America's Role in an Evolving World Order

The Cyber Sphere: The Hidden Variable of International Relations
Enya Gu, with Prof. Nazli Choucri

The Decline of US Primacy in the Asia-Pacific and the Future of a Key US Ally, Australia
Lloyd Skinner

And more...

Publication in the Journal of Interdisciplinary Public Policy does not signify endorsement of individual authors' opinions or representations. The author(s) of each individual work retain ownership and full responsibility for the content thereof. The authors and editors of the Journal of Interdisciplinary Public Policy should be assumed to be students unless specifically noted.
FRONT MATTER

The Journal of Interdisciplinary Public Policy is a quarterly, open-access journal for youth. We elevate diverse perspectives in public policy and highlight the need for interdisciplinary thinking to create equitable policy. Whatever your interests or skills, there’s a home for you at JIPP.

Our next issue will be an anthology celebrating the first 10 issues! Stay connected for more wonderful student-driven policy, and feel free to contribute your own perspectives as well! Other forthcoming issues are expected to include immigration, economic policy, and more. Stay connected with us here!

Lloyd Skinner was the Issue Head for this publication. Lloyd is a JIPP Staff Writer and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in history and Chinese studies at the University of Melbourne. Having served as an Officer in the Royal Australian Navy, he is interested in counter-terrorism, military policy in the Asia-Pacific, and the confluence between climate change and defense policy. In his spare time, Lloyd enjoys a variety of physical activities, including weight training, running, and cricket, and has an avid passion for Romanticist literature and art.

Maanas Sharma was a Contributing Editor to this publication. Maanas is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Interdisciplinary Public Policy and is passionate about policy analysis, mathematics, and music. Maanas is a senior at the School of Science and Engineering in Dallas, Director of Finance at Redefy, a member of the International Youth Council, and a member of Parivar Bay Area’s Board of Directors. At his core, Maanas is passionate about transdisciplinary public policy and incorporating historical and social-scientific understandings in data science and quantitative policy solutions.

Berkeley Borkert was a Contributing Editor to this publication. Berkeley is a Blog Editor at JIPP and a student at Woodlands Academy in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois, where she serves as student body president and a leader in the choir program. Outside of the classroom, she is an internationally recognized cellist, a lover of language learning, and an outspoken advocate for equity in education. Berkeley’s passions lie in utilizing the arts as a vehicle for social change.
FRONT MATTER 1
ESSAYS 3

The Decline of US Primacy in the Asia-Pacific and the Future of a Key US Ally, Australia 3

Lloyd Graham

The South China Sea Dispute: China’s Challenge to US Hegemony 13

Tiffany You

COMMENTARY 17

The Cyber Sphere—The Hidden Variable of International Relations: In Conversation With Professor Nazli Choucri 17

Enya Gu

Finance With Consequences: The Case for Reducing Arms Sales to Taiwan 22

Daniel Gallagher

ART + POETRY 26

Euromaidan (Acrylic Paint and Newspaper Collage) 26

Toby King-Thompson
The Decline of US Primacy in the Asia-Pacific and the Future of a Key US Ally, Australia

Lloyd Skinner

Lloyd Skinner is a JIPP Staff Writer and is currently studying a Bachelor of Arts majoring in history and Chinese studies at the University of Melbourne. Having served as an Officer in the Royal Australian Navy, he developed an interest in counter-terrorism, military policy in the Asia-Pacific, and the confluence between climate change and defense policy. In his spare time, Lloyd enjoys a variety of physical activities, including weight training, running, cricket, and has an avid passion for Romanticist literature and art.

ANZUS, the longstanding trilateral security alliance between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (US), has been a central feature of Australia’s foreign policy since World War II. However, the growth of Chinese economic power, which will supersede the US by 2028 (BBC News), calls into question how adequately the ANZUS alliance fulfills Australia’s national security interests given its unique position in the Asia-Pacific. Given how China is aggressively countering American power in Asia, Australia’s security partnership with the US may put it at greater risk than if Canberra pursued a more neutral foreign policy independent of the US. Similarly, the relative decline of American power means that the US may not be willing or able to guarantee Australia’s long-term security needs. Since Barack Obama was elected president and Iraq and Afghanistan have communicated important lessons, Washington DC looks less likely to use armed force for causes that are outside its immediate strategic boundaries. This includes the defense of Australia, should it be threatened militarily. Similarly, the unrivaled military hegemony the US once enjoyed has ended, as China represents a legitimate match to American military capabilities. Even if the US came to Australia’s aid if the country was threatened, there is no certainty that Washington could effectively safeguard Australia’s defense needs.
against Beijing’s military power. It is crucial to consider the cost of maintaining the status quo of Australia’s security policy; it may not be in Australia’s national interests to continue to rely on ANZUS if it cannot guarantee its long-term security. Accordingly, it is essential for traditional US allies like Australia to question alternative foreign policy, security, and defense arrangements in light of the decline of US primacy in the Asia-Pacific.

**The Assumptions of the US-Australia Alliance**

The US-Australia alliance is structured on the core belief that the US would be willing and able to defend Australia from attack. However, recent developments invite skepticism on almost all portions of these assumptions.

