ivan IV ("the Terrible") of having a messianic holy mission as the "Third Rome" and a bastion of Orthodox probity (*katechon*) standing for all that is right and good in a global struggle against Western malevolence and spiritual degradation, its fixation since Peter the Great upon catching and surpassing the West in military power and technological sophistication, and its focus since at least Catherine II ("the Great") upon territorial empire as the metric of its status as a great power able to proudly hold it head up vis-à-vis the countries of the West.

Nor do we sufficiently appreciate Russia's enduring desperate insecurities over civilizational identity and its love/hate relationship with the West – as seen in debates over "Normanist" theories of the origins of Kievan Rus, and in the longstanding contestation between Westernizers identifying with Europe and "Slavophiles" identifying with the Eurasian steppes – or the ways in which a cult of noble self-sacrifice to "save" humanity is used to valorize a callous Russian recklessness with human life. To have a history is not necessarily to be imprisoned by it, of course, and modern Russia certainly has agency in the world. Nevertheless, to see such longstanding themes as irrelevant to the Kremlin's contemporary behavior and bellicose predilections vis-à-vis Europe would be naïve.

Yet our modern instinct for self-criticism, our worry that we might be responsible for harm, and (let us be honest) our narcissism, are more than powerful enough to convince a remarkable number of Westerners to believe Putin's propaganda that the Kremlin's modern

warmongering is *our* fault because we heeded the pleas of free sovereign people in Eastern Europe – who have rather more historical experience with Russia than we do – to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[14] Such narratives continue to distort our security policy discourse today.

As the abovementioned examples show, America's adversaries are often quite comfortable seizing the high ground of virtue-signaling propaganda discourse by signing up to international legal restrictions while cheating on such agreements all the while. For its legal conscientiousness and integrity in *not* ratifying agreements with which it is not sure it would want to comply (*e.g.*, Additional Protocol 1, UNCLOS, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), however, the United States is excoriated as a scofflaw and an enemy to diplomatic progress.

Even more worryingly, Putin has also been attempting to weaponize the anti-nuclear and anti-war instincts of Western publics and elite opinion-shapers through a campaign of incessant nuclear saber-rattling. Coupled with Russia's development of a new suite of "exotic" strategic nuclear delivery systems and the theater-range nuclear systems it now possesses partly as a result of having ignored both its "Presidential Nuclear Initiative" (PNI) promises and the requirements of the INF Treaty, this saber-rattling is a part of the "offensive nuclear umbrella" under which Putin seeks to deter Western efforts to stop him from invading and annexing neighbors such as Ukraine.

The Russians' approach to preparing for and undertaking geopolitically revisionist aggression has had many facets, but it is becoming increasingly clear that weaponizing the West's ethics and integrity against it has played an important role. They counted on us to continue to comply with arms control agreements while they cheat, for example, scored propaganda points against us for not agreeing to just *any* disingenuous diplomatic initiative, and they expected us to be unwilling to provide support to Ukraine for fear of provoking Russia. This hasn't worked perfectly for them, of course, but it certainly did work to a degree, and for a while.

More generally, moreover, it is now clearly part of Russia's strategy to distort and subvert our *own* value-discourses, weaponizing them – in effect – against themselves. As Peter Pomerantsev has pointed out in comparison to Soviet propaganda and as I have noted in comparison to Chinese messaging, Putin-era Russian information warfare is "less about arguing against the West with a counter-model … [than] about slipping inside its language to play and taunt it from inside." The brilliance of this new approach, he writes, is that "it climbs inside all ideologies and movements, exploiting them and rendering them absurd."[15]

Through such postmodern malevolence, in other words, we are encouraged not so much to doubt ourselves and our own values in the face of supposedly superior alternatives, as we are simply to doubt even the *possibility* of moral value, of genuine rectitude, in the first place. The profound corrosiveness of such conclusions is not coincidental: it is precisely the point. This is, in part, a weaponization of our otherwise commendable openness to ideas and traditions of moral self-interrogation.

