

## Call for Papers

### Beyond Hegemony: China's Quest for Domestic Autonomy, Creation of Global Dependencies?

China's expanding global footprint and perceived influence raises questions about its strategic ambitions and the practices and mechanisms through which it reshapes international economic and political order(s). We are moving away from a unipolar, hegemonic moment towards a new constellation that could be characterized as inter-imperial competition. While U.S. hegemony, especially after the Cold War, was characterized by consensual leadership, shared norms, and multilateralism, we are increasingly observing the formation of multiple centres of power, each with its own zone of influence, as well as growing geopolitical tensions between them. In response to growing geopolitical and economic pressures, particularly Western efforts to contain the rise of China, a diverse set of actors from China has sought to enhance autonomy from incumbent powers. Autonomy, defined as the ability to make independent decisions without relying on external forces, has been central to the party-state's strategy since the 2010s. However, this very effort has also deepened global dependencies on its economy, finance or technology, especially among states, companies, and platforms.

We invite scholars to examine how Chinese political and economic actors navigate this complex relationship between autonomy and dependence amidst a changing global order. Key areas of interest include the domestic determinants that shape Chinese preferences and learning processes for adapting policies and the global projection of these altered preferences and related practices. We welcome theoretical and empirical contributions on, but not limited to, the following topics:

- **China's Quest for Autonomy:** China seeks to enhance its economic, political, technological, institutional, and intellectual autonomy amid shifting global power constellations and growing geopolitical tensions. How are Chinese policymakers and elites responding to this situation, which has increased international backlash against China, particularly from Western states? What strategies are employed to reduce reliance on U.S.-led institutions and critical infrastructures? How do domestic governance structures, regulatory capacity align (or not) with corporate actors, and how do historical legacies shape China's efforts to insulate itself from external dependencies? Examples include:
  - **Geopolitical and Goeconomic Pressures on Autonomy:** Examine how rising tensions with Western states, including the U.S. "Pivot to Asia" and the "Trade and Tech War," drive China's pursuit of self-sufficiency.
  - **Institutional and Regulatory Strategies for Self-Sufficiency:** Investigate how China's governance structures, economic policies, and legal frameworks reduce dependence on Western institutions and infrastructure.

- **Creating Dependencies on China:** China's quest for autonomy simultaneously creates new dependencies on its economy, finance and technology. How is the growing footprint of Chinese actors reshaping global dependencies, particularly in non-Western states? What are the unintended consequences of China's growing economic, financial and technological centrality for states, businesses and international institutions? Does growing dependence on Chinese infrastructure increase China's strategic leverage or, paradoxically, undermine its own autonomy? How do these dependencies reshape or constrain China's long-term strategic goals? Examples include:
  - **Sinocentric Financial Infrastructure:** Explore how China's alternative financial systems shield its economy from U.S. influence while increasing the reliance of a range of foreign actors on Chinese-controlled networks.
  - **Restructuring of Non-Western Markets and Companies:** Assess how China's economic expansion is reshaping trade, investment flows, value chains, and technological dependencies, particularly in non-Western states.

Scholars are invited to submit extended abstracts (appr. 500 words) of their papers to Ms. Nicole Henze (n.henze@uni-bremen.de) by **March 31st, 2025**. Abstracts should include information on the main argument, data and methodology, and contribution to the literature.

Authors will be notified of acceptance by **April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025**.

An online **authors' workshop** will take place on **September 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025**. Submission deadline of contributions (3000-5000 words) will be **September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**.

Selected papers will be included in a Special Issue of a peer-reviewed international journal in the fields of International Relations or International Political Economy.

For questions, please contact Nicole Henze.

Best regards,

Prof. Dr. Wiebke Rabe, University of Bremen, Germany

Prof. Dr. Tobias ten Brink, Constructor University, Bremen, Germany

Dr. Johannes Petry, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Germany