First, it is unclear whether the US would be willing to defend Australia. Since World War II, Australia has been a ready supporter of the American interventionist cause in Korea, Vietnam, the First Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the US-led coalition against the Islamic State. This involvement was based on the idea of reciprocal loyalty, with the faith that Australia would receive immediate American support in a time of Australian crisis (Henry). However, during the crisis in East Timor in 1999—a significant security concern on Australia’s doorstep—the Clinton Administration failed to provide immediate military support to Australia’s operations in the country (Shearer). This was in spite of Australia’s dependence on American intelligence and logistical support and the Australian Defence Force’s (ADF’s) struggle to deploy and sustain a modest fighting force (Shearer). The inaction of the US on East Timor calls into question the extent to which the US will assist Australia in conflict, especially if the action is unpopular politically or not in the immediate strategic purview of Washington.

Due to global shifts in the distribution of wealth and power, it is estimated that, by 2030, China’s GDP will reach 42.4 trillion USD compared to America’s $24 trillion (Roggeveen). Accordingly, Americans struggle to determine whether their strategic leadership in Asia is worth the expense and danger of disputing with China, the emerging regional hegemon in Asia (White). The election of Donald Trump in 2016, a public figure who has long advocated for the US to renege the burden of global leadership, is a testament to how Americans are becoming more internally focused (White). This sentiment is largely mirrored by Democrats and Independents who believe the US should focus less on global problems and more on internal
issues (Pew Research Center). The Biden foreign policy doctrine perpetuates the trends foreshadowed by the Obama Administration, which pushed restraint and “red-lines,” as well as President Trump’s abstinence from more “endless wars.” As highlighted by the August 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Biden Administration’s policy decisions reflect the reluctance of Americans for more armed conflict unless it is commensurate with America’s immediate national interests (Cooper et al.). This may translate to a tentative response from the US, should Australia become entangled in a conflict. While it is commonly believed that the ANZUS Treaty compels the other signatories to war if one member state is attacked per the principle of *casus foederis*, ANZUS only compels *consultation* between member states in the event of conflict (ABC News). Clearly, Australia cannot anticipate or rely on American assistance, and it must take alternative action to ensure its security interests are upheld.

Similarly, Australians have no assurance that the US would be victorious in a conflict with China. Just as US power is retracting internationally, the capacity of the US Armed Forces (USAF) to match the growing military might of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is declining. The capability of the US to project power by air and sea has been undercut by China’s growing geostrategic advantages in the Western Pacific and the extensive expansion of its air and naval forces (White). If a war is fought in East Asia, supply chains from San Francisco will be overstretched, and should the trend of declining US power continue, it is unlikely that the US will prevail in an armed conflict with China (White). It is also important to note that the US is a naval power, while China is a continental power. The capacity for the USAF to defeat the PLA is contingent on the unlikely prospect that it can conquer the Chinese homeland (Keating). This reaffirms that Australia cannot rely on the US to continue providing its security, and it is against Australia’s national interest to do so.

All in all, given the decline of US power and the rise of China, the basic assumptions of the US-Australia alliance—that the US would be willing and able to defend Australia from attack—are no longer viable (Dibb).

**The Detriments of the US-Australia Alliance**

Supposedly, Australia’s greatest security challenge is the pre- eminent rise of China as a global superpower and its accompanying antagonism and intimidation. Certainly, as China has a history of unprovoked non-military attacks on Australia through cyber attacks, election interference, and economic coercion, these should involve Australia’s cooperation with the US
and other democratically-minded states. However, Australia’s alliance with the US has made it a prominent target of Chinese bullying. Assertions that China would treat Australia with more cordiality if it discontinued its observance of ANZUS have credibility. China’s strategic imperative and new wolf warrior diplomacy primarily involve countering US global predominance (Hillman). A significant factor behind Beijing’s hostility toward Canberra is its interest to put pressure on the Australia-US alliance (Feng). Geostrategically, China sees Australia as a threat because it constitutes a stable and defendable American military outpost in the Pacific during wartime, just as was the case during the War in the Pacific during WWII. Part of the PLA’s military strategy involves inhibiting the US from possessing a defensible garrison like Australia in the Pacific, which enables the US Navy to project its sea power (Grant). Accordingly, Beijing is pursuing the construction of a military base on Vanuatu and instituting its soft power in Southern Pacific states like Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Fiji to restrict America’s access to the Pacific from Australia (Zhang). It is certainly feasible that China would refocus its attention away from Australia if Beijing no longer perceives Canberra as a significant threat to its security imperatives. New Zealand, which is less aligned with the US because its treaty obligations to ANZUS were suspended in 1986, maintains a conciliatory diplomatic relationship with China despite disagreements over Hong Kong and the treatment of Uyghurs (Young). Accordingly, China has not been belligerent toward New Zealand like it has toward Australia. To have Beijing act more peacefully, Canberra should consider mirroring Wellington’s position, which does not embrace the anti-Chinese rhetoric of the US. Just as New Zealand has achieved, Canberra can still maintain a strong relationship with China while cooperating diplomatically with Washington on issues of mutual interest surrounding China, such as upholding human rights and cyber security.

