

## **Rethinking Influence: Analysing NATO's Role in Peace and Security through an Emancipatory Lens**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper reconceptualises “influence” within the discourse of international peace and security from a critical social science perspective, examining how it could be reshaped to foster an emancipatory result. Focusing on the Middle Eastern region, it considers NATO as a representative case, as it is a prominent actor in global peace and security. The paper argues that there exists a discrepancy between theoretical reality and practical reality within international organisations such as NATO, which undermines its potential to promote genuine peace and security. It posits that as long as this contradiction persists, these organisations’ influence will remain constrained and fail to achieve emancipatory outcomes.

Using a qualitative methodology grounded in emancipatory realism and informed by critical social science, this study investigates NATO’s influence during the Gulf War, specifically in response to Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, as a case to support the argument provided. Through this lens, the paper demonstrates how critical perspectives can uncover and challenge hidden power dynamics, and it advocates for a rethinking of international influence that aligns more closely with the principles of emancipation. It aims at offering insights for scholars in all fields of social sciences taking the role of an organic intellectual as conceptualised by Antonio Gramsci.

**Keywords:** theoretical reality; practical reality; Iraq; Gulf War; Saddam Husein