Authoritarian Resurgence: Power, Politics and the Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and China

A Thesis

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by

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To my teacher, mentor, and friend:
Bill Martel
Whose ideas inspired this work and whose support made it possible
I am forever grateful

"What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?"

- *Winston Churchill*

Abstract

A quarter-century after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, leading authoritarian regimes are reasserting influence in their regions and are progressing from consolidating power within their borders to projecting power beyond them. Nowhere is this trend more evident, or important, than in contemporary Russia and China – the world's two most powerful authoritarian states. Instrumental in this success has been their adaptation to globalization and modern technology – phenomena once thought of as destabilizing for autocrats – by employing advanced tools of monitoring and censorship to maintain control over their domestic populations.

Concurrently, Russia and China throughout the twenty-first century represent two cases of great power authoritarian regimes that are developing more assertive foreign policies and military strategies in their respective regions. In practice, Russia continues to destabilize and interfere in Ukraine and the near abroad while China has proven more aggressive over its territorial claims in the East and South China Seas. What is less understood, however, are the linkages between heightened authoritarianism at home and the propensity to pursue revisionist foreign policies. The question remains: what are the connections, if any, between these domestic and foreign policy trends?

The primary argument of this research is that there are internal dynamics within Russia and China that are influencing their foreign policy preferences, objectives, and ultimately, behavior. For these authoritarian regimes, the domestic and foreign domains are inextricably linked: internal consolidations of power and assertive foreign policy strategies are needed to achieve stability at home, as well as the legitimacy of great powers in the international system. While political survival is the objective of all regimes, both democratic and authoritarian, domestic stability and regime security are critical elements of authoritarian political orders. Insecurity among regime elites and insiders is felt in markedly different ways than those in democratic systems, as being removed from power might entail not only losing political power but also material wealth and personal freedom.

Importantly, this insecurity affects foreign policy in that it makes autocratic political actors wary of external influences that seek to destabilize their internal orders and leads them to take steps that maximize their legitimacy and power – at home and abroad. While empirical evidence shows that authoritarian systems are not inherently more warlike, this research develops more nuanced categories and theories that link Russia and China's domestic conditions to their foreign policies, with the goal of ascertaining the specific facets of authoritarian control that are most detrimental to peace and stability. Specifically, this research assesses the influence on foreign policy of domestic variables including the emergence of nationalist individuals and groups, their consolidation of control across political institutions and processes, and the existence of powerful challenges to regime legitimacy.

This research applies process tracing and congruence methodology to a series of in-depth case studies that cover Russian and Chinese domestic politics and foreign policy between 2000 and 2017. Each case study seeks to illustrates the interaction of factors behind the pursuit of revisionist foreign policy strategies. Ultimately, the aim is to build greater understanding of why, how, and to what extent Russia and China are pushing the boundaries of their regional orders in efforts to build "spheres of influence," and what these developments mean for the shaping and conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Russia and China's trajectories – internally and externally – have the power to either enforce or destabilize the liberal international order. Conflict and war are not inevitable, but we cannot avoid what we do not understand.

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Writing a dissertation takes a village. We often think of this process as a solitary endeavor, but in reality there are countless individuals and communities who shape our thinking and provide immeasurable amounts of support along the way. While all shortcomings of this work are my own, I would like to thank several people who helped make this a reality.

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Introduction

I. The Return of Great Power Competition

As of this writing in 2017, significant power shifts within and among the world's leading states are redefining geopolitics. Authoritarian leaders in Russia and China are consolidating power at home and employing unilateral force and coercion abroad in attempts to develop regional spheres of influence. A revanchist Russia has invaded Ukraine, seized Crimea, intervened in Syria, and meddled in U.S. and European elections; and a resurgent China has unilaterally advanced territorial claims in its maritime domain and is asserting itself economically and politically across Asia, Latin America and Africa. Their assertiveness comes at a time when the future of America's global leadership role is in question. As the U.S. and Europe deal with internal challenges such as political polarization and economic stagnation, powerful authoritarian states are challenging prevailing democratic norms and undermining democratic processes to dismantle elements of the liberal international order with which they are dissatisfied. These dynamics, along with others, make it clear that great power competition has returned.

U.S. national security strategy is adjusting to this new paradigm. Sixteen years ago, following the September 11th, 2001 attacks, violent extremism and terrorism were the foremost national security concerns for the U.S. government. In recent years, however, challenges from powerful revisionist and authoritarian states have reentered discussions on U.S. foreign policy priorities. In June 2015, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (then General Martin Dempsey) issued the most recent U.S. National Military Strategy (NMS). The 2015 NMS organized national security threats into two primary categories: "revisionist states" and "violent extremist organizations." Revisionist states covered in the report include Russia, Iran, North Korea and China. The 2015 NMS argued that revisionist states seeking to change the existing international order are creating a strategic context whereby "global disorder has significantly increased, while some of our comparative military advantage has begun to erode."[1] Of note, the NMS stated – for the first time in a major

[1] The National Military Strategy of the United States of America, June 2015, pp. 1-4. Accessed at: http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf; Kathleen J. McInnis, "The 2015 National Military Strategy: Background and Questions for Congress," July 29, 2015. Accessed at: https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/IN10333.pdf

strategy document produced in the last twenty years – that there is a distinct possibility that the U.S. may find itself in a conflict with another great power, and that this probability was "low but growing."[2]

That same year, General Joseph Dunford told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee at his confirmation hearing to serve as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs that despite ongoing terrorist threats, "Russia presents the greatest threat to our national security..."[3] Dunford was referring not only to Russia's nuclear capabilities, but also to its capabilities and willingness to violate the sovereignty of states close to its borders. He concluded, "If you look at their behavior, it's nothing short of alarming." General Dunford placed China second on his list of concerns. He said, "As somebody in uniform, I get paid to look at both somebody's intent *and* their capabilities ... When I look at Chinese capabilities relative to our interests in the Pacific, I'd have to consider China as an area for concern for security."[4] As Chairman, Dunford has defined U.S. national security challenges in a "4+1 framework." Similar to the 2015 NMS, this framework is comprised of challenges emanating from four state-based adversaries and competitors: North Korea, Iran, Russia and China, and one non-state, transnational challenge from violent extremist organizations. Illustrations from the national military strategy, Dunford's confirmation hearing and his threat assessment framework all imply that the U.S. must be prepared to face challenges from powerful, and potentially revisionist, states with conflicting worldviews and national interests.

II. An Era of Authoritarian Resurgence

In addition to the threats and concerns posed by revisionist states, there are also challenges emanating from a global resurgence of authoritarianism. Indeed, despite the great strides made by democratization movements around the world, authoritarianism is staging a comeback. Following the third wave of democratization in Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, and the compelling perception that democracy represented the end-state of government's ideological evolution, global trends of democracy have stagnated and in many cases declined.

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Jim Garamone, "Dunford Faces Senators Considering His Nomination as Chairman," *U.S. Department of Defense,* July 9, 2015. Accessed at: https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/612624/
[4] Ibid.

According to *Freedom House,* 2016 marked the eleventh consecutive year of democratic decline measured in civil liberties and political rights enjoyed by citizens. This trend holds for every region of the world. Within authoritarian states, powerful political dynamics are emerging. Nations as diverse as Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, Hungary, Poland, the Philippines and Venezuela are experiencing the rise of 'strongmen' authoritarian leaders who are consolidating control into the hands of one or a few individuals with limited constraints on their decision making capabilities.

Evident in this phenomenon is the contradictory nature of modern authoritarian regimes: illiberal states are employing increasingly advanced tools of monitoring and censorship to maintain control over their domestic populations, while adopting quasi-democratic practices such as superficial political competition, rule of law, and economic openness. To this end, Freedom House reports, "Fundamentally antidemocratic governments have strengthened their hold on power by making at least some of the common set of concessions – largely illusory in nature – to the world's prevailing democratic order."[5] Many argue that they do so in order to appear more legitimate in the eyes of the international community, whose capital, globalized markets and free flowing goods they need to maintain stability among their increasingly interconnected, internationally aware and informed citizens.

III. Research Puzzle

As authoritarian states strengthen their grip on power and present evolving challenges to international stability and to U.S. national security interests, what is less understood are the linkages between these internal and external developments. Russia and China throughout the twenty-first century represent two such cases of great power authoritarian regimes that are becoming increasingly authoritarian at home while developing more assertive foreign policies and military strategies in their respective regions. Yet the question remains: what are the connections, if any, between these domestic and foreign policy trends?

To address this question, this research analyzes cases in contemporary Russia and China and seeks to understand how internal political and economic factors interact with international conditions to incentivize or allow for the pursuit of revisionist foreign policy strategies. As will be explored,

[5] Freedom House, "The Twilight of 'Modern Authoritarianism,'" October 29, 2014.

revisionism in this research is defined by three characteristics: i) a national posture and security strategy that indicates a preference for a redistribution of power and prestige in the international system and/or proximate region; ii) an exemplified willingness to use unilateral and illegitimate coercion and force to expand territorial possessions to achieve such a redistribution of power; and iii) a high risk tolerance for incurring costs to secure "international goods" such as territory. While it may seem elementary that non-democratic actors have fewer constraints on their actions, this does not necessarily translate into foreign policy preferences and behaviors that are empirically more warlike. If, therefore, authoritarian regimes should not be defined entirely by their aggressive nature, we should seek to understand the conditions under which authoritarian regimes more inclined to pursue revisionist foreign policy strategies.

Furthermore, international relations theory presupposes that revisionist states maintain clear and noticeable characteristics. Wilhelmine Germany in the lead-up to WWI and France in the Napoleonic era are considered two classic and clear examples of revisionist states. But a state's foreign policy intentions are not always obvious, and this is particularly the case for closed-system authoritarian regimes. Moreover, similarities to twentieth-century revisionism are unlikely, particularly since the end of the Cold War as authoritarian regimes have grown more dependent on foreign investment and access to international markets for economic growth and political legitimacy. This leads my research to ask not only *why* states pursue revisionist foreign policies, but also *how* and through what strategies can they minimize the potential costs of their actions?

The global resurgence of authoritarianism has tremendous implications for regional and global security. It is plausible that revisionist foreign policies will become more prevalent among authoritarian regimes if domestic political stability and legitimacy is threatened. This is particularly the case in Russia and China, where both administrations are suppressing free media more and are consolidating power to the detriment of institutionalized processes. This may suggest a weakening of the regime's sources of power and legitimacy, rather than a strength. In fact, many analysts argue that the basis of Russian and Chinese assertive foreign policies could lie in how Presidents Putin and Xi view threats to their internal consolidation of power, including concerns emanating from public protest, elite factions and fear of external adversaries challenging the legitimacy of their regimes.

Finally, there is a lack of academic and policy-related research that synthesizes insights from governance oriented studies on authoritarianism and regime stability with security related works of conflict initiation and revisionism. This is a particularly potent gap given the rise of authoritarianism as a global trend, as well as evidence of increasingly assertive foreign policies being exhibited by great power authoritarian regimes. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to academic and policy acumen by integrating a focus on the sources of stability in modern authoritarian regimes with an assessment of factors behind conflict and expansion in international relations.

IV. The Argument

"My power depends on my glory and my glories on the victories I have won. My power will fail if I do not feed it on new glories and new victories. Conquest has made me what I am, and only conquest can enable me to hold my position."[6] *– Napoleon*

At its core, this study argues that the demands of regime survival and consolidation are significant drivers behind the articulation and implementation of revisionist goals and behavior. The purpose and effect of revisionism therefore cannot be fully explained by international conditions and changes in the material distribution of power in isolation. Building from this assumption, this research explores the domestic actors, decision making processes, and political and economic conditions behind foreign policy strategies. Placing sub-state actors within the regime – those who hold the primary decision making power in domestic politics and foreign policy – at the center of analysis allows for a focus on internal and dynamic conceptions of the sources of state behavior in the international sphere. Specifically, I argue that the following three internal political processes factor significantly into foreign policy decision making and therefore deserve greater attention in the analysis of revisionism.

[6] Quoted in Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), 133.

First, when political leaders and elites hold expansionary interests and stand to benefit from assertive foreign policies abroad, the state apparatus is more likely to consider revisionist strategies. This argument is based on the assumption that state preferences mirror the ideas and interests of the political leaders and organizations that hold political, economic and coercive power within the state. Second, as the centralization of authority over wide ranging policy areas takes place – in which the power of bureaucratic constraints, political opposition forces and an independent press are minimized – there are fewer entities able to constrain the decision making power of the political leadership. Under this condition, revisionism may become more likely as there is decreased debate in the political arena, a narrowing of decision making circles among the political elite and the enhanced possibility of misperception of state capabilities or an adversary's intentions.

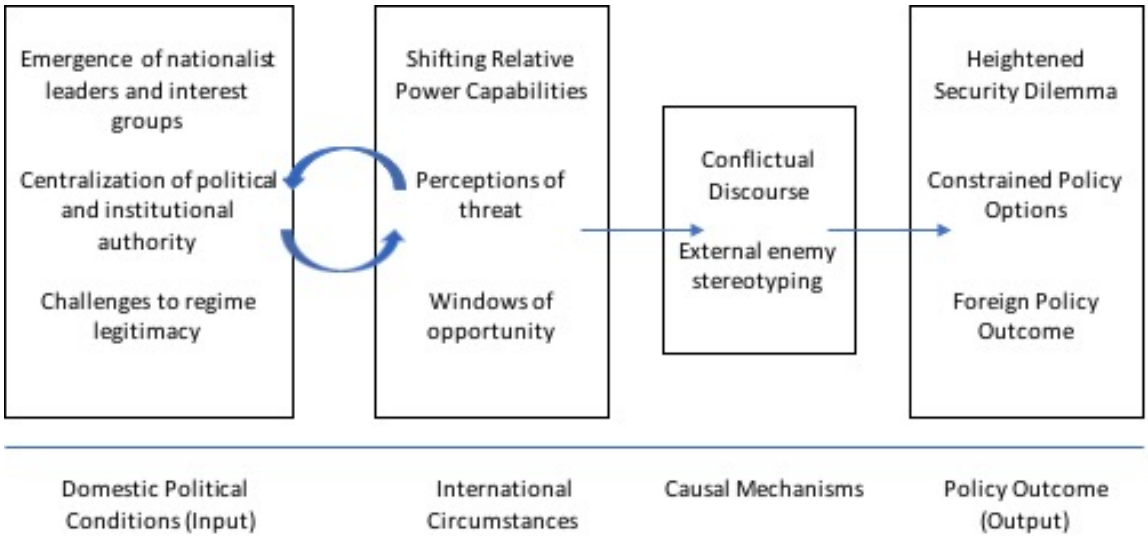
Even as processes such as the emergence of nationalist leaders and the centralization of authority take place, political regimes must undergo legitimization projects in both domestic and international arenas. This leads to my third argument regarding the influence of internal conditions on foreign policy behavior: When elite legitimacy is challenged in times of poor performance (economic pain) or high insecurity (leadership transitions or periods of domestic unrest), autocratic regimes may become incentivized to rely on revisionist strategies that are designed to increase public support for and identification with the regime. This argument emerges from the assumption that the more closed the political process and thus input legitimacy granted by civilians, the more an autocratic system must rely on performance dimensions, such as economic growth or security provisions.

An important caveat in this argument, however, is that while revisionist strategies may be pursued to enhance the legitimacy and power of a regime among its domestic population, it may not effectively improve legitimacy in the long-run as the regime had originally hoped. While the regime may enjoy a temporary boost in popularity created by a surge in nationalism or a diversion away from domestic troubles, over time strategies driven by demands of regime survival can lose favor with a domestic audience bearing the burden of international adventures and costly mistakes. Furthermore, external enemy stereotyping carried out by the state may lead to a heightened security dilemma that can drive the regime into responding to international crises of its own making. This

may divert state resources away from maintaining domestic stability, implementing economic reforms and spending on social services and non-military resources, leading to further domestic unrest and instability.

The Logic of the Argument

The influence of domestic political conditions (the independent variables) including the emergence of nationalist leaders and groups, the centralization of authority, and challenges to regime legitimacy, on foreign policy strategies (the dependent variable) may be less direct than theoretically expected. This research proposes key interactions and causal mechanisms in the relationship between these independent and dependent variables: interaction with international conditions and the role of conflictual discourse and external enemy stereotyping through official or semi-official rhetoric employed by the regime. This causal logic is illustrated in the diagram below.



When taken into consideration with the international conditions illustrated above – shifting relative power capabilities, perceptions of threat and windows of opportunity – this causal logic suggests that foreign policy outcomes of revisionist nature are more likely when the proposed domestic political conditions are present. Not only do weak institutions and the consolidation of control make it easier for a state to pursue riskier policies of revisionism, but so too can the emergence

nationalist leaders and groups with an interest in pursuing such strategies. Their effect, under circumstances of minimal public debate, information and opposition, can be constrained policy options and a higher likelihood of misperception among the political elite of national capabilities and international opportunities and threats. Their internal signaling – articulated through military and strategy doctrines and in statements made by national leaders – can become part of a self-fulfilling spiral, since the effect of such framing and stereotyping reverberates across states. As trust and cooperation declines, security dilemmas ensue and conflictual foreign policy outcomes become more likely. Overall, powerful individuals, their ideas, and their interests all feature centrally in the relationship between domestic politics and international conflict.

As mentioned, while internal political circumstances and decision making processes are the primary focus of this study, I would be remiss to ignore the international dynamics that influence every political leader's decision making. Increasing perceptions of threats from adversaries or the emergence of an opportunity – an international event, changing security environment or declining likelihood of pushback – can shift the cost-benefit analysis more in favor of engaging in international conflict and are therefore dynamics that will be critically analyzed in the case studies.[7]

V. Articulation of Hypotheses

The arguments listed above are articulated through a series of hypotheses that will be explored in the case study research. These hypotheses highlight what I argue to be the primary internal conditions and factors in foreign policy decision making and in moving state behavior toward a revisionist orientation. To recall, these conditions are: i) the dominance within the political system of nationalist leaders and interest groups that stand to benefit from revisionism abroad; ii) the consolidation of institutional and political authority; and iii) the weakening of the regime's

[7] Jack Snyder incorporates specific variable factors of a nation's position in the international system, which fall under two categories: whether the opponent is perceived as aggressive or hostile, and whether the international situation creates offensive or defensive advantages. Realpolitik incentives for offensive action include an unstable political status quo in a key region, windows of opportunity, technological or geographical circumstances favoring the attacker, revolutionary situations favoring offensive political instruments, and the number of great powers in the balancing system. See Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 218.

legitimacy among its domestic population and with key audiences that the regime relies on to maintain power.

H1: Authoritarian government preferences will mirror the ideas and interests of the political leaders, political organizations and economic groups that control the resources the regime needs to survive politically. Revisionist foreign policies are more likely when nationalist individuals and groups emerge to dominate the political system.

This hypothesis stresses the influence on foreign policy of individuals, elite groups and the ideologies they propound. In developing this argument, I rely on Jack Snyder's seminal work on assessing the role of domestic politics to explain why great powers pursue policies of "overexpansion."[8] Snyder argues that foreign policies of overexpansion – policies that prove more costly than beneficial or that provoke overwhelming balancing coalitions – are the product of nationalist domestic political coalitions formed among groups that stand to benefit from expansion and military preparations. These groups, including military or economic actors or state bureaucracies, carry out political activities to pursue their various hawkish and militarist interests. They also use the propaganda tools of the state to justify their self-serving policies in terms a broader public interest in security and national survival.[9]

Other scholars, such as Jason Davidson, refer to these types of individuals and groups as *externally oriented groups* – those that benefit from acquiring or maintaining the state's sovereign territory and international status.[10] The military and defense industries are often considered externally oriented groups. On the other side of the spectrum are groups that are *internally oriented* – those that incur costs from military buildup or war. Business interests are one such group that may either pay the costs of the foreign policy goals themselves (such as higher taxes on profits) or through the costs of response (such as externally imposed sanctions). Welfare beneficiaries – those that receive

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[8] Specifically, Snyder applies his model to great powers during what he argues are eras overexpansion: Germany (1866-1945); Japan (1868-1945); Britain (1830-1890); the Soviet Union (1945-1989) and the United States (1945-1989).

[9] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 2.

[10] Davidson, "The Roots of Revisionism: Fascist Italy, 1922–1939," *Security Studies,* Vol. 11, No. 4. Summer 2002, 129-130.

important financial benefits from the government and whose pie would shrink with an increase in defense or military spending – are also resistant to revisionism abroad.[11]

As Davidson writes, analyzing this argument is straight forward when "either externally or internally oriented groups hold a clear and predominant share of the resources necessary to guarantee the government's survival. In those cases, the preferences of the dominant groups in a governing coalition are often translated into policy."[12] The situation becomes more complex when it is unclear what groups maintain dominant power over the political processes, or if the processes themselves are opaque. This is often the case in autocratic regimes. Therefore, analyzing the influence of internal group preferences on foreign policy outcomes requires a more in-depth, albeit imperfect, assessment. First, we must demonstrate what actors have channels of influence in their domestic political settings. To do so, we need to understand what resources a government demands to maintain legitimacy and power, and what groups it relies on for such resources. These resources can include money, coercive tools, including those from domestic security groups, or control of political institutions.[13] Revisionism becomes even more likely when national groups that maintain such resources come to dominate political processes that are essential in foreign policy decision making. This leads to my second hypothesis on the consolidation of control among decision-makers and political authorities.

H2: The centralization of political and institutional authority over wide ranging policy areas, the removal of political opposition and the weakening of institutions[14] allow an autocrat to carry out policies with less accountability or retribution. This also means that individual preferences will have more influence over decision making.

This hypothesis argues that institutions responsible for maintaining an autocrat's power internally can also affect a state's foreign policies. What matters according to this assumption is not only whether regimes make decisions through narrow or collective processes, but also how they

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] The weakening of institutions includes the repression of independent press through heightened censorship and surveillance of civil society.

reinforce them.[15] When institutional processes shift to enhance authoritarian control within a society, foreign policy decision making can also shift. Authoritarian control within a society can be enhanced through several mechanisms. Such processes covered in this study include the centralization of authority over wide ranging policy areas, the repression of political opposition, and the weakening of institutions (such as an independent press) through heightened censorship and surveillance of civil society.

As Jessica Weeks points out in her research on how domestic institutions affect an autocrat's decision to initiate military conflicts, autocracies can still be incentivized to respond to the preferences of their domestic audiences even when there are not formal elections or institutionalized procedures to check or remove leaders.[16] When this audience is small or non-existent, there are several ramifications for conflict initiation and expansionism abroad. First, as free speech and independent press become rare commodities, propaganda and ideological enforcement on behalf of the regime becomes easier. Second, with little pushback and debate in the political arena, in addition to a lack of political challengers, a leader will have more power to carry out his decisions. Under conditions of ineffective or nonexistent domestic audiences, the personal preferences and perceptions of the individual leader will also weigh more on foreign policy objectives and behavior. This condition also means that the backgrounds (civilian or military) of individual leaders and the political elite are important dimensions in assessing foreign policy decision making. Third, the narrowing of the decision making apparatus can lead indirectly to revisionist behavior, as the possibility of misperception among the political elite of state capabilities and adversarial intentions increases. Lastly, the centralization of political authority and the weakening of formal political institutions make overexpansion more likely, as a diffuse and strong array of interest groups tend to slow down hasty political processes based on misperception.

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[15] Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950–1992," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, 113–126.

[16] Jessica Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 106. No. 2, May 2012. In autocracies, domestic audiences refer to groups that are capable of holding leaders accountable for their decisions. Effective domestic audiences create mechanisms for restraining or removing leader and can be composed of regime elites of primarily civilian or military nature. Examples of domestic audiences include military officers, oligarchic classes, and regime/bureaucratic elites.

How do the interests of nationalist groups and sentiment emerge and come to dominate political processes? Jason Davidson's assessment of Fascist Italy throughout the 1920s and 1930s illustrates the application of these first two hypotheses to a case study of overexpansion. Nationalist groups and public sentiment in Italy emerged prior to Benito Mussolini's rise to power, due to political mobilization that took place in World War I, "as Italians rallied to defend their country against Austria."[17] But institutions also mattered. Davidson argues that after Mussolini became Prime Minister in 1922, he consolidated state power throughout the 1920s by removing parliamentary oversight, taking personal control of ministerial departments such as the military and foreign ministry, and by using the secret police to remove political opposition. After abolishing the Chamber of Deputies, Mussolini relied on labor and industry representatives that he appointed and a small group of individuals who had outsized influence in decision making. During this time, Mussolini also faced legitimacy challenges from other powerful entities including the Church and the Monarchy. He sought to deal with these challenges by manipulating public sentiment and adopting "revisionist goals with the explicit aim of getting rid of the Monarchy and the Church through victory."[18] By the late 1930s, prior to Italy entering a political and military alliance with Germany in 1939, Mussolini "faced no direct competitor for political control of Italy."[19]

As can be seen in this case of Fascist Italy, when such unitary systems become dominated by individuals or parties that stand to benefit from expansion and have no countervailing political forces to keep them in check, revisionism is quite possible.

H3: Domestic legitimacy problems – internally or externally inspired – threaten an autocratic leader's ability to retain effective control and power over his office and therefore influence his decision making in the domestic and foreign policy realms.

This final hypothesis argues that despite the perception that public opinion is not a factor authoritarian foreign policy decision making, international objectives and threats may be exploited by authoritarian regimes for several reasons. First, the lack of legitimacy granted by citizens

[17] Davidson, 142.
[18] Davidson, 143.
[19] Ibid.

through competitive and fair elections leads authoritarian regimes to justify their rule based on the ability to provide order and economic progress. When economic performance falters and the potential for domestic instability rises, a regime will rely more on coercive measures and other pillars of legitimacy, such as nationalism, to quell dissent. Specifically, illiberal states struggling to maintain legitimacy with their domestic populations in times of poor performance can use identification enhancing strategies[20] to contrast the regime and its supporters with "outsiders" or "external enemies." As Jean Bodin writes, "the best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion, and civil war is to... find an enemy against whom [the subjects] can make common cause."[21]

Second, autocratic regimes must pay close attention to satisfying the needs of groups that represent their primary bases of support – such as the military, economic elites, oligarchs, or technocrats. This is because when elites see the benefits of supporting the regime dwindle, their interest in maintaining the current leadership structure falls. If an autocratic regime fears a fracturing of regime support among elite groups, it may adopt certain hardline foreign policy rhetoric and positions to mobilize their base, enhance their credibility, and discredit opposition. This is particularly the case if a regime's legitimation strategy rests in part on its ability to maintain a great power status internationally and "defend its people" from external threats and enemies. One could argue that political leaders in contemporary Russia rely on such foundations, including the nation's great power status as a source of national pride among its citizens.

Overall, this hypothesis highlights the influence of legitimacy crises on authoritarian foreign policy behavior. But how can we recognize legitimacy crises when they emerge within authoritarian societies? What constitutes a legitimacy crisis varies greatly across contexts. For the sake of consistency and to narrow the scope of the study, this research assesses the following three circumstances as conditions under which the political leadership is more likely to perceive insecurity surrounding their rule:

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[20] Jason Lyall puts forward a convincing argument that the origins of revisionism are found in the nature of the collective identity that a regime uses to legitimate its rule. For an extensive and detailed study on this hypothesis, see Jason Lyall, "Paths of Ruin: Why Revisionist States Arise and Die in World Politics," PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2005.

[21] Originally quoted in Jack Levy, "The Diversionary War Theory: A Critique," in *Handbook of War Studies, edited by Manus I. Midlarsky,* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 259.

- 1) *Electoral cycles and leadership transitions:* the periods of time leading up to and following an election or leadership transition;
- 2) *Economic decline:* periods of economic decline, slow growth and other negative economic indicators; and
- 3) *Low domestic support:* periods of low or declining support for the government and political leadership, as indicated through public polling and incidences of public unrest and protest.

Finally, legitimacy challenges to a regime's power can also emerge from outside actors and from the nature of the international order itself. For example, one can consider the challenges that the U.S.-led international order poses for the Russian and Chinese political regimes. Both regimes maintain strong concerns over "democratizing" efforts within their countries, which they believe are inspired by the United States. In Russia, they point to the U.S. championing of liberal opposition forces against Vladimir Putin in the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary and presidential elections. Western support for the color revolutions in Eastern Europe throughout the early 2000's and the Arab Spring starting in 2011 were also particularly worrying to the Russian regime. In China, examples include American support for democracy activists in Hong Kong, public condemnations of human rights abuses and support for the Dalai Lama in Tibet. According to Thomas Wright, U.S. foreign policy also directly challenges what they see as their legitimate role in international affairs. Wright argues, "Since the Cold War, U.S. policy has been that all countries get to decide their type of government and their foreign relations for themselves, without interference by an outside power. Traditionally, great powers acquire a sphere of influence in which they have a say in the domestic politics of their smaller neighbors – this desire often arises from a sense of insecurity either deeply rooted in history or owing to the nature of the regime – both of which apply to Russia and China."[22]

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[22] Thomas Wright, *All Measures Short of War: The Contest for the 21st Century and the Future of American Power,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 18.

These hypotheses highlight what I argue to be the primary domestic political conditions and processes that influence the pursuit of revisionist foreign policies. The emergence of nationalist leaders and groups, the centralization of political and institutional authority and challenges to regime legitimacy all have foundations within international relations and security literature and provide the analytic framework through which the case studies are carried out. These hypotheses also advance the argument that internal dynamics play a vital role in the articulation and implementation of foreign policy objectives and therefore must be centrally considered when ascertaining the motivations behind revisionism. Specifically, this line of argument seeks to build our understanding of foreign policy decisions and behavior through the lens of internal factors involving leaders, the political systems in which they operate, and their requirements for domestic legitimacy. Alternative hypotheses grounded in structural theories that incorporate the role of relative power capabilities and external threats to security are also critically assessed throughout this research.

Now that the primary arguments, independent variables and hypotheses have been defined, we turn to analyzing the context in which these variables exist – modern authoritarian regimes. The next two chapters explore the concepts and typologies of authoritarian systems, as well as adaptations in their strategies and tactics for maintaining elite cohesion and legitimacy.

Chapter 1

The Study of Modern Authoritarianism: Concepts and Typologies

I. Chapter Objectives

In contemporary literature on authoritarianism, few works synthesize insights from the study of comparative politics with security-related works of conflict initiation and revisionism. This is a particularly potent gap in both academic and policy acumen, given the rise of authoritarianism as a global trend, as well as the increase in assertive foreign policy behavior being exhibited by great power authoritarian regimes today. The aim of this chapter and subsequent chapters, therefore, is to integrate the study of authoritarianism from the perspective of comparative politics with international security literature on the drivers of conflict. This is done to gain a better understanding of how authoritarian regimes maintain institutional power, legitimacy and control, and how these mechanisms have evolved throughout the Cold War and post-Cold War eras.

In pursuit of the broader research objectives posed above, these first two chapters serve as an overview of the current state of authoritarianism in today's international system. I attempt to answer several introductory questions, including: What are the key metrics by which to measure authoritarian stability and control? Who are the key decision-making actors in authoritarian regimes? To what extent do these actors, institutions and leadership-elite power dynamics differ across various forms of authoritarian regimes – including personalist, single-party and military controlled governments – and how should we classify them? How have authoritarian regimes adapted to changing international environments in the post-Cold War and twenty-first century eras? Lastly, from what entities do threats to elite power and legitimacy emerge, and how are such threats traditionally handled?

Before ascertaining how contemporary authoritarian regimes in Russia and China operate internally and develop foreign policy strategies, it is first important to understand the defining characteristics of authoritarian systems, and they have evolved in recent history. Throughout the

following assessment of the literature on authoritarianism, the political dimensions and power dynamics across and within authoritarian regimes remain paramount.

II. Key Concepts: Scope and Terminology

A. Taking a Political Approach to Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is a concept with many faces. It is viewed as a form of government, a socio-economic system, an institutional structure and even an individual psyche or personality. It has several intrinsic characteristics that are political, economic and social. It is this author's impression that the political dimensions of authoritarianism offer the most insightful channels through which to analyze decision-making on domestic policy and foreign policy calculations. This approach focuses on the exercise and organization of power, its connection to society, and the perceived threats to a regime's hold on that power. It incorporates an assessment of rulers and their use of political repression and exclusion, as well as the elite institutions and arrangements that uphold the regime.[23] This approach has been pursued by many analysts, including political scientist Juan Linz who conducted one of the first prominent studies on authoritarianism through his exploration of the politics of Francoist Spain in the 1950s.

Within this political framework, it is also important to explain what this research describes as an authoritarian "regime." A helpful definition of "regime" is offered by political scientist Jason Lyall, who describes the entity as a "collection of political authorities charged with exercising and legitimating power in and over a particular society."[24] According to Lyall, a regime consists of two components: a leadership entity and corresponding institutional mechanisms for maintaining its rule, including surveillance and security services.[25] This definition places less emphasis on the formal institutions of decision-making such as legislatures and more narrowly focuses on a core group of individuals, whose roles may be formal or informal within the political system.

[23] The approach is followed by Amos Perlmutter in his work, *Modern Authoritarianism: A Comparative Institutional Analysis,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).
[24] Jason Lyall, "Paths of Ruin: Why Revisionist States Arise and Die in World Politics," (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2005), 35.
[25] Ibid.

Justification for this narrow approach is that legislatures and other formal institutions often serve as "window-dressing" in authoritarian political systems, and are not often capable of challenging decisions made within the upper echelons of the political regime.

B. Definitional Attributes and Characteristics of Authoritarianism

The traditional definition of authoritarianism was developed by political scientist Juan Linz in 1964.[26] An authoritarian regime, as he defined it, encapsulates a state that is "controlled by one leader (or a small group of leaders), affords very limited political pluralism, is not guided by an elaborate ideology, does not seek or permit extensive political mobilization, and exercises power in ways that are formally ill-defined, though actually quite predictable."[27] Encapsulated in this definition are four necessary and sufficient conditions of authoritarianism: i) limited political pluralism; ii) mobilization by the state of certain mentalities (referred to as ideologies in totalitarian systems); iii) limited or confined channels of political mobilization; and iv) minimal opportunities for participation. These measurements are not merely static properties of government and its relationship to society. Rather they are, in the words of Karen Stenner, aspects of "a living and breathing social phenomenon: a dynamic political process."[28]

Limited Pluralism and Institutional Aspects

Limited pluralism is the most distinctive feature of authoritarian regimes. In the early years of scholarship on authoritarianism, around the mid-twentieth century, authoritarianism was defined as the rule by the few over the many; a limitation that involves the constant process of coopting political groups and various sectors of society to become participants in a non-pluralistic system. This process could even be institutionalized through formal political participation and electoral procedures, but as Linz highlights, there was little doubt in this process over what groups the rulers would allow to operate, and under what conditions they could do so.[29]

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[26] Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2000).
[27] Linz, 154.
[28] Karen Stenner, *The Authoritarian Dynamic*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 326.
[29] Linz, 161.

The presence of a single or privileged party is also an important component of limited pluralism. Often such single parties are developed by the group already in power rather than from grassroots movements. According to Amos Perlmutter, the installment of political parties is not an indication of democratic opening. Rather it is a step taken to institutionalize the regime's power and to achieve political monopoly over all forces, interests and structures within the system. The stability of the regime will then depend upon how successful the single party is in establishing political control and dominating the state and coopting the opposition.[30]

From Driving Ideologies to Elusive 'Mentalities'

Totalitarian regimes in the twentieth-century organized power through powerful ideologies that stood in stark contrast to democratic ideals and norms. In contrast, modern autocrats do not rely on ideological pillars of legitimacy, but rather on their ability to develop strong (and often corrupt) patronage systems. As Perlmutter argues, "Once an authoritarian regime is established, political ideology becomes a product of governmental and institutional policies rather than an innovative force therein."[31] This does not mean that institutionalized regimes will not *exploit* various ideologies or nationalist sentiments to sustain their rule, but ideologies should not be viewed as the wellspring of authoritarian systems. As will be further discussed, it is the organization of a system of material benefits, not ideology, to which modern authoritarian regimes owe their surprising durability.

Linz in his original work on authoritarian regimes referred to this diminished form of ideology as a 'mentality.'[32] According to Linz, unlike driving ideologies with strong utopian elements, which are more characteristic of totalitarian societies, mentalities do not involve the assistance of intellectuals or an appeal to that stratum of society. Mentalities instead exist as signals to citizens of the benefits of conformity and of abiding by certain rules and norms in society.

[30] Perlmutter, 169.
[31] Perlmutter, 176.
[32] Linz, 165.

An additional difference between mentalities and ideologies is that mentalities are less binding, and do not require a commitment of the rulers and the subjects irrespective of costs and of the need of coercion to implement them. Linz writes, "Mentalities are more difficult to diffuse among the masses, less susceptible to be used in education, less likely to come into conflict with religion or science and more difficult to use as a test of loyalty."[33] The emphasis on mentalities as opposed to more doctrinal ideologies is not to dismiss the importance of ruling ideas in authoritarian regimes. Rather, the vagueness of mentalities present in authoritarian regimes allows the rulers to co-opt a variety of supporters and decide policies pragmatically; it reduces the utopian strain in politics that would require more repression than leaders could afford. Furthermore, state mobilization of conforming signals "avoids the ideological trappings of revolutionary fervor," which, as Ivan Krastev notes, "not only breeds reformist delusions on the part of elites, but also gives the opposition a discourse that it can use to press the regime from below."[34]

Vague and elusive mentalities are also present in twenty-first century authoritarian regimes. Contrary to the twentieth century, when Soviet totalitarianism represented a clear set of ideological prescriptions, the propaganda employed by authoritarian regimes today is far more nuanced. A key example of this phenomenon can be found in the present-day Chinese Communist Party where official propaganda is not used to "indoctrinate" Chinese citizens, but to show the government's strength and ability to intimidate sources of potential domestic instability. "Clearly, simple indoctrination is no longer the goal," writes Haifeng Huang of the University of California in an article by Peter Pomerantsev. "A sufficient amount of propaganda can serve to demonstrate a regime's strength in maintaining social control and political order."[35] Tracing this argument back to that of Linz's original emphasis on mentalities, Huang calls this propaganda a form of "signaling" rather than "indoctrination," designed to show that the government has complete control.[36]

Mobilization and Participation

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[33] Linz, 163.
[34] Ivan Krastev, "Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 22, No. 2, April 2011, 13.
[35] Originally quoted in Peter Pomerantsev, "Beyond Propaganda," *Foreign Policy,* June 23, 2015.
[36] Ibid.

Ultimately the degree of political mobilization and with it the opportunities for participation are a result of the other two dimensions of authoritarianism: the ability of the regime to maintain a limited pluralist political landscape and the degree to which the regime mobilizes certain mentalities. Potential instability within authoritarian regimes can emerge when political mobilization and demand for opportunities for participation become difficult to control unless the regime becomes more totalitarian or democratic. Linz writes, "Effective mobilization, particularly through a single party and its mass organizations, can also be perceived as a threat by other components of the limited pluralist government, typically the army, the bureaucracy, the church, or interest groups."[37] Therefore, limiting political opportunities for participation while mobilizing political support for the regime among a population and its elites is a fine line for authoritarian regimes to walk. In the end, dictators would do well to heed the advice of ancient Roman scholar Titus Livy on the power of the masses: "From being ferocious together, when isolated, each with his own fear, they became obedient."[38]

Outlined here are the primary conceptual and definitional attributes of authoritarian systems, from the perspective of comparativists who analyzed authoritarian settings throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Building from these foundations, there are vast differences across democratic, totalitarian and authoritarian systems that must be assessed to understand the nuanced political dynamics, power struggles and survival strategies of authoritarian regimes today.

III. Placing Authoritarianism in a Hierarchy of Regime Types

Without meaningful ways of classifying authoritarian regimes, it is impossible to answer key questions about authoritarian politics. Typologies help us to think about how dictatorships work. The definition and evolution of authoritarianism articulated above can be further clarified by contrasting it with both competitive democratic systems and totalitarian systems. Many scholars of democracy and authoritarianism classify authoritarian regimes as ones that "are located in the middle of a continuum

[37] Linz, 270.
[38] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy,* translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), ps. 114-115.

anchored by democracy at one pole and dictatorship at the other."[39] Whether termed competitive authoritarian regimes, illiberal democracies, or hybrid regimes, these authoritarian political orders feature a distinctive profile that is neither democratic nor totalitarian.

A. Differentiation to Competitive Democracies

Robert Dahl offers a contemporary and standard definition of a democratic regime, which is a political system that is "completely or almost completely responsive to all its citizens."[40] Dahl also notes that "all full citizens must have unimpaired opportunities: to i) formulate their preferences; ii) to signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective action, and iii) to have their preferences weighed equally in the conduct of the government..."[41] These opportunities exist for citizens when the state provides basic guarantees including the right to join organizations, freedom of expression, the right to vote, the right of candidates to compete for support, public access to alternative sources of information, and the right to free and fair elections.[42]

Following Dahl's approach, many scholars, including Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, define democracy as encompassing four key attributes: "i) Free, fair, and competitive elections; ii) Full adult suffrage; iii) Broad protection of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, press, and association; and iv) The absence of nonelected "tutelary" authorities (militaries, monarchies, or religious bodies) that limit elected officials' power to govern."[43] In contrast, authoritarian regimes can are defined as governments that violate at least some of these basic principles.

Political authority in democratic societies is derived from the rule of law, which provides individuals and social groups with the right to challenge leaders and policies. The law, therefore, limits the arbitrary exercise of governmental power.[44] Democracy also involves considerable

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[39] Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Post-Communist World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) vii.
[40] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 2-3.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.
[44] Charles Andrain, *Political Life and Social Change,* (Belmont California: Duxbury Press, 1974), 181.

dispersion of power among several conflicting groups, which maintains the independence of government and provides for the expression of diverse demands and interests.

Democratic societies, furthermore, reveal a balance between *conflict* and *consensus* – consensus in seeking to establish a common identity around civil values, and conflict through the experience of competing centers of organized power in both government and society. "The power relations in democratic societies show consensus, and concern with the use of power for common ends," writes Charles Andrain in *Political Life and Social Change.* "Social groups, political parties, and individual citizens exercise control over governmental power," and organize to compete with one another for influence over policy.[45] Thus in a democracy, there needs to be a balance between power relations expressing conflict and those showing consensus.

B. Totalitarianism: Authoritarianism in its "Extreme Form"

Like democracies in their purest form, totalitarian regimes can most accurately be regarded as *models* of social systems. Just as no society is ever wholly democratic in all its features, so too has no totalitarian system ever realized the total control that totalitarianism implies. In this model, whereas democratic societies seek a balance between conflict and consensus, totalitarian societies express, as Andrain writes, "consensus or unanimity within the domestic society and total conflict with the out-group,"[46] such as with foreign states and internal opponents of the regime. Once identified, totalitarian leaders will then attempt to mobilize the whole population to engage in conflict with 'the enemy.' The "totalitarian" entered political debate in the 1920s to explain the pillars of Italian fascism. In the 1940s, totalitarianism in academic and political debates shifted to focus distinctly on Germany.[47] During the Cold War, Western democratic powers began contrasting their systems with totalitarian communism in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China, illustrating that the concept of totalitarianism has been most widely used in wartime or adversarial contexts.[48]

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[45] Andrain, 182.
[46] Andrain, 200.
[47] Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Hitlerism Compared* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.
[48] Andrain, 200.

Similar to the sliding scale one could apply to authoritarian and democratic regimes, totalitarianism differs from authoritarianism in a matter of degrees. There are several conceptual differences between autocracy and totalitarianism, which is often referred to as an *extreme* version of authoritarianism. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, in capturing the essence of Lenin's Soviet Union, describe totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century as "the outcomes of movements directed against the denigration of the state in the liberal age," and as an "autocracy based upon modern technology and mass legitimation," guided by a "totalist" ideology and backed by a strong party.[49] The ultimate goal of totalitarian states is to "resuscitate such total control in the service of an ideologically motivated movement, dedicated to the total destruction and reconstruction of a mass society."[50] A totalitarian ideology provides the sense of common identity and contains ideas pertaining to all aspects of people's lives and societal relations. Indeed, every aspect of life becomes part of the state sphere in a totalitarian society.

Totalitarian regimes also require tremendous degrees of organizational power, as without well-developed instruments of power, the totalistic ideology would amount to nothing. "Organization makes it possible for the elite to implement ideological goals – to bring about total control and the total reconstruction of man and society," writes Andrain. The distribution of power in totalitarianism, unlike in democracy, tends towards monopoly by a ruling elite.[51] Moreover, Friedrich highlights the all-encompassing aspects of such a regime, writing, "It is evident that totalitarianism is not only, nor even primarily, a form of government... totalitarianism... is indeed 'total;' it engulfs the whole man who participates in it, and hence has its economic, sociological and other aspects beyond the political and governmental."[52] Similarly, George Kennan argues, "What is essential is only the seizure, organization, and ruthless exercise of power. For the seizure of power, a certain degree of mass bewilderment and passivity are required. Once the power has been seized, even these states of mind are not vitally important."[53]

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[49] Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy,* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1956), 8.
[50] Friedrich and Brzezinski, 17.
[51] Ibid., 201.
[52] Carl Friedrich Zbigniew Brzezinski, 8 3
[53] George Kennan, "Totalitarianism and Freedom," in Carl Friedrich, *Totalitarianism* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1953*,* 23.

Hannah Arndt defines totalitarianism as a type of regime that, "no longer satisfied with the limited aims of classical despotisms and dictatorships, demands continuous mobilization of its citizens toward a greater cause."[54] She writes, "Totalitarian domination rules through total terror; pursues, by means of secret police, 'objective enemies' or enemies of the people who are typically not subjective opponents of or threats to the regime; offers an all-encompassing ideological framework that abridges the complexity of life in a single-axiomatic, reality-resistant postulate that allows no cognitive dissonance,"[55] and preys on human beings' innate feelings of insecurity and fear.

In terms of leadership, totalitarian leaders and authoritarian leaders differ greatly. Paul C. Sondrol argues, "Unlike their bland and generally unpopular authoritarian brethren, totalitarian dictators develop a charismatic 'mystique' and a mass-based, pseudo-democratic interdependence with their followers via the conscious manipulation of a prophetic image."[56] The dominant principles of legitimacy found in totalitarian societies reflect the monopoly and arbitrary exercise of power by the ruling elite. In contrast to the legitimacy of democratic and authoritarian regimes, totalitarian regimes justify their right to rule by claiming to embody an ideological cause that they regard as a higher principle above men, to which all society must conform. Both elites and the rule of law in a totalitarian society are subordinate to an ideological cause.

The authoritarian ruler, conversely, is an individual that seeks to maintain political power and internal stability through power sharing arrangements with a ruling elite. Unlike totalitarian tyrants, who view themselves as indispensable 'functions' to guide and reshape society in the cause of a higher purpose, authoritarian rulers are perfectly content to control. Consequently, by utilizing power for personal aggrandizement and lacking the "binding appeal of ideology,"[57] authoritarians must support their rule through systems of patronage and loyalty.

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[54] Peter Baehr, *Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Social Sciences,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 4.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Paul C. Sondrol, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Dictators: A Comparison of Fidel Castro and Alfredo Stroessner". *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Oct., 1991), 600.
[57] Ibid.

There are clear and undisputable differences that exist among democracies, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in how regimes make decisions, pursue objectives, face political exigencies, and manage leadership-elite dynamics. However, the simple distinction between democratic, totalitarian and autocratic states must be broken down further, as there are several forms of autocratic rule that "draw on different groups to staff government offices and different segments of society for support."[58] As Barbara Geddes argues, "They have different procedures for making decisions, different characteristic forms of intra-elite factionalism and competition, different ways of choosing leaders and handling succession, and different ways of responding to society and opposition."[59] Without expressive ways of classifying authoritarian regimes, it is impossible to answer key questions about authoritarian politics; typologies help us to ascertain what makes dictatorships tick.

IV. Authoritarian Regimes Typology

"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

- *Tolstoy, (Anna Karenina)*

As is the case with authoritarian regimes, citizens may be unhappy, but are in very different ways. Having distinguished between democracies and totalitarian regimes, we are left with all other regimes that do not fit into these categories. Authoritarianism was originally defined, in fact, as a residual category, characterized almost completely by what is missing. Linz encapsulated this fact when he defined authoritarian regimes as non-ideological and as lacking intensive or extensive political mobilization. In this sense, throughout twentieth-century studies on authoritarianism, there were no systematic, universally accepted dimensions of the world's authoritarian regimes. There was only democracy, its perversion, and its absence.

[58] Barbara Geddes, "Authoritarian Breakdown: Empirical Test of a Game Theoretic Argument," Paper prepared for APSA, September 1999,
[59] Ibid.

In the twenty-first century, "Categorizations of dictatorship have evolved considerably since the early studies on totalitarianism..." write Natasha Ezrow and Erica Frantz, "In contemporary work, authoritarian regimes are no longer viewed as a residual category, which makes a major advancement in our understanding of the authoritarian world."[60] Democracy expert Larry Diamond adds, "And if we are to understand the contemporary dynamics, causes, limits, and possibilities of regime change, we must understand the different, and in some respects new, types of authoritarian rule."[61] Furthermore, in analyzing authoritarian regimes, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of authoritarianism is continuous rather than dichotomous. As Giovanni Sartori writes, "Concepts should be understood as a matter of more-or-less, as pointing to difference in degree."[62] Authoritarian regimes can contain varying degrees of pluralism, mobilization and opportunities for participation, while still being categorized as authoritarian. This point should remind us that most regimes are "mixed" to one degree or another.

Many in the field of comparative politics find Barbara Geddes's research to be among the most important contributions to the literature on non-democratic regime types. Specifically, Geddes distinguishes between single-party, military, and personalist classifications of authoritarian systems. These classifications are based on "whether access to political office and control over policy are dominated by a hegemonic party, the military as an institution or a single individual."[63] While there are disagreements in how best to categorize such autocratic politics, this tripartite has become commonplace within the literature. Each authoritarian system below is defined in terms of three components: primary political actors, political mechanisms, and potential threats to power.

A. Single-Party Autocracies

Primary Political Actors

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[60] Natasha Ezrow and Erica Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships: Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and their Leaders*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 2.
[61] Larry Diamond, "Elections Without Democracy: Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy*, April 2002, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 21-35.
[62] Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," The American Political Science Review, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec., 1970), 1036.
[63] Ezrow and Frantz, 3.

In strong party states, a single political party generally dominates the political space and its influence permeates every facet of the country's military, social and economic systems, as well.[64] Many party leaders and cadres want to hold and keep office for simple reasons: to control policy, maintain power and acquire illicit material benefits that come with the office.[65]

Political Mechanisms

According to Geddes, "In the ideal-type single-party regime, a party organization exercises some power over the leader at least part of the time, controls the career paths of officials, organizes the distribution of benefits to supporters, and mobilizes citizens to vote and show support for party leaders in other ways."[66] Although other parties may legally exist and compete in elections, access to and control of political office are dominated by one party. In fact, Geddes writes that holding regular elections in which there is some competition is "a strong indication that a party has achieved a level of organization and influence sufficient to be taken seriously as a political actor."[67]

Geddes argues that the "single-party" label holds if the dominant party has never lost control of the executive since coming to power and usually wins more than two-thirds of the seats in the legislature.[68] Perpetuation can occur, despite the existence of multiple parties in the political sphere, when other parties become significantly disadvantaged due to harassment by security and political branches of the government. Opposition parties and candidates can also be expelled or banned at any time under false pretenses. Often-cited examples include the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in Mexico and East European countries under Communist rule that transitioned around the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union such as Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, among others.

While ruling coalitions in single-party systems are not often held together by close ties in ways

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[64] Brandon J. Kinne, "Decision Making in Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective," *International Studies Perspectives* (2005) Vol. 6, 116.
[65] Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?" Annual Review of Political Science, Vol. 2, 1999, 129.
[66] Ibid., 124.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Geddes, 125.

that monarchical or personalist regimes are, there are benefits to be gained from upholding the regime. According to Geddes, although certain factions of elites may form around policy differences and competition for leadership positions, "...everyone is perceived as better off if all factions remain united and in office," which is why "cooptation rather than exclusion is the rule in established single-party regimes."[69] Geddes adds, "Through their control over the allocation of educational opportunities, jobs, and positions in government, single parties can typically claim the loyalty or acceptance of many of the most able, ambitious, and upwardly mobile individuals in society... especially those from peasant and urban marginal backgrounds whose social mobility might otherwise have been quite limited."[70] Given such benefits of maintaining a united rule, single-party regimes have fewer internal sources of instability compared to military autocracies and personalist regimes, as long as the interests of regime elites continue to be met.

Potential Threats to Power

Threats to power in single-party autocracies emerge from within leadership-elite dynamics, as these governments tend to maintain powerful domestic audiences within their ranks. Leaders depend on the party to ensure their political survival and unlike their counterparts in personalist dictatorships, elites often have ability to hold the leader accountable. Therefore, threats to the leader's power come more from within the party apparatus than from the broader population.[71] As Jessica Weeks notes, Contemporary China and post-Stalin Soviet Union serve as two illustrations in which "government insiders rose through the ranks based in significant part on merit and seniority, rather than on personal or family relationships to the paramount leader."[72] In such regimes, insiders' loyalty to the incumbent is less reliant on familial relations or shared backgrounds and thus can be more tenuous, particularly if the aforementioned benefits become scarcer.

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[69] Geddes, 129-130.
[70] Ibid., 134.
[71] Kinne, 120.
[72] Jessica Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. 106, No. 2, May 2012, 330.

Moreover, scholars Mark Peceny, Caroline Beer and Shannon Sanchez-Terry find that among autocracies, single-party regimes have proven most successful at coopting and enhancing for their own purposes the power of the coercive and military structures of the state. They write, "Single-party regimes have often proven effective at mobilizing the people and resources of their societies in support of the national armed forces and have forged strong civilian control over professionalized militaries."[73] In other words, successful single-party systems are capable of transforming the military into an instrument of the Party.

B. Personalist Autocracies

Primary Political Actors

In these regimes, one individual dominates the military, state and security apparatus. According to Geddes, "Personalist regimes differ from both military and single-party in that access to office and the fruits of office depends much more on the discretion of an individual leader."[74] Such leaders emerge when the military and party are not strong enough to prevent one individual from taking personal control of decisions and the selection of key positions across the government.[75] During and after a seizure of power, informal networks of close allies surround the leader. Concurrently, and as in single-party regimes, factions also form around potential rivals to the leader, but usually have strong reasons – the reward of material benefits and the risk of harsh punishment – to continue supporting the regime and leader.[76]

However, personalist regimes have relatively narrow support bases. They distribute benefits and offices to a smaller proportion of citizens than in single-party regimes, thereby opening themselves to more challenges from outside and excluded groups. Given the strong personal network of internal support, internal splits are unlikely except when economic calamity disrupts the patronage and kleptocracy that underpins the regime.[77]

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[73] Mark Peceny, Caroline Beer and Shannon Sanchez-Terry, "Dictatorial Peace?" *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. 96, No. 1 (Mar. 2000), 18.
[74] Geddes, 131.
[75] Geddes, 132.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Geddes, 122.

Political Mechanisms

According to Kinne, "The heavy emphasis that dictators place on their status or prestige often leads to the formation of a 'personality cult' in which the leader's peers come to believe, often through indoctrination, that the leader possesses exceptional personal, intellectual, oratorical, diplomatic, or other abilities."[78] These peers can include military leaders, rival factions, regional actors or the mass public. Strong opposition on behalf of the leader towards an outgroup – whether it is an ethnic minority or an 'imperialist power' – can contribute to the strength and aura of the leader and the regime.[79] This proposition highlights the benefits for leaders of creating external enemies and then defending, as perceived by the people. As is the case in all forms of autocratic government, personalist leaders take threats to power very seriously and the punishment for disloyalty runs high.

Potential Threats to Power

There are three vulnerabilities that make personalist regimes susceptible to possible collapse. First, personalist regimes rarely survive beyond the death of the leader, possibly because in an effort to defend themselves from rivals, leaders also eliminate capable followers who could serve as successors.[80] Concern over rival factions or challenges drivers rulers to undermine or coopt the military and other institutions that may serve as power bases for challengers. Second, these networks and support bases are relatively narrow, meaning that groups excluded from the benefits may be tempted to challenge or usurp the leader.[81] Furthermore, "No institution presents a greater threat to the power of a personalist dictator than the Army does,"[82] write Peceny, Beer and Sanchez-Terry. "Like military regimes, personalist dictators depend on the Army and security forces to repress popular dissent. They understand, however, that the armed forces almost always represent a greater threat to their power than do civilian dissidents. Personalist dictators must be

[78] Kinne, 120-121.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Geddes, 132.
[81] Geddes, 134.
[82] Mark Peceny, Caroline Beer and Shannon Sanchez-Terry, "Dictatorial Peace?" *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. 96, No. 1 (Mar. 2000), 18.

constantly on guard against the possibility of a military coup."[83] Third, personalist regimes are highly vulnerable to economic calamity. Although poor economic performance will not destabilize highly corrupt systems of patronage that work outside the market economy, disasters in which public employees and soldiers cannot be paid will undermine regime support and can lead to the ouster of the leader. Thus, the leader is more concerned with maintaining the wealth of the ruling elite over the economic wellbeing of the masses – a vicious cycle in the lifeline of corrupt authoritarian regimes.

To note, personalist systems in the twenty-first century have become a more prevalent form of authoritarian rule than during the Cold War and the 1990s. Data compiled by comparativists Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz show that 44-percent of all instances of "authoritarianization" from 1946 to 1999 led to the establishment of personalist dictatorships. From 2000 to 2010, however, they report that 75-percent of transitions toward authoritarianism ended in personalist rule. "In most cases," Frantz and Kendall-Taylor write, "the populist strongmen rose to power with the support of a political party but then proved effective in sidelining competing voices from within."[84]

C. Military Autocracies

Primary Political Actors

Military dictatorships are usually the result of seizures of power undertaken by professional military groups that have developed a sense of unity and a desire to create a political hierarchy.[85] Military autocracies can rule as a power-sharing organization of high-ranking officials, such as a junta, or through a single individual. It is more common that many regimes headed by military officers are not controlled by a group of senior officers, but rather through the rule of a single individual protected by the military or personal security networks.

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, "How Democracies Fall Apart: Why Populism Is a Pathway to Autocracy," *Foreign Affairs,* December 5, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-05/how-democracies-fall-apart

[85] Erica Frantz and Natasha Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship: Institutions and Outcomes in Authoritarian Regimes,* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011), 8.

Political Mechanisms

In military regimes, this individual or group of high-ranking officers holds a high degree of centralized power in the country, decides who will rule and exercises strong influence on policy. In an institutionalized military regime, senior officers have agreed on a method for sharing power and successor planning – which may include keeping with rules specified by institutions of the regime (such as in Argentina, 1976-1983) or through manipulation of elections in which the military ensures that the officer that it selects as its candidates always wins the presidency (for example in El Salvador 1948-1984).[86]

Military rule does not often lead to stable and long-term power-sharing agreements among the ruling elite. Because of their susceptibility to transitions, military autocracies are historically unstable, but have nonetheless occurred in many forms and across several regions in recent history.[87] Most frequently, military interventions lead to short periods of military rule followed by the consolidation of power behind a single officer while the rest of the officer corps becomes marginalized. Therefore, when military interference serves as a transition into personal tyranny, it is appropriate to refer to these regimes as personal dictatorships, even though the leader wears a uniform.[88] Cases such as Pinochet's military intervention in Chile, or Suharto's in Indonesia maintain elements of both military autocracy and personalist dictatorship, given that the military institutions retained strong autonomy and influence.[89]

Potential Threats to Power

A group generals or other high-ranking officers generally exercise delegating power in military autocracies, and this cabal therefore possesses the most influence over the political survival of the regime's leader.[90] A moderating effect on regime instability comes from the fact that military

[86] Geddes, 124.
[87] Kinne, 117.
[88] Geddes, 124.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Kinne, 121.

regimes place a high value on the survival and efficacy of the military itself. Therefore, when elite splits threaten military unity and efficacy, most of the officer corps will likely not contribute to further political instability. The worst outcome for the military as an institution is civil war in which factions of armed forces end up fighting each other from opposite sides of the battle line.[91] On the other hand, the inherent structure of the military helps in instigating coups, as it is likely that coup implementers from the military will have access to weapons and troops. Thus, "Military regimes thus contain the seeds of their own destruction." This makes them more unstable than personalist or single-party regimes, and Geddes highlights that "military regimes in existence at any time between 1946 and 1999 have lasted on average about nine years, whereas personalist regimes survived about fifteen years on average, and single-party regimes (excluding those maintained by direct foreign occupation or military threat) endured on average almost twenty-three years."[92]

The table below, reproduced from work conducted by scholar Brandon Kinne, summarizes the relevant actors, and political mechanisms in each of the three regime types discussed:

Regime Type and the Political Dimension			
	Autocratic Regime Type		
	Military	Single Party	Personalist
Primary Political Actors	The junta or cabal of military generals and advisors	The cadre of party elite; party advisors	The leader himself or herself
Primary Political Mechanisms (and challenges to control)	Delegation of authority; (counter-coup or factional coup; return to the barracks)[93]	Delegation of authority (potential ouster or demotion by the party)	Status of leader among peers (rival factions, military, regional actors, and domestic public)

[91] Geddes, 126.
[92] Geddes, 131.
[93] Kinne notes that in military regimes, the military presents the threat of a counter-coup and threat of the returning to the barracks (the military populace getting back to "what it knows best"). Both mechanisms make accountability in military autocracies a complicated process.

Source: Brandon J. Kinne, "Decision Making in Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective," International Studies Perspectives (2005), 121.

Importantly, highlighting differences in regime type allows for more systematic means of investigation when it comes to the study of foreign policy decision-making. This is because leaders face different threats to their power across various types of authoritarian governments, causing them to make different calculations about the risks and rewards of international actions. As Kinne writes, "When trying to get a read on a military regime, democratic leaders would do well to focus explicitly on the connection between the autocratic leader and his supporting generals, while giving comparatively less credence to matters such as popular opinion or regional status. In a single-party state, on the other hand, the link between the leader and his party is of utmost importance."[94] Conversely, in a personalist state, one should give more attention to the leader's inner circle of advisors. Therefore, the pressure points within various forms of authoritarian regimes are different, and typologies explored here help us determine where to look for them.

While the primary aims of this research are not comparative in nature, drawing such typological distinctions is important. As Ezrow and Frantz highlight, "Whether dictatorships are governed by a political party, a professionalized military or neither affects the dynamics of leader and elite interactions,"[95] and the types of threats faced by ruling coalitions. This feeds into this dissertation's argument that domestic institutions, regime perceptions of threat to power, and the fickle balance of power between a leader and his inner circle or domestic audience have important implications for decision making on domestic *and* foreign policy issues.

V. Leadership-Elite Dynamics Across Types of Authoritarian Regimes

Despite the vast differences in political rule across democracies, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, and within different authoritarian regimes, the primary goal for every form of government is political survival. This reality has led researchers to emphasize the various strategies that modern

[94] Kinne, 126.
[95] Ezrow and Frantz, 3.

dictators employ to stay in power, beginning with work conducted by Carl Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Hannah Arendt in the 1950s. Such experts acknowledge that leaders' attempts to maximize their power do not stop once regimes are formed. Ezrow and Frantz add that, because all leaders aim to stay in power, most will try to "gain personal control over as many key political instruments as possible throughout their tenures, such as assignments to political posts, control over policy, and control over the security forces."[96]

However, and as Kinne notes, "The simple fact that political survival is a primary concern for all leaders tells us little about how the political dimension actually functions in non-democratic decision making."[97] The next step is to specify the ways in which political dynamics might vary between states of different regime types. Key questions include: who holds the power over a leader's political fate? What are the primary threats to that power? What political factors do autocratic consider most important when making decisions and whom do they consider most important to please? [98]

Who controls the upper echelons of power – whether it be a strong party, military organizations or a personalist dictator – affects the answers to these questions. As argued by several in the field of comparative politics, there is greater variation in the power of domestic audiences and elite coalitions among authoritarian regimes than commonly assumed. Differences exist specifically on the basis of three factors: dynamics within the ruling elite, institutional membership and control over security forces.

A. The Ruling Elite

Authoritarian politics centers on the relationship between two key groups: leaders and elites.[99] Identifying the central actors in these inner circles and their levers of political influence is of

[96] Frantz and Ezrow, p 6-7.
[97] Kinne, 118.
[98] Brandon Kinne pursues this approach in exploring the political dimensions of authoritarian regimes. Kinne's theory asserts that state leaders assign primary importance to their political survival, however the meaning of "the political" varies dramatically from country to country and therefore influences foreign policy decision making in decidedly different ways.
[99] Ezrow and Frantz, 1.

fundamental importance.[100] Indeed, all political leaders need the support of certain groups, however small, to maintain their command. Another way of referring to the political elite is as *the domestic audience* to which leader are accountable. In democracies, this group is the electorate. In dictatorships, it is far less obvious. Jessica Weeks writes, "Most authoritarian leaders require the support of domestic elites who act as audiences in much the same way as voting publics in democracies."[101] In autocracies, however, "audiences often consist of a much smaller group of elites whose positions inside the regime give them leverage over the leader."[102] This is the group that, in theory, is capable of removing the dictator from power if its interests are no longer being met, and can impose costs on leaders for poor domestic and foreign policy choices.

Others refer to the political elite as the *ruling coalition*, which consists of individuals who support the government, and jointly with the dictator, hold enough power to be both necessary and sufficient for the survival of the government. "For instance," writes Milan Svolik, "the Syrian government of Hafiz al-Assad (1971–2000) relied on the support of two groups – military officers of the Alawi sect and al-Assad's family and friends – throughout most of its existence. In another case, Leonid Brezhnev's position at the helm of the Soviet government depended on loyal followers from his former posts in Dnepropetrovsk and Moldova, whom he elevated into key positions in the Politburo, the Central Committee, and various government ministries."[103]

Ezrow and Frantz define the elite coalition as the set of individuals whose support the dictator requires to stay in power and to carry out desired policies. Regime elites are central to the distribution of patronage, and the sanctioned use of repressive security forces. As argued in Beatriz Magaloni's authoritative work on Mexican politics, elites perform important services for the regime, such as mobilizing voters, rigging elections, threatening opposition members, and spying on the public. Since leaders' primary preference is to stay in power, they in return pursue policies that reward the members of the ruling coalition for their loyalty.[104]

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[100] Ezrow and Frantz, 11.
[101] Jessica L. Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve." *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2008), 36.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Milan W. Svolik, "Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes." *American Journal of Political Science* 53, No. 2 (April 1, 2009), 479-480.
[104] Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

The dynamic relationship between a leader and the ruling elite can be characterized as an ongoing competition for political influence, power, and the material benefits of that power. As with members of the mass public, elite support is contingent on cost-benefit analysis – elites must perceive that the benefits of supporting the regime outweigh the costs of defection. The cost-benefit analysis carried out by elites can alter under a variety of circumstances, such as when the regime loses the ability to distribute economic perks due to a faltering economy or when an opposition movement intensifies to the point where elites have high confidence that opposition efforts will be successful in removing the current leader from his position of power.[105] This calculation is not to be made lightly, as benefits of support typically involve policy influence, access to power, economic and material gain and costs of defection can range from loss of job and legal persecution to exile or even execution.

B. Institutional Membership

States are comprised of several institutions that have the responsibility to set the direction for the national policies and implement them to various degrees. In democracies, these are often thought of an executive, political parties, legislatures, professional military organizations and judiciaries. Ezrow and Frantz highlight that the individuals chosen to fill key institutions vary across authoritarian regimes. In single-party regimes, the elite coalition is the ruling body of the party, sometimes called the central committee or politburo; in military regimes, the coalition generally consists of the military junta and other high-ranking officers; and in personalist regimes, the coalition is typically made up of close networks of individuals chosen by the ruler.[106] This dynamic effects the policy outcomes produced by the regime, "how easy it is for dictators to survive in office, and "the freedom dictators have in their foreign and domestic policy choices."[107]

Specifically, Ezrow and Frantz argue that when elites share membership in a unifying institution, like a party or military, this increases their bargaining power relative to the dictator and makes it

[105] Frantz and Ezrow, 58.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Frantz and Ezrow, 3.

harder for dictators to appoint and dismiss coalition members at will. Furthermore, leaders in military and single-party regimes have less control over membership in the elite coalition than personalist leaders do. This reduces the ability of single-party and military dictators to choose a coalition of individuals least likely and capable of ousting them.[108] In China, for example, despite Mao's supremacy, the institutional constraints inhibited him from excluding opponents or their views from the ruling Communist party (although he did purge countless high-ranking members of the party throughout his tenure). Later, Jiang Zemin proved unsuccessful in ensuring the appointment of a successor from his "faction" after he stepped down as general secretary, as did Hu Jintao after him.

In contrast, personalist dictatorships offer few institutions that effectively unite elites. Instead, personalist leaders have more control over the selection of individuals in their inner-orbit, as they can act without the constraints of military or party guidelines for appointments. As a result, leaders can choose close associates, friends and family members to surround them. The Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos provides a good example of this. Marcos's narrow base of support included former classmates and relatives. He also awarded key positions in the business sector to his most loyal associates, regardless of merit or expertise.[109] Overall, when elites share membership in a party or military organization, it is easier for them to overcome the coordination barriers in ousting the leader.

C. Control over Security Forces

Another difference in leadership-elite dynamics across various forms of authoritarian governments is control over the security forces. Ezrow and Frantz argue that when elites have control over the security forces, they secure access to troops and weaponry for foreign endeavors and to security services to carry out act of domestic repression. This access, however, also increases the elite's ability to carry out challenges to the leadership's power.[110] Indeed, most coups are carried out with the help of military forces and therefore, the more direct control that elites have over such forces,

[108] Ibid., 20.
[109] Ibid., 22.
[110] Frantz and Ezrow, 8.

the more the leader's position is at risk.[111] This is most common among elites in military dictatorships, who often have backgrounds as military commanders, tend to have greater and more autonomous control over the security forces than do elites in personalist and single-party regimes. This argument reemphasizes that military elites have more resources at their disposal to carry out coups against a leader.

In single-party dictatorships, the military is subordinated to the control of the party, similar to its role in democratic regimes. The difference from democratic states, however, is that military officials are promoted according to party loyalty, as dictated by the political leadership. Personalist dictators similarly control military promotions and advance their close associates while eliminating individuals who they deem to be disloyal, overly capable, or threatening. These differences make the execution of a coup more difficult for elites in personalist and single-party regimes than in military regimes, where elites have greater access to and control over the armed forces.[112]

The overall findings of Erica Frantz and Natasha Ezrow's rigorous testing of these implications across regions and time periods is illustrated here:

	Collective Actor?	**Security Access?**	**Ability to Stage a Successful Coup?**
Military elites	Yes	More likely	High
Single-party elites	Yes	Less likely	Medium
Personalist elites	No	Less likely	Low

Source: Erica Frantz and Natasha Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship: Institutions and Outcomes in Authoritarian Regimes,* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011), 25.

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The implications of these two dimensions – institutional membership and control over the security forces – are that leaders in different types of authoritarian regimes face different threats to their

[111] Frantz and Ezrow, 23.
[112] Ibid.

political power and therefore respond with different tactics. Researchers focusing on these dimensions have highlighted that leaders in military dictatorships are the most vulnerable to internal overthrow by factions of the *military*, followed by leaders in single-party dictatorships, and lastly leaders in personalist dictatorships.[113] This does not mean, however, that personalist dictatorships are immune to other forms of internal overthrow that might emerge from destabilizing social or economic factors.

Given that dictators face various domestic vulnerabilities that emerge from different entities, understanding the membership of a ruler's elite coalition also helps us to understand not only leadership survival, but also a range of other political outcomes. One aim of this research is to illustrate how leadership-elite dynamics affect foreign-policy decision making as one such political outcome. This research argues that to understand what drives the decision making in dictatorships, we should look to the individuals and groups that dictators rely on to stay in power, their interests, and the threats they pose to the survival of the leadership.

