

A brief summary of each of the major themes in Michael Doyle's work.

Written in third person, with the help of Elliot Gross.

## I. The Comparative Study of Empires

His major work in the area of empires is his PhD Dissertation and later book, *Empires* (Cornell Univ Press). This book seeks to account for the imperial phenomenon and to establish its importance as a subject in the study of the theory of world politics. Doyle believes that empires can best be defined as relationships of effective political control imposed by some political societies—those called metropolises—on other political societies—called peripheries. To build an explanation of the birth, life, and death of empires, he starts with an overview and critique of the leading theories of imperialism. Supplementing theoretical analysis with historical description, he considers episodes from the life cycles of empires from the classical and modern world, concentrating on the nineteenth-century scramble for Africa. He describes in detail the slow entanglement of the peripheral societies on the Nile and the Niger with metropolitan power, the survival of independent Ethiopia, Bismarck's manipulation of imperial diplomacy for European ends, the race for imperial possession in the 1880s, and the rapid setting of the imperial sun. Combining a sensitivity to historical detail with a judicious search for general patterns, *Empires* engages the attention of social scientists in many disciplines.

*Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); (Beijing: CITIC Press, 2024).

## II. Liberal Internationalism, Democratic Peace, and Kant

Michael Doyle's analysis of liberal internationalism revisits the liberal claim that respect for individual liberty fosters restraint and peaceful intentions in foreign policy. Building on Kant's Perpetual Peace, Doyle identifies both the achievements and contradictions of liberal states. He highlights the historical emergence of a "separate peace" among liberal democracies, noting that constitutionally secure liberal regimes have not waged war against one another,

thereby substantiating the central claim of the democratic peace thesis. At the same time, Doyle underscores liberalism's propensity for interventionism and imperialism in relations with nonliberal states, often justified through appeals to liberal principles and universal rights. In the *APSR* article, he situates these dynamics within three intellectual traditions: Schumpeter's liberal pacifism, Machiavelli's republican imperialism, and Kant's liberal republicanism. Of these, Kant provides the most comprehensive framework, accounting for both the pacific union of liberal states and the liberal temptation toward coercion. Doyle concludes that the coexistence of liberal pacifism and liberal imperialism is not accidental but rooted in divergent conceptions of the citizen and the state. His work thus illuminates the dual legacy of liberalism in world politics: a normative commitment to peace within the liberal order and a tendency toward aggression beyond it.

"Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs: Part I," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, XII, No. 3, June 1983, pp. 205-235.

"Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs: Part II," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, XII, no. 4, October 1983, pp. 323-353.

"Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4, December, 1986, pp. 1151-1169. Noted as second most downloaded international relations article in 100th years of publication of *APSR* and among the top 20 most cited (*American Political Science Review* 100:4 (November, 2006) pp. 17-18).

### III. International Political Theory, Including Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism

Doyle's *Ways of War and Peace*, his most extensive work in international political theory, offers a systematic engagement with the enduring traditions of the discipline—realism, liberalism, and socialism—through a dialogue with classical thinkers such as Thucydides, Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, Kant, Marx, and Lenin. Doyle situates these traditions in relation to the central dilemmas of war and

peace, arguing that while no single school provides a comprehensive explanatory framework, each contributes indispensable insights. Realism foregrounds the dynamics of power, insecurity, and conflict; liberalism emphasizes institutions, law, commerce, and the distinctive peace among liberal states; socialism directs attention to structural inequalities, imperialism, and the role of class in shaping international order. Doyle's analysis is notable for combining normative inquiry with empirical assessment, testing theoretical claims against historical cases. In the wake of the Cold War, he contends that the resources of classical theory remain vital for grappling with contemporary challenges such as humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping, and the tensions between liberal and non-liberal regimes. Rather than advocating a singular paradigm, Doyle advances a pluralistic approach, urging policymakers and scholars alike to draw upon the conceptual tools of the great political theorists in order to navigate the complexities of post-Cold War international relations.

*Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997). Doyle is working now on a new and revised edition that will include Fascism and a new section on the Global South.

#### IV. Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

Michael Doyle, in collaboration with Nicholas Sambanis, advances a theoretically grounded and empirically tested account of international peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Their analysis, initially articulated in "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis," conceptualizes peacebuilding capacity as a function of three interrelated dimensions: the intensity of local hostilities, the availability of domestic capacities for change, and the extent of international commitment. These dimensions form a "political space" within which sustainable peace can be pursued. Drawing on a dataset of 124 civil wars since 1945, Doyle and Sambanis demonstrate that multilateral United Nations operations significantly improve prospects for both durable peace and democratization. This argument is extended in *Making War and Building Peace*, which stresses that UN

interventions must be specifically calibrated to the dynamics of each conflict and endowed with sufficient authority and resources. Although the UN is constrained in its ability to enforce peace in ongoing wars dominated by spoilers, it plays a crucial role in supporting peace settlements, institutional reconstruction, and compliance monitoring. Moreover, Doyle underscores the importance of economic development as a long-term foundation for peace, suggesting that the UN's role in postwar development should be expanded.