Nor has China been above trying to weaponize the sometimes naïve earnestness of Westerners desirous of peace and anxious about the risks of war. It remains a staple of CCP diplomatic discourse, for instance, to accuse any Westerner expressing concern about Beijing's increasingly aggressive international behavior of having a "Cold War mentality," and to be desiring a return to Cold War-style confrontation and arms racing. For years, moreover, Western scholars of China who were worried that China's rise might prove more predatory than benign were told that such sentiments should not be voiced lest they become a "self-fulfilling prophecy" – thus transforming the well-intentioned *hope* that China would behave well into a dangerous tool for ignoring Chinese misbehavior and suppressing evidence of its global ambitions.

And indeed, on the whole, this Chinese approach was successful for many years, leveraging Western good faith and optimism to help the CCP stigmatize and muzzle criticism of the PRC and prevent other countries from responding to Beijing's growing power as China "bided its time and hid its capabilities" while preparing its present

challenge to the rules-based international order. (It should also be noted that China benefited enormously from the United States' unwillingness to withdraw from the INF Treaty for so many years, notwithstanding Russian cheating. China's military buildup made great progress during the 2008-2019 window during which the United States opted to remain in that treaty while Russia developed INF-prohibited weaponry, and it is only now that the Americans are working to deploy INF-class conventional weapons in the Western Pacific to help counter China.) Our intentions were eminently good, but we were shrewdly played; our adversaries have done well in weaponizing our integrity against us.

What Are We to Do?

So what is one to make of all this? One possible response to the challenge of adversaries who work to weaponize our integrity against us, of course, might be simply to *abandon* that integrity – that is, to ourselves become as ruthless and unprincipled as they are. In their 1999 book *Unrestricted Warfare*, for instance, PLA colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui claimed that "[t]he most ideal method of operation for dealing with an enemy who pays no regard to the rules is certainly just being able to break through the rules" oneself.[16]

And, indeed, during the early part of the Cold War, the United States *did* have some officials who felt that we needed to "fight fire with fire" in responding to subversive activities carried out worldwide by the KGB and other East Bloc intelligence services. According to one government commission during the Eisenhower years,

> "we must learn to subvert, sabotage[,] and destroy our enemies by more clever, more sophisticated[,] and more effective methods than those used against us. It may become necessary that the American people will be made acquainted with, understand[,] and support this fundamentally repugnant philosophy."[17]

In our present circumstances, however, such a reflexive "toss out the rulebook ourselves" answer would surely be too rash. For one thing, while our adversaries do work hard – and are sometimes very

effective – at weaponizing our integrity against us, that integrity is also a source of strength that we should not throw away lightly. It helps us sustain a degree of domestic support for foreign and national security policy that would otherwise be much more difficult to achieve. Even if we felt a ferociously ruthlessly policy response *were* the right answer to our adversaries' depredations, therefore, we would be unlikely to be able to implement it effectively over time.

Moreover, it is also our ethical integrity and commitment to principle that helps us draw upon the assistance of "likeminded" allies and partners in the international arena who do not *want* the brutal scofflaw imperialists of modern Russia and China to remake the rules-based order in their dark and lawless image. There is a compelling strength in moral courage, and we would squander much of this support were we to become "just like" our thuggish adversaries in the callous ruthlessness of our tactics.

These reasons are fundamentally pragmatic ones, of course, but there is also reason *within* our ethical discourse not to throw aside all our scruples. After all, we do care about our own integrity, and we would dishonor ourselves – and in some important sense cease to *be* ourselves – were we to do so.[18]

Yet in sticking to our moral guns, we need not just to do the right thing but also to have the moral courage, as it were, to *display* moral courage. We must have the fortitude to be forthright in firmly defending our choices. We must *not* be – as Western officials have sometimes tended to be over the years – defensive or awkwardly apologetic in the face of adversarial lawfare-type gamesmanship.

If our security interests require us to no longer comply with a treaty, for example, we must not violate it, but we should also be willing to withdraw from it promptly and lawfully, and we should be in no way embarrassed about having the moral courage to take this step. We should refuse the shallow virtue-signaling of feckless diplomatic engagement undertaken merely for its own sake, insisting upon meaningful dialogue or upon none at all; we should never agree to something we are not sure we wish to follow; and we should have

the courage stoutly to defend all such choices as the ethical and principled ones they are.