[113] Frantz and Ezrow, 48.

Chapter 2

The Evolution of Modern Authoritarianism: Adaptations in Strategy, Tactics and Legitimacy

I. The State of Authoritarianism Today

A. The Rise of 'Competitive Authoritarianism'

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union posed a fundamental challenge to authoritarian regimes around the world. In the late 80s and early 90s, dictatorships collapsed throughout Africa, post-communist Europe, Asia and Latin America.[114] The demise of the Soviet Union ushered in an era in which the West, led by the United States, became the center of economic, political and military power. Concurrently, Western foreign policy shifted from containing communism to supporting more strongly the legitimacy and formal architecture of democratic institutions through a combination of external assistance, diplomatic pressure and at times, military intervention. Amongst Western powers, there existed a great deal of consensus about how economies and polities should be organized and how states should interact with each other. In the world's most powerful capitals, free markets and democracy became the only legitimate forms of economic organization and political organization.

The post-Cold War period also saw the proliferation of transnational organizations – governmental and non-governmental – designed to promote human rights and democratic progress through election monitoring and other means. Importantly, this shift changed the cost and incentive structures for autocratic regimes in maintaining legitimacy at home and abroad. As Stephen Levitsky and Lucan Way argue, these changes in the international environment raised the external cost of authoritarianism and created incentives for elites in developing and post-communist countries to, at a minimum, adopt multiparty elections to enhance their credibility as viable partners in the international community and with Western states.[115]

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[114] Levitsky and Way, 17.
[115] Ibid, 18.

Even regimes representing new forms of autocracy (such as in former-Soviet states) and regimes that remain communist, including China, Cuba and Vietnam, lost the power to champion an alternative form of government to democracy in the 1990s. Instead of exporting their ideologies to neighboring states, by the early 2000s, they projected a very different message, claiming that their regimes were already democratic (even if they were not) or that they were moving their countries in the direction of democracy.[116] For example, Chinese President Hu Jintao used the phrase "democratic management," to describe China's political system, whereas President Putin throughout the early 2000s referred to Russia as a "sovereign democracy." While this trend has steadily declined or reversed, with strong authoritarian nations feeling less pressure to comply with democratic norms, there was a palpable pressure on governments throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s to move their societies in the direction of democratic opening and progress.

This changing international environment and external pressure ushered in a new form of non-democratic governance referred to as "competitive authoritarianism," as coined by Levitsky and Way. They define this type of hybrid regime as, "civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse for the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents."[117] Such regimes are democratic in the sense that opposition parties have the constitutional right to contest for power and are not legally barred. Their activities are public and operations are managed above ground. But they are not democratic because the playing field (including financial resources and state-run media) is heavily skewed in favor of the incumbents. Their elections and other "democratic" institutions are largely façades in systems that Larry Diamond calls "authoritarian hegemony." In such systems, there is space for political opposition, independent media, and social organizations that do not seriously challenge the regime, and elections that serve only to prolong the incumbent and his ruling party's tenure. Larry Diamond highlights that, "at the extreme end of the continuum, the presidents of Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen were all "reelected" in the 1990s with

[116] Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Post-Communist World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 43. Note: the authors highlight that in his visit to the U.S. in April 2006, Chinese President Hu Jintao used the phrase "democratic management," whereas Putin's public relations specialists coined the term "managed democracy" and then "sovereign democracy" in the early 2000s.
[117] Levitsky and Way, 5.

well over 90 percent of the vote, at which point the rulers had been in power for 21, 15 and 12 years, respectively..."[118] Other post-Cold War examples include leaders such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Vladimir Putin in Russia and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, all of whom came to power through democratic elections but then took steps to dismantle democratic institutions and individuals that opposed their rule.

As democracy and authoritarianism experts Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz write, "The playbook is consistent and straightforward: deliberately install loyalists in key positions of power (particularly in the judiciary and security services) and neutralize the media by buying it, legislating against it, and enforcing censorship. This strategy makes it hard to discern when the break with democracy actually occurs, and its insidiousness poses one of the most significant threats to democracy in the twenty-first century."[119] From this perspective, competitive authoritarian regimes contain elements of both authoritarianism and democracy, but are often capable of keeping power in the hands of undemocratic rulers.

In the post-Cold War era, and as will be further discussed, elections have actually enhanced regime legitimacy and have prolonged and strengthened authoritarian control. Many analysts, including Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, argue that elections within contemporary authoritarian systems reflect "strategic decisions on the part of powerful leaders to enhance their control over the system," [120] rather than a sign that domestic and international pressures are working to push leaders to embrace some aspects of democracy. On the contrary, leaders use democratic features in order to "expose, divide, and thereby weaken regime opponents, calibrate alliances, fine-tune patronage networks, and, more generally, solve the information problems that are built into the authoritarian political enterprise."[121] Beatriz Magaloni's influential study of the Mexican political system shows how one dominant party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), perpetuated

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[118] Larry Diamond, "Elections Without Democracy: Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy*, April 2002, Vol. 13, Issue 2.

[119] Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, "How Democracies Fall Apart: Why Populism Is a Pathway to Autocracy," *Foreign Affairs,* December 5, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-05/how-democracies-fall-apart

[120] Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[121] Bunce and Wolchik, 11-12

its dominance over the political system by retaining a legislative supermajority that allowed it to write and change the rules as it wished. Through largely constitutional means, the PRI was able to ensure that there was "no binding set of constitutional rules" [122] by which to be held accountable. This is one example of how democratic practices such as competitive elections have proven to solidify, rather than undermine, authoritarian rule.

Russia's Duma elections (the lower-house of the Russian Parliament) in September 2016 represent another example of how an authoritarian regime uses the ballot box to maintain a veneer of legitimacy and ultimately elongate authoritarian rule. Following the extensive protests that took place after the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary and presidential elections, the government took a series of steps to enhance its legitimacy (or at least the appearance of legitimacy).[123] The 2016 parliamentary elections saw minimal instances of voting fraud and had fourteen parties on the ballot, compared to only seven in the 2011 parliamentary elections. The results secured a majority in the Duma for Putin's political party *United Russia,* while allowing opposition candidates to openly criticize Putin and his decision-making.

These realities, however, do not highlight how the results were part of a carefully scripted outcome produced by the Kremlin. Voter apathy, represented by a forty-eight percent voter turnout (compared to sixty-percent in the 2011 parliamentary election) was engineered by moving the elections from December to September, hoping that the populace would be too busy with summer vacations and the beginning of the school year to pay attention. Opposition candidates also found it difficult to compete with United Russia candidates for airtime and favorable coverage on state-run media outlets. In addition to skewed voting processes, the Duma in large measure is seen as a "rubber stamp" on the Kremlin's decision-making, with several alternative parties represented in Parliament – including Just Russia – often voting in line-step with United Russia. So why does the Kremlin care about maintaining legitimacy through elections? Alexander Baunov of the Carnegie Moscow Center writes, "Vladimir Putin and his protégés in government, parliament, and

[122] Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 260-261.
[123] International Foundation for Electoral Systems, "Elections in the Russian Federation: 2016 Parliamentary Elections." September 18, 2016. Accessed at: http://www.ifes.org/faqs/elections-russian-federation-2016-parliamentary-elections

diplomatic service don't stake their claim to power through birth or from having led a revolution. They depend on institutional legitimation, the assertion that they are genuinely popular with the people and the people have validated their power in a proper legal manner."[124] Characteristic of competitive authoritarian regimes, the Kremlin rests its authority on both popularity and a "framework of legality that validates the autocracy."[125] This also explains why the regime pays such close attention to polling data, even that of the independent Levada Center, which the Kremlin labeled as a "foreign agent" shortly before the election.

B. The Surprising Resilience of Authoritarianism

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, it was clear that the third wave of democratization – which began in the mid-1970s with Portugal's Carnation Revolution and gained considerable momentum with the fall of the Soviet Union – had run its course, colliding along the way with the durable power of authoritarian regimes. Why, therefore, was it perceived at the end of the Cold War that authoritarian regimes were so unstable? A discussion about the nature of modern authoritarian regimes such as Russia's or China's should start with a critical examination of the assumptions that led Western actors to believe that authoritarianism was bound for the ash heap of history.

The prevailing mood at the end of the Cold War was that authoritarian regimes were transitory. This belief was captured by Samuel Huntington, who in 1991 stated that "liberalized authoritarianism is not a stable equilibrium; the halfway house does not stand."[126] Larry Diamond added to this notion of an unstable equilibrium when he wrote, "If authoritarian regimes do not perform, they lose legitimacy since performance is their only justification for holding power. But... if they do perform socioeconomically, they tend to refocus popular aspirations around political goals for voice and participation that they cannot satisfy without terminating their existence."[127]

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[124] Alexander Baunov, "Authoritarianism by Stealth: Russia After the Duma Elections," *Carnegie Moscow Center,* September 21, 2016.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Samuel Huntington, *Third Wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 137
[127] Larry Jay Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries*. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 1988) 39.

Yet not all autocracies underwent superficial electoral changes in the early years of the post-Cold War period, and authoritarian regimes remain powerful forms of government. There are fully closed systems in which electoral processes and means to contest ruling parties and rulers are non-existent, such as in contemporary China and Saudi Arabia, and slightly more open single-party regimes, where dictators rule through a dominant party and hold regular elections that are often characterized by repression and fraud. As is true in Russia, Putin relies on the political party, United Russia, while leading critics are often imprisoned or exiled, and opposition parties (although technically allowed to compete in elections) are given less media attention and are harassed by government forces.[128]

There are two arguments that support Huntington and Diamond's theses. The first is the "Lipset hypothesis," which, as discussed by Ivan Krastev, posits that "high incomes and economic development enhance the chances for democracy to be sustained." Krastev also insists on a symbiotic relationship between democracy and capitalism by which the spread of capitalism and the rise of incomes worldwide only strengthens the argument that authoritarian regimes are a transitory phenomenon.[129] The second reason for the perceived inevitable failure of authoritarianism is what Krastev calls "the effect of openness." Ian Bremmer in his book *The J Curve* addresses this effect by arguing that conditions of openness including free trade, free travel, and access to information, as well as democratic practices such as transparent political processes and a citizenry's ability to influence government, all further a state's capacity to withstand political shocks and avoid producing them.[130] From this perspective, for autocracies to be stable they must either close their borders (geographical and technological) or open their political systems.

Yet in spite of their many weaknesses, authoritarian regimes continue to persist and thrive in the twenty-first century. This is the case, in part, because external democratizing pressure has been limited in many circumstances. The West has walked a fine line between promoting democracy while advancing national interests that may require working with autocratic states and turning a

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[128] Levitsky and Way, 7.
[129] Ivan Krastev, "Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 22, No. 2, April 2001, 10.
[130] Ian Bremmer, *The J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

blind eye to domestic repression. Moreover, Western democracy promotion is at times "electoralist" in that it focuses almost exclusively on the existence of multiparty elections and less so on dimensions such as civil liberties and a level playing field among parties in the electoral process.[131] Furthermore, despite the lack of legitimacy formulas and driving ideologies attractive to both intellectuals and mass audiences, authoritarian regimes rather than democratic governments and totalitarian systems are traditionally the regimes most easily established and able to withstand domestic and external pressures.[132] This is because, according to Linz, "authoritarian governments neither fully empower the individual and allow him a free choice among leadership alternatives, as in democracies, nor mobilize citizens to implement 'great historical tasks' or build perfect societies, as in totalitarian societies."[133] Instead, they strive solely to maintain power and control over their citizens while accruing the material benefits of their rule.

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Modern authoritarian regimes are more open than their totalitarian predecessors in that they maintain a minimal degree of freedom in the media and in public debate, while devoting significant resources to controlling the narrative on state-sponsored outlets. In this sense, they are not forced to carry out mass and open repression of opponents. This system is what Ozan Varol, a constitutional law expert, refers to as "stealth authoritarianism."[134] Governments of this type prefer to consolidate its power by using legal mechanisms and democratic procedures rather than resorting to more costly methods of ideological mobilization and mass repression.[135]

VI. Sources of Stability in Modern Authoritarian Regimes

A. Internal Strategies for Maintaining Elite Cohesion and Control over Society

[131] Levitsky and Way.
[132] Linz, 271.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Originally cited in Alexander Baunov, "Authoritarianism by Stealth: Russia After the Duma Elections," *Carnegie Moscow Center,* September 21, 2016. Accessed at: http://carnegie.ru/commentary/?fa=64647
[135] Ibid.

Modern authoritarian regimes are characterized by constant power struggles between elites and dictators. In this endemic power struggle, regimes develop strategies to ensure the loyalty of the elites and minimize the threat of popular uprising or dissent without having to resort to overt repression. Over the course of the post-Cold War era, authoritarian systems have adapted the tools and tactics they use to maintain power and control. Such tools include the development of strong political parties, new instruments of coercion over civil society and the media, and state capture over the economy. These strategies are used to manage internal challenges to the regime's control, as well as interference or direct involvement of outside actors. These tools of control and coercion, however are not entirely novel. The more recent adaptations described below should be viewed as an ongoing process of authoritarian consolidation that predates any of the more recent phenomena of the twenty-first century. When strategies aimed at maintaining elite cohesion and loyalty break down, the result can be demise and even ouster for the dictator.

Institutions and Political Parties

A primary source of regime stability is the existence of a single institutionalized ruling party. As many researchers have found, it is common for dictatorships in newly independent states to co-opt or create a political party to build solidarity, organize and legitimize control.[136] Institutionalized parties are also useful in dealing with challenges to the regime, when challenges are severe and the leader must make concessions to competing groups. Under such circumstances, political parties can help to signal preferences between factions, make concessions and compromises and reach agreements among ruling elites without giving up too much power.[137]

To this end, political parties help to channel opposition demands without spiraling into open conflict, and can serve as an incumbent as "instruments of co-optation." Jennifer Ghandi writes, "For the potential opposition, assemblies and parties provide an institutionalized channel through which they can affect decision-making even if in limited policy realms. For incumbents, these institutions are a way in which the opposition's demands can be contained and answered without

[136] Bunce, McFaul, and Stoner-Weiss.
[137] David Art, "What Do We Know About Authoritarianism After Ten Years?" *Comparative Politics,* April 2012, 359.

appearing weak."[138] Similarly, Franz and Ezrow argue, "When elite disagreements surface, political parties are institutions that can regulate this conflict and handle disputes. Regimes can use parties as vehicles for patronage distribution to ensure elite satisfaction."[139] The stronger and more institutionalized the party, the better it will be at guiding the political system through periods of leadership succession, which can often be extremely destabilizing and have the potential to erupt into violence and even civil war. Moreover, others have argued that dictatorships create or use political parties to prolong the regime's hold on institutional power. For example, Vladimir Putin over the course of his sixteen years in power has sought to strengthen his party, United Russia, while coopting other groups to support its interests, in order to enhance institutionalized control over the Duma and Federal Assembly.

In short, institutions and parties have domestic and international purposes in modern authoritarian regimes. Internally, they have become instruments of co-optation among the ruling elite and externally, they serve as 'window dressing' of democratic progress in order to appease international and Western audiences. This argument aligns with the previously mentioned work of Levitsky and Way, who claim that political parties and other democratic institutions actually aid regime survival, instead of signal openness.

New Instruments of Coercion

In addition to political parties and institutions, a primary source of autocratic stability is an autocrat's control over an extensive and well-funded coercive state-security force that can quell large-scale protests and deal with opposition challenges. According to Art, coercion remains a core feature of authoritarian regimes, as fear, violence, intimidation and surveillance play extensive roles in the origins and maintenance of authoritarianism.[140] Yet coercion in modern authoritarian systems is different from tactics employed by twentieth century totalitarian states. Arch Puddington of Freedom House writes, "Traditional dictatorships and totalitarian regimes were

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[138] Jennifer Ghandi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorship,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8. Originally cited in, David Art, "What Do We Know About Authoritarianism After Ten Years?"
[139] Natasha Ezrow and Erica Frantz, *Dictaotrs and Dictatorships: Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and their Leaders,* (New York: Continuum International, 2011), 76.
[140] Art, 353.

often defined by closed, command, or autarkic economies, a state media monopoly with formal censorship, and 'civil society' organizations that were structured as appendages of the ruling party or state. Especially in military dictatorships, the use of force—including military tribunals, curfews, arbitrary arrests, political detentions, and summary executions—was pervasive."[141] Today, coercion also plays an important role in maintaining the collective normative order established by autocratic leaders, but tactics are more subtle and nuanced.

Specifically, modern authoritarian regimes focused their attention on inhibiting Western influence from reaching into their societies, particularly after the color revolutions in the early 2000s highlighted threats that civil society and Western supporters could pose to autocratic regimes. Puddington writes, "...whereas dissidents were dispatched to the gulag or explicitly exiled by the Soviets, or jailed and murdered by traditional dictatorships like Augusto Pinochet's Chile, today's activists are checked by NGO regulations that control registration and foreign funding, laws that allow arbitrary restrictions on public protest, and trumped-up criminal charges for key organizers that serve to intimidate others."[142] Authoritarian governments maintain the power to close "foreign operated" NGOs while allowing domestic NGOs with "benign missions" – such as poverty alleviation – to continue their work.

In China, for example, foreign NGOs are required to partner with domestic Chinese organizations, creating massive bureaucratic hurdles and inhibiting their ability to function. Independent media outlets – traditional and online – are suppressed through laws and regulations that do not affect less politically sensitive ideas from reaching citizens, giving the veneer of open information. The "great firewall" censors "dangerous ideas" while allowing citizens to access vast amounts of information available to the rest of the world. In Russia, President Putin signed a "bloggers law" in May 2014, which requires any blog or website with more than 3,000 daily viewers to register as a media outlet with the government. A follow-up law passed in July 2014 mandated social-media platforms and other telecommunication companies to store Russian users' data on servers

[141] Arch Puddington, "Breaking Down Democracy: Goals, Strategies, and Methods of Modern Authoritarians," *Freedom House*, June 2017. Accessed at: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/June2017_FH_Report_Breaking_Down_Democracy.pdf
[142] Puddington, 7.

where it can be accessed by the FSB.[143] Through such acts of coercion and manipulation, regimes create a culture of compliance and persuasion that goes beyond the use of violence and rests on the ability of the political leadership to channel material and economic benefits to influential members of society.

State Control of the Economy

A final source of stability in modern authoritarian regimes is the state's discretionary control over the economy. This control is generated from a failure to fully privatize state owned enterprises and the government's ability to direct energy revenues for its own purposes, giving leaders access to enormous resources and material benefits to keep supporters in line. This accumulation of wealth also helps the government to bar opposition parties from gaining sufficient resources to mount campaigns or survive as viable organizations.

Without the widespread privatization of key industries and strategic assets in authoritarian states, including the energy, finance and manufacturing sectors, small minorities of powerful individuals and groups maintain disproportionate influence and wealth. Even when privatization does occur, the process can breed corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability. This was the case in Russia's experience with privatization from the 1990s, which led to the rise of powerful and corrupt oligarchs who amassed tremendous wealth. Other examples of regimes that exert state control over energy resources to consolidate power include Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Uzbekistan throughout the 2000s.[144] The more material benefits elites gain from such arrangements with the state, the less likely elites are to stray from upholding authoritarian power sharing agreements.

B. External Factors Behind Regime Stability

Levitsky and Way add three additional factors that provide insight into the stability of modern authoritarian regimes: Western leverage, Western linkages and organizational power. Western

[143] Freedom of the Press 2015 Report, *Freedom House.* Accessed at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/russia.
[144] Stenner, 235.

leverage is defined as the governments' vulnerability to external democratizing pressure; it encompasses a regimes' bargaining power vis-à-vis the West, their ability to avoid the impact of Western criticism toward domestic abuses on human rights and civil liberties, and the potential effects of such punitive measures such as sanctions.[145] While many factors influence the power of Western leverage, it is primarily rooted in the target country's political and economic strength. Levitsky and Way's research determined that where Western leverage was high – in states that were weak economically, or that counted on the support of a powerful external ally for economic resources, political legitimacy or help with domestic stability – the regime was more likely to become unstable when pressured.[146] As one would imagine, in great power authoritarian regimes such as China and Russia, vulnerability to external pressure is considerably low.

The second international factor shaping authoritarian stability is the concept of Western linkages. This multidimensional concept is defined as "the density of ties (economic, political, diplomatic, social, and organizational) and cross-border flows (of capital, goods and services, people, and information) among particular countries and the U.S., the E.U. and Western-dominated institutions."[147] Linkage is also rooted in in a variety of historical factors, including colonialism, military occupation, and geopolitical alliances, which make a weaker democracy or autocratic state more dependent, or at a minimum aligned, with more powerful states including Russia or the United States. Levitsky and Way write, "Linkages to the West – in the form of cultural and media influence, elite networks, demonstration effects, and direct pressure from Western governments – appear to have raised the costs of authoritarian entrenchment, making the democratization of competitive authoritarian regimes more likely."[148]

They point to a series of cases in the post-Cold War era (1990-2005) in regions with closer ties to the West, where "the removal of autocratic incumbents has generally resulted in democratization..." They find, "In Latin America, for example, four out of five competitive authoritarian regimes democratized after 1990 (the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru, but not Haiti). Similarly, during the same period four out of five competitive authoritarian

[145] Levitsky and Way, 41.
[146] Art, 358.
[147] Ibid., 43.
[148] Levitsky and Way, 60.

regimes in Central Europe democratized (Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Romania, but not Albania)."[149] However, among former Soviet republics, only one competitive authoritarian regime (Moldova) democratized in the 1990s.[150] Where extensive, linkages to the West raise the cost of building and sustaining authoritarian rule; where linkage is low and external democratizing pressure is weaker, government abuse is less likely to trigger costly external responses, leaving autocrats with more internal flexibility over their coercive and repressive tactics.[151] To this point, in Central Europe where there existed many international organizations monitoring democratic developments following the end of the Cold War, even small abuses of power were noted in Western media. Where INGO penetration was weak, such as in parts of Africa, Western media and experts received less notification of even the most egregious acts against civil society.

Overall, democratization is less likely and authoritarianism persists where linkage and leverage are low. In these cases, Levitsky and Way argue that authoritarian durability is driven primarily by domestic factors, particularly an incumbents' *organizational power*. This set of factors refers to the sources of stability already discussed – including the institutional strength of the ruling regime's political party, new and adaptive coercive capacities over civil society and the media, and state control of the economy. If organizational power is high, incumbents are better equipped to manage elite conflict and hinder opposition challenges, leading to more stable authoritarianism.[152]

C. Challenges to Modern Authoritarian Systems: Threat of the 'Palace Coup' and Popular Revolts

Now that we have discussed strategies for maintaining elite cohesion and loyalty, along with several internal and external sources of authoritarian stability, it is important to highlight what can happen when a regime's strategies prove unsuccessful. In addition to popular revolts, threats to regime survival can emerge from insider elites, meaning that while an elite coalition is a necessary

[149] Ibid, 339.
[150] Levitsky and Way, 62.
[151] Ibid.
[152] A key element of "incumbent strength" is its ability to employ coercive tools in monitoring and repress civil society and political dissent without punishment.

function of a ruler's power and his support base, this group can also be the greatest threat to his survival and a source of political instability.

Dan Slater brings a central insight to the discussion of authoritarian power dynamics and elite conflict. He argues that "elites will only act collectively to maintain an authoritarian, extractive state if they view it as less threatening than the alternative."[153] What the alternative looks like to elites is ascertained through gauging the extent of the threat from above or below to their lives and livelihoods. Contentious politics and mass unrest – through organized and collective activity that challenges the political status quo -- can be either "*endemic* or *episodic*, and *manageable* or *unmanageable* under existing institutional arrangements."[154] As Slater argues, elites are most threatened when they perceive of conflict as endemic and unmanageable, and when challenges to regime power take the form of demands for radical redistribution, affect urban as opposed to rural areas, and spark communal in addition to class tensions.[155]

Over the course of the Cold War and post-Cold War eras, authoritarian leaders have lost control to various factions – including insider coups and popular revolts. Research conducted by Milan Svolik assessed autocracies between 1945 and 2002 and found that a majority of authoritarian leaders lose power as a result of insider coups rather than popular uprisings.[156] Svolik's seminal work on power sharing in authoritarian regimes, as indicated by Table 1 below, highlights the importance of leadership-elite dynamics to political conflict in authoritarian regimes. As the table shows, among 303 leaders, only 32 were removed by popular uprising. In contrast, 205 dictators – more than two-thirds – were removed by government insiders, such as other government members or members of the military or security forces through coup d'états.[157]

Nonconstitutional Exits of Leaders in Dictatorships*

[153] Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia,* (New York: Cambridge University Pres, 2010), as cited in David Art, "What Do We Know About Authoritarianism After Ten Years," 354-355.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Svolik examined all 316 authoritarian leaders who held office for at least one day and lost power by non-constitutional means (exits that did not follow a natural death or a constitutionally mandated process) between 1945 and 2002.
[157] Ibid.

	Frequency (Percentage			
Nature of Exit**	At Least One Day in Office		At Least One Year in Office	
Coup d'état	205	(67.66)	151	(63.71)
Popular Uprising	32	(10.56)	30	(12.66)
Transition to Democracy	30	(9.90)	30	(12.66)
Assassination	20	(6.60)	17	(7.17)
Foreign Intervention	16	(5.28)	9	(3.80)
Total	*303*	*(100.00)*	*237*	*(100.00)*
** Exits of interim leaders and lead exist during civil wars are not included.*				
***Unambiguous determination of the nature of exit was not possible for 13 leaders.*				

Source: Milan W. Svolik, "Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes." American Journal of Political Science 53, No. 2 (April 1, 2009), 479.

Leadership-elite dynamics, however, is not the only political dimension that has implications for authoritarian leaders when dealing with threats to survival. Actions within the ruling elites tell only part of the story of regime stability and change. Other threats can and do emerge from external shocks and popular mobilization against the regime. In fact, the trend of autocratic ousting from insider coups may be declining. Updating Svolik's work on autocratic exits, Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor find that "the percentage of autocrats ousted in [popular] revolts has tripled from 4 percent to 12 percent since the end of the Cold War. In fact, from 2010-2012, a quarter of dictators who lost power did so via revolt."[158] The Arab Spring uprisings in particular highlight the threat that popular uprisings can pose to an authoritarian leader. Indeed, coups have declined in the post-Cold War era, with Franz and Kendall-Taylor noting that "the proportion of autocrats ousted via coup – which accounted for as much as half of all autocrat ousters in the 1960s and 70s, for example – has fallen to less than 10 percent in the last decade."[159] By 2014, revolts had surpassed coups as the most common way to unseat dictators. The research of Svolik, Frantz and

[158] Erica Franz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, "The Foreign Policy Essay: The Rising Threat of Revolt in Autocracies," *Lawfare*, June 22, 2014. Accessed at: https://www.lawfareblog.com/foreign-policy-essay-rising-threat-revolt-autocracies
[159] Ibid.

Kendall-Taylor highlights that in order to develop a greater understanding of regime decision-making, we need to focus on the political dynamics and threat perceptions within authoritarian systems between the rulers and their elite coalitions, as well as the rulers and their populations.

A final and essential domestic source of political stability within authoritarian regimes is a regime's ability to maintain *legitimacy* with elites and among the domestic population. The concept of legitimacy has very different meanings in Western and non-Western societies, as autocratic regimes rely on different pillars and strategies for legitimacy than democratically elected leaders. How do authoritarian leaders sustain legitimacy behind their rule, and why do they care about maintaining a sense of legitimacy among their population and the international community? These are the question to which we now turn.

VII. Legitimation Strategies Among Autocracies in the Twenty-First Century

A. Legitimacy in Authoritarian Settings

A key concept for the maintenance of power and stability in political systems, whether they are democratic or authoritarian, is legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy in the context of authoritarian regimes can be difficult and elusive to define and it has evolved over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This research defines legitimacy as the popular acceptance of a governing body's right to exercise authority. This definition has two elements. First, it treats legitimacy as a *subjective concept,* dependent upon perceptions and beliefs of the governed, and not on objective and universal standards. In this sense, governing authorities in different contexts must be assessed by the perceptions of those who view them as worthy of support, not whether they satisfy a set of pre-determined criteria and electoral procedures. Second, this definition puts the focus on *internal perceptions of legitimacy* – whether and to what extent those who are subject to authorities believe them to be legitimate.

Larry Diamond argues that a regime is legitimate "when its people believe it is the most appropriate form of government for their country – better than any other alternative they can imagine and therefore has the moral right to make laws, collect taxes, direct resources and command

obedience."[160] When governments fail to deliver economic development, control corruption, effectively coerce society and maintain order, there emerges a broad sense that the regime has forfeited its legitimacy. Diamond highlights that all regimes – whether authoritarian or democratic – depend on some mix of legitimacy and force. Just as force or the threat of force is necessary to compel compliance to some extent, so too must there be a faction of society that believes in the efficacy of the regime. In other words, even if most citizens privately disapprove of the regime, there must be a set of loyalists and insiders who regard the regime as legitimate and who are committed to its defense and maintenance.

Legitimacy in non-democracies is a vastly different concept than that of democratic and Western societies. In non-Western states (although there is a great deal of variance among them), state-society relations are more likely to be based on personal ties and informal rules. Public goods are provided to elite groups from distinct social or ethnic backgrounds rather than on the basis of civil or universal rights; access to economic and political resources depends on exclusive relationships, not on open competition.[161] As the OECD reports, "It follows that people's expectations of the state, and their ideas about what constitutes legitimate political authority and acceptable behavior by state official will differ fundamentally in Western and non-Western states."[162] Legitimacy in non-democracies becomes a complicated concept as regimes must rely on several interacting – and potential contradictory – sources of legitimacy from various actors, elite and non-elites, within society. This is particularly the case when legitimacy wanes: an autocratic state may either forego responsibilities to their people, or use their control of these services against their own citizens. This fear makes them less responsive to citizens' needs, which further enhances the severity of the regime's legitimacy problem. In desperate times, regimes must rely more on coercive measures to force political authority upon their populations.[163]

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[160] Diamond, 88.
[161] OECD, Conflict and Fragility, "The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity." 2010, 17.
[162] OECD, 18.
[163] OECD, Conflict and Fragility, "The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity." 2010, 7-8.

According to Seymour Lipset, political systems must "engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate one for society."[164] This belief must be felt not only among mass audiences, but also by key constituency groups that the regime relies on for stability and power. There are two primary ways for autocracies to exercise power: through legitimation strategies on one side (carrots) and coercion and repression on the other (sticks). Even if coercive actions wax or wane throughout times of domestic upheaval or leadership transitions, ruling elites must always complement these measures with positive strategies of legitimation to maintain society's support.[165] Given that a central problem in autocracies is the lack of normative legitimacy achieved through popular consent, they may feel more pressure to, as Marianne Kneuer writes, "produce some degree of public support with the purpose of justifying their authority and thus securing stability."[166] To reiterate, this is a perceptions-based approach to legitimacy, which considers whether a population believes their regime supports their values and beliefs, and not simply whether it comes to power through formal electoral mechanisms. Elections, according to research conducted by the OECD, take on a distinct meaning only when people share the common belief that the will of the collective nation has been accurately and fairly expressed.[167]

Scholars maintain several definitions for state legitimacy. Stephen Van Evera defines legitimacy as a function of a regime's representativeness, its competence and efficiency, and the scope of the tasks that face it.[168] Similarly, Alastair Iain Johnston writes, "legitimate political, social, economic or international order means that members of the relevant in-group are positively motivated to not want to see a change in the personnel and structure of policy and authority... Citizens are not merely tolerating the status quo until something better comes around, but they also imagine that there are not any alternative models worth fighting for."[169] Johnston also cites sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, who write, "legitimation is the process of 'explaining' and 'justifying' existing institutional arrangements to new generations; it is intricately involved with the creation

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[164] Seymour Lipset, *The Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (London : Heinemann, 1983), 64. Originally cited in Marianne Kneuer, "The Quest of Legitimacy, Foreign Policy as a Legitimation Strategy in Authoritarian Regimes," ISPA-ECPR Joint Conference, Sao Paulo, Brazil, February 16-19, 2011, 2.
[165] Kneuer, "The Quest of Legitimacy, Foreign Policy as a Legitimation Strategy in Authoritarian Regimes," 2.
[166] Ibid.
[167] OECD, Conflict and Fragility, "The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity." 2010, 24.
[168] Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), 31.
[169] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Legitimation, Foreign Policy, and the Sources of Realpolitik," *Draft Paper,* Government Department, Harvard University, November 1999, 5.

of an in-group historical narrative or ideology for purposes of socialization."[170] Building on the above definitions, this research defines legitimacy as the product of several sources – institutions, free and fair elections, representation, competence and performance – that is justified and maintained by the regime using a coherent and persuasive narrative. Importantly, the population and elite classes must believe that there is no better alternative to the regime and the leader's political authority.

The pursuit of legitimacy is necessary for both democratic and authoritarian states, but proves significantly more difficult and complex for the latter. Yet many explanations of legitimacy continue to discuss the term strictly in Western contexts, disregarding how alternative systems maintain legitimacy among their populations. The Western conception also takes for granted systems of personal patronage and loyalty, the blurring of public and private spheres, and the coercive power of the state in many aspects of society. Indeed, in authoritarian states, the ruling party or individual's influence is rarely confined to the political sphere, and its influence permeates other facets of the country's military, social and economic systems.[171] Furthermore, given an autocrat's lack of normative legitimacy, he must produce on his own some degree of public support for the purposes of justifying his authority and thus securing stability. For the purposes of this study, determining how regimes maintain power in times of normalcy and in times of crisis is essential to understanding when the foreign policy sphere may become a stronger pillar of legitimacy.

B. Pillars of Legitimacy

There are four primary sources of legitimacy that exist in state-society relations, which play out differently in various social and political contexts. These sources include input or process legitimacy, performance legitimacy, shared beliefs and collective identities and international legitimacy. These pillars of legitimacy can contradict each other at times, and a regime may place its reliance on one over another depending on the circumstances of its rule.

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[170] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treaties in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York, Anchor Books, 1966) 93. Originally quoted in Johnston, 7.
[171] Brandon J. Kinne, "Decision Making in Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective," *International Studies Perspectives* (2005) Vol. 6, 116.

Input or process legitimacy:

Input legitimacy, or *demos,* comes from "agreed rules of procedure through which the state takes binding decisions and organizes people's participation."[172] Input legitimacy emerges most notably due to the mechanisms by which those in power are held accountable by their constituencies. In Western states, accountability is maintained through formal rules enshrined in a constitution and multiparty system, the provision of public goods and services, and access to economic and political resources. In democratic states, as Kneuer notes, "It is also expected that formulated demands and interests will be translated into political decisions and that the government will be responsive to these interests and demands through electoral accountability." [173] If a central authority is not responsive to demands of the people, it is assumed that other features of democracy will step in, such as the pluralism of interest groups, checks and balances, independent judicial systems and media, and civil society organizations.

For autocracies, input legitimacy in the Weberian sense is almost non-existent, given that they are inherently defined by their lack of pluralistic political systems and free and fair competition. Instead, autocrats rely on customary practices justified by a monarchy or ruling elite based on "divine right" or patronage networks. In a system of patronage, "legitimacy is linked to the material rewards that accrue from exchange across various constituency groups in society, although it often excludes those at the bottom of society... serving the main means of managing violence, creating political alliances and maintaining social stability."[174] But patronage carries with it many risks; it can undermine regime legitimacy if it is seen as benefiting one group at the expense of the majority. Applied to China under Xi Jinping, this rationale provides one explanation as to why Xi Jinping has initiated an extensive anti-corruption campaign throughout the Chinese Communist Party in order to root out aspects of the regime that are delegitimizing the Party's rule.

Output or performance legitimacy:

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[172] OECD *Conflict and Fragility,* 23.
[173] Kneuer, 3.
[174] OECD *Conflict and Fragility*, 26.

Given the lack of ideological motivation in authoritarian societies today, regimes must justify their rule in large measure based on their performance and ability to provide order and economic development.[175] This form of *output legitimacy* is defined by the effectiveness and quality of services and goods, such as security, that are delivered by the state. The ability of the government to maintain security of the state's borders, and the territory within its borders, is often seen as a primary form of output legitimacy. However, the provision of security can also serve to delegitimize the state among the people, and if repressive, violent or coercive measures become the dominant forms of security produced by state forces. When state security becomes exclusive – meaning at the expense of certain groups – perception of illegitimacy can grow among certain aspects of society.

Modern autocratic regimes arguably rely first and foremost on their ability to produce economic prosperity and provide social services. The health of the economy can be measured in straightforward indicators such as growth of GDP or debt-to-GDP ratio, unemployment, and inflation. The regime also must be perceived as the primary agent of progress and economic development. According to the OECD, "... the state needs to be seen as ultimately responsible for services and for organizing the contributions of other actors (including NGOs, philanthropic organizations, aid agencies, etc)."[176] As discussed, ideological zealotry no longer serves as the most effective way to mobilize the masses to support the regime; instead, economic stability is often seen as a primary reason that the public accepts less political involvement and civil liberties. As with all state services, including security, there must be a means to financially support them. State building is therefore constrained by the economic resources of the country – a regime can do little over the long-term without the financial means for action.

[175] Larry Diamond points out that dictatorships face an intrinsic dilemma and catch-22: if it does not deliver on what the people expect in exchange for tolerating its authoritarian rule, it forfeits its only basis of legitimacy. "However, if it does succeed in solving the problems that ushered it into power – such as economic crisis, social polarization, political violence, or insurgency – its harsh measures are no longer needed. If the dictatorship produces sustained economic development, it may transform society in ways that make its rule even more dispensable and in favor of democratic transition." Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy,* (New York: Times Books, 2008), 90.
[176] OECD, 27.

In terms of economic performance, autocratic regimes must pay most attention to satisfying the needs of groups that comprise their pillars of their support – such as the military, economic elite, oligarchs, technocrats, or the church. When elites see the benefits of supporting the regime dwindle, their interest in maintaining current leadership structure falls, regardless of the strength of the loyalty ties. Economic instability is therefore a central instigator of public unrest among these influential groups in society on which the regime depends.

Yet material incentives or side payments to such groups should not be confused with legitimacy, as they are simply tools for maintaining power, not legitimating it. If legitimacy relies entirely on transactional benefits, compliance and loyalty would then drop off when material benefits decline. This is why regimes with high levels of perceived insecurity may turn to coercive measures in order to maintain their rule when economic performance falters. Given that coercion is often not enough to ensure long-term compliance, the regime may also look to other pillars of legitimacy, such as the legitimacy that comes from collective identities and perceived differences between in-groups and out-groups.

Shared beliefs and collective identities:

One of the most basic aspects of a state is the existence of a "national identity" centered on a shared history, values, or vision for the nation's future. This research defines national identity as a political and social community comprised of shared beliefs that are shaped by social practices, institutions, traditions, religions and ideologies. Importantly, collective identities are not only descriptive; they can also be instrumental. If instructed and disseminated appropriately, they can also lead citizens to see the regime as the public and rightful authority of the state. In authoritarian regimes, shared beliefs can be constructed and used by regime to cement loyalty and allegiance from elites and the broader public. Official rhetoric, according to Jason Lyall, is one means that regimes use to "publically articulate the desired goals and aims of the political community,"[177] to endorse a particular vision for the country, and to denote specific in-groups and out-groups that will benefit

[177] Lyall, 66.

(or be punished) based on their support for that vision and for the regime.[178] This practice is even more potent when used by leaders in times of economic stress or social instability, when regimes would typically undergo significant challenges to its legitimacy.

International Legitimacy:

The international arena is a fourth source of legitimacy, which involves the recognition of the state's sovereignty and legitimacy by external actors. International legitimacy also refers to a government's "sense of obligation to uphold international laws and contracts and maintain one's commitments."[179] Regional and international organizations, as well as hegemonic powers in the international system do a great deal to confer (or discredit) legitimacy of other states on the international stage, and approval or condemnation from the international community can affect regime's domestic legitimacy and internal ruling strategy. For example, detrimental actions taken by a state in the realm of human rights and minority rights can elicit pushback from international organizations; and civil society actors can then point to backing from the international community in order to build support among domestic audiences to take action against the regime. Finally, modern authoritarian regimes have shown a propensity to seek legitimacy from the international community to gain access to foreign investment and the global economy to bolster their internal control.

C. State Legitimacy vs. Regime Legitimacy

In exploring the primary sources of legitimacy among democratic and non-democratic states, it is important to note that legitimacy of the state as a sovereign entity differs from the legitimacy of a particular *regime* or *leader* in non-democratic states. This is an important distinction given that the focus of this study is on *regime* legitimacy, and illegitimate governments can reside within powerful and legitimate sovereign states. For example, Afghanistan enjoys external legitimacy as

[178] On the other hand, identity formation (in the constructivist sense) is socially constructed through a more bottom-up process. The use of collective identities by regimes through official rhetoric and symbolic acts, however, is the primary focus of this research.
[179] Andrea Hasenclever, Peter Mayer, and Voker Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997) 171. See also Thomas M. Franck, *the Power of Legitimacy Among Nations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Originally cited in Johnston, 5.

a nation-state, but lacks internal legitimacy with its weak governing structures and little control over rival factions and territory.

A population's views about the legitimacy of a regime can be ambivalent, fluctuating or rejected. When ambivalent, citizens may see the government as crooked (after a fraudulent election), while also acknowledging that it still represents the best available option for delivering economic growth or other public goods.[180] Notions of regime legitimacy can fluctuate in ways that conceptions of state legitimacy do not, such as when a leader suffers a blow to his political legitimacy due to declining economic performance or high corruption while the state apparatus remains strong. In times of regime legitimacy crises, citizens may reject an existing regime that does not meet their expectations and demand that it be reformed or expelled (as we saw in the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan).

Finally, there is a difference between state security and regime security with regards to the security dilemma in international relations. According to the logic of the security dilemma as defined by Robert Jervis, states in search of security may pursue expansion to create secure frontiers or buffer zones in which to protect the homeland from attack. Yet revisionist actions including territorial expansion may be taken in response to perceptions of threat to *regime* power rather than state security concerns. To understand revisionist actions that seemingly belie security concerns of the state, we must look to internal factors for more insight.

VIII. Conclusion to Chapters 1 and 2

These first two chapters have drawn on the vast literature in comparative politics and security studies to present the key concepts, scope and terminology of authoritarianism as one of the dominant systems of governance in the world today. The research presented thus far has acknowledged the state of modern authoritarianism – in terms of leader-elite dynamics, sources of stability, and pillars of legitimacy – and the evolution of authoritarian regimes' power tactics and survival strategies throughout the Cold War, post-Cold War and twenty-first century eras. From

[180] OECD, 32.

this review, it is clear that today's leading illiberal states rely on different sources of power and legitimacy than their totalitarian and traditional authoritarian predecessors.

Changes in international distributions of power and Western support for democratization have also affected the stability of authoritarian regimes around the world. Yet this pressure has been applied unevenly and in many cases, superficially. The Western world's emphasis on multiparty elections has allowed authoritarian regimes to undergo shallow changes in order to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the international community while further institutionalizing coercive power over their own populations.

Authoritarian domestic adaptations, even in the face of external pressure and civil society-based resistance movements, have been impressive. The question of what these changes and adaptations mean for authoritarian foreign policy behavior, however, remains underexplored. Are authoritarian political systems inherently inclined toward revisionism? What are the domestic drivers of revisionist preferences and policies when they do occur? Is there any variation across authoritarian regimes in terms of their desire to change key aspects of the liberal international order? Assessing the intentions, and the motivations behind those intentions, of revisionist states in the twenty-first century is essential. Moreover, understanding why authoritarian regimes pursue revisionist foreign policies is an important undertaking, if the U.S. is to maintain security and stability in regions where it has national security interests at stake.

This chapter has also outlined a typology of political regimes, drawing comparisons between democratic, totalitarian and authoritarian systems, and then differentiating between various forms of autocratic governments including single-party, personalist and military regimes. The purpose of this classification is not teleological in nature; rather it is to highlight various forms of leadership-elite power dynamics, perceptions of threat and strategies of survival within different types of authoritarian systems, and how these factors might influence decision-making.

One primary finding is that in modern authoritarian regimes, the role of ideology in mobilizing the population to support and uphold the regime's legitimacy has changed drastically. As mentioned throughout this chapter, authoritarian regimes such as contemporary Russia and China rely less on

doctrinal ideologies to co-opt the masses than they do systems of patronage and loyalty. This has alleviated the utopian strain in politics that would require more repression than most leaders could afford. Instead of employing powerful ideologies to mobilize masses behind regime objectives, dictatorial leaders rely on varying degrees of economic progress and nationalism. Moving into the foreign policy realm, assertive strategies that appeal to the population's sense of national identity might help the regime to achieve the legitimacy of a great power in the international system *and* to consolidate power and stability at home.

This research will now turn to outlining an analytic and theoretical framework for assessing revisionist preferences and behavior among states in the international system. A critical component of this theoretical development is to identify mid-range international relations theories that explain the drivers of foreign policy behavior as originating within the state and based on certain domestic conditions. Such theories take into account the importance of institutions, leaders, political processes, and challenges to regime survival, and the role that these internal factors can play in foreign policy decision making.

Chapter 3

Analytic and Theoretical Frameworks:
The Domestic Drivers of Revisionist Foreign Policy Strategies

I. Chapter Objectives

History is rife with great power conflict and clashes between revisionist and status quo seeking states. One can look as far back as the Peloponnesian War, which one might say was inevitable due to the "rise of Athens and the fear that this inspired in Sparta," as Greek historian Thucydides writes. Several great power and minor wars of the contemporary era were also driven by revisionists. From 1795 to 1814, France in the Napoleonic Wars sought to control Europe until Russia, Austria, Prussia, and England aligned together against Napoleon and achieved a balance of power arrangement at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. [181] America is considered by many to have been a revisionist power in the early twentieth century as it competed with the European imperialist powers for hegemony over the Western hemisphere. Later examples include Wilhelmine Germany in the lead-up to WWI, imperial Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and subsequent revisionist strategies across the Asia Pacific, and Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy revisionist aims in Europe and the Mediterranean in WWII. Great power competition did not cease following the war, and a rivalry immediately emerged between Soviet and Western blocs, with the Soviet Union and the United States supporting competing ideological movements around the world. The Korean War from 1950-1953 and the Gulf War from 1990-1991 are also examples of wars initiated by revisionist powers. In the Korean War, while there were many causes, one was Kim Il Sung of North Korea's desire to unify the peninsula and his subsequent invasion of South Korea beyond the 38th parallel. Similarly, one of the primary causes of the Gulf War was Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and desire to achieve regional hegemony.[182]

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[181] Jason Davidson provides a helpful overview of examples of revisionism from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. See Jason Davidson, *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-Quo States,* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 3.
[182] Ibid.

From a theoretical standpoint, my research argues that a theory on the origins of state behavior must pay close attention to factors that exist below the systemic level within states and societies, including leaders and the political systems in which they operate. This research also argue that the best way to identify a revisionist state's intentions is not only through an assessment of changing relative power capabilities; one must also look for the emergence of comprehensive strategies among ruling coalitions within states that are aimed at challenging U.S. and allied interests, and a willingness to incur the costs and risks of doing so. These arguments provide a complementary narrative to existing realist and rationalist explanations of revisionism that rest primarily on structural arguments and relative distributions of power.

Building from the first two chapters that analyzed evolving domestic structures of power and legitimacy within modern authoritarian states, the first objective of this chapter is to operationalize the concept of revisionism and to develop more precise categories of revisionist preferences, strategies, and tactics. This is a prerequisite for bringing more clarity to the range of tactics available to revisionist powers in the twenty-first century. In this chapter and throughout the dissertation, I argue that the strategies pursued by great powers such as Russia and China constitute a form of *measured revisionism.* Conceptually, measured revisionist powers may seek to alter the balance of power in their regions not only through conventional warfare, but also through strategies and tactics that incorporate the use of non-military or non-kinetic tools over a series of long-term and incremental steps. In practice, the aim of measured revisionist strategies is to achieve national objectives while remaining below the threshold of costly obligatory responses and escalatory thresholds from, for example, NATO Article V commitments or U.S. security assurances in East Asia.

As will be discussed further in this research, Russia and China wish to see aspects of the liberal world order amended in different ways. Russia seeks to supplant the Eastern European security architecture to replace it with a "spheres of influence" model in which it maintains preeminent power over the political, economic and military decisions of its neighbors. China seeks an East Asian security order where it is on equal footing with the United States and where its interests are accommodated by its smaller and less powerful neighbors. Its vision for such an order may be

more benign than the one promoted in the Kremlin, but uncertainty surrounding Beijing's long-term intentions in the region create more doubt than reassurance in the West.

A final objective of this chapter is to identify and analyze international relations theories that explain foreign policy behavior as originating from a combination of international factors and requirements of domestic political control and legitimacy. The goal of the research is not to further expound democratic peace theory[183] and its antithesis; social structures and internal conditions are far more complex than the two theories present. Rather this research aims to develop theories that explore the domestic factors behind state behavior, with the goal of ascertaining the specific facets of authoritarianism that are most detrimental to peace and stability. Given that my implicit argument is that the pursuit of revisionism is best understood as the product of evolving international conditions *and* internal political developments and legitimization processes, the theoretical frameworks presented here provide a complementary narrative to existing realist and rationalist explanations of revisionism that rest solely on structural arguments and relative distributions of power.

While this research does not argue that authoritarian states are inherently more aggressive than democratic states (and empirical research does not find this to be the case), there are several assumptions about the nature of authoritarian regimes that differentiate them from democratic states. First, while the primary goal of any leader is to stay in power,[184] this incentive is more pronounced for authoritarian leaders than those who are democratically elected, given the unpredictability of succession procedures in most authoritarian settings and the risk to personal wellbeing of outgoing leaders and elites.[185] Second, the prospect of being forcibly removed from power makes authoritarian leaders more likely than democratic regimes to turn to coercive

[183] Democratic peace theory, with its origins in international liberalism and the work of Emmanuel Kant, finds that foreign policy is shaped by unit level characteristics, including institutions and modes of governance. Specifically, democratic peace theory promotes the idea that liberal democracies are more likely to conduct liberal practices with other liberal democracies. Democracies are less likely to go to war with one another for four reasons. First, democratically elected leaders must answer the public at the ballot box for any wars in which they engage; second, leaders answerable to the public are more likely to support diplomatic institutions to resolve international tensions; third, democracies look favorably upon countries with similar values; and lastly, economic integration due to liberal economic policies makes war less desirable for liberal democracies.
[184] Bueno del Mesquite et al. *The Logic of Political Survival,* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).
[185] Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950–1992," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, 113–126.

measures and untraditional sources of legitimacy – such as the foreign policy arena – to remain in power. Third, in authoritarian regimes where state interests are conflated with the political fortunes of a leader or a small group of elite individuals, the needs of the regime are separate from, and may conflict with, state-based notions of "the national interest."

Lastly, an important qualification is that this research seeks to explain the policy making procedures behind a state's goals, not a state's choice of tactics or actions in fulfilling those goals. For example, if one is to argue that President Vladimir Putin desired to change the status quo in Eastern Europe prior to annexing Crimea and invading eastern Ukraine, then we must understand the motivations behind adopting this *goal* – and not Putin's singular decision to take military action. Overall, this research does not attempt to explain states' actions in isolation from a comprehensive strategy.

II. Understanding Revisionism in the International System

A. Definitional Attributes of Foreign Policy Revisionism

The very idea of a revisionist state embodies some degree of imprecision. This stems from the fact that many states seek to "revise" the international system in some way, exerting varying degrees of power to ensure that change occurs in their favor. Most definitions, moreover, equate revisionism with the initiation of overt conflict and war, or focus on revisionism as a form of balancing or bandwagoning strategies. As a consequence, we lack clear theoretical criteria and practical indicators for distinguishing among revisionist states to meet the realities of twenty-first century power politics.

The sections below explore how scholars and practitioners have addressed criteria and indicators of revisionism to date. The goal of these sections is to trace the evolution of literature on revisionism and to develop a more nuanced description of the strategies and tactics available to revisionist powers today.

Traditional Approaches: Status Quo, Imperialist and Prestige Policies

The distinction between revisionist and status quo states has been a feature of contemporary international relations theory since E.H. Carr defined power politics as a fundamental competition and divergence of interests between "nations desirous of maintaining the *status quo* and nations desirous of changing it."[186] Hans Morgenthau then classified power politics into three types: status quo maintenance policies, imperialism, and prestige policies. According to Morgenthau, "the policy of the status quo aims at the maintenance of the distribution of power as it exists at a particular moment in history." [187] Furthermore, a status quo policy is opposed to any "reversal of the power relations among two or more nations, reducing, for instance, nation A from the first rate to a second-rate power and raising nation B to the eminent position that nation A formerly held." [188]

On the opposing side of the spectrum, the true nature of revisionism (or imperialism, in Morgenthau's twentieth century lexicon) is a policy devised to overthrow the status quo. The goal of imperialism can be to dominate the international system and develop a form of world empire, or be more limited in design. A nation can seek hegemony over a localized geographic area, including continents or regions that are most pressing to its national interests and geopolitical objectives. Such objectives can be limited by the capabilities of the revisionist power itself, based on its relative power vis-à-vis the status quo state(s) or the state's willingness to divert resources away from domestic endeavors.

Whereas revisionist, or imperialist, policies seek to change the current situation using coercion or force, "prestige policies" are strategies implemented with the primary objective being to *display* power, rather than *exert* it in any meaningful way. Robert Art refers to this function of force as "swagger," which serves to deter aggression and convince domestic and international audiences of the regime's ability and willingness to use military force to support its goals. After conceptually distinguishing between these three types of grand strategies, the question becomes: does a rising power seek to drastically shift the existing distribution of power, contemplate minor adjustments

[186] E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939.* (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1939), 53.
[187] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 43.
[188] Morgenthau, 45.

within the general framework of the existing status quo, or simply project power for the purposes of showing capabilities, rather than using them?

Answering this question proves immensely challenging, and Morgenthau's distinction between status quo, imperialist and prestige strategies highlights the difficulties in recognizing a revisionist state. For one, it is very difficult to tell imperialist and prestige policies apart. A show of force, through military modernization efforts and robust defense spending, could be a signal of "imperial" ambitions in some cases, and could serve defensive and deterrence purposes in others. History provides us with few classic and clear examples of revisionist states, and determining the intentions of a rising power is far from straightforward. This calculation has, in the words of Morgenthau, "determined the fate of nations... and the wrong answer has often meant deadly peril or actual destruction..."[189]

Adaptive Approaches to Revisionism

Building on Morgenthau's traditional approach to state orientations, an important distinction between revisionist and status quo states is whether their primary goal is to achieve *power* or *security.* A revisionist state, according to Morgenthau, is "a nation whose foreign policy aims at acquiring more power than it actually has, through a reversal of existing power relations…"[190] Revisionist states, furthermore, can be defined according to their aggressive character and desire to contest the hierarchy of the international or regional system of order. "Staying in place is not the primary goal of revisionist states," argues Randall Schweller, "they want to increase, not just preserve, their core values and to improve their position in the system... these goals cannot be achieved simply by ensuring that everyone else does not gain relative to them. They must gain relative to others."[191] In this sense, seeking to maximize security may be the goal of status quo states, but not those dissatisfied with their place in the international system.

[189] Ibid.
[190] Morgenthau, 51.
[191] Randall Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security,* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer, 1994), 87.

One can also distinguish between revisionism and status quo seeking behavior by the willingness to take risks surrounding gains and losses. For status quo states, security and a desire to avoid losses are the primary objectives of foreign policy. Revisionist states, according to Arnold Wolfers, require "a preference for changing the international distribution of goods – including but not limited to, territory – and a willingness to incur costs in pursuing that preference."[192] Building on Wolfers' definition, Jason Davidson characterizes revisionist states as risk-tolerant in their pursuit to change the international or regional distribution of goods, which can include territory, status, markets, expansion of ideology, and the creation or change of international law and institutions.[193]

As indicated by Davidson, material interests are not the only drivers of a state's foreign policy aims. Revisionist strategies also preside along an ideological spectrum, in that they challenge the *values* underlying "existing international norms and rules"[194] or those of a regional system. A state may be dissatisfied with its level of *prestige* in the system, leading it to act aggressively to demonstrate its status as an influential state and to secure a role in great power or major state competition.[195] Another key distinction between revisionist states and merely dissatisfied states is their willingness to use unilateral and illegitimate[196] coercion and force to expand territorial possessions and exert leverage over other states. Revisionist states may employ illegitimate military force to change the status quo and to extend their values through non-security compelled expansion, if they are willing to accept the risks and costs of conflict.

Jackals and Wolves

Among revisionist states, foreign policy behavior can be characterized by limited or unlimited aims (see Figure 1). Limited-aims revisionists, or "Jackals" as Schweller defines them, are those states that believe that the order is essentially legitimate but want prestige commensurate with their power or have other grievances that can be satisfied without fundamental or total changes to the

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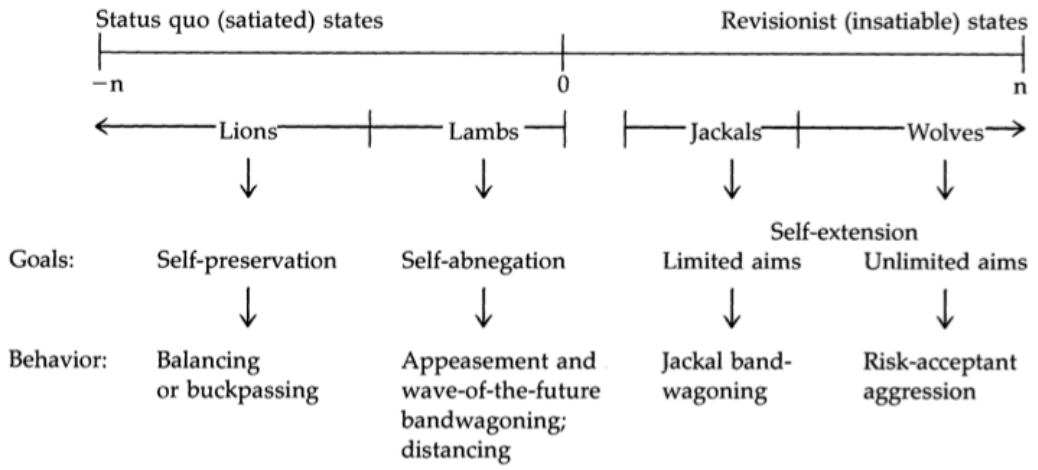
[192] Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 125; Davidson, "Roots and Revisionism," 125-126.
[193] Jason Davidson, *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-Quo States,* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 14.
[194] Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking the World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 10.
[195] Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 21; David Zionts, "Revisionism and its Variants: Understanding State Reactions to Foreign Policy Failure," *Security Studies,* Vol 15, 2006. 633.
[196] Illegitimate force and coercion involves a breach of internationally accepted norms, such as territorial integrity.

existing order. There are also unlimited-aims revisionist states – or "Wolves" – that seek to overthrow the existing order, which they consider illegitimate and intolerable to achieving their interests.[197]

These two types of "insatiable" states sit opposite more "satiated" states, which Schweller refers to as "Lions," states willing to pay high costs to maintain what they have, but not to increase what they value, and "Lambs," states that will pay only low costs to defend or extend their values. According to Schweller, when the value of maintaining a particular status quo arrangement outweighs the value of revisionist aims, states will remain relatively satiated; when the benefits of revisionist action outweigh the status quo order, states may consider pursuing revisionist strategies.

Figure 1. State Interest (n) = (value of revision) − (value of status quo).



Source: Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Revisionism in the Twenty-First Century

Measured Revisionism

[197] Schweller, 100-104.

Rising power capabilities give a state the ability to challenge other states in a regional or international order. However, there are constraining factors that inhibit states from doing so. First, potentially revisionist powers share common interests and concerns and will choose to bandwagon with other dominant powers on many transnational challenges including terrorism, climate change, international piracy, and challenges in the cyber and space domain. These shared concerns dictate that states have powerful mutual interests in working together and being perceived to some degree as "responsible stakeholders" in the international system.[198] Second, major powers value a leadership status among the constellation of great powers, and demand respect and equality from the United States and other major states in the international community, which might be lost if they are perceived as "rogue states." Third, revisionists' dependence on global trade and markets make them anxious to achieve their goals through tactics short of major conflict and escalation. Revisionist powers are thus more likely to pursue a mixed strategy whereby they exhibit revisionist tendencies on some issues and status quo strategies (such as membership in international organizations) on others. For example, Russia benefits from stable energy markets for the health of its energy export-driven economy, and China profits from freedom of navigation and the safe passage of the energy resources and goods needed to meet the demands of a growing middle class. Both in recent years have also seen the benefit of allying with the United States on shared concerns over international terrorism.

It is therefore helpful to develop a concept of *measured revisionism,* a strategy that may be pursued by states that rely on aspects of international system for their own interests and legitimacy. This is particularly the case when a nation's international legitimacy (which regimes can rely on for domestic purposes as well) comes from recognition and inclusion in the system. Under such circumstances, identification as a "rogue state" carries with it negative connotations of being marginalized or isolated by other major powers.[199]

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[198] Michael J. Mazarr, "Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict," *Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press,* December 2015, 13.

[199] This type of bandwagoning behavior is explored in Deborah Welch Larson's work on why states bandwagon with great powers, in which she argues that states sometimes join alliances for status and prestige and not to address external threats to state security. See Deborah Welch Larson, "Bandwagoning Images in American Foreign Policy: Myth or Reality?" in *Dominoes and Bandwagons,* ed. Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

The concept of measured revisionism, or "gray zone" conflict as referred to by some security analysts, is not conceptually new. Revisionist states, constrained by risks of escalation and economic interdependence, have always sought subtle and limited means to achieve their objectives. Some analysts prefer the term "hybrid warfare," while others refer to tactics of measured revisionism as "measures short of war." Unconventional and asymmetric approaches to maximizing a state's power vis-à-vis its adversaries, including fifth-column-style political disruption, espionage and disinformation campaigns, have been constant features of conflict and war for centuries.[200] This historical pattern of subtle means and tactics, however, does not deny that Russia, China and other states in the international system are using measures short of war – military, political, informational, and economic – as part of comprehensive strategies aimed to achieve revisionist goals and challenge U.S. and allied interests.

Understanding the motives behind revisionist action is critical to understanding emerging patterns of conflict, because, as Michael Mazarr states, "it is precisely in the limited, mixed and sometimes paradoxical motives of measured revisionists that we find the basis for gradual, constrained forms of nonmilitary conflict.[201] Furthermore, revisionists are "determined to use tools below the threshold of war to shift international rules, norms, distribution of goods, and patterns of authority to their benefit."[202] In this sense, measured revisionists may join military or diplomatic coalitions when their interests align, while at the same time demanding significant changes in existing power structures upheld by U.S. and Western influence and dominance.

The chief revisionists in the current system, namely Russia and China, are not close to being labeled as one of Schweller's risk-tolerant and near suicidal "wolves," in the but are still thought of as calculating in their determination to gain a larger share of influence within the international system. Unlike other states that may maintain revisionist goals, Russia and China have shown a willingness to use unilateral and illegitimate coercion and force to expand their territorial possessions and exert leverage over their less powerful neighbors. While Russia has done so on a far greater scale and through overt aggression whereas China has been relatively measured, each

[200] Michael J. Mazzar, "The Strange Debates on Strategy," *War on the Rocks,* January 14, 2016.
[201] Mazarr, 13.
[202] Ibid., 10

has used illegitimate force to exert their claims. As Alastair Ian Johnston argues, their use of military action in particular requires a certain degree of commitment to a specific policy outcome. It is one thing for a state to desire relative political, economic and military power. However, when a state chooses to employ military force to change the status quo, they are signaling that the state does in fact value what they covet more than what they currently possess and are willing to take on the risks of military action.[203]

According to these criteria, measured revisionist powers are neither (in Morgenthau's terms) imperialist nor status quo in their orientation. Nor are they entirely aggressive or adventurist in their actions. Measured revisionist is a concept "entirely natural to the worldview of rising powers... that recognize the value of a rule-based order... but demand and presume a transformation of some elements of the system; and they therefore possess a motive to seek out deliberate but powerful strategies for change."[204] These states are determined to enhance their relative power and to harness strong nationalist narratives and motivations among their populations in order to do so. Such a mindset can be found not only in China, Russia and Iran, but also, in different ways, among other powerful states such as Brazil, Turkey, and India.

B. Operationalizing Foreign Policy Revisionism

Robert Gilpin offers useful criteria for operationalizing revisionist strategies. Gilpin asserts that control over or governance of the international system is a function of three operational components: the distribution of power, the hierarchy of prestige, and the "rights and rules"[205] that influence the interactions among states. As for why states would challenge these existing components of the international system, Gilpin argues that they will do so when the benefits of expansion outweigh the probable costs through an increase in a state's relative power. Building from Gilpin's functions of international governance, Alastair Iain Johnston asks three questions to

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[203] Alastair I. Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security,* Vol. 27, Number 4, Spring 2003. It should be acknowledged that many aspects of China's foreign relations are not revisionist. China's One Belt One Road initiative and development of the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (as a parallel institution to the IMF) are not overtly aggressive or conflictual. China benefits from its integration in global markets for its domestic growth. Regarding its territorial claims in the Asia Pacific, however, China has shown its willingness to use illegitimate force to achieve its aims.
[204] Ibid., 11
[205] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 29-34.

determine whether a state is intent on revising a given status quo: first, how do state leaders speak and act with regards to "rules of the game" – i.e. of interstate diplomacy, of security institutions and of international economic institutions? Second, how do state leaders speak and act regarding to the distribution of power globally or regionally? And third, how do they speak and act regarding the hierarchy of prestige?[206] These questions are explored throughout the case studies on Russian and Chinese foreign policy to ascertain the degree to which each state is pursuing revisionist campaigns in their respective regions.

Using Gilpin and Johnston's work as a foundation, this research operationalizes revisionism through the following criteria and indicators:

1. A national posture and security strategy that represents a preference for a redistribution of power and prestige in the international system and/or proximate region and desire to replace it with an alternative vision. Specifically, this includes:
    - The promotion of a revisionist ideology through official or quasi-official sources (i.e. state sponsored media) that speaks to a necessity to overturn elements of the system to fit a certain worldview
    - A show of resoluteness in projecting power that extends beyond variable and episodic moments in time. To this end, mobilization of economic, technological, and human resources, military modernization programs and the acquisition of advanced military technologies are central long-term features[207]
2. A willingness to use unilateral and illegitimate coercion and force to expand territorial possessions and achieve a redistribution of power
3. A high risk tolerance for incurring costs to secure "international goods" such as territory

When assessing measured revisionism, analysts tend to look at individual actions in isolation and not in the context of coherent revisionist strategies. Adopting an expansive view of revisionism through the above criteria – official statements, mobilizing resources to translate into

[206] Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Is China a Status Quo Power?' International Security, vol. 27, no. 4 (Spring 2003), 10.
[207] Balance of power literature is vague when it comes to what levels of military expenditures constitute balancing. Furthermore, military expenditures are not simply functions of external threats and opportunities; they are also determined by technological innovation cycles, organizational interests and domestic ideologies and therefore may represent a more long-term preference towards balancing than a single show of force.

military/strategic power, and the use of illegitimate force and coercion – enables us to detail the myriad of ways a state can indicate its revisionist or status quo intentions, in words and actions. Importantly, the criteria adopted here begin with an assessment of a state's articulated goals, rather than with a state's actions. This also allows for analysis of Russian and Chinese foreign policy in distinct but comparable frameworks. Russia's approach to Eastern Europe, and Ukraine in particular, may be far more aggressive and militarized than anything China has yet attempted in the Asia Pacific, but this does not mean that China does not seek a sphere of influence commensurate with its rising power.

C. What is the Status Quo?

I draw these criteria and indicators of revisionism from a specific conception of an international status quo. The status quo can be defined as a condition under which accepted norms and rules are upheld by nation states through international institutions and through relations with one another. The international system consists, through one lens, of political, military and economic institutions. These include the United Nations, Bretton Woods economic institutions such as the IMF and present-day World Bank, hierarchical economic groups including the G7 and G20, and military institutions such as NATO and U.S.-backed security alliances.

Looking through another lens, this system is also an enduring order of rules and norms, underwritten by liberal values and sustained by a hierarchical structure of leading nation states and by the consent of the international community. According to John Ikenberry, "the liberal order is – at its heart – open and rule-based order based on consent... but it also draws upon and coexists with other organizational logics of order, namely balance and command."[208] It is an order based on the consent from states and societal groups that are incentivized to cooperate on issues of shared interest. "In its most developed form," writes Ikenberry, "international order is constitutional in character... state power is embedded in a system of rules and institutions that restrain and circumscribe its exercise."[209]

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[208] John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 61.
[209] Ibid.

Similarly, Henry Kissinger describes the post-WWII world order as "a cooperative order of states observing common rules and norms, embracing liberal economic systems, forswearing territorial conquest, respecting national sovereignty, and adopting participatory and democratic systems of governance."[210] This Westphalian system strives to curtail anarchy through an extensive network of international legal and organizational structures designed to maintain a stable trade and financial system, establish accepted principles of resolving international disputes, and set limits on the conduct of wars when they do occur.[211] It is also based on some measure of acquiescence or consent by secondary and peripheral states, as they must "buy into" the order in some fundamental normative way.

Ikenberry focuses on three major logics or mechanisms by which order is established and maintained: balance, command and consent. The current and American-led liberal world order incorporates all three. In principle, a "liberal-oriented hierarchy is international order in which the dominant state builds and operates within more or less agreed-upon rules and institutions," [212] writes Ikenberry. In this system, dominant states also provide public goods and engage in reciprocal political processes of negotiation. At its deepest level, the bedrock of the modern international order is the Westphalian system of sovereign states organized around a group of leading states or a singular hegemon that regulates conduct and seeks to mitigate conflict. Kissinger writes, "Of all these concepts of order, Westphalian principles are, at this writing, the sole generally recognized basis of what exists of a world order."[213] The status quo is upheld by powerful states – namely the United States – operating under principles they recognize and benefit from, such as sovereign statehood, liberal trade and economic policies, and noninterference.

Ikenberry goes even further to define the status quo as synonymous with American hegemony and power. Ikenberry writes, "The hierarchical system is maintained as long as the leading state remains powerful enough to enforce the rules and institutions of order. When hegemonic power

[210] Henry Kissinger, *World Order,* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), p. 1.
[211] Kissinger, p. 7.
[212] Ikenberry, 76.
[213] Kissinger, 3.

declines, the existing order begins to unravel and break apart."[214] American dominance is manifested in both hard and soft power; it is not simply military or economic; it is political, scientific, and cultural. Its interests are rooted in the infrastructure the U.S. helped to create and lead in the wake of WWII. Ikenberry adds that in this unipolar order, "The remarkable global reach of American postwar hegemony has been at least in part driven by the efforts of European and Asian governments to harness American power, render that power more predictable, and use it to overcome their own regional insecurities."[215] Therefore, maintaining the status quo amidst the emergence of powers with alternative visions for their regional orders, including Russia and China, depends on American power.

Overall, status quo and revisionist orientations are based on specific contexts of rules, norms and institutes that prevail at a particular moment in time. The exploration of various forms of revisionism pursued by authoritarian regimes is context-specific and must describe the realities – international and domestic constraints and opportunities – in which nations operate. In the case studies under consideration, the twenty-first century offers a different set of constraints and incentives for revisionist states than was present in earlier eras.

Now that we have defined and developed criteria for revisionist foreign policy preferences and behavior in the international system, let us turn to the theoretical frameworks that incorporate domestic conditions and state-level factors in the explanation of foreign policy behavior.