“International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis,” with Nicholas Sambanis, *American Political Science Review* 94, 4 (December, 2000) pp. 778-801

*Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, with Nicholas Sambanis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

#### V. The Law and Ethics of Preemptive and Preventive War

Tackling one of the most controversial policy issues of the post-September 11 world, Professor Doyle argues that neither the Bush Doctrine nor customary international law is capable of adequately responding to the pressing security threats of our times. In *Striking First*, Doyle shows how the Bush Doctrine has consistently disregarded a vital distinction in international law between acts of preemption in the face of imminent threats and those of prevention in the face of the growing offensive capability of an enemy. Taking a close look at the Iraq war, the 1998 attack against al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, among other conflicts, he contends that international law must rely more completely on United Nations Charter procedures and develop clearer standards for dealing with lethal but not immediate threats. After explaining how the UN can again play an important role in enforcing international law and strengthening international guidelines for responding to threats, he describes the rare circumstances when unilateral action is indeed necessary.

*Striking First: Preemption and Prevention in International Conflict*, ed. by Stephen Macedo, with commentary by Harold Koh, Richard Tuck and Jeff McMahan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

## VI. The Law and Ethics of International Intervention

The question of when or if a nation should intervene in another country's affairs is one of the most important concerns in today's volatile world. Taking John Stuart Mill's famous 1859 essay "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" as his starting point, Doyle addresses the thorny issue of when a state's sovereignty should be respected and when it should be overridden or disregarded by other states in the name of humanitarian protection, national self-determination, or national security. In this time of complex social and political interplay and increasingly sophisticated and deadly weaponry, Doyle reinvigorates Mill's principles for a new era while assessing the new United Nations doctrine of responsibility to protect. In the twenty-first century, intervention can take many forms: military and economic, unilateral and multilateral. Doyle's argument examines essential moral and legal questions underlying significant American foreign policy dilemmas of recent years, including Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

*The Question of Intervention: John Stuart Mill and the Responsibility to Protect* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2015).

## VII. The Development and Explanation of the "Model International Mobility Convention" (Including International Law and Policy for Migrants and Refugees)

Doyle's work on the Model International Mobility Convention (MIMC) advances a systematic response to the limitations of existing migration and refugee law. Current instruments, particularly the 1951 Refugee Convention, provide only partial protections and fail to address the full spectrum of cross-border mobility. Doyle and his commission therefore constructed the MIMC

as a comprehensive and cumulative framework establishing a minimum “floor” of rights for all categories of movers, ranging from tourists and students to labor migrants, investors, refugees, and the forcibly displaced. A central innovation is the recognition of “forced migrants,” whose claims to protection arise from threats of serious harm—including conflict, environmental degradation, and organized violence—rather than solely from persecution. The Convention further reformulates temporary labor migration by proposing safeguards such as portable pensions and multiple-entry visas, while alleviating host-state concerns that had hindered ratification of earlier treaties. In terms of governance, it introduces mechanisms such as a mobility visa clearinghouse to expand legal pathways and a responsibility-sharing system, modeled on climate agreements, to distribute equitably the financial and social burdens of refugee protection. Doyle conceptualizes the MIMC as a “realistic utopia”: a normative blueprint that combines legal precision, ethical solidarity, and reciprocal state interests. Its purpose is not immediate codification but to serve as a coherent model capable of guiding states toward a fairer and more humane regime of international mobility.

“The Model International Mobility Convention” *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, vol 56, no. 2 (2018), pp. 219 -237.

“The Model International Mobility Convention: Beyond Migrants and Refugees,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol 163, No. 3, (September, 2019) pp. 260-270.

“An Immigration Philosophy Fit for Our Better Selves,” *Carnegie Council*, March 17, 2025.

<https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/media/article/immigration-philosophy-better-selves>.

## VIII. The Geopolitics of the New Cold War

In *Cold Peace: Avoiding the New Cold War*, Doyle advances a nuanced analysis of the emerging geopolitical order defined by intensifying rivalry among the United States, China, and Russia. He argues that the world could enter a phase of “Cold Peace” rather than a full-scale “Cold War II” if prudent and realistic diplomatic measures were taken to promote accommodation. Unlike the ideological confrontation of the twentieth century, this new contest is shaped by geoeconomic competition, cyber operations, propaganda, nationalism, and security dilemmas, rather than by a binary clash between communism and liberal democracy. Doyle situates geopolitical tensions in Ukraine, Taiwan, and global trade not merely in structural power competition, but in the interaction of domestic political crises—democratic backsliding, inequality, populism, and authoritarian consolidation—that exacerbate external conflict. Doyle proposes a framework of managed competition, which entails compromise and institutional restraint. This includes strategic ambiguity in sensitive territorial disputes, arms control and military confidence-building, respect for minority rights, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. For Doyle, the central geopolitical challenge is to sustain economic interdependence and international cooperation on transnational issues such as climate change, global health, and nuclear risk, while preventing great-power rivalry from escalating into open conflict.

*Cold Peace: Avoiding the New Cold War* (New York: Liveright/WW Norton, 2023). Chinese translation Crystal Press, Ltd., 2023.