

South Korea Pivots To Conflict



South Korea's far-right President Yoon Suk Yeol is rushing South Korea headlong into the middle of the [new Cold War](#) that the United States is waging against China. Yoon's aspiration to position South Korea as a "global pivotal state" is turning South Korea into a bigger cog in the U.S. war machine and stakes South Korea's security and economic future on a declining U.S.-led global order. Yoon's support of the U.S. global order has taken him on a flurry of visits and meetings around the world from the virtual Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) summit to the NATO summit in Madrid to high-level meetings in Japan and the United States.

Most recently on his April 26 U.S. visit, President Yoon and U.S. President Joe Biden announced the "Washington Declaration" to deploy U.S. nuclear-armed submarines to South Korea—reintroducing U.S. nuclear weapons to South Korea for the first time in over [40 years](#). When viewed against North Korea's development of nuclear weapons as a strategic deterrent, these weapons in South Korea will more likely fuel a nuclear arms race rather than check North Korea's nuclear program. As former South Korean Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun [observed](#), four out of North Korea's six nuclear tests occurred in response to the hardline stance of conservative South Korean administrations that refused to dialogue with North Korea.

Ultimately, Yoon's actions are putting South Korea on a dangerous path that further destabilizes inter-Korean relations and antagonizes China, its biggest trading partner. All the while, the move also [forsakes](#) the Korean government's duty to advocate for reparations from Japan for Koreans exploited under Japanese colonialism and to prevent the [discharge of radioactive waste](#) from the Fukushima nuclear reactor, which lies upstream from South Korea.

Yoon's 'Global Pivotal State'

The alarming return of U.S. nuclear weapons to South Korea follows Yoon's posturing to develop nuclear weapons in South Korea [this past January](#) as part of his evolving [extremist hardline North Korea policy](#). More broadly, it forms part of Yoon's greater foreign policy agenda of inserting South Korea in the security

architecture of the U.S.'s anti-China Asia-Pacific grand strategy. The Yoon administration's "[Strategy for a Free, Peaceful and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region](#)," like Yoon's recent activities, follows closely from the U.S. [Indo-Pacific Strategy](#), with the goal of building and enforcing a U.S.-led "rules-based order" in the region with "like-minded allies" to contain China.

For all its declarations of fairness and playing by the rules, this U.S.-dominated "rules-based order" is at odds with the actual multipolar world taking shape around the world as well as the multilateral nature of the internationally agreed-upon UN-based order. The United States has been leading the creation of regional [minilateral](#) bodies such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) or the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework as part of its "[hybrid war against China](#)" and engaging in unilateral aggression toward China in the form of "military, economic, information, and military warfare."

For example, the United States is setting the stage to dispute China's actions in the South China Sea not through the UN "[Law of the Sea Convention](#)," which the United States has not signed onto, but rather through the Indo-Pacific security framework. This allows the United States to target China's actions while exempting its own naval operations from the oversight of "[global bureaucrats](#)"—i.e., the UN. Furthermore, despite calling for an "open" and "free" Indo-Pacific, the United States is [waging a "chip war"](#) by pressuring its Indo-Pacific allies to impede China's access to semiconductor chips, one of the world's most critical high-tech resources today.

The Yoon administration has been contributing to the buildup and reinforcement of this "rules-based order" through its participation in the Indo-Pacific framework, global NATO, and by consolidating the U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral military alliance. In May 2022, a few weeks into his term, Yoon participated virtually in the IPEF meeting. In December, the administration adopted its own Indo-Pacific Strategy which committed to "stabilize supply chains of strategic resources" and "seek cooperation with partners with whom we share values,"—i.e., IPEF states. South Korea is now being [recruited](#) into the U.S. chip war against China.

In June 2022, the participation of South Korea (including Yoon's establishment of a NATO diplomatic mission) and three other Asia-Pacific states in the NATO meeting expanded NATO's reach from the North Atlantic into the Pacific. This year, Yoon paved the way toward consolidating the U.S.-Japan-South Korea

trilateral alliance by [forgoing demands](#) that Japan take responsibility for its colonial exploitation of Korean workers. Then, during his March visit with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, he resumed the controversial 2016 General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) intelligence-sharing pact, laying the groundwork for direct military coordination between South Korea and Japan.

In April, U.S., Japan, and South Korean officials met and agreed to hold missile defense and anti-submarine exercises to counter North Korea and “promote peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region,” with special emphasis on “peace and security in the Taiwan Strait.” As a further show of commitment to the U.S. global war strategy, in an April 19 [Reuters interview](#), Yoon reversed his position on Ukraine and raised the possibility of sending weapons, and exacerbated the U.S.’s provocations in Taiwan vis-a-vis the One China principle, to the ire of Chinese [officials](#).

A Pivot Toward Peace

Activists in South Korea and abroad have been ceaselessly working toward peace on the peninsula, with key struggles waged along the very sites of U.S. military installations in the Asia-Pacific region encircling China, such as the construction of the [military naval base](#) in Gangjeong village. They have also been part of long-standing transnational activism to procure a [peace treaty for the Korean War](#). As these activists and U.S. scholar Noam Chomsky have [recently reiterated](#) in the face of the April 26 U.S.-South Korea nuclear weapons deal, only a peace treaty ending the Korean War would lay the basis for denuclearizing the Korean peninsula, bring an end to the U.S. military occupation of South Korea, and move toward peace and stability in Northeast Asia. To continue building greater exchange, dialogue, and solidarity, and pivot the region toward peace, this May 16, [Justice Party](#) National Assemblymembers along with the [International Strategy Center](#) and other civil society organizations in South Korea, the United States, and Japan will be organizing an International Forum for Peace in Northeast Asia and Against a New Cold War Order.

