

Topic Summaries

South Africa's fragile democracy - The African National Congress (ANC) party has governed South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994. But the party today suffers from popular frustration over official corruption and economic stagnation. A weaker ANC could lead to political fragmentation in this relatively new democracy.

Russia's foreign policy - Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia is projecting an autocratic model of governance abroad and working to undermine the influence of liberal democracies, namely along Russia's historical borderlands. Putin's foreign policy toolkit includes interfering in elections in other countries, forming alliances with autocrats, and engaging in proxy wars. How does Putin conceive of national interests, and why do Russian citizens support him?

China and America: the new geopolitical equation - In the last 15 years, China has implemented a wide-ranging strategy of economic outreach and expansion of all its national capacities, including military and diplomatic capacities. China has made inroads through efforts like the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). What are Beijing's geopolitical objectives? What leadership and political conditions in each society underlie growing Sino-American tensions?

Turkey: a partner in crisis - In the wake of a failed military coup in July 2016, the autocratic trend in Ankara took a turn for the worse. In this age of a worsening "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West, even more important than its place on the map is what Turkey symbolically represents as the most institutionally Westernized Muslim country in the world.

Media and foreign policy - Conventional journalism now competes with user-generated content. Official channels of communication can be circumvented through social media. Foreign policy is tweeted from the White House and "fake news" has entered the zeitgeist. Cyberwarfare, hacking and misinformation pose complex security threats. How are actors using media to pursue and defend their interests in the international arena?

Global health: progress and challenges - The collective action of countries, communities and organizations over the last 30 years has literally saved millions of lives around the world. Yet terrible inequalities in health and wellbeing persist. We also remain vulnerable to the emergence of new and deadly pandemics. For these reasons, the next several decades will be just as important—if not more so—than the last in determining wellbeing across nations.

U.S. global engagement and the military - The global power balance is rapidly evolving, leaving the United States at a turning point with respect to its level of engagement and the role of its military. Some argue for an "America First" paradigm, with a large military to ensure security; others advocate for a restoration of American multilateral leadership and a strengthened role for diplomacy. How does the military function in today's international order, and how might it be balanced with diplomatic and foreign assistance capabilities?

The waning of Pax Americana? - During the first months of Donald Trump's presidency, the U.S. began a historic shift away from Pax Americana, the liberal international order that was established in the wake of World War II. Since 1945, Pax Americana has promised peaceful international relations and an open economy, buttressed by U.S. military power. Some believe that President Trump is championing

isolationism and protectionism Others believe that he is advocating selective U.S. engagement, where foreign commitments are limited to areas of vital U.S. interest and