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The Combined Transitions of Great Power Politics and the Global Energy System  
A Comparative Analysis of China, the United States and Russia

by

Roger Anthony Boyd

A Dissertation  
submitted to the Balsillie School of Global Governance  
of Wilfrid Laurier University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
In Global Governance

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Neoclassical Realism, Coxian Historical Materialism, Strategic Culture

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to provide a framework that allows for a holistic and integrated analysis of what will become, if they are not already, the two most significant determinants of foreign policy – the need for a fundamental change in the global energy system and the nature of major power competition within the international system. It specifically rejects the eco-modernist framing of the required energy transition as simply a technocratic challenge, and instead accepts the large-scale nature of the social, political and economic changes and disruptions that will be required. By framing these changes within the dynamic of great power competition, this study can provide unique insights into the possible dynamics of, and the nature of resistance to, such an energy transition.

The requirement for a transition of the global economy toward low carbon energy sources has been evident since the first assessment report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UN IPCC) in 1990. Thirty years later, and with anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) over 60% higher than in 1990, the prospects for such a transition are still open to question due to the ongoing inability of the leading nations to address the issue in a timely manner and with an adequate scale and scope of action. In the same timeframe, the international system has been fundamentally changed, firstly by the collapse of the Soviet bloc and then by the rise of China, and in recent years by the return of great power conflict. This study argues that the energy transition and the configuration of the international system are interdependent, with both negative and positive possible interactions that must be analyzed in an integrated fashion.

Cox's historical materialist methodology provides a framework for understanding the processes of such large-scale change over time to the world order, and within

individual nation states. The effect of the resulting international *and* domestic configurations upon state foreign policy processes can be captured within the neoclassical realism of such researchers as Christensen, Lobell, Ripsman, Schweller, Taliaferro and Toje. The selection of the long-term domestic variables of strategic culture and Cox's state/society complex (viewing the state and society as an integrated complex rather than as separate social realms) provides this study with a longer-term view than many of the tactically oriented neoclassical realist analyses.

The eco-modernist assumptions that underlay much of the social science literature on the possibility of an energy transition, together with assumptions of unbroken exponential economic growth, are problematized given the fundamental framing effect that they have upon academic and policy discussions.

Three nation-state case studies are utilized, China, the USA and Russia, to analyze the possible alignment and misalignment of the international system, and individual nation-states, with the transition to a low carbon economy within the timeframes proposed by the UN IPCC. The core question raised is the possible irreconcilability between continued economic growth combined with great power competition and embedded fossil fuel interests, and the international cooperation and the limited growth required for an energy transition within a timeframe compatible with keeping the average global surface temperature below dangerous levels.



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Climate Change and the Need for an Energy Transition

The First World Climate Conference of 1979 was the pivotal event for the start of global climate research and governance, with the next decade constituting a period of framing the problem in scientific and policy terms (Gupta 2010). Bodansky, Brunnee & Rajamani (2017) see the latter half of this period as being one of policy agenda setting (1985-1988) followed by pre-negotiation (1988 to 1990), including the publication of *Our Common Future* (WCED 1987) and the testimony of James Hansen to the U.S. Congress in 1988 (Shabecoff 1988). In 1992 the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC) was adopted and opened for ratification. This was to provide the framework under which international climate agreements would be negotiated. The general objective of the UN FCCC as stated in article 2 was the “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”, with article 4.2., providing a non-binding commitment to return anthropogenic emissions of GHGs to 1990 levels (UN 1992).

Nearly three decades after the adoption of the UN FCCC, anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions are more than 60% higher (Global Carbon Project 2019). In 1979 the atmospheric concentration of GHGs was the equivalent of 382 parts per million of carbon dioxide (ppm CO<sub>2e</sub>), in 2019 it was 500 ppm CO<sub>2e</sub> (NOAA 2020); the rate of change is now higher than in the 1980's (3.6ppm per year vs. 3.2ppm per year). With the US having rejected the 2015 Paris Agreement (the new Biden administration started the process of rejoining in early 2021), most other nations not implementing policies that

would match their Paris Agreement voluntary commitments (Climate Action Tracker 2019), and China and India only committed to peaking emissions prior to 2030 (China's recent commitment to "carbon neutrality" by 2060 does not alter this), the probability of extremely disruptive climatic changes are becoming increasingly likely. The longer that the international community delays substantive actions, the greater and more difficult policy actions will become, and the more difficult it will become for the international community to act together for the greater good. Such a dynamic could produce dysfunctional and conflict-ridden reactions within and between nations which may significantly undermine the international community's ability to act effectively in the face of a possible existential crisis.

With fossil fuels providing the energetic basis of society, and many nations heavily dependent upon fossil fuel rents, the replacement of fossil fuels may have significant ramifications both within the domestic arena and for the international system. Such complexities will tend to be exacerbated if the window for action is reduced due to the ongoing lack of substantive actions by the international community. The sheer scale and complexity, in technical, economic and sociological terms of the global energy system has been well documented by authors such as Smil (2010, 2017, 2017a), Hall and Klitgaard (2012) and Yergin (2011, 2020).

The next section discusses the nature of the international system within which any energy transition will be implemented.

## **1.2. The Nature of the International System**

### **1.2.1. From Great Power Politics to Unipolar Moment to Great Power Politics**

In 1991, just a year before the adoption of the UN FCCC, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed, resulting in a fundamental reorientation of the international system. Over the next decades the East European states of the Warsaw Pact, together with Albania and the new Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, were integrated into the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Yugoslavia was also dismembered into separate states, with some of them also joining the EU and NATO. The USSR itself split into a number of successor states, with Russia pushed far away from Europe with the creation of the independent Baltic states, Belarus and the Ukraine. It was also separated from central Asia and the Middle East by the new states of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Russia possessed only half the population of the USSR, and during the last decade of the twentieth century its economy was halved in size. Extensive deindustrialization produced an economy heavily dependent upon the production of fossil fuels, minerals and foodstuffs. The Soviet bloc as a threat, and counter example to, Western capitalism for over four decades simply faded away from the international scene.

Three years prior to the adoption of the UN FCCC, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had weathered the Tiananmen Square crisis and was about to oversee two decades of economic growth that averaged over 10% per annum (doubling every seven years), transforming a country that had been poorer on a per capita basis than sub-Saharan Africa in 1978 into a middle income nation. With a population of 1.4 billion, such per capita income also brought its economy within reach of parity with that of the US. Growth of

over 7% per annum during the next decade then doubled the size of the Chinese economy, making it larger than the US on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis.

With the collapse of the USSR, the US was faced with the “unipolar moment” and the assumed *End of History* (Fukuyama 1992) with capitalist liberal democracy assumed to have triumphed over all other ideologies. The First Iraq War and the US interventions in Yugoslavia were the first major foreign US interventions since the Vietnam debacle. After the 9/11 attack, US foreign policy took on an even more militaristic tone with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, together with a “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) that resulted in a massive increase in covert operations and the establishment of an extensive drone warfare program. The next decade brought the regime change operation in Libya and the transference of the Ukraine into the Western camp. With a rising China increasingly allied with a somewhat resurgent and independent Russia, and the US unable to force its will upon the Middle East, the unipolar moment may have now come to an end.

The unilateral retreat of the Soviet Union from the international scene, the rapid ascension of China within the international system, and the actions of the United States after the collapse of the Soviet bloc point to the need for theoretical structures that integrate both the international and the domestic. The three decades from 1990 to 2020 may be seen as an interregnum between periods of great power politics. The collapse of the Soviet Union intensified the intellectual reassessment of the concept of security that had arisen during the 1970s and 1980s in response to “the intense narrowing of the field of security studies imposed by the military and nuclear obsessions of the Cold War” (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde 1998, p. 2). This involved both a *widening* and a *deepening*

“in favour of deepening the referent object beyond the state, widening the concept of security to include other sectors than the military, giving equal emphasis to domestic and trans-border threats, and allowing for a transformation of the Realist, conflictual logic of international security” (Buzan & Hansen 2009, p. 188).

Prior to this period the international system was dominated by the bipolar conflict between the US-bloc and the Soviet-bloc, after this period a new bipolar conflict between the less cohesive blocs centered on the US (e.g. the US, EU/NATO, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan) and China (with Russia, Pakistan, Central Asia and Iran) may become dominant. This study returns to the focus on the competition between great powers, while accepting that the international system is significantly more pluralistic than during the Cold War, reflecting the current ontological reality of the international system.

### **1.2.2. The Nature of the State in the International System**

Within the discipline of *International Relations*, *realists* view the referent object of security to be that of the nation state, with state-to-state relations representing the ontological core of any analysis. Such interactions are assumed to be of a generally utilitarian nature within a Hobbesian anarchic international system (or “world order” as preferred by Cox) with “every state for themselves”. The *classical realism* of such thinkers as Carr, Niebuhr and Morgenthau (and earlier thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Clausewitz), while differing “greatly from one another in assumptions, objectives and methodologies” (Gideon, p. 153), tended to stress the “objective laws that have their roots in human nature” (Morgenthau 2006, p. 4), a nature that is inherently flawed and causes conflict through the non-congruence between the quests for power of competing nations. This was generally superseded by the *neorealist* approach in the

1970s, which stressed the dominance of the structure of the international system over the agency of the individual nation; the actions of individual “unitary, national states motivated by a desire for security” (Gideon 1998, p. 149) responding to the structure of the international system and their relative objective power positions. This was at the height of systems theory within the academy and borrowed heavily from a mainstream economics that viewed the individual as a rational unitary being motivated by a desire for utility. Neorealism can be either *offensive* (Mearsheimer 2003) – assuming that states seek security through the maximization of relative advantage, or *defensive* (Waltz 1979) – seeing the international system as somewhat less Hobbesian and more open to balancing security alliances. In the latter case, disruptive factors such as new military technologies and “rogue states that misread or ignore the true security-related incentives offered by their environment” (Rose 1998, p. 150) may interrupt the relatively benign international system.

Although neorealism is a parsimonious theoretical structure that can provide insights into possible state behavior within a given international systemic configuration, it has provided limited value with respect to explaining actual historical state behaviors. *Neoclassical realists*, while still making “relative [state] power their chief independent variable” and assuming “that states respond to the uncertainties of international anarchy by seeking to control and shape their external environment” (Ibid., p. 152), accept that states may not act as expected by *neorealists* due to intervening variables such as the subjective perceptions of their external environment and national political considerations:

Proponents of neoclassical realism draw upon the rigor and theoretical insights of ... neorealism ... without sacrificing the practical insights about foreign policy and the complexity of statecraft found in ... classical realism ... [it] assumes that politics is a perpetual struggle among different states for material power and security in a world of scarce resources and pervasive uncertainty. (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro 2009, p.4)

States are not seen as like-objects but varying internally in ways that directly affect foreign policy decisions. They also acknowledge that foreign policy is made by actual human beings that are affected by personal and group-level biases, which may result in *non-rational* and inaccurate perceptions of geopolitical realities and the efficacy of different strategies (Christensen 1997). Such misperceptions may partly stem from an inability to adjust to changed circumstances, and flawed beliefs stemming from personal socialization and bureaucratic inertia. The former may be especially impactful during periods of significant international system reorganization – due to such things as new rising powers (e.g. the US at the start of the twentieth century and China at the start of the current century), the rapid deterioration of a systemically important one (e.g. the USSR at the end of the last century), and the recovery of a previously declining one (e.g. Russia in the past decade or so). The acceptance of internal political considerations also allows for the integration of the *international* and the *domestic*. The relative power and legitimacy of the state with respect to society is also an important intervening variable, as this will affect the ability of the state to utilize and direct national resources toward its objectives (Christensen 1997). Some of the more recent neoclassical realist work has moved away

from seeing the international system as the primary variable driving state behavior, proposing that the nature of the international system may exist on a spectrum between *permissive* (low level of imminent danger) and *restrictive* (high level of imminent danger), with the former allowing for a much greater impact from domestic factors. For example, the United States faced a more permissive environment in the 1950's before the Soviet Union was able to build a significant intercontinental ballistic missile arsenal, and between the fall of the Soviet Union and the present day. That permissiveness may be rapidly declining with a growing China and a reinvigorated independent Russia.

While providing a nuanced and multi-perspective process for analyzing foreign policy decisions and options, neoclassical realists have been criticized for a non-consistent choice of intervening variables, using different variables from one analysis to another. This may of course be seen as a reflection of the empirical “messiness” of social reality, which inhibits the usefulness of generalizable theories that purport to be applicable across nations and time. Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) organize the domestic intervening variables into four clusters: leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutions and extend the temporal range over which these variables can operate. The relative importance of these variables may change with each new nationally and temporally specific case; the *particularity* of the circumstances of a given nation at a given time is accepted within their analytical structuring.

This analysis utilizes the broader notion of strategic culture as “entrenched beliefs, worldviews, and shared expectations” (Ibid., p. 81) that “shape the strategic understanding of political leaders, societal elites, and even the general public” (Ibid., p. 83). In addition, Cox’s concept of state/society complex (Cox 1981; Cox & Sinclair



1996) that subsumes state-society relations and domestic institutions will be used as an intervening variable. Cox rejects the “distinction between state and civil society” which may have

made practical sense in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries when it corresponded to more or less distinctive spheres of human activity or practice ... Today, however, state and civil society are so interpenetrated that the concepts have become almost purely analytical ... and are only vaguely and imprecisely indicative of distinct spheres of activity. (Cox 1981, pp. 126-127)

This conceptualization supports the assumptions of the heterogeneity of states within the international system, with the possibility of a myriad of configurations of the state/society complex. It also supports the possibility that a given state/society complex may create a *state* interest that is very different to the *national* interest, as proposed by van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2016) in their study of the integration of US grand strategy and corporate elite networks. In the more collective decision-making structures of most modern nations, such as the US and China, leader images may be subsumed under the strategic culture category; a specific leader may create tactical, but not *long-term strategic*, changes in foreign policy. The exception, reflecting the caution with which any analytical framework needs to be utilized, may be that of Russia – specifically Vladimir Putin. This possibility will be reviewed in detail in the relevant chapter.

What is also required is a theory of longer-term change with respect to both the global system and within individual nations. The *historical materialism* utilized by Cox

envisages state/society and global system configurations as being *historical structures*, a “particular combination of thought patterns, material conditions, and human institutions which has a certain coherence among the elements” that “constitute the context of habits, pressures, expectations, and constraints within which action takes place” (Cox 1981, p. 135) and are “limited in their applicability to time and space” (Ibid., p. 137). The currently fluid conditions, both between the dominant and rising powers, and in the energetic basis of the economy, produce a “condition of uncertainty in power relations” that “beckons to critical theory” (Ibid., p. 130) that “does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing” (Ibid., p. 129). Historical materialism provides such critical theory that views the world through a political economy lens, examining “the connections between power in production, power in the state, and power in international relations” (Ibid., p. 135). Strategic culture can be seen as a product of a nation’s historical and present state/society complex configurations, with a specific focus on elites with respect to foreign policy decisions and orientations; elites that may be as much focused on their *own* interest as the *national* interest:

those actors who benefit from a change in the social system and who gain power to effect such change will seek to alter the system in ways that favour their own interests. (Gilpin 1981, p. 9)

The strategic culture focus on elite strategy makers also provides a balance with Cox's focus on larger political economic forces. The specificity and contingency inherent in such elite groups, and even an individual such as Vladimir Putin, can have significant impacts not foreseen by a purely historical materialist approach. The historical examples of Stalin and Mao bear this out.

The next section covers the way in which fossil fuel energy and assumptions of continued economic growth are central to the economic, social and political realities of modern societies.

### **1.3. Fueling the Economic Growth Imperative**

#### **1.3.1. Economic Growth Required For State Legitimacy and Social Stability**

In the post-WW2 period economic growth has become a *sine qua non* of state legitimacy, even more so from the last decade of the twentieth century as the ideological supports of communism and socialism were removed from the Soviet-bloc, China and India. With the rejection of the 'License Raj' in India in the early 1990s, the post-Tiananmen Square Chinese state compact of growth without political liberalization, and the recovery of Russia from the disastrous 1990s, approximately half of humanity has been added to the growth equals state legitimacy fold; as long as personal incomes continue to rise, the state can claim its right to govern. Added to this dynamic is the pressure of an international system full of growing economies. To not grow is to rapidly fall behind in economic scale and the resultant relative power; the dynamics of great power competition only add to the intensity of this pressure for continued growth.

In the past few decades, industrialized societies have also become increasingly dependent upon continued economic growth for social, economic and political stability as

financial markets, property values, retirement plans, corporate incentives, insurance policies and long-term state budgets have become structurally dependent upon assumptions of unbroken future economic growth (Boyd 2014). The rapid growth of financial markets in relation to the economy in the United States and United Kingdom and many other nations, together with extensive deregulation and globalization, has created a global financial system that has been repeatedly shown to be prone to abrupt non-linear behavior. As a complex social system, the global financial system displays the same bounded resilience that many complex ecological systems display (May, Levin & Sugihara 2008; Boyd 2014). Within certain limits of variability the system can maintain its integrity, utilizing negative feedback and adaptability mechanisms to regulate toward equilibrium, but when those limits are broken positive feedback loops can rapidly move the system to a very different state (Sornette 2002, 2003); such events in the financial markets are referred to as “crashes”. The progressive integration and increasing complexity of global financial markets, together with increases in market concentration, has increased the risk of such cascading systemic collapses (Goldin, Mariathan, Georg and Vogel 2014). Even just the prospect of a contraction in the economy can have a large negative impact upon the financial markets, possibly creating a positive feedback loop between the financial system and the economy. This is the ledge that state policy makers looked over in 2008 before launching their global multi-trillion-dollar bailout. States will carry out previously unthought of interventions in the economy to forestall the positive feedback loop between falling asset prices and economic contraction; as seen once again during the 2020 COVID-19 crisis. With both markets and eco-systems displaying non-

linear behavior, and the former existing within the latter, there is also the possibility for the compounding effects of coupled non-linear behavior at different scales.

Social welfare may cease to grow above a given level of GDP per capita, after which other factors such as social inequality become central (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009). Unfortunately, the structure and dynamics of political, economic and financial systems at national, regional and global scales, together with inter-state competition, preclude an unforced movement away from the growth paradigm.

### **1.3.2. Energy and Economic Growth: Eco-Modernism to the Discursive Rescue**

The scale of energy use accelerated rapidly with industrialization, utilizing the fossil fuels of first coal and then oil and natural gas (Huber 2009; Yergin 2011; Hall & Klitgaard 2012; McNeill and Engelke 2014; Angus 2016; Smil 2017). Their utilization freed humanity from the constraints of the ongoing flow of solar energy, through the geological and geochemical processes that had converted millions of years of solar energy into concentrated reservoirs of coal, oil and natural gas. The availability of this concentrated energy also facilitated the building of other energy sources, such as hydroelectric dams and nuclear power stations, but these non-fossil fuel sources have always been an adjunct to the vast majority of energy supplied by fossil fuels (Smil 2017a). Even with the installation of increasing amounts of renewable energy sources in the past decade, fossil fuel use has continued to increase (IEA 2020). As the burning of fossil fuels is the predominant source of anthropogenic GHG emissions, those emissions have also continued to grow (UNEP 2020). In addition, the provision of fertilizers through the fossil fuel fed Haber-Bosch process has resulted in large increases in agricultural emissions and deforestation.

If economic growth is assumed to be a constant and such growth requires increasing amounts of fossil fuel derived energy how can anthropogenic GHG emissions be reduced? How can the circle be squared? A fundamental belief in the ability of applied human ingenuity, technology, to fix any problem is the ruling discourse that allows for a belief in continued economic growth combined with reductions in anthropogenic GHG emissions. At the core of this belief is the theory of eco-modernism, which proposes that a process of *ecological modernization* inherent to a *reflexive* market economy (Beck 1992; Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994; Beck, Bonss & Lau 2003; Beck 2007; Mol, Sonnenfeld & Spaargaren 2009) will proactively respond to such ecological challenges – in this case decoupling energy (and generally material) use from economic growth. A *relative* decoupling, with energy use increasing at a lower rate than economic growth has been observed, but not an *absolute* decoupling. With energy use continuing to increase, installations of renewable energy have been unable to even offset the annual increases in energy use, let alone reduce the use of fossil fuels. Unless *absolute* decoupling can be attained, significant reductions in fossil fuel usage in the timeframes envisaged by the UN IPCC scenarios may not be reconcilable with continued global economic growth. The technocratic basis of eco-modernist approaches also tends to ignore the large-scale social and political challenges inherent to the destruction of the majority of the current energy system and related social, economic and political structures.

The 2014 UN IPCC report utilized speculative eco-modernist assumptions of massive levels of GHG emission capture and storage, with no basis in the reality of current technological capabilities, to reconcile continued economic growth and falling *net* GHG emissions. With the continuing growth in the levels of atmospheric GHGs and

anthropogenic emission levels, the scale of the eco-modernist assumptions upon *future speculative technologies* must increase to square the circle. If such technologies fail to materialize on the scale necessary, the next eco-modernist move may be towards the direct geo-engineering of the climate system through global-scale Solar Radiation Management (SRM) technologies.

The theory that a decoupling of economic growth and energy usage can be attained at the global level has no empirical basis (see the section *The False Promise of Absolute Decoupling of Growth and Fossil Fuels*). Proposed technologies to either remove and store GHGs or reduce the level of solar radiation reaching the Earth's surface are highly speculative and the subject of many possible technical shortcomings and negative side effects. The maintenance of the belief in the efficacy of such answers to the predicament of reconciling continued economic growth with reductions in the level of atmospheric GHGs is an extremely risky one that may lead into a period of climate policy crisis that may drive extreme and highly disruptive policy outcomes. In the meantime the belief in eco-modernist answers allows policy makers to place the energy transition well behind many more "urgent" issues.

Given the scale of the current predominantly fossil-fuel based energy system, without which the material base of modern societies would not be possible, together with the extensive embedded dependencies throughout the industrialized nations, a low-carbon energy transition will have large-scale economic and political impacts; impacts that technocratic approaches such as eco-modernism tend to substantially underestimate. Historical materialism assumes a linkage between changes in the organization of production and changes in social forces which then affect the structure of states and

consequentially the international system (or “world order” as preferred by Cox). For example, Anievas (2014) identifies the uneven rates of industrialization between states prior to World War One as creating significant changes in the relative power positions of the major European states. Given the extreme dependence of many states upon fossil fuel export revenues, and the myriad of industries that will be affected by a low-carbon energy transition, the impacts upon individual states and the international system as a whole may be significant.

#### **1.4. Significance of This Study**

The objective of this study is to provide a framework that allows for a holistic and integrated analysis of what may become, if they are not already, the two most significant determinants of foreign policy – the need for a fundamental change in the global energy system and the nature of major power competition within the international system. It specifically rejects the eco-modernist framing of the required energy transition as simply a technocratic challenge, and instead accepts the large-scale nature of the social, political and economic changes and disruptions that will be required. By framing these changes within the dynamic of great power competition, this study can provide unique insights into the possible dynamics, and the nature of resistance, to such an energy transition. It also explicitly explores the applicability of strategic culture and historical materialist state/society constructs with respect to both energy and foreign policies, with exceptions identified.

#### **1.5. Research Question and Case Study Selection**

The assumption of this study is that the challenges of a geopolitical system undergoing fundamental change in the balance of states and an energy system requiring a



comprehensive restructuring are not independent and will interconnect in a complex and bi-directional fashion that will act to complicate the reactions of the global community to both. To address this assumption, I construct an integrated framework and test that framework utilizing three case studies:

- China: The rising power that challenges the US dominance of the international system. The largest emitter of GHGs, as well as the largest producer and consumer of coal, the sixth largest producer of fossil fuels, and the biggest oil and natural gas importer. The leading nation in the production and utilization of low carbon technologies.
- United States of America: The dominant power within the international system, especially after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The second largest emitter of GHGs and the largest producer of fossil fuels.
- Russia: A significant regional power and increasingly allied with China in opposition to the US. Possesses a nuclear arsenal only second to that of the US. The fifth largest emitter of GHGs (after China, US, EU28 and India), and also the second largest producer and the largest exporter of fossil fuels.

Together, these three nations are the dominant powers with respect to nuclear arsenals and military might. In addition, they represent nearly half of global GHG emissions and are the first, second and sixth biggest producers of fossil fuels. Russia is the largest exporter of fossil fuels, and China the largest importer of oil and natural gas. China and the US are also the largest economies. China is the largest producer and

consumer of low carbon technologies, with the US in a somewhat less advantaged position, and Russia a significant laggard. This combination of economic and military power, fossil fuel production and use, contrasting positions with respect to fossil fuel import and export dependency, and differing positions with respect to the production and use of low carbon technologies, together with the competitive relationship between the US and China plus Russia, provides a good set of cases with which to test the applicability of the proposed framework and therefore validity of the research question.

The European Union is not seen as possessing an independent foreign policy orientation, especially with the majority of its members being part of a US-dominated NATO. Japan also falls within the US security umbrella and has a significant US military presence on its territory. India has a population on the scale of China, but has not been able to develop the social and political institutions to drive the required constant upgrading of capabilities that China has been able to maintain. The recent turn to a fascistic religious-nationalism and the dominance of oligarchic power (Andersen & Damle 2019; Chatterji, Hansen & Jaffrelot 2019; Roy 2020) does not bode well for the development of such capabilities. Given these concerns, and the diversity of attributes of the selected three nations, a case study on India is not seen as necessary for the testing of the proposed framework.

## **1.6. Chapter Outlines**

The Conceptual Framework chapter (chapter 2) utilizes previous research in the areas of Climate Change, Eco-modernism, and Security Studies to construct the conceptual framework that will be utilized for the case studies.

This is followed by the three Case Study Chapters (chapters 3, 4 and 5) that utilize the framework to study the specific cases of China, the US, and Russia respectively. China is intentionally placed first to reflect the historical length and scale of its civilizational project that significantly overshadows that of Western civilization (of which the US is the vanguard). This reverses the euro-centric and liberal-centric conceptualizations of Western civilization as the universal standard to which others should aspire, as well as accepting that multiple conceptualizations of modernity may exist. Western civilization is *provincialized* as specific rather than universal.

The final Conclusion chapter (chapter 6) provides a review of the applicability of the proposed framework, possible areas for future research and lessons learnt with respect to the joint energy and geopolitical transition.

## Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

### 2.1. The False Promise of an Absolute Decoupling of Growth and Fossil Fuels

The scale and complexity of any organism, whether it is an individual or a combination of many organisms (e.g. a bacteria, an ant hill or a human society), is dependent upon the supply of energy to that organism; increases in scale and complexity tend to require increases in energy inputs (Tainter 1988; Zotin & Pokrovskii 2018; Smil 2019). Following from this, economic growth and development require that energy and other resources be extracted from the environment to manufacture goods, provide services, and create capital; “The central role of energy is substantiated by both theory and data” (Brown et. al 2011, p. 19). Prior to the industrial revolution, and the exploitation of fossil fuels, human societies were limited by their ability to harness the energy of the sun through photosynthesis for food and animal feed, conversion of that energy to heat through fire, and to a much lesser extent watermills and windmills (Hall & Klitgaard 2012; Smil 2017). The history of human civilization prior to the eighteenth century is one of repeated developments of complex societies, followed by repeated collapses of those societies. Morris (2011) developed an index of social development and noted that only three civilizations could be identified as reaching the low 40s on his index: those of the Roman Empire, the Song Dynasty, and modern civilization. About six hundred years separate the first two, and five hundred years the latter two. Morris notes:

If someone from Rome or Song China had been transplanted to eighteenth century London or Beijing he or she would certainly have had many surprises ... Yet more, in fact much more would have seemed familiar ... Most important of all,

though, the visitors from the past would have noticed that although social development was moving higher than ever, the *ways* people were pushing it up hardly differed from how Romans and Song Chinese had pushed it up. (Ibid., p. 482).

This quickly changed with the exploitation of coal from the late eighteenth-century, “A long-term perspective shows virtually no growth of major economies before 1750, and accelerated growth in the frontier (that is the richest Western) economies, in the UK after 1750 and the US a century later” (Smil 2019, sources of economic growth para. 13). By “about 1870 [humans] used more fossil fuel energy each year than the annual global production from all photosynthesis” (McNeill & Engelke 2014, p. 9). In the twentieth century human energy use increased by a factor of eight and has continued to increase in the twenty-first century. Oil, and then natural gas, was increasingly added to coal usage as the twentieth century progressed. These fossil fuels represent the cumulative energy produced by hundreds of millions of years of photosynthesis, removing the energy constraint that had limited the scale and complexity of human civilizations; “growth since the industrial revolution has been driven largely by the increased stock of capital and the adequate supply of useful energy due to the discovery and exploitation of relatively inexpensive fossil fuels” (Ayres & Voudouris 2014, p. 27). The resultant phenomenal scale, and historically atypical nature, of energy usage in modern societies is a little-discussed fact within the dominant social discourses. Instead, it tends to be an assumed part of a *common sense* that is not questioned or problematized

within such areas as mainstream economics and sociology, together with society in general.

When looking at the determinants of economic growth, mainstream economists see such growth as a function of labor, capital and technology, as with the widely used Cobb-Douglas production function. Little or no role is given to natural resources, including energy, with technology being *assumed* as being responsible for the majority of economic growth that cannot be accounted for by labor and capital. When reviewing the economic literature for the explanation of the residual economic growth once the inputs of labor and capital had been removed, Ayres & Warr (2009, p. 159) note “The unexplained residual is usually attributed to a homogeneous stock of technological ‘knowledge’ that grows (by assumption) smoothly and automatically, due to factors outside the economy”. Such assumptions are repeated through many highly influential economic texts. Although Denison (1968, p.5), “tries to give explicit consideration to the largest possible number of factors affecting growth” no reference to energy can be found in the book index. In the extremely brief chapter on “Land and Natural Resources” (Ibid., pp. 180-186), fossil fuel energy is included with all other minerals production (e.g. iron ore, copper etc.) and counted in US\$ rather than in units of energy. Solow (2000, p. xii). states that, “the permanent rate of growth of output per unit of labor ... depends entirely on the rate of technological progress in the broadest sense”. Samuelson and Scott (1966, p. 780) can note “inventions which helped to drain swamps or to grow more food on the same acres of land” without taking any account of the increases in energy usage required by those inventions (and the availability of natural gas for the production of cheap and plentiful nitrogen fertilizers). They then surmise that “facts suggest the hypothesis that

capital accumulation is second to technical change in explaining rising productivity” (Ibid., p. 791); again, no mention of the increased usage of energy required to utilize that technical change. This fits within what Dunlap and Catton referred to as the “Human Exemptionalist Paradigm” (HEP), that views humanity as exempt from environmental limits due to the unlimited possibilities of human technology (Dunlap & Catton 1994).

The position of mainstream economics with respect to energy has not changed substantially in over half a century, with even the work in the sub-field of Resource Economics not altering the assumptions held across the discipline, as Stern (2011, p. 26) notes “Resource economists have developed models that incorporate the role of resources, including energy, in the growth process, but these ideas remain isolated in the resource economics field”; a position supported by other researchers such as Ayres & Warr (2009). Mainstream economists continue to assume “that there are only two important ‘factors of production’ and that energy and other natural resource inputs contribute very little to the economy” (Ayres & Voudouris 2014, p. 16). This viewpoint has become widely embedded within popular culture with authors such as Simon (1981, 1996) and Naam (2013) popularizing the ability of human technology to drive economic growth irrespective of exogenous factors such as the availability of energy. Smil has pointed out that although “civilization is the product of incessant large-scale combustion of coals, oils, and natural gases ... for many decades, the fundamental link between the rising use of energies and the growing complexity and greater affluence of human societies was overlooked by both the public and the policymakers” (Smil 2010, introduction para. 1).

The empirical research of Ayres and Voudouris (2014) contradicts the dominant discursal *common sense* that assumes infinite growth independent of energy and material limits, pointing to a fundamental and irrevocable causal relationship between energy, especially cheap fossil fuel energy, and economic growth since the industrial revolution. This conclusion is supported by the work of Hall & Klitgaard (2012), Ayres & Warr (2009), Ayres et. al. (2013) and Smil (2010, 2017, 2017a). “In contrast to the neoclassical economic model ... The real economic system can be viewed as a complex process that converts raw materials (and energy) into useful materials and final services. Evidently materials and energy do play a central role in this model of economic growth” (Ayres & Warr 2009, p. xviii). In addition, reductions in energy costs are seen as having offset the increased energy required for the extraction of rapidly declining mineral ore grades due to depletion (Bardi 2014), “By using larger and larger amounts of available energy we can sift copper out from poorer and poorer ores ... But the energy cost of mining low-content ores increases very fast” (Georgescu-Roegen 2011, p. 67). Greater energy usage is therefore linked directly to greater social welfare and general notions of progress (Hall & Klitgaard 2012; Smil 2017); supported by the exponential growth in energy usage in the post-WW2 period as the global economy entered a still continuing phase of exponential growth (McNeill & Engelke 2014).

A significant proportion of the advances in human technology can be seen as both dependent upon concentrated energy availability (e.g. coal to heat water into a gas within an atmospheric engine) and facilitating increased usage of that energy (atmospheric engine water pumps used in coal mines) in a synergistic fashion. The later usage of diesel (derived from oil) and electric (using electricity from coal-fired electricity generating



stations) engines in coal mining were later refinements. Technology becomes not simply a substitute for energy usage, but both dependent upon greater energy availability and a facilitator of greater energy usage. The internal combustion engine was dependent upon the availability of an energy-dense liquid fuel (oil) and facilitated an exponential increase in the use of that fuel; “while the worldwide car sales were less than 100,000 vehicles in 1908, they were more than 73 million in 2017, roughly a 700-fold increase” (Smil 2019, figures of merit para. 12), with significant possibilities for future growth outside the richer nations. The technology and capital investments that brought the provision of electricity were also dependent upon the availability of fossil fuels (coal and then natural gas) and produced an exponential growth in the usage of those fuels. Such social and economic phenomena fit with the *Jevons Paradox* or *rebound effect* (Jevons 1865; Polimeni et. al. 2008) that states that technological change that increases the efficiency with which a resource is used leads to an increase in consumption of that resource.

This is seen at the global level, with reductions in energy use per unit of gross domestic product (GDP) of 1.6% per year since 2000 (Enerdata 2019) being offset by a GDP growth rate of over 3%, resulting in continued increases in energy usage. Even with gains in energy efficiency (a *relative* decoupling of energy usage and GDP growth), trend economic growth rates are still dependent upon increasing energy supplies. The same trend is seen for the U.S. economy from 1950 to 2005, during which “the energy efficiency of the economy nearly doubled ... which had the effect of increasing the aggregate consumption of commercial energy in the US by almost three times!” (Polimeni et. al., p. 84). These findings parallel the findings of Ayres et. al. (2013) who propose that there is a high output elasticity with respect to energy in modern

industrialized economies; i.e. significant reductions/increases in energy throughput will produce significant reductions/increases in economic output. With the rate of energy system decarbonization being negligible since 2000 (Enerdata 2019a), as the growth in renewable energy was more than offset by the growth in overall energy consumption, economic growth has been predominantly facilitated through an increased consumption of fossil fuels. Smil (2010 & 2017) has detailed how decarbonization of the energy supply may not be the “frictionless” process assumed in policy models and may be limited by complex social, economic and technical considerations. This is echoed by climate scientist Steffen, who considers that it will take at least 30 years and more likely 40-60 years, to attain a net zero emissions global energy system (Moses 2020).

Given the linkage between relative economic size and geopolitical power detailed by scholars (Anievas 2014; Kennedy 1987), the possibility of differing nation-specific GDP growth “speed limits” beyond which GHG emissions grow may take on geopolitical dimensions. Nyman (2018) has identified the possible conflict between the need for growth-supportive levels of energy provision in the short term and the need to decarbonize that energy provision for longer-term climate security. Short-term energy security is attained at the cost of longer-term climate insecurity.

European environmental sociology that fits within the contemporary post-WW2 modernist and functionalist sociological mainstream (e.g. Giddens, Latour and Urry) proposes the probability of a decoupling of economic growth and general resource usage through an *ecological modernization* inherent to a *reflexive* market economy (Beck 1992; Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994; Beck, Bonss & Lau 2003; Beck 2007; Mol, Sonnenfeld & Spaargaren 2009). As Foster notes “Looking at today’s ecological modernization theory,

it would be hard to miss the close family resemblance to earlier post–Second World War modernization theory” (Foster 2012, p. 216). As noted previously no such decoupling has been observed at the global level, nor for the US from 1950 to 2005. With respect to individual nations, a *positive* correlation between resource usage and economic growth has been observed across 186 countries when including the embedded resource utilization of net imports (Wiedman et. al., 2015). Research identifying absolute decoupling in some advanced industrial nations tends to utilize national production measures that ignore the effects of net imports. With the general globalization of supply chains, and therefore the possible off shoring of energy and other resource-intensive activities from richer to poorer nations, such exclusion undermines the validity of these reports. In essence:

absolute decoupling measured by DMC [a production based indicator of resource usage], at the individual country level, may not indicate that resource use is actually decreasing with increasing income. It may just indicate that more material extraction has been off-shored. Developed nations experience an increase in imports of semifinished and finished products and a change in economic structure toward service economies, which add high value to the GDP. These trends make developed countries look more resource-efficient, but they actually remain deeply anchored to a material foundation underneath. (Ibid., p. 6275)

The sheer scale of the offshoring of resource extraction activities is shown by the estimation that “41% (29 Gt) of total global resource extraction was associated with international trade flows in 2008” (Ibid., p. 6275); rendering domestic production-based

measures of resource usage, including energy, as unreliable indicators. Going further, Ward et. al. (2016), conclude on the basis of simple modeling that “decoupling of GDP growth from resource use, whether relative or absolute, is at best only temporary. Permanent decoupling (absolute or relative) is impossible for essential, non-substitutable resources because the efficiency gains are ultimately governed by physical limits ... growth in GDP ultimately cannot plausibly be decoupled from growth in material and energy use” (Ibid., p. 10).

The measurement issues noted above can be seen in specific national energy usage statistics, with observed slight reductions in *absolute* energy usage in the richer nations of North America and Japan since 2000 (a trend reversed in the USA in 2018), and the EU28 since 2010, being the result of errors of omission inherent in the production-based measures utilized to arrive at these findings; Japan, the EU28 and the USA display the greatest differences between energy production and energy consumption measures (Kan, Chen & Chen 2019). Significant amounts of energy intensive activities, especially manufacturing, have been offshored to other nations such as China and Mexico. For example, in “Switzerland the energy embodied in imports has increased by 80% between 2001 and 2011” (Moreau & Vuille 2018). With respect to the United States, Smil (2013) details the wholesale transplantation of significant energy-intensive industries, through both foreign competition and corporate offshoring, from the 1970’s onwards. The role of China as a major net exporter of embedded energy is detailed by Xu et. al. (2016), who state that “China’s net embodied energy exports reached the highest level with a volume of 652 MTOE in 2013, which accounts for nearly 30% of China’s total coal and oil consumption. And 91% of China’s total net embodied energy exports

are from manufacturing sectors. If net embodied coal & oil exports are considered, China is still an energy exporter” (Ibid., p. 1303). Such empirical issues are missed in “many forms of ecological modernization [that] suffer from an inability to grasp how affluent countries in the core zone are able to improve their environmental conditions through outsourcing the impacts of material extraction and disposal to the periphery” (White, Gareau & Rudy 2017, p. 29). In recent years, the rate of *relative* energy decoupling has been on an undulating plateau, with the energy intensity of global GDP declining by 1.8% in 2016, 1.2% in 2017, 1.5% in 2018, and 2.1% in 2019; in the latter year 80% of the primary energy mix was still fossil fuels (Enerdata 2020).

The ecological modernization hypothesis is somewhat akin to the *Environmental Kuznets Curve* (EKC) (Stern 2004; Dasgupta, Laplante, Wang & Wheeler 2002) that proposes a decoupling of environmental impacts and economic growth at higher income levels. Both the ecological modernization and the EKC theories are seriously undermined by the analysis of both energy usage and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for the period 1971-2015 by Luzzati, Orsini and Gucciardi (2018, p. 619), who state “for the period 1971 -2001, there was some weak evidence of EKC” but “such a piece of evidence does not hold for the whole period 1971-2015, which includes the new wave of globalization”. Csereklyei and Stern (2015, p. 641) also find that “the most robust driver of growth in energy usage has been economic growth” and that “there is no sign of decoupling of economic growth and the growth of energy use at higher income levels”. Such findings also contradict the propositions put forward by some ecological economists (Daly 1996 & 2014) that qualitative development and quantitative growth can be separated once basic material needs have been met. Historically “all the most important processes of structural

transformation that the economic system has experienced, from the creation of a labor market ... to the concentration of production in large factories ... from colonial exploitation to postwar development policies ... ending with consumerism and the financialization of the economy ... have been supported and shaped by economic growth” (Bonaiuti 2011, p. 46); growth acts as a lubricant for change within society as the old is devalued and the new developed.

Eco-modernist scholars have identified localized and limited examples of reflexive behavior, but have provided no evidence of such behavior leading to reductions in material and energy throughput at the global or national levels to support their theories, “empirical results from the cases studied are implicitly taken to have a general validity, but the research strategies applied are actually not able to support such claims” (Seippel 2012, p. 299). In addition, European environmental sociology “draws heavily on the sociology of science and science and technology studies” with the result that “natural science arguments are rarely used authoritatively in European environmental sociology” (Lidskog, Mol & Oosterveer 2015, p. 347); empirical analysis is not accepted as an objective measure of theory. Instead of viewing human society and economy as a subset of nature, eco-modernists argue for the incorporation of nature within the economy (Mol 1995 & 1996); human culture and technology being assumed to trump ecology.

This is in contrast to a US environmental sociology founded in the environmentalist heyday of the 1970’s (Catton & Dunlap 1978 & 1978a) that calls for the inclusion of “biophysical variables in sociological analysis” and “is ‘dependent on’ natural science laws, calculations and materialities” (Lidskog, Mol & Oosterveer 2015, p. 346). This is evident in the writings of Catton and Dunlap who state that “Neglect of the

ecosystem-dependence of human society has been evident in sociological literature on economic development ... which has simply not recognized biogeochemical limits to material progress” and is in the “habit of neglecting laws of other sciences (such as the Principle of Entropy and the Law of Conservation of Energy) – as if human actions were unaffected by them” (Catton & Dunlap 1978, p. 43); a statement that could be directed at eco-modernist scholars four decades later.

The approach in this text integrates both *social* and *natural* empirical study utilizing an approach of scientific realism “it is the task of philosophy to create ontologies of society, but in a society with extensive social research such ontologies should be made conditional on the results of the empirical study of society” and whenever “theory and empirical ... research run into conflict, it is the metatheory ... that needs to be changed” (Heiskala 2011, pp. 15-16). It is accepted that empirical study can be used to validate, or invalidate, social theory; the alternative is the “danger of replacing empirical social research with [ungrounded] metatheory” (Ibid., p.16). Therefore, it is assumed that eco-modernism is an unproven theory that may require changes to match the results of empirical study. Although energy usage and carbon emissions *relative* to the size of the global economy have been reduced, and there are specific local case studies of *absolute* reductions, there is no proof of *absolute* reductions at the national or global levels. It has not been proven that energy and fossil fuel usage can be significantly reduced in the context of a global economy growing at the rates experienced in this century. Such a finding is at odds with the *common sense* assumptions of continued exponential growth independent of energy supply and pollution limitations. Relative decoupling will be taken as a likely future reality, while absolute decoupling will be treated as an unlikely one.

Eco-modernism, and the related theories of *Green/Natural/Ecological Capitalism* (Hawken, Lovins & Lovins 1999; Lovins & Rocky Mountain Institute 2011; Berghof & Rome 2017) and the concept of *Sustainable Development* still hold a leading position within the societal discourse on growth and ecology, one that is not supported by empirical research. The belief that economic growth can be delinked from environmental degradation and resource usage was implicitly accepted by the United Nations with its concept of *Sustainable Development* (WCED 1987), and has also been popularized by the World Bank which stated that “The view that greater economic activity inevitably hurts the environment is based upon static assumptions about technology, tastes and environmental investments” (IBRD 1992). The dominant United Nations climate change discourse also assumes that ecological modernization will take place to decouple economic growth and energy usage and/or carbon emissions; energy systems will transition from fossil fuels to low carbon alternatives, new technologies will capture and sequester carbon, and a greater relative, or even an absolute, decoupling of energy usage and economic growth achieved (UN IPCC 2018).

The staying power of such concepts, surviving lack of empirical support for more than three decades (and even longer in the case of mainstream economics), may be significantly due to their placement within a much longer utopian discourse of *progress* and *modernism* (Harlow, Golub & Allenby 2013). They reflect the political modernization theory that became dominant in the West in the post-WW2 period and that proposed “that a meliorist, rationalizing, benevolent, technocratic state was capable of solving all social and especially economic ills” (Gilman 2003, p. 56). Neoliberalism also seems to have been integrated into these concepts, as Foster notes (2012, p. 220), “the



emphasis of ecological modernization theory ... seems to be shifting somewhat in recent years from public regulation by government to private authority in the governance of ecological flows” within which “the privatization of formerly public authority is seen as entirely consistent with ecological reform or regulation, since corporations, along with transnational authorities, such as the WTO, are said to be increasingly disposed toward private self-governance and self-regulation of environmental flows through voluntary measures in line with ecological rationality”. Beliefs that a combination of unfettered free markets and human ingenuity are capable of resolving fundamental social issues and limits, a *utopian liberalism*, emerged toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Polanyi 2001). This utopian liberalism is reflected in the words of Beck (2010, p. 73), who states that, “Under a regime of ‘green capitalism’ composed of transnationally structured ecological enforced markets, ecology no longer represents a hindrance to the economy. Rather, the opposite holds: ecology and climate protection could soon represent a direct route to profits”. As with liberalism, communism is a modernist child of the Enlightenment and shares the belief in the unlimited capabilities of human organization and ingenuity. This is reflected in the major ecological problems created by the practice of communism in both Russia (Powell 1971; Kramer 1974) and in a China with a previous history of extensive ecological degradation (Shapiro 2001; Economy 2004; Elvin 2004). The discourse of progress and modernity is not just one of capitalism but a “greater problem of industrial civilization” (Polanyi 1968, p. 76), a paradigm that “is still a powerful device in civic debate” (Heiskala 2011, p. 15). To reject it is to reject the two major ideological discourses of the modern industrialized era.

In addition, the theories of Green/Natural/Ecological Capitalism and the concept of Sustainable Development are conceptually flexible enough to be ontologically defined by beholders with many differing utopian ideals. These theories can also be seen as a mainstream response (including from leading mainstream economists) to the anti-utopian messages arising in the 1970's from such texts as *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et. al. 1972) and *The Population Bomb* (Ehrlich 1968) and US environmental sociology, as well as a general increase in environmental awareness and the identification of the negative impacts of industrial civilization. The comment of Solow is telling "having, like everyone else, been suckered into the reading of *Limits to Growth*" and is representative of the approach of many mainstream economists and sociologists to what was seen as the overly pessimistic and anti-modernistic environmental discourses of the 1970's that challenged some of the common sense assumptions of modern growth-oriented societies (Foster 2012; Parenti 2012). Eco-modernism (and the various strands of sustainable capitalism and development), as with modernism, "is an expression of conformity to dominant institutions, which are seen as the very epitome of *modern*" (Foster 2012, p. 217) and thus serves as a theoretical and discursal protection of the status quo against threatening theories and discourses. "It should hardly surprise us that there is very little difference between the language and emphases of today's ecological modernization theorists, and the earlier stances adopted by post-Second War modernization theorists such as Bell, Lipset, and Nisbet, when entering the limits of growth debate" (Ibid., p. 219).

With a new wave of development in nations such as India and Indonesia that are at an energy-intensive stage of development the possibility for any absolute global energy/GDP decoupling, or even acceleration in relative decoupling, may not be possible

for decades. The extremely high correlation between increased energy usage and increased social welfare in such low energy usage per capita nations will provide intense pressure toward increases in energy consumption. At the same time, there appears to be little appetite within the industrialized nations for offsetting reductions in energy usage. The still dominant modernist and eco-modernist discourses of human exemptionalism reinforce and support these trends. They also support a predominantly technocratic approach to issues of energy security and environmental pollution that fits well with the rationalist and technocratic approaches of neo-realist and liberal internationalist international relations traditions.

As noted above, this research will assume that there may be a continued relative decoupling of economic growth and energy usage, but will reject absolute decoupling as an unreliable hypothesis. If global economic growth is to continue at the over 3% rate achieved in this century the result will tend toward increased energy (and quite possibly fossil fuel) consumption. As societies get wealthier, they may reduce the amount of energy (and other material) required per unit of GDP, but no absolute reduction in usage is achieved:

Whilst the strength of the proportionality between consumption and impact decreases slightly towards higher incomes (measured by so-called elasticities), consumption was found to be a consistently positive driver. In other words, the impact intensity of consumption decreases, but absolute impacts increase towards higher consumption. Absolute decoupling, let alone an inverted-U-type Kuznets

relationship, does not occur from a consumption-based accounting perspective. (Wiedman, Lenzen, Keysser & Steinberger 2020)

This assumption is supported by the *International Energy Outlook* produced by the United States Energy Information Administration (EIA), that forecasts an increase of nearly 50% in world energy consumption between 2018 and 2050 in its reference case, “with almost all of the increase occurring in non-OECD countries” (EIA 2019, p. 24); non-OECD countries include China, India, Indonesia and South East Asia. In the EIA’s forecasts, the growth in renewables is unable to offset the growth in energy usage, resulting in continued increases in fossil fuel consumption. The International Energy Administration (IEA) also forecasts increasing fossil fuel use, in this case to 2040. In the *New Policies* scenario that includes all new policies and targets announced by governments (an optimistic scenario given the mismatch between announcements and actions by many governments [Wilkes, Warren & Parkin 2018; Climate Action Tracker 2019]), the growth in renewables cannot fully offset a growth in global energy usage of over a quarter by 2040 (IEA 2018).

In the IEA’s eco-modernist *Sustainable Development Scenario* (IEA 2018) an approximate doubling in the rate of energy efficiency improvement offsets economic growth (i.e. zero energy consumption growth with over 3% global economic growth) and increases in electrification and renewables reduce fossil fuel use. It is notable that even in this scenario large-scale implementation of carbon capture, usage and storage technologies is required to meet GHG emission goals. Its assumption of a doubling in energy efficiency is also seriously undercut by the findings of the IEA 2020 report on

energy efficiency that found that “Since 2015, global improvements in energy efficiency ... have been declining”, which is “especially worrying because energy efficiency delivers more than 40% of the reduction in energy-related greenhouse gas emissions over the next 20 years in the IEA’s Sustainable Development Scenario” (IEA 2020, p. 10).

As discussed above, the probability of such an eco-modernist scenario will not be taken as a probable one; the assumptions in this research align significantly with the EIA reference case and IEA New Policies scenario. They also align with short-term (5-year) renewable energy industry association forecasts which see a slow growth of 2.7% per annum in net new global wind energy capacity (GWEC 2019) and a rapid deceleration in the annual growth of net new solar capacity from 12% in 2020 to 6% in 2023 (SolarPower Europe 2019); the latter compares to approximately 25% as recently as 2019.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) *Emissions Gap Report 2020* (UNEP 2020) has found that even consumption-based measures of GHG emissions, which include embedded-energy imports, have exhibited small reductions for the richer nations since the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC). A major reason for this though has been the significantly reduced rates of growth in the EU28, US and Japan after the GFC. Even these reduced rates of growth may have been significantly overstated for a US that has aggressively utilized statistical changes to reduce the inflation rate (deflator) used to convert nominal into real GDP (therefore inflating its real GDP growth numbers [Williams 2013]), and included its large and growing fee-based financial sector as an economic output rather than as the intermediate cost that it had been previously considered to be (Assa 2017). In addition, there are significant concerns that

the positive GHG emissions effects of coal to natural gas switching in the electricity-generation sector in many rich nations have been substantially over-estimated due to the under-counting of fugitive methane emissions related to natural gas extraction and distribution (McKibben 2016; Howarth 2019; Schneising et al 2020; Wheeler 2021).

Given the above, the only avenue available to reduce GHG emissions at the required rate proposed by the UN IPCC would be a significant if not total reduction in global positive GDP growth combined with global-scale war-like efforts to transition to low carbon energy sources and increase energy efficiency. This would require an extremely high level of trust and coordination at the international level, including the possibility of richer nations making a greater contribution (e.g. wealth and technology transfers, negative growth) to make space for poorer nations to improve their populace's living conditions. There would also need to be sanctions available against any "free-riding" nations or non-state actors.

The following section interrogates the international system with respect to the possibility of such cooperation.

## **2.2. The Nature of the International System**

### **2.2.1. Neoclassical Realism, Strategic Culture and Coxian Historical Materialism**

*Neoclassical realism* came into being as a response to the shortcomings of *neorealism* (or *structural realism*) and the repeated occurrences of states acting in ways contradictory to what would be expected from a neorealist perspective. With neorealism Waltz placed the focus upon his third image, the anarchic international system with states as the most significant actors; the referent object with respect to the attainment of security. States are seen as being forced to act in a rational way to the balance of power

within the international system that they inhabit, with no recourse to a higher power. Those states not acting rationally in their own interest will either be socialized by the negative consequences of their actions or removed from the system altogether by those consequences. The other two images, the nature of the individual humans and social groups involved, and the internal configuration of each state, fall into the background. These are assumed to be “like objects” with little or no variation between human policy making groups or states. To maintain their security, states must act with respect to the nature of the international system as otherwise they will either lose relative position or even perish; “the international system socializes states over time to balance against rising great powers and to emulate the successful security behavior of their peers” (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell 2016, p. 17). This systemic and rational theoretical perspective was first put forward by Waltz in the 1970s, at the height of the influence of *systems theory* within the academy. It also borrowed heavily from a microeconomics that viewed individuals as reacting rationally for their own utilitarian interests with respect to an external market system.

The assumption of generic rational individuals and social groups who perceive the world accurately and can adequately process all of the information available severely limits the applicability of structural realism. Robert Jervis (1976, 2017) and others (Booth 1979; Katzenstein 1996; Krause & Latham 1997) have argued that the actual human beings that conduct foreign policy frequently make perceptual and cognitive mistakes across a whole range of variables, such as the possible options available and the relative balance of power. This can be due to a combination of cognitive and cultural biases, the sheer complexity and possible contradictory nature of information flowing from the

international system, and the possible lack of clarity of such information. A state that has never been invaded may view the international system in a very different way to one that has been repeatedly invaded, leaders may have very different temperaments, other states may work hard to conceal their own motives, and the probabilistic and complex nature of planning may produce stasis rather than insight. The first image may have significant impacts upon actual outcomes, with the *Strategic Culture* (Glenn, Howlett & Poore 2004) specific to given national strategy making groups impacting national decision making over decadal timeframes.

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) treat strategic culture as one of their four clusters of intervening variables (the others being leader images and perceptions, state-society relations, and domestic institutions) and extend the temporal range over which such variables can operate. This facilitates the usage of neoclassical realism as a theory of international relations in itself, rather than as a device to tactically deal with outcomes at variance to neorealist expectations. The relative importance of strategic culture may change, as with the other variables, with each new nationally and temporally specific case; the *particularity* of the circumstances of a given nation at a given time is accepted within their analytical structuring. In some cases, leader images and perceptions may be subsumed within the strategic culture – especially with a regular turnover of leaders. A term-limited democratically elected leader from outside the political establishment, such as a Jimmy Carter or a Donald Trump may show significant *presentational* differences, but variances to the general *continuity* of foreign policy making are much less evident. This may not be the case for leaders in more autocratic systems who may retain leadership for a decade or more – such as a Vladimir Putin; they may have the mixture of



tenure and political strength to bend the strategic culture somewhat to their will, while acting with some independence. Even medieval absolute monarchs though had to take the views of their elites into account, with a ready successor always seemingly available to cast them aside.

The study of strategic culture began during the Cold War, as academics studied the cultural bases for the relations between the US and the Soviet Union. As Snyder (1977, p. v) stated “Neither Soviet or American strategists are culture-free, preconception-free game theorists ... It is useful to look at the Soviet approach to strategic thinking as a unique ‘strategic culture’. Individuals are socialized into a distinctively Soviet mode of strategic thinking. As a result of this socialization process, a set of general beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral patterns ... had achieved a state of semipermanence that places them on the level of ‘culture’ rather than mere ‘policy’ ... new problems are not assessed objectively. Rather, they are seen through the perceptual lens provided by the strategic culture.” This challenges the “ahistorical, non-cultural neorealist framework for analyzing strategic choices” (Johnston 1995, p. 35). A second generation of strategic culture research in the mid-1980s “started from the premise that there is a vast difference between what leaders think or say they are doing and the deeper motives for what in fact they do” (Ibid., p. 39) – the symbolic discourse may not represent the underlying decision making processes. This left an ambiguous instrumentality that could not be solved within the second-generation theoretical approaches. Approaches emerged in the 1990s that are “explicitly committed to competitive theory testing” (Ibid., p. 42) to validate the applicability of strategic culture in comparison to other approaches.

As noted previously, this analysis will utilize the broader notion of strategic culture as “entrenched beliefs, worldviews, and shared expectations” (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, p. 81) that “shape the strategic understanding of political leaders, societal elites, and even the general public” (Ibid., p. 83). From the later strategic culture research, it will be seen as a variable that “either presents decision-makers with limited range of options or ... acts as a lens that alters the appearance and efficacy of different choices” (Johnston 1995, p. 42). It will be assumed that such culture will reflect the interlinked material, ideational and institutional context within which strategy making elites have developed within and currently reside, aligning with the approach taken by van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) that has highlighted significant differences between US and Chinese strategic decision makers. These decision makers do not independently “float above” the national *milieu* that they represent, focusing independently and rationally on the *raison d’etat*, but are imperfect actors, with their own interests as well as those of the state, that are molded by, and reside within that *milieu* – especially the elite networks from which they tend to be drawn from. With respect to the US, Layne (2017) makes the case for a strategic culture, stemming from a “foreign policy establishment”, that has displayed a significant amount of continuity from the 1890s to the present day; supporting the case for strategic culture as a long-term determinant of foreign policy. “The foreign policy establishment has had two incarnations. The ‘old’ foreign policy establishment’s heyday was from the late 1890s to the late 1960s, the era where the East Coast elite was clearly ascendant in the US foreign policy making process ... Since the 1960s, the foreign policy establishment has become less white, less male, less Protestant, less East Coast centric, and its ranks leavened significantly with women,

people of color, Catholics, and Jews [but] the foreign policy establishment successfully co-opted, assimilated, and socialized the members recruited from non-traditional backgrounds” (Layne 2017, pp. 263-264). The current US elite may *look* somewhat different to those of the late 1890s or 1950s, but there may be relatively few differences in their strategic culture – “the foreign policy establishment’s world view ... has remained fundamentally unchanged since the early 1940s” (Ibid., p. 267).

With structural realism treating states as “like-objects”, possible variances in such things as the state/society complex configuration, domestic institutions and political considerations, and the ability to mobilize internal resources with respect to external challenges are not considered. This ignores the real possibility that states may compromise their position within the international community to prioritize internal economic, political and social needs. Barnett (1972, 1986) argues that the drive of the post-WW2 Labour government to meet the clamor of the population for greater social welfare after the sacrifices of two world wars redirected resources that were required to limit its relative decline with respect to other nations. The social and political culture of a nation may also greatly affect its ability to make full use of the resources available. For example, the cultural norms that delayed the mobilization of women as an industrial workforce by the Nazi German leadership placed Germany at a disadvantage with respect to a Britain that had no such resistance. The “Vietnam Syndrome” can also be seen as restricting US foreign policy options even into the current period, with a foreign policy executive and military branch highly averse to the domestic political risks of taking major casualties or instituting a draft.

Neoclassical realism “retains the primacy of the international system that structural realists emphasize, while relaxing the constraints of external determinism” (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell 2016, p. 25) to allow the inclusion of factors internal to the individual nation-state, providing for both the structural and unit-level causes that Waltz accepts are required to explain actual behaviors and outcomes. One use has been a relatively tactical one of explaining empirical variances to what would have been expected from a neorealist perspective. This assumes that states tend to act in a way conformant to neorealist theory, with only occasional variances. Another has been to explain more than just anomalies, providing insights into “a broader range of foreign policy choices and grand strategic adjustment” (Ibid., p. 29) – a general theory of foreign policy. The referent object of both approaches is still the state within an anarchic system, but states that may not be “like objects”. This aligns with the possibility of state differentiation proposed by Buzan & Schouenborg (2018, p. 23) that “suggests that ‘like-units’ might be quite radically different from each other”, for example in the nature of their state/society complexes.

Cox’s concept of the state/society complex subsumes the state-society relations and domestic institutions intervening variable clusters and sees them as co-creational elements of a larger structure rather than as independent intervening variables. Cox provides a way of analyzing the structure, and the interaction of the parts, through the concept of the state/society complex defined by the interaction of ideas, institutions and material capabilities. As with neoclassical realism, Cox integrates insights that could be construed to be constructivist, but such a view would “fail to appreciate the deep connection Cox maintains between intersubjectivity and the material conditions of

existence, which is informed by a particular reading of historical structures that comes through an engagement with the work of Carr and Braudel” (Germain 2016, p. 537).

Carr’s work was “centrally concerned with how the future is evolving out of the contemporary social, political, and economic arrangements” (Ibid.), with the historical method being essential to all social sciences. Cox’s work shares much with the classical realists, while rejecting fixed concepts of “human nature” and providing a more structured approach to the process of historical change.

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) expand on Waltz’s understanding of system structure, including Buzan’s concept of “interaction capacity” factors that are systemic without being part of the system – such as “technological capabilities and shared international norms and organization” (Ibid., p. 39), referring to them as “structural modifiers”. Here, Cox’s concept of material capabilities, ideas and institutions interacting in a reciprocal fashion as a historical global structure provides a more holistic, integrated and temporally conditioned view of such systemic, but not structural, factors. They are not part of the structure, but may alter that structure and the interactions within the system in fundamental ways. Anievas’ analysis (2006) of the ways in which the process of industrialization and modernization unbalanced the international system prior to World War 1 is indicative of the insights that can be gained from such a historical materialist approach that does not assume a simplistic material determinacy.

Cox’s view of a given configuration of structural modifiers, a “particular combination of thought patterns, material conditions, and human institutions which has a certain coherence among the elements” that “constitute the context of habits, pressures, expectations, and constraints within which action takes place” (Cox 1981, p. 138) as

temporally and geographically specific provides a way of understanding the “present” as a specific point in a fluid space/time. Differing scales and timeframes can be accommodated, with the rejection of ahistorical and universal social concepts such as *The Thucydides Trap* and liberalism.

The assumption of an ongoing struggle between different interests and ideas facilitates the understanding of change, at the systemic and unit levels. There may be periods of relative stability, such as the post-WW2 Cold War, that lend themselves to static *problem-solving* theories. The post-Cold War period, continuing up to the present time, has been one of major change and instability. *Critical theory*, such as Cox’s historical materialism, that problematizes and historicizes conditions at a given moment in time, is advantaged over problem solving theoretical approaches that generally assume only incremental change, during such times.