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Source: Globetrotter

May Day In Havana: International Solidarity To Resist The U.S. Blockade



This year’s May Day celebration in Cuba was interrupted by severe storms that knocked out electricity in much of the country. Authorities had no choice but to postpone the traditional mass marches. But for over 150 young grassroots organizers from the United States who had traveled to the country to mark the holiday, this turn of events was just more reason to deepen their efforts to end the U.S.-imposed blockade of the country.

Miya Tada, a brigade participant from New York, explained how this showed that “the biggest obstacle the Cuban people are facing is the repression and economic warfare of our own government, and that just inspires me to further the struggle against the blockade back in the United States.”

This wide range of activists from nearly 30 states and dozens of organizations was brought together by the International Peoples’ Assembly, a network of left movements and parties around the globe. Members of the solidarity brigade had spent the preceding week taking part in educational panels, discussions with Cuban activists, and youth exchanges as they sought to deepen their

understanding of the Cuban Revolution.

May Day Amid a Tightening Blockade

The country is currently grappling with a range of severe difficulties that boil down to a single tremendous challenge—surviving amid a blockade that seems to tighten every day. The U.S.-imposed blockade has been in effect for over six decades, but a series of developments in the past several years has taken its cruelty to new heights.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused havoc in every country on the planet, but the coercive measures on Cuba magnified the crisis dramatically there. The country was able to avoid the kind of catastrophic loss of life experienced in the United States thanks to its world-renowned health system that produced five different vaccines, but the economic consequences were grave. Tourism is a principal source of foreign currency—essential to import vital goods since Cuba is locked out of the dollar-dominated world market—but this industry effectively disappeared overnight. Many other sectors of the economy were severely impacted as well.

“The other pandemic we faced,” Dr. Damodar Peña Pentón of the Latin American School of Medicine explained to brigade members earlier in the trip, “was the administration of Donald Trump. He imposed 243 new measures and used COVID-19 as an ally.”

Over the course of the Trump administration, the mild thaw in U.S.-Cuba relations that took place at the end of the Obama years was completely reversed. Aiming to suffocate the revolution, Trump imposed 243 new restrictions on Cuba designed to totally isolate it from the world economy.

Towards the end of his term, the State Department officially labeled Cuba a “state sponsor of terrorism”—because it had hosted successful peace talks between the Colombian government and the rebel movement FARC! Colombia’s president at the time was celebrated for his efforts with a Nobel Peace Prize, but Cuba’s reward was to be slandered as terrorists in an effort to further deter potential trading partners. This is a prime example of what Johana Tablada, Deputy Director for U.S. Affairs at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told brigade members the prior week: “The U.S. government has been permanently telling lies to justify its policy.”

Last August, a massive inferno broke out at the country's main fuel storage facility in the province of Matanzas. A lightning strike sparked a fire that exploded one of the facility's massive tanks and then spread to three more. Fourteen firefighters tragically died as they heroically battled the blaze.

Such a disaster would badly affect any country, but for Cuba, the blockade had already made it extraordinarily hard to meet its energy needs. Severe fuel shortages ensued, which persist to this day. This disrupts daily life in innumerable ways and makes it extremely difficult to respond to situations like the storm on the eve of May Day.

Just a few weeks after the fire, on September 27th, Hurricane Ian made landfall in the western province of Pinar del Río. The powerful storm destroyed over 50,000 homes and damaged 60 percent of the housing in the province. Construction materials desperately needed for reconstruction efforts could not be imported due to the economic siege of the island.

Ian also had a profound effect on agriculture. Pinar del Río is known for its tobacco production, and Cuba's cigars are an important way to acquire foreign currency through exports. Food crops being grown in the region were almost totally destroyed.

The cumulative effect of all this was to create an economic crisis that—contrary to the presentation in the major corporate media outlets—is the consequence of the limitless cruelty of the U.S. government, not a failure of socialism.

The United States seeks to cover up this criminal behavior by preventing its own citizens from traveling to Cuba to see the reality firsthand. Despite traveling as part of a licensed, completely legal trip, members of the youth brigade were harassed and held in secondary questioning upon their return home at the Miami and Newark airports. Several young activists had their phones wrongfully searched and seized in a blatant violation of their civil liberties.

Moving Forward Despite Great Obstacles

The slogan of this year's May Day in Cuba was "Hands and Hearts for the Homeland!" It reflects the urgent need for every Cuban to contribute all their abilities to overcome any challenge.

Any easing of U.S. pressure on the country will be an immense relief as they

pursue this task. The blockade of the country has been almost unanimously condemned at the United Nations on an annual basis for three decades. But even short of the full lifting of the blockade, steps like the revocation of the 243 Trump-imposed measures or the outrageous designation by the State Department that Cuba is a “state sponsor of terrorism” would improve the situation greatly.

“Being here in Cuba has opened my eyes to the dire need in the United States to raise awareness about what’s going on with this blockade and to end it,” explained brigade member Sarah Brummet of Pensacola, Florida. “I’m very inspired to see the solidarity and the struggle of the Cuban people, and it’s our responsibility to take that same energy home and fight the blockade,” she said.

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Source: Globetrotter

Why Julian Assange Is At The Vanguard For World Press

Freedom



*Julian Assange -
Photo: wikipedia*

We celebrate World Press Freedom Day in May as a reminder that the role of news organizations is to speak truth to power. Not for [manufacturing consent](#)—to use Chomsky’s famous words—for the government and the ruling classes.

