

Review of: "How to Think and Frame Third Worldism with Illustrations from Iran-South Africa Diplomatic Relations, 2006-2019"

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In this reviewer's opinion, this article requires a major revision. The article opens with an exploration of the term and concept of Third Worldism, which is perhaps passé compared with the developing world and Global South. The author could explain why the case of Iran-South Africa relations was selected and how the article contributes to the extent literature on the subject. Missing from the article are seminal works on the subject like those by Onderco (2012) and Chehabi (2016). Methodologically, why is the analytical focus exclusively on diplomatic relations when the article attempts to explain global economic inequalities? Such inequalities may exist between middle powers or peripheral states like Iran and South Africa, on one side, and great powers or core states like the United States and China, on the other. At the same time, to what extent do these inequalities exist between developing countries like Iran and South Africa within the framework of South-South cooperation? The United States and other countries imposed sanctions and embargoes against Iran and South Africa at different times. At the same time and after the 1979 revolution, Iran embargoed South Africa until apartheid ended in the 1990s.

The article contains issues with periodization and should present the history of Iran-South Africa relations chronologically to help guide the reader. The abstract states these relations date back to ancient times, but the focus is the period 2006-19, even though sanctions against Iran, albeit less draconian ones, started during the hostage crisis of 1979-81, as the article somewhat acknowledges. What was South Africa's voting record on issues involving Iran while being a non-permanent member of the UNSC? The periodization section starts with 2006-19 and jumps back to ancient times with nothing in between. The theoretical section examines Iran-South Africa relations in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The section on Third Worldism returns to ancient or pre-modern times before focusing on Ahmadinejad, without examining the Africa policy of previous presidents, not to mention the supreme leader. Contrary to what the article argues, Bagheri and Lob (2022) assert that Rouhani's policy differed from his predecessor by neglecting the continent, at least diplomatically and economically. The article tends to focus more on Iran-Africa relations than those between Iran and South Africa.

The article argues that Iran's "return to self" consisted of anti-urbanism and pro-ruralism, without providing evidence to

support this reductionist claim. In the case of Iran, what does a “return to self” mean, when the country’s ideology and identity are multi-dimensional along the lines of geography, nationalism, ethnicity, religiosity, etc.? Since the 1979 revolution, for example, different elites and citizens have embraced and rejected Islamization and Persianization – the latter of which was central to the Pahlavi dynasty. Under the Shah and starting with Ethiopia, Iran established relations with dozens of African countries, engaged with their multilateral institutions, and possessed Third Worldist dimensions to its foreign policy. Rather than comprising a complete rupture from the past, the Islamic Republic’s Africa policy contains continuities with its monarchical predecessor. Anti-imperialism aside, to what extent can Shia Iran make cultural and religious inroads into a continent that is majority Christian and Sunni? The article often digresses from Iran-South Africa relations by delving deeply into the terms and concepts of South-South cooperation and Third Worldism, leaving the reader to wonder about the true focus and take-home message.