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Charles University

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International military assistance: a historical and conceptual genealogy

International Military Assistance (IMA) is undergoing a major revival in the light of the war in Ukraine, in which it is a fundamental marker, both in terms of the ability of the players to last in a war of attrition (Western support for Ukraine, North Korean and Iranian support for Russia) and as a means of indirect action for the benefit of the states providing the aid. While this case study is essential and will not fail to be referred to, this contribution aims to move beyond the specific case to examine International Military Assistance as a foreign policy tool. The purpose of this contribution is to carry out a conceptual and historical study of military assistance. It will then be seen that the common definition based on the four pillars of Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip is a protean implementation, strongly determined by the international context in which it takes place. An essential but not easy distinction with co-belligerence will be made, providing a welcome conceptual perspective for the other contributions on the panel, which will look at contemporary case studies in IMA. Finally, a brief presentation of the history of IMA will also be given to provide a comparative overview, both in terms of the evolution of doctrines (particularly since the founding American document of 1976 establishing the creation of Foreign Internal Defense dedicated to military assistance) and in terms of the variety of practices, from lease loans and the supply of equipment (cf. The Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949) to indirect intervention by foreign volunteers (ex: Spanish Civil War). In conclusion, this contribution is intended as a theoretical and historical characterization of IMA and defense cooperation, which will provide a conceptual introduction to the analysis of specific cases in the remainder of the panel.

What discipline or branch of humanities or social sciences do you identify yourself with?

Political Sciences - History

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No, I am submitting a Closed Panel abstract

Are you a PhD student or early-career researcher?

No

Primary author: FOUILLET, Thibault (Directeur Scientifique - Institut d'Etudes de Stratégie et de Défense, Université Jean Moulin Lyon III)

Presenter: FOUILLET, Thibault (Directeur Scientifique - Institut d'Etudes de Stratégie et de Défense, Université Jean Moulin Lyon III)

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