Likewise, as Australia preaches the US position that China is a threat, it is “determinedly casting China as an enemy – and in the doing of it, [Australia is] actually creating an enemy of China where none exists” (Keating). Former Prime Minister Paul Keating argues, “the notion that Australia is in a state of military apprehension about China, or needs to be, is a distortion and lie of the worst and most grievous proportions” (Keating). While the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) pushes intrusive foreign policy involving tariffs against Australian imports, intolerance to political opposition in Hong Kong, and island-building in the South China Sea, these represent no real military threat to Australia. Furthermore, while all great powers desire the development of buffer zones, China does not attack other sovereign states (Keating). Even if it did turn expansionist, Australia has a defendable continent that is not remotely within any territorial claim by China. Australia is not within the strategic purview of China; it is only made
an adversary by the Australian government’s own doing. Abandoning Australia’s treaty commitments to ANZUS and refusing to participate in American anti-China rhetoric are both in the nation’s security interests. Such actions would nullify the CCP’s aggressive posture toward the Australian homeland and any possibility that China could be belligerent toward Australia.

Even outside of just China, the involvement of the ADF in American interventionism has been detrimental to Canberra’s security interests. Australia’s participation in the War on Terror has endangered Australia’s national security because it has made it a greater target for terrorist groups and has worsened the global crisis of terrorism (ABC News). Following the beginning of the War on Terror after the 9/11 attacks, Australian citizens were heavily targeted by terror cells, Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda in the Asia-Pacific. The most notable attacks were the 2002 Bali Bombing and the 2004 Australian Embassy bombings, in which 211 Australians were killed and were largely motivated by Australia’s involvement with conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (BBC News; Jeffrey & Oliver). Furthermore, the War on Terror as a whole has worsened the international crisis of terrorism. Declassified intelligence material has demonstrated that the War on Terror created a breeding ground for extremist networks such as Islamic State and galvanized jihadist motivations for violence against the West (Office of the Director of National Intelligence). In this case, Australia’s alliance with the US has made its citizens less safe. Similarly, the costs of Australian collaboration with the US on acts of foreign interventionism have also been significant, and the outcomes of its participation in US-led conflicts have not shown any meaningful importance to Australia’s strategic imperatives. In the Vietnam War, for example, 521 Australians were killed, costing approximately $218.4 million (Australian War Memorial). Australian involvement in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which is without any discernible benefit to the Australian national interest, cost the lives of 45 Australian servicemen (Australian War Memorial), and $10 billion and $5 billion, respectively (Davis & Correy). Australia’s alliance with the US is based on its willingness to support the USA in its conflict; however, this has been shown to make Australia less safe in addition to having an exorbitant cost (Shortis).

The US alliance is no longer acting in Australia’s interest, not just because there is no assurance that it would assist Australia if it were to be attacked, let alone if Washington could successfully guarantee Australia’s security, but also because it is actively harming Australia. As such, continuing to rely on the US alliance would be irresponsible and in opposition to its national interests. For this reason, Australia must consider a new strategic posture that can provide for its national security interests.
Australian neutrality

Many other US allies fear that they are investing in an alliance in which the primary security guarantor has a renewed focus on retrenchment and isolationism. While Americans do not want to retreat from their position of global leadership, the political and economic model that enabled the US to compete and lead in a contested world is declining (Halpin et al.). The high social cohesion and wealth of the American middle class that propelled it to the role of global superpower following World War II is vanishing (Magsaman). Domestically, the US is marred by rancorous social, economic, and political divisions involving race, partisanship, and inequality. The nation has significant governance problems ranging from poor fiscal discipline, political corruption caused by poorly regulated donations, and gun violence (Magsamen). Foreign policy derives from domestic policy, and to remedy these internal woes, the US needs leadership underpinned by broad-based public consensus. This consensus does not currently exist, nor does it look like it is coming to fruition in the future. The United States is a fraught ally. Hence, it is time for current American allies, such as Australia, to consider decreasing their alliance commitments rather than becoming embroiled in a chaotic situation.

The greatest threat to Australian security is its complacency through remaining in the fraught American alliance. The risk is that Australia, as a US ally, will become ensnared in the Thucydides Trap as China surpasses America as the ruling regional hegemon in Asia (Grant). If nothing changes Australia will be mired in this emerging Great Power conflict. Departing the alliance will mean that Canberra will be exempt from any involvement in a dispute between Washington and Beijing. This means that a neutral Australia will be safer by avoiding the security complications that derive from participation in a possible great power conflict. Even sans a large-scale showdown, it very likely would save Australia from the current attacks on its democracy as well as potential economic shocks inflicted by China.