It’s an occasion to remember three people who exemplify the need to speak the truth: Daniel Ellsberg of [Pentagon Papers](#) fame and Julian Assange of [WikiLeaks](#); and also of Chelsea Manning, without whom we would not have the proof of what the United States was doing, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but all across the globe. In doing so, I will also deal with the changing nature of government “secrets”, what outing them means then and now.

In today’s day and world, just as the scale of the government’s powers to pry into our lives and activities has increased exponentially—for example, [NSA’s Prism](#) and [NSO’s Pegasus](#)—so has the *scale of the leaks*. Ellsberg’s Pentagon Papers were a mere *7,000 pages*, and he photocopied them by hand (Daniel Ellsberg, [The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner](#)). Chelsea Manning’s “papers”, which Assange outed, earning the U.S. government’s enmity, consisted of about *750,000 documents* (Iraq War logs, Afghanistan War logs and U.S. diplomatic cables). Manning used her computer to copy this enormous cache of data. Ellsberg had one of the highest security clearances in the U.S. government. Snowden, a system administrator, is assumed to have “exfiltrated” [more than a million](#) NSA documents.

Manning was low down in the military ranks and a mere corporal. Assange had identified one key characteristic of our epoch: the digital revolution means the enormous centralization of information and also the ease with which it can release. In a [conference in 1984](#), Stewart Brand, an author, in a conversation with Steve Wozniak, the co-founder of Apple, had brought this duality of information in the digital age: the centralization of information as it is so valuable for the rulers. And also the ease of its duplication and therefore liberating it from the rulers. This is why Assange set up WikiLeaks. People, who had access to this valuable information stored in “secure” government vaults, could use WikiLeaks to reach the people. Both use the power of digital technologies and their ability to produce copies but for completely different purposes.

In 1971, a little over 50 years ago that Daniel Ellsberg leaked a study carried out by the U.S. Defense Department—the [Pentagon Papers](#)—on the Vietnam War to the New York Times and subsequently to a host of other news organizations. The anti-Vietnam War movement, which had exploded in the United States then, with cascading effects around the world for my generation, had turned Ellsberg into a radical. Just as it did many of us around the world who demonstrated against the United States and its war. The Vietnam War had discredited the U.S. empire and produced a radical generation, of which Daniel Ellsberg was a proud member.

The Pentagon Papers laid out in detail why the Vietnam War was already a lost cause and why Vietnamese people would defeat the neocolonial puppet government of Ngo Dinh Diem backed by the United States in South Vietnam. Though the study was completed in 1968 that the United States could not win, the United States had enlarged the war from a land and air war against the Vietnamese liberation forces in South Vietnam to the aerial bombardment of North Vietnam and Cambodia as well. Ellsberg believed that if the U.S. public learned the truth about the Vietnam War, they would help stop the war. This is why he, and a former colleague Anthony Russo, shared the Pentagon papers with the press. The U.S. people, he believed, had a right to know about the war being waged in their name.

The exposure of Pentagon papers helped the anti-war movement but did not stop the war. It took another four years—April 1975—before Vietnamese freedom fighters liberated Saigon. The pictures of the U.S. forces leaving in ignominy, [clinging to helicopters](#) as they lifted off from the roof of the U.S. embassy, are similar to what we saw recently in Kabul.

By the time we reached the Iraq War, the world of information had changed. Information was no longer in paper form. Copies were also not on paper. Digitizing information meant that enormous amounts could be collected, stored and used in real-time for the purpose of war: both its physical-kinetic variety and also the information war. The full power of the United States, its technology might, and its money power could be wielded to build not only the U.S. war machine but also what we now call the [surveillance state](#). Not simply its invasion of every aspect of our lives but also in creating new, invisible hands of the Ministry of Truth. This is an information war of a different kind than in the days of Ellsberg photocopying the Pentagon Papers.

This is the world that Assange saw and understood. If Ellsberg understood the world of power, Assange understood the changing nature of how information is created in vast amounts continuously by the government, stored and transmitted. The very nature of technology that permits this almost costless duplication of information and its flows also makes it vulnerable to being shared and made available to the public.

Let us look at some numbers here. At the time of Ellsberg, there were perhaps a few hundred, maybe a maximum of 1,000, who had access to Pentagon papers and could have photocopied them by hand as he did. He had a security level of GS-18, a civilian equivalent to a clearance level somewhere between *major general and lieutenant general* in the military. Chelsea Manning was a “specialist”, the rank equivalent to that of *a corporal in the U.S. armed forces*. It is the nature of the change in technology that made it possible for a specialist holding a rank of a corporal to strike a body blow in the U.S. war in Iraq and Afghanistan. You need tech specialists to make the nuts and bolts of the global information infrastructure run. They may have “low” ranks but by virtue of being closest to the information on these vast military and diplomatic networks maintained by the Governments, they have complete access. And the computer, as a copying device, is a much more potent device for copying information. And lastly, the discs on which we copy data today, including our lowly thumb drive/memory stick, can store hundreds of thousands of pages!

It was Assange and WikiLeaks that made possible for Manning’s information to reach people across the globe. And even when he and Manning have been arrested, jailed and isolated, the information on Wikileaks still continues to be accessible to all of us. Even today. the Baghdad video of [Collateral Murder](#),

posted on WikiLeaks, was seen across the world and brought home that the United States was lying and involved in a massive cover-up of its war crimes. The Diplomatic Cables on Wikileaks informed the Tunisian people about the kleptocratic rule of the Ben Ali family and started what was later named as Arab Spring.