Cox also introduced the Gramscian concept of *hegemony* to International Relations, with a hegemonic state serving to mitigate the anarchical nature of the international system, “If a social class becomes hegemonic within a state, then it may expand its naturally consolidated hegemony abroad. In doing so, it forges an international historic bloc ... The formation of an international historic bloc serves to mitigate systemic anarchy” (Green 2014, p. 288). This is proposed as the case for the Pax Britannica (1845-75) and the later Pax Americana, “Cox proposes that the major consequences of the liberal era [Pax Britannica] were that it permitted both a *transformation of state structures*, centered upon convergence toward the liberal form, and the *expansion of the world economy* in relatively peaceful circumstances” (Ibid., p. 289). This convergence toward a liberal form was in many cases mediated and combined

with nation-specific political economies. In the case of German industrialization liberal forms were grafted onto an in-place set of economic and social relations, with the aristocratic Prussian *Junker* class remaining dominant, producing hybrid rather than purely liberal structures. The same hybridity can be seen in the present, especially in the case of China. Instead of producing convergence, hegemonic periods of globalization can produce heterogeneous outcomes as each newly developing nation grafts liberal elements onto already existing social structures and institutions in a *revolution from above* aimed at driving rapid development. Referring to Japan, Cox & Sinclair (1996, p. 262) note that “a substructure of classes objectively differentiated by evolving relations of production is overlaid by the persistence of *stande* (status groups) characterized by specific styles of life and conceptions of honor”. This aligns with Trotsky’s concept of *Uneven & Combined Development* (Hobson 2011), which sees industrialization as spreading *unevenly* across the globe, and liberal elements being *combined* with differing social and cultural traditions. These hybridizing processes have created much of the heterogeneity of states within the current international system; “unevenness posits multiplicity and differentiation as a general ontological condition of social existence. Second, unevenness *ipso facto* conditions and is reconditioned by processes of change within and across interacting societies. This interactive process ontologically blurs the analytical distinction between the ‘internal’ and ‘external’, and by extension the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, as it necessarily generates particular ‘combinations’ of its own component parts, continuously generating new iterations and dynamics of unevenness” (Anievas & Matin 2016, p. 7).

Strategic culture, by incorporating the specific beliefs and cognitive biases of the humans, and groups of humans that inhabit strategic planning groups, overcomes the possible blindness of historical materialist approaches (and other systemic approaches) to the importance of contingency. Specific individuals and groups, through their actions and beliefs, may have significant impacts upon geopolitics; the importance of a Stalin or Hitler, or the US “north eastern protestant elite” comes to mind. Cox understood the importance of contingency when he noted that, “There is no iron determinacy or historical inevitability at work in the process of structural transformation of the world system. There is rather a balance of constraints inherent in the existing order, with opportunity inherent in the process of change itself” (Cox & Sinclair 1996, p. 251).

Neoclassical realism is limited in its use to those nations that maintain a significant degree of sovereignty, such as Western Europe, the white settler colonies (Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand), Japan, Russia, India and China. As the level of sovereignty declines the impact of outside interests upon state policy making becomes more prevalent, such as more powerful states, supranational organizations, non-governmental organizations and transnational corporations.

### **2.2.2. The Interregnum Between Great Power Conflicts**

The collapse of the Soviet Union intensified the intellectual reassessment of the concept of security that had arisen during the 1970s and 1980s in response to “the intense narrowing of the field of Security Studies imposed by the military and nuclear obsessions of the Cold War” (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde 1998, p. 2). This involved both a *widening* and a *deepening* “in favour of deepening the referent object beyond the state, widening the concept of security to include other sectors than the military, giving equal emphasis to



domestic and trans-border threats, and allowing for a transformation of the Realist, conflictual logic of international security” (Buzan & Hansen 2009, p. 188). The process of globalization also reinforced this process, as it was perceived by many as reducing the power of the state and introducing new actors such as transnational corporations, international non-governmental organizations, and city networks together with the general facilitation of cross-border horizontal connections independent of the state (Robinson 2004; Scholte 2005; Sassen 2007; Castells 2009; Sassen 2012; Taylor 2013; Sprague 2015; Curtis 2016; Pingeot 2016). In addition, with the “unipolar moment” removing major power confrontation as a significant security issue, in the post-9/11 period terrorist organizations became a privileged threat.

The overwhelming power and transformative orientation of the United States during the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union was captured well by Zakaria “U.S. hegemony in the post–Cold War era was like nothing the world had seen since the Roman Empire” (Zakari 2019), Mearsheimer “My basic argument is that the United States was so powerful in the aftermath of the Cold War that it could adopt a profoundly liberal foreign policy, commonly referred to as ‘liberal hegemony’ ... the United States has sought to remake the world in its own image” (Mearsheimer 2018, preface para. 1) and Huntington “The very phrase ‘the world community’ has become the euphemistic collective noun ... to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers” (Huntington 1993, p. 39).

Starrs (2013) typified globalization as not reducing the power of the US state/society complex, but rather representing a change in the way that power was projected and maintained, “As a consequence of sustained acquisitions by American

firms in key markets around the world over the past couple decades, perhaps it is not surprising that by 2012 American firms combined own 46% of all publicly listed shares of the top 500 corporations in the world” (Ibid., p. 824). In addition, the US state’s domination of international bodies such as the IMF and World Bank together with the liberalization of trade and capital flows allowed the US state and US transnational capital to more directly affect the internal structures and processes of other states. US capital, allied with the US state, had increased its global dominance “beginning with US-led globalization in the 1960s and US led liberalization in the 1980s, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the great opening and rise of China, among others, by the twenty-first century American structural power straddles the globe like never before” (Ibid., p. 828). This view of a tight integration of US economic elites and US state policy making institutions is supported by the work of van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2016) in analyzing “the social context in which grand-strategy makers are embedded” (Ibid., p. 237) and Layne (2006 & 2017). A context of predominant overlap between state and US transnational corporate sector actors “which obviously serves the interests of U.S. transnational corporations ... not because U.S. grand-strategy makers are agents representing the corporate elite, but because in fact they are often part of the corporate elite themselves, or at least of broader corporate elite networks” (van Apeldoorn & de Graaff, p. 238).

From this perspective globalization can be seen significantly as a consciously shaped process that increased the power of the US state/capital combination (and to a lesser extent that of other Western ones with respect to non-Western ones) while reducing the ability of other states to resist through the liberalization of trade and capital flows and

the deregulation and privatization of major economic sectors. Taylor's work (2013) provides support for such a view, with the global corporate command and control functions becoming increasingly centralized within the leading "global cities" that predominantly reside within the US and other Western nations. State sovereignty is seen as being a critical determinant of whether or not a nation would be able to produce global cities with all their economic and political benefits as against simply cities of slums. China is identified as one of the few non-Western nations that maintained sovereignty, and therefore has been able to develop leading global cities such as Shanghai.

The predominant Western view in the last decade of the twentieth century was that as nations interacted with the liberal West they would be integrated into the US-led liberal hegemony. As Europe had become in the post-WW2 era, "European capitalists formed ties with American capitalists both within Europe *and* within the US, which actually reinforced the material foundation of American imperial hegemony. European capitalists no longer constituted 'national bourgeois' inclined toward anti-American sentiments ... by the early 1970s, [they] were becoming 'Canadianized'" (Gindin & Panitch 2012, p. 115). The whole world would inevitably embrace liberalism, as captured by the concept of *The End of History* (Fukuyama 1992) or the view that the world was "Flat" (Friedman 2005); all nations would naturally converge, or would be "helped" to converge, toward a liberal capitalist state. Ideological conflict would be made irrelevant through a truly global liberal international order (LIO) overseen and safeguarded by the "enlightened" and "benevolent" leadership of the "indispensable nation" of the US acting as the "global policeman". "Looking at the world at the end of the twentieth century, one could be excused for thinking that history was moving in a progressive and liberal

internationalist direction” (Ikenberry 2018, p. 7). Ikenberry captures the liberal internationalist belief in the universalism and inevitable global triumph of liberalism when he asserts:

This is not a story about the rise and spread of Western liberalism. It is a story of modernity and the global search for universal principles of politics and economics. No region or people own this story. It is a story that is written on a world scale – and it is one of breakthroughs, crises, triumphs and transformations. The liberal international order is in crisis. But after liberalism there will be more, well, liberalism. (Ikenberry 2010, p. 521)

By replacing the words “liberalism” with “Christianity”, “politics and economics” with “religion”, and “liberal” with “Christian” the parallels with the Western Christian civilizing burden of a previous time are apparent. The world would become civilized and enlightened through the adoption of US capitalist democracy. A dissident alternative view was provided by Huntington (1993), who saw a global system rent by a “Clash of Civilizations” along cultural lines. In both cases major nation-state power rivalry was not seen as a significant part of the security agenda, although Huntington did quote Lucian Pye in seeing China as “a civilization pretending to be a state” (Ibid., p. 24). The events of 9/11 and the resulting “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) provided some support to Huntington’s thesis, while significantly re-orienting security concerns toward non-state actors in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

As Mearsheimer notes, between WW2 and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc the US headed a “Cold War order” that was “neither liberal nor international” (Mearsheimer 2019, p. 8). The construction of this Cold War order was the result of the overwhelming economic and military power of the US post-WW2; the Axis powers of Germany, Italy and Japan had been defeated, devastated and occupied, the rest of Europe, Russia and China suffered overwhelming economic and social losses, and the United Kingdom was financially ruined (Barnett 1986) - “America’s *first* unipolar moment” (Layne 2017, p. 261). To refer to it as a “liberal international order” is both mistaken and Eurocentric given its composition. It had liberal features, but the logic was predominantly one of realism by the US state/society complex, “quarantining” those states that it could not dominate, while maintaining a hierarchical hegemony over those that it could. At the core of this hierarchy was a “West” consisting of Western Europe, and the white settler nations that shared a cultural and ideological history of Western colonial supremacy and liberal ideological constructs such as capitalist democracy (in differing forms, such as the German *ordoliberalism* [Biebricher & Vogelmann 2017] and the French *dirigisme* [Schmidt 1996]); “the liberal order is a club of the West” (Acharya 2018, p. 3). Japan was only added after Western institutional constructs were forcibly imposed upon it during the post-WW2 occupation period (an occupation that still continues for the people of Okinawa and those around the many other US military bases in Japan [Vine 2017]); “Japan was forced to adopt (and then adapt to) political and economic institutions that were literally imposed on them from abroad” (Steinmo 2010, p. 89). The order was “rules-based inasmuch as it is solidified in liberal global institutions established by and

centered on US power, but also crucially underpinned by a preponderant military with a global reach” (De Graaff & Van Apeldoorn 2018, p. 113).

Layne (1997) identified a security/interdependence nexus at the base of post-WW2 US policies. The imposition of liberal democratic structures in West Germany, its integration within the US-dominated North American Treaty Organization and the European Coal and Steel Community, the major deployment of US troops to the country, and a US-led reconstruction, remade the nation as a non-threatening member of a peaceful Western Europe. Within such an environment, economic interdependence could flourish. Japan was placed in the same position, with the occupying force driving through extensive land redistribution and liberal democratic structures, an imposed constitution that renounced the right to war, a “Red Scare” to crush socialist elements, and a security alliance with the US. After the end of the occupation the CIA “spent millions of dollars to support the conservative party that dominated Japan's politics for a generation” (Weiner 1994). The two major Axis powers were internally reconstructed, and integrated within security and economic alliances, that *made* them safe for democratic capitalism and extensive economic interdependence. The lesser member of Italy was also restructured, and internally manipulated well into the post-war years.

Overall, a peaceful liberal core was constructed whereby “the plutocracy that dominates the system is centered in the United States, but has powerful allied branches in Western Europe and Japan especially” (Shoup 2015, preface, para. 2). This structure facilitated the post-WW2 economic “miracle” that came to a halt in the 1970s, a hegemonic order that provided extensive benefits to its core nations and their populations through an enforced mixture of US-provided security, liberal democracy and economic

integration. It also fully supported the Open-Door policies that facilitated the international growth of the globally dominant US international corporations. This “security/interdependence nexus” (Layne 1997, p. 86) required a strategy of *preponderance*. The “creation and maintenance of a U.S.-led world order based on preeminent U.S. political, military, and economic power, and on American values; maximization of U.S. control over the international system by preventing the emergence of rival great powers in Europe and East Asia; and maintenance of economic interdependence as a vital U.S. security interest” (Ibid., p.88); the US as the sovereign of its world order. This was based upon “a historically rooted belief that to be secure, the United States must extend abroad both its power and its political and economic institutions and values” (Ibid.). This concept of preponderance integrates the Offensive Realist view of the need for a maximization of relative power and the Defensive Realist view that “The spread of democracy, economic interdependence, and the development of international institutions can help accomplish” (Ibid., p. 93) security; the latter being somewhat consistent with liberal internationalism.

The vast majority of humanity existed outside this bounded sphere, with many of the non-Soviet bloc nations existing within economic and political “lesser than” spheres of influence dominated by the sovereign or one of the senior members – such as Central and Southern America (the US) and the West African CFA franc nations (France) – that were maintained through economic, political, cultural and if necessary military, power. In many cases formal colonialism was replaced with the economically more efficient, and politically more expedient, neocolonialism. As Yates states with respect to the French dominated Gabon:

Gabon was an African country, geographically shaped by the French, *colonized* by the French, forested by the French, led by a francophone assimilated elite who spoke French, read French writing, received French education, practiced French law, worked for French businesses, and who adopted a French system of government that was additionally dominated by France through a system called ‘cooperation’ (a term coined by the French in a series of military, economic, and diplomatic accords). (Yates 2012, p. 28)

Others became proxy battlegrounds between the two competing blocs, such as the Koreas, Vietnam, the Middle East, Somalia and Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Cuba. “The order often operated more through coercion than consent. It was hardly ‘orderly’ for the Third World, where local conflicts were magnified by capricious great power intervention, including the United States and its Western allies” (Acharya 2018, p. 4).

The neoliberal revolution was first implemented under the direction of the Milton Friedman led “Chicago School” by the Chilean Pinochet dictatorship of 1973-1990 (brought into power by a US-supported military coup) and then by the US-supported Argentinian military dictatorship of 1976-1983 (Gandin 2006; Undurraga 2015); the latter only fully taking “root a decade later with President Menem’s (1989-1998) implementation of the ‘convertibility plan’. During the 1990s” (Ibid., p. 11). In the late 1970s and early 1980s it became established in both the US and UK (Harvey 2005; Mitchell & Fazi 2017). With respect to the former, the New York fiscal crisis of the mid 1970s served as somewhat of a “dry run” for the national imposition of neoliberal



policies and the reassertion of elite interests (Phillips-Fein 2017). Neoliberalism differed from classic liberal theory (as against the actual reality of pre-WW2 “liberal” capitalism [Polanyi 2001]), and the post-WW2 embedded liberalism (Ruggie 1982), through the explicit role of the state in engineering markets (in contrast to *laissez faire*) and the extensive state privatization, removal of state social services, and deregulation (in contrast to embedded liberalism) respectively. In 1983 the French government of Francois Mitterand “faced with a choice between abandoning major elements of its *dirigiste* policies or the European Community, decided in favor of the latter and, therefore, of liberalism” (Schmidt 1996, p. 378) turning away from its attempts to “revive and extend the post-war *dirigiste* model” (Mitchell & Fazi 2017, p. 78) and embraced a more neoliberal and austerity-focused orientation “in what became known as the *tournant de la rigueur* (‘turn to austerity’)” (Ibid., p. 80) and later dismantled “the core institutions of the post-war *dirigiste* model” (Ibid., p. 81).

Aided by the reinvention of global economic governance organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) along the neoliberal lines of the “Washington consensus” (Kentikelents & Babb 2019), together with the 1980s Third-World debt crisis (created by the combination of high oil prices and greatly increased US interest rates due to the “Volcker shock”), peripheral nations could also be forcibly “structurally adjusted” along neoliberal lines. “From the 1970s onwards, a similar therapy [to that implemented in Chile] was imposed – through financial blackmail, coercion, violence and even outright military intervention – on several countries, from Latin America to Asia to Eastern Europe to the Middle East” (Mitchell & Fazi, p. 102). With respect to Brazil “an alliance of agro-mineral and finance capital, involving both foreign

and local capitalists” supported the election of President Cardoso in 1994, which “led to a decisive break with the national statist policies of the previous 60 years” (Petras 2013, p. 471); a process started by Collor, the first elected President after the end of the military dictatorship. This neoliberal regime was “sustained and deepened by the Lula regime” of 2003 to 2010 (Ibid., p. 472).

Such direct intervention into national economic and social structures by global governance organizations, together with Western powers and TNCs, represented a significant reduction in sovereignty for the peripheral nations. A new neoliberal order was being imposed upon the Western bloc and its areas of influence. The illegal guerrilla “contra” war against Nicaragua in the 1980s, and the invasion of Panama in 1989 also demonstrated that the US was the sovereign, unconstrained by the rules or norms of the order that it led (Karabell 1999). A position underlined by its response to a 1986 International Court of Justice ruling against it with respect to its aggression toward Nicaragua; it refused to recognize the court’s jurisdiction and used its UN Security Council veto to reject a resolution calling for full compliance to the court’s ruling (Gandin 2006, p. 118; Hight 1987).

It was in this context that the West received the dividends of the collapse of the Soviet bloc and Chinese market liberalization. With no offsetting international grouping, the Western powers seemed to be free to impose a true (neo)LIO, “The sudden and unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union inflated America’s ambition for its role in the world, as reflected in Washington’s strenuous efforts in the post-Cold War era to create a unipolar world and expand the liberal hegemonic order to the rest of the globe” (Wu 2018, p. 1000). An ambition reflected in the side-stepping of the United Nations to carry

out an illegal (under international law) invasion of Iraq, followed by the occupying forces' illegal imposition of a fundamental neoliberal restructuring of the Iraqi constitution, law and institutions without the consent of the Iraqi people (Whyte 2007; Baker 2014).

With the collapse of the Soviet-bloc and the entry of China into the global market place, it was assumed that the US would remain as the sovereign of its now fully global order, setting the rules of that order with some consent from its constituents (including the new ones such as Russia and China) but reserving the right to be above those rules when it deemed such an exception to be required; acting as the “policeman” who is also the judge and jury. Those that did not acceptably accede to the sovereign’s authority would continue to be identified as threats to be co-opted (China after its break with the Soviet bloc), subdued (Iran 1953, Guatemala 1954, Argentina 1955 & 1976, Bolivia 1964, Brazil 1964, Chile 1973, Uruguay 1973 [Gandin 2006; Dehghan & Norton-Taylor 2013])), or contained (the Soviet Bloc, China before its break with the Soviet bloc, North Korea, Cuba, post-Shah Iran, Chavez and Maduro-led Venezuela). The contingent nature of the commitment to democracy (as against capitalism) is shown by the US recognition and ongoing support for extremely illiberal regimes, such as Saudi Arabia and Central/South American and African dictatorships; especially when such elites are of a subservient *comprador* type. This has been repeatedly underlined through such things as the post-WW2 CIA interventions into Italian politics to make sure that the populace voted the “right” way (Blum 2014), and Levin’s identification of 81 cases of US intervention in the democratic processes of other nations between 1946 and 2000 (Levin 2019). Democracy seemed to be only an option if it was within a capitalist system, while

capitalism seemed to be an option with or without democracy; a position taken by the highly influential economist Hayek during a visit to totalitarian Chile “my personal preference leans toward a liberal dictatorship rather than a democratic government devoid of liberalism” (as cited in Gandin 2006, p. 172).

The Western nations would continue to represent the senior members of this order, akin to feudal Nobles, able to maintain lesser spheres of influence while being subservient to the sovereign. Individual Western nations may be allowed limited independence, as with France’s decision not to maintain a full membership of NATO in 1966 (reversed in 2009), but such independence was limited - as shown by the punitive actions of the US toward the UK and France during the Suez Crisis.

The self-perceived superiority of the US (and other Western nations), and the ideological need for them to impose its (their) rules and norms upon others, was further buttressed by Democratic Peace Theory and the concept of *Human Security* operationalized through the paradigm of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) (Menon 2016). Nations that did not align with Western norms and values (e.g. capitalist democracy) could be defined as the “ontological Other” (Zhang 2016, p. 805) that were not “civilized” enough to deserve the full protection of Westphalian sovereignty; “with a liberal zone of law constituted by liberal states practicing a higher degree of legal civilization, to which other states will be admitted only when they met the requisite standards” (Kingsbury 1999, p. 90). This “discourse of ‘democracy as civilization’” (Zhang 2016, p. 805) supported a dominant Western position that “In the name of democracy, violence and war as well as regime change can be and indeed have often been justified as necessary evils in the course of either establishing or defending a ‘superior’

liberal political and legal order and punishing or disciplining ‘rogue states’, ‘pariahs’ and ‘outlaws’” (Ibid., p. 806). The rhetorical support for liberal interventionism continued as before to be at odds with the reality of US foreign policy actions. In 1993 Russia President Yeltsin “won enthusiastic support from both the Clinton administration and virtually all of the U.S. media” (Cohen 2001, p. 126) when he carried out a violent coup against the democratically elected Russian Parliament. In 2009 the Honduran coup-leaders who overthrew a democratically elected president were supported by the US and Canada (Shipley 2017) – support repeated after 2016 elections that the Organization of American States (OAS) judged to be marred by “irregularities, mistakes and systemic problems” (HRW 2017). Noting the reality of geopolitical considerations over supposed humanitarian ones, Menon asked “Would the Saudis ever face a Security Council - R2P resolution? Would the United States, Britain or France vote for an R2P resolution condemning Israel’s use of force ... in the West Bank or Gaza?” (Menon 2016, p. 98). Such an interventionist stance can also be seen as violating the basic liberal international tenets of state sovereignty and pluralism that are embedded in the United Nations charter. From this perspective, the current positions of the Western powers and that of Russia and China may be seen as differing selections from the liberal international values pallet, rather than one being liberal and the other illiberal.

US policy elites expected that Russia, China, the Eastern European and Baltic nations, together with Yugoslavia would accept the necessity of US dominance and security, and their place within its now fully global order. For the successor states of Yugoslavia, the Baltic States and Eastern Europe this assumption generally became reality, with integration for many within both NATO and the European Union. It has been

argued that US policies forestalled the integration of Russia (Cohen 2001), while the sheer scale, independent stance and the specific state/society complex of China ruled out a compliant acceptance of a subservient position within a US-led global order.

### **2.2.3. Failure To Integrate And The Return Of Great Power Politics**

The recovery of Russia from the disastrous decade of extreme Western-sponsored structural adjustment “shock therapy” at the end of the twentieth century (Cohen 2001), together with its reassertion of an independent role in international affairs, brought major power competition back onto the security agenda. As Cohen so presciently noted:

what will be the reaction of our own opinion shapers and policymakers when Russian realities explode the prevailing myths about America's post-Communist friend and partner, as they soon will? If missionary dogmas persist, the American backlash is easy to foresee - at best, cynicism and indifference to Russia's plight; at worst, a sense of betrayal and a revival of reflexive Cold War attitudes . . .

Russia can find its own way only within the limits of its own traditions and possibilities, not ours. Such a reformation does not need our political tutelage. If the United States cannot accept this first principle of post-Communism everywhere, the sequel to the Cold War is likely to be a very cold peace. (Ibid., pp. 111-112)

The decisive move away from the shock therapy neoliberal experiment of the 1990's by the Putin government, toward a more dominant state and nationalist position (which included financial and legal measures against economic elites/oligarchs deemed to

be non-compliant), placed Russia outside the neoliberal capitalist democratic orientation acceptable to the Western powers. This is most evident in the fossil fuel sector, where after a period of privatization in the 1990's the Russian state has worked to reassert control, with state backing becoming "a vital factor determining the success of [fossil fuel] players in Russia's state managed capitalism" (Kretzschmar et, al 2013., p. 778). The result has been state management but not necessarily nationalization, "even state behemoths such as Rosneft and Gazprom are organized like private companies, geared primarily to pay dividends to shareholders – of which the state is simply the largest" (Wood 2018, p. 171).

After the accession of Putin to the Russian presidency, the Russian state had continued to have good relations with the US and had provided extensive support to the US invasion of Afghanistan (as did Iran). Putin had been lauded in the Western press, with *The Economist* as late as September 2003 describing the Bush-Putin relationship as "warm and fuzzy" and Putin as "one of his [Bush's] few real remaining friends on the world stage" (The Economist 2003, p. 49). The very next month the Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, purported to be the richest man in Russia, was arrested on charges of fraud and tax evasion. The Yukos oil and gas company that he had gained control of through the infamous "Loans for Shares" privatization process in the 1990s was broken up with substantial parts being taken over by the government controlled Rosneft. By acting against the most powerful private actor in Russia, Putin asserted and solidified the power of the Russian state apparatus and rebalanced the relationship between the state and the remaining oligarchs. The arrest of Khodorkovsky may also have been precipitated by the possibility of a sale of a major stake in Yukos to Exxon

(Jack & Hoyos 1993), which would have placed a strategic Russian fossil fuel asset under US influence. Putin's actions both rebalanced the power of the Russian state with respect to capital, and blocked US corporate access to a strategic asset. Given the orientation of the US state, as noted above, it would be expected that responses to such actions would be extremely negative. This became very apparent in US mainstream press coverage, with Kristof (2014) asserting, "the West has been suckered by Mr. Putin. He is not a sober version of Boris Yeltsin. Rather, he's a Russified Pinochet or Franco. And he is not guiding Russia toward free-market democracy, but into fascism".

Relations were also damaged by Russian resistance to Western influence in Ukraine, a former member of the USSR with an extensive border with Russia and the host of the Russian naval base at Sevastopol. Any attempt by Russia to establish its own sphere of influence to maintain its security was not acceptable to the US. Cohen quotes Elisabeth Bumiller of the *New York Times* as stating that US "Russia specialists say [Putin's] involvement in Ukraine is his most serious offense yet in American eyes" (Cohen 2005). The deterioration continued with the 2008 Russia-Georgia war (with the US providing support to Georgia) and the continuing Russian opposition to the eastward march of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) toward the Russian border. Tensions between Russia and the US escalated further after the NATO regime change intervention in Libya in 2011, which was seen as a misuse of the UN mandate by both Russia and China:

Russia and China learned their lessons in Libya. Neither country opposed Security Council Resolution 1973, which, in 2011, authorized military action, undertaken



by a coalition of NATO and Arab states, to protect Libyan civilians; but they complained bitterly, well before the mission had ended, that ‘regime change’ was afoot and had never been part of the mandate. They became determined not to allow a repeat performance in Syria and have acted accordingly. (Menon 2016, p. 9)

This was followed by the Ukraine crisis of 2014, which resulted in the Ukrainian civil war, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the resultant escalating Western economic sanctions. Russian intervention in Syria in 2015, couched in terms of Syrian state sovereignty and self-determination, then underlined a newfound independence in Russian foreign policy that stood in opposition to the US-led discourse of universalist capitalist democracy, humanitarian intervention and regime change. This opposition was enunciated clearly by the Russian President in 2019 in a speech at the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club:

since all nations are obviously different, uniformity and universalisation are impossible by default. A system is required whereby different values, ideas and traditions can co-exist ... in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they used to refer to a “Concert of Powers.” The time has come to talk in terms of a global “concert” of development models, interests, cultures and traditions where the sound of each instrument is crucial, inextricable and valuable, and for the music to be played harmoniously rather than performed with discordant notes, a cacophony. It is crucial to consider the opinions and interests of all the participants in international

life. Let me reiterate: truly mutually respectful, pragmatic and consequently solid relations can only be built between independent and sovereign states. (Putin 2019)

Such a position fundamentally challenges the US role as the sovereign of the global international community; placing it as one among a number of equal great powers (each with their own accepted sphere of influence) with no single power empowered to take unilateral action. Russia's increasingly independent stance is reflected in significant differences between the Russian National Security Strategy (NSS) documents of 2009 (Russian Federation President 2009) and 2015 (Russian Federation President 2015). The latter portrays "the EU, along with NATO and the US negatively" (Raik et al., 2018) and uses much more explicit language to identify the source of major state threats, such as "the Russian Federation's implementation of an independent foreign and domestic policy is giving rise to opposition from the United States and its allies, who are seeking to retain their dominance in world affairs" (Russian Federation President 2015, Article 12). Russia's position is captured well in Putin's interviews with Oliver Stone (Stone 2017), and summarized succinctly by the Brookings Institute, a leading US foreign policy think tank:

Putin's vision of international order is fundamentally at odds with the interests of the United States. Putin believes that the existing order is a façade. It is shrouded in the language of universal values and global institutions but the order is actually designed to promote American dominance of the international system.

Consequently, Putin has made it his mission to weaken this order and replace it

with something much more conducive to Russia's interests ... Putin believes that America's penchant for intervention in the Middle East destabilized the region and empowered Islamist forces that threaten Russia. Globally, in his view, the United States has weaponized the international financial system to unilaterally impose sanctions on countries that it disagrees with, including on Russia over the annexation of Crimea and destabilization of Ukraine. (Chollet et. al. 2017, pp. 18-19)

The relationship between Russia and the US and its allies has only deteriorated further with the *Skripal* incident and the continuing clash of interests in Syria. The most recent Western media coverage of the *Russiagate* allegations of Russian tampering in the democratic processes of the USA and its allies is highly reminiscent of the *Red Scare* at the beginning of the Cold War during the early post-WW2 years. The extremely negative and demeaning discourse is reflected in the US foreign policy establishment, through such documents as the US National Security Strategies (see below) and reports from highly influential think tanks. A case of the latter is the identification of Russia as a "Rogue, Not a Peer" (Dobbins, Shatz & Wyne 2018, p. 1) by a RAND Corporation report that goes on to state that "Russia is not a peer or near-peer competitor but rather a well-armed rogue state that seeks to subvert an international order it can never hope to dominate" (Ibid., p. 2). This explicitly "Others" Russia and places it among the non-civilized "rogue states" that should not enjoy the status and protections of the higher level of legal civilization.

Four decades of exponential growth have transformed China from a backward nation with per capita wealth on the same level as many African countries into a still fast growing upper middle-income nation with an economy larger than the United States on a purchasing power parity basis. It had been assumed by many that after its ascension to the World Trade Organization, China would increasingly converge with the liberal capitalist nations and take its place within the US-led (neo)LIO, rather than act as a “revisionist” state. This was reinforced by the Chinese stance of *Keeping A Low Profile*, under which “China passively adapted itself to changes in the international environment” (Yan 2014, p. 166) while it focused on national economic development. In 2010, Buzan could note that “China’s rise over the past 30 years certainly looks peaceful compared to that of most other recent great power *arrivistes* [Germany, Japan and the USSR]” and that “over the past 30 years, China has done a pretty good job of pursuing peaceful rise” (Buzan 2010, p. 15).

Buzan typified China as a “*reformist revisionist*” power that “accepts some of the institutions of international society for a mixture of calculated and instrumental reasons. But it resists, and wants to reform, others, and possibly also wants to change its status” (Buzan 2010, p. 18) and presciently observed that the “danger is that as China rises it will become less dependent on the United States, and more opposed to its leadership, and the United States will feel more threatened by its increasing power and revisionism” (Ibid., p. 22). The new stance under the leadership of Xi Jinping of *Striving for Achievement* and his promotion of the *Chinese Dream* of national rejuvenation has been seen in the West as threatening an increasingly assertive foreign policy that will “‘shape’ the international system to a higher degree”, expect “to be treated on an equal footing” and that “China

will never compromise on China's sovereignty and core interests " (Sorensen 2015, p. 65). This new stance can be seen in China's increasing opposition to the United States in the UN Security Council, its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and its actions to claim sovereignty within the South China Sea; "China's foreign policy is transformed from weak-state diplomacy to strong-power diplomacy" (Yan 2014, p. 168). As well as providing demand for Chinese goods and services, the BRI (and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank [AIIB]) "reflect Beijing's efforts to promote the reform of the existing international economic system dominated by the USA so as to allow China to play a more important role" reform that "can hardly be echoed and supported by status-quo powers, the USA in particular" (Cai 2018, p. 838).

It is interesting that in later work Buzan and Schouenborg (2018) note that China aligns with the classical Westphalian Global International Society (GIS) institutions of sovereignty, non-intervention, territoriality, balance of power and great power management, together with the newer ones of nationalism, human equality and development together with conditional acceptance of markets; "From the CCP's [Chinese Communist Party's] perspective, it is the liberal West that is aggressively revisionist, seeking to impose its liberal values [of democracy and human rights] on the rest of the world" (Ibid., p. 462). This statement helps problematize a Western-centric viewpoint that may be blind to the Western neoliberal interventionist (e.g. R2P and World Bank/IMF conditionality) revisionism that gained force in the post-Cold War period and the possible role of China in wanting to return to Westphalian principles.

China's rapidly expanding economy, the 'S-curve' trajectories of Chinese R&D expenditures and patent applications in recent years (Li 2018), and increasing Chinese

military capabilities (even with military expenditure capped at 2% of GDP) may in of themselves have triggered a more conflictual response from the United States; “By the early 2010s ... the rise of Chinese power, its military power in particular, had become all the more evident and real, which inevitably made the status-quo powers and neighboring states increasingly concerned” (Cai 2018, p. 839). Chinese state-supported technology development, together with the continued state ownership/control of the “commanding heights” of the Chinese economy, blocks US/Western corporate ownership and the integration of Chinese capital into the (neo)LIO, while at the same time threatening the dominant position of US/Western corporations within the leading technological sectors. Starrs questions whether an independent capitalist class even exists within China “the liberal concept of the ‘private sector’ itself does not exist in China, as there is no strict separation between public and private spheres ... this throws serious doubt on whether there is any basis for the existence of an independent capitalist class in China that can challenge the state – and by extension, their integration with a global TCC [transnational capitalist class] against the policies of the state” (Starrs 2017, p. 647).

This parallels So and Chu’s (2016) typification of predominant Chinese state economic policies as ones of *state neoliberalism*, with deregulation, privatization and marketization being used to maintain the power of the state and CCP rather than reduce it. The successful co-option of the corporate and upper middle class (Feng, Johannsen & Zhang 2015) helps maintain the ascendancy of the Party over what could otherwise develop into an independent private sector and civil society. As van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2018, p. 122) note “in the case of China the lack of state *ownership* does not imply lack of state *control* or state *direction* ... Chinese private enterprizes above a

certain size always have a party secretary and a party commission included in the organizational structure of the company”. In this context, the relatively sudden emergence of Huawei as the global leader in computer networking can be seen as a challenge to both US technological dominance and its specific state/society complex. The more assertive Chinese foreign policy and government statements, together with official state plans to leapfrog the US in critical high technologies (Morrison 2019), could only add to the sense of threat within US policy making and corporate circles.

In response the US state began to treat China more as a competitor than one accepting its leadership role within the (neo)LIO. This was seen first with the “pivot to Asia” under President Obama at the beginning of the last decade and the more recent aggressive stance of the Trump administration. The major US concern is about China’s ability to establish its own sphere of influence in the Western Pacific, as the US did in the Americas before extending its reach globally after World War 2:

Beijing believes that it can create a new Sino-centric status quo in the Western Pacific that the United States will be unable or unwilling to stop, that Washington will have little option but to accept it once established, and that U.S.-China relations will, in this context, become predominantly cooperative ... If China succeeds, it will transform the regional order into one with a weaker U.S. role, Chinese control over vital sea-lanes (which will remain open but only with their consent), and a Sino-centric institutional order. This could have the effect of reshaping the international order as a whole. A spheres of influence order in East Asia ... would weaken the U.S. position globally. (Chollet et. al. 2017, p. 23)

As with its actions toward Russia, the US stance is one of resisting the emergence of any regional competitors to the US-led (neo)LIO, a position reflecting that of the 1992 *Wolfowitz Doctrine* “The third goal is to preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to our interests, and also thereby to strengthen the barriers against the reemergence of a global threat to the interests of the U.S. and our allies. These regions include Europe, East Asia, the Middle East/Persian Gulf, and Latin America” (National Security Council 1992, p. 2). This stance has been reflected in the wording of a US National Security Strategy that explicitly identifies both Russia and China as state competitors (see below). There is also, as Buzan notes “a quite strong constituency in the United States that almost wants to cast China in the role of ‘peer competitor’ in order to resolve the clarity of purpose to US foreign policy which has been hard to find since the end of the Cold War” (Buzan 2010, p. 23). In an academic disciplinary and policy complex sense, a “Cold War 2.0.” would also significantly benefit many of those pushing the “China as threat” discourse at the expense of the wideners and deepeners.

The result has been a significant reordering of security discourses back toward a state-specific orientation, with both military and geo-economic competition being seen as major concerns by the US administration; leading to attempts at forcing a more neoliberal model upon the Chinese state-managed economy through tariffs. At the same time, the global governance of conflict has been significantly attenuated as the United Nations Security Council has also been rendered dysfunctional due to the differing agendas of the US, China and Russia; all of which possess veto power. This underlines the move away from liberal internationalist and GWOT conceptions of security and a return to a more



state-centric and realist-oriented security paradigm. The competing interventions within the Ukraine and Syria, and more recently Venezuela and Iran, are symptoms of this new international environment. The rapid growth of India since the economic reforms of the early 1990's has also added at the least an additional major regional power to the international system. I propose that the last decade of the twentieth century and the first of the new century may come to be seen as an interregnum between two periods of major power rivalry, with both global governance institutions and globalization becoming significantly attenuated. US foreign policy and national security elites seem to have reoriented themselves toward major power rivalry during the current decade, with a more forthright stance adopted during the Trump administration.

The 2010 US National Security Strategy (NSS) states that “there should be no doubt: the United States of America will continue to underwrite global security” (The White House 2010, p. 1); implicitly assuming that the US has the authority to define what is a threat to global security and will not accept a challenge to that authority – a redrafting of the blunter deliveries of the same message by the previous Bush administration. Russia and China had not yet been identified as serious threats to that authority. The USA will work “to build deeper and more effective partnerships with other key centers of influence—including China, India, and Russia, as well as increasingly influential nations such as Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia—so that we can cooperate on issues of bilateral and global concern, with the recognition that power, in an interconnected world, is no longer a zero sum game (Ibid., p. 3)”. In the section entitled “Security”, emphasis is given to the need to “Strengthen Security and Resilience at Home” and to “Disrupt, Dismantle, and Defeat Al-Qa’ida and its Violent Extremist Affiliates in Afghanistan,

Pakistan, and Around the World” as well as reversing “the Spread of Nuclear and Biological Weapons and Secure Nuclear Materials”. No mention of major power rivalry as a major security threat. The 2015 NSS, written after the Obama administrations *pivot to Asia* notes, “India’s potential, China’s rise, and Russia’s aggression all significantly impact the future of major power relations” (The White House 2015, p. 4). Apart from widening the security issues to be dealt with to include climate change, health and “Access to Shared Spaces” (Ibid., p. 12) such as space, the high seas and the internet, the document does though maintain the same general security focus as the previous one; great power rivalry is not listed as a security issue. Later in the document mention of the dependence of Europe upon Russian energy supplies is made, and that the USA “will closely monitor China’s military modernization and expanding presence in Asia, while seeking ways to reduce the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation” (Ibid., p. 24).

Very early on in the 2017 US NSS, a very different emphasis is taken “China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence.” (The White House 2017, p. 2) and require “the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades—policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false” (Ibid., p. 3). In a major section entitled “Promote American Prosperity”, which states that “Economic security is national security” it is noted, “American prosperity and security are challenged by an economic competition

playing out in a broader strategic context. The United States helped expand the liberal economic trading system to countries that did not share our values, in the hopes that these states would liberalize their economic and political practices and provide commensurate benefits to the United States. Experience shows that these countries distorted and undermined key economic institutions without undertaking significant reform of their economies or politics. They espouse free trade rhetoric and exploit its benefits, but only adhere selectively to the rules and agreements” (Ibid., p. 17). In a sub-section entitled “Promote and Protect the U.S. National Security Innovation Base” it states “Every year, competitors such as China steal U.S. intellectual property valued at hundreds of billions of dollars” and that “Losing our innovation and technological edge would have far-reaching negative implications for American prosperity and power” (Ibid., p. 21); explicitly securitizing intellectual property and innovation. Reference is also made to the increasing role of the USA as a fossil fuel exporter and that “As a growing supplier of energy resources, technologies, and services around the world, the United States will help our allies and partners become more resilient against those that use energy to coerce” (Ibid., p. 23).

The “revisionist powers of China and Russia” that “want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests” (Ibid., p. 25) are identified as challengers to US power. “Contrary to our hopes, China expanded its power at the expense of the sovereignty of others. China gathers and exploits data on an unrivaled scale and spreads features of its authoritarian system, including corruption and the use of surveillance. It is building the most capable and well-funded military in the world, after our own. Its nuclear arsenal is growing and diversifying. Part of China’s military modernization and

economic expansion is due to its access to the U.S. innovation economy, including America's world-class universities" (Ibid., p. 25) and "Russia aims to weaken U.S. influence in the world and divide us from our allies and partners. Russia views the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) as threats. Russia is investing in new military capabilities, including nuclear systems that remain the most significant existential threat to the United States, and in destabilizing cyber capabilities." (Ibid., p. 25-26). The threat from China is seen as encompassing many areas of competition on a global basis, while that of Russia is seen on more regional basis and limited to military and energy competition. Overall, the "2017 NSS takes a bleak view of global realities. The struggle for power is on. Multilateral efforts to cope with global challenges are out. Multilateralism is viewed as competitive at best" (Raik et al. 2018, p. 21). With the *Wolfowitz Doctrine* still seeming to be in place, the US is not accepting of a rebalancing of the global system toward a pluralism that will constrain its actions and place geographically specific limitations upon the reach of US, and other Western, capital and transnational corporations. This reorientation of the international system, as perceived by the leading power of the (neo)LIO, supports the assumption of the state as the referent object of security.

The recent US actions to sideline such core global institutions as the United Nations and World Trade Organization through bilateral trade sanctions and tariffs, the 'weaponization' of the international payments system (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications: SWIFT) to reinforce sanctions regimes (Farrell & Newman 2019), and intellectual property rights to curb the development of Chinese technology corporations such as Huawei and ZTE, point to a US state focused on relative

gains and a “win-lose” foreign policy orientation. Such actions fit very well within Zhou’s proposed version of power transition theory in which:

before a rising power overtakes it, the hegemonic power will take action to avoid losses, and that in response the rising power will passively take action to avoid its own losses [with the] inhibitive influence of nuclear deterrence, strategic competition between the hegemonic power and the rising power is limited to peaceful measures including diplomatic means. (Zhou 2019, p. 1)

The possibility of an escalating cycle is also possible, “Beijing cries foul, bemoans alleged U.S. efforts to ‘contain its peaceful rise’—a popular meme in Chinese commentary on U.S. strategic intentions toward Asia—further ramps up its military spending and bolsters its warfighting capabilities. A vicious, unavoidable, and tragic action-reaction cycle is born” (Liff & Ikenberry 2014, p. 53). A report from the RAND Corporation, one of the predominant US foreign policy institutes, using the following words, “War between the United States and China could be so ruinous for both countries, for East Asia, and for the world that it might seem unthinkable. *Yet it is not* [my italics]: China and the United States are at loggerheads over several regional disputes that could lead to military confrontation or even violence between them” (Gompert, Cavallos & Garafola 2016, p. iii) can also be seen as a warning of future aggression. The report goes further to identify a time window of 2015 to 2025 for successful US military action against China that is reminiscent of Germany’s concerns about the rapid industrialization of Russia prior to WW1:

Note that China's enhanced A2AD [Anti Access/Area Denial] in 2025 will reduce the gap between its losses and U.S. losses at T1. Because it could be less clear which side is losing at T1, a severe war might be more likely to be prolonged in 2025 than in 2015, despite mounting costs (Gompert, Cavallos & Garafola 2016, p. 22)

As historians convincingly demonstrate, there was a relatively short window of opportunity, as perceived by German state managers (approximately 1912-17), for launching a preemptive strike against Russia before it completed its strategic railway lines, making German tactical war plans obsolete. (Anievas 2014, p. 27)

Such analyses support the proposition that the two states are in a period of relative power transition, and reinforce notions of a closing window for US action to curtail Chinese growth and/or force it into acceptance of US hegemony within the neo(LIO). With an economy still growing at over twice the rate of the US, and a defense budget of only 2% of GDP, China is capable of increasing military expenditures at a much faster rate than the US without significantly impacting its economy; the very position that the US enjoyed with respect to the USSR in the 1980s.

The very public attacks upon China by senior government officials are reminiscent of the official US discourses used against Russia during the Cold War (Perlez 2018), as is the increasingly *Red Scare* like US discourse with respect to Russia. To critical researchers such as Michael Hudson, such attacks are simply propaganda

designed to obfuscate the real objective of obtaining Chinese and Russian subservience within a US and Western capitalist dominated (neo)LIO. He considers that the Chinese response is predictable:

There is no way that China will dismantle its mixed economy and turn it over to U.S. and other global investors. It is no secret that the United States achieved world industrial supremacy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by heavy public-sector subsidy of education, roads, communication and other basic infrastructure ... The U.S. idea of a ‘win-win’ agreement is one in which China will be ‘permitted’ to grow as long as it agrees to become a U.S. financial and trade satellite, not an independent competitor. (Hudson 2019).

This has many parallels with the US approach taken toward what was seen as the Japanese industrial and technological (specifically in semiconductors) challenge to US hegemony in the 1980’s. The result was “voluntary” restrictions on Japanese exports to the US, an agreed upon major upward revaluation of the Yen against the dollar, and domestic financial deregulation that helped trigger the Japanese financial crash in the following decade. The rhetoric of “unfair” competition and the need for significant structural changes (Fallows 1989) echoes the current US rhetoric toward China; it would seem that only if China becomes a “bigger version of Japan” will it be seen as an acceptable member of the US dominated (neo)LIO.

### 2.3. Summary

In chapter 1.3., the dependency of modern industrialized (and financialized) societies upon ongoing growth for both state legitimacy and social stability was noted. For the lesser-developed nations, the extremely high correlation between economic growth and increasing societal welfare also produces an ongoing pressure for economic growth. The benchmark that will be taken within this paper is that the trend global GDP growth rate of approximately 3% will continue. Chapter 2.1. shows that the promise of an *absolute* decoupling between trend GDP growth inherent in such theories as eco-modernism is not backed up by empirical evidence. Increases in global energy efficiency have been declining since 2015 (IEA 2019); for the purposes of this paper a rate of 1.5% per annum will be assumed, with a limited possibility for increase (in 2019 a coalition of countries agreed an aspirational target of a 3% reduction in energy intensity per annum, but this did not include the US or China [Kosolapova 2019]). With significant friction within economic, financial, social, and political systems with respect to energy system decarbonization (reductions in GHG emissions per unit of energy), only slow progress will be assumed in this area, consistent with historical trends and industry, IEA and EIA forecasts referenced in chapter 2.1. Steffen (Moses 2020) considers that such a transition to a global low-carbon energy system will take at least 30 years at best, and more likely 40-60 years.

The next section will utilize analyses of the two major powers (China and the US) together with a Russia that is allied with China in opposition to the US, to assess whether the dynamics of the international system and the internal dynamics of those specific nations, are consistent with a reconciliation of the need for an energy transition and great



power politics. US government policy and strategy statements have displayed an unwillingness to accede to the rise of China within the international system. Given the ongoing pressure of a differential economic growth rate that advantages China (with the Chinese economy already 25% larger than the US on a PPP basis and the gap becoming greater each year), and a more assertive China, there is a probability of escalating conflict within the international system. The aggressive stance of the US with respect to Russia adds to the possibility of conflict. The most recent examples of this are the US-China trade war and the increasingly negative US discourse toward Russia with respect to alleged US election interference and toward China in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. A global clean energy transition is seen as a system level variable that may alter the nature of the international system, possibly changing the balance between the great powers and their allies. At the same time, the competition between the powers will provide a feedback into the nature and success of any such energy transition, reflecting the bi-directional co-dependent nature of these two global processes.

From the discussion in 2.2., the appropriate method of analysis for the individual states is deemed to be the utilization of the neoclassical realism proposed by Ripsman, Taliafero and Lobell (2016), with strategic culture and Cox's state/society complex as the two long-term internal state variables. The process of change over time will be conceptualized using Cox's historical materialism, a conceptualization that's allows for the co-creational development, continuity and change of material interests, institutions and ideas. The latter will include the national "myths" that underpin national identities and culture.

## 2.4 Application of the Conceptual Framework

The neoclassical realism of Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell allows for the insights into the dynamics of the international system provided by neorealism to be utilized. The relative position of a given state within that system to other states, current and possible alliances between states, and the rational reactions of a state to the system configuration that it faces, can be addressed. The inclusion of longer-term international system-level variables, such as industrialization or new weaponry, also provides for some forces of historical change to the international system. At the same time, the inclusion of longer-term domestic intervening variables (strategic culture, leader image and perceptions, state-society relations and domestic institutions) brings into play the internal dynamics of each state. Such dynamics may drive policy decisions that are different to those that would be expected from a purely neorealist lens. Significantly adding to these differences is the acceptance of subjectivity, with the rejection of a purely rational actor basis of human decision-making. In addition, the incorporation of the possibility of contingency, such as a natural disaster or specific individuals, better reflects national and international reality.

The resulting analytic is then a combination of the external policy drivers (the international system), internal policy drivers (the internal dynamics of the individual state), and the consideration of any system-level variables (e.g. the continuing impact of industrialization on the relative power of individual states) – an integration of all these factors will be required in the analysis of individual states and possible future policy paths.

- What are imperatives of the international system upon a specific state?

- What impact will international system level variables have upon the relative position of states?
- What is the strategic culture of each state and how will it affect the response to those imperatives?
- Do individual leaders have a significant impact upon policy decisions, and if so how will they affect the response to those imperatives?
- How will the nature of state-society relations (e.g. the ability of the state to muster societal resources) affect the response to those imperatives?
- How will domestic institutions affect the response to those initiatives?
- How sensitive is the state to different contingencies, does it have the resources and social structures necessary to deal with contingencies effectively?

Although providing greater levels of insight and analytical flexibility compared to a neorealist approach, such an analysis would still be significantly lacking.

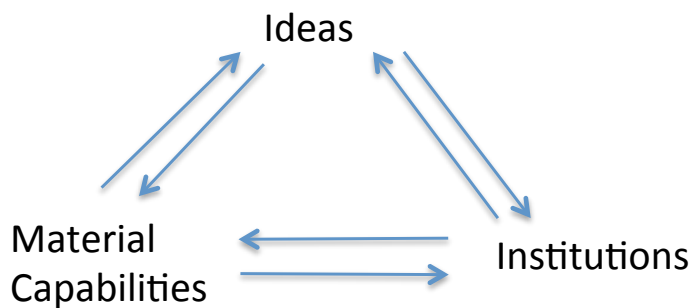
Notwithstanding the inclusion of system level variables, the lens is still a predominantly static one; it lacks a theory of change over time. A given point in time is part of a somewhat path dependent continuum that progresses from the past into the future. Cox's dialectical materialist approach to change rejects enlightenment notions of an ongoing process of societal perfection, together with liberal notions of capitalist democracy naturally providing for the general good. Instead, it sees change as the outcome of a struggle for power between competing interests and ideas. In addition, the liberal separation of the state from society (including domestic institutions) is rejected as out of date – replacing this separation with an integrated state/society complex. I have chosen not to subsume strategic culture into this state/society complex as it provides insights into

how groups of specific individuals can affect both short and long-term outcomes; an analytical lens missing in Cox's work. Generally, leader image and perceptions can be subsumed within strategic culture, but there will be cases where specific individuals may have importance. The questions above become somewhat altered:

- What are the current imperatives of competition between state/society complexes within the world order, seen as a point in time within a partially path-dependent historical continuum driven by a dialectical process of change between competing interests and ideas?
- What are the world order level variables, such as industrialization, that may affect the relative position of an individual state/society complex over time?
- What is the current nature and effectiveness of those complexes, seen as a point in the historical continuum?
- What is the current strategic culture, seen as point in the same historical continuum?
- How sensitive is a given state/society complex to different contingencies, and does it have the resources and social structures necessary to deal with contingencies effectively?

To gain an understanding of the present state of the world system, an individual state/society complex, or strategic culture, the historical analysis will be guided by Cox's forces, which can be applied to each one of these areas of analysis.

**Figure 2 1: Cox's Forces**



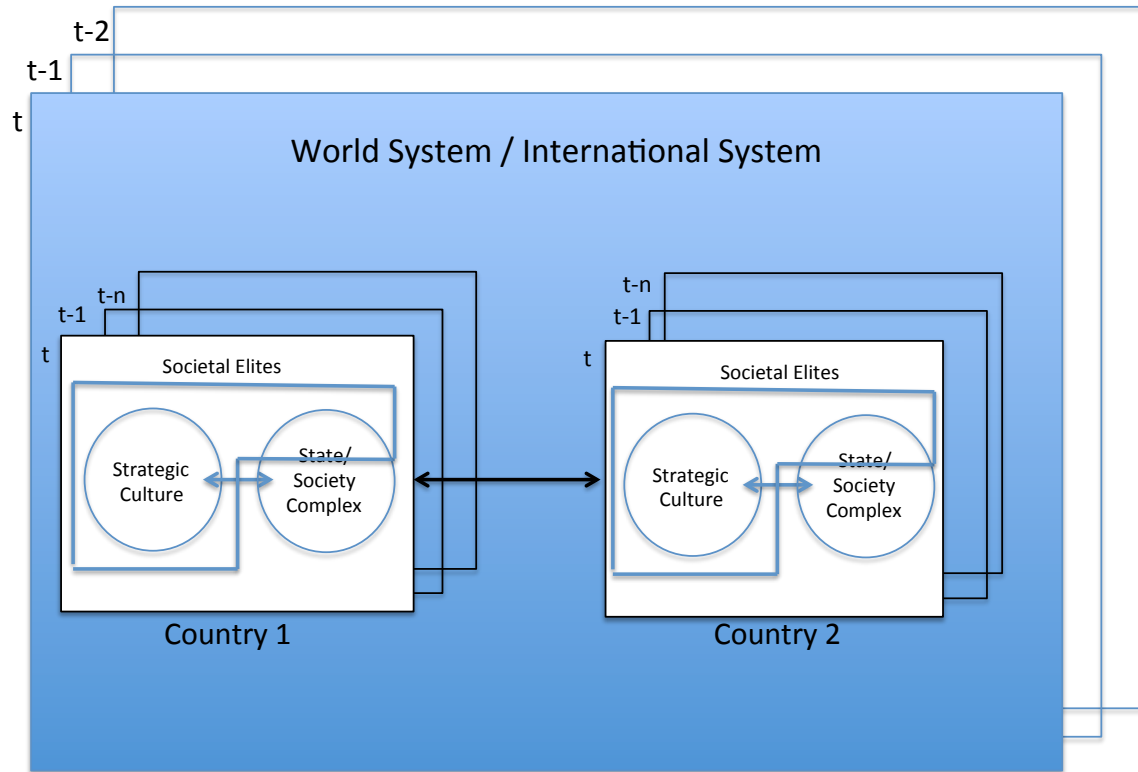
Material capabilities, ideas and institutions are seen as interactively co-creative, with no unidirectional causal processes. For example, material capabilities and institutions may give birth to some ideas, but those ideas can change both of the other forces and exist well past the material capabilities and institutions that birthed them. Cox also sees these forces as being applied to what he terms “social forces” stemming from the organization of production. These equate to the system level variables, such as industrialization or an energy system transition, that are not part of the system but may fundamentally affect it over time – through such things as changing relative national material capabilities (e.g. the UK as the first industrializing nation), or the creation of new economic and social actors such as a concentrated industrial work force.

The concept of strategic culture brings into perspective the position of at least part of the societal elite, but the framework is still lacking an effective representation of elites: both within a given nation and across nations. This is where the insights of the *Amsterdam School*, as well as concepts of *comprador* and *quisling* elites become pertinent. At the national level it is assumed that an elite, made up of one or more social class fractions (Jessop & Overbeek 2019) that may compete but also coalesce when collective interests are threatened, both subsumes the strategic culture and dominates the

state/society complex. At the same time, it is accepted that cross-national coalitions of elites may exist in differing structures of equality and hierarchy. A given national state/society complex and/or elite may significantly prescribe the actions of another. The processes through which the US exerts such control over the Brazilian and other South American elites and state/society complexes are well documented (Barbosa dos Santos 2019; Black 1977, 1986). Cross-national elite networks may also be based on shared cultures, and their relationships may change significantly over time; as with that between the US and UK elites. National elites may also have explicit historical hatreds, as with the hatred generated by the Soviet massacre of the flower of the Polish elite in Katyn Forest in 1940. The figure below provides a diagrammatic representation of the structure of analysis:

- Strategic cultures, state/society complexes, countries, and the world/international system are all historical entities that change over time in a somewhat path dependent way.
- Strategic culture is separated from Cox's state/society complex, as it provides for an analysis of policy-maker belief systems that is not a focus of Cox's methodology.
- The societal elite is conceptualized as encompassing strategic culture and also dominating (but not fully encompassing) the state/society complex.

**Figure 2 2: The World Order (or international system) as a historical entity**



The questions above become somewhat altered:

- What are the current imperatives of competition between state/society complexes within the world order, seen as a point in time within a partially path-dependent historical continuum driven by a dialectical process of change between competing interests and ideas?
- What are the world order level variables, such as industrialization, that may affect the relative position of an individual state/society complex over time?
- What is the current nature and effectiveness of those complexes, seen as a point in the historical continuum?

- What is the current strategic culture, seen as point in the same historical continuum, and how is that culture affected by elite socialization, power and wealth?
- What are the interconnecting structures between different state/society complexes and/or elites? How much sovereignty does an individual country possess?
- How sensitive is a given state/society complex to different contingencies, and does it have the resources and social structures necessary to deal with contingencies effectively?

Through this set of questions, and the analytical tools provided by the differing theoretical approaches utilized, we can arrive at a holistic understanding of the dynamics of the world order. This understanding can then provide a base of understanding from which to assess the possible future policy paths of individual countries, and groups of countries; as I will show in the three case studies contained within this work.



## Chapter 3: China Case Study

“Smash The Four Olds”

(Slogan used during the Cultural Revolution, referring to Old Ideas, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Customs)

“A Chinese Dream”

(Slogan used by Xi Jinping)

“The China Virus”

(Donald Trump September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, speech to the United Nations)

“The China Nightmare”

(Title of a 2020 book by Dan Blumenthal of the American Enterprise Institute)

In this chapter, I will firstly carry out a historical analysis to ascertain the political economy of China, specifically the nature of its state/society complex and the power dynamics within it, and the long-term determinants of the strategic culture of the policy-making elites. I will then utilize these insights to assess current energy-related policies in the context of major power competition. In the final piece of the chapter I will summarize the current characteristics of China with respect to the international community and possible policy paths. Mao may have instigated social chaos to smash the impact of China’s history upon its present, but Xi’s envisaged Chinese dream still very much builds on select parts of the “Olds”; a dream which may produce nightmares in a West still asserting its ideological superiority and claim upon a single universalist conception of modernity that is threatened by the virus of a successful alternative.

### 3.1. Historical Positioning

#### 3.1.1. Periodic consolidation and collapse, Mongol invasion, Empire, Imperial Zenith (~1600 BC to 1839 AD)

China has been the site of a major civilization, centered on the Yellow River valley, from at least the time of the Shang Dynasty that was established around 1600 BC (the existence of the prior Xia Dynasty from 2070 to 1600 BC is still open to academic debate, although there is evidence of royal palaces and bronze vessels from that period [Trigger 2003, p. 107]). The Shang territorial state at its maximum may have controlled 320,000 km of rich farmland, an area only slightly smaller than modern Germany, with a population of approximately 10 million. It was a centralized monarchy (as was its successor) with access to economic surpluses on the scale required to produce large palaces and support “highly skilled and specialized artisans [that] crafted magnificent luxury goods and symbols of authority” (Trigger 2003, p. 111). The Shang dynasty lasted until 1046 BC, paralleling the existence of the Egyptian *New Kingdom*, with a population around twice that of Egypt. Its successor, the Zhou dynasty, lasted until 221 BC; a combined period of over thirteen centuries. In the Zhou dynasty, during the *Spring and Autumn* period (772-481 BC) which generally paralleled the period of the pre-republic *Roman Kingdom*, centralized control broke down and power became much more decentralized. This disintegration led to the *Warring States* period from 475 to 221 BC. The population of China during the Warring States period was at least 30 million, and the wars lasted for two and a half centuries. Each of the seven warring states (Qin, Chu, Zhao, Wei, Han, Yan, Qi) exhibited large economic, social, political and military structures, with complex strategic planning and diplomatic strategies. The enforced

competitiveness drove innovation across many areas, especially in military organization and technology, and state administration. Within the Qin, the political leader Shang Yang implemented reforms that greatly increased its efficiency and effectiveness, facilitating its eventual victory and the establishment of the Qin Dynasty (the first dynasty of Imperial China).

The philosophy behind these reforms was that of *Chinese Legalism*, and the *Book of Lord Shang* is seen as a foundational text of this school of philosophy. It is a philosophy of centralized autocracy, state efficiency and the use of power that has been likened to the work of *Machiavelli* in *The Prince*. A fundamental belief is the need for a strong central state to maintain political stability and protect against the chaos and destruction of disintegration that periodically enveloped China. A competing philosophy was provided by *Confucius* (551-479 BC), which emphasized the gaining of the right to rule a hierarchic social structure through elite benevolence, justice, virtue, and morality. Confucianism somewhat aligns to the *Mandate of Heaven* concept that was first used by the Zhou to legitimize their overthrow of the Shang. Unlike the European *Divine Right of Kings* the Mandate was not unconditional, but provided a right of rebellion against those seen as ruling unjustly or incompetently. Major natural disasters and droughts could be seen as heaven removing its mandate, legitimizing rebellion. As covered later in this chapter, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has utilized the Mandate of Heaven in the current form of the concept of *Performance Legitimacy*. The CCP has also utilized a combination of Legalism and Confucianism to represent itself as a strong centralized force that rules in a benevolent fashion. The third major Chinese school of philosophy, *Daoism*, also originated during this period. This was based on a belief in the need for

human harmony with nature, humility in leadership and restrained statecraft. Its belief in limited government has had some contemporary scholars liken Daoism to *Libertarianism*.

This Warring States period overlaps with the time of *Thucydides* (460 – 400 BC), who's *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* has been seen as the first political realist text. The contemporaneous Athenian experiment with democracy provides an ancient basis for the Western philosophy of *Liberal Democracy*. An important point is that the Peloponnesian Wars involved a population of only about one million over sixty years, while the Warring States period involved thirty times the population and four times the number of years. The applicability of lessons learnt from the Warring States period may thus be seen to be more applicable to the present than the Peloponnesian War, as well as other significantly smaller and simpler events of Western history. A core part of the chronicles of the Warring States period is the usage of deceit, strategic withdrawal, alliance building and general statecraft to offset the military advantages of opponents and if possible, win without the need for battle. As Sun Tzu, who lived during the Zhang dynasty, noted: the best general is the one that can win a war without fighting any battles (Gagliardi 2014).

The individual Chinese states could amass armies of at least 100,000, with the larger states possibly amassing armies as big as one million men. At a single battle, that of Changping in 260 BC, hundreds of thousands of men died (a figure of over 450,000 was estimated during the later Han dynasty). Western warfare did not reach this scale until the beginning of the nineteenth century with Napoleon's *Grand Armee* on the eve of the invasion of Russia (1812 AD), a scale not to be repeated until World War 1; famous battles such as *Agincourt* (1415 AD), *Waterloo* (1815 AD) and *Gettysburg* (1863) pale in

comparison. The “total war” nature of the societal destruction of the Warring States period could be compared to that of the *Thirty Years War* (1618-1648 AD), Napoleon’s invasion of Russia and the two World Wars. The level of chaos and destruction of the Warring States period has been seen as a warning of what can happen if the “center does not hold”; a parallel with the later *Three Kingdoms* period (220-280 AD), *Sixteen Kingdoms* period (304-439 AD), the *Mongol Conquest* (1205-1272 AD), the *Century of Humiliation* (1839-1949 AD), and the *Cultural Revolution* (1966-1976 AD). The Chinese population tended to grow during the peace provided by a strong center, only to significantly decrease during times of internal strife and invasion.

The Warring States period ended with the victory of the Qin and the start of the Imperial Period. The Qin dynasty was rapidly replaced by the Han dynasty that lasted for over four centuries (206 BC to 220 AD). The Han dynasty was a tortuous transitional period with respect to political-economic thought, “from ‘contention of a hundred schools of thought’ to a ‘grand unification’” (Cheng & Zhang 2019, para. 5) that was a synthesis of aspects of Legalism, Daoism and Confucianism combined with insights from the merchant class. This new orthodoxy displayed guiding principles which emphasized the collective over the individual, benevolence and righteousness outweighing instrumentality, the relative importance of agriculture over manufacturing and commerce, frugality, and reducing inequality. It also became a privileged paradigm of thought that “became a barrier to the development of new economic thought” and “it was not until the late Qing Dynasty ... that the conditions were created for revolutionary changes in the subject area” (Cheng & Zhang 2019, final para.). After being defeated by the Xiongnu nomadic tribes to the north in 200 BC, and forced into a vassal status, it took a century

for the Han to reverse roles with the Xiongnu. The dynasty was later undermined by increasingly complex and violent court politics, together with peasant rebellions led by Daoists, as with the Daoist *Yellow Turban Rebellion* (184-205 AD) and the rebellion of the *The Celestial Masters* in 184 AD. Following the death of Emperor Ling in 189 AD the palace eunuchs were massacred and the empire became divided between different warlords. At approximately the same time, the *Roman Empire* was attaining its peak.

The chaos and destruction of the resulting Three Kingdoms (Wei, Shu & Wu) Period was ended with reunification under the Jin dynasty (266-420 AD), but that started to disintegrate within a few decades resulting in extensive internal conflict; including the *War of the Eight Princes* (291-306) and the *Uprising of the Five Barbarians* (304-316). Its final denouement was followed by the chaos and extreme political volatility of the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms (304-439), paralleling the fall of the *Western Roman Empire* in Europe. These kingdoms were slowly consolidated into the Northern and Southern dynasties (386-589), which were then combined to form the short-lived Sui dynasty (581-618). It was from this period that the state bureaucratic system, staffed from those that could pass the rigorous entrance exams rather than just those from noble families, was established. This greatly improved the quality of the administration and lent it legitimacy as lowborn individuals reached senior positions. Another of the accomplishments of this dynasty was the building of the Grand Canal with up to 5 million laborers; this greatly improved transportation between the northern and southern parts of the Empire. The economic strain of such large projects together with a series of costly wars helped destabilize the Empire, leading to the establishment of the Tang dynasty (618 – 907). This dynasty is seen as the heyday of Chinese civilization, with the

population increasing to 80 million. This was succeeded by another unstable period, that of the *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (907-979). Much of China was then reunited under the Song dynasty (960-1279), which coexisted with the smaller Western Xia and Liao dynasties. The latter was overthrown by the Jin dynasty, which then successfully waged war with the Song, taking the northern part of their territory before stalemate set in. During this period, the Chinese population is estimated to have grown to approximately 90 million, in comparison to a European population that had grown from about 50 million in 1000 to a high of around 75 million (approximately the same size as the Roman Empire at its peak nearly a millennia before).

The Mongols conquered both the Western Xia and Jin lands in the period 1229-1241, and after a long war defeated the Song in 1279. The Mongol leader Kublai Khan formed the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) to rule China. The dominance of Mongol and Semu (various Central Asian groups allied with the Mongols) in the higher reaches of the government, together with their cultural and legal special privileges, underlined the colonial nature of the dynasty. There does seem to have been a major level of depopulation during the latter part of this period (up to 50%), as well as a general decline of the state, although some scholars point to the establishment of serfdom as removing many people from the official population rolls. In later years the Mongol leaders took less interest in good governance, and this lack of effective government policy when combined with a series of natural disasters undermined the leadership's legitimacy. In 1351 the *Red Turban Revolt* turned into a nationwide rebellion, with the Ming coming to dominate the rebel forces after the *Battle of Lake Poyang*, which reportedly involved 850,000 men. The Ming dynasty was established in 1368 and ended in 1662, a period during which the

Chinese population grew to about 160 million; approximately double that of Europe. In parallel, the *Ottoman Empire* arose in Western Asia, destroyed the *Byzantine Empire* (also known as the *Eastern Roman Empire*) and expanded into North Africa and the Balkans. The collapse of the Yuan Dynasty led to the retreat of the Mongols to what later became the state of Mongolia and the autonomous Chinese region of Inner Mongolia.

It was during the Ming dynasty that the *Tribute* system was formalized, reflecting much of the philosophy of Confucianism. China was seen as the benevolent head of a hierarchy of states, with the lesser states such as Vietnam and Korea displaying their respect through ostentatiously obsequious displays and actions that generally aligned with China's interests. After exchanges of gifts and the investiture of the foreign leader by the Chinese, trade relations would be allowed. The lesser states remained independent of China, and were not required to change their economic, social or political structures to align with those of China. Such an approach can be seen with the current Belt and Road Initiative (and many other dimensions of current Chinese foreign policy), with Chinese investment and trading relations not being dependent upon changes to a state's internal composition. This is very much in contrast to the universalist liberal internationalism of the Western nations, which does not allow for such diversity and has relied heavily upon territorial expansion and forced societal change. Between 1405 and 1433, seven huge ocean-going expeditions were carried out by the Chinese navy, stretching as far as the East African coast. These consisted of hundreds of ships, some of them over 400 feet long and 160 feet wide; the ships used by Columbus to "discover" North America in 1492 were tiny in comparison and such a scale of fleet would not exist again until World War 1. Due to increasing challenges at home such as the newly reunited Mongols, and



court politics between expansionist elements and more frugal Confucian elements, a navy that had consisted of 3,500 vessels was eventually scrapped. At no time during these voyages did the Chinese display a need to conquer and subjugate foreign territory, unlike the future European vessels that would enter the Indian Ocean.

From the 16th century onwards European trade increasingly affected China, both through the introduction of new crops (the *Columbian Exchange*) and increasing demand for Chinese goods. A combination of agricultural collapse stemming from the *Little Ice Age* and the effects of reduced trade upon a silver-dependent economy led to a successful rebellion against the Ming that was defeated by the Manchus. The latter then established the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) after a bloody conquest that resulted in the deaths of over 25 million people (approximately 1 in 6 of the population). Although the Manchus made extensive efforts to integrate Han into elite positions and integrated much of Han culture, setting them apart from the Mongols, the Qing dynasty was seen as not being a legitimate heir of the Middle Kingdom by surrounding nations such as Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. Fang (2019) identifies this period as the end of any East Asian cultural community that might have existed, with the latter nations identifying themselves as more legitimate heirs to the civilization of the Middle Kingdom. The Qing dynasty peaked in the late 18th century, at which point there was little variation in wealth and income between Europe, the USA and China (Davis 2001; Bayly 2004).

For many centuries, the high cultures of Asia were held in respect, even awe, in many parts of Europe (Darwin 2007:117). India and China were dominant in manufacturing and many areas of technology. As such, the West interacted

with Asian powers sometimes as political equals and, at other times, as supplicants. (Buzan & Lawson 2013, p. 624)

Adam Smith noted the greater sophistication of Chinese markets of the time when compared to European ones (Jacques 2012, p. 30), and “saw China as an exemplar of market-based development, [observing] in 1776 that ‘China is a much richer country than any part of Europe’” (quoted in Jacques 2012, p. 93). In 1820 China’s economy accounted for nearly 40% of the global economy and was seven times the size of that of both the United Kingdom (UK) and France (India was three times the size of the latter two). The US economy was less than one twentieth the size of that of China (Maddison 1995, p. 30). The Chinese population was approximately 381 million, more than four times that of France, Britain, Spain, Austria and Prussia combined, 38 times that of the US, and one third of the global population. Its economy had enjoyed centuries of “vigorous economic growth and reasonable prosperity” (Jacques, p. 92).

Without the ability to overcome the biophysical limits of its intensively utilized agricultural sector China was at a disadvantage to a Britain that could access firstly Irish lands (even at the cost of local famine [Thomas 1982]) and then the colonies of North America; the latter including the cheap slave-produced cotton that helped propel the British textile industry. In addition, the UK was able to amass capital from the profits of the slave trade and the naval plundering of Spanish precious metal shipments, and later the massive profits provided by the colonization of India. Britain’s separation by water from its enemies also protected against invasion (unlike the position of China with respect to the Mongols) and it possessed large-scale accessible coal deposits within its

small landmass. As Jacques (2012) states, it may have been at least as much these one-off factors than any longer-term socio-economic ones that produced the British industrial revolution that took off in the early nineteenth century. Such a position is supported by the ability of a very different socio-economic model, that of China, to so rapidly and successfully industrialize; rendering liberal capitalism as a *specific* rather than a *universal* route to modernity.

For this modernity to take shape though, the shackles of the hegemonic culture and political economy established during the Han dynasty had to be broken to allow for the import of new ideas and a reconceptualization process; one that the Japanese successfully performed after the *Meiji Restoration* of 1868. The Qing dynasty saw itself as the center of global civilization, surrounded by lesser civilizations, or even barbarians. Mirroring today's universalist liberalism, the only path to being truly civilized was seen as being that of integration into Chinese culture. This arrogance, allied with a lack of inquisitiveness about other civilizations and even basic geography, exposed the Qing to the possibility of a catastrophic denouement at the hands of the Western powers:

After the Kangxi Emperor (1645-1722) banned the spread of Catholicism, the Chinese people suffered a major setback in their geographic knowledge. Worse still, the erroneous view that China was at the center of the world, surrounded by some insignificant barbarian countries, again became a platitude commonly heard of in Chinese society. The Yongzheng Emperor and his son, the Qianlong Emperor, declared even stricter bans on Catholicism, thus severing all ties with

Western civilization, which was making tremendous progress at the time. China, by contrast, became increasingly ill-informed and backward. (Fang 2019, p. 3).

### **3.1.2. Century of Humiliation (1839 to 1949)**

Following the peak of the Qing dynasty came the *Century of Humiliation* from 1839 to 1949 during which China was reduced to a mere supplicant of other powers. The first half of this period encompassed the *First and Second Opium Wars* (to force China to legalize the British opium trade that recycled the silver paid for Chinese exports), the *Taipeng rebellion* (1850-1864) and *Dungan revolt* (1862-1877) that led to the deaths and displacement of tens of millions, the *Sino-Japanese war* of 1894 resulting in huge reparation payments and the loss of the tributary Korea, and the *Boxer rebellion* (1899-1901) that led to the outright invasion of China by the Western powers. “By the turn of the century, China’s sovereignty had been severely curtailed by the growing presence of Britain, France, Japan, Germany, the United States, Belgium and Russia on Chinese territory” (Jacques 2012, p. 102). By 1900 the richest parts of Europe had a GDP per capita of over ten times that of China (Bayly 2004), and China’s share of global GDP was less than a third of that of Europe (Davis 2001). The US economy had overtaken that of China by 1890, and by 1930 was nearly three times the size, with the UK and Germany roughly equal in size to China (Cox 2015).

The Qing dynasty finally collapsed and was overthrown in 1911, ending the last imperial dynasty of China. The new Republic of China with Sun Yat-sen as its first president was highly unstable and included the interregnum of the dictatorship of Yuan Shikai (1912-1916), together with the chaos of the *Warlord Era* (1916-1928). As Fang

notes (2019, p. 48), during the period of chaotic change from 1849 onwards, “especially amidst forced Sino-Western contact, an unprecedentedly great value shift concerning the question of how to view ‘civilization’ occurred in China, reaching a climax with the May Fourth Movement”. As with Japan, this did not result in the replacement of local culture and thought by those of the West, but rather the use of the latter to serve the rejuvenation and extension of the former. Greater stability came with the establishment of the Kuomintang (KMT) nationalist government under Chang Kai-Shek in 1927, but then civil war resulted from the split of the KMT with the CCP (including the massacre of communists in Shanghai); the CCP and KMT had been in alliance from 1923-1927. The next decade brought the Japanese invasion of Manchuria (1931-1932). The *Long March* of the CCP (1934-1935) also took place during this period, with Mao becoming leader of the CCP in 1935. Within two years the Japanese mounted their larger invasion of China (1937-1945). The *Rape of Nanjing* (1937) is only one example of the scale of destruction and violations of basic human rights during the Japanese invasion and occupation. From 1940 onwards the CCP and KMT were allied once more in a national government focused on fighting the Japanese invaders. As soon as the war ended in 1945, civil war broke out between the CCP and KMT, lasting until 1949.

This period of over a century of extensive subjugation to foreign powers and internal disintegration ended the more than five-century period of national development under the Ming and Qing dynasties, and a nearly four millennia stretch of a Chinese civilization that was dominant in the Asian continent and a major global power. A civilization that had seen itself as the *Middle Kingdom* sitting above all others was defeated, subjugated and devastated; the only full parallel being that of the Mongol

invasion and occupation six centuries earlier (the Manchus took great care to integrate with, rather than dominate, the Han). “China’s plight during this period is illustrated by the fact that in 1820 its per capita GDP was \$600, in 1850 it was still \$600, by 1870 it had fallen to \$530, in 1890 was \$540, rising very slightly to \$552 in 1913 – still well below its level in 1820, almost a century earlier. By 1950 it had fallen to a mere \$439, just over 73 per cent of its 1820 level.” (Jacques 2012, p. 114). This Century of Humiliation remains today in the collective Chinese consciousness, and within the history books, with a latent will to recover the status and pride lost with the demise of the Middle Kingdom; a potent source of nationalist and anti-foreign sentiment, and legitimation for the CCP (Kaufman 2010; Weatherley & Rosen 2013). It also serves as “a source of beliefs about how the world works” (Kaufman 2010, p. 4) for elite policy makers, embedding a deep mistrust of the Western powers and a fear of the chaos and destruction of the period. The horrendous record of Japan during its invasion of China is also well remembered, and a lingering source of anti-Japan sentiment that can rise to the surface; the Rape of Nanjing is still a highly contentious issue between the two countries.

### **3.1.3. Communism (1949 to 1978)**

After the end of the Second World War, the socialist and nationalist crisis ridden and corrupt KMT rule that had been established in 1927 was swept away by the communist revolution that established the modern People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, led by Mao. The PRC was unable to subdue the island of Taiwan, where the defeated nationalist government re-established itself. As with the Century of Humiliation, this is seen as a historic wrong that should be righted – providing a long-term non-negotiable foreign policy objective. A fully communist system (i.e. without capitalist

productive relations) was not established until later in the 1950s; during this first period of rule the CCP oversaw a rapid growth and recovery from the destruction of the Japanese invasion and the civil war. This was helped by extensive technical aid from the USSR. What followed was the disastrous *Great Leap Forward* (1958-1960).

At first output had leapt during the Great Leap Forward due to the over-intensive use of resources at the behest of Mao (machinery, people and natural resources), but this was unsustainable and produced vast amounts of waste. An example was the melting down of household and farming implements in “backyard furnaces” to produce metal that was generally useless for manufacturing purposes; a process that destroyed capital goods in return for a short-term jump in unusable industrial output. Another was the *Smash Sparrows Campaign* that resulted in severe ecological imbalances due to the mass killings of sparrows; the sparrows were seen as pests that ate grain seeds, but they also served to keep insect numbers under control. These imbalances, together with disruptive changes in agricultural organization, excess procurements of grain, and the redirection of labor from agriculture to industrial uses, exacerbated adverse weather patterns that would have by themselves reduced crop yields. The result was the *Great Chinese Famine* (1959-1961) that resulted in the death of approximately 20-30 million from starvation. Some of this death toll was due to local Party officials’ resistance to accepting the reality of reduced yields and to reporting that reality to Mao (O’Grada 2009). As with the 1930s USSR famine, the study of this famine has become enmeshed within ideological discourses with a recent example being that of Dikkoter (2010). In his highly critical review of that work, O’Grada (2011, p. 200) provides a more balanced interpretation, “None of [the extenuating circumstances] absolves Mao from responsibility for the

policies that caused the greatest famine ever. But reckless miscalculation and culpable ignorance are not quite the same as deliberately or knowingly starving millions ... Few of the countless deaths in 1959-61 were sanctioned or ordained from the center in the sense that deaths in the Soviet Gulag or the Nazi gas chambers were.”

The failures of this period led to a restriction of Mao’s powers, and a limited agricultural de-collectivization was carried out that produced a significant recovery in the next few years (1961-1965). This recovery was hampered by the removal of Soviet assistance after the Sino-Soviet split of 1962. In 1966, Mao re-established his pre-eminence, while creating widespread cultural and social destruction, through a political terror campaign that undermined basic societal institutions and the state bureaucracy. After only two years of the Cultural Revolution the chaos and instability were so great that Mao had to call in the military to re-establish basic social order in the cities. The chaos was concentrated in the cities, and there was a much lesser impact upon agricultural output than on industrial production. The 1971 death in an air crash in Mongolia of the Vice-Chairman of the CCP Lin Biao, in still highly debated circumstances, has been seen by some as moving Mao away from the extremes of the Cultural Revolution and toward the reinstatement of many purged and disgraced officials. Mao had shown himself to be better at destruction than creation, removing the previous economic and social order but also producing over a decade of lost growth. With the reduction in the intensity of the Cultural Revolution, which would continue under Mao and then the Gang of Four until 1976, economic growth resumed. The purging of many competent officials during this period, and the educational deficits caused by the closure



of the universities, provided significant headwinds for longer-term economic development. One of the disgraced officials that were reinstated was Deng Xiaoping, who was rehabilitated in the mid-1970s. Following the death of Mao and the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976, he established himself as the leader of the CCP late in 1978.

In 1951 Tibet was reintegrated into China under the *Seventeen Point Agreement*, with its internal structure remaining unchanged; a medieval theocracy with the vast majority of land organized into religious and secular manorial estates worked by serfs (Parenti 2003). The region had been a protectorate under the Qing dynasty from 1720 to 1912. The succeeding Republic of China had claimed it as part of China, as the current Taiwanese government still does. The British had invaded Tibet in 1904, and once the Qing dynasty collapsed Tibet became a British protectorate. This was *de facto* independence, but Tibet did not receive *de jure* recognition by the international community. After the Tibetan uprising of 1959, supported by Taiwan and the CIA (Conboy & Morrison 2002), both sides (the PRC and the Dalai Lama) repudiated the Seventeen Point Agreement and the PRC revoked Tibetan local autonomy. From a CCP point of view, the reintegration of Tibet can be seen as part of the process of regaining sovereignty over Chinese lands from the Western powers; in the same vein as the return of Macao and Hong Kong, and the still unresolved issue of Taiwan.

Immediately after the establishment of the PRC, Mao allied the nation with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which provided extensive economic, technical and military aid. In 1950, only a year after the establishment of the PRC, the Chinese army was used to repulse the UN troops that had crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and had approached the Chinese border at the Yalu River. Although the successful defense of

North Korea increased the CCP's reputation and legitimacy, the cost of the war significantly impacted domestic development policies. After the death of Stalin in 1953 and his denunciation by Khrushchev, the two nations started to diverge on communist doctrinal and geopolitical issues. This culminated in the breaking of relations with the USSR by China in 1962 and border conflicts in the late 1960s. China was heavily involved in supplying support staff and material to the North Vietnamese during its wars with the French, and then the US (Qiang Zhai 2000); support that was critical to North Vietnam's final victory. In the 1970s China became more pragmatic with respect to foreign relations and opened up communications with the US from 1972 onwards.

#### **3.1.4. Communism In Name Only (1978 to Present Day)**

At the start of this period the Chinese GDP per capita was lower than that of sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 2019a & 2019b), and its economy represented only 2.19% of global GDP in purchasing power parity terms (PPP) (The Guardian 2016). By 2018 Chinese GDP per capita was at the level of Brazil and Mexico in US\$ terms and only one third less than Greece and Portugal in PPP terms (World Bank 2019c & 2019d). This had been facilitated by the move away from communist dogma and toward a more pragmatic approach instigated by Deng:

Only if we emancipate our minds, seek the truth from facts, proceed from reality in everything and integrate theory with practice, can we carry out our socialist modernization programme smoothly ... Seeking truth from facts is the basis of the proletarian world outlook as well as the ideological basis of Marxism (Deng 1978)

The richer conurbations such as Shanghai currently house tens of millions who enjoy a Northern European standard of living. In 2016, the Chinese economy was 18% of the global economy. These facts remind me of a conversation I had in the late 1990s with a Singaporean colleague when I was complaining about the authoritarian nature of the city-state's government and its leader. I was quickly silenced when told that only a few decades earlier the city state had been "as poor as Africa" and the freedom of her children from hunger, disease and a lack of education were much more important than liberal notions of democracy. When discussing human rights, it is important to remember the more basic ones and the relative hierarchy of needs; the selective utilization of such rights can be seen as an act of politicization and propaganda. Compared to the experiences of the Mao era, or even of the last two decades of the twentieth century, the current China can be seen as being an incredible achievement. An achievement extremely obvious to any Chinese person over the age of thirty; the human rights of the average Chinese citizen have been massively improved.

From the start of Deng Xiaoping's liberalizing reforms at the end of the 1970's until 1993 China was self-sufficient in fossil fuels. After this period, domestic oil production was unable to keep up with increasing domestic consumption, resulting in a widening trade deficit in oil and oil derivatives (EIA 2015). In parallel, China began its integration into the neoLIO supported by successive US administrations that took a view that increasing trade and development would push China toward "economic liberalism, multiparty democracy, and a rejection of hegemonic designs" (Salam 2018). China conditionally obtained US "Most Favored Nation" (MFN) trading status in 1980,

renewable on a yearly basis (under the 1974 US Trade Act). Repeatedly, US administrations resisted Congressional and other domestic pressures to revoke MFN status, even after the 1989 Tiananmen crisis.

In the late 1980s the CCP was split between those that supported political liberalization and those that supported the combination of authoritarian politics and liberalizing economics. This dispute culminated in the subjugation of the 1989 *Tiananmen Square* protests, the removal of the leaders supporting political reformism such as Zhao Ziyang, and the reinstatement of the authoritarian development state. The center was strengthened to remove the possibility of the chaos that had afflicted China so many times during its history, a chaos personally experienced by a leadership that had lived through the Japanese invasion, the Chinese civil war and/or the Cultural Revolution (Jiang 1997; Brown 2014; Vogel 2015). Deng himself had been purged from the elite during the Cultural Revolution to reside in the countryside as a manual worker and had seen a son become a paraplegic after either jumping, or being pushed, out of a window while being imprisoned by the Red Guards (Vogel 2011). Xi Jinping, the current head of the CCP, saw his senior Party member father denounced and jailed, one of his two sisters commit suicide after the ransacking of their house by student militias, and was sent to the provinces where he resided in a cave house before being assigned to a work camp to dig ditches (Buckley & Tatlow 2015). The collapse of the USSR can only have reinforced an elite consensus toward a strong central state, and resistance to any signs of domestic revolt, backed by both Chinese history and visceral personal experience. In referring to Xi, MacFarquhar notes “The combination of that domestic trauma, experienced as a young person, and the trauma of the collapse of the Soviet Union, those two traumas, one

domestic and one foreign, have really shaped him ... He has seen what happens if you allow too much criticism of the party and the establishment” (quoted in Denyer 2015).

Far-reaching economic reforms were made in the next decade, but political stability was maintained, foreign capital kept at arms-length within the Special Economic Zones, and the economic “commanding heights” kept within state ownership. In contrast to the USSR and its successor states, the period from the late 1980s to the turn of the century was not one of economic collapse, but rather of rapid economic growth. This was aided by a much shorter history of collectivist communist rule (including the partial de-collectivization of agriculture in the wake of the Great Leap Forward), a previous multi-decadal capitalist period immediately prior to the communist revolution (unlike in pre-revolutionary Russia), extensive markets under the Ming & Qing dynasties, and access to a large market-savvy and capital owning Chinese diaspora – including those in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The reinstatement of competitive exams for entrance to the state bureaucracy also produced a highly capable technocratic state bureaucracy.

At this point China had become “communist in name only” and the CCP could not rely upon ideology for its legitimacy. The CCP became dependent upon its ability to successfully meet its citizens needs for its legitimacy. The most significant way of providing for its citizens needs was through the economic growth that has facilitated rising living standards. “Top officials in China all know that economic development is now most crucial for maintaining the state’s power. They not only strongly promote market-oriented reforms but also try hard to prevent economic overheating and high inflation” (Zhao 2009, p. 425). Such *performance legitimacy* is akin to the ancient Chinese concept of the Mandate of Heaven that had come to the fore with the Western

Zhou dynasty (1045-771 BC). This created a state (and Emperor) legitimacy based upon the state's ability to competently serve the general good:

One of the key components of the Mandate of Heaven concept is that although a ruler cannot entirely determine his own destiny, he is able to influence Heaven's will by good and moral conduct ... in general, a good emperor needed to act according to moral principles prescribed in the Confucian teachings, maintain the functioning of the government administration and public order, lead the defense of the state in time of foreign attacks, and take responsibilities for the people's welfare and associated public works, including but not limited to flood control and irrigation projects, road construction, and famine relief during natural disasters. (Ibid., p. 421).

As Zhao notes, the concept allowed for the de-legitimization of the ruler (i.e. the Emperor) based upon performance, a situation that supported rebellion against a ruler seen to be unfit, "the idea of rising to rebel against an unfit ruler had a legitimate position in Chinese political culture" (Ibid., p. 421). As with the Emperors, the CCP has no electorally based legitimacy to fall back upon during difficult times, and therefore must rely upon ideology, nationalism and/or performance for its legitimacy. Through the market reforms of Deng, together with a more open dialogue about the shortcomings of post-1949 Chinese state socialism, "By the mid-1980s, most urban Chinese no longer believed in communism" (Ibid., p. 423). After the forcible subjugation of the pro-democracy movement in 1989, which was significantly triggered by the economic and

social disruptions of the prior decade, the CCP “employed all three major forms of performance legitimacy available to stabilize its rule (Zhao 2001): moral performance, economic performance, and the defense of national interest (calls to patriotism and nationalism)” (Ibid., p. 425). The focus of the CCP upon performance-based legitimacy since that period was underlined by the concept of the three representatives put forward by Jiang Zemin in 2001:

Jiang argued that in order to be accepted by the people “The CCP must always represent the development of China’s advanced forces of production, the orientation of China’s advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people” [and] the CCP-controlled [sic] media ... argued that the three representatives are “the foundation of the Party, the basis of government legitimacy and the sources of state authority”. (Ibid., p. 426).

In 2000, the United States provided China with “Permanent Normal Trade Relations” (after significant political maneuvering within the US), and supported China’s ascension to the WTO in 2001. These latter changes greatly facilitated the movement of western manufacturing to China, as they provided a promise of future stability in trade relations that corporations could rely upon. This helped accelerate the Chinese economic growth rate in the first decade of the new century, producing a five-fold increase in the size of the economy. The Chinese economy then nearly doubled during the following five- year period. This period of explosive growth has its historical parallel in that of the global emergence of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century; although

China's economy grew at twice the rate that the US had experienced during its industrial takeoff.

The movement of the ex-Soviet Bloc countries toward the liberal model of capitalist democracy in the 1990s supported the idea that the inclusion of China within the neoLIO would lead it down the same inevitable liberalizing path. Western hubristic assumptions of the "End of History" (Fukuyama 1992) and the triumph of liberal capitalist democracy, provided support to such a benign view of China's rise, "The West ... chose to look at China through political rose-colored glasses over the decades, despite the dramatic wake-up call that was Tiananmen" (Rudd 2019, p. 39-40). China's own focus on economic development "pushed the country away from its earlier revolutionist attitude towards international society, and towards a more *status quo* position" (Buzan 2010, p. 13) with respect to the neoLIO; a position exemplified by the diplomatic strategy of "keeping a low profile and hiding brightness". As Buzan noted, "over the past 30 years [1980 to 2010], China has done a pretty good job of pursuing peaceful rise" (Buzan 2010, p. 15). There were some scholars and policy makers who questioned such a benign view. For example, Brzezinski (1997, p. 54) questioned "how large a Chinese sphere of influence, and where, should America be prepared to accept as part of a policy of successfully coopting China into world affairs? What areas now outside of China's political radius might have to be conceded to the realm of the reemerging Celestial Empire". With the US focus on the "Global War on Terror" post 9/11, China could continue to gain strength while enjoying the security and stability provided by the neoLIO; a situation that continued through the first decade of the 21st century. Internally, the CCP continued to liberalize the economy but within a framework of Party dominance.



Although China regarded the world energy market “as an unfair and unsafe arena for latecomers” (Shaofeng 2008, p. 96) its growing import needs forced it to rely upon the global oil markets. These concerns were ameliorated somewhat by a diversification of supplying nations and fossil fuel related foreign direct investment by Chinese national oil companies (NOCs). Its acceptance within the neoLIO provided China with a relatively secure and reliable international fossil fuel trading environment at a low cost.

In 2007, China became the third, and then in 2010 the second, largest economy in US\$ terms; overtaking Germany and then Japan (IMF 2019a). IMF projections indicate that China may overtake the United States in the late 2020s if it continues to grow at the same rate (Ibid.); there is already a precedent for this on a PPP basis since 2013 (IMF 2019b). China’s rapid economic growth has not turned the country into a liberal capitalist democracy, instead, the CCP remains the dominant political force and large swathes of the economy remain state-owned or subject to state direction (So & Chu 2016; Starrs 2017). Xi underlined the non-negotiable nature of this arrangement in a speech in 2015:

We must consolidate and develop the public sector with firm commitment, and devote equal commitment to encouraging, supporting, and guiding the development of the non-public sector, ensuring that ownership of all forms can reinforce each other and develop together. At the same time, we must be extremely clear that our nation’s basic economic system is a pillar of the Chinese socialist system and the basis of the socialist market economy, and therefore the dominant role of public ownership and the leading role of the state sector must not change. (Xi 2015)

In the current decade, Chinese foreign policy has taken on a less subservient stance, with Xi Jinping's new strategic direction of "Striving for Achievement" (SFA) indicating, "that China will take initiatives to shape its external environment in a favorable direction" (Yan 2014, p. 166); as noted in chapter 2.

Buzan typifies China as a "*reformist revisionist*" state that "accepts some of the institutions of international society for a mixture of calculated and instrumental reasons. But it resists, and wants to reform, others, and possibly also wants to change its status" (Buzan 2010, p. 18). It will want to "'shape' the international system to a higher degree", expect "to be treated on an equal footing" and "will never compromise on China's sovereignty and core interests" (Sorenson 2015, p. 65). Buzan (2018) notes that China aligns with the classical Westphalian Global International Society (GIS) institutions of sovereignty, non-intervention, territoriality, balance of power and great power management, together with the newer ones of nationalism, human equality and development together with a conditional acceptance of markets. "From the CCP's perspective, it is the liberal West that is aggressively revisionist, seeking to impose liberal values [of market dominance, democracy and selective human rights] on the rest of the world" (Ibid., p. 462). This statement helps place China's position with respect to the neoLIO, with it being seen as supportive of many of its aspects while wanting to revise its relative position within that order and resisting what it sees as a Western revisionism that especially violates concepts of state sovereignty. Given its historical interactions with the West, especially during the Century of Humiliation, such a focus is understandable.

Initiatives such as BRI that serve to expand China's sphere of influence while supporting political and economic diversity (and restricts the interventionism of the Washington Consensus institutions), and the "Made in China 2025", together with a "Chinese dream" that envisions a China at odds with basic tenets of Western neoliberalism, can be seen as direct challenges to America's global leadership and the neoLIO as it currently stands. At a deeper level, the universalism of Western modernity is being challenged as the only true version of modernity. Instead, multiple possible versions of modernity are seen as possible, with the Chinese model as one of them (Jacques 2012). This creates significant ideological differences between China and the West, not as great as those between communism and capitalism, but still significant; especially in such areas as the balance between individual (and property) rights and the collective and the need for Western-style democracy.

China has also taken a more active stance against the US within the UN Security Council after encountering what it saw as the misuse of a UN-mandate by NATO to overthrow the Libyan state in 2011. In addition, China's military capabilities have expanded. Although Chinese defense expenditures have remained at around 2% of GDP, they have paralleled the exponential growth of the economy. In US\$ terms, the Chinese defense budget overtook that of Japan in 2001, became the second-largest globally in 2002, and in 2018 was equal to over one third of the US defense budget while being nearly four times larger than the third-placed country (SIPRI 2019); calculated on a PPP basis China's defense spending would be approximately half that of the US.

The combination of the above factors has led to a reassessment of China by the United States, starting with the Obama administration's "Pivot to Asia" in 2011. US

policymakers have changed their positioning vis-à-vis China significantly as indicated by national security documents, together with many academic books and articles, identifying China as a strategic revisionist competitor (US DoD 2018) and assessing the viability of oil blockades and military conflict (Allison 2017, Collins 2018, Gompert et. al. 2016). The current trade war that includes demands for fundamental changes to the ways in which the Chinese economy operates can be seen as a continuation of this escalating trend. As Buzan noted in 2010 “The danger is that as China rises it will become less dependent on the United States, and more opposed to its leadership, and the United States will feel more threatened by its increasing power and revisionism” (Buzan 2010, p. 22). A fundamental issue is that the Chinese population is about four times that of the US, and therefore if it is able to escape the “middle income trap” and its GDP per capita becomes closer to that of the US it will naturally become the dominant world power. From a realist viewpoint it would be advantageous for the US to keep China within that middle-income trap, a possibility undermined by the continual upgrading planned for the Chinese economy through such initiatives as Made in China 2025. Moak (2020) states the US view bluntly, “China was a ‘good guy’ when it was producing labor-intensive or low-technology products such as garments. It only became the ‘greatest threat’ when it was able to produce high-technology goods that were competitive with those produced in the US.”

In parallel to this changing geopolitical environment, Chinese oil imports have continued to increase rapidly; imports now provide approximately two thirds of domestic consumption and China has become the largest global importer of oil and its derivatives. With limited prospects for increases in domestic oil production and the rapid growth in

the number of personal and commercial vehicles, the import share of oil is set to increase further. Although imports of coal increased substantially after 2011, they still represent less than 6% of domestic consumption. With domestic production of coal increasing in the past few years, and consumption growth moderating, it is possible that China will return to a position of coal self-sufficiency on a net basis (some imports of coking coal may still be required). Natural gas consumption has also increased rapidly in China over the past few years, leading the country to become a net importer after 2007. Since then imports of natural gas have increased further, and with the Chinese state targeting a doubling of the natural gas share of primary energy consumption to 10%, the level of imports is set to substantially increase in the next decade. The increase in imports is associated with a lack of progress in the development of domestic shale gas deposits combined with repeated reductions in forecasts of future production (Forbes 2019).

### **3.1.5. Current Domestic Energy Consumption**

Overall, fossil fuels provided 85.4% of primary energy consumption in 2018 (compared to 92.2% ten years earlier). China's energy intensity (energy usage per unit of GDP) fell by 2.2% in 2018, a rate well below the 10-year trend of 4% annual reductions (BP 2019). Although coal use as a percentage of overall energy consumption has fallen, its use in *absolute* terms has remained stable over the past few years. Oil consumption has been rising at a steady rate of 5% per year, while natural gas consumption has been rising at a rapid rate of 15% per year. Nuclear power has been growing rapidly, but from a small base. The growth rate in hydroelectricity has been falling year over year. The new renewables have been growing rapidly, but from a low base and the growth rate has decelerated significantly over the past few years. Overall, the growth in nuclear,

hydroelectricity and the new renewables has been unable to offset the growth in primary energy use, resulting in a continued increase in the use of fossil fuels.

**Table 3 1: Chinese Primary Energy Consumption**

|                                   | Total Energy          | Growth Rate |             | Share of    |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                   | Mill. Tons Oil Equiv. | 2010-17     | 2018        | Total       |
| <b>Primary Energy Consumption</b> | <b>3,273</b>          | <b>3.9%</b> | <b>4.3%</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| - Coal                            | 1,907                 | 1.8%        | 0.9%        | 58%         |
| - Oil                             | 641                   | 4.9%        | 5%          | 20%         |
| - Natural Gas                     | 243                   | 15%         | 18%         | 7.4%        |
| - Hydro                           | 272                   | 9.2%        | 3.2%        | 8.3%        |
| - Nuclear                         | 67                    | 15%         | 19%         | 2%          |
| - Wind, Solar, Biomass, Geo       | 144                   | 41%         | 29%         | 4.4%        |

Data from BP 2020 Statistical Review and IRENA Renewable Energy Statistics 2019.

### 3.2. Current Strategic Culture & International Political Economy

Today in China the CCP with a membership of over 90 million, and the CCP-controlled state, are the dominant social, political and economic institutions. This CCP-state, or Party-State (PS) complex aligns with the Legalist school of Chinese philosophy that has been likened to the western realist school. State appointments are controlled by the CCP, including for state-owned enterprises (SOEs), removing the possibility of an independent state civil service. An independent civil society, independent media (including the Internet) and independent property-owning bourgeoisie are to all intents and purposes non-existent within China. PS control is maintained over the commanding heights of the economy, including the financial system. This control is extended through investment and lending relationships, informal networks, and the CCP committees that exist in all corporations. At the same time private property does not have the same level of protection as in the West, the owner can be unencumbered of such property and face criminal charges if deemed necessary. The Party-state-society complex (PSSC) is

integrated to a much higher degree than in liberal democratic societies, with a right-wing capitalist equivalent being the very different fascist state of Mussolini; the latter considered to be a highly amenable option by many Western elites during the 1930s.

The market is a disciplining factor for corporations, including the SOEs, but it is an *embedded* market designed to serve the aims of the PSSC. When the vicissitudes of the market threaten a strategic industry, such as the solar photovoltaic (PV) industry in the early 2010s, the PSSC will be at hand to support the industry during rough times. Individual corporate winners will not be chosen, rather the industry as a whole is protected. Aside from the market, the dangers of over centralization are mitigated by the sheer size of and competition between Chinese provinces, many equal to sizeable nation states; aided by the state decentralization initiated by Deng in the 1980s until its reversal in the mid-1990s. This allows for a diversity of practices and localized flexibility, with the best practices becoming good examples for other provinces while the failures are only locally impactful.

The PS is seen as the center that must hold. It would be expected that any direct threat to it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Actions taken against Falun Gong, the Uyghur community, specific dissidents, and the Hong Kong protests fall within this expectation. Soon after Xi Jinping gained the leadership of the CCP he started an anti-corruption drive to improve a Party reputation that had been tarnished by significant levels of corruption. This can be seen as fitting within the Confucian tradition; the center must not only be strong but also seen as legitimate through its actions and its ethics. The drive also facilitated a removal of many of Xi's opponents within the Party, consolidating his power. He has been very successful in having his own acolytes promoted to the

Politburo of the CCP (Thomas 2020). A number of commentators now see Xi as the most powerful CCP leader since Mao, exceeding the power position that Deng enjoyed.

The alignment with the Mandate of Heaven and Confucian benevolent good governance is apparent in the response to the increasing politicization of local environmental issues – especially air pollution within the larger cities. Tighter emission standards have been placed upon coal-fired electricity generating systems, some plants moved away from urban areas, and a greater role given to natural gas and low-carbon generation. The CCP leadership has also taken multiple actions, such as heavy investment in rural and lagging areas, together with increased social services in such areas and increases in the minimum wage, to mitigate increases in income inequality. Together with rural areas possibly reaching the *Lewis Turning Point* at which rural migration to cities tightens up rural labor markets, Chinese income inequality has fallen significantly after peaking around 2010 (Li 2016; Kanbur, Wang & Zhang 2017; World Bank 2020). The focus on the equitable sharing of the benefits of growth was one of the key elements of Hu Jintao's *harmonious society* strategy; PS benevolence experienced by all citizens. The BRI also serves to help develop many underdeveloped inland regions, as they become hubs for international transport networks. After a stumbling start, the effective and efficient response to the COVID-19 pandemic can also be seen in the same Confucian light.

In recent years, the CCP has also started to increasingly use nationalism as a tool of legitimation, utilizing the need to overcome the Century of Humiliation and re-establish the Middle Kingdom in Asia for purposes of both legitimation and social unification. This nationalist orientation, combined with performance legitimacy, orients



the CCP (and hence the state) toward a focus on traditional concepts of the *national interest*. The lack of a truly independent bourgeois sector (Starrs 2017), together with the lack of integration and subjugation of Chinese elites into transnational networks (de Graaff & van Apeldoorn 2018), also supports the view of the Chinese elite as focused predominantly on the Chinese national interest, the *raison d'état*. This argues for a realist (within the Chinese Legalist philosophy) strategic culture perspective, imbued with Confucianist and tributary elements that do not call for the geographical, military or philosophical dominance of other nations as long as those nations do not threaten China; a strategic orientation that also combines a strong defense to deter aggression with a preference for victory without the need for battle. This shares much with defensive realism.

Strategy is less about winning battles than it is about winning without a battle. Good strategists seek positions that are so powerful that no one challenges them. Fighting opponents openly is usually the failure of strategy ... The goal is to create positions that others cannot attack and that ideally they want to join. Sun Tzu teaches that a general who fights a hundred battles and wins a hundred battles is not a good general. A good general is one who finds a way to win without fighting a single battle. Strategy teaches that you win by building the right positions and advancing those positions while avoiding conflict. (Gagliardi 2014)

The nationalist orientation, together with China's continued strong economic growth, places China in the position of the rising power attempting to establish its own

sphere of influence; very much as the US did with respect to the Western Hemisphere. Unlike the British though, the US is highly unlikely to acquiesce to the establishment of a Chinese sphere of influence. This is underlined by a US (and Western) position that seems to be, “[the] United States and other Western powers ... [are] eager to bring China ... on board to share responsibilities ... but ... not willing to give up their much larger share of the decisionmaking power” (Li 2011, p. 347). China is also surrounded by strong powers (Russia, India and Japan) that restrict its room for geopolitical maneuver. The Chinese elite nationalist orientation also places it at odds with the US TNC elite, as it represents a barrier to the latter’s ability to fully profit from the Chinese market. In addition, the CCP’s fostering of globally competitive Chinese firms creates strong competitors to US (and other Western) TNCs.

With the Chinese economy continuing to grow significantly faster than the US and Europe, time is on the Chinese side. From a defensive realist stance, and one of power transition theory, it would be best for China to not trigger a military conflict and deter one through a strong defensive position. China has increased the size of its military in line with economic growth to deter aggression from other powers, an objective enhanced by the increasingly close relationship with Russia. Its military has also been reoriented toward deterring an aggressive US move through the denial of a safe operating space to the US navy in the Western Pacific and South China Sea through such things as long range anti-ship missiles and submarines. Expansion has been carried out through financial, economic and diplomatic means, the BRI being the prime example, which should not trigger open conflict. With forecasts that show the Chinese economy on a PPP basis more than twice as large as the US and bigger than the US and Europe combined by

2030, it may be only a decade before China once again becomes the Middle Kingdom. This places a strong imperative on continued economic growth within the Chinese strategy.

As I will argue in the chapter on the US, China faces a main opponent that is not fully aligned around an agreed *raison d'etat*, with significant contention within the elite. US corporations have reaped extremely large profits from both the location of production within China, and their ability to sell into the large and expanding Chinese market. An excellent example is that of the Apple global value chain (GVC) that allows for that corporation to capture over 50% of the value of the iPhone (Phillips 2017). This creates a tension within the US elite with respect to steps that may benefit the relative US strategic position but directly, or indirectly through Chinese counteractions, damage TNC profitability and market positions. Another possibility is that actions to limit the use of US corporate intellectual property (IP) by Chinese firms may accelerate a drive to replace that IP. Given that the control of GVCs is heavily dependent on IP (Phillips 2017), such moves are a direct threat to the US and Western TNCs that currently dominate most global GVCs. Such considerations may significantly delay substantive US action and facilitate a “playing for time” Chinese strategy. The recent opening of a Tesla factory in China, aided by funding from the Chinese state, can be seen as the creation of a useful hostage in such an environment.

### 3.3. The Drivers of Current Energy Policy

Chinese energy policies can be seen as being directed by the intersection of geopolitics (the risk of the interdiction of the increasing levels of oil and gas imports), the domestic politicization of local air pollution, and an industrial policy targeted at new “green” industries.

#### 3.3.1. Geopolitics and Energy Security

The increasing dependence upon imported oil and natural gas, with the former predominantly provided through surface shipping from the Middle East and Africa, when combined with an increasingly conflictual geopolitical environment threatens Chinese energy security. The resulting policy changes would be expected to focus on the safety of the supply of fossil fuels, and the ability to resist any form of energy embargo. This fits into an overall policy framework driven by the level of net imports and the level of conflict within the geopolitical environment:

**Table 3 2: Relationship Between Energy Security And Geopolitics for China**

|  | <b>Low Conflict / High Trust Geopolitical Environment</b>  | <b>High Conflict / Low Trust Geopolitical Environment</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Self Sufficient in Energy</b>             | Reliance upon domestic supplies (from US “open door” to 1993)  | Reliance upon domestic supplies (prior to US “open door”)   |
| <b>Heavily Dependent Upon Energy Imports</b> | Reliance upon global market, diversification of supplies and foreign direct investment. (1993 to 2010) | Increase self-sufficiency<br>Source from “friendly” nations along secure supply routes.<br>Build a strategic reserve. (2011 to present and into the future) |

Since 1993, China has moved from the upper left quadrant (characterized by energy self-sufficiency and low potential for conflict), to the lower left (a stage of energy import dependence within a low conflict environment), and then from 2011 increasingly into the lower right quadrant (with high risk of conflict and high dependence on external energy sources).

The state maintains an implicit policy that coal imports, which were 251.94 million tonnes in 2018 (6% of total consumption), will remain flat in volume terms from year to year (Singh, Xu & Schmollinger 2019). It does appear that the policy with respect to coal imports is to maintain some flexibility and competition for domestic producers while reserving the ability to be self-sufficient if required. The drive to increase the usage of domestic low carbon energy sources such as hydroelectricity, nuclear, wind, and solar can be seen as fitting within an energy security paradigm. Their increased usage offsets some of the growth-driven need for increases in imported energy and thus reduces the risks associated with an interdiction of supplies or political issues within one or more supplier nations. The main areas of concern from an energy security perspective are the increasing levels of natural gas and oil imports.

China has significant domestic gas production and has very recently been able to overcome its inability to grow that production through unconventional sources – especially coal bed methane. Even with this, consumption continues to outstrip domestic production with the probability of import dependency rising to over 50% by 2025 (Angus Media 2019, EIA 2019). China has developed significant supplies of natural gas that are sourced from “friendly” nations (Russia, Central Asia) delivered through land-based

pipelines and has plans to significantly increase those levels of secure supplies (Wu 2014; Zhao & Chen 2014; Jamali 2018). The most important new project is the *Power of Siberia* gas pipeline, which will have a full capacity of 38 Bcm/year in 2022-23, approximately 9.5% of consumption in 2022 (Liang, Abrue & Fan 2019). The in place Central Asia – China gas pipeline has a capacity of 55 Bcm/year and is forecast to be running at peak capacity by 2019 (Putz 2018). The state has also merged the gas pipelines of the three national oil companies to improve efficiency and effectiveness. With further gas pipelines and expanded liquefied natural gas (LNG) deliveries from Russia, China has the potential to replace all other supplies – including those from Australia (a member of the *Five Eyes* with the US), Qatar (the site of a major US military base) and the Middle East in general.

Domestic oil production has grown at a rate of only 0.3% per year in the past decade, well behind an annual increase of 4.9% in consumption, with the result being an increasing level of imports – with an import dependency of 72% in 2018 (BP 2019). The Chinese state has a goal of increasing domestic oil production by 50% (2 million barrels per day [Mb/d]) through expanded development spending over the next 5 years, from conventional fields (Forbes 2019). There are limited prospects for China to repeat the US shale oil revolution of the past decade due to geographical, geophysical and ecological differences. Even if domestic production is increased by 2 Mb/d over the next five years, this compares to an annual increase in consumption of 0.5 Mb/d over the past decade and 0.7 Mb/d in 2018 (BP 2019); unless oil consumption growth is reduced, this domestic production increase will at best stabilize the level of oil imports up to 2023.

China has established a strategic oil reserve and it “has around 80 days of oil in storage, including those in its strategic petroleum reserve (SPR), oil storage at oil firms and commercial stocks” (Daly 2019) which equates to about 788 Mb. With the fall in oil prices due to COVID-19 China has taken the opportunity to significantly add to its petroleum reserves. Coal to Liquids (CTL) plants to replace oil as a carbon feedstock have been estimated to cost \$67-\$82 per barrel of oil equivalent (Hydrocarbons Technology 2019), and increased state pollution and water use regulations may further hinder large-scale adoption (Guo & Xu 2018). China’s usage of methanol as a transportation fuel has risen rapidly in the current decade and was over 500,000 b/d in 2016 (EIA 2017), making up 8% of liquid fuel use in 2015 (Ingham 2017). Chinese methanol is predominantly derived from coal, so its increasing usage as a transportation fuel would leverage the nation’s large coal reserves to reduce imported oil consumption.

China’s oil refinery capacity is greater than that required for domestic demand, with the result that in 2019 it is estimated that approximately 10% (1 Mb/d) of China’s crude oil imports will be re-exported as oil products (Zhuo, Xu & Yep 2019). Current oil pipelines from Russia and Central Asia have the ability to deliver 1.2 Mb/d of oil (Collins 2018). Taking into account the pipeline-delivered oil, together with the ability to shut down the excess refining capacity, a very sizeable exposure to seaborne oil deliveries still exists. If we assume that the combination of transport electrification (see below) and increased domestic oil production serves to stabilize oil imports at 10 Mb/d significant measures would be required if an oil embargo were instituted against China. The analysis below draws on Collins 2018.

**Table 3 3: Cumulative Effects of Actions to Counter an Energy Blockade**

| <b>Actions</b>   | <b>Change</b> | <b>Seaborne Oil Imports</b> |
|--|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Stop Petroleum Product Exports                         | -1 Mb/d       | 9 Mb/d                      |
| Current Overland Pipelines                             | -1.2Mb/d      | 7.8 Mb/d                    |
| Rail and Truck Capacity                                | -0.6 Mb/d     | 7.2 Mb/d                    |
| Methanol & other fuel extenders                        | -0.6 Mb/d     | 6.6 Mb/d                    |
| 35% reduction in oil demand (per US in WW2)            | -4.9 Mb/d     | 1.7 Mb/d                    |
| Increased military oil usage                           | +0.5 Mb/d     | 2.2 Mb/d                    |
| Additional 5% oil demand reduction (air travel and EV) | 0.5 Mb/d      | 1.7 Mb/d                    |

With the 2019 level of strategic petroleum reserve, together with other crude stocks, estimated at 788 Mb (Daly 2019), China would be able to withstand a seaborne energy blockade for approximately 15 months. This could be extended to 20 months through the emergency addition of a new oil pipeline from Russia transporting 0.6 Mb/d. China's latest increases in its strategic oil reserves could extend a possible holdout period to significantly beyond 2 years. During such an extended period, further pipelines could be completed, and structural changes would also reduce oil demand. An important point is the importance of Russia and the Central Asian states to the energy security of China during a possible seaborne energy blockade for at least the next decade, if not longer. Only when the need for imported oil and gas has been reduced to minimal levels will this dependency be fully removed.

It is extremely doubtful that the US could impose a seaborne energy blockade upon China for over two years, given the scale of the global economic and political fallout. The price crash resulting from the removal of Chinese demand from global oil markets would severely impact many oil exporting nations, many of which may worry about being displaced as unreliable suppliers after the blockade; there would also be the



additional risk of an accelerated Chinese move toward the electrification of transport. Another big question is whether the US would risk antagonizing Russia by interfering with Russian tankers delivering oil to China through the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea. Given this, China may be said to have already substantially *desecuritized* its energy supply, removing it as a possible geo-economic vulnerability to be used against it. Post 2025, as greater and greater numbers of electric vehicles (EVs) enter the Chinese personal and commercial fleets, together with the scrapping of older less efficient internal combustion engine vehicles (ICEVs) etc., the ease with which China could withstand an energy blockade would rapidly increase. As with the window for successful US military action against China in the South China Sea and environs passing by 2025, any possibility of a successful energy blockade may also have passed by then – if not already.

### **3.3.2. Domestic Politicization of Local Air Pollution**

The Party-state has reacted vigorously to the domestic politicization of local air pollution, working to both show its responsiveness and co-opt citizen actions within Party controlled processes. In doing this, the interaction between the PS and the citizenry is kept within “normal” politics, removing the possibility of a politicization of the issue of local air pollution in a manner threatening to the legitimacy and domestic dominance of the Party-state.

Stringent particulate matter regulations have been imposed upon the coal-fired electricity fleet, requiring “scrubbers” to be installed, and actions taken to move many electricity-generating plants away from concentrated urban areas. At the same time, the use of natural gas and low-carbon electricity generation has been increased, and natural gas increasingly targeted to reduce the role of coal for space heating purposes. What is

considered “one of the world’s strictest rules on automobile pollutants” (Xinhua 2019) has also been put in place and the use of EV’s within urban areas incentivized.

China has been upgrading its coal-fired electricity generating fleet to supercritical and ultra-supercritical high-efficiency power generation units that both reduce coal usage, and as a side effect of that extra efficiency, particulate matter and carbon dioxide emissions per unit of electricity (Wang, Xu & Ren 2018). Super and ultra-supercritical high efficiency units provide approximately half of Chinese coal-fired electricity generating capacity (Hart, Basset & Johnson 2017). The Chinese state is already tightening regulations with respect to acceptable plant efficiency levels to obsolete the least efficient plants “By 2020, every existing coal-fired power unit in China must meet an efficiency standard of 310 gce per kilowatt-hour; any units that do not meet that standard by 2020 will be retired. *In contrast, none of the current top 100 most efficient U.S. coal-fired power units would meet that same efficiency standard today [my italics]*” (Hart, Basset & Johnson 2017). With the average ultra-supercritical plants in Southeast Asia being 22% more efficient in transforming coal into electricity than subcritical ones (World Coal Association 2016), and the best plants 41% more efficient than the average SE Asia subcritical plant (Power Technology 2019), there is a large scope for China to significantly increase the electricity output of its coal-fired fleet without increasing the amount of coal consumed. This ongoing ability to increase the amount of electricity generated for a given amount of coal allows for a level of domestic coal consumption “projected to broadly plateau over the next 20 years” (Wang, Xu & Ren 2018, p. 161) while supporting the need for the increases in electricity production required for continued economic growth.

### 3.3.3. Industrial Policy

The Party-state has driven a consolidation of the coal mining industry into larger automated mines (Wang, Xu & Ren 2018) to increase the efficiency of the overall industry. This produced a temporary fall in coal production in mid-decade as smaller mines were closed but production rebounded in 2017 and 2018 (BP 2019). Approval was given to “40 new ‘modernized’ domestic coalmines, with a total capacity of 196 million tonnes, in the first three quarters of 2018” (Singh, Xu & Schmollinger 2019).

The low carbon energy sector has been targeted as a growth area in which China can provide technology leadership, and as a source of new job opportunities. The installation of significant levels of solar and wind energy in China has aided the development of the related domestic industries. State support for the solar industry during the over-capacity crisis of the early 2010s allowed the industry to survive that crisis and then become the globally dominant supplier of solar panels that it currently is. Support for the nuclear industry has also been provided by the expansion of capacity within China, with the industry now in a position to bid for foreign plant installations.

Within the renewable electricity generation sector China has rapidly moved from being a laggard to the position of a leader, both as an implementer of renewable technologies and as a manufacturer of such technologies. The table below details the capacity and output growth of low carbon energy sources:

**Table 3 4: Chinese Low Carbon Energy Sources**

|                          | Mtoe<br>Mill. Tons Oil Equiv. | 2007-17<br>Growth | 2018<br>Growth | Share        | 2018 Cap.<br>Growth |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <b>Low Carbon Energy</b> | <b>483</b>                    | <b>n/a</b>        | <b>n/a</b>     | <b>14.7%</b> | <b>11%</b>          |
| - Hydro                  | 272                           | 9.2%              | 3.2%           | 8.3%         | 2.5%                |
| - Wind                   | 83                            | 49%               | 24%            | 2.5%         | 12%                 |
| - Nuclear                | 67                            | 15%               | 19%            | 2.0%         | 2.0%                |
| - Solar                  | 40                            | 100%              | 51%            | 1.2%         | 33%                 |
| - Biomass, Geothermal    | 21                            | 28%               | 14%            | 0.6%         | 0.6%                |

Data from BP 2020 Statistical Review and IRENA Renewable Energy Statistics 2019

The electrification of transport is also a key area of development for China. The massive implementation of subways, trams and trains (including a high-speed train network larger than the rest of the world combined) has facilitated the growth of highly competitive industries within these sectors. In parallel, EV manufacturing has been supported through both producer subsidies and consumer incentives. China leads the world in the production and usage of electric buses, a fleet with a high utilization rate with respect to personal vehicles. Roughly 99% of the 385,000 electric buses worldwide operate in China, 17% of the overall Chinese bus fleet (Poon 2018), with estimates that for every 1,000 electric buses 500 barrels of diesel are displaced per day. The city of Shenzhen has already moved to a 100% electric bus fleet (Keegan 2018). Some local governments have also been targeting taxi fleets, which have much higher than average utilization rates, for electrification. Local government has direct control over the composition of taxi fleets, through the regulation of the types of vehicles allowed and the provision of charging points. These powers have been used by a number of Chinese cities to replace gasoline-powered taxis with EV's (Chun 2018; Keegan 2018). This focus on high-utilization transport may significantly increase the reduction in oil usage from the adoption of EVs.

From only a 0.9% market share in 2015, Chinese EV sales have grown at a compound annual rate of 69% to reach a market share of 3.9% in 2018, with 75% of EV sales being pure battery electric vehicles (as against hybrid models) in 2018 (Hertake et al 2019). Sales fell in the second half of 2019 due to reductions in EV state subsidies, but this can be seen as a strategic step to shake out the less efficient among a plethora of Chinese suppliers and to reduce the rapidly increasing fiscal impact of such subsidies. With the removal of restrictions on foreign-owned EV production, those subsidies may have also increasingly gone to foreign car manufacturers. Due to the previous state regulations that only allowed EV manufacturing by locally owned and joint-venture entities and steered manufacturers toward domestic battery manufacturers (Huang 2019), the domestic market has been predominantly supplied by domestic manufacturers. The state's development plans call for the production of 2 million EV's in China by 2020; actual production was 250,000 in 2015, 410,000 in 2016, 660,000 in 2017 and 1.2 million in 2018 (Qiao & Lee 2018; EEI 2019). The state has targeted a market share of 20% for new energy vehicles (NEVs) in 2025, which may include fuel cell and other technologies (Hernandez 2018). Given that the vast majority of cars sold in China are net new additions to the fleet (Collins 2019) this level of EV market share may bend the upward curve of oil usage growth but will not result in any shrinkage of the ICEV fleet.

Chinese manufacturers had struggled to produce competitive internal combustion engine cars, resulting in a heavy foreign presence within the Chinese market. For example, 40% of Volkswagen and 50% of BMW global sales are in China (Hanley 2018). This provides significant leverage for China with respect to European car manufacturers who are also being pushed to develop EVs by new EU28 emission

regulations. The foreign manufacturers will be forced to sell an increasing number of EVs within China just to defend market share against domestic competitors. The pressure from China, combined with that from recent EU28 regulations, may spur the sales of EVs within the EU28 where the majority of car sales replace current fleet vehicles resulting in a reduction in European oil demand. The result would be a greater reliance upon the Chinese market for oil exporting nations, and possible significant disruption for a US car industry that significantly lags with respect to EVs (excepting Tesla).

A report on the geopolitics of a low carbon energy transition (GCGET 2019, p. 40) states that “leaders in technological innovation are positioned to gain the most from the global energy transformation” to renewables, and that “No country has put itself in a better position to become the world’s renewable energy superpower than China. In aggregate, it is now the world’s largest producer, exporter and installer of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles, placing it at the forefront of the global energy transition.” Such a position offers “its industry the opportunity to overtake US and European companies, which have been dominant in sectors such as cars and energy machinery”. The report also notes that in 2016 China had a 29% cumulative share of renewable energy patents, compared to 18% for the US, 14% each for the European Union and Japan (Ibid., p. 41). An analysis of renewable energy patents in 2017 gave China a 76% share, with the US only having a 10% share (PEi 2018).

### **3.4. Summary**

The predominant orientation of China is toward the removal of possible military conflict through strong defensive measures and the removal or nullification of possible conflict-inducing factors (e.g. its seaborne oil imports). This allows for a continued

peaceful rise of China, with its economy forecast to become twice the size of the US within a decade in PPP terms. At the same time China is establishing an increasing web of economic, social and political connections with other nations through such policies as the BRI. Through the BRI and other initiatives China is economically integrating much of South East Asia with its own economy, and extending this to Central Asia, parts of the Middle East, and Africa. Economic growth and an increasing position of China within the international community are central to the continued domestic legitimacy of the CS.

China's deepening partnership with Russia benefits its security, economic and political objectives in multiple ways. Firstly, it removes the "threat from the north" that has dominated Chinese security concerns for centuries. Russia also provides a nuclear umbrella second only to that of the US, advanced military technologies and tactical knowledge, and a geographic expanse that links China to Europe and Central Asia. With respect to energy, Russia would be a core element in any Chinese response to an energy embargo. This myriad of factors leads to the need for China to carefully consider the impact upon Russia of its policies.

Such considerations may act as a drag upon any Chinese move to a low-carbon economy, given the high dependence of Russia upon fossil fuel exports – both oil and natural gas. The high price elasticity to demand for oil could lead to a significant drop in world oil prices were China to cut its oil imports; especially when such a cut was seen as part of a long-term incremental reduction that could drive oil exporters to maximize current production to monetize oil reserves before their value falls further. China could reorient its oil imports toward Russia, as it has somewhat during the pandemic-induced oil price drop in 2020, but this may only offset part of the loss in Russian oil revenues.

Any extremely aggressive eco-modernist moves away from oil, perhaps through a deadline beyond which ICEVs will no longer be sold, will need to be balanced with measures to support the stability of the Russian economy. Such policies could include increasing non-fossil fuel Russian imports such as food and directing investments to aid the Russian economy in moving away from fossil fuel dependency. The latter policy avenue may become more viable later in the 2020s as Chinese US\$ GDP per capita overtakes that of Russia (in 2019 the latter was still about 10% more than the former), making the well-educated Russian workforce more competitive; continued Western sanctions against Russia would also tend to improve China's bargaining position with respect to investments in its ally.

Nowhere in the above has climate change been mentioned, reflecting the marginal impact that climate change considerations have upon Chinese policies. China's commitment at the Paris climate conference in 2015 was to peak GHG emissions by 2030, a commitment that it has not changed since (including at the 2019 Madrid COP meeting). This provides no real limitations upon China's energy policies until the date at which it is forecast to have an economy that will be over twice the size of the US.

If there is no climate change constraint upon China's energy policies within the next decade are there any other factors that could create a much more aggressive move toward a low carbon economy? One possibility is an accelerated industrial policy focused on dominating the green economy, especially in EVs and related technologies. The main policy drivers for this would be increases in the state-mandated Chinese market share of EVs above current targets, and possibly a date by which ICEVs would no longer be allowed to be sold. The problem with such an acceleration, as stated above, is that it



could cause significant problems for its ally Russia and it could trigger an aggressive response from the US (paralleling the response to the *Made in China 2025* plan to dominate leading technology sectors). Instead, such a policy change may be carried out in reaction to greater conflict with the US, or to some form of global climate emergency.

The greater efficiency of EVs versus ICEVs does mean that there would be some reduction in GHG emissions through the substitution of electricity from China's coal heavy generating mix for oil; projections "show that electric passenger cars using China's national electricity mix in 2015 will result in a 50% reduction in life cycle fossil energy use and a 35% reduction in life cycle GHG emissions compared to gasoline cars" (Ou, Xiaoyu & Zhang 2010). Such reductions would be mitigated by the fact that the majority of new Chinese car sales are additions to the car fleet rather than being replacements of current ICEVs. Much more significant policy changes would be required to escape the *Energy Security Paradox* noted by Nyman (2018) where immediate energy security is increased through a move to more secure fossil fuel sources, while longer-term insecurity is increased through the continuing usage of those fossil fuels.

With both domestic and geopolitical considerations forestalling any reductions in economic growth, it is hard to identify a path that would reduce Chinese GHG emissions over at least the next decade. With no constraints provided by its Paris agreement commitments, and seemingly little policy urgency with respect to climate change, there appears very little possibility of significant policy moves to reduce GHG emissions. Short of a climate emergency (e.g. a very high intensification of the local effects of climate change that threatens significant geographic and industrial assets), a CCP generally committed to the *raison d'etat* (and its own existence) will remain focused on

maintaining the economic and geopolitical rise that will return China to the position a prosperous Middle Kingdom.

A Middle Kingdom that will not require territorial control nor ideological and cultural homogeneity if the CCP reverts to earlier foreign policy practices. The nature of the PSSC will provide a very different civilizational modernity to that of Western liberalism, and its rise will return the international system to the civilizational plurality that existed prior to the nineteenth century; a change that will provide a new reality very hard for Western elites to accept after their centuries of global pre-eminence.