Ostensibly, becoming a neutral state without an alliance to safeguard security and deter external threats appears dangerous. Yet, this can often be a safer foreign policy decision as security alliances are antagonistic to non-aligned states and can draw those with relatively little stake in a conflict into full-scale war (Snyder). This situation was demonstrated in the outbreak of World War I, when the assassination of a relatively insignificant political figure caused the escalation of a continental war in Europe. During this time, Switzerland displayed the efficacy of neutrality and abstinence from military alliances. Switzerland managed to remain unharmed
during the First and Second World Wars. This was despite being entrapped amongst battling belligerents which surrounded it geographically. In fact Switzerland has not been at war since 1815 due to a combination of factors including its impartiality, geographic defenses, and Zurich’s effective use of its armed forces on its borders to deter potential inquest (Smallwood).

Canberra should explore the impartiality to warfare embodied in the neutrality of the Swiss. While Australia has a relatively small population of 25 million, it is not impossible to guarantee its security needs independently. Drastic changes to Australia’s military force structure, foreign policy, and regional stance will be needed in the interim (Henry). Essential changes to the ADF’s force structure and composition include possessing naval warships that utilize a sovereign technological capability. The Royal Australian Navy will struggle to operate autonomously when some warships employ the American AEGIS combat system. Similarly, Australia cannot sustain the incoming nuclear-powered submarines acquired in the new trilateral defense pact without a domestic nuclear industry (Lowe). This deal only entrenches Australia’s military alliance with the US and should be reconsidered. Ultimately, the structure and composition of the ADF must function not to fit in a larger US-led force as a ‘fleet unit’ but for the immediate defense of Australia and its borders.

The Swiss demonstrated that natural geographic defenses combined with mobilizing a small, purpose-built, and independent fighting force could prevent intervention from militaristic neighbors. Accordingly, Australia does not require American military assistance to fulfill its national security needs. Canberra should rely upon its geographic isolation, coastline, and large landmass along with a national defense primed to safeguard the security of Australia’s borders and its immediate sphere of influence.

**Conclusion**

In summary, Australia should sever the ANZUS pact with the US. Continuing to observe the terms of the alliance are no longer in Australia’s interests given the rise of China and the retraction of American power globally. These factors mean the US may not be willing or able to provide for Canberra’s security needs. The adoption of a neutral and non-aligned foreign policy will make Australia safer as a neutral Australia will not antagonize Beijing, which is currently countering the power of the US and its allies. If Australia is not an American ally, it will be outside the PRC’s strategic purview, thus warranting no threat from China. Similarly, as demonstrated by Switzerland, Australia does not need a superpower to safeguard its security; it
can fulfill its security needs independently. Should Canberra not act upon these propositions, Australia will be less safe by relying upon a fraught alliance that makes Australia a target for American adversaries and does not provide for Australia's most basic security needs.

References

ABC News (a). “Fact Check: Does ANZUS Commit the US to Come to Australia’s Aid?” *ABC News*, 07 July 2014,


Australian War Memorial (a). “Deaths as a Result of Service with Australian Units.” *Australian War Memorial*, 27 Jan. 2022,


Davis, Mark, and Phillip Correy. “$3B and Rising Rapidly: Cost of the War to Australian Taxpayers.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Mar. 2007,


Feng, Chongyi. “What’s behind China’s Bullying of Australia? It Sees a Soft Target and an Essential One.” *The Conversation*, 01 Dec. 2020,


The South China Sea Dispute: China’s Challenge to US Hegemony

Tiffany You

Tiffany You is an 11th-grade student at Godolphin and Latymer School in London. Passionate about international relations, racial inequality, and education equity, she is the co-founder of a nonprofit that aims to support and encourage underprivileged children in their literacy education and also started a podcast that discusses political affairs. Tiffany is also an avid musician, playing the piano, cello, and organ.

Following the collapse of the USSR towards the end of the 20th century, the international system transferred from a world order characterized by bipolar competition between two opposing superpowers to one of unipolar hegemony dominated by the United States. However, this has been accompanied by protracted debates over the durability of American hegemony. During the 1990s, the United States’ technological, economic, and military superiority was unrivaled, and many believed it would be a long time before the country’s global leadership was challenged. However, now in 2022, new evidence suggests that this was not the case and that the era of American primacy is coming to an end, owing largely to the rise of the People’s Republic of China. As China advances toward becoming a major superpower, it challenges US hegemony, particularly in continental Asia and the Asia-Pacific. This conflict is typified in the South China Sea, a marginal sea that is part of the Pacific Ocean and
covers an area of approximately 3.5 million square kilometers. Despite its relatively small geographical area, it has in the past decade remained a considerable interest to the world’s superpowers. This has been due to a multitude of reasons, including its strategic positioning with one-third of the world’s shipping passing through the region each year and its holdings of huge untapped gas and oil reserves.

At first glance, the disputes in the South China Sea involving China and its neighbors appear to be disagreements between distant nations with little significance to the United States. However, America has several interests (geopolitical, geostrategic, and economic) that give it good reason to hold a stake in this dispute. The United States has made public statements regarding its official South China Sea policy. It believes that the People’s Republic of China has no right to lawfully assert a maritime claim and that the country’s constant harassment of fisheries and offshore energy development in the area to exploit resources are markedly illegal. More specifically, the United States rejects China’s claims of the 12 nautical mile territorial sea radius surrounding its claims on the Spratly Islands. The Spratly Islands are hotly contested by countries in the region, and give China rights to prime holdings in the center of the South China Sea, but the United States and others believe China lacks any lawful claim to the islands. To even a congressional level, America has made clear that its support of international freedom rejects any unrightful (or expansionary) acts in the South China Sea.