III. Theoretical Frameworks on the Domestic Drivers of Revisionism

To develop a set of arguments about the domestic determinants of revisionist foreign policy (including the requirements of regime legitimacy and control discussed above), this section proceeds as follows. First, this section outlines neorealist perspectives on the security dilemma and the origins of state behavior. Second, it provides an overview of neoclassical realism and applies it to assessing the influence of various domestic political conditions on foreign policy. Third, this

[214] Ikenberry, 57.
[215] John Ikenberry, *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 20.

section draws on mid-level theories that highlight the explanatory power of specific domestic factors that will be tested throughout the case studies of Russian and Chinese authoritarianism and foreign policy. Throughout, this section addresses the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each theory. It also underscores the contributions that this research makes to our understanding of the motivating factors behind revisionism and the theories that underpin this phenomenon.

A. Structural Theories of Foreign Policy Behavior

Classical Realism: The Centrality of Scarcity and Power

The core claims of classical realism are best exemplified by Hans Morgenthau's seminal work, *Politics Among Nations*, written in 1954. In recent years, scholars have widened the term to include all realist works from Thucydides to Morgenthau, making classical realism not a separate school, but rather *the* original realist tradition.[216] In this long line of thinkers who contributed to classical realist theory, the central and unifying concept is the existence of an anarchical system; all units or nation states exist and compete with one another in this anarchic international system. This is the assumption on which all realist theory stands and it is the departure point from which various schools diverge to develop their separate analyses.

A key variable in realism is state power, which reduces international politics to a competition over scarce resources. Scarcity leads states to take actions – such as increasing military capacities, and forming alliances – all in the name of security and survival. Moreover, as states compete over resources, realist theory finds that there is little room for the statesman to pursue value-based objectives, and therefore realism expresses strong skepticism about the role of factors outside of power in international affairs. Overall, classical realism's central argument holds that international politics rests on power, and states take actions as part of a never-ending struggle to maintain or increase their power for the sake of security.

Neorealism: Cops, Robbers and the Security Dilemma

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[216] William C. Wohlforth, "Realism," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* ed. Reus-Smit, Christian and Snidal, Duncan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 7, 136.

Neorealists, including Kenneth Waltz, maintain the classical realist assumption that states are unitary and act in mostly in rational ways. Because of the anarchy encapsulating state relations, states help themselves in providing for security, which is their most important means for survival.[217] Structural realism includes concepts of both offensive and defensive realism, which promote differing arguments as to how sates deal with the "security dilemma" in international politics. Robert Jervis explains the security dilemma as a situation in which states are distrustful of other states' intentions and, consequently, will always attempt to maximize their own security. Tensions between states can either rise or fall depending on whether offensive or defensive capabilities of each side dominate, and on whether the intentions of states are perceived as either revisionist or status quo.[218]

Defensive realists argue that state survival is best assured through moderation and restraint, there is room for cooperation among states, and that increasing cooperation and communication between states can diminish the security dilemma. These predictions follow from defensive realism's two core assumptions: first, that the order is anarchic and second, that it is populated by states wishing to survive.[219] Even though states have differing levels of national power, they all pursue the same defensive goal of security and survival. "In anarchy, security is the highest end," writes Waltz. "Only if survival is assured can states seek such other goals as tranquility, profit, and power." [220] The first concern of states therefore is not to maximize power but to maintain their current positions and security in the system.

As scholar Jason Davidson asks, if the international system provides no rational explanation for revisionist behavior, then how do defensive realists account for actual attempts at expansion? Essentially, this school of thought depicts a "world of all cops and no robbers."[221] When "robbers" do appear, it is because some states are pathological, and the source of the problem must be found below the structural level. To this point, Fareed Zakaria writes, "In practice, of course, states often try to expand beyond these objective security requirements, but defensive realism refuses to

[217] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979).
[218] Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* Vol. 30, no. 2 (1978), 167-214.
[219] Waltz, 121.
[220] Waltz, 126.
[221] Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's Status-quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?" *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (March 1, 1996), 96.

attribute any of this expansion to systemic incentives."[222] To the defense realist, therefore, structural conditions move states to adopt moderate approaches; understanding the motivations of revisionist powers requires additional analysis that rests on individual and unit-level variables beneath the systemic level.

Unlike defensive realists who see cooperation among states as a means of diminishing the security dilemma, offensive realists see the security dilemma as an inescapable element of the anarchic system. According to this theoretical perspective, mutual security is close to impossible because states are perpetually in conflict and seeking to gain power in the system. This neorealist interpretation, as exemplified by John J. Mearsheimer's, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, outlines how the anarchic system creates "power hungry states" that attempt to install themselves as regional and global hegemons. The system is created, shaped, and maintained by coercion. When the system and its institutions no longer serve the hegemon's interests, the state will undermine the system.[223] States, furthermore, are viewed as units of differing sizes and capabilities (using the billiard ball analogy) and will respond to threats based primarily on relative power capabilities.

Neither defensive nor offensive realism is entirely conclusive if we are to attempt an in-depth study of the domestic drivers of foreign policy behavior. While defensive realists may acknowledge the influence of domestic structure on international action and offensive realists recognize that states might seek power beyond security, neither provides a framework through which to focus on aspects of regime type and domestic political conditions that alter perceptions of threats and opportunities to regime stability and power.

Using cost-benefit analysis, Randall Schweller's theory of "balance of interests" builds on both defensive and offensive realism to account for the behavior of revisionist states. Schweller argues that states can, in certain circumstances, be motivated by *profit* rather than security concerns. His concept has a dual meaning, one at the unit level, and the other at the systemic level. At the unit level, "balance of interests" refers to the costs a state is willing to pay to *defend* its values relative to the costs it is willing to pay to *extend* its values. At the systemic level, balance of interest motivations refer to the

[222] Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," International Security 17, 1992, 192.
[223] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (New York: Norton, 2001).

relative strengths of status quo and revisionist states. "By relaxing neorealism's assumption that states value what they possess more than what they covet," writes Schweller, "the full range of state interest emerges: some states value what they covet more than what they have; others are entirely satisfied with their possessions; still others value what they have only slightly more than what they covet, and vice versa."[224] The logical next question is to ask why some states pursue revisionist aims while others do not? Schweller argues that revisionists emerge when they become dissatisfied with their status quo situation and when the expected net gain of achieving what they *covet* exceeds the anticipated costs.

The problem with Schweller's argument is that it does not discuss what specific internal motivations – both material and ideational – might change this cost-benefit calculation for revisionist states – in other words, why some are incentivized to pursue revisionist foreign policies and others remain "satiated" by their position. He also does not acknowledge whether such motivations originate from concerns over regime security, as opposed to national security. Schweller also does not push realist theory far enough to reveal the importance of political and social dynamics in the relations within and among states, leaving us uncertain as to what internal political conditions incentivize some authoritarian regimes to pursue revisionist foreign policies over others. Therefore, we need to incorporate a later movement of realism, known as neoclassical realism. This discourse permits more rigorous analysis of the individual and unit level factors that produce certain foreign policy outcomes.

Neoclassical Realism and Unit-Level Explanations

The international relations theory of neoclassical realism postulates that state action is influenced by both systemic and domestic factors. Internal variables include political leaders and institutions, societal actors, economic indicators and political cultures. According to neoclassical realists, such as Gideon Rose and Fareed Zakaria, there are intervening variables that exist on the unit level – perceptions of the threat of war or aggression, domestic institutions and national identities – that hold a certain degree of explanatory power for why and how the state and its decision makers respond to issues on the systemic level.[225] As applied to this study, the neoclassical approach is

[224] Schweller, 100.
[225] Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics,* Vol. 51, No. 1 (Oct., 1998), 144-172.

essential for analyzing the roles that leaders, elite groups and institutional sources of power and legitimacy play in authoritarian decision-making.

In particular, the *innenpolitik* (internal politics) school of thought within neoclassical realism stresses the influence of domestic factors on foreign policy, including political ideology, national character and partisan politics, in determining how countries behave in their international relations.[226] At its core, the theory argues that foreign policy is best understood as the product of a country's internal dynamics; to understand state behavior, one must look at the preferences of and relationships among key domestic actors and their institutions.[227]

In exploring competing hypotheses of external and internal motivations behind a state's foreign policy behavior, it is useful to move interchangeably between unit and structural level factors, as neoclassical realism does. While theorists of this school do not reject the primacy of the international systemic level, they argue that inputs from the international system are influenced by differing domestic lenses – such that perspectives may differ from Washington to London, or from Baghdad to Tehran. Moreover, neoclassical realism argues that the effect of relative power capabilities on foreign policy decisions is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level, including through leaders' perceptions and the constraints of the political system in which they are operating.[228]

The combination of both structural realism and innenpolitik allows for the exploration of several questions that will be addressed in this study: First, who are the relevant actors within the state that have the power to influence foreign policy decision making? Second, what political processes govern foreign policy decision making– are they personalized or collective – and through what means do leaders reinforce these processes? And lastly, how do institutions such as the professional military, political opposition, elite groups and an independent press serve as constraints on decision makers?

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[226] Rose, 150

[227] The problem with this theory, Rose argues, is that pure unit-level explanations have difficulty "accounting for why states with similar domestic systems often act differently in the foreign policy sphere and why dissimilar states in similar situations often act alike." Rose, 148.

[228] Ibid.

As an illustration, Paul Kennedy applies the framework of neoclassical realism to analyze the domestic political factors behind Britain's policy of appeasement leading up to WWII. Kennedy highlights that the 1920s marked the end of an era in which Britain's policies were decided by a small group of "aristocrats, country squires and men of commerce,"[229] who proved willing to defend the 'national interest' using force, and the start of the period when the majority of the population viewed the provision of social services – pensions, insurance, health, education, etc. – as the most determinant factor in the success or failure of governments.

Kennedy writes, "With this certain domestic scene, and with a public opinion psychologically scarred by the First World War, sympathetic to the internationalist/pacifist ideals propagated by the League of Nations Union and other anti-militarist groups, and quite failing to see the need for large defence forces or a vigorous foreign policy when the 'war to end all wars' had just finished, governments, even those with traditional sympathies for the perseveration of British power abroad, had to respond in order to survive electorally."[230] Kennedy also alludes to the international factors behind Britain's policy of appeasement, which were largely economic. He refers to a Foreign Office memorandum written in 1926, which stated: "We have got all that we want – perhaps more. Our sole object is to keep what we have and to live in peace."[231] Conversely, an extensive rearmament program would have left an already weak economy in ruins. This combination of domestic and systemic factors, among others, led to the development of a British foreign policy that cut defense expenditures and turned inward to address the domestic concerns of their constituencies instead of Germany's rising power on the European continent.

As seen through Kennedy's work, such analysis acknowledges the importance of domestic factors, as well as a state's material power in the international system. How can we apply this framework to the study of revisionist states? As Jason Lyall writes, "a revisionist is marked by a persistent preference across time for high-risk, high-gain strategies,"[232] which may eventually lead to

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[229] Paul Kennedy, "The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy 1865-1939," *British Journal of International Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 3 (Oct. 1976), 206.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Jason Lyall, "Paths of Ruin: Why Revisionist States Arise and Die in World Politics," PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2005. 25.

suboptimal outcomes, including military defeat. Neoclassical realism provides a framework through which to understand the various psychological, ideational and political factors that may affect how political actors within revisionist states develop such preferences for high-risk strategies, and how they perceive of other states' capabilities relative to their own.

B. Domestic Political Explanations

Coalition Logrolling and Coalition Ideology

Building on neoclassical realism's acknowledgment of domestic-level factors in state behavior, Jack Snyder focuses on specific processes that might explain how dictatorships are able to put their countries on the warpath. Snyder proposes a theory toward "the myth of security through expansion," which he defines as the idea that "the state's security can be safeguarded only through expansion." Snyder argues that this myth helps to explain why industrial great powers pursue paths of overexpansion, even though such policies may not serve the broader public or national interest. This happens, he argues, when "myths of security through expansion" are used to support "domestic political coalitions formed among groups having parochial interests in imperial expansion, military preparations, or economic autarky."[233] These groups, including economic interest groups and state bureaucracies, *logroll* their imperialist interests using arguments about security gains for the state to justify what are instead self-serving policies.[234] Through coalition building strategies, interest groups and ruling elite build the capacity to carry out the expansionary ideologies they propound. "The crucial element in the explanation," writes Snyder, "lies not with the power and persuasiveness of these groups taken separately, but with the process by which they form coalitions of several such groups and with how these coalitions justify their policies."[235]

How can narrow interests succeed in hijacking state policy, particularly if they lack the power to harness the state for their own ends? Snyder argues that through processes of *coalition logrolling* and *ideological enforcement,* narrow interest groups can join coalitions, pool resources and trade

[233] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 2.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Snyder, 17.

favors to achieve what each wants most. Furthermore, when interest groups are able to capture the state, "groups in the imperial coalition can harness its propaganda resources,"[236] to better sell its "myths." Yet why would a ruling class that has a major stake in the long-run health of a society devise a potentially risky strategy that may lead to its demise? Though overexpansion tends to hurt society as a whole, it is attractive to some groups within society (nationalists are often leading lobbyists for revisionism), as the benefits of expansion are disproportionately concentrated in their hands while the costs are diffused throughout society in the form of taxes, inflation, tariffs and conscription.[237]

In drawing comparisons between democratic and authoritarian regimes, one could argue that logrolling is more likely in authoritarian regimes because they lack the diffuse array of interest groups and countervailing political forces often found in democratic societies, which tend to inhibit the concentration of power and coalition building processes. When a leader is able to concentrate power among few groups, as is more often the case in authoritarian settings, overexpansion is more likely than under-expansion, since interests in expansion and militarism are typically more concentrated than the interests opposed to them. Thus one can make an argument that democratic systems are less prone to overexpansion and security-driven arguments than systems dominated by logrolling among powerful interest groups or individual dictators.[238] Snyder illustrates this argument through analysis of Wilhelmine Germany and imperial Japan, in which "the social consequences of late industrialization gave rise to logrolling among narrow interests groups,"[239] versus democratic systems in Britain and the U.S., where early industrialization "strengthened diffuse interests opposed to overexpansion."[240]

Nationalist "Mythmaking" and the Consequences for War

Snyder's theories of expansionism explore how nationalist groups develop coalitions and exploit control over information and propaganda to sell self-serving myths about the nation, its history and

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[236] Snyder, 17.
[237] Snyder, 15.
[238] See Margaret and Charles Hermann – "Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How? *International Studies Quarterly 33* (December 1989) 361-88.
[239] Snyder, 18.
[240] Ibid.

external enemies. Building on these arguments, Stephen Van Evera proposes another form of "myths" espoused through nationalist propaganda, which governments use to justify risky or aggressive foreign policies. Nationalist "myths" include claims of a nation's special virtue and competence, cultural superiority, the false denial of past wrongdoings, and the false faith in one's capacity to defeat and subdue others, which can all lead to conflict and miscalculations of state capabilities and chances of victory.[241]

Van Evera acknowledges that such strands of nationalist mythmaking emanate largely from nationalist political elites, for whom they serve important political functions. These myths can, according to Van Evera, bolster the authority of elites facing legitimacy challenges by making claims that the nation faces serious external threats, thereby deflecting popular hostility away from national elites and toward outsiders. To this point, Van Evera argues, "the temptation for elites to engage in mythmaking is therefore inversely proportional to their political legitimacy: the less legitimate their rule, the greater their incentive to make myths."[242]

In societies suffering economic decline or stagnation, nationalist mythmaking and external scapegoating can also meet a receptive audience. According to Van Evera, "publics are more willing to believe that others are responsible when they are actually suffering pain; when that pain is new and surprising, they search for the hand of malevolent human agents."[243] This reality further tempts regimes facing economic decline or social instability to use myths to divert popular discontent with the government's inability to improve conditions.[244]

Lastly, theories surrounding nationalism and conflict argue that autocratic societies, which are poorly institutionalized and lack an independent press but are reliant at least in part on public support, are most likely to pursue nationalist propaganda directed at outside threats. Unlike absolutist dictatorships that possess a massive military superiority over their citizens, regimes most

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[241] Stephen van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), 28. Van Evera notes that nationalist mythmaking of this form can produce conflict-spirals, as the nation responds to others' legitimate complaints with hostility, in expectation that others will back down if challenged.
[242] Van Evera, 30-31.
[243] Van Evera, 32. The challenge with this hypothesis, however, is that it has not been rigorously tested; more empirical research on the relationship between economic downturns and scapegoating is still needed.
[244] Ibid, 31.

susceptible to such scapegoating and mythmaking are those that "depend on some measure of popular consent, but are narrowly governed by unrepresentative elites."[245] Such regimes cannot rely entirely on coercive measures and thus seek to maintain some sort of legitimacy through public appeals, leading to a greater reliance on nationalist mythmaking in order to maintain domestic support. Van Evera's hypotheses closely align with my argument that leaders are more likely to politicize foreign policy when they face domestic legitimacy crises; unrepresentative regimes that face strong political opposition, economic decline or social instability will sow myths to build the support needed to defeat domestic challenges.

Van Evera also applies his nationalism hypotheses to Europe in the early 1990s. He acknowledged that in Western Europe, where state governments were seen as legitimate, militarily secure and economically stable, chauvinist mythmaking by elites was unlikely. In the East, however, Van Evera predicted a higher possibility of conflict in the weaker successor states of the former Soviet Union, where the new regimes in Georgia and Moldova had already experienced secessionist wars. Conditions of little respect for minority rights and illegitimate state borders poorly aligned with ethnic boundaries created conditions for conflict. Importantly, some of the new Eastern regimes in the former Soviet Union also lacked legitimacy and were under-institutionalized, raising the risk that political leaders would resort to "chauvinist mythmaking" to maintain their political viability. Weak traditions of freedom of press and speech also meant that nationalist myths were likely to go unchallenged in public debate.

Domestic Institutions and Audiences

While the theories explored here provide a framework for assessing the political processes that may incentivize revisionist foreign policies in authoritarian regimes, it is important to acknowledge that not all authoritarian regimes behave in the same ways; some are aggressive and conflict-prone, while others are the victims of aggression themselves. Moreover, authoritarian leaders perceive the costs of fighting, the costs of defeat and the value of territory and security, compared to the status quo, in different ways. Jessica Weeks wrestles with this dynamic in her work on how domestic institutions affect autocratic leaders' decisions to initiate military conflicts.

[245] Van Evera, 33.

Weeks addresses the substantial variation in conflict initiation that occurs among authoritarian regimes. Specifically, she focuses on how certain domestic institutions constrain leaders' decisions to initiate international military disputes, primarily through ex-post accountability measures that deter leaders from pursuing risky policies.[246] Weeks also analyzes variation among different types of authoritarian regimes based on the existence and preferences of a *domestic audience* – the group that has the means to punish leaders by removing them from office. When powerful audiences exist, we must understand their views about the costs of fighting, the costs of defeat, and the relative benefits of winning.[247] In democratic societies, this domestic audience is the electorate. In authoritarian settings, this audience typically includes powerful elite groups that reside closer to leadership. When no powerful audience exists and the leader is more autonomous, as in most personalist regimes, the individual leader's preferences and perceptions will play more influential roles in policy formulation. Weeks compares personalist systems in North Korea, Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Syria under the Assad's with regimes that operate under powerful bureaucratic constraints, including contemporary China and the former Soviet Union after Stalin's rule.[248] For regimes with strong domestic audiences, their power depends on a combination of repression and loyalty. Weeks argues that, under these conditions, "defeat in war damages an important instrument of repression – the military – and taxing the citizens at higher rates to compensate for wartime losses is likely to reduce the regime's other resource, the loyalty of the public."[249] Thus, there are circumstances in which a regime is constrained in its foreign policies by factors of ex-poste accountability.

Weeks's theory makes significant contributions to our understanding of the domestic institutions and domestic audiences that either encourage or discourage leaders in initiating military disputes abroad. This theory, however, assumes that authoritarianism is a static phenomenon; it is less evident what happens when authoritarian political dynamics within a country *change*. Authoritarian consolidation, as is the focus in this research, includes shifts in the balance of power within institutions, or the insulation of decision-makers, who find that there are fewer constraints on their actions. This gap in

[246] Jessica Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 106. No. 2, May 2012, 328.
[247] Weeks, 329.
[248] Weeks, 330.
[249] Weeks, 332.

theory leads back to one of my original puzzles: what are the linkages between *increasing* authoritarianism at home and revisionist foreign policies abroad? Furthermore, Weeks's theory on domestic audiences ignores the importance of ideational and societal factors such as political cultures, historical narratives and national identities. This is an important omission, as there is no reason to believe that social dynamics such as identity and strategic culture do not play strong roles in authoritarian decision-making, as they did, on a greater scale, for their totalitarian predecessors.

Diversionary War Theory

As has been discussed, societal-level theories give attention to the domestic sources of international conflict. In addition to the above theories of coalition logrolling, nationalism and domestic institutions and audiences, an important theory discussed in this research is that of diversionary war theory. Diversionary war theory posits that leaders suffering crises of legitimacy or domestic instability may take foreign policy actions in order to i) divert the public's attention away from illegitimate practices of the regime or domestic hardship and ii) build unifying national resilience against external threat and increase domestic support for the regime. This theory also argues that the outbreak of war can lead to a "rally around the flag" effect that enhances public support for political leaders, and thereby incentivize unpopular leaders to undertake risky foreign ventures or hardline foreign policy strategies. [250]

Diversionary war arguments incorporate central tenets of prospect theory, which in its application to international relations, argues that decision makers give more weight to losses than to comparable gains and are generally risk-averse with respect to gains and risk-acceptant with respect to losses.[251] In the context of decision making in times of domestic unrest or uncertainty, leaders operating in a domain of loss may be more inclined to undertake actions of considerable risk. An underlying premise of diversionary war theory is that a leader's propensity to use military

[250] Jack S. Levy, "The Causes of War and the Conditions of Peace," *Annual Review of Political Science,* 1998, 152. This line of reasoning does not address, however, under what conditions a political leader would be driven to undertake such risky actions that may, if unsuccessful, serve as the impetus for his removal. To understand the politically motivated use of force, we must understand the domestic conditions under which revisionist policies are most likely to occur.

[251] Jack Levy, "An Introduction to Prospect Theory," *Political Psychology,* Vol. 13, No. 2, Special Issue: Prospect Theory and Political Psychology (June, 1992).

force abroad is likely to be greatest during periods where political insecurity is high and domestic support for the regime is uncertain or low, such as during leadership transitions or in periods of poor economic performance. In other words, conflict initiation abroad is more likely to occur when a regime cannot rely on traditional "performance" or "output" pillars of legitimacy. It is during these times when regimes turn to coercive measures and identity enhancing tactics to maintain stability and control. A leader's reliance on other measures of control when performance falters may explain why international aggression can take place alongside enhanced means of internal repression.

Most of the diversionary war studies to date have focused on democratic nations because of the assumption that greater political accountability of leaders and dependence on public support makes them more likely to engage in external scapegoating. Autocratic regimes, however, must also rely on certain domestic sources of support, particularly because their legitimacy is not upheld by direct engagement from the public through electoral means. Furthermore, the personal costs of being removed from office in an authoritarian setting are often greater than those in a democratic state. Examples of external scapegoating involving non-democratic regimes, as cited by Levy, include Argentina in the Falklands War, Germany in World War I, and Russia in the Russo-Japanese War.[252]

An important weakness in diversionary war theory is the lack of empirical data to support its claims. Quantitative and cross-national studies produce mixed results regarding the relationship between variables of domestic dissatisfaction and the threat or use of force in a state's international relations.[253] Furthermore, diversionary tactics might appeal to some groups in society rather than the public in its entirely.[254] This is why understanding the primary audiences from which a regime

[252] Whether the diversionary use of force is effective depends on the potential benefits of scapegoating, the probability of diplomatic or military victory, the domestic costs and risks, and the availability of alternative means of dealing with domestic opposition and threats to power. While the effectiveness of diversionary tactics is not the primacy focus of this research, these factors do play a role in the cost-benefit analysis carried out by leaders.
[253] Taylor M. Fravel, "The Limits of Diversion: Rethinking Internal and External Conflict" Security Studies Vol. 19 No. 2, 2010; Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behavior 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data," The China Quarterly no. 153 (March 1998), 1-30; Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in Handbook of War Studies, edited by Manus I. Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
[254] Levy, 54.

draws its power and legitimacy is critical.[255] Focusing on the existence of fractured elites in an authoritarian political system is an important aspect of this research because, as discussed, threats to leadership can emerge from within elite groups as well as from mass uprisings. If neither elites nor masses are unified, one must explore what these fractures are and what the consequences are for the leadership.

Thomas Christensen's use of *mobilization theory* to explain the Sino-American conflict from 1947-1958 provides an interesting contrast to diversionary war theory, while still focusing on the domestic sources of national security strategy. Christensen negates the assumption that states can simply mobilize resources in responding to international challenges and opportunities without any sort of public debate or discord. In his mobilization theory, the foreign policy strategy that elites pursue can depend on the political hurdles they face in mobilizing the public on policies they wish to implement – either foreign or domestic. [256]

In his assessment of the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis, Christensen argues that international balance of power dynamics were not the primary driver of Mao's decision to attack the straits. "The Americans had already made a firm commitment to defending Chiang," writes Christensen, "so Mao could not have been trying to prevent such an outcome… by attacking in the straits, Mao was primarily attempting to stir up international tensions short of war." Mao wanted to create tensions with the United States to replicate the spirit of public sacrifice found within China during the earlier WWII fight against Japan and during the civil war period. "This popular fervor would help Mao implement his new grand strategy: the radical drive for self-sufficient industrial growth and nuclear weapons development launched under the banner of the Great Leap Forward." In this sense, Mao carried out an over reactionary foreign policy strategy not to quell internal dissent at home, but to boost public support for his domestic policies that may have otherwise faced high obstacles to mobilization.

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[255] Political leaders in different authoritarian settings (for example single-party bureaucracies, military-led and personalist regimes) have different constituencies from which they seek support. For example, the Argentine plan to seize the Malvinas by force, was designed not only to recover public support for the ruling military junta, but also as a means to unify a divided elite around a mission it could coalesce.

[256] Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategies, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958, (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

IV. Conclusions and Next Steps

The theories presented here build on a series of mid-range theoretical arguments about the relationship between internal conditions and processes and a state's proclivity toward aggression and conflict abroad. Importantly, this chapter promoted a multifaceted explanation that incorporates a myriad of processes, conditions and factors within authoritarian regimes in the analysis of state behavior. Furthermore, the theories explored here all coalesce around interconnected factors and conditions that seek to explain why authoritarian regimes may be incentivized to pursue revisionist and expansionary foreign policies. Political scientist James Rosenau speaks to the importance of looking at such interactions when he writes, "Complex systems encompass both wholes and parts. We can begin to understand them only if we employ a method that allows us to move our analytic eyes back and forth between systems and subsystems and thus between collectivities, their subgroups and the individuals who comprise them."[257] As is evident from the broad range of applicable theories to the study of authoritarian foreign policy behavior, this research is designed to analyze the interplay between causal factors and mechanisms – domestic and international – rather than isolating one factor at the expense of others.

I conclude this section with the argument that theory development must focus on interactions between actors, their perceptions and their incentives for regime survival in order to more conclusively examine the origins of state behavior. To this point, Seyom Brown writes, "For if we insist on neat, impenetrable analytical boundaries, and levels of analysis that must never be fused, we will fail, once again, not only in our attempts at retrospective explanations of past transformations but also in our ability to anticipate profound change in the future."[258] Theoretical analysis is never clean-cut; explanatory power lies the intersection and fusion of complex processes between individuals and groups within the state and at the international level. Following this approach, the theories articulated here illustrate that competing, or more aptly, complementary domestic political factors within states – from the role of nationalist leaders and institutional power

[257] James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).
[258] Seyom Brown, "Explaining the Transformation of World Politics." *International Journal,* Vol. 46, N. 2, Understanding Global Change (Spring, 1991,) 207-219.

to conceptions of national identity and perceptions of threats to regime legitimacy – are needed to understand fully the pillars of foreign policy motivation and behavior.

This chapter has also argued that strategies challenging the status quo in the twenty-first century are likely to take the form of *measured revisionism*, through which nations seek to remain below escalatory thresholds and take actions that, on their own, are not *casus belli.* As such, we must look at revisionist foreign policies today through a wide lens – one that incorporates conventional and unconventional strategies and that assesses a state's preferences and behavior – from a regime's articulated justification for shifting a status quo situation to a state's behavior that challenges the prevailing norms, including the use of force. We also must look at these actions from the domestic perspective of how authoritarian leaders seek to maintain internal stability and a sense of legitimacy behind the regime. Under these conditions, measured actions such as the use of non-military or non-kinetic tools over a series of long-term and incremental steps can achieve the objective of boosting nationalism, building political legitimacy or deflecting attention away from domestic troubles while lessening the risk of escalatory response.

The following chapters take up the task of testing the arguments and theories outlined here in diverse contexts through longitudinal case studies of Russian and Chinese authoritarianism and foreign policy. Following the completion of these separate case studies and within-case analysis, this research will then analyze similarities and contrasts across the cases to draw substantive conclusions on the motivations behind revisionist foreign policies in great power authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Case Study Selection

I. Research Design and Methodology

A. Structured and Focused Case Studies

This research carries out a multiple-case design: three case studies covering domestic politics and foreign policy in each of the chapters on contemporary Russia and China. The case study approach provides two advantages: first, it allows me to investigate the phenomenon of modern authoritarianism within its real-life context, [259] and second, the case studies provide for in-depth exploration of possible causal mechanisms driving revisionist foreign policies within the selected authoritarian countries.[260]

As further discussed below, the cases focus on specific time intervals between 2000 and 2017. The primary objectives are to first describe the changes in Russian and Chinese stated foreign policy objectives and behavior over the allotted time intervals and then to better understand the causal mechanisms at work in their foreign policy decision making. The case studies also explore potential alternative explanations and assess deviations from the theoretical predictions outlined in Chapter Three. Furthermore, the method of structured, focused comparison allows for analysis of multiple variables of theoretical interest but only with specific research objectives in mind.[261] This is particularly useful for examining foreign policy studies of "complex causality," as multiple factors interact to either incentivize or disincentive regimes to pursue certain strategies.

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[259] John Gerring, "The Case Study: What it is and What it does," Chapter 4, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics,* Edited by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, 2009, 92.

[260] Given that authoritarianism denotes a political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or a small group of elites that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people, the individual/group level of analysis will be important.

[261] According to George and Bennett (p. 67), "the method is structured in that the researcher writes general questions that reflect the research objective and that these questions are asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and accumulation of the findings of the cases possible. The method is "focused" in that it deals only with certain aspects of the historical cases examined."

Lastly, this research takes the form of *theory testing.* Much has been written separately on the causes and correlates of war, and on the domestic institutions and sources of power in authoritarian regimes. This research aims to bridge these two worlds by assessing theories that cover both, as outlined in Chapter Three. The next two chapters will apply these theories to contemporary case studies of Russian and Chinese foreign policy through the lens of specific independent and intervening variables, including domestic elites, institutions and political processes.

B. Within Case Analysis

The case studies designed and carried out in this research first illustrate the emergence and prevalence of revisionist preferences and strategies over time in Russia and China. Following an overview of their foreign policies using the criteria of revisionism outlined in Chapter Three, the case study research will then use congruence methods to assess whether the hypothesized domestic conditions exist across periods of both relative revisionist and status quo foreign policy behavior. In this assessment, I also explore international factors including shifting balances of power and strategies pursued vis-à-vis Russia and China by regional actors and great powers. Third, this research applies process tracing, using primary and secondary source material, to explore whether the highlighted domestic and international conditions may have causal relationships with the articulation and implementation of revisionist foreign policies. Overall, this research combines congruence method with process tracing to conduct in-depth and within-case analysis of both countries' foreign policies over time, and to analyze the domestic variables and external factors that are driving the outcomes we see in their foreign policy strategies.

Process tracing is an analytic tool used for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence as part of a temporal sequence of events. According to David Collier, "As a tool of causal inference, process tracing focuses on the unfolding of events or situations over time... The descriptive component of process tracing begins not with observing change but rather with taking good snapshots at a series of specific moments."[262] Process tracing is an appropriate method to use given that this research is based on theoretical propositions, which, as political

[262] David Collier, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences.* Chapter 10, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation."

scientist Charles Tilly writes, "should be analyzed through relevant, verifiable causal stories resting on differing chains of case-effect relations whose efficacy can be demonstrated independently of those stories."[263] In the context of my research, process tracing helps to identify the mechanisms between authoritarian domestic conditions (the independent variables) and foreign policy objectives and strategies (the dependent variable).

Process tracing is also an appropriate tool for observing change in the Russian and Chinese case studies of foreign policy strategy (specifically Russian foreign policy in Eastern Europe and Chinese maritime strategy in the Asia Pacific) because there is a clear temporal sequencing of events in which their behavior has shifted (and at times has grown more assertive) over a delineated period. Lastly, the origins of such strategies have emerged from path-dependent and cumulative actions set in motion by the political exigencies faced by the regimes and their responses to those perceived threats.

Determining causality in dynamic decision-making processes is a difficult and often opaque endeavor, particularly as it relates to authoritarian regimes. Therefore, the case studies involve several sources of inquiry, analysis of military and operational doctrine, in-country state and independently run media, and comparative event data of foreign policy behavior. As part of the overall research project, the case studies include interviews with policymakers, analysts and opinion elites (U.S. and foreign) with direct knowledge of and experience in dealing with Chinese and Russian political and military affairs.

II. Case Selection

Revisionism does not present its greatest challenges to U.S. foreign policy in principle, but in effect. Therefore, where revisionist strategies are emerging, and over what issues, matters. It is where national interests and conceptions of regional order differ, and indeed clash, that revisionism has the greatest potential for instability, misperception and miscalculation. For example, China's westward push through its one belt-one road strategy or China's creation of the Asian

[263] David Collier, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences.* Chapter 10, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation."

Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are inherently less conflicting with U.S. vital strategic interests and therefore less likely to lead to conflict. Furthermore, according to the conception of measured revisionism maintained in this research, revisionist policies are more likely to emerge in regional orders than over transnational concerns that great powers have in common. In this sense, Russian behavior in Eastern Europe and China's maritime strategies in East Asia provide a lens through which to assess Russian and Chinese foreign policy where it is most likely to be revisionist.

Moreover, contested territories – in Eastern Europe as well as in the East and South China Seas – are salient issues in assessing revisionist and status quo orientations. First, and as Taylor Fravel argues, "Behavior in territorial disputes is a fundamental indicator of whether a state is pursuing status quo or revisionist foreign policies.... the greater the importance of the territory at stake, the larger the magnitude of the internal threat necessary to make compromising strategies more attractive than delay."[264] Fravel's point also illustrates how territorial issues can provide interesting accounts in which to assess the intersection of domestic politics and foreign policy. Second, according to Jaroslav Tir, territorial conflicts also have a greater capacity to elicit feelings of threat and unity than other issues (such as diplomatic disputes, trade or economic concerns), in part because territory speaks more directly and convincingly to the people's conceptions of national identity. [265] The bond people feel to land and the willingness to support the use of force to act on territorial disagreements, can potentially be manipulated and exploited by leaders who are seeking to boost their own internal legitimacy amongst their domestic population.[266]

Russian Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics Under Putin

The first set of case studies seeks to explain the motivating factors behind Russia's evolving and increasingly "revanchist" strategy in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Russia throughout the twenty-first century is an interesting case because its domestic structures highlight several features of

[264] Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation: Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes." *International Security,* Vol. 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005), 54.
[265] Jaroslav Tir, "Territorial Diversion: Diversionary Theory and Territorial Conflict," *The Cambridge Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72, Issue 02, April 2010, 414.
[266] Tir, 416.

"competitive authoritarianism." Putin's regime, while politically repressive, presided over massive economic growth from 2000 and 2008 and allowed for drastic changes in its citizens' access to internet, foreign travel and international business. Furthermore, politics in contemporary Russia can be described as relatively non-ideological (compared to its Soviet predecessor) in how legitimacy is maintained among elites and the populace, which is another key feature of modern authoritarian regimes. As Ivan Krastev writes in the *Journal of Democracy, "*It is the contradictory nature of Russia's authoritarianism – stable and dysfunctional, open and non-ideological – that can best help us to understand why authoritarianism is surviving in the age of democratization, and why it is so difficult to resist contemporary authoritarian regimes."[267]

Why do Russia's internal political and economic circumstances matter to an analysis of Russian foreign policy? If Russia's economy grows even less competitive, owing to low oil prices and Western-imposed sanctions, the Kremlin could be further incentivized to legitimize its rule through military adventurism. Furthermore, the Kremlin views threats to Putin's regime as emanating from external and Western actors. Following the color revolutions in former Soviet republics – Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004-2005, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 – which the Kremlin perceived as being fomented by the West – Putin has since come to see protest as a significant challenge to his legitimacy and power. In line with my proposed hypotheses, several analysts highlight that the basis of Russian foreign policy could lie in how President Putin views such threats to domestic stability including public protest internally and against autocratic leaders (and allies) in Russia's "near abroad." In this context, resistance to Western-style liberalism and to Washington's tools of democracy promotion are components of Putin's definition of sovereignty for Russia.[268] Putin's own history as a KGB officer in East Germany during the downfall of the Soviet Union has led him to recognize the power of protest and revolution.

Chinese Twenty-First Century Strategy in East Asia

The second set of case studies analyzes Chinese foreign policy preferences and behavior as it relates to its evolving maritime strategy in East Asia. According to several Chinese experts and

[267] Ivan Krastev, "Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy,* April 2011, Vol. 22, No. 2, 8.
[268] Ibid., p. 53

analysts, the Asia Pacific, and the South China Sea in particular, represents an area in which the Chinese have pursued more revisionist and expansionary aims over the last decade. The perceived motivations for doing so, however, are varied and differ. Furthermore, despite its relatively benign environment, China has undergone significant military modernization efforts, worrying analysts who do not see a commensurate threat to Chinese interests that would justify the spending increases.

Domestically, China under President Xi has undertaken domestic security efforts and a tightening of authoritarian control geared primarily toward maintaining stability in a time of significant economic reforms and high economic inequality. However, as Perry Link writes, "Not all sources of instability are rooted in economic inequality. Power rivalry within the elite, for example, is a perennial concern."[269] Moreover, there are several separatist movements (including the Tibetans and the Uighurs) and demands for greater autonomy by residents of Hong Kong and Taiwan that also represent a challenge to the CCP's official conception of national identity.[270] Finally, authorities at the regional level represent elite competition within the CCP and can serve as obstacles to implementation of policies designed in Beijing. These challenges occur as Xi develops and implements his "Chinese Dream," which emphasizes wealth, national pride, and obedience to authority, or "party-revering patriotism."[271] The CCP's emphasis on state strength has had particular success among younger Chinese, many of whom have "bought into the notion that being Chinese in the twenty-first century means being materialistic, nationalist and aggressive."[272]

Many Chinese today see the West more as a rival than as a model. In 2016, just under half (45-percent) of the Chinese public regarded U.S. power and influence as the top international threat facing the country.[273] For these reasons, contemporary China under Presidents Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping represents an exemplary case study for analyzing the intersection of domestic changes within an authoritarian regime, the appeal of responding to rising nationalism, and the pursuit of more revisionist foreign policies.

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[269] Perry Link, "What it Means to Be Chinese," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2015, 30.
[270] Perry Link, "What it Means to Be Chinese," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2015, 30.
[271] Link, 31.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Richard Wike and Bruce Stokes, "Chinese Public Sees More Powerful Role in the World, Names U.S. as Top Threat," *Pew Research Center,* October 5, 2016.

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Further justifications for selecting contemporary China and Russia as case studies are variance that the cases provide in terms of region, political culture, authoritarian systems, and relative power in the international system. Yet both countries exhibit similar trends that deserve greater attention. Internally, neither Russia nor China shows a preference for moving away from its authoritarian nature. Contemporary China has focused solely on modernizing its economy while avoiding any corresponding political reforms and Russia has continuously moved away from Gorbachev's policies of glasnost (political openness) and perestroika (economic restructuring), despite a period of political and economic reforms in the early-1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Internationally, Russian and Chinese foreign policy strategies differ in their level of aggressiveness, but both nations have exhibited signs that each desires a sphere of influence in their respective regions. Moreover, both nations have taken commensurate steps to modernize their military doctrines and enhance their military capabilities in traditional and nontraditional realms of operation. Simply put, Russia and China are the two most geopolitically consequential authoritarian countries in the world, and this makes them worth studying. As Fareed Zakaria writes, "Their search for political and economic systems that work for them is of enormous global significance."[274]

[274] Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad,* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 91.

Chapter 5

Russian Foreign Policy and Revisionism in the Putin Era

"What had seemed easy turned out to be extremely difficult. I apologize for not justifying some of the expectations of people who believed that we could jump in one swoop from the gray, stagnant, totalitarian past to the bright, prosperous civilized future. I believed in it myself. It seemed that if we could just make one jump, we would overcome everything."

– President Boris Yeltsin's farewell address, December 31, 1999

"Putin is the ideal ruler for the current period. He is a tragic figure. He has a horrible entourage, made up of exhausted people, a sea of despicable worms who are fouling up the entire field of his movement. And he is methodically and steadily, bit by bit, clearing away all this dismal legacy. He is like an alchemist turning black into white. It is only getting grey so far but this is just the beginning. The dawn is breaking, the dawn in boots. I believe in Putin and I entirely support him."

– Alexander Dugin, January 19, 2001[275]

"Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the world."

– Halford MacKinder, 1904

Application of Analytic Framework

Relations between Russia and the West have reached a post-Cold War nadir. Russian aggression in Ukraine, prompted by Ukraine's near-attempt at a trade agreement with the European Union, and Russia's intervention in the Syria crisis have taken place in the context of fundamentally clashing visions with the West over global stability, sovereignty, intervention and the use of force.

[275] An extract from an Interview with Alexander Dugin for the website dni.ru. Dugin is considered a Russian "ultra-nationalist" and is the founder of the Eurasian Youth Union in Russia. He has served as an advisor to several conservative Russian politicians, and was sanctioned by the U.S. and Canada following the annexation of Crimea.

There is no single explanation for current tensions between Russian and the West, nor for heightened Russian revisionism in its neighborhood. While Ukraine might be the proximate locus of Russian revisionism and rivalry, it is not the primary cause. In order to understand the changing nature of Russian foreign policy over the course of the Putin era, we must understand a myriad of changing dynamics outside of and within Russia.

I began this research on Russia by asking questions of whether Russia's domestic political and economic considerations can lend understanding to how and why the nation's foreign policy has evolved in the twenty-first century. After developing several theories and hypotheses in Chapter Two on the mechanisms through which domestic conditions can influence foreign policy, this chapter explores those theories and mechanisms through a close examination of Russia's domestic scene and foreign policy strategies in the Putin era.

This chapter is divided into three case studies from 2000 through 2016, which will be further explained below. In short, the first case covers 2000-2007 over the course of Putin's first two terms as president of Russia; the second case includes the end of Putin's second term in 2007 and Dmitri Medvedev's presidential tenure from 2008-2012; and the third case highlights Putin's third term as president from 2012-2016. Each case study examines Russia's evolving foreign policy preferences and behavior in Eastern Europe and its "near abroad" through event data and an account of major relevant Russian foreign policy military and national security doctrines and speeches. Each phase of Russia's foreign policy and strategic orientation is demarcated by turning points. Critical junctures include Russia's differing responses to NATO expansion; the "color revolutions" in Eastern Europe; Russia's war with Georgia in 2008 and Putin's key speeches in the year and months preceding the war; the "Reset" and the New Start Treaty between Russia and the U.S. in 2009 and 2010; and finally, Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and Russia's intervention in Syria in 2015.

To recall, these phases of foreign policy take into consideration the following indicators and criteria of revisionism:

1. A national posture and security strategy that represents a preference for a redistribution of power and prestige in the international system and/or proximate region and desire to replace it with an alternative vision
    - The promotion of a revisionist ideology through official or quasi-official sources (i.e. state sponsored media) that speaks to a necessity to overturn elements of the system to fit a certain worldview;
    - A show of resoluteness in projecting power that extends beyond variable and episodic moments in time. To this end, mobilization of economic, technological, and human resources, military modernization programs and the acquisition of advanced military technologies are central long-term features[276]
2. A willingness to use unilateral and illegitimate coercion and force to expand territorial possessions and achieve a redistribution of power
3. A high risk tolerance for incurring costs to secure "international goods" such as territory

In line with this study's definition of revisionism, my conception includes not only actions that violate norms regulating the legitimate use of force, but also revisionist *internal preferences* in which a country's leadership promotes a well thought-out preference for establishing hegemony in the region, for diminishing U.S. and Western military power and for setting up a system according to their own rules.

In analyzing external and domestic factors behind Russia's foreign policy and strategic orientation (status quo and revisionist), I use Soviet expert Jack Snyder's framework for assessing Soviet grand strategy. Snyder tested systematically whether variations over time in Russian foreign policy during the Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras correlated with variations in the international circumstances that Russia faced. This framework analyzes the international setting of Soviet foreign policy through its endemic circumstances (that characterize relative power capabilities between major powers) and variable circumstances that change with the character of the opponent,

[276] Balance of power literature is vague when it comes to what levels of military expenditures constitute balancing. Furthermore, military expenditures are not simply functions of external threats and opportunities; they are also determined by technological innovation cycles, organizational interests and domestic ideologies and therefore may represent a more long-term preference toward balancing than a single show of force.

current military technology and capabilities, or with windows of opportunity.[277] Similarly, in exploring each case study of Russian foreign policy, I ask how closely Russian policy has matched those exigencies. Overall, I find that considerations of realpolitik account rather poorly, when discussed in isolation, for revisionist strategies in Russian foreign policy. To understand fully the shifts in foreign policy, I argue, we need to understand domestic political and economic circumstances facing the nation's key decision makers.

In making this argument, I first assess Russia's relative power capabilities and the international context in which Russia has operated over the course of these foreign policy "phases." I then discuss how conclusive external factors are in explaining Russia's shifts away from or towards revisionism. Finally, and perhaps most substantially, I examine Russia's evolving domestic context in each case study to explain the factors and motivations behind the apparent changes in level and intensity of Russian foreign policy revisionism. To recall, these domestic-level factors include:

I. The changing composition and interests of the Russian elite, and leadership-elite dynamics
II. The centralization of political and institutional authority over wide ranging policy areas, as well as the removal of political opposition and weakening of institutions
III. Challenges to the legitimacy of the ruling elite and political regime

Plan of Chapter

As Snyder argues, any theory of overexpansion should also be able to explain periods of "retrenchment." Heeding this advice, and for the purposes of this research, this chapter highlights specific phases of Russian foreign policy in the twenty-first century (throughout the Putin era) that display not only degrees of revisionism, but also of cooperation and accommodation with the West.

The first case study analyzes Vladimir Putin's first two terms in the presidency, from 2000-2004 and 2004-2007[278], a period marked by domestic consolidation and Putin's battle to unify and

[277] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
[278] This case study ends with the months prior to the Russian presidential election in March 2008.

reinvigorate Russia from within. Russia's primary national security threats emerged from Chechnya, and ongoing warfare in the Caucuses assisted Putin's rise to power and aided his centralization of political control. It was also during this time that the political landscape tilted away from open opposition and toward an uneven playing field dominated by Putin's political base, United Russia. Authoritarianism creeped into civil society through the hollowing out of an independent press and deinstitutionalization of key policy areas. Yet Russia still sought integration with the West in both political and economic terms. Putin was the first foreign leader to call U.S. President George W. Bush after the September 11th terrorist attacks, and Russia was instrumental in providing support to the war in Afghanistan. In addition, Russia's response to NATO expansion in 2004 was relatively tepid, particularly given NATO's inclusion of the Baltic States along Russia's border.

The political leadership's domestic focus and Russia's relatively benign role in the region was broken by Russia's war with Georgia in August 2008, when Russia's military crossed into another state's territory for the first time since the end of the Cold War. However, signs of Russia's international resurgence can be seen earlier. Putin's fiery speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007, Russia's cyber-attacks on Estonia in April 2007, temporarily crippling the nation's banking system, and its use of energy resources to exert leverage over its Eastern European neighbors, are clear examples of this evolution. This second case study of Russian resurgence took place between 2007-2012, a period just before and during Dmitri Medvedev's assumption of the presidency and Putin's time as prime minister, a position in which he was not entirely, by any means, removed from the scenes. The next five years would see Russia oscillate between postures of competition and cooperation with the U.S., NATO and the West before finally shifting toward rivalry and confrontation.

The third case study of Russian foreign policy looks at the period from 2012 to 2016, starting as Putin reassumed the presidency for a third term. This phase is most prominent in the minds of policymakers and analysts when thinking about Russian revisionism and heightened tensions between Russia and the West. It has also been marked by Russian official and semi-official media's anti-Western rhetoric and demonization of U.S. leadership following the 2011 and 2012 Russian parliamentary and presidential elections, Russia's annexation of Crimea, invasion of eastern

Ukraine, sanctions imposed on Russia by the U.S. and Europe, and Russia's military intervention in Syria.

Approaches to Understanding Russian Foreign Policy

There are three traditional approaches to explaining Russian foreign policy throughout each of these phases. The first perspective argues that Russia's hardened revisionist acts in its near abroad are *reactionary.* This line of thinking focuses on actions taken by the West, which over time Russia found untenable and anathema to its own interests. America's intervention and policy of regime change in Iraq, NATO's expansion that encroached up to Russia's borders, NATO's intervention in the Balkans (culminating in Kosovo's independence in 2008), NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 and the West's apparent unwillingness to treat Russia as an equal, all drove Russia and Putin to take a combative stance against the Western-led order. Coupled with Russia's historical sense of insecurity on it Western land border, NATO's movements eastward offered renewed suspicion of foreign incursions.

The second perspective centers on *relative capacity.* At the end of the Cold War and throughout Yeltsin's presidential tenure in the 1990s, Russia was on its knees. Its great power status had disappeared, its economy was in shambles, and the political leadership was stumbling away from a totalitarian past in search of a new national identity that ultimately resulted in corruption and instability. From 2000 to 2008, Putin revived Russia. He centralized power away from Russia's regional fiefdoms, restored economic stability (buoyed by surging oil prices), repaid Russia's international debts and revitalized Russia's military. Realist and power politics theorists point to this increasing relative capacity on the world stage and argue that Russia's growing economic and military clout account for its ability and willingness to project power abroad.

A third approach to understanding Russian foreign policy focuses on *domestic politics.* Purely domestic-oriented theories explain Russian actions abroad through its authoritarian nature. Those who pursue this approach analyze Putin's role in moving Russia away from democratic progress and toward autocratic rule. It is accurate to state that Putin's centralization of power has been accompanied by the repression of political opposition, civil society and independent media. He

has decidedly narrowed his circle of decision makers and "deinstitutionalized" the foreign policy decision-making process. Putin's increasingly autocratic rule has also led him to rely on alternative sources of legitimacy. From this perspective, Russian aggression in Ukraine and confrontation with the West were driven by Putin's decision to return to the presidency for a third term in 2012 and the urban class protests that followed (which also took place in the backdrop of waning economic growth). The unprecedented challenges to Putin's legitimacy resulted in the regime taking actions to heighten Russian nationalism and boost Putin's popularity at home. In this regard, Ukraine's shift towards Europe (first through possible NATO accession in 2008 and then economic partnership in 2013), particularly after the color revolutions in Russia's near abroad the early 2000s and the Arab Spring revolutions throughout the Middle East in 2011 and 2012, represented a clear and present danger to the stability of Russia's own political system and leadership.

Each explanation in isolation is valid but inconclusive. Russia's decisive turn toward confrontation with the West and its enhanced revisionist actions abroad are the cumulative result of changing domestic and international factors. In this sense, all three theories of reaction, capacity and domestic politics are needed to explain Russian revisionism. Yet current analysis of the motivations behind Russian foreign policy are slated toward structural arguments. Russian authoritarian political conditions and foreign policy revisionism are rarely discussed in the same works. Simply put, the intersection between Russian domestic politics and foreign policy remains underexplored. As such, this chapter seeks to lend understanding of Russia's action abroad through an exploration of the political exigencies and challenges the political leadership faces at home, the steps Putin that has taken to consolidate power, and the evolution of his own worldview. I argue that these domestic and individual-level factors hold the key to fully understanding Russian revisionism in the Putin era.

A Caveat...

Russia and China expert Bobo Lo offers an important caveat to the study of foreign policy decision making in authoritarian systems. He writes, "In effect there are two broad policy milieus – the real and the virtual. The latter is what outsiders see. This is the world of public policy statements, such as the Foreign Policy Concept, the Concept of National Security, and the Military Doctrine." These are important for highlighting trends in Russian foreign policy, but do not illustrate how it is

actually made. Lo adds, "By contrast, the real policy world is exclusive and almost invisible. This is where the big decisions are made. The vast majority of the political class plays little role, and public input is minimal. A particular order comes from the Kremlin, but without exceptionally privileged access it is often impossible to know who influenced whom, what, and how.'"[279] As such, there is a considerable amount of guesswork involved when trying to understand Russian foreign policy. Nevertheless, we can attain far greater understanding of the factors behind Russian revisionism in the Putin era by complementing our understanding of evolving geopolitical conditions with a greater appreciation for what is taking place within Russia's political and economic context. In other words, to ascertain how Russia's foreign policy might shift next, we need to look inside the black box of Putin's authoritarian system.

Case Study I: The Battle for Russia (2000-2007)

A. Russia's Strategic Orientation: Indicators of Revisionism and Key Turning Points

i) Russia's Wars with Chechnya and the Need for Order at Home

Transfers of power in authoritarian systems are far from predictable, even in the era of Russia's nascent democracy under President Boris Yeltsin. Prior to Putin's appearance on Russia's political stage, the question of succession was critical. In Yeltsin's memoir, *Midnight Diaries,* he discusses his assumption of power from Mikhail Gorbachev at the end of the Soviet Union. "For Russia, it was a question of historic importance. This peaceful transition was an accomplishment of sorts for Russia. Never before had a ruler willingly given up power. Authority in Russia had always been transferred through natural death, conspiracy, or revolution. The Tsar ceased to rule only after his death or after a coup. It was exactly the same with the general secretary of the Communist Party." Yeltsin concluded, "I suppose the Communist regime inherited the inability to transfer power painlessly."[280]

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[279] Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder,* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015).
[280] Yeltsin 361.

By the spring of 1999, the question of succession was once again on the mind of the Russian leader. Yeltsin's health was failing and he was suffering from alcoholism. Yeltsin, his "family,"[281] as his inner circle of advisors was called, and his daughters were facing charges of corruption and there was a strong likelihood that his political base *Unity* -- a loose political movement and later political party – would lose the parliamentary elections scheduled for later that year.[282] Under these circumstances, Yeltsin named Vladimir Putin as his acting Prime Minister in August 1999. Putin was a former KGB intelligence officer and Lieutenant Colonel who served in East Germany at the fall of the Berlin Wall and then went on to start his political career in St. Petersburg. He rose in power to eventually assume the position of Yeltsin's deputy chief of staff and then was named the Director of the FSB in 1998. Most importantly, Putin had proven his loyalty to Yeltsin. As a testament to this loyalty, Yeltsin wrote in his memoir, "I wanted to hand him the crown of Monomakh.[283] I wanted to give him the most important, the dearest thing I had: my political legacy." Yet on the eve of Yeltsin's surprise resignation from the presidency, Putin was not well known to the Russian public. His chances of winning the presidential election in 2000 were far from certain, and he still needed to demonstrate his capacity to bring stability to Russia.

Ongoing throughout this most important question of Yeltsin's succession, Russia was struggling with vital national security terrorist and separatist threats emanating from Russia's Caucasus region, which had resulted in a number of bombings and hostage situations in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia throughout the late nineties. Russia had already fought a war in Chechnya from 1994-1996 that culminated in Russia taking control of portions of the region but it was highly unpopular with the Russian public and led to thousands of deaths in the Russian military and local civilian population.

[281281] According to Michael McFaul, "the family" played a central role in Russian politics and continued to do so in the early years of the Putin presidency. It consisted of Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana Dyachenko; his former chief of staff Valentin Yumashev, the first Prime Minister under Putin, Mikhail Kasyanov; the chief of staff of presidential administration, Aleksandr Voloshin; and several others including the Minister of the Interior, Vladimir Rushaillo, the Minister of the Press, Mikhail Lesin, Prosecutor General, Vladimir Ustinov, and the Minister of Railways, Nicolai Aksenenko. Two financial tycoons, or oligarchs, Roman Abramovich and Aleksandr Mamut are also considered members of the family. Referenced in McFaul's review of *Midnight Diaries,* by Boris Yelsin.

[282] Following Putin's rise in popularity around the time of the Chechnya War, Unity would gain 23% of the vote in the Duma elections.

[283] The crown of Monomakh is a relic of the Russian princes and tsars. It was made for Tsar Michael Fyodorovich in the 1600s, and is said to have been used by Ivan the Terrible to crown himself Russian Tsar. It was used in coronation ceremonies until Peter the Great assumed the title of Emperor and fashioned a more Western-style crown.

Despite the strong opposition to the first Chechen War, Russia commenced the second Chechen war in August 1999 following the invasion of Dagestan by Chechen forces. The invasion took place only two days after Yeltsin's decree appointing Putin as acting Prime Minister. According to Yeltsin, "[Putin] resolved to settle just one task: saving the federation, saving the country."[284] By the end of September 1999, and in response to a series of bombings in Moscow apartment buildings allegedly carried out by Chechen terrorists, Russian soldiers entered Chechnya. As a review of John Dunlop's, *The Moscow Bombings of September 1999,* highlights, "the attacks were the equivalent for Russians of September 11, 2001, for Americans. They aroused a fear of terrorism – along with a desire for revenge against the Chechens – that Russians had not known since Stalin used the supposed terrorist threat as a pretext to launch his bloody purges of the 1930s."[285] Putin, still Prime Minister, viewed managing the conflict in Chechnya as an extension of the actions he needed to take to bring order to Russia's internal affairs. The ongoing violence stemming from the Chechen conflict also served an instrumental purpose: allowing for the growth in the Russian security apparatus as a major tool in maintaining domestic stability.[286] Importantly, this domestic violence and chaos also helped a relatively unknown former KGB operative rise to the forefront of Russian politics.

In keep with the adage, "politics does not stop at the water's edge," Yeltsin used this national security crisis to groom Vladimir Putin's public image. He wrote, "I wanted people to start getting used to Putin and to perceive him as the head of state."[287] His tough rhetoric regarding the Chechens in response to the September apartment bombings in Moscow made him popular with the public.[288] The violence in the heart of Moscow would help to justify a war against Chechnya, and unite the people around Yeltsin's successor. Leading into the 2000 elections, Putin stood out as a "young, decisive politician in contrast to the elderly Primakov and the retrograde Zyuganov, as well as to his feeble predecessor. The public was being gradually but persistently encouraged

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[284] Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries,* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 336.
[285] Amy Knight, "Finally, We Know about the Moscow Bombings," *The New York Review of Books,* November 22, 2012. Review of John B Dunlop, *The Moscow Bombings of September 1999: Examinations of Russian Terrorist Attacks at the Onset of Vladimir Putin's Rule,* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2012).
[286] Vladimir Gel'man, *Authoritarian Russia,* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2015), p. 76.
[287] Yeltsin, 337.
[288] There are theories (although still unproven) that the FSB knew of the impending attacks and either did not move to stop them, or at worst, was complicit in order to build anti-Chechen sentiment.

to see Putin's presidency as an alternative both to a Communist restoration and to the incompetence of 'the democrats.'"[289] Even Yeltsin recalled, "I am convinced that the reason for Putin's popularity was that he instilled hope, faith, and a sense of protection and calm… Putin gave people a guarantee of personal security backed by the state. People believed that he, personally, could protect them… Putin got rid of Russia's fear. And Russia repaid him with profound gratitude."[290]

On November 14, 1999, Putin issued an editorial in the *New York Times* titled, "Why We Must Act," in which he outlined for a Western audience his priorities for fighting terrorism alongside bringing order to Russia's domestic situation:

> Our great task now is to rebuild infrastructure and social institutions that were degraded during several years of turmoil. We must reopen schools and hospitals. For years, federal payments intended for workers and pensioners have been diverted illegally. We will make sure that these funds go to the proper recipients. In brief, we are striving to replace strife and chaos with peace and normal life... the antiterrorist campaign was forced upon us. Sadly, decisive armed intervention was the only way to prevent further casualties both within and far outside the borders of Chechnya, further suffering by so many people enslaved by terrorists. [291]

Putin's vehement description of Chechen forces as 'terrorists' deserves greater context. Chechens are often, in the context of terrorism, viewed as religious extremists and criminals, as Putin describes here. Fiona Hill writes in 2002, "Russian discussions of the threat of terrorism quickly become muddled with concerns about religious extremism, 'banditry' and criminality (frequently used in conjunction with the Chechens), general social disorder, and the rupture of national unity."[292] Indeed, the Chechen forces are comprised of a patchwork of groups, including several terrorist groups, and some with possible links to Al-Qaeda. These groups of Chechen radical Islamists have carried out multiple terrorist attacks since the early 1990s throughout Russia.

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[289] Sergei Kovalev, "Putin's War," *The New York Review of Books,* February 10, 2000. The last few years of the Yeltsin regime could only be considered democratic by a large stretch of the imagination – but most Russian voters associate the "democrats" with Yeltsin.
[290] Yeltsin, 338.
[291] Vladimir Putin, "Why We Must Act," *New York Times,* November 14, 1999: http://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/14/opinion/why-we-must-act.html
[292] Fiona Hill, "Putin and Bush in Common Cause? Russia's View of the Terrorist Threat After September 11," *The Brookings Institution,* June 1, 2002.

Yet these Chechen forces are only a subset of the broader Chechen population. More broadly, Chechens are a Muslim ethnic group that has lived for centuries in the North Caucasus region. Chechens have resisted Russian rule for over 200 years and suffered under Soviet leaders, most notably Stalin who accused them of supporting Nazi Germany and deported the entire population to Kazakhstan and Siberia. Chechnya declared independence in 1991 as the Soviet Union disintegrated, and separatists and guerilla forces have since fought against Russian forces who have opposed their independence. Their cause has attracted the support and funding of Islamist militants from outside Chechnya, including al-Qaeda. Alexander Vershbow, a U.S. ambassador to Russia, said shortly after September 11, 2001, "We have long recognized that Osama bin Laden and other international networks have been fueling the flames in Chechnya, including the involvement of foreign commanders like Khattab."[293] To Putin, these groups were exploiting vulnerabilities within Russia's military, political and economic weaknesses, which needed to be resolved.

One month later in his millennial address in December 1999, Putin reiterated: "[Russia] considers terrorism to be the most dangerous and treacherous phenomenon... it survives one when it has the chance to undermine the stability of the state, to sow seeds of mutual suspicion and animosity. Our common task is to raise an efficient barrier against this evil."[294] Putin realized that the situation in Chechnya had the potential to spill over into the entire north Caucasus and spread religious and ethnic conflict throughout the territory; and the unrest helped Putin to consolidate power at the very outset of his tenure as leader of the Russian federation. Yeltsin in his autobiography recalled Putin's handling of the Chechen violence: "Putin turned to me and requested absolute power to conduct the needed military operation and coordinate all power structures. I supported him without hesitation. Within a matter of weeks, he had transformed the situation within our power ministries. Each day he would bring together the heads of each ministry or agency into his office. He forced them to gather all their resources into one united fist."[295] Putin may not have been President, but he owned the situation in Chechnya and would be held responsible for its outcome.

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[293] Preeti Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism Backgrounder," *The Council on Foreign Relations,* April 8, 2010. Accessed at: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chechen-terrorism-russia-chechnya-separatist
[294] Putin, Millennial Message, 2000.
[295] Yeltsin, 336.

Yet the matter of Yeltsin's succession was also one of personal survival, as is often the case in authoritarian political systems. When Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned on December 31, 1999, there were no laws regarding the guarantees to be granted to an outgoing president. Yeltsin trusted Putin to secure his future, and his gamble paid off. In Putin's first weeks as president, he issued a decree regarding the matter. It read: "The president of the Russian Federation, having completed his duties in office, shall enjoy immunity… He is not subject to criminal or administrative procedure, detention, or arrest; he is not subject to search of his premises, interrogation, or search of his person."[296] Yeltsin's fate was secure.

ii) Putin's Early Engagement with the U.S. and the West

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991, Russia's global stature was greatly diminished having lost the vast territories accumulated by the Soviet Union. While Russia became the 'continuation state' of the USSR and went on to maintain the Soviet seat on the UN Security Council, as well as a significant nuclear arsenal, space program and military, it was no longer able to influence global events in the ways that the Soviet Union had since the end of World War II. In other words, Russia post-1991 could not influence the trajectory of Eastern European states through the same power and influence that Stalin employed at Potsdam and Yalta. In this sense, and combined with Russia's weak economy, it was not considered a great power following the end of Cold War. Instead, the next ten years were largely defined as America's "unipolar era" leading a liberal and rule-based order based on market economies and security arrangements in which the United States sat at the center. Russia, on the contrary, was faced with a very different set of challenges. When Putin became president in 2000, Russia was in no position internationally to project power beyond its borders in any meaningful way without risking further internal chaos. Given these relative balance of power conditions, and as Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy note in their seminal work on Vladimir Putin, foreign policy was absent from his December 1999 Millennium Message. They write, "For Russia the priority of internal national policy was

[296] Yeltsin, 365.

unquestionable... If Russians did not get their house in order, they risked being relegated to the status of a third-rate nation for the first time in 200-300 years."[297]

At this time in Russia's relations and integration with the West, Putin did not initially reject the promotion of values such as democracy, individual liberties and private property. Instead, Putin outwardly projected an image for Russia that was "open, responsible and ready for cooperation on an equitable, partnership basis."[298] The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in particular ushered in a new era of U.S.-Russian relations over the shared goal of combatting terrorism, and Putin was the first international leader to call President Bush following the attacks to offer his support. The immediate year following 9/11 also saw enhanced dialogue and cooperation between Russia and NATO. In 2002, the two parties established the NATO-Russia Council to serve as a forum for consultation on shared security issues. Russia was also integral to NATO's intervention in Afghanistan and its resupply and assist missions, as it transported non-military ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) supplies to troops. Putin himself served as a "dove against the hawks"[299] in his war cabinet, overruling his military advisors who believed that the U.S. would "never leave" if they managed to install military bases in Central Asia (including Kyrgyzstan, where Russia installed a military base in 2003).

Even after President Bush decided to unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) in December 2001, meaning that it would create new missile defense systems in Europe to counter rogue states, Putin's initial response was relatively muted. Putin insisted was a mistake, but he issued a statement on December 13, 2001 pressing for further cooperation with the U.S. He said, "I believe that the present level of bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and the U.S. should not only be preserved but should be used for working out a new framework of strategic relations as soon as possible."[300] Igor Sergeyev, Putin's defense aid, was also quoted saying, "the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty will not create any problems of strategic stability for the next 10-15 years."[301] The U.S. and Russia then negotiated

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[297] Vladimir Putin, "Address to the Millennium Summit; Threats to Russia; Common Enemies of Free Nations." Accessed in: International Affairs, No. 6, Vol 46., 2000. Cited in Hill and Gaddy, 312.
[298] Putin, Millennium Summit, 2000.
[299] Author interview with Ambassador John Beyrle, Washington D.C., March 9, 2017.
[300] http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21444
[301] Deborah Seward, Associated Press, December 14, 2001. Accessed at Hoover Institution Archives, June 13, 2016.

the Moscow Treaty in May 2002 in which both parties agreed to reduce and limit stockpiles of strategic nuclear warheads and reaffirm their obligations under the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Speaking a few months later in 2002, Putin reaffirmed his interest in strong partnership with the U.S., stating that "a new, close partnership between Russia and the United States is not only in the interests of our countries. It also has a positive impact on the entire system of international relations and, therefore, remains one of our unquestionable priorities."[302] Therefore, cooperation between the U.S. and Russia was still, at this time, seen by both nation's leaders as necessary to achieving their security interests.

iii) Russia's Attempts at Regional Integration

In its regional policies, Russia made a push to incorporate former Soviet states into closer economic and security partnership. In 2001, Russia founded the Shanghai Cooperation Organization along with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to deepen security cooperation in Central Asia. In 2002, Russia then founded the Common Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a mutual defense treaty, with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan,[303] which stemmed from the Collective Security Treaty in 1994.[304] It also formed the Eurasian Economic Community, comprised of a similar set of states, to increase economic cooperation through a common market, customs union and standardized currency exchanges. However, none of the frameworks was set up to challenge NATO's power in nearby regions of Eastern Europe or in Afghanistan, unlike the Warsaw Pact of 1955.

Rather, Russia viewed the CSTO and the SCO as potential Eurasian partners to NATO. According to Russia's Senior Deputy Foreign Minister Vyasheslav Trubnikov in 2004, "Together with our CIS partners, we are ready to deepen our cooperation with NATO… the combination of abilities of these two military-political alliances will profit to both its members and the entire world community. Resistance would mean reviving the Cold War. We are not seeking that and expect

[302] Vladimir Putin, "Speech at the Foreign Ministry Attended by the Heads of Russian Diplomatic Missions Abroad," Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Moscow. July 12, 2002. Accessed at the British Library, January 4, 2015.
[303] Uzbekistan later became a member in 2006.
[304] (which had also included Azerbaijan and Georgia) in 1994.

NATO to act likewise."[305] These remarks took place amidst NATO's expansion up to Russia's borders in 2004, showing that despite Russian criticism toward NATO's actions, it would not preclude cooperation over shared international and regional interests.

Although there was cautious optimism during this time period for relations between Russia and the West, as seen through collaboration in the fight against terrorism, a new Russia-NATO council and revived arms control negotiations, Russia began to exert malevolent pressure on its neighbors through its energy sector. Starting in January 2006, Russia used natural gas cutoffs and price increases in Ukraine to pressure the government politically. Operating in the shadow of the Orange Revolution and dealing with Ukraine's pro-Western government under Yuschenko, Russia's use of energy warfare in this transit country for Russia's national gas pipelines, emphasized to Europe that Russian oil and gas exports made the Kremlin an important and powerful actor that would not be ignored.

Despite Russia's use of its energy resources to pressure Ukraine politically, Russia's stance toward Ukraine was not always confrontational. Following Ukraine's independence in 1991, Russia under Yeltsin was relatively accommodating to Ukraine's interests. In 1994, Russia, Ukraine and the United States managed to work out the difficult issue of Ukraine's nuclear arsenal, which, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, included 1900 strategic nuclear weapons. That year Washington brokered a deal known as the Budapest Memorandum between Ukraine and Russia in which Ukraine agreed to transfer its nuclear warheads to Russia and eliminate its strategic missiles and deployment systems. In exchange, the U.S., Russia and the U.K. agreed to provide security assurances to Ukraine; to "respect the independence and sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine;" and to "refrain from the threat or use of force" against the country.

Under Yeltsin, Russia and Ukraine also worked out the difficult issue of the Black Sea Fleet. In 1997, both nations agreed to divide the fleet's warships 50-50, allow Russia to sign a 20-year lease of ports in and around Sevastopol, and designate the peninsula as a territorially sovereign part of Ukraine. Negotiations on the Black Sea Fleet were part of the Russian-Ukrainian Treaty of

[305] An interview with Senior Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov by Katerina Labetskaya, *Vremya Novostei,* March 17, 2004.

Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership signed in May 1997, in which Russia agreed to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The treaty also wrote off most of Ukraine's $3 billion debt owed to Russian energy company Gazprom. In Putin's early years in office, he generally continued Yeltsin's accommodating stance toward Ukraine, not taking an overly confrontational stance on Ukrainian politics until the 2004 Orange Revolution.