### **3.5. Framework Insights In The China Study**

The current dynamic of the international system (what Cox refers to as the world order), places China as a rising contender to the dominance of the United States; with a rational focus on increasing its own power and/or that of its coalition with respect to the US and its coalition. The neoclassical realism of Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, adds an analysis of the internal dynamics of China – a strong central authoritarian bureaucratic Party-state that dominates, even subsumes, Chinese society; a Party-state that also enjoys high levels of societal legitimacy. In addition, a strategic culture focused on the *raison d'état* (also the *raison du parti* as synonymous with the *raison d'état*) and the recovery of China's "rightful" place within the international system, staffed with individuals groomed over decades within the Party and state bureaucracies. This is reinforced by a leader whose father was a senior figure in the revolutionary movement, and that leader's experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Such an analytical picture does provide a relatively nuanced view of the present, and provides some insights into future state policy making, but does not provide a vision of the historical processes that created the current

China, nor their possible impact going forward. It also takes the present as a given, without problematizing its elements; *how* and *why* the present came into being may have significant exculpatory value with respect to how the future may progress.

A significant surprise among many Western scholars and policy makers has been the lack of movement toward a society with liberal institutions, such as political democracy, a free press, and independent non-governmental organizations; why is this and will it continue? To answer such a question Cox's historical materialist approach can be utilized. The Chinese state/society complex has swung between that of an effective central state that dominates society, and disintegration, for over two millennia – a continuous process of dialectical change rather than any smooth route to societal perfection. Even within dynasties there were dialectical processes present, as shown with the *Discourses of Salt & Iron* during the Han period, in which competing groups debated how much the state should intervene in the market for basic necessities that affect the cost of living of the general population. This historical discussion was an important part of the debates about the pace of liberalization of the Chinese economy in the 1980s, a period when a “big bang” economic and social liberalization was a significant option (Weber 2021); an example of Cox's notion that ideas can be extremely long-lived, even when the material and institutional conditions that helped create them are well in the past. Over the two millennia, there were also popular uprisings and other challenges that had to be dealt with and new ideas integrated into an updated societal *common sense* as a result of these dialectical processes. The Century of Humiliation can be seen as the period during which this common sense was reconceptualized, after remaining relatively stable for over a millennium, to align with the modern world and the challenge of the West.

This resulting common sense includes the societal acceptance of a scale and scope of state activities that differs greatly from Western liberal conceptualizations. This stems from the association of social stability and the growth of material capabilities with a strong competent state, and social chaos and collapse in its absence. The interaction over time of the philosophy of *Legalism* that was the ideational base for the first imperial dynasties (the short-lived Qin and then the four century Han) with the repeated successes of states that utilized it drove a positive feedback between Cox's forces of material capabilities, institutions and ideas. *Confucianism* added the need for the state to rule benevolently, for the benefit of the nation as a whole, benefitting from the same positive feedback between the forces. As noted above this process was not smooth, as shown by the repeated collapses and reconstructions of the Chinese state/society complex – each of which brought new derivations of the same basic formula; for example, competitive exams for state bureaucratic positions. The combination of Legalist and Confucianist concepts also aligned with the communist conceptions of central planning and the role of the state in fostering the good of the working people and limiting their exploitation. The lack of a bourgeois revolution, either organically or from above, also meant that markets were not seen as a separate realm better left independent of the state. The ease of the combination of aspects of different philosophical schools points to a level of ideational *pragmatism* in state building, far predating Deng's famous statement that "It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice".

The victory of the communists in 1949 put paid to the development of a capitalist economy and the dominance of the state by capital. Instead, the communist Party-state very much followed the historical practice of a strong, and socially dominant, central

state. Even after the extensive reforms started by Deng, there is still not a truly independent bourgeoisie, instead the Party-state remains as the dominant elite grouping, “In the Chinese state–society complex, primacy rests not with an autonomous capitalist class but ultimately with the state and a *state class* organized around the Communist Party, which is still the dominant source of power in society” (de Graaff & van Apeldoorn 2018, p. 116). A Party-state dependent upon a *performance legitimacy* that very much aligns with the historical concept of the *Mandate of Heaven*, and has been burnished by the incredible growth in material capabilities that it has overseen in the past decades.

In this context, Xi’s focus on routing out corruption, asserting the power of the Party-state with respect to the wealthy and their corporate vehicles, and the need to reduce income inequality, can be seen as a logical rebalancing after the excesses created by the breakneck and less controlled growth of the first decade of this century. All things that previous emperors and their administrations would have been at home with as they worked to maintain the strong central state’s efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. In at least the medium term, the strong Party-state will remain as the dominant social, economic and political institution and the creation of an independent bourgeois class will continue to be stymied.

The work of the *Amsterdam School* adds to these insights through its focus on the background and relationship networks of the societal elite. The Party-state elite is seen as independent of other national and cross-national elite groupings, an independence supported by the Party control of the “commanding heights” of the economy (e.g. finance, energy and media) as well as the bureaucratic recruitment and advancement

processes. China's independence is not just supported by its material capabilities, institutions and ideas, but also through the career paths leading to membership of the policy-making elite. Xi's extensive focus against corruption within the Party-state, as well as the recent reassertion of state dominance over economic elites, will serve to bolster that independence.

It is this Party-state elite that provides the Chinese strategic culture, imbued with the historical beliefs and learnings of China; the fundamental belief in the efficacy of a strong central state (and Party) populated with highly educated and experienced bureaucrats, dependent upon the people for its legitimacy and with a strategic vision of a reinvigorated Middle Kingdom. The multi-decade process through which a leader rises through the Party hierarchy, during which they experience increasingly senior and diverse assignments, will tend to reinforce group cohesion and identification with the Party. This long process of advancement within the Party, together with the long tenure of paramount leaders (14 years for Deng, 10 years for Jiang, 10 years for Hu, 9 years so far for Xi) and other senior officials, supports a long-term orientation to strategic planning and decision-making; in contrast to the US political cycles that regularly place individuals with no previous state executive experience in senior positions, including that of the President. Such a strategic culture can support the multi-decadal commitments required for such things as the Belt & Road Initiative and a move beyond the middle-income trap; it also mirrors the leadership stability during the rapid economic growth of Japan (the LDP), Korea (Park Chung-hee), Singapore (Lee Kuan Yew), and Taiwan (the Kuomintang).

The personal experiences of Xi and many of his colleagues during the Cultural Revolution also serve to reinforce the perceived efficacy of a strong central state, as well as the need to limit the impact of a rogue individual (such as Mao). Xi may now have gained as much power as Deng, but the strategic culture will provide much resistance to him ever becoming a Mao; somewhat mirroring the focus on collective leadership within the Soviet Union after the time of Stalin. The strategic culture is also affected by the material capabilities of China versus the Western powers, hence Deng's foreign policy orientation of keeping a low profile to allow for the unimpeded focus on economic growth. China's multi-decade exponential growth has now placed it into a position to start to challenge the West's dominance of the world order, and these new circumstances have been reflected in a more assertive foreign policy. The strategic culture is also informed by the historical way in which China has dealt with foreign powers, which differs greatly from that of the US. The Tribute system did not require the invasion nor cultural dominance and homogenization of other nations, instead it focused on the benefits of trade while accepting heterogeneity and independence as long as the leading position of China was acknowledged and not challenged. These ideas can be seen in the material capabilities and institutions of the Belt & Road Initiative, and provide a fundamental ideational, as well as material and institutional, challenge to the way in which the West has operated.

The Coxian concepts of competing state/society complexes and the co-creational combination of material capabilities, institutions and ideas allows for a full appreciation of the scale and scope of the challenge of China to the US, and the West in general. The fundamentally differing backgrounds of the competing societal elites, with very different

worldviews and relatively few connections between them, also underline this challenge and the great difficulties that the US elites will have in attempting to co-opt Chinese elites. In addition, the historical legitimacy of the state, together with that developed by the Party-state in recent decades, does not augur well for any attempt to separate the latter from “the Chinese people” as imagined by the then US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (2020). The still relatively low level of GDP per capita underlines the opportunity for the Chinese state/society complex to outgrow the scope and scale of its US counterpart; empowering an elite centered on the Party and state rather than the capitalist class as in Western nations. The differing material and institutional capabilities with respect to domestic fossil fuel production and the technologies required for a low-carbon energy transition only deepen the challenge, as China seems positioned to gain significant advantage with respect to the US during any such a transition. The continued success and growth of China becomes a direct challenge to the interests of the Western capitalist classes and their ability to dominate both the international system and their own domestic citizenry.

The Chinese state/society system does not have an internal fossil fuel capitalist group that may resist an energy transition, as the energy sector is owned by the Party-state – i.e. the nature of the elite and political economy removes significant barriers to such a transition. An industrial policy that has favoured green technologies as part of a policy of continuous economic upgrading and growth (central to the continuing legitimacy of the Party-state), together with the position of China as a major oil importer, will result in significant benefits from the move to low carbon technologies. In addition, a focus on the electrification of transport will benefit domestic energy production and



reduce the dependence upon foreign oil. A limitation upon the speed of such a transition will be a strategic culture that values social stability, and a need to support Russia and Central Asia that are important allies that secure its borders, support its energy security in the short and medium term, and provide military and geopolitical support in the case of Russia. The result may be a transition that is faster than that in the US, but not too fast to threaten internal and external stability.

## Chapter 4: USA Case Study

"Pride goeth before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall"  
(The Bible, Book of Proverbs 16:18)

In this chapter I will first describe the historical development of the United States and how the nature of that development affected both the state/society complex, and the long-term determinants of the strategic culture of the policy-making elites. I will show that the history of the US (and the precursor British colonies) has been one of continual expansion; to begin with predominantly through military means (the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries), and then through a mixture of economic, political, covert, and when deemed necessary, overt military means. I will then utilize these insights to assess current energy-related policies in the context of major power competition. In the final piece of this chapter I will summarize the current US configuration with respect to the possible paths open to the nation.

If the young United States had a mission, it was not to liberate but to expand. "Of course" declared Theodore Roosevelt in 1899, as if explaining the self-evident to the obtuse "our whole national history has been one of expansion." TR spoke truthfully ... How was this expansion achieved? On this point, the historical record leaves no room for debate: by any means necessary. (Bacevich 2009, pp. 19-20)

I will also show that the historical experiences of the British colonies prior to the mid-eighteenth century, together with the following extermination of the native peoples, have produced a creation myth that sanctifies the US as "The Shining City On A Hill"

that is in a constant civilizing struggle with the Other; a conceptual structure and discourse that has been repeatedly used to support aggressive actions against other nations. Only when all of the world has been “civilized” and accepts the US as the “indispensable nation” and “global policeman” will America’s work be done.

The notion of American exceptionalism – that the United States alone has the right, whether by divine sanction or moral obligation, to bring civilization, or democracy, or liberty to the rest of the world, by violence if necessary – is not new. It started as early as 1630 in the Massachusetts Colony when Governor John Winthrop uttered the words that centuries later would be quoted by Ronald Reagan, Winthrop called the Massachusetts Bay Colony a “city on a hill”. Reagan embellished a little, calling it a “shining city on a hill” ... A few years after Governor Winthrop uttered his famous words, the people on a hill moved out to massacre the Pequot Indians ... Expanding into another territory, occupying that territory, and dealing harshly with people who resist occupation has been a persistent fact of American history from the first settlements to the present day. (Zinn 2005)

This multi-century expansionist drive has been supported by the combination of extensive domestic natural resource endowments and an ever-increasing population, together with the ability of the US to dominate its own hemisphere; separated by two oceans from military attack and bordered by two weak nations. Until 1970 the US was self-sufficient in fossil fuel energy, after which it suffered a 40-year period of escalating

foreign oil dependency until the shale oil revolution that has now returned the nation to a position of self-sufficiency; a position strengthened by the oil production surpluses of the neighboring Canada and Mexico. The US is home to the majority of global private fossil fuel TNCs, which have for over a century developed extensive global operations synergistically with US foreign policy. There are also many US based TNCs, such as Boeing and General Electric, which are directly dependent upon the continued use of fossil fuels.

I will show that the US has been politically dominated by big business and finance since the late nineteenth century, a situation that has direct impacts upon US foreign policy. Since World War 2 that policy has been dominated by the large internationalized corporate elites, with an emphasis on the integration of as much of the globe as possible within a US-dominated market regime. This has been heavily facilitated by US dominance in the immediate post-WW2 period, repeated four decades later by the collapse of the Soviet-bloc and the liberalization of China.

Domestically, the US is relatively unique among Western nations in never having developed a labor-based, socialist mass movement as a balance to business interests. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, business, the state, and the courts, worked together to constrain labor organizations – aided by extreme economic volatility. The rapid rise of big business at the end of the nineteenth century, in the context of a still small business-oriented state, altered the balance of power even more against labor (and against smaller domestic-oriented businesses). The power of big business was only challenged in the depths of the Great Depression of the 1930s, with the resulting New Deal social compact lasting into the 1970s. Since the progressive challenge of the late

1960s and early 1970s, and the turmoil created by the Vietnam War, economic elites have returned themselves to a dominant position that is at least, if not greater than, that of the late nineteenth century. Such elite dominance puts the lie to the dominant US discursive notions of its own democracy, as Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis noted “We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both” (Shoup 2015, preface).

#### **4.1. Historical Positioning**

##### **4.1.1. The Terror Dream (1584 to 1776)**

Much of US myth making is facilitated by “forgetting”, with large voids between the *Pilgrims* landing at *Plymouth Rock* in 1620 and American Independence in 1776. This misses much of the continuity between prior colony and new nation, and leaves generally unseen the highly exploitative, class-ridden, and terror-inducing reality of this period.

Historical mythmaking is made possible only by forgetting. We have to begin, then, with the first refusal to face reality: most colonizing schemes that took root in seventeenth and eighteenth-century British America were built on privilege and subordination, not any kind of proto-democracy. The generation of 1776 certainly underplayed that fact. And all the subsequent generations took their cue from the nation’s founder. (Isenberg 2017, p. 5)

The Jamestown, Virginia colony was established in 1607 as a business venture by the Virginia Company of London after a series of failed colonies, including the *Lost Colony of Roanoke* that had been established in 1585. Jamestown was briefly abandoned

in 1610 after three years of extremely high settler death rates due to starvation, disease and attacks from local tribes and the Spanish (this included the *Starving Time* from 1609-1610); it was quickly resettled with the arrival of new supply ships.

That a small fraction of colonists survived this first twenty years of settlement came as no surprise back home – nor did London’s elite much care. The investment was not in people ... The colonists were meant to find gold, and to line the pockets of the investor class back in England. The people sent to accomplish this task were by definition expendable. (Isenberg 2017, p. 11)

After starting to successfully harvest tobacco from 1614 the colony began to prosper, but this then led to expansion that drove conflict with the neighboring tribes. In 1622 these tribes attempted to eliminate the colony, killing 300 settlers (about a third of the English-speaking colonists) but failed in their elimination attempt. Despite these losses, the colony continued to prosper and grow, and decisively defeated the local tribes between 1644 and 1646. The workforce of the colony predominantly consisted of African slaves and currently or previously indentured servants; many of the latter poor adults and fatherless boys with some children “spirited” (i.e. kidnapped) from London streets and sold to planters. The balance switched more to slavery after *Bacon’s Rebellion* of 1676, during which indentured servants and slaves fought together against the colony’s administration; the enslaved portion of Virginia’s population grew from 9% in 1700 to 40% in 1775 (Holton 1999, page xix). The rebellion had begun due to the Governor’s perceived lack of support for the frontier settlers’ moves to annex more Amerindian

territory, as he refused to retaliate against tribal attacks on frontier settlements. This need for expansion to provide space for a growing population, with much of the colonial lands taken by the early settlers and large estates, would bedevil the British colonies. From Virginia, the British expanded into North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. The large estate owners became the powerful plantation elite within the colony, utilizing mostly slave labor; a pattern repeated throughout the American South. The nature of the Virginia colony, and that of the plantation South that grew from it, did not lend itself to the basis of a national myth based upon religious freedom and democracy. That role fell to Plymouth, and more generally New England, founded thirteen years after Jamestown.

The Plymouth colony was founded in 1620 by puritan separatists that came to be known as the *Pilgrims* (a word not popularized until 1874 [Isenberg 2017]); both as a business settlement and a place of escape from religious persecution. The *Voyage of the Mayflower* and the *First Thanksgiving* (in late 1621 after half the Pilgrims had died) provide foundational myths of White American history. The latter was not celebrated with a national holiday until the *US Civil War*, a time of need for Northern national myth making, two and a half centuries later. The larger Massachusetts Bay colony was established in 1628, the Province of New Hampshire in 1629, and Connecticut and Rhode Island & Providence Plantations colonies in 1636. The words of John Winthrop in 1630 to a group of Massachusetts colonists before they embarked on their journey, “as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people will be upon us ... we shall be made a story and byword through the world”, were only published two centuries later and it was another century until US Presidents would utilize his words in the service of US exceptionalism:

I have been guided by the standard John Winthrop set before his shipmates on the flagship Arabella [sic] three hundred and thirty-one years ago, as they, too, faced the task of building a new government on a perilous frontier. "We must always consider", he said, "that we shall be as a *city upon a hill*—the eyes of all people are upon us" ... For we are setting out upon a voyage in 1961 no less hazardous than that undertaken by the Arabella [sic] in 1630. We are committing ourselves to tasks of statecraft no less awesome than that of governing the Massachusetts Bay Colony, beset as it was then by terror without and disorder within. (Kennedy 1961)

Ronald Reagan utilized Winthrop's words many times, identifying the US as the *shining* city on a hill. Barack Obama and many other politicians have also utilized Winthrop's words to underline the assumed exceptionalism of the US. In 2017 Reagan's adaptation was used by James Comey, the former FBI Director, in his testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee in reference to Russia: "That's what this is about. And they will be back, because we remain – as difficult as we can be with each other, we remain the shining city on the hill, and they don't like it" (Comey 2017). The mythical view of the US as an exceptional *New World* nation, rising above the failures of the *Old World* was well captured by Schlesinger (1952):

The New World had been called into existence to redress the moral as well as the diplomatic balance of the Old; we could not defile the sacredness of our national mission by too careless intercourse with the world whose failure made our own



necessary ... Our nation had been commissioned--whether by God or by history--to work out on this remote hemisphere the best hopes and dreams of men.

Mass migration to the New England colonies continued until the *English Civil War* (1641 to 1652) after which population growth was predominantly from natural increase. The New England colony utilized few indentured servants or slaves, but instead of being the mythical home of freedom and equality,

By the 1630s, New Englanders reinvented a hierarchical society of 'stations', from ruling elite to household servants. In their number were plenty of poor boys, meant for exploitation. Some were religious, but they were the minority among the waves of migrants that followed Winthrop's *Arbella*. The elites owned slaves, but the population they most exploited were the child laborers. Even the church reflected class relations: designated seating affirmed class station. (Isenberg 2017, p. 10).

As Turner (2020, p. 180) notes "only a small percentage of adult settlers elected the colony's leaders and gave consent to laws and taxes. In some respects, New Plymouth functioned as an oligarchy, as men like William Bradford, Edward Wilson, Mules Standish, and Thomas Pence filled key offices year after year." After a peaceful start to relations with the local Amerindians, the expansion of the New England colonies produced the same result as in the southern colonies – conflict. This conflict included the *Pequot War* (1636-1638) and *King Philip's War* (1675-1678). The latter led to large-

scale destruction in the New England colonies and significant loss of life. Expansionism was supported by a notion of “providential and historical ‘destiny’” so strong that the settlers “saw the ‘clearing’ of Native American communities by disease as evidence that God ‘intended’ the colonists to possess Indian [sic] lands” (Kakel III 2011, p. 17). Such a view also supported the multi-century Amerindian genocide and land theft that started early in the New England colonies, historical realities that lie silent in US mythology:

In a chilling display of the coexistence of democracy and genocide on the American borderlands, the settlers first held a vote on what to do with the indigenous Moravian converts. Indiscriminate slaughter won out ... Within American history ... The ‘c’ and ‘g’ words – colonialism and genocide – are rarely invoked. (Hixson 2013, preface)

The British colonies in North America had been split by New Holland until a series of Anglo-Dutch wars (1664-1674) that resulted in a British takeover of the area that now includes New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The city of New Amsterdam, renamed New York, was a thriving port and trading center. The population was heterogeneous, governed with a secular pragmatism. This remained so after the British takeover, forming the cultural basis of the development of New York and the surrounding middle colonies. The British victory opened the door to large-scale immigration from the New England colonies.

The French to the north and west, the Spanish to the south and the Amerindians to the west hemmed in the British colonies along the North American eastern seaboard. This

led to the British colonies being drawn into European wars, as well as dealing with Amerindian resistance to their expansion. *King William's War* (1688-1697: European War of Grand Alliance) involved conflict between the British colonies of New England and New York and the French colony of New France; each side using its respective Amerindian allies. Within five years the colonies were consumed into *Queen Anne's War* (1702-1713: European War of Spanish Succession). This involved conflict with both New France and Spanish Florida and ended with significant British gains. The 1715-1717 *Yamasee War* (with the Yamasee tribe) nearly destroyed the South Carolina colony, with it only being saved by an alliance with the Cherokee tribe. In the north, conflict continued with *Father Rale's War* (1722-1725), *King George's War* (1744-1748: War of Austrian Succession) and *Father Le Loutre's War* (1749-1755). The wars with the French, and their Amerindian allies, were finally stopped with the *French and Indian War* (1754-1763), which resulted in total defeat for the French and a huge expansion of the British colonies to the Mississippi River.

This ended the much-forgotten period of seemingly endless and brutal struggle; a period of painful attrition with the colonists continually growing in numbers and the Amerindians dwindling due to pandemics, war losses and outright slaughter. Added to this was an internal theocratic and disciplinary terror. This included in the northern colonies the persecution of Quakers and those accused of practicing witchcraft; exemplified by Salem and its infamous *Witch Trials* (1692-1693). The terror and moral ambiguity of this period, that required both a constant ideological reinforcement of the colonists' spiritual uniqueness and a fostering of a hatred of the Other, is well captured by Faludi (2007, Ch. 8, para. 33):

Caught in these coils, early American settlers dwelled in a state of perpetual insecurity, in what they repeatedly described as an experience of ‘terror’. Time and again, military attempts to guard frontier towns failed. Long after King Philip [a native leader] himself had been shot, quartered, and beheaded, long after his head was impaled on a pole and displayed in Plymouth’s town square (where his father had dined with Pilgrim’s at the first Thanksgiving) for the delectation of white passers-by for the next quarter century ... the different kind of war roiled on, in the borderlands of the continent and the bitter hearts of the antagonists.

Founding myths are fundamental to the way in which nations see themselves. I have already referenced the usage of the notion of “The City Upon A Hill” above: a city that had the right to spread the civilizing mission of its God fearing people, even if that “Manifest Destiny” entailed the eradication or subjugation of “heathen” Others. “Indians [sic] destabilized the colonizer’s identity and his presumed providential destiny to inherit the land. This persistent rupturing of the colonialist fantasy combined with ‘savage’ anticolonial resistance had a traumatic impact on the colonizer. Euro-Americans thus engaged in often-indiscriminate violence aimed at fulfilling the self-serving vision of Indians as a ‘dying race’” (Hixson, p.4). The City Upon A Hill struggling to rid the world of the savage Other has been a redolent trope throughout US history, within such discourses as “Godless communists”, uncivilized “Muslim terrorist states”, “humanitarian intervention” and “the indispensable nation”. Only within such an exceptionalist discourse would the labeling of individuals and ideas as “un-American” make sense.

“So, welcome to America as it was” (Isenberg 2017, p. 14); a small elite standing above a class-ridden and autocratic white society, taking land for its own through conquest and genocide after more than two centuries of a brutal “total” war with the Other (Amerindians), and profiting from the enslavement of hundreds of thousands kidnapped from their home continent or born into slavery; a societal reality that would continue into the twentieth century.

The defeat of the French and their Amerindian allies removed the major threat to the British colonies that had “thwarted Great Britain’s plans to institute new colonial policies” (Ferling 2013, p. 56) to better control the somewhat unruly North American colonies, while at the same time suddenly removing much of the colonists need for the defensive services of the home country. At the same time the British started to raise new taxes on the colonists to pay for the large costs of the *Seven Years War* of 1756 to 1763 (which included the French and Indian War); taxes that the colonists were unwilling to pay. A third factor was the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, which created an Indian [sic] reserve west of the British colonies that was not open to settlement to the British colonists. This was a vast amount of territory coveted by both settlers and land speculators (including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and many more of the elite members of colonial society). The lack of colonist voting rights, and the sometimes-capricious decisions of colonial governors (including one directly affecting a land grant to George Washington [Ferling 2010, p. 72-73]), also supported ideas of gaining greater decision-making powers for the colonists. The *Intolerable Acts* of 1774, mostly passed in response to the *Boston Tea Party*, removed the self-governance of the Massachusetts colony and triggered the *First Continental Congress* in that year.

Another significant factor in the elites drive for independence may have been their fear of slave emancipation by the British, reflecting the shifting of the legal tides within the mother country (including the freeing of a slave bound for the Americas by a British judge in 1772) and the increasing usage of Africans within the British armed forces in the Americas. Many of the slaveholders had moved from the Caribbean, to escape the many slave revolts that were aided by the large imbalances between the “white” population and slave population in the Caribbean islands. The threat by Lord Dunmore of Virginia to utilize armed Africans to quell the brewing revolt can only have intensified the fears of the colonial elites (Horne 2014). In the northern colonies, which benefitted very significantly from the slave trade and industries that served the southern slave estates:

the sight of armed Africans was quite unsettling ... It was in 1768 that Bostonians were treated to the sight of Afro-Caribbean drummers ... actually punishing their fellow “white” soldiers. In the heart of Boston Commons, these Negroes whipped about ten alleged miscreants for various misdeeds ... It was also in Boston in 1768 that John Hancock and other eminent petitioners accused the redcoats of encouraging slaves to “cut their masters’ throats and to beat, insult and otherwise ill treat said masters”; it was felt that with the arrival of more redcoats, the Africans surmised they would soon “be free [and] the Liberty Boys slaves” (Horne 2014, p. 10).

Hostilities began with the *Siege of Boston* in 1775, with the colonists finally prevailing with extensive and decisive support from France and Spain.

#### 4.1.2. Independence To The Great Depression (1776 to 1933)

In pre-revolutionary New England “there was resentment against the authority of Parliament, resentment against the royal officials in the colony, and finally, resentment against the moneyed and merchant class in Boston” (Adams 1925, p. 160). Independence served to replace the former two with the colonial elites, such as the moneyed and merchant classes, and the large landowners; less a revolution for the majority of the population than an assumption of power by the local elites. This model of revolt, with local elites opportunistically utilizing a colonial crisis for their own benefit, was paralleled across much of South and Central America within half a century, for example in Colombia (1810), Venezuela (1811), Argentina (1816), Chile (1818), Mexico (1821), and Brazil (1822). As Ferling (2013, p. 84) notes, some North American colonists “longed for the new United States to replicate the social and political structure of the former mother country”; still elite rule, but now local elite rule unfettered by the mother country, “their own powerful nation state, one which the entrepreneurs, speculators, exporters and importers, and men of finance would be free from London’s confining shackles and oppressive hand” (Ibid., p. 267). The later Haitian revolution (1791-1804) was a slave revolt and resulted in the expulsion and extermination of the local French elites (much like the fate of the elites in France during its own revolution); an example not propitious for the US elites nor the slave owning practices of the US South. The US refused to recognize the new nation and worked toward undermining its independence (Karp 2016). In the face of much domestic US opposition, the *Jay Treaty* of 1795 normalized relations with a Britain at war with revolutionary France – completing the final piece of the story of the *Animal Farm* novel penned by Orwell (1945) a century and

a half later. The local US elites had re-established good relations with the old elites that they had taken power from and continued to rule generally in the same fashion as prior to the revolution. “Independence did not magically erase the British class system, nor did it root out long-entrenched beliefs about poverty and the willful exploitation of human labor. An unflavored population, widely thought of as waste or ‘rubbish’, remained disposable indeed well into modern times.” (Isenberg 2017, p. 14).

In the accepted mythology of the nineteenth century the *Founding Fathers* were considered “‘to have risen to the light of prophecy’ and [to be] *not* at all motivated by economic interests” (McGuire 2003, p. 16). During the progressive era at the end of that century a very different view developed and was consolidated by Beard (1913). This view saw the Federalists as “mainly merchants, shippers, bankers, speculators, and private and public security holders” (McGuire 2003, p. 16) who voted with their economic interests; an interpretation that became the dominant one until the 1950s. At the start of the Cold War era this interpretation was challenged and then repudiated by the academy, but recent scholarship has tended to support Beard’s general hypothesis. The Framers can be seen as overwhelmingly representing the economic elites of society, who greatly benefitted from voting for a strong centralized nation state (as against the loose confederation and weak central government of the Articles of Confederation) that balanced some of the democratizing trends within the states; “what a Massachusetts merchant called ‘plebian despotism’ and the ‘fangs’ of the citizenry” (Ferling 2013, p. 259) – a parallel of the “basket of deplorables” of the 2016 Presidential campaign (BBC 2016). This strong state protected the elites’ property and was able to raise the taxes required to pay the central and state debt securities that many of them owned; “The idea



of self-interest can explain the design and adoption of the constitution” (McGuire 2003, p. 4).

These men were experienced but not disinterested. More than half were slave owners, a third more actively involved in foreign and interstate commerce, the lion’s share were land speculators, and a majority owned certificates of public debt. Economic considerations were part and parcel of the deliberations. (Ferling 2013, p. 264)

The taxes claimed by the British Parliament were replaced with a national system of tariffs and taxes that were utilized to repay state war loans at face value. One result of this was the bailing out and enriching of the war debt speculators that included many of the political representatives that voted for repayment at face value and a number of New York associates of financier Alexander Hamilton, who was both a *Federalist* and the US Secretary of the Treasury. It offered nothing to the soldiers and the many that had lent money to the revolution who had sold their rights, many times forced to by dire financial need, to the speculators for as little as fifteen cents on the dollar. This was a conscious decision by Hamilton to create a new economic elite that could help develop the industry of the young nation, lubricated by the now large national debt and the predominantly privately owned central bank, the *Bank of North America* and its successor *First Bank of the United States* (the precursors of the *Federal Reserve* established in 1913). The payment of substantial bonuses to military officers also helped cement a coalition between

economic and military elites, “a powerful bloc of aristocratic power within the Congress” (Stoller 2017).

Overall, Hamilton’s policies may have established the sound debts and currency required for the development of the nation, but the way in which they were implemented directly benefitted the few at the expense of the many. The farmers and soldiers, who had sold their government notes, and those unable to pay debts and increasing taxes in hard currency, were not so well looked after; an “open struggle between ordinary people and upscale investors, [which] was edited out of our common memory long ago” (Hogeland, p. 3). This struggle included protests that “broke out in the western parts of the country, similar to pre-Revolution-era revolts against the British, who, in extracting revenue for the Crown and its allies, were pursuing the same policies that Hamilton did” (Stoller 2017). This became the *Whiskey Rebellion* (1791-1794), “‘a deluded multitude’ of ‘Ignorant, wrestless [sic] desperados, without conscience and or principals’” (Ferling 2013, p. 241) according to Abigail Adams (wife of Vice President, and later President, John and a war debt speculator) that was crushed by a Federal army and extensive human rights abuses. The same bailing out of the rich at the expense of the rest can be seen in the US government responses to the 2008 *Global Financial Crisis* (Johnson 2009), and the 2020 *COVID-19 Crisis*, while the hagiographic musical *Hamilton* was lauded by the neoliberal establishment (Stoller 2017), as well as the repeated nineteenth century battles between the “sound money” (i.e. gold and silver backed) creditors and the “paper money” debtors – especially during periods of price deflation.

Like many of his Federalist and other elite peers, Hamilton was no supporter of democracy, proposing a President and upper house serving for life atop a highly

centralized federal government with extraordinary powers – against the previously envisaged decentralized state-centric approach; he gained the centralized national government with a large standing army, but had to compromise with respect to the President (indirectly elected by a Senate, itself selected by state legislators rather than directly).

He wanted to bring an elective monarchy and restore non-titled aristocracy to America. “The people are turbulent and changing”, he declared. “They seldom judge or determine right.” They must be ruled by “landholders, merchants and men of learned professions,” whose experience and wisdom, “travel beyond the circle” of their neighbors. America, Hamilton argued, ... had to insulate rulers and the economy as much as possible from the jealous multitude. (Frank & Kramnick 2016) The same Platonic *philosopher king* logic used to justify the “independence” (from democratic control) of the later Federal Reserve.

This is the “Framers’ Coup” that Klarman (2016) refers to in his account of the making of the US Constitution, centralizing power in a way that protected elite interests and buttressed that power against the democratic whims of the common citizenry. The *Quasi-War* (1798-1800) with France was used by the Federalists to pass the *Alien and Sedition Acts* of 1798 in the name of “national security”, which allowed for the summary deportation of non-citizens and criminalized criticism of the government; “Not for the last time in American political history did conservative extremists ... exploit a perceived foreign threat to ... consolidate their strength and destroy their political opponents ... to

muzzle dissent and browbeat [their opposition] into submission” (Ferling 2013, p. 413). Thomas Jefferson proclaimed, “that in less than ten years the federal government ‘has[d] swallowed more of the public liberty’ than had England before 1776” (Ibid., p. 414). With the *Democratic-Republican* victory in the highly contested federal elections of 1800 that took place in the shadow of possible civil war, the anti-elitist but also deeply racist (Ferling 2013, p. 90) plantation and slave owner Jefferson became the President on the thirty-sixth ballot. The Alien and Sedition acts were rescinded (excluding the *Alien Enemies Act* which remains in place today) and the military was reduced in size and restructured to remove the dominance of the Federalist Party and create a depoliticized and professionally trained military. Jefferson also oversaw the extension of the franchise to nearly all white men, as part of a general democratization of society. A first *Military-Industrial Complex* (MIC), combined with an autocratic *Homeland Security* apparatus and *Imperial Presidency* was averted.

Hamilton did help put in place the *Infant Industry* approach of high targeted tariff protections and a development state, to allow for the successful industrialization of the US (Ho 2005; Melitz 2005; Chang 2010; Hudson 2010; Ho 2013; Parenti 2020). After the Treaty of Ghent signed in 1814, following the *War of 1812* with Britain, the “great influx of low-priced British manufactures threatened to extinguish American industrial capital, and thereby to restore American industrial dependence on England, leaving it prone in the event of warfare.” (Hudson 2010, p. 40). The resulting tariffs, passed with bi-partisan support, “introduced a schedule of minimum duties, a forerunner of the ‘American Selling Price’ system of import evaluation for tariff purposes.” (Ibid., p. 41). Between this period and the 1860 fracture of the Democratic Party between the *Free Soil*

and pro-slavery factions, a coalition of the agricultural Southern and the merchant Northeastern Seaboard states worked successfully to reduce the tariffs, with the latter coming to see them as benefitting their national opponents at their own expense – the industrial North. The issue was resolved by the US Civil War, “the moral end of the Civil War was free soil, and later abolition of slavery altogether, the economic end was protectionism and industrialization, and the ancillary policies that went with it” (Ibid., p. 50).

The newly formed US of only 3 million people set about establishing primacy in the Western Hemisphere through a series of conquests, together with the explicit claim to hemispheric hegemony contained in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. The genocidal *Indian Wars* (1775-1924) included the War of 1812 that removed Britain as an ally of the native peoples, and the *First Seminole War* (1816-1819) that led to the ceding of Florida to the US by Spain. The British had proposed the creation of an Indian [sic] state during the Treaty of Ghent negotiations, but the US had made its position clear beneath the misleading decorum of its language:

The United States, while intending never to acquire lands from the Indians otherwise than peaceably, and with their free consent, are fully determined, in that manner, progressively, and in proportion as their growing population may require, to reclaim from the state of nature, and to bring into cultivation every portion of the territory contained within their acknowledged boundaries ... for the sake of preserving a perpetual desert for savages. (Congress of the United States 1854, p. 1347)

With the *Louisiana Purchase* of 1803 from France, made under threat of seizure, and the approximately half of Mexico gained through the *Mexican-American War* (1846-1848), the nation spread from “sea to sea”. The US military also backed the *Open Door* policy of gaining access to other nations’ markets, with the *Treaty of Wanghia* with China in 1844 and the opening of Japan thanks to the “persuasion” of Commodore Perry’s naval squadron that resulted in the *Treaty of Amity and Commerce* (1858) between the US and Japan; both treaties providing US rights of extraterritoriality (Rubenberg 1998). The peak of the native genocide occurred after the brutal *American Civil War* (1861-1865) that ended with the victory of the industrial North over the agricultural (and slave owning) South; with over 600,000 war casualties alone from a pre-war population of approximately 30 million.

the ‘clearing’ of the continent moved to its grand finale. By 1890, vast Indian populations had been wiped out and their remnants consigned to reservations. America had quarantined its remaining illegal enemy combatants and, along with them, centuries-long contagions of shame. (Faludi 2008, Ch. 11, para. 27)

In 1867 Alaska was purchased from Russia. Ten years later, the brief period of freedom for the former slave population under *Reconstruction* (1863-1877) after the Civil War was quickly replaced with the virtual slavery of the share cropping system, reinforced by a terror campaign targeted at the African-American community (Blackmon 2009); a reality that would continue until the 1960s. With the closure of the western

frontier, US expansionism moved further west into the Pacific and Far East. The *Spanish-American* and *Philippine-American* wars (1898-1902), together with the defeat of the *Philippine Moro Rebellion* (1902-1913), established US control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and The Philippines; after numerous atrocities committed against the civilian populations. Hawaii was also annexed in 1898 after a revolution “instigated by American sugar barons” (Grandin 2006, p. 20). The US was also involved in putting down the Chinese *Boxer Rebellion* (1899-1901). The brutality shown in many of these interventions, especially during the Philippine campaigns, paralleled that of the Indian Wars; “The Christian Filipinos had not particularly appreciated benign assimilation until compelled by a ruthless combination of military might, concentration camps, and starvation” (Arnold 2011, p.20). Many US troops fought in both the domestic and international subjugations of Others, “Led by officers whose formative experience had come during the Indian Wars, American military leaders considered Moroland [in the Philippines] to be like a huge Indian reservation populated by savage tribes ruled by warrior chieftains” (Ibid., p. 20). Grandin (2006) notes the widespread usage of the terms “Indians” and “Indian country” to describe the peoples and lands to be subjugated; terms later used in Vietnam and Iraq. Chomsky (2016, p. 16) notes the naming of the contemporary bin Laden operation “Geronimo”, and US helicopters as “Apache, Blackhawk, Cheyenne”.

There were also extensive interventions in Latin American internal politics, with US warships being sent to Latin American ports “a staggering 5,980 times between 1869 and 1897” (Grandin 2006, p. 21). US hegemony over Central America and the Caribbean was asserted through its occupation of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) in 1904,

Nicaragua in 1911 and Haiti in 1915 to recover international debts; with President Theodore Roosevelt (who had led the famous *Rough Riders* in the invasion of Cuba) claiming the right of “international police power” to curb “chronic wrongdoing” (Roosevelt 1904). This assertion of policing power resulted in over thirty-four US interventions in Caribbean countries in the first few decades of the new century; the discourse of “global policeman” has been heavily utilized by the US in the post-Soviet era. In addition, in 1903 a rebellion was fermented in Colombia, which resulted in the creation of a Panama that allowed US jurisdiction over the construction and operation of the Panama Canal. The continual expansion of US territory and US geographic dominance during this period is at odds with the US isolationist mythology, as Bacevich noted “I think that the abiding theme of U.S. policy virtually from the founding of the Republic has been expansionism” (Bacevich, quoted in Chotiner 2020). At the start of the new century, the United States was bordered by two weak states (Canada and Mexico), had gained significant Pacific territories, and was unsurpassed by any other state in the Western Hemisphere; the “homeland” was safe from any conceivable foreign invasion.

Skilled labor unions grew in fits and starts due to the repeated economic depressions (post-1812, 1828-31, 1839-43) and aggressive business anti-union tactics such as “Pinkertons, imported strikebreakers, militia, black lists, and yellow dog contracts” (Rayback, p. 160), together with a judiciary that viewed unions as illegal conspiracies. The movement revived in the recovery of the 1840s, successfully gaining a reduction in working hours (the 10-hour day) and survived the Civil War. The post-war depression (1868-70) and aggressive employer associations then greatly reduced its membership. After a short recovery from 1870, the US economy fell into the *Long*



*Depression* of 1873-79, “For labor the depression was disastrous. By 1877 it was estimated that one-fifth of the nation’s workmen were completely unemployed, two-fifths worked no more than six or seven months a year, and only one fifth worked regularly” (Rayback 1966, p. 129). A short recovery was then followed by the depression of 1882-85, and the following recovery stopped with the depression of 1893-97.

The growth of the nation was supported by accelerating waves of mostly European immigrants that started from 1830, with the US population increasing from under 13 million in 1830 to 76 million in 1900; a nearly six-fold increase. Late in this period the theory of *Eugenics* became popular among elite groups, directed at maintaining the quality of the homogeneous “white stock” (animal husbandry terms were widely used in the Eugenics discourse). Numerous states legislated the enforced sterilization of those deemed to be “defective” and the Federal Government legislated to maintain the ethnic shares of the US population while banning the immigration of “Asian” peoples (e.g. the 1924 *Johnson-Reed Act* which was only revised in 1952). Such racism was also shown in the internment of the Japanese-American population during WW2, something markedly not carried out against the German-American population. The continual westward movement of *The Frontier*, at the expense of the Amerindian population, had provided the equivalent of the *Lebensraum* later sought for the white race by Nazi Germany (Kakel III 2011); the two being “strikingly similar projects of ‘space’ and ‘race’” (Ibid., p. 7). Such parallels, including widespread US anti-Semitism and business linkages with the Nazi regime (e.g. Henry Ford), were to be quickly forgotten once the horrors of a Nazi regime deemed exceptional in its own way (and therefore unrepresentative of Western civilization) came to light.

The nation was also blessed with natural resources that far exceeded the needs of its growing colonist population, including extensive deposits of the coal required for industrialization. Following the Civil War, the massive expansion of the railways created a more national market, and benefitted factories, machines and semi and unskilled labor who “came from the farm and from Europe” (Rayback 1966, p. 159) and came to constitute 56-75% of the labor force. With this industrialization, the manufacturing workforce grew from 1.3M in 1860, to 2M in 1870, and to 4.25M in 1890 (Rayback 1966, p. 53). In spite of the repeated economic contractions and financial panics, between 1865 and 1880 industrial production more than doubled, and then nearly trebled in the following two decades (Davis 2004). In 1890, the US economy surpassed that of the UK, becoming the largest economy in the world.

No nation in history (now with the possible exception of China) industrialized as rapidly as the United States. In a historical eye-blink America went from being an underdeveloped nation to an industrial goliath mightier than the chief economies of Europe combined. (Fraser 2015, p. 28)

This was also a period of increasingly large corporations and the monopolistic “trusts”, together with a “a violent anti-labor campaign” (Rayback, p. 168) that followed the *Haymarket Affair* of 1886 and continued into WW1. The 1892 *Homestead Strike* that pitted Andrew Carnegie’s massive steel company against one of the best organized labor unions in the country showed the new reality: a combination of corporate financial resources, 300 Pinkerton agents, 8,000 state militiamen, and an anti-labor judiciary broke

the union. The same result was achieved with the addition of federal troops and U.S. marshals in the case of the Pullman railway strike of 1894, together with a new legal weapon of blanket injunctions that effectively rendered strikes illegal; a weapon that became widely used. It became evident that “the corporations of the late nineteenth century were ... capable of defeating the strongest labor organization, and that capital had secured a firm grip on state and local governments and would use the state’s power to protect its own interests” (Rayback 1966, p. 53). The period was a pivotal point with respect to corporate size and power:

Before 1880, few industrial enterprises employed more than 400 workers ... By the 1890s, large-scale enterprises had grown common. Individual firms in steel, oil, and especially several of the large railroads, employed over or near 100,000 workers ... The corporations soon outweighed the government in size, bankroll, and, increasingly power. (Cowie 2016, pp. 35-36)

The Crisis of the 1890s was a major turning point in American history. It marked the close of the age of Jacksonian Laissez Nous Faire, and provided the setting for the death scene of the individual entrepreneur as the dynamic figure in American life. At the same time, it marked the triumph of a new system based upon, characterized by, and controlled by the corporation and similar large and highly organized groups throughout American society. (Williams 2009, p. 29)

Churella notes (2013, Intro., para. 11) that the Pennsylvania Railroad (the largest US corporation during the last two decades of the nineteenth century) “In an era of weak national government ... was a highly developed bureaucracy. In an era of relatively modest federal budgets [it] had a budget ... second only to that of the national government”. The benefits of growth accumulated mainly at the top, as the increasingly semi and unskilled nature of jobs provided little bargaining leverage, especially with the inflow of workers from abroad and the agricultural hinterland, and unions that had been rendered ineffective. The possibility of a strong working-class movement was also stymied by the hope of upward mobility and divisions along racial and ethnic lines. Farmers were also defeated in their attempts to organize through Farmers’ Alliances and overcome the factors of “monopolistic railroads, greedy bankers, and a punitive credit system” (Painter 2008, Ch. 2, para. 58) that they saw as keeping them poor.

Remarkable national wealth, on the one hand, and ethnic and racial divisions within the working class, on the other, meant that broad working-class solidarity materialized briefly in moments of crisis and endured only until the inevitable red scare scattered the forces of labor. (Ibid., Intro, final para.)

The resulting concentration of wealth was extreme, with the top one percent of families owning more than the bottom 44%, and the top 12% owning 86% of the wealth. The top 2 percent of families received more than half of all income (Ibid., Intro., para. 8-9); a level of income and wealth inequality paralleling that of the present day.

In reaction to the rapid social changes driven by industrialization, the rise of big business and monopoly, the scale of violent industrial strife, and perceptions of a corrupted politics, the *Progressive Movement* developed from 1890 onwards. This was predominantly led by the middle class and supported a general technocratic reformative modernization and democratization of society. Corporate legitimacy was challenged by muckraking publications that exposed corporate misdeeds, together with events such as the *Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire* of 1911 in which 146 died, the machine-gunning of a miners' tent village at Holly Grove in 1913 and the *Ludlow Massacre* of 1914. The causes of the widespread industrial strife were laid out in a 1915 government report:

After hearing more than seven hundred witnesses, the United States Commission on Industrial Relations had identified four problems. Workers had not shared in the fruits of the enormous economic growth that the country had experienced. Between 25 and 33 percent of working families received too little to support 'anything like a comfortable decent condition'. Workers were also haunted by the threat of a sudden layoff. A majority of them were unemployed for up to ten weeks in any twelve-month period. These men and women did not view the government as their friend. On the contrary, they believed that every agency of the government operated to uphold the power of the bosses and thus to degrade them further. The best proof of this was the refusal of the government to offer them any support in their efforts to organize. (Finan 2007, Ch. 12, para. 9).

The rapid build-up of monopolistic trusts was slowed somewhat, but many were able to reform under less formal arrangements. Any ability to change the balance of economic power in the favor of labor also came up against the “U.S. and state governments’ hostility to the collective interests of working people [that] was unremitting, and often violent. Justifications for state involvement were grounded in broad, often counterintuitive interpretations of the law” (Cowie 2016, p. 68). Such interpretations were evident in the courts’ acceptance of the misuse of the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1906, which was used in the post-WW1 period predominantly against unions rather than the intended target of corporate trusts. In addition, “the courts’ insistence on the unconstitutionality of wages and hours legislation stymied reformers until well into the New Deal Era” (Ibid., p. 70). A new era of corporate consolidation ensued in the decade after WW1. Throughout the period from US independence to the 1930s, excluding the Civil War and WW1, government spending had averaged about 3% of GDP. This was a much smaller share than in Germany, France and the UK (Mauro et al 2015); unlike in other industrialized nations, big business preceded big government. Starting in the post-WW1 period, a multi-decadal “great migration” of African Americans from the South to the North took place that triggered both overt racist violence and structural racism such as real estate practices designed to limit African Americans to specific areas (Anderson 2016).

Energy usage was changing substantially, in 1900 domestically mined coal had provided 90% of the US energy supply, but by 1930 this share was cut by a third; the use of cars drove the consumption of petroleum, and hydroelectricity and natural gas usage also significantly increased. All of these energy sources were domestically produced, and

the US was a major exporter of fossil fuels; “U.S. oil fields accounted for slightly less than two-thirds of world oil production in 1920, slightly more than two-thirds in 1945, and 16.5 percent in 1973” (Painter 2014). The US oil majors also worked hand in hand with the US state as they started to develop deposits abroad, with control of the core energy source required for modern industrial nations having major geopolitical ramifications in addition to profit making. For example, the 1928 *Red Line Agreement* allowed for the domination of Middle East oil production by seven western oil corporations; five of which were American. Monopolies and trusts were central to the fossil fuel sector, with Standard Oil controlling 90% of US oil refining capacity in 1880. This had been reduced to 65% by the time the company was broken up in 1911 under the Sherman Act, due to the continued rapid growth in the sector. Many coal mining companies claimed penury when asked for wage rises, but were in fact transferring those profits to railway corporations that they also had ownership interests in; the concept of *transfer pricing* that has been extensively used by TNCs in the present day.

The intervention of the United States in WW1 brought a political clamp down that mirrored that during the time of Alexander Hamilton, including the passage of the *Espionage Act* in 1917 and the *Sedition Act* in 1918, together with extensive censorship and pro-war government propaganda. Under the former act, the US Postmaster was given the power to exclude any material that he considered critical of the war. In essence, he was given control of what US citizens could read, as periodicals were distributed through the US mail. This resulted in repeated refusals to carry left-wing periodicals, together with threats and even refusals to deliver mail to certain outfits; much left wing and progressive discourse was removed. Foreign periodicals “generally abandoned any

commentary on the war in order to win a license to publish under the Trading with the Enemies Act” (Finan 2007, Ch. 1, para. 27). A significant victim among the thousands of arrests was that of socialist Eugene Debs, who had garnered 6% of the votes in the 1912 presidential election. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, of which he served two and a half after being convicted for publicly saying “You need to know that you are fit for something better than slavery and cannon fodder” (Ibid., Ch 1., para. 29).

The largest prosecution under the Espionage Act was against the leadership of the *Industrial Workers of the World*, a radical union, with nearly 100 convicted and sentenced to terms of up to twenty years. The government and the media fostered societal feelings of being under siege by foreign agents, with the Attorney General supporting such vigilante organizations as the *American Protective League* with a membership of 250,000. He asserted that its role was “keeping an eye on disloyal individuals and making reports of disloyal utterances” (Ibid., Ch. 1, para. 31); such statements could be expected from the later novel *1984* (Orwell 1949), or a communist Soviet Union which had only recently been established after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, when replacing “disloyal” with “bourgeois”. In the immediate post-war years, a “Red Scare” was instigated, operationalized through the *Palmer Raids*; suppressing left-wing activists in parallel with the anti-Bolshevik US involvement in the *Russian Civil War* (1918-21).

The great majority of American leaders were so concerned with the Bolshevik revolution because they were so uneasy about what President Wilson called the ‘general feeling of revolt’ against the existing order, and about the increasing intensity of the dissatisfaction. (Williams 2009, pp. 105-106)



The following decade was one of concerted anti-union campaigns by businesses. Union membership had increased substantially during wartime planning, but all those gains were lost in the 1920s (Cowie, p. 11). This period can be seen as the end of the Progressive Era, as well as any possibility of the kind of labor-based political party that had developed in other countries. The control of the African American population through terror also increased with the reinvigoration of the *Ku Klux Klan*, aided by a deeply racist President Woodrow Wilson who re-segregated the federal government (significantly increasing the earnings gap between black and non-black civil servants [Aneja & Xu 2020]) and held a viewing of the *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith 1915) in the White House; a film that included the following quote from Wilson himself:

The white men were roused by a mere instinct of self-preservation ... until at last there had sprung into existence a great Ku Klux Klan, a veritable empire of the South, to protect the Southern country. (quoted in Matthews 2015)

The end of the 1920s completed a period in which business elites, especially big business elites, had established and maintained their political pre-eminence while greatly restricting the ability of labor to successfully organize itself in opposition. The remaining Amerindian population had been cleared from their lands and housed in government-run reservations, and a neo-slavery had been fully implemented in the South. The United States had expanded its dominance across the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific and was now the leading nation of the globe. The only failure had been the inability of the

Executive to gain support from the Congress for the League of Nations. WW1 had demonstrated that the US state could enter into a major foreign war against significant domestic political opposition and then through extensive propaganda and censorship bring the nation fully behind the war effort. The usefulness of a major crisis to crackdown on dissonant voices and organizations was also demonstrated, especially the labeling of such elements as agents of a foreign country or oppositional ideology (i.e. communism).

#### **4.1.3. From The New Deal to The Age of Diminishing Expectations (1933 to 1979)**

It was only during the *New Deal Era* of the 1930s, which arose from the urgent need to stabilize society during the *Great Depression* that had significantly delegitimized *laissez faire* capitalism, that labor gained full rights to organize and effectively challenge management power through the *Wagner Act* of 1935. Although this was at least partly the result of extensive labor pressure, Ferguson (1991) also proposes that the internationally oriented and capital-intensive segment of the economic elite were instrumental in such changes as they were, “not seriously jeopardized by the epochal welfare measures that they and the administration collaborated in preparing. And because they were internationally oriented, these enterprises were the primary beneficiaries of the administration's historic turn to free trade after 1934” (Ibid., p. 494). A turn facilitated by US industrial dominance, and accompanied by a rapid forgetting of *America's Protectionist Takeoff* (Hudson 2010); in the same way that an industrially dominant Britain had rapidly forgotten the high tariff protections, slave-produced cotton, war disruptions of its European competitors and dominance over India that so benefitted its fledgling textile industry (Chang 2002 & 2010; James 2012). The mixture of a liberalized trade Open Door combined with a limited business-labor compromise would continue for

another four decades, during which business interests would strive to undermine the latter compromise.

Attempts to roll back parts of this compromise by economic elites quickly gained momentum (Domhoff 2013). A major step was the Democratic National Convention machinations of 1944 (“shutting down the convention with Wallace on the verge of victory” [Nichols 2020, p. 99]) that chose the unknown and inexperienced Truman as the vice presidential candidate instead of the in-place and extremely popular and progressive Vice President, Henry Wallace. With Roosevelt in serious decline, this was a choice of the next US President. The highly supportive environment for union organization lasted for only 12 years, as the post-WW2 *Taft Hartley Act* of 1947 (passed with a bipartisan rejection of a presidential veto) removed many of the previous legislation’s benefits to labor. With the support of the state, union density had trebled, peaking at about 36% during the 12-year period. It stayed at around that level for the next decade, before starting the six-decade decline that would take union density below its pre-WW1 level (Cowie 2016). Government spending was still under 5% of GDP in 1930; during the depression it jumped above 10%, and then stayed in the mid to high teens in the post-war period until 1960 (Mauro et al 2015).

Grandin (2006) proposes that during the inter-war years the US moved away from an expansionary policy based upon military intervention and occupation toward one based more upon economic, political, financial, cultural and covert methods together with the support of *comprador* elites; much of this was the usage of the *soft power* later coined by Nye (1990 & 2009):

By the late 1920s, then, the United States had apprenticed itself as a fledgling empire in Latin America, investing capital, establishing control over crucial raw materials and transit routes, gaining military expertise, and rehearsing many of the ideas that to this day justify American power in the world. But the experience in Latin America, both during the initial ‘drive toward hegemony’ and then during the Good Neighbor policy of the 1930s and 1940s, also pushed US leaders to develop a coherently sophisticated imperial project, one better suited for a world in which rising nationalism was making formal colonialism of the kind European nations practiced unworkable. (Grandin, p. 22)

The Mexican revolution (1910-1920), “which destroyed massive amounts of U.S.-owned property” (Ibid., p. 28), had shown the force of Latin American nationalism. The Nicaraguan guerillas (1927-1933) had also fought US troops to a standstill, in spite of the US military’s overwhelming advantage in firepower; an outcome to be repeated a few decades later in Vietnam; and a few decades later again in Afghanistan. Instead of direct intervention, “friendly ‘strong men’ who promised to respect American interests and establish stable self-government” (Foglesong 1995, Intro. Para. 9), would be supported. The Great Depression also significantly reduced US power and precipitated a greater domestic focus. A leading member of the elite, Nelson Rockefeller, had witnessed firsthand “widespread poverty and labor unrest in Venezuela, Bolivia and Mexico” (Ibid., p.30) and proposed that US corporations work with local states to preempt nationalist revolutions through improving local living standards. In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the *Good Neighbor* policy, withdrawing US occupation troops

from the Caribbean, asserting a non-interventionist stance, and actively supported Latin American development, including the nationalization of some US company holdings. The Open Door orientation, focused on the international free flow of US goods and capital, was operationalized through numerous bilateral trade and investment treaties.

The United States emerged unscathed from WW2, its productive capacity having grown substantially during the war, and war deaths numbered just over 400,000 from a population of 133 million in 1941. With the Axis Powers defeated and Europe, the USSR and Asia economically and socially devastated, it was the preeminent global power. Its economy represented approximately half of global GDP, and the previous leading power, the UK, was to all intents and purposes financially bankrupt (Barnett 1972 & 2014).

Taking the lessons of the inter-war years, the US imposed an international order that was structurally beneficial to itself and the international expansion of US corporations, while at the same time maintaining an overwhelming military capability and global network of military bases (Vine 2015) with which to police that order. The Open Door orientation, embedded within the Bretton Woods system, facilitated the outward expansion of US corporations. The Marshall Plan provided external demand for the demobilizing US economy, facilitated the much greater entry of US corporations into European markets, and supported the efficacy of capitalism against the arguments of left-wing groups that had played large roles in the wartime resistance movements.

[at Bretton Woods] American officials set up institutions designed to open up free trade around the world ... These institutions would be largely funded and controlled by Americans; and they formulated precisely to establish a new

economic order to replace the previous one associated with European imperialism ... By accepting these plans, London quietly transferred the mantle of hegemonic control to the United States. (Craig & Logevall 2009, Ch. 1, sub-sect. Distant Allies, para. 14)

Widespread clandestine US political and paramilitary interventions in countries such as Italy and France, as well the military intervention in Greece (Francovich 1980 & 1992; Ganser 2005 & 2006; Weiner 2007; O'Rourke 2018), also made sure that the more radical left-wing interests would not gain political power. "From 1945 to 1975, U.S. government agencies gave an estimated \$75 million to right-wing organizations in Italy, including some with close ties to the neofascist *Moviments Sociale Italiano* (MSI)" (Parenti 1997, p. 30); this "covert financing of the far right fueled a failed neofascist coup in 1970" (Weiner 2007, chapter 28, sub-sect. The Only Way To Go Was The Old Way, para. 10). The occupying forces in Japan instigated a post-war Red Scare, selected both Japan's Prime Minister and "number one gangster" (Weiner 2007, chapter 12, para. 2), repurposed the wartime Japanese intelligence services for its own covert operations (Morris-Suzuki 2014), and then after the end of the US occupation the CIA "spent millions of dollars to support the conservative party that dominated Japan's politics for a generation" (Weiner 1994). In Germany and Austria, extensive use was made of ex-Nazi officials to staff the administration and the intelligence services (Beste et al 2012; Simpson 2014). The USA actively guided the politics and economics of Europe and Japan toward the capitalist camp, supported with military and trade arrangements (The Bretton Woods Institutions, *North American Treaty Organization* (NATO), the *US-Japan*

*Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security* etc.), financial incentives and military bases. The discursal construction of an expansionist communist threat inherent in the creation of NATO and the *Truman Doctrine* also aided group cohesion. A post-WW2 system was constructed whereby “the plutocracy that dominates the system is centered in the United States, but has powerful allied branches in Western Europe and Japan especially” (Shoup 2015, preface, para. 2).

As noted in chapter 2, this “liberal international order” order was in fact neither liberal nor international, as it excluded the Soviet bloc and China, included numerous military and covert interventions across the globe, and actively supported autocratic governments. The US also acted as a sovereign that deemed itself above the law, as with its 1946 acceptance of the *World Court* that was conditioned “with very broad reservations which some regarded as virtually nullifying [US] acceptance” (Bidler 1991). The use of the “Soviet threat” as a cover for the real motives for many US interventions is stated clearly by Huntington, “If you draw from that analysis the conclusion that you have to intervene or take some action, however, you may have to sell it in such a way as to create the misimpression that it is the Soviet Union that you are fighting. That is what the United States has been doing since the Truman Doctrine” (Hoffman et al 1981, p. 14). Kennan (1948, sec. VII) captured the fundamental economic drive behind post-WW2 US foreign policy:

Furthermore, we have about 50% of the world’s wealth but only 6.3% of its population ... Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity ... our

attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction.

The US view of the USSR had been a generally negative one driven by the latter country's post-revolutionary exit from WW1 hostilities, and the ideological threat of communism. After the failed US and European interventions in the Russian Civil War on the side of the Mensheviks (Foglesong 1995); diplomatic relations between the US and USSR were not established until 1933. The rapid Soviet industrialization of the 1930s also turned it into a much stronger ideological competitor. Stalin's pact with Germany in 1939, together with the USSR's invasion of neighboring Finland, only added to the generally negative view of it held by the US. This was put aside with the German invasion of the USSR in mid 1941, although even after that time there was still much domestic opposition to sending aid to the USSR (Fischer 1950); the dread of a separate German-Soviet peace overrode ideological concerns. After being allies with the USSR during the war, the animus of the US returned with the end of hostilities and the Soviet bloc identified as an existential threat to US interests; a move partially triggered by the "loss" of China to its own communist revolution and the USSR's imposition of friendly regimes in Eastern Europe (as agreed at the Tehran meeting [Kitchen 1987, p. 427]).

He [Roosevelt] accepted Soviet demands for preponderance in the Baltic states and Poland, protesting only that he could not officially accept Soviet domination



over the latter for domestic political reasons. (Craig & Logevall 2009, Ch. 1, sub-sect. Distant Allies, para. 11)

A greater reason may have been the inability of Roosevelt to “duplicate with Moscow the relationship he sought with the British – that he could incorporate the Kremlin into a partnership dominated by the United States, not only during the war but after it” (Craig & Logevall 2009, Ch. 1, sub-sect. Stalin Recalcitrant, para. 1). At Bretton Woods the “U.S. negotiators conspicuously sought to secure the Soviet Union involvement, by offering it a vast postwar loan in exchange for its participation in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund” (Ibid., para. 4) to no avail. At the end of World War 2 the USSR was exhausted, having suffered over 25 million deaths (one in eight of the pre-war population) and countless other casualties fighting the vast majority of the German armed forces, and having had much of its physical infrastructure, agriculture and industry destroyed. Underlining the weakness of the Soviet position, the “USA’s Central Intelligence Agency carried out a study in 1946 which concluded that the shattered Soviet Union would not be in a position to wage a war for fifteen years” (Ibid., Ch. 1, para. 32). The same was true of a devastated China, after fighting the vast majority of the Japanese ground forces for a decade and then being devastated again in a brutal civil war. Although this meant that the US could operate with a relatively free hand in the rest of the world, it could not gain access for its internationalizing corporations to the Soviet bloc and China.

The US was now faced with both a Russia and a China that would not accept its hegemony, and therefore especially after the Russian production of its first nuclear bomb,

the communist Other had to be both created and contained. The well founded Russian fear of foreign aggression, based upon two incredibly destructive German invasions, the US and European interventions, the previous century's Crimean War and Napoleonic march on Moscow, was put down to the "Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs" by Kennan (1946); an understanding very different to the one taken by Roosevelt only a couple of years earlier (Craig & Logevall 2009).

there was a puzzling refusal to acknowledge the Soviet claim that two invasions by Germany in twenty-seven years made the control of Eastern Europe essential to Russian security. Truman insisted on seeing the Soviets as a determinedly expansionist enemy of the free world almost from the day he assumed office. (Alexander 2011, Ch. 1, para. 12)

An extensive discourse of Othering is evident in the Kennan *Long Telegram* (1946), that used descriptions of the Kremlin such as "oriental secretiveness and conspiracy", and "inaccessible to considerations of reality in its basic reactions" and "Impervious to logic of reason, and it is highly sensitive to logic of force" and stated that the USSR was committed to a belief that "the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed". Such nightmarish words could have been written about the US Amerindian populations during the time of another Terror Dream (Faludi 2007); those that would not accept the dominion of the The Shining City On The Hill would become a heathen Other and treated as a malevolent source of threat and terror. The Cold War fell into place, producing a discursal binary between the

communist East dominated by the USSR and a “free” West dominated by a benevolent US policeman. The opening up of Soviet archives after the collapse of the USSR has shown that that US military and intelligence entities consistently inflated the military strength of the USSR far above its realities, producing a menacing dark presence from a relatively weak defensive entity. Pressure from the domestic Red Scare, together with the start of the Korean War in 1950, helped the US “hawks” such as Nimitz to get President Truman to approve National Security Council (NSC) 68 – a document that greatly exaggerated the threat from the Soviet Union to justify large increases in US defense expenditures and an active policy of containment. President Truman went on television to tell the nation that “Our homes, our nation, all the things we believe in are in great danger ... this danger has been created by the rulers of the Soviet Union” (Truman quoted in Ritter 2020, p. 39). After the near mutual annihilation of the *Cuban Missile Crisis* of 1962, a more rational relationship was established with the Soviet Union – culminating in the period of *détente*. The Cold War permanent war economy, the MIC that Eisenhower warned Americans of in 1961 (US National Archives 2020), was unprecedented in peacetime (excepting the short-lived Hamiltonian version) and provided a new subset of the power elite (Mills 2000).

Within the US, corporate power remained preeminent but the legacy of the New Deal, together with the experience of successful wartime central planning and the scale of the citizenry’s patriotic exertions during WW2, led to the compact of Fordism; mass production, high wages for white males, mass consumption, and politically docile unions, with the latter even working with the CIA on covert foreign operations abroad (Wilford 2008). The second Red Scare (the first occurring after the Bolshevik revolution), through

such things as the infamous *McCarthy Hearings* (1954) and extensive investigations of government employees, significantly restricted what was deemed to be acceptable political beliefs – both in society in general and within the state apparatus (Finan 2007; Storrs 2013). There was also a coordinated effort by the CIA to directly manipulate the media, academia and citizen groups (Bernstein 1977; Saunders 2000; Wilford 2009). As shown by the *Church Committee* hearings of the mid 1970s, these efforts were paralleled with extensive covert FBI political activities, such as the *Counter Intelligence Program* (COINTELPRO) that was started in 1953, against those deemed to be too politically “radical” (US Senate Church Committee 1976/2009 & 1976/2010; Cunningham 2004; Weiner 2007; Blackstock 2020). Additionally, there was extensive propagandizing in support of the “free market system” by business interests, both within their own establishments and throughout society (Fones-Wolf 1995). In parallel, the US at least tacitly supported, and in the many cases actively participated in, the subjugation of progressive democratic movements in Central and Southern America. Within the latter, *coup d’etats* established dictatorships in many nations (Paraguay 1954, Brazil 1964, Bolivia 1971, Uruguay 1973, Chile 1973, Argentina 1976). This facilitated the cooperation between the US state and South American military intelligence agencies that grew into an *Operation Condor* that involved the extensive surveillance, torture and murder of progressive regime opponents in the name of “combating communism” (McSherry 2002, 2005 & 2019; Zanchetta 2016). A multinational COINTELPRO with no institutional limits on the actions of the security forces, many of the members of which were trained and armed by the US.

The post-war period has been dubbed *The Great Compression*, as income inequalities were significantly reduced; a process that lasted into the 1970s. The heavy regulation of the financial sector that stemmed from the Great Depression reduced economic volatility and *rentier* capitalism, the post-war labor-capital Fordist compact facilitated an extensive (white) middle class consumer economy, and highly progressive taxation rates were carried over from wartime. With even factory workers becoming “middle class”, mainstream sociology could envisage the *Embourgeoisement* of the working class. This was a period of a racially specific and partial *Embedded Liberalism* (Polanyi 1944; Ruggie 1982) at home (within strict limits set by an ever-present anti-communism and widespread state covert political actions) and between the Western nations, counterposed with Cold War conservatism with respect to the rest.

The war had led to the extensive funding of military-relevant scientific research, much of which could be commercialized to facilitate economic growth. In the post-war years a significant development state was “hidden” within the military, through such things as the *Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency* (DARPA), the *Controlled Thermonuclear Research Computing Center* (now known as the National Energy Research Scientific Computing Center – NERSC) and the *Lawrence Radiation Laboratory* (now known as the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the spin-off Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory). Together with other military research, the *North Aeronautics and Space Administration* (NASA) space program, and much increased research funding for the *National Institutes of Health* (NIH), this hidden development state was responsible for much of the US dominance in areas such as

computing, communications and pharmaceuticals (Mazzucato 2015). As Chang (2010, p. 55) notes:

Between the 1950s and the mid 1990s, US federal government funding accounted for 50-70% of the country's total R&D spending, which is far above the figure of around 20%, found in such 'government-led' countries as Japan and Korea.

Without federal government funding for R&D, the US would not have been able to maintain its technological lead over the rest of the world in key industries like computers, semiconductors, life sciences, the Internet and aerospace.

A new progressive era emerged in the 1960s, around such issues as African-American voting repression, women's rights, corporate malfeasance and environmental pollution. The *Voting Rights Act* of 1965, the 1960's *Great Society* extension of the welfare state, *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973, and the establishment of the *Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) in 1970 are some of the accomplishments of this era. The majority of these dealt with social issues and none directly challenged business dominance – paralleling the previous progressive era. Those that more directly challenged the fundamental status quo, such as the *Black Panthers*, the *Nation of Islam*, anti-war protestors and draft resisters such as Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King toward the end of his life, and student demonstrators in the early 1970s, were the subject of widespread state espionage, infiltration, propaganda, and violence (including the murder of Fred Hampton [Haas 2019]). With the implementation of the Great Society, together with spending related to the Vietnam War, government expenditure increased to

over 30% of GDP by 1970. It then continued to increase to over 40% by the mid-1980s (Mauro et al 2015).

Domestic politics became increasingly turbulent, driven heavily by racist violence, civil rights agitation, and then growing resistance to the war in Vietnam. The eight-year period from 1962 to 1970 was especially convulsive; the Cuban missile crisis, two Kennedys, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Fred Hampton assassinated, the violence of the voting rights campaigns, and the escalating protests against the Vietnam War culminating in the Kent State shooting of students in 1970. The next five years brought the US retreat from Vietnam, the US repudiation of fixed exchange rates, and the undermining of the *Keynesian Consensus* by a stagflation triggered by the first oil shock. State authority was further reduced by the indictment and resignation of a sitting US President, together with a series of congressional hearings into extensive CIA, NSA and FBI post-WW2 abuses that served to delegitimize major parts of a coercive state apparatus that had already been heavily undermined by the Vietnam debacle. The general feeling of decline continued as the government rescued Chrysler in the face of intensified European and Japanese trade competition, the US dollar became chronically weak, and the Iranian hostage crisis dragged embarrassingly on for 444 days. The nearly farcical US rescue attempt of the hostages in Iran, *Operation Eagle Claw*, of 1980 “was a disaster that ended with American deaths, ruined military planes, and the hostages no closer to freedom” (Kamarck 2019); in brutal contrast to the successful Israeli raid on Entebbe four years earlier. The Others of Vietnam and Iran had defeated, divided and bewildered the forces of the Shining City On A Hill; a city more perceived to be in sad decline than serving as a beacon for the “free world”.

The legitimacy of the US state was being assailed, from both within and without, and for the first time a major war had to be ended in the face of widespread popular opposition (together with extensive insubordination among enlisted military personnel in Vietnam). US corporations were also being delegitimized by their failures against foreign competition, together with the revelations of corporate misdeeds by consumer rights activists such as Nader (1965 & 1976) and environmental activists such as Carson (1962) (Vogel 1983). They were also being subject to greater levels of regulation, as with the new EPA and *Occupational Safety and Health Administration* (OSHA). In addition, early in the “1970s, antiwar activists pioneered a new kind of protest, one hinged on exposing the corporate role in the war” (Phillips-Fein 2009, Ch. 7, para. 4) and which transformed into a general opposition to the rule of “a violent minority” (Ibid., Ch 7., para. 5) establishment; “A study done by Oklahoma Christian University in 1973 found that undergraduates gave businessmen the lowest rankings for ethical standards (Ralph Nader was at the top). Half of all seniors identified themselves as leftists, compared to one third of all freshmen” (Ibid., Ch. 7, para. 7) and only a minority of the general public expressed confidence in business leaders. Calls for limits to economic growth (Meadows et al 1972) in the name of environmental sustainability also challenged the growth that supported corporate profits.

The student demonstrations of Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and Kent State, the bombs at the Bank of America, the accusations of Ralph Nader, the new government regulations, the sudden new working-class militancy, the activists invading corporate offices – all of it seemed a single continuum, one



discordant challenge rising against American businessmen. In 1972, *Business Week* reported on 'America's growing antibusiness mood'. (Ibid., Ch. 7, para. 9)

The geopolitical importance of oil had been underlined by the 1941 US oil embargo of Japan and the 1953 US and UK backed Iranian coup that overthrew an elected leader who threatened the control of Iranian oil production by those two nations. The dominance of the US oil majors over US energy policy was underlined by repeated anti-competitive measures taken by the US government to bolster domestic oil prices. In 1933 the government instigated production rationing to stop cheap oil from flooding the marketplace and in 1959 oil imports were restricted to a maximum of 9% of domestic demand to stop a plethora of new foreign production sources from crashing the domestic price of oil. The latter resulted in significantly higher oil prices within the US with respect to global oil prices, an explicit subsidy provided by US oil consumers to US oil producers. This was only removed in 1973 after the peak in 1970 of US oil production; a peak that occurred after a nearly continuous increase in US oil production that stretched back to the previous century. Climbing domestic demand then led to a rapidly growing trade deficit in oil products and the dependence of the US upon the *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries* (OPEC) oil cartel; a reality shown in the domestic oil shortages caused by the two Middle East driven oil shocks of 1973 and 1979. The oil trade deficit was thereafter reduced until the mid 1980s through price-induced US energy efficiencies and the stabilization of domestic oil production due to new finds in Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico.

In retrospect, the post-war “miracle” years can be seen as a period of exception in US history (Cowie 2016), with the lingering effects of the New Deal, wartime planning, popular expectations after wartime patriotic exertions and a Fordist economic structure facilitated by US post-war economic and military dominance. Another factor may also have been the need to maintain the myth of the Shining City On A Hill in ideological competition with the Communist Other. The confluence of military defeat, economic and political crisis and more radical domestic populism brought forth a coordinated response from the economic and political elites. The New Deal coalition had also been weakened through religious, cultural and racial cleavages opened up by the success of the new social movements, providing exploitable social and cultural divisions (Domhoff 2013); as was exploited with the Republican *Southern Strategy* (Lopez 2014; McAdam & Kloos 2014; Maxwell & Shields 2019). Much of the working class may have been economically leftist, but it was much more socially conservative than the left elites – a difference open to political exploitation. The increasingly non-Caucasian share of immigration, together with the civil-rights movements and residual racism, also provided avenues for scapegoating and “dog-whistle” political tactics. In addition, the ire of the progressives was heavily directed at the government, greatly reducing its legitimacy in the eyes of citizens.

This allowed for a coalition of elite interests with socially conservative citizens (including the highly religious), which served the economic interests of the former while pandering to the cultural conservatism of the latter (e.g. racism, homophobia, opposition to *Roe vs. Wade* and the feminist movement) and taking aim at “Big Government”. The “grand bargain” of white supremacy, buttressed by paternalism and evangelism, whereby

the southern white masses relinquished political power to the few in exchange for maintaining their social status as better than the black man” (Smith quoted in Maxwell & Shields 2019. p. 1), and now Latinos, together with the sanctity of the “traditional family” and “life”, had been rejected by a Democratic party that was shedding its interest in the economic welfare of the working class. In this way, a substantial share of the American populace was brought to vote against its own economic interests, with a *false consciousness* facilitated by such things as a *Prosperity Gospel* that conflates US capitalism and religion (Bowler 2013). This was also aided by the move away from criticisms of big business and the diminution of the influence of the unions within the Democratic party; the Republican party would now fill the role of protecting “mainstream” white “values”. A core part of this was a carefully constructed synonymy between “crime and blackness ... The point longtime aide John Ehrlichman explained, was to present a position on crime, education, or public housing in such a way that the voter could ‘avoid admitting to himself that that he was attracted by a racist appeal’” (Anderson, 2016, p. 104). The Nixon administration, together with a Supreme Court with four new conservative appointees, facilitated the ongoing segregation and unequal funding of the school system “by eviscerating the constitutional right of black children to an education and then some” (Ibid., p. 110). The Supreme Court then followed up later in the decade with the undermining of positive discrimination based on race for university admissions, while leaving discrimination based on alumni funding and connections in place.

From the late-1970s onwards the US economy and society was returned to the structure of the late nineteenth century, through waves of corporate consolidation,

financial deregulation, the restriction and outsourcing of government services, massively reduced taxation for the rich, and the destruction of much of the labor movement; facilitated by what constituted an elite funded and organized neoliberal counter-revolution (Harvey 2005; Phillips-Fein 2009; Hacker & Pierson 2010; MacLean 2017; Mayer 2017). The formation of the large-corporation dominated *Business Roundtable* in 1972, the *Lewis Powell Memorandum* (1971) to the *US Chambers of Commerce*, entitled “Attack On The American Free Enterprise System” and the “Crisis of Democracy” report (Crozier, Huntington & Watanuki 1975) for the recently established *Trilateral Commission* (founded by David Rockefeller) exemplified this period of economic elite coalition building. The elite reaction was able to build upon the work of some of its more radical elements who had opposed the New Deal through such things as the *American Liberty League* (1934: heavily supported by the Du Ponts), the American Enterprise Institute (1938: Eli Lilly, General Mills, Bristol-Myers, Chemical Bank, Chrysler, Paine Webber), the *Mount Pelerin Society* (1947), and over “the course of the 1950s, dozens of new organizations devoted to the defense of free enterprise and the struggle against labor unions and the welfare-state” (Phillips-Fein 2009, Ch. 3, para. 7). The discursal and ideological weaponry was greatly enhanced in the 1970s, through a new raft of elite-funded organizations, such as the *Heritage Foundation* and the *Cato Institute* (and its spin-off the *Ludwig von Mises Institute*). A more recent addition has been the highly influential *Center for American Progress* in 2003.

#### **4.1.4. From Morning In America To Making America Great Again (1979 to present)**

The election of Ronald Reagan, who had previously worked extensively in the post-war capitalism-promoting efforts of General Electric (and had also acted as an FBI

informant during the post-WW2 red scare [Rosenfeld 2012]), provided a President that actively supported the corporate and political elite pushback. “Reagan received what he called his ‘post-graduate education in political science’ while serving as General Electric’s ‘travelling ambassador’ under its vice president, Lemuel Boulware, a union buster extraordinaire” (Marcetic 2020, p. 45). Labor-power had already been weakened by a less union supportive *National Labor Relations Board* (NLRB), and anti-union decisions by both Republican and Democrat administrations during the 1970s (Domhoff 2013). The push for a government-financed universal healthcare system and a guaranteed minimum income for all had come to nothing with the defeat of Teddy Kennedy at the Democratic convention (Ward 2019). Labor-power was now greatly reduced by the firing of the striking air traffic controllers by the state (legitimizing the firing and replacement of striking workers), the high unemployment created by the Fed-induced *Volcker Shock* recession of the early 1980s (Greider 1987), and new employer-friendly interpretations of labor law. The Reagan (1980 – 1988) administrations also “ordered a scorched-earth policy through the Great Society from education, to housing, to employment [and] targeted very specifically those programs in which blacks were overrepresented even as he protected [programs such as] social security, where African Americans were but a small fraction of the recipients” (Anderson 2016, p. 119). Large-scale federal layoffs also disproportionately affected African Americans, and Reagan rendered the *Equal Employment Opportunities Commission* (EEOC) ineffective. The racialization of the *War on Drugs* (including the 100-1 difference in sentencing between crack cocaine and powdered cocaine in the *Anti-Drug Abuse Act* of 1986; in 1992, 91.4% of federal crack offenders were African American [Stolberg & Herndon 2019]), a problem at least

partially created by the administration's facilitation of *Contra* drug running, also led to a substantial undermining of the cohesion of African American neighborhoods.

This following decade brought two Democratic presidential terms which resulted in the *End of Welfare As We Know It* (Law 1997; Brown 2013), *three-strikes* laws, and the biggest crime bill in US history that had an over-weighted impact upon the African American community through both the massive reductions in the social safety net and a doubling in the level of incarceration from 1994 to 2009; amid a “highly racialized world of welfare politics” (Brown 2013, p. 584) and a dog whistle discourse of “welfare queens”, “predators” and “super predators” (Dyck & Hussey 2008; Brown 2013; Lopez 2014; Stolberg & Herndon 2019). “Clinton’s policies proved that he was no friend to poor black women” (Baldwin 2010, p. 9), nor poor black men, nor black children who “Clinton used racially coded rhetoric to cast ... as animals” (Alexander quoted in Robinson 2016, p. 20). He, and the *Corporate Democrats*, were also no friend of labor as they passed the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA), made the US a member of the new *World Trade Organization* (WTO), and provided China with *Permanent Normal Trade Relations* (PNTR); facilitating extensive corporate offshoring. In addition, “By the end of the twentieth century, the once vaunted Wagner Act had become worse than null and void – it had become, as David Brody put it, a ‘tool of management’” (Cowie 2016, p. 25).

The Clinton administration was a friend of finance though, ignoring the US\$500 billion bill for the extensive illegal looting of the *Savings & Loan* industry facilitated by the Reagan-era deregulation that was met with little or no punishment for the looters (Pizzo, Fricker & Muolo 2015) and the collapse of *Long Term Capital Management*, to

further deregulate the financial industry. It also ignored the head of the *Commodities Futures Trading Commissions* (CFTC) in refusing to regulate over the counter (OTC) derivatives generally and to treat credit derivatives as insurance instruments (which they are). At the end of the decade it also ignored the lessons of the Great Depression, removing the separation between commercial and retail banking, with the Treasury Secretary responsible for this regulation, previous co-chair of Goldman Sachs Robert Rubin, decamping to the biggest beneficiary Citigroup where he received over US\$100 million in compensation.

After stabilizing at about 23% in the late 1970s, US union density declined to the point in the 2010s where it was below the level prior to that of the passing of the Wagner Act (Cowie 2016, p. 11). Wealth and income inequality levels returned to those of the 1920s (Cowie 2016, p. 12) aided by an increasingly regressive tax structure (both technically and even more *de facto*), and the repeal of the New Deal financial regulatory environment. Reflecting and reinforcing the new power realities, the US Supreme Court issued rulings that equated money with protected free speech. After government spending fell somewhat during the 1990s, benefitting from the short-lived *Peace Dividend* and the *Dot.com Bubble* and restrictive fiscal policies, it rose back above 40% with the 2008 *Global Financial Crisis* (Mauro et al 2015). The *Christian Right* rose in power within the Republican party from the 1980s onward, with a hybrid mixture of religious fundamentalism, neoconservative foreign policy, and a gospel of wealth that supports free market fundamentalism; “Getting Christianity and elite economics together on the same page is useful in signaling that policies that serve the rich are simply articles of

faith, the dispute of which is akin to arguing with a literal interpretation of the Bible” (Parramore quoted in Maxwell & Shields 2019, p. 300-301).

One area not affected by reductions in state spending was that of the Hidden Development State (Block 2008) that benefitted corporate interests through providing the basic research that facilitated new product generation. The *Small Business Innovation Research* (SBIR) program was put in place in 1982 to provide federal state funding to small business research initiatives. A near tripling of funding to the NIH, together with the *Orphan Drugs Act* of 1983, greatly aided the dominance of the US pharmaceutical industry. The *National Nanotechnology Initiative*, started in 2003, brought much greater coordination for federal nanotechnology research. This state directed development ran counter to the prevailing discourse of market-fundamentalism, but reflected the reality of the need for federal funding for future-oriented basic research. The discourse of the entrepreneurial “risk taking” venture capital and high-tech industries had been built upon a substantial amount of myth. As Mazzucato notes, it is as much the risk taking of the entrepreneurial state that is responsible for successful technological development, “As has been the case in the development of other industries such as biotech and IT, private businesses have entered the game only after successful government initiatives absorb most of the uncertainty and not a little risk of developing new energy technologies in the first place” (Mazzucato 2015, p.127). The discourse of neoliberalism both “hides” this development state and endangers its future:

From the Internet to biotech and even shale gas, the US state has been the key driver of innovation-led growth – willing to invest in the most uncertain phase of



the innovation and let business hop on for the easier ride down the way. If the rest of the world wants to emulate the US model they should do as the United States actually did, not as it says it did: more State not less ... This is something that needs to be understood not just by the rest of the world, but in the United States itself, where the dominant political narrative is endangering funding for future innovation and economic growth. In 2013, US government spending for basic research fell below where it was a decade earlier. (Mazzucato 2015, p 1)

The discourse of “unleashing private entrepreneurial energies” was used to both greatly reduce state regulations and to greatly reduce levels of taxation – especially upon capital gains:

In the late 1970s capital gains taxes fell significantly following lobbying efforts on behalf of the US venture capital industry ... The lobbyists argued before the government that venture capitalists had funded both the Internet and the early semiconductor industry, and that without venture capitalists, innovation would not happen. The same actors that rode the wave of expensive State investments in what would later become the dot.com revolution successfully lobbied government to reduce their taxes. (Mazzucato 2015, p. 25)

Repeated reductions in corporate taxes and those on rich individuals, together with extensive use of tax havens and transfer pricing, significantly reduced the level of state funding provided by the economic elite. In contrast those elites benefitted from

many state policies, including repeated state bailouts for the financial sector. The removal of the New Deal financial regulatory framework, together with the legalization of share buy-backs and the failure to regulate the derivatives market, facilitated a vast expansion in the financial sector. This financialization of the economy precipitated both *extractive* and *rentier* forms of capitalism. Increasingly value was extracted from corporations and society by executive management and shareholders (including private equity), and through income sources based upon economic rents. With respect to private equity investment, which tends to greatly increase the debt level of corporations and extract value through large dividends and fees, “between 1985 and 2005, private equity funds experienced a compound annual growth rate of 18.5 per cent, and in the last few years, growth has been even more marked” (Froud & Williams 2007, p. 4). There has been a general tendency to see corporations as simply a set of cash flows that can be leveraged up (increased debt) to increase the returns to the equity holders. With respect to private equity, in many cases the initial investment is rapidly returned through large management fees and dividend payments, leaving only upside for the investors.

the extraction of value is pure financial engineering because the operating business acquires liabilities in the form of debt equal to the sum of cash taken out. But the cash goes into the hands of elite private equity providers and fund managers while the liabilities are passed onto the business ... This serves to normalize the pursuit of value through financial re-engineering as businesses become bundles of assets that can be sold, unbundled, sold again through several cycles of refinancing for value extraction. (Ibid., p. 12)

All of the downside risk is placed upon the employees and debt holders (and the state with respect to possible increases in social welfare payments and employee pension bailouts), with the corporation being placed into bankruptcy if unable to service its large debts.

the private equity business model concentrates equity ownership and fee income in a few hands so that a managerial elite can gain what the *Financial Times* have described as ‘life changing amounts of money’. (Ibid., p. 10)

In many cases US corporate expenditures on stock buy-backs, which are tax advantageous to investors as the additional income comes in the form of lower-taxed capital gains and executives who get to boost the value of their share options (which are not rebased to reflect the higher share prices created by the buy backs), exceed all R&D expenditures as well as increasing the corporation’s debt levels. The outcome of such value extraction may be a serious relative diminution in basic US technology innovation, “In the end, an increasingly timid (and sometimes austerity-driven) public sector and an increasingly financialized business sector will surely get us secular stagnation” (Mazzucato 2015, p. 15). With US economic power relying less and less on physical manufacturing, and more and more on the control of global value chains (GVCs) and intellectual property (Phillips 2017), this could be seriously detrimental in a geostrategic sense. At the international level, US corporations are relying more and more upon patent and copyright protections to both limit competition and to provide licensing revenue.

This has been aided by the WTO *Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights* (TRIPS) that became effective in 1995. This was the first time that intellectual property rights law was embedded in the international trading system, and it also changed the basis of patents from that of process (allowing other nations to “reverse engineer” patented products) to the product itself (Prashad 2014, p. 181). The US state has used extensive pressure to force other nations to integrate the WTO TRIPS into their laws and to accept the extended monopoly protection periods of US law. The rise of competitive patent-producing Chinese global corporations such as Huawei and the Made in China 2025 Chinese development plan, directly threaten the US dominance of GVCs.

Increases in corporate rents (and power) have been further aided from the late 1990s by an extensive level of US corporate consolidation driven by merger and acquisitions (M&A) facilitated by increasingly novel and flexible interpretations of anti-trust regulations; “one can make the case that merger reviews have become rather lax in the US” (Phillipon 2019, p. 90) with the number of US publicly listed companies per capita falling by more than half. An example of this lax regulation is that “the agency [US Federal Trade Commission] seems to have decided that five competitors are enough to ensure adequate competition in most markets” (Ibid., p. 91). In addition, there have been less new entries into concentrated markets, which may be significantly explained by hurdles erected by regulation and industry lobbying. Adding to the level of concentration has been the Pentagon’s move to a greatly reduced number of major military contractors, as well as the US *Federal Communications Commissions* (FCC) facilitation of extensive M&A that has resulted in six corporations that “Control 90% Of The Media In America ... from 50 companies back in 1983” (Lutz 2012). The supposed democratizing nature of

the Internet has been overcome, as with previous information revolutions, by the formation of “a highly centralized and integrated new industry” that has taken its place to “uphold the social structure that has been with us since the Industrial Revolution” (Wu 2010, intro. para. 11). The internet “doesn’t reverse the economic logic of concentration – it amplifies it” (Hindman 2009, p. 132) with the result that the “public sphere is already a de facto aristocracy” (Ibid., p. 139). Recent consolidations across Internet behemoths (e.g. Google buying Youtube; Facebook buying Instagram and WhatsApp) have added to the level of concentration. Within the financial industry, the removal of the *Glass Steagall* separation of investment and commercial banking, together with retraction of regulations against inter-state banking, has resulted in a multi-decadal merger wave. This was exacerbated by the consolidations carried out during the 2008 *Global Financial Crisis*, with the resulting handful of “Too Big To Fail” financial institutions, such as Wells Fargo and Bank of America, dominating the industry; in severe contrast to the 1930s policies that enforced the division of retail and commercial banking and led to the prosecution of a number of banking executives.

In the 1980s, as noted in chapter 2, the US led a stealth neoliberalisation of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. These institutions were utilized during the *Third World Debt Crisis* of the 1980s to force nations to implement policies that would both open up their economies to foreign TNCs, and to move much of the public sector into the market economy. In this way both an extensive expansion of capital (the *spatial fix* [Harvey 2001; Arrighi 2004]) and an intensive one through the commodification of social services, utilities, health and education were facilitated. The blockage of the option of debt default that had been successfully utilized by many nations in the 1930s greatly

benefitted US and other Western (and local elite) creditors, while creating a “Lost Decade” for much of Latin America and Africa. The commodification of government services has been brought home, with extensive privatization of US government services – including significant functions of the US military, privately-run charter schools and educational testing.

US economic growth was aided by the ongoing fall in oil prices from 1980 until 2000, which acted to both increase real incomes and to lend support to the US car industry by supporting demand for less fuel efficient and much more profitable large vehicles; the minivan and sport utility vehicle came to provide the bulk of US automobile industry’s profits. Starting in the late 1990s there was also a slew of mergers and acquisitions between the large oil corporations, resulting in the “super-majors” such as Exxon Mobil. Domestic legislation required the increasing use of biofuels mixed with gasoline (predominantly corn-based ethanol), with about 10% of US fuel being composed of ethanol by the late 2010s. Although seeming to reduce oil import dependency and GHG emissions, the overwhelming evidence is that corn-based ethanol at best marginally contains more energy than is used to produce it – with a significant amount of that energy being diesel fuel - and creates only marginally less GHGs than oil production. Resultantly, the legislation has been seen as more a forced consumer subsidy to large corporate agriculture than providing increased energy security and reduced GHG emissions.

The *Vietnam Syndrome* (Summer Jr. 1992; Bagdikian 1993) was seen as limiting large-scale military operations, compounded by the mass casualties produced by the bombing of the marine barracks in Beirut in 1983; in this context the highly secretive and

illegal *Contra* operations against Nicaragua can be understood (Rubenberg 1988). When faced with a lack of public support, even in Congress, the executive branch utilized illegal and covert actions, rather than accept limitations upon its actions. Robinson proposes that the overthrow of Antonio Somoza in Nicaragua, together with other populist revolutions in a number of other US authoritarian allies, oriented US tactics toward “democracy promotion” [sic] as a way to “manage political change in order to preempt more fundamental social change ...” emphasizing “the penetration of civil society itself in order to secure social control and limit control from therein” (Robinson 2007, pp. 32-33). In 1983 the *National Endowment for Democracy* (NED) was formed as a conduit for such efforts and “went on to provide aid to pro-US democratic forces in the Philippines in 1986 and in Chile from 1984–1990, contributing to nonrevolutionary regime transitions [and] broadened its mission beyond the non-Communist Third World to include aid to friendly democratic movements in Poland and Nicaragua” (Pee 2017, p. 707). This did not constitute a change in strategy, but rather a change in tactics within the same Open Door strategy; as noted by the man who helped draft the NED legislation “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA” (Allan Weinstein quoted by Engdahl 2015, chapter 2, sub-sect. US-Sponsored NGOs, para. 6).

After the rekindling of the Cold War in the 1980s, the collapse of the USSR removed the core Other (the “Evil Empire”) while enabling the inclusion of the ex-Soviet bloc (and a liberalizing China) within the neoLIO. The collapse of the ideological alternatives created a discursive closure at home, while also providing a much greater freedom of action for the US. Perhaps even more than in the immediate post-WW2 period, the US (aided when possible by other parts of the West) found itself in a highly

permissive position relative to the international system, allowing it to seemingly remake the world at will to its benefit; the natural conclusion to its multi-century efforts to defeat the recalcitrant Other. The escalating level of foreign oil dependence from this time onwards also created an increased need to maintain the stability of foreign oil providers. Instead of a peace dividend being provided through a reduction in defense spending, the MIC was reoriented toward a role of global dominance.

These drivers can be seen in the facilitation of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the support of shock therapy in the ex-Soviet bloc, funding and support for “color” revolutions, support for EU/NATO membership for the Eastern European and Baltic States (in contravention of explicit guarantees given to the USSR leadership [Majumdar 2017]), the removal of Iraq from Kuwait, the actions of the IMF and World Bank during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, and the inclusion of China within the WTO. The first US-Iraq war was also celebrated as removing the Vietnam Syndrome of domestic resistance to large-scale US foreign intervention (Summers Jr. 1992); a removal aided by US-Kuwaiti elite propaganda collaborations such as the infamous *Baby Incubator Hoax* congressional testimony by the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US Senate masquerading behind a hidden identity and aided by extensive coaching from the US public relations firm Hill & Knowlton (Stauber 1995; Knightley 2001; MacArthur 2004); an early example of the western interventionist human rights discourse (and reminiscent of British WW1 propaganda about German soldiers bayonetting babies).

The GWOT then facilitated an escalation of Middle East interventionism with the invasion and occupation of firstly Afghanistan and then Iraq. The rapid rise in oil prices from 2000 onwards, together with rapidly increasing US oil imports and fears over *Peak*



*Oil* raised the visibility of the control over global oil supplies within US strategic policy circles. This led to the alleged *Seven Nations in Five Years* plan of the Bush administration (Burke 2007), and has been seen as a major determinant of the US invasion of Iraq; a nation belligerent toward *Al Qaeda* (in contrast to US claims) and lacking the consciously fabricated *Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Leopold 2015). The GWOT, together with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, provided permanent US military bases across the Middle East, while aiding in the construction of the Muslim Other. It also, as with both WW1 and the Quasi-War with France, facilitated the passing of politically repressive legislation (e.g. the *Patriot Act* and *Homeland Security Act*) and extensive domestic spying (Angwin et al 2015), together with providing extensive profit-making opportunities (aided by the privatization of military and homeland security functions), and indirectly, furthering neoliberal ideological dominance.

The ‘war on terrorism’ provided a seemingly endless military outlet for supplier capital, generated a colossal deficit that justified deeper dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state, locking neoliberal austerity in place, and legitimated the creation of a police state to repress political dissent in the name of security.

(Robinson 2018, Ch. 5, para. 44).

From a purely realist perspective many of the US actions would seem not to make sense, for example the aggressive march of NATO toward Russia’s borders, as they needlessly increased the risks of conflict between nuclear-armed adversaries. When a critical lens is added, including an understanding of the dominance of TNC capital within

US foreign policy, rational motives become more evident. NATO and EU membership both fully integrate the ex-Soviet bloc states into the neoLIO and recreate the policy of Cold War containment with respect to an independent Russia; that nation may not be the ideological competitor that the USSR was, but after the turn of the century it has become much more nationalistic and resistant to Western dominance. China represented a colossal new profit-making opportunity for the TNCs; together with the ex-Soviet bloc it provided the spatial fix *par excellence* for TNC capital. This entailed:

a geographical restructuring of capitalist activity (deindustrialization here and reindustrialization there, for example) across the face of planet earth, the production of new forms of uneven geographical development, a recalibration and even re-centering of global power (with far greater emphasis upon the Pacific and newly industrializing countries) and a shift in the geographical scale at which capitalism is organized (symbolized by the growth of supra-state organizational forms such as the European Union and a more prominent role for institutions of global governance such as the WTO, the IMF, the G8, the UN and the like).

Contemporary globalization has been, we can argue, the product of these specific geographically grounded processes. (Harvey 2001, p. 24).

These geographically grounded processes may have been facilitated by relatively inanimate factors such as new communications and transport technologies, but were also driven by the very animate and conscious actions of TNCs and the US foreign policy and military establishments (generally supported by their Western counterparts). For

approximately two decades, the US elites had an unparalleled ability, and opportunity, to remake the world to their liking; as noted above possibly greater than during the immediate post-WW2 period. Without the need to build a positive buttress to an ideological competitor, and the legacy of the New Deal, the reaction was much more shock therapy and aggression than Marshall Plan. It was also one of hubris in much of the US policy-making and military establishments:

we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us. (US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright interviewed on the *Today* show [Albright 1998])

full spectrum dominance – the ability of US forces, operating unilaterally or in combination with multinational and interagency partners, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the full range of military operations. (US National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies 2000, p. 61)

We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do. (a senior advisor to President G.W. Bush, which the article's author identified as Karl Rove, quoted in Suskind 2004)

We came, we saw, he died. (US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, referring to the torture and murder of Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan head of state [CBS 2011])

As Cohen (2001; 2019) notes, the inability of the US to engage with Russia in a more supportive and respectful way may be seen as a major foreign policy blunder. The aggressive US reaction to Russia's renewed nationalism has created a powerful coalition between Russia and China, on the basis of "my enemy's enemy is my friend". Instead of dividing and conquering, the US has united its opponents. Given the significant synergies that exist between China and Russia, together with the economic weakness of the latter, such strategic blindness can only be seen as a symptom of the hubris noted above and anger at the "loss" of Russia. The active US support for the coup against the elected President of the Ukraine, and then the resulting anti-Russian administration (including the deployment of NATO troops to the country), has only served to drive Russia closer to China.

After the mass domestic resistance to the Vietnam War, the freedom of action of US foreign policy with respect to domestic opinion was greatly increased by a number of factors. The US military have relied upon a voluntary membership, rather than one based upon a conscription army that would spread the experiences of the nation's wars across the citizenry, "The Nixon Administration was very clear on that point: to give yourself a *chance* of fighting a lengthy limited war, you must get away from conscripts" (Hoffman et al 1981, p. 8). In more recent years the large-scale use of private armed mercenaries and the extensive outsourcing of administration and support tasks previously performed

by military personnel has served to reduce the “official” casualties, as the outsourced personnel tend to die much less publicly.

Too many soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines dying ... would draw unnecessary attention ... Mercenaries die in warzones. They absorb deaths that would otherwise bloody the military ranks. This allows the War Department [sic] and Capitol Hill to cite low casualty figures ... Additionally, using mercenaries keeps conscription off the table. Conscription would expand the burden of war into the upper-middle and upper classes of society, dragging in the sons and daughters of the ruling elite. (Sorensen 2020, p. 20)

In addition, media access to war zones has been greatly restricted, with “embedded” journalists becoming the norm, and independent (of the US state) journalists treated as an opposition rather than as part of the free press (MacArthur 2004), and extensive cooptation of media organizations has taken place (Taylor 1992; Bagdikian 1993; Isikoff & Corn 2006; Brewer 2009). Instead of having to “keep transmission equipment out” (Hoffman et al 1981, p. 8), the US state and a compliant media have become proficient at managing the media messages emanating from conflict zones.

Kreps (2018) also notes the move away from war taxes and war bonds, that produce a directly identifiable financial impact to the citizenry, to war funding through a general increase in state indebtedness. As with the lack of a military draft, this helps remove the impact of wars away from the consciousness of the general citizenry; the \$6.4 trillion costs of the post-911 wars (The Watson Institute 2019) have been added to the US

state debt with no immediate financial impact upon the general populace. Foreign interventions have also been restructured in ways that reduce US casualties and increase secrecy, though the extensive use of air power, drones, covert special operations, proxy armies, covertly supported “color revolutions”, and economic and financial sanctions. The reaction of the majority of US citizens to the 2018 deaths of US troops in Niger was one of surprise that US troops were even in Niger; a measure of the ability of the US state to successfully utilize such covert operations with limited or no external oversight (Cooper, Gibbens-Neff & Schmitt 2018).

In 2010, Karen DeYoung and Greg Jaffe of the *Washington Post* reported that the U.S. Special Operations Forces were deployed in 75 countries ... By the end of 2011, U.S. Special Operations Command spokesman Colonel Nye told me, that number would reach 120. (Turse 2012, p. 12)

As of 2020, there are only 195 countries in the world. A lesson initially learnt from Nicaragua at the turn of the century, then relearnt from Vietnam that had to be painfully relearnt again from Iraq and Afghanistan was that:

Nothing is more destructive of army morale than being in a situation in which it is nearly impossible to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys; in which one does not know whether the terrain on which one fights is yours or theirs.

(Hoffman et al 1981, p. 10)

Sorenson (2020) proposes that the balance of power within the Military Industrial Complex (MIC) has become *corporatized*, that the profit-maximizing private defense industry corporations – a “war industry” - have become the predominant power within it. He identifies a highly effective five-step strategy to capture government:

1. Pull retiring military officers into war corporations.
2. Stack the deck by placing ex-industry officials in the Pentagon leadership.
3. Finance congressional campaigns.
4. Lobby creatively.
5. Fund think tanks and corporate media. (Ibid., p. 68)

U.S. foreign policy then becomes heavily affected by the profitability requirements of the defense industry corporations – peace is very bad for profits. This extensive capture of government by private interests greatly restricts the set of foreign policy alternatives deemed to be “politically acceptable” – especially with many corporations and industry bodies funding both Democratic and Republican politicians. Hillary Clinton may call for a redirection of defense spending to rebuild the industrial policy hidden within the MIC (Clinton 2020), but the willingness of the major defense corporations to give up their massively profitable military contracts may severely limit the ability to significantly implement such a change. No-bid service contracts and overly-complex “cost plus” military hardware specified by captured buyers are just so much more profitable than producing batteries, wind turbines and smart electricity grids in a competitive market place.

The consolidation of the media into large TNC enterprises has also greatly reduced the scope for a diversity of domestic discourses. The lack of impact of revelations of executive branch misrepresentations with respect to the war in Afghanistan (Chotiner 2019), extensive torture programs (US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence 2014) and large-scale domestic surveillance (McCoy 2013) highlight this discursal closure. The partnership between Facebook and the TNC-dominated Atlantic Council (Vanian 2018), and changes to Google algorithms that downgraded respected non-mainstream media sources (Pop 2017), all point to reductions in non-elite entities' ability to engage in the national political discourse. The concept of *Humanitarian Intervention* has also been used as a domestic legitimizer of intervention (e.g. Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya), together with extensive media manipulation (MacArthur 2004; Rampton & Stauber 2006), and a jingoistic nationalism added after 9/11. Taken together, and with a bipartisan political party consensus for foreign interventions, the result is little if any domestic constraint upon US foreign policy – short of a long-lasting major war requiring conscription.

The recent case of the *Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons* (OPCW) whistleblowers that have exposed serious concerns of political bias and malpractice with respect to the investigation of the Douma, Syria “gas attack” is highly instructive. The numerous whistleblowers call into question the OPCW’s official findings that a gas attack even happened; findings that were used as a *casus belli* by the US, resulting in a cruise missile attack upon Syria (Hitchens 2019). The very limited and generally dismissive coverage of the mainstream media with respect to these whistleblower testimonies given what would appear to be their high “newsworthiness” is



instructive of the level of discursual discipline followed by the media (Mate 2020); a discipline that led to the resignation of a *Newsweek* journalist due to the refusal to print his story on the OPCW whistle-blower revelations (Haddad 2019; MacLeod 2019). The only coverage dealing fully with the details exposed by the whistleblowers has been through alternative media sites such as the *Gray Zone* (Mate 2019 & 2019a).

Technological breakthroughs that allowed for the exploitation of shale oil and gas, supported over an extended period by the US development state, have completely changed the energy security position of the US within a decade. From being heavily dependent upon oil imports in 2010, the US has become nearly self-sufficient in oil products and has become a net exporter of natural gas. Together with the increase in Canadian Tar Sands production, which relied upon the patient support of the Canadian development state, this has created a surplus within the global oil market. This surplus has allowed the US to place extensive economic and financial sanctions upon oil producing nations that have not fully integrated with the neoLIO, specifically Iran and Venezuela, without creating substantial and damaging increases in oil prices. The US has also placed such sanctions, but not explicitly restricting fossil fuel exports, upon Russia. The belated attempts to stop the *Nordstream 2* gas pipeline between Russia and Germany are an escalation in this respect (Jacobs, Wadhams & Paulsson 2019); as well as the stated “security” concerns, the new competition between the US and Russia for European gas imports may also be a factor.

Unlike the consistent multi-decadal support for the innovations that allowed for the exploitation of shale oil and gas, state development support for renewable energy has been limited and inconsistent; suffering from its alignment with the politically-contested

concept of climate change (in the US) and lack of political power with respect to the fossil fuel industries. The promising *Wind Energy Systems Act* of 1980 was quickly reversed by the Reagan administration, with federal R&D funding falling to minimal levels by 1988 (Jones & Bouamane 2011). The lead was taken by Denmark and Germany. Later, extensive Chinese government support allowed China to develop a large wind energy industry. With respect to solar, “In 1986 President Reagan removed even the solar panels which President Carter had installed on the White House” (Ibid., p. 25). During the 2010s global crisis of over-capacity in solar photovoltaic (PV) manufacturing the Chinese state continued to provide significant ongoing support to its manufacturers, in contrast to the much more limited US state approach (Fialka 2016); resulting in global dominance by the Chinese manufacturers. The only major US electric vehicle manufacturer, Tesla, has been heavily dependent upon early-stage federal loans, consumer subsidies for EV purchases (an increase in the number of vehicles covered by US federal subsidies was vetoed by the US President in late 2019), and its ability to realize significant revenues from the sale of excess EV credits to other manufacturers. State supportive policies have been seriously constrained due to a combination of the dominant market-fundamentalist discourse and oppositional fossil fuel interests that have been able to discursively and politically restrict any attempts at policies related to climate change. This has involved the lack of ratification of both the Kyoto protocol and the rejection of the Paris Accord by President Trump (recently reversed by President Biden). This failure of state development policy, across both Democrat and Republican administrations, has placed the US at a significant disadvantage with respect to the green technologies that may represent a major basis of future economic growth and geopolitical

power (International Renewable Energy Agency [IRENA] 2019). The political dominance of fossil fuel interests with respect to energy policy is underlined by an Obama administration that oversaw a massive expansion of shale oil and gas production; an expansion that President Obama was happy to celebrate as an achievement of his administration (Meacham 2018).

The acceptance of miscalculation through cognitive misinterpretations within neoclassical realism shows its utility with respect to the present-day US. At the very zenith of its global power, the US made fundamental foreign policy errors. The assumption that the fall of the Soviet Union produced an “end of history”, in which the global acceptance of American-style democratic-capitalism was inevitable, fulfilled the creation myth of the Shining City On A Hill bringing civilization to the whole world and acting as the Global Policeman. Such a belief led firstly to the provision of US permanent normal trade relations and then WTO membership, to a highly non-liberal China. The massive profit-making opportunities available to US TNCs through the US-China wage-arbitrage may also have been a significant factor in these decisions. This allowed the Chinese CCP dominated economy to enter a period of rapid exponential growth during the next decade. At the same time, as Cohen notes, the plundering and arrogant treatment of Russia created a nationalist backlash led by Putin. The inability of the US to accept Russia as an independent power, with its own sphere of influence, then turned it into an opponent and natural ally of China.

Instead of leveraging the huge amount of global goodwill that stemmed from the 9/11 attacks, the hubristic and aggressive way in which the US responded alienated many. The invasion and occupation of both Afghanistan and Iraq went against the lessons

taken to heart in the inter-war period and learnt again in Vietnam. The extensive focus on the GWOT, together with the problems created by the two occupations, allowed for little geopolitical focus on Russia and China. The growth of the latter not only strengthened a possible opponent, but also weakened the US through extensive deindustrialization. The perceived (by Russia and China) misuse of a UN mandate in Libya, together with the US support for the Ukrainian coup, then helped solidify the budding alliance between Russia and China. The destruction of the Middle East power-balance through the invasion of Iraq has also increased the local position of Iran, including with the majority-Shia Iraq. The at least tacitly sponsored by the US destabilization of Syria has also provided much greater influence for both Iran and Russia within that country.

With respect to South America, the United States has recognized and actively supported highly questionable changes in government in countries such as Brazil (with the removal of the serving President and a leading candidate jailed under highly questionable circumstances) and Bolivia (with the unsupported assertion of “electoral irregularities” by the OAS [Chang et al 2019]) as part of a general reversal of the South American *Pink Tide* (Encarnacion 2018). This may at least partly be seen as a reassertion of US dominance over the Western Hemisphere in the face of the Chinese challenge.

#### **4.1.5. Current Domestic Energy Consumption**

US domestic primary energy consumption is predominantly provided by oil and natural gas, with the balance provided by coal, nuclear, hydro, and a very small share of new renewables (predominantly wind and solar). US energy intensity increased in 2018, after four years of improvements (BP 2019a); this increased energy usage was predominantly supplied by natural gas and oil. Coal consumption fell, as natural gas and

new renewables consumption increased. The new renewables have been provided with limited government support, but their capacity growth rate has decelerated while their share of primary energy consumption is only 4.5%. The political strength of fossil fuel interests in the US still represents a significant bar to an energy transition, as shown by the lukewarm climate change and energy transition policies of the Obama administration and the outright repudiation of such policies by the Trump administration.

**Table 4 1: US Primary Energy Consumption**

|                                   | Mtoe<br>Mill. Tons Oil Equiv. | 2007-18<br>Growth | 2018<br>Growth | 2018<br>Share |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Primary Energy Consumption</b> | <b>2,301</b>                  | <b>-0.4%</b>      | <b>3.5%</b>    | <b>100%</b>   |
| - Oil                             | 920                           | -0.6%             | 2%             | 40%           |
| - Natural Gas                     | 703                           | 1.7%              | 10.5%          | 31%           |
| - Coal                            | 317                           | -4.9%             | -4.3%          | 14%           |
| - Nuclear                         | 192                           | 0%                | 0.3%           | 8.4%          |
| - Hydro                           | 65                            | 2%                | -2.7%          | 2.8%          |
| - Wind, Solar, Biomass, Geo       | 104                           | 14%               | 10%            | 4.5%          |

Data from BP 2020 Statistical Review and IRENA Renewable Energy Statistics 2019

## 4.2. Current Strategic Culture & International Political Economy

The US state/society complex has been dominated by elite business and financial interests since its independence, and prior to that within the predecessor British colonies; especially within the central and southern colonies. The period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s, when there was somewhat of a compromise between the elites and the rest, was an exception to the general rule of US history. In the past four decades political power, together with wealth and income, has been re-concentrated to the level of the late nineteenth century *Gilded Age*. This has been underlined by the multi-trillion-dollar rescue packages for the financial system and large corporations in response to both the

2008 GFC and the most-recent COVID-19 crisis. In contrast, monies allocated to the rest of society, including small businesses, have been both small and grudgingly provided; for example, the lack of aid for defaulting homeowners after the 2008 GFC and the resistance to providing direct financial aid to individuals during the COVID-19 crisis. This “socialism for the rich, free markets for the rest” was also shown in previous state rescues of the financial system (1982 *Mexican Peso Crisis*, late 1980’s Savings & Loan Crisis), but the level of state favoritism to elite sectors has intensified over time.

Another confirmation is the resistance shown by both mainstream political parties to the provision of the type of socialized healthcare (“Medicare for All”) provided in other Western nations, something repeatedly shown to be supported by a majority of the population, in contrast to the ease with which increased military spending, business bailouts and subsidies, and repeated elite tax cuts have been passed. The nearly complete lack of state action against monopolistic and monopsonistic business practices both underlines elite dominance and serves to intensify that dominance; as does the repeated refusals of the Democratic Clinton and Obama administrations to support legislation that would improve the position of unions. This Democratic Party indifference is in contrast to an Economic Policy Institute article that points out a “huge unmet demand for collective bargaining”, as a result of workers having been “systematically disempowered as a result of corporate practices and economic policies that were adopted – or reforms that were blocked – at the behest of business and the wealthy” (Mishel 2020).

The case of the investment bank Goldman Sachs is illustrative of the elite domination and corruption of the Federal Government. Facing illiquidity and insolvency in 2008 it was provided with a commercial banking license so that it had direct access to

Federal Reserve financing, and was made solvent through the state-approved full payment of US\$12.9 billion on derivative contracts by the state-rescued American International Group's that would have been nearly worthless otherwise (Rush 2011). Goldman Sachs was also allowed to hide its losses in a "missing month" by switching its fiscal years (Norris 2009), allowing for reported profits and large executive bonuses in the next fiscal quarter. No such largesse was shown to the many that lost their jobs and houses in the ensuing deep recession by the ex-Goldman Sachs CEO (a role that he had only relinquished in 2006) who served as the Treasury Secretary. At the same time, instead of the already highly concentrated banking industry that had facilitated the crisis being broken up into much smaller entities, further consolidation was facilitated with government funds and guarantees. There would be nothing like the *Pecora Commission* (Perino 2010) and fundamental industry re-regulation of the 1930s; nor any individual prosecutions for what appeared to be widespread control fraud (Marrs & Ferguson 2010; Pontell, Black & Geis 2014; Cohan 2015). The massive scale of the fiscal and monetary largesse to the financial and corporate sectors was not fully disclosed until a Freedom of Information lawsuit from the Bloomberg news organization forced disclosure by the Federal Reserve a few years later (Bloomberg 2011).

Such economic elite dominance of government is described by Wolin (2008) as *Inverted Totalitarianism*; a political sphere subservient to the economic. To all intents and purposes a single business party, masquerading as a duopoly (Democratic and Republican parties), dominates the US political system; the substantial policy differences between the two parties are minimal and focused within the area of *culture* (e.g. *Roe vs. Wade*, sexual and racial discrimination, "political correctness" etc.) rather than *political*

*economy*. In 1964 Julius Nyerere, the President of Tanzania, captured this dynamic well when he stated, “The United States is also a one-party state, but with typical American extravagance, they have two of them” (quoted in Sharlet 2008, p. 384).

The extensive Democratic party machinations in both 2016 and 2020, aided by allied “liberal” media organizations, to defeat the *economically progressive* Bernie Saunders campaigns for the Party’s presidential nomination are evident of the political alignment of the Democratic party’s leadership. The two parties may represent slightly different combinations of economic elite factions (although many large political donors provide support to both parties), such as transnational and domestic groups, but this does not alter the overall ascendancy of economic elite interests. The lack of any real choice within the political system, and the prior destruction of the private sector unions, together with a highly concentrated and co-opted media, serves to demobilize the population (in contrast to the popular mobilization of a classical totalitarian state). The elite antagonism shown toward public sector unions (the last redoubt of concentrated labor power) and state support for the average citizen (e.g. *Medicare* and *Social Security*) is indicative of a continued drive to return US society to the realities of the late nineteenth century. Elite economic interests, to a level exceptional among Western nations, dominate the US state/society complex:

In modern America, concentrated wealth controls politics and government, leading even the extremely conservative Senator John McCain to remark that “both parties conspire to stay in office by selling the country to the highest bidder.” The American nation with its incredibly powerful chief executive,



gargantuan military, repeated interventions in the affairs of foreign states, and political system in the thrall of great wealth, this is the very world that [Thomas] Jefferson abhorred. (Ferling 2013, p. 497)

Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) and Layne (2017) detail the continuity of US TNC domination of the strategic planning apparatus and foreign policy elite. The TNC leadership, their think-tank networks, foundations, and lobbyist organizations are significantly merged with the strategic planning process; to view them as separate entities is both ontologically and epistemologically misleading, “the foreign policy establishment is a subset of the corporate and financial elite (the ‘one percent’)” (Ibid., p. 264). The myriad of connections between the defense bureaucracies and the oligopolistic defense industries within the MIC (itself significantly expanded through increased defense spending and privatization) only adds to the level of merger. This leads to a strategic culture that has had a consistent worldview since at least the early 1940s, after the fall of France to Nazi Germany, when the possibility and the benefits of US global dominance became evident (Wertheim 2020).

This is based on: American primacy (“American leadership”), the imperative of national security. Liberal ideology – perhaps most importantly – the economic Open Door. From 1945 until today, the foreign policy establishment has aspired “quite simply to the moral and political leadership of the world” (Hodgson 1973, 10-11). (Layne 2017, p. 263).

This was a leadership gained through US economic, political, cultural and military (both overt and covert) dominance; a worldview seemingly triumphant with the fall of the Soviet bloc and the liberalization of China – only for triumph to be seemingly snatched away.

Up until the 1970s US elite interests and the *raison d'état* were generally aligned, a strong nation as the underlying base for expansion and dominance; what was “good for GM” could be said to be “good for America”. In the post-WW2 period, the seemingly idyllic lifestyles of the American white population and the nation’s industrial and scientific leadership were important in the establishment of US hegemony over the neoLIO. With the move toward increased globalization at the turn of the century, together with the remaking of domestic political-economic relations from the 1970s, US elite interests and the *raison d'état* started to become less aligned. The increasingly extractive relationship of the elite to the nation (Lazonick & Shin 2020), together with the profit-driven movement of economic activities to China and other nations, reduced relative national capabilities and increased those of geopolitical competitors. The increasing destruction and precarity of what used to be called the “US middle class” also reduced the strength of the US “brand” required for hegemonic leadership. The extreme state ineptitude and elite favoritism of the response to COVID-19, on both sides of the political aisle, has only added to the tarnishing of this brand image. A major conundrum for US elites, which has not found its way into mainstream discourse, is that its increasingly extractive relationship to the nation serves to reduce the geopolitical strength that the US transnational elites are reliant upon – a situation reminiscent of the British elite’s lack of

interest in protecting and developing critical industrial sectors in the first half of the twentieth century (Barnett 1972, 2014).

The foreign policy establishment itself maintains the continuity of the strategic culture through the ways in which new entrants are recruited, the socialization process of those recruits at all elite educational levels, and the career limiting nature of dissent with respect to the consensus of “the cardinal points of US grand strategy [which] are pretty much set in concrete” (Layne 2017, p. 265). The instrumentality of these cardinal points with respect to the dominance and profits of US TNCs provide their material support.

The core components of the policy establishment’s world view are: the primacy of national security, the imperative of American leadership, the importance of the open international system, and the need to export America’s liberal political ideas. (Ibid., p. 267).

Parmar and Ledwidge capture the effectiveness of the integration of chosen racialized individuals into US elite beliefs and behaviors with respect to a President Obama who they propose represents a “‘Wasp-ified’ black elite, assimilated into the extant structures of power that remain wedded to a more secular, non-biologically racial, version of Anglo-Saxonism or, more broadly, *liberal internationalism*” (2017, p. 374). They argue that Obama is “a *part* of that establishment and shares its elitist, secularized religio-racial-in-origin mindsets ... the power of Establishment socialization and cooptational processes is fundamental” (Ibid., p. 377); other exceptional examples would be Susan Rice, Condoleeza Rice and Kamala Harris. The “establishment is open to the

most talented minorities – exhibiting a formal commitment to a superficial but important *visible* ‘diversity’ – who share, or *can learn to share*, their mindsets” (Ibid., p. 377); a diversity of identities but not a diversity of worldviews. The very efficiency of the co-optation of racialized and female individuals into elite policy circles, and the cultural disciplining of those circles, may produce a longer-term failure – a group cognitive inflexibility with respect to changing international realities, as noted by Layne (2017).

There is no strategic policy elite problematization of a continued framing of the US as both The Shining City On A Hill, munificently providing the benefits of its exceptionalism and leadership to the rest of the world and as The Indispensable Nation always faced with a new Frontier of external threats to be subjugated for the common good; “Even during the triumphalist interlude of the 1990s, the foreign policy establishment warned (in the words of President George H. Bush) that America’s security now was imperiled by amorphous forces of ‘uncertainty, instability, and danger’” (Ibid.). The GWOT provided a new Terror Dream inhabited by unknowable, unpredictable, amorphous forces that were “out there” in the “borderlands” while also “among us”. The threats of “non-liberal” and unsubordinated Russia and China have now created additional Others that threaten “our way of life”, and therefore need to be met with a reinvigorated US focus on global primacy. Their very existence in a form not acceptable to the US is seen as an existential threat. At the same time, US economic and financial elites do not accept that they must contribute toward this reinvigoration of the US as a nation – quite the contrary as they look for yet more tax cuts, less state support for the average citizen, continued maximization of short term profits, and even greater state

subsidization; “In the United States, economically and politically, predatory value extraction has trumped sustainable prosperity” (Lazonick & Shin 2020, p. 239).

The prior weakening of US national strengths, together with the lack of the readiness of the elites to commit to a domestic regeneration, produces a reliance upon external actions designed to retard the development of Russia, and especially China. The actions taken to damage some of the leading Chinese TNCs and limit the ability of Russia to monetize its fossil fuel deposits, represent such actions. With an inability to move away from a policy of global primacy, an escalating use of such external actions would be expected; with the possibility of military conflict increasing.

A move away from the policy of primacy, and perhaps a move to the offshore balancing proposed by Layne (1997 and 2017) and other realist scholars would represent a fundamental turn in the 400-year history of the US and its colonial precursors. It would also bring an end to the Western European global dominance, of which the US represents the pinnacle. Such a change also has a significant racialized element if the ascendancy of China within the geopolitical system, and that of the “East” in general, is to be accepted. It would represent the rejection of the universalist Western “civilizing” mission based upon Greco-Roman concepts, and the acceptance of the validity of other civilizational philosophies and foundational histories. Japan had represented a smaller-scale challenge that had led to a “Yellow Peril” anti-Japanese racist response due to its own ascendancy in the 1970s until its financial crisis in 1993 (Heale 2009), echoing the earlier anti-Asian scares nearly a century earlier; even though Japan had already integrated significant liberal institutions during the US occupation and accepted US geopolitical primacy. Such

considerations represent some of the unstated reasons for resistance to the end of US primacy.

### **4.3. The Drivers of Current Energy Policy**

As noted above, the interests of the US fossil fuel corporations, especially the transnational oil corporations such as Exxon Mobil have heavily driven US energy policy since large-scale US oil deposits were discovered in the mid nineteenth century. In addition, the geopolitical importance of control over global oil supplies has had a major impact upon US foreign policy.

The explosive growth in domestic US oil and gas production from 2010 onwards, due to the shale oil and gas revolution, has erased the net oil and gas import position of the US. In addition, the growth in Tar Sands production in Canada has provided additional energy security. These increases in North American oil production have led to significantly lower global energy prices, and an overall over-supply. This over-supply has provided the US with the ability to take actions against the oil production of states that do not accept its “leadership” without repercussions to the global oil price. The result has been crippling sanctions for Iran and Venezuela, and significant sanctions against Russia.

The dominance of fossil fuel interests within the US provides a very limited range of policy options – from a mix of limited support for renewables while still providing significant policy support to the fossil fuel industry (Obama) to outright and unapologetic support to the fossil fuel industry (Bush, Trump). With respect to international climate change negotiations the range has been between lukewarm support for global climate agreements (Obama) to outright rejection of those agreements (Bush, Trump). Such a limited range of policy options can be expected to continue short of fundamental

domestic political economic changes, a secular fall in global oil production, or a climate emergency. The energy policy focus of the Biden presidential campaign in late 2020 belies this reality, with its reliance on the capture and storage of GHGs rather than on a significant reduction in the usage of fossil fuels (Horn 2020). The need to limit the relative GDP growth gap with respect to the faster growing China will also tend toward state support of a shale oil and gas industry that has been one of the greatest areas of strength within the US economy.

#### **4.3.1. Geopolitics and Energy Security**

Being self-sufficient in fossil fuel energy supplies, and with energy exporting nations on its borders, the US can be deemed to be energy secure. As a rich nation with a highly diversified economy and relatively small net exports of fossil fuels, it also has little reliance upon energy export revenues; a dependence completely nullified by its possession of the global reserve currency. The US was becoming more energy insecure after its domestic oil production peaked in 1970 while demand continued to increase, but this position has been reversed with the recent massive increases in domestic oil and gas production (and the increases in Canadian oil production).

With the exception of the three decades following the 1970 domestic oil production peak, the US has tended to utilize its domestic fossil fuel resources as a facilitator of foreign policy actions designed to produce insecurity in nations oppositional to what it has determined as its interests (and/or those of the US fossil fuel corporations). This was the case with the Japanese oil embargo in 1941, when the US was the dominant global oil producer. It has most recently been the same with respect to the sanctions against Venezuela and Iran that have had the side effect of reducing global oil production

at a time of US-induced global glut. Sanctions have also inhibited new oil and gas exploration with respect to Russia, as well as delaying that nation's ability to sell more natural gas to Europe.

#### **4.3.2. Industrial Policy**

As noted above, consistent and supportive US industrial policy has been glaringly absent from the field of low carbon energy, including the failure to maintain the wind energy industry in the 1980s and the solar power industry in the 2010s. There have been some limited attempts to support the nuclear industry, but these have not reversed the long-term decline of that industry. This decline, as well as the decline of the coal industry, is predominantly the result of the North American glut in natural gas stemming from the shale gas revolution; with some impact from the increases in wind and solar electricity generation. In the area of EVs, policy support has been very limited; with Tesla being the main result. Overall, the US EV industry is significantly behind that of China and is in danger of falling behind a newly EV-focused Europe.

As can be seen in the table below, the growth rate of US energy supplied by wind turbines has declined significantly, from over 20% to single digits. The same deceleration can be seen with respect to solar energy, more than halving from above 50% to 24%. This deceleration is occurring while wind and solar provide only 3.7% of US primary energy. Industry forecasts are for at best stabilization at the current growth rates, which would produce a doubling for wind in approximately 9 years (from 2.7% to 5.4% share) and for solar in about 3 years (from a 1% share to a 2% share); assuming no growth in overall energy usage. Even slow growth in energy usage could offset these increases, continuing



the trend of increased wind and solar output being combined with increased fossil fuel usage.

**Table 4 2: US Low Carbon Energy Sources**

|                          | Mtoe<br>Mill. Tons Oil Equiv. | 2007-17<br>Growth | 2018<br>Growth | Share        | 2018 Cap.<br>Growth |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <b>Low Carbon Energy</b> | <b>361</b>                    | <b>n/a</b>        | <b>n/a</b>     | <b>15.7%</b> | <b>11%</b>          |
| - Nuclear                | 192                           | 0%                | 0.3%           | 8.4%         | 0%                  |
| - Hydro                  | 65                            | 2%                | -2.7%          | 2.8%         | 0%                  |
| - Wind                   | 63                            | 22%               | 8%             | 2.7%         | 7.7%                |
| - Solar                  | 22                            | 53%               | 24%            | 1%           | 20%                 |
| - Biomass, Geothermal    | 19                            | 1.2%              | 1%             | 0.8%         | -1%                 |

Data from BP 2020 Statistical Review and IRENA Renewable Energy Statistics 2019

#### 4.4. Summary

From the above, it can be ascertained that the main domestic determinant of US foreign policy is the TNC orientation of the state, which includes a significant weighting of global fossil fuel and related corporations directly threatened by an energy transition. This orientation both blocks significant central state action to facilitate a low-carbon energy transition and creates a policy bias toward the opening of foreign markets and resources to US-based TNCs together with those of other nations. This predisposes the US state toward the maintenance of a dominant (certainly no longer hegemonic) position within the international community and the neoLIO that facilitates the operation of US (and other allied) TNCs across national economies, the privatization, marketization and commodification of societies, and the containment/destruction of nationalist and populist organizations. This is reinforced by the continuity of a strategic culture that views US global primacy as its *sine qua non*, supported by the view of an exceptionalist US as the Indispensable Nation tasked with bringing the civilizing Liberalism to the rest of the

world; The Shining City On A Hill must never rest until its light is felt by all across the globe. The general consistency of US foreign policy across administrations is evident:

Over time the various policies employed to advance American interests have shown a remarkable continuity ... The most effective of these doctrines has been the 'open door policy', conceived in the mid-nineteenth century and originally designed to ensure US access to (or rights in) China and Japan ... And for a century and a half far beyond China and Japan, this doctrine has assured the USA's access to resources, markets, and investment opportunities throughout the world ... Another policy with a lengthy history is opposition to nationalist movements. (Rubenberg 1988, pp. 1471-1472)

even though ... the Bush administration was widely unpopular ... its policies regarding NATO expansion, free trade, and a host of other programs aimed at maintaining clients were for the most part continuations of what the Clinton administration had done. (Sylvan & Majeski 2009, p. 245)

With an orientation toward economic growth and the expansion of the global reach of US-based TNCs, and the continued dominance of the neoLIO:

The United States cannot disarm, significantly lower the defense budget, or relax economic warfare against commercial competitors, nor can the American businessman halt the restless, exploitative search for economic opportunity abroad

unless the economy is managed in a very different way ... as long as the American economic imperative is growth, the pressures toward economic expansion and military presence abroad will be irresistible. (Barnett 1971, referenced by Rubenberg 1988, p. 1471)

The tight alignment between US national cultural myths and the interests of US based TNCs may argue for a certain degree of cynicism with respect to the actual belief of strategic policy makers in these myths. Such cynicism can be seen, as with the observations of Huntington noted earlier, but this does not negate the reality of these shared beliefs within the US elite and strategic policy making circles. The challenge of China is not just to the material position of the US within the international system, but also to the *Ontological Security* of US elites as it provides a competing vision of modernism that challenges the universality of Western Liberalism and hundreds of years of Western (white) European supremacy (Jacques 2012).

[They] cannot yet comprehend an order that encompasses on the basis of something approaching equality the broad mass of people – citizens – at home, let alone the non-western peoples of the global South, or even their elites. (Parmar 2018)

The US state has also greatly increased its ability to conduct foreign policy relatively independent of domestic (i.e. non-TNC) concerns, in contrast to the impacts of popular isolationism in the period between the two world wars and the anti-Vietnam

activism, short of the need for a large-scale draft and inability to finance the cost of wars through debt (estimated at US\$6.4 trillion just for the post 9/11 wars [Macias2019]). The extreme consolidation of the media, including the major Internet platforms, has also limited the avenues for dissenting voices to be heard; an issue which is greatest “when it comes to macro-oriented issues, such as US foreign, military, and international monetary policy” (Kennis 2015, p. 109). These factors substantially negate the ability of domestic oppositional forces, as was seen with the demonstrations against the Iraq War, to inhibit the decision-making process of the policy making elites. As Layne (2017) notes, as well as other realist scholars such as Mearsheimer, the resulting policy decisions may not be in the best interests of the US nation as a whole. The US strategic policy apparatus may be significantly misaligned with the *raison d’etat*; due to both short-term elite self-interest and an inability to alter a strategic culture at odds with a new geopolitical reality (especially after the hubris of the two decades straddling the end of the last century). This is different to the immediate post-war period, when what was good for General Motors could with some alignment with reality be said to be “good for America”.

This national dysfunctionality is exacerbated by the financialization of the economy, which advantages extractive behavior through the manipulation of corporate financial and control structures to benefit the few while providing costs to the many. A side effect of this extractive behavior has been a move away from costly basic technical research toward more immediate product-driven research; a move that may lead to a lower level of US-based technological advance going forward. Any movement to reinvigorate the US manufacturing base could significantly reduce the profitability of US TNCs given the cost differentials between onshore (i.e. US) and offshore locations,

producing major TNC resistance to any policies that would enforce such a change. What would be good for a GM that in 2019 sold more vehicles in China than in the US (Statista 2020), may no longer be good for the US.

The interests of the many US fossil fuel, and fossil fuel dependent, large corporations will serve as a significant break to any move toward low carbon energy sources. This leaves the avenues of the capturing and storage of GHGs and direct attempts to reduce the global temperature through Solar Radiation Management. The dependence of the reserve currency status of the US\$ upon the global purchases of oil in that currency may also limit any moves to pressure others to reduce oil consumption.

The Trump administration can be seen as a continuation of trends from previous administrations “these two sectors [finance and law firm/consultancy], which are generally trans-nationally oriented, make up more than 50 per cent of the total [administration positions], which is similar in all four post-cold war administrations” (van Apeldoorn & de Graaff 2019, p. 12). Notwithstanding this, there were some differences from previous administrations “the kind of firms to which Trump’s foreign-policy makers connect are on average smaller and include fewer large transnational corporations than the other administrations” (Ibid., p 13), and the financial sector representatives include a significant number of domestic real estate interests. This produced an inner policy circle with few linkages to the usual network of think tanks that have been “so central to top foreign-policy makers over the past decades across both Democratic and Republican administrations” (Ibid., p. 18). This partial break with the historically dominant institutions of US strategic planning represented somewhat of a more nationalist-oriented segment of US economic elites and provided a significant driver of the “establishment”

antagonism toward the Trump administration. Any differences can be seen as more in the form of tactics though, such as the best way to contain Iran, rather than a fundamental challenge to the US strategy of global pre-eminence.

Below the discursal “smoke” there has been extensive bipartisanship with respect to such things as increases in defense and homeland security spending, the aggressive economic and political moves made against Venezuela, intensified sanctions upon Russia, and the attempts to force changes to the Chinese development state. In the latter case, a bi-partisan misperception of the Chinese capabilities resulting significantly from US arrogance has been apparent. A China that is well past the development stage of simply copying foreign technology may be substantially able to remove its dependence upon US technology. The Trump administration also continued and extended the Obama administration policies of focusing on economic and covert political and military actions, together with the use of air power, to reduce the costs and political and geopolitical fallout of foreign policy actions.

Some consciousness of the need to bolster US industrial capabilities can be seen, but contrary to the rhetoric little real policy action has been taken in this area. With the military strength that supports the neoLIO founded upon the financial and technological strength of the US, as well as its domestic social and political stability, there may be a limit of relative decline that TNC elites will accept. Such a viewpoint has been voiced by some sections of the elite with respect to their low levels of taxation and also concerns about the lack of self-sufficiency with respect to critical military technologies. Significant failures and shortcomings with respect to US military equipment and capabilities (Martynov 2019), such as the F35 aircraft (Broder 2015; Insinna 2019), the Littoral class

ships (Axe 2019), and the inability to get the weapons elevators working on a recently built aircraft carrier (Mizokami 2019), may help focus attention on US manufacturing capabilities. The significant recent failures of leading US technology corporations, such as Boeing with respect to the 737-Max and Intel with respect to the next generation of microchip technology, may also raise this awareness. There have also been concerns stressed by some US elites about the multi-decadal lack of income increases for the bottom 80% of the US population, and ever-widening income and wealth inequalities. A more “realistic” US elite may utilize such things as the eco-modernist “Green New Deal”, possibly stripped of its most progressive elements, on a bipartisan basis. The discourse of a new Cold War may also provide the discursal cover for a much more active state driven development focus; one is reminded of the 1960s “race for the moon”. Combined with a foreign policy oriented more toward alliance building, this may reduce the speed at which the US geopolitical position is reduced relative to China.

The capability of the US policy elite, so used to operating from a position of overwhelming economic and geopolitical preeminence, to accurately ascertain the position of the US both domestically and within the current global system may be the determining factor for the future of the US and possibly the peaceful development of the international system as a whole. Without a large focus on the rebuilding of domestic economic, social and cultural strength, the policy alternatives available to the US to slow its relative decline will be more oriented to ones designed to interdict the further development of China. By their very nature, such policies risk a spiral of escalation – especially if the US is unable to accept a larger role for China within the international system. Such a reorientation will require a fundamental change in the US elites that have

become used to providing less resources to the state and society through taxes and labor income, while extracting more value through increased economic rents and outright predation (Hudson 2015; Philippon 2019; Lazonick & Shin 2020).

A continuation of current trends would result in at best lukewarm policy support for climate change action and a transition to a low carbon energy system (especially after the closure of the aged coal electricity-generation fleet has exhausted itself). In the worst case, the perceived need to compete with a growing China will produce a “growth at all costs” mentality that will support further fossil fuel exploration and development – fulfilling Nyman’s (2018) pessimistic paradox between short term security optimization and the cost of longer term climate-change driven insecurity.

#### **4.5. Framework Insights In The US Study**

The current dynamic of the international system (what Cox refers to as the world order), places the US as the dominant power undergoing a possible challenge from China; the incumbent with a rational focus on limiting the rise of its challenger through increases in its own relative power and/or that of its coalition with respect to China and its coalition. In neorealist terms, the rise of China as a Great Power threatens US hegemony and requires a strategy of containment (as practiced with the Soviet bloc during the Cold War) and perhaps even inevitable military conflict.

The analysis of the internal dynamics of the US provided for by the neoclassical realist approach of Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell directs us to significant internal dynamics that may affect foreign policy decisions. The political system is dominated by two political parties, the Republicans and Democrats, who differ very little in political worldview when compared to other Western democratic nations (the Democratic Party



would be on the right of the political spectrum in many other nations). In many cases they share the same corporate and rich individual political donors, in a system with few checks on the dominance of money in politics and subject to extensive corporate lobbying. In addition, there are no substantial limitations on the “revolving door” between state roles and positions in private industry, political lobbying and consultancy organizations; even between the military and the highly concentrated oligopolistic organizations from which it purchases equipment and services. Exacerbating this is the high degree of corporate concentration, producing oligopolies that multiply the power of their owners and senior executives (the vast majority of which are *de facto* owners through stock option grants); with further concentration provided by huge asset management firms such as Blackrock which holds over US\$9 trillion in financial assets. Blackrock’s role in managing the Federal Reserve’s large scale purchasing of bonds as part of the 2020 COVID financial support activities, some of which overlap with Blackrock’s own portfolios, underlines the extremely close and possibly conflict-ridden relationship between the state and economic and financial elites. State-society relations are resultingly dominated by large corporations and rich individuals, with domestic policies heavily skewed toward their benefit (extensive deregulation, little regulatory resistance to corporate concentration, tax cuts, privatization, little or no state support to labour unions, and a general resistance to social programs that are prevalent in many other Western nations). In the past four decades this domestic policy orientation has greatly exacerbated income and wealth inequality, reversing the significant reduction of these in the post-WW2 “miracle” years. The strategic culture tends more toward the *raison d’élite* than the *raison d’état*, with the larger and internationalized concentrations of capital highly advantaged; with an Open-

Door foreign policy that serves to open up other nations to the profit-making of large US corporations and rich investors. The neoliberal “Washington Consensus” of the US Treasury and US and Western dominated international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank, WTO) utilizes financial and economic levers to pressure other nations to remove capital controls and state support for domestic industries, deregulate, cut social spending and privatize significant segments of the state. A *common sense* that sees the US as an “exceptional” nation with a mission to bring liberal capitalist democracy to the world also supports overt and covert interference in the internal dynamics of other nations that require help to become truly “modern”. The view of the US as the “global policeman” (the sovereign that can act above the law to protect the “rules based international system”) also legitimizes such intervention. Within such a worldview, US actions that veer from liberal ideals are seen as either “mistakes” or unfortunate ones required with respect to “uncivilized” (as defined by the US strategic culture) nations which tend to be branded as dictatorships, authoritarian or lacking respect for universal human rights. Only with such a worldview can *humanitarian interventions* that violate other nation’s sovereignty be rationalized, and examples such as Libya be seen as unfortunate “failures” rather than instrumentally driven regime change operations. The obfuscation of underlying economic and financial motives by this ideology leads some foreign policy analysts to bemoan the “human rights” focus of the US, rather than seeing the interests of the US elites that underly the strategic culture.

These insights provide for a very different view of US foreign policy from that of the neorealist school, a foreign policy directed at the protection and advancement of US corporate and investor interests in foreign nations – even if those interests may

undermine the welfare of significant segments of the US population or even national security (e.g. the offshoring of significant segments of US manufacturing, the facilitation of the rise of China). The US policy of global pre-eminence serves to remove the threat of competitor economic elites, back up pressure on individual nations to “open up” with overwhelming military (both overt and covert) force and to physically protect the sprawling activities of US-dominated global supply chains. The extreme aggression shown toward states with governments that do not support economic opening, or the “free” market in general, reflects the *raison d’élite*. The greatest challenge of nations such as Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Iran, Russia, and China to this elite is that they block attempts to open themselves up to the exploitation of US capital, as well as representing an example of a different path for both other nations and the US general populace. Six decades of economic and financial sanctions, and repeated attempts at regime change and leader assassinations, is the result for a Cuba that in no way can be conceived of as a threat to the US in neorealist terms after the collapse of the Soviet *bloc*. A strategy of pre-eminence also directly benefits a heavily privatized US Military Industrial Complex that gains financially from both covert and overt aggression, with the oligopolistic military contractors being some of the most profitable US corporations. Of the over US\$2 trillion spent on the 20-year occupation of Afghanistan (and the US\$8 trillion spent on the post-2001 wars) much went to boost the profits of military contractors, as well as the pre and post retirement careers of the military leadership; many of which retire into very lucrative positions in defence contractor and related organizations. The GWOT provided the means with which to reverse any possibility of a “peace dividend” after the fall of the Soviet *bloc*, and the US has increased its number of foreign bases rather than reduce them since

that fall. The continued stationing of 35,000 US military personnel in Germany, 12,000 in Italy and 10,000 in the UK when the threat of a Soviet *bloc* invasion evaporated decades ago is evidential of these dynamics. This, together with the expansion of NATO (against explicit promises made to the USSR President, Gorbachev, at the time of the reunification of Germany) to the borders of Russia, a major nuclear power second only to the US, tends to increase the possibility of conflict rather than reduce it. When viewed through a neorealist lens, such actions could be seen as actively *reducing* the security of the US given the lack of any real threat from a much diminished and defensive Russia. An understanding of the internal dynamics of the US, and its resultant strategies of the Open Door and global pre-eminence, provide some answers to this conundrum.

This foreign policy orientation may significantly account for what may go down as one of the greatest errors of US foreign policy – the derogatory and aggressive stance toward post-Soviet Russia that has resulted in the increasing alignment of Russia with China. A Russia in the Western camp would have placed the West across the northern border of China, brought Central Asia under Western influence, removed Russian military support and technology from the Chinese, and greatly strengthened any Chinese energy embargo; what could be considered a “no brainer” perhaps in neorealist balancing terms. Instead, China is significantly strengthened by its symbiotic alliance with Russia; an alliance protected from the early efforts of President Trump for a *rapprochement* with Russia by the dominant elites, strategic decision-making institutions and a mainstream US media through the “Russia, Russia, Russia” propaganda blitz. In the 1990s it seemed as if Russia would become subservient to US and Western interests, with no need to treat it with diplomatic respect. This assumed inevitability was reversed by Putin and the

nationalist elements of the Russian capitalist and state classes. The US strategic culture seemed unable to accept this “loss” of Russia (with parallels with the “loss” of China in 1949), responding with an unprecedented vilification of a leader of a major foreign power and the obviation of any possibility of reconciliation between the two powers. Any relationship with Russia other than a completely subservient one, with a Russian economy open to US profit making and exploitation, seems to be unacceptable to the US strategic culture.

Neoclassical realists also take into account the level of *permissiveness* of the international system. In an international system with an extremely low level of threat, as with the US immediately the collapse of the Soviet *bloc* in the 1990s, domestic political and economic dynamics may play a greater role in foreign policy as the international system is less constraining. This can be seen in the aggressive regime change actions taken by the US to force open the economies of other nations from the 1990s onwards; with military actions against Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, and “colour revolutions” fomented and/or supported in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and the Ukraine, and sanctions and outright support for opposition groups with respect to North Korea, Syria, Iran, Venezuela and Russia. With the resurgence of Russia, and the arrival of China as a great power, this level of permissiveness has already been significantly reduced, and may be completely removed in many areas of the world as the combination of Russia and China (as well as Iran) become more assertive in the international realm. It could be said that the US strategic culture mistook a temporary period of permissiveness for a final liberal capitalist victory; leading to hubris and possibly an inability to accept the new emerging pluralistic reality that could lead to significant foreign policy errors.

Such an analytical picture does provide a relatively nuanced view of the present, and provides significant insights into future state policy making, but does not provide a vision of the historical processes that created the current US, nor their possible impact going forward. It also takes the present as a given, without problematizing its elements; *how* and *why* the present came into being may have significant exculpatory value with respect to how the future may progress. This is where the benefit of a historical materialist analysis comes into play.

The US started as a series of British (and Dutch in the case of New Amsterdam) white settler colonies on the western seaboard of North America, both as business and religious extremist ventures, reflecting the hierarchical structures of the home country. The settlers considered it their God-given right to take the lands inhabited by the indigenous nations; including the extermination of those inhabitants if required. The first two centuries of conflict with these “heathen” Others helped create the conditions for the intensification of the indigenous genocide and the creation of a new “living space” (a genocidal project that Hitler drew many parallels with in his own quest for *lebensraum*) for white settler capitalism free of the constraints of the mother country. The mass utilization of African racialized slaves removed the threat of a combination of lower-class whites and others against the ruling elites while creating great concentrated wealth in the South and a huge market for the industries of the North. Independence replaced the authority of the British elite with that of the US elite, one that created a central state and a constitution designed to protect its interests within a nation created through “indigenous genocide, racialized slavery and hyper-capitalism” as Sjursen succinctly puts it (2021); allied with a belief in a civilizational exceptionalism buttressed with religious extremism

and chauvinism. The modern-day sense of terror of the not yet subjugated Others, which practice “aggression” against the US through their very existence, carries over from the centuries of genocidal clearance of the continental US of the uncivilized (i.e. non-white, non-liberal and non-Christian) Other. The terror of such others as “Muslim terrorists”, “Godless communists”, “Reds under the bed”, and “authoritarian leaders” has been invoked from the Philippine Moro War (“Indian country”) to Vietnam (“gooks”) to the “yellow peril” of Japan (both in WW2 and in the 1990s), the invasion of Iraq (“hajis”), and now the demonization of first Putin and now Xi (and the CCP). This is not just conscious propaganda but reflects a widely held worldview within the strategic culture – as evidenced by the statements of officials covered in the case study.

The victories over Mexico and then Spain (adding militarist imperialism to US practices) reinforced these beliefs, and the fratricidal self-destruction of two world wars emanating from Europe further strengthened the view of the US as the saviour of Western civilization from a decadent and decaying Europe. The scale and resources of the nation, “from sea to sea”, when combined with the railway and the telegraph helped create huge oligopolistic corporations that dominated major sectors of the economy, together with concentrated financial capital. The combination of these with the power of a state and the courts dominated by the wealthy, together with mass immigration, overwhelmed any attempts at working class solidarity and the creation of the labour-based political parties seen in other Western nations. The resulting truly exceptional, but not in the ways promulgated by the US elites, nation was then provided with an overwhelming position in the world system through the three-decade self-destruction of the other great powers. A position gained with no military attacks upon the continental US, the homeland; the US

Civil War (1861-1865) being the only major US military action to occur on what is now US soil since the Mexican American war of 1846-1848. The relative ease of the US rise, without the invasions and widespread destruction suffered by both China and Russia, also serves to reinforce the *common sense* of US exceptionalism.

Within this context the “post-war miracle” can be seen as a historical exception, as the New Deal compromise stemming from the Great Depression greatly reduced inequality among the white population and the US remained mostly unchallenged outside the *cordon sanitaire* that had been erected around the Communist *bloc*. After the economic and political crises of the 1960s and 1970s, the US elites drove a four decade reversal of the New Deal policies and the collapse of the Soviet *bloc* combined with the opening of China seemed to deliver a completion of the US civilizational project of making the world “safe” for liberal capitalist democracy (and US economic and financial exploitation). The “End of History” and a “permissive” international system that facilitated the US civilizational project on a global scale. Strategies such as offshore balancing were rejected in favour of the globalization of the hybrid capabilities of interference in other nation’s affairs that had been perfected in South America in the twentieth century, with all of the globe now seen as the US hemisphere. This has been given military representation by US military commands that encompass the globe – Africa Command, European Command, Central Command, Indo-Pacific Command, Northern Command, Southern Command and Strategic Command; with new commands recently added for the internet, “Cyber Command” and even space “Space Command”. Added to these are the US covert operations taking place within the majority of the nations upon the Earth.



The extensive privatization of state functions, the reduction of unions to near irrelevancy in the private sector and the gutting of the welfare state, the wholesale deregulation which included the removal of the New Deal limitations upon the financial sector, the repeated reductions in individual and corporate taxes, the oligopolization of major segments of the economy and the private capture of state regulatory and purchasing functions, have all served to increase the profitability of *rentier* activities that favour financial, market and political manipulation. Widespread *rentier capitalism* removes the discipline of both the market and state oversight, as well as moving resources away from core activities that do not offer *rentier* returns and continuously undermines good governance. An important insight from neoclassical realism is that although a given nation may have huge resources it is dependent upon the capacity of the state to mobilize those resources for the national interest. The US state's ability to effectively mobilize resources is open to considerable question given the lack of increases (and possible significant decreases if the pre-1990 inflation calculations were used) in welfare for the majority of the citizenry over the past decades. Why should citizens give their lives to a state that they see as not operating in their best interests? This inability was evident during the occupation of Iraq, with the military doing everything possible to stave off the need for a general military draft. In addition, the repeated failures in military procurement (e.g. the F35 jet and the Littoral combat ship), the regulatory incompetence shown with respect to both the Boeing 737 crisis and the COVID response, and most recently the fiasco of the Afghanistan withdrawal, put into question the basic competency of the US state. The *rentier* orientation of the elites may also place parts of it at direct odds to important US foreign policy objectives, such as the nurturing of soft power.

Whilst China has been able to take significant advantage of “vaccine diplomacy”, the brazen rent-seeking behavior of the US pharmaceutical companies that was seemingly backed up by the US State Department can only have reduced the positive image of the US to other nations.

In Cox’s terms, the US state/society complex is dominated by the capitalist elite class that has set itself the task of rendering all other state/society complexes into an idealized version of itself that opens up those complexes to US (as well as that of its Western junior allies) domination and exploitation. Over a number of centuries, capitalist class dominance and a limited role for the state (i.e. roles that do not benefit the capitalist class) have been integrated into the societal *common sense* as has also been the innate superiority of the US with respect to other nations and its right to interfere with the internal dynamics of those nations; liberal imperialism. The dialectical processes that have challenged this common sense have been repeatedly crushed with few exceptions, whether they be those provided by the indigenous population, labour unions, communists, small farmer organizations, the former slave population, anti-war protestors, or the recent Occupy Wall Street movement. The US elites and their co-opted state and judiciary have utilized widespread authoritarian and cooption measures many times in US history to restrain and defeat challenges to this common sense. These measures being the norm rather than the exception; the *Red Scares* after both world wars, COINTELPRO, the Espionage Act, the Homeland Security Act, the illegal domestic surveillance programs of the NSA, and mass incarceration being some examples. Ironically, the reversal of much of the New Deal by the capitalist elites, their even greater domination of state functions in the past four decades, together the removal of the competing state/society complex of the

Soviet *bloc* may have paradoxically led to an overemphasis on *rentier* activities and a level of arrogant self-deception that has degraded important capabilities; as noted above.

The *Amsterdam School*, focusing on the nature and impact of the elites, captures the elite dominance of the US state/society complex well:

In the case of the United States, its liberal capitalist political economy is characterized by a structure at the apex of which we find the oligarchic top segment of an autonomous capitalist class. The US political system is consequently structurally biased towards the interests of the corporate community, secured through persistently revolving door and through the so-called policy planning process. That process takes place primarily within think-tanks and foundations which are in turn closely interlocked with the corporate elite, generating a particular (pro-business) elite consensus and world-view that then feed into public policy-making. It is our argument that the close nexus of this corporate elite, and its predominantly globalist outlook, with the foreign policy-making establishment helps to account for America's overall foreign policy of the past decades, and will remain an important variable in determining future US strategy *vis-à-vis* China. (de Graaff & van Apeldoorn 2018, p. 116)

The *Amsterdam School* also captures the ways in which the US elite has integrated other Western elites into their global project, and subordinated other *comprador* elites to serve its (and their own) interests rather than those of their own nations. These elite connections are fostered across business, educational, state and military realms – providing extremely flexible and powerful ways with which to undermine and overthrow governments that take actions against US interests; backed up

by US-allied NGOs and agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). South America offers a great number of examples of the US utilization of such elites, through coups, the delegitimization of opposing governments, and general social, political and economic destabilization.

China is not just a rising power threatening the interests of the United States, but also a nationalist Party-state dominated state/society complex that both resists domination by a capitalist class and serves as a competing state/society model to that of the US for other nations to follow; and perhaps the domestic US population itself. The Chinese challenge is not to the US nation *as a whole* but to the capitalist class that dominates the US. A class which is somewhat “trapped” by its own highly profitable labour-arbitrage and consumer market activities in China and Asia in general; “a loss of economic openness in Asia and the ability to maintain and control that openness on US terms—is what constitutes the greatest threat to US interests” (de Graaff & van Apeldoorn 2018, p. 124). At the same time, the Otherness of the Chinese civilizational project is reinforced in the US strategic culture through the latter’s somewhat unconscious beliefs in racial superiority that are couched in cultural terms and Orientalist language. As Siu and Chun (2020) note, racialized tropes such as the “Yellow Peril”, accusations of Oriental economic and technological “cheating” and even assertions of the Chinese creation of COVID, have surfaced as China becomes a greater challenge to US dominance.

The challenge is not just to the elite’s power and status, but also to its sense of self; its ontological security. This latter challenge has been shown in the US responses to the new assertiveness of both Russia and China, “the United States finds it extraordinarily difficult to accept [being on the receiving end of the type of lectures that it is used to

being the one to deliver]” (Mercouris 2021). The Coxian materialist understanding that ideas can significantly outlive the material and institutional realities that supported them may provide insight into a significant complication of US foreign policy, as its elites struggle to comprehend a world in which they need to accept the Other as their legitimate equal or even perhaps as their better. The resulting cognitive dissonance may lead to dangerous policy errors, as US elites seek to reject facts that threaten their sense of self and attack the perceived purveyors of those facts.

The *Amsterdam School* allows for a heterogeneous capitalist elite, that may come together when overall class interests are involved but may also have conflicting interests. Within the US, the fossil fuel and related interests form a significant capitalist class fraction that greatly constrains US climate change policies within a bound of outright denial of the existential threat (under Presidents Bush and Trump) and a soft acceptance (under Presidents Clinton and Obama) that does not significantly hinder fossil fuel interests. Within such a constraint, no significant climate change-oriented policies should be expected outside the circumstances of a climate change emergency; even then policies would tend toward technology solutions such as Solar Radiation Management that could facilitate a slow move away from fossil fuels. The fossil fuel related grouping, together with domestic interests that are dependent upon the health of the US domestic economy – such as real estate development and resource extraction in general – were evident in coalition of elite forces that supported Trump; a very different coalition to the Open Door one that dominated foreign policy up to Trump’s election and strove mightily to nullify parts of his agenda that they did not agree with. With the election of President Biden, the

Open Door fraction has fully reasserted its dominance, and outright climate denial has been replaced with policies of soft acceptance.

## Chapter 5: Russia Case Study

“In his present mood, PM [Neville Chamberlain] says he will resign rather than sign alliance with Soviet”

(Sir Alexander Cadogan, British Permanent Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, private diary entry, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1939, quoted in Kotkin 2017, p. 642)

“Russia ... a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”

(Winston Churchill, October 1939, quoted in Mettan 2017, p. 176)

“The Russian bear has always been eager to stick his paw in Latin American waters ... Now we've got him in a trap, let's take his leg off right up to his testicles. On second thought, let's take off his testicles, too.”

(Air Force General Curtis LeMay's advice to President Kennedy during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, quoted in Joshua Rothman, *Waiting For World War III*, *The New Yorker* Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

“The historical practices of the Russians, who are typically, almost genetically, driven to coopt ... penetrate ... gain favor ... typical Russian technique”

(James Clapper, Former US Director of National Intelligence 2010-2017: interviewed on NBC News *Meet The Press* May 28<sup>th</sup> 2017)

In the West, Russia has been caricatured as a dark and dangerous presence for centuries, irrespective of its internal political economic configuration and its actual foreign policy orientation. Mettan (2017) exhumes the history of this caricature, seeing its roots in the *Great Schism* of the Christian church in the 11<sup>th</sup> century:

religious confrontation [between the Eastern and Western Christian churches] has lost nothing of its virulence and continues even now to impregnate the minds with the same anti-Orthodox and anti-Russian prejudices as in 1054, even if they now hide behind other terms and other arguments. (Ibid., p. 135)

The Mongol invasion of Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century can only have increased the fear of an unknowable terror lurking in the east. Mettan also sees the base of the trope of

Russian expansionism and despotism in the period of the *European Enlightenment* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

The myth of Russian expansionism was born under Louis XIV with the fabrication of Peter the Great's fake will, written with the aid of Polish aristocrats. The myth of oriental despotism took shape in Enlightenment times, with Montesquieu, the later Diderot, and the liberal intellectuals of Restoration, Guizot and Tocqueville in particular. (Ibid., p. 137)

This period is also seen by Wolff as one of geographical ontological change, as Europe became defined more through its alignment to the east and west, than through its alignment to the north and south, creating an Eastern European Other to the Western European enlightened civilizational project:

The invention of Eastern Europe was an event in intellectual history that occurred as the Enlightenment invested an overwhelming significance in the alignment of Europe according to the east and west, while, correlatively, reducing and revising the significance of the Renaissance alignment according to north and south. Eastern Europe, on the map, came to exist in the analytical eye of the enlightened beholder. (Wolff 1994, p. 357)

For the United Kingdom, the caricaturing of Russia arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after centuries of good relations, as the Russian defeat of Napoleon's *Grand Armée* both elevated Russian power and removed much of the French threat which was finally extinguished at the *Battle of Waterloo* in 1815. Following a strategy of offshore



balancing, it made sense for the British to reconsider who they defined as their enemy and their friend. It is notable that the UK and France allied together in the later *Crimean War* (1853-1856) against Russia:

Russophobia is a paradox in the history of Great Britain. Within the United Kingdom there developed early in the nineteenth century an antipathy toward Russia, which soon became the most pronounced and enduring element in the national outlook on the world abroad. The contradictory sequel of nearly three centuries of consistently friendly relations, this hostility found expression in the Crimean War. (John Howes Gleason, quoted in Mettan 2017, p. 178)

The underlying antipathy toward Russia was intensified with the Bolshevik Revolution, as communism provided an ideological threat to liberal capitalism. For a short while after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this antipathy was replaced with a patronizing Western stance of being the liberal capitalist teacher to the Russian student. The reassertion of Russian nationalism and self-determination then resurfaced the caricature. As James Brown notes, the current Western view of Russia is a “Stereotype, Wrapped in a Cliché, Inside a Caricature” (quoted in Mettan 2017, p. 176). Such misrepresentations are voiced in the quotes at the beginning of this chapter, resulting in actions that may be seen as against a nation’s own self-interest (in the case of Chamberlain) or against the interest of humanity as a whole (in the case of LeMay), and even producing what could be seen as paranoid delusions in a man who was the US

Director of National Intelligence for seven years (Clapper). The analysis below will strive to cast aside such caricatures and see Russia as it really is.

In this chapter I will first describe the historical development of Russia and how the nature of that development affected both the state/society complex, and the long-term determinants of the strategic culture of the policy-making elites. I will show that Russia had been an expansionary state for a number of centuries prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it fell behind economically and militarily with respect to other nations (e.g. Britain and France in the Crimean War and Japan in the *Russo-Japanese War* [1904-1905]), and has since followed a predominantly defensive posture – both in the shape of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and as the more recent Russian Federation. In the past century, the nature of Russian society has progressed through two convulsive periods, the transition to communism after the end of the Civil War in 1922 and the transition to a deeply flawed capitalism after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. I will then utilize these insights to assess current energy-related policies in the context of major power competition. In the final piece of this chapter I will summarize the current Russian configuration with respect to the possible paths open to the nation.

## **5.1. Historical Positioning**

### **5.1.1. Ryurikid Dynasty (862-1598)**

A founding myth is that the Slavic tribes of what was to become Russia invited a Viking (the Rus') prince to rule over them, as they were unable to effectively govern themselves, "Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come rule and reign over us" (Galeotti 2020, p. 14). This is a lovely story "however, the evidence that he was

invited in seems, alas, distinctly lacking” (Ibid., p. 15), but “it does reflect the fact that Scandinavian Vikings, called Rus’ were present in the territories of the eastern Slav and Finnic tribes by the ninth century and that they eventually became rulers or princes over the native population” (Martin 2007, p. 2). It is probable that a Ryurik did establish a fort at Ladoga, east of present-day Saint Petersburg, at about this time. He then established the city that became Novgorod, about 125 km to the south. Ryurik’s successor, Oleg (879-912) then took the lands around Kiev from two other Rus’ leaders, creating the lands of the Rus’ with Kiev as its capital (the *Kievan Rus’*) and he as the Grand Prince of Kiev. After his death the Kievan Rus’ were ruled by Igor 1 (912-945), then Olga (Igor’s wife who acted as regent due to her sons’ young ages: 945-959) who was later sainted for her work to spread Christianity within Russia, then her son Sviatoslav 1 (959-972); the latter’s death led to a fratricidal contest between his three sons. The eldest, Yaropolk (972-980) killed the middle brother, but then was killed by the youngest brother – who became Vladimir the Great (980-1015). The problem of contested succession was to dog the Rus’ until the time of the Romanovs, the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin, and may possibly become an issue after the time of Putin; a threat that Putin himself has repeatedly striven to delay. Vladimir the Great both expanded his territories and forced his lords and subjects to convert to Christianity. This latter act provided a highly beneficial alliance with Byzantium and the state-church combination that was only interrupted by communist rule in the twentieth century; a combination resurrected by Putin.

With the death of Vladimir, another bloody dispute for the crown broke out between his sons that lasted for nine years, ending in the division of the territory between the brothers Mstislav and Yaroslavl (1024-1036) and the reunification under Yaroslavl (1036-1054) after the other brother's death. The sprawling lands of the Rus' were governed in a distributed fashion, with the sons and trusted acolytes of the Grand Prince being assigned to govern, and sometimes rotated between, specific areas. With repeatedly conflicted successions, and individual principalities growing in strength, the lands were beset by fratricidal succession wars and increasing fragmentation. Competitors on all sides surrounded the lands of the Rus', with the Vikings to the North, the aggressive roaming tribes of Pechenegs (who seized Kiev in 1036) and Polovtsy to the East and South, and new challengers such as the Poles to the West. The result was ongoing conflict with other states, and the involvement of those states in the internal politics of the Rus'; including marriage alliances between Rus' and foreign elites. The Polovtsy, who repeatedly penetrated Rus' defences and roamed across the Rus' interior, provided the greatest challenges. "The conference at Lyubech in 1097 was a direct response to the crisis generated by the Polovtsy attacks and the failure of the [internal political system] ... [which] proved to be inadequate to withstand the power of the Polovtsy" (Martin 2007, p. 59). This conference made governance positions inherited within bloodlines and set inheritance rules; establishing a feudal structure with Kiev at its center. The improved cooperation and coordination that resulted was reflected in successful campaigns against the Polovtsy that removed them as a threat to the southern border. President Putin raised the memory of the Pechenegs and Polovtsy

when he compared the challenge of COVID-19 to their challenges to Russia (Shevchenko 2020).

During the 1125-1237 period, “the number of principalities within [the Kievan Rus’] and the relative power among them was continually changing” due to dynastic competition and conflict, “but these trends neither destroyed the integrity of the Kievan Rus’ nor undermined the role of Kiev as its real and symbolic center” (Martin 2007, p.105). At the end of this period, far to the east the Mongol conquest of northern China was being completed; the Mongol attention now turned to the west, to the land of the Rus’. The first encounter was at the battle of the Kalka River in 1223, with the Mongol advanced guard crushing the Rus’ army. Four years later came the main invasion force, which swept aside any resistance from 1237-1240. The destruction of those that did not surrender was typified by the destruction of Riazan captured in the *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu*, “the Mongols ‘burned this holy city with all its beauty and wealth ... And churches of God were destroyed and much blood was spilled on the holy altars. And not one man remained alive in the city. All were dead ... And there was not even anyone to mourn the dead’” (Martin 2007, p. 153). The 50,000 strong population of Kiev was also nearly completely wiped out (Galeotti 2020); Novgorod sued for peace, therefore escaping such destruction. For more than two centuries, the land of the Rus’ would fall under the *Mongol Yoke*.

The Mongol *Golden Horde* (the western portion of the Mongol Empire) established its own capital to the East of the Rus’ and required obedience and tribute from the conquered lands; in a structure reminiscent of the later Chinese Tribute

system. It is during this period that the previously smaller town of Moscow flourished, especially from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards as its Ryurikid rulers proved able quislings that were highly adept at using Mongol power and politics to consolidate their own position. For example, Prince Ivan (1325-1341) led a Mongol army to suppress an uprising in the competing principality of Tver. He also solved the succession issue by instituting the rule of *primogeniture*, full succession by the eldest son. With continued expansion and increasing wealth, Moscow started to push back against a fading Golden Horde that was impacted by the *Black Death*, the disruption of the *Silk Road* trade route by the overthrow of the Mongols in China and by the Ming and Turkish advances, and internal Mongol conflict. Dmitry (1359-1389) fought and defeated Tver against the Mongol ruler Mamai's wishes, and then routed a Mongol army at the *Battle of Kulikovo* (1380). Although Kulikovo is seen as a monument to Russian nationalism, and in 1988 the Russian Orthodox Church sainted Dmitry, it would take another hundred years to end Mongol rule; Moscow being sacked and once more subjugated only two years after Kulikovo. During this century, Moscow continued to consolidate its position with a "Gathering of the Russian Lands" (Galeotti 2020, p. 42).

Ivan III ("the Great", 1462-1505) brought Novgorod under the rule of Moscow in 1478, fended off the Mongols at the *Great Stand on the Ugra River* in 1480, and expanded to the west at the expense of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow became the center of an Orthodox Christian Church that was fully supported by, and supportive of, the Muscovite rulers. Power was increasingly centralized within the Grand Prince, supported by a new legal code, the

*Sudebnik*; a process of centralization continued by Ivan the Great's successor, Vasily III (1505-1533). With his death, the three-year-old Ivan IV ("the Terrible") ascended to the throne, with firstly his mother and then the squabbling Boyar families holding the regency. In 1547 he was crowned Tsar of All the Russias, a move toward autocratic rule rather than that of "first among equals". He built the basic structures of the Russian state bureaucracy and formalized the relations between church and state. He also set up a salaried army answerable directly to the Tsar, rather than the nobility, which was used to conquer the Khanate of Kazan (1552) and the Astrakahn Khanate (1556) – massively expanding Russia's territory to the south and east; with an ongoing expansion into Siberia providing further expansion. The indecisive Livonian War (1558-1583) with Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania and Poland followed. In parallel to this in 1572 the remaining Khanate of Crimea nearly sacked Moscow before being turned back. At the same time, Ivan had launched a paranoid time of terror within the nation – which included "a month long orgy of massacre and rape in Novgorod in 1570" (Galeotti 2020, p. 56), the torture and execution of numerous perceived internal enemies, and the death of Ivan's son at his own hands. This mixture of genius and paranoia would revisit Russia centuries later during the rule of Stalin. At Ivan's death in 1584 a socially and economically devastated Russia was handed over to his incompetent young son Fyodor (rather than the competent elder son that he had murdered). Power was contested between the rival families, and when Fyodor died childless in 1598 the Rurikid dynasty died with him.

### 5.1.2. Godunov, Time of Troubles and the Romanov Dynasty (1598-1917)

In 1598, Godunov seized power (1598-1605) and became the first non-Ryurikid Tsar. He was succeeded by his 16-year old son Fyodor II, but Fyodor was murdered after only being in power for 2 months. Following the murder of Fyodor came the *Time of Troubles* (1605-1613) during which there were two *False Dmitry* imposters (impersonating the elder son that Ivan the Terrible had murdered), palace coups, rebellions, and foreign interference and occupation. The Polish manipulated internal Russian politics, and then later invaded and occupied Moscow, with King Sigismund III of Poland seizing the Russian throne. A Russian revolt forced the Poles out of Moscow in 1612.

In 1613 the elite of Russia offered the Tsardom to the sixteen year old high ranking aristocrat Mikhail Romanov (he was the son of the Patriarch of Moscow, who became the *de facto* ruler of Russia upon his release from Polish imprisonment in 1619), after several other options had been exhausted; this began the Romanov dynasty that would last until the *Bolshevik Revolution* three centuries later. Over the next century Kiev was retaken, access to the Gulf of Finland gained (including the site of what is now Saint Petersburg), the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan once again defeated, and the Khanate of Siberia defeated – creating a sprawling multiethnic state. Under the rule of Peter the Great (1682-1725) the *Great Northern War* (1700-1721) with the Swedish Empire was initiated, stretching across western Russia, Poland and Denmark. The decisive *Battle of Poltava* of 1709, fought deep in the Ukraine, established Russia as a major European power. In 1721 Peter the Great was proclaimed *Emperor of All the*



*Russias*, an Empire that over the next century would expand to the approximate geography of the post-WW2 Soviet Union. Peter changed the basis of the political hierarchy from that of birth to that of merit and service to the Emperor; depriving the Boyar nobles of their inherited seniority and therefore reducing their political power. In addition, he abolished the Duma and concentrated power in a ten-member Senate that more reliably served him, together with formally subordinating the Russian Orthodox Church to the Russian state. These changes reinforced the position of the Tsar as an absolutist monarch in command of an autocratic state bureaucracy; a position that would remain largely unchanged until the reestablishment of the Duma in 1905. He also modernized the Russian army and state functions, as well as carrying out many reforms aimed at Westernizing Russian culture and producing a modern industrial economic sector. Catherine the Great (1762 to 1796) extended the territories of Russia to the Black Sea and into the Caucasus, and into Europe through the annexation of the much of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (with the rest being partitioned between Prussia and the Habsburg Empire). During her reign, the elites adopted many aspects of Western European culture and philosophy. Alexander I (1801-1825) then continued by taking over Finland in 1809, Bessarabia in 1812, and expanding further into the Caucasus. Russian power reached its apogee under Alexander I with the defeat and destruction of Napoleon's invading *Grand Armee* of nearly 700,000 men in 1812 (Napoleon only had a significantly outnumbered 73,000 men at Waterloo), which included the *Fire of Moscow* that destroyed much of the city.

The coronation of Nicholas I (1825-1855) was marred by the *Decembrist Revolt* of thousands of liberal minded army officers and citizens, demonstrating for a more

representative form of government, that was quickly crushed by the army. The inability to move toward the kind of *constitutional monarchy* established through the British *Glorious Revolution* (1688-1689) and by the *Unification of Germany* (1871), or the federal republic established in the US in 1776 and the re-established republic in France in 1870, became a fundamental issue as Russia attempted to join the industrial revolution later in the century. Nicholas' reign would be known for political repression backed by extensive censorship and a huge network of spies and informers; a *modus operandi* later taken up by Stalin. Regional autonomy was also substantially reduced, as power was further centralized.

Despite large expenditures lavished upon the military during the reign of Nicholas I, the crushing defeat in the *Crimean War* (a misnomer for a war that stretched “from the Balkans to Jerusalem, from Constantinople to the Caucasus” [Figs 2011, Intro., para. 10], better known as the *Eastern War* in Russia) of 1853-1856 at the hands of the Ottomans and their allies Britain and France exposed Russia's relative military, bureaucratic and industrial backwardness. Nicholas had miscalculated that the Christian nations would not support the crumbling Muslim Ottoman Empire. Instead, the European nations saw both the need to stop an expansionary Russia from becoming a more dominant power, and the opportunity to increase their own interests in the Ottoman Empire. The conflict was also seen as “a crusade for the defence of liberty and European civilization against the barbaric and despotic menace of Russia, whose aggressive expansionism represented a real threat, not just to the West but to the whole of Christendom” (Ibid.); sentiments that have stretched from the time of Russia's alignment with Byzantium to the present day (Bailey 2020; Cohen 2019, 2019a; Tsygankov 2019;

Mettan 2017; Taras 2014; Tsygankov 2009; Foglesong 2007; Foglesong & Hahn 2002; Gleason 1950). Nineteenth century French writers that argued that an “Asiatic Russia was to follow in the hoofprints of the hordes of Gengis Khan” (McNally 1958, p. 188) would have felt at home watching “Red Dawn” (Feitshans, Beckerman & Beckerman 1984) and be well employed in the current US media. Russia’s early destruction of the Ottoman fleet only served to increase the urgency of European concerns. Russia lost approximately half a million men in a trench-style warfare to be seen later in WW1 (the allies lost approximately 300,000), saw its Sevastopol naval base destroyed and was forced to cease naval operations in the Black Sea.

Nicholas’ successor, Alexander II (1855-1881), made efforts to instigate a much needed “revolution from above” to implement a state-led industrialization and to develop capitalist economic and social structures within Russia (Anievas 2014), including the abolition of serfdom and administrative and political reforms. Unfortunately, with his assassination in 1881 a much more reactionary and autocratic Alexander III came to power and ruled until 1894, during which time some of Alexander II’s reforms were reversed. The next Tsar, Nicholas II (1894-1917), only gave limited support to the required political reforms while overseeing an “ambitious programme of state-backed industrialization” aided by an alliance with France that “accelerated French investment, mainly in mining, metallurgy, and engineering, though much went also into banking, insurance, and commercial firms” (Smith 2017, p. 34). British investment also aided in the development of the oil industry, and there was significant domestic private sector industrial development. Notwithstanding the above, Russia still trailed significantly in industrialization with respect to the USA, Germany, Britain and France.

By the turn of the century this industrialization had produced a concentrated urban proletariat that could act as a revolutionary force, especially when it was without formal, and legal forms of political expression; a deep industrial recession that had begun in 1899 exacerbated proletarian restiveness. A politically conscious student population and emancipated peasants looking for greater control over their lives also represented forces for change that were without representation. It is important to note that “by 1903 peasants were already leasing almost half the land belonging to the landowning class and some had taken out loans from the Peasant Land Bank to buy noble land” (Smith 2017, p. 32) while “for any peasant, the nobleman ... symbolized ‘them’, the privileged society from which they felt entirely excluded” (Smith 2017, p. 32). Increases in rural literacy may have also served to increase the understanding of being without political representation. The devastating defeat of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), a multi-year economic downturn after the growth at the end of the previous century, and the *Bloody Sunday* massacre of unarmed demonstrators (1905), helped spur the widespread revolt of the *First Russian Revolution* (1905) that forced the Tsar to accept the *October Manifesto*. This established the Duma as the central legislative body, elected under universal suffrage; a limited constitutional monarchy.

Nicholas II rapidly turned back to autocracy and repression though, taking steps to limit the power of the Duma and when the 1906 elections produced a left-wing political body, he dissolved it after only 73 days of existence. The Second Duma of 1907 lasted only 103 days and was succeeded by the Third Duma (1907-1912) that was elected with much greater weight given to the votes of land and city property owners and was followed by the Fourth Duma (1912– 1917). The opening provided for a peaceful move

away from autocracy was rejected, producing the volatile political and social conditions with which Russia entered the First World War (1914-1918).

Nicholas' determination to maintain his divinely ordained position as all-powerful autocrat hardened in the face of the radicalism displayed by the first and second dumas ... At the same time, the ebbing of the mass movements from summer 1906 encouraged him to unleash the full might of state repression in order to suppress the insurgency. (Smith 2017, p. 61)

As Gatrell (2014, Intro., para. 17) notes "Nicholas II demonstrated a very impoverished understanding of the complex forces unleashed by the revolution", and made no effort to remedy "the lack of institutional mechanisms to extend involvement in decision-making beyond a relatively narrow circle"; to the contrary, he actively resisted any attempts to implement such mechanisms. The repeated military failures against the German invasion, together with economic and social breakdown on the home front, greatly diminished the legitimacy of a Tsar who had taken personal control of the armed forces. Fundamentally, Russia had not completed the economic and social modernizations required to fight a multi-year industrialized war with the more advanced Germany:

Backwardness was deeply entrenched and a constraint on the adaptability of the Russian economy. A dearth of skilled labour made it hard to achieve rapid increases in labour productivity in the short run. Industries of crucial significance

to modern war, such as chemicals and machine tools, remained weak.

Backwardness implied difficulty in persuading subsistence farmers to apply themselves to the challenge of growing for non-farm consumption. It raised a question mark over the use of financial instruments to encourage the population to contribute to the war effort. (Gatrell 204, Intro., para. 15)

Nicholas' legitimacy was further damaged by the influence of *Rasputin* on his German-born wife who ruled at home while he was at the front. Towards the end of 1916 Russian society became increasingly unstable, with spiraling civilian food and fuel prices and bread riots, widespread strikes and an exhausted and dispirited conscripted peasant dominated military ridden by mass desertion, large-scale surrendering and enemy fraternization, self-wounding and criminal activities (Astashov 2019). With the military supporting the *February Revolution* of 1917, Nicholas II abdicated, and a provisional government dominated by aristocratic and capitalist interests was established. In parallel, the socialists set up a network of *Soviets* that vied for power in a socially chaotic period. For a while patriotic support for the war was renewed, but the positive response of the general population to the provisional government faded as it increasingly favored the interests of employers over workers. "As Trotsky wrote, their stance 'cost the capitalists dear'" (Gatrell 2014, chap. 9, sub-sect. 4, para. 2) and increased the support for Bolshevism – seen as the only chance of safeguarding the workers' revolution. The situation was resolved with the *Bolshevik Revolution* on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1917 (in the Julian calendar), which saw the Bolsheviks led by Lenin overthrow the provisional government.

### 5.1.3 Civil War & New Economic Program (1917-1928)

Following the Bolshevik Revolution came a demeaning peace treaty with Germany that created a Polish state, took hegemony over the Baltic States, and separated Ukraine and a significant portion of Belarus from Russia. The Treaty of Versailles of 1918 and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 confirmed the creation of a Polish state. In addition, in December 1918 the Soviet government accepted the independence of Finland. The highly destructive *Russian Civil War* continued for four years from 1918 to 1922 against the “White” counter revolutionaries and their European and US interventionist allies, and various independence movements (such as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus and the Ukraine). This included the *Polish-Soviet War* (1919-1921), which resulted in large areas of western Belarus and Ukraine being placed under Polish rule with the *Peace of Riga* of 1921 that also recognized the independence of the Baltic States. Victory in the civil war delivered to the Bolsheviks a nation shattered by the German invasion, the brutal civil war itself, the war with Poland, and the brutality of the *War Communism* implemented by Lenin.

The years between 1918 and 1922 witnessed a level of chaos, strife, and savagery that was unparalleled since Russia’s ‘Time of Troubles’ ... It has been estimated that between May 1918 and the end of 1920 nearly 4.7 million members of the Red and White forces, partisan detachments, and nationalist armies died as a result of combat or disease, or simply disappeared. The population on Soviet territory (within 1926 borders) fell from its 1917 level by 7.1 million in 1920, by 10.9 million in 1921, and by 12.7 million in early 1922. Up to 2.1 million of this

loss was due to emigration, but the overwhelming majority who died perished not in battle but as a result of the ravages of typhus, typhoid fever, cholera, smallpox, dysentery, hunger, and cold. (Smith 2017, p. 161)

The autocratic and repressive Bolshevik state that partly resulted from the exigencies of this period had much in common with the Tsarist state. The nation had passed from one autocracy to another, a continuation of the autocratic rule that had reined from the beginning of the Rus'. For the West, the Oriental Tsarist Other was exchanged for the Bolshevik Other – a “monster which seeks to devour civilized society and reduces mankind to the state of beasts” (US Secretary of State Lansing quoted in Carley 2014, p. 17); a new incarnation of the wild and bestial Russian Bear was to be contained by the dutiful Bulldog, the Rooster and the majestic Eagle within a *cordon sanitaire*. The 1920 *Miracle on the Vistula* that had saved Warsaw, and therefore Poland, from the Red Army and integration into the Soviet Union, had blocked direct Bolshevik access to Western Europe. The earlier failed *German Revolution* (1918-1919) had also reduced the possibility of any repeat of the Bolshevik Revolution across the continent. A US Red Scare and a French *Peril Rouge* were also utilized to crush any socialist forces that might catch the Bolshevik disease, as “The spirit of the Bolsheviks is lurking everywhere, and there is no more fertile soil than war weariness” (President Wilson quoted in Lascurettes 2020, p. 150). The *Zinoviev Letter* (from the head of the Communist International to the British Communist Party directing the latter to engage in sedition), widely agreed now to have been a forgery, was also used in Britain to defeat the socialist Labour Party in the



1924 election. All of these actions underlined the antagonism of Western governments to Bolshevism.

The *New Economic Policy* (NEP) that was put in place in 1921 by Lenin allowed for a mixed economy reoriented toward the market and private business, in an attempt to recover from the devastation of the two wars and to quiet widespread unrest. In some ways it paralleled the approach taken decades later by Deng in China, a communist party overseeing a significantly liberalized economy. Unlike the post-WW1 Soviet Union though, China was aided by extensive trade and investments from the West and did not have to be concerned about future military conflict with the West. The heyday of the NEP was from 1924-1926, after which the Stalin-dominated group (Lenin had been seriously ill since 1922 and died in 1924) turned against it. The *Soviet War Scare* of 1927 (the Nationalists in China had split with the Communists, the British had cut off diplomatic relations to the Soviet Union, the Soviet minister to Poland was assassinated in Warsaw and France forced the recall of the Soviet ambassador [Sontag 1975, p. 70]) underlined the need for a rapid industrialization to make the USSR capable of fighting a war with one or more of the Western powers.

Without rapid industrialization the result of a major war with the West would most probably be a rerun of the WW1 - defeat. Great Britain, Italy and France had recognized the Soviet Union in 1924, but the other actions of these powers were interpreted as removing the possibility of them aiding in the development of the Soviet economy. Instead the USSR would have to rely upon domestic resources, “By the summer of 1927, however, it had become evident to Soviet spokesmen that the capitalist West would not be the source of badly needed credits; rather the West had shown its

hostility toward the Soviet Union and was viewed once again as a threat to the existence of the Soviet state” (Sontag 1975, p. 74). This was underlined by the lack of governmental recognition by a United States that was extremely antagonistic towards the Soviet communist party; in contrast to the immediate US recognition of the 1917 Provisional Government. The period from 1917 until the inauguration of Roosevelt, who recognized the communist government, has been likened to a *First Cold War* (Davis & Trani 2002), “America had ‘quarantined’ Russia and asked others to do so as well. In March 1921, Hoover issued a statement that trade was limited by communism because credits could not be extended to a government that repudiated private property” (Davis & Trani 2002, p. 200). Such a policy of containment was reintroduced in the post-WW2 years, representing continuity from this period – with much in common between President Wilson’s and George Kennan’s statements about the nature of the Bolshevik government; “in 1920 Wilson had come close to the conclusion that Kennan arrived at after World War II ... If Russia were contained, the system would collapse under the weight of its own contradictions” (Davis & Trani 2002, p. 206). A food shortage that the communists believed was significantly due to the *kulaks* (more affluent peasants) hoarding food also undermined support for the NEP.

The above pointed toward the need to extract a much greater surplus from agriculture with which to carry out rapid industrialization. This would require the repression of any peasant resistance to that extraction, a resistance centered on the kulaks. Stalin utilized the War Scare to consolidate his power, and by the end of 1927 he had expelled his main rival Trotsky together with two other leading communists, Zinoviev and Kamenev from the Party.

#### 5.1.4. The Communist USSR (1928 – 1988): Rapid Growth Followed by Stagnation

Stalin reversed the NEP in 1928 and central state planning and the forced collectivization of agriculture followed, “From the mid 1930s to Stalin’s death in 1953, the policies of forced collectivization, rapid industrialization, and centralized planning through a series of five-year plans held complete sway” (Keeran & Kenny 2010, chap. 2, para. 16). Reinforcing his position, in 1929 he removed his other possible rival, Bukharin, from the Politburo when the latter disagreed with the forced collectivization policy; Stalin had become a *de facto* communist Tsar. His two aims were to forcibly collectivize the peasantry to remove them as a threat to the revolution and to rapidly industrialize in order to meet the external threats. With respect to the latter, nothing was allowed to stand in the way of removing the nation’s backwardness:

To slacken the tempo would be to fall behind. And the backward get beaten. We don’t want to be beaten ... The history of old Russia consisted, among other things, in her being ceaselessly beaten for her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal rulers ... by the Polish-Lithuanian lords. She was beaten by the Anglo-French capitalists ... [and] by the Japanese barons. Everyone gave her a beating for her backwardness ... They beat her because it was profitable and could be done with impunity ... We have fallen behind the advanced countries by 50 to 100 years. We must close the gap in ten years. Either we do or we will be crushed. (Stalin, quoted by Carley 2014, p. 352)

The drive to industrialize was at first aided by good weather in 1930, concessions made to the peasants, and the Great Depression in the West; the latter made those nations much more open to their corporations accepting Soviet contracts.

As other customers for large capital orders became scarce, Stalin shopped the great capitalist department store. Starting with the American companies Freyn Engineering and Arthur McKee ... to import the new American wide-strip steel mills and heavy blooming mills with which to build brand new integrated steel plants ... with the Ford Motor Company to build an integrated mass-production facility ... Caterpillar was engaged to re-equip facilities ... to mass-produce tractors and harvesters ... DuPont and Nitrogen Engineering to manufacture chemicals, nitric acid, and synthetic nitrogen, and Westvaco for chlorine ... ball-bearings technology from Sweden and Italy, advanced plastics and aircraft from France, turbines and electrical technology from Britain. Virtually every contract would contain one turnkey installation – an entire plant from scratch to operations. (Kotkin 2017, p. 31-32)

The West was greatly aiding the development of a Soviet Union that it had only recently tried to strangle at birth, paralleling its later role with post-Mao China; “Tsarist Russia had produced almost no machine tools in 1914, the Soviet Union, in 1932, produced 20,000” (Kotkin 2017, p. 71). No such aid is forthcoming for Russia in the present, rather the opposite in the form of sanctions. The good luck would not continue. As collectivization and forced grain procurements were intensified, with one of its aims

the explicit destruction of the kulaks, drought visited the main growing areas; resulting in widespread famine, “in 1931, a cold spring followed by a summer drought – a fatal combination – struck the Kazakh steppes, Siberia, the Urals, the Volga, and Ukraine” (Kotkin 2017, p. 75). At the same time the Great Depression created deflation in commodity prices, the exports of which were paying for the foreign technologies critical to Soviet industrialization. The pace of industrialization would have to be significantly slowed, or the peasants would have to be sacrificed; Stalin chose to sacrifice the peasants. During the years of 1932 and 1933 it has been estimated that anywhere between 4.5 and 10 million died from the direct and indirect effects of the famine, as Stalin refused to redirect resources to alleviate the suffering. The scale of the required repression was extensive, “Collectivization involved the arrest, internal deportation, or incarceration of 4 to 5 million peasants, the effective enslavement of another 100 million” (Kotkin 2017, p. 131).

The higher death figures tend to be utilized by those that argue for a *Holodomor* (death by hunger), a purposefully produced famine to quell Ukrainian nationalism. Such claims are open to substantial academic debate, especially whether or not a conscious genocidal decision-making was present, and the higher death figures have not been confirmed by more recent academic access to Soviet-era records (Vallin, Meslé, Adamets & Pyrozhevskov 2002; Himka 2008). The leading scholar of famine, Cormac O’Grada, states, with respect to theories of an intentionally ordered famine directed at the Ukraine:

Recent specialist scholarship denies this, regarding the ‘years of hunger’ instead as the outcome of a political struggle between a ruthless regime, bent on

industrialization at a breakneck speed, and an exploited and uncooperative peasantry. The recently released correspondence between Stalin and his right-hand man, Party Secretary Lazar Kaganovich, shows no sign of a plan to single out the Ukraine; to the contrary, on August 11, 1932, Stalin ... confided to Kaganovich his conviction that ‘we should be unstinting in providing money’ to the Ukraine, if only for fear that it might be lost to Moscow. (O’Grada 2009, p. 236)

Propaganda was also effectively mixed with repression to facilitate an extreme level of work intensification and exploitation, “Money was spent like water, men froze, hungered and suffered but the construction went on with a disregard for individuals and a mass heroism seldom paralleled in history” (Scott, quoted in Parenti 1997, p. 67). The strange mix of deprivation, persecution and optimistic propaganda is captured by Kotkin:

Looked at soberly, Stalin’s anti-capitalist experiment resembled a vast camp of deliberately deprived workers, indentured farmers, and slave laborers toiling for the benefit of an unacknowledged elite. But the Soviet Union was a fairy tale. Unrelenting optimism spread alongside famine, arrests, deportations, executions, camps, censorship, sealed borders. (Kotkin 2017, p. 304)

It can be argued that Stalin made the right decision with respect to the *raison d’etat*, it was the forced industrialization that allowed the Soviet Union to withstand the later Nazi onslaught. With a good fall harvest in 1933, and the impacts of the crash

industrialization starting to be seen, the parallel collectivization and industrialization strategy could start to be seen as a success; especially when set against the depression within the capitalist realm. Unlike Mao in the early 1960s, Stalin had maintained his pre-eminence while fully collectivizing agriculture and building the nation's industrial might, "Stalin forced into being a *socialist* modernity, presiding over the creation of a mass-production economy, a Soviet mass culture, an integrated society, and a mass politics, without private property" (Kotkin 2017, p. 296).

The dictatorship of Stalin, as with the Tsars, requires the analytical use of Mearsheimer's first image, "within man", in this case a single man; a man who "increasingly was alone. Not only had both of his wives died [the second one committing suicide], but now his closest friend [Kirov] was gone [murdered]", his relations with his children had become strained, and "newer associates, Andreyev, Yezhov, and Zhdanov, were minions, not social peers, and he was not close to the unlettered Kaganovich or the stiff Molotov" (Kotkin 2017, p. 236). He had also been repeatedly challenged within the party over the previous few years and sat atop a communist state that was both alone and surrounded by those that had proven that they would conspire to destroy it. In such circumstances, paranoia may be functional, but it may also escalate beyond the functional level and exacerbate an already "demonic disposition" (Kotkin 2017, p. 303). The conspiratorial nature of Stalin's rise within the Party, together with "Lenin's purported [last] testament calling for his removal" (Kotkin 2017, p. 299), can only have supported a propensity to assume that others may be plotting against him. As the decade wore on Stalin became fixated on his former opponents, especially the exiled Trotsky (who was murdered in 1940 in Mexico), and the level of repression escalated to dizzying heights.

