



UNIVERSITY OF
SURREY

**THE DIMENSIONS OF
GREAT POWER
COMPETITION**
WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

16 June 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The return of great power competition poses some important questions about exactly what kind of competition is taking place. What are states competing over, or for? The answer, increasingly, seems to be that there are fewer and fewer areas of international political, economic and social life untouched by competitive dynamics. This workshop therefore seeks to integrate perspectives on great power competition from a wide range of disciplinary specialisations – including International Relations, Political Theory, Law, Business Studies and Management, Political Science, Economics and Finance, Sociology, Psychology, and History – to evaluate how competition is manifest across multiple dimensions of interaction, both in theory and practice. In doing so it seeks to understand how increasingly transactional national postures in the military, diplomatic, technology, legal, and economic spheres, affect actors and sectors beyond the national security state, in supply chains, energy, raw materials, and intellectual property.

Organising committee:

Nicholas Kitchen, Centre for the Study of Global Power Competition (CGPC)
Joshua Andresen, Centre for the Study of Global Power Competition (CGPC)

Administrative support:

Louise Jones (Institute of Advanced Studies) and Jessica Mathew (University of Surrey)

PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 16 JUNE

(BST)	
09.00 – 09.30	Registration
09.30 – 11.00	Panel: Great Power Competition and International Order
11.00 – 11.15	Break
11.15 – 12.45	Panel: The Leading Edge of Power: Technological Competition
12.45 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 15.00	Panel: Periphery Dynamics of Great Power Competition
15.00 – 15.15	Break
15.15 – 16.45	Panel: Great Power Strategies
16.45 – 17.00	Break
17.00 – 18.00	In Conversation: Values, Order, and Great Power Competition in Ukraine

ABSTRACTS AND PARTICIPANTS

PANEL: GREAT POWER COMPETITION AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

Chair: Josh Andresen

Dragons and Doves: The Effects of China's Leadership of UN Agencies
Sabrina Arias, University of Pennsylvania

Does China successfully wield leadership of UN agencies to further its own national interests of an alternative global order? We test these expectations to assess whether a rising power uses the position for formal influence—to reward like-minded states—or informal influence—to accumulate prestige.

To probe for formal influence, we leverage a comparative case study approach of 11 different IOs, combining original data collection of 12,481 IO country-projects from 1988-2022 and an ethnographic case study of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). We also conduct an elite conjoint survey experiment with IO staff to test the mechanisms of formal executive influence via a 'pleasing the principal' mechanism in which IO staff anticipate a leader's preferences based on nationality cues, or an 'agenda-setting mechanism,' in which leaders overtly indicate their preferences. To examine informal influence, we conduct a survey experiment on representative samples of the public in the US and Brazil to examine whether partnerships between Chinese leaders and IOs enhance China's image, again leveraging the case of the ITU.

These results have substantial implications for the way that we interpret China's motivations toward the international order, the independence of IOs, and the broader vitality of IOs in the midst of power transitions.

The Reality and Power of International Law: Georg Schwarzenberger's Forgotten Theory of International Relations
Carmen Chas, University of Kent

Georg Schwarzenberger's oeuvre has remained significantly underexplored in the literature despite his as one of the most important thinkers in international relations and international law of the twentieth century. Ahead of their time, his works reveal a picture of law that transcends academic boundaries, challenging conventional portrayals of both realism and international law. Through a detailed examination of the works of this theorist, this paper offers an analysis of the fundamental aspects of his theory of international relations and international law. It explores the elements at the heart of Schwarzenberger's theory of international relations, which, though examined infrequently, retain their relevance in today's international society. Through this exploration of Schwarzenberger's works, this paper argues that his theory of international relations provides a powerful commentary on the fundamental structure, nature, and problems of international law. It points to and reveals issues that have remained at the heart of international law

until today, offering a sophisticated and self-conscious interrogation of the relationship between law, power, and politics.

International production networks as weapons of, and constraints on, great power politics

Tamas Meszaros, Keio University

Due to emerging great power competition, international production networks have become regarded by states as sources of vulnerability which amplify the risks of asymmetric dependence on adversarial powers. Consequently, the US, China, the EU and East Asian states have made attempts to reduce their reliance on production outsourced to rivals.

These attempts to reshore production and 'decouple' from adversaries have yielded limited results so far for four reasons, which are often overlooked in the International Relations literature.

First, the differences in competitive advantages between developed economies and China mean that competing great powers possess heterogeneous coercive capabilities in different economic sectors, limiting their ability to weaponize interdependence.

Second, the fragmented and networked nature of manufacturing constrains the degree to which states can influence profit-seeking non-state actors in order to shape the international economic architecture.

Third, decoupling would require a significant reorganization of the domestic economies of great powers, which faces significant political economy constraints.