Overall, Russia's engagement with the West can be viewed as largely cooperative and optimistic during Putin's first two terms as president; the indicators of revisionism, as outlined earlier in this chapter, were largely absent. However, a series of international and domestic evolutions during this time would slowly change Putin's calculation of Western intentions and Russia's own ability to project power in the region.

B. International Factors

i) U.S. Invasion of Iraq

Russian perception of Western intentions suffered when the U.S. invaded Iraq in March of 2003, which Putin called a mistake from the very beginning. In a significant break from the U.S., Putin aligned with French president Jacques Chirac and Chancellor Gerhard Schroder to prevent the U.S. from acquiring a UNSC resolution to justify its intervention in Iraq. The three issued a joint-statement saying, "There is still an alternative to war... Use of force can only be considered as a last resort. Russia, Germany and France are determined to ensure that everything possible is done to disarm Iraq peacefully."[306] In a three-hour interview with the New York Times on October 4, 2003, Putin indicated his longstanding fear in the chaos that emerges when powerful state-based regimes collapse. Putin warned that Iraq could become "a new center, a new magnet that attracts all destructive elements." He added, "How could one imagine a different course of events in [after the dismantling of] the Saddam Hussein's regime? Of course, we have always thought that there was a danger of the collapse of the state into separate components – its disintegration. And this is the danger we are facing right now... Now, there is no more Saddam and we witness the infiltration

[306] RFE/RL, "Iraq: France, Russia, Germany Call for Added Inspections," February 10, 2003. Accessed at: https://www.rferl.org/a/1102182.html

of a great number of members of different terrorist organizations on Iraq's territory."[307] Not only did Putin view the fall of Saddam's regime as bad for regional stability, but he also saw the U.S. as fomenting chaos, echoing the role it played with NATO in former Yugoslavia. "Putin went through a transformation in his thinking about the U.S. following the invasion of Iraq in 2003," said Chip Blacker, Senior Director for Russian, Ukrainian and Eurasian affairs at the National Security Council (NSC) in the Clinton Administration, "and he would remember it."

ii) Eastern Europe's Color Revolutions

In addition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, two other sets of events shocked the region and the world and changed Putin's calculus in assessing the West's intentions in Eastern Europe and dealing with the U.S. and NATO. The first set of events were the "color revolutions" that swept across Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan from 2003 to 2005, which Putin viewed as directly supported and abetted by the U.S.

Georgia's Rose Revolution, 2003

In November 2003, tens of thousands of demonstrators protested in the streets of Tbilisi against the fraudulent results of the parliamentary elections and demanded the resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze, the president of Georgia who had been involved in Georgian politics for over 30 years – first as first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia in 1972, and later as president after he was elected in 1995. Shevardnadze was considered an ally of Russia's, having served as a reformist Soviet Foreign Minister and a key player in a series of negotiations that brought about the peaceful end of the Cold War. As the Soviet Union's Foreign Minister under Gorbachev, Shevardnadze negotiated arms treaties with the U.S, the end of the war in Afghanistan and the reunification of Germany. He also played an instrumental role in removing Soviet forces from Eastern Europe and from the Chinese border. Yet his tenure as Georgian president was considered by many Georgians to be corrupt and ineffective. Shevardnadze's ouster was called the Rose Revolution, due to the red roses student demonstrators gave to the soldiers sent out to retain order in the streets and who eventually laid down their guns. Mikhail Saakashvili, a young, pro-Western and U.S.-educated politician, led the movement that ultimately forced Shevardnadze to flee and

[307] Vladimir Putin, Interview with the *New York Times,* October 5, 2003.

was then elected president in January 2004. His election was followed by constitutional amendments that strengthened the presidency and allowed for a cabinet and prime minister for the first time in the country's history.

Before the election, the U.S. Agency for International Development budgeted more democracy-related assistance to Georgia in 2002 and 2003 than to any post-Soviet state except Russia and Ukraine. Along with the Soros Foundation, USAID funded pro-democracy activities such as civil society advocacy training, voter list reform, and the cultivation of election monitoring NGOs.[308] The U.S. also imposed diplomatic pressure to ensure for clean elections. The U.S. also pressured the Georgian government politically. U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles said that if the parliamentary elections were "not conducted in an open and honest and transparent manner," this would not only "be very bad for Georgia," it would "also be bad for the American-Georgian relationship."[309] In September 2003, the IMF and the U.S. both announced that they would scale down foreign aid and reducing assistance if the election was seen as corrupt and an abuse of power.

Given these efforts, the U.S. viewed the Rose Revolution as a success for democracy in the region, and looked favorably on the election of a pro-Western and pro-U.S. regime. Moscow, on the other hand, viewed Saakashvili's victory as a blow to Georgian-Russian relations and a clear example of U.S. meddling in regional affairs. Russian hardliners viewed the fallout from the Rose Revolution in drastic terms. "By making permanent concessions and trying to 'pacify' the 'rose revolutionaries' in Tbilisi, Russian diplomacy is preparing with its own hands the ground for escalation of foreign interference and a start of a new armed confrontation in the Caucuses, which, in its turn, will serve as a signal for destabilization of public structures on a national scale,"[310] said Alexander Krylov, Caucasus expert at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow. Georgia's overthrow of Shevardnadze was also seen in Russia as the first example of

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[308] Cory Welt, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: From Regime Weakness to Regime Collapse," *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* December 28, 2006. Accessed at: http://www18.georgetown.edu/data/people/cdw33/publication-32608.pdf

[309] "US ambassador to Georgia hails ties, urges fair elections," Rustavi-2 TV, August 15, 2003, trans. in BBC Monitoring. Cited in http://www18.georgetown.edu/data/people/cdw33/publication-32608.pdf

[310] Alexander Krylov, "Threat to Abkhazia and South Ossetia Threatens Russian Statehood," *Russian Analytica,* 2005. Accessed at the British Library, January 7, 2015.

a "color revolution," which Russia viewed as the West's own version of hybrid warfare used to pursue its own interests at the expense of regional and global stability.

To this point, later in May 2014 at the third Moscow International Security Conference, Valery Gerasimov defined the color revolutions as "a form of non-violent change of power in a country by outside manipulation of the protest potential of the population in conjunction with political, economic, humanitarian and other non-military measures." Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov added that the U.S. and Europe's exploration of the color revolutions were "to serve their own interests, impose their own values, and would end in creating new global tensions."[311]

Ukraine's Orange Revolution, 2004

Not long after the Rose Revolution, Ukraine experienced a similar phenomenon. The 2004 presidential election in Ukraine was set to decide the heir to then President Leonid Kuchma, whose corrupt regime had governed Ukraine since 1994. Earlier in November 2002, Kuchma appointed Viktor Yanukovych, the former governor of Donetsk, as Prime Minister in an attempt to put Yanukovych in a well-placed position to succeed him in 2004, as Kuchma was not eligible to run. The elections would have implications for Ukraine's ties with the West and with Russia,[312] as Yanukovych saw closer ties with Russia as the key to Ukraine's future prosperity, while opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko wanted to move Ukraine closer to the West while recognizing Moscow as a "strategic partner."[313]

The outcome of Ukraine's election was considered by Moscow to be far more important than Georgia's one year prior. Many Russians consider Ukraine and its population of 48 million as part of Russia's own history. Indeed, Ukraine holds a unique place in Russia's history, dating back to the Kievan Rus, a loose federation of Slavic tribes under a monarchy that reigned from the 9th century AD to the 13th century AD, whose people both Ukrainian and Russians consider their

[311] Valery Gerasimov and Sergei Lavrov, Russian Ministry of Defense's third Moscow Conference on International Security on May 23, 2014, held in Moscow.
[312] It should also be noted that around this time Russia was creating an economic alliance with Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan, although it was in its early phases, and did not want to see Ukraine drift further into Europe's economic orbit.
[313] Ron Popeski, "Court Considers Appeal in Ukraine Election," *Reuters*, November 25, 2004.

cultural ancestors. In 2001, thirty-percent of Ukrainians were native Russian speakers, and its location is a major transit route for oil and gas exports between Europe and Russia. Ukraine is also considered a strategic buffer between Russia and member states of the European Union and NATO. Yushchenko offered a vision of further integrating Ukraine into the very Western structures that Moscow resented. Therefore, Ukraine was of much greater strategic, historic and cultural significance to Russia than Georgia, and instability in Ukraine warranted greater concern among Moscow's governing elite.

In the years leading up to the election, USAID carried out long-term efforts to support free media, the rule of law, civil society and election monitoring in Ukraine. Months prior to the election in March 2004, Russia's ambassador to Ukraine, Viktor Chernomyrdin, accused the U.S. of increasing its presence in Ukraine ahead of the presidential election. "An American task force has landed in Ukraine. They are traveling around regions to help prepare the elections… whatever can be of use to them, (the Americans) immediately take into their sphere of interest, and there is inevitably either a mess or blood there," said Chernomyrdin in an interview with Russian TV station Channel One.[314] In July 2004, President Putin also came out strongly against U.S. "involvement." Putin is reported as saying, "Their agents, both inside our countries and outside, are trying everything possible to compromise the integration between Russia and Ukraine."[315]

The results of the fraudulent presidential elections in November 2004 claimed Viktor Yanukovych to be the winner over Viktor Yushchenko (who had been badly poisoned during the campaign), despite exit polls showing a clear victory by Yushchenko – one poll showed him ahead by 4 percent and another showed him 11 percent ahead. These polls were overturned by unofficial results released by Ukraine's Central Election Commission showing Yanukovych as the winner by a margin of nearly 3 percent and taking over 90 percent of the total votes in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.[316] Showing his preference, Putin congratulated Yanukovych on his victory twice on November 21 despite the wide spread reports of ballot rigging.[317] In response to alleged election fraud, the courts blocked the inauguration of Yanukovych and hundreds of thousands –

[314] "Russian Ambassador Lashes at US Involvement in Ukraine," *AFP*, March 28, 2004.
[315] Valeria Korchagina, "Putin Tells West Not to Meddle in Ukraine," *The Moscow Times,* July 27, 2004.
[316] Freedom House, "Election Fraud in Ukraine Presidential Vote," November 22, 2004.
[317] Oksana Yablokova, "The Princess of the Orange Revolution," *Moscow Times,* December 10, 2004.

waving orange flags (Yushchenko's campaign color) – took to the streets in support of Yushchenko.

Following the fraudulent election results, the U.S. took a firm stand against Yanukovych's victory. Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "We cannot accept this result as legitimate, because it does not meet international standards and because there has not been an investigation of the numerous and credible reports of fraud and abuse." He also warned, "If the Ukrainian government does not act immediately and responsibly, there will be consequences for our relationship."[318] Putin saw statements such as Powell's (although President Bush was more measured in his support for the Orange Revolution) as evidence of the U.S. attempting to put in place a pro-Western government at the expense of Russia's own regional interests.

Yushchenko went on to challenge the results in the Ukrainian Supreme Court, and won the re-vote on December 26, 2004. He then appointed Yulia Tymoshenko, a pro-Western opposition leader of the Orange Revolution, as his Prime Minister. While pledging closer economic cooperation with Russia, Yushchenko on inauguration day told a crowd of over 100,000 in Kiev's Independence Square, "Our place is in the European Union,"[319] confirming Putin's worst fears about Ukraine's western-leaning trajectory.

Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution, 2005

Only a few months after Ukraine experienced its Orange Revolution, protesters took to the streets in cities across Kyrgyzstan in reaction to disputed parliamentary elections. Askar Akayev had led Kyrgyzstan, one of the least democratic regions in the former-Soviet bloc, since 1991. Although Akayev initially won in a popular election and introduced multi-party democracy to Kyrgyzstan, over the years he clamped down on dissent while strengthening the presidency and weakening political parties. When international election monitors judged the balloting as flawed, protestors took control of government buildings in the capitol of Bishkek, Jalalabad, Osh (Kyrgyzstan's second largest city) and Batken and demanded Akayev's resignation. When Akayev refused to go,

[318] Briefing by Secretary of State Colin Powell, Washington DC, November 24, 2004.
[319] Mara D. Bellaby, "Yushchenko Selects Pro-Western Prime Minister," Janary 24, 2005.

violent clashes broke out between protestors and police, in what became known as the "Tulip Revolution." Akayev eventually fled to Russia and resigned on April 4, 2005.[320]

The elections were watched closely by the U.S. and Russia, both of whom had military bases in the Central Asian nation outside Bishkek.[321] Yet Russia did not view the events in Kyrgyzstan as an epicenter of U.S. and Russian rivalry in the way it did the Ukrainian and Georgian revolutions. The political options did not represent a split between pro-Western and pro-Russia orientations, and the Kyrgyz opposition indicated a preference for maintaining the status quo in its relationship with Russia. Kyrgyzstan was also not in a position to apply for EU or NATO membership and therefore did not pose a threat of an encroaching democratic West. Because of the lesser geopolitical implications, Putin did not call into question the role of Western and U.S. actors in the way he did during the Rose and Orange Revolutions, although he did declare Akayev's overthrow to be illegal.

Despite Russia's more accepting response to the events in Kyrgyzstan, the Kremlin took stock of the color revolutions in its near abroad and made moves to counter any future revolutions in the region. Putin also emerged from these events with a deep skepticism of the West's involvement in the post-Soviet space. "The color revolutions in Russia's near abroad, and the U.S. support for them, confirmed that the U.S. had contrary interests to Russia's," says Chip Blacker.

At this writing in 2017, it is hard to argue that many in the U.S. foreign policy apparatus (although perhaps not at the top echelons of the Trump administration) would not like to see Putin leave the stage, given his willingness to pursue blatantly aggressive and destabilizing measures in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, as well as in Western capitals in Europe and in the United States. However, throughout the early 2000's when the color revolutions took place in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the Bush administration viewed Russia (and Putin) as an ally in solving many

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[320] Unlike in Georgia and Ukraine, the opposition lacked unity behind a leader. Protests in Kyrgyzstan were also significantly more violent, chaotic and widespread than in the preceding Rose and Orange revolutions. Violence continued in the months following the flawed election, although new elections took place in July 2005 that brought opposition figure Kurmanbek Bakiyev to power.

[321] The U.S. used Kyrgyzstan as an important hub from which to launch operations for the war in Afghanistan and set up a base there shortly following the September 11th attacks. Russia opened its base two years later in 2003, in its first military installation on foreign soil since the fall of the USSR.

transnational issues of shared concerns. Moreover, Putin had not yet become the fully authoritarian leader that he is today. Therefore, this research does not consider U.S. support for the color revolutions as veiled attempts to destabilize the Putin regime. This does not mean, however, that the U.S. was not wary of the possibility that Russia might attempt to exert more forcefully its influence in Eastern Europe in the future; and in this sense NATO expansion can be viewed as a hedge against the possibility of future Russian aggression in the region.

iii) **NATO Expansion**

Russia's outlook on regional stability was not helped by NATO's extensive round of enlargement in 2004, agreed upon at the NATO Prague Summit in November 2002, which granted membership to the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Russia strongly condemned NATO's expansion, as it did previous rounds of NATO expansion. Yet although the expansion prompted condemnation from Russia, it did not elicit an aggressive countermeasure. Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov depicted Moscow's view of the move as "calm, but negative." Putin also stated that Russia intended to "do all we can to ensure that relations between Russia and NATO develop positively."[322] Several news outlets in Russia described Moscow as "preferring not to dramatize the situation."[323] At the time, Russia was still determined to cooperate with NATO over shared objectives on counter-terrorism following 9/11 and Putin remained committed to seeing what Russia could gain from its engagement with the West. Russia and NATO also established the NATO-Russia Council at the Rome Summit in May 2002 in order to "work as equal partners on a wide spectrum of security issues of common interest."[324]

John Beyrle, Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia (2008-2012) and DCM to Russia (2003-2005), was surprised by the lack of confrontation with Russia over NATO expansion into the Baltics. He remarked, "We never felt the pushback on that second round that I really expected; and from the

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[322] Arms Control Association, "NATO Expands, Russia Grumbles," Arms Control Today. May 1, 2004. Accessed at: https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004_05/NATO
[323] Sergei Yastrzhembsky, "Do Not Be Afraid of Big NATO," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta,* January 13, 2002; "NATO-Russia: East Expansion Threatens 'Crisis of Confidence," Rossiyskaya Gazeta, December 31, 2003
[324] NATO-Russia Council, "About NRC," Accessed at: http://www.nato.int/nrc-website/EN/about/index.html

Baltic states...part of the USSR! It was always remarkable to me that Putin acquiesced in a very curious way."[325] Putin's continued desire to engage with the West, even amidst pushback from Russian military officials, leads us to believe that there were other determinate factors that altered Putin's calculus toward the U.S. and the West.

Furthermore, the argument that Russia's increasingly confrontational stance with the West was driven by a direct threat from NATO expansion and encroaching U.S. military presence is a difficult assertion to prove based on real figures. At the end of the Cold War, there was a significant decline of U.S. forces on the European continent. According to U.S. European Command, "At the height of the Cold War, more than 400,000 U.S. forces were stationed across 100 communities on the European continent. [In 2016], U.S. forces on the continent [had been] reduced by more than 85% and basing sites reduced by 75%."[326]

For these reasons, NATO expansion in isolation did not drive Moscow to perceive the West as a hostile entity. Another factor was the European Union's expansion that occurred around the same time as NATO's enlargement. Just over one month following NATO's expansion in March 2004, the European Union admitted ten new members, including three former Soviet Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), and former Soviet satellites including Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, as well as Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta. Several former Soviet states, including the Baltics, signaled to Moscow that they were moving -- politically, economically and militarily – in the direction of the West.

Given the timing of the European Union and NATO's expansion, Moscow began to perceive NATO and the European Union as tandem challenges, where accession to NATO would likely be followed by integration with Europe. A second critical factor is that both expansions occurred just before the height of the 2004-2005 Orange revolution in Ukraine. Putin's response, however, remained relatively unphased. In a December 10, 2004 Press Conference with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, Putin stated that unlike NATO expansion, he had "always

[325] Interview with Ambassador John Beyrle, March 8th, 2017.
[326] U.S. European Command, "U.S. Military Presence in Europe (1945-2016) Factsheet," May 26, 2016.

seen the European Union's enlargement as a positive process,"[327] and even referred to Ukrainian membership in the EU as a positive step for both EU and Russian interests.

International factors therefore are inconclusive in explaining Putin's, engagement strategy with the West. In order to understand Russia's foreign policy orientation, despite setbacks to Russia's national interests in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, we must explore the domestic transformations – economic, social and political – that occurred in Russia throughout the leadership transition from Yeltsin to Putin, and during the early years of the Putin administration. Significant shifts emerged in the composition of the "ruling elite," and in the relationship between Russia's regions and the "center" as Putin moved to restore economic stability and consolidate political power under his rule.

C. Domestic Conditions

A. Composition and Interests of the Russian Elite (IV #1)

i) The Transition from Yeltsin to Putin

During the 1990s, the elite that gathered around Yeltsin were young, neo-liberal reformers. Their overriding goal was economic and market reform, including the privatization of state property. The elite, however, lacked the means for implementing their reforms as three other sets of elites acted as obstacles to the reform process. One group was the key power-holders in national institutions and another was the regional elite that ruled over Russia's 89 regions and autonomous republics.[328] A third were the all-powerful business magnates known as "the oligarchs." Having benefited immensely from the inefficient privatization of Russia's state-owned oil and metals enterprises, a small group of oligarchs including Boris Berezovsky (who became deputy secretary of the Security Council in 1996), Roman Abramovich and Mikhail Khodorkovsky (owner of Yukos oil), captured a large percentage of the economy and influence over the government. In a

[327] "President Vladimir Putin met with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero," the Kremlin's official website, December 10, 2004. Accessed at: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/32363
[328] Anton Steen, "Political Elites and the New Russia: the Power Basis of Yeltsin's and Putn's Regimes," (New York; Routledge, 2003).

1997 interview with the *Financial Times,* Berezovsky said, "We," in the name of the Moscow group of seven bankers, "hired [current First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly] Chubais and invested huge sums of money to ensure [President Boris] Yeltsin's election. Now we have the right to occupy government posts and enjoy the fruits of our victory." [329] Khodorkovsky also summarized how the oligarchs were using public office for private gain in a 1997 interview: "Politics is the most lucrative field of business in Russia. And it will be that way forever."[330]

By the end of the 1990s, these three predominant factions of the Russian elite were fragmented and engaged in constant zero-sum political struggles, operating across weak and new institutions, allowing for individual elite personalities to play particularly strong roles in politics.[331] When Putin rose to power, the composition and dynamics of the elites changed drastically. Speaking at a reception for state security personnel on December 20, 1999, two weeks before he would be named acting president, Putin joked, "The group of FSB personnel assigned to work undercover in the government has successfully carried out the first step of their assignment."[332] It was meant as a joke, but there was an element of truth in his remarks. He brought with him a close group of associates from his early political career in St. Petersburg and days in Russia's security services, the KGB and FSB, known as the *siloviki.*[333] The siloviki's de facto leader was Sergei Ivanov, as head of the Russian Security Council. Other key members of the inner circle included four deputy chiefs of the presidential administration, Viktor Ivanov, Dmitry Medvedev, Igor Sechin and Dmitry Kozak and the then head of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev.

According to former U.S. Ambassador to Russia (2012-2014) Michael McFaul, there were also two other groups that comprised Putin's coalition. [334] One was a team of liberals, or reformers,

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[329] Boris Berezovsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsky quoted by Andrei Piontskovsky, "Modern-Day Rasputin," The Moscow Times, November 12, 1997).
[330] Ibid.
[331] Anton Steen, "Political Elites and the New Russia: the Power Basis of Yeltsin's and Putn's Regimes," (New York; Routledge, 2003).
[332] Vitaliy Yaroshevksiy interview with Ol'ga Kryshtanovskaya, "Operatsiya 'vnedreniye' zavershena!," *Nov. Gaz,* August 30, 2004. Cited in: Brian Taylor, *State Building in Putin's Russia, Policing and Coercion after Communism,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 36.
[333] This term is used to describe people with backgrounds in the security and power ministries. As Brian Taylor points out, the rise of the siloviki cohort actually started in Yeltsin's second term, as his last three prime ministers – Yevgeny Primakov, Sergey Stepashin, and Putin – all came from power ministries.[333]
[334] Michael McFaul, "Review of Midnight Diaries," in The New Leader. Nov 2000, Vol. 83 Issue 5, 18; American Labor Conference on International Affairs.

serving in government and presidential administration. According to McFaul, they did not have long-standing personal relations with Putin, but they had the market ideas he supported and wanted to implement. They included Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Alexei Kudrin, Minister of Economy and Trade Herman Gref, and Presidential Advisor on the Economy, Andrei Illarionov. A key proponent of "liberal" faction advocating for economic reform outside of government was Anatoly Chubais, then head of RAO-UES, a massive Russian electricity company.[335]

The third group in Putin's coalition was "the family." While many thought Putin would push Yeltsin out after winning in 2000, he did little to weaken this faction early on. As McFaul notes, "Where else in the world would a newly elected president retain the chief of staff from the previous administration!"[336] Indeed, the Yeltsin "family" remained a political force in Russia in the early years of the Putin presidency. In Yeltsin's autobiography, he emphasizes repeatedly that Putin was his "creation," warning the president that he still needed him and his support group to stay in power.[337]

ii) **Rise of the Siloviki**

One can draw a few conclusions in the background of the individual elites who surrounded Putin's during his years as Prime Minister and then as President. Conventional analyses highlight the rise of the siloviki as driving Putin's administration in a more militaristic and authoritarian direction.[338] This seems to be a viable consideration, as the upper levels of the Russian political elite – individuals in Putin's personal cohort, members of the Duma, Federation Council and civilian positions in government – were dominated by siloviki who had accompanied Putin from the FSB, held considerable power in the Kremlin (such as Ivanov) and served a consultative role in decision making.

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[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Michael McFaul, "Review of Midnight Diaries," in The New Leader. Nov 2000, Vol. 83 Issue 5, 18; American Labor Conference on International Affairs.
[338] The notion that Putin immediately resurrected the power of the KGB when he became president is, however, a contested fact.

Putin and his advisors were determined to follow an "Andropov strategy,"[339] which sought to restore central command, a single hierarchy above the executive, legislative and judiciary branch that culminated in the power of the Kremlin, and that diminished other centers of power. According to Olga Kryshtanovskaya, a State Duma deputy from the United Russia party, these centers included, first and foremost, the governors, particularly those of the rich 'donor' regions who formed an association to advance their interests in the Federation Council, the oligarchs, who had amassed significant power in the State Duma, opposition political parties and the independent media.[340]

By the time of Putin's reelection campaign in 2004, Putin had attacked the empires and personal fortunes of Russia's 'oligarchs' and had drastically diminished their influence on politics. He did so most notably by dissolving their holdings in and control over independent or quasi-independent media outlets.[341] As Putin took steps to strengthen the central state during his first term, he also pursued free-market policies, and wanted to be seen as a friend to capitalist and private enterprise. But in the background of his economic policies, former KGB and security services associates were taking over key Russian state-owned companies – particularly in the energy, transportation and military sectors.

Dan Treisman wrote in 2007, "While there is nothing new about former KGB officers going into business, what is unprecedented is the way political and economic decision-making at the highest level are dominated today by an organized network of siloviki… 'Silovarchs'[342] now occupy key positions in the oil, gas, defense, transport and nuclear power sectors."[343] Their mission was to restore respect for law enforcement, enhance the power of the executive (Putin), and "clean up the media, political parties, and business circles, which they believe the private magnates

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[339] Yuri Andropov was the Chairman of the KGB from 1967 until 1982 and then the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR for a brief fifteen months starting in 1982. Andropov attempted to initiate economic reforms to the flagging Soviet economy under the strong authoritarian and centralized leadership of the Communist Party.
[340] Ol'ga Kryshtanovskaya, "The Russian Elite in Transition," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics,* Vol. 24 , Issue 4, 2008, p. 587-588.
[341] Sharon Werning Rivera and David Rivera, "The Russian Elite Under Putin: Militocratic or Bourgeois?" *Post-Soviet Affairs;* Vol. 22, April-June 2006. Accessed at the British Library, January 6, 2015.
[342] Treisman combines "silovik" and "oligarchy" to describe how industrial and financial capital has fused with secret police networks to create a new form of elites in Russia.
[343] Daniel Treisman, "Putin's Silovarchs," *Orbis,* Winter 2007, 9. Accessed at the British Library, January 5, 2015.

corrupted."[344] The table below shows significant individuals in Putin's close cohort who held both major government and corporate positions throughout this first two terms as president.[345]

Putin's 'Silovarchs'				
Name	**Security Background**	**Overlap with Putin's Career**	**Government Position**	**Corporate Affiliation**
Igor Sechin	Former KGB agent	St. Petersburg City Government (1991-1996)	Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration (1999-2008)	President and Chairman of Rosneft
Viktor Ivanov	Former KGB Directorate of Leningrad	KGB Leningrad (1975-1984); St. Petersburg City Government (1991-1996)	Deputy Head of the Presidential Staff (2000-present)	Chairman of Aeroflot and Almaz-Antei (anti-missile enterprise)
Sergei Ivanov	Former KGB agent	KGB Leningrad (1975-1984)	Minister of Defense (01-07); 1st Deputy Prime Minister (07-08); Chief of Staff of Presidential Adm. (11-16)	
Vladimir Yakunin	Former Diplomat and supposed high ranking KGB officer	KGB Leningrad (1975-1984)	Minister of Russian railways (2005-2015)	Chairman of the Union of Railways (UIC)
Nikolai Patrushev	Former KGB and FSB agent	KGB Leningrad (1975-1984)	FSB Director (1999-2008); Secretary of the Security Council (2008-present)	Patrushev's son served as an advisor to Sechin in Rosneft; later became Deputy Head of Gazprom Neft

[344] Treisman, 9.
[345] It is indicated where individuals went on to serve in high government positions following his return to the presidency in 2012.

Igor Sechin in particular deserves greater attention for his role among the "silovarchs" in Putin's court. Widely viewed as the second most powerful man in Russia after Putin, Sechin rose to power with Putin as his chief of staff when Putin was Deputy Mayor of St. Petersburg in the 1990s and then as deputy head of the presidential administration when Putin was elected president in 2000. When Putin became Prime Minister in 2008, Sechin took on the role of deputy prime minister. Then when Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, Sechin moved to Rosneft. Yet aside from this running list of high-level official titles, little is known of Sechin. He has kept such a low profile that the Russian press calls him a "phantom." Analysts say Sechin is "not a man who flies solo and everything he does reflects Putin's will."[346]

During Putin's first two terms, the Russian political elite, fractured but made up of individuals with predominantly security-based backgrounds, were focused on returning stability to the internal affairs of the state. The military (often an actor that pushes for more assertive policies abroad), was largely left out of key positions. "Putin's corporation draws narrowly on a small group of his mid-level FSB acquaintances from St. Petersburg and his German posting, reportedly arousing resentment among higher-placed siloviki, and the military has been largely left out…"[347] writes Treisman. There were also divergent economic interests amongst oil and gas silovarchs and the arms and nuclear fuel exports, in terms of what partnerships should be sought with Western firms. As such, they interests of key decision makers and elites in Russia during Putin's first two terms were not dominated by expansionary aims for Russia abroad; Rather, their focus was internal order, stability and control. In essence, they remained preoccupied with rebuilding an effective state.

Leadership-elite dynamics also changed over the course of Putin's first two terms. According to elite analysis conducted by Phillip Chapkovski, in 2000, Putin was considered a first among equals in terms of intra-elite connections; some advisors from Yeltsin's presidency, such as Anatoly Chubais, having personal influence early on. However, by 2008 when Putin left office, leadership-

[346] Fara Ispahani, "The Kremlin Phantom," CNN International, December 23, 2004. Sent to Michael McFaul in an assortment of Putin-related wires. Accessed at Hoover Institution Archives, June 15, 2016.
[347] Treisman, 15-16.

elite dynamics had changed drastically. By this time, Vladimir Gel'man writes, "Putin was the only node in the center of the linkages: nobody else among the elite had personal influence even slightly comparable to that of the dominant actor. There was in place a highly manageable and centralized hierarchy, which was once compared to a solar system."[348]

B. Consolidation of Control (IV #2)

i) Contextual and Precipitating Factors

Amidst changes to the political elite and the return of the state-security apparatus, there were three precedents, historic and contemporary, which set the stage for Putin's consolidation of power in his early years as president.

The first, and most pertinent to Putin's rise to power, was the violence stemming from the war with Chechnya that pushed Russians to prioritize stability over other domestic concerns. Even prior to the Moscow terrorist attacks in September 1999, the Russian public was already in desperate need of stability – economic and security based – after Yeltsin's failed economic reforms and the ruble crisis of 1998. According to Sergei Kovalev, a former State Duma member and human rights activist, "Even before the recent violence began, public opinion in Russia was psychologically prepared to support tough government measures, regardless of what they were or against whom they were directed. What has happened is what was predicted some time ago: society is nostalgic for 'the firm hand.'"[349]

The second precedent was the constitutional crisis of 1993 that placed in wide-ranging and sweeping power in the hands of the executive branch. Despite Russia's early steps to build democratic institutions following the end of the Soviet Union, a formal separation of powers, as outlined by the constitution, greatly diminished under Yeltsin during this political stand-off between Yeltsin and the Russian parliament in 1993.

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[348] Gel'man, p. 75.
[349] Sergei Kovalev, "Putin's War," *The New York Review of Books,* February 10, 2000.

Tensions between the two parties had been building for months due to Yeltsin's faltering economic reforms and parliamentary opposition to the "shock therapy" measures favored by Yeltsin's prime minister Yegor Gaidar. Yet prior to Gaidar's appointment and throughout 1992, opposition to Yeltsin's reforms grew within the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies, as the legislature pushed back against Yeltsin and the executive for control over government and economic policy. The speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, as well as Yeltsin's Vice President, Aleksandr Rutskoi were vehemently opposed to Yeltsin's reform movement. Both had backed Yeltsin during the failed hardliner coup in August 1991. On September 21, 1993, Yeltsin sparked the crisis by dissolving the legislature (the Congress of People's Deputies and its Supreme Soviet) and moving to replace the constitution with a new one that gave extensive power to the executive.[350]

In response, parliament voted to impeach Yeltsin and swore in his Vice President, Rutskoi. Violent uprisings against Yeltsin's government and his unpopular economic reforms grew, and legislators barricaded themselves in the White House (Russia's parliament building) on October 2. Violent clashes ensued and culminated in the October 3rd, "Bloody Sunday," and the storming of the Russian White House by pro-Yeltsin government forces, with supporters of the legislature being led by "militant Communists and nationalists... who took up arms in an effort to seize power."[351] The *New York Times* reported, "Like the Communists who led the abortive putsch in 1991, Mr. Khasbulatov and Mr. Rutskoi were convinced that a 'silent majority' and the Army were longing for a return to the centralized order of the past. Once again, they proved wrong."[352] The army, which at the last minute decided to remain loyal to Yeltsin, besieged the White House with tank artillery and cleared the elected legislature. By October 5, the anti-Yeltsin resistance was crushed.[353] In December, Yeltsin pushed through his constitution, which gave sweeping powers to the presidency, including the power to appoint or nominate senior members of the executive and

[350] According to Yeltsin's proposed constitution, the Russian parliament would be comprised by 450 deputies in the State Duma (the name of the legislature before the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917) and an upper house called Federation Council, comprised of representatives from 89 subdivisions of the Russian Federation.
[351] Serge Schmemann, "Showdown in Moscow: The Overview; Russian Army Routs Rebels at Parliament as Yeltsin Takes Steps to Tighten Control," *The New York Times,* October 5, 1993.
[352] Ibid.
[353] According to official figures, the violence resulted in the deaths of at least 150 protesters, and military.

judicial branches and the authority to issue decrees that have the force of law without legislative review.

The third contextual factor behind Putin's consolidation, although more historic in nature, was the political culture in Russia, which throughout imperial and Soviet times paid loyalty to an individual sovereign leader. Alexei Arbatov of the Carnegie Moscow Center ascribes this political culture, in part, to Russia's "age-old tradition of absolutism in which the 'monarch' has absolute power over everything." Deference to a single leader can be traced back to Russia's "triad doctrine" of orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality (*Pravoslaviye, Samoderzhaviye, Narodnost)* first pronounced in the early nineteenth century under Tsar Nicholas I. Searching for an ideological and legitimating doctrine following the Decembrist uprising in 1825, Nicholas tasked Minister of Education Sergey Uvarov with developing a state education system. Upon assuming of office to the Ministry of Education in 1833, Uvarov declared:

> It is our common obligation to ensure that the education of the people be conducted, according to Supreme intention of our August Monarch*, in the joint spirit of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality.* I am convinced that every professor and teacher, being permeated by one and the same feeling of devotion to the throne and fatherland, will use all his resources to become a worthy tool for the government and to earn its complete confidence.[354]

Uvarov's pronouncement was the first time since the sixteenth century that the Russian monarchy had attempted to develop and promulgate its own ideological doctrine.[355] Uvarov's concepts of orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality became the 'ideological pillars' of the Russian Empire. Geoffrey Hosking argues, "During the succeeding decades in practice autocracy alone became the defining feature of the Russian polity, to an extent which made it an unremitting obsession with statesmen of conservative bent."[356] After the fall of communism, the Kremlin similarly attempted to create a new national identity and ideology of the state, but constantly struggled to find a unifying national identity.

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[354] Geoffrey Hosking. *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917,* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997), 146.
[355] Ibid., 146.
[356] Ibid., 147.

In many ways, Putin attempted to revive the traditional and conservative values espoused by Nicholas I, and was assisted in his efforts to consolidate power by Russia's predisposition toward strong leaders. Contrary to popular beliefs in the West, many Russians throughout the 1990s remained nostalgic for the ideological purity of the Soviet Union. According to public opinion polling, a majority of Russians in the 1990s maintained liberal preferences, believing in the promise of a capitalist and democratic society. But economic failure contributed to changing preferences among Russians; many wanted a centralized state and a strong figure to lead it.[357] In his attempts to revive traditional values in Russian society, Putin has relied more on the Russian Orthodox Church as an instrument of the state. Patriarch Kirill is also a close ally of Putin's who "helps project Russia as the natural ally of all those who pine for a more secure, illiberal world free from the tradition-crushing rush of globalization, multiculturalism and women's and gay rights."[358] Yet the relationship between the church and the Russian state is complicated. Maria Lipman of the Carnegie Moscow Center argues, "Church-state relations have been mutually beneficial since the time of Peter the Great. But it is also a complex entanglement. The church is seeking protection for the state through favorable legislation the benefits the church; the state is using the church as a pillar of statehood and identity to accommodate the rise in nationalism. Therefore, the Church is an ideological tool and an instrumental of the state, but it also has to be kept under control so as not to surpass the state as the central form of legitimacy and identity."[359]

ii) The Process of "Vertical Vlaasti"

In the shadow of these three precipitating factors, Putin in the early years of his presidency had the maneuverability to centralize control, and he did so along two parallel tracks. The first was on economic reforms, which helped the economy to stabilize and prosper. Following the August 1998 financial crisis and devaluation of the ruble, the economy grew every year between 1999 and 2004. In these four years, Putin accelerated economic reforms, balanced the budget for several years in

[357] Kirill Rogov, Center for Global Interests Panel Event, "Politics in Putin's Russia," Washington DC, September 21, 2016.
[358] Andrew Higgins, "In Expanding Russian Influence, Faith Combines With Firepower," *New York Times,* September 13, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/europe/russia-orthodox-church.html?_r=0
[359] Author conversation with the Maria Lipman on September 21, 2016, Washington DC.

a row and reduced international borrowing.[360] McFaul wrote in 2004, "Russia's stock market is soaring; foreign direct investment hit an all-time high in 2003; hard-currency reserves are bursting; inflation is modest; and real per capita incomes have grown by more than one-third since Putin came to power."[361]

In parallel to Russia's economic progress, however, its political system became less pluralistic and democratic. Although Putin inherited a system from Yeltsin that in no measure was a consolidated democracy, he did nothing to strengthen democratic institutions during his early years in the Kremlin. He revealed his distrust and disdain for nascent and dysfunctional democratization in Russia almost immediately and set about restoring authority from the top-down through a process known as "vertical vlaasti." A significant move to consolidate power came in December 2004 when Putin signed a bill eliminating the direct elections of regional governors, giving the president the right to appoint Russia's 89 regional leaders. He also created seven administrative areas with a governor-general (a presidential envoy) at the helm. These steps were, to a certain degree, necessary as Russia's economic challenges were exacerbated by the autonomy of Russia's regional 'fiefdoms' and the federal government's inability to collect tax revenues. The effect of this policy was the shift in allocation of revenue from regional to federal budgets. As Dr. Emil Pain notes, before the policy "the allocation was almost equal: 51% went to the center and 49% to the region." After the policy, "the federal shared increased from 63% while the regions' portion dropped to 37%."[362]

Putin's reorganization, while boosting revenue toward the federal government and halting what many saw as the "disintegration of the country," was criticized for "freezing the republics in almost a feudal system of governance and encouraging official corruption." Another concern among more reform-minded Russians was that consolidation would be accompanied by a growth in Russian nationalism, "exploiting Russians' nostalgia for the Soviet Union and nationalist sentiments." Dr. Pain foreshadowed, "nationalist consolidation requires the image of an external enemy… if

[360]The pro-Putin Duma passed into law a series of reforms including a flat income tax of 13-percent, a reduced profit tax (from 35 to 24 percent) a new Land Code, and new legislation on currency liberalization.
[361] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Glass is Half Full and Leaking," RFE/RL Political Weekly, March 15, 2004.
[362] Dr. Emil Pain, "Will Russia Disintegrate? Republics Resist Centralization," NIS Observed, April 27, 2001.

nationalism becomes firmly established in Russia, they [Putin and elites] could halt temporarily the disintegration process... but it will be a dead-end for democratic development."[363]

iii) Consolidation of Media Landscape

The independent media landscape was also tested in Putin's early years. At the turn of the century, television had a broad audience in Russia and was, as it remains, the most influential medium for news in the country. Among the three national channels (RTR, ORT and NTV) that existed when Putin took power, one (the state-owned RTR) was already favorable towards and "politically loyal" to Putin. In August 2000, the Kremlin changed the management of Channel 1 (ORT) using its 51 percent ownership of the shares (following the channel's criticism of how Putin handled the explosion of the Russian *Kursk* submarine). Boris Berezovsky, oligarch and owner of 49 percent of Channel 1's shares, alleges that he was intimidated by the state into selling his shares to Roman Abramovich, a Russian billionaire and confidante of Yeltsin and Putin. The only independent national TV station that remained was NTV, which maintained a healthy skepticism of the Putin regime and openly criticized the government's policies in Chechnya and Putin's political base, Unity.

Yet when NTV and its CEO, oligarch and businessman Vladimir Gusinsky, began airing segments on corruption and human-rights abuses, Putin did not take well to their criticism. The New Yorker reported, "Within five months of taking power, he dispatched armed Interior Ministry troops to raid Gusinsky's headquarters; by 2001, Gusinsky had been forced to give up NTV to more obedient owners and had fled the country."[364] A decisive turning point in the Kremlin's war against NTV and independent media came in April 2001 when Gazprom Media, a subsidiary of Gazprom (the largest state-owned corporation in Russia) took over NTV by force and pushed for a change in their management and Director-General.

According to Beyrle, "When you lost NTV, that independent nationwide broadcast voice that spoke to millions of Russians every night and said, 'You should be asking questions about what is

[363] Ibid.
[364] Evan Osnos, David Remnik, and Joshua Yaffa, "Trump, Putin and the New Cold War," March 6, 2017.

happening…' When that voice was extinguished, Russia became a different country that has been sustained to this day."[365]

iv) Modern Authoritarian Political Tactics

By the 2004 presidential election, Putin faced no real political opposition. His approval rating was over 80% and his primarily opposition was Sergey Glazyev,[366]a left-wing economist who went on to place third in the election with only 4 percent of the vote. Unlike Yeltsin in 1996, Putin did not need to win back public support. In 2004, the Russian economy was enjoying strong growth – 7 percent -- and retirees, the segment of the population most likely to vote, credited Putin with the fact that their pension checks arrived on time. In comparison to 2000, when Putin received 53 percent of the vote, in 2004, he got more than 70 percent. The composition of his support base also changed: In 2000, he was mostly supported by Communists, senior citizens, veterans and the bureaucracy. In 2004, he was supported by a middle class as his majority. [367]

The 2003 parliamentary elections and subsequent 2004 presidential election are considered a turning point in Putin's political consolidation. The election was characterized as unfair, as the media landscape tilted far toward the incumbent. An OSCE report on the media found that one state-controlled national television network "gave Putin two hours and 38 minutes of 'overwhelmingly positive' coverage during the first two weeks of the official campaign period, when all of the other candidates combined received a total of only 22 minutes."[368]

Beyond media manipulation, new forms of coercion emerged in the 2004 election. Following the election, RFE/RL reported on an interview in the weekly "Yenedelnyia Zhurnal," with media consultant Marat Gelman (who consulted for the Motherland-Patriotic Union bloc in the December 2003 Duma elections). Gelman stated, "A new kind of 'technology of power' has appeared," one

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[365] Interview with John Beyrle, Washington D.C., March 8 2017.
[366] Glazyev announced his retirement from politics in March 2007, and said that he did not intend to seek a further term in the Duma, arguing that Putin's rule had crowded out political opposition and debate in the country. In 2012, he was appointed by Putin as presidential aide for coordinating the customs union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia. He was a strong critic of the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement.
[367] Gleb Pavlovsky, "Elections in Russia: The Struggle Was Honest, The Winner's Advantage, Obvious," RIA Novosti, March 15, 2004.
[368] Julie A. Corwin, "Spinning Putin," *RFE/RL Newsline,* March 12, 2004.

that relies on "instruments such as tax inspections, prosecutorial inquiries, and court cases against one's political rivals." Collecting compromising materials and organizing operations to discredit political rivals were also popular methods used by the FSB. "For one thing, they're cheaper. No consultant or firm has to be paid. And for another, they are just as effective,"[369] writes Gelman. These tactics led to widespread allegations that it had been the least competitive election Russia's post-Communist history.[370] The Moscow Times reported that almost "some 900,000 people seem to have disappeared from the country's lists of registered voters in the three months between the December parliamentary elections and March 14 presidential elections, in what appears to reflect a clever effort to boost turnout figures."[371]

Putin and United Russia's tactics worked. The 2003 parliamentary and 2004 presidential elections showed the strength of Putin's party, United Russia, as it "steamrolled rival parties,"[372] according to the Moscow Times. The communist party, which had long dominated the political landscape as one of the top-two political parties, was badly beaten in the December 2003 parliamentary elections. The United Russia party (Putin's nominal support base, although he ran as an independent) won a majority of the Duma's 450 seats.[373] In elections to the Moscow City Duma in December 2005, moreover, United Russia acquired 28 out of 35 seats, won all fifteen races in single-mandate districts and 47 percent of the party list vote (votes cast for parties). In the broader context of encroaching authoritarianism (and as discussed in earlier chapters), these tactics represented new measures that Putin's regime used to remain in power and gain legitimacy – ones that are emblematic of modern authoritarian systems in which subtle deception and persuasion is preferred to overt oppression.

Lastly, Putin had achieved a level of popularity that Yeltsin could have never dreamed of for himself. His high levels of public support even led commentators to view the question of his eventual succession differently. As an illustration, as early as 2004, media station NTV Mir

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[369] Corwin, "Spinning Putin."
[370] McFaul, "Russia's Glass is Half Full and Leaking."
[371] Caroline McGregor, "Election Numbers Do Not Add Up," *Moscow Times,* March 19, 2004. Accessed at Hoover Institution Archives, June 13, 2016.
[372] Moscow Times, "United Russia Gets 28 Out of 35 Seats," December 6, 2005. Accessed at Hoover Institution Archives, June 13, 2016.
[373] Reuters, "Suspense as Russia Decides Presidential Hopefuls," January 28, 2004. Accessed at Hoover Institution Archives, June 13, 2016.

(International), reported: "Putin sees the problem of successor totally differently from how it was seen by Yeltsin. For Yeltsin, the problem of successor was a problem of saving the state from the results of a failed policy. Putin is resolving a different problem: how a man who has effectively become the social and national leader can leave his post, after his term expires, without destabilizing the situation of presidency…"[374] Putin was creating a system that depended entirely on his own power.

C. Challenges to Regime Legitimacy (IV #3)

i) Internal Disorder... Getting Their House In Order

Despite widespread popularity, Putin still faced both economic and security challenges during his first two terms as president. On economic issues, his road map at the turn of the century was an extension of the internal changes that the nation underwent in the final decade of the twentieth century. Under Yeltsin, the Russian economy had experienced a catastrophic financial crisis in 1998 when the Russian ruble collapsed (the Russian Central Bank devalued the ruble and defaulted on its debt) and pensions disappeared. Sergei Kovalev writes, "To an even greater degree to political scandals accompanying the crisis undermined the population's faith in the possibility and desirability of political democracy and social freedom in Russia. For many people the economic and political failure of 'Yeltsin's reforms' meant disillusionment with the ideas of 'Western-style' liberalism."[375] As a result, on the day of Yeltsin's resignation, his approval rating was 3 percent. Due to Yeltsin's failings, Putin's own legitimacy would rest on his ability to deal with, and stabilize, Russia's economy.

State security also continued to be a legitimacy issue for Putin in the early years of his presidency. A pivotal moment in Russia's renewed fight against terrorism came on October 23, 2002, when Chechen rebels seized a Moscow theater and held about 800 people hostage. The crisis did not end before most of the rebels and 120 hostages were killed when Russian forces stormed the building.

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[374]NTV Mir, Moscow/ BBC Monitoring, "Russian Analyst sees opportunity for opposition after election," March 15, 2004. Accessed at Hoover Institution Archives, June 13, 2016.
[375] Kovalev, "Putin's War."

Later in September 2004, more than 380 people, many of them children, where killed when armed Islamic groups, primarily Chechen and Ingush, besieged a school in the town of Beslan, North Ossetia (an autonomous region in Northern Caucasus in Russia) for three days. It was Russia's worst terrorist attack in history, and the catastrophe prompted a boost in state security powers. Moscow's attempt to deal with domestic instability was to strengthen the state security forces. In fact, this series of attacks and ongoing violence stemming from Chechnya created growing space for the Russian security apparatus as a major tool in maintaining domestic stability and had a decisive influence on the reemergence of the state's administrative capabilities moving into Putin's second term as President.[376]

Given Putin's heavy-handed response to security concerns, the Russian public saw Putin as a strong leader in dealing with terrorist threats. Furthermore, he brought economic stability back to Russia, lending significant legitimacy to his regime, even as he grew more authoritarian.

Conclusion to Case Study #1

Putin's rise to power came amidst chaos in the Caucuses and an ongoing war with Chechnya, which he assumed responsibility for when he became acting Prime Minister in August 1999 and then as president in 2000. According to many analysts, and even as Yeltsin himself has alluded, Putin owes his accession to the presidency largely to his actions during the war. He then consolidated power under an elite group of siloviki and in United Russia, removing powerful oligarchs from positions of influence and gaining control of major TV outlets. But abroad, Russia in the early 2000's was not consolidated internally nor powerful enough in its military capabilities to affect events in its region, nor compete with the European Union or the United States for influence.

Should we consider Russia's war in Chechnya an indicator of Russia's revisionist aims in the region? While Putin's methods for dealing with the threat were brutal, objectionable and troubling in terms of its humanitarian toll, Russia's military activities in the Caucasus region should be looked at as primarily an issue of internal stability. According to the indicators of revisionism laid

[376] Vladimir Gel'man, *Authoritarian Russia,* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2015), p. 76.

out earlier in this chapter, the country's foreign policies during Putin's early years should not be classified as outwardly revisionist. Russia did not maintain a national posture and security strategy that sought redistribution of power in the region, nor did Putin promote a revisionist ideology in his speeches and public addresses. Russia's leadership did not indicate a sense of resolve to exert Russia's political and military influence in its region or to challenge, even rhetorically, the dominance of the Western-led liberal order in Europe during Putin's early years as President. Moreover, there was little willingness to use unilateral force and coercion to expand territorial possessions (nor to tolerate the costs) while Russia's internal affairs were in disarray.

Case Study II: Russia's Oscillation between Cooperation and Confrontation (2007-2012)

This case study of Russian foreign policy (2007-2012) spans the last year of Putin's second-term as president, as well as Dmitry Medvedev's four-year presidential administration (with Putin in the role of prime minister). This era can be classified as one of oscillation between Russian and Western competition and cooperation. This era began with the 2007 Munich Security Conference, where President Putin delivered a harsh address condemning American 'unipolarity' and what he saw as Western hypocrisy in its use of force abroad. Putin's notable address was followed by several acts of Russian aggression in its region, first with Russia's alleged cyber-attacks against Estonia in April 2007, and then its five-day war with Georgia in August 2008. Russia's engagement with the West, however, turned newly cooperative with the accession of Dmitry Medvedev to the presidency. From 2009 to 2011, The U.S. under Obama and Russia under Medvedev attempted to "reset" relations, enhance arms control cooperation and work together with other great powers to address Iran's nuclear program. The hope of greater cooperation between Russia and the West continued throughout Obama's first term and Medvedev's presidential tenure.

A. Russia's Strategic Orientation – Indicators of Revisionism and Key Turning Points

i) Munich Security Conference: February 2007

A critical juncture in Russia's revisionist posture came on February 10, 2007, when Putin addressed the 43rd Munich Security Conference, an annual security conference that attracts political and military leaders from around the world. It was at this time that Putin made a decisive and public move away from integrating into the Western-led security order in Europe. During this speech, he accused the United States of trying to create a "unipolar order" with "one center of force, one center of decision-making." "It is a world," he said, "in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within." In this new system, Putin warned, "we are witnessing the almost uncontained hyper use of force—military force—in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts... One state, and of course, first and foremost the U.S., has overstepped its national borders in every way."[377]

Putin's remarks indicated Russia's desire to fundamentally change the hierarchy of power in the international system for the first time since the end of the Cold War. Putin viewed it as high time that the international community recognize that Russia was back on its feet, and he urged its members that the world had reached "that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security."[378] Indeed, by 2007, Russia had paid back its international debts (over three years ahead of schedule) and was economically stronger than it had been at any other time during its post-Soviet life. Putin's repayment of the debt allowed Russia to pursue a more sovereign and independent course in its foreign policy, and he wanted to capitalize on it. "There is no reason to doubt," he said, "that the economic potential of the new centers of global economic growth will inevitably be converted into political influence and will strengthen multipolarity." The post-cold war era of unipolarity in Putin's mind had been catastrophic, and he would seek to alter it moving forward. Putin took this opportunity to indicate to the international community his frustration over the Iraq war and Western support for the color revolutions that took place in Russia's "near abroad" over the first decade of the 21st-century. Yet unlike in the 2003 U.S.

[377] Vladimir Putin, "Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," Munich, Germany, February 2007.
[378] Ibid.

invasion of Iraq, or during the 2004 Orange revolution in Ukraine, Putin and Russia were strong enough to push back.

Eighteenth months before Russia's August 2008 war with Georgia, it was a speech that, according to many U.S. and European security analysts, signified a shift in Russia's desire to promote an alternative vision for international relations with both great powers and smaller nations. This speech is a clear illustration of the internal preferences for revisionism, but this did not yet represent Russia's decisive turn away from integrating with the political West through revisionist actions. Instead, the next five years would see Russia oscillate between posterns of competition and cooperation with NATO and the West, before finally shifting toward rivalry and aggression. This would not come until Putin decided to return to the Russian presidency for a third term, highlighting the importance of domestic and individual factors in Russia's confrontation with the West.

ii) Russia's Cyber Attacks on Estonia

Following the Munich Security Conference Speech, Russia began to test Western resolve in its near abroad. In the early morning on April 27, 2007, the Estonian government removed a bronze statue in from the center of Tallinn, the nation's capital. The statue was a Soviet WWII memorial dedicated to the Red Army "liberators of Tallinn" who on September 22, 1944 forced the Nazis to retreat. But the statue was controversial. It was considered by ethnic Russians in Estonia (who make up over a quarter of population, although the majority is ethnic Estonian) to symbolize their rightful place in the country's history, and deemed by others as a symbol of Soviet occupation following WWII. The final decision to relocate the statue and accompanying burial ground for Soviet soldiers was made after the issue evoked two days of the most intense riots Estonia had ever experienced.

A few days after the removal of the statue, Estonia experienced a crippling series of cyber-attacks. In an extremely electronically connected and internet dependent country as Estonia (over 90 percent of bank transactions are conducted online), the attack, which took place over a period of three weeks, was catastrophic. The attack crashed the websites of the government, political parties, the country's major newspapers and banks. The Estonian Defense Minister Jaak Aaviksoo said in

an interview with Wired Magazine, "The attacks were aimed at the essential electronic infrastructure of the Republic of Estonia... All major commercial banks, telcos, media outlets, and name servers — the phone books of the Internet — felt the impact, and this affected the majority of the Estonian population. This was the first time that a botnet threatened the national security of an entire nation." [379]

While Russia was immediately suspected of carrying out the attacks (there is now no doubt that Russian actors were the perpetrators), EU and NATO representatives stopped short, initially, of directly accusing Russia. At the time, cyber-attacks were not included in the NATO Charter Article V, which deems that an attack against one is considered an attack against all. It was not until 2016 that NATO made it an official policy to treat a significant cyber-attack as a conventional act of war that would trigger Article V. In the interim, Moscow learned that the international system and collective security arrangements were not well equipped to handle hybrid tactics, such as cyber-attacks, even against a member state of NATO. While Russia never agreed with the post-Cold War security architecture in Europe – and certainly saw NATO expansion as a direct affront to its interests – Russia's cyber operations in Estonia represented a clear turning point in Russia's movement from cooperation to confrontation with the West over Eastern European security. Where there was a lack of Western willpower, Russia proved in Estonia that it would test it.

Russia's cyber-attacks on Estonia also had important implications for Russia's use of cyber weapons moving forward. First, it represented an important milestone in Russia's efforts to test Western resolve and commitment to the Baltic states as nations that had only recently joined NATO in 2004. Second, it was an opportunity for Russia to test its cyber warfare capabilities. Following the Estonian attack, cyber weapons became an even more important tool in Russia's twenty-first century toolkit of active measures that it uses to exploit vulnerabilities within states to the advantage of Russian interests. Similar tactics used in Estonia were seen again in the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 and in Kyrgyzstan in January 2009 during heated debates over the future of a U.S. air force base near Manas. In both instances, massive distributed denial of services (DDoS)

[379] Joshua Davis of Wired magazine interview with Jaak Aaviksoo, "Hackers Take Down the Most Wired Country in Europe," Wired Magazine, August 21, 2017.

attacks shut down internet services, and IP traffic was traced back to Russian servers.[380] In each instance, particularly in the case of Estonia as a NATO member, Russia's use of cyber tactics proved convenient for carrying out political goals without the use of overt military tools.[381] Following the Clausewitz adage, "War is the continuation of politics by other means," Russia was expanding the effective means in its arsenal to achieve the nation's, and the regime's, political aims.

iii) The Russia-Georgia War of August 2008

A major turning point in Russia's projection of power and use of military force abroad was the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008. The five day war between Russia and Georgia was sparked when the Georgian government attempted to regain control of separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. After days of shelling from Ossetian separatists on Georgian villages, the Georgian Army moved into the South Ossetian conflict zone on August 7. Russia accused Georgia of aggression against South Ossetia and launched an air and sea invasion of Georgia, citing the necessity to defend Russian citizens living in South Ossetia. The conflict lasted five dates until French President Nicholas Sarkozy negotiated a ceasefire on August 12. Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as autonomous republics on August 26; and in response, the Georgian government severed diplomatic relations with Russia. It was the first time that the Russian military had used force beyond its borders since the end of the Cold War. Yet, overall, the response from the West to Russia's military operations was limited. Sanctions were not considered a viable response, and as Dan Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs from 2005-2009 alluded, the U.S. not was confident in the sanctions option and did not have the support of Merkel and the Germans."[382] The U.S. and Europe were fractured over the necessary response, and Putin acknowledged this.

While the domestic and international factors leading to the war will be further explored below, there were three significant ramifications of the Russo-Georgian war for Russian foreign policy

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[380] Andrzej Kozlowski, 'Comparative Analysis of Cyberattacks on Estonia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan,' *European Scientific Journal*, Vol 10, No. 7 (2014).

[381] The Georgian case is a moderately different case, given that cyber tools were employed in addition to military operations in the August 2008 war.

[382] Daniel Fried, Presentation at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, February 22, 2017.

moving forward. The first was the perception Putin developed from the lack of Western response. Russia closely observed the reactions and political responses of the United States, NATO, the EU, UN, and individual European countries during and after the war. According to a National Intelligence Officer at the NIC at the time of the conflict, "Moscow took the lack of U.S. and NATO military support for Georgia—coupled with NATO's prior tepid response to Russia's cyber-attacks in Estonia in 2007—and intra-alliance disagreements about appropriate countermeasures, as fissures that it could exploit in the future…"[383] Russia realized that no European state was willing to enter a direct military conflict with Russia over Georgia, and that it would instead attempt to avoid military escalation with Russia at all costs. The EU considered sanctions against Russia for its transgressions but did not enact any. Thus, Russia determined that it had a distinct advantage over its neighbors and major European states in its willingness to threaten or use military force.

Second, Moscow concluded that Washington was the predominant force behind NATO, and that the U.S. had its own strategic priorities that would preclude it from acting forcibly in Europe. The Bush administration issued a series of responses to the Russian invasion of Georgia, including the deployment of naval units to the Black Sea and a robust $1 billion economic package in support for Georgia. However, from a geostrategic perspective, in 2008 the United States clearly prioritized its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq above fighting with Russia over Georgia, despite the seemingly close political relations between Washington and Tbilisi during this period. Coupled with the global financial crisis in 2008, the U.S. was perceived as distracted with its own problems. The third ramification for Russian thinking was its renewed faith in using military force as an *offensive* tool of statecraft, but one that would need to be modernized.

iv) Defense Reform and Military Modernization

Indeed, the war with Georgia highlighted the military's conventional weaknesses, as the ground forces and the air force suffered high losses, including from friendly fire. "The sloppy performance was a 'come to Jesus' moment in the Kremlin," said Ian Brzezinski, the former Deputy Assistant

[383] Author interview with National Intelligence Officer (anonymous) on February 22, 2017.

Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy under George W. Bush.[384] On this point, Steve Pifer, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, also notes, "The war with Georgia in 2008 served as a wake-up call to the Kremlin that their fighting forces were not in good shape."[385] In response, Putin, who regarded and still sees military modernization as a vital national interest, initiated an extensive investment in Russia's conventional forces.

As a first step, Putin empowered Anatoly Serdyukov, Russia's defense minister and a former member of his St. Petersburg group, to carry out significant defense reforms. Serdyukov oversaw the downsizing of the armed forces, a fifty-percent cut in the officer corps, a two-tier system of strategic commands more mobile combat brigades.[386] But the most significant military reform was a ten-year weapons-modernization program that was launched in 2010, at a cost of $720 billion. At the time, only ten-percent of weapons in the current inventory were considered modernized. The aim was to increase this figure to 30 percent by 2015 and 70 percent of the army's equipment classified as "modern" by 2020.[387]

Senior officials at the NATO Allied Maritime Command (MARCOMM) highlight these defense reforms initiated in 2008 as a turning point in Russia's enhanced military strength and power projection capabilities. Following Russia's military reforms, the military became a viable tool of foreign policy for the first time in twenty-five years.[388] However, Russia's military modernization did not immediately translate into a more forceful posture abroad, as is often a concern when a nation modernizes its military and increases defense spending without a projecting clear strategic intentions. Instead, the accession of Dmitry Medvedev, who had been serving as Deputy Prime Minister since 2005, to the presidency in March 2008 signaled potential for renewed U.S.-Russia relations and a "reset," again highlighting the importance of domestic political factors in shaping

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[384] Ian Brzezinski quoted in The Economist, "Putin's New Model Army," May 24, 2014.
[385] Interview with Steve Pifer, Washington D.C., October 6, 2016.
[386] Jim Nichol, "Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy, *Congressional Research Service,* August 24, 2011.
[387] The Economist, "Putin's New Model Army," May 24, 2014. Accessed at: https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21602743-money-and-reform-have-given-russia-armed-forces-it-can-use-putins-new-model-army
[388] MARCOMM Presentation to Brookings security fellows in February 2017. The full strength of Russia's modernization program was seen when Putin amassed 40,000 troops along the border with Ukraine following the March 2014 annexation of Crimea. Putin's ability to deploy large numbers of combat-ready troops, even if he had no intention of a ground invasion, proved intimidating and useful to Russia's destabilization of eastern Ukraine and support for pro-Russian separatists.

a nation's foreign policies. The succession planning between Medvedev and Putin will be discussed in more detail below, but a brief overview of U.S.-Russian joint endeavors of cooperation from 2009-2011 are explored here.

v) New Faces, the U.S.- Russia Reset, and *Peregruzka*

The symbolic reset between the U.S. and Russia occurred in March 2009 when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov with a red button with the English word "reset" and the Russian translation "peregruzka."[389] The more substantive outcomes of the U.S.-Russia reset, however, occurred during President Obama's first official visit to Moscow in July 2009, when he and President Medvedev negotiated an agreement to reduce nuclear stockpiles and reaffirmed their commitment to the tenets of the 1991 START I treaty. Medvedev also announced at the summit that Russia would allow U.S. force supplies to pass through Russian airspace on their way to Afghanistan. Later in September 2009, in a show of reciprocal good will, Obama decided to shelve President Bush's plans to install missile defense bases in Poland and the Czech Republic and build a missile defense shield in Europe. A few months later in April 2010, Medvedev and Obama signed the New START treaty, committing both sides to drastically cut their arsenals of deployed nuclear warheads.

More broadly, the world witnessed a series of negotiations throughout between great powers that indicated warming relations and heightened cooperation between Russia and the West. One instance came in May 2010, when major powers under the P5 + 1 framework (the U.S., France, Britain, Russia, China and Germany) agreed impose additional sanctions against Iran in an attempt to halt their enrichment of uranium.[390] Russia and China were key components of the negotiation's success, as the sanctions would affect Russia's conventional arms sales to Iran as well as China's energy investments. According to Pifer, Russia went along with the sanctions far more than expected. He said, "When the UNSC voted on a resolution to outlaw arms sales transfers to Iran, the language about the S-300 missile system (which Russia exported to Iran) was not very clear;

[389] Portending harder times to come, the actual translation is of *peregruzka* is "overcharged."
[390] International cooperation between the US, Russia and Europe on the Iran nuclear issue commenced after 2005, when the Bush administration formed a group to negotiate with Iran and passed three UN Security Council Chapter 7 resolutions to sanction Iran.

Moscow ended up taking a harder line than expected by including it as part of the outlawed arms transfers, when Washington had not really specified."[391] In response, the U.S then cancelled sanctions against the Russian state arms export agency, which had previously been sanctioned for exporting arms to Iran. One month later in June 2010, Medvedev and Obama signaled even deeper ties when Medvedev made his first visit to the White House. During his visit, Obama stated that the U.S. would back Russia's accession to the WTO, an issue on which negotiations had been stalled for over a decade.

Overall, the period of 2007-2012 represented a period of oscillation between cooperation and competition in Russia's regional foreign policies and relations with the West. This case study begins with Putin's fiery remarks at the Munich Security Conference, and subsequent cyber attacks in Estonia in 2007 and war with Georgia in 2008. Tensions cooled from 2009-2011 when Medvedev and Putin exchanged places, offering the possibility of a "reset" in relations with the U.S. These three years also represented the second instance of relatively smooth engagement between Russia and the West during the Putin era, the first being after the September 11th attacks when Putin chose to ally with Washington and the West in the global war on terror. This can also be defined as an era of "first, do no harm," a mentality that led to Obama's decision to drop missile defense plans in Eastern Europe and Medvedev's acquiescence of the NATO no-fly zone in Libya in 2011.

Yet, as Bobo Lo argues, "One of the flaws of the reset was the hope that bilateral problems might be resolved or at least managed if they could be discussed in a pragmatic, cooperative spirit. This underestimated the gravity and intractability of the two sides' substantive disagreements."[392] There remained strong dissent on missile defense, the architecture of European security cooperation, and the civil war in Syria. Where both sides wanted to see an end to the civil war, Russia was unwilling to abandon the Assad regime as its stronghold in the Middle East. By late 2011, Secretary of State Clinton was accusing Russia of being on the "wrong side of history" over Syria. Importantly, the Obama administration's lack of interest in forming a relationship with Putin (preferring to deal

[391] Interview with Steve Pifer, Washington D.C., October 6, 2016.
[392] Lo, 174.

only with Medvedev) would also come back to haunt U.S.-Russia relations when Putin returned to the top of Russia's political system in 2012.

B. International Conditions

i) Russia's Growing Economic Clout

Russia had regained its economic footing by the time it showed renewed strength in its region and underwent efforts to negotiate with the U.S. and the West on shared transnational concerns. In 2006, Russia paid back the final $22 billion of international debt owed to the Paris Club – a group of 17 creditors including the United States. This was no small task, given that Mikhail Gorbachev's government maintained almost $70 billion in foreign debt, which the Russian Federation officially assumed after the fall of the Soviet Union.[393] In 2007, Russian economic growth hit a six-year high of 8.5 percent and the country amassed $478bn in foreign exchange reserves, giving Russia one of the lowest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world.[394] By contrast, when Putin became acting president, Russian reserves were at $8.5 billion. Between 1999 and 2008, over the first two terms of Putin's tenure, Russia had one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The booming economy was due in large measure to surging oil and gas prices, which quadrupled (along with per capita income) between 2002-2008,[395] [396] but also structural economic changes that Russia had made internally. Household consumption was buoyant, as were the domestic construction and manufacturing industries.

In the context of Russia's rising international economic power, Moscow began to operate with more maneuverability abroad. By 2008, Putin and the people around him were convinced that they no longer needed Western support or integration for economic stability. "They had become masters of their own fate," said John Beyrle.

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[393] Leon Aron, "The Battle Over the Debt," *American Enterprise Institute,* April 1, 2001.
[394] World Bank Data, Russian GDP growth (annual %) and Russian foreign exchange reserves (including gold and current USD). Accessed at: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FI.RES.TOTL.CD?end=2007&locations=RU&start=1993&view=chart&year=2015
[395] OECD (2017), Crude oil import prices (indicator). doi: 10.1787/9ee0e3ab-en (Accessed on April 5 2017).
[396] World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files. Accessed at: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?locations=RU

The global financial crisis of 2008-2009 set Russia back on its heels and halted the meteoric economic rise it experienced from 2000-2008 under Putin. Some analysts attribute Russia's heightened cooperation with the West to Russia's economic slowdown following the crisis and their inability to "fill the gaps" in their own development. Beyrle notes, "When this happens throughout Russian history, there is usually a scramble to fill the gap by tilting toward the West… this made it easier for the Obama administration to find willing partners in business and in WTO negotiations."[397] Yet the impact of the crisis could have been worse. Due to Russia's decade of building its financial reserves, it was able to pass a significant stimulus package to shield household income from drastic declines. As will be discussed later on in this chapter, the relatively quick recovery of the Russian economy following the global financial crisis shielded the political elite from a catastrophic crisis of legitimacy.

ii) NATO Reaches Farther East: The Bucharest Summit

NATO's exploration in 2008 of expanding eastward prompted a renewal of tensions between Russia and two of its closest neighbors: Ukraine and Georgia. Relations with Georgia in particular had been deteriorating since the Rose Revolution and Saakashvili's rise to the Georgian presidency in 2003. Yet a more proximate factor in the buildup of tensions between Georgia and Russia that eventually culminated in the August 2008 war with Georgia was the April 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit, at which Membership Action Plans (MAPs)were considered for Ukraine and Georgia. While membership plans were not extended (despite pressure from President Bush and Saakashvili's expectation that MAPS would be granted), NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer indicated in a news conference following the summit that Georgia and Ukraine would "eventually become members." This left NATO members in the unfortunate position of not having gained ground on Ukraine and Georgia, while still angering Russia in the process. Ukraine and Georgia's possible accession into NATO was an untenable development for Russia. More so than the Baltic states, Putin prioritized Ukraine and Georgia as greater strategic concerns to Russia in ways that the Baltics were not, perhaps given Russia's shared cultural and political history with Ukraine and interest in the separatist regions in Georgia's territory and on Russia's border.

[397] Interview with Ambassador John Beyrle, Washington D.C., March 8, 2017.

Following the Summit, Ukraine backed away from seeking NATO membership, whereas Georgia pressed further, challenging a vital national interest for Putin. The U.S., however, made assumptions that Russia's response to another round of possible NATO expansion would be muted.