The battle of the [Chagos islanders in the International Court of Justice](#) (ICJ), illegally removed by the UK and the United States to set up the U.S. naval base in Diego Garcia, was partly based on documents from WikiLeaks. This is only a very small fraction of the information that is now available to activists, and it cannot be erased either from the Internet or from our memory. Just as the surveillance state has invaded every nook and corner of our lives, the pathological need of the surveillance state to access and store all this information also makes the state porous and vulnerable.

The latest example of this vulnerability is that a 21-year-old lowly Air National Guard, Jack Teixeira, had access to the [top secret documents](#) of the Pentagon and the CIA on Ukraine. He shared these documents on a private Discord gaming server, not for any noble purpose of stopping the war, but for simply getting bragging rights. Whether this was the only leak, are others also leaking documents to create a fog of war, is a mixture of leaks, or are they also plants is another story. What is important to this story is that Airman Teixeira, though near the bottom of the ladder in the U.S. Air Force, has access to top secret documents, normally seen by the top echelons of the armed forces and the intelligence authorities of the United States. He was part of a team that managed the core network and was one of the 1.5 million people who had this level of access.

Yes, we today are in a panopticon of the surveillance state where our rulers can look into every part of our lives. But what Manning and Teixeira show us is that the same technology that allows them to look at what we are doing also works in reverse. As long as we have Assange, Ellsberg, Manning and others, they are also visible to us. As the English poet Shelly wrote in 1819 after the Peterloo Massacre, "*Ye are many, they are few.*" This has not changed in the digital age as well.

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Noam Chomsky Speaks On What ChatGPT Is Really Good For



Noam Chomsky

The subset of artificial intelligence known as Large Language Models can't tell us anything about human language learning, but it excels at misleading the uninformed.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is sweeping the world. It is transforming every walk of life and raising in the process major ethical concerns for society and the future of humanity. ChatGPT, which is dominating social media, is an AI-powered chatbot developed by OpenAI. It is a subset of machine learning and relies on what is called Large Language Models that can generate human-like responses. The potential application for such technology is indeed enormous, which is why there are already calls to regulate AI like ChatGPT.

Can AI outsmart humans? Does it pose public threats? Indeed, can AI become an existential threat? The world's preeminent linguist [Noam Chomsky](#), and one of the most esteemed public intellectuals of all time, whose intellectual stature has been

compared to that of Galileo, Newton, and Descartes, tackles these nagging questions in the interview that follows.

C. J. Polychroniou: As a scientific discipline, artificial intelligence (AI) dates back to the 1950s, but over the last couple of decades it has been making inroads into all sort of fields, including banking, insurance, auto manufacturing, music, and defense. In fact, the use of AI techniques has been shown in some instance to surpass human capabilities, such as in a game of chess. Are machines likely to become smarter than humans?

Noam Chomsky: Just to clarify terminology, the term “machine” here means *program*, basically a theory written in a notation that can be executed by a computer—and an unusual kind of theory in interesting ways that we can put aside here.

We can make a rough distinction between pure engineering and science. There is no sharp boundary, but it’s a useful first approximation. Pure engineering seeks to produce a product that may be of some use. Science seeks understanding. If the topic is human intelligence, or cognitive capacities of other organisms, science seeks understanding of these biological systems.

As I understand them, the founders of AI—Alan Turing, Herbert Simon, Marvin Minsky, and others—regarded it as science, part of the then-emerging cognitive sciences, making use of new technologies and discoveries in the mathematical theory of computation to advance understanding. Over the years those concerns have faded and have largely been displaced by an engineering orientation. The earlier concerns are now commonly dismissed, sometimes condescendingly, as GOFAI—good old-fashioned AI.

Continuing with the question, is it likely that programs will be devised that surpass human capabilities? We have to be careful about the word “capabilities,” for reasons to which I’ll return. But if we take the term to refer to human performance, then the answer is: definitely yes. In fact, they have long existed: the calculator in a laptop, for example. It can far exceed what humans can do, if only because of lack of time and memory. For closed systems like chess, it was well understood in the ‘50s that sooner or later, with the advance of massive computing capacities and a long period of preparation, a program could be devised to defeat a grandmaster who is playing with a bound on memory and

time. The achievement years later was pretty much PR for IBM. Many biological organisms surpass human cognitive capacities in much deeper ways. The desert ants in my backyard have minuscule brains, but far exceed human navigational capacities, in principle, not just performance. There is no Great Chain of Being with humans at the top.

The products of AI engineering are being used in many fields, for better or for worse. Even simple and familiar ones can be quite useful: in the language area, programs like autofill, live transcription, google translate, among others. With vastly greater computing power and more sophisticated programming, there should be other useful applications, in the sciences as well. There already have been some: Assisting in the study of protein folding is one recent case where massive and rapid search technology has helped scientists to deal with a critical and recalcitrant problem.

Engineering projects can be useful, or harmful. Both questions arise in the case of engineering AI. Current work with Large Language Models (LLMs), including chatbots, provides tools for disinformation, defamation, and misleading the uninformed. The threats are enhanced when they are combined with artificial images and replication of voice. With different concerns in mind, tens of thousands of AI researchers have recently [called](#) for a moratorium on development because of potential dangers they perceive.

As always, possible benefits of technology have to be weighed against potential costs.

Quite different questions arise when we turn to AI and science. Here caution is necessary because of exorbitant and reckless claims, often amplified in the media. To clarify the issues, let's consider cases, some hypothetical, some real.

I mentioned insect navigation, which is an astonishing achievement. Insect scientists have made much progress in studying how it is achieved, though the neurophysiology, a very difficult matter, remains elusive, along with evolution of the systems. The same is true of the amazing feats of birds and sea turtles that travel thousands of miles and unerringly return to the place of origin.

Suppose Tom Jones, a proponent of engineering AI, comes along and says: "Your work has all been refuted. The problem is solved. Commercial airline pilots achieve the same or even better results all the time."

If even bothering to respond, we'd laugh.

Take the case of the seafaring exploits of Polynesians, still alive among Indigenous tribes, using stars, wind, currents to land their canoes at a designated spot hundreds of miles away. This too has been the topic of much research to find out how they do it. Tom Jones has the answer: "Stop wasting your time; naval vessels do it all the time."

Same response.

Let's now turn to a real case, language acquisition. It's been the topic of extensive and highly illuminating research in recent years, showing that infants have very rich knowledge of the ambient language (or languages), far beyond what they exhibit in performance. It is achieved with little evidence, and in some crucial cases none at all. At best, as careful statistical studies have shown, available data are sparse, particularly when rank-frequency ("Zipf's law") is taken into account.

Enter Tom Jones: "You've been refuted. Paying no attention to your discoveries, LLMs that scan astronomical amounts of data can find statistical regularities that make it possible to simulate the data on which they are trained, producing something that looks pretty much like normal human behavior. Chatbots."

This case differs from the others. First, it is real. Second, people don't laugh; in fact, many are awed. Third, unlike the hypothetical cases, the actual results are far from what's claimed.

These considerations bring up a minor problem with the current LLM enthusiasm: its total absurdity, as in the hypothetical cases where we recognize it at once. But there are much more serious problems than absurdity.

One is that the LLM systems are designed in such a way that they cannot tell us anything about language, learning, or other aspects of cognition, a matter of principle, irremediable. Double the terabytes of data scanned, add another trillion parameters, use even more of California's energy, and the simulation of behavior will improve, while revealing more clearly the failure in principle of the approach to yield any understanding. The reason is elementary: The systems work just as well with impossible languages that infants cannot acquire as with those they acquire quickly and virtually reflexively.

It's as if a biologist were to say: "I have a great new theory of organisms. It lists many that exist and many that can't possibly exist, and I can tell you nothing about the distinction."

Again, we'd laugh. Or should.

Not Tom Jones—now referring to actual cases. Persisting in his radical departure from science, Tom Jones responds: "How do you know any of this until you've investigated all languages?" At this point the abandonment of normal science becomes even clearer. By parity of argument, we can throw out genetics and molecular biology, the theory of evolution, and the rest of the biological sciences, which haven't sampled more than a tiny fraction of organisms. And for good measure, we can cast out all of physics. Why believe in the laws of motion? How many objects have actually been observed in motion?

There is, furthermore, the small matter of burden of proof. Those who propose a theory have the responsibility of showing that it makes some sense, in this case, showing that it fails for impossible languages. It is not the responsibility of others to refute the proposal, though in this case it seems easy enough to do so.

Let's shift attention to normal science, where matters become interesting. Even a single example of language acquisition can yield rich insight into the distinction between possible and impossible languages.

The reasons are straightforward, and familiar. All growth and development, including what is called "learning," is a process that begins with a state of the organism and transforms it step-by-step to later stages.

Acquisition of language is such a process. The initial state is the biological endowment of the faculty of language, which obviously exists, even if it is, as some believe, a particular combination of other capacities. That's highly unlikely for reasons long understood, but it's not relevant to our concerns here, so we can put it aside. Plainly there is a biological endowment for the human faculty of language. The merest truism.

Transition proceeds to a relatively stable state, changed only superficially beyond: knowledge of the language. External data trigger and partially shape the process. Studying the state attained (knowledge of the language) and the external data, we can draw far-reaching conclusions about the initial state, the biological

endowment that makes language acquisition possible. The conclusions about the initial state impose a distinction between possible and impossible languages. The distinction holds for all those who share the initial state—all humans, as far as is known; there seems to be no difference in capacity to acquire language among existing human groups.

All of this is normal science, and it has achieved many results.

Experiment has shown that the stable state is substantially obtained very early, by three to four years of age. It's also well-established that the faculty of language has basic properties specific to humans, hence that it is a true species property: common to human groups and in fundamental ways a unique human attribute.

A lot is left out in this schematic account, notably the role of natural law in growth and development: in the case of a computational system like language, principles of computational efficiency. But this is the essence of the matter. Again, normal science.

It is important to be clear about Aristotle's distinction between possession of knowledge and use of knowledge (in contemporary terminology, competence and performance). In the language case, the stable state obtained is possession of knowledge, coded in the brain. The internal system determines an unbounded array of structured expressions, each of which we can regard as formulating a thought, each externalizable in some sensorimotor system, usually sound though it could be sign or even (with difficulty) touch.

The internally coded system is accessed in use of knowledge (performance). Performance includes the internal use of language in thought: reflection, planning, recollection, and a great deal more. Statistically speaking that is by far the overwhelming use of language. It is inaccessible to introspection, though we can learn a lot about it by the normal methods of science, from "outside," metaphorically speaking. What is called "inner speech" is, in fact, fragments of externalized language with the articulatory apparatus muted. It is only a remote reflection of the internal use of language, important matters I cannot pursue here.

Other forms of use of language are perception (parsing) and production, the latter crucially involving properties that remain as mysterious to us today as when they were regarded with awe and amazement by Galileo and his contemporaries at the dawn of modern science.

The principal goal of science is to discover the internal system, both in its initial state in the human faculty of language and in the particular forms it assumes in acquisition. To the extent that this internal system is understood, we can proceed to investigate how it enters into performance, interacting with many other factors that enter into use of language.

Data of performance provide evidence about the nature of the internal system, particularly so when they are refined by experiment, as in standard field work. But even the most massive collection of data is necessarily misleading in crucial ways. It keeps to what is normally produced, not the knowledge of the language coded in the brain, the primary object under investigation for those who want to understand the nature of language and its use. That internal object determines infinitely many possibilities of a kind that will not be used in normal behavior because of factors irrelevant to language, like short-term memory constraints, topics studied 60 years ago. Observed data will also include much that lies outside the system coded in the brain, often conscious use of language in ways that violate the rules for rhetorical purposes. These are truisms known to all field workers, who rely on elicitation techniques with informants, basically experiments, to yield a refined corpus that excludes irrelevant restrictions and deviant expressions. The same is true when linguists use themselves as informants, a perfectly sensible and normal procedure, common in the history of psychology up to the present.

Proceeding further with normal science, we find that the internal processes and elements of the language cannot be detected by inspection of observed phenomena. Often these elements do not even appear in speech (or writing), though their effects, often subtle, can be detected. That is yet another reason why restriction to observed phenomena, as in LLM approaches, sharply limits understanding of the internal processes that are the core objects of inquiry into the nature of language, its acquisition and use. But that is not relevant if concern for science and understanding have been abandoned in favor of other goals.

More generally in the sciences, for millennia, conclusions have been reached by experiments—often thought experiments—each a radical abstraction from phenomena. Experiments are theory-driven, seeking to discard the innumerable irrelevant factors that enter into observed phenomena—like linguistic performance. All of this is so elementary that it's rarely even discussed. And familiar. As noted, the basic distinction goes back to Aristotle's distinction

between possession of knowledge and use of knowledge. The former is the central object of study. Secondary (and quite serious) studies investigate how the internally stored system of knowledge is used in performance, along with the many non-linguistic factors that enter into what is directly observed.

We might also recall an observation of evolutionary biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky, famous primarily for his work with *Drosophila*: Each species is unique, and humans are the uniquest of all. If we are interested in understanding what kind of creatures we are—following the injunction of the Delphic Oracle 2,500 years ago—we will be primarily concerned with what makes humans the uniquest of all, primarily language and thought, closely intertwined, as recognized in a rich tradition going back to classical Greece and India. Most behavior is fairly routine, hence to some extent predictable. What provides real insight into what makes us unique is what is not routine, which we do find, sometimes by experiment, sometimes by observation, from normal children to great artists and scientists.

One final comment in this connection. Society has been plagued for a century by massive corporate campaigns to encourage disdain for science, topics well studied by Naomi Oreskes among others. It began with corporations whose products are murderous: lead, tobacco, asbestos, later fossil fuels. Their motives are understandable. The goal of a business in a capitalist society is profit, not human welfare. That's an institutional fact: Don't play the game and you're out, replaced by someone who will.

The corporate PR departments recognized early on that it would be a mistake to deny the mounting scientific evidence of the lethal effects of their products. That would be easily refuted. Better to sow doubt, encourage uncertainty, contempt for these pointy-headed suits who have never painted a house but come down from Washington to tell me not to use lead paint, destroying my business (a real case, easily multiplied). That has worked all too well. Right now it is leading us on a path to destruction of organized human life on earth.

In intellectual circles, similar effects have been produced by the postmodern critique of science, [dismantled](#) by Jean Bricmont and Alan Sokal, but still much alive in some circles.

It may be unkind to suggest the question, but it is, I think, fair to ask whether the

Tom Joneses and those who uncritically repeat and even amplify their careless proclamations are contributing to the same baleful tendencies.

CJP: ChatGPT is a natural-language-driven chatbot that uses artificial intelligence to allow human-like conversations. In a recent article in [The New York Times](#), in conjunction with two other authors, you shut down the new chatbots as a hype because they simply cannot match the linguistic competence of humans. Isn't it however possible that future innovations in AI can produce engineering projects that will match and perhaps even surpass human capabilities?

NC: Credit for the article should be given to the actual author, Jeffrey Watumull, a fine mathematician-linguist-philosopher. The two listed co-authors were consultants, who agree with the article but did not write it.

It's true that chatbots cannot in principle match the linguistic competence of humans, for the reasons repeated above. Their basic design prevents them from reaching the minimal condition of adequacy for a theory of human language: distinguishing possible from impossible languages. Since that is a property of the design, it cannot be overcome by future innovations in this kind of AI. However, it is quite possible that future engineering projects will match and even surpass human capabilities, if we mean human capacity to act, performance. As mentioned above, some have long done so: automatic calculators for example. More interestingly, as mentioned, insects with minuscule brains surpass human capacities understood as competence.

CJP: In the aforementioned article, it was also observed that today's AI projects do not possess a human moral faculty. Does this obvious fact make AI robots less of a threat to the human race? I reckon the argument can be that it makes them perhaps even more so.

NC: It is indeed an obvious fact, understanding "moral faculty" broadly. Unless carefully controlled, AI engineering can pose severe threats. Suppose, for example, that care of patients was automated. The inevitable errors that would be overcome by human judgment could produce a horror story. Or suppose that humans were removed from evaluation of the threats determined by automated missile-defense systems. As a shocking historical record [informs](#) us, that would be the end of human civilization.

CJP: Regulators and law enforcement agencies in Europe are raising concerns

about the spread of ChatGPT while a recently submitted piece of European Union legislation is trying to deal with AI by classifying such tools according to their perceived level of risk. Do you agree with those who are concerned that ChatGPT poses a serious public threat? Moreover, do you really think that the further development of AI tools can be halted until safeguards can be introduced?

NC: I can easily sympathize with efforts to try to control the threats posed by advanced technology, including this case. I am, however, skeptical about the possibility of doing so. I suspect that the genie is out of the bottle. Malicious actors—institutional or individual—can probably find ways to evade safeguards. Such suspicions are of course no reason not to try, and to exercise vigilance.

Source: <https://www.commondreams.org/>

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Understanding The Controversy And Legality Of ‘Overseas Police Stations’



John P. Ruehl

The centers have highlighted China’s growing influence, as well as the increasing legal complexity of managing citizens and dual citizens in Chinese diaspora communities.

The [apprehension of two men](#) in New York on April 16, 2023, marked the first known U.S. arrests in connection with Chinese overseas police stations. Both men were working in a building in Manhattan's Chinatown rented by the [America ChangLe Association](#), a charity that had its tax-exempt status revoked in May 2022. [More Chinese police stations](#) are believed to be operating across the U.S.—though, like in other countries, not all their locations are known.

While foreign intelligence agencies conduct extensive espionage operations in other countries, domestic law enforcement agencies are also occasionally active abroad. The FBI trained many Latin American [police units throughout the Cold War](#) and has [been covertly active](#) in the region for decades. In 2020, Russia also [offered to send a police force](#) to Belarus during mass protests against Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who [blamed the West](#) for trying to foment a color revolution.

However, the scale of China's international program and the scope of its responsibilities is notable. Run primarily by ethnic Chinese residents, the main concern of these stations appears to be managing the more than [10.5 million Chinese citizens](#) living overseas, and to a lesser extent the 35 to 60 million people in the Chinese diaspora. The considerable size of Chinese overseas communities has allowed Beijing to field an extensive global presence through these stations.

China's first known use of these stations [occurred in 2004](#) with the establishment of the Community and Police Cooperation Center in Johannesburg, following several attacks on Chinese citizens and businesses. The center opened with the blessing of the South African government, and more than a dozen have since opened in the country. As in other countries, they help Chinese citizens obtain documents, assist in criminal matters, integrate into the country, as well as offer "[security, fire, and ambulance teams](#)." The Chinese government maintains that they are not police stations but instead function as "[service centers](#)."

[Two reports](#), released in September and December 2022 by the human rights organization Safeguard Defenders, indicated that there are now more than 100 overseas Chinese stations active in more than 50 countries. Managed by [China's Ministry of Public Security](#), the stations are operated by police agencies from [three Chinese provinces](#) (Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Fujian) [and are divided into](#) centers, which are greater in scale, and liaisons, which have a lower profile but are more numerous.

Though the stations had previously drawn little attention, the reports have made Western countries far more wary of them in the context of intensifying geopolitical tensions with China over the last few years. [There are also fears](#) that the stations act as part of China's [United Front](#) system to build political, economic, and cultural connections to influence other countries.

The stations have also brought increased Western attention due to their role in convincing Chinese citizens to return to China to face legal charges. Now known as [Operation Fox Hunt](#), Safeguard Defenders estimates that from April 2021 to July 2022, [230,000 Chinese citizens](#) were persuaded or coerced into returning to China, with China's Ministry of Public Security itself stating that [210,000 citizens](#) returned in 2021. Western officials [had already criticized](#) China for abusing Interpol's Red Notice system to arrest and extradite citizens abroad for political purposes, while Operation Fox Hunt has allowed Chinese officials to bypass Interpol and deal directly with its own citizens.

Interrupting the ability of China to carry out this program is increasingly becoming a domestic security priority for the U.S. But the two men who were arrested in New York appear to be both [U.S.](#) and [Chinese](#) citizens, and the incident has become the latest attempt by Chinese and Western authorities to exert authority over each other's citizens, as well as dual citizens.

Several dual Chinese/U.S. citizens were prevented from leaving China [in 2017](#) and [2018](#) in an apparent effort to convince their family members living in the U.S. to return to China. Meanwhile in 2018, Meng Wanzhou, a Chinese national and CFO of Huawei, was placed under house arrest in Canada to await extradition to the U.S. for fraud. In response, two Canadian businessmen in China were also detained and prevented from leaving, based on espionage allegations. [All were released in 2021](#), with Chinese and U.S. authorities denying any connection between them.

The U.S. does not have an extradition treaty with China, while the [few European countries that do](#) have taken steps to reduce China's ability to [enforce it in recent months](#). While Chinese officials have demonstrated their willingness to detain dual citizens in China, the overseas stations allow Chinese officers to locate and contact citizens living abroad directly. Through harassment, intimidation, and coercion, Beijing has bypassed formal extradition methods and quietly convinced hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens to return home.

Beijing's approach to dealing with wanted citizens abroad contrasts with techniques employed by other countries. Many, including the [U.S.](#), [Russia](#), and [Iran](#), have used military, intelligence, or organized crime assets to assassinate citizens opposed to the governments. Iran is also known to have [resorted to kidnapping](#) to bring citizens back to the country, though this has also [generated significant attention](#).