However, I argue that long-term geographic power in the South China Sea is the driving force behind the United States’ interest in the region itself. Whoever controls the South China Sea will have permanent geographic power, an essential component of any state’s foreign policy. The United States understands the historical significance of its dominance over the American continent in its rise to superpower status: that is how it imposed itself and ended European hegemony on the continent. Likewise, in its geopolitical competition against China, the US cannot allow China to pursue the same goals and achieve the same outcomes as the Monroe Doctrine. Antonio Gramsci’s revolutionary thesis of cultural hegemony posits that the United States must contain China’s ambitions in order to maintain its own position; and, if “containment” is not implemented, the region will likely witness a gradual transition of power. Thus, whether it is injecting weakness, delaying China’s development, preventing the formation of a global center of power, or being part of a revisionist policy to change the world to its image, the end goal of the United States’ revisionist policy is to prevent a regional power transition process. In this regard, it should be emphasized that the failure of the containment policy is the greatest risk of the South China Sea dispute. If the US fails, we will witness an immediate power transition, increasing the risk of falling headfirst into a Thucydides trap (the claim that the war

*The Journal of Interdisciplinary Public Policy*
between Athens and Sparta was attributable to the rise of one great power and the fall of another).

Since the Obama Administration’s ‘pivot’ towards Asia in 2011, the United States has been shifting its policy stances. Speaking for the country, former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton called for an “increased investment—diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise—in the Asia-Pacific region,” which was interpreted as a response to China’s growing expansion. One particular aspect of this has been the freedom of navigation operations led by the US Navy: supplying arms to rim states in the South China Sea (such as Vietnam) with military and lethal aid and patrolling near the artificial islands created by China in the disputed Spratly archipelago. The United States affecting its policy of containment in the South China Sea has by far been one of its most important in our world today. Failing to do so against China would have immense implications on global politics and society in the near future, as its stance in the region would give it both the economic and geopolitical power needed to rise to the dominant world power. As a result, to the United States, it is believed that it must not only impose a strategy to maintain its current position, but it must also succeed.

In many ways, China’s rise in an American-led global system has precipitated the US-China power shift. In retrospect, the power transition began in 1978, when China embarked on a modernization strategy. Signs of China’s rise drew global attention in the early 1990s, and its growth accelerated in the early 2000s. Massive changes occurred, and the China threat emerged, overshadowing China’s relations with the rest of the world. China had never contributed to the establishment of the current global order; instead, it had sought its demise for decades prior to 1978. China had no way of challenging the American-led order at the time. Instead, it was forced to become a part of this system, especially in terms of economic development. Leaving aside China’s recent misfortunes, the country has a rich sociopolitical, strategic, and cultural history. However, China’s rise has been governed by an authoritarian regime that rejects globally shared democratic ideologies.

China’s ability to install a challenge in the South China Sea could signal a shift in the global hegemonic order rather than merely a rise in influence in neighboring Asian regions. If China successfully establishes its influence and shapes events in the South China Sea, it will mark a significant step up the hierarchical ladder. In this sense, both powers are expected to defend their respective interests. Gramsci’s theory predicts an increase in the likelihood of conflict, with China becoming more confident and assertive and the US becoming more nervous after losing the economic battle, as China is expected to surpass US GDP by 2030. The power
transition between the United States and China differs significantly from previous transitions. While there is no clear guide for the US and China in the unfolding events, many changes are expected, particularly in the South China Sea. As a result, while China’s ultimate success in modernizing its economy and military is not guaranteed, the likelihood of success is increasing. So, the high probability of China’s success in achieving most of its development goals by 2050 remains high, signaling the end of an old world order and the beginning of a new one.

References


Commentary

The Cyber Sphere—The Hidden Variable of International Relations: In Conversation With Professor Nazli Choucri

Enya Gu

Enya Gu is a Staff Writer at JIPP and the captain of Lincoln-Douglas debate at Nashua High School South in New Hampshire. She has received regional and national awards in several events at the Technology Student Association competitions and was a Bank of America Student Leader in 2021. Enya is also the editor for many comic and novella publishing groups that have garnered over 2 million views. In her spare time, Enya loves to learn about policy issues, international and domestic.

Nazli Choucri is a Professor of Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She focuses on “computational social sciences in the areas of international relations and cyberpolitics—with special attention to sources of conflict and threats to security on the one hand and strategies for sustainability and global accord, on the other.” Choucri has authored or edited twelve books and directs the Global System for Sustainable Development (GSSD).

What drew you to your areas of expertise, specifically cyberspace and International Relations?