According to a national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council, "There was a prevailing view that Russia was an empty shirt, it would 'shout and scream' but not do anything serious. Beginning as early as 1992, Russian officials had complained vehemently about U.S. actions in Russia's neighborhood and then done very little to openly confront the U.S.—although Moscow had certainly applied plenty of economic and political pressure on its neighbors." Yet this assumption proved false. The official added that instead, "Putin was determined to draw and enforce a real red line and show everyone who was boss, teach Saakashvili in particular a lesson, and also send a strong signal to the U.S. and the rest of the region that things had changed! Russia would assert itself in its neighborhood and would use military force."[398]

Kosovo's independence from Serbia in February 2008, which the Russians vehemently opposed, was used as justification for sovereignty by the separatist leaders in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and by Putin. As a spokeswoman for South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity told Reuters at the time: "The Kosovo precedent has driven us to more actively seek our rights."[399] Putin also responded strongly to the West's backing of Kosovo's independence. The U.S. and Western allies viewed Kosovo's independence as sui generis and unique to other separatist tensions in the region. But Russia believed that it set a dangerous precedent for other separatist regions in its own territory, first and foremost Chechnya. Following the Kosovo decision, Putin addressed a meeting of regional leaders in Moscow. He said, "The precedent of Kosovo is a terrible precedent, which will de facto blow apart the whole system of international relations, developed not over decades, but over centuries." Putin later added on a state broadcast, "[The West] has not thought through

[398] Conversation with National Intelligence Officer on National Intelligence Council from 2006-2009, Washington DC, February 2017.
[399] Giles Elgood, "Was South Ossetia's Fate Sealed in Kosovo," *Reuters,* August 8, 2008. Accessed at: http://blogs.reuters.com/global/2008/08/08/was-south-ossetias-fate-sealed-in-kosovo/

the results of what they are doing. At the end of the day it is a two-ended stick and the second end will come back and hit them in the face."[400]

One month later, Putin moved into the role of Prime Minister as Medvedev took the reigns as President of the Russian Federation. Putin, however, would not forget the lessons he learned over the course of his first two terms from 2000 to 2008. His warning about the West's practices coming back to "hit them in the face," would turn out to be more prophetic than anticipated.

C. Domestic Conditions

A. Composition and Interests of the Russian Elite (IV #1)

Prior to Putin's decision to announce his support for Medvedev as a presidential candidate, there was uncertainty among elites as to who would fill Putin's void after leaving the presidency, similar to the void felt following Yeltsin's resignation. A key difference between this period of leadership succession and that of Yeltsin's in 1999, however, was that Putin was in good health and at the height of his popularity. Regardless, the uncertainty over succession plans led to renewed elite competition, particularly among individuals in the security sector. Henry Hale writes, "Russia's political-economic networks had little incentive to mobilize popular opposition and push for more democracy, instead struggling both overtly and covertly to influence Putin's decision and to better position themselves for whatever new arrangement would emerge. It was during this period that competing networks with roots in rival security services resorted to tactics that included arresting each other's representatives and exposing each other's misdeeds in media outlets."[401]

At a Valdai discussion forum in Sochi in September 2007, Putin stated, "There are now at least five people who can run for president and can be elected..."[402] He did not list who those candidates

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[400] Cited in reporting by *Sydney Morning Herald,* "Putin Calls Kosovo Independence 'Terrible Precedent,'" February 23, 2008. Accessed at: http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/putin-calls-kosovo-independence-terrible-precedent/2008/02/23/1203467431503.html
[401] Hale, "Russian Patronal Politics Beyond Putin."
[402] Sputnik News, "Putin Says Five Candidates Could Run for President," September 14, 2007. Accessed at: https://sputniknews.com/russia/2007091478797642/

were, but some media outlets inferred that they were Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, First Deputy Prime Ministers Sergei Ivanov and Dmitry Medvedev and acting deputy Prime Minister Sergei Naryshkin. At the time it was perceived that Sergei Ivanov, Putin's close ally and a former KGB agent, was the front runner in the race for the Presidency, ahead of Dmitry Medvedev.

On December 10th 2007, Putin announced at a meeting with representatives from the United Russia party and three other parties in parliament that he would support First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev as his successor, ending months of speculation. However, uncertainty over the future of political power in Russia remained even after Putin indicated that he would retain a certain degree of power as prime minister and leader of the United Russia Party and cede the presidency to the more "liberal" Medvedev (and because polls showed that the majority of the electorate would vote for whomever Putin endorsed). Medvedev went on to win the March 2008 presidential election in a landslide, as United Russia, Putin and Medvedev's political support base, made significant gains in the Russian parliament. Similar to the elections in 2003 and 2004, there were widespread indications of voting irregularities, but most criticism of the fairness of the election was directed toward the media, which heavily favored United Russia and its candidates.

As Prime Minister, Putin quickly put together a cabinet comprised of many of the same individuals from his prior presidential administration. Alexei Kudrin retained his position as finance minister, and Sergei Lavrov and Anatoly Serdyukov kept their positions as foreign and defense ministers. Putin also increased the number of deputy prime ministers serving under him as prime minister. These moves, along with other indicators, led critics to accuse "Putin of bolstering the position of prime minister in Russia and weakening the presidency in recent months so that he can hold onto power."[403] Sergei Sobyanin who headed the presidential administration under Putin moved into the position of government chief of staff and Igor Sechin, another close ally of Putin's and his former deputy chief of staff became one of the five deputy prime ministers. Sergei Ivanov, who had previously been seen as a front runner for the presidency, became another one of the deputy prime ministers. Radio Free Europe quoted Yevgeny Volk, Moscow Director of the Heritage Fund,

[403] Chloe Arnold, "Russia: Prime Minister Putin Names New Cabinet," *RFE/RL,* May 12, 2008. Accessed at: https://www.rferl.org/a/1117469.html

as stating that Putin's choices showed "the preservation of power." Volk added, "Objectively, we can see that it isn't just those appointed personally by Putin [in his former administration] who have managed to hang on to their jobs...He's also added a powerful group of his supporters who worked with him in the Kremlin."[404]

As Putin consolidated his power as Prime Minister, Medvedev in the position of the presidency would have important implications for Russia's foreign policy, particularly regarding the U.S.-Russia reset. According Beyrle, there were two domestic factors (within the U.S. and Russia) that helped lead to the reset. The first was the change of administration in Washington. Putin and his regime had accumulated a litany of grievances under President George W. Bush (from Bush's withdrawal from the ABM treaty and desire to place missile defense systems in Europe to the U.S. invasion of Iraq and policy of regime change) and now saw an opportunity to turn the page. The Obama administration was also a willing partner in the exploration of business deals and assisting with Russia's accession to the WTO.

There was also a "new" face in the Kremlin, and this speaks to the second factor behind the reset. As Beyrle argues, "Medvedev was a very different kind of leader than Putin... and he had much more autonomy from Putin that we give him credit for. Medvedev could stake out positions that Putin would have fought harder against, such as the decision to abstain from the Libya intervention." There was also a more congenial relationship between Medvedev and Obama, made easier by their shared backgrounds; both were law professors of the same generation, helping add to their "personal chemistry."[405] Medvedev's distance from Putin and ability to make independent decisions on foreign policy fostered renewed cooperation with the West on sanctions against Iran as well as on the U.N. and NATO intervention on Libya in 2011.

B. Consolidation of Control (IV #2)

[404] Vevgeny Volk, Moscow director of the Heritage Fund. Originally quoted in Chloe Arnold, "Russia: Prime Minister Putin Names New Cabinet," *RFE/RL,* May 12, 2008. Accessed at: https://www.rferl.org/a/1117469.html
[405] Interview with Ambassador John Beyrle, Washington DC, March 9, 2017.

The day following Medvedev's inauguration, he named Putin as Prime Minister, completing the fait accompli and Medvedev-Putin power tandem. As Hill and Gaddy argue about the swap, Putin maintained significant power over the policymaking process. They write, "When [Putin] was prime minister from 2008-2012, he took the key strategic planning and goal setting functions along with him. As president, Dmitry Medvedev executed and carried out some of the main goals. He did not get to set the national agenda on his own, although he was allowed to make a few tweaks here and there and exert some influence."[406] But Putin maintained his operating style, which was to "decide which goals are best suited to the overall mission and purposes of the [Russia Inc.] 'organization.' Hill and Gaddy remind us, "The people immediately around the president and at the top levels of the cabinet are not there to set the goals. Mr. Putin sets the goals. They execute them."[407]

Decision-making processes during the Medvedev's tenure as president may not have changed significantly, but 2007-2012 is considered a time of moderate political openness in Russia. Medvedev took a series of steps to move Russian politics in a more liberal direction, although they were mostly symbolic. Two illustrations are Medvedev's reconvening of a council on human rights, which eventually investigated the death of Sergei Magnitsky, and launching of a review of the NGO law adopted in 2006 on civil society organizations, which had expanded government control over NGOs and restricted the right to privacy of NGOs and their members. He later created a working group to draft amendments to the law and submitted it to Parliament for consideration.

On the other hand, Medvedev presided over a law that changed the constitutional mandates on presidential and parliamentary term limits, further entrenching Russia's authoritarian political direction. In November 2008, Medvedev proposed substantial changes to the constitution (for the first time since 1993) that were then passed by the Russian parliament in December 2008. The amendments extended the terms of the President from four to six years and the State Duma from four to five years. They were reviewed in a hurried legislative drive that met opposition from

[406] Hill and Gaddy, 200-201.
[407] Ibid.

liberal and democratic parties, but which were too fractured by this point to take meaningful action.[408]

C. Challenges to Regime Legitimacy (IV #3)

i) Domestic Implications of the Global Financial Crisis

In 2008, Russia was thrown into the abyss of the global economic crisis, coupled with the collapse of oil prices. Turmoil in the world financial markets still hit the Russian economy hard: there was a rapid depreciation of the ruble against the dollar and ensuing capital flight from the country. According to Hill and Gaddy, "From June 2008 to January 2009, the stock market lost nearly 80 percent of its value. In 2009, GDP dropped by 7.9 percent and industrial output by 10.8 percent from the previous year."[409] Moreover, hard times fell on an undiversified economy. By 2008, hydrocarbon export revenues comprised 65 to 70 percent of Russia's budget directly or indirectly.[410] The world was reminded how thoroughly dependent Russia was on oil and gas.

Fortunately, household income was largely protected due to government stimulus measures. Real income continued to grow and job losses were smaller than almost anywhere else in Europe.[411] The decade spent building up reserves helped Russia to weather the crisis, and convinced Putin that fiscal conservatism would help Russia remain resilient to short-term shocks. Whereas the economic crisis could have been a significant blow to Putin's legitimacy, the solvency of the Russian state stood in stark contrast to how Russia weathered the 1997 Asian financial crisis and subsequent ruble crisis in 1998. Therefore the Putin-Medvedev tandem had yet to face anything remotely close to the scrutiny that accompanied Yeltsin's final years in office. Their story was one of stability, and Russians could remember far worse.

Case Study III: Russia's Turn Towards Hard Revisionism (2012-2016)

[408] The Russian constitution allows only for two consecutive presidential terms, but does not set a limit on the total number of terms a president can serve if they are not consecutive. This allowed Putin's return to the presidency to be (at least nominally) in accordance with the spirit of the constitution.
[409] Hill and Gaddy, 86.
[410] Andrey Movchan, "Predicting Russia's Economic Health," Carnegie Moscow Center, February 3, 2016.
[411] Hill and Gaddy, 86.

Russia's relations with the West, and most notably with the United States, changed drastically when Putin returned to the presidency in March 2012. Putin by this time had developed a worldview in which the West was overtly hostile to Russian interests and unwilling to treat it as an equal partner. NATO's 2011 intervention in Libya that eventually brought down Muammar Gaddafi served as a final tipping point. Putin was convinced that Western interventions spread only chaos and would not let the same outcome occur in Syria. Meanwhile, chaos was building on Russia's border as Ukrainian's protested President Yanukovich's decision to reject further integration with Europe in exchange for Russian economic assistance. In the chaos, Putin saw not a unique opportunity to act but also the threat of democratic contagion.

These international events were compounded by internal changes and challenges within Russia, which affected Putin's calculus on Russian foreign policy. Foremost among them were the anti-Putin protests that accompanied his return to the presidency in 2012. Faced with legitimacy challenges at home and what he saw as a dire threat to regime security abroad, Putin moved Russian foreign policy in a revisionist direction. Putin's latitude on foreign policy was helped by his consolidation of power in the Kremlin. Many analysts argue that following 2012, Putin "deinstitutionalized" the foreign policy establishment, taking power away from institutions and moving it into the hands of a few individuals associated through informal networks and shared backgrounds in the security services. Societally, Putin clamped down on free press and civil society groups that could present further challenges to his rule following his controversial return to the presidency. This era (2012-2016) serves as an exemplary case study of the interaction of domestic and international factors motivating foreign policy, and the role of individual actors and their political exigencies in the foreign policy decision-making process.

A. Russia's Strategic Orientation: Indicators of Revisionism and Key Turning Points

i) Russia's New Course

Prior to Putin's reelection in March 2012, it was already clear that he wanted to take Russia in a different direction, away from Western integration and closer to the unique position he believed

Russia should hold in international politics. Putin's 2012 presidential campaign trumpeted foreign policy to a greater degree than in any other election in Russia's history, pointing to the U.S. as an instigator of revolution and chaos. In many ways, he brought a distinct worldview to the political discourse of his campaign. In an op-ed Putin penned in a Moscow newspaper, *Moskovskiye Novosti*, in the weeks leading up to the election, he discussed Russia's conception of global security. He wrote, "It seems that NATO members, especially the United States, have developed a peculiar interpretation of security that is different from ours. The Americans have become obsessed with the idea of becoming absolutely invulnerable. This utopian concept is unfeasible both technologically and geopolitically - but it is the root of the problem. … By definition, total invulnerability for one country would in theory require absolute vulnerability for all others."[412] In this context, Russia began three "course corrections" away from further integration from the West. The first was toward more defiant stance on sovereignty from outside influence. By 2012, Putin viewed Western influence in its internal affairs, and its support for domestic liberal opposition, as directly threatening to the stability of his regime. The second pivot was to Eurasia, through projects such as the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union; and the third was to Asia, through development projects in Siberia and the Far East and consistent outreach on energy and security cooperation with China.[413]

ii) The Rise of Anti-Americanism Following Putin's Return to Power

Immediately following Putin's victory in the March 2012 presidential elections, Putin's anti-Western bias was renewed when hundreds of thousands of Russians took to the street to protest his return to power. While the implications of Putin's return will be explored in detail below, the protests had an immediate effect on Russian political leadership's rhetoric toward the West and the U.S. From the domestic politics theoretical perspective outlined earlier in this chapter, Putin's decision to return to the presidency and the subsequent protests drove the Russian regime to take measures to boost Putin's popularity and appeal to Russian nationalism, which as Dmitri Trenin

[412] Vladimir Putin, "Russia's Place in a Changing World," *Moskovskiye Novosti,* February 27, 2012.
[413] Dmitri Trenin, "Foreign Policy as an Exercise in Nation Building," *Russia's Foreign Policy, Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations,* edited by David Cadier and Margot Light, (Palgrave MacMillan UK, 2015).

argues, "required mobilization in the face of a putative foreign threat."[414] In other words, for Putin's authoritarian system at home to be sustained, bold actions were needed abroad, and the Ukraine political crisis the following year offered a perfect opportunity. Moreover, the successful toppling of Yanukovich and Ukraine's desire to seek further integration with Europe represented a clear danger to the Russian political system, already struggling with legitimacy issues. This argument accurately points to a link between political exigencies within Russia and its foreign policies abroad, but it is an overly simplistic explanation.

Making a more nuanced argument linking political conditions to foreign policy priorities, Dmitri Trenin reflected in 2014:

> When Putin returned to the Kremlin in May 2012, Russia's foreign policy changed course. The centerpiece of the new foreign policy tack has been—and remains—winning full sovereignty for Russia. That means essentially two things. The first is the total exclusion of any outside influence on Russian domestic politics or policies, as well as the consolidation of the Russian people around a reinvigorated national idea. The second is the attainment of a degree of freedom of action on the international stage that would allow the Kremlin to protect and promote Russia's national interests globally and regionally, within what has come to be known as the "Russian world."[415]

Putin's position at the top of the political system was fundamentally different in 2012 than it had been in 2008, when Putin's domestic power was in many respects less challenged. As Trenin alludes, this changed the nature of Russian foreign policy and its relations with the West. Winning full sovereignty in Russian domestic politics (through the removal of outside influences) and in its foreign policies (allowing Russia more room to maneuver absent meaningful constraints from other great powers) became more important than it ever had been in Putin's tenure. As Trenin also alludes, Putin's tenuous domestic position was not the only factor driving foreign policy. In addition to domestic needs, there were international ambitions, challenges and windows of opportunities that drove Russian revisionism.

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[414] Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Breakout From the Post-Cold War System: The Drivers of Putin's Course," *Carnegie Moscow Center,* December 22, 2014. Accessed at: http://carnegie.ru/2014/12/22/russia-s-breakout-from-post-cold-war-system-drivers-of-putin-s-course#

[415] Ibid.

Even prior to the fall of Yanukovich and Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Kremlin's rhetoric and posturing had taken on a decidedly anti-American character. The anti-Putin protests of 2011-2012 radically changed the context of Russia-U.S. relations. Bobo Lo writes, "The Kremlin's shock at the turn of events led it to ramp up anti-Americanism rhetoric to levels not seen since the Georgia war – supplementing excoriating rhetoric with a series of measured targeted specifically at Washington."[416] Mark Pomar, the Director of the U.S.-Russia Foundation, who had worked in Russia over the span of two decades (and has since been barred from entering the country), recalled the vehemently anti-American rhetoric taken by the political leadership following the presidential elections of 2012. Pomar stated that prior to 2011, the organization could work relatively uninhibited. "It was not until the undesirable act was passed against 'foreign agents' that we saw a turn against Americans in prominent positions," said Pomar. He reiterated, "The change for my organization was most profound after the Duma and Presidential elections of 2012, after which there emerged a palpable sense of anti-Americanism... post-2011, the anti-Western media hysteria became worse than it was in the Cold War; it became personalized and nasty."[417] While aggressive actions abroad did not immediately accompany the state-run media's rhetoric toward the U.S. and the West, this is a key indicator of internal preferences geared toward revisionism.

iii) The Fall of Yanukovich, the Annexation of Crimea and Russia's Move into Eastern Ukraine

By 2013, according to Hill and Gaddy, "Putin and his security team had come to the conclusion that the United States was not just incompetent (which was bad enough in their view) – it was dangerous and malicious, and intent on inflicting harm on Russia."[418] It was with this worldview that decision-makers in the Kremlin woke up on November 21, 2013. On this day, Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovych reversed a decision to sign the European Union Association Agreement, which would have provided Ukraine with funds in exchange for liberalizing reforms. Under pressure from Russia, Yanukovych instead signed a treaty and multi-billion dollar loan with

[416] Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder,* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 37.
[417] Address by Mark Pomar at the Fletcher School, Boston MA, March 9, 2016.
[418] Hill and Gaddy, 305.

Russia.[419] Protests erupted and grew over the coming months, culminating in protesters taking control of the presidential administration buildings on February 22, 2014. President Yanukovych fled to Russia and the Parliament voted shortly after to remove him from office and hold elections in May.

In the West, the movement was seen as an impressive push for democracy after ten years of corrupt rule under Yanukovich. However "In the Kremlin," said Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak, "it was seen as a forceful overthrow of a legitimate government, an armed coup supported by the U.S., which later adopted a constitution banning Russian as the second official language."[420] The Kremlin also viewed the unrest in Ukraine with far more suspicion and concern than it did the Orange Revolution in 2004 and 2005. The events seemed harder to quarantine and appeared much closer to home, given the political unrest that took place in Russia during the 2011 and 2012 political transition. "Ukraine is part of the Russian heartland," says Christopher Donnelly, a former special advisor to NATO's Secretary General Lord Robertson, "and losing Ukraine to the EU was a terrible threat to Putin's system, because it would show ordinary Russians' that there was an alternative way ahead…"[421]

Events moved quickly following Yanukovich's flight to Russia. On February 27, 2014, soldiers in uniforms without insignia seized government buildings in Simferopol, the capital of Crimea. On March 1, the Russian parliament approved President Putin's request to use force in Ukraine to protect Russian interests, and on March 18, Putin signed a bill to absorb Crimea into Russian territory. On that day, he delivered a speech in the Russian Parliament when requesting that the Parliament ratify the treaty on admitting Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation. But Putin did not restrict his speech to outlining his thinking on Crimea and Ukraine. He also used the opportunity to discuss, more broadly, his perspective on Western malevolent intentions and American exceptionalism.

[419] In December 2013, Putin agreed to buy 15 billion of Ukrainian debt and reduce the price of Russian gas by one-third.
[420] Sergey Kislyak, Speech at John Hopkins University, October 11, 2016. Note: the vote was later overturned.
[421] Interview with Christopher Donnelly, January 15, 2016, London.

Putin first acknowledged the shared history of Crimea and Russia as well as the catastrophic effect of the fall of the Soviet Union. To note, the Crimean peninsula was territory of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev "gifted" the peninsula to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954. Some believe Khrushchev made a drunken decision to give Crimea away, but others believe that he was attempting to make amends for the Ukrainian famine under Stalin, or marking the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's merger with the Russian empire. Khrushchev's decision remained highly unpopular with Russians. Regardless, he likely did not foresee the end of the Soviet Union that would make this a political nightmare.

Referring to the Soviet Union's collapse, Putin said, "Millions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, overnight becoming ethnic minorities in former Union republics, while the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic groups in the world to be divided by borders."[422] Putin also characterized the overthrow of the Yanukovich regime as conducted by "neo-Nazis," which was much stronger rhetoric than had been used by Russian officials after the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Putin asserted, "Those who stood behind the latest events in Ukraine had a different agenda: they were preparing yet another government takeover; they wanted to seize power and would stop short of nothing. They resorted to terror, murder and riots. Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites executed this coup. They continue to set the tone in Ukraine to this day."[423]

Putin also believed the actions that the Crimean people took to declare independence from Ukraine fit completely with what the citizens of Kosovo did when declaring independence from Serbia, with the full support of NATO and the United States. In a speech to the Russian Duma on March 18, 2014, Putin stated, "... The Crimean authorities referred to the well-known Kosovo precedent – a precedent our western colleagues created with their own hands in a very similar situation..." Drawing from his longstanding angst toward U.S. "exceptionalism," Putin said, "We keep hearing from the U.S. and Western Europe that Kosovo is some special case. What makes it so special in the eyes of our colleagues? It turns out that it is the fact that the conflict in Kosovo resulted in so

[422] Address by President Vladimir Putin to State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin, March 18 2014.
[423] Ibid.

many human casualties. Is this a legal argument? … This is not even double standards; this is amazing, primitive, blunt cynicism."[424]

Lastly, Putin's speech illustrated a consistent line of thinking and cynicism toward international 'unipolarity' that he projected in his seminal speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. He reiterated:

> After the dissolution of bipolarity on the planet, we no longer have stability… Our western partners, led by the United States, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle 'If you are not with us, you are against us.' To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organizations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UNSC and the UN overall.[425]

This speech following the annexation of Crimea, although forceful in its condemnation of the West and the U.S., was not directed solely at boosting nationalism or support among Russians for the annexation of Crimea. In addition, his rhetoric exemplified his true feelings toward the U.S. and the West. According to Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs from 2001-2009, "What Putin says is a clear indication of what he believes: Western values are not Russian values; Russia is not part of trans-Atlantic institutions (both security and economic). Therefore, Russia instead seeks to 'fragment the arena.'"[426] From his perspective, NATO's intervention in Kosovo, the bombing of Belgrade, America's intervention in Iraq and finally, the NATO intervention in Libya all served as illustrations of Western hypocrisy.

By April 2014, pro-Russian protestors had occupied government buildings in Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, calling for referendums on independence. The next few months saw movements in eastern Ukraine in support of Russia, as pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and

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[424] Address by Vladimir Putin, March 18 2014.
[425] Ibid.
[426] Paula Dobriansky, Speech at the Harvard Kennedy School, April 13th 2016.

Luhansk declared their independence from Ukraine, and movements in Kiev towards the West, as Ukraine under new president Poroshenko signed an association agreement with the EU. Meanwhile, hundreds of Ukrainians were killed in military skirmishes across the eastern part of the country.

Initial international responses to the annexations came in the form of economic sanctions and strongly worded condemnations. The U.S., the EU and Canada issued targeted sanctions in early-March and following the Crimean referendum on Russian entities in the absence "of de-escalatory steps by the Russian Federation," to bring an end to the violence. Japan, Australia and other nations would follow suite, targeting Russian economic interests and prominent Russian businessmen. The second round of sanctions from the U.S. and the EU came in April 2014, imposing tougher sanctions on an expanded list of Russian officials. However, it was not until July 2014 and the escalating war in the Donbas that the U.S. and the EU issued its third round of sanctions on entities in the Russian energy (including major firms Rosneft and Novatek), financial and arms industries that are still in place as of August 2017. The downing of a passenger Malaysia Airliner on July 17 2014 killing 298 people played a significant role in the issuance of tougher international sanctions on Russia.[427] Yet the uncertainty over the military actors in the early stages of the Crimean annexation and invasion of eastern Ukraine led to confusion and delay on the part of international actors. It was not until November 2014 that NATO confirmed the movement of Russian equipment and combat troops entering Ukraine.

iv) The Gerasimov Doctrine and Russia's Little Green Men

A central element of Russia's operations in Ukraine was developed by Valery Gerasimov in November 2012, when Putin appointed him to Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia. To recall, Putin tasked Gerasimov, along with Defense Minister Serdyukov, with revising the country's fighting forces after their poor showing in the 2008 War with Georgia. In a 2013 speech to the general meeting of the Military Sciences Academy, Gerasomiv outlined Russia's

[427] The airliner was hit by a Russian-made missile over eastern Ukraine and is believed to have been fired by pro-Russian fighters.

new approach to modern warfare. His approach would become characteristic of Russia's measured revisionist approach to achieving its objectives abroad. He said:

> In the twenty-first century we can observe a trend of blurring of the differences between the states of war and peace. War is not declared, and once begun, it does not follow familiar patterns. Experience of armed conflicts, including those associated with the so-called color revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East, have confirmed that a thoroughly prosperous state can in a matter of months and even days turn into an arena of fierce armed struggle, fall victim to foreign intervention, and be plunged into the abyss of chaos and humanitarian disaster, and civil war. Of course, the easiest thing of all is simply to say that the events of the "Arab spring" are not a war, so there's nothing here for us, the military, to study. But perhaps it's the opposite: maybe it is precisely these events that represent the typical war of the twenty-first century.[428]

Gerasimov echoed the Kremlin's stance that the West was already at war with Russia and that threats to Putin's regime emanated primarily from external and Western actors. The Kremlin has articulated that it views protests in the region (such as the color revolutions in former Soviet republics – Georgia in 2002, Ukraine in 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in 2005) as being fomented by the West as part of its efforts to instill regime change. Importantly, Putin feared that these protests could emerge on the streets of Minsk or Moscow, and Putin's own history as a KGB officer in East Germany during the downfall of the Soviet Union led him to respect and fear the power of protest and revolution.

Gerasimov's doctrine was put into effect in Russia's operations in Ukraine starting in March 2014. Russia immediately capitalized on the state of confusion within Ukraine to send military outfitted as "little green men" to occupy government buildings in Crimea. While the troops claimed to be separatists, it is acknowledged today that these troops were Russian special forces. Without insignia and completely unidentifiable at the time, Russia could deny involvement and therefore avoid pushback for its actions in Ukraine. As evidence of this tactical approach, Russian foreign

[428] Valery Gerasimov, The Value of Science in Forecasting: New Challenges Require a Rethinking of the Forms and Methods of Warfare, Speech to the AVN (Military Sciences Academy) in late January 2013. Translation provided to author by Clifford Gaddy. Cited in: Tom Wright, All Measures Short of War: The Contest for the 21st Century and the Future of American Power. (Forthcoming, Yale University Press, May 2017).

minister Sergei Lavrov when challenged by the press on Russia's involvement stated, "Before demanding from us that we stop doing something, please present proof that we have done it."[429] As U.S. officials observed at the time, Russia had succeeded in "avoiding alliance tripwires while still subversively contributing to instability, unrest, and violence in Ukraine."[430] By the summer of 2014, Russian conventional forces were crossing into Ukraine, but Moscow continued to deny outright culpability.

Russia's use of "little green men" in Crimea was part of a broader Russian strategy, which incorporated elements of *maskirovka,* including deception, propaganda and subversion through military and non-military means. Galeotti refers to these capabilities as ones that "span the military and intelligence realms and which can be used effectively in conjunction with political and economic instruments and in deniable operations."[431] Following Russia's deployment of Russian special forces, or *Spetsnaz,* in Crimea without insignia, they were later deployed in large numbers, and in a less deceptive fashion, to the Donbas where they have been operating since 2014. One of their primary roles is in covertly "training, mobilizing, supporting and leading irregular forces"[432] and local volunteers operating in the Donbas.

Russia has also made significant use of influence operations through its state-controlled media. Russian security officials describe such entities as RT and Sputnik news as "warriors of the political battleground.."[433] Russia's media operations are particularly effective in areas with high numbers of ethnic Russians, who have existing vulnerabilities and grievances with the central government, particularly in Crimea and in eastern regions of Ukraine such as Donetsk and Luhansk. Russian special services including the FSB also made attempts to infiltrate Ukrainian civil service organizations and share disinformation regarding Russia and the central Ukrainian government in Kiev. All of these tactics – from the use of intelligence services to propaganda campaigns – can be considered part of Gerasimov's "active measures."

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[429] Gabriela Baczynska, "Russia Says No Proof It Sent Arms, Troops to East Ukraine," Reuters, January 21, 2015. Accessed at: vwww.reuters.com/.
[430] Janine Davidson and Amy Schafer, "Ukraine and the Future of NATO: Redefining Old Notions of Warfare and Conflict," Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, August 18, 2014, journal.georgetown.edu/
[431] Galeotti, 53.
[432] Galeotti, 59.
[433] Galeotti, 70.

v) Russia's Evolving Military Doctrine

Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine is also emblematic of the shifts in Russia's strategic priorities and objectives following Putin's return to the presidency and the subsequent unrest. A NATO research paper highlights that "the 2014 doctrine, in comparison to its 2010 predecessor, stands out for emphasizing *domestic threats* to national security. Such threats include destabilization of Russia's political situation, including terrorist activities as well as outside political influence on Russia's population."[434] Where the 2010 document talked about the "weakening of the ideological confrontation," between Russia and the West, the new version replaced this with a sentence stating: "global competition is on the rise."[435] It also emphasizes the importance of removing external influence from Russian internal affairs. Sinovetz and Renz write, "In the manner of the Monroe doctrine, it sends Western powers the message that Russia's neighborhood should be regarded as its sphere of influence, which Moscow is ready to defend, if necessary by all means."[436]

To a certain extent, Russia's emphasis on protecting Kremlin-friendly governments in its near-abroad stems from Russia's historical feelings of insecurity of invasion on its borders. Yet Moscow's focus on enhancing *regime security* as a central component of its foreign policy strategy indicates the Kremlin's focus on domestic legitimacy challenges, and the intersection of domestic politics and foreign policy. Russia's identity as a great power with the capacity to influence change in its traditional sphere of influence is an image and a role that Russians are accustomed to; it is a part of their national pride and psyche.

An important component of Russia's great power identity is its nuclear weapons capabilities, which play a traditional and legitimizing role in Russia's military doctrine. Russia relies more on its military – and nuclear – pillar of power to project strength at home and abroad and to

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[434] Polina Sinovets and Bettina Renz, "Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine: and Beyond, Threat Perceptions, Capabilities and Ambitions," *NATO Research Paper – No. 117,* NATO Defense College, Rome, July 2015: http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=830

[435] Pavel Podvig, "Missile Defense and the Myth of Strategic Stability," Prepared for the Workshop on "Stability Issues in a New Nuclear Order," Georgia Tech, December 15-16, 2014: http://russianforces.org/podvig/Podvig-Missile%20defense%20and%20strategic%20stability.pdf

[436] Polina Sinovets and Bettina Renz, "Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine: and Beyond, Threat Perceptions, Capabilities and Ambitions."

compensate for its relatively weak pillar of economic strength. Nuclear capabilities also have geopolitical importance, as they are the ultimate basis for defense of Russia's vast land frontiers stretching across the Eurasian continents. Russia's reliance and emphasis on its nuclear weapons capabilities in its military doctrines have been growing. A National Intelligence Council Report in 2012 assessed, "Nuclear ambitions in the U.S. and Russia over the last 20 years have evolved in opposite directions. Reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security strategy is a U.S. objective, while Russia is pursuing new concepts and capabilities for expanding the role of nuclear weapons in its security strategy."[437]

As part of its military modernization efforts under Putin, Russia has developed an "escalate to deescalate" doctrine in which nuclear weapons could be threatened or used to compel an opponent to deescalate in a confrontation involving conventional weapons. Russia's reliance on nuclear weapons might also reflect an underlying insecurity over its conventional military capabilities. Michael O'Hanlon writes, "Russian doctrines like 'escalate to de-escalate' that threaten early nuclear weapons employment in the context of a future war with the West sound belligerent and reckless. But they may also reflect a nervousness among Russians that the imbalance of power with NATO combined with advances in weaponry may leave them quite vulnerable in a future conflict, absent such a bold warfighting concept."[438] O'Hanlon's point emphasizes, as does this research, that the Kremlin sees the military realm as a way to compensate for other security, economic and political weaknesses.

vi) Russia's Return to the Middle East

Eastern Europe was not the only region where Russia sought to project power. When running for President in 2012, Putin wrote in an op-ed for a Moscow newspaper stating that, "No one should be permitted to use the Libya scenario on Syria."[439] On September 11, 2013, Putin again wrote an open addressing the widespread chaos in the Middle East, but this time for the *New York Times,* an outlet that he had not used since 1999 when he appealed to Western audiences for support in

[437] National Intelligence Council, "Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds," December 2012, 69.
[438] Michael O'Hanlon, *Beyond NATO: A New Security Architecture for Eastern Europe,* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017), 83.
[439] Vladimir Putin, "Russia's Place in a Changing World," *Moskovskiye Novosti,* February 27, 2012.

Russia's war with Chechnya. Putin called for U.S. caution as Congress contemplated a military strike following Assad's use of chemical weapons against his own people, a clear red line for the Obama administration. Putin asserted, "It is alarming that military intervention in internal conflicts in foreign countries has become commonplace for the United States. Is it in America's long-term interest? I doubt it. Millions around the world increasingly see America not as a model of democracy but as relying solely on brute force, cobbling coalitions together under the slogan 'you're either with us or against us…' But force has proved ineffective and pointless."[440]

He also used this opportunity to address an even graver and longstanding objection he has maintained against the U.S.: the nation's view of itself as *exceptional* and owning a unique mission in world affairs. He criticized Obama's earlier assertion that America was exceptional, saying: "It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. Their policies differ, too. We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal."[441] Long before September 2015, Putin had concluded that the only way to stand on equal footing with the West was through strength, and Russia's best strength, he believed, was its military force. With this op-ed, Putin indicated that his worldview, and that of Russia, was fundamentally at odds with America's conception of global stability and its role in maintaining it. In response, Russia's foreign policy moving forward would prove to be distinctly independent and targeted against Western interests.

Russia's shift from asserting itself in Eastern Europe to the Middle East was not an entirely linear and expected path. Between 2013 and 2015, Putin's perceptions of the international environment, and Russia's ability to exert power in that environment, had shifted. Russia had clear objectives in Syria in terms of supporting the Assad regime, which it has considered a political ally (Hafez-al Assad was a staunch ally of the Soviet Union in the last two decades of the Cold War), and defending its Mediterranean naval base in Tartus and air force base near Latakia. When Assad looked as if he might fall, Russia risked losing its last military foothold in the region. Another

[440] Vladimir Putin, "A Plea for Caution," *The New York Times,* September 11, 2013.
[441] Ibid.

pragmatic reason for Russia's involvement was to stop the spread of terrorism and chaos, which it saw the U.S. as fomenting. Indeed, Russia has consistently dealt with a terrorist threat from extreme Islamists in the Caucuses region and viewed authoritarian strongmen, such as Assad, as capable of stemming the growth of terrorist groups. But Russia's return to the Middle East also illustrated Putin's efforts to reassert Russia as a great power on equal footing with the U.S.

In September 2015, the Russian military, at the request of the Assad regime, began air operations against rebel and terrorist groups operating in the country. Russia's projection of military force was in every way justified and legitimate in the eyes of President Putin, and he saw Russia's objective as to maintain the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Assad regime, despite contradictory Western objectives. When he addressed the UN General Assembly on September 28, 2015, for the first time since 2005, Putin used the opportunity to outline Russia's goals in terms of defeating international terrorism. He also, however, remained outspoken in his criticism for Western and American intervention in the Middle East. He said, "We all know that after the end of the Cold War — everyone is aware of that — a single center of domination emerged in the world, and then those who found themselves at the top of the pyramid were tempted to think that if they were strong and exceptional, they knew better and they did not have to reckon with the U.N., which, instead of [acting to] automatically authorize and legitimize the necessary decisions, often creates obstacles or, in other words, stands in the way."[442] To Putin, America remained the creator of chaos… exceptional in its own eyes but destructive to his conception of global security.

Russia's goals in Syria have always been clear, giving it a significant advantage over the U.S., which has maintained a sense of strategic drift in its evolving Syria policy. In an interview with Россия-1 TV station on October 11, Putin announced that the goal of the Russian military was to stabilize the "legitimate authorities" in the country, stating, "Our task is to stabilize the legitimate power and create conditions for the search for a political compromise."[443] As long as Putin was in power, Assad would not suffer the same fate as Qaddafi, and Syria would not fall into the chaos he saw enveloping the rest of the region. Moreover, Syria could be used as an illustration of Russia's "return" to great power politics in the Middle East.

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[442] Vladimir Putin, Address to the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly, September 28, 2015.
[443] Interfax, "Путин назвал основную задачу российских военных в Сирии" (Putin outlines the main task of the Russian military in Syria), October 11 2015. Accessed at: http://www.interfax.ru/russia/472593

Putin's "made-for-TV" warfare also had another objective. Glorified images of Russian airstrikes in Syria on state-run TV news channels fit perfectly into the nation's worldview that it is a great power with the ability to be a decisive force in international politics. This was an effective and popular way to identify with the Russian people, particularly in an era of economic downturn. "Russia has a tradition of being a great power, and even a superpower, which is rooted in several centuries of history," says Fyodor Lukyanov. He added, "For the Russian national psyche it is important to feel respected (and sometimes even feared) on a global scale. That is why the collapse of the Soviet Union has been perceived as a national and even global disaster, and why Russia's current recovery as a great power is so widely popular."[444]

vii) A New Cold War?

Since Russia began its intervention in Syria, the U.S. and Russian relationship has turned competitive in almost every space, from the geopolitical arena to cyber space. While many analysts are quick to say that we are not in a new Cold War with Russia, there are others that say the current conditions are even more dangerous than they were during the Cold War. Indeed, Dmitry Trenin argues that analogies between the situation post-2014 and the situation in the Cold War are misleading. He cites the following reasons that the U.S.-Russia relationship today is more dangerous than during the Cold War years. First, there is a significant asymmetry in power between the US and Russia and the weaker party, Russia, has shown the proclivity to take greater risks and use unconventional tools to compensate for that weakness. Second, there is an impression that the use of nuclear weapons have become obsolete and out of the question as a tool of statecraft today. "But we should question this assumption, as Putin sees Russia as a nuclear superpower," argues Trenin. Most notably, Russian and American leaders, and each nation's respective media outlets, demonize the other's political leaders to an extent not seen in the Cold War. "Never in the Cold War did we have such disrespect for the other party's political leaders and class,"[445] says Trenin.

[444] Interview with Fyodor Lukyanov of the Valdai Discussion Club, Moscow, March 10, 2016.
[445] Speech by Dmitry Trenin at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., December 2016.

By 2016, Russia represented a fully revisionist state. Per the indicators of revisionism outlined earlier in this chapter, Russian political and strategic posturing at this time was characterized by: i) Official and semi-official promotion for a redistribution of power and prestige in the international system (and in comparison to the West); ii) a show of resoluteness to carrying out a sustained campaign and projecting power (through its military modernization program and sustained involvement in Ukraine and Syria); iii) a willingness to use unilateral and illegitimate force; and iv) a tolerance for incurring costs to security "international goods" such as territory. Former Deputy National Security Advisor Benjamin Rhodes said that the Obama Administration was convinced that Putin had gone into an "offensive mode beyond what he sees as his sphere of influence," in order to destabilize NATO and the U.S. Rhodes added, "The new phase we're in is that the Russians have moved into an offensive posture that threatens the very international order."[446] Samantha Power offered a similar warning shortly before leaving her post as United Nations Ambassador. Russia, she said, was "taking steps that are weakening the rules-based order that we have benefitted from for seven decades."[447]

viii) Russia Uses "Active Measures" to Hack the 2016 American Presidential Election

Nowhere was Russia's desire to upset the status quo more evident than in its "hacking" of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Russia's ability to wreak havoc through active measures including influence and cyber operations was extensive and powerful. They included the illegal obtainment and leaking of thousands of emails from individuals on the Democratic National Committee and on the Clinton campaign – to the advantage of Donald Trump, Russia's favored candidate. Other tools in Russia's arsenal include propaganda and misinformation campaigns conducted through *Russia Today* and countless internet trolls targeted at American citizens in key voting districts.

Yet Russia's use of influence operations is not new; the Kremlin has employed propaganda campaigns throughout the Baltic States in Eastern Europe and the Visegrad nations in Central Europe for several years, at times in support of "fifth-column" parties and at others to simply undermine faith in democratic processes. Indeed, Russia's tactics in the 2016 presidential election

[446] Quote by Benjamin Rhodes, cited in "Trump, Putin and the New Cold War," *The New Yorker,* March 6, 2017.
[447] Samantha Power, Speech at the Atlantic Council, Washington D.C., January 17, 2017.

are reminiscent of Cold War era active measures that Putin was likely trained in during his KGB years throughout the 1980s. They involve asymmetric tactics designed to target the vulnerabilities of stronger opponents. Both sides during the Cold War used active measures to spread disinformation and embarrass the other.

Indeed, "Far from new ways of war, in many ways both hybrid and political war can be seen as revivals of Soviet-era methods, adapted to the modern context... the Soviets were especially concerned with propaganda, misinformation and political manipulation, often with the same goal of masking underlying weaknesses,"[448] writes Mark Galeotti. One example is in the Soviet Union's attempt to influence the 1982 election against Ronald Reagan, although it was ineffective. The *New Yorker* reported, "According to extensive notes made by Vasili Mitrokhin, a high-ranking K.G.B. officer and archivist who later defected to Great Britain, Soviet intelligence tried to infiltrate the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic National Committees, popularize the slogan 'Reagan Means War!' and discredit the President as a corrupt servant of the military-industrial complex."[449]

Despite the longstanding efforts of Russian influence and propaganda operations, Western democracies including the U.S., the Netherlands, France and Germany only recently became alert to the *proximity* of the threats posed by twenty-first century active measures, having fallen victim to the Kremlin's operations in recent and ongoing elections throughout 2016 and 2017. The implications of Russia's actions have proven immense in the U.S., and have likely inhibited meaningful cooperation between Trump and Putin given distrust of Russia in Congress. The broader implications of Russian active measures against democratic institutions in the U.S. and elsewhere is still uncertain. However, it is clear that the aim of Putin's propaganda machine and cyber tactics is to create confusion within Western societies, weaken European solidarity and infringe on America's democratic processes.

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[448] Mark Galeotti, "Hybrid War or Gibridnaya Voina? Getting Russia's Non-Linear Military Challenge Right," *Mayak Intelligence,* 2016, 46-47.
[449] Evan Osnos, David Remnick and Joshua Yaffa, "Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War," *The New Yorker,* March 6, 2017.

The period from 2012 to 2016 saw Russian foreign policy turn towards a fully revisionist posture in ways not evident in the early years of the Putin era. Illustrations of unilateral force and coercion include Russia's annexation of Crimea, invasion of eastern Ukraine, intervention in Syria and meddling in U.S. and European elections throughout 2016 and 2017. These more forceful illustrations occurred alongside anti-Western and anti-U.S. rhetoric, as well as actions against foreign organizations operating in Russia, all of which followed Putin's return to the presidency in 2012. They also occurred against the backdrop of military Russia's modernization programs, defense reforms, and a military doctrine in 2014 that emphasized the return of great power competition and *domestic* threats to national security. Fundamentally, there were several international and domestic factors that affected Putin and the political leadership's calculus on foreign policy priorities for Russia, which will now be discussed.

B. International Conditions

i) The Arab Spring and NATO's Intervention in Libya

In December 2010, the Arab Spring began in Tunisia when a street vendor set himself on fire to protest the corrupt practices of the government. The pro-democracy movements spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, resulting in the ousting of several authoritarian dictators, including Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Other protest movements were crushed by the authorities, including in Bahrain. Moscow watched the events closely, and Putin publically expressed support for those seeking "democratic reform." Yet Putin also added in 2012 that "It soon became clear that in many countries, events were not following a civilized path. Instead of asserting democracy and protecting the rights of minorities, attempts were being made to stage a coup and depose an enemy. This only resulted in replacing one dominant force with another even more aggressive dominant force."[450]

The public uprising against Qaddafi's government in Libya fundamentally changed Russia's approach to the ongoing unrest in the Middle East. In March 2011, a multi-state NATO led

[450] Vladimir Putin, "Russia's Place in a Changing World," *Moskovskiye Novosti,* February 27, 2012.

coalition began a military intervention in Libya with the original aim to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (on which both Russia and China abstained) and prevent the Qaddafi regime from carrying out attacks against civilians. NATO enforced a no-fly zone until the end of October 2011, immediately after rebels captured and killed Muammar Qaddafi. Moscow was furious that its abstention of the UN Resolution led to what it effectively saw as "regime change" in Libya. In an op-ed Putin wrote in 2012, he stated: "Foreign interference and the use of force in support of one side of a domestic conflict gave [the Arab Spring] developments a negative aura. By using air power in the name of humanitarian support, a number of countries did away with the Libyan regime. The revolting slaughter of Muammar Qaddafi - not just medieval but primeval - was the embodiment of these actions."[451]

According to Trenin, "Medvedev had been sent by Putin on a sort of scouting mission to the West to determine what was possible to achieve with the U.S. and Europe. He held him on a very long leash, allowing him to negotiate not only strategic arms reductions but also ballistic missile defense with NATO… and when the time came to draw up the balance sheet, Putin was not very pleased."[452] After Medvedev's handling of the Libya crisis, Putin determined that Russia's interests were consistently dismissed by the West, and particularly the U.S.

By this point, Putin was also committed to ensuring that the same did not take place with the Assad regime in Syria, its key Middle Eastern ally and home to a strategic naval base. It also served as a final reminder to Putin that the West was not in the business of maintaining the kind of regional stability that served Russia's interests. In addition, the culmination of political and economic circumstances at home, which will be explored in the following section, influenced Putin's decision-making calculus and his perceptions of Western actors, particularly their role inside Russia's borders.

C. Domestic Conditions

A. Composition and Interests of the Russian Elite (IV #1)

[451] Ibid.

[452] Dmitri Trenin, "Foreign Policy as an Exercise in nation Building," *Russia's Foreign Policy, Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations,* edited by David Cadier and Margot Light, (Palgrave MacMillan UK, 2015), 30.

i) A "Shrinking of the Pie" in Putin's Return to the Presidency

In 2011, Russia's political landscape was at a turning point as Putin, then Prime Minister, attempted a return to the presidency. At a United Russia Congress in September 2011, President Medvedev endorsed Putin for the Presidency in 2012. Putin then reciprocated Medvedev's offer and asked him to serve as his "running mate" and eventual Prime Minister once Medvedev's term ended. After winning the presidential election in March 2012 with 63 percent of the vote and accounts of widespread voting "irregularities," massive protests broke out in Moscow and St. Petersburg, including several thousand that protested in central Moscow's Bolotnaya Square, to challenge the contested parliamentary and presidential elections that placed Putin back in the Office of the Presidency for a third-term. The spontaneity of the protests also caught the Kremlin off guard; it confirmed their deep-seeded fears that a loss of control can happen quickly and without any notice.

There were also renewed fears over splits within the elite. When Putin returned to the presidency, many of the significant advisory roles were still maintained by his former KGB and St. Petersburg associates, known as the *siloviki*. Yet his relationship to them evolved over the course of his third term, and the main driver of this changing relationship was economic. According to Beyrle, "In 2002 and 2003 the people that Putin was talking to – the Ivanov and Patrushev type – had not formed a relationship with Putin in which Putin depended on them as much as he does now." In 2001, he was able to convince the hardliners in his cabinet and in the military to acquiesce to the Americans on certain issues, such as Afghanistan. By 2012 and 2013, there was, "a real situation in the Kremlin in which they were and are all in a mutual death embrace, and the minute one of them lets go, because of this fantastic amount of wealth that all of these people have accumulated in the last 15 years, it falls apart… they have all become mutually dependent in a way that didn't exist in 2002."[453] The 2008 financial crisis, declining oil prices and the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West has meant a "shrinking of the pie" over cash flows among elites that have accumulated significant wealth over the course of the Putin era, and this affects Putin's cost-benefit analysis and decision making.

[453] Interview with Ambassador John Beyrle, Washington DC, March 8, 2017.

Putin knows that his close support base lies in the security services and that when "the chips are down," they will protect him. However, elites surrounding Putin began in 2012 to question more critically whether he was capable of safeguarding the wealth and power they amassed over his time in office, and whether he will be able to protect their fates, families, and fortunes. As Putin gets closer to the inevitable and eventual transfer of power (likely in 2024), there will be more at stake, more risk, and much more to lose for those that surround Putin.

Most recently, Putin has carried out a number of changes to his inner circle of advisors. This inner circle was regarded as stable until Vladimir Yakunin was removed from the prominent position as Minister of the Russian Railways in August 2015, a position he held from 2005 to 2015. In a power move, Putin signaled through this shift that not even his closest advisors should feel safe in their positions. Following Yakunin's dismissal, a key advisor to Putin, Sergei Ivanov, (Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration from 2011-2016), who previously had served with him in the KGB, was also "removed" from his position in August 2016.[454] Ivanov was then replaced by Anton Vaino, a young and inexperienced diplomat and politician, in a signal to elites that Putin may value loyalty more than experience and perhaps critical advice. He has also appointed individuals to positions far above their level of confidence and experience.[455] As Beyrle notes, "These are people for whom Putin will always be *Bbl* instead of *Tbl*... none have 'come up through the ranks' with him."[456] This makes a significant difference in decision making, as those less senior around Putin are unlikely to provide critical feedback to potentially poor policy decisions.[457]

Ivanov's removal from his position as the head of the presidential administration is a particularly important shift, as the Presidential Administration holds a significant role in foreign policy decision making, even more so than the National Security Council. As Brian Taylor writes,

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[454] Formally, Ivanov "retired" from his position in the Presidential Administration.

[455] Interestingly, this reshuffling has not affected other areas sorely in need of reform, including the powerful heads of the oil and gas industry, nor the chairmen of the central banks. Shoigu, Minister of Defense and the Minister of Emergencies remain in their current positions.

[456] Interview with Ambassador John Beyrle. March 8, 2017.

[457] A number of hardliners within Putin's inner circle, however, remain. Nikolai Patrushev remains the Secretary of the Security Council, a position he has held since 2008, and Vitaly Shoigu is still Minister of Defense, a position he has held since 2012.

"Although the Security Council does include many of the country's top officials, including the heads of the power ministries, it has never been the core locus for decision making. This was true under both Yeltsin and Putin, both of whom tended to concentrate more important decision making within the presidential administration."[458] By the end of 2016, most of the positions immediately surrounding Putin were filled by technocrats and bodyguards.

Changes such as these have led to a "de-institutionalized" foreign policy establishment. As Bobo Lo wrote in 2015, "The current political landscape is centered on individuals and their networks rather than formal institutions. This is demonstrated above all by President Putin. No single person in the six decades since the death of Stalin has been so intimately identified with power and policy in Russia."[459] Russian analyst Andrei Soldatov also remarked on this fact in 2016 when he stated, "We are witnessing the decline of institutions in Russia, such that you won't understand Syria by talking to anyone in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Informal actors using cyber and hybrid tools in Ukraine are the ones who enjoy direct access [to the decision makers], but they are not in formal institutions, and this allows them to be more adventurous in foreign policy."[460]

B. Consolidation of Control (IV #2)

i) Putin's Patronal and Informal Politics

In March 2016, Dr. Alexie Arbatov, former member of the Russian State Duma (1994-2003)[461] commented on Putin's apparent shift in decision-making style between his first two terms and third term as President. Arbatov noted that in his meetings with Putin during his first term (of which there were three), Putin was "still trying to adjust to the existing environment – the existing system of government, and to the executive and parliamentary, and was still trying to gain popularity and seek advice."[462] During that time, Arbatov described Putin in more of a "campaign mode" in which he sought out various factions in the Russian parliament to make the case for his agenda. Arbatov

[458] Taylor, 58-59.
[459] Lo, 12.
[460] Andrei Soldatov, Center for Global Interests Panel, Washington DC, September 19, 2016.
[461] Arbatov is also a senior fellow at Carnegie Moscow Center, and Director of the Center for International Security at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO).
[462] Interview with Alexei Arbatov, Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow, March 16, 2016.

met with Putin again during the campaign season leading up to the 2012 presidential election when Putin visited a federal nuclear center with Arbatov and others. “He spent close to three hours with a group of about ten people listening to their advice and providing his own input, but it was clear he wasn’t interested in their opinions,” said Arbatov.[463]

Fyodor Lukyanov, Editor-in-Chief of Russia in Global Affairs, also remarked on a noticeable shift in Putin’s leadership style since his reelection in 2012. "After 2012, Putin became almost an emperor, leading through a more tsarist-like rule," said Lukyanov. “This is different from his first term, when he was like an extremely powerful CEO, but with a board that he listened to. Now there are still several people with whom he consults, but none of them can say that he knows what decisions will be made. And this makes Putin indispensable." Russia expert Nikolai Petrov argues that over his third term, Putin has met far less with governmental consultative bodies, and traditional security advisors, thereby weakening formal institutions. Instead, he relies on informal decision-making processes and backchannels. In this sense, Putin’s centralization has taken place alongside increasing informality in his decision making. As a result, by 2015, there was a sense among analysts that Putin was making more misstatements, appearing less well-informed on issues and caring less about the accuracy of his statements.

This perception of Putin’s disinterest in consultation aligns with how Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy viewed Putin when they met with him at the 2011 Valdai Discussion Club around the same time as Arbatov’s meeting. When asked by the Valdai scholars how he planned to “keep this system going that [he had] created,” Putin did not have a clear response, whereas in previous years he was known to have firm answers to all questions asked**.** He also came across as misinformed or uninformed on issues such as fracking and missile defense, which was surprising given his past performances at Valdai. “He repeatedly projected the idea that he’s on top of everything, that he doesn’t need to either explain himself or defend himself,” said Gaddy of the exchange. His tone is best illustrated through his answer to a question posed by Andrew Kutchins on whether Putin

[463] Ibid.

would support the reset, given that it was more closely associated with President Medvedev. Putin's answer was, "I don't think I need to prove anything to anybody."[464]

ii) Consolidation of the Political Space under United Russia

Since the assassination of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov on February 27, 2015, meaningful political opposition to the Kremlin has been non-existent. Those who do not admire Putin's leadership, including individuals such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny,[465] either say so from exiled positions abroad, or are repeatedly convicted of fraudulent charges made by the Russian government. The 2016 parliamentary elections indicated just how far Putin and United Russia had consolidated control of the political system. United Russia won over 54 percent of the vote, with the Communist Party coming in a distant second with only 13 percent of the vote. All parties except United Russia saw a decrease in membership. Furthermore, the elections were not characterized as overtly fraudulent, in the ways that the 2011 parliamentary elections had been. It was considered by experts to be a more legitimate, open and honest election cycle. The greatest challenge was the lack of a level playing field, with less media attention paid to opposition parties and candidates, making it difficult to run successful campaigns against United Russia.

Indeed, given that peaks of contestation occur during times of transitions, this election was managed closely by the political leadership. Interestingly, voter turnout was staggeringly low compared to previous years, showing a shift in political maneuvering on behalf of United Russia from mobilizing their support base to minimizing interest of those in urban communities. Traditionally, high turnout was a source of legitimacy for Putin and United Russia. This was the first time that authorities attempted to *inhibit* turnout. The election was moved from December to September so that the campaign season would take place in the summer months when the urban

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[464]Clifford Gaddy and Fiona Hill, "Putin's Next Move in Russia: Observations from the 8th Annual Valdai International Discussion Club," December 12, 2011. Accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/putins-next-move-in-russia-observations-from-the-8th-annual-valdai-international-discussion-club/.

[465] Alexei Navalny is a longtime political opposition figure and anti-corruption campaigner in Russia who opposes Putin's regime. He played a significant role in the protests following the 2011 parliamentary elections, which Navalny argued were stolen by Putin's political party, United Russia. Since then, Navalny has been charged and jailed on various accusations brought forward by the state. In 2016, Navalny announced his intentions to run for president in 2018. In the interim, he has led two massive anti-corruption protests across Russia directed at the political system under Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin.

middle and upper classes went on summer vacation and paid less attention, thereby increasing voter apathy. The voting count in Moscow and St. Petersburg was low at around 34 percent. Overall turnout was around 47 percent, approximately 14 percent lower than in 2011. For the first time in Putin's tenure, his regime's legitimacy was not based on voter turnout. Instead, the regime preferred voter apathy in areas where they knew they would fare poorly.

The elections also proved that the recalibration of the system following the 2011/2012 political unrest had worked. "Putin can now say that he has cut off channels of external meddling" in Russian politics... the fear of 'color revolutions' has subsided," says Pavel Baev of the Brookings Institution.[466]

iii) The Return of the State Security Apparatus

In addition to Putin's consolidation of power in the legislature, Putin has resurrected the concept of state security to protect the power of the regime. One major step taken to secure the power of the regime took place in May of 2016, when the Russian parliament passed legislation giving Russia's internal security corps a makeover. It established the Russian National Guard, a 400,000-person internal security corps intended to maintain public order and ensure security against domestic threats. The force is led by Putin's former bodyguard Viktor Zolotov, a choice that signals a narrowing of Putin's decision-making circle. While plans for the unit were discussed for a number of years, the timing of this development served as a warning to society against protests and unrest surrounding the Duma elections that took place in September 2016. According to Henry Hale, Putin's decision to "create a National Guard reporting to him personally, and binding to it the brutal network of Chechnya strongman Ramzan Kadyrov, is perhaps the latest major step in this process of increasingly tight coordination of Russia's major networks around Putin as chief patron."[467]

In a pure illustration of "L'Etat, C'est Moi," Putin has become the establishment; there is no difference between the political leadership and the state. This centralization of state operations beyond the normal boundaries of institutions lends itself to the Russia's conduct of hybrid and

[466] Remarks by Pavel Baev, Brookings Institution, March 13, 2017.
[467] Henry Hale, "Russian Patronal Politics Beyond Putin," *Daedalus,* Spring 2017, Vol. 146, No. 2.

'gray zone' strategies abroad and the use of unconventional tools of war carried out by unofficial actors (such as little green men). According to Russian military expert Mark Galleotti, "The 'hybridity' of Russian operations reflects a conceptually analogous, even if operationally very different 'hybridity' of the Russian state. Through the 1990s and into 'Putinism' it has, however you choose to define it, either failed to institutionalize or has actively deinstitutionalized. This is a patrimonial, hyper-presidential regime characterized by the permeability of boundaries between public and private, domestic and external."[468] This deinstitutionalization under Putin has had important implications for Russian foreign policy. Galeotti adds, "Given that, after all, state institutions are so often regarded as personal fiefdoms and piggy banks, officials and even officers freely engage in commercial activity, and the Russian Orthodox Church is practically an arm of the Kremlin, the infusion of non-military instruments into military affairs was almost inevitable."[469] Overall, deinstitutionalization under Putin has allowed for the extensive involvement of non-military actors, including the FSB, in what might be considered the realm of traditional military affairs.

The reemergence of the Russian security apparatus as a major political force in Russian politics has also influenced Putin's ability to consolidate control internally. Putin has used domestic security forces to jail journalists and disgrace political opponents through espionage. As discussed, political opposition figures such as Alexei Navalny are repeatedly accused of fraudulent charges made by the Russian government and enforced by Russian security organs.

The security services have also facilitated the emergence of a nationalistic ecosystem to counter internal actors from carrying out Putin's worst nightmare of an internal "color revolution." Specifically, the Russian state has forced foreign-funded NGOs and civil society organizations focused on contentious issues such as human rights to register with the government under the "Foreign Agents Law" that took effect in November 2012. When organizations did not comply, the state began carrying out intrusive inspections prompted directly by Putin in 2013.[470] Saskia

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[468] Mark Galeotti, "Hybrid War or Gibridnaya Voina? Getting Russia's Non-Linear Military Challenge Right," *Mayak Intelligence,* 2016, 49.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Saskia Brechenmacher, "Civil Society Under Assault: Repression and Responses in Russia, Egypt and Ethiopia," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,* May 18, 2018. Accessed at:

Brechenmacher writes, "The inspections were often highly disruptive and seemed aimed at intimidating the targeted organizations. At times, the inspection teams included agents from the Federal Security Service who claimed to have been alerted that the organization in question was involved in 'extremist' work."[471]

In efforts reminiscent of the Soviet Union, Russian state authorities have encouraged "a tightly regulated civic sector comprised of pro-government and/or apolitical organizations,"[472] through the creation of so-called "marionette organizations." The state has also created and funded patriotic youth movements and pro-government organizations, designed to "propagate key elements of the Kremlin's ideology, including its conservative social agenda and anti-Western stance."[473] If an organization strays too far from its purported pro-government position, the state employs its security services to harass and crackdown on the organization's activities.

iv) Media consolidation

Although the Kremlin has taken significant steps to revive the state security apparatus, it has been less heavy handed, although no less persistent, in its tactics to manipulate the public's access to information. To understand the social unrest that emerged after Putin's return to power in 2012, one must pay attention to the economic and social modernization that took place in Russia in the early 2000s. Russians, just like millions around the world, acquired cell phones, access to the internet, and traveled abroad in greater frequencies than earlier generations. Between 2008-2012, the economic and social mobility achieved by middle class Russians spilled over into demands for *political modernization* and an opening of Putin's increasingly autocratic system. This could not and would not be tolerated. Russia's political leadership, akin to modern authoritarian regimes around the world, had to deal with competing trends: economic and social modernization alongside the need to maintain control over an increasingly aware, mobile and connected society. The Kremlin would adapt as a sort of "informational autocracy" in which the government manipulated

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http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/18/civil-society-under-assault-repression-and-responses-in-russia-egypt-and-ethiopia-pub-69953

[471] Ibid.

[472] Ibid.

[473] Ibid.

the media in order to maintain popularity and support, using more subtle tactics of censorship and cooptation than the blunt instruments of terror carried out in systems such as Stalin's Soviet Union.

After the social unrest in 2012, Kremlin-controlled television stations were used as a "smear machine" against the protestors that came out against Putin, calling them "unpatriotic." However, the Kremlin's actions remained less than brutal. Putin did not fill prisons with political dissenters, nor did he block the public's access to the internet or mainstream media in all-encompassing ways. Instead, true to form of modern authoritarians, as the New Yorker in early 2017 reported, "[Putin's] propagandists have taken their cue from foreign forms: magazine shows, shot-fests, game shows, and reality shows."[474] The aim in 2012 was to *demobilize* the population, providing more entertainment options and thereby muddling the media landscape with a myriad of distractions. In this environment, alternative and independent news outlets could remain, but only on the margins.

Manipulation of the media landscape has helped Putin to develop a sort of personality cult with the Russian public and to maintain high popularity ratings, typically above 80 percent, while satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Russian government remains far lower around 40 percent. The gap in Putin's popularity and that of the Russian governments is due, in part, to the state's control of the media. Putin has developed a cult of personality exaggerated in the media landscape, which may allow him to avoid blame for poor policy outcomes.

While the internet media landscape has remained more open and independent than television news outlets, Russia's seizure of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine helped to drive propagandist content in the Russia media and led to greater restrictions over the internet space. Two new laws took effect in 2014 that significantly extended state control over social media and online platforms. In May 2014, Putin signed "the bloggers law," which requires any website with more than 3,000 daily viewers to register as a media outlet with Roskomnadzor (a federal agency responsible for supervision of the media). Separately, under Law No. 97 and a follow-up law passed in July 2014, social-media platforms and other internet companies were forced to store Russian users' data on

[474] "Trump, Putin and the New Cold War," *The New Yorker,* March 6, 2017.

servers where it can be accessed by authorities.[475] All media platforms operate with the understanding that the government has the power to shut them down at any time.

C. Challenges to Regime Legitimacy (IV #3)

i) Putin's Return to Power and Anti-Putin Protests

For both democratic and authoritarian governments, legitimacy rests on the perception on the lack of viable alternatives. As such, political instability comes when people think something else is possible. Over the course of Putin's third term, he has had to deal with legitimacy challenges that did not exist in his earlier terms. Putin had the wind in his sails until 2009, when the global financial crisis and declining oil prices shocked Russia's economy once again. While the Russian people appear to have little direct effect in the political system given the limited role of the Russian Duma and political parties in actual policymaking, the population gains traction when they act collectively. According to Fiona Hill, "From workers in manufacturing companies (especially defense), to railway workers, miners, and the military, etc. – the aggregate opinion of these groups, and the population at large, as expressed in polls and through elections, is the essential element in affirming the legitimacy of the current political system."[476] Therefore, "Putin's popularity – his record as a leader and the public's rating of his political performance over time – are critical to keep power in balance."[477] This is why the anti-Putin protests following his return to the presidency were a singular and direct attack on the essence of Putin's power, and thereby the power of Russia's entire state apparatus.

ii) Two Source of Perceptions of Threat to Regime Legitimacy

In the months and years following Putin's return to the presidency and the social unrest immediately following the election, there were two threats facing regime stability and legitimacy. The first threat was from western actors, and most notably the United States. As Mark Pomar

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[475] Freedom of the Press 2015 Report, *Freedom House.* Accessed at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/russia.
[476] Fiona Hill, Congressional Testimony in front of the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, February 10, 2016.
[477] Ibid.

noted, "following 2011, Putin's rule became more about staying in power, and ramping up anti-American hysteria is a convenient way to create an enemy." Ambassador John Beyrle also notes, "The handmaidens of the West – the Navalnys, the undesirable organizations, the foreign agents – all of this is tied into the outside world acting through some nefarious Russian hirelings that Putin mythologizes as posing a threat."[478] For Putin, this is an easy threat to promote because at the time, a strong majority of Russians viewed the U.S. as a "hostile country," even through the period of the reset, and have a built in suspicion of the West.

Playing to this already confirmed impression, Putin widely and publically implicated U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the protests. Speaking at a televised meeting with political advisors and allies, Putin charged that hundreds of millions of dollars in "foreign money" were being used to influence the political landscape in Russia. Putin also directly accused Clinton of "Setting the tone for certain actors inside Russia. She gave the signal. They heard the signal and with the support of the U.S. State Department began active work."[479] The so-called "signal" refers to Clinton's remarks on December 5, 2011, in which she publically questioned the fairness of the parliamentary elections.

Although Clinton's remarks had questionable, if any, influence on the anti-Putin protests, Putin saw Clinton as an agent for regime change, given her role in the 2011 Libya intervention. From Putin's perspective, Clinton sought to support color revolutions within Russia, as had occurred in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan over the previous decade. Putin saw U.S. condemnation of the Russian elections as part of a long-standing desire to foment unrest in authoritarian regimes with which it did not share national interests. Yet if there is a sense in the Kremlin of an intrinsic threat from the West, it is not the fear of support for overt regime change. Rather it is a fear of "information warfare" and U.S. and European support for revolutions outside of Russia, which, if successful, indicate to Russians that they too can succeed in developing alternative forms of government. It is imperative to Putin's own survival that revolution in such volatile places as Kiev

[478] Interview with Ambassador John Beyrle, Washington DC, March 9, 2017.
[479] David M. Herszenhorn and Ellen Barry, "Putin Contends Clinton Incited Unrest Over Vote," *The New York Times,* December 8, 2011.

and Damascus not provide successful examples of what happens when the people rise up against their leaders.

The second challenge to Putin and his regime's legitimacy is far more intrinsic. As Beyrle notes, "The more acute threat was apparent when Putin saw thousands of people carrying signs that said 'A world without Putin,' which he had never experienced... and this leads to the question: who does Putin have to fear internally who organically thinks it is time for him to go?" The Russian elite who have amassed a great deal of wealth under Putin continue to watch very closely for any perceived sign of weakness that he is slipping. As Beyrle argues, "the *perception* that he is losing control is all that matters."[480]

An account from Brookings scholars Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy at the 2011 Valdai Discussion Club[481] meeting with Putin illustrated the value the Russian leader places on perception of control. "He cannot let his guard down. Any sign of frailty or confusion must be avoided… he is enough, and he really doesn't, as he said, have to defend or explain himself or apologize to anybody for anything." When pressed about any "younger faces" that may be able to take over "the system" after him, he only spoke of Medvedev. He did not recognize the legitimate concern of succession, and "his personal vigor, his health and his youth becomes all the more important precisely because he doesn't have anyone else, and so he has to be the one to embody dynamism and youth and strength… the one who keeps the system going, and keeps the plan on track, and keeps everything going for the future."[482] This phenomenon is not unique to Putin, as personal authority has always played a major role in legitimizing the Russian political system and regime.

iii) Sanctions and Russia's Economic Crisis

[480] Interview with John Beyrle, Washington DC, March 8, 2017.
[481] The Valdai Discussion Club is an annual meeting of foreign think-tank experts, academics, journalists and politicians who are invited to Russia to meet with their Russian counterparts. They are also invited to meet with Russian government and political officials in Moscow. President Putin gives at annual address and answers question.
[482] Clifford Gaddy and Fiona Hill, "Putin's Next Move in Russia: Observations from the 8th Annual Valdai International Discussion Club," December 12, 2011. Accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/putins-next-move-in-russia-observations-from-the-8th-annual-valdai-international-discussion-club/

In 2013, the Kremlin realized that it would need more justification for its political rule than the economic growth it relied on through 2008. Even before the U.S. and Europe enacted sanctions on Russia for its annexation of Crimea and its violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the economy had shrunk by over a third due to declining oil prices. Living standards were falling and continued to fall throughout 2014 and 2015. As an illustration, the average salary in Russia in January 2014 was $850 a month; a year later it was $450.[483] In the short-term, however, signs indicate that Russians will ride out the poor economic conditions, as circumstances are not nearly as bad as they were under the economic reforms of the 1990s. Andrei Movchan, director of the Economic Policy Program at the Carnegie Moscow Center, believes the economy has a long way to go before it incites unrest. According to Movchan, although the Russian economy lacks the capacity and the momentum for new growth, the wealth accumulated during the boom years of 2000-2008 will insulate the country against a crash in the years ahead. Moreover, Movchan indicated, "Many analysts suggest that until GDP per capita in Russia falls from the current $8,500 USD to $4,500 USD there is no risk of political instability."[484] He added that popular uprisings are more likely to start in countries with nominal per capita GDP of under $6,000 USD.

Despite the bite of Western sanctions and plunging oil prices, rampant corruption will remain an even greater detriment to the long-term health of the Russian economy by inhibiting entrepreneurship, innovation and international investment. Movchan highlights that this lack of trust in the government has progressively turned businessmen away from the country. Over the past sixteen years, total capital flight has even exceeded total revenue from oil and gas sales.[485] Furthermore, the Russian private sector is so underdeveloped that it generates less than $3,000 per year per capita, a figure that puts Russia outside the top 100 countries worldwide in this ranking.[486]

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[483] The Economist, "Russian Foreign Policy: A Hollow Superpower," March 1, 2016. Accessed at: http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21695003-dont-be-fooled-syria-vladimir-putins-foreign-policy-born-weakness-and-made

[484] Interview with Andrei Movchan, Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow, March 15, 2016.

[485] Andrey Movchan, "Sources of Russia's Stagnation," *Carnegie Moscow Center,* March 3, 2016. Accessed at: http://carnegie.ru/commentary/2016/03/03/sources-of-russia-s-stagnation/ius9

[486] Ibid.

Russia is also facing significant structural challenges, beyond the current economic crisis brought on by declining oil prices and Western sanctions. In 2010, 35,000 people immigrated to Russia. In 2015, this number had fallen to 4,000. In 2015, only 45 percent of Russians believed that Russia was on "the right track," despite Putin's astronomically high personal approval ratings. According to Kirill Rogov, this statistic is also correlated with interest in official media outlets. "Support for the regime and viewership of state-run TV outlets had both declined in the years before the annexation of Crimea," said Rogov, "Following the annexation, both vehemently increased."[487] However, Russians' low approval of the direction of the country (aside from the "honeymoon" period following the annexation of Crimea), show that problems are there.

Fare more important to Russia's long-term viability as a great power will be the nation's ability to deal with systemic internal challenges. Russia has long struggled with demographic issues that plague the nation's economy as well as its international competitiveness. Corruption is rampant across sectors of the economy and has resulted in the richest 10 percent of Russians owning 87 percent of the wealth.[488] Russia has an overall adult life expectancy similar to developing nations; according to U.S. Census Bureau projections, Russia's share of the global working-age population is projected to drop from 2.4 percent to 1.6 percent.[489] While this will clearly hurt Russia's economy, it will also hinder its military capabilities and manpower. Russia's growing inability to match its international ambitions with resources will affect its national security strategy far more than Putin would care to admit now. This reality may even force the political leadership to rely on its nuclear capabilities as its primary pillar of military strength and "nuclear saber-rattling" (a rhetorical tactic it uses now), much to the detriment of signaling and stability between great powers.

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[487] Kirill Rogov, Center on Global Interests Panel, Washington DC, September 21, 2016.
[488] Credit Suisse Research Institute, "Global Wealth Report 2015," October 2015. Accessed at: https://publications.credit-suisse.com/tasks/render/file/?fileID=F2425415-DCA7-80B8-EAD989AF9341D47E
[489] Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear: Russia's Demographic Disaster," *Foreign Affairs,* November 2011, Volume 90 No. 6, 105.

Overall, Putin's third term as president (still ongoing at the time of this writing) has been defined by domestic turmoil and international revisionism. The Russian military is a fully revived tool of statecraft, and Moscow has used its renewed military strength to project power in its near abroad and in the Middle East well beyond Western expectations. Meanwhile, Putin has managed to fully coopt the political space under United Russia's umbrella and has reshuffled his inner cabinet to include more young loyalists than seasoned hands. Putin's own worldview has also hardened. He is convinced that Western intentions are anathema to Russia's, and that cooperation on issues of global and regional security are impossible as long as the West refuses to treat Russia as an equal partner. Russia's foreign policy objectives in this context are to weaken NATO, challenge the solidarity of the European Union and limit America's ability to influence events in the "near abroad," all while pursuing a Russian "sphere of influence." If there was ever any doubt, the era of geopolitics and great power competition is back.

Currently, Putin is playing a weak hand relatively well. He has succeeded in achieving strategic influence and depth in Russia's near-abroad, particularly in the Caucasus, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine. A challenge for Putin moving forward, however, will be maintaining a robust military presence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. There is a real and significant danger of overextending Russia's military and political might. Putin runs the risk of losing domestic support and stretching an already limited inventory of military capabilities if he looks to further expand Russia's military footprint in a period of economic stagnation and international isolation. This presents the even greater uncertainty: what happens when a dictator's back is against the wall?

Conclusion

Russian foreign policy under Putin has displayed many consistencies. Over the course of the twenty-first century to date, Putin has consistently declared the need to recognize the "multipolar" state of world affairs,[490] the sanctity of Russia's great power status and the (in many ways hypocritical) importance of non-interference in states' internal affairs. Russia's political leadership has also consistently bemoaned NATO expansion and denounced ballistic missile defense

[490] Putin's "multipolar vision" was also heavily influenced by Yevgeny Primakov and his vision of Russia as an independent center of power.

initiatives pursued by the United States as fundamentally destabilizing. Yet despite these consistencies, there have also been tremendous changes to the style and substance of Russian foreign policy over the course of the Putin era.

Many Russia analysts consider 2007 and 2008 to be turning points in Russia's confrontational posture with the West and power projection in Eastern Europe. These years were characterized by Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, followed by the cyber-attacks on Estonia and then the war with Georgia in 2008. According to this perspective, the Georgian war and its ramifications led directly to the predicament in which we find ourselves now. Russia's renewed economic power, at its height in 2008, and its subsequent military modernization efforts, gave Russia the capabilities and power to challenge the West on key diverging interests. Yet from other perspectives, the watershed moment in the downturn of Russian relations with the West came with Putin's return to power in 2012. The difference between these two perspectives lies primarily in whether one believes internal factors play a significant role in driving foreign policy preferences and behavior.

This study pursues the latter approach: Russia's decisive turn away from engagement with the West does not align with purely realpolitik considerations and constraints. Russian revisionism did not occur immediately following NATO's encroaching expansion in 2004, or even later in 2007, when the Baltic States, along with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia were admitted to the European Union. Russia's response was relatively muted, and it still sought integration into a European security framework. Under Medvedev's tenure, the U.S. and Russia signed a comprehensive arms control treaty and attempted to "reset" relations. Russia's aggression in its near abroad came most notably after Putin's reelection in 2012 and the 2013 Maidan movement in Ukraine. It was at this point when Moscow reached the conclusion that the European Union had become completely intertwined with NATO, presenting a triple threat of the near abroad's political, economic and military movement *away* from Russia.

Indeed, regime stability is at the core of Russian foreign policy, but it is has been exacerbated by these internal and external factors. The color revolutions in the mid-2000s, Russia's economic downturn following the 2008 financial crisis, conventional NATO interventions and

unconventional Western informational and economic campaigns threaten the very stability of Putin's power. Lastly, individuals and their worldviews – particularly in authoritarian settings with few institutional constraints – have been shown to influence and drive foreign policy decision making in contemporary Russia. To this point, Fiona Hill reminds us that perceptions of threats to regime stability cannot be fully understood without recognizing how Putin's personal worldview and past experiences have shaped his world vision and nurtured a negative view of political opposition movements.[491]

Validity of Hypotheses

The composition and interests of elite (IV #1) have had a significant effect on Russian foreign policy, particularly as Putin has managed to "deinstitutionalize" the foreign policy sphere and rely more heavily on an informal network of close advisors. There is no question that Putin's power base resides with individuals from the Russian security services, who have ushered in a return of the state security apparatus. The rise of the security apparatus to the forefront of Russian politics has also furthered Putin's internal consolidation of control through the jailing of journalists, the harassment of political opposition figures and the monitoring of civil society groups. Moreover, the emergence of the siloviki as a political force has occurred in a competitive authoritarian system led by a hyper-presidency and networks of informal advisors and patrons. Under Putin's rule, it has shifted even further in the direction of a personalist system, in which Putin is unconstrained by powerful elites nor a critical public. He has coopted various political parties and factions under his umbrella, appealing to their support when necessary for his own aims. This allows him to avoid serious debate over critical issues of national security and foreign policy.

Among the metrics of consolidation of control (IV #2), this study has found the closing of the independent media space to be one of the most important implications of authoritarianism on foreign policy. The state-controlled television environment has allowed the regime to project tightly honed messages about domestic and international events. It has also allowed Putin to shape perceptions about himself, his hold on power, and his ability to defend Russia from outside threats. Putin knows that he must maintain an astronomically high approval rating with the Russian public

[491] Fiona Hill, "How Vladimir Putin's Worldview Shapes Russian Foreign Policy," in *Russia's Foreign Policy, Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations,* edited by David Cadier and Margot Light, (Palgrave MacMillan UK, 2015), 214.

to keep elites in check, and his effective consolidation of the information space has thus far helped him to achieve this goal.

Legitimacy concerns (IV #3), while one of the leading factors behind the heightened anti-American rhetoric following the 2012 anti-Putin protests, were not the primary drivers behind Russia's revisionism in Ukraine nor in the Middle East, despite the boost in Putin's popularity that followed the annexation of Crimea. Simply put, Ukraine represented a red line in Moscow. It is of more fundamental importance – in symbolism, history, politics, economics and security terms – than the Baltic States, and therefore Moscow cannot afford to lose Ukraine to the European Union. Ukraine also represents the frontier of the post-Soviet space that Russia is attempting to reconstitute as a political and military buffer zone. When Yanukovich fell in 2013, Putin saw a unique window to act, and he did. But legitimacy issues certainly influenced Putin's style: Internal political objectives of "regime-proofing" prompted a nationalist foreign policy approach that emphasizes Russia as the conservative and true Europe, while characterizing the United States and the European Union as threats to Russia's national interests.

Legitimacy remains a fickle but necessary aspect of Putin's regime, and threats to Putin's power emerge from three sources: first, the external infiltration of Western influence and support for liberal opposition groups; second, the example of successful revolutions and revolts against authoritarian regimes abroad; and third, the loss of "buy in" from elites who fear that Putin can no longer protect the massive fortunes they have accumulated over his time at the helm of the political system. Putin must handle all three to stay in power, and there is no denying that he has done so exceedingly well.

Despite the validity of the three hypotheses proposed in this study, a purely domestic oriented and "authoritarian" approach to Russian foreign policy is ill advised. This study did not propose, nor did it find, a direct correlation between authoritarian rule and revisionist approaches to foreign policy. Conversely, Putin's first term as president, which saw marked consolidations of power, was also defined by attempts at engagement and cooperation with the West. On the other hand, authoritarian rulers, and the political systems they lead, rely on different sources of legitimacy and perceive threats to personal and regime stability in different ways than democratic governments.

Leadership-elite dynamics also affect decision-making processes within authoritarian settings, and individuals are more likely to hold significant power over institutions. These factors, along with the evolving international conditions that were explored in this chapter, offer a more explanatory understanding of Russian revisionism under Putin than any singular theory or approach can offer. As we look at Russia's next six years under Putin (barring a political earthquake), it is likely that in situations where regime insecurity is high, and Western actors appear threatening to Russian interests, foreign policy – and revisionism – will remain the continuation of domestic politics by other means.

Chapter 6

Chinese Foreign Policy and Revisionism in the 21st Century

"The history of sea power is largely, though by no means solely, a narrative of contests between nations, of mutual rivalries, of violence frequently culminating in war. The profound influence of sea commerce upon the wealth and strength of countries was clearly seen long before the true principles which governed its growth and prosperity were detected...The clash of interests, the angry feelings roused by conflicting attempts thus to appropriate the larger share, if not the whole, of the advantages of commerce, and of distant unsettled commercial regions, led to wars. On the other hand, wars arising from other causes have been greatly modified in their conduct and issue by the control of the sea. Therefore the history of sea power, while embracing in its broad sweep all that tends to make a people great upon the sea or by the sea, is largely a military history..."

– Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History,* 1890

The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.

– Sun Tzu

Peace is Precious.

– Confucius

Application of Analytic Framework

The evolution of Chinese foreign policy over the course of the twenty-first century represents the clear-cut trajectory of a resurgent power. China has become a nation no longer playing catch up; instead it seeks to set the stage. But this evolution has also been one of uncertainty: China's intentions remain unclear; its governing system is inscrutably opaque; and its rising power is worrying to many on the outside looking in. This study on contemporary China aims to complement our understanding of China's growing regional and international presence with an assessment of the international and domestic factors behind China's turn towards revisionism.

Analyzing China's foreign policy orientation (between status quo and revisionist) throughout each case study involves, as it did in the Russia case studies, a focus on *internal preferences* – key

speeches and doctrinal texts from the political leadership and military modernization programs and defense spending trends – and *external behavior* – an assessment of China's diplomatic, economic and military strategies and tactic, including the use of coercion in its relations with other nations. Using this framework, this research examines official PRC political and diplomatic statements and Chinese actions in the Asia Pacific region from the East China Sea to the South China Sea. Using the same approach as in the Russia case studies, this chapter will cover three delineated phases, or cases, in Chinese foreign policy that highlight Beijing's relations with key actors in the Asia Pacific region with whom China has pursued more or less status quo or revisionist strategies over territorial and economic concerns. These actors include the United States, Japan, Taiwan, the ASEAN nations (foremost Vietnam and the Philippines) and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Each case study first provides an accurate as possible summary of major relevant shifts in Chinese preferences and behavior in the Asia Pacific maritime region to assess to what extent China exhibits trends towards or away from the indicators of revisionism (outlined below). This chapter will then examine international factors including China's relative power capabilities vis-à-vis smaller regional and great powers, actions and strategies pursued by other states (including powerful regional states Japan and the United States) in each phase of Chinese foreign policy. This is done to conclude the extent to which the apparent shifts in Chinese behavior over time vary with changing international and regional dimensions. Finally, and again most substantially, this chapter will assess the domestic context in each phase of Chinese behavior to analyze the effect of domestic political and economic conditions on the leadership's foreign policy decision making processes. To recall, these domestic-level factors include:

I. The changing composition and interests of the Chinese elite, and leadership-elite dynamics
II. The centralization of political and institutional authority over wide ranging policy areas, as well as the removal of political opposition and weakening of institutions
III. Challenges to the legitimacy of the ruling elite and political regime

Plan of Chapter

These international and domestic factors are assessed over the course of three case studies, spanning between 2002 and 2016. The first case study analyzes Chinese foreign policy and

domestic politics under Hu Jintao during his first five years as general secretary of the CCP, from 2002 through 2007. The second case study examines Hu's second five years at the helm of the CCP, from 2007 through 2012 and the leadership transition from Hu to Xi. The third case study looks extensively at Xi Jinping's tenure as general secretary of the CCP from 2012 through 2016, a period which many China experts regard as significant in terms of Xi's consolidation of control and ability to set a new course for China's foreign policy.

Following the same methodological plan as in the Russia case studies, each case study in this chapter traces the evolution of China's foreign policy strategies, particularly in the Asia Pacific maritime domain, and highlights turning points in China's regional and international trajectory. To recall, this research takes into consideration the following indicators and criteria of revisionism:

1. A national posture and security strategy that represents a preference for a redistribution of power and prestige in the international system and/or proximate region and desire to replace it with an alternative vision. Specifically, this includes:
    - The promotion of a revisionist ideology through official or quasi-official sources (i.e. state sponsored media) that speaks to a necessity to overturn elements of the system to fit a certain worldview;
    - A show of resoluteness in projecting power that extends beyond variable and episodic moments in time. To this end, mobilization of economic, technological, and human resources, military modernization programs and the acquisition of advanced military technologies are central long-term features[492]
2. A willingness to use unilateral and illegitimate coercion and force to expand territorial possessions and achieve a redistribution of power
3. A high risk tolerance for incurring costs to secure "international goods" such as territory

Approaches to Understanding Chinese Foreign Policy

[492] Balance of power literature is vague when it comes to what levels of military expenditures constitute balancing. Furthermore, military expenditures are not simply functions of external threats and opportunities; they are also determined by technological innovation cycles, organizational interests and domestic ideologies and therefore may represent a more long-term preference towards balancing than a single show of force.

China in the twenty-first century is a compelling case for studying great power revisionism because of all great powers operating in the international system today, and particularly in Asia, China has the longest standing and clearest conception of world order and its role in upholding that order. Kissinger describes this conception as a 'sinocentric tribute system,' which defined Chinese foreign relations for over two millennia. He writes, "In this traditional concept, China considered itself, in a sense, the sole sovereign government of the world. Its Emperor was treated as a figure of cosmic dimensions and the linchpin between the human and the divine. His purview was not a sovereign state of 'China' – that is, the territories immediately under his rule – but 'All Under Heaven,' of which China formed the central civilized part: 'the Middle Kingdom,' inspiring and uplifting the rest of humanity."[493] This conception serves as the historical context behind many of the diplomatic strategies China pursued today. Consider China's approach to political and economic negotiations with its neighbors. China prefers to enter into conversations on a bilateral basis, as opposed to through multilateral fora. In part, this is due to China's overwhelming power advantages vis-à-vis its Southeast Asian neighbors, including Vietnam and the Philippines. But there is another explanation more deeply rooted in China's imperial history and its conception of the Middle Kingdom tributary system.

Kissinger writes that from China's unification as a single political entity in 221 B.C., "world order reflected a universal hierarchy, not an equilibrium of competing sovereign states. Every known society was conceived of as being in some kind of tributary relationship with China, based in part on its approximation of Chinese culture; none could reach equality with it... diplomacy was not a bargaining process between multiple sovereign interests but a series of carefully contrived ceremonies in which foreign societies were given the opportunity to affirm their assigned place in the global hierarchy."[494] China's hierarchical conception of relations with other states (and its position at the top of that hierarchy), however, was not accompanied by a desire to dominate or proselytize others. Rather, "The goal of the tribute system was to foster deference... it sought to induce respect, not conversion; that subtle line could never be crossed. Its mission was its performance, which foreign societies were expected to recognize and acknowledge."[495]

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[493] Henry Kissinger, *World Order,* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 213.
[494] Kissinger, 2014.
[495] Kissinger, 215-216.

In this sense, China was an anomaly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Western imperialism, aggressive Communism notions of missionary zeal reigned. During these eras, China's national identity was not fixed in its Middle Kingdom mentality and tributary approach to East Asia. Instead, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were considered in China as "centuries of humiliation," which led the Chinese people to adopt sentiments of humility and antagonism towards outside powers. Now, in an era of burgeoning power and regional interconnectedness and dynamism, China's national narrative is shifting from a "victim mentality" to a "great power mentality."

Taking into account China's centuries-old history as an Asian power, one would be remiss to call China a 'rising' power today. This conception would ignore centuries of Chinese history dating back thousands of years before the creation of the modern state system. For centuries, China's emperors ruled over what they believed comprised "everything under the heavens," or *tian xia*. For over one thousand years, China was the preeminent power in Asia; its rulers received tributes from smaller nations and won over its adversaries not through force but through deference to its superior values, culture, innovations and military prowess. Following in this tradition, China's modern leaders from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping have called for China's "national revival" and a return to its rightful place in the center of the international system.

Over the centuries, Chinese foreign policy has been guided by differing and dualistic strategic cultures. Jonathan Pollack describes this characteristic as, "an inescapable duality in Chinese thinking – that is, a commitment to peaceful development while protecting China's legitimate rights and interests and a refusal to sacrifice the state's core interests."[496] Andrew Scobell similarly notes the paradoxes in Chinese foreign policy, describing its strategic culture as "a cult of the defensive" that "predisposes Chinese leaders paradoxically to engage in offensive military operations as a primary alternative in pursuit of national goals, while rationalizing these actions as being purely defensive and a last resort."[497] Moreover, China's continental and maritime orientations lend themselves to a dualistic strategic culture. Pollack writes, "China is what one

[496] Jonathan D. Pollack, "Competing Visions: China, America and the Asia-Pacific Security Order," in *China's Global Engagement: Cooperation, Competition, and Influence in the 21st Century*, edited by Jacques Delisle and Avery Goldstein. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017, 161.
[497] Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

leading Chinese scholar terms a 'state in the middle,' and the Asian continent is its natural home. China is thus pursuing a dual strategic identity, entailing maritime and continental dimensions, with the maritime domain the primary arena of U.S.-China competition."[498]

The Preexisting East Asian Order

U.S. security structures in Europe and in Asia have evolved along two very different paths since 1945. In both arenas, the United States has developed institutions and alliances at which it sits in the center. In the European theater, the U.S. developed a multilateral organization in NATO, whereas in Asia, following Japan's defeat in WWII and later the Korean War, the U.S. developed several "hub and spoke" security partnerships with Asian Pacific nations. These partnerships have included the mutual defense treaty with the Philippines (1951), the Australia-New Zealand-US Security Treaty (1951), the US-South Korea Alliance (1953) and the mutual defense treaty with Japan (1960). In comparison, China's only formal alliance is the China-DPRK Treaty of 1961 and it was largely due to the Sino-Soviet rivalry of the early 1960s.

For much of the Cold War, America's relationship with China was largely adversarial, given China's revolutionary and communist nature, as well as its role in the Sino-Soviet alliance. According to Jonathan Pollack, "Even when the United States and China pursued mutual accommodation during the 1970s and 1980s, the relationships was defined largely by shared antipathies to Soviet strategy, rather than by outright congruence of U.S. and Chinese policy goals."[499] Nevertheless, given China's relative economic and military weaknesses and its narrowly defined interests abroad, it did not have a reason to nor an interest in contesting U.S. regional primacy. Beginning in 1978 at the commencement of the post-Mao era under Deng Xiaoping, China was an inward looking and developing country. It had endured over a century of intrusions from Western powers, which limited its ability to play a commanding role in the East Asian order.

Therefore, at the end of the Cold War the U.S. did not face any overt opposition to its regional primacy in the Asia Pacific. David Kang writes, "It was only in the 1990s that the system appeared to begin – once again – to resemble an East Asian regional system that is both powered and steered by East Asian states themselves."[500] The system was first powered by Japan's dynamic economic

[498] Pollack, 159.
[499] Pollack, 156.
[500] David Kang, *China Rising,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 49.

growth, although Japan's ascendency was curtailed in the late 1990s by the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and 1998. Now in the twenty-first century, and as the world's largest trading nation, China has emerged as an autonomous strategic actor with growing economic and military resources capable of testing America's primacy in the Asia Pacific.

Why this Study's Focus on the Asia Pacific?

Given China's expansive presence to the east and west of its borders, as well as its economic and developmental initiatives including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and its One Belt One Road Initiative, it is important to clarify why this chapter focuses on China's maritime periphery as the key theater for analyzing China's revisionist strategies. First, there are differing existing status quo and security arrangements in the Central Asia and East Asia regions. Since the end of World War II (and even prior), the U.S. has maintained security arrangements and a significant forward-deployed military presence in East Asia, which China encounters directly in any expansion of its power. Furthermore, China's strategic interests in East Asia (encapsulating the Korean peninsula, the East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea) correspond closely with predominant U.S. security, political and economic interests, and is where the United States maintains the preponderance of its military power. As Dr. Thomas Fingar of the Hoover Institute notes, "If you go anywhere with a ship in the Asia Pacific, you are challenging the U.S."[501] Fundamentally, China does not have to contend with an American countervailing presence in Central Asia inasmuch as U.S. political, economic and military reach is far less pronounced, and its security interests more closely aligned with China's. This context provides greater opportunities for enhancing Chinese influence and outreach without unsettling existing status quo arrangements between great powers.

Second, China's strategies in Central Asia and East Asia differ in *effect*. China's efforts to develop the Asia Infrastructure and Investment Bank and the One Belt One Road Initiative have not, in recent years, employed the same level of coercion that China has carried out in the Asia Pacific. In East Asia, China has shown a greater proclivity to use unilateral coercion, although predominantly below the threshold of overt conflict, against its neighbors in its maritime territorial

[501] Author Interview with Thomas Fingar, Stanford University, June 15, 2016.

disputes. This strategy has proven more destabilizing to regional order than its developmental and economic efforts to the West of its borders.

Defining Nationalism in the Chinese Context

Lastly, before moving into the analysis of China's evolving foreign and domestic policies over the course of the twenty-first century, it is important to discuss briefly the historical role of nationalism as a legitimation strategy for the Communist Party. This is because nationalism in the Chinese context is different than it is in a European or Western sense. Authoritarian regimes, and notably the Chinese Communist Party, rely on two pillars to maintain the party's legitimacy: economic growth and nationalism. Ernest Haas defines of nationalism as "an ideology that makes assertions about the nation's claim to historical uniqueness, to the territory that the nation-state ought to occupy, and to the kinds of relations that should prevail between one's nation and others."[502] China experts Erica Strecker Downs and Phillip Saunders apply a definition of nationalism to the Chinese context, referring both to "government efforts to appeal to preexisting nationalist sentiment and to deliberate attempts to stir up nationalist sentiment for political ends."[503] Despite government appeals to nationalist sentiment for political gains, nationalism is a fickle factor in the CCP's legitimacy, as it must be promoted among the Chinese population but also carefully managed by the government; it is both a threat to and a tool of the CCP.

This duality stems from China's history in managing nationalist fervor and demonstrations. The last imperial dynasty to rule China, the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) ended after the Revolution of 1911, which was brought about, in part, due to the Qing's inability to defend Chinese territory from foreign incursions. Two Opium Wars against foreign powers led by Great Britain resulted in China's loss of Hong Kong and the forced opening of international trade and treaty port rights dictated on Western terms that disadvantaged China. Imperial China also lost Taiwan and parts of Manchuria to the Japanese after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. The Boxer Rebellion of

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[502] Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*: *Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations,"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3. Originally cited in Ernest Haas, "What is Nationalism and Why Should We Study It?" *International Organization,* 1986*,* Vol. 40 (3), 707.

[503] Erica Strecker Downs and Phillip C. Saunders, "Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism: China and the Diaoyu Islands," *International Security,* Vol. 23, No. 3 (Winter, 1998-1999), pp. 114-146, 119.

1899-1900 was a strong antiforeigner movement in response to the Qing's weakness against outside threats. Finally, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 established Japanese claims in the Northeast of China and further weakened the Qing dynasty shortly before its downfall.[504]

Following WWI, the 1919 peace conference at Versailles awarded Germany's territorial holdings in Shandong province to Japan. This sparked the May 4th Movement (May 4th 1919) which grew out of student protests challenging the government's weak response to its territorial losses at Versailles. The movement, representing a surge of nationalist fervor, also attacked Chinese traditionalism as too weak to stand up against foreign imperialism. The later Chinese Revolution of 1949 led by Mao Zedong broke out immediately following WWII after perpetual conflict and civil war with the Nationalist government, the Republic of China (ROC), beginning in the 1920s. One factor behind public support for Mao was also the inability of the Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek to defend China from Japanese assaults during WWII. The Communist Party under Mao was praised by peasants for its "unflagging efforts" to fight against Japanese invaders.[505] Upon founding the PRC on October 1, 1949, Mao declared: "Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up." The Communist Party under Mao assumed the mantle of anti-imperialism consistent with China's nationalist struggles against foreign exploitation.

The interim period between Imperial and Communist rule in China deserves special attention, as it was during this time that a new form of nationalism emerged in China that is maintained to this day. Following the 1911 revolution, a Provisional Government of the Republic of China was created with Sun Yat-Sen, a revolutionary who played an instrumental role in the Qing overthrow, serving as its provisional president. Sun founded the Nationalist Party of China, also known as the Kuomintang (KMT) whose successor leader, Chiang Kai-Shek fought and lost to the Communist Party in the Chinese Civil War before retreating to Taiwan in 1949. Importantly for this discussion on nationalism, in the early years of this interim period Sun developed a guiding ideology for the KMT known as the "Three Principles of the People," which incorporated "nationalism, democracy and livelihood (or socialism in some translations)." In lectures that Sun delivered on the doctrine,

[504] The Office of the Historian at the U.S. Department of State, "The Chinese Revolution of 1911." Accessed at: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/chinese-rev
[505] The Office of the Historian at the U.S. Department of State, "The Chinese Revolution of 1949." Accessed at: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev

he lamented that in China, "the spirit of unity has not extended beyond the family and clan relationships."[506] In order to "save" China, he argued that "the development of Chinese nationalism will give our people a permanent place in the civilized world; so it is our duty to make effective the doctrine of nationalism." Specifically, Sun articulated through a series of lectures in 1924 a modern form of Chinese nationalism to compete with other powers including Great Britain, France, Japan and Italy.[507] He wrote:

> Although there are a little over ten million of non-Chinese in China, including Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans, and Tartars, their number is small compared with the purely Chinese population, four hundred million in number, which has a common racial heredity, common religion, and common traditions and customs. It is one nationality! What is, then, our position in the world? In numbers we are the largest national group in the world, and our four thousand years of cultural background may be compared favorably with that of the West.[508]

While this form of nationalism was based in a racial population, Sun's single objective was to create a strong and unified China. In pursuit of this goal, Sun Yat-sen sought support from any group that would provide assistance. As such, the Nationalist party formed an alliance with the Chinese Communist Party in 1922 at the urging of Soviet diplomat, Adolf Joffe. When the nationalists and communists split in 1927, both Mao Zedong and Cheng Kai-shek claimed Sun's Three Principles of the People as their own foundational ideology, particularly its emphasis on Chinese nationalism. While there are different nationalist principles that exist on the mainland and in Taiwan today, Sun's principles served as a point of unity. This is why Sun is revered as a nationalist figure in both Mainland China and Taiwan. In Taiwan, Sun Yat-sen is remembered as the "Father of the Republic of China." On the mainland, Sun is revered as the "Forerunner of the Revolution."

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[506] Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Lecture on "The Three Principles of the People: the Doctrine of Nationalism," Delivered on January 27, 1924, 3. Accessed at: http://larouchejapan.com/japanese/drupal-6.14/sites/default/files/text/San-Min-Chu-I_FINAL.pdf
[507] He also described Germany, Austria and Russia as great powers, but that they had "collapsed" after WWI.
[508] Ibid.

Following the civil war and throughout the first two decades of the CCP's existence, Mao (like other totalitarian leaders of the twentieth century), relied on Marxist ideology as the government's legitimizing pillar, but he also sought to benefit from and develop Sun's ideas on nationalism. The nationalist undertones of the CCP, however, were far more hostile to external influences than those in Chiang Kai-shek's KMT, which was friendlier toward Western influences (indeed, Chiang married the American-educated Soong Mei-ling). Mao's communist form of nationalism was also anti-Confucian and maintained an interpretation of China as a traditional and rural society that would follow a socialist political path in contrast to Western powers. Mao's xenophobic nationalism was not new, as there was a consistent sense of ambiguity in modern China toward Western powers. The Boxer Rebellion mentioned above is a clear indication of this. After Mao's passing in the late-1970's and leading up to the Tiananmen Square crisis of 1989, Marxism as the defining ideology of the CCP began to lose favor. Market-oriented reforms carried out by Deng Xiaoping went against the CCP's characterization of China as a socialist nation.

Combined with rampant corruption in the party ranks, and high unemployment, the gap between socialist ideology and economic reality grew wider.[509] Following Tiananmen, the state's use of force against the protestors and the bankruptcy of communist ideology meant that the party needed to find new sources of legitimacy. Minxin Pei writes, "Since Tiananmen, no nightmare has obsessed the CCP leadership more than the collapse of the Soviet Union, and no political leader has been more reviled by the party than Gorbachev."[510] To avoid a similar calamitous downfall to that of the USSR, the CCP has pursue various legitimation strategies since Tiananmen. Downs and Saunders define these strategies as two-fold: "The first emphasizing nationalist goals and highlighting the party's success in building China into a powerful state; the second emphasizing economic goals and claims that the political stability provided by the CCP rule is necessary for continued economic growth."[511]

Despite the government's promotion of nationalism amongst its citizens, there are significant limitations on the extent to which the Chinese government can promote nationalism and carry out

[509] Downs and Saunders, 118.
[510] Pei, 17
[511] Downs and Saunders, 118.

the assertive foreign policies that tend to stem from such sentiments. There are two constraints, in particular. The first constraint is that excessive appeals to nationalism can lead to demands from the population for assertive foreign policies that Chinese leaders cannot fulfill given the relative power of the Chinese military vis-à-vis its primary challengers, particularly the United States. Second, any international conflict, while perhaps temporarily boosting the party's legitimacy and its perception of strength, would ultimately hurt China's economic growth and development needs – thereby diminishing its primary governing mechanism: the CCP's promise to increase living standards for its citizens in exchange for political compliance.

Before Xi Jinping's tenure, the party struggled to boost nationalism under these constraints. Downs and Saunders write, "In order to exploit both sources of legitimacy in a complementary manner, the government seeks to shore up its nationalist credentials through propaganda aimed at a domestic audience while simultaneously sending reassuring messages about China's desire for international cooperation to foreign audiences."[512] Nationalist sentiment is even more complicated in China as it must reconcile its legacy as an empire with that of a weaker nation that experienced multiple foreign invasions over the last 150 years.

Finally, while related less to the subject of nationalism, a broader challenge to the CCP's legitimacy is corruption within its political system. Although China is not a democracy, the government's legitimacy relies on a sense of political meritocracy within the Communist Party ranks. Daniel Bell writes, "The value of meritocracy is central to Chinese political culture and studies show that ordinary Chinese expect their leaders to be virtuous, meaning that rulers are supposed to use power to serve the political community, not themselves. The higher the level of political corruption, the less meritocratic the political system."[513] Just as the KMT lost the civil war to the Communist Party in part because of corruption, so too can the CCP lose favor with the Chinese people if they are seen as furthering their own wealth at the expense of the people. These complex aspects of Chinese nationalism and legitimacy will be explored further throughout the following case studies in this chapter..

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[512] Downs and Saunders, 122.
[513] Daniel Bell, "Why China's Leaders See Corruption as a Political Threat," *The World Post,* February 23, 2015. Accessed at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-a-bell/china-corruption-threat_b_6699410.html

A Caveat on Terminology...

On a conceptual note, the term "revisionism" is not one often used by Chinese analysts or scholars. I found the term over the course of this research to be less helpful and appropriate in discussing Chinese foreign policy than concepts such as "assertive" or "active." Perhaps this is due to China's historic conceptions of world order in which China is simply returning to its rightful place in the Asia Pacific hierarchy of power dating back centuries – long before the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union and America's post-Cold War unipolar era.

That being said, there are several clear indicators in China's internal preferences (official and semi-official rhetoric) and foreign policy behavior that align with this research's conception of what a revisionist power says and does. This chapter highlights these indicators and seeks to assess the international and domestic factors behind China's evolving foreign policies in the region.

Case Study I: The Fourth Generation of Leadership Takes Control (2002-2007)

A. China's Strategic Orientation: Indicators of Revisionism and Key Turning Points

i) The Fourth Generation Reinvigorates Debate over China's Role

Before the Hu administration began in 2002, President Jiang Zemin crafted a foreign policy strategy around the concept of *daguo waijao*, or 'great power diplomacy.' "The basic idea of great power diplomacy," writes journalist and sinologist Willy Lam, "Is that while the PRC was in the 1990s not yet a global player because of its relatively limited economic, military, and geopolitical clout, it should seek to play a bigger foreign policy role particularly in the Asia-Pacific region."[514] Jiang Zemin looked at China's emerging power relative to the world's major power blocs, consisting of the U.S., the EU, Japan, and Russia.

In Jiang's worldview, China's ability to become a great power in world affairs depended on its relationship with the U.S., which Zemin viewed as the world's only 'super power.' In fact, Jiang's concept of 'great power diplomacy' confined China's foreign policy within the parameters set by

[514] Willy Wo-Lap Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era: New Leaders, New Challenges* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 159.

U.S. regional and global power.[515] Unfortunately the final years of the twentieth century and those preceding Hu's rise to power in 2002 were bumpy for U.S.-China relations. The years from 1999-2001 marked a particularly low point for the relationship. During this time, the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was accidentally bombed by U.S. forces as part of an ongoing NATO intervention in Serbia. Also in 2001, the U.S. and China found themselves in a diplomatic standoff over the detention of an American naval intelligence aircraft and crew following a midair collision with a Chinese fighter jet approximately 70 miles away from China's Hainan Island, killing one Chinese pilot.

To Jiang's critics in the Chinese foreign policy establishment, these events should have made China far more critical of the U.S., while Jiang was seen as guilty for pursing an overly 'pro-U.S.' policy. Moreover, before Hu took power at the Sixteenth Party Congress in late-2002, Lam writes that "Hu's aides and advisors had privately criticized Jiang for waging a 'romantic' foreign policy, that is, one divorced from a more realistic, systematic, and 'scientific' appraisal of the relative strengths of China and the U.S."[516] Therefore, early on the Fourth Generation of CCP Leadership under President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao sought to pivot away from Jiang's orientation and develop a Chinese foreign policy that was more commensurate with China's "emerging quasi-superpower status."[517]

In the context of the complex U.S.-China relationship following Jiang Zemin's departure, the CCP under Hu outlined two primary foreign policy goals, among several others. First, China would seek to maintain a stable and benign peaceful environment that would allow for China's continued economic development. This goal was defined at the Sixteenth Party Congress in 2002 within the strategic guidelines of the conceptual "period of strategic opportunity," which highlights the CCP leadership's judgment that China will maintain a benign external security environment through 2020 that will allow them to focus on internal development.[518] Second, China would work to guarantee reliable energy resources to meet China's growing domestic needs.[519] To achieve

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[515] Johnson, 22. Xi Jinping would later "update" this concept to cast China on a less deferential and more equal footing with the U.S., suggesting that he perceived U.S. power as a lesser constraint on China's exercise of power and influence in the region.
[516] Lam, 160.
[517] Lam, 157.
[518] Christopher K. Johnson, "Decoding China's Emerging 'Great Power' Strategy in Asia" *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* June 2014, 16.
[519] Lam, 158. Of note, China became the world's second largest importer of petroleum in 2003.

China's need for domestic energy, the CCP sought strategic partnerships with EU countries, its Asian neighbors and with key countries in Africa. Concurrently, Chinese officials and diplomats in the early years of Hu's leadership perceived Washington as pursuing a containment policy against China and thus sought to dispel notions that China's rise would be militaristic or aggressive.

ii) Hu's Defining Discourse of China's 'Peaceful Rise' and a 'Harmonious World'

President Hu's first stated policy goal after taking over the party was "to quadruple the 2000 GDP by 2020 and transform China into a 'moderately prosperous' society, where the Chinese people would enjoy a much more abundant and comfortable life."[520] Foreign policy furthered this goal by maintaining a peaceful international environment. In this context, one of the most significant foreign policy ideas attached early on to President Hu's tenure as leader of the CCP was the concept of "peaceful rise" or *heping jueqi.* This concept is based on the premise that China must maintain peaceful relations with its neighbors and a benign international environment within which to pursue economic development and domestic stability.

The concept was first developed by a group influential Shanghai-based academics and reiterated by President Hu and Premier Wen to audiences around the world. Zheng Bijian, a close advisor to President Hu, former Central Party School vice-president and Chair of the China Reform Forum, is widely considered to have influenced the articulation of the "peaceful rise" policy.[521] In 2003, Zheng argued that China should adopt a foreign policy approach that would avoid international tensions usually caused by rising powers. To do so, he urged that China should transcend "the traditional ways for great powers to emerge, as well as the Cold War mentality that defined international relations along ideological lines."[522] In 2006, Zheng affirmed the inherent qualities of China's peaceful rise in stating, "As for those who take it for granted that as Communist Party, China will inevitably follow the Soviet-style route of seeking international expansionism and

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[520] Suishen Zhao, "China's Power from a Chinse Perspective," in *Assessing China's Power*, edited by Jae Ho Chung, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 252.
[521] Lam, 166.
[522] Quoted in Biwu Zhang, "Chinese Perceptions of US Return to Southeast Asia and the Prospect of China's Peaceful Rise, in *The Making of China's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century,* edited by Suicheng Zhao (New York: Routledge, 2016), 225.

practicing domestic autocracy, those views are groundless."[523] Moreover, President Hu was so concerned about the international reception of China's "rise" that he replaced the concept of "peaceful rise" with "peaceful development."

Other Chinese high-level officials and influential actors around this time made statements that affirmed the benign implications "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development" as a central concept in Chinese foreign policy. Li Junru of the Central Party school wrote that "China's rise will not damage the interests of other Asian countries. That is because as China rises, it provides a huge market for its neighbors. At the same time, the achievements of China's development will allow it to support the progress of others in the region."[524] Moreover, Wu Baiyi of the influential Chinese foreign policymaking actor, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), noted the effect of economic development on the way that China developed its national security strategy:

> What China pursues now is a security of sustained development. The change is landmark... the nature of its security policy, therefore, is accommodative, rather than confrontational. Compared to past policies, the current concept signifies two major changes... For the first time, economic security is treated as equally important with those of "high politics." Second, it focuses more on the interrelationship between external and internal security challenges.[525]

In other words, China recognized that to benefit economically, it would have to craft an accommodative national security strategy that maintained a stable international and regional environment. Even PLA officials (an organization more often known for its hawkish stance on regional security issues) underscored China's peaceful intentions in the Asia-Pacific. During a tour of Southeast Asia in early 2004, Defense Minister General Gao Gangchuan sought to reassure China's neighbors that may have been concerned over China's growing economic clout in the region. On a visit to Thailand, General Gao stated, "China is determined to seek its emergence

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[523] David Kang, 84. Original citation: Wang Xiangwei, "Soviet-Style Rise 'Is Not on Agenda,'" *South China Morning Post,* November 23, 2005.
[524] Originally quoted in Elizabeth Economy, "China's Rise in Southeast Asia: Implications for the United States," *Journal of Contemporary China* 14, no. 41 (August 2005), 413.
[525] Wu Baiyi, "The Chinese Security Concept and Its Historical Evolution," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10, (2001): 281. Originally cited in Kang.

through peaceful means... China will not go down the old road of some major Western countries, which embarked on an expansionist path after their rise to power."[526]

Hu's conception of "peaceful rise," and the accompanying premise of a "harmonious world," or *hexie shijie,* also represented a progression in the leadership's thinking about China's role in the world. Defined broadly, Hu's principles indicated that China would be a more *proactive* participant in shaping a benign and "harmonious" order in which it could continue to thrive economically. Hu departed from Deng's earlier warning that China should "hide its light and bide its time," and serve as a more passive participant in world affairs. Hu also progressed, although less so, from Jiang Zemin's foreign policy principle of 'great power diplomacy,' which already conceived of China has a more active participant in building what Jiang saw as an emerging 'multipolar order.'[527]

iii) China's Commitment to a Multilateral Approach

For the purpose of maintaining a peaceful regional environment in which China could continue to grow economically, China designed a "charm offensive," known as the "good neighbor policy." Indeed, a key aspect of China's foreign policy was the notion of maintaining good ties with its Asian neighbors on security and economic issues. While Chinese foreign policy is often characterized by a preference for bilateral relations with its neighbors (so that it can use its relative military, political and economic weight as leverage), the early years of Hu's tenure and the corresponding China-ASEAN Summits in 2002, 2003 and 2004 were productive for Chinese multilateral cooperation with ASEAN states. At the China-ASEAN Summit in 2002, China and its counterparts signed the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties on the South China Sea,* which stated: "The Parties concerned undertake to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea."[528] The

[526] Willy Wo-Lap Lam, cited from Luo Yinwen, "Chinese defense minister talks about the 'Peaceful rise' road in a speech in Thailand," CNS, March 31, 2004.
[527] One of the CCP's central foreign policy concepts under Jiang Zemin was *yu shijie jiegui,* or, as literally transcribed, "linking up with the tracks of the world," which symbolized China's move towards a modernized state on track with the modern and globalized era.
[528] Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and the PRC, November 4, 2002. Accessed at:

Declaration also reaffirmed the parties' recognition of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) and commitment to freedom of navigation.

Even on the most sensitive territorial and sovereignty related issues, China and ASEAN began to make renewed commitments to peace. At the following year's summit in 2003, China signed the *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia* (TAC), which was a landmark nonaggression pact with ASEAN meaning that common interests would take priority over sovereignty-related disagreements, including in the contested Spratly and Paracel Islands. During his summit remarks, Premier Wen elaborated on China's goodwill strategy towards its neighbors. He stated:

> It is a vital part of China's policy towards surrounding countries under the new circumstances to be the good neighbors, good friends and good partners of ASEAN countries.... At present, the international and regional situations are undergoing complex and profound changes. Given such a backdrop, we should focus even greater attention on expanding the areas of converging interests and promoting common development and common security. Our cooperation should be broader, deeper and more performance-oriented and deliver more benefits to the people. Our cooperation should feature a wider regional and global perspective, helping not just ourselves but also the rest of Asia in terms of coping with new challenges.[529]

While progress on security and territorial issues was advanced during this time, China's push for regional integration can be seen first and foremost in its economic policies. At the China-ASEAN summit in 2003, China and its ASEAN counterparts also signed the framework for the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) with the intention to establish a free trade area among the ten member states of ASEAN and China by 2010.[530] At the following year's summit, Premier Wen and his counterparts vowed to build "the world's largest free trade area by 2015."[531] In addition, China sped up work on an infrastructure network along the Mekong River with an eye towards building a new trade zone that would incorporate southwest China, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and

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https://cil.nus.edu.sg/rp/pdf/2002%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Conduct%20of%20Parties%20in%20the%20South%20China%20Sea-pdf.pdf

[529] Premier Wen Jiabao of the PRC at the Seventh China-ASEAN Summit. Bali, October 8, 2003. http://wcm.fmprc.gov.cn/pub/eng/topics/zgcydyhz/dqc/t27714.htm

[530] The FTA came into effect on January 1, 2010. Upon its implementation, the FTA was the largest in terms of population and third largest in terms of nominal GDP.

[531] Lam, 205.

Cambodia. This project became known by many as China's "Marshall Plan," as Beijing covered the majority of the costs of building the necessary ports, airports and bridges.[532] Moreover, in June 2003, China and ten other East Asian countries established an Asian Bond Fund of $1 billion that would create a regional bond market, funnel foreign exchange reserves back into the region, and respond to "economies in crisis."[533] In a noteworthy next step, a second bond fund was established in December 2004, and the resources were doubled to $2 billion.

Finally, and in addition to signing to these multilateral treaties with its Asian partners, China exhibited a genuine and increasing commitment to international organizations throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. This is best illustrated in China's efforts to join the WTO in 2001 and its willingness to bring about significant domestic reforms to align with global standards.

On a geostrategic level, China's leaders viewed further integration with Asian groups (ASEAN being the primary arena) as a useful means to constrain America's ability to take actions in the region that ran counter to Chinese interests. Robert Sutter writes, "Chinese officials and specialists made clear in consultations in mid-2004 that Chinese leaders viewed deeper Chinese involvement in Asian multilateral organizations as providing a defense against possible revival of U.S. efforts to pressure or contain China. The ever-growing webs of Chinese connections with an increasing array of Asian multilateral organizations and groups provided the basis of a sort of Gulliver strategy that would tie down and impede possible U.S. efforts to engage in sharp pressure or containment of China."[534] Moreover, China's creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 (and implementation in 2003) along with Russia and four Central Asian nations was perceived by Beijing as a tool to counter the Washington's influence and predominance.[535] This was a consistent perspective throughout much of the Hu era of leadership: although China's leaders grew more confident in China's power and influence, they remained keenly aware of U.S. predominance in the region and viewed regional integration as a means to avoid counterbalance.

iv) China's Pursuit of 'Energy Diplomacy'

[532] Ibid.
[533] Kang, 73.
[534] Robert Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils,* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 9.
[535] Interestingly, there is evidence to support the assertion that China saw the SCO as a tool against U.S. predominance in ways that not even Russia attempted to carry out.

Pushing back against perceptions of China's 'peaceful rise' in the early years of the Fourth Generation's leadership was Chinese assertiveness, and sometimes aggression, over energy resources in its region. Indeed, China's vast domestic needs for sustainable energy resources in the early 2000's drove the leadership to develop and carry out an assertive 'energy diplomacy' strategy and renew efforts to explore offshore oil and gas deposits. In many respects, China's intense focus on energy exploration is warranted. Since 1993, China has been a net importer of oil and in 2003, China surpassed Japan as the world's second largest importer of crude oil. [536] By 2004, China was buying two million barrels of oil a day, over 60-percent of which was coming from the Middle East.[537] Furthermore, during this time China's usage of oil also rose as a share of world consumption, growing from under three-percent in the 1960s to almost 14-percent by 2004. From 2000-2004, the rise was particularly sharp, as China's share of world oil consumption expanded by almost 30-percent.[538] Despite the clear justification of a vigorous energy diplomacy, China's pursuit of energy resources in the region – and particularly in the contested waters in the East China Sea and the South China Sea – have led to increasing contestation in the region and had profound implication for Chinese diplomacy and foreign policy.

v) Rivalry with Japan Over Resources in the East China Sea

Regional tensions emerging from China's energy exploration during the early Hu era were most deeply felt in the East China Sea. Analyzed in the context of China and Japan's longstanding rivalry and bitter history, relations with Japan entered a cycle between cooperation and confrontation throughout the early 2000s.[539] At the time, the driving factors were, and remain, the disputed sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu in the PRC), a chain of eight uninhabited

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[536] Taylor Fravel, "International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansion," *International Studies Review* (2010) 12, 505-532, p. 513.
[537] Lam, 177.
[538] James Tang, "The Grain or Against the Grain? Energy Security and Chinese Foreign Policy in the Hu Jintao Era," *The Brookings Institution Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies,* October 2006.
[539] Tensions over disputed territories and rights to corresponding energy resources were also part of a broader power game between Japan and China in the Asia Pacific, as each vied for preeminent economic power in the region. Japan's unease over this matter would grow between 2000 to 2010, as Japan's economy stagnated while China's economy grew five-fold, from 1.2 trillion in 2000 to over 6 trillion in 2010 (eventually surpassing Japan's economy in 2010).

islands in the East China Sea, and the disputes over the delineation of exclusive economic zones.[540] Further complicating the dispute is the Shirakaba undersea natural gas field (Chunxiao by the Chinese) that lies within the disputed area. In early 2005, amidst frosty political relations (due in part to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's annual visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine),[541] the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) began drilling in the contentious oil field. Tokyo then allowed Japanese firms to apply for drilling rights in the contested region, and three months later awarded drilling rights to Japanese energy company, Teikoku Oil. The response from Beijing was alarmist. *China Daily,* the government backed newspaper, warned, "Giving Teikoku the go-ahead to test drill is a move that makes conflict between the two nations inevitable, though what form this clash will take is hard to tell."[542]

By early September, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDR) started flying over Chinese rigs along the disputed line, and soon after Chinese naval destroyers and frigates were brought into the region. Fortunately, both sides backed down. Beijing and Tokyo commenced negotiations over the oil fields of the East China Sea in January 2006, signaling that both nations were willing to solve their grievances through consultation.[543] Throughout 2007, the two countries reached a series of understandings that culminated in June 2008, at which point the two sides agreed to, "make East China Sea a sea of peace, cooperation and friendliness;" to select "through joint exploration... mutual agreement areas for joint development;" and to welcome "the participation of Japanese legal [companies] in the development of the existing oil and gas field in Chunxiao..."[544] The underlying delimitations of the dispute would remain unresolved, but tensions were diffused. The episode between China and Japan also set a clear precedent for conflict that could emerge from China's vigorous energy diplomacy in hotly disputed territories throughout the region.

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[540] Exclusive Economic Zones extend up to 200 nautical miles from shore. The UN Convention on the Law of the Seas holds that nations have exclusive rights of economic exploitation and management within their respective EEZs.

[541] The memorial honors 2.5 million Japanese who died in war battles since the second half of the 19th century, but that also includes war criminals and WWII prime minister Hideki Tojo. The memorial is regarded by victims of Japan's aggression, including South Korea and China, as a symbol of Japanese militarism.

[542] "Japan's Dangerous Move in the East China Sea," *China Daily*, July 18, 2005, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-07/16/content_460642.htm. Originally cited in M.T. Klare, "Petroleum Anxiety and Militarization," in *Energy Security and Global Politics: The Militarization of Resource Management,* Edited by Daniel Moran and James A. Russell, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 54.

[543] Ibid.

[544] China-Japan Principled Consensus on the East China Sea Issue, June 18, 2008. Unofficial Text, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore. Accessed at: https://cil.nus.edu.sg/rp/il/pdf/2008%20China-Japan%20Principled%20Consensus%20on%20the%20East%20China%20Sea%20Issue-pdf.pdf

vi) China Goes Further Afield in Search of Energy

China's reliance on foreign oil and gas were also recognized by China's leaders as a national security issue, which could be alleviated through the procurement of energy supply outside of Asia and the Middle East, in Africa and Latin America. In 2003, China expanded its oil imports from Africa by 67-percent compared to the year before.[545] By 2004, President Hu had signed sale-and-purchase agreements with an impressive number of African nations, including Angola, Sudan, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria and Egypt.[546] Furthermore, over half of Hu Jintao's foreign visits between 2005 and 2010 were to countries in which Chinese energy companies had oil or natural gas interests.[547] To note, China's energy diplomacy with these African nations, as well as Latin American nations such as Venezuela, served as a point of tension with the Bush Administration, as China displayed no qualms about working with oppressive authoritarian regimes who were at odds with the U.S. The U.S. also issued concerns over China's more assertive policies that stemmed from its energy needs. The 2006 National Security Strategy stated: "China's leaders must realize that they cannot stay on this peaceful path while holding on to old ways of thinking and acting that exacerbate concerns throughout the region and the world." One of the "old ways" referenced in the document was, "Expanding trade, but acting as if they can somehow 'lock up' energy supplies around the world or seek to direct markets rather than opening them up – as if they can follow a mercantilism borrowed from a discredited era."[548]

While China throughout first half of the Hu Jintao administration clashed with the Japanese and took steps to diversify its energy sources further afield, its more brazen acts of energy exploration in contested territories would not emerge until 2009 and 2010, and will be explored further in the second case study of this chapter. Prior to this time, China's pursuit of energy diplomacy should instead be viewed as predominantly focused on developing domestic sources. Acknowledging the security concerns that stem from China's foreign reliance on oil and gas, Zhang Guobao, Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, suggested in 2005 that "while

[545] Lam, 179.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Jacobson and Knox, 26.
[548] "The National Security Strategy of the United States," March 2006, 41. Originally cited in Tang, 7.

the country would try to diversify the sources of its energy, coal would remain the most important source and the country would devote more effort in developing renewable energy sources."[549]

vii) Early Indications of Chinese Revisionism: Tensions Grow with Taiwan

Chinese-Taiwanese relations have been complex and challenging since the founding of the PRC in 1949. Yet of all of China's diplomatic relations during the first half of the Hu administration, its relationship with Taiwan was perhaps the most fraught.[550] In the first two years of Hu's administration, Taiwan and mainland China actually enjoyed a steady rapprochement in relations.[551] However they became more confrontational in 2005 after Taiwanese President Chen Sui-Bian's reelection in 2004 and Chen's consideration of a referendum on Taiwanese sovereignty. China then issued the *Anti-Secession Law*, intended to strengthen Beijing's approach to "peaceful national reunification," and stating that China would "employ non-peaceful means" to protect its national sovereignty.[552] This foreign policy move can be seen as an extension of China's domestic situation, as the vote on the anti-secession law came shortly after President Hu was named Chairman of the state military commission, and was timed to signal Hu's control of China's Taiwan policy. It was also meant to deter Chen's pro-independence bend.[553]

The pentagon's annual report on the Chinese military highlighted the concern with which the U.S. viewed the move. In July 2005, the Pentagon released its annual report to Congress on the PRC's military power. It offered a sober account of China's military modernization (detailed in the section below) and described China's short-term strategic goals as: 1) "Preventing Taiwan independence or trying to compel Taiwan to negotiate a settlement on Beijing's Terms" and 2) "Building counters to third-party, including U.S., intervention in cross-Strait crises."[554] Importantly, the report also referenced General Wen Zongren, the Political Commissar of the influential PLA Academy of

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[549] Tang, 29.
[550] Taiwan was also, and remains, central to disputes between China and Japan, given its strategic location at the intersection of the East and South China Seas.
[551] James Mulvenon, "Chairman Hu and the PLA's "New Historic Missions," *Chinese Leadership Monitor,* No. 27, 9.
[552] Eleanor Albert, "Backgrounder on China-Taiwan Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 7, 2016.
[553] New lines of communication and transportation were developed during this period, as President Chen visited China in May 2005 for the first meeting between the Nationalist and Communist Party leaders since 1949. There was also the first direct airplane flight between China and Taiwan since 1949.
[554] John Tkacik, "Chinese Military Power Deserves Careful Reading," *Heritage Foundation,* July 25, 2005.

Military Science, who indicated that the status-quo arrangement in Taiwan constrained China from projecting power further into the region. He is cited in the report as stating that the Taiwan issue is of "far reaching significance to breaking international forces' blockade against China's maritime security. . . . Only when we break this blockade shall we be able to talk about China's rise. . . . [T]o rise suddenly, China must pass through oceans and go out of the oceans in its future development."[555] This citation suggests that the PLA was, even in 2005, perceived as generating the military capabilities to go beyond a Taiwan scenario.

In this regard, the U.S. perceived China's Taiwan policy, in the context of China's military modernization efforts, as an initial phase in projecting military power in the broader region. For the purposes of this research and for indicating Chinese revisionist preferences and behavior, 2005 serves as a relevant turning point in China's move away from a clear status quo orientation in the region. Moreover, the anti-secession law has also had longstanding implications for potential conflict between the U.S. and China over Taiwan. Should independence forces on the island cross a threshold and prompt a military response from the mainland, defense arrangements between the U.S. and Taiwan could drag the U.S. into a military confrontation with China.

viii) The Precursors to Modern Military Modernization from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin

China's military modernization efforts are a significant aspect of the outside world's perceptions of China's rise and its revisionist orientation in the region. Much attention has been given to China's advancements in the naval and maritime realm under Xi Jinping, but its precursors lay in the Hu era and were accelerated during the 1990s due to Deng Xiaoping's under-prioritization of military affairs through the 1980s. Rightfully so, Deng prioritized China's economic growth to military modernization. Following the war with Vietnam initiated in 1979, (which was largely viewed as a failure for the Chinese), Deng enacted significant cuts to the six-million strong military and slashed the budget. At the onset of Deng's reform program, according to Thomas Christensen,

[555] Department of Defense, "Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People's Republic of China," 2005. Accessed at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2005/d20050719china.pdf

"China's military budget had been between 8 and 10-percent of GNP... under Deng, this percentage fell to less than 2-percent by the early 1990s."[556] Yet Deng's reform process gave China the economic wherewithal for impressive military modernization, as spending has since tracked China's GDP growth. Christensen adds, "...China's economic has grown approximately 10-percent since the mid-1990s, the military budget has enjoyed even faster growth."[557]

The Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1995-1996, in which the U.S. effectively moved aircraft carriers into the Taiwan Straits is considered by many analysts to have provoked China's more recent phase of military modernization, such as China's advancements in anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Indeed, in the latter half of the 1990s China began to adjust its defense posture in large measure due to increasing tensions with Taiwan. Earlier versions of Chinese military doctrine emphasized "defense of the borders of the PRC and domestic stability operations and Chinese security elites focused almost exclusively on maintenance and development of a land army. Since the 1990s, however, the Chinese leadership began giving more resources to the Chinese PLA Navy and Air Force."[558] The PRC used reverse engineering to first import and then develop weapons systems including submarines, advanced aircraft, cruise missile systems, advanced air defenses and satellite and radar systems. Of special attention has been China's development of larger more sophisticated arsenal of ballistic missiles that can pose direct challenges to not only Taiwan, but also U.S. treaty members including Japan, South Korea and the Philippines (and therefore U.S. military bases).

ix) Hu Jintao and the "New Historic Missions of the PLA"

Hu presided over these expansive increases in military expenditure (which have historically kept pace with GDP growth), and placed particular emphasis on the maritime realm. One can also argue that Hu began the 'doctrinal shift' that has culminated under Xi Jinping, in which the Chinese military has moved from a predominantly land-based fighting force to a maritime expeditionary force. At minimum, according to Chris Johnson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Hu's rhetoric and doctrinal statements signaled a stronger military posture in the Asia

[556] Thomas Christensen, *The China Challenge*: *Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015) 28.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Christensen, 33.

Pacific. Hu's official statements, as well as those made by other political and military leaders, highlight an earlier shift in China's *internal preferences*[559] towards changing the regional balance of power, which were then put into action by Xi Jinping.[560] An important illustration of President Hu's more assertive rhetoric was a speech given by Hu on Christmas Eve in 2004, days after his elevation to Chairman of the Central Military Commission.

The speech introduced a series of significant changes to PLA known as the 'New Historic Missions.'[561] Under the ideological guidance of "scientific development," introduced at the Sixteenth Party Congress in 2002, the PLA's "New Historic Missions" are regarded by many China analysts as an approach for China to deal with its changing international and regional security environment. The missions, otherwise known as the "three provides, and one role" are defined as: "(1) providing an important guarantee of strength for the party to consolidate its ruling position, (2) providing a strong security guarantee for safeguarding the period of important strategic opportunity for national development, (3) providing a powerful strategic support for safeguarding national interests, and (4) playing an important role in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development."[562] Hu's articulation also moved the military's functions beyond its traditional tasks of protecting the nation's borders and the safety of sea lanes to include ensuring the CCP's ruling status and, for the first time, required the PLA to defend China's expanding overseas interests in the maritime, space and cyberspace realms.[563]

In terms of the maritime realm, an important area of analysis for this research, the New Historic Missions noted the growing importance of the oceans to China's economic and security interests. In addition to China's vast oil needs (discussed in "Hu's Energy Diplomacy" section above), China's economy also relies heavily on minerals and fisheries.[564] As such, Hu placed additional

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[559] Recall that official and semi-official statements made by political leaders serve as indicators of a nation's internal preferences for status quo or revisionist strategic orientations.
[560] Interview with Chris Johnson, October 12, 2016.
[561] James Mulvenon, "Chairman Hu and the PLA's "New Historic Missions," *China Leadership Monitor,* No. 27. The official text of the speech is not public. Therefore, the author has relied on secondary analysis from Chinese and American scholars for information. With the CMC's approval, the National Defense University hosted a workshop in September 2005 that was attended by high-level military and civilian leaders in China, at which overviews of the "new historic missions" were discussed.
[562] Jia Yong, Cao Zhi, and Li Xuanliang, "Advancing in Big Strides from a New Historical Starting Point— Record of Events on How the Party Central Committee and the Central Military Committee Scientific Development in National Defense and Army Building," Xinhua, August 7 2007. Originally cited in Mulvenon, 2.
[563] Daniel M. Hartnett, "The New Historic Missions: Reflections on Hu Jintao's Military Legacy," in *Assessing the People's Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era,* Strategic Studies Institute, April 2014.
[564] The development of maritime resources has been addressed in every Five Year Plan since 1986.

emphasis on developing China's maritime capabilities to safeguard its growing interests. In a 2006 publication by the PLA's General Political Department (GPD) on the new historic missions, the GPD highlighted: "People's understanding of the oceans and development of maritime capabilities continues to rise, causing the oceans to become an important area in international struggles of the 21st Century."[565] Therefore, it was clear to Hu, as it would be to Xi, that defending against maritime threats – from piracy to attacks on its shipping and petroleum routes – would require the PLA to develop the capabilities to safeguard China's continued economic and social development.

In pursuit of advancing the PLA capabilities, between 2003 and 2005 Hu implemented a series of changes to the military establishment, particularly in its command-and-control apparatus. According to analysis conducted by the Jamestown Foundation, "The primary goal of Hu's CMC was to lick together a leaner – and more combat-ready – force with special emphasis on air, naval and missile prowess. Thus, Hu [oversaw] the further demobilization of about 200,000 PLA personnel, mainly from the ground forces and non-combat divisions."[566] Hu carried out a campaign to persuade the European Union to lift its embargo on arms sales to the PRC (which has to day proven unsuccessful).

Hu's push to further modernize the military represented a departure from Deng's approach to military affairs, which in large measure was to inhibit the PLA from standing in the way of economic progress, and to Jiang's, which was to develop a PLA that could defend against attacks from outside forces and a potential Taiwanese move towards independence. Hu, on the other hand, was more offensive. He "laid utmost emphasis on the PLA's combat-readiness, or its ability to win a war 'under new conditions' at the push of a button. Hence the oft-repeated slogan raised by Hu: 'the PLA must [constantly] get ready for military struggle.' As he noted not long after becoming commander-in-chief, 'the most important, realistic and pressing strategic task for the PLA is to concentrate on making preparations for military struggle.'"[567]

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[565] Cited in Daniel M. Hartnett, "The New Historic Missions: Reflections on Hu Jintao's Military Legacy," in *Assessing the People's Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era,* Strategic Studies Institute, April 2014, 48. Original Citation: PLA General Political Department, "Lesson 4: Provide a powerful strategic support for safeguarding national interests", August 9, 2006, available from www.ycgfjy.com/Article_Print.asp?ArticleID=2283.

[566] China Brief, "Hu Jintao's Driving Influence on Chinese Military Modernization," *The Jamestown Foundation,* Volume: 5 Issue: 17, August 2, 2005. Accessed at: https://jamestown.org/program/hu-jintaos-driving-influence-on-chinese-military-modernization/

[567] "Hu Jintao on grasping well the task of preparing for military struggle," New China News Agency, March 13, 2005; "Hu Jintao's new thoughts on running the army," Wen Wei Po (a Beijing-run Hong Kong newspaper), March

As a closing point on Hu's military modernization efforts through 2008, it is important to note that while the PLA made significant strides in its warfighting capabilities, it was not at the level to compete in modern warfare against developed nations in the region. First mentioned in 2006, the PLA leadership perceived the military as lacking the capabilities to fight a modern war. According to a 2006 PLA Daily article: "The principal contradictions that the modernization level of our armed forces has yet to meet the requirements for winning local wars under informatized conditions, and that the military capabilities of our armed forces are yet to live up to the historical mission they are shouldering at the present new stage in the new century."[568]

B. International Factors

i) China's Period of Strategic Opportunity

In general, China's political leadership in the first phase of Hu's leadership viewed the international environment as relatively benign, allowing China to continue its economic development in a period of "strategic opportunity." The concept was first used by Jiang Zemin in the Sixteenth Party Congress Work Report in 2002 to imply that "an overview of the situation shows that for our country, the first two decades of the 21st century are a period of important strategic opportunities which we must seize tightly and which offer bright prospects."[569] China's continued development would benefit from favorable international factors, because "the overall situation is peaceful, the likelihood of great power conflict is low, and the world is moving towards multipolarization and globalization."[570] In the same vein, Hu sought to exploit the favorable international environments to enhance China's economic and social development. Yet despite China's overall favorable environment at the turn of the twenty-first century, there were several

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14, 2005. Originally cited in "Hu Jintao's Driving Influence on Chinese Modernization," *China Brief, The Jamestown Foundation,* Volume 5 Issue 17, August 2, 2015. Accessed at: https://jamestown.org/program/hu-jintaos-driving-influence-on-chinese-military-modernization/

[568] Originally cited in Daniel M. Hartnett, "The New Historic Missions: Reflections on Hu Jintao's Military Legacy," in *Assessing the People's Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era,* Strategic Studies Institute, April 2014, 65-66.

[569] Jiang Zemin, "Building a Well Off-off Society in an All Round [sic] Way and Create a New Situation in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," Jiang Zemin Report to 16th Party Congress, section III, November 8, 2002, available from www.english.peopledaily.com.cn/200211/18/eng20021118_106983.shtml. Originally cited in Hartnett, "The New Historic Missions: Reflections on Hu Jintao's Military Legacy."

[570] PLA General Political Department, "Lesson 3: Providing a Strong Security Guarantee for Safeguarding the Important Strategic Opportunity Period of National Development"), August 9, 2006. Available from www.ycgfjy.com/Article_Print.asp?ArticleID=2282. Originally cited in Hartnett, "The New Historic Missions: Reflections on Hu Jintao's Military Legacy."

obstacles to China's continued development, which Hu elaborated on in his "New Historic Missions for the PLA" speech at the end of 2004. They included territorial disputes with neighbors, separatist movements in Taiwan and elsewhere in the border areas of China (such as Tibet), and domestic social stability problems.

In its "Lessons on the Historic Missions," the PLA's General Political Department elaborated on the threats to China (and to the power of the CCP) emanating from its regional and international environment. First and foremost was Taiwan's independence movement, spearheaded by Taiwanese president Chen. 2006 was considered a low point in mainland-Taiwan relations, to the point that the GPD referred to it as the "most serious threat influencing the Strategic Opportunity Period." Importantly, this perception also included the possibility of a U.S. intervention in the event of a cross-straits conflict.[571] In addition to Taiwan, the GPD saw China's land and maritime territorial disputes as a "hidden danger," which if not settled could harm China's ability to continue its economic growth.[572] On a geopolitical level, China under Hu perceived its ability to successfully exert economic and military power in its region as dependent upon America's strategy towards China. As such, U.S.-China relations would primarily define the international context in which China could either grow in influence or be constrained by U.S. interests and alliances.

ii) U.S.-China Relations in the early 2000s: Taiwan, Terrorism and Regime Change

President Hu came into power after a tense period in U.S.-China relations, due to the Taiwan Straits Crisis in 1995-1996, continuing U.S. arms sales to the ROC and the 1999 NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade by U.S. forces. Relations between the U.S. and China under President George W. Bush oscillated between distrust and cooperation due to several international events and U.S. perceptions of Chinese intentions in the Asia Pacific. Even as Chinese leadership pronounced their foreign policy of "peaceful development," many in the West were doubtful of what this meant in the context of an authoritarian and nontransparent Chinese political system. From the Chinese perspective, America's willingness to use force unilaterally and pursue policies of "regime change" remained a consistent concern throughout the Bush administration. Early on, hopes in China for renewed relations with the U.S. were soon challenged by the Bush

[571] Hartnett, 45.
[572] Ibid.

administration's early articulation of a pro-Taiwan stance, which the administration endorsed over the course of several statements in March 2001.

One such statement was made by State Department spokesman Richard Boucher in March 2001 in which he indicated that the U.S. intended to drop Clinton's "three no's" policy on Taiwan. The "Three No's" principles, as stated by President Clinton, meant that the U.S. would not support "'independence for Taiwan,' or 'two Chinas,' or 'one Taiwan, one China.'" Clinton also did not support Taiwan's membership in any organization in which statehood is a requirement. Boucher's announcement led to speculation in China that the U.S. take a more favorable stance on the side of Taiwan. This statement was followed by a succession of events that did not help U.S.-China relations. The first was the EP-3 spy plane incident on April 1, 2001 in which the U.S. reconnaissance aircraft collecting intelligence off the coast of China collided with a PLA air force fighter jet, killing the Chinese pilot and forcing the U.S. aircraft to land on Hainan island. The Chinese held the U.S. crew for 11 days, and the incident prompted intense anti-American demonstrations in China. Only a few weeks later, President Bush approved arms sales to Taiwan, including the first sale of U.S. submarines to Taiwan since 1974. Bush followed the arms deal with a statement the next day in which he stated that the U.S. would do "whatever it took" for Taiwan to defend itself. In May, the Bush administration then granted President Chen permission to visit New York to meet with members of Congress (en route to Latin America). Further angering the Chinese, the same week as Chen's visit, Bush held a private meeting with the Dalai Lama at the White House. This series of announcements and events quickly proved to the Chinese that any chance for positive relations with the new Bush administration were unlikely.

iii) Possibility for Renewed Relations after September 11, 2001

Despite the early setbacks in the U.S.-China relationship under Bush, the September 11th attacks fundamentally altered their relationship and ability to cooperate on shared interests. It also altered Beijing's perception of America's priorities and attention. First, Beijing acknowledged the overriding shift in focus of U.S. foreign policy to the Middle East and Afghanistan. America's pivot to the Middle East lessened concerns in Beijing that Washington was first and foremost intent on pursuing a "containment policy" towards China in the Asia Pacific. In other words, it moved China further down America's 'threat list.' The attacks also gave China and the U.S. more room for cooperation on counter-terrorism efforts. As Wu Xinbo wrote in 2004, "In the realm of U.S.

foreign policy, China was thus transformed from a 'strategic competitor' requiring imminent attention to a potential partner in the war on terrorism."[573] China was also not immune to the threat of terrorism, and had long acknowledged the importance of nontraditional security challenges. The East Turkistan terrorist groups in China's Xinjiang Province, a product of a movement launched by Islamic fundamentalists part of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China in the 1980s, carried out several terrorist attacks throughout the 1990s in Xinjiang.[574]

In late-2002, Vice-Premier Qian Qichen stated, "After the September 11 attacks, the relationship among great powers has noticeably stabilized. Sino-U.S. relations are developing along the lines of 'cooperation, democracy, and peace."[575] Indeed, September 11 ushered in a period that can be described as a "brief honeymoon" between the two great powers. China took several steps to assist the U.S. on its counterterrorism initiatives, from supporting all UN counterterrorism resolutions, sharing intelligence, and cracking down on the financing of terrorist activities.[576] In return for China's cooperation with the U.S. in Central Asia on counter-terrorism efforts, the U.S. reduced its level of criticism for Beijing's oppressive policies towards separatist movements in Xinjiang and Tibet and its policies on human rights. As an illustration, for the first time since the Tiananmen Square crackdown, Washington in 2002 did not sponsor an 'anti-China' motion at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.[577] Moreover, and as demonstrated by President Bush's trips to China in October 2001 and February 2002, Washington wanted "candid, constructive, and cooperative" relations with China.[578]

iv) America's Democracy Promotion Agenda Under Bush and the Reemergence of a "China Containment Policy"

Even amidst new levels of cooperation between the U.S. and China from 2001-2003, America's invasion of Iraq in 2003 confirmed China's suspicion over America's willingness to carry out unilateral policies of regime change. America's intervention also went against the grain of China's

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[573] Wu Xinbo, "The Promise and Limitations of a Sino-U.S. Partnership," Washington Quarterly, 27:4, Autumn 2004, 121.
[574] Xinbo, 116.
[575] Cited in staff reporter, "Qian Qichen speaking at Peking University: September 11 has stabilized ties among great powers." *Ming Pao,* September 11, 2002. Originally cited in Willy Lam, 183.
[576] Xinbo, 121.
[577] Lam, 184.
[578] Xinbo. 121.

approach to countering terrorism. Bordering fifteen countries, many of which are less economically developed, China sought stability on its periphery through enhancing political ties and promoting economic cooperation with its neighbors. This is because, as Xinbo alludes, "Reflecting on the broad sociopolitical context of terrorism, the Chinese believe that poverty and economic inequality is the hotbed of terrorism."[579] Also concerning to the Chinese was the strong neoconservative thread that ran through the highest levels of the Bush Administration. In this context, China viewed America's unilateral and preemptive response to the WMD threat in Iraq as destabilizing and worrisome.

Many in the Bush administration also maintained wary views of China. Condoleezza Rice, while promoting a positive role for China that was commensurate with its growing power, also saw China as a competitor to America in the Asia Pacific. Rice coined the term "strategic competitor" in a *Foreign Affairs* article written during the 2000 presidential campaign. The article stated,

> "Even if there is an argument for economic interaction with Beijing, China is still a potential threat to stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Its military power is currently no match for that of the United States. But that condition is not necessarily permanent. What we do know is that China is a great power with unresolved vital interests, particularly concerning Taiwan and the South China Sea. China resents the role of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. This means that China is not a "status quo" power but one that would like to alter Asia's balance of power in its own favor. That alone makes it a strategic competitor, not the "strategic partner" the Clinton administration once called it."[580]

Yet amidst the Iraq invasion and increasing skepticism between Washington and Beijing on one another's intentions, relations between the two countries continued on a relatively smooth course. As an example, Washington lauded China's active diplomatic role in the six-party talks over North Korea's nuclear program in August 2003. The following month on September 5, 2003, Secretary

[579] Xinbo, 119.
[580] Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs,* January/February 2000.

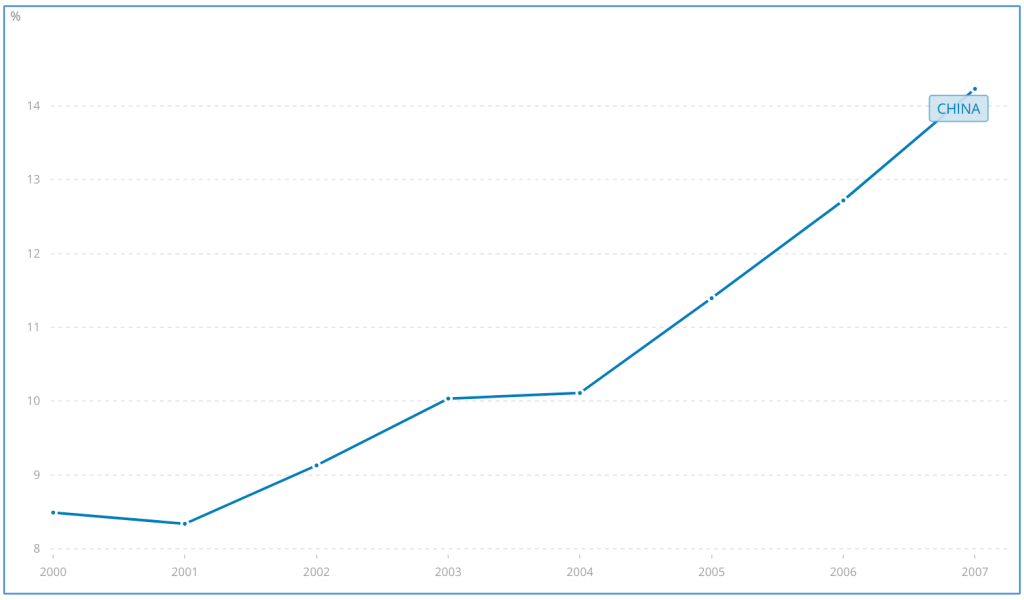
of State Colin Powell announced in a speech at George Washington University that "US relations with China are the best they have been since President Nixon's first visit."[581]

v) Regional Dynamics in Hu's Early Years – China's Economic Rise in a Benign Regional Environment

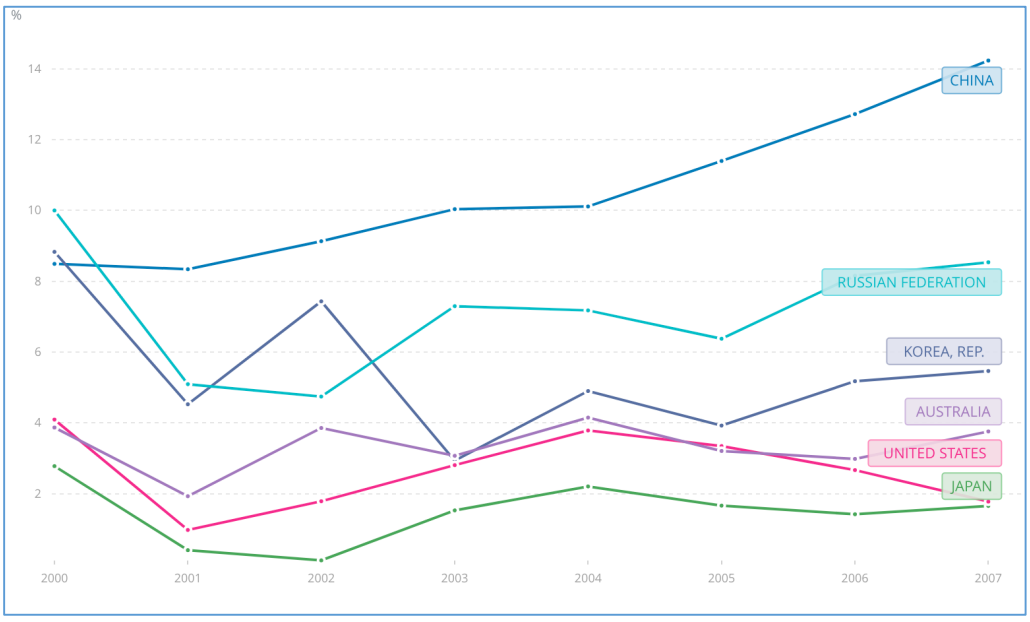
In the years following Powell's remarks, the U.S. and China looked to cooperate on issues where their interests aligned, such as counterterrorism, but would remain, as Rice alluded early on, "strategic competitors" on other regional issues. While there were some disagreements between Washington and Beijing in Central Asia, including over the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the removal of President Akayev, a good friend of Beijing's, China remained supportive of America's intervention in Afghanistan. Ultimately, America's focus during the first half of the Hu era remained predominantly in the Middle East. Militarily, the U.S. shifted resources away from the Asia Pacific and towards the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the reassignment of U.S. combat brigades in South Korea to Iraq in mid-2004.

Meanwhile, China's relative strength in the international system and in the region continued to grow. China's annual growth in GDP almost doubled between 2000 and 2008; according to the World Bank, China's GDP, in annual percentage points, increased from 8.5-percent in 2000 to 14.2-percent in 2007, according to the World Bank (Figure 1). China's GDP also grew at a faster and higher rate than other G-20 nations in the region (Figure 2).

[581] Secretary Colin Powell, George Washington University, Washington, DC, September 5, 2003. Accessed at: https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/23836.htm



Source: The World Bank



Source: The World Bank

Given America's focus on the Middle East, China did not face any significant counterbalance to its rising power in the Asia Pacific. Other regional actors, including ASEAN member states, Japan, and South Korea did not pursue meaningful hedging strategies against China's increasing economic clout. In fact, China used its economic strength to pursue regional integration. The region, and China, learned a great deal on the importance of regional integration from the 1997

Asian financial crisis. David Kang writes, "The 1997 Asian financial crisis highlighted the interconnected nature of the region as the perception that the U.S. was not as willing to help Asia as much as it was originally perceived."[582] Instead, China, with its rising economic strength, might be called upon to take a more meaningful role in response to crises. As mentioned previously, in the early 2000's China conducted massive infrastructure projects throughout southwest China and Southeast Asia, created the Asian Bond Fund in 2003 to deal with future financial crises and pursued free trade deals with ASEAN. Economic integration gave way to other forms of acquiescence to China's rise in the region; no regional bloc nor major powers exemplified a desire to balance against China militarily during the early 2000s.

This was in part because of China's historically benign nature. Kang writes, "Historically, Southeast Asian states have not seen China as a colonizer in the Western sense."[583] Yet public perceptions in Asia of China's rise in the early 2000s were mixed. Between 2002 and 2007, South Korea's favorable views of China dropped from 66 to 52-percent. Even at this small majority, 60-percent of South Koreans said they perceived China's growing economic power as a bad thing, and 89-percent viewed Chinese military might as negative.[584] In Japan, the period between 2002 and 2007 witnessed a drop of favorable views towards China from 55 to 29-percent. Moreover, 80-percent of Japanese disapproved of China's expanding military strength. In 2006, Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Aso said of China, "It's a neighboring country with nuclear bombs and its military expenditure has been on the rise for 12 years. It's beginning to pose a considerable threat."[585]

Despite increasingly negative views of China among South Korean and Japanese publics, their political and military leaders did not insist on pushing back against the resurgent power. Militarily, Japan did not increase its defense spending to counter a threat from China or elsewhere in the early-to-mid 2000s. Japan's nominal and real defense spending was actually reduced five years in a row, from 2002 to 2007. Similar trends were seen on the Korean peninsula. The Republic of Korea (ROK) showed minimal desire to balance against China in the early years of the twenty-

[582] Kang, 71.
[583] Kang, 59.
[584] Nearly all of China's neighbors saw China's economic growth as good for their own economies. South Korea and Japan were the only two nations in the Asia Pacific to look at China's rise as predominantly negative.
[585] Chisake Watanabe, "Japan Calls China a Threat," Associated Press, December 22, 2005. Originally cited in David Kang, 63.

first century. While the ROK maintained a strong military force, it was, and remains, predominantly geared towards fighting a threat from North Korea. Kang cites a senior Korean defense official stating in 2006, "We are not planning on any type of conflict with China. The opposite, actually – we're increasing our cooperation with China in military exchanges."[586] Kang also alludes to a 2006 statement by a senior South Korean government official who indicated that "China has no intention of threatening the Korean peninsula. China wants stability on its borders, and has very good relations with us. We are also deeply intertwined on economic issues as well as cooperating on security issues."[587]

As can be seen through these assertions and the lack of a military counter-balance, the early to mid-2000s spurred China's hopes and expectations for a period of strategic opportunity in which to continue its economic growth. It experienced little to no counter-balance in the Asia Pacific region, as the United States remained focused on the Middle East, thereby pushing strategic competition with China further down its list of national security priorities. It was also in this period of strategic opportunity that China asserted itself diplomatically and militarily in Asia Pacific maritime domain. Before moving on to assess China's evolving foreign policy strategies in the 2009-2013 period, it is first necessary to look inside China at the primary political and military leaders and the decision-making processes through which they operated. It is at this level of analysis where we can better understand the evolution in China's strategic thinking about its role in the region, and how it would choose to fill that role.

C. Domestic Conditions

A. Composition and Interests of the Chinese Elite (IV #1)

Every nation's policy process, aside from the most closed and dictatorial, is comprised of a myriad of actors with competing interests. As such, this research will not discuss each foreign policy actor relevant to the Chinese political system. Rather, out of such complex systems, the goal of discussing the composition and interests of the political elite is to identity which individuals and groups are dominant within the foreign policy political system and *most* capable of logrolling their interests into actions. A key hypothesis within this research holds that when the foreign policy

[586] Kang, 56.
[587] Ibid.

process becomes dominated by nationalist individuals and groups that stand to benefit from expansionary policies abroad, there is a greater likelihood that revisionist strategies will emerge. As such, discussing every actor within a foreign policy process is exorbitant; we should instead identify those with the most power over the foreign policy levers of government.

The Chinese political system is an immensely vast bureaucracy dominated by the power and centrality of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), comprised of 87 million members. Within this system, the Party's power is paramount: The Party outranks all sectors of the State, including government departments; the Party controls the use of force through the People's Liberation Army, and the Party "controls the consultative mechanisms of the state, which are designed to reflect popular opinion."[588]

In the Chinese political system, decisions are made along dual tracks and three coordinating bodies: the Party track, in which there is one supreme coordinating body, and the State track, in which there are two coordinating bodies. Because the Party reigns superior to the State, the Central Committee's approximately 200 members are the most important individuals in the Chinese political system. In the parallel State track, the second major coordinating body is the State Council. The State Council is comprised of vice-premiers and councilors that oversee a wide array of commissions, ministries, administration bodies and central organizations (such as state-owned enterprises) that make up the government system.[589] The third important coordinating body is the National People's Congress, which, as Jakobson writes, is a "parliamentary-like entity that in principle oversees the State Council. In reality, its power is limited although in recent years it has become noteworthy as a body that permits a relatively free discussion of important legislation under consideration."[590]

Within the Central Committee, the most important body is the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), comprised of seven to nine individuals (in recent years) of the highest rank in the Communist Party. This body controls the country's most pertinent foreign policy and national security decisions, and President Hu and Premier Wen are considered central to PSC decision

[588] Jakobson, 102
[589] Ibid.
[590] Ibid.

making. According to Linda Jakobson, an expert on the Chinese political system, "The PSC oversees consequential decisions affecting China's major relationships, including the United States, Japan, Russia and North Korea. The PSC also has to deal with emergencies or international crises, such as border skirmishes or international incidents."[591] The PSC is presumed to meet weekly, although its schedule, and the outcome of the meetings, are often not made public.

Given the hierarchical nature of Chinese decision making, in theory and in practice, the centrality of the Politburo Standing Committee should not be understated. This notion is not to oversimplify the decision-making process. Rather, it is to acknowledge that key individuals within the PSC (while considering the role that SOE's and research institutions have in influencing general debate) have the final say on foreign policy issues. Decisions are then passed down by consensus to lower ranks of the CCP and to implementing bodies. Local government officials also feed into foreign policy debates at the national level, through holding positions on the Central Committee or in the National People's Congress. Local officials in Southern provinces, especially Guangxi, have a heightened interest in maritime issues relations with China's ASEAN neighbors.

Also instrumental within the decision-making system are "Leading Small Groups" (LSGs), which are committees designed to report directly to the PSC and advise leaders on their respective issue area, including on foreign policy. The most important LSGs, such as those on national security and economic reform, are attached to the Central Committee and report through the Committee to the PSC.[592] Full membership of the LSGs is not public information and their agendas are not publicized, but the LSGs on National Security and Foreign Affairs (FALSG) are considered necessary vessels of information and expertise for members of the PSC who are not well versed on foreign policy issues. According to Jakobson and Knox, State Councilor Dai Bingguo, the presumed director of the FALSG office under Hu was the most influential foreign policy actor outside the PSC on foreign policy during Hu's tenure as general secretary, in part given his role in shaping the FALSG's agenda.[593] Dai obtained his position in the Hu administration partly due to his role as the director of the Central International Liaison Department (CILD) from 1997 to 2003,

[591] Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, "New Foreign Policy Actors in China," SIPRI Policy Paper No. 26, September 2010, 5. Starting with the PSC, the CCP's decision making processes are hierarchical in that orders are passed down from level to level. In other words, an individual must have recourse to an order from a higher level allowing him or her to act.
[592] Jakobson, 104
[593] Jakobson and Dean Knox, 5.

when he would often accompany Hu on foreign trips prior to his ascent to the presidency, and thereby earned Hu's confidence and trust.[594] According to conversations between Hillary Clinton and Henry Kissinger, Kissinger found Dai to be one of the most "fascinating and open-minded Chinese officials he had ever encountered."[595]

In the state track, the State Council is the highest body in the Chinese government and represents China in state-to-state relations. Under Hu, Dai Bingguo was the state councilor responsible for handing Chinese foreign policy, outranking ministers of foreign affairs and commerce, Yang Jiechi and Chen Deming.[596] Outside of the Party's official bodies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays an important role in policy formulation, however a myriad of factors have led the MFA to take on a smaller and less pivotal role. One reason is the growing complexity of China's international relations, which requires more entities involved in decision making. Another reason is the MFA's declining powerbase within the CCP, which has declined since its "high water mark under Zhou Enlai,"[597] China's Premier from 1949 to 1976, as well as China's foreign minister from 1949 to 1958. Under Hu, the MFA also faced growing competition from other government bodies, and the Ministry of Commerce in particular, due to its close ties with the business community and its influential role in foreign trade.[598] Yet, the MFA remains China's primary implementing tool of foreign policy and is responsible for making sure that foreign policy decisions align with China's stated international objectives.[599] Propaganda instruments (including the Publicity Department of the CCP), also have a formal role in foreign policy decision making, albeit limited, through their oversight of domestic media and ability to shape public perceptions. Its primary coordinating outlets are the Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) and Xinhua News Agency.[600]

i) The Central Military Commission (CMC) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA)

[594] Cheng Li, 57.
[595] Hillary Clinton, *Hard Choices,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 69-70.
[596] Jacobsen and Knox, 7. To note, Dai became a full member of the Central Committee in 2002. Foreign Minister Yang rose through the ranks of the diplomatic corps, where he started out as an interpreter. He was described by Secretary Clinton as an "unapologietic nationalist"
[597] Interview with Chris Johnson, Washington, DC, October 12, 2016.
[598] Jacobsen and Knox, 8.
[599] Ibid.
[600] Ibid.

A final actor to discuss within the formal foreign policy decision making process under Hu is the military establishment. The military has a completely different governance structure than the state, providing it with a sense of autonomy over its operations.[601] However, Party leadership demands, and is given, complete control over the military and keeps it at arm's length from political decision-making. Therefore, the closest the military can reach into the highest echelons of political power is through a retired military official sitting on the Politburo Standing Committee, a circumstance that has not occurred since 1997, or through military officials becoming members of LSGs and providing a military perspective on relevant issues. Within the military apparatus, the PLA Navy (PLAN) took on a larger role under Hu in line with China's growing maritime interests and territorial disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea.

There were several instances under Hu in which the military's actions seemed uncoordinated with the political leadership. Often mentioned examples include China's response to the EP-3 spy plane incident with the U.S. in 2001, during which many debated whether the PLA withheld information to pressure the political leadership to take a more forceful stance against the U.S.; and China's anti-satellite test in 2007, after which the government did not make a coordinated policy statement for two weeks. Incidents such as these led to circumstances, according to a former Political Officer in the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, in which "it was difficult to tell whether an action taken by the PLA was deliberative or accidental..."[602] Despite these isolated incidences, general consensus is that the political leadership under Hu had outright control over the military, although coordination and communication challenges existed.

Within this complex and hierarchical system, Chinese decisions proceed through a process of "collective leadership," which is mandated constitutionally but also carried out in practice. Even at the highest echelons of the political system, this process allows for the vetoing of major decision should a coalition be formed on the Politburo Standing Committee that is strong enough to overrun momentum on an issue. Within the formal system of collective leadership, it is also important to note the influential role of *informal* networks. Relationships founded on patronage and mentorship are still endemic in Chinese society. As Jakobson and Knox argue, "Not only do a person's chances of promotion and increased benefits depend on a labyrinth of personal connections; the ability to

[601] Ibid.
[602] Author Interview with Richard Hu, Beijing, China, October 2016.

influence decisions pertaining to his or her work also requires nurturing these connections."[603] Relationships within the highest levels of the CCP are often formed through the networks of officials' family ties, hometowns, former classmates and mentors.

ii) Who is Hu?

At the top of the foreign policy hierarchy sat President Hu. Hu Jintao was born in 1942 in Taizhou, Jingsu to a merchant family. As a student, Hu joined the CCP and earned a hydroelectric engineering degree from Tsinghua University in 1965. Hu also came of age during the cultural revolution, and was sent after his studies to work for a year as a construction worker in Gansu province. He later held several political posts in the province before moving to Beijing in the early 1980s to become the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League. Hu's training as a hydraulic engineer and his subsequent rise through the CCP is one illustration of the "technocratic takeover" of the CCP throughout the 1980s and 1990s in which individuals with specialized training in engineering or science moved into leadership positions within the CCP. He was also the first leader of China to have emerged without any significant 'revolutionary credentials.' Given his early background in the CCP, Hu is also considered by China hands to have emerged from the *Tuanpai* ("league") tradition, a process whereby "leaders advanced their careers primarily through the leadership of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) when they were young..."[604] According to Cheng Li of the Brookings Institution, "Tuanpai leaders are those officials who worked in the senior levels of the CCYL leadership (municipal/prefecture, provincial, and ministerial levels or above) anytime from 1982 to 1998..."[605] In 1985, Hu was appointed party secretary for Guizhou province and became a member of the CCP Central Committee in 1987.

In 1988, Hu was sent to Tibet as provincial party secretary where he dealt with social unrest emanating from anti-Han Chinese and eventually imposed martial law in 1989 in response to the unrest.[606] Hu's experience with the protests had interesting implications for his role in the

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[603] Jakobson and Knox, 19.
[604] Cheng Li, 19. Individuals of the tuanpai tradition stand in contrast to "princelings," such as Xi Jinping, who were born into families of revolutionaries or other high-ranking officials.
[605] The CCYL has long been a recruitment sources for the party leadership and is meant for peoples ages fourteen to twenty-eight, with the purpose of "adding new blood" to the party. It was preceded by the Chinese Socialist Youth League, established in 1922, one year after the founding of the CCP.
[606] *Encyclopedia Britannica,* Biography of Hu Jintao. Accessed at: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hu-Jintao

Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, during which he was one of the first regional leaders to publicly declare support for the central authorities. When his political mentor and fellow Tsinghua graduate Song Ping, retired from the politburo in 1992, he lobbied for Hu to replace him. During his time on the CCP Central Committee, he served as Secretariat, and later as vice president and then vice chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission. Even before the Sixteenth Party Congress when he was named general secretary, Hu played a role in the foreign policy partly in his capacity as head of the CCP's Leading Group on National Security. Overall, Hu is regarded as a tempered and understated bureaucrat, whose role in foreign policy was determined by his position at the top of the political system, and not by his own personal ambitions or leadership style.

iii) An Eclectic Array of Voices on Foreign Policy

Outside of President Hu, assessing individual foreign policy actors with meaningful power is difficult given the opaque nature of the Chinese political system. Moreover, it is even more difficult to ascertain the distinctions between those *shaping* and *implementing* policies. There was also a significant number of actors, old and new, who played a role in influencing, either directly or indirectly, China's foreign policy under Hu. Newer actors included business leaders, particularly in the energy industry, regional leaders with strong international commercial interests, think tanks and academic institutions and finally, the media and China's growing 'netizen' population.[607]

iv) Actors on the Margins: State-Owned Enterprises and Energy Companies

Under Hu, there emerged an even greater number of voices in the foreign policy process. Three entities are important to discuss for their influence in the Chinese policy process, especially given China's expanding economic interests abroad. These include China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs); Chinese energy companies;[608] and think tanks and academic institutions. Although each actor is considered on the margins of the foreign policy making process, commercial interests in particularly have had a growing impact on China's foreign and development policies over the course of the twenty-first century. In fact, according to Jakobson and Knox, "Since the government

[607] These categories are outlined in an in-depth reported conducted by Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox of the Sipri Institute in 2010. Full citation: Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, "New Foreign Policy Actors in China," SIPRI Policy Paper No. 26, September 2010.

[608] China's three major national oil companies are the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), the China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec), and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC).

announced in 1999 its 'going out' ... policy promoting Chinese companies' overseas expansion, Chinese companies have invested over $178 billion abroad."[609] Moreover, large SOE's have a close relationship with the political elite in Beijing, and the top management of these SOEs often hold ministerial or vice-ministerial ranks in the government. Executives of China's National Petroleum Corporation are even appointed by the CPC Organization Department.[610] That being said, they are also not an autonomous actor, as they need government approval to make significant investments overseas. Furthermore, SOEs do not play a direct role in foreign policy formulation unless they have a direct interest at stake. As such, Chinese petroleum companies in particular have played a role in China's territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas.

In some instances, China's companies have played a mediating role in facilitating cooperation over contested territories. In March 2005, CNOOC signed a tripartite agreement with Vietnamese and Philippine oil companies to conduct research around the Spratly Islands. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo applauded the companies for their role in "the breakthrough in implementing the provisions of the code of conduct in the South China Sea among ASEAN and China to turn the South China Sea into an area of cooperation rather than an area of conflict."[611] In others, they can incite contestation. For example, and as discussed previously in this chapter, in early 2005 the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) began drilling in the Chunxiao field in the contested East China Sea region with Japan, sparking a diplomatic crisis and turning CNOOC into a major foreign policy player. In both instances, the extent to which the energy company's actions shaped China's subsequent foreign policy and to what extent it was used as *tool* of Chinese foreign policy is open to interpretation.

v) Advisory Actors: Think-Tanks and Academic Institutions

According to Willy Lam, "One of Hu's fortes in foreign-policy formulation is that he takes an eclectic approach to securing advice from myriad think tanks and advisers. Experts from backgrounds including the army, intelligence, finance, energy, and foreign trade get a fair

[609] Jakobson and Knox, 26.
[610] Jakobson and Knox, 25.
[611] People's Daily Online, "Philippines, China, Vietnam to conduct joint marine seismic research in South China Sea," March 2005. Accessed at: http://en.people.cn/200503/15/eng20050315_176845.html

hearing."[612] Prominent thinkers from CASS and the Central Party School made up Hu's personal 'brain trust,' including CASS America Institute director Wang Jisi on U.S.-Sino relations. Interestingly, Hu is thought to have sought the advice and recommendations of advisors with advanced degrees from U.S. or European Universities who have offered hawkish views and recommendations – including tough tactics towards the U.S. and Japan – to the Leading Group on Foreign Affairs.[613] Starting in 2002 upon his appointment as general secretary, Hu Jintao started convening Politburo collective study sessions at which experts from the government, PLA institutions and universities would hold lectures on specific topics. Hu also invited foreign policy specialists from universities, research institutions and military schools for an annual meeting with his "inner circle" to discuss China' s foreign policy successes and failures. Also of note is that Hu, in an attempt to prepare China for its greater role in world affairs in the twenty-first century, "consulted historians and geographers for knowledge about the rise and fall of empires through the centuries."[614] It is unclear whether Hu was trying to understand how to further China's rise, or look for indicators of America's incipient decline.

B. Consolidation of Control (IV #2)

i) Continuity of Politburo Standing Committee Processes under Hu Jintao

Analyzing metrics of consolidating control is difficult in the Chinese political system, given the opacity of decision-making processes. Yet we can interpret a few facts from analyzing changes in the Politburo Standing Committee. The PSC appointed in 2002 after the Sixteenth Party Congress was comprised of nine members, under Hu Jintao as the General Secretary. The nine members represented an increase from the seven members of the PSC under outgoing General Secretary, Jiang Zemin. China analyst and Hoover Institute Fellow Alice Miller notes, "Many foreign and Hong Kong observers inferred that the expanded size of the 2002 Politburo Standing Committee reflected an attempt by Jiang to retain influence under the new Hu leadership by packing the body

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[612] Lam, 163. Note: independent think tanks do not exist in China, and the most prestigious ones are run by CPC organs or the PLA. Scholars, until they gain a certain level of prominent, cannot criticize government policy. Academics at major universities in (such as Peking, Renmin and Tsinghua Universities) are seen as having slightly more independence.
[613] Ibid.
[614] Ibid.

with his 'Shanghai Gang cronies.'"[615] However, Hu did not appear stymied by the stacked PSC and was made head of the important Leading Group on Foreign Affairs and the Leading Group on Taiwan Affairs. Although it took several months after becoming general secretary, Hu's power on the PSC was further strengthened when Zemin stepped down as chair of the Central Military Commission in September 2004, signaling an end of the "Shanghai Faction" and allowing Hu to focus less on factional pushback within the party.

Bureaucratically, Hu maintained the post-Mao Chinese tradition of 'consensus decision-making,' and even made explicit the subordination of the PSC to the full Politburo and the Politburo to the full Central Committee. Miller notes, "Since 2004, Xinhua has published accounts of Hu delivering reports as a matter of routine on the work of the Politburo to successive Central Committee plenums. Similarly, Xinhua has on occasion noted that the full Politburo reviewed the work of the Standing Committee in the course of reporting on Politburo meetings."[616] Moreover, Hu maintained the traditional role of the General Secretary as the "first among equals in the rest of the PSC." Illustrative of this fact, Hu was not granted the title of 'core leader,' unlike his predecessor Jiang Zemin (or his successor Xi Jinping). Miller also writes, that "none of the new ideological departures that have emerged since Hu became general secretary—for example, the emphasis on 'people-centered' policies, the 'scientific development concept,' or the 'socialist harmonious society' ideal—have been described as his personal intellectual property."[617] Instead, "They have instead been routinely attributed to the "collective wisdom" of the 16th and 17th Central Committee leaderships."[618]

Miller writes of the PSC members, "On one hand, they appear aimed at limiting the ability of the general secretary to acquire dictatorial powers over the rest of the leadership, as Mao had enjoyed in the 1960s and 1970s and as Stalin had in Soviet politics. On the other hand, they also appear to be aimed at inhibiting any one leader or bloc of leaders from any constituency from asserting dominance over the others."[619] Moreover, Hu's 25-member Politburo represented a balance between major institutional constituencies including the party apparatus, the organs of the state

[615] Alice Miller, "The Politburo Standing Committee Under Hu Jintao," *Chinese Leadership Monitor*, no. 35, 5.
[616] Ibid.
[617] Ibid.
[618] Ibid.
[619] Ibid.

and the provinces. It also had limited representation from the security institutions, including the PLA.[620]

These forms of balancing inhibited any single sector from overwhelming the interests of other groups and sought to constrain the power of a single individual, namely the general secretary, in decision making processes. This is an important metric in the analysis of the consolidation of control (IV #2) under Hu. As this study alludes, trends towards personalist and the "logrolling" of specific interests can create domestic conditions under which expansionary foreign policies are more likely to be adopted and implemented. This does not appear to have occurred under Hu, nor was it the case under Chinese leaders following Mao. Specifically, limiting the representation of the PLA on the Politburo has inhibited the general secretary from using the military as his own personal power base.

For these reasons, this research finds that Hu's consolidation and coordination efforts within the PSC do not signify a trend towards personalist rule, in which power is concentrated in the hands of one individual or a small group not held accountable to an institutionalized party. Rather, Hu's moves to bring more coordinating power to the PSC reinforced the consensus-based style of decision-making and China's traditional model of collective leadership. Moreover, the political representation and institutional balancing on Hu's PSC did not stray from processes established by predecessors. Since 1979, processes were put in place to avoid the over-accumulation of dictatorial power that was witnessed under Mao. Looking ahead, what would Hu's leadership model, fashioned similarly to those before his time, mean for Xi Jinping? Given that precedent, rather than regulation, often guides successive generations of Chinese leaders, there would be no regulations in place to inhibit Xi Jinping from altering Hu's leadership structure on the Politburo or PSC. However, for Xi, this would mean that while Hu's system would not constrain him, he would also not be able to arbitrarily dismiss Hu's leadership system without ramifications.[621]

Outside of political decision making processes on the PSC, the Fourth Generation leadership faced the challenge of implementing vast economic reforms without giving way to reforms in the

[620] Ibid. As Miller alludes, this form of "institutional balancing" was also used by Soviet leadership in the Brezhnev period.
[621] For example, should Xi add a PLA official as a member of the PSC, anxieties and suspicions could rise over the PLA's role in civilian decision-making, the member's personal relationship to Xi, and the general secretary's own ambitions.

political realm. Hu's ability to manage the growing challenge of economic inequality tested the legitimacy of the CCP and the party's ability to provide economic opportunities to its growing number of middle class citizens, as well as to citizens rising out of poverty. Challenges to regime legitimacy, and their connection to the foreign policy realm, is the issue to which we now turn.

C. Challenges to Regime Legitimacy (IV #3)

There is a perception when analyzing authoritarian systems that the government does not need to take into account public opinion when making foreign policy decisions. However, and particularly in the case of China, the government must walk a fine line between exploiting public emotions on territorial and regional issues, while at the same time managing them. As mentioned in Chapter One, autocratic regimes may exploit the foreign policy domain for domestic gain under certain circumstances. One circumstance is when the public views a government as weak on territorial or international issues of high public value. In China's own history, such social instability arose when the Qing Dynasty was perceived as unable to stand up against foreign invaders or adversaries. Their weakness led in part to the regime's downfall in 1911. Another circumstance under which a government may try to make foreign policy gains for domestic consumption is during periods of intense elite political struggle and discord. In such circumstances, political leaders may attempt to use public opinion around a certain foreign policy issue (such as territorial disputes) to mobilize their political base and discredit their opposition.

In the case of contemporary China under President Hu, neither condition was present, and China's fast-paced economic growth and increasing prosperity boosted the regime's legitimacy. That being said, President Hu faced serious challenges – endemic and episodic – to the CCP's legitimacy throughout his tenure. An endemic concern was the stagnant income inequality stemming from China's dynamic but unequal growth. Episodic, although reoccurring, concerns of the political leadership emerged from nationalist discontent over the government's handling of foreign policy disputes with Japan and other regional neighbors. One significant episode was the April 2005 anti-Japanese demonstrations, which will be discussed below.

i) Inherent Inequality in Hu's Harmonious Society

Long-term economic inequality was a significant challenge for President Hu Jintao's domestic legitimacy, as the CCP continued to struggle with the unequal effects of its economic progress.

Over the last three decades, the economic aspects of the CCP's legitimacy claims have proven strong but uneven. On the one hand, China's dynamic growth cannot be understated. According to the IMF, from 1987-2007, China added roughly $2 trillion to the world's GDP, created 120 million new jobs and pulled 400 million people out of poverty.[622] By 2007, it had become the fourth largest economy in the world and the third largest trading nation. However, despite this remarkable growth, improvements in living standards were not felt by all classes of Chinese citizens. To this point, Downs and Saunders write that throughout the 1990s, "Economic reforms have had differential impacts in rural and urban areas, and in costal and interior provinces, resulting in a rapid increase in economic inequality."[623] As an illustration, even as China grew to become one of the richest countries in the world on aggregate, its per capita income in 2004 was a little over $1500, compared to the world average of $6800.[624] Furthermore, the China Human Development Report in 2005 compiled by the UNDP revealed China's massive regional disparities and concluded that China's gini coefficient, a measurement of income inequality, had increased by more than 50-percent over 20 years and placed China's urban-rural income inequality as one of the highest in the world.[625]

The challenge of addressing the massive inconsistences in living standards between the rich and poor across urban and rural regions of the country was well known to the Hu-When team when they took over leadership of the CCP. In response, as early as 2004 Hu outlined the party's central principles of "putting people first" and developing a "harmonious society."[626] The leadership also acknowledged the direct threat social unrest posed to the party. In Hu's 2004 speech on the "New Historic Missions of the PLA," he discussed threats to the Party and its ruling position. His first of the four missions called upon the military to "provide an important guarantee for the Party to consolidate its ruling position," even in the event of a political crisis. He justified the mission by highlighting three threats to the CCP's continued rule: The economic, scientific, technological and military superiority of more developed nations; ideological attacks from "hostile Western forces...

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[622] IMF Survey: China's Difficult Rebalancing Act, September 12, 2007. Accessed at: http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/53/socar0912a
[623] Saunders, 119.
[624] World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, accessed at: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CN-1W-US
[625] Wenran Jiang, "The Dynamics of China's Social Crisis," *The Jamestown Foundation,* Publication: China Brief Volume 6, Issue 2, January 20, 2006.
[626] Kerry Brown, "Hu Jintao's Legacy," *Foreign Policy,* November 8, 2012.

who have not given up the wild ambitions of trying to subjugate [China] and domestic social problems brought about by decades of reform and economic development."[627] Hu elaborated:

> Social internal relations are even more complicated, as various hostile forces are stirring up trouble by exploiting by hook or by crook a few contradictions and problems present in our realization of a socialist life, and are carrying out disturbances and destruction. International and domestic forces are collaborating and working in concert. Their final goal is to overthrow the ruling position of our Party, overthrow the national power of the People's Democratic Dictatorship and reverse our nation's socialist system.[628]

In this speech, Hu intertwined the CCP's greatest purported challenges to its legitimacy, and thereby domestic stability: social problems emanating from economic development, and foreign influence aimed at challenging the CCP's power.

Other CCP leaders, including Wen Jiabao, also highlighted the inherent weaknesses in China's economy. At the National People's Congress in March 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao indicated, "the biggest problem with China's economy is that the growth is unstable, unbalanced, uncoordinated, and unsustainable." It is a statement that has been widely referenced by international scholars to highlight the underlying fragility of China's dynamic growth, and the potential ramifications for domestic stability.

China's foreign policy strategies in the South China Sea relates integrally to the CCP's reliance on economic growth and stability for legitimacy. Under Hu, the development of PLA Navy's (PLAN) power projection capabilities in near and far seas operations were aimed to ensure that Chinese major overseas economic interests were protected. Command of the South China Sea and corresponding transportation and communication lanes would give China the ability to deny others access in times of hostility, as well as help the PLAN to carry out far seas operations into the Indian Ocean region where many of China's overseas interests are located. As Wu Zhengyu of Renmin

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[627] The U.S. Army War College, "Assessing the PLA Under Hu Jintao," Strategic Studies Institute, April 2014. Accessed at: http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/pub1201.pdf

[628] Hu Jintao, "See Clearly our Military's Historic Missions in the New Century of the New Period," December 24, 2004. Cited in: U.S. Army War College, "Assessing the PLA Under Hu Jintao," Strategic Studies Institute, April 2014.

University argues, "Hu's emphasis on 'far-seas operations' represented a shift in China's naval strategy, which had since the mid-1980s focused on 'near-seas defense.' Since China's interests in the region are mainly economic, [this strategy] directly ties into national interests since China's domestic stability and political legitimacy rest largely on sustainable economic growth."[629]

ii) Political Challenges

The Party's economic inequality challenges were amplified by the outbreak of the SARS epidemic in 2003. The Party was lambasted by the international community for not handling it effectively and for waiting months to inform the World Health Organization of the epidemic's spread. The same year, there were massive 500,000 person demonstrations in Hong Kong against the introduction of anti-subversion national security legislation. Circumstances were not helped by political corruption scandals, such as the downfall of Politburo member and Shanghai Party Boss Chen Liangyu to graft charges in 2006. Some analysts attest that Chen's downfall was carried out by Hu and Wen to reduce local resistance to their policies, and in advance of their reshuffling of members of the Politburo at the 17th party congress in 2007.[630] Hu's move to weed out corruption at the highest level would foreshadow President Xi's extensive anti-corruption campaign years later, which also served, in part, to further his political consolidation.

iii) The Fickle Nature of Anti-Foreign Nationalism

Nationalism is not a blunt instrument that the Chinese government can use at its disposal to bolster its legitimacy domestically. On the contrary, stoking nationalist sentiment has proven dangerous; public opinion critical of foreign actors such as Japan or the U.S. can shift towards anger at the Chinese government for not acting strongly enough abroad. Anti-foreign protests, when allowed, have also morphed into anti-government protests. An illustrative example of this is the April 2005 anti-Japanese demonstrations that took place in Beijing and across China. The episode started after an online petition admonishing Japan for discounting its war crimes and urging the Chinese government to inhibit Japan's efforts to joining the UN Security Council garnered over 40 million signatures (although this figure is hard to verify). Anti-Japanese protests then emerged in over twenty Chinese cities. Interestingly, disgruntled citizens angry over pollution and unpaid pensions

[629] Author interview with Wu Zhengyu, Beijing, October 2016.
[630] Joseph Kahn, "Shanghai Party Boss Held for Corruption," *The New York Times,* September 25, 2006.

held parallel demonstrations and merged with the anti-Japanese demonstrations. It is reported that the government shut down protests when demonstrators in Beijing marching towards the Japanese Embassy began to move towards Tiananmen Square, the symbolic scene of the 1989 crisis.[631] Shortly after, government officials were arresting anti-Japanese protestors. This was a lesson to the top leadership that public opinion could quickly shift from anti-foreign sentiment to anger over the government's inability to deal with domestic and international challenges effectively.

Despite the number of episodic challenges to the regime's legitimacy, including rising inequality, high-level political scandals, the SARS outbreak, and perceived government weakness vis-à-vis Japan, President Hu managed to respond pragmatically while consolidating control over his first few years in office. Moreover, none of the aforementioned challenges posed a direct and existential threat to the legitimacy and power of the CCP.

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Throughout Hu's early years, China viewed the Asia Pacific region through the window of "strategic opportunity." In order to maintain a peaceful international environment in which China could continue to develop economically, from 2002-2007 China was largely integrationist and sought cooperation with its ASEAN partners to negotiate free trade deals and settle disagreements in the South China Sea. While China's relations with Japan oscillated between heightened tensions and tepid cooperation, this phase of Chinese foreign policy ended with an agreement between the two sides to pursue joint exploration in the contested areas of the East China Sea. Chinese political leadership also went to great lengths to alleviate international concerns over China's increasing economic and military power, even shifting official rhetoric from using the concept of "peaceful rise" to "peaceful development."

On the worrying side of the equation, China's pursuit of alternative energy sources and Hu's central concept of "energy diplomacy" showed how far China would go to secure its massive energy demands. Moreover, China's relations with Taiwan during this period illustrated China's commitment to security its core interests, even by force, as it announced for the first time in 2004

[631] Ibid.

that China would use military force to deter Taiwanese moves towards independence. The U.S. also perceived China's Taiwan policy, in the context of Chinese naval modernization efforts, as an initial phase in projecting military power into the broader region. Despite Hu's emphasis on harmony, some analysts suggest that Hu's diplomatic style was "more frank and more direct, and that he [was] more willing than past leaders to express bluntly China's position on international issues."[632]

Domestically, the CCP leadership transition from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao has been described as "the first orderly, planned succession in the history of any major communist state."[633] Hu's moves to consolidate power on the PSC were relatively minor and included changes such as coordinating leading small groups from the PSC. This was done to create a more effective governing strategy within the massive Chinese bureaucracy, rather than to consolidate control in the hands of one or few individuals unaccountable to the party. On the contrary, the Hu-Wen team placed an emphasis on collective leadership and largely adhered to the governing principles carried out by Jiang Zemin. Hu also weathered several legitimacy challenges in a relatively effective manner, from promoting (and managing) nationalist protests, to maintaining social stability and economic progress in a period of drastic income inequality.

The next four years (2008-2012) would witness a new American administration and renewed efforts at U.S.-China cooperation, all against the backdrop of the global financial crisis and concerns over China's economic and military revival on the world stage.

Case Study II: China Grows More Assertive Under Hu Jintao (2007-2012)

A. China's Strategic Orientation: Indicators of Revisionism and Key Turning Points

While many analysts associate China's increasing assertiveness in its maritime domain with Xi Jinping's tenure as general secretary, Chinese foreign policy underwent a series of shifts and turning points between 2007 and 2012, prior to his leadership. This period began with a new American president and the global financial crisis, both of which had tremendous implications for China's role in Asia and the world. In 2010, China surpassed Japan as the world's second largest

[632] Robert Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia*, 4-5.
[633] Sutter, 6.

economy, further proving its economic clout in a time of waning global growth. China's military modernization programs continued to progress, while China took more assertive positions on its territorial claims in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, exhibiting a stronger posture in its policy positions, rhetoric and actions than previously seen. Internally, Chinese influential scholars and officials engaged in renewed debate over the nation's adherence to Deng Xiaoping's axiom of 'hide your light and bide your time,' as well as Hu's central foreign policy concept of "peaceful development."

This case study, as the others before it, asks the central questions: what were the international and domestic factors behind the nation's evolving foreign policy strategy, and what weight should we assign to the domestic and international contexts in their influence over the foreign policy decision-making process? As is often the case, both levels of analysis are necessary to understanding the realities that policymakers face. Overall, however, this case study analyzing the period from 2007 to 2012 over Hu's last five years as general secretary finds that international factors and changing relative power dynamics were highly influential in shifting Chinese foreign policy. Primary international factors include the global financial crisis, the Obama administration's 'pivot' to Asia and China's rising economic power on the world stage relative to other great powers. Interviews with Chinese scholars and analysts affirm this position. There were also a number of internal developments that lend understanding to China's more assertive postures on contested territories and regional disputes, which will be discussed.

i) A Resurgent China Amidst the Global Financial Crisis

China's international soft power was given a boost by its hosting of the Olympic summer games in August 2008. For China, it was an opportunity to highlight to the world its history, culture and traditions, its world class athletes (China won the most gold medals out of any country) and perhaps most importantly, the effectiveness and appeal of its capitalist authoritarian system. The games served as an effective form of propaganda, while largely hiding the state's repression of its own citizens. As Anne Applebaum of the Washington Post wrote after the games, "What you did not see, and what the Chinese public did not see, were the arrests, detentions and jail sentences, not to mention the threats and intimidation that the Chinese government thought necessary to make

the Games run smoothly, though these were no secret."[634] Regardless of the internal repression, the games were ruled a success by international media. Ironically, China's 'coming out' at the Olympic games took place immediately prior to America's subprime mortgage crisis, which spiraled into a full-blown international crisis with the collapse of Lehman Brothers on September 15, 2008.

In response to the global banking crisis, the Chinese government in November 2008 initiated a $586 billion (four trillion yuan) stimulus package, the largest in the nations' history. As a result of the stimulus and other measures taken by the government, China's economy moved along at close to double-digit growth from 2008 to 2010, while the global GDP contracted 1.7-percent in 2009. By comparison, America's economy contracted over 2-percent in 2009.[635] These dynamics furthered China's perceptions of its own strengths. Suisheng Zhao writes, "China's self-image of its power has evolved from a developing country after the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s to a great power after the global financial crisis in 2008."[636]

Around this time, a debate emerged within China over the extent to which China could use the West's economic weakness to more vigorously press its interests abroad. Some political leaders wanted to send a reassuring message to Western capitals addressing anxieties over China's rise amidst the financial crisis. On a May 2009 trip to Europe, Premier Wen Jaibao rejected the notion of a 'G-2 world,' a concept that had gained currency at the start of the Obama administration, calling it "not appropriate" and stating that "China remains a developing country despite remarkable achievements and its modernization will take a long time and the efforts of several generations."[637]

Concurrently, more nationalist voices in China urged for greater Chinese military and political assertion. In 2010, Senior Colonel Liu Minfu published a book *The China Dream,* which "called for China to abandon modest foreign policy and build the world's strongest military to deter the United States from challenging China's rise while the West was still mired in an economic

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[634] Anne Applebaum, "Show of Power, Indeed," *The Washington Post,* August 26, 2008.
[635] World Bank Data, GDP growth (annual %). Accessed at: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=US&view=chart
[636] Zhao, 251.
[637] "When rejects Allegation of China, US Monopolizing World Affairs in Future," *Xinhua,* May 21, 2009. Originally cited in Zhao, 256.

slowdown."[638] Following the Obama administration's decision to sell arms to Taiwan and meet with the Dalai Lama in 2010, China took an unusually tough position. For the first time, the Chinese Foreign Ministry threatened to impose sanctions on U.S. companies involved in the arms sales and Yang Yi, a PLA Rear Admiral suggested imposing sanctions on the U.S. in order to "reshape the policy choices of the U.S."[639]

While nationalist rhetoric from retired and active military officers in China is not new, their statements joined a chorus of rising voices within China to take a more assertive international role. This growing chatter finally led Dai Bingguo, Hu's senior foreign policy advisor, to issue an authoritative article titled "Adhere to the Path of Peaceful Development" in December 2010. In the article, Dai promoted a strategy favoring greater cooperation with the United States and stated the importance of "being moderate and cautious, undertaking no leadership, raising no banner, searching for no expansion, not running after hegemony and being consistent with the idea of peaceful development."[640] This was followed by a White Paper issued by the State Council in September 2011 reiterating China's 'peaceful development.'[641]

Dai's article emphasizing China's inward orientation had two aims: first, to appease foreign powers that had grown increasingly worried over China's posture between 2008 and 2010, and second, to lower Chinese nationalists' expectations of China's international posture and involvement. As Thomas Christensen argues, given the role of nationalist ambitions in bringing down former Chinese rulers (the Qing and the KMT), and in the lead-up to President Hu Jintao's January 2011 state visit to Washington, Dai Bingguo sought to "set an official standard by which China's leadership should be judged by its own citizens. China was not, Dai argued, trying to supplant the U.S. as the supreme power in East Asia; rather it was acting to defend its sovereignty when challenged and to guarantee a stable international environment necessary to address China's domestic problems."[642]

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[638] Zhao 257.
[639] Citation from Suisheng Zhao, "China's New Foreign Policy Assertiveness: Motivations and Implications." *ISPI Analysis,* No. 54, May 2011. Original citation: "China yesterday urged the United States to cancel a massive arms deal to Taiwan, warning of severe consequences if it does not heed the call," *China Daily,* January 8, 2010.
[640] Dai Bingguo, "Adhere to the Path of Peaceful Development," China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Xinhua, December 6, 2010.
[641] According to Jonathan Pollack, this white paper remains the authoritative statement on Chinese foreign policy; despite evidence of foreign policy activism under Xi Jinping, no other policy paper has yet replaced it.
[642] Christensen, 5.

During the time period that Dai Bingguo issued his article and the State Council produced its white paper on peaceful development, other influential Chinese intellectuals were advocating for a different approach. Yan Xuetong, Dean of International Relations at Tsinghua University coined a strategy of "striving for achievement" to stand as a contrast to Deng's strategy of "keeping a low profile." In addition to the global financial crisis, Yan points out two turning points in China's evolution away from Deng's strategy. The first turning point in China's international status and relations with nations in East Asia was in 2010 when China's economy surpassed Japan's to rank only second in size to the United States. The second was increased pushback to China's rise from Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan and the United States that many in China believed required a more assertive response. The debate between the perspectives promoted by Dai Bingguo and Yan Xuetong would continue within Chinese academic, intellectual and political circles until Xi's first major foreign policy speech in October 2013 in which he finally signaled the end of China's period of "keeping a low profile."

ii) China's Diplomatic and Military Assertiveness in the South China Sea

Concurrent to China's internal debate over its regional and global role, 2009 and 2010 witnessed a flare in regional tensions between China and its smaller ASEAN neighbors with competing territorial claims in the South China Sea.[643] China's interests in the South China Sea are not new. In fact, its policies in this region have evolved over the span of eight decades. Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China claimed sovereign rights over territory within the "nine-dash line," encapsulating all the islands of the South China Sea, including the contested Paracel and Spratly Islands. The first such map depicting the nine-dash line is reported by scholars and commentators to have been published in 1947 by the Nationalist government of the Republic of China. China's historians have also referred to shards of pottery atolls in the South China Sea as proof that the sea has historically and rightfully belonged to China. Despite these long-standing positions, however, China's diplomatic and military posture over territorial claims in the South China Sea became more assertive between 2008 and 2010.

In this time, China alienated regional states including the Philippines, Vietnam and the U.S. over its maritime disputes. In March 2009, Beijing took its claims a step further by challenging the U.S.

[643] Claimants in the disputes include Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia.

survey ship *Impeccable* operating 75-miles of the coast of Hainan Island. On March 7, a Chinese intelligence ship contacted the *Impeccable* to state that its actions were illegal and ordered the ship to leave the area. The next day, five Chinese fishing patrol ships and PLA Navy surveillance ships shadowed the *Impeccable* until two Chinese trawlers moved directly in front of the *Impeccable,* forcing it to conduct an emergency procedure to avoid collision. China's decision in this case to deploy official and unofficial actors to exert Chinese sovereignty was not unique; throughout 2009 and 2010, China used fishing vessels to carry out patrols throughout the disputed waters of the South China Sea.[644]

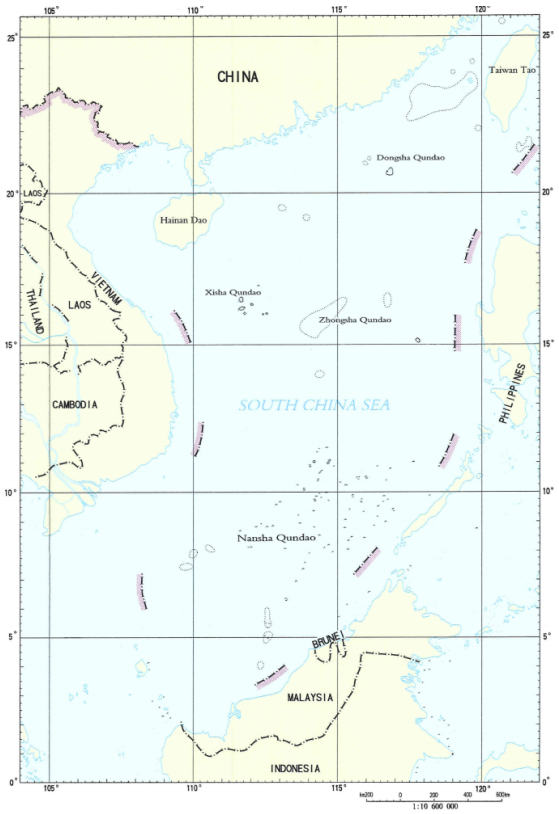
In addition to China's aggressive measures, China's leadership issued forceful official positions through diplomatic channels in response to their neighbors' competing claims to territories in the South China Sea. In May 2009, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei claimed their continental shelves should be extended so that they could claim economic rights and access to energy resources in the South China Sea. China protested the claims through a "Note Verbale" to the UN Secretary General stating the following:

> "China has indisputable sovereignty over the islands in the South China Sea and the adjacent waters, and enjoys sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the relevant waters as well as the seabed and subsoil thereof (see below map). The above position is consistently held by the Chinese government, and is widely known by the international community."[645]

As part of its Note Verbale, China attached the "nine-dash line" map (illustrated below). This submission was the first time that China had presented a map indicating its claims to the UN.[646] Also in May 2009, China submitted to the UN a preliminary declaration of claims to an extended continental shelf, which stated China's "right to make submissions on the outer limits of the

[644] Note: China's strategy of using fishing vessels to exert governmental control over contested waters will be further explored later in the chapter.
[645] Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China, Notes Verbales CML/17/2009 and CML/18/2009, May 7, 2009, available from the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) at: http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/mysvnm33_09/chn_2009re_mys_vnm_e.pdf and http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/vnm37_09/chn_2009re_vnm.pdf
[646] Taylor Fravel and Michael Swaine, "China's Assertive Behavior, Part Two: The Maritime Periphery," *Chinese Leadership Monitor #34.*

continental shelf that extends beyond 200 nautical miles in the East China Sea and in other sea areas."[647]



Description: China's depiction of the "nine-dash line" submitted by the Permanent Mission of the PRC to the UN.

Two months later, in his closing statement at the 2009 U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, State Councilor Dai Bingguo issued a sweeping interpretation of China's core interests.[648] He stated, "To ensure that our bilateral relationship will move forward on the track of long-term and sound development, a very important thing is that we need to support, respect, and

[647] Quoted in Fravel and Swaine. Original citation from: People's Republic of China, "Preliminary Information Indicative of the Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf Beyond 200 Nautical Miles of the PRC," May 11, 2009.
[648] According to Thomas Wright, the phrase "core interest" was first used by Chinese officials in 2003 to indicate China's concerns over Taiwanese independence. In 2006, Tibet and Xinjiang were added to the list of "core interests."

understand each other, and to maintain our core interests. And for China, our concern is we must uphold our basic systems, our national security; and secondly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity; and thirdly, economic and social sustained development."[649] While one can interpret these statements in a number of ways, many China analysts believed the core interest of "upholding sovereignty and territorial integrity" included China's territories within the nine-dash line of the South China Sea, as well as Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang.[650] Later in April 2010, the *New York Times* cited a government source who claimed that in a March 2010 meeting between State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and NSC Asia Director Jeffrey Bader, China stated for the first time that the South China Sea was a core interest, placing the issue on the same level as Taiwan and Tibet.[651]

This account of China's shifting 'core interests' is supported by a 2014 interview given by Secretary Hillary Clinton in which she said, "When I became Secretary of State, China had two issues that they would repeatedly stress as their core interests: Tibet and Taiwan. That was what you would hear every time you met with a Chinese official. Starting in 2010… It was Tibet, Taiwan and the South China Sea…. It was clear that this was a very well thought out introduction of a third core interest that we must take seriously."[652] Secretary Clinton noted that she first heard the Chinese leaders describe the country's territorial claims in the South China Sea as a "core interest" in May 2010 when she was in Beijing for the Strategic and Economic Dialogue.[653]

There are also noted incidents during this period of Chinese officials using bellicose language with their ASEAN neighbors. At a particularly momentous ASEAN Summit hosted by Vietnam in July 2010 (also remembered for Secretary Clinton's stern remarks on America's national interests in the South China Sea), Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told his ASEAN counterparts, "China is a major power and you are small states, and that's just a fact," perhaps indicating that China would seek to achieve gains in contested territories through measures that its smaller neighbors

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[649] U.S. Department of State, "Closing Remarks for U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue," July 28, 2009. Accessed at: https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/july/126599.htm
[650] Wright, 84.
[651] Edward Wong, "Chinese Military Seeks to Extend Its Naval Power," *New York Times,* April 23, 2010. Also cited in Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive is China's New Assertiveness?"
[652] Clinton Interview with Larry Page, 2014.
[653] Clinton, 76.

could not undertake, nor realistically counteract. His remarks are also reminiscent of the Thucydides adage that 'the strong will do what they may, and the weak will do what they must.'

Later in 2011, China requested that another 'note verbale' be communicated to UN Member States, which reiterated much of the content of the 2009 verbale quoted above, and added that "China's sovereignty and related rights and jurisdiction in the South China Sea are supported by abundant historical and legal evidence."[654] According to Taylor Fravel and Michael Swaine, it was more specific than any previous communication to the UN, in that China argued that the disputed islands were entitled to a territorial sea, EEZ and continental shelf.[655] China's land reclamation would not begin for another two years, but these assertions within the framework of the nine-dash line represent early indications of China's willingness to issue unilateral claims to its maritime territorial disputes.

In 2011 and 2012, Beijing translated its more outspoken claims on the disputed territories of the South China Sea into more assertive actions. Many China watchers perceive Beijing as having "stepped up" its assertiveness in the region during this time, particularly against the Philippines and Vietnam over the exploration of energy resources.[656] In May 2011, Vietnamese officials accused three Chinese surveillance ships of severing the cables of a Vietnamese oil company vessel exploring for oil and gas near the Gulf of Tonkin. This event foreshadowed future actions by Beijing, including a similar act carried out against a Vietnamese vessel in December 2012, nearly one month into Xi's tenure. This time, China's actions led to weeks of anti-China protests in Hanoi and a decision by Vietnam to send out new police patrols to guard against Chinese fishing boats in the South China Sea.[657] In a show of force against the Philippines, between April and August 2012, China effectively expelled the Philippines from the waters surrounding the Scarborough

[654] Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China, Note Verbale CML/8/2011, April 14, 2011, available from DOALOS at: http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/mysvnm33_09/chn_2011_re_phl_e.pdf
[655] Michael D. Swaine and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Assertive Behavior—Part Two: The Maritime Periphery." *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 35 (Summer 2011). 3.
[656] Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security,* Vol. 37, No. 4 (Spring 2013).
[657] Jane Perlez, "Dispute Flares Over Energy in South China Sea," *New York Times,* December 4, 2012.

Shoal and took control of the shoal by interdicting any Philippine vessel that entered its surrounding waters.[658]

Alastair Iain Johnston, a skeptic of claims asserting Chinese revisionism, even noted that China's rhetoric and behavior over maritime claims in the South China Sea starting in 2010 "did threaten to impose substantially higher costs on states with disputes with China."[659] "To be sure," Johnston wrote, "in 2009 and 2010 China's military and paramilitary presence in the South China Sea was more active than in previous years. Indeed, the South China Sea is perhaps the only example where China's diplomatic rhetoric and practice did shift fairly sharply in a more hardline direction in this period."[660]

iii) Tensions Flare in the East China Sea: A Sign of New Chinese Assertiveness?

In September 2010, a Chinese fishing trawler hit a Japanese coast-guard vessel after the Japanese coast guard ships intercepted the trawler near the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Japan released the crew of the trawler but it detained the captain, eliciting tough and repeated calls from Beijing for his release. As calls for his release moved from the MFA to Premier Wen Jaibao, rhetoric became increasingly harsh. Wen even referred to the islands as "sacred territory," which, according to Johnston, was a term rarely used to describe the Diaoyu islands, the last time being by the *People's Daily* in the early 1970s.[661] China also demanded compensation and an apology from the Japanese government. Moreover, there are reports that in response to the incident, China issued an embargo of Chinese rare earth exports to Japan. If this occurred, it would have been an aggressive move against a core Japanese economic interest.[662]

The incident between Japan and China provides an interesting example of new Chinese assertiveness, but one that needs to be wrestled with. International media found China's response

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[658] China later clarified that it would interdict vessels within 12 nautical miles of the islands for which China has announced "baselines," which are the metrics the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to determine territorial waters.
[659] Johnston, 45.
[660] Johnston, 19. Johnston notes, however, that others point out that some of China's activity was in response to more proactive diplomacy y other claimants of maritime disputes. See Michael D. Swaine and Taylor Fravel, "China's Assertive Behavior, Part Two: The Maritime Periphery," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 35 (Summer 2011).
[661] Johnston, 23.
[662] There are conflicting reports over whether Japanese imports of the rare earth materials from China actually declined during this period.

to the incident as "unprecedentedly assertive." But to others, including Alastair Iain Johnston, Beijing's harsh diplomatic rhetoric to compel Japan to release the captain was conducted for domestic purposes. The upcoming anniversary of the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria might have led the Chinese leadership to take a more assertive posture for fear of looking weak around this nationalist anniversary. One could also place the majority of the blame for the diplomatic row on Japan's unwillingness to release the captain, deeming it as unnecessarily provocative and a sign of Japan's hardening diplomacy towards the disputed region. Regardless, the incident serves as an illustration that China was willing to stand up for its claims in the East China Sea and even consider using instruments of trade to defend them.

iv) China's Military Modernization and Enhanced Naval Capabilities

Hu Jintao's articulation of the PLA's "new historic missions" in 2004 addressed the growing importance of the maritime domain to China's economic and security interests. Whereas Jiang Zemin emphasized near-seas defense, Hu extended military strategic thought to include far-seas operations. Jiang focused on developing the capabilities that would inhibit Taiwan from declaring formal independence and believed that far-seas operations were a less pressing and more long-term focus. For Hu, given China's growing international economic interests, far-seas operation became more pressing and near-term. As such, the PLA navy underwent significant modernizations, which accelerated after 2010. IHS Jane's Defense and Security Forecasts estimated that the PLAN will have committed approximately $65.7 billion USD to $84.8 billion on a new naval construction projects between 2010-2024.[663]

Under Hu the PLA Navy also acquired an aircraft carrier, *the Liaoning,* which it bought from Ukraine, refitted and commissioned in September 2012. This acquisition, among other tasks, would allow for air cover for naval operations in the South China Sea. The PLA navy also developed a significant number of naval capabilities around this time, constructing destroyers, frigates, light frigates and fast attack craft (FACs).[664] While the PLAN's enhanced capabilities were developed primarily to protect China's economic interests through sea lane security and anti-

[663] Alex Pape and Tate Nurkin, "China's Naval Strength: Current and Future," in *Chinese Naval Shipbuilding,* edited by Andrew Erickson, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2016).
[664] David Lai and Roy Kamphausen, *Assessing the People's Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era,* (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College Press, 2014).

piracy operations, they also led to the increased possibility of a confrontation with the U.S., given differing interpretations of the region's exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Whereas the U.S. regards EEZs as international waters, China maintains a more restrictive and sovereignty-based interpretation.

As China's naval modernization accelerated in 2010, the Information Office of the State Council of the PRC issued its biennial defense white paper. It stressed China's ongoing period of strategic opportunity in which the nation could continue to rely on a peaceful and stable international environment to further its economic development. However, it also emphasized that "international strategic competition and contradictions are intensifying, global challenges are becoming more prominent, and security threats are becoming increasingly integrated, complex and volatile." Importantly, it highlighted China's perception that traditional geopolitical and military competition had returned to the forefront of international politics. It stated, "International strategic competition centering on international order, comprehensive national strength and geopolitics has intensified."[665] These excerpts show that China's military doctrine was evolving not only to secure China's growing international economic interests, but also in response to a changing, and more challenging, international environment.

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As illustrated through these examples of Chinese diplomatic and military actions between 2008 and 2012, China was becoming increasingly assertive in its maritime periphery vis-à-vis Japan in the East China Sea, its ASEAN neighbors in the South China Sea and towards the United States. These actions took place alongside Chinese military modernization efforts, more strident diplomatic posturing at the UN and at regional forums, and China's economic gains amidst the global financial crisis. Compounding tensions over China's increasing assertiveness in the Asia Pacific was America's own strategic shift in its Asia policy, ushered in by the new Obama administration. Leading up to China's leadership transition in late-2012, Obama's 'pivot' and a series of international events would influence China's strategic calculus regarding its role in the region and on the world stage. These factors will now be discussed.

[665] Anthony H. Cordesman and Steven Colley, *Chinese Strategy and Military Modernization in 2015,* (Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2015), 28.

B. International Conditions

i) The 2008-2009 Global Financial Crisis

The global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 (deemed the "U.S. financial crisis" by the Chinese) fundamentally changed how China's leaders viewed the West's economic model and the strength of its own economic system, by comparison. Indeed, the crisis showed the inherent weaknesses of the West's capitalist and democratic model and helped feed the narrative of an assertive China. According to Jonathan Pollack, the financial crisis also had implications for the global balance of power. He writes, "some believe that by avoiding major embroilment in the financial crisis, China was able to sustain double digit economic growth rates. But some Chinese thinkers saw possibilities of an unexpectedly abrupt realignment of the global order, extrapolating from the U.S. financial meltdown to shifts in the longer-term balance of power."[666] Suisheng Zhao, an influential Chinese scholar based in the U.S., also encapsulates this sentiment well. He writes that by 2009, "the US fiscal situation was out of control, its banking system discredited, its military stretched by two protracted wars, and its moral high ground lost. In contrast, China's ascent was mind-boggling in its economic growth, with more than $2 billion in reserves and the position as the critical creditor to the United States."[667] After years of receiving lectures from Western leaders about the merits of free markets and democratic societies, the tables had turned. On a geostrategic level, Chinese leaders felt vindicated by the failure of the Western model of modernization.

As discussed, the financial crisis and the West's economic stagnation also raised questions among Chinese strategic thinkers over the continued relevance of Deng Xiaoping's trepidation over China's role in the world. Many China watchers believe that the global financial crisis proved to China that the engine of America's global power – its economy – was declining more rapidly than expected, which in turn changed China's risk calculus on assertive behavior in its region. China's surpassing of Japan in 2010 as the world's second largest economy[668] became a tremendous source of pride in China that only further proved Chinas economic power and might on the world stage.

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[666] Pollack, 165.
[667] Zhao, 258.
[668] In 2010, China also surpassed Germany as the world's largest exporter. In 2004, China surpassed the U.S. as the largest consumer country in the world.

Lastly, it is important to note that despite impressions that China uses its economic power predominantly to coerce its neighbors to bend to China's will, China's regional economic efforts have also improved the economic standing of its neighbors and the region's economy. For example, following the global financial crisis, China played a major role in limiting the economic contagion to the region. Johnson writes, "In addition to deploying a domestic economic stimulus package that bolstered domestic growth and helped avoid downturn in regional trade, Premier Wen Jiabao pledged a Southeast Asian regional infrastructure investment fund of $10 billion, along with a $15 billion line of credit for poorer ASEAN states..."[669]

ii) American "Pivot" or "Rebalance" to the Asia Pacific

When Obama entered the Presidency in January 2009, the general perception in Asia was that the U.S. was distracted by two wars in the Middle East and economically weakened from the global financial crisis.[670] Indeed, many Chinese scholars and analysts view 2008 and 2009 as a period of opportunity for China, in which the U.S. still gave the impression, at least to China, that it was focused on conflicts and strategic challenges elsewhere. That being said, when Obama took office, the new administration wanted to send an early message that it would pay closer attention to Asia. Obama's Asia team was also staffed by seasoned Asia hands, including Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell and Senior Direct for Asian Affairs on the NSC, Jeffrey Bader. Secretary Clinton set also the stage by making her first overseas trip to Asia on February 15-22, 2009.[671] The trip included stops in Japan, South Korea, China and Indonesia. Clinton's stop in China was met with anxiety by many Chinese senior officials, who remembered her for her 1995 speech in Beijing on human rights and women rights and for her tough talk on Chinese trade issues during the 2008 campaign.[672]

According to Jeffrey Bader, by 2010 and before the U.S. launched its "pivot" policy, America's China policy rested on three principles: First, China should not be considered an inevitable adversary, but a partner on shared international interests. In this sense, the U.S. welcomed a "strong, prosperous and successful China that would play a stronger leadership role on global

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[669] Johnson, 29.
[670] Jeffrey Bader, 2.
[671] This was the first time since Dean Rusk in 1961 that a Secretary of State made their first overseas trip to Asia.
[672] According to Clinton, her two primary counterparts during her time as Secretary of State were State Councilor Dai Bingguo and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi.

issues."[673] Second, the administration believed that China's 'rise' should occur within the context of international law and norms. This meant settling disputes peacefully, conforming to rules established by the WTO, the IMF and the OECD, accepting the principles of freedom of navigation and working to curb nuclear proliferation. Third, and importantly, the administration sought to "ensure that China's rise served to stabilize, not destabilize, the Asia-Pacific region, which included five U.S. allies and other partners whose security Americans had an interest in."[674]

Amidst China's more strident posture in its maritime periphery throughout 2009 and 2010, Secretary Clinton attended the annual ASEAN summit in July 2010 in Vietnam. Following remarks from Vietnam and other ministers of the ASEAN nations in which they expressed their concerns over China's increasingly assertive posture in the South China Sea, Secretary Clinton stated that the U.S. would not take sides in any particular dispute, but would facilitate the process of developing a code of conduct because the U.S. "saw freedom of navigation in the South China Sea as a 'national interest.'"[675] Her words were chosen carefully, so as to counter China's earlier assertions of the South China Sea as a "core interest." According to Clinton's account of the meeting, Chinese foreign minister Yang "was livid" following Clinton's assertion of America's national interests and willingness to add bargaining power to the ASEAN nations' plight. He dismissed the disputes in the South China Sea, warned the U.S. against interfering and in a thinly veiled warning, reminded his ASEAN neighbors that China was a far more powerful country than others in the region. According to Clinton, "...in subsequent years, diplomats in the region would point to that meeting as a tipping point, both in terms of American leadership in Asia and in pushback against Chinese overreach."[676]

Obama formally announced America's 'pivot' to the Asia Pacific region in a speech to the Australian parliament in Canberra on November 17, 2011. "Make no mistake," Obama stated, "the tide of war is receding, and America is looking ahead to the future that we must build... As President, I have, therefore, made a deliberate and strategic decision -- as a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by

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[673] Jeffrey Bader, *Obama and China's Rise, An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 69.
[674] Bader, 69-70.
[675] Clinton, 79.
[676] Ibid.

upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends."[677] Obama's plan for America's enhanced presence in the Asia Pacific included economic and military resources. Militarily, Obama assured that reductions in U.S. defense spending would not occur in the Asia Pacific theater; rather America's presence and mission in the Asia Pacific would be a "top priority" for his national security team. If Obama's position was not yet clear to the Chinese, he added, "Our enduring interests in the region demand our enduring presence in the region. The United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay."[678]

To add credibility behind Obama and Clinton's rhetorical gestures of America's staying power, the United States and Australia agreed to begin rotating as many as 2500 marines through Darwin, Australia, thereby expanding America's military presence beyond South Korea, Japan and the Philippines. While commentators tend to focus on the military dimensions of the rebalance (which derived in large measure from decisions in the Bush administration to assign greater American naval and airpower to the Pacific), the U.S. also sought to enhance its economic and diplomatic leverage to the fastest growing economic region in the world. Immediately prior to Obama's seminal speech in Canberra, Obama spoke at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Hawaii. There, he put his weight behind the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multilateral free trade deal (excluding China) that has long been viewed by the Chinese as a form of economic "encirclement." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also declared in Honolulu that the twenty-first century would be "America's Pacific Century."

According to Clinton, the pivot was designed primarily to indicate America's renewed commitment to the region, to America's allies *and* to focusing on China. She writes, "When we started in 2009, many in the region doubted our commitment and our staying power. Some in China sought to take advantage of that perception. Our pivot strategy was designed to dispel those doubts... We had climbed out of the hole we found ourselves in at the beginning of the administration and reasserted America's presence in the region."[679] While none of America's moves were directly targeted at 'containing' or 'encircling' China, they led to a sense of unease and concern in Beijing. While official response was relatively muted, as President Hu and

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[677] President Barack Obama, "Remarks to the Asutralian Parliament," November 17, 2011, Parliament House, Canberra Australia. Accessed at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament
[678] Ibid.
[679] Hillary Clinton, *Hard Choices,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 79.

Premier Wen continued to preach the importance of cooperation between the U.S. and China in the region, Chinese scholars adopted a more strident tone on America's rebalance. Ruan Zongze, a scholar at the Chinese think-tank CIIS wrote, "the rebalancing strategy implemented by the United States is the catalyst that will change the regional order... the United States seems not to recognize the magnitude and urgency of this issue. It clings to the Cold War mentality, unable to make properly respond to changes in the West Pacific region."[680] Similarly, Richard Hu, Dean of International Relations at Hong Kong University blames current tensions on America's Asia Pacific strategy under Obama. "The pivot," he said, "poked China in the eye... leaving China with no choice but to build up defenses... if there is a blame, blame Washington for flaring up tensions."[681]

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While this research argues that one cannot understand China's evolving regional strategy without a focus on its domestic conditions, it is impossible to argue that the Obama administration's "pivot" and its numerous military and political ramifications did not affect Beijing's regional calculus. Moreover, China's continued economic growth during the period of the global financial crisis fundamentally changed perceptions of the relative balance of power between great powers, particularly for Chinese leaders, perhaps giving them greater confidence to push back against America's role in the Asia Pacific. As Pollack alludes, "Chinese critiques of U.S. political-military behavior in East Asia are not new phenomenon, but they have become more pronounced as China's absolute and relative power and the geographic span of its interests have increased."[682] While China's economic and military power are still dwarfed by America's, Beijing had a newfound sense of confidence after the financial crisis, followed by renewed unease over America's "pivot" to the region.

C. Domestic Conditions

A. Composition and Interests of the Chinese Elite (IV #1)

[680] Ruan Zongze, "What kind of periphery does China need to build," China Institute of International Studies, May 28, 2014. Accessed at: http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2014-05/28/content_6942279.htm
[681] Author Interview with Richard Hu, Dean of International Relations at Hong Kong University, October 20, 2016.
[682] Pollack, 177.

The domestic conditions under Hu Jintao moving from the Sixteenth Party Congress (2002-2006) to the Seventeenth Party Congress, convened in the fall of 2007, represent a great deal of stability and continuity. Therefore, the composition and interests of the actors involved in the policy process do not elicit as much discussion as the changes that would later occur when Xi Jinping came to power in the fall of 2012.

The most important political issue at the beginning of this phase was the question of leadership succession for positions under Hu. The Seventeenth Party Congress in 2007 also represented the first time that the Chinese Communist Party underwent a leadership transition without the revolutionary generation on hand. At the time, the Politburo Standing Committee had four empty seats; three opened up by retirement and one by a current member's death. Two positions were filled by logical successors from the Politburo, leaving two open seats that were filled by Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang. It was from these seats on the PSC between 2007 and 2012 that Xi and Li would essentially lobby for the position of Hu's successor. At the time, it was perceived by many China watchers that Hu Jintao wished to promote fellow Communist Youth League member Li Keqiang as his heir apparent.

Xi Jinping, whose pedigree did not identify with either the CYL or Jiang's "Shanghai Gang," had been serving as the Shanghai Party secretary was also seen as a potential general secretary in the future. According to Joseph Fewsmith, "Xi's management of two coastal provinces, Fujian and Zhejiang, [makes it clear] that he understands how to develop the economy, especially the private economy, while his support for inner-party democracy and other consultative political forms while serving as Party secretary of Zhejiang makes him attractive as a reformer."[683] In 2007, Xi was named to the head of the Secretariat, where his views and background as a "princeling" were balanced by other members of the secretariat, including Hu's colleagues from the CYL. Importantly, there were no members of the PLA on the Secretariat, a move that had uncertain foreign policy implications, but that served in "stark contrast to past practice."[684]

B. Consolidation of Control (IV #2)

[683] Fewsmith, 7.
[684] Fewsmith, 8.

Unlike the Russian political system between 2008 and 2012 – a period during which Vladimir Putin worked to implement his own power shifts by essentially switching places with Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev in the 2008 elections – China's leadership succession planning proved far more institutionalized. Indeed, the Chinese model of governance from 2007-2012 appeared to move towards *institutionalization* without ceding ground to informal networks, rules and power brokers. One example of increased institutionalization was the allocation of positions on the Central Committee and the Politburo at the Seventeenth Party Congress in the fall of 2007, which largely remained the same as in the Sixteenth Party Congress inaugurated in 2002. For example, the number of seats and positions occupied by military officials of the PLA and the People's Armed Police Force on the Central Committee were consistent to what they had been at the preceding party congress in 2002.[685] The retirement age of members on the Central Committee, Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee (68 years of age) was enforced and it remained clear that individuals moving into certain positions needed to be 'elected' through an inner-party democratic system.

Joseph Fewsmith encapsulates the sense of continuity in the Seventeenth Party Congress and Hu's tenure as general secretary as he writes, "The 17th Party Congress appears to have come out strongly in favor of the status quo. Hu Jintao's calls for establishing a 'scientific development concept' and sustainable development were reaffirmed, whereas his more populist call for building a harmonious society was de-emphasized. Combined with the decision to promote Xi Jinping as the heir apparent (though not yet formally designated as such), the congress signaled that Hu will have power, but that that power will be balanced."[686]

Indeed, even Hu Jintao in his role as general secretary continued to work through processes of collective leadership. Despite his position as leader of the party, state and military, a consensus-driven decision making process was carried out to maintain party unity or, at a minimum, enough harmony within elite groupings and factions to ensure loyalty to the party above all else. In this highly formulaic process, the political system under Hu's last five years as general secretary continued to grapple with the importance of balancing institutional practices (such as the

[685] Joseph Fewsmith, "The 17th Party Congress: Informal Politics and Formal Institutions," *China Leadership Monitor,* No. 23, 2.
[686] Ibid.

retirement age and the distribution of seats on the PSC and Politburo) against the power of political factions. China's integrated system of checks and balances within the party structure allowed for the continued stability among factions in the CCP ruling elite. Yet this system also tested China's ability to respond effectively to rapidly evolving international events and crises, and in a few instances raised questions around who was in charge over important decisions of national security.

One test came in January 2011, when China carried out a publicized trial flight of China's new stealth fighter jet, the J-20. The trial coincided with a trip to China by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who raised the issue with President Hu. According to Tom Christensen, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, participants at the meeting stated that "Hu seemed surprised to hear of the incident and checked with his military advisor regarding Gates's information,"[687] signaling that PRC political leadership may not have been entirely on the same page as PLA leadership. To some analysts, Hu's questioning even led many analysts to "wonder about the extent of the PLA's policy autonomy, and even Hu's ability to control his own military."[688]

C. Challenges to Regime Legitimacy

Many of the legitimacy challenges that Xi Jinping has faced since the beginning of his tenure as general secretary in 2012 began before his time. Foremost challenges under Hu included rampant corruption within the official ranks of the CCP, the trial of Bo Xilai during the leadership transition from Hu to Xi, and the endemic inequality surrounding China's economic reforms. On the latter point, despite the CCP's adequate response to the global financial crisis, during which it issued a $586 billion stimulus package to maintain growth, China's economic growth slowed and produced unequal results for Chinese citizens. Moreover, according to the IMF, over Hu's ten years in office, GDP per capita tripled from $2800 in 2002 to $9100 in 2012. Yet urban per capita income continued to vastly outpace rural income levels, and was accompanied by immense corruption issues within the CCP. In terms of income disparity, a 2011 survey of more than 8000 Chinese households conducted by Gan Li of Texas A&M found the country's top 10-percent controlling 56-percent of income – a figure that according to the Wall Street Journal makes China less equal

[687] Christensen, 31.
[688] Johnson, 20.

than some African countries.[689] In terms of corruption, Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perception Index ranked China 80th in the world, sharing its ranking with Serbia and Trinidad and Tobago.[690] As a result, social unrest became a growing problem for the fourth generation of CCP leadership and the Hu administration. Despite the lack of reliable data, according to Sun Liping, a professor at Tsinghua University, found that there were 180,000 mass incidents in 2010, up from 50,000 in 2002.[691]

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These were the myriad of challenges facing Xi when he assumed the mantle of CCP leadership in November 2012. This background helps to explain Xi's early and aggressive drive to launch an unprecedented anti-corruption campaign. China's economic slowdown and the singular importance of pursuing massive economic reforms is perhaps a leading reason behind Xi's extensive consolidation of power. Both trends will be explored in the next section. Regarding the foreign policy changes that would occur under Xi, these too had their precedents in the Hu era. China grew more assertive in its diplomatic and military posture in contested regions of the East and South China Seas, deeming the South China Sea a "core interest" for the first time in China's modern history. China's assertive posture in its region took place alongside extensive military modernization campaigns within the PLA and in particular the PLA Navy, worrying its regional neighbors and sowing doubt with the U.S. security community over Hu's alleged devotion to China's "peaceful development."

Finally, Hu's outgoing political report as general secretary, delivered to more than 2200 delegates at the Eighteenth Party Congress in November 2012, offered several insights into China's internal affairs as well as the nation's renewed military presence in East Asia and in its maritime periphery. On corruption, Hu warned that failing to address corruption "could prove fatal to the party and even cause the collapse of the party and the fall of the state."[692] Hu's report also paid more attention

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[689] Originally cited in the Wall Street Journal, "State Media Survey: It's the Wealth Gap, Stupid," November 6, 2012. Accessed at: https://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/11/06/state-media-survey-its-the-wealth-gap-stupid/

[690] Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2012," Accessed at: https://www.transparency.org/cpi2012/results. In comparison to other BRIC nations, in 2012 India and Russia ranked well below China at 94th and 133rd, respectively, and Brazil ranked above China at 69th.

[691] Originally cited in the Wall Street Journal, "Charting China's Economy: 10 Years Under Hu," November 16, 2012.

[692] Full text of Hu Jintao's Report at the 18th Party Congress," Xinhua, November 17 2012, http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/18th_CPC_National_Congress_Eng/t992917.htm.

to social problems than the report issued in 2007, giving environmental issues their own section for the first time in CCP history. In a nod to China's growing regional role, Hu reminded China's neighbors that the world's second-largest economic power had a commitment to "enhance our capacity for exploiting marine resources... resolutely safeguard China's maritime rights and interests, and build China into a strong maritime power."[693] To do so, he called for building a PLA that would be "commensurate with China's international standing."[694] Building from his doctrinal statement in 2004 on the "New Historic Mission" of the PLA to protect China's far seas interests, Hu's tenure as general secretary enshrined the concept of maritime power into the CCP's political dialogue and debate. The newly appointed Xi Jinping would turn Hu's doctrines and rhetoric into concrete actions, using a notably different script and style.

Case Study III: Xi Jinping and a New Era of Chinese Assertiveness (2012-2016)

A. China's Strategic Orientation: Indicators of Revisionism and Key Turning Points

Internal Preferences

i) Xi's Central Foreign Policy Tenets: What is Constant?

Upon assuming the role of general secretary at the 18th party congress in November 2012, Xi Jinping quickly stood out for his ability and willingness to articulate bold policies. Yet many of Xi's foreign policy articulations early on in his tenure were extensions of doctrines already outlined by Hu Jintao. One important and preexisting tenet was China's so-called "period of strategic opportunity." At the November 2014 Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, Xi reflected the CCP's judgment that "All factors considered... China is still in an important period of strategic opportunity for its development endeavor in which much can be

[693] Ibid.
[694] Ibid.

accomplished."[695] This indicated that Xi perceived of China's strategic environment in ways similar to that of earlier generations of Chinese leaders, including Hu.[696]

A second mainstay in foreign policy from the Hu to Xi era is the concept of "peaceful development," which is the argument that China's rise will be peaceful and will benefit China's neighbors as well as itself. A 2016 report by CSIS argues that, "despite a brief – and politically contentious – flirtation with the alternative formulation of "peaceful rise" in Hu's first term, like the period of strategic opportunity, peaceful development has been a mainstay of China's diplomatic canon for more than a decade."[697] It should be noted, however, that despite the continuity of peaceful development as a central feature of China's foreign policy, Xi contributed more strident language on China's territorial sovereignty and the defense of China's core interests. As Xi argued at a Politburo study session on foreign policy on January 28, 2013, "China will unswervingly pursue peaceful development... the PRC will never pursue its development at the cost of sacrificing interests of other countries. We will never benefit ourselves at others' expense or do harm to any neighbor." Yet he also emphasized, "We should never give up our legitimate rights and will never sacrifice our national core interests. No country should presume that... we will swallow the 'bitter fruit' of harming our sovereignty, security or development interests."[698]

ii) Xi's Central Foreign Policy Tenets: What is New?

In addition to these points of continuity in Xi's foreign policy rhetoric, there are three primary foreign policy articulations and strategies that set Xi apart from his predecessors. The first two "tifas," as Thomas Christensen defines them, were Xi's conception of the "Chinese Dream" and his emphasis on a "new type of great power relations." Xi's conception of great power relations

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[695] Report issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC following the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, November 29, 2014. Accessed at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml

[696] Michael Swaine notes that Xi's appreciation of "China's period of strategic opportunity" was also a theme in Hu Jintao's 2006 speech to the Central Committee on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs. See: Michael Swaine, "Xi Jinping's Address to the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs: Assessing and Advancing Major Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics," *Chinese Leadership Monitor,* no. 46.

[697] Christopher Johnson, "President Xi Jinping's 'One Belt One Road' Initiative," *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* March 2016, 13.

[698] Xi's official statement was not made public, but summaries of the address can be found online. This quotation was accessed from a summary provided by D.S. Rajan in "China: Post-Party Congress Scenario: Policy Indicators in Two Speeches of Xi Jinping," *South Asia Analysis Group,* February 18 2013. Accessed at: http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1170

was meant to encapsulate China's relationship with the U.S., first and foremost, but also with other great powers. The third differentiation between Xi and his predecessors is the utmost importance Xi attributed early on to maritime affairs and to building China's capabilities as a naval power.

The Chinese Dream and the Two Centenary Goals

Xi's articulated vision for domestic development is what he calls 'the Chinese Dream.' It is closely aligned with his emphasis on China's two centenary milestones: the founding of the CCP in 2021, and the founding of the PRC in 2049. Each centenary milestone is associated with a goal set by the CCP: first, for China to double its 2010 GDP and per capita income to be a "moderately well-off society" by 2021 and second, for China to be a "full modern society" by 2049. These goals and the Chinese Dream are closely associated with China's foreign policy. According to Michael Swaine, this set of medium-and long-term development goals and the Chinese Dream are "all directed at attaining the long-standing objective of creating a strong and wealthy China at peace with outside powers."[699]

At the Xi-Obama Sunnylands Summit on June 7-8, 2013, Xi elaborated on what he envisioned as the "Chinese Dream." He stated that "China will work hard to realize the Chinese dream of the great national renewal and will work hard to push forward the noble cause of peace and development for all mankind." Xi added, "By the Chinese dream, we seek to have economic prosperity, national renewal and people's well-being. The Chinese dream is about cooperation, development, peace and win-win, and it is connected to the American Dream and the beautiful dreams people in other countries may have."[700] Alice Lyman Miller argues that the Chinese Dream is a multifaceted vision for China's future. "The Chinese Dream incorporates the notion that "Only communism can save China... an assertion that goes back to the 40s; but also that only socialism can save China and embody the ambition of all of China's people. It is a patriotic appeal that rests on a notion of Chinese wealth and power," says Miller. "Internationally, it is connected to Chinese nationalism in the sense that China is rightfully taking its place on the world stage through its wealth and power."[701] However, this new strategy of national rejuvenation is also

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[699] Swaine, *China Leadership Monitor,* no. 48, 3.
[700] Remarks by President Xi Jinping, Sunnylands Retreat, Rancho Mirage, California, June 8, 2013. Accessed at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/08/remarks-president-obama-and-president-xi-jinping-peoples-republic-china-
[701] Author interview with Alice Miller, Stanford University, June 14, 2016.

ambiguous. As Christensen alludes, "We still do not know the character of Xi's Chinese national dream. Does the dream envision China settling historical scores on the international stage by recovering 'lost' territories and putting former victimizers like Japan in their place? Or does it mirror the American Dream with increased prosperity and personal security for the average Chinese citizen?"[702]

A New Type of Great Power Relations

In 2012, when Xi was still vice-president of China, he had already begun advocating for a new type of great power relations between the U.S. and China. Later as President, Xi elaborated on this concept at the Sunnylands summit in 2013. Xi outlined the contours of a "new type of great power relations" in three points: first, it would be a relationship "that is different from the inevitable confrontation and conflict between the major countries of the past;" second, "it would be based on mutual respect," and third, it would focus on "win-win cooperation for the benefit of the Chinese and American peoples, and people elsewhere in the world."[703]

According to Cheng Li of the Brookings Institution, "Embedded in the 'New Type of Great Power Relations' is a nation's hope for an international environment more conducive to its development. From the rise and fall of its many dynasties to its forced opening up to the West in the wake of the Opium Wars, China has always seen itself as a civilization deeply entangled and affected by history. Recognizing the historically recurring clashes between an existing great power and an emerging power, China looks to the 'New Type' framework to avoid historical determinism and to seek a less-disruptive rise in an increasingly integrated world."[704] Importantly, Cheng adds that Xi's concept not only suggested parity with the United States, but also respect on its core interests. "By emphasizing the respect of 'core interests' as an element of the concept, China pushes its territorial claims to the forefront. This is China's attempt at more clearly demarking where the United States and other neighboring countries need to toe the line..."[705]

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[702] Christensen, 8.
[703] Remarks by President Xi Jinping, Sunnylands Retreat, Rancho Mirage, California, June 8, 2013. Accessed at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/08/remarks-president-obama-and-president-xi-jinping-peoples-republic-china-
[704] Cheng Li and Lucy Xu, "Chinese Enthusiasim an American Cynicism Over the 'New Type of Great Power Relations," *The Brookings Institution,* Thursday, December 4, 2014. Accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinese-enthusiasm-and-american-cynicism-over-the-new-type-of-great-power-relations/
[705] Ibid.

Johnston notes that in 2013, Chinese official media such as Xinhua news agency began making references to China's pursuit of "great power diplomacy," which was also a central feature of Jiang Zemin's foreign policy with powers such as the United States and the European Union. Xi's version, however, "cast China on a more equal footing with the U.S.,"[706] suggesting that Xi saw U.S. power as less of a constraint on China's actions and influence. In a speech at the Brookings Institution on September 20, 2013, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi further elaborated on what this new type of great power relations should mean. After restating Xi's three points, he also made clear that China expected the U.S. and China to show respect for "each other's system and path chosen by their people, as well as each other's core interests and concerns,"[707] especially China's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Asia Pacific. Xi repeatedly promoted the framework at summits with the United States, including at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in July 2014 and then at a summit with President Obama in November 2014. While Obama did not repeat nor endorse the framework during subsequent summits with Xi, Obama's national security advisor, Susan Rice, gave a speech at Georgetown in November 2013 in which she said, "When it comes to China, we seek to operationalize a new model of major power relations. That means managing inevitable competition while forging deeper cooperation on issues where our interests converge in Asia and beyond."[708]

Xi's Emphasis on Maritime Affairs

An often attributed and fundamental hallmark of Xi's foreign policy is his greater focus on maritime affairs. In many regards, Xi's articulation of China's goals and intentions in the East China Sea and the South China Sea are consistent with President Hu's more assertive stance on territorial claims in the maritime regions. Indeed, Hu Jintao made the issue central in his outgoing address at the 18th Party Congress when he stated that China should enhance its capacities to exploit marine resources and build China into a maritime power. What sets Xi apart on these issues is what analysts and scholars refer to as Xi's distinct *governance style.* Robert Blackwill and Kurt

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[706] Johnson, 22.

[707] Foreign Minister Wang Yi, "Towards a New Model of Major-Country Relations Between China and the United States," The Brookings Institution, September 20, 2013. Accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/wang-yi-english-prepared-remarks.pdf

[708] Remarks as prepared for delivery by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice, "America's Future is in Asia," Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., November 20, 2013. Accessed at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/21/remarks-prepared-delivery-national-security-advisor-susan-e-rice

Campbell define Xi's more assertive 'style' as "his willingness to use every instrument of statecraft, from military assets to geo-economic intimidation, as well as explicit economic rewards, to pursue his various geopolitical objectives... Xi's policy has been characterized by bullying over territorial issues and selective beneficence on economic matters, with the looming application of economic coercion ever present."[709] In this sense, Xi has embodied a more assertive posture for China in the Asia-Pacific and has made explicit China's right to defend its core interests.

Xi's contribution to China's maritime strategy has also been to "move from [Hu's] matter-of-fact description to a more threat-oriented message that paints the maritime challenges China is faceting in stark and uniquely strategic terms."[710] At a Politburo session in July 2013, he stated that the maritime domain plays an important role when it comes to safeguarding the nation's "state sovereignty, national security, and development interests." Xi also underscored that "the oceans and seas have an increasingly important strategic calculus concerning global competition in the spheres of politics, economic development, military and technology." [711] Xi's speed in enacting decisions on maritime issues has caught many analysts by surprise and has added an additional layer of complexity to understanding the channels through which decisions are made. As Blackwill and Campbell argue, Xi's ability to carry out more assertive foreign policies in the face of such "threats" has been "facilitated by his centralization of the policymaking sphere."[712]

iii) Internal Debates Over China's Rise

As Xi articulated his foreign policy vision throughout his first two years as general secretary, prominent strategic thinkers in China engaged in a debate over the pros and cons of a more assertive China in the region and in the world. There were, and remain, those who are not convinced that China's rising power will lead to a more favorable security environment on its periphery. Leading scholars from Peking and Renmin Universities such as Wang Jisi and Jin Canrong, respectively, have espoused the value of adhering to Deng and Hu's models of 'keeping a low profile' and 'peaceful development.' Their concern is that China's turn towards more assertive tactics and rhetoric in the nation's foreign policy will distract the leadership from

[709] Robert Blackwill and Kurt Campbell, "Xi Jinping on the World Stage," *Council on Foreign Relations,* Special Report No. 74, February 2016, 16.
[710] Johnson, 46.
[711] Ibid
[712] Blackwill and Campbell, 16.

prioritizing domestic problems. While much can be said of the myriad of viewpoints presented by more cautious scholars, it suffices to say that their overarching argument is that China should avoid confrontation with the U.S. and other powers in order to maintain a benign international environment and continue its domestic reforms.[713] Concurrently, there were, and similarly remain, nationalist perspectives that see America as intent on containing China's rising power. On this side of the debate are scholars such as Yan Xuetong of Tsinghua University, who during Xi's ascendency to CCP leadership began advocating strongly for China to take a more assertive role in the Asia Pacific.

President Xi is perceived as having ended this internal debate in a seminal speech at the Work Forum on Chinese Diplomacy Towards the Periphery on October 23 and 24, 2013, which many China watchers would later regard as a significant turning point in Chinese foreign policy under Xi. According to Chinese scholar Yan Xuetong, the October 2013 Work Forum was the highest level meeting on foreign policy decisions since the founding of the PRC in 1949.[714] At this meeting, Xi outlined in a comprehensive fashion his views on foreign affairs, allowing analysts to assess new concepts and themes.[715] During his address to the CCP conference, Xi skillfully outlined the "foreign policy cannon" within the party and discussed Hu's concepts of peaceful development and the longer-held concept of China's period of strategic opportunity. According to Chris Johnson, "By endorsing these concepts, he is acknowledging that the external environment, while more complicated, remains benign... but he reframes each in a more activist mold. For example, the period of strategic opportunity has traditionally been seen as a gift handed to the Chinese by a benign external environment... In Xi's rendition, he talks about it as China's growth

[713] For a more comprehensive overview of the internal debate between leading scholars over the character of China's rise, see Yan Xuetong, "From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics,* Vol. 7, No. 2, April 2014.

[714] Yan Xuetong, 154. The last conference on peripheral diplomacy was held in 2006 and presided over by President Hu Jintao, but not all members of the Politburo Standing Committee attended.

[715] Xi's thinking on foreign policy is also illustrated in *The Governance of China,* a book published two years into Xi's leadership tenure (in October 2014) by the State Council Information Office that covers a compilation of speeches, conversations and instructions by Xi from November 15, 2012 to June 13, 2014. The compilation provides a remarkable overview of Xi's thoughts and vision on a wide range of topics from domestic politics to foreign policy. The publication of such a tome is also significant because neither appeared during the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao eras. The book, also translated into English, gives the outside world insight into the general secretary's thinking, and provides clarity on "a range of principles and policies guiding China's growing involvement in world affairs."

being the engine of strategic opportunity."[716] This articulation, in turn, has implications for how China acts in the region and how expect others in the region to interact with them.

Furthermore, much can be deduced by what was *not* stated during Xi's addresses. The October 2013 address, along with Xi's address in November 2014 to the CCP Leadership at the Fourth Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, confirmed that Beijing was discarding Deng Xiaoping's advice to "hide our capabilities and bide our time." According to many China analysts, the absence of discussion over Deng's axiom at both conferences proved that the concept was no longer a central feature of Chinese foreign policy. Johnson also notes that Xi had apparently moved on from Hu's concept of a 'harmonious world.' He writes, "Added to the speed with which key constructs associated with Hu Jintao, such as 'harmonious world,' have virtually disappeared from the leadership's foreign policy lexicon, it suggests that Xi has set upon a deliberate course for reshaping China's relations with countries other than the U.S."[717] Instead, many of Xi's early speeches stressed ideas of "renewal" and "rejuvenation" as opposed to Hu's emphasis on "harmony" among powers. At the October 2013 conference in particular, Xi Jinping pointed out that the strategic goal of China's diplomacy is to serve the realization of the two "centenary goals" and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.[718]

As illustrated here, Xi's rhetoric and clear articulation of his foreign policy vision early in his tenure as general secretary was both a continuation and departure from earlier generations of Chinese leadership on foreign policy. What created additional tensions with major powers and smaller nations alike was China's ongoing military modernization and defense reforms that took place alongside Xi's more strident rhetoric.

iv) China's Continued Military Modernization and Defense Spending

China's 2013 Defense White Paper

[716] Author interview with Chris Johnson, Washington, DC, October 2016.
[717] Johnson, 21.
[718] Xi Jinping, "Let the Sense of Community of Common Destiny Take Deep Root in Neighboring Countries," Report produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, October 25, 2013. Accessed at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/activities_663312/t1093870.shtml

The China Defense Ministry's biennial white paper, *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* was likely finalized before Xi took control of the CCP and the Central Military Committee, but it was not released until April 16, 2013 after Xi had taken over leadership. It reflected a few key changes and continuations from the prior 2011 white paper. First, it reinforced China's commitment to the path of peaceful development, stating: "It is China's unshakable national commitment and strategic choice to take the road of peaceful development. China unswervingly pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defense policy that is defensive in nature... China will never seek hegemony or behave in a hegemonic manner, nor will it engage in military expansion."[719] The White Paper also took a consistent stance on China's reading of its international environment as relatively benign, only mentioning once that "The [United States] is adjusting its Asia-Pacific security strategy," and that, "Some country has strengthened its Asia-Pacific military alliances, expanded its military presence in the region, and frequently makes the situation there tenser."[720]

For the first time, the Chinese announced personnel figures for each of the military branches, discussed military levels of "readiness" and outlined defending international sea lanes and China's overseas interests as core missions of the PLA.[721] Also different from the 2011 White Paper was its direct criticism of Japan in maritime sovereignty disputes, as a country that "is making trouble over the issue of the Diaoyu [Senkaku] Islands."[722] Interestingly, it also stressed that that PLAN, "In combination with its routine combat readiness activities... [should provide] security support for China's maritime law enforcement, fisheries, and oil and gas exploitation."[723] This clarification, according to several Chinese military analysts, could hint that the Chinese government did not intend for the PLAN to be the foremost front-facing actor in the maritime periphery; realizing that China's actions would appear less confrontation if they came from civilian and non-military actors.

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[719] Citation provided by Anthony H. Cordesman and Steven Colley, *Chinese Strategy and Military Modernization in 2015,* (Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2015) 30.
[720] Analysis and citation provided by Dennis Blasko, "The 2013 Defense White Paper in Perspective," *The Jamestown Foundation,* China Brief Volume 13, Issue 9. Accessed at: https://jamestown.org/program/the-2013-defense-white-paper-in-perspective/
[721] Daniel M. Hartnett, "China's 2012 Defense White paper: Panel Discussion Report," *Center for Naval Analysis,* September 2013, 2. Accessed at: https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/CCP-2013-U-005876-Final.pdf
[722] Hartnett, 4.
[723] Information Office of the State Council, "The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces," April 2013, Beijing, 15. Accessed at: http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/files/library/ARF%20Defense%20White%20Papers/China-2013.pdf

The CCP's Third Plenum Announces Major Defense Reforms

At the CCP's Third Plenum in November 2013, defense reforms focused on three themes: readiness, "jointness" and the global commons.[724] Readiness encapsulated the PLA's capabilities to fight and win as an effective force in conflict scenarios. 'Jointness' and restructuring involved redistributing resources from land to air and navy capabilities, reducing the PLA land force by 300,000.[725] This is not the first time that China had enacted personnel cuts to the military. According to a 2016 RAND report, "In recent decades, the PLA has embarked on multiple rounds of personnel reductions, most recently with a 200,000 personnel cut that left roughly 2.3 million troops remaining as of mid-2000."[726] This restructuring also represented the third major cut to army personnel since 1997.[727]

The 2013 modernization effort was different, however, as it enacted significant changes to command-and-control relationships for joint operations and the authority of the Central Military Commission in directing the services. Specifically, the reforms turned the four General Departments of the military into fifteen smaller organizations that would respond from joint war zones directly to the CMC. This meant that the reforms also had political ramifications, bringing the military under firmer control of the Party leadership, and in particular under Xi Jinping as Chairman of the CMC.[728] To what end the CMC's central role, and that of Xi Jinping, will be employed remains unclear. Lastly, the defense reforms emphasis on the "global commons" aimed to make China's military more capable of defending China's interests not only further afield through military bases and ports in Djibouti and Gwadar, but in space, cyber space and the far seas.

China's 2015 Defense White Paper

The next iteration of China's military strategy was released in May 2015 and followed the same theme issued in 2013 of pursuing the "long-standing task for China to safeguard its maritime rights

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[724] Recall that China launched its first aircraft carrier, the Laoning, the previous year in 2012.
[725] This is an even more significant move when one takes into account the bureaucratic importance of the land forces within the PLA
[726] Cristina L Garafola, "People's Liberation Army Reforms and Their Ramifications, *The RAND Blog,* September 23, 2016, Accessed at: http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/09/pla-reforms-and-their-ramifications.html
[727] http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/chinas-evolving-military-strategy-the-reorganization-the-17508?page=show
[728] Xi Jinping acquired this title in March 2013.

and interests."[729] But the military strategy used particularly pointed language towards Japan and the U.S., stating: "As the world economic and strategic center of gravity is shifting ever more rapidly to the Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. carries on its "rebalancing" strategy and enhances its military presence and its military alliances in this region. Japan is sparing no effort to dodge the post-war mechanism, overhauling its military and security policies. Such development has caused grave concerns among other countries in the region."[730]

Additionally, China used harsh rhetoric towards its ASEAN neighbors, stating: "On the issues concerning China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, some of its offshore neighbors take provocative actions and reinforce their military presence on China's reefs and islands that they have illegally occupied. Some external countries are also busy meddling in South China Sea affairs; a tiny few maintain constant close-in air and sea surveillance and reconnaissance against China." According to Dennis Blasko of the Jamestown Foundation, "The white paper makes a 'new' statement that turns the PLA's traditional approach to operations and strategy on its head, or at least on its side," It states: "The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests."[731]

v) Is China's Military Build-up Worrying?

As Michael O'Hanlon and James Steinberg argue, the steps China has taken to professionalize the military are warranted in order to address the systemic corruption in the military ranks, to modernize and streamline command-and-control processes. Furthermore, the professionalization makes the PLA a more effective fighting force with a modern joint command-and-control organization.[732] At the same time, however, China's defense spending patterns have become increasingly concerning. According to data compiled by SIPRI, between 2007 and 2016, China enacted the biggest growth in military spending among any other major power, with an increase

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[729] The Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, "China's Military Strategy," May 2015, Beijing. Accessed at: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2015-05/26/content_35661433.htm
[730] Ibid.
[731] Dennis Blasko, "The 2015 Chinese Defense White paper on Strategy in Perspective: Maritime Missions Require a Change in the PLA Mindset," *The Jamestown Foundation,* China Brief Vol. 15, Issue 12, June 19, 2015. Accessed at: https://jamestown.org/program/the-2015-chinese-defense-white-paper-on-strategy-in-perspective-maritime-missions-require-a-change-in-the-pla-mindset/
[732] Michael E. O'Hanlon and James Steinberg, *A Glass Half Full? Rebalance, Reassurance, and Resolve in the U.S.-China Strategic Relationship.* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017).

of 118-percent, followed by Russia (87-percent) and India (54-percent). In this same period, the United States decreased its defense spending by 4.8-percent.[733]

O'Hanlon and Steinberg also make a case for why one might worry about China's military ascendance: "Coupled with its increasing sophistication and focus on power-projection assets, these developments are having an impact on the regional military balance. Furthermore, the purposes of China's military buildup have not always been well explained, and the rate of some modernization efforts seems out of synch with the magnitude of any actual threat."[734] They add that China's "modernization has also focused on contributed to China's 'anti-access/area-denial (A2-AD) capabilities,'"[735] complicating the ability of the U.S. to operate safely within the first island chain in the Asia Pacific.

External Behavior

As discussed in the methodology sections of this research, the internal preference outlined above are one set of indicators to illustrate whether a state is carrying out revisionist strategies. These have included, as they did in the Russia case studies, preferences articulated by the political leadership through official and semi-official addresses, military modernization programs and defense doctrines. The other set of indicators is in a nation's *external behavior*, and specifically in its willingness to use unilateral force and coercion to achieve a shift in the regional balance of power. Indicators of revisionism within China's foreign policies and *external behavior* are explored below.

i) A New ADIZ: Chinese and Japanese Tensions Rise to New Levels in the East China Sea

Between 2012 and 2014, China's actions in its maritime periphery caught its neighbors and the United States off guard, due to their speed and level of aggression. In the latter half of 2013 China took a series of potentially escalatory and destabilizing actions in disputed waters of the East and South China Seas. Foremost among them took place on November 23, 2013, when China escalated

[733] Nan Tian, Aude Fleurant, Pieter Wezeman and Siemon Wezeman, "SIPRI Fact Sheet: Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2016," April 2016,. Accessed at: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Trends-world-military-expenditure-2016.pdf. To note, in 2016, total US military expenditure of $611 billion is over one-third of global military expenditure. This is nearly three times the level of China's spending, which is ranked second.
[734] O'Hanlon and Steinberg, 28.
[735] O'Hanlon and Steinberg, 35.

its territorial disputes with Japan and announced an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea, extending control of the skis over waters disputed between China and Japan but also between China and South Korea.[736] For reference, an ADIZ, according to David Welch is "a publicly defined area extending beyond national territory in which unidentified aircraft are liable to be interrogated and, if necessary, intercepted for identification before they cross into sovereign airspace."[737] U.S. Northern Command protocol states that any aircraft approaching and crossing into an ADIZ must maintain contact with civilian air traffic control authorities and military actors responsible for administering the ADIZ. NORCOMM protocol also states, "Any aircraft flying in these zones without authorization may be identified as a threat and treated as an enemy aircraft, potentially leading to interception by fighter aircraft."[738]

Although ADIZ's are not traditionally used to assert sovereignty, Beijing seems to have made the decision in part to leverage its claims over the Japanese in disputed waters. After the ADIZ announcement, PRC Defense Minister Yang Yujun stated: "Following the international practice, the Chinese government sets up the East China Sea [ADIZ] with the aim of safeguarding state sovereignty, territorial land and air security, and maintaining flight order. This is a necessary measure taken by China in exercising its self-defense right."[739] China's announcement of the ADIZ was, in many ways, another example of Xi Jinping putting China's muscle behind assertions laid out by Hu Jintao. Whereas Hu was willing to speak more forcefully (albeit carefully) about China's claims, Xi was willing to take the next step.

The U.S. issued a strong response to the ADIZ announcement, which it saw as a decision that was taken unilaterally and without any consultation with China's neighbors. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "This unilateral action constitutes an attempt to change the status quo in the East China Sea."[740] Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel immediately responded that the U.S. would not acknowledge the ADIZ. He stated, "This announcement by the People's Republic of China

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[736] To note, senior Chinese officials had informed their Japanese counterparts as early as May 2010 2010 that they were considering an ADIZ in the East China Sea.
[737] David A. Welch, "What's an ADIZ? Why the United States, Japan and China Get it Wrong," *Foreign Affairs,* December 9, 2013.
[738] According to Welch, ADIZ's are maintained by a number of countries, including the United States, Canada, India, Japan, Norway, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.
[739] "Defense Spokesman Yang Yujun's Response to Questions on the Establishment of The East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone," PRC Ministry of National Defense, Beijing, November 23, 2013.
[740] "Statement by Secretary of State John Kerry on the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone," U.S. Department of State, November 23, 2013.

will not in any way change how the United States conducts military operations in the region." Hagel also used the opportunity to publically reaffirm its commitment to the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty and its application to the Senkaku Islands.[741]

China's announcement of an ADIZ came after months of tit-for-tat incursions by the Chinese and Japanese over conflicting interests in the East China Sea. The first was a move by the government to purchase and nationalize a group of the disputed Senkaku/Daiyou islands in September 2012 that were previously owned by a Japanese citizen and leased by the Japanese government. Beijing immediately sent two patrol ships to reassert its claims – although with patrol ships not part of the PLA navy.[742] In December 2012, a Chinese reconnaissance aircraft entered the airspace above the islands, prompting Japan to scramble fighter jets. Just a month later in January 2013, a Chinese frigate locked its fire-control radar on a Japanese destroyer, which many analysts believe could have escalated into a shooting war.[743] In the following months, Chinese fighter jets were intercepted by the Japanese in disputed airspace, Chinese surveillance ships entered disputed waters around the Senkakus and Chinese warships circumnavigated Japan.

These actions, and particularly the establishment of an ADIZ in the East China Sea all represented escalations from previous skirmishes between the Chinese and the Japanese, with the Chinese taking a far more assertive stance in the region than seen under Hu. Importantly, heightened tensions between the two nations occurred during and after two nationalist leaders took control, namely Xi Jinping and Shinzo Abe.[744] Since Beijing's announcement of the ADIZ, Chinese military officials and academics have written articles, published by state-run media, questioning Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa. In May 2013, the Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman declined to comment when asked twice about whether China considers Okinawa a part of Japan, which it has claimed since 1879.[745] Since this string of incidents throughout 2012 and 2013, China has repeatedly moved aircraft and coast guard vessels into Japanese territory surrounding the

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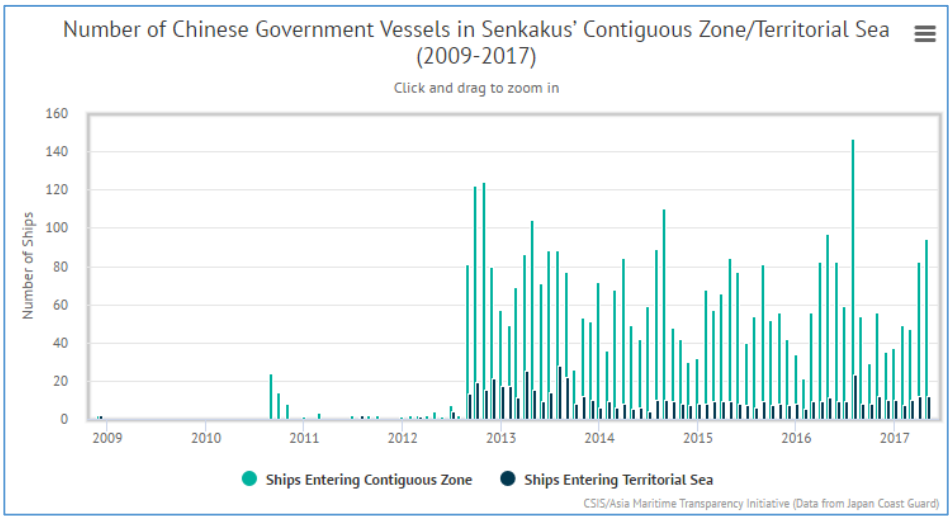
[741] "Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone," U.S. Department of Defense, November 23, 2013.
[742] Similar with its tactics in the South China Sea, Beijing often avoids sending military forces into disputed territories, instead using "civilian government vessels" to reassert its claims.
[743] Howard French, "China's Dangerous Game," *The Atlantic,* November 2014. Accessed at: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/11/chinas-dangerous-game/380789/
[744] Shinzo Abe assumed office as Prime Minister of Japan on December 26, 2012. Just one month after Beijing announced its ADIZ in the East China Sea.
[745] Benjamin Carlson, "China Questions Japan's Right to Okinawa," *Global Post,* May 9, 2013. Accessed at: https://www.pri.org/stories/2013-05-09/china-questions-japans-right-okinawa

Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (see illustration below). The most notable bright spot in the relationship was a proposed China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Agreement and successful trilateral summit in November. The FTA, however, has been hampered by ongoing territorial disputes.



Source: CSIS Maritime Transparency Initiative

ii) The Clearest Signs of Chinese Revisionism: The South China Sea

China's actions in the South China Sea are complex and involve a number of disputes between China and five neighboring nations with competing claims – Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. As summarized by Adm. Harris, Commander of the U.S. pacific command, "The first dispute is between China, Taiwan, and Vietnam over the sovereignty of the Paracel Islands, which China took by force from Vietnam and has occupied since 1974. The second dispute is between China, Taiwan, and the Philippines over Scarborough Reef, of which China seized control in 2012. The third dispute involves multiple claimants within the Spratly Islands where China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines each claim sovereignty over various features."[746] Since 2012, China has taken unilateral steps to alter the status quo in the South China Sea, in a show of revisionism (as indicated by the use of unilateral force and coercion) unmatched by China's actions elsewhere.

[746] Statement of Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, February 23, 2016.

iii) Grey Zone Revisionism: China's "Maritime Militia" and Coast Guard Fleet

Immediately following Beijing's announcement of the ADIZ in the East China Sea, China deployed its aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, to the South China Sea on its first voyage, accompanied by a full naval strike group. On its journey a Chinese warship maneuvered into the path of the USS Cowpens, a U.S. warship in the U.S. Pacific Fleet, forcing the Cowpens to take evasive action to avoid a collision. It was the most significant maritime incident since March 2009 when Beijing attempted a similar maneuver with the U.S. survey ship Impeccable operating 75-miles of the coast of Hainan Island. [747] In May 2014, a few months after the Cowpens incident, China unilaterally deployed a deep-sea oil-exploration rig along with over 80 Chinese ships, reportedly including seven navy vessels to protect it, just 120 nautical miles off the coast of Vietnam. Unable to match China's superior strength, Vietnam was left to issue diplomatic protests. This incident was also an illustration of the fact that, unlike Japan, the ASEAN nations were no match for China's military power, nor immune to its economic leverage.

Aside from these more brazen shows of force, China's tactics in the South China Sea have been incremental and carried out through a series of 'salami-slicing' tactics. Salami-slicing involves "the slow accumulation of small actions, none of which is a casus belli, but which add up over time to a major strategic change," writes Robert Haddick. Haddick also argues that, "a salami-slicer puts the burden of disruptive action on his adversary. That adversary will be in the uncomfortable position of drawing seemingly unjustifiable red lines and engaging in indefensible brinkmanship."[748] For China, meant carrying on its tactics while ignoring America's Asia Pacific Fleet, under the assumption that the U.S. would not risk major war to defend the South China Sea. The goal of Beijing's salami-slicing tactics has been to gradually accumulate facts on the ground (or facts on the water) to enhance China's presence and legitimacy on its claimed territories. With

[747] For a complete list of incidents between Chinese and U.S. ships and aircrafts in international waters, see: Ronald O'Rourke, "Maritime Territorial and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Disputes Involving China: Issues for Congress," *Congressional Research Service,* September 15, 2017.
[748] Robert Haddick, "Salami Slicing in the South China Sea," *Foreign Policy,* August 3, 2012. Accessed at: http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/08/03/salami-slicing-in-the-south-china-sea/

new facts gradually established, Beijing between 2012 and 2016 aimed to achieve a fait accompli before its adversaries could develop a coordinated plan of response.

Importantly, China has carried out these actions through quasi or non-military actors. While Washington recognizes that China has the world's largest blue water Coast Guard, fewer take into account that it also has the world's largest fishing fleet, which has assumed a key role in advancing China's disputed maritime claims. According to U.S. experts Andrew Erickson and Conor Kennedy, China's Coast Guard's (CCG) fleet greatly outnumbers those of Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines combined.[749] China also has a "Maritime Militia" that Erickson describes as a 'third maritime force' in addition to China's navy and coast guard. This Maritime Militia, according to Erickson, "is a civilian force posing as fishing boats and other noncombatants but is clearly under the operational control of the government."[750] As an example of its power, following the supposed commencement of China's land reclamation project in December 2013, Beijing imposed a fishing permit rule in the South China Sea in January 2014, defying the objections of the U.S., the Philippines and Vietnam, and attempted to inhibit other nation's ships from entering contested waters. China has also used civilian fisheries to project power in the Scarborough Shoal. Instead of forcibly removing the Philippines from the contested region in 2012, China trained its fishermen to deliberately sail into disputed waters around the shoal and then protected them against Philippine patrols using Chinese surveillance ships.

Erickson also describes China's maritime militia as "a paramilitary force that operates on the front lines but hides behind the façade of civilian operations. They are often presented as fishing trawlers, but they rarely behave as such.... These maritime militia 'blue hulls' are waging a campaign of 'grey zone aggression.' Despite their civilian nature, these entities are state-organized operating under a direct military chain of command."[751] China's maritime militia has been involved in a number of operations, including several instances prior to and after Xi became general secretary in 2012. These include the 2009 interception of a U.S. surveillance ship, the 2011

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[749] Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "China's Island Builders: The People's War at Sea," *Foreign Affairs*, April 9, 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/east-asia/2015-04-09/china-s-island-builders.
[750] Daniel L. Kuester, "Naval War College Professors Testify on State of South China Sea," *Navy News Service*, 30 September 30, 2016. Accessed at: http://www.andrewerickson.com/2016/10/naval-war-college-professors-testify-on-state-of-south-china-sea/
[751] Ryan Pickrell, "How the US Should Respond to China's 'Secret' Weapon," *The Daily Caller*, September 24, 2016.

sabotage of Vietnamese hydrographic vessels, the 2012 seizure of the Scarborough Shoal, the 2014 repulsion of Vietnamese vessels near a Chinese oil rig in disputed waters, and a 2015 harassment of the USS Lassen during one of the U.S. navy's freedom of navigation operations.

iv) China's Land Reclamation Project

China's land reclamation campaign is a key example of its "salami slicing" tactics, albeit extensive. According to the CSIS Maritime Transparency Project, December 2013 marked the supposed initiation of China's land reclamation campaign in the South China Sea. This was also the turning point in Chinese assertiveness for many U.S. government officials, including officials on the National Security Council focused on China policy in the Asia Pacific. One such official stated, "China took on the process of reclamation the way that they do many advancements – big and fast – they took 'one big bite' instead of moving more incrementally. This shook regional actors and the U.S."[752] Zhang Weiwei, an analyst at the Chinese Institute for International Studies in Beijing also alluded to this trend. In an interview with the author she said, "China is so big, has so much strength and works so fast that it got pushback... It is natural that China's efforts in the South China Sea left a psychological impact on the U.S. that China might take over."[753]

As an illustration of the sheer size and speed of China efforts, since 2013 China has created more than 3200 acres of new land on occupied reefs in the Spratly Islands, compared to Vietnam, which has created about 230 acres of new land on its occupied territories, and Taiwan, which as reclaimed about eight acres of land.[754] Between 2014 and 2016, the land reclaimed by China in the South China Sea was seventeen times more land than all other claimants combined over the past forty years.[755] China also completed its 3125 meter runway on the Fiery Cross reef in September 2015.[756] According to a U.S. Naval Captain Geoffrey Gage, "from a purely military standpoint,

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[752] Author interview with Director on the National Security Council responsible for South China Sea related issues, September 28, 2016.
[753] Author interview with Zhang Weiwei of CIIS, October 20, 2016.
[754] CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative. Accessed at: https://amti.csis.org/chinas-new-spratly-island-defenses/. It should be noted, however, that the total size of the islands developed by China is smaller than the Stanford University Campus. Given the relatively minor size of China's initiatives in the region, they must be analyzed with regards to its overall Asia Pacific maritime strategy to fully grasp the implications.
[755] Blackwell and Campbell, 17.
[756] The following month, the U.S. sent the USS Lassen to pass through the waters around the artificial islands on a freedom of navigation operation.

the reclamation efforts were most significant in terms of infrastructure,"[757] such as the runway. Their construction of military airstrips, airfield, and recreation facilities, ammunition storage at outposts on Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief Reefs can position full regimens. Moreover, "all three of these new islands will have approximately 10,000 foot runways, deep water harbors, and enough reinforced hangars to house 24 fighters as well, as bombers, tankers, and airborne early warning aircraft,"[758] writes Tom Shugart of the Center for a New American Security. It should be noted, however, that China is not the first nation to operate an airstrip on the Spratly islands; every other country that occupies territory in the Spratly's operates an airstrip, as well.[759] Regardless, In February 2016, Adm. Harry Harris Jr, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee warning that China's actions were "changing the operational landscape in the South China Sea."

Furthermore, views on China's intentions with regards to these outposts are mixed. As these remote outposts become militarized it is unclear whether the non-kinetic characteristics of Chinese revisionism will hold. Indeed, China began dredging sand to build artificial islands in the Spratlys as early as 2014 but moved quickly to build deepwater harbors and runways capable of accommodating fighter jets and warships. In early 2015, China installed surface-to-air missile batteries and radar facilities in the Paracels. Yet one reassuring note, as outlined by O'Hanlon and Steinberg, is that China has not yet prioritized weapons that could be even more foreboding, such as "power projection capabilities (for example, a large amphibious fleet that could attack Taiwan)... And its South China Sea infrastructure, while potentially useful for exercising tactical control and even coercion in that region under day-to-day circumstances, does not represent a major war-fighting capability."[760] Each fortification built by the Chinese could be easily destroyed by the U.S. military in a conflict – it if were willing to confront the Chinese, which is a risk that Beijing has taken.

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[757] Author Interview with Captain Geoffrey Gage, February 13, 2017.
[758] Thomas Shugart, "China's Artificial Islands are Bigger (and a Bigger Deal) Than You Think," *War on the Rocks,* September 21, 2016.
[759] Derek Watkins, "What China Has Been Building in the South China Sea," *The New York Times,* updated February 29, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/30/world/asia/what-china-has-been-building-in-the-south-china-sea-2016.html
[760] O'Hanlon and Steinberg, 35.

At a September 2015 Summit with President Obama, Xi Jinping asserted that China did not have any intention of militarizing the islands, stating: "We're committed to respecting and upholding the freedom of navigation and overflight that countries enjoy according to international law... and China does not intend to pursue militarization."[761] Despite Xi's reassurance and claims of legitimate defensive action, China's building of artificial islands and the installment of military equipment on the islands has prompted heightened tensions with its regional neighbors, pushing Vietnam and the Philippines into closer partnership with the United States. Overall, China has managed to develop "facts on the water" and refute its neighbors claims while remaining below the threshold of overt militarization that might elicit escalatory responses from other nations, such as the United States.

v) China's Regional Economic Diplomacy (and Coercion)

In analyzing China's actions in the South China Sea, it is important not to decouple these actions from China's broader and comprehensive maritime strategy, which Hu Jintao laid out at the 18th Party Congress in November 2012 and has been implemented by Xi. To that end, China's island reclamation campaign in the South China Sea should be analyzed alongside Beijing's extensive and coercive economic measures employed to cajole smaller southeast Asian nations into China's "sphere of influence." Indeed, Beijing has accompanied its hardened posture on maritime disputes with investment and trade packages to Southeast Asian states.[762] For example, in October 2013 at the ASEAN annual summit hosted by Indonesia, Xi took the opportunity to highlight his major economic initiatives, including his proposal for an Asian infrastructure bank (which would later be established in December 2015 as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)).

At the same summit and in a speech to the Indonesian parliament, Xi proposed a Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between China and ASEAN and outlined a plan for a new "maritime silk road." The primary themes of both initiatives were connectivity and economic integration between China and ASEAN, perhaps at the expense of the U.S. Influential Chinese scholar and analyst Ruan Zongze published his commentary in the CCP-friendly publication *China*

[761] Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China in Joint Press Conference, Washington, D.C., September 25, 2015.
[762] Blackwill and Campbell, 17.

Daily stating, "China and ASEAN countries are neighbors linked by land and water. This unique geographical advantage is irreplaceable as an old Chinese saying goes, a good neighbor is more helpful than a brother far off."[763] In fact, President Obama did not even attend the summit, allowing Xi to pursue a more visible leadership position in the region. In November 2014, Xi Jinping stated that China would contribute $40 billion to the new Silk Road Fund, on top of the $50 billion Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank that China launched at a ceremony in Beijing just one month prior.[764] Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from 2009-2013 duly summarizes China's development plans in the region as helping to advance Chinese trade while showing its smaller neighbors the benefits of cooperation against a "backdrop of potential conflict."[765]

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China's internal preferences – illustrated through Xi's original foreign policy concepts of the 'Chinese Dream' and a 'new type of great power relations,' new defense reforms focused on building naval capabilities, and military modernization programs indicate the extent to which Zhongnanhai is acting on a new vision for China's role in the region and with other major powers. In some regards, Beijing under Xi Jinping has continued along the path laid out by Hu for placing a greater emphasis on China's naval and maritime capabilities. In other regards, Xi has differentiated himself from other reform-era leaders through his assertive stance on territorial disputes and his vision for China role on the world stage. These internal preferences, moreover, have been matched and at times surpassed by China's more bellicose external behavior in the Asia Pacific. Particularly in the South China Sea, China has exhibited a turn towards revisionism not seen in China's reform era beginning with Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s. Analysts are split on whether China's actions indicate a more militaristic turn in the nation's foreign policy or whether Beijing is seeking to counter – but not escalate – what it perceives as hostile actions from other regional powers, including Japan and the United States.

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[763] Ruan Zongze, "A Treaty to Secure Regional Vision," *China Daily,* October 10, 2013,. Accessed at: http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2013-10/10/content_17019280.htm
[764] Jeremy Page, "China to Contribute $40 Billion to Silk Road Fund," *Wall Street Journal,* November 8, 2014. Accessed at: https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-to-contribute-40-billion-to-silk-road-fund-1415454995
[765] Blackwell and Campbell, 17.

Uncertainty around China's true intentions in the Asia Pacific is what drives the greatest degree of concern in many China watchers' minds. What is undoubtedly clear, however, is that Xi has shown a proclivity to use all China's tools of statecraft – from non-military civilian actors to substantial economic leverage – to achieve China's national interests. It is also evident that for Xi, the primary purpose of China's foreign relations is to maintain a conducive environment for China's internal development and his extensive reform agenda. This next section will explore the extent to which China's actions abroad have been in response to a less benign external environment and a heightened security dilemma as perceived by China's leaders.

B. International Conditions

i) Washington's Pivot Continues as Views Between the U.S. and China Harden

Over the course of four years between 2012-2016, changes have occurred in both the Asia-Pacific regional order and in the international system that have shifted Beijing's foreign policy decision making calculus. In general, the Chinese leadership maintained the perspective that China was operating in a window of "strategic opportunity" that would allow them to focus on China's internal development until at least 2020. This was evident in Xi's addresses to CCP conferences in the first years of his tenure as general secretary. Beijing's perceptions of America's role in the region, however, shifted over Obama's second term in office. Prior to America's announcement of its "pivot to Asia" in 2011, many in China and in the region viewed the U.S. as distracted by ongoing wars in the Middle East, and economically weakened by the global financial crisis.

In the time since Xi took power as general secretary and Obama was reelected as President of the United States, the Chinese grew more skeptical about America's intentions in the region. One reason was economic. Washington continued its efforts to negotiate a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multilateral trade deal, also driven by Japan and absent the Chinese (although not precluding their involvement). Obama initially put his weight behind the TPP in 2011 and pressed through multiple rounds of negotiations until a final agreement was drafted in October 2015 and signed in February 2016.[766] It was viewed continuously by Beijing as part of Washington's efforts to 'contain' China. In response, China accelerated its own trade initiatives in Asia throughout 2015

[766] President Trump pulled the United States out of the trade deal on January 23, 2017.

and 2016, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a proposed 16-nation free-trade area across Asia.

Another reason for concern in Beijing was America's role in the South China Sea disputes. On issues pertaining to the South China Sea, the Obama administration's purported objective was to uphold freedom of the seas, open navigation and a commitment to international law. The United States also continued its longstanding tradition of carrying out Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) within 12-nautical miles of China's occupied islands, while also challenging other nation's claims. For example, since 2012, the U.S. has also challenged the Philippine and Indonesian limitations on sea lanes used in international transit, and Philippine claims defining archipelagic waters as internal waters. At the same time, the U.S. pursued deeper cooperation with ASEAN nations, some of whom were looking for more reassurance from Washington in the wake of China's encroachment. In April 2014, Washington and Manila signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) in 2014, which is a "ten-year deal that allows a strengthened U.S. military presence in the Philippines, with increased rotation of U.S. military personnel and assistance devoted to humanitarian and maritime operations."[767] The U.S. also moved towards closer defense cooperation with Vietnam, eventually lifting a decades long U.S. arms embargo in May 2016. By October 2016 and perhaps in response to these actions, Chinese sentiment towards the United States had crystallized: 52-percent of the public believed that the U.S. was "trying to prevent China from becoming an equal power," and just under half (45 percent) said that U.S. power and influence was the top international threat facing the country – more so than other threats including global economic instability, climate change and tensions with Russia.[768]

ii) Japan Reconsiders its "Peace Clause" under Shinzo Abe

At a time when Sino-Japanese relations were already sour due to Japan's purchase of a group of islands among the Senkaku/Diayuo disputed islands in 2012, the newly elected Shinzo Abe attempted to alter Japan's constitution to allow Japan to take military action in times of self-defense. The proposal to revise Japan's postwar constitutions was put forward by Shinzo Abe's

[767] Eleanor Albert, "The U.S.-Philippines Defense Alliance," CFR Backgrounder, *Council on Foreign Relations,* October 21, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-philippines-defense-alliance. This decision faced public opposition within the Philippines, and the U.S./Philippine relationship is not without tensions.
[768] Richard Wike and Bruce Stokes, "Chinese Public Sees More Powerful Role in the World, Names U.S. as Top Threat," Pew Research Center, October 2016. Accessed at: http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/10/05/chinese-public-sees-more-powerful-role-in-world-names-u-s-as-top-threat/

party, the Liberal Democratic Party. It would have allowed Japan "to use military force in a more aggressive way, including the full-fledged exercise of the right to collective self-defense and participation in United Nations-authorized military operations as defined under the U.N. Charter."[769] To note, the first paragraph of Article 9, Japan's constitutional 'peace clause' states that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes," and that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."[770]

As a result of Abe's more nationalist front, Xi Jinping and Shinzo Abe did not hold their first meeting until November 2014 in a chilly conversation on the sidelines of the APEC summit. Over time, however, Abe's position on constitutional amendments softened, due to domestic pushback and difficulties of enacting constitutional change within the Diet. Abe's most recent declaration on constitutional changes stated that he would like to add to the "war-renouncing Article 9 a paragraph that legitimizes the Self-Defense Forces, while keeping the rest of the article unchanged."[771] Despite signs that Abe's nationalist platform could only go so far, China still regarded Japan as increasing challenge to its interests in the region. As mentioned, China's 2015 military strategy took a harder line towards Japan, stating that Japan was "sparing no effort to dodge the post-war mechanism, overhauling its military and security policies... causing grave concerns among other countries in the region."

iii) The Arbitration Case that Pitted Beijing Against International Law

In addition to growing concerns in Beijing over America and Japan's regional intensions, China was also dealt a blow in the realm of international law. In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PAC) at the Hague issued its long-awaited ruling on a case lodged by the Philippines over its territorial disputes with China. The Philippines filed the case in 2013 under the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) in response to China's seizing the Scarborough Shoals. The Philippines' case accused China of interfering with its fishing rights and failing to protect the marine environment surrounding the Scarborough Shoal. The case also asked the

[769] Reiji Yoshida, "Japan's defense-only posture to 'basically' remain unchanged under proposed constitutional change, Suga says," *Japan Times,* May 8, 2017.
[770] The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, *The Constitution of Japan*, Article 9. Accessed at: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html
[771] Ibid.

tribunal to "reject China's claim to sovereignty over waters within a 'nine-dash line,'"[772] encircling as much as 90 percent of the South China Sea. The Hague ruled in favor of the Philippines, deciding that "China had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights in its exclusive economic zone" and that "there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the 'nine-dash line'."[773] It also charged China with causing "severe harm to the coral reef environment."

The United States called on China to respect the tribunal's ruling in accordance with international law and Vietnam quickly endorsed the decision. China, for its part, maintained its position to not "accept, recognize or execute" the decision and held that the tribunal did not have any jurisdiction in the dispute. Xi took the opportunity to reassert China's claims over sovereignty in the South China Sea that had existed "since ancient times," and the Foreign Ministry stated that the decision was "invalid and has no binding force."[774] Tellingly, Dai Bingguo, an earlier advocate for China's 'peaceful development' during in time as State Councilor for Hu Jintao, came out with a nationalist rebuke of the ruling. Speaking in Washington before the ruling, Dai stated: "I hear the arbitration ruling will come out soon, and so be it. There's no big deal for it amounts to nothing more than a piece of waste paper."[775]

iv) Duterte Pays a Tribute

Despite the massive setback for China's claims in the eyes of international law, Beijing was also handed a gift by the Philippines in its election of Rodrigo Duterte, who promised to be more accommodating towards China than his predecessor and who took a hard line towards the United States. Duterte and Xi managed to work through their differences on the South China Sea in a visit Duterte paid to Beijing in September 2016. In a modern day example of the "tributary system," Duterte also gave Beijing something it wanted: recognition that the Philippines would not be beholden to Washington's every interest in the region. Specifically, Duterte stated, ""I announce

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[772] Jane Perlez, "Tribunal Rejects Beijing's Claims in South China Sea," *New York Times,* July 12, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/world/asia/south-china-sea-hague-ruling-philippines.html?_r=0

[773] Permanent Court of Arbitration Press Release, The Hague, July 12 2016. Accessed at: https://www.pcacases.com/web/sendAttach/1801

[774] Foreign Ministry of the PRC, "Statement of the Decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on the Arbitration Tribunal of the South China Sea Arbitration Tribunal requested by the Republic of the Philippines," July 12, 2016. Accessed at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1379490.shtml

[775] Original quote provided in *The Wall Street Journal,* "Veteran Chinese Diplomat Warns on South China Sea Ruling," July 6, 2016. Accessed at: https://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2016/07/06/veteran-chinese-diplomat-warns-on-south-china-sea-ruling/

my separation from the United States. Both in military, not maybe social, but economics also. America has lost."[776] While this was more hyperbolic rhetoric than a depiction of reality, it showed that alliances in the Asia Pacific remain in flux. At the end of Duterte's visit, China and the Philippines had settled on over $13.5 billion worth of trade deals and China granted Filipino fisherman access to the Scarborough Shoal. The move did not diminish Beijing's claims over sovereignty, and showed that China need not move to militarize the situation in order to achieve its interests. It is far more capable of cajoling the smaller ASEAN nations into agreement over its aims using economic deals.

v) Regional Perceptions of China's Rise under Xi Grow Wary

While not directly affecting China's strategy, evolving regional perceptions of China's enhanced presence in the region is a useful indicator outside of U.S. and Western perceptions of Chinese foreign policy. In 2013, the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project assessed that regional concerns about China's behavior and intensions in the Asia Pacific were on the rise. In response to the question "How big a problem are territorial disputes between China and your country?" the percentage that said the disputes were a "very big" or "big" problem was 82 percent in Japan, 90 percent in the Philippines, 62 percent in Indonesia, 36 percent in Malaysia and 77 percent in South Korea.[777] In 2015, an updated Pew research poll found that 91 percent of Filipinos and 83 percent of Vietnamese were "very concerned or somewhat about territorial disputes between China and neighboring countries." This compared to 78 percent in South Korea, only 45 percent in Malaysia and 41 percent in Indonesia.[778] At the same time, regional actors also worried about America's 'staying power,' despite Obama's rebalance strategy.

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[776] BBC News, "Duterte in China: Xi Lauds 'Milestone' Duterte Visit, October 20 2016. Accessed at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37700409

[777] Richard Wike and Bruce Stokes, "Who is Up, Who is Down: Global Views of China and the U.S.," Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, June 2013. Quoted in the Prepared Statement of Bonnie Glaser, Senior Advisor for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Testimony Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on China's Grand Strategy in Asia," March 13, 2014.

[778] Bruce Stokes, "How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders," Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, September 2015. Accessed at: http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/09/02/how-asia-pacific-publics-see-each-other-and-their-national-leaders/. Also cited by Bonnie Glaser, "Testimony Before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on China's Grand Strategy in Asia," March 13, 2014. Accessed at: https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/GLASER_Testimony.pdf

The annual ASEAN Summit in Laos in September 2016 highlighted the differing roles of the United States and China in Southeast Asia and in the South China Sea. Obama, in his last summit address of his presidency, took the opportunity to reaffirm America's commitment to ensuring that disputes in the South China Sea were handled according to international law. It was also an opportunity to challenge China's dismissal of the international tribunal's ruling against China and in favor of the Philippines. Obama stated, "...the United States will stand with allies and partners in upholding fundamental interests, among them the freedom of navigation and overflight, lawful commerce that is not impeded, and peaceful resolution of disputes." China, on the other hand, sought to leverage its economic assistance to ASEAN nations in exchange for their support on security matters, particularly from Cambodia and Laos.

Immediately following the Hague ruling, Beijing provided a $600 million aid package to Cambodia,[779] in a show to other ASEAN nations (who also receive substantial financial support from Beijing) that economic support comes with an expectation of loyalty. China also plays a strong hand in Laos, where it is the country's leading investor, providing billions of dollars in infrastructure projects. It appeared that China's economic influence worked to inhibit ASEAN nations from taking a firm stance against China's abrasive actions in their territorial disputes. The ASEAN nations, for their part, were unable to reach consensus on a communique affirming the Hague's ruling and condemning China's actions in the South China Sea, driven by dissension from Cambodia and Laos.

It was the perfect encapsulation of where the calculus of power rests today: the ASEAN nations that remain dwarfed by China's economic power, but dependent on the United States for security leverage, will continue to hedge their relationships with both pacific powers in the event that one proves to have more 'staying power' than the other. As America becomes embroiled in a domestic debate between internationalist foreign policy and a nationalist "America first" discourse under Trump, the ASEAN hedging strategy might pay off. Whether their security will benefit from falling more into Beijing's shadow, however, is an open question.

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[779] Dung Phan, "Can Beijing's Influence on the South China Sea Break ASEAN?" *ASEAN Today,* August 2, 2016. Accessed at: http://www.aseantoday.com/2016/08/can-beijings-influence-on-the-south-china-sea-dispute-break-asean/

The Obama Administration's reassertion of power in the Asia Pacific and its commitment to upholding international norms and its defense treaties proved to Beijing that Washington would not ignore its more assertive posture in the region. Moreover, China's bellicose actions with regards to the South China Sea led to wary and uneasy perceptions of "China's rise" among populations in ASEAN and in Japan. The international tribunal's 2016 ruling placed Beijing starkly at odds with international law for the first time. Yet overall, Xi appears to have maintained the perspective that his predecessors held: China was operating in a benign environment that served its domestic development goals well. Why then, did Beijing launch its extensive land reclamation projects in the South China Sea, unilaterally pursue an ADIZ in the East China Sea, and flame tensions with the regional actors and the United States? The shifting international factors explored here do not fully explain why Beijing moved with such speed and strength on its territorial disputes when it had previously pursued more diplomatic advancements. As discussed, it is important to view the South China Sea disputes within the larger framework of China's evolving strategy in the Asia Pacific, which was also undergoing significant changes, albeit subtly outlined in nuanced Chinese rhetoric and military doctrine. Greater insight into the domestic developments under Xi Jinping may lend understanding to the many changes in China's foreign policy strategy and tactics in the region.

C. Domestic Conditions

A. Composition and Interests of the Chinese Elite (IV #1)

The 18th Party Congress initiated in November 2012 ushered in a new era of Communist Party rule under Xi Jinping as General Secretary and Le Keqiang as Premier of the State Council. As in similar phases of this case study, encapsulating the myriad of voices with a say in the Chinese foreign policy decision making process would be near-impossible. Indeed, recent years have seen an increasing diversification among the Chinese elite, in terms of family backgrounds, worldviews, regional connections and political associations.[780] There have also been important developments in the Xi Jinping era in terms of a rising middle class, an increased voice for Chