

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

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The author of this article raises a rather provocative and intriguing question at the intersection of theory and practice: does the concept of *Third Worldism*, which was coined and gained traction during the Cold War, still have contemporary relevance, i.e. adequately captures the political developments in Asia, Africa and Latin America? The author suggests that it does and cites modern-day diplomatic relations between South Africa and Iran as a case in point. However, as you read further, it becomes clear that what the author is mostly interested in is not so much an explanation but a practical political argument about how things should be, namely how interstate relations in the global South should evolve.

This is a perfectly legitimate endeavour. However, I think it requires a better and more detailed conceptual elaboration. For example, the author admits one important limitation, i.e. that the discussion of *Third Worldism* in the article is restricted to the economic dimension that has to do with resisting and overcoming the hierarchical structure of global capitalist economy holding back the Third World countries. At the same time, the author also insists that at the heart of South-South cooperation is the ability of the states involved to manage unequal *political power* dynamics between them (emphasis mine). However, it is not clear how economic cooperation would translate into political power redistribution. What seems to be an assumption at the moment requires a more in-depth engagement with relevant literature, for instance with the neo-liberal institutionalist theory that explores the linkages between economy and politics.

Another important issue is the meaning of the anti-hegemonic struggle that some states in the South, specifically Iran, claim to be engaged in. Some postcolonial theorists would argue that a state espousing an anti-hegemonic stance is in fact deeply embedded in the hegemonic order and implicated in its operation. The normative horizon of such a state is exhausted by the values underpinning the hegemonic order so that instead of providing an alternative to the hegemonic order an anti-hegemonic state succeeds in perpetuating and validating it. This certainly undermines the idea that *Third Worldism* informed by a common colonial past and inspired by a common anti-colonial sentiment could pave the way to South-South solidarity and cooperation as a 'self-organizing, decentralized and non-hierarchical meshwork'. Even states avoiding explicit anti-hegemonic rhetoric such as South Africa are nevertheless part and parcel of the global hegemonic order, which is reflected in their status-seeking behaviour. Thus, South Africa's global positioning as a 'middle power' and 'bridge-builder' between West and South speaks more of the attraction that the West-dominated hegemonic order holds for South African leaders rather than the idea of South-South solidarity. In a word, I wish the author had considered in greater detail the political dilemmas that states in the global South are faced with and the predicament they find

themselves in. The author touches upon this issue briefly in their discussion of Iran but I think it requires further discussion and elaboration. Overall, my suggestion would be to engage more with the literature that seems to contradict the author's claims and assumptions and to address the concerns that might be expressed.