Cyber didn’t exist at all in the 1970s and 1980s. I think what got me into that was computational social science. There was, at that time, a movement towards quantitative international relations, and they were beginning to use computer programs to analyze data. For my PhD thesis, I focused on content analysis of speeches of three leaders from three countries that were not aligned in the Cold War to apply quantitative analysis to their words and their expressions. But the focus was on the individuals as leaders. It gradually became clear to me that international relations, which was what I was interested in, is about countries, not just leaders. And so, from there, with the guidance of my professor and the
work of the group at the time, we started focusing on how to distinguish between countries in a way that makes sense.

What were some of your early findings, and what's next?

The basic idea is that there are only three variables that shape what the country can do, what the country is, and whether it can move out and do things internationally or not. The variables are (i) the people, (ii) the resources, and (iii) the technology. But they’re not additive variables, they’re interactive.

For example, if you look at China now, and compare it to China in the 1950s, not only did the population grow along with everybody else’, the technology skyrocketed. If we compare Korea today with Egypt today, Korea, technologically, is very far ahead. In 1950, they were both at the same level.

Next came the issue of distinguishing between countries. But what we really want to know is, what is the propensity of a country to expand outwards? Quantitatively, we could figure this out. But around the 1980s, two things became clear. We were polluting a lot—the environment became important. At the same time (but we didn’t notice it), the cyber domain—what we now call cyber, the digital world itself—was also developing.

In particular, the internet did two conflicting, competing things. It was available to everybody (just about) to level the playing field. But there were no “rules of the road.” For example, when driving, if you run a red light, you’ll get pulled over, but there’s nothing like that for the internet. Now, we have words like malware, etc.—which is very exciting, but it’s going to be your problem. You guys are gonna have to figure out the rules of the road.

I think that the next really big thing in this question is, what are we going to do about developing rules of the road for the use of AI (artificial intelligence)? It’s a technology that can be used by an individual and by a country, for whatever purpose. Think about airplane travel. If the pilot takes off whenever he wants to and whatever route he wants to, you can see the mess it would make. For AI, we’re going to have to develop a similar framework of rules. And it’s international relations—not just the specific violence/conflict side of it, but we’re all affected by it. It’s in our common interest to have some kind of rules.
Additionally, privacy is a big question: you want to make sure that not everyone has easy access to you. MIT has VPNs and so forth, but it’s internal to MIT. I am very conflicted about privacy—in other words, I think it’s a good thing, but I don’t think it can really exist. But then if it can’t exist, is there a fallback position? Your generation will see. What is really kind of interesting is that my generation, which did not grow up with the Internet, is trying to make rules about all this for the next generation.

In your book *International Relations in the Cyber Age: The Co-Evolution Dilemma*, you say China, the United States, and India have the highest lateral pressures, which are defined as “the propensity of organized entities to expand behavior beyond established boundaries.” How can lateral pressures be mitigated by other states?

A key question is, are patterns of lateral pressure in the physical world similar to what they are in the cyber domain? For some countries, like Saudi Arabia, they are physically much higher: in the cyber domain, you can’t really see them. But there’s a group of countries that are high on all three. I think that what we want to prevent or mitigate is the propensity of expansion in their interaction. Expansion always leads to competition of some sort—my trade is better than your trade, or we have more troops overseas than you do. So trying to anticipate and modulate the possibilities of hostilities is really, really important. But this is something that you can’t do overnight; you have to do it sustained over time. And meanwhile, most countries believe that they have to respond immediately to something—they’ve got to send troops immediately, or we have to do something immediately. And that takes priority.

In your world, there will be more multiple major powers; not 100, but maybe three or four or five big ones, like India, China, and the United States—whatever happens to Russia, maybe something like Brazil. Not equal, but enough to make demands. I think that the structure and restructuring of entities in the world is a far more important issue than liberalism vs. communism vs. etc. And then, what does cyberspace do? Does it help? Or does it hinder? I see that domain simultaneously as a power domain and a capability domain.
So nuclear weapons supposedly serve as deterrence to conventional attacks. Do you believe that the cyber world could do the same in the future?

Actually, I do. It could cause a lot of harm with very little investment. But at the same time, we know that countries or people (and not just countries) are using those tools for financial gain.

In the book [International Relations in the Cyber Age: The Co-Evolution Dilemma], there’s a comparison between how deterrence works in the old world and how deterrence can work here. And so we’re in the middle of the experiment now. Can the United States deter Russia? Can we deter Russia through cyber tools? We also don’t know what the United States is doing. The Department of Defense doesn’t say, “Well, today we penetrated…” So we don’t have a complete real sense of what’s going on. The interesting part would be can cyber deter a China or an India? Can cyber attacks lead to a country warring where people might die? I think probably not, but maybe in some instances.

But I do think that there is vulnerability now. Everybody is vulnerable to critical damages in their critical infrastructure. If the water system here erupts—we may be able to do without electricity for a while, but we do need the infrastructure of water to continue. So my answer to your question, can cyber deter? I think yes, but I don’t have the data. So maybe the research question should be, how can cyber deter? How could it be done?

