

THOUGHT PROVOKING IDEAS OF THE GLOBAL ESSAY COMPETITION 2022

The New Generational Contract and the Avoidance of the 'Dorian Gray' Effect in the Age of Global Politics

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Abstract

Intergenerational contracts are fundamental pillars of future global governance. Bridging the gap between the normative differences of generations can lead to a concrete consensus on the future of international security. However, the language of foreign policy does not allow for the distinction between regimes and people, constructing an interactive environment of exclusions. The threat of 'Russia', the turbulent rise of 'China', and the revisionist behavior of 'Turkey', are only a few of the examples that dominate the international security discourses. Regimes do not necessarily represent people and thus, regardless of the attractive norms of interdependence and multilateralism, the language of foreign policy can slowly construct enmity and suspicion on a holistic level. This essay presented how the language of international relations carries this

normative risk. Just like the hideous picture in Dorian Gray's house, the camouflaged identity constructions can generate security problems in a generation that has different priorities, providing a tangible chance to tackle the Dorian Gray effect. Conducting a discourse analysis in the latest speeches and remarks regarding the Ukraine crisis in the United States and the United Kingdom, the essay raised a big question regarding intergenerational contracts: How can the traditional language of foreign policy represent a generation that perceives security in a more global sense? Inheriting the burden of the past in a generation that views the world through global lenses is a major issue for intergenerational contracts. Thus, the essay recommended that the language of foreign policy and the practical distinction between regimes and people can limit the risks of the 'Dorian Gray' effect. The

intergenerational contract should be written in the language of a generation that understands its role in a global sense, as the global problems of today do not leave room for holistic suspicion and self-help. Understanding the responsibility to reconstruct the traditional language of foreign policy does not undermine the older generations' approach, but mirrors a unique chance for more concrete global interaction. Putting the word 'government' in front of Russia and distinguishing between regimes and peoples will prove that the post-WWII norms and the liberal values are not delusions and can influence an intergenerational contract that rethinks the real problems of tomorrow's international society.

Introduction

"The historical culture...is something healthy which bodes well for the future only when it comes with a powerful new stream of life, a developing culture..."

-Friedrich Nietzsche

The concept of an intergenerational contract is crucial for the establishment of societal and political consent. Globalisation and the reconstruction of the pre-WWII isolationist norms led to a different understanding of security. Multilateralism and international institutions covered a variety of security domains, challenging the dominant state-centered approach (Edkins, Zehfuss, 2019). Yet, the foundations of the bridge between generations are shaky. 'Otherness' is still dominant in the language of foreign policy, constructing identities that do not allow for the consolidation of global security. How many times have the words of democratic leaders echoed concerns on the aggression of 'the Russians'? Is this an inherited approach or it is time to replace it? Finally, how the contemporary circumstances can alter that and integrate this phenomenon in the discussion of an intergenerational contract?

In the famous novel of Oscar Wilde, "The Picture of Dorian Gray", young Dorian finds himself trapped under a spiritual 'contract', where regardless of his wicked behavior or nasty habits, his appearance mirrors beauty and health. Yet, the portrait that fueled his arrogance is turning older, wicked, and repulsive. Influenced by this shape, I created the concept of the 'Dorian Gray Effect' that mirrors how modern liberal democracies can fall into the trap of promoting international interdependence, cooperation, and peacemaking, while at the same time their rhetoric legitimises suspicion on holistic terms. Lacking the potential to distinguish between a regime and its people is the opposite of multilateralism and a camouflaged threat to the global governance of the future.

The crisis in Ukraine has fueled an intense security debate in the Western world. The relevant discourse in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) is a case study that enables us to detect and analyze the problem of the 'Dorian Gray' effect. The methodological role of language as a generator of security phenomena is a tangible way to uncover insecurity problems (Buzan, Hansen, 2009). Therefore, such studies can enhance the intergenerational contract with the camouflaged risks of tomorrow's security discourses. The first part of the analysis will address what is the problem of the Dorian Gray effect, through a discourse analysis from the White House and the United Kingdom's Parliament Archives. The later part will answer why today's circumstance is an ideal momentum for the reconstruction of this traditional foreign policy dictionary, by showing why intergenerational contracts cannot ignore the risks of security constructions.

The Ukraine Crisis: A Discourse Analysis

The 'Russian' Threat

The analysis of January's speeches and remarks of the White House archive reveals that 'Russia' is the source of the Ukraine crisis. The discourse analysis of the collected evidence detected that the dominant descriptions from the White House present a situation where "The 'Russians are not in the process of de-escalating", 'and "Russia undertakes efforts to try to destabilize Ukraine", warning that "it's a dangerous situation and we've been saying for over a week that Russia could invade at any time" (White House, 2022). Similarly, the potential Western reaction is an official possibility, as "President Biden made clear that the United States and its allies and partners will respond decisively if Russia further invades Ukraine" (White House, 2022). Finally, in the readout of the President's video call with European leaders, it is clear that "the leaders discussed their joint efforts to deter further Russian aggression against Ukraine" (White House, 2022).

The statement made by the British Prime Minister (PM) Boris Johnson in the House of Commons on the 25th of January reveals a similar approach. It is Russia that "already attacked Ukraine, illegally annexing 10,000 square miles of her territory in 2014 and igniting a war in the Donbass region" (GOV.UK, 2022).

The British forces of NATO in Estonia have been alerted for possible engagement in operational moves, as the British PM clarified that "if Russia invades Ukraine we would look to contribute to any new NATO deployments to protect our allies in Europe" (GOV.UK, 2022).

Out of the 17 times where the name of Russia was uttered, only twice the British PM distinguishes between the Russian President and the country, i.e. "if President Putin were to choose the path of bloodshed and

destruction" and "President Putin avoids the trap of starting a terrible war" (GOV.UK, 2022). This approach should have been the paradigm of foreign policy language but it is only a parenthesis in the bigger picture of holistic identity construction.

The discourse analysis revealed that Russia is portrayed as a challenge for international security. This is a commitment to the traditional foreign policy language, not a choice of the contemporary transatlantic leaders. However, we need to address the problem in this rhetoric, since the label of Russia mirrors the identity of a country and not the identity of a regime. Is Russia an aggressive country? The first step to answer this question is looking at how the Russian population experiences the political approach of the government.

The Russian Government and the Russian People

The figures below, taken from the Freedom House and the V-Dem platform show that the Russian government has established an illiberal order, where freedom is restricted and access to political participation is undermined (Fig.1,2,3). Political rights and civil liberties are limited, while even the access to the internet is far from what the Western users are experiencing, with serious barriers to critical content.

According to Freedom House, authority and power are granted to the President, Vladimir Putin. The Russian leader has been accused of controlling the media, manipulating elections, and establishing exclusive legislation for potential political opposition (Freedom House, 2021).

Russia

20
/100

NOT FREE

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| <u>Political Rights</u> | 5 /40 |
| <u>Civil Liberties</u> | 15 /60 |

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

20 /100 Not Free

Figure 1: Freedom in Russia 2021. Source: Freedom House. Scores are based on a scale of 0 (least free) to 100 (most free)

Furthermore, access to internet information has been heavily restricted and thus the concept of political consent is limited to state-controlled data and evidence (Freedom House, 2021). In addition, data from the V-Dem platform show that the rates of academic and cultural freedom of expression, political rights, fair elections, and civil liberties of association and expression have reached illiberal levels (V-Dem, 2021). Figure 3 presents the decline of civil and political freedom in the past twenty years, uncovering that the Russian regime is not a static illiberal state, but continues undermining liberties and democratic procedures.

Russia

30
/100

NOT FREE

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| <u>A. Obstacles to Access</u> | 12 /25 |
| <u>B. Limits on Content</u> | 10 /35 |
| <u>C. Violations of User Rights</u> | 8 /40 |

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

30 /100 Not Free

Figure 2: Freedom of the Net. Source: Freedom House. Scores are based on a scale of 0 (least free) to 100 (most free)

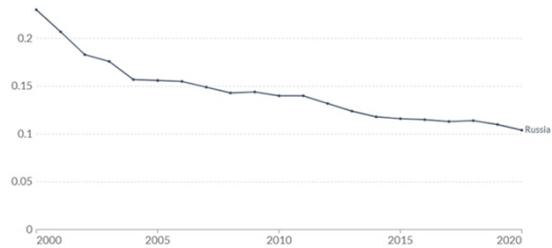


Figure 3: V-Dem Liberal democracy index (2000 to 2020). Source: V-Dem dataset 2021

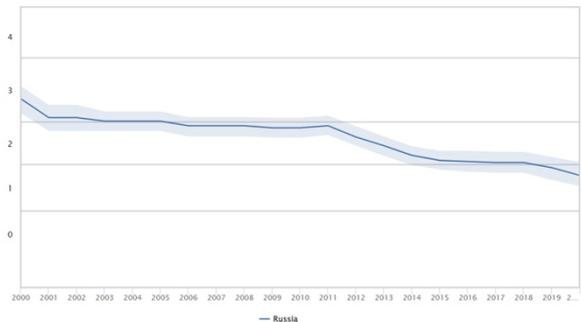


Figure 4: V-Dem Freedom of Academic and Cultural Expression in Russia (2000-2020). Source: V-Dem dataset 2021

Understanding the experiences of the Russian population should raise concerns on how we perceive Russia. It is not the ‘Russian’ aggression and the ‘Russian’ disrespect towards international institutions. It is a specific regime that acts unilaterally without risking of losing legitimacy by claiming the peoples’ consent. In an intense circumstance like the Ukraine crisis, describing the Russians as a threat can only construct suspicious shared ideas, which ignore some of the real victims of the specific regime: the Russians. As Barry Buzan explained, “when a word is uttered, something is done” (Buzan et al., 1998, p.26). And in this case, the words have been uttered again and again. The umbrella of an aggressive regime can construct a broad collective mentality of hostility. Thus, this problematic umbrella leads to ignorance regarding people’s experiences. While liberal democracies preach multilateralism and international cooperation, these powerful identity constructions generate a hideous and

exclusive collective mentality that can pose camouflaged barriers to future collaboration. We do not see it clearly because it is hidden, like the picture in Dorian Gray's secret room.

The Good, the Bad, and the...Global: The Intergenerational Contract

Intergenerational Contract: The 'Good' Priorities

According to a research project conducted by Rand Corporation, older people feel more concerned about national security than younger generations (Posard, et al., 2018). Young people tend to prioritise economic security, showing that the gap between the domestic and the international security realm has been relatively bridged when it comes to how young people perceive threats (Posard, et al., 2018). Collective experiences construct collective mentalities and thus reality is perceived in different ways from generation to generation. Another research conducted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States revealed that Generation Z (Gen Z) was most likely than older participants to consider the influence of the US as less significant than that of the European Union (Weber, 2021). This differentiation is evidence of rethinking the global world as a realm of unipolar or bipolar competition by prioritising the impact of international institutions.

Another relevant research on the concerns of new generations, i.e. Millennials and Gen Z was conducted by Deloitte and included the analysis from 22,928 participants from 45 countries across the world. The data analysis revealed that the biggest concerns of the participants were climate change, healthcare/disease prevention, and economic growth (Deloitte, 2021). Participants showed that their greatest concerns are global issues that do not stop at the threshold of sovereignty. Furthermore, according to the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Gen Z has stressed

the significance of climate challenges and the necessity to implement sustainability, mirroring a less national security viewpoint, at least regarding the nature of the specific concerns (Milotay, 2020).

Looking at the traditional foreign policy rhetoric, this study explained that cooperation can be trapped under the identity constructions that occur through the analysed discourses. While the new intergenerational contract can be structured on the pillar of tackling global challenges collectively, the reproduction of hostility and suspicion can be a barrier and even a lever for backsliding to different normative standards. This backsliding is the 'Dorian Gray' effect, that today's intergenerational contract should avoid. Who would cooperate with an enemy 'other', after all?

The 'Bad' Insecurity...

A 2020 survey-based research of 16,000 Millennials in 16 different countries organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross detected that the majority of the participants (54%) trust that nuclear weapons will be used in the next decade (Maurer, 2020). A bigger number of participants answered that the possibility to experience a third world war is more likely than not to (Maurer, 2020). This is an epistemological fear, i.e. they fear what they cannot control. It is not a fear that occurs from a specific enemy, like the Cold War bipolarity. However, the more aggression becomes a synonym with countries and the more bilateral or multilateral tensions shape the security discourses of the 21st century, enmity might obtain the shape of nations, leading to a horrific backsliding and a communication breakdown.

...the 'Global' future and the Intergenerational Bridge of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

IHL is based on the foundation of limiting the

negative effects of conflict and protecting non-combatants by restricting the methods of warfare (Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, 1949). As there are no crystal balls to predict the future and as conflict can emerge on different terrains, the 'Dorian Gray' effect is an obstacle to the principles of IHL. As younger generations tend to prioritise a global view of security, institutionalised norms of IHL can prevail. Thus, altering the language of foreign policy is not only a responsibility of an intergenerational contract but a necessity to make the older generations' humanitarian contribution a tangible reality. The collective mentality of today is a construction and thus an intergenerational contract cannot ignore the responsibility to rethink the way discourses pose barriers to communication.

Conclusion

An intergenerational contract for the future of international security should be primarily based on reconstructing the concept of 'otherness'. Global problems require collective action and thus inclusive collective perceptions. It is essential to start talking about regimes and not about people. Acts are committed by governments and if liberal democracies want to escape the trap of reproducing suspicion when rooting for cooperation, replacing 'Russia' with 'the Russian government/regime' is the beginning of a crucial step towards a commitment to global security. It is a simple thought but a difficult deconstruction process. If global challenges knock on our generations' door, 'otherness' will be an obstacle to cooperation. New generations have shown global tendencies in the way they understand security and thus this momentum is an ideal point to rethink the way 'otherness' becomes part of the public debates. The

intergenerational contract in foreign affairs can be signed and sealed by the deposition of the Picture of Dorian Gray from the wall of liberal democracies. A similar approach was also followed in the city of Matsumoto, where participating citizens were organised into workshops and asked to come up with a 60 year plan for renovating the city hall and related expenditure in city infrastructure (Nishimura et al., 2020). A significant finding of the study was that being a part of the FD workshop and asked to adopt the perspective of future generations led the participants to lower their discount rates for the future. Similar results were reported in a study based in Yahaba (Hara et al., 2021). After introducing the FD mechanism in waterworks workshops throughout the city, citizens started viewing the issue of a clean and reliable water supply from a longer-run perspective, and ended up reaching a consensus for increasing the tax rate on water.

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