

Chinese Narratives of Epistemological Sovereignty: New Bandung, Neocolonialism, and Whither Cambodia

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- Understanding China's positions, and the historical and political-theoretical frameworks underlying them, is vitally important
- This is the work of undoing both Western-centric imaginations and dependencies
- Then the question of sovereign knowledge production can be addressed

John Mearsheimer – China as Global Power

Cambodia – China is largest investor and donor
nation

Geopolitical shifts – including in the production
and circulation of knowledge

Mearsheimer's "Mirror Imaging"

Avoiding binary Imaginations – US-style neo-imperialism with Chinese characteristics or New Bandung

The imaginative limits of the transactional concept of "soft power"

Chinese Developmentalist Narratives of South-South Cooperation

Ching Kwan Lee – “Three Frontiers of Global China”

- Material
- Normative
- Epistemological – knowledge and sovereignty

Antonio Gramsci – “hegemony” and the Chinese
response: Leadership of shared South-South
development

De-colonial hegemony?

There is no sovereign development outside of US-led hegemony without independent knowledge production

This requires building institutional capacity

US-Euro vs Chinese Knowledge Systems

- Universalist
- Formal logic (grounded in scientific claims to authority)
- Prescriptive
- Knowledge transfers – a banking imagination (Paolo Freire)
- Parallel development along multiple paths
- Cooperative production, consultation, shared learning (overproduction)
- Contextually-situated in different histories and material circumstances

Structural realignments of world systems

Beyond material and normative aspects, these are shifts in the conceptualization of knowledge itself and its central role in sovereign development

Will China live up to this? That remains to be seen. What is clear is that the Western-influenced ways of understanding China's approaches are insufficient – how Cambodian education systems navigate the massive influence of China will shape its position in a new global political-economy