I remember that recently, when the India/Pakistan dispute seemed like it was drastically escalating, the Indian government shut down internet access in Kashmir. If there were to be more conflicts in the future, conventional or otherwise, do you think that countries would start targeting infrastructure like technology and the internet?

Absolutely, yes. I don’t like it. But yes. Can they sustain it? And who will retaliate? I think we can predict it will happen. What I can’t predict is, what’s the reaction? Or the reaction from an ally? Even if the reaction is nothing, that gives a signal to somebody.

Do you think countries are prepared for this?

No, not even the United States. Maybe China’s a big exception. Because—and that’s not taking into account theories of international relations—in general, the leadership, and
maybe the society, has a long term view of things. So I wouldn’t be surprised at all if they were preparing. The West is generally a market much more oriented towards the immediate short term. Even though we have five year development plans, we don’t have a strategic view of the globe, such as where we want to be at 20 years from now. China tends to be the only country I know that tends to be consistently thinking beyond the short run.

**What are the most important steps for America to be taking in regards to the cyber sphere? What should the United States be focusing on?**

Well, I think the United States should be thinking about a global accord on the conduct of behavior in the cyber domain. Some countries have their own cyber laws, but I don’t know of any international law.

I think the United States should take the high road and say the time has come: we should all convene and think about how to frame a general approach. We will have companies represented, but it’s a matter of sovereignty, and it is a matter of security for individuals and for the globe—and I can write the speech for this. It’s not going to cost the US anything except for maybe some time of its representatives. There are lots of pockets in the UN and elsewhere that are beginning to talk about this, but no country has taken the initiative and said it. There are some efforts, like the International Telecommunications Union, but I think we should be moving towards an accord and then hopefully international law comes out of it.
Finance With Consequences: The Case for Reducing Arms Sales to Taiwan

Daniel Gallagher

Daniel Gallagher is a junior at the Gilman School in Baltimore, Maryland, where he is an award-winning policy debater and is involved with Model UN as well. Content-wise, Daniel is largely interested in International Relations, specifically the consequences of US engagement with global strategic rivals.

A Brief Introduction

An often unrecognized tenet of American foreign policy, arms sales enable the United States (US) to both decentralize its international military presence and stimulate domestic defense contractors by expanding their access to worldwide markets. Allied recipients of the arms also view the sales favorably: they get the privileges associated with an American security guarantee, a pathway to military modernization, and a renewed role in worldwide war-making efforts. Even for American politicians, approving arms sales to a particular country is an easy way to demonstrate their approval of the US alliance structure to their constituents. On the flip side, restricting arms sales is politically challenging to pull off, as exemplified by partisan divides on arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Israel, among others.

Yet, in an increasingly tenuous international situation, arms sales carry costs at levels more significant than their financial benefits. Although it may seem appealing to reassure an ally nation, recent US sales have had the propensity to inflame regional disputes and broadly destabilize security structures globally. This idea is best illustrated by American arms sales to Taiwan. Although intended to assure an ally of having American support in armed conflict, sales for the last several decades have angered China, provoked regional Chinese aggression, and proved to be the thorn in the side of many attempts at US-Sino cooperation to resolve key global issues.

Recent Escalations

Although China has disapproved of the sales for decades, tensions increased massively under the Trump administration and have only continued to rise under President Biden. The
recent sale of $750 million of howitzer ammunition was uniquely destabilizing, as it provided the Taiwanese military with the capability to further utilize precision GPS technology to update their tracking and targeting systems. This process is a unique sticking point in Sino-Taiwanese relations, as it is perceived by CCP (Chinese Communist Party) leaders as further Taiwanese military buildup. This perception justifies reciprocal buildup from the PLA (People’s Liberation Army), which only further intimidates Taiwanese forces, creating a vicious cycle of arms racing that broadly upsets the region. Specifically, regional allies such as Japan and South Korea are encouraged to respond to military buildup with their own domestic measures to build up their forces, which further fuels an increase in tension and a decrease in potential collaboration in the critical region.

While the creation of arms races is a daunting prospect in itself, an arguably more sinister aspect of recent sales is their relative inability to deter any potential Chinese threat to Taiwan credibly. Although howitzers possess some firepower capacity, they largely fall flat in the face of a Chinese invasion. According to the Global Times, a Chinese state newspaper, this would bring with it an “overwhelming saturation attack” from the PLA that would “instantly destroy the morale of the entire armed forces of Taiwan.” Plus, American draw-in to a large-scale conflict over Taiwan is questionable at best. Even as the Taiwanese representatives at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office responsible for arms sales are forced to increase spending, the country is still incapable of catching up to China’s level of defense investment, as shown by over three decades of spending data.

This data clearly exemplifies the problem: even as Taiwan pours billions into military funding, primarily through purchases of American equipment, the nation is still outpaced at every turn by massive spikes in Chinese investment, which guarantees technological and military
superiority for decades to come. The stark population differences between the two would only further intensify the disparities between the two in any potential conflict. So, not only do US arms sales to Taiwan dangerously increase the risk of conflict with China, they foolishly entrap our allies, and serve little strategic purpose in the event of such a conflict, which clearly precedes a slight financial benefit to the sales themselves.