The previous peak in Soviet executions had been 20,201 in 1930; in 1937 and 1938 combined there would be 681,692 (closer to 830,000 if other causes of death during detention are taken into account) out of a working age population of about 100 million (Kotkin 2017). This *Great Terror* was carried out in an environment of little real domestic political threat. The Terror spread to the officer corps, with the greatest impact at the most senior level. Nine out ten of the most senior commanders were executed, “among the highest rungs of 186 commanders of divisions, the carnage took 154, as well as 8 out of 9 admirals, 13 of the army’s 15 full generals, and 3 out of 5 marshals” (Kotkin 2017, p. 378). A toll that both greatly reduced the military leadership quality and greatly reduced the possibility of candid feedback to Stalin, setting up the disaster of the first months of the German invasion. The state bureaucracy, military intelligence and industrial management were also seriously diminished. Just as with Mao and the Cultural Revolution, Stalin would come to recognize the need to rein in what he had started before it destroyed what he had created. If it was only the weaker members of the leadership of the Party that were not seen as threats and therefore survived, such as Khrushchev (see below), what was the impact upon the quality of Soviet decision making longer-term? Given the leadership tenure of this generation until the mid-1980s that quality may have been significantly diminished both by the negative-fitness survivor selection effects of the purges, and the psychological effects upon those survivors. In the Cultural Revolution Mao tended to *banish* those out of favor, but not *eliminate* them, allowing for the reconstitution of a functional elite after the worst years of the Cultural Revolution.

Only painstakingly slowly did Stalin recognize the menace of a rearmed Nazi Germany led by a Hitler who railed against the “Judeo-Bolshevik” menace. The 1936



*Anti-Comintern Pact* between Germany and Japan, joined by Italy in 1937, threatened the Soviet Union with attack from both the East and the West. The German annexation of Austria and the partitioning of Czechoslovakia, and the victory of the German-backed Franco in Spain underlined the threat. Stalin also exacerbated the historic enmity of the Baltic States, Finland, Poland and Romania toward the Soviet Union, and there had been repeated discussions between Germany and Poland about the latter joining the Anti-Comintern Pact; which would threaten a joint German-Polish invasion. After the British and French guarantees were given to Poland, the two nations opened talks with the Soviet Union, but the British firstly obfuscated with respect to the formal alliance proposed by the Soviets and then informed Germany that they would not enter into such an alliance with the Soviets (Kotkin 2017, p. 621 & 629). With a German invasion of Poland imminent, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Germany on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, including shared protocols dividing up Poland and the Baltic States in the event of a German invasion. This resulted in the front line between the Germans and Soviets being moved many hundreds of miles farther away from Moscow than it would otherwise have been, while reclaiming lands taken by the Poles in the 1920 Polish-Soviet War and removing the threat of invasion from the Baltic States. Thoughts that Germany would become bogged down in the West after its invasion of the Low Countries and France in May 1940 were dashed by the rout of the British and French armies. Within a year German forces would be amassed on the Soviet border, with their attack on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1941 aided by Stalin's unwillingness to properly mobilize his forces in the face of widespread warnings of an imminent invasion. "Hitler's plan to fool Stalin worked remarkably well, permitting near-total surprise ... Though Barton Whaley lists eighty-

four different warnings that should have alerted Moscow, Stalin refused to believe or act on any of them, in part because he did not want to take any action that might provoke Hitler” (Gompert, Binnendijk & Lin 2014, p. 85).

The Soviet victory over the Axis powers would cost over 20 million dead together with widespread devastation and capped three decades during which the USSR had faced two invasions by Germany, a brutal civil war that included the intervention of numerous Western nations, a major famine, and The Terror. After all of this, the Soviet Union was faced with an overwhelming superior and antagonistic US and its allies. The alliance to beat the Axis Powers quickly turned into a continuation of the Cold War that had been broken by the Roosevelt administration, with a President Truman (who succeeded Roosevelt in 1945) that had stated in the New York Times after hearing that Germany had invaded the USSR in 1941 “if we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kill as many as possible ... Neither of them think anything of their pledged word” (quoted in Butler 2008, p. 324).

the price of defeat in World War 1 was the punitive Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which was designed to turn Eastern Europe and the westernmost parts of Russia into a German preserve through a system of satellite states and economic exploitation ... the civil war that followed the October Revolution drew in foreign powers including Great Britain, France, Japan, and the United States ... in 1941 invading Axis forces advanced six hundred miles into Soviet territory in four months on their whole front and were only checked after twelve months, by when their southern armies had advanced a thousand miles into the Soviet Union ... in

1959 the U. S. Strategic Air Command had 1,750 bomber capable of nuclear strikes on the Soviet Union, which lacked an effective means of attacking the United States. (MccGwire 1991, p. 8)

This imbalance led to a massive redirection of economic resources toward the military, and away from the reconstruction and development of the civilian economy, in an attempt to address the disparity with the US and NATO. The 1949 consolidation of the French, English and US zones of occupation into a rejuvenating West Germany, that became a member of NATO in 1955, can have only added to Soviet concerns. The rift with China in the late 1950s also created a rival on the Soviet's eastern border. Given the Marxist-Leninist assumption of existential conflict between communist and capitalist systems, supported by US behavior and statements that called for the destruction of the Soviet system, Soviet defense policy was directed toward not losing a war; losing meant the destruction of the communist system within the USSR.

The resulting defensive posture was reflected in the maintenance of the Eastern European buffer (including the previously belligerent Poland, Baltic states, and Western Ukraine), the focus on a *Communism In One Country* that seriously limited the Western European left wing, and acquiescence to the Western dominance in Italy and Greece (Kolko 1990); which in the latter case included the use of Allied troops to defeat a communist insurgency. This defensive posture also drove Soviet military doctrine, with the USSR in a constant state of catch up with the West.

As fast as they caught up or developed a counter in one area of military technology, the United States would introduce a new weapons system that

outflanked them ... In the 1950s it was the United States that enunciated the policy of devastating strikes upon the Soviet Union known as massive retaliation; it was NATO ... that declared that it had integrated its arsenals and would use conventional or atomic weapons as appropriate. Soviet war planners had to accept these and other constraints, and ... they were strategy takers, unlike the Germans in World War II who were strategy setters.

(McCWire 1991, p. 16)

On March 5<sup>th</sup> 1953, Stalin died and with the aid of General Zhukov (the military hero of WW2) Khrushchev established his leadership; including the execution of Stalin's head of state security, Beria. Three years later, Khrushchev delivered the *Secret Speech* (which was relatively widely circulated within the Party and Eastern Europe) that was a "devastating attack on Stalin" who was "guilty of 'a grave abuse of power'" (Taubman 2012, p. 271) while glossing over his own extensive involvement in The Terror and wartime mistakes. A process of de-Stalinization was carried out, that included the rehabilitation of about twenty million victims of Stalin's terror (both alive and deceased), and the release of those still imprisoned. This process undermined the Polish and Hungarian regimes, leading to increasing unrest. In the former this was successfully met with reforms, but in the latter the Soviet leadership "were in over their heads" (Taubman 2012, p. 300) and the crisis led to direct military intervention to crush the uprising. In July 1957 Khrushchev very narrowly survived an attempted *putsch*. During the Khrushchev era (1953-1964) there was a limited amount of economic liberalization, some of which was reversed during his tenure, together with some political decentralization.

Khrushchev had attempted to ease Cold War tensions through many unilateral actions, such as “deep unilateral cuts in Soviet armed forces ... [pulling] troops out of Austria and Finland [and encouraging] reform in Eastern Europe” (Taubman 2012, p. 399). Mirroring its response to the unilateral overtures provided by Gorbachev three decades later, the US “refused these overtures ... made their acceptance subject to conditions he as a Communist considers impossible. We are in the process of rearming Germany and strengthening our bases surrounding Soviet territory ... He has offered a European settlement based on the status quo while we engage in economic competition” (US Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson quoted in Taubman 2012, p. 399). The 1960 shooting down of a US U2 spy plane which had flown deep into Soviet air space served to poison the relationship between the two nations, and the failed 1961 US *Bay of Pigs* invasion of Cuba together with the start of the construction of the *Berlin Wall* (to stop the exodus of East Germans through West Berlin) increased the tensions. In response to the US attempted invasion, and the stationing of US nuclear missiles in Italy and Turkey, the Soviet Union placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. The resulting 1962 *Cuban Missile Crisis* came close to triggering a nuclear war, with this visceral threat of mutual annihilation creating a somewhat less antagonistic relationship between the US and the USSR that facilitated the later *détente* at the end of the 1960s. The Brezhnev years (1964 to 1982) were ones of stability, rather than change, but with a greater focus on military spending and advanced technology and less on the production of consumer goods.

His leadership had started propitiously, with the “Brezhnev Thaw” that included a continuation of the loosening of media control that had occurred under Khrushchev, but with a less celebratory and more reflective tone; the media acting as a critical lens to

identify such things as entrenched bureaucracy and corruption. Such an official mandate did not sit well when it was directed at those within the power structure, and the latter's sense of being under attack was exacerbated "particularly after the 1963 decision to end jamming of foreign radio stations" (Huxtable 2016, p. 32) and from the dissident *samizdat* publications. With political unrest in Eastern Europe – especially in, but not limited to, Czechoslovakia, the tension between the revolutionary possibilities of press freedom and the need for political stability came more to the fore. The thaw started to turn into a freeze from 1965 onwards "Gradually, deviation from established truths were considered dangerous; 'liberal' became a term of abuse" (Huxtable 2016, p. 34). By 1968 Kosygin's (the reformist Premier) general reformist path, which included a small liberalization of economic planning and management, had been defeated. An early very limited attempt at the later *Perestroika* and *Glaznost* had been snuffed out, with a repeat of the 1956 press crackdown that stemmed from many of the same concerns (which included the unrest in Hungary).

By 1974, the country had seen trials of prominent intellectuals, a crackdown on suspect thought within the social sciences, and by September an exhibition of 'non-conformist' artists in Izmailovskii Park, Moscow, was literally crushed by the authorities, which gave it the name by which it is now known: the "Bulldozer exhibition". (Huxtable 2016, p. 21)

The Brezhnev era became "associated with conformity, pessimism, and stability" (Ibid.). At first to "grease" the central planning wheels and to meet some of the unmet

consumer needs, an illicit economy had developed during the Stalin years. This grew during the Khrushchev period, and accelerated under Brezhnev into a full-blown parallel economy that involved the widespread corruption of state and party officials, reaching to the very top (Keeran & Kenny 2010, ch. 3); “the top operators in the shadow economy were an indispensable part of Brezhnev’s power base – and some indeed were close family friends” (Crump 2014, p. 209)

Between 1928 and 1970, the USSR was the third fastest growing economy in the world. At the peak of the Soviet economy in 1975, the GDP per capita was higher than Mexico, Latin America, South Korea, Taiwan (Ricon 2016), and of course, a China that was as poor as Africa. Russian GDP per capita was also just below 40% that of the US, 35% as late as the early 1980s, and did not start to fall rapidly with respect to the US until very late in that decade and after the start of the Gorbachev reforms (Ricon 2016). The USSR was self-sufficient in oil throughout the communist era. Prior to World War 2, the Baku region had been the center of the Russian oil industry. In the post-war period, the Ural and Volga regions, “proved to be a bonanza” (Yergin 2011, p. 496), with Soviet oil production doubling between 1955 and 1960. Baku production never met its pre-war levels, and the Ural and Volga regions peaked in 1975. The discovery of massive oil deposits in Siberia more than offset these declines, with oil production reaching a ten-year plateau in 1980 at five times what it had been in 1960. With an increasing share of oil production being exported in the post-war period, the result was a substantial increase in Soviet foreign exchange revenues. This effect was accelerated by the sustained jump in oil prices after the first oil shock at the beginning of the 1970s, together with increases in natural gas exports.

These foreign exchange revenues were used to purchase the goods that the Soviet economy did not provide – such as new technologies, consumer durables and food. The oil rent funded imports that filled the gaps in the heavy industry, and military industrial complex, focused Russian economy. “The unbelievably strong (and increasing since the 1970s) dependence of the Soviet Union on, first of all, imports of wheat and a number of other categories of consumer and industrial goods, especially high-tech ones, became one of the plates in its armor” (Ermolaev 2017). The 1970s increase in oil prices only added to this “When oil prices increased (and they continuously increased between 1974 and 1980), there was a temptation to boost imports even more” (Ermolaev 2017). The large increases in both oil and natural gas production also fuelled a domestic economy that was highly energy intensive, including personal fossil fuel consumption that was heavily subsidized (compared to international prices) by the state. In contrast to many Western nations, the USSR did not increase energy efficiency in response to the oil price jumps of the 1970s.

The collapse in oil prices in the 1980s hit a Soviet economy highly dependent upon fossil fuel foreign exchange earnings for meeting basic consumer needs. This can be seen as at least a contributing factor to the sense of crisis that led to Gorbachev’s attempts at reform and the later dissolution of the Soviet Union. The state had been able to delay necessary reforms due to the previously surging amounts of foreign exchange earnings, allowing the underlying problems to compound further.

It seemed a cure for all problems . . . Do [we] really need to solve the food problem radically and quickly, when it’s so easy to buy tens of millions tons of grain, followed by huge amounts of meat, and other food products from America,



Canada and Western European nations? Do we really need to pull our construction industry out of the horrible underdevelopment, if we can just utilize Finnish, Yugoslavian or Swedish construction specialists to build or reconstruct important objects and import the scarcest materials and plumbing equipment from West Germany, and shoes and furniture from other places? Many of my colleagues and I, in the end of the 1970s until the beginning of the 1980s, were thinking that the West Siberian oil saved the economy . . . then we started to come to the conclusion that this wealth had at the same time seriously undermined our economy; the due and overdue reforms were continuously postponed. (Arbatov quoted in Ermolaev 2017)

The Soviet Union was not well positioned for the changes required to remedy its lagging performance in economic growth and commercial technology (as against military and space technology) and its inability to provide for increasingly complex and heterogeneous consumer needs. This was made worse by the intensification of the corruption of the state and society,

during the last three decades of the Soviet era, illegal economic activity penetrated into every sector and chink of the economy; assumed every conceivable shape and form; and operated on a scale ranging from minimal or modest for the mass to the substantial for the many, to the lavish and gigantic, as well as elaborately organized, for some . . . the shadow economy spread out, grew, and prospered – under Brezhnev (1964-82) thanks to benign neglect if not tacit encouragement. (Grossman 1998a, p. 31)

Much of this activity involved stealing time and materials from the state; a precursor to the wholesale looting that took place from the late 1980s onwards. The rapid phase of Soviet growth, from the 1950s to the early 1970s had been based on an “extensive” growth model, utilizing greater and greater amounts of labor (freed from intensified agriculture), land and raw materials. With the end of the labor surplus provided by the intensification of agriculture, raw material depletion that required the development of the higher cost Siberian deposits that “swallowed up a large fraction of the investment budget for little increase in GDP” (Allen 2001, p. 876), and a heavy redirection of R&D activities from commercial to military uses, the growth rate fell from the early 1970s onwards. Allen (2001) also points to a redirection of investment from the building of more modern plants to the maintenance and upgrade of current plants, as further reducing the growth rate. The ecological degradation caused by the intensive utilization of marginal lands, exemplified by the depletion of the Aral Sea to grow cotton, may also have constrained agricultural productivity. As noted above, the availability of the large amounts of foreign exchange provided by the rapid rise in oil prices in the 1970s also provided policy options that did not require the underlying economic problems to be addressed.

The two premiers following a Brezhnev who suffered a serious decline in health in his last decade (dependent on tranquilizers and having suffered two strokes), an Andropov who suffered total kidney failure in early 1983 (1982-1984) and the terminally ill Chernenko (1984-1985), were not alive long enough to have any real reformist impact. With Brezhnev having greatly reduced the turnover of the *nomenklatura* the administration had become significantly geriatric, stifling the ability to develop new

talent and be open to new ideas. Even as late as 1984, the leadership considered that only incremental reform was required.

the Soviet leadership still believed that [a strong Soviet economy] could be achieved by shaking off the stagnation of the late Brezhnev years and following through on fairly simple reforms [which] would include speeding up the shift from extensive to intensive development; improving the planning of production, the allocation of resources, and the distribution of goods; eliminating waste; and increasing the efficiency of managers and the discipline of the workforce. (McCgwire 1991, p. 158)

At this point, the Soviet economy may have been capable of slow growth for a significant period and the ensuing collapse was not an inevitability.

even though Soviet socialism had clearly lost the competition with the West, it was lethargically stable, and could have continued muddling on for quite some time. Or it might have tried a Realpolitik retrenchment, cutting back on superpower ambitions, legalizing and then institutionalizing market economics to revive its fortunes, and holding tightly to central power by using political repression. (Kotkin 2001, Intro., para. 2)

In 1985 Gorbachev became premier, with a mostly unreformed state planning system that had been significantly corrupted, and a growth model that could only produce

extremely slow levels of economic growth. In the first two years of the Gorbachev leadership (1985-87), a generally reformist stance was taken in an attempt to reduce corruption and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the communist system. Even a reformist stance threatened many in the *nomenklatura* and their lifestyles. In many ways the *nomenklatura* could be likened to a non-capitalist oligarchy, but with their lifestyles and ability to push forward their offspring wholly dependent upon the continuation of their positions within the Party; with the exception of the illegal wealth obtained through the extensive corruption. This is very different to a capitalist oligarchy that owns the wealth that supports their lifestyles and can pass that wealth from one generation to another. There were three main interest groups, each representing a “combination of monopolies, their suppliers and customers who greatly depended on their success, and their representatives in the top political cadres ... the defense-industrial complex (OPK), agro-industrial complex (APK) and fuel-energy complex (TEK)” (Guriev 2019, p. 125). The ossification of the Soviet state and Party, and the human composition of the interest groups within it, was very different to the experience of China, where collectivization and central planning had only been in place since the late 1950s and the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath had produced instability, rather than stability, in the elite. The sheer scale of the Chinese population also facilitated a lower level of political centralization.

### 5.1.5. Accelerating Collapse (1988 to 1998)

From 1988 onwards Gorbachev followed much more radical and disruptive policies, which constituted a fundamental restructuring away from communism and toward private property and market-based solutions; it was from this period onwards that GDP peaked before starting an accelerating absolute decline. This can be seen as an attempt to outmaneuver the inertial elements within the Party, but unfortunately many members of the *nomenklatura* that resisted reform were also best placed to take advantage of a dismantling that provided them the opportunity to transform their positions within the hierarchy into private wealth.

No substantive attempt was made to purge the *nomenklatura* to reduce the power of vested interests, nor was there any attempt to drive through necessary but painful reforms such as limited price liberalization backed up with repression (as Deng ordered in 1989). The possibility of a coup in response to such actions, as had happened to Khrushchev, was always a possibility:

These [defense, industry and energy] lobbies were interested in preserving the status quo. Even an omnipotent General Secretary of the Communist Party could not have crushed them. Miller ... cites a conversation between Gorbachev and Gosplan's head ... showing their understanding that curbing the military budget would result in their "dismissal". (Gurieiev 2019, p. 129)

In the face of reduced revenues due to lower oil prices and alcohol prohibition, the state utilized international borrowing to support social expenditures, increased

military expenditures and industrial subsidies. At the same time consumer prices were kept low in “order to pacify the general public” (Guriev 2019, p. 126). The state became severely weakened through increased indebtedness, with the monetization of those debts when combined with price controls creating a repressed inflation waiting for any freeing of prices.

The 1988 laws on cooperatives and leases allowed for the *de facto* creation of private enterprises able to hold private property; possibilities that the more powerful shadow economy elements were best placed to take advantage of. The liberalization of trade also facilitated easy profits for those with the right connections, as goods could be bought at the low domestic prices (or stripped from state enterprises) and sold at much higher international prices for hard currency. Gorbachev’s decision to keep domestic prices low aided the process of looting, as black markets flourished and created shortages at the official prices. The result was an increasingly powerful and diverse group, including many state actors, that had become wealthy through simple arbitrage and asset stripping (and significant violence) rather than through the creation of real wealth.

Caught between a rapidly diminishing and indebted state apparatus, and a “private” sector heavily focused on extracting rather than creating wealth, the economy faltered and the black-market inflation accelerated. At the same time, the opening of the media to direct criticisms of the state and Party, *Glasnost*, helped undermine the legitimacy of both (Remnick 1993); especially from 1987 onwards as the press became increasingly pro-market and anti-communist (Keeran & Kenny 2010). This further reduced the capacity of an already heavily disillusioned and corrupt state apparatus to enforce rules and commit to future plans – helping to stymie any possibility of any social

bargain based on the redistribution of the future benefits of reforms. The period from 1989 to 1991 represented a period of accelerating collapse, with the dysfunction of the weakened, delegitimized and increasingly corrupt state sector added to by the profiteering of many in the legal and illegal private sector. The economy was neither capitalist nor communist, but a highly dysfunctional and corrupt combination of the two.

Adding to this were political changes that disrupted economic policymaking and coordination; such as the wholesale constitutional changes, increasing nationalism (especially in the Yelstin-led Russian Republic) and the independence of an increasing number of Eastern European communist-bloc nations; facilitated by Gorbachev's stated policy of non-intervention and accelerated by the cessation of subsidized imports from the USSR. The removal of the previous *Brezhnev Doctrine* of Soviet military intervention to defeat any challenge to Eastern European communist regimes may have been a gambit to galvanize such regimes into reformist efforts, but it backfired spectacularly as it facilitated the collapse of those regimes. The resulting disintegration of the Soviet Bloc then helped legitimize the possibility of the disintegration of the multinational Soviet Union while demoralizing the Soviet leadership – especially the unification of Germany on Western terms. As Gorbachev would later write, “I would be less than sincere if I said that I had foreseen the course of events and the problems that the German question would eventually create.” (Gorbachev quoted in Kotkin 2009, p. 218). Events and problems very personally experienced by a Vladimir Putin stationed in East Germany. Gorbachev lost control of the process that he had begun, and his own popularity among the Russian populace plummeted. The *coup de grace* was delivered by the failed communist counter-revolutionary coup (the *August Coup* of 1991), and the resulting dissolution of the Soviet

Union that resulted from the power struggle between Gorbachev and Yeltsin. The suddenness of the dissolution severed complex supply chains and payment processes that straddled newly independent states and produced an unprepared Russian state that at its inception lacked such basic functions as tax collection and effective control over local power structures. Kennan's warning over four decades earlier was shown to be prescient:

If ... anything is ever to occur to disrupt the unity and efficacy of the Party as a political instrument, Soviet Russia might be changed overnight from one of the strongest to one of the weakest and most pitiable of national societies. ("Mr. X"  
[George Kennan] 1947, quoted in Grossman 1998, p. 24)

Communism was only victorious in China in 1949, prior to which the economy has been predominantly market and private property based. With market relations still being tolerated by the CCP until the mid 1950's, the period of non-market relations lasted for only two and a half decades before Deng's reforms. In addition, China benefitted from capitalist enclaves such as Hong Kong, linkages with the capitalist Taiwan and a large entrepreneurial Chinese diaspora. It also had a substantially simpler political economy due to its significantly lower level of economic development, and under Deng the CCP had a highly competent and legitimate state bureaucracy with enforced staff rotations to reduce stasis and undermine the creation of interest groups. The East European Soviet-bloc nations had been mixed capitalist economies prior to their incorporation into the Soviet sphere of influence, with full collectivization not being implemented for many until the 1950's. The economy of Hungary, the richest of the East



European nations, had never been fully collectivized or centrally planned and the state had “been experimenting with marketization since 1968” and “had already taken substantial steps down the path to capitalism” (Kludt 1995). In addition, a significant Hungarian diaspora existed. East Germany was integrated directly into West Germany, with massive amounts of federal financial transfers to aid the transition period. Czechoslovakia had also started a process of limited liberalization in the mid 1960’s, prior to the Soviet invasion and the reinstatement of the Soviet economic model; this liberalization was restarted in the 1980’s.

From an Institutionalist perspective, of all the communist nations, Russia was perhaps one of the least prepared for a move to market relations, private property and democracy. This position was made worse by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, as the production and financial linkages of the previous central planning system that crossed republican borders fell apart resulting in a collapse in trade between the newly independent nations. The new Russian state was extremely weak as at inception it “lacked many of the attributes conventionally associated with statehood. It had neither its own currency nor its own armed forces, it did not control its borders, and it was unable to perform such basic functions as tax collection” (Tompson 2002, p. 15).

Given the massive economic and social destabilization of the 1988-1991 period, exacerbated by the breakup of the Soviet Union and centrifugal forces within Russia itself, a period of consolidation and stabilization may have been sought. Instead of following the gradualist approach followed by China, and to some extent Hungary (Hall & Elliott 1999) a “shock therapy” of rapid change was prescribed by Western elites and advisors and adopted by the Russian state. It may have been the case that things had

deteriorated to such an extent that only a final move to capitalism was possible. A continuance of the *status quo* of a dysfunctional and deteriorating mix of a failing and corrupt state sector and a heavily crony and exploitative private sector was itself a recipe for ongoing collapse. What is without doubt is that the shock therapy accelerated the collapse.

The first case of shock therapy in Chile had been carried out by a strong effective state within a mixed capitalist economy – and even that had to be substantially reversed within less than a decade. The result of rapid deregulation, marketization, and privatization within a country with no history of predominant market relations and institutionalized private property rights, a heavy dependency upon a weakened and corrupted central planning system, and a crony and extractive capitalist sector, should have been predictable, “initial conditions matter much more than economists in Russia and the West who urged rapid reform believed” (Millar 1997, p. 360) and “market elements and private sector were far too poorly developed when economic reforms were introduced in contrast to Poland or Hungary, which have made the economic transition much more difficult and painful” (Gidathubli 1994, p. 1179). Many of the changes were carried out virtually overnight.

The January 1992 reforms freed 90% of retail prices overnight; most remaining prices followed in the ensuing months. Directives and legislation rapidly liberalized trade and exchange rates, cut the state budget (reducing defense expenditures by 68%), curtailed subsidies, and established provisions for enterprise bankruptcy. (Gerber & Hout 1998, p. 4)

The results were made worse by the previously suppressed inflation and loose monetary policy that helped turn inflation into hyperinflation, together with a lack of financial support from other nations. Russia was very significantly deindustrialized, mass unemployment and impoverishment was produced, and through extensive illicit primitive accumulation the major productive assets were concentrated within a few “oligarchic” hands, many of which were the previous “ruling elite in pursuit of its own perceived interests” (Kotz & Weir 1997). This was “insider privatization” that allowed the “large-scale conversion of state property into private property by ... the former managers of state enterprises in connivance with the higher echelons of the bureaucrats and former party apparatchiks known as the 'nomenklatura'” (Gidadhubli & Mohanty 2002, p. 5000). Cohen (2001, p. 101) supports this view, noting “when ‘privatization’ of large-scale property began in 1993-1994, members of the former Soviet elite, the *nomenklatura*, were its main beneficiaries”. This process was greatly aided by ill-defined property rights that facilitated insider looting and the extremely rapid privatization of large swathes of the economy to the benefit of those with the right connections and financial resources.

The plan to transfer ownership and governance of economic enterprises from the state into private hands was designed in 1992 and mostly implemented by June 1994. By that time over 75% of small-scale enterprises were privatized through direct competitive bidding or lease buyouts. Another 49,000 medium- and large-scale enterprises, forming 60% of industrial assets, had completed or were undergoing ‘mass’ privatization. (Ibid., p. 5).

The process “was completed by the scandalous loans-for-shares deals of the mid-1990s” (Tompson 2002, p. 18). This was very different to the Chinese approach where rather “than undertaking the massive, centralized privatization of State-owned enterprises (SOEs), the Chinese government permitted a variety of ownership forms, including firms collectively owned by local governments, foreign-invested firms and new private start-ups” (Buck et. al. 2000, p. 381) and kept ownership of the SOEs that it considered to be in strategic economic sectors such as energy and weapons production, together with the banking system.

Russian GDP collapsed by 18% in 1992, followed by 12% and 15% in the next two years, plus another 4% in 1995 (Ibid.). As Millar noted in 1997 (p. 360):

The main annual macroeconomic indicators, including GDP, industrial production, agricultural production and capital investment have been falling in Russia since 1989, and the best forecasts suggest that they will continue to fall at least through 1997, although perhaps at a slower rate. Inflation continues too, although at lower rates recently ... The main sectors of the economy are mired in debt: the enterprises to each other, their employees and the budget, and the government owes enterprises and their employees substantial sums too. Some 33.6 million persons are living below the official poverty line, many more than in 1989. Plus those living on the verge of poverty, the total may consist of one-half of the total population at a minimum. Life expectancy at birth has declined from 62 years for men and 74 for women in 1992 to 58 and 72, respectively, in 1996.

The halving of international oil prices between 1996 and 1998 further worsened the economic position, and the state defaulted on its foreign debts in August of the latter year.

In 1993, Russia's fledgling democracy had been "dealt a wounding, possibly fatal, blow" as President Yeltsin carried out a military-backed coup that terminated "Parliament and all other elements of rule-of-law government in Moscow" (Cohen 2001, p. 125); actions approved of by the US President, who stated "approvingly that 'if such a thing happened in the United States' he too would have taken 'tough actions'" (Ibid.). The increasingly heavy influence of the oligarchs over the Russian state apparatus added to the diminution of democracy. It was further subverted in 1996, with Yeltsin only just beating the Communist Party for the Presidency through the extensive intervention of the oligarchs, a US-supplied political strategy team (Jones 2017) and a suspiciously timely IMF loan that "will help Mr. Yeltsin carry through on commitments to increase social spending and to pay back wages, both of which will be helpful to him in winning votes" as the New York Times (1996) noted at the time. The above was wholeheartedly supported by the US President, as he "and his top aides [went] far beyond the norm of international relations, becoming the cheerleader, accomplice, and spin doctor, and thus implicating America [sic] in some of [Yeltsin's] most ill-advised and even wicked deeds" (Cohen 2001, p. 139). The US election meddling was very overt:

The Clinton administration went out of its way, certainly well beyond propriety, to help Yeltsin win. It arranged a booster-summit meeting in Moscow and a \$10 billion IMF loan shortly before the election, justified the

ongoing Chechen war by comparing it to the American [sic] Civil War and Yeltsin to Lincoln, and sent U.S. campaign experts to serve as his advisors. The American [sic] ambassador in Moscow ... even tried to pressure Grigory Yavlinsky [Yeltsin's main rival for the Presidency] to withdraw from the first round in favor of Yelstin. (Ibid., p. 150)

This period was a social and economic catastrophe greater than that visited upon the United States in the depths of the 1930's depression. "Russia would need decades to regain what it has lost in the nineties, and nothing can retrieve the millions of lives already cut short by the 'transition'" (Cohen 2001, p. 169). The level of personal destruction was pointed to by the fact that in 2001 "real wages were 48 percent of their 1991 value" (Ibid., p. 194) and that "According to official statistics [in 2001], about 40 percent of the people live in poverty, but the actual figure is at least 50 percent, and several reliable Moscow newspapers report that it could be 85 to 90 percent ... In a national survey, only 14 percent ... said they could afford necessary medical treatment" (Ibid., pp. 194-195); in the Soviet Union healthcare had been free and real poverty only afflicted a small percentage of the population. The legacy of Stalin's industrialization had also been destroyed, with a smaller Russia being returned to the backwardness the Tsars that the communists had tried to overcome.

The result [of Boris Yeltsin's "shock therapy" program] was the worst economic and social catastrophe ever suffered by a major nation in peacetime. Russia sank into a corrosive economic depression greater than that of the American 1930s.

Investment plunged by 60%, GDP by almost 50%; some two thirds of Russians were impoverished; the life expectancy of men fell below 59 years; and the population began to decline annually by almost a million people. In 1998, with nothing left to sustain it, the Russian financial system collapsed. State and private banks defaulted on their domestic and foreign obligations, causing still more poverty and widespread misery. (Cohen 2011, p. 26)

Perhaps the most lasting industrial catastrophe of the Russian crisis ... is the demise of advanced electronics manufacturing. (Castells 1998, p. 70)

The effects of the memories of this period upon the general Russian population, and state policy makers, should not be underestimated. The impoverishment of the highly educated middle class that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union, including the destruction of their savings through inflation twice in one decade, represents a significant restraint upon economic and technological development. Strong leadership, social and economic stability, and a resurrection of national pride should all have a heightened attraction to a population that endured this catastrophic period. The generations that came of age and grew up during this period could be likened to the US *Greatest* and *Silent* generations that were the most active generations of the immediate US post-WW2 period, but having endured a more searing experience. For these Russian generations, and the older ones whose savings and pensions were destroyed during the collapse, it could be very easy to see Putin as a savior who rescued their nation and their own personal situations. The perceived complicity of the Western powers in the looting and collapse of the Soviet Union and then Russia adds to the historical memories of the Cold War and the

repeated Western military invasions; Napoleon in 1812, Britain and France in 1852, Germany in WW1 and WW2, and the European and US involvement in the Civil War of 1918-22 (Foglesong 1995).

#### **5.1.6. Recovery and Stagnation (1999 to the present)**

The economy that resulted from this chaotic period of crisis was a highly corrupt one, substantially controlled by a small group of oligarchs and caught in the *Staples Trap* (Haley 2011; Carter 2018); significantly more dependent upon the exports of raw materials and minerals than the USSR. Russia was significantly smaller in population than the Soviet Union, but retained the vast majority of the previous state's oil and gas production within its borders. During the period that started with the first Putin presidency, Russia has been unable to generate a significant manufacturing export sector. In 2017 45% of exports were oil and oil products, 6% natural gas, 5% coal and 6% petrochemicals; 63% fossil fuels. Another 26% of exports were metals, precious metals, wood products and food. Only 6% of exports were made up of instruments, machines and transportation products while nearly half of imports consisted of goods in those categories (OEC 2019). As Sherstnev (2014, p. 82) states:

The Russian economy has become much less diversified, and its structure is dominated by the primary sector industries ... the predominant source of commodity supply and the aforementioned growth of personal consumption is imports. All the talk, especially popular during the perestroika years, about restructuring and converting military production by using its technological



capabilities for civil production basically remained intact. A significant part of the industry was simply lost during the reforms that were actually implemented.

Oil and gas activities also provided 25% of state revenues in 2017 on a direct basis (World Bank Group, 2018), and significantly more when indirect effects are taken into account. Movchan (2017) notes the extreme sensitivity of the Russian state budget to oil prices:

If oil prices start rising again, every \$10 price increase will add \$20–\$40 billion to the budget. In other words, oil prices of \$65–\$70 a barrel will virtually eliminate the budget deficit for the time being. Likewise, an oil price of \$30–\$35 a barrel would seriously exacerbate the deficit problem and could trigger a serious budget crisis as early as 2019–2020.

The first decade of the twenty-first century repeated the Soviet experience of the 1970s, with a continuous increase in oil prices ending in a high plateau that lasted from 2006 to 2014 (excluding the temporary peak and fall around the Global Financial Crisis in 2009). As with the 1970s Soviet case, additional foreign exchange earnings also came from significant increases in natural gas exports. During this period, the Russian economy grew rapidly. The Russian economy hit bottom with the financial collapse of 1998, with the economy contracting by 5.3%. In the next decade, the economy grew at an average annual rate of 7%, nearly doubling its size. After the contraction of 7.8% year of the Global Financial Crisis of 2009, the Russian economy grew an average of over 4% for three years (World Bank 2019). With the steep drop in oil prices in 2014, together

with the added impact of Ukraine-related sanctions, the Russian economy slowed, then contracted (2.3% in 2016 [Ibid.]) and then stabilized at the low growth rates reminiscent of the Soviet period of stagnation.

The GDP per capita of the USSR in 1988 was approximately one third of the US level (Ricon 2016) of US\$21,417 (Worldbank 2019a) – about US\$7,000. This was for all of the USSR and the territory that now constitutes Russia would be expected to have a significantly higher GDP per capita. Russian GDP per capita in 2018 was US\$11,288 (Worldbank 2019b). Accepting the problem of measuring Russian GDP per capita in US\$ (instead of PPP), and the difficulty of measuring GDP in centrally planned economies, this comparison still shows how little real progress has been made in three decades. If the 1980s were the “lost decade” for Latin America, Russia may be seen as having three lost decades. In that period the growth of the US, European, Chinese and other South East Asian economies have left Russia far behind. This very significant per capita relative decline, together with a Russian population that is only half that of the previous USSR, shows how much less powerful Russia is within the international system than was the USSR. The lack of a “Soviet Bloc” only adds to the relative decline with respect to the USSR. If the Cold War US administrations can be seen as having greatly exaggerated the threat that the Soviet Bloc constituted, the current hysterical US claims of the Russian threat make those previous administrations’ claims seem relatively attached to reality.

The recent stabilization of the Russian economy was aided by a significant fall in the ruble exchange rate. Such a flexible exchange rate is only part of the required policies to overcome the volatility of fossil fuel rents:

oil and natural resources are important assets that can contribute to the prosperity of the country and its citizens if managed well. That requires sticking to a policy of letting the exchange rate adjust to changes in oil prices to manage short run macro issues and long-term structural reforms that would allow Russia to become a modern market economy where intangible wealth is an order of magnitude larger than its subsoil wealth. (Becker 2016)

Fossil fuel interests that maintain significant control over state policies, from both within and without, constitute a significant barrier to the required long-term structural reforms needed to accelerate growth outside the primary sector. A case in point is the removal of individual company emission quotas and a carbon trading system from proposed Russian climate change legislation in 2019, under pressure from the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP) and the fossil fuel industry-friendly ministries of Energy and Industry & Trade, in favor of voluntary actions (Butrin & Shapovalov 2019).

the model on which the Russian economy has been based for the past 20 years is dying. Everybody needs to find a way to move money into low-carbon areas of the economy. Under the leadership of Rosneft and Gazprom, this cannot be done. (Yulkin quoted in The Moscow Times 2019)

The result is that Russia's economic growth has remained tightly correlated with fossil fuel rents (Becker 2016). The dependency upon fossil fuel revenues places Russia in an extremely disadvantaged position with respect to an energy transition to alternative

energy sources, especially when it does not possess a competitive manufacturing and services sector that could replace lost oil revenues and take advantage of green technology opportunities. Russia has some advantage in the arms manufacturing and nuclear power sectors, but even these advantages are at risk in the medium term from large customers such as China and India developing their own capabilities. As Movchan (2017) states:

Essentially, Russia needs to develop new export industries, but that ambition requires a financially efficient production capacity on its own territory and a reasonably high quality of product. Unfortunately, Russia is incapable of delivering on either of these goals.

The Putin state has reasserted its control to a significant degree, but power is still negotiated between the state and the oligarchs. Those oligarchs that accepted the rebalancing of power between themselves and the state have remained, while those that have not, have been imprisoned or have fled. After a period of privatization of fossil fuel assets in the decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian state has worked to reassert control over these assets, with state backing becoming “a vital factor determining the success of [fossil fuel] players in Russia’s state managed capitalism” (Kretzschmar, Simpson & Hack 2013, p. 778). The result has been state management but not necessarily nationalization, “even state behemoths such as Rosneft and Gazprom are organized like private companies, geared primarily to pay dividends to shareholders – of which the state is simply the largest” (Wood 2018, p. 24). The need to keep fossil fuel revenues flowing to the state and a “predatory, authoritarian elite” (Ibid., p. 171), together

with an institutional inability to increase domestic energy efficiency and low-carbon sources, is evidenced in Russia's extremely weak Paris commitment of 25-30% below 1990 levels (Climate Action Tracker, 2018). Due to the decimation of heavy industry in the decade following the Soviet collapse this target allows for the country's GHG emissions to grow "6-24% above 2016 levels by 2020 and 15-22% by 2030" (Ibid.). To all intents and purposes Russian fossil fuel centric GDP growth is not constrained by its Paris commitment.

The reorientation of the relationship with the US and the West became apparent with the arrest of the oligarch Khodorkovsky in 2003 and the Georgia crisis of 2008, and then gained speed with the NATO regime change intervention in Libya in 2011 and the start of the Ukrainian crisis in 2013 (see chapter 2.2.3. for more details); this reorientation has fundamentally changed the geopolitical environment for Russia and its ability to exploit its energy resources. Sanctions that included restrictions on the provision of technologies for fossil fuel exploration, together with credits and financial transactions for state banks and oil companies, have had serious impacts. These sanctions have also restricted the possibilities for the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows into Russia that could facilitate a general technology upgrading of Russian economic capabilities (Becker 2009), restricting a development path heavily utilized by China. The US has made it clear that it does not accept a Russia with an independent foreign policy, a local sphere of influence, or a nationalistic elite not fully open to US elite ownership of strategic domestic assets. Escalating Cold War rhetoric from both US state actors and the mainstream media continue to support this position (Cohen 2019).

The Ukrainian crisis directly impacted the ability of Russia to control its natural gas exports to Europe, as major gas pipelines transited through that country. Ukraine failed to pay for delivered supplies, and later defaulted upon the accumulated debt (supported by the IMF against its own rules). Russia had shut off natural gas supplies to the Ukraine to pressure it to pay its debts, but Ukraine simply diverted supplies meant for other European customers. As an alternative Russia has attempted to construct alternative pipeline routes. The South Stream route through Bulgaria was stopped due to pressure from the EU (which wanted to diversify its gas supplies) and the US (Stratfor 2015). The Blue Stream pipeline to Turkey (16 bcm/yr) and the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany (55 bcm/yr) were successfully constructed prior to the Ukrainian crisis. The TurkStream pipeline to Turkey (31.5 bcm/yr) was constructed after the failure of South Stream, and there are plans to extend Turkstream to supply gas to Greece, Italy and the Balkans. After much resistance from other EU members and the US, in late 2019 Denmark approved the final section of the Nordstream II pipeline to Germany (55 bcm/yr), although US sanctions affecting the pipe laying corporations will further delay completion. The fracking revolution in the US has turned that country into an LNG exporter, placing it in direct economic, as well as geopolitical, competition with Russia for the European market.

Given falling German natural gas production, the planned 2022 termination of Dutch production, and a move from coal to gas in electricity generation, Europe may face a shortfall of between 100 and 300 Bcm/yr of natural gas, increasing its need for plentiful and cheap external supplies (Dohmen, Jung & Nelles 2019); “Beyond the political rhetoric, there is an energy pragmatism that recognizes that Europe needs to import a lot

more gas and a lot of that is going to come from Russia” (Weafer quoted in Simes 2019). Russia has also made fossil fuel and pipeline investments in Iraq, which together with its alignment with the Syrian state, provide an impediment to European attempts at supply diversification (Koduvayer & Everett 2019).

As noted in Chapter 2, Russia has typified the US and its allies as attempting to restrict the development of Russia and its attainment of a greater geopolitical role. As Western sanctions have escalated, and the problematic relationship with the EU became evident, Russia has established a deepening relationship with China. The latter provides the still fast growing and largest national economy (in PPP terms) as an alternative and increasing source of demand for fossil fuels and other exports, as well as possible financing for new projects. It is also increasingly becoming an alternative source of high technology products that the West may become unwilling to sell to Russia. In addition, on the basis of “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” the two are natural military, geo-economic and diplomatic allies against Western pressure. Russia is also looking at other Asian nations, such as the non-aligned India, as an outlet for its fossil fuel exports.

Unlike the post-WW2 period, Russia’s heavily diminished economic and geopolitical position has placed it in the position of junior partner to China. From being a global superpower in the mid-1980s, the position of Russia has been reduced to one close to that of the WW1 Brest-Litovsk treaty. A German-dominated European Union and a US-dominated NATO have integrated the Eastern European and Baltic states, with the ex-Soviet republics of Georgia and the Ukraine seen as “aspiring” members. The presence of Western-centric governments and NATO troops on its border in the Ukraine and the Baltic states underlines Russia’s diminished position. Putin may have played a

weak hand relatively well, but that does not change the generally weak and defensive position that he brings to the table.

Russia has a mixed economy with a large private sector, and a relatively small state that levies a 13% flat tax on income (a 15% tax on incomes above 5 million rubles has recently been proposed), has a budget of approximately 20% of GDP, and provides free healthcare and education, while targeting budget surpluses when the economy is not in recession. The central bank also runs a conservative monetary policy, partly to protect the Russian economy against the volatility of fossil fuel prices. In many ways, Russia could be said to be at least as neoliberal as the US, while both experience the dominant political and economic power of their respective oligarchies. Without the glaring ideological differences that communism created between the West and Russia, the underlying relationship is laid bare – a competition between powers with Russia viewed as part of the periphery that should be subjugated to the West. A compliant Russia that opens up its economy to Western capital and maintains a deferential foreign policy, as under Yeltsin, is acceptable. “If they'd say 'uncle’”<sup>1</sup> (Ronald Reagan quoted by Cannon 1985) to the US/West and accept the “benign” stewardship of the Global Policeman then the relationship would be deemed acceptable. A nationalist elite with an independent foreign policy, rather than a *comprador* elite, is not.

The extreme concentration of wealth and income that resulted from the period of primitive accumulation and looting has led to a very low median income, with half of Russian workers earning less than 35,000 rubles (US\$550) per month (The Moscow Times 2019a), with an average of about 45,000 rubles (US\$705) per month (The Moscow

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<sup>1</sup> Used by Ronald Reagan in reference to the Nicaraguan government during the illegal Contra war against that country, with “uncle” used in the slang form, denoting acceptance of defeat.



Times 2019b). Monthly earnings have been falling slowly in real terms since the fall in oil prices in 2012 (Ibid.). Such low monthly earnings are mediated somewhat by the very high home ownership rate and lack of mortgage debt (the state gifted homes to those living in them), together with the free healthcare and education (including higher education), and an exchange rate that does not properly reflect lower Russian prices (i.e. it significantly underestimates Russian PPP). Russian GDP per capita PPP was US\$30,820 in 2017, about the same level as Greece (IMF 2020) and about 50% higher than China. This includes non-wage incomes that are highly concentrated in the top one percent of households though; i.e. it is not representative of the incomes of the vast majority of Russians, as is also the case for the US and China.

#### 5.1.7. Current Domestic Energy Consumption

Russian domestic primary energy consumption is predominantly provided by natural gas and oil, with the balance provided by coal, nuclear and hydro. The new renewables share is negligible. Russia’s energy intensity increased by 1.9% in 2018; in contrast to a 10-year trend of 0.7% annual reductions (BP 2019), as increased energy usage was predominantly supplied by natural gas and coal.

**Table 5 1: Russian Primary Energy Consumption**

|                                   | <b>Mtoe</b>                  | <b>2007-17</b> | <b>2018</b>   |              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                   | <b>Mill. Tons Oil Equiv.</b> | <b>Growth</b>  | <b>Growth</b> | <b>Share</b> |
| <b>Primary Energy Consumption</b> | <b>721</b>                   | <b>0.3%</b>    | <b>3.8%</b>   | <b>100%</b>  |
| - Natural Gas                     | 391                          | 0.1%           | 5.4%          | 54%          |
| - Oil                             | 152                          | 1.2%           | 0.5%          | 21%          |
| - Coal                            | 88                           | -1.1%          | 4.9%          | 12%          |
| - Nuclear                         | 46                           | 2.4%           | 0.7%          | 6.4%         |
| - Hydro                           | 43                           | 0.5%           | 2.6%          | 6%           |
| - Wind, Solar, Biomass, Geo       | 0                            | 9%             | 11%           | 0%           |

Data from BP 2020 Statistical Review and IRENA Renewable Energy Statistics 2019

## 5.2. Current Strategic Culture & International Political Economy

The policy orientation of the Russian state can be seen as predominantly toward the *raison d'état*, both from within the state apparatus and from a nationalist economic elite – with both heavily dependent upon the fossil fuel and general primary economic sectors of the economy. The heavy influence of fossil fuel and other extractive industry elites acts as a blockage upon the development of an energy transition, as well as other non-primary sector industry and export service sectors. The nationalistic orientation has been reinforced by Western actions, with sanctions even forcing a limited level of import substitution. Although having a massive geographical presence on the Eurasian continent, Russia is a relatively weak power with its strength drawing upon the military and energy inheritances from the Soviet Union.

As has historically been the case the geographically sprawling nation is seen as surrounded by possible aggressors and competitors. With the increasing alliance with China, these concerns are now predominantly focused on a West that is considered to have repeatedly through history (whatever the political economy of the country) shown its unwillingness to accept Russia as an equal and independent partner. These concerns are exacerbated by the multi-century antipathy of Poland, the Baltic States, Finland and a Western Ukraine which competes as the historical home of the Rus', fought for its independence in the Civil War, fielded divisions for the Nazi army and fought a guerilla war against the Soviet Union in the immediate post-WW2 period. At the same time there are concerns about the radicalization of Russia's Muslim population (approximately 10%

of the population), which partially explains the support of Russia for those fighting Muslim terrorists in the Middle East and its actions with respect to Chechnya.

In response, the Russian state can be seen as taking an extremely limited and defensive stance when faced with such events as the war with Georgia, the Libyan regime change, Ukrainian coup (which endangered Russia's Black Sea naval base and the Russian diaspora), and the attempted destabilization of its ally (and the site of its only foreign naval base) Syria. Russia is operating from a position of weakness, not one of strength. In this respect, the increasing alliance with China provides a lifeline (and a classic balancing coalition strategy) while also providing the risk of becoming a subservient partner. Russia's fostering of its relationships with other powers, such as India, can be seen as a way of protecting itself from such an outcome.

In 2003 Bobo Lo painted a picture of a generally Eurocentric Putin that was highly effective in balancing the different national coalitions to maintain stability and power, "He has come to dominate the political class through stealth and guile, in not dissimilar fashion to Stalin who in the 1920s was able to split his potential rivals by playing on their mutual suspicions, while initially at least, appearing inoffensive" (Lo 2003, p. 20) and creating a stronger position for the state with respect to economic actors. This was written before the actions taken against the oligarch Khodorkovsky, and the alienation of Russia from the West. Even in 2003, Lo saw Putin as dominating the foreign policy agenda and controlling the state with the aid of a small coterie of trusted individuals, many of which he had worked with during his days in St. Petersburg.

Although Putin has significantly consolidated power in the past two decades, he is still not a "new Tsar" as some in the West have described him (Myers 2015) and must

still take care to manage the different factions within the elites, and the hundred or so billionaire oligarchs who could be likened to somewhat independent medieval barons. With the de-legitimization of communism from the time of Gorbachev onwards (e.g. see Remnick 1993), and an aversion to ideology in general, Putin's legitimacy rests upon his ability to maintain stability after the chaos of the previous years and improve the standing of the Russian people and Russia as a whole. The rapid growth during the recovery of the economy from the collapse period, together with positive domestic policies and the reinstatement of Russian "pride" after the humiliations of the 1990s, did provide the Putin administration with a high degree of legitimacy. By effectively balancing the different coalitions Putin maintains stability and power, but is limited in his ability to push bold new policy positions that may threaten a given constituency; the gutting of his proposed climate change legislation being a good example of this. Putin may have somewhat lessened the *Medici vicious circle* where economic and political power reinforce each other (Zingales 2017) but it is still very much an inertial factor within present-day Russia.

With his long tenure and extensive previous security service experience, Putin can be seen as having the same orientation as the Chinese leaders, focused on the *raison d'etat* – but without the institutional power of a CCP behind him and having to carefully accommodate diverse interest groups and oligarchic private interests. Given this, and the weak geopolitical position of Russia, the long-time horizon and extreme care exhibited by his administration's foreign policy is understandable. As with the Soviet Union, Western official discourse has tended to create the mirage of strength from weakness with respect to both Russia and Putin. A gifted player with a weak hand is still a player with a weak hand.

The inability of Putin to institutionalize his power and remove coalitions that given the chance would partially or substantially remove what he sees as his achievements, can be seen in his need to remain in power. The retirement of a US President, or even of Xi Jinping may create significant policy changes but would not fundamentally change the ideological bases upon which policy is based (e.g. “liberal capitalism” and “socialist market economy”); that is not the case with Putin. In neoclassical realist terms, the most important domestic variable is Putin himself. The recent Russian constitutional amendments made it possible for him to rule until 2036 (if twice re-elected), increased his control of the state (e.g. in being able to remove judges), made international law subservient to national law, and placed residency and citizenship limitations upon state office holders. These point to a determination to embed the new political economy and foreign policy orientation of Russia. The residency and citizenship requirements follow on from the previous changes designed to severely limit and control the operation of foreign NGOs within the country.

With the recent inability to overcome economic stagnation, and as the memories of the 1990s fade into history, a more diverse basis for state legitimacy may be required. In recent years there has been an increased celebration of Russian culture, utilizing both the Russian Orthodox Church and pre-communist history. Putin’s more recent conceptualization of Russia as an anti-liberal conservative bulwark against an antagonistic liberal West does fall upon fruitful ground given both historical and recent events and serves to delegitimize the pro-Western and liberal elements that still exist within the elite. As Laruelle (2016, p. 278) notes, “Since at least the eighteenth century, Russian intellectuals and official circles have used a civilizational grammar to define

Russia's identity and place in the world" using non-binary constructs; "a European country that follows the Western path of development ... a European country that follows a non-Western path of development ... a non-European country". Putin's reconceptualization falls within this civilizational, as against nationalist, grammar – seeing Russia as fitting within the second option, in contrast to the Yeltsin years that heavily tilted toward the first option (and which is still supported by the liberal opposition and represented by Medvedev within the elite). The recent removal of Medvedev, who had been a close ally of Putin (a rift was caused when he did not block the UNSC approval for action against Libya when serving as the President [Zygar 2016]), from the position of Prime Minister, may also be seen as a reinforcement of the second option. Putin's language certainly lacks the xenophobia of a nationalistic tilt, especially with his view of an integrated Eurasia with a free flow of goods and people.

### **5.3. The Drivers of Current Energy Policy**

#### **5.3.1. Geopolitics and Energy Security**

A global energy transition away from fossil fuels represents an existential crisis to the Russian state, as well as many of its oligarchic backers, a situation reflected in its interactions with the UN climate change apparatus. Instead of reducing fossil fuel domestic usage and exports, Russia is focused on increasing both in order to maintain some level of economic growth and increase foreign exchange earnings. Such a high fossil fuel dependency makes the future position of Russia in the international system somewhat of a derivative of the international prices for oil and natural gas, as with many

other fossil fuel export dependent nations; with the outcome as uncertain as the future forecasts of those prices.

Russia's overwhelming dependence upon fossil fuel exports places it at great risk with respect to a possible export embargo (as has been imposed on Iran and Venezuela), a probability heightened with the continuing Western sanctions and conflicts with the US. Russia would be expected to move exports towards friendly nations, such as China, and reinforce its relationship with its European customers (e.g. through Nordstream II). Utilizing the "Relationship Between Energy Security And Geopolitics" framework in the table below, the following lays out the historical combinations for Russia.

Even at the height of the Cold War, the USSR's energy exports were not the subject of geopolitically based actions from the West and in addition Russia never used Europe's dependency upon its fossil fuel supplies as a weapon. The Cold War was also typified by "proxy" conflicts rather than direct military engagements. It was an environment of Cold War conflict, but one of high trust between the USSR and Europe with respect to fossil fuel imports and exports. During the most recent period of conflict, geo-economic weapons such as sanctions, the weaponization of the SWIFT payments system and attempts to block fossil fuel technology transfer have been much more prevalent. This moves Russia from the left to the right-hand side of the table below. The need to reorient its exports toward more friendly nations over secure supply routes dovetails well with China's options for protecting itself against an energy blockade.

**Table 5 2: Relationship Between Energy Security And Geopolitics for Russia**

|  | <b>Low Conflict / High Trust Geopolitical Environment</b>  | <b>High Conflict / Low Trust Geopolitical Environment</b>                          |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Heavily Dependent Upon Energy Exports</b> | Reliance upon the market and energy cartels (Period of the USSR and then Russia until the mid 2010s. | Seek 'friendly' customers along secure supply routes (Mid-2010s to current period) |

Domestic policy considerations preclude any growth-restricting energy policies, especially given the negative economic impacts of Western sanctions. In addition, the dominance of the fossil fuel sector interests within the state will severely restrict any actions that would reduce fossil fuel production. The economic and political power of oligarchs that rely heavily upon energy and raw material production also limits any drive to develop a renewable energy sector that would threaten their profits.

### **5.3.2. Industrial Policy**

#### ***5.3.2.1. Reorientation of Exports Toward Friendly Nations***

Russia has started to reorient its energy exports towards a China that has extremely large and growing energy needs combined with a geopolitically driven drive to reduce seaborne energy imports and those from the US and its allies. Energy exports to China can be paid for in local currencies, bypassing the need for US dollars and the SWIFT payment system. Russia is also looking at exports to the growing Indian energy market, another relatively friendly nation with which payments can be made in local currencies (Mehrishi 2018). This builds on its successful sales of nuclear technology to



India (Miglani and De Clercq 2018). Although Putin has stated that Russia will continue to show “a responsible, businesslike approach in relations with our long-standing partners in Europe” he has also stated that if Europe continued to “keep energy hostage to political differences” then “Naturally, we receive new impetuses to develop cooperation with those that do not support this logic – the logic of dishonest competition ... The demand for hydrocarbons is growing in Asia, more quickly than in Europe” (Putin quoted by Simes 2019). With the scheduled closure of the 2022 Groningen gas field in The Netherlands and the depletion of other European natural gas fields, Europe may have no option but to increase its Russian gas imports. Gazprom’s (Russia’s main natural gas corporation) share of the European gas market rose 2% to a new high of 36.7% in 2018 (Soldatkin 2019).

The new *Power of Siberia* gas pipeline will have a full capacity of 38 bcm/yr in 2022-23, delivering approximately 9.5% of Chinese consumption. (Liang, Abrue & Fan 2019). Russia also wants to develop a pipeline from its Altai region to China that would carry 30 bcm/yr (Guo & Wu 2019) and a spur from its Sakhalin - Khabarovsk – Vladivostok line into China to deliver 10 bcm/yr, but no agreements have yet been reached (Soldatkin & Grabar 2019). The Russian natural gas company Novatek also plans to increase its LNG production capacity to approximately 95 bcm/yr natural gas equivalent (NGE) by 2030; it is already producing 22.5 bcm/yr NGE at its Siberian Yamal facility (Daiss 2019). Novatek plans to utilize a fleet of large icebreaker vessels, together with ice capable LNG tankers, to extend eastbound deliveries to China and Japan into the winter months (Chambers 2019). There are also an increasing number of Russian

natural gas supplied petrochemicals projects, partly financed by China, with output targeted at the Chinese market.

Power of Siberia, the Amur plant and Chinese funding for liquid natural gas production plants in Russia's Arctic have underlined the growing business ties between Moscow and Beijing, which have largely seen Chinese cash exchanged for Russian energy assets (Foy 2019).

Russian oil exports to China have also been increasing, with a nearly 20% jump in 2018 to 1.43 million barrels per day (Abbasova 2019), partly delivered by a spur to the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean pipeline (600k barrels per day)

### ***5.3.2.2. New Renewables and Transport Electrification***

As noted above, the power of fossil fuel interests both within the state and the private sector provide a significant restraint to the ability of Russia to develop both a low carbon energy infrastructure and even other alternatives to fossil fuel export and revenue dependency. Even with the very weak Paris commitments, President Putin had to bypass parliament after “months of opposition from industry lobbyists” (Sauer 2019) to endorse the Paris Accord in late 2019. The chairman of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP) has stated that:

We have to maximize our sales of gas, oil and coal as much as we can without stopping while there is still a buyer for it, and use that money to

stimulate innovations in new technologies so we can keep up with other economies. (Gerschkovich 2019)

Planned legislation to accompany the ratification of the Paris Accord was radically revised after pressure from the RRSP, Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, with proposals for carbon quotas, a national carbon trading system and penalties for the biggest polluters removed (Burtin & Shapovalov 2019).

Overall, there has been minimal activity with respect to an industrial policy aimed at developing a green technology industrial sector or the implementation of significant amounts of new renewables. This places Russia at a severe risk with respect to a global energy transition that could massively reduce its export and government revenues, as well as impact a significant portion of its industrial sector. With much of the fossil fuel sector based in areas that will be heavily affected by climate change, especially through the impacts of Arctic Amplification on permafrost regions, Russia may be heavily impacted by the effects of both an energy transition and climate change.

#### **5.4. Summary**

From the above, it can be ascertained that Russian foreign policy is heavily affected by its need to be able to continue to exploit its fossil fuel reserves, both to power the domestic economy and to earn foreign currency revenues through exports. This is supported through the domestic dominance of fossil fuel interests, as well as the need to support the economic growth that helps maintain state legitimacy (Becker 2019) and funds the expenditures required to resist Western pressure. Russia's Paris commitments allow for continued fossil fuel driven economic growth until at least 2030. Its alignment

with China, and other moves to consolidate and diversify its ability to exploit its fossil fuel reserves, helps negate much of the current Western attempts to weaken the Russian economy. These policies are what would be expected from the “Integration of (Supplier) Energy Security and Geopolitics” framework.

Caught in the Staples Trap, Russia is committed to an energy policy position that may shore up its geopolitical security in the short, and even possibly medium, term. This period may be extended as it increases exports of natural gas, a fossil fuel seen as “cleaner” than coal for electricity generation, and also hard to dislodge from its space heating and petrochemical uses. President Putin has publicly taken a softly skeptical position with respect to climate change, which would be expected given the fossil fuel orientation and deep dependence of the Russian state. An end to the US shale revolution, resulting in a fall in US oil and gas production and/or significant Middle East hostilities, would also be advantageous in the short term. A possible expansion of arms and nuclear exports, together with the geopolitical strategic sourcing of fossil fuel imports by China may also delay the inevitable. In the medium term there is the risk that the main customers for arms and nuclear exports such as China and India may develop their own capabilities, and the global demand for oil and gas begins to fall due to the adoption of electric vehicles and increasing usage of renewable energy production. As China electrifies its transportation sector, the importance of Russia as a trusted fossil fuel supplier during any energy embargo may also be reduced over time; changing the dynamics of the relationship in China’s favor. A dynamic that can only be reinforced if the Chinese economy continues to grow significantly faster than Russia, and China’s technological capabilities march far ahead of those of the Russian nation.

Unlike the Chinese state-directed focus on the continual upgrading of the economy and its technological base, there is no concerted focus and effort from the Russian state to remedy the severe shortcomings in the advanced manufacturing and green technology sectors:

There are still no clear political or economic decisions for addressing further development of domestic production or for scientific and technical development of the country. The contemporary leadership and its economic advisers generally reject import substitution, the state industrial policy, and seek maximum economic openness ... Russia is becoming less able to generate innovation a la Schumpeter, or even to maintain the high technology inherited from the Soviet Union ... International monitoring of scientific research (for example, the Thomson Scientific survey) shows a consistent and sufficiently rapid drop in our country's role in the scientific world, especially in the natural sciences and engineering. (Sherstnev 2014, p. 83).

Without the capabilities and elite orientation to develop manufacturing output and services to replace fossil fuel revenues, and with little if any capability in the green technology sector, Russia is unable to escape the staples trap when its main staples may become increasingly in less demand. It has an even greater dependence upon fossil fuel rents than the USSR, and much of its manufacturing sector was lost in the depression of the 1990s. Any further falls in global oil prices and/or export volumes will inevitably lead to domestic economic retrenchment. Hence, Russia is at great risk of longer-term decline as nations replace fossil fuels with alternatives, especially the electrification of transport

that will displace oil demand. The resulting policy may be to sell as much of its fossil fuels “while it can” and continued obstructionism in international climate change negotiations in an attempt to extend the period that its fossil fuels will be in demand through a retardation of any global actions to decarbonize.

In this respect, Russia fulfills Nyman’s (2018) thesis of a fossil-fuelled increase in short-term security leading to a longer-term decrease in security, but in a novel geo-economic form. With Russia being the largest Arctic nation, and Arctic Amplification driving climate change in that region at multiples of the global pace, Russia may also fulfill Nyman’s main thesis at a quicker pace than others. That much of Russia’s fossil fuel infrastructure sits upon permafrost may only add irony to that thesis.

From a neoclassical realist perspective, the Russian state can be seen as generally focused on the interests of the Russian nation, the *raison d’etat*, as defined by Putin and his close allies, while limited in its policy orientation through the dominance of fossil fuel and other oligarchic interests. Its highly defensive and careful foreign policy actions show a quite accurate perception of its weak position within the international system; with the focus on protecting its position, building a balancing coalition, and attempting to reduce the alignment of others with the US foreign policy position toward itself. The skill and carefulness of this policy can be seen in the reactions to the Ukrainian coup - from a geostrategic viewpoint Russia had no option but to integrate the Crimea, but was very careful not to be seen to be invading the Eastern Ukrainian provinces. The same can be said with respect to its intervention in Syria (the site of its only foreign naval base), and the relationship with Turkey. Working from a position of weakness, Russia has performed with high competence with respect to foreign policy with surprising successes.

With the recent constitutional changes, Putin hypothetically has another 16 years to alter the internal power balance more toward his favor and perhaps be in a position to drive a very different industrial and climate policy. As China's GDP per capita in US\$ (i.e. non PPP) surpasses Russia's and widens the gap during the next decade, Russia may become an attractive and safe destination for Chinese FDI. This could be utilized by Putin to help build out an alternative industrial sector and impose some domestic competition upon the oligarchs. In this respect, one of the greatest beneficiaries of increased US hostility to China may be Russia. If Putin is unable to take advantage of the shrinking window of opportunity Russia may well revert in the long term to its historical backwardness, while clinging onto industries of a bygone era and the support of an increasingly dominant China.

### **5.5. Framework Insights In The Russian Study**

The current dynamic of the international system (what Cox refers to as the world order), places Russia as a secondary power with significant military capabilities (including a nuclear arsenal only second to that of the US) inherited from its previous existence as part of the Soviet Union while being much weaker than the combined Soviet *bloc*. In its European sphere it is faced with a NATO and a European Union that are at odds with significant aspects of its national interests, and generally with a US which seems to see Russia's subjugation, including possible regime change, as the only acceptable geopolitical outcome; evidenced by "the failure of the Euro-Atlantic community to create a security system that acknowledges Russia's interests" (Milosevich 2021). In response, Russia has increased the closeness of its alliance with China in the past few years, and become more assertive in protecting its national interests – shown

with the annexation of Crimea in response to the Ukrainian coup and its actions in Syria to forestall regime change in the nation hosting its only Mediterranean naval base. The Russian economy and the state are heavily dependent upon the export of fossil fuels, something that was not politicized during the Cold War, but which has now been weaponized by the US; with both sanctions designed to restrict the development of the fossil fuel sector and pressure brought to restrict new fossil fuel pipelines to Europe. The neoclassical realism of Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, adds an analysis of the internal dynamics of Russia – an authoritarian state with a leader (Putin) that balances the interests of a Russian capitalist oligarchical class heavily focused on resource extraction and rent seeking (approximately one hundred US\$ billionaires), the *siloviki* (nationalist state security forces, of which Putin himself was a member) and his own circle largely populated with trusted colleagues from his days in St. Petersburg. Together with a state budget that is approximately the same as the US equivalent in terms of GDP, a government focused on balanced budgets, a significantly neoliberal economy, and extreme inequalities in wealth and income, Russia can be seen to significantly resemble the US. The problem with the Russia is not its ideology - with Communism going the way of the Soviet Union, nor its general workings, but that its elite and strategic culture is nationalistic and resists subjugation and exploitation by the US and the West in general.

The balancing act carried out by Putin tends toward inertia, especially in domestic economic policy as moves to reverse the deindustrialization of the 1990s and foster new green technologies are stymied by the interests of the fossil fuel, and other extractive elites whose dominance would be threatened by a rebalancing of the economy and a move away from fossil fuels. Limited reindustrialization has been mostly carried out with



the oversight of the security services overseen by the *siloviki*, and a military industrial complex that maintained much of its capabilities during the 1990s through exports – as evidenced by the recent additions of advanced weapons to Russia’s arsenal and the nation’s position as second in weapons exports only to the US. Russia’s relative economic and geopolitical weakness, when added to the domestic political balancing act, leads to a relatively defensive and reactive position in the foreign policy space. The maintenance of this balancing act is heavily dependent upon Putin as an individual, and therefore a change in leader would create the possibility of significant domestic instability. Such an analytical picture does provide a relatively nuanced view of the present, and provides some insights into future state policy making, but does not provide a vision of the historical processes that created the current Russia, nor their possible impact going forward. It also takes the present as a given, without problematizing its elements; *how* and *why* the present came into being may have significant exculpatory value with respect to how the future may progress.

Since the Middle Ages, Russia has been treated as the eastern Other by Europe, reflecting both memories of the Mongol hordes and the result of the Great Schism. It has also had centuries long conflicts with its neighbouring nations, such as Poland, the Ukraine and the Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia that colour the present after being subsumed during the period of the Soviet Union. With Russia becoming a great power after the defeat of Napoleon, Britain also turned from an ally into an enemy that demonized it as a despotic threat to civilized Europe. Consisting of a huge landmass that sits between Europe and Asia, Russia has occupied an indeterminate position that is neither European nor Asian. Peter the Great pointed Russia toward Europe, and its elite

remained Westernized (including conversing in French rather than Russian) until the fall of the monarchy in 1917 – even while being treated as the Oriental Other by the West. This Othering was extended during the time of the Soviet Union and then the Soviet *bloc* and has returned with the renewed nationalism of Putin.

Gorbachev and Yeltsin both strived for acceptance within the West, and the latter was heavily dependent upon Western support and technical advice. The West did not provide the financial aid required to blunt the effects of the Russian shock therapy of the 1990s, contributing to the 50% collapse and extensive deindustrialization of the economy. In parallel, the West extended NATO and the EU toward Russia's borders, abrogating the commitments made to Gorbachev when the unification of Germany was being discussed. At first, Putin followed an orientation toward the West and offered important support to US efforts in Afghanistan after 9/11, but this changed with his actions against the oligarchs from 2003 onwards that represented a rebalancing of state power with respect to the capitalist class. In addition, these actions may have forestalled the sale of a significant share of Russia's fossil fuel assets to US interests. In the same year, there was a wave of NATO enlargement with the inclusion of the Baltic States (Poland had become a NATO member in 1999 and joined the EU in 2004) and Western support for colour revolutions in Georgia and the Ukraine. The response to Putin's actions from the West was rapid with Putin being denigrated as an autocratic devil incarnate when earlier he had been seen as a friend (or assumed subordinate) of the West. Since this period, Russia has progressively moved toward the East as the West has taken increasingly aggressive steps such as the support for the Georgian invasion, the coup in the Ukraine, sanctions and US actions to stop the Nordstream 2 pipeline. The

unwillingness of the West to treat Russia as anything other than a supplicant, together with the escalating propaganda against Putin and Russia, has led to some rebalancing of forces within the Russian strategic culture. Putin has both moved to remove foreign interests, such as foreign NGO's and state functionaries with foreign passports or residency, taken an increasingly oppositional stance to the West, and moved to facilitate the continuation of his own rule.

The strategic culture, as well as that of the general population, is heavily affected by the lack of any bourgeois or democratic revolution in Tsarist Russia or the USSR. The state has always been an authoritarian one, notwithstanding the brief glimpses of democracy after the 1905 revolution (1905-1917, undermined by the absolutist-minded Tsar Nicholas) and after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991 to 1993 when President Yeltsin ordered the storming of the parliament building). The lived experience of many Russians of the chaotic move to a deeply corrupt and rentier capitalism in the 1990s, combined with economic collapse and widespread deindustrialization, may have darkly clouded their view of liberal capitalist democracy. This is reflected in the very low approval rates among the populace for multi-party systems and the market economy (Pew Research 2019).

From the 1980s onwards the authoritarian state carried out a revolution from above, accelerating the move to a corrupted form of capitalism based upon primitive accumulation by those with power and connections, rent extraction, and financial speculation; including the dissolution of the Soviet Union against the wishes of the population expressed in a 1991 referendum on the subject. The nature of this move may have been significantly affected by the death of so many of the nation's best leaders and

thinkers under Stalin, leaving only relative mediocrities that as a group stayed in office overseeing a fossilized bureaucracy until they died (with the exception of Khrushchev). This produced a corrupted and mediocre state with self-interested elite *nomenklatura* factions and fiefdoms that had been built up and reinforced over decades; covering up much of its failing with fossil fuel foreign currency revenues that also facilitated large-scale embezzlement and misuse. Russia today somewhat resembles a weaker version of its Soviet predecessor, still very much dependent upon fossil fuel revenues to hide the weakness of the economy, with an autocratic state and powerful security forces, and many of the same *nomenklatura* in both the *siloviki* and as part of the new capitalist class. Although GDP per capita in 2018 was approximately 90% higher than at the high point of the Soviet Union (a level equalled only in 2003 after the economic collapse of the 1990s), it has stagnated in the past decade (Jutta & van Zanden 2020), mirroring the oil price to a large degree, and the level of income and wealth inequality is much greater in the present than during Soviet times. This may mean that although Putin did bring stability and relative recovery after the chaos of the 1990s, the welfare of the majority of Russians may not be that much better than at the height of the USSR. This is very different to the experience of the average Chinese citizen, who has seen their standard of living grow enormously in the past three decades and looks forward to more gains. With memories of the recovery of the first decade of this century receding, the Russian state is at the risk of reduced legitimacy if it fails to reignite the growth in living standards.

Putin himself has stated that he sees the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and what followed as a tragedy, to be added to the deprivations of the two world wars, the post-revolutionary civil war, the invasion by Napoleon, the Crimean War, the Time of

Troubles, and the Mongol invasion; a sentiment that we can assume is shared by the *siloviki*. This positions the centralized autocratic state as a protector of stability and sovereignty; reinforced by the ability of Putin to reverse some of the chaos and destruction of the 1990s with the help of rising oil prices (although as noted above this basis of legitimacy may be declining). Russia can be seen to have been in conflict with the West for more than two centuries and with Poland and the Baltic states since the seventeenth century, making the sprawling nation's concerns about being surrounded with possible enemies not a case of paranoia but a rational position based upon both history and more recent events.

From an *Amsterdam School* perspective, the heterogeneous Russian elite have few connections with Western elites; especially in the case of the *siloviki* and St. Petersburg groups. The separation of the capitalist class from the West has been increased through Putin's actions against specific oligarchs (e.g. Khodorkovsky, Gusinsky and Berezovsky), his close relationship with others (e.g. Deripaska) and the more recent Western sanctions – although a significant portion may be open to *comprador* status if it were a profitable bargain. This capitalist class is not fully autonomous, being balanced by Putin and his inner circle and a *siloviki* that has not been heavily coopted by the capitalist class nor developed relationship networks with Western security complexes. Together with the ongoing high levels of popularity of Putin, such an elite makes it extremely hard for the US and the West to co-opt a significant group with which to undermine Russia from within; while underlining the importance of Putin with respect to Russian foreign policy. The strict controls over foreign NGOs and the monitoring of US and other Western diplomats also reduces the possibility of any such co-option. Some Western

analyses have seen the *siloviki* as dominating an aggressive militarized state, but this seems to be greatly overstressing reality as the *siloviki* itself is not monolithic and “the correct inference to draw from extant data is that perhaps *Russia’s top political leadership came to be dominated by siloviki during the Putin presidency but its elite as a whole definitely did not*” (Rivera & Rivera 2018).

The deepening alliance with China offers Putin some ability to overcome the inertia inherent in his domestic balancing act, as the Russian MIC benefits from increasing sales to China (at least in the short and medium term) and Chinese capital could be used to develop non-fossil fuel sectors of the Russian economy; strengthening the none resource-extractive elite sectors. In parallel though, the increasing Chinese needs for fossil fuel imports and energy security does lend support to the fossil fuel sector. The importance of fossil fuel revenues for both the Russian elite and state is a central long-term challenge to Russia given the probability of a low carbon energy transition that Russia will tend to forestall for as long as is possible.

The increasing levels of interaction between the elites of the Chinese developmental state and Russian elites may also help reorient the latter, although Russian elites may also be careful to not become subordinated to their Chinese counterparts and there is a lack of the shared language (in the case of the UK and British settler colonies) and cultural affinities that benefit the linkages between US, European and settler colony elites.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### 6.1. Applicability of the Framework

The framework used in this dissertation combines two distinct ontologies, that of the relatively ahistorical and state-centric neoclassical realism and that of a Coxian historical materialism that can operate at, and across, multiple levels of analysis – such as the system level and horizontally between state/society complexes. My usage of the Coxian conceptualization of the state/society complex removes the liberal notions of the independence of the state, the economy and civil society, and also removes the Western liberal lens through which much of the West views, and judges non-Western nations. In addition, the utilization of the concept of strategic culture allows for the agency and subjectivity of national strategy making elites that may have significant impacts with respect to other factors, even those of the *longue durée*. This complexity mirrors that of the actual social world being analyzed, which cannot be adequately represented by any single theory – as Van Der Pijl (2009, p. xii) states, “No single theory has produced such a watertight ‘coverage’ of the object of inquiry that a different approach would not serve to highlight blind spots or weaknesses. To paraphrase Hegel, there cannot exist a truth that is separate from the totality of thinking and being”. My usage of the term *framework* rather than that of *model* accepts the inability to perfectly represent the complex social structures involved and the indeterminacy of outcomes. Its use is a descriptive one to provide insight into general trends and possible outcomes, but not to predict specific outcomes.

Unlike the neo-realists, liberal internationalists, or scientific Marxists, this work is not looking to create a “scientific” predictive model, but more a descriptive framework through which a better approximation of social reality can be gained. It accepts that the sheer complexity of that reality is not fully knowable, and that any attempt at “scientific” representation will always result in a deeply flawed and overly simplistic result. Such over-simplification is redolent in many areas of international relations, with outcomes said to be the result of a small number of unproblematized universally applicable assumptions backed up in some cases by highly questionable historical analyses. To put it bluntly, *the international system is important, the longue durée is important, national elites are important, ideas and culture are important, individuals are important BUT their relative importance may vary greatly with respect to a given historical and geographic context AND may be annulled by the vicissitudes of contingency.* This does not lend itself to universalist and concise theory making, but hopefully points the way to both increased insight and intellectual humility. This humility includes an acceptance that Eurocentric beliefs in such things as the superiority of liberal capitalism to other avenues to modernity, and the definition of the modern state arising from interpretations of the *Treaty of Westphalia* (1648), may be merely provincially specific worldviews. So how does the proposed framework perform with respect to the three example nations?

Both neoclassical realism and Coxian historical materialism go beyond any artificial separation of the *intranational* and the *international*, with the former accepting that the internal configuration of states may significantly differ and that those differences may affect foreign policy actions. Cox goes further than this, seeing social forces acting both within and across states, an insight that is highly applicable in the case of the US and



its relationship to other nations. The US can be seen as the vanguard of the Western civilizational project that started in Western Europe, claiming Greco-Roman origins, and spread across the globe through conquest and settler colonization. Its core members consist of Western Europe and the white settler colonies of Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand; it is no coincidence that the latter four and the UK are the members of the “Five Eyes” intelligence sharing arrangement. The generally lighter-skinned elites of Central and Southern America also tend to identify with a European civilizational heritage, facilitating their *comprador* status as leaders of nations generally deferent to the West. Such deference is also seen in many of the post-colonial elites that have been socialized and schooled within Western institutions and social *milieu*, as well as nations such as Greece, Japan and the Philippines where Western state/society configurations were imposed by force. The resultant shared beliefs, together with cultural, friendship and familial ties, greatly aided the US in the development and maintenance of its post-WW2 hegemonic position.

Cox states that “A world hegemony is thus in its beginnings an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class” (Cox 1983, p. 171) and sees Britain as the global hegemon from 1845-1875, a non-hegemonic period between 1875 and 1945, then a period of US hegemony. As detailed in the relevant case study, the US became dominated by its national bourgeois white protestant elite with independence in 1776, and the resulting removal of British rule. This elite was greatly consolidated and strengthened through the results of the Civil War and the growth of large-scale businesses at the end of the nineteenth century. The multi-century project of territorial expansion that had begun with the first colonizers was

completed early in the twentieth century and replaced with a project of a more indirect approach to domination. This approach came into its own in the post-WW2 years when the other competitors for global or regional hegemony had been economically destroyed. The US elite developed its ability to become “a class for itself” through such integrating structures as the Council for Foreign Relations established between the two World Wars; an organization central to the conceptualization and implementation of the post-WW2 global Open-Door policy (Shoup & Minter 1977; Shoup 2015; Wertheim 2020). The US was able to use its immediate post-WW2 dominance to design the systems of global governance to its benefit and forge the Western European and Japanese social structures to allow them to act reliably within its hegemonic bloc. Hegemony at home was extended to hegemony within the West, with an “Atlantic ruling class, which continues to occupy the commanding heights of the global political economy” carrying out a strategy designed to “open up contender state/society complexes, dispossess the state classes, and replace them by a governing class submitting to liberal governance and ‘open for business’” (Van Der Pijl 2012, p. 504).

The flexibility of the framework is evident here, in that it does not require an either/or distinction. The hegemonic elites within the differing state/society complexes of the West are significantly integrated, but they are still dominated by a national US elite. This integration was aided by the establishment of such bodies as the Ditchley Foundation in 1958 (the “spiritual home” of the US-UK relationship), the Atlantic Council in 1961 (with a mission of “shaping the global future together” that galvanizes US leadership in the world), the German Marshall Fund in 1972 (to promote elite cooperation between North America and Western Europe), and the Trilateral

Commission in 1973 (to foster cooperation between North American, Western European and Japanese elites); reflecting the recovery of the Western European and Japanese economies, whereby “the plutocracy that dominates the system is centered in the United States, but has powerful allied branches in Western Europe and Japan” (Shoup 2015, preface, para. 2). This plutocracy may be somewhat transnational but it is still heavily grounded within the nation-state, with the US nation-state providing the prevalence of force to facilitate the protection and expansion of its hegemonic zone.

Such a position contrasts with those that see the existence of a truly transnational capitalist class, independent of national linkages, such as Robinson (2005, p. 11) “Globalization is not a ‘national’ project but a class project without a national strategy, or rather, with a strategy that seeks to utilize the existing political infrastructure of the nation-state system and simultaneously to craft TNS structures” (Robinson 2005, p. 11). Such a conceptualization is shown to be overly extreme by analyses that show the concentration of TNC ownership within US nationals (Starrs 2013), the dominance of global value chains by US-domiciled corporations (Phillips 2017), and the dominance of US citizens among the extremely wealthy (Credit Suisse 2019), together with the US dominance of NATO.

The Chinese Party-State can be seen as hegemonic, and as a “class for itself”, within China but on the international stage it lacks the shared history, culture and values that the US enjoys with its Western counterparts and *comprador* allies. In addition, it is faced with historical enmities and competing civilizational projects within the Asian region, together with the Orientalist Othering of the West. A tributary system, rather than a hegemonic order, based upon non-interference and the acceptance of social, political

and economic heterogeneity may much better fit China's circumstances. With Putin acting as the skilled moderator between competing elite interests, with a sub-set that may be happy with *comprador* status, a hegemonic order and a dominant "class for itself" does not exist within Russia. Together with the historical enmities of many of its surrounding states, its Othering by the West, and the lack of the shared ideology of communism, it is unable to establish even a regional hegemony. One area of possibility for both China and Russia is Africa where there is a readiness to learn from the successes of the former and a memory of post-colonial aid from the latter, but a truly hegemonic position is highly unlikely for either.

The threat of China to the US is not one of competing hegemony, but rather one of the degradation of US and Western hegemony, even within the Western nations themselves. At an ideological level China provides "the threat of a good example" (Chomsky 1993, p. 22) as a country that has raised itself from sub-Saharan levels of destitution to become a huge middle-income nation, using its own form of modernity that is antithetical to much of liberalism and the "development" prescriptions of the Western-dominated global institutions. The Chinese state/society complex is dominated by a Party-State, with "a state class [that] to varying degrees confiscates its society from above, relying on state initiative to accelerate and sustain the pace of social change and develop the economic and military assets necessary to hold its own against the West" (Van Der Pijl 2012, p. 504). The "commanding heights" of the economy, such as the financial system and fossil fuel sector, are directly controlled by the Party-State, and significant control is maintained over the rest of society. Concepts such as an independent bourgeois class (Starrs 2017) or civil society lose much of their meaning with the

extensive Party-State integration and cooption of such possible independent sectors. This Party-State has resisted the movement toward liberal democratic capitalism, and has certainly not allowed the “Atlantic ruling class ... to open up [its state/society complex], dispossess the state classes, and replace them by a governing class submitting to liberal global governance and ‘open for business’” (Van Der Pijl 2012, p. 504). In Coxian terms, this is competition between two very different state/society complexes with China providing the greatest challenge to the West to date – significantly greater than that of the Soviet Union. For a Chinese high-technology corporation such as Huawei to better its Western rivals, or for the BRI to facilitate others to follow China’s developmental lead while accepting state/society diversity, is heretical to liberal internationalism and the (neo)LIO, and therefore a direct threat to US and Western hegemony – both at home and abroad.

BRI represents a profound challenge to U.S. influence throughout large parts of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and southern Europe. China’s geoeconomic strategy is not a challenge susceptible to defense, deterrence or containment. China is offering large-scale financing to dozens of countries, with few of the conditions on which Western institutions normally insist” (Dobbins, Shatz & Wyne 2018, p. 13).

In many respects, in contrast to the Cold War period, Russia does not offer a state/society complex that poses an ideological threat to liberal capitalism as currently practised in the US. The Russian state/society complex may be seen as a poorer and less

developed version of that in the US; not a parallel that US elites would like to publicly emphasize or even internally accept, but the case for such a parallel can be made. An economically and politically dominant elite with extreme inequality in both wealth and income, electoral and media systems that serve to severely constrain acceptable political discourse, and with religion as a significant part of the national mythology and current political milieu; which country does this describe? The differences have only shrunk in the past two decades as the US has become increasingly authoritarian and power centralized within the Presidential office – the *Imperial Presidency* that Schlesinger (1973) warned about and was consolidated under Bush and Obama. Much more than in previous times, the creation of difference through propaganda is unlinked from actual social and economic realities in the case of Russia.

Even in a hegemonic order, the policy making elite is specific to a given nation and will be reflective of that nation's political, economic, and social past and present. The framework allows for the group identity and belief systems of those that constitute the policy making elite of the state/society complex, through the usage of the strategic culture concept, pushing aside the rational and deterministic instrumentality assumed in much of mainstream IR and political-economy conceptualizations (e.g. rational choice theory). Chomsky makes the point well, specifically with reference to the intellectual elite, but his point can be extended to the rest of the elite given their shared group socialization processes and elite schooling:

my guess is that you will find that the intellectual elite is the most heavily indoctrinated sector, for good reasons. It's their role as a secular priesthood to

really believe the nonsense that they put forth ... for the intellectual elite themselves, it's crucial that they believe it because, after all, they are the guardians of the faith. Except for a very rare person who's just an outright liar, it's hard to be a convincing exponent of the faith unless you've internalized it and come to believe it. (Chomsky 1987, p. 35)

The efficiency and effectiveness of the US policy elite in maintaining a given set of beliefs and cultural values over time, even when integrating “non-traditional” members is documented by Layne (2017). Chomsky also notes the seeming inability of US elite members to comprehend the points that he makes which contradict their indoctrination, when a more general audience does not seem to have “much difficulty” (Chomsky 1987, p. 35). The core of the US elite belief system is what used to be known as the White (protestant) Man’s Burden to spread Western-civilization from the “Lockean heartland” (Van Der Pijl 2012, p. 504) to the rest of the globe; more recently cast in more politically correct cultural terms such as “liberal capitalist democracy”, “human rights”, and “liberal internationalism”. With the US as the Shining City On A Hill, the freest and most just society in the world that is full of Horatio Alger-like upward mobility, and The Global Policeman that strives for power only so that it can act as the compassionate tutor to the less civilized. Within such a belief system those that do not accept such tutoring can be Othered as a dangerous force that must be removed or contained; whether it be Amerindians, “gooks”, “godless-communists”, “Moslem-terrorists” or “autocracies”; resurfacing the Terror Dream of the colonial era. The underlying racist and religious underpinnings may manifest themselves in such things as the conceptualization of a

Democratic Peace Theory that is blind to the overthrow of non-white democracies (e.g. Iran 1953, Guatemala 1954, Chile 1973) by white democracies and the racial undertones of the reaction to the economic rise of first Japan and then China. This US and Western elite self-righteousness and conceptual blindness may create significant policy errors and create a greater level of international risk than would otherwise be the case:

Morgenthau's warning against the tendency to take the interests of our own group and make them into the moral law of the universe has never been more timely in an age in which liberal states earnestly debate the degree to which they should tolerate the polities founded on another basis. (Thompson & Clinton 2006, p. xxiii)

It is only within such a belief system that China could be expected to “naturally” progress toward liberal capitalist democracy or otherwise fail (a good recent example being Kroenig 2020) and that Russia could be seen as an aggressor in the face of an expanding and encircling West. The elites “really believe the nonsense that they put forth” (Chomsky 1987, p.35).

The Chinese elite is also effective in maintaining shared beliefs and cultural values, but has also shown a flexibility and openness to other world views and an acceptance of civilizational heterogeneity that contrasts with US and Western elites that tend to believe in the universal nature of liberal capitalism and its place as the highest form of civilization. The words of Xi Jinping in 2015 are instructive when compared to the arrogant assertions of Western elites:



our commitment to upholding the basic components and methodology of Marxist political economy does not imply a rejection of the economic theories of other countries ... At the same time, however, we must cast a discerning eye on the economic theories of other countries, particularly those of the West, making sure that we separate the wheat from the chaff ... economics ... does not exist in a vacuum, and therefore cannot be separated from social and political issues ... For Marxist political economy to remain vital, it must evolve with the times. Practice is the source of theory. (Xi 2015)

For Chinese and Russian elites the “multiplex world ... a world without a hegemon, culturally and politically diverse yet economically interconnected” envisaged by Acharya (2018, p. 6) holds no ontological challenges, but it may fundamentally destabilize the *Ontological Security* of Western elites as they are forced to come to terms with a liberal capitalism that is only provincial rather than universal. For a non-Western nation such as China to approach the income per capita levels of the core Western nations, overcoming the middle-income trap, creates not just a geopolitical competitor but also a competitor in racial, cultural and ideational terms in the minds of the Western elites who have assumed their natural superiority for centuries.

For the neorealist, US-China competition is simply that of a rising power with respect to the currently dominant power, with the US elite responding “rationally” to that challenge. For the liberal internationalist, the conundrum becomes the lack of alignment with “Western values” as the Chinese economy has become integrated into the global

economy and the growing hostility between such highly integrated economies. The nuances that arise from the use of the analytical tools of strategic culture and Cox's state/society complex are lost and the more comprehensive nature of the challenge of China's Party-State to the US Plutocracy-State and the Western elite grouping that the latter dominates, remains unobserved.

The usage of strategic culture also allows for the impacts of the lived experiences of policy making elites. The CCP elite share the visceral personal childhood impacts of the Cultural Revolution and the teachings of a Chinese history replete with societal collapses and external domination coalescing into a belief in the strong Party-State as the guarantor of national unity and sovereignty. China's Century of Humiliation, during which the Middle Kingdom was reduced to the status of a supplicant, also provides collective memories of societal mistreatment, suspicion of the West, and the rightness of China's reestablishment as a great power or even the greatest power. The long history of an activist state as the protector of the Chinese people and its culture also provides a level of state legitimacy and an acceptance of widespread state intervention among the general populace that is inimical to Western liberal traditions. The combination of Legalism and Confucianism not only provides for an effective and strong state, but also one that rules in a way that maintains its legitimacy and its Mandate of Heaven,

Bell (2015, p. 179) typifies the unique Chinese political structure as "democracy at the bottom, experimentation in the middle, and meritocracy at the top", with the long service and slow climb required of the senior members providing for a high level of cohesion and a long-term (i.e. decadal) policy orientation. In such a structure, "a person with Barack Obama's presidential professional experience would not even be the

manager of a small county in China's system" (Li, quoted in Bell 2015, p. 187). Of course, such a system is open to the personal favoritisms, cliques, and corruption of any such authoritarian bureaucracy – as has been evident with respect to the Party-State. Notwithstanding this, the bureaucracy has displayed a high degree of competence and *raison d'etat* (with the continued success of the Party seen as a crucial element of the *raison d'etat*) and has been seen to carry out policies to ameliorate such tendencies. The recent actions taken against Jack Ma and the Ant Group (Neate 2020; Zhong 2020) may be seen as designed to reign in possibly dangerous financial activities (both to the Chinese financial system and to individual borrowers) as well as *rentier* and monopolistic tendencies that could damage the legitimacy of the Party-State. As Hudson (2015) has noted, a highly innovative financial sector may be beneficial to the elites but not to the general populace. The actions taken against Jack Ma and the Ant Group also remind the economic elites that the Party-State is preeminent and that private sector firms operate under its oversight.

The Russian policy making elites, as well as the general populace, share the visceral personal impacts of chaos and collapse with their Chinese counterparts. In the Russian case from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the chaos of the 1990s - during which Russia became a mere shadow of its previous glory and the West was seen to support a kleptocratic authoritarian state to further its own interests. The Western movement toward Russia's borders and its extensive propagandist Othering of the nation can only have increased the suspicion of a West that refuses to deal with Russia as an equal. Combined with a history replete with Western interventions, a tendency toward stability, protection of sovereignty (for example in the tight control of foreign NGOs) and

careful statecraft, can be seen as stemming from both the internal strategic culture and Russia's geopolitical position. The lack of a cohesive elite also reinforces conservative tendencies as a careful balance must be maintained between competing interests.

The US policy making elites overlap substantially with the economic elites and their corporate and think-tank networks, providing shared educational, corporate, consulting and social experiences. Their history is one of centuries of Western dominance, seventy years of US global dominance, and a homeland that last experienced warfare nearly a century and a half in the past. The increasingly *rentier* and extractive orientation of these elites over the four decade plus period of neoliberalism and globalization has somewhat separated them from the *raison d'etat*, as short-term financially driven profit making has taken precedence over nation building. In addition, the belief in the universal pre-eminence of liberal capitalism, buttressed by the collapse of the communist Soviet Union, may have provided a hubris that blinded policy makers to the rise of possible competitors. This understanding of US strategic culture, not available to neorealist (as opposed to classical realist) and liberal internationalist ontologies, provides the insights necessary to understand the weakness of the West in directly fostering Chinese growth – blinded by the elite's belief in its own ideology, together with a certain amount of racist arrogance (e.g. that Orientals can only copy and not create high technology), and the huge profit-making opportunities available. The former factors may now have been somewhat reduced, but the latter when combined with the costs associated with reshoring or onshoring production activities is still significant. The historical Othering of Russia, the residual impacts of a Cold War that was reignited in the 1980's by Reagan, and anger at the "loss" of Russia during Putin's reign may also help account

for why the US has not been willing to heed the neorealist position that it should split Russia from China, to deal with one geopolitical opponent at a time, as it did successfully in the 1970s. Instead its foreign policies have served to greatly deepen the alliance between the two nations. This is in contrast to the US policies toward China during the 1970s that were directed at taking advantage of the split between it and the USSR (with China the much weaker of the two) in order to bring China closer to the US (neo)LIO and exacerbate that split. Instead, the US seems to have gone out of its way to vilify Russia (now very much the lesser of it and China) and reinforce the nationalist forces within that country. A Russia within the Western camp would both threaten the Chinese northern border and the fossil fuel supplies from Russia and Central Asia that are critical elements of current Chinese energy security. The vast anti-Russia propaganda effort during the Trump administration can only have served to make such a possibility even more remote.

The utilization of the strategic culture concept may be lacking though, as recent Chinese history has been deeply affected by the impacts of specific individuals; firstly Mao (who at times could be likened to an Emperor), and then Deng. Unlike truly despotic nations though, the CCP has shown its ability to somewhat self-correct even in the face of a leader as dominant as Mao; for example, in the demotion of Mao after the failures of the Great Leap Forward. Deng's reforms and the ongoing development of China have also greatly strengthened the Party-State with respect to any individual leader. Xi may be considered by some to be gaining the same personal power as Deng, but even Deng had to be mindful of what was possible within the constraints of the Party apparatus. Also, Deng's passing did not fundamentally change the ideology and structure of the Party-State.

In Russia, the individual Tsars, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and now Putin did not fully establish the effective bureaucratic and administrative structures of either modern Western liberalism or the current Chinese Party-State. While the Mao-dominated China gave way to the institutional rebuilding of Deng, Jiang and Hu, the bureaucratic structures of the USSR were destroyed and replaced with a Russia dominated by individuals and cliques. In the US, regular elections, presidential term limits, political parties, and governmental structures limit the impact of any one individual. In China, the Party-State acts as a barrier to a Mao-like figure, as does the memory of Mao's rule. In Russia, there are no such barriers, resulting in the greater importance of individuals - especially Putin. A central question for the future of Russia is the state of one man's health and his ability to continue his rule through a chosen successor – as he himself was chosen by his predecessor and the oligarchs. The centrality of such an individual requires incorporation into the model as a possible contingency, as the rise and nature of such an individual is not fully knowable in advance.

Bolstered by the rise in oil prices in the first decade of the new century, and his ability to mediate between and balance competing interests, Putin has been able to provide a relative stability and has been rewarded for this with legitimacy from the Russian citizenry. Putin has striven in recent years to institutionally and culturally embed the base of his power and his future legacy. To build a new nationalism, Putin has reached back to the Tsarist period and the founding myths of Russia. The tight alignment with the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates the Russian image of itself as the protector of Orthodox Christianity and conservative values. The “Great Patriotic War” has also been raised to the status of a founding myth, on par with the defeat of the Mongols, the

expulsion of the foreign powers after the Time of Troubles, the Battle of Poltava, and the Battle of Borodino against Napoleon's *Grand Armée* (Walker 2018). There was much public appetite for the nationalistic myths upon which national pride could be rebuilt after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demotion of Russia in the international ranks, as shown by the growing demand for media that celebrated the pre-Soviet era (Norris 2012). As Walker (2018, p. 253) pointedly states, "Russia's glorious past has become a national obsession, but a prosperous future still seems a long way off". Such a yearning for past national greatness in the face of a much lesser present heavily parallels the mood of my native Britain which continues its shrinkage from the time when the "sun never set" on its Empire while its media continues to celebrate its past much more than its present.

Notwithstanding Putin's efforts, Russia is still predominantly the kleptocratic and oligarchic nation that he inherited from his predecessor, with a significant liberal-western oriented constituency and a state/society complex that has not fully institutionalized his nationalist orientation. Putin may be personally committed to the *raison d'état* but there are domestic forces that may still yearn for a *comprador* rapprochement with the West and be able to place their personal interests above what is good for the nation.

The use of a historical materialist lens removes a major shortcoming of much IR scholarship in seeing the present as a creation of the past, and the future emanating in a somewhat path-dependent way from the present. A process so well captured by Marx:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations

weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new sense in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. (Marx 1885)

Its dialectical nature also accepts the nature of historical change as a process of continuing struggle between competing interests and worldviews rather than as a path to societal perfection.

The ahistorical, Eurocentric and universalist shortcomings of neorealism with respect to a rising power such as China are evident in analyses such as Allison's (2017), that rely upon the assumption that the small-scale Peloponnesian wars of more than two millennia ago are applicable to the modern world of superpowers and weapons of mass destruction, with the internal dynamics of each nation deemed to relative irrelevance. Furthermore, both classical realist and neorealist scholars may utilize simplistic readings of Thucydides, an author that may in fact be a highly unreliable narrator (Podoksik 2005). There is a great deal of disagreement among historians about who actually started the Peloponnesian wars; it could have been Athens, Sparta, Corinth or even a combination (Dickins 1911; Tannenbaum 1975; Kagan 2013), and therefore the main lesson to be learnt is the complexity of the real world, even the ancient one. In addition, as Bagby notes (1994, p. 133), "Thucydides thinks that an understanding of the political and cultural differences among city-states before and during the Peloponnesian War is crucial



for understanding their behavior”; Sparta and Athens could easily be seen as greater ideological competitors than the Cold War US and Soviet Union. This is directly at odds with the ontology of neorealism, but compatible with both Cox’s historical materialism and neoclassical realism as well as the conceptualization of strategic culture used in this dissertation. As noted in the chapter on China, learnings from the much larger conflicts that happened in that country during the same time period as the Peloponnesian War may be more applicable to the present.

The dialectical nature of change is most evident in the US, with the extreme economic cleavages created by four decades of neoliberalism interconnecting with a history of racist Othering that has not been properly surfaced and addressed by economic, political and cultural elites. As Martin Luther King so eloquently stated:

History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture, but as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals ... few members of a race that have oppressed another race can understand or appreciate the deep groans and passionate yearnings of those that have been oppressed. (King 1963)

The intensification of these fault lines during the COVID crisis, and the inability of even “progressive” elites to adequately conceptualize and address them, points to the possibility of an intensifying internal strife which may significantly affect foreign policy decision-making and the ability of elites to command societal resources when necessary.

In such circumstances, the identification and scapegoating of threatening Others may serve both to distract and discipline the general populace. As shown with the US entry into World War 1 and the more recent Iraq wars, and noted by Goering, the Reichsmarschall of Nazi Germany, in an interview given at the Nuremberg Trials in 1946:

Naturally, the common people don't want war, neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood, But the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country. (Goering 1946)

Cox's historical materialism also allows for the inclusion and treatment of non-systemic, but system changing, variables such as the still ongoing process of global industrialization and the probable future transition of the global energy system to low carbon sources. The latter will have consequences far beyond those of simple technocratic changes, with highly divergent impacts between nations. The three case studies chosen include both the possible greatest gainer (China) and one of the possible greatest losers (Russia) from such a transition. The relative positions of China and the US with respect to gains from such a transition, together with the differing balances of power within their state/society complexes, may provide China with geopolitical advantage.

Within the US, the tension between fossil fuel interests and other elite groupings may intensify over time as the need for such a transition becomes more urgent.

From the above, it can be seen that the framework utilized in this dissertation captures much of the complexity of international relations that mainstream IR frameworks miss. Its hybridity serves to better match the complexity of the world, and the rejection of the universality of Eurocentric and liberal tenets allows for the analysis of heterogeneous nations on a basis less coloured by a single ideological lens. What are the areas of further research that may be the most fruitful ones?

A first area of research would be to utilize the framework to analyze the position of other nations. Germany, as the now dominant power within the EU, would provide useful insights. India, as both a regional power and one that seems to be in a transition phase from secular socialism to oligarchical neoliberal Hindu-nationalism, may prove to be another fruitful research topic. Japan, as another regional power and historical competitor to China, may also be a good candidate. It is important to remember that the framework may be limited in its applicability to nations that possess limited sovereignty – which is the case with many nations, especially in Africa and the Americas. For example, the concept of state/society complex would require some changes to integrate things such as *comprador* elites and the deep penetration of supranational authorities (e.g. the World Bank, IMF, United Nations Development Program, European Central Bank, European Commission), foreign agencies (e.g. USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy), and international non-governmental organizations (e.g. “philanthropic” foundations such as the Rockefeller, Ford, Open Society and the Bill and Melinda Gates foundations) and transnational corporations into the internal workings of many nations.

Another important area for possible research is the detailed geopolitical and energy security dynamics of a transition away from fossil fuels, an area that has been little covered by the academy. Such research would include the dynamics of a highly inelastic global oil and gas market place, the extreme dependence of some elites upon oil and gas rents for their continued rule and even personal survival, highly varied extraction and social costs, the possibility of supplier favoritism with respect to domestic and allied production, and the possible urgency to bring forward production of a wasting resource that at some point will ultimately become worthless. The possibility for a highly volatile period with non-linear demand responses and significant conflict needs to be fully conceptualized and understood with respect to possible outcomes and most applicable policy options.

Another area of research could be into the construction of possible coalitions that could enforce a low carbon energy transition through economic incentives and disincentives, and military means if necessary, together with the financial steps required to remove the threat posed by fossil fuel and growth-related assets to the global financial system. For example, could a nationalization of fossil fuel assets, with the losses on those assets becoming significantly socialized, facilitate a transition by removing much of the elite resistance to that transition?

## 6.2. Overall Framework Insights

The analysis facilitated by the framework provides explanatory value with respect to recent events that both neorealism and liberal internationalism cannot adequately explain – the increase rather than a reduction in US and Western overt and covert aggression after the fall of the Soviet Union, the nature of the Russian state/society system following the Soviet collapse, and the rise of China. By understanding both the historical nature of the related state/society systems and the culture of the decision-making elites, these outcomes can be accounted for.

With respect to the US, the collapse of the Soviet-*bloc* can be seen not as the collapse of the preeminent security threat that will allow for a more peaceful world and a reassignment of resources away from the security state, but rather as the opportunity to fulfil a multi-century elite mission of US, and Western, global dominance and the opening of all nations to US, and Western, exploitation and profit making. Within this context, the expansion of NATO (and the EU) in the wake of the collapse of the very threat that NATO was supposedly constructed to address, becomes comprehensible. The unwillingness to include a Russia with any semblance of sovereignty within the Western alliance, together with the aggressive regime change operations within its bordering nations, also becomes understandable.

The removal of the Soviet *bloc* removed a blockage to the dominance of the US capitalist class, and its lesser allies, allowing for a *more* aggressive geopolitical stance designed to subjugate all other nations; the more permissive international environment facilitating a full expression of the interests of the US elite within its foreign policy. After sensing victory in this drive for global dominance, the rejuvenation of Russia and the

emergence of China now threaten a less permissive international environment of a multipolar world that will constrain US, and Western, expression of their capitalist class interests within their foreign policy; especially with a China that it is dominated by a Party-state class that has remained in place during China's decades of rapid growth, rather than a liberal capitalist one. Over a period of hundreds of years, material capabilities, ideas and institutions have reinforced each other in the production of a Western *common sense* that sees liberal capitalist democracy as the only acceptable "modern" civilizational model, supported by a degree of inherent racial and religious arrogance – with the US as the epitome.

A parallel can be drawn between the current position of the West, one of civilizational arrogance and ideological dogmatism, and that of China prior to its Century of Humiliation. A China that considered itself as the peak of civilization, with a state/society complex operating with the ideational and institutional arrangements established during the Tang dynasty a millennium before, was unable conceptualize the West as a threat, and to reinvigorate itself when that threat was realized. The Century of Humiliation was one of a reconceptualization of Chinese society, a much slower one than the successful Japanese example of the *Meiji Restoration*, completed by Mao and then Deng. A reconceptualization that benefited from the readiness to take lessons from many philosophical traditions, both from within and without China, while remaining generally faithful to the service of the welfare of the Chinese people (the Mandate of Heaven now transformed into a Performance Legitimacy that replaced the ideological support of communism). After the path of radical economic and political liberalization was rejected at the end of the 1980s, the pre-eminence of the Party-state was reinforced and a hybrid

Chinese path to development and modernity – rejecting the Western liberal path – became the new *common sense*. A path that resulted in the growth miracle of the following three decades, one that greatly surpassed that experienced by the US during its period of rapid growth in the nineteenth century. In this context, the actions of Xi should not be surprising as they represent a redirection back toward the centrality of a less corrupt and more benevolent Party-state after the unequal and corrupting rapid growth of the first decade of this century. The actions to restrict *rentier* financial activities (e.g. subprime lending) and tighten controls and regulation over the creation of credit, together with the commodification of the social sphere (a primitive accumulation of the social commons and human psychological preferences) inherent in the business models of social media companies, serve to both protect the Chinese citizenry against exploitation and remove threats to the stability of the Chinese development model and the authority of the Party-state; quite the opposite of the position taken by the US state. The continued high competence and responsiveness of this Party-state is evidenced by its responses to domestic pollution concerns, the challenge of the COVID pandemic, the extensive infrastructural, economic and military upgrading of the past decade, and the creation of world-beating technological organizations such as Huawei.

The West finds itself unable to conceptualize China as a civilizational equal that it can learn significant lessons from; lessons that may threaten both the current wealth and position of the capitalist class and challenge the basic self-serving ontology through which it views the world. From Cox's conceptualization the co-creational relationship between material capabilities, ideas and institutions is evident; the prospect for significant ideational change is constrained by material capabilities and institutions, and any such

change will result in concomitant changes in those other forces. The work of de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, as well as that of Layne, point to the workings of these inertial constraints within the US strategic culture. The possibilities for a rethinking of US foreign policy are constrained both by the material and institutional realities within which the strategic culture operates (e.g. sources of funding and future career paths), and the selection and socialization processes that work effectively to discipline and/or winnow out non-compliant individuals. The inability to conceive of an alternative to liberal capitalism or to accept a more pluralistic world order is evidenced by the repeated refrain to “Western values” in the criticism of China, with the civilizational Other still being expected to comply to Western civilizational ideals and the rules of a (neo)LIO that the West both constructed and places itself in the position of judge and jury over such compliance. At the same time, Western elites repeatedly point to the “inevitable” collapse of China, and its presumed inability to advance beyond the middle-income trap, due to its illiberalism. Tooze (2021) reflects this level of civilizational arrogance and rejection of unfortunate facts within the US military establishment when he states:

Now, the ultimate goal of the Pentagon planners is to loosen that link between economic performance and military force. They aim to secure US military dominance even as the centrifugal effect of global economic growth reduces America’s relative weight in the world economy. Ultra-advanced technology, not GDP, will be the decisive factor. As Washington torques the sinews of power, the entire world will feel the effect.



No acknowledgement of the development of advanced military technologies by Russia and China (e.g. hypersonic surface to surface and air to surface missiles), the repeated failure of so many high technology military projects – from the “Star Wars program” of the Reagan era to the current F35, and the repeated US losses against China in war games situated in the South China Sea (Copp 2021). The utilization of the Coxian insight of the fundamental co-creation of material capabilities, ideas and institutions within this work helps identify the linkage between US economic and military dominance in the creation of the institutions of the LIO in the immediate post-WW2 period and the (neo)LIO in the post-Soviet period. As relative material capabilities of liberal and illiberal powers change in the latter’s favour it should be expected that the institutions of the world order will also change, with the (neo)LIO being less resistant than some of the more sanguine US academics (Deudney & Ikenberry 2018; Ikenberry 2018) from being transformed into a multipolar order with institutions reflecting compromises between heterogeneous worldviews – including illiberal ones. The belief that “Both projects - the Westphalian and liberal internationalist—were founded on ideas that were implicitly universal in their normative and legal-political scope” (Ikenberry 2018, p. 24) is bereft of the Coxian insight while exhibiting the blinkers of Eurocentrism. The assertion that “The liberal order and its democracies will prevail because the stately ships of illiberalism readily run aground in turbulent times, while the resilient raft of liberalism lumbers along” (Deudney & Ikenberry 2018, p. 24) requires significant self-reflection with respect to the differing experiences of China and the West in the post Global Financial Crisis world (with the current COVID crisis offering another chance for such self-reflection).

An unsettling parallel for US elites is that of the Soviet Union and the US during the 1980s, with a Russia handicapped by a slow growing economy and an increasingly corrupted and dysfunctional Party-state bureaucracy that was not able to keep pace with the US and the West; with an increasingly radical revolution from above producing collapse rather than rejuvenation. In the present, the US now sits in the slowly growing, corrupted and dysfunctional role, with a faster growing China seeming to possess a much more competent and focused elite class, and the US directing a much greater share of GDP toward military and security activities, together with *rentier* profits, while its domestic infrastructure, institutions, the social welfare of the majority, and the legitimacy of the capitalist elite and state decay. As Tooze (2021) notes “Defining militarised spending more generally to include Homeland Security, the share [of US state discretionary spending] rises to two thirds or more”. The use of approximately US\$8 trillion of resources for US military aggression, with little to show for it except within the pockets of corporate executives and shareholders, is a prime example of the unlinking of US state policy from basic competence and the *raison d'état*. The inability of the strategic culture to address the scale of this failure and to accept the need for a fundamental process of renewal reflects its locked in nature. In such a context the extreme reactions to the retreat from Afghanistan, after twenty years of expensive failure, becomes comprehensible; a rejection of the inconvenient facts and shooting of the messenger required to forestall the acceptance of the need for a fundamental rethink of US foreign policy and the nature of its state/society complex.

The internal dynamics and historical trajectory of Russia place it as a weak secondary power requiring an alliance with a major power. The material, institutional and

ideational history does not provide the basis for the kind of developmental state that China possesses. For a few decades, mostly under Stalin, successful industrialization was carried out, but the state was unable to move from an *extensive* mode of development into an *intensive* one. In the decades following Stalin the state ossified and became increasingly corrupted, which then became the basis of the corrupted and *rentier* capitalist elite created during the 1990s. Putin has brought some stability and state oversight, greatly aided by the increase in oil prices in the new century, but is greatly restricted in his ability to carry out the required transformation required for Russia's development beyond the status of a resource exporter with a relatively advanced military industrial sector. Attempts to gain the support of the West in such a transformation were rebuffed, and now Russia is heavily dependent upon its alliance with China; an alliance where it has come to accept its secondary role. Given the inability to endogenously upgrade its economy, Russia may be increasingly faced with the role of Mexico with respect the US, that of a resource exporter and location of Chinese offshored production sites. With Chinese GDP per capita at market exchange rates close to surpassing that of Russia, and growing at a much faster rate, this may become a distinct possibility during the current decade; especially if the Chinese currency appreciates and the transition to low carbon energy systems accelerates. As the Chinese equal and overtake average Russian incomes on a PPP basis over the next ten years, and Chinese technological achievements outstrip those of Russia, the legitimacy of the Russian state and elite may become more challenged while at the same time a window for more fundamental change may be opened. The management of the changing relationship between the two powers

will be a crucial one for China, with the maintenance of Russian national prestige and state legitimacy a significant determinant.

The Chinese state/society complex has been “winning” for over four decades, aided in its early days by a highly supportive West that assumed that it would inevitably become more liberal and open to Western leadership and more recently by the West’s error in pushing Russia (and also Iran, Pakistan and most recently Afghanistan) toward an increasingly close alliance with China. The general geopolitical strategy of “winning without fighting” (Boyd & Ufimsteva 2021), backed up with a strong defensive military position, is highly effective for a development state with high levels of domestic legitimacy and capable of driving still fast economic growth and industrial upgrading. The analysis facilitated by the framework identifies no need for any fundamental change in this strategy unless triggered by a militarily aggressive US, especially with a foreign policy and economic stance that has helped keep ASEAN out of any anti-China alliance. In contrast, the US is challenged with the need for a significant ideational, institutional and material renewal that will require a rebalancing of internal power relationships and quite possibly income and wealth distribution; together with a significant adjustment in its attitude toward the sovereignty of other nations. Without such a renewal, the US may face an accelerating decline in position with respect to China as it continues to fight using the assumptions of its “unipolar moment” and the first Cold War, in the face of an opponent with very different strengths, strategies and tactics and a significantly changed world system. Russia faces the same challenges, although allied with China, in striving to not become increasingly a natural resource supplier and provider of cheap production facilities – a *Mexicanization*.

The possible impacts of the above for the possibility of a move to a low carbon energy system are covered in the next chapter.

### **6.3. Lessons for the Combined Transition**

“Our Gross National Product ... counts air pollution and cigarette advertising ... special locks for our doors and jails for the people who break them ... the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl ... napalm ... and nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities ... Yet [it] does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of our education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials ... And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans.”

(Robert F. Kennedy, Remarks at the University of Kansas March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1968, quoted in Chayes 2020, p. 289)

More than five decades ago, Robert F. Kennedy detailed the severe shortcomings in the measurement of Gross National Product (GNP) and its disconnection from many of the things that create and maintain the happiness of the citizenry. Such insights have still not been accepted into mainstream policy making discourses. Instead, growth in GNP/GDP has become increasingly fetishized as the official measure of the success of a given nation and the competency of its policy making elites. Ecomodernist theories have been used to reconcile such growth with the need to limit humanity’s impact upon the Earth systems that are critical to the continued existence of complex human civilization. In an earlier chapter I addressed the improbability of the ecomodernist assertion of a hard delinking between economic growth and material consumption facilitating such a reconciliation. The geopolitical transition that is currently taking place reinforces this growth imperative, as competing nations strive to maintain or increase their relative economic power. In addition, the possibility of the extensive international cooperation required to address climate change, and other issues stemming from large scale human

interference with Earth systems, is reduced as the level of international conflict increases. This brings us to a modified form of the paradox proposed by Nyman (2018): the attempt to maximize relative geopolitical position by individual nations removes the possibility of significant reductions in fossil fuel usage in timeframes relevant to limiting climate change within a safe temperature range – increasing the risk of large-scale discontinuous changes in the climate that may be produce an existential risk to modern advanced civilization.

With a United States that has been expanding for over four centuries, representing the vanguard of a “liberal”, Christian and white West that had been expanding for two centuries prior to that, the US-led *bloc* can be seen as the historically unstoppable force – one that considers itself as the natural successor to Greco-Roman civilization. This was especially the case during the 1990s, the global apogee of Western universalism, but it is now being challenged by the immovable object of a China allied with Russia that cannot be contained in the way that the USSR was. The leaders of both China and Russia have expressed their resistance to the Western assumptions of exceptionalism and pre-eminence:

I would rather disagree with a case he [Obama] made on American exceptionalism, ... It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. ... We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord’s blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal. (Putin 2013)

No country has the right to dominate global affairs, control the destiny of others or keep advantages in development all to itself. Even less should one be allowed to do whatever it likes and be the hegemon, bully or boss of the world ... There must be no practice of exceptionalism or double standards. Nor should international law be distorted and used as a pretext to undermine other countries' legitimate rights and interests or world peace and stability (Xi 2020)

That immovable object also threatens to soon take over the role of the unstoppable force, at least regionally – although perhaps with a lesser level of forced ideological and socio-economic assimilation. The best that can be hoped for in such a confrontation is a relatively peaceful period of conflict before a new geopolitical balance is reached, especially with the highly divergent state/society complexes, national histories and cultures of the West and China. Especially with rhetoric such as this in an editorial of the official Chinese media:

If China, as a major power, wants to realize its great rejuvenation, it must overcome the US' strategic malice and madness. A peaceful coexistence between China and the US cannot be achieved by China's obedience and tolerance. We must be an invincible force, and then the US may finally accept peaceful competition with China in accordance with rules. In other words, benign cooperation between the two countries can be stabilized only when the US finds that peaceful coexistence with China is its best choice, or the least-worst one. (Global Times 2020)

Very much “speak not so softly and carry a big stick” to misquote Theodore Roosevelt. The possibility of a “hot” war cannot be written off just because the nations involved are highly economically integrated and such a war may seem a little crazy. Many made the same mistake about a WW1 fought predominantly between relatively homogeneous Christian nations with inter-married aristocratic elites and substantial inter-country trade flows. The German fear of a closing window in which it would be able to defeat the industrializing colossus of Tsarist Russia is also mirrored in US elite concerns about time not being in their favor with respect to challenging a rising China. All three nations also possess the required level of elite media and social control to change the national populace’s perception of another nation to facilitate and legitimize war if required; as displayed by Russia with respect to its actions in Chechnya and the Crimea, and the US with respect to its actions in Iraq, the former Yugoslavia and Libya, and its entry into WW1. This is not to say that conflict is inevitable, especially if China continues to move ahead economically and diplomatically while focusing on defense rather than offense and Western elites can come to terms with their worldview becoming provincial rather than universal. Without such an acceptance, the West will continue to condemn China as not being acceptably “modern” through the lens of its assumed universalistic assumptions of what “modernity” is, even within the walls of the academy:

With its resort to Western standards, current scholarship is full of unilateral critiques and “accusations” about the wrongdoing of the Chinese government without any serious exploration into the underlying operative logic of the Chinese



government embedded in a complex economic, social, and historical context.

Without any sound reasoning and evidence, an implicit working assumption behind much of this scholarship is that China will or ought to adopt the model set up by Western doctrines. (Zhou 2019, p. 424)

When the required energy transition is placed within its geopolitical and political-economic context, instead of viewed as simply a technocratic exercise, the importance of the relationship of the major powers with respect to such a transition becomes apparent. The three powers analyzed in this work hold very different positions with respect to that transition. China has the most advantaged position, as it is a major fossil fuel importer and its industrial policy has placed it in a leading position in the fields of green technology intellectual property, production and implementation. In addition, its surface transportation is already much less dependent upon internal combustion engines than those of both the US and Russia. This is not to say that China will quickly move to a low-carbon economy, given its economic-growth driven need for increasing and secure energy supplies that are still heavily dependent upon the usage of domestic coal consumption. Rather, that it stands to gain the most from any such transition, whatever the pace of that transition, relative to Russia and the US. Russia has the most disadvantaged position, with a high dependency of state revenues and corporate profits on fossil fuel exports, and minimal capabilities in green technologies. The US is a mixed picture, with both a significant fossil fuel sector and a growing green technology sector, although the latter is significantly behind that of China. In both Russia and the US, fossil fuel elites act as a significant negative with respect to the ability to improve relative

positions; as does the lack of the kind of focused state industrial policy practiced in China.

Some may question the effectiveness of such state-driven industrial policy, but the rapid upgrading of Chinese technological capabilities in the past decade tends to support its effectiveness when managed by highly competent and trustworthy bureaucracies; as seen with the highly successful state-driven development of the “Four Little Dragons” and Japan (Johnson 1982; Amsden 1989; Vogel 1991; Wade 2004; Chang 2006), China and Vietnam (Hansen, Bekkevold & Nordhaug 2020). The collapse of the Soviet Union greatly delegitimized state-driven industrial policy, but the inference that the collapse of the USSR proved that industrial policy was not efficacious utilizes false-logic. It is akin to refusing to take a drug prescribed by a doctor because some people overdosed on that drug. The other false parallel used to critique industrial policy is that of South American import substitution, but this is comparing Asian apples to South American oranges. The South American nations were handicapped by such things as corrupt bureaucracies, societal institutions oriented toward negative rent-seeking and clientelist behaviours, and an import substitution orientation that facilitated the protection of inefficient and uncompetitive “favorites”. Even with all of these shortcomings, South American state-driven development was not the disaster that the Western consensus proposes (Hira 2007). The negative Western consensus view (a “cognitive and normative monoculture of basic beliefs about how the world does work and how it should work” [Wade 2014, para. 4]) toward state-driven development is highly resistant to the lessons of the Asian examples, and forgetful of successes in its own history, such as nineteenth-century

Germany and the US (Hudson 2010), and too negative with respect to the South American experience.

The reality is that “In a world of constructed comparative advantage, social and political institutions – the state among them – shape international specialization. State involvement may be taken as one of the sociopolitical determinants of what niche a country ends up occupying in the international division of labour” (Evans 1995, p. 9-10). Simplistic, and quite possibly self-serving (Chang 2010), notions of Ricardian fixed comparative advantage (and capital bottled up within each nation) and the “natural” shortcomings of state intervention with respect to “free” markets may be as relevant to the present day as a buggy whip is to a modern car (Chang & Grabel 2014).

The above points to the possibility of an accelerated move of China toward an energy transition, taking advantage of its leading green technology position to claim an increasing technological lead over the US. At the same time, such a move would serve to decrease its fossil fuel imports, which will provide an improvement in both its terms of trade and its energy security – especially with respect to a US-led energy blockade. One major retardant of such a move is the inertia and friction that exists within societies, friction that is not reflected in the technocratic ecomodernist models of energy transition. These include the question of the large losses that would be actualized in non-depreciated economic assets, such as fossil fuel powered electricity generation and fossil fuel extraction, together with the structural unemployment and retraining needs produced by such a transition. In addition, there would be the physical and financial limitations on the speed of production ramp-ups in areas such as electric vehicle production, solar panel and wind turbine production and implementation, raw material extraction, electric grid

expansion and battery production (Yergin 2020). Added to that would be the possible impacts on important constituencies within the CCP, such as the national oil companies and the electricity generation sector. This is nowhere near an exhaustive list of the physical, political and economic retardants upon a low carbon energy transition. An overall concern for a CCP that is very cognizant of the need for social stability would also be the possibly highly disruptive effects of a rapid transition, including risks to the economic growth that supports CCP legitimacy in a myriad of ways. Much better to have a measured transition that still takes advantage of China's leading position but does not risk instability within the Party and society as a whole, and also does not risk the stability of China's fossil fuel dependent northern ally. Such a "steady as she goes" approach may also serve not to awaken the alarm of US elites in the way that the "China 2025" initiative did. The recent Chinese proclamations of being carbon-neutral by 2060 supports this, "steady as she goes" hypothesis.

The need for continued economic growth, for domestic legitimacy, financial stability, and geopolitical reasons, will continue to limit any decreases in GHG emissions if only a relative decoupling is assumed. If Chinese GDP growth is to average 5% over the next decade, a realistic assumption given the recent GDP growth deceleration, even the combined effects of a relative decoupling of energy usage and increased renewables usage may not produce more than a minor reduction in GHG emissions. Any reduction in the acceptable GDP growth rate would both reduce the relative size of Chinese GDP with respect to the US and its Western allies in the future, and limit increases in the welfare of the Chinese population. In this context, the Chinese promise of a peak in national GHG emissions "by 2030 at the latest" makes a great deal of geopolitical and domestic political

sense, and is aligned with the recent target of doubling Chinese GDP per capital by the mid 2030's; no hints of reducing GDP growth to accelerate a reduction in GHG emissions. By that date Chinese GDP would be approximately double that of the US in PPP terms and China's economic mix would be at a stage when increasing amounts of energy (and emissions) will be embedded in imports (transferring GHG emissions to the national accounts of other nations). At the global level, such a peaking of Chinese GHG emissions, counted on a national production basis, may have little if any positive impact upon climate change given the height of the peak and the possibility for a significant increase in externalized emissions through imports of embedded energy.

The *Anthropocene Geopolitics* that Dalby (2020) calls for to facilitate ecological sustainability may therefore not be possible until at least the point at which the above processes have completed, meaning a delay of at least a decade or more before even the most limited of geopolitical prerequisites would be in place for such a global “coming together”— even ignoring the internal political dynamics in many nations that may retard any move away from fossil fuels. The definition of the required destination is not the bigger problem, it is the question of how we get “there” from “here”; with the latter moving farther away from the former by the day.

Does ecomodernism have any new rabbits that can be pulled from the proverbial hat to resolve, or at least delay the consequences of, the paradox? Perhaps yes, at least in a discursive sense, through the intensification of human attempts to control nature; technocratic “solutions”, that allow for continued growth, and don't challenge the status-quo state/society complexes. These are the geo-engineering technologies that promise to either provide an anthropogenic global thermostat by reducing the albedo of the Earth, or

capture and store the climate-warming waste gases of human consumption – in some cases even fulfilling the ecomodernist dream of a ‘circular’ economy where those wastes are recycled into new production processes. Even if such proposed technologies are highly speculative, they may provide the socio-economic and ideational path of least resistance within nations unready or unable to face the deep and threatening changes required to significantly reduce global fossil fuel use. Discourses on such technologies have already infested the UN IPCC documents (Anderson 2015), as climate change progress has increasingly lagged behind the required path; with assumptions of colossal human projects aimed at sequestering gargantuan amounts of carbon dioxide – always in the future (Larkin, Kuriakose, Sharmina & Anderson 2017; Hilaire et al, 2019).

To allow for a continuing belief in the ability of human ingenuity to overcome ecological limits, *Solar Radiation Management* (SRM) technologies, some of which appear to be relatively cheap to implement and can be localized to a geographic locality (i.e. managed nationally) may just fit the bill; especially if an emergency response is required to combat non-linear reactions of the Earth System. As with other geo-engineering technologies though, the possible side effects are not fully understood, and different technologies may be required for specific areas such as the Polar Regions. The next UN IPCC report, slated for 2022, will be indicative of whether SRM technologies are gaining acceptance within technocratic circles. A report on solar geoengineering released in early 2021, by the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, calls for the US government to fund a 5-year \$200 million national research program (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021).

That the implementation of such colossal and fundamentally untestable technologies may be more believable than a reconciliation and cooperation of nations and humanity along the lines proposed by Dalby (2020) is indicative of the depth of the paradox that international society, and humanity in general, faces.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

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### Chapter 3: China Case Study

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## Chapter 5: Russia Case Study

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## Chapter 6: Conclusion

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