If our adversaries hide themselves behind civilians in wartime and a given legitimate military target is important enough to justify the associated casualties under the clear principles of LOAC equity-balancing, moreover, we should be willing to "take the shot" and then defend that choice with a firm voice and a clear conscience, even if in sorrow at our enemies forcing us to struggle with such tragic choices. And we should give no quarter in pointing out other parties' disingenuousness, hypocrisy, and gamesmanship – nor any less in excoriating their abuses and violations of law and of the norms of civilized behavior. Confronted with disingenuous lawfare or other efforts to weaponize our integrity against us, we must also be unsparing in pointing out who the *real* scofflaws and moral cowards are.

To be sure, this sort of thing is not easy, and such courageousness is not for the squeamish. But such is the behavior of a country confident in its moral compass, and that is what we need to be.

Western society's tradition of self-criticism has been a powerful engine for political and social reform over the centuries as humans have striven, however imperfectly and inconsistently, to conform their conduct to principle; such striving has advanced human flourishing in numberless ways, and we should be proud of it and the tradition out of which it grows. In recent decades, however, we seem to have allowed this noble instinct to metastasize, growing into monstrous and self-destructive form as an oikophobia that teaches us a poisonous self-doubt and distaste for ourselves by reflex rather than (as before) encouraging us to continue to *improve* ourselves on the basis of careful critical reflection.[19]

It is this self-doubt that helps make us particularly vulnerable to lawfare, and an easy victim for unprincipled adversaries who seek to leverage our own integrity and best intentions against us. As my Pharos Foundation colleague Patrick Nash and Deniz Guzel have noted, "America and her allies have thus far proved themselves

remarkably complacent" in the face of "lawfare" and related threats. We must do better.

There is no easy answer for the challenges such gamesmanship presents, but whatever it is, it must surely involve fortitude and clarity. We can counteract our adversaries' efforts to weaponize Western moral integrity more effectively by seeing such challenges for what they are, and by finding within ourselves the self-confidence and moral courage to stick to our principles with stern resolution and defend them with vigor and thoughtful care.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Christopher Ford *is Professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies with Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies and a Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. The views expressed herein are entirely his own, and do not necessarily represent those of anyone else.*

Notes

1) Edward Dumbauld, *The Life and Legal Writings of Hugo Grotius* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 28. Ironically, however, this position came back to haunt Grotius later, however, when he was subsequently hired to defend Dutch claims in that area against the English. *See* Franz De Pauw, *Grotius and the Law of the Sea*, trans. P.J. Atherton (1965), at 45, in *Grotius Reader: A reader for students of international law and legal History*, eds. L.E. van Holk and C.G. Roelofson (Asser Institute, 1983), 144-45.

2) As has now been publicly detailed, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Council (NSC) lawyers began debating what standards should apply to CIA and Defense Department (DoD) personnel in interrogating *al-Qaeda* and Taliban prisoners "almost immediately" after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, and in August 2002 the Department of Justice (DOJ) provided CIA with a legal memorandum on the topic. In January 2003, the CIA Director provided written interrogation guidelines to his personnel, two months later DOJ provided DoD's General Counsel with the abovementioned OLC memorandum, and in December 2004, the CIA's Office of Medical Services provided its *own* guidelines to govern such activity.

3) Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Albatross, 2020), 176 & 190-91. In this description, unrestricted warfare both can and should weaponize every conceivable tool available – *e.g.*, atomic, diplomatic, financial, conventional, network, trade, bio-chemical, intelligence, resources, ecological, psychological, economic aid, space, tactical, regulatory, electronic, smuggling, sanction, guerrilla, drug, media, terrorist, virtual (*i.e.*, deterrence), and ideological. Qiao and Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 123.

4) Orde Kittrie, *Lawfare: Law as a Weapon of War* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 22 (citing *Basics of International Law for Modern Soldiers*, ed. Zhao Peiying (1996)). He also recounts Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei describing international legal rules such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as being no more than "a collection of mumbo-jumbo by disciples of Satan." Kittrie, 22 (citing Ann Elizabeth Mayer *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics* 36 (5th ed. 2012); Abdulmumini A. Oba, "New Muslim Perspectives in the Human Right Debate," *Islam and International* Law 234, eds. Marie-Luisa Frick and Andreas Muller (2013)).

5) *See* Dmitry Adamsky, *The Russian Way of Deterrence: Strategic Culture, Coercion, and War* (Stanford University Press, 2024), 46 & 49-50.

6) U.S. Department of Defense, *Law of War Manual* (December 2016), ¶ 5.16, 290.

7) In such cases, Israel is still required to take into consideration the presence of human shields for purposes of weighing anticipated civilian collateral damage against the military necessity of striking a legitimate Hamas military target, *see* Department of Defense, *Law of War Manual*, ¶ 5.16.4, 293, which means taking such precautions as may under the circumstances be feasible to minimize such harm. Nevertheless, the party that hides behind human shields assumes primary responsibility for the harm to them that results. Department of Defense, *Law of War Manual*, ¶ 5.16.5, 293.

8) Nor is this the first time Hamas has gotten away with, or even benefitted from, such war crimes. Attentive readers may recall that several years ago, Richard Goldstone – a former South African judge who authored a United Nations report accusing Israel of war crimes during its 2006 campaign against Hamas in Gaza – publicly "reconsidered" some of his conclusions in that report. His original report had concluded that Israel had undertaken "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate, and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability." As this author has described elsewhere, "Goldstone's fundamental, logically untenable inference – that because civilian casualties occurred in Gaza, Israel must therefore have intended them – was, therefore, all he thought was required in order to prove war crimes. The report's conceptual blindness was self-reinforcing … [as] Goldstone's tendentious inference was not merely a substitute for actual evidence, but to some extent actually became an excuse not to look for any." Christopher Ford, "Living in the 'New Normal': Modern War, Non-State Actors, and the Future of Law," in *Rethinking the Law of Armed Conflict in an Age of Terrorism*, eds. Christopher Ford and Amichai Cohen (Lexington Books, 2012), 272. In 2011, however, Goldstone expressed "regret" that he had not had access to the full facts "explaining the circumstances in which we said civilians in Gaza were targeted, because it probably would have influenced our findings about intentionality and war crimes." Unfortunately, Goldstone's after-the-fact regrets did almost nothing to mitigate the incendiary impact of the original 2009 report, which has become in some sense the received wisdom of the international community about the 2006 Israeli campaign.

9) Irregular fighters who wear no uniforms and hide among the civilian population would normally be considered "unlawful combatants" or "unprivileged belligerents," and would thus not be entitled to the privileges of combatant status (*e.g.*, combatant immunity to domestic law and POW status). The First Additional Protocol, however, attempted in its Article 1(4) through Common Article 2 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions to make those earlier conventions apply to protect such politically-favored combatants. (Guerrillas fighting against communist dictatorships or left-wing authoritarian regimes were presumably not supposed to receive such special legal protection.)

10) These illustrations are all drawn from *The USSR Proposes Disarmament (1920s-1980s)*, eds. Ye. Potlarkin and S. Kortunov (Progress Publishers, 1986), 18, 220-21, 289-93, & 314-17.

11) Adamsky, *The Russian Way of Deterrence*, 89.

12) Some years after the INF Treaty had been signed, U.S. officials acquired information indicating that the USSR had cooperative arrangements with its Warsaw Pact allies whereby "the Soviet Union had understandings

that Soviet manufactured SS-23 missiles transferred to at least one of the East European countries could be mated with Soviet nuclear reentry vehicles" as part of an "undisclosed program of cooperation." U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), "Supplemental Report to Congress on SS-23 Missiles in Eastern Europe" (September 18, 1991), at p.3. As described, this would be a remarkably close analogue – albeit a secret one – to NATO's "nuclear sharing" concept whereby forward-deployed U.S. nuclear weapons could be made available to NATO allies in time of conflict. (Because the Soviets had not disclosed its transfers of SS-23s to Warsaw Pact allies, moreover, the U.S. concluded that Moscow had negotiated the INF Treaty "in bad faith" and had "probably violated the Elimination Protocol of the Treaty by failing to eliminate in accordance with Treaty procedures, re-entry vehicles associated with and released from programs of cooperation [with Eastern European governments]." Acting ACDA Director Stephen R. Hanmer, letter to Senator Jesse Helms (September 19, 1991).

13) *See, e.g.*, James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (Vintage, 1970); Orlando Figes, *The Story of Russia* (Metropolitan, 2022); Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (Metropolitan Books, 2002); Dina Khapaeva, "Russia: Fractures in the fabric of culture," *Histories of Nations: How Their Identities Were Forged*, ed. Peter Furtado (Thames & Hudson, 2017); Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia and Its Future with the West* (Thomas Dunne, 2015); Serhii Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation* (Basic Books, 2017).

14) Iran is also not above weaponizing Western susceptibility to feelings of guilt, and frequently attempts to leverage for diplomatic advantage narratives of U.S. involvement in the 1953 coup in Tehran against the government of Mohammed Mossadegh. U.S. policy discourse on Iran all too frequently accepts this as a kind of American "Original Sin" vis-à-vis that country, for which some kind of atonement is presumably needed. The administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton, for example, was openly apologetic, with Secretary of State Madeline Albright declaring in 2000 that the coup was "clearly a setback for Iran's political development," that it was "easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs," and that "[a]s President Clinton has said, the United States must bear its fair share of responsibility for the problems that have arisen in U.S.-Iranian relations." (The Central Intelligence Agency itself, in fact, has sometimes seemed contrite.) What is less well understood, however, is that the 1953 coup, undemocratic though it clearly was, was nonetheless supported by Iran's Shi'ite clergy at the time – that is, by the group that presently rules Iran and deploys the coup narrative in its anti-American propaganda – and indeed that some of those clerics may actually have received "large sums of money" from U.S. operatives. For his part, Ayatollah Khomeini loathed Prime Minister Mossadegh, hating the man as much as he hated the Shah. *See, e.g.*, Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (University of California Press, 1993), 10 & 110.

15) *See* Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* (Public Affairs, 2014), 49 & 67.

16) Qiao and Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 114.

17) Quoted by Loch K. Johnson, *The Third Option: Covert Action and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2022), 15.

18) Some years ago, in discussing the importance of honor and the internalization of restraint as an indicium of civilization, this author observed that "the interiorization of the modern LOAC as a sort of virtue ethics for liberal democracies under the rule of law – the moral operational code, as it were, for market states of consent even, or perhaps especially, in threatening times – … [may] bring[] international law back to its Spanish, Grotian, and even Stoic origins as a system to shape the behavior of the sovereign, even non-reciprocally, because of the *kind* of virtuous ruler he is. Through this lens, in other words, the law is about *who you are*, not what your adversary does or what particular body of codified rules declares itself most relevant." Ford, "Living in the 'New Normal,'" 283.

19) Traditionally, it has been our own American values that have summoned us to self-improvement by calling attention, as Martin Luther King Jr. put it at the Washington National Cathedral shortly before his

assassination in 1968, "to the gulf between promise and fulfilment." As the historian Jürgen Osterhammel has noted, the value system encoded in modern international law may have been "originally understood to be Christian," but it came to be seen as having a "transreligious humanitarian character" – and indeed has on occasion compellingly been invoked *by* Asians and Africans *against* "the culpability of colonial practice" by its European originators. Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton University Press, 2014), 505-06 & 835; see also Osterhammel, 500; and Jeremy Black, *A History of Diplomacy* (Reaktion, 2010), 164. By contrast, rather than giving us signposts toward self-improvement, the ghastly politicized Left and Right postmodernisms of recent years offer only a dark and soulless pseudo-religiosity that offers an analogue to Original Sin and blood guilt, but without the admixture of forgiveness or Redemption: merely a crippling sensibility of sin, retribution, and endless penance, shorn equally of hope, of love, and of light.

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