**Strategic Implications**

While continued arms sales certainly raise the risk of regional conflict, they also implicate America’s ability to create long-term collaboration regimes with China. The failure of US-Sino collaboration is uniquely key in 2021: global changes such as climate change, COVID-19 response, and regulation of emerging technologies necessitates a nearly unprecedented level of Great Power cooperation in order to harmonize multilateral regulatory and economic tensions. This is especially true in the context of American relations with China given recent diplomatic troubles between the two nations. Coupled with dangerous rhetoric espoused by right-wing politicians regarding China, President Biden’s choice to diplomatically boycott the Beijing Winter Olympics further exacerbates concerns. Given this unique diplomatic setting, the further inflammatory signal sent by continued arms sales is no longer even a brash signal of strength, but a truly dangerous signal of American force projection that can only serve to further escalate an already tenuous situation.

**A Path Forward**

All of the examples above justify substantial changes to the current American arms policy towards Taiwan, but that is far from the end of the story. Though the idea of reducing sales in a vacuum appears appealing, without necessary conditions, if not performed properly, it could escalate tensions on a similar level to the continuation of said sales. The role of American foreign policy in this instance should be the establishment of institutional and diplomatic norms, the facilitation of arms reduction regimes, and the promotion of peace-focused alternatives to arms racing and conflict escalation. These methods should be viewed as fundamental tenets of a strategy of accommodation in the region, which is key to “testing the water” and eventually fully de-escalating tensions in the long term. However, attitudes in both America and Taiwan are largely skeptical of such a move, as it would be seen
as somewhat of a concession to China and a renege on American security assurances in the region. However, these concerns are largely unfounded. Such a reduction in sales would still allow for the viable development of a Taiwanese defense force sans the escalatory financial pressures the sales provide. With the goals of peace and collaboration in the region in mind, the clear option for reforming America’s role towards Taiwan, and the world generally, is a deepening of our accommodation strategy, the most viable option in a bad situation.

References


Euromaidan (Acrylic Paint and Newspaper Collage)

Toby King-Thompson

Toby King-Thompson is a contemporary artist based in London, UK. As a synesthete, Toby sees words, names, and digits in color. His works have been featured extensively internationally and he is experienced in fine art, post-impressionism, and abstract expressionism. Holding a BA in International Relations from the University of Exeter, Toby has centered global affairs in a number of his works.

As an International Relations graduate, I wanted my artwork to provide a snapshot of the desolate consequences of diverging policy between the western-led order and Russia’s support for Ukraine’s then-President Viktor Yanukovych. This piece aimed to capture the very
epicenter of a national and international crisis. It provides a glimpse of the impact, struggle, pain, and hostility at a micro-level. My artwork displays the situation ‘on the ground’ surrounding the Ukrainian crisis showing a pro-democracy Ukrainian citizen being beaten by uniformed Ukrainian Riot police following orders from the pro-Russian Ukrainian President Yanukovych.

This piece aimed to highlight via a bottom-up approach the wider geopolitical crisis: the increased confrontation and hostility between the Western-led order and Russia. In 2013, Ukraine found itself as the battleground between Cold War-style pressures from Russia to undermine and influence democracy abroad to sway the expansion of Europeanization in order to shift the balance of power in Russia’s favor. Russia was deeply concerned with the eastward expansion of NATO and the EU in the post-Soviet sphere. This trajectory of liberal democracy and economic liberalization in Ukraine was at direct odds with Putinism. Thus, when President Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign the association agreement with the EU in November 2013, mass violent unrest was sparked and a new political movement called ‘Euromaidan’ ultimately led to a revolution and overthrow of Yanukovych. On-going conflict and civil war, particularly in eastern Ukraine, between the Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian militants, dominated Ukraine for many years to follow, even leading to Russia annexing Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

My artwork aimed to show the emotive struggle and suffering Russia’s foreign policy has had on Ukraine and its people. Showing a helpless pro-democracy Ukrainian being brutally beaten as a consequence of deep tensions between two political ideals in Europe.

Now, in 2022, the geopolitical situation in Ukraine has shifted much. Indeed, conflict still ferments in Ukraine’s Eastern region of Donbas, provoked by Russian-backed separatists. But, more recently, Russia has amassed about 125,000 troops on Ukraine’s border equipped with tanks and other sophisticated military weaponry. Talks have stalled as Russia calls for a ban on Ukraine’s potential membership in NATO in the future, which the United States and its allies have called a “nonstarter.” Again, the eastern expansion of western, American influence in Europe has precipitated conflict; the very real threat of all-out war is ever more distressing for Ukraine and its allies.

Yet, as the world ponders the macro-level changes to the world order, the micro-level effects of the situation on Ukrainian citizens are all but forgotten. In capturing this, Euromaidan remains incredibly poignant. On the one hand, my artwork created in 2013 captured a specific
set of geopolitical tensions as a moment in history; on the other hand, it reveals how art’s relevance can endure the passage of time. No one knows how this story will climax but it is clear that this picture will always depict part of the story’s foundation.