The role of these stations in advancing Chinese interests and extraditing Chinese citizens has naturally caused concern in the West. Yet until the 2022 Safeguard Defenders reports, the Western response had been somewhat slow. Only after the scale of the stations became public knowledge did Western officials take substantial steps to clamp down on them. FBI director Christopher Wray stated in September 2022 that he was "[looking into the legal parameters](#)" of the stations, and the Manhattan station was [raided by the agency in October](#).

More than a dozen other countries have [also launched probes](#) against the stations in recent months, and other countries have significantly scaled back their cooperation with them. The [growth in the number of Chinese tourists](#) traveling abroad previously incentivized many governments to facilitate cooperation with Chinese police forces, for example, and Chinese police officers were [formerly permitted](#) to assist Chinese tourists visiting Italian cities. But this decision was [reversed in December 2022](#), while Croatia is under similar pressure to restrict [Chinese tourist assistance police patrols in its cities](#). Other restrictive measures in the U.S. and Europe are likely to be introduced.

Western officials, however, have so far refrained from bringing too much attention to the centers. Allegations of McCarthyism and racial profiling could cause social unrest and provide Beijing with evidence of hostile Western intent toward overseas Chinese communities. Additionally, acknowledging the existence of covert Chinese officials operating across the West would publicly undermine the sanctity of Western sovereignty and reinforce perceptions of China's growing power in international affairs.

The stations, nonetheless, are destined to remain a sticking point in the Western-Chinese relationship. Operation Fox Hunt reveals that not even the U.S. has been able to protect dual citizens or those seeking asylum on its own soil. Though Chinese officials will likely have to act even more discreetly for some of their overseas operations, U.S. officials have yet to locate where all these stations are.

And even if they are found, the Chinese government has traditionally [cultivated close ties](#) with overseas Chinese communities and has additional avenues to project influence.

Despite Western countries' increasing concern with the stations, other countries which host them appear unperturbed and will continue to cooperate with China for a variety of reasons. [In 2019](#), Chinese police officers began patrolling several Serbian cities alongside Serbian police forces to assist Chinese tourists. Additionally, Chinese police officers have worked out of an office in Cambodia's national police headquarters [since 2019](#) to manage Chinese citizens suspected of being involved in crime. Chinese police and security forces have also drastically increased their cooperation with their Latin American counterparts [over the last decade](#) to "speed up the signing process of treaties concerning judicial assistance in criminal matters, and expand cooperation in such areas as fighting crimes, fugitive repatriation and asset recovery," [according to the Chinese government](#).

[In February 2023](#), China also unveiled its Global Security Initiative to enhance training and cooperation with developing countries' security forces. And because Chinese stations [do act as legitimate centers aimed to help Chinese citizens abroad](#), countries with good relations with China and existing and growing Chinese immigrant and worker communities will likely allow further expansion for Chinese overseas stations.

The stations will continue to evolve to suit the environment of their host countries. Their ongoing operations show the increasingly sophisticated ways China aims to aid its citizens abroad, convince others to return home, and extend its cooperation agreements and influence activities around the world.

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Source: Globetrotter

After Years Of Attacking Protesters, Sudan's Army And Paramilitary RSF Turn On Each Other



List of cities in Sudan - Map
Wikipedia

More than 500 people have been killed and 4,000 injured since fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 15.

Groups such as the Sudan Doctors Union are worried the fighting could escalate after the evacuation of foreign nationals. Thousands have already fled the country. Over 69 percent of the hospitals in and around the conflict zones are inoperable. There is a severe shortage of medicine, food, water, and electricity.

The fighting is the latest in a series of political convulsions since [massive pro-democracy protests overthrew long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir](#) in April 2019. Army chief General Abdel-Fattah Burhan, who is the chair of the ruling military junta, and his deputy and RSF head, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, aka

Hemeti, were key members of Bashir's regime. The RSF was [formed out of janjaweed militias](#) who were responsible for mass killings in Darfur during Bashir's reign.

Burhan and Hemeti took over de facto control after Bashir's fall and were responsible for the [massacre of more than 100 protesters](#) who were demanding civilian rule at a sit-in in Khartoum in June 2019. In its aftermath, they negotiated [with right-wing parties](#) in the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) coalition and inaugurated a civilian-military transitional government in August.

While this government [had a civilian Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok](#), defense, police, and foreign policy were under the control of the army, with [Burhan heading a 'Sovereignty Council.'](#) The army controls a substantial chunk of the economy while the RSF has gorged on the mineral wealth of Darfur.

The transitional arrangement was supposed to pave the way for civilian rule. Instead, in October 2021, [Burhan and Hemeti took complete control in a coup](#).

Throughout the years since the coup, protesters took to the streets, [often in the hundreds of thousands](#), refusing any compromise with the junta and demanding genuine democracy and civilian control of the military. The protests were spearheaded by the [Resistance Committees \(RCs\)](#), a [network of over 5,000 neighborhood organizations](#). Left forces, including the Sudanese Communist Party, were a key force too. Over 120 people were killed in the attacks on demonstrations in the months following the October 2021 coup.

[Disregarding popular sentiment](#) against any negotiations with the junta, the international community—the UN, U.S., UK, European Union, African Union, and the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development—supported renewed talks between the junta and the FFC.

This negotiation led to the [Framework Agreement in December 2022](#), which was to be concluded with a final political agreement that would have led to the formation of another joint government with civilians on April 11, 2023.

This plan did not materialize as the SAF and RSF turned on each other after disagreeing over the timespan for the integration of the latter into the former.

The Sudanese Communist Party has reiterated its [rejection of any compromise](#)

with the junta. It maintains that international support for another power-sharing compromise after the October coup served to legitimize the junta, which eventually led to this infighting.

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