Fourth, decoupling carries significant second order costs for great powers' allies. East Asian and Eastern European states have based their economic development on

participation in international production networks dependent on Chinese inputs and demand. Consequently, the disruption of these networks poses a challenge to their welfare and their value as allies.

This paper presents empirical evidence to support the first two hypotheses and discusses how the empirical data manifests in the political constraints described in the third and fourth hypothesis.

PANEL: THE LEADING EDGE OF POWER: TECHNOLOGICAL COMPETITION

Chair: Laura Chappell

AI Leak, Security Dilemma, and Regulatory Strategies

Mikolaj Firlej, University of Surrey

In the academic literature there is a scarcity of studies regarding the impact of AI leak on national security. 'AI Leak' is an emerging concept which refers to the unintentional release or unauthorized access to sensitive machine learning models. A recent example was the leaked pre-trained model called 'LLAMA' which was developed by Meta's (Facebook). The purpose of LLAMA is to generate human-like language processing for use cases such as virtual chatbot, translation or sentiment analysis. LLAMA model was accidentally made public by a Meta employee who uploaded it to a public GitHub repository, making it available for anyone to access and download. A leak could expose Meta's proprietary language processing technology and expertise that could be used for competitors or adversaries to develop applications for intelligence gathering or spreading misinformation. AI including large language models (LLMs), is considered by countries as a key enabling technology driving operational gains both for defense and commercial purposes. Recently released ASPI's new Critical Technology Tracker reveals that China has built a global lead relative to the US in 37 out of 44 crucial technology fields including in AI. The US Department of Defense (US DoD) is working on its own

LLM, known as the 'Gargantua' program. The goal of the Gargantua program is to create LLMs that are capable of processing and understanding large amounts of unstructured text data, including potentially sensitive military data. The Gargantua program is still in development, but the DoD has stated that it sees significant potential for LLMs in a range of military applications, such as intelligence gathering, situational awareness, and decision making. My article explores a hypothetical scenario of Gargantua AI Leak in the context of security dilemma. First coined by John Herz in 1950, the security dilemma describes how the actions that one state takes to make itself more secure, such as the adoption of AI, tend to make other states less secure and lead them to respond in kind. I explore how such a leak could differ from previously known cyber leaks. Further, I investigate what security challenges such a leak poses on the US DoD / NATO Alliance both from the perspective of state and non-state actors. Finally, I explore the potential mitigation solutions and emerging regulatory strategies to address AI leaks more generally and in the context of LLMs for national security.

Technological Change and World Politics: Is Great Power Competition Changing American Practices of Loitering Munition Development?

Tom F.A. Watts, Royal Holloway, University of London

This paper examines whether the recent (re)prioritisation of great power competition (GPC) as the focus of Washington's strategic planning has impacted its practices of designing and developing

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loitering munitions. Despite the increasing prominence these systems have been given in recent Pentagon defence planning, IR scholars have paid surprisingly little attention to the history of loitering munitions and what their study can tell us about the dynamics involved with great power competition. Drawing from Science and Technology Studies scholarship, the first section of this paper conceptualises loitering munitions as a 'social-technical system' which can reflect the geopolitical priorities of their manufacturers.

International practice theories are then applied to the processes of loitering munition development in four different periods: (1) the Cold War; (2) the 'unipolar moment' which followed the Soviet Union's collapse; (3) the Global War on Terror; and (4) the period of renewed GPC which has crystallized since 2014. The final section of this paper connects these empirical findings to the larger debates on the interactions between technological change and world politics. It reaffirms the role which international politics can play in shaping technological innovation and forecasts Washington's continuing investment in loitering munitions as a major tool of GPC.

The Foreground of Great Power Competition? Technology in US-China Relations

Christopher Featherstone, University of York

With the return of Great Power Competition, naturally, attention turns to critical areas where this competition will manifest. I argue that technology has already begun to form the foreground in this great power competition, and as such, competition in this area will set the tone for

the future of this relationship. This competition can be split into two areas. First, there is competition in terms of hardware, such as micro-chips and spy-balloons. Second, there is competition over software, such as artificial intelligence, social media, and cyber-warfare. Technology has formed the foreground in this Great Power Competition because the rules and norms of behaviour in this area are typically newer, less solidified, and weaker than in areas such as economic policy, trade policy, and conventional warfare.

Old Wine in New Wineskins: How the Horizontal Proliferation of Existing Technologies Generates Great Power Competition in Emerging Technologies

Samuel Seitz, University of Oxford

How has great power nuclear competition evolved in the post-Cold War period? Significant attention has been focused on the role of advanced qualitative improvements to major powers' nuclear arsenals. Yet, in many ways these views erroneously draw on lessons from the Cold War, which was unique due to the presence of only two major nuclear actors and to the absence of cross-cutting dyads within alliance blocs. The emerging nuclear landscape is complicated by the addition of new nuclear actors, which has exacerbated rivalries by introducing cross-cutting strategic dyads. This paper illustrates these dynamics via a case study of the emerging competition between North and South Korea, and its effect on the Sino-American nuclear relationship. North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons has intensified Seoul's security concerns, leading it to pursue counterforce capabilities. Relatedly, the US has invested

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in homeland missile defense to allay South Korean concerns over the credibility of its extended deterrence guarantee. While these efforts are driven by developments in North Korea, advances in South Korean capabilities also create threats to China's nuclear arsenal. This new era of nuclear competition is driven less by bilateral qualitative arms racing and rather by new actors' acquisition of long-existing systems.

PANEL: PERIPHERY DYNAMICS OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Chair: Taz Rajwani

Developing Digital 'Peripheries' for Strategic Advantage: A Comparative Analysis of American, EU, and Chinese Projects in Africa

Julia Carver, University of Oxford

Weaponized interdependence (WI), or the exploitation of networked asymmetries for strategic advantage, has come to dominate the strategic thinking of the European Union (EU), China, and the United States (US). Declaring the importance of cyber capacity building (CCB) as a strategic tool, they have each invested heavily in the digital development of network 'peripheries'—especially African states. Conventional wisdom holds that cyber capacity building projects build resilience against networked asymmetries and thus reduce the recipient's vulnerability to WI risks. Given that the EU, US, and China have allegedly weaponized interdependence for their own advantage in cyberspace, it seems disadvantageous for them to fund programmes aimed at reducing opportunities for WI gains. How do these powerful donors perceive CCB investments as shaping their strategic advantage? Building a rational choice model, the paper argues that, under supply-side competitive pressures, CCB projects are strategically useful for reconfiguring networked asymmetries in the donor's favour. This logic is reflected in the current rollout of American, Chinese, and EU CCB initiatives for African states.

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Therefore, extant scholarship has underestimated how 'networked peripheries' have emerged as central sites of global geopolitical competition, with CCB programmes serving as tools for shaping the normative and structural conditions for strategic advantage.

How Do Great Powers Respond to Secondary State Hedging?

Fabio Figiaconi, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

China's rise and growing challenge to U.S. power has triggered debates about how the competition between rising and established Great Powers may impinge upon secondary states. According to IR wisdom, most secondary states choose to either ally with the established Great Power to balance the rising one, or to bandwagon with the rising Great Power. However, scholars have recently argued that some secondary states "hedge", that is, they maintain an equidistant position between the competing Great Powers. By employing hedging, these secondary states try to mitigate the security risks associated with alignment. Given the pivotal role that some hedging states can have in the context of Great Power competition, both Great Powers are incentivised to develop a strategic response towards them, with the aim to leverage or neutralise these players notwithstanding their hedging strategies. Quite surprisingly, however, the question of how concretely rising and established Great Powers respond to secondary state hedging has been largely left unaddressed. Aiming at filling this important gap, this paper will zoom in on two cases: the hedging response strategies of Germany and Great Britain in relation to the Netherlands before

WWI, and those of China and the United States in relation to Singapore today.

Norms of subordinate governance: monopolization and major power conflict

Patrick Gill-Tiney, University of Oxford

This paper argues that an overlooked pathway via which major powers are drawn into conflict with each other is via competition over small states and territories. When a major power seeks to monopolize a subordinate, preventing others from pursuing their interests in its territory, norms of open subordinate governance are challenged. To address this violation, threats and force may be used. Moreover, the monopolizer is perceived as having revisionist preferences for international order, meaning future interactions are understood in this context. Three pathways to war open up, firstly, monopolization itself may involve the significant use of force, secondly, major powers may immediately respond with force, and thirdly, future interactions will involve greater suspicion and threat-making, increasing the probability of war. This argument is evaluated through quantitative examination of rising power disputes between 1816 and 2010, and comparative case study analysis of the Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese wars. Contestation of the norms of subordinate governance play an important role in shaping the probability of major power conflict, and provide insight into the behaviour of the major powers in the contemporary international order.

Karl Kautsky's Theory of Ultra-Imperialism among Great Powers

Thomas Furse, City, University of London

Karl Kautsky's Ultra-Imperialism shaped his understanding of European colonialism and Great Power competition. In the early twentieth century, Kautsky argued that explanations for world disorder stemmed from what liberal and bourgeois politics avoided—harmonizing class relations and making their states more democratic. He characterized that the capitalist bourgeois approach to world order would be via international cartels and monopolies. They were ideologically and economically unable to offer alternative routes to peace. He predicted that in an ultra-imperialist world order, the great powers would deepen their exploitation of the world's resources and working class labour. In situating Kautsky in his context, this article connects his socialist republicanism with his aspirations for a Society of Nations, and finds that he imitated form August Ludwig von Rochau's Realpolitik, in that he delineated a political strategy to build a socialist world order through his political activism. This paper then calls into view that analytical discussions of Great Power competition have to consider the politics within states. Ultra-Imperialism has hitherto been underexplored but it provides a potential route to understand the causes and character of the emerging polycentric world order.

PANEL: GREAT POWER STRATEGIES

Chair: Nicholas Kitchen

It's in the Pipeline: The Geopolitics of European Energy Security

Amelia Hadfield, University of Surrey

In the months since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, European energy policy has moved front and centre as a central tenet of EU foreign policy and security. Some would argue the shift is long overdue. Others may suggest that in doing so, the EU has an unparalleled opportunity to align the concepts of European energy security with European foreign policy and security more broadly, while also considering the degree to which Europe needs to be strategically autonomous in both these areas. This presentation considers the degree to which energy security now operates within the EU's foreign affairs terrain, the way in which the war in the Ukraine has first securitised and then weaponised energy, and the dual opportunities and pitfalls that lie within the EU's REPowerEU Transition Plan.

Great Powers, Great Pasts: Narratives of Decline and Promises of Renewal

Robert Ralston, University of Birmingham

Narratives of international decline are common in great powers, from Margaret Thatcher's promise to reverse Britain's decline to John F. Kennedy's handwringing about the decline of the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. What are the consequences of narratives of international decline? I argue that declinists, more often

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than not, choose policies that can be characterized as expansionist and pugilistic—policies of “punching back” against decline—rather than policies of retrenchment (or “pulling back”). Declinist narratives often sustain policies of global expansion to save face, regain lost glory, and reverse decline. First, it is typical of declinists to envision and draw upon a time of past glory. Second, there are psychological reasons, particularly with respect to prospect theory, for why we would expect declinists to pursue expansion rather than retrenchment. Finally, from a political coalitional perspective, there are more incentives to expand than retrench. I examine this argument by comparing narratives of international decline and foreign policy consequences in three cases: the declinism of Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy, and Donald Trump. This paper has implications for contemporary debates about US decline and the policy consequences of narratives more generally.

Fear of the LIO: Sino-Russian antipathy towards ‘friendship’.

Martin A. Smith, Anisa Heritage, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

This submission analyses Russian and Chinese perspectives on the US-centred “Liberal International Order” (LIO). Drawing on the work of scholars such as Ikenberry, we identify two features that make the LIO a unique type of Great Power network:

1. It is institutionalised to an unprecedented degree.
2. It rests on discernible shared normative foundations.

Russia and China are comparatively institutionally impoverished and cannot compete with the US in global structural power. In the Russo-Ukraine conflict, Ukraine draws support from over 40 countries. Russia has had practical support from only Belarus, Iran and North Korea. China’s strategy of controlling UN agencies through winning leadership posts by coercing smaller states is also losing ground.

There is no clear normative basis for Russian and Chinese Great Power policies. They lack the US’s international ‘friendship’ networks, as the Russian case in Ukraine highlights. Chinese support of Russia is a mission in exploiting Russia’s weakened position by extracting concessions over energy and access to military technology. Thus the LIO is not fragile or degrading. Its relative strengths explain official Russian and Chinese antipathy. Both are ultimately fearful of its core institutional and normative strengths.

Networked Hierarchies: Great Power Competition and Overlapping Hegemonic Orders

Lucas De Oliveira Paes, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUP)

China’s growing influence in world politics has resurfaced old debates about hegemonic disputes over global order. At the core of these debates is the question of how the rise of China will interplay with the United States’ preponderant position in the international order and whether it may trigger hegemonic competition. Although hegemonic order studies have long focused on how powerful states build the institutions that underpin international order, they have little to say about how concomitant order-building efforts may

shape the dynamics of conflict or cooperation among hegemonies. Hegemonic interactions are assumed to be intrinsically conflict-prone and left under the states-under-anarchy framework. This paper argues that hierarchical relations among states constitute hegemonies and structure international orders. It proposes a network-relational framework for investigating the interplay among hegemonic efforts in order-building. Networked hierarchies can entangle multiple hegemonies together and constrain the pathways for cooperation and competition among hegemonies. To demonstrate this framework’s utility, I apply it to a comparative analysis of the United States and Soviet Union’s competition in the Cold War (1950–1991) and the hegemonic-ordering dynamics ensuing from the rise of China (2006–2014).

IN CONVERSATION: Values, Order, and Great Power Competition in Ukraine

Mike Aaronson and Jamie Shea in conversation with Amelia Hadfield



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