



supported by



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

Worse than the Cold War?

Euro-Mediterranean
Perspectives on
Sino-American Rivalry

17 October 2022

16:30 – 20:30

Aula Magna Regina

(JCU Guarini Campus, Via della Lungara 233, Rome)

Conference Report



PROGRAM

16:30–17:00 Part 1:

Worse than the Cold War? A diplomatic view from Italy

Welcome remarks:

Franco Pavoncello (President of John Cabot University)

Enrico Fardella (Director of the ChinaMed Project / John Cabot University)

Giuliana Del Papa (Head of Policy Planning Unit, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)

17:00–18:45 Part 2:

Worse than the Cold War? | Sino–American rivalry on the eve of the 20th national congress of the CCP

Panel Discussion:

Sarah Kirchberger (Kiel University)

Veerle Nouwens (RUSI)

Edward Luttwak (The Marathon Initiative)

Francesco Sisci (Renmin University)

Moderated by: Enrico Fardella (John Cabot University)

Coffee Break

19:00–20:30 Part 3:

Worse than the Cold War? | Euro–Mediterranean Perspectives on Sino–American Rivalry

Panel Discussion:

Ruth Hanau Santini (University of Naples "L'Orientale")

Pejman Abdolmohammadi (University of Trento)

Giovanni Andornino (University of Turin / Torino World Affairs Institute)

Brandon Friedman (Moshe Dayan Center / Tel Aviv University)

Moderated by: Simone Tholens (John Cabot University)



Worse than the Cold War?
Worse than the Cold War?



Franco Pavoncello

After receiving a B.A. in International Relations and Chinese and Japanese Studies (summa cum laude) from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Franco Pavoncello continued his studies at the University of Michigan, where he obtained an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Political Science.

He has been a member of the faculty at John Cabot University since 1990, where he served as Dean of Academic Affairs from 1996 to 2005 while continuing to lecture in Political Science. In 2005, Franco Pavoncello became Acting President of the University and was confirmed President in April 2006. In Spring 2018, the JCU Board of Trustees renewed President Pavoncello's mandate until 2023. A leading analyst of Italian politics, Dr. Pavoncello's work has appeared in, among others, the American Political Science Review, the British Journal of Political Science, Asian Studies, and World Affairs. He is also a well-known media commentator on Italian affairs, a contributor to major international newspapers, and appears regularly on radio and television networks, including CNN, BBC, New York Times, Reuters Press and TV, International Herald Tribune and many other media organizations



Enrico Fardella

Dr. Enrico FARDELLA currently works as Visiting Scholar at John Cabot University in Rome and with TOChina Hub as director of the ChinaMed Project and Area Director of the ChinaMed Business Program. Enrico has worked until July 2022 as tenured associate Professor at the History Department of Peking University (PKU) and Director of PKU's Center for Mediterranean Area Studies (CMAS, 北京大学地中海区域研究中心). He is Global Fellow del Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington D.C., Research Scholar at the Machiavelli Center for Cold War Studies, member of the Academic Committee at Pangoal Institution in Beijing and Fellow of the Science & Technology China Program of the European Commission. Enrico also sits in the editorial board of OrizzonteCina monthly review focusing on China's relations with Europe and the greater Mediterranean region. His fields of interests are: Chinese foreign policy; Sino-European relations; China's role in the Mediterranean; the Belt and Road Initiative; History of international relations; History of contemporary China.



Sarah Kirchberger

Dr. Sarah Kirchberger serves as head of Asia-Pacific Strategy and Security at the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University (ISPK) and vice president of the German Maritime Institute (DMI). She is nonresident senior fellow with the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. Her current work focuses on maritime security in the Asia-Pacific region, emerging technologies in the maritime sphere, Russian-Chinese military-industrial relations, China's arms industries, and China's naval and space development.



Edward Luttwak

Dr. Edward N. Luttwak is contractual strategic advisor for the USG and a Distinguished Adjunct Fellow at The Marathon Initiative, a policy initiative focused on developing strategies to prepare the United States for an era of sustained great power competition. Previously, Luttwak has served on U.S. presidential transition teams, testified before committees of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, and has advised the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. National Security Council, the White House Chief of Staff, and several allied governments, including Japan.

His books, including *The Rise of China viz. The logic of Strategy*, and *Strategy: the Logic of War and Peace* (both Harvard UP) have been best sellers translated in more than twenty languages.



Veerle Nouwens

Veerle Nouwens is a Senior Research Fellow for Asia Studies and Head of the Indo-Pacific Programme within the International Security Studies team of the Royal United Services Institute, focusing on geopolitical relations in the Indo-Pacific region. Her research interests include China's foreign policy, cross-strait relations, maritime security and ASEAN. Prior to joining RUSI, Veerle worked for the European External Action Service at the Delegation of the European Union to Singapore's Political Section. In this role, she focused on EU-Singapore bilateral relations and regional security.

Veerle holds an MPhil in Modern Chinese Studies from the University of Oxford, an MA in International Relations and Diplomacy from Leiden University, and a BA in International Relations from Macquarie University. She has attended semester programs at both Peking University and Tsinghua University and has lived and travelled across Asia. She is fluent in Dutch and English, and speaks Mandarin at intermediate level.



Francesco Sisci

Francesco Sisci (August 5, 1960) is an Italian sinologist, author and columnist who lives and works in Beijing.[1] Currently he is a senior researcher at Renmin University of China[2] and contributes to several journals and think tanks on geopolitical issues. In 2016, he was granted the first interview to the Pope on China.[3] The interview has received widespread coverage in the Chinese press, for the first time in the history of the Chinese Communist Party. He was a contributor for Il Sole 24ore[citation needed] and for Asia Times with the column Sinograph and a frequent commentator on international affairs for CCTV and Phoenix TV.

He was born in Taranto in Italy in 1960. He graduated at the University of Venice and he specialised in Chinese language.[4] Subsequently he studied at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and in 1988 he became the first foreigner who was admitted to the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). He obtained his PhD in Chinese Classical Philology and Philosophy with a thesis on "Rationalisation of Thought and Political Discourse in Early Mohism".



Brandon Friedman

Brandon Friedman is the Director of Research and a Senior Research Fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (MDC), Tel Aviv University, where he is also a member of the Faculty of Humanities. He is the managing editor of *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review*, jointly published by the MDC and Penn State University Press.



Giovanni Andornino

A tenured Assistant Professor of International Relations of East Asia at the University of Turin, Dr Giovanni B. Andornino is the Coordinator of the TOChina Centre and the founding General Secretary of the China-Italy Philanthropy Forum. Dr Andornino is Vice President and Head of the Global China program at the Torino World Affairs Institute (T.wai), Director of the ChinaMed Business Program at Peking University (Beijing), and outgoing Editor of *OrizzonteCina*, Italy's leading academic journal on contemporary China studies in the social sciences. His research focuses on China's domestic politics, foreign policy, and relations with Italy and the wider Euro-Mediterranean region.



Pejman Abdolmohammadi

Pejman Abdolmohammadi is Associate Professor in Middle Eastern Studies at the School of International Studies at University of Trento. His main research areas are the security and politics of the Middle East, with a particular focus on the geopolitics of the Persian Gulf and the Iranian domestic affairs and foreign policy. Currently he is Coordinator of the European Project on 'North Africa and Middle East Politics and EU Security' (NAMEPES) within the 'Jean Monnet' scheme. He is vice Coordinator of the International Master in Security, Intelligence & Strategic Studies (IMSIS). Pejman spent three years as a Research Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) - Middle East Centre and has taught as Lecturer at JCU for three years. His most recent book 'Contemporary Iranian Domestic and Foreign Policies' will be published by Palgrave/ Mcmillan in July 2020.



Ruth Santini

Ruth Hanau Santini is Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations at Università Orientale in Naples. Her research revolves around European foreign policy, Middle East and North African politics, democracy, citizenship and the politics of intervention. She has worked for a number of think tanks (CEPS, SWP, Brookings), the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international organisations (the World Food Programme).



Simone Tholens

Simone Tholens is Associate Professor of International Relations at John Cabot University, and part-time professor at the Robert Schuman Centre/European University Institute. Her main research interest are interventions, security assistance, bordering processes, and materiality of global war practices, as well as theories of contestation and practice.



Worse than the Cold War?
Worse than the Cold War?

Worse than the Cold War?

Euro-Mediterranean Perspectives on Sino-American Rivalry

Aula Magna Regina, JCU Guarini Campus, 17 October 2022

Report prepared by

Leonardo Bruni (Research Fellow, ChinaMed Project)

The expression 'new Cold War' has taken hold across much of the debate on the rising tensions between the United States and China, as many look to history to identify patterns from past periods of great power rivalry. However, current global dynamics, especially the unprecedented interdependence of national economies, may lead to a more complex international situation rather than to a simple return to Cold War bipolarity. It is yet to be seen if this new global context will allow regional players to play independent roles or if it will instead force them to participate and take sides.

It is within this context that the conference "Worse than the Cold War? Euro-Mediterranean Perspectives on Sino-American Rivalry" brought together renowned experts to discuss the growing tensions between China and the US, and the role of actors from across the wider Mediterranean region as they navigate escalating global polarization. The event, held on 17 October 2022, was hosted by John Cabot University with the support of the ChinaMed Project, the Guarini Institute for Public Affairs, and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The conference began with welcoming remarks from Enrico Fardella (Director of the ChinaMed Project / John Cabot University) and Giuliana Del Papa (Head of the Policy Planning Unit of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation).

Enrico Fardella opened the conference by justifying its provocative title. He explained that, unlike the Cold War, the current tensions between China and the US are not taking place in a world divided into blocs, but rather in a global context characterized by heightened economic interdependence. Beijing and Washington's antagonism, strengthened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, COVID-19, and the rise of populist leaders have contributed to exacerbating trends that have led to the return of phenomena once believed to be confined to the past: resurging nationalist sentiment, severe economic and technological disputes, rapid militarization, and the specter of nuclear war. Economic interdependence has not prevented rising tensions, rather, it could turn this bout of great power rivalry into something worse than the Cold War. Indeed, the war in Ukraine and its impact on the global economy may only be a prelude to a wider structural shift. In her remarks, Giuliana Del Papa stated that this event exemplifies how academia and institutions can explore new ideas and establish a

more functional relationship. Moreover, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' support illustrates its interest in public diplomacy as a way to involve all stakeholders, including non-institutional ones, in confronting international challenges. As global dynamics evolve at an accelerated pace, public diplomacy grants insights into how foreign policy is perceived and allows for the rapid communication of ideas and suggestions. This is especially vital for the topic of this conference, the Sino-American rivalry. Comprehending the intentions of both actors requires in-depth analyses of both internal dynamics, like the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and the 2022 US midterm elections, and international ones like globalization.

On the conference's title, Del Papa noted how it may be difficult to compare a forty-year-long period of global confrontation to these recent few years of increased tension. Asking whether there is anything to be learned from the Cold War, she noted that it was not solely decades of struggle and mistrust, but also of dialogue. A shared language was constructed that helped avoid war and bridge misunderstandings. However, it may take years for China and the US to build up this same capacity.

The first panel of the conference, chaired by Professor Fardella, focused on the current status of the Sino-American rivalry on the eve of the 20th National Congress of the CCP.

Francesco Sisci (Renmin University) began by analyzing China's role in the war in Ukraine and its relations with Russia. According to Sisci, China feels hoodwinked by Moscow. Beijing believed that Russia would win the war in weeks, politically dividing the EU thus leading to the US' expulsion from Europe. Instead, NATO has been revitalized with new members and larger defense budgets. The US has also managed to strengthen its presence in Europe while at the same time maintaining its focus on Beijing and Asian affairs. China perceives this invigorated NATO as a possible future threat.

Beijing finds itself in the uncomfortable position of being unable to backtrack on its 4 February "no limits" declaration with Moscow. While recent statements appear less supportive of Russia, China is still unable to take a clear position on Ukraine. For example, Xi's very long speech inaugurating the 20th CCP national congress did not mention the war in Ukraine, as if the war was not happening.

For Sisci, Beijing feels like there is an incoming siege due to the decoupling policies being passed in the West, especially those meant to hinder China's technological progress. Beijing's response has been to increase the pace of its technological development. Moreover, China has been enhancing the quality of its exports, especially those related to the green transition, to hook Western markets on Chinese supply chains. This led Sisci to hope that Europe does not repeat the mistake of Russian gas.

In the EU there is the misperception that these tensions are being driven just by the US and China, even though other countries like Japan, India, and Vietnam also have an ax to grind against Beijing due to its bullying and economic competitiveness. Many of them are taking advantage of supply chains moving out of China by welcoming them with open arms. Sisci noted that these economic dynamics make the "new Cold War" expression not adequate as similar economic relations never existed with the USSR, however, no better label exists that could help us better understand the current geopolitical situation.

Regarding what China has learned from the war in Ukraine, Veerle Nouwens (Royal United Services Institute) affirmed that it is likely that Beijing did not expect Russia's invasion to bog down like it did, the EU and the US to strengthen transatlantic ties vis-à-vis China and Taiwan, and Asian countries to condemn and sanction Russia.

Additionally, the Russian military's failure in Ukraine has probably led to much internal reflection within China as to the state of their own military capabilities and preparedness, in particular regarding Taiwan.



Worse than the Cold War?

Nevertheless, Taiwan is not Ukraine as the former is a small island near China with limited diplomatic recognition. Thus, if a war breaks out, Taipei will find it very difficult to receive similar levels of support as Kyiv. However, being an island confers Taiwan certain benefits as blockades and amphibious invasions are very difficult logistically. This is relevant as the war in Ukraine has shown that overwhelming military capabilities and technology is not enough. An army also requires adequate internal reporting, logistics, maintenance, command chains, interoperability, and personnel.

A further lesson which China has likely learned from Ukraine is to prepare for a US response regardless of Washington's "strategic ambiguity." It is not just a military response they are accounting for but also an economic one, as the war in Ukraine has shown not only the West united in cutting off Russia, but also the private sector's participation in these efforts. While China is likely future proofing, for the time being it appears that Beijing is still open to economic cooperation as it has been careful to not provoke secondary sanctions. Additionally, Xi's speech at the 20th National Congress mentioned turning China into an international business hub. This is probably due to China still requiring foreign investment for many different developmental and military purposes.

Sarah Kirchberger (Kiel University) instead contended that China has been actively supporting Russia's invasion as before the war began it signed a deal to import Russian hydrocarbons and grains. With this agreement, China signaled to Russia that it was willing to absorb exports that would come under sanctions. Furthermore, the US attempted to convince China to persuade Russia not to attack, but the American intelligence offered to Beijing was ignored and forwarded to Moscow.

While China clearly supported Russia, it did not openly back the invasion. For Kirchberger, the source of this paradox is Beijing and Kyiv's significant strategic relationship. Until 2014, Ukraine was China's major source of advanced military and naval technology with Kyiv for example transferring aircraft carrier technology to Beijing and training Chinese carrier pilots. Indeed, without Ukraine, the PLA Navy would not have a single operational aircraft carrier today. Moreover, in 2013, Xi signed a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with Ukraine which included a security guarantee. Thus, for Kirchberger, Beijing is offering Moscow the maximum support it is actually capable of giving.

Kirchberger drew some other interesting parallels between China and Putin's Russia by recalling the 2011 article "Reclassifying Chinese Nationalism" by Christopher Hughes, which analyzed the geopolitical turn taken by Chinese politics and how it sowed the seeds for justifying the use of force for 'defensive' expansion. She noted how at the time of that article's publication ultranationalism was a fringe movement within China. However, a year later, Xi Jinping came to power and through his policy choices this somewhat marginal movement moved to the center of political thinking in China with so-called "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy being the latest outgrowth of this trend.

Navalism is a key aspect of this geopolitical turn as China's unfortunate maritime geography sees it encircled by the US ally-controlled "first island chain." This prevents the Chinese navy from moving without being observed or traced, which has implications on its capacity to conduct sea-based nuclear deterrence. According to Kirchberger, navalism has become an obsession with China building up a navy that surpasses all projections. For her, it is difficult to see how the situation, especially concerning Taiwan, can be defused peacefully.

Edward Luttwak (The Marathon Initiative), on the other hand, stated that China cannot start, let alone win, a war against Taiwan, as China, first and foremost, is encircled. More precisely, Beijing is self-encircled, as its own actions have irritated all its neighbors. This is not helping China's naval ambitions as relationships and the access to bases they entail are the real basis of maritime power. For Luttwak, China's naval strategy is "illogical," as it consists in building warships and then acting

in a way that prevents those ships from entering ports and exerting naval influence. An example is China's relationship with Japan during the late 2000s when instead of cooperating with the first neutral Japanese governments since 1945, it pushed for control over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. This led in part to Shinzō Abe returning to power and reforming the passive alliance with the US into an active one. Moreover, Tokyo has now even stated that it would intervene if China attacked Taiwan, a real problem for Beijing as the Japanese navy is in many respects superior to its own.

Luttwak then introduced the concept of "capax belli," or capacity for war, and its two constituent aspects: willingness to fight and the resources to fight. Beijing, according to Luttwak, possesses neither. Firstly, China no longer has "expendable male children" to call up as soldiers. Due to the one-child policy, a single soldier could represent the future of two whole families. Thus, Beijing may not be willing to fight as the deaths a war entails could be very costly from a social perspective.

Secondly, China is not self-sufficient regarding food, especially since the Chinese diet has become more meat-based in recent years. Indeed, in 2021, China imported 95 million metric tons of soybeans to feed its livestock. As the complaints regarding the lack of fresh meat during Shanghai lockdown showed, Chinese people are not willing to return to primarily eating rice and vegetables. Thus, if a war does break out, Beijing would face serious consequences as Western sanctions would cut off its access to animal feed and therefore its population's access to meat.

Considering also the technological backwardness of China's military, Luttwak suggested that China will not and cannot fight a war for Taiwan. The only domain in which Beijing could win against the US is cyberspace where technological underdevelopment and capax belli are less relevant.

The second panel of the conference was moderated by Simone Tholens (John Cabot University) and analyzed the perspectives from Euro-Mediterranean actors on the Sino-American rivalry and how the antagonism between Beijing and Washington is influencing their positions.

Ruth Hanau Santini (University of Naples "L'Orientale") analyzed the position of the EU in the context of the war in Ukraine, the consolidation of transatlantic ties, and the tensions between China and the US. She reflected on the recent US National Security Strategy and EU High Representative Josep Borrell's speech to EU ambassadors on 10 October as both share interesting similarities.

The US National Security Strategy abandoned the ideological framing of "democracies versus autocracies" initially used by the Biden administration in favor of a strategic competition framework. It also no longer represented China and Russia as interchangeable threats, but singled out Beijing as a strategic competitor and Moscow as only a power to be contained. The document also defined three "tools": rebuilding the US at home, military modernization, and coalitions. Regarding coalitions, the US, by renouncing the idea of an "alliance of democracies," is now freer to construct coalitions with non-revisionist autocracies. All in all, the strategy reflects a shift to a more pragmatic approach,

Borrell's speech, on the other hand, is a similarly candid and blunt assessment that notes how interdependence is being weaponized, the importance of protecting positive connections between global powers, and the EU's three major foreign policy shortcomings. The first shortcoming is the EU's inability to adapt to changing global politics, the foremost example being the war in Ukraine. The second is Brussels lacking the capacity to react to and protect itself from multidimensional crises. For example, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not solely a military issue, but also entails energy, financial, and food crises that require a holistic response. The third regards strategic culture. For Borrell, the EU should abandon its "Kantian" worldview and instead adopt a more



Worse than the Cold War?
Worse than the Cold War?

“Hobbesian” perspective aware of the world’s threats and dangers. While it is true that Brussels has achieved some success with its use of sanctions and of the European Instrument for Democracy to finance military aid for Ukraine, Borrell also noted that the EU should reconsider its position as it has decoupled security and prosperity. The former was outsourced to the US, while the latter instead depended on cheap energy from Russia and cheap goods from China. As these conditions no longer exist, the EU needs to revisit and completely overhaul its strategy

Returning to the analogy of the Cold War, Brandon Friedman (Moshe Dayan Center / Tel Aviv University), who recently published an article for Global Policy on this very topic, noted its utility for analyzing the dynamics that are shaping the Middle East. He also remarked how the tensions between Beijing and Washington are just one factor of a wider “polycrisis” (which includes the war in Ukraine, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, the possibility of a global recession, and food insecurity) that is affecting the Middle East and the world at large. In this context, a key dynamic to analyze is globalization as many states are opting for regional integration as a way to insulate themselves from the risks of economic interdependence. Even the Middle East, which has historically been one of the least economically integrated regions of the world, is moving towards increasing “regionalization” with the Abraham Accords, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, and the Negev Summit.

Regarding whether the Sino-American rivalry will force states to pick sides, Friedman considered the case of Israel. For him, Tel Aviv’s China policy is merely an extension of its US policy, as Israel’s relations with Beijing are increasingly being shaped by American pressure. Israel’s susceptibility to American influence is due to the paramount role that relations with Washington play in Israeli foreign policy. However, despite Israel being firmly in the American camp, it, alongside the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Middle Eastern states, does not want to choose, but instead maintain good relations with both the US and China. Nevertheless, if there is a lesson to be learned from the Cold War, it is that countries will be forced to pick sides when push comes to shove, but until that turning point is reached, countries will try their best to sit on the fence.

Pejman Abdolmohammadi (University of Trento) instead discussed Iran’s perspective on the great power competition between China and the US in the context of the sanction regime and the negotiations to revive the JCPOA. For him, there is a difference between the national interest that Iran could have and what the Islamic Republic can have. Although Iran’s economy and geography and the current international energy market would suggest closer ties with the West being the more rational choice, the ideological regime currently governing the country is instead maneuvering to the East as a consequence of intra-elite struggles and domestic factors.

Indeed, for Abdolmohammadi, Tehran’s current domestic and legitimacy crisis, precipitated by a younger generation that no longer wants the regime in power, is bringing the Islamic Republic to tactically ally with China and Russia. While this process began in 2017 following Trump withdrawing the US from the JCPOA, major steps were taken in recent weeks with the latest Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit and Iran’s sale of military drones to Russia for its war in Ukraine. A possible reason for Iran’s rapid alignment with China and Russia is that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is ill and that Tehran desires Beijing and Moscow’s support to guarantee a stable transition of power. This is facilitated by how the reformists, who advocated a double-faced foreign policy that pursued ties both with the West and with China and Russia, are no longer in power.

To conclude, Giovanni Andornino (University of Turin / Torino World Affairs Institute) gave his observations on how the new right-wing Italian government under Giorgia Meloni will behave vis-à-vis China. Based on data on how the governing parties’ members of parliament

voted during the past three years, Andornino predicted that the Meloni government will take a much colder stance towards Beijing. He personally speculated that the largest party of the governing coalition, Brothers of Italy, will probably stick to their time-tested attitude of firmly opposing any and all cooperation with the People’s Republic. The two junior parties of the coalition, the League and Forza Italia, will likely follow suit to shore up their tarnished Atlanticist credentials as they traditionally have had close ties with Russia. Moreover, the League was actually co-responsible for the government which signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative in 2019. As a result of this new government, Italy may provide an interesting case study, as it has gone from the closest major European country to China to becoming the one that may be most opposed to Beijing (with the possible exception of the United Kingdom).

Regarding the Memorandum on the BRI, Italy now finds itself in a worse position than prior to its signing, as while the agreement is non-binding, it will soon expire. The new Italian government likely does not want to renew it or wishes to make it smaller, however, such moves would surely anger Beijing. Some hope that the Chinese will not press the issue, a big favor that Andornino does not count China on providing.

On the topic of this conference’s title, Andornino remarked that there is one area in which this period will certainly be worse than the Cold War: the cognitive sphere. This especially the case for Italy, as during the Cold War, Italians knew both superpowers quite well: the United States for obvious reasons and the Soviet Union because of Italy’s large, well-connected communist party. Adequate knowledge on both actors allowed the Italian political system to better formulate its foreign policy. Nowadays, there is no similar level of information on or connection with Beijing. Italy and almost all countries are therefore ill-equipped in terms of the cognitive instruments necessary to properly engage with China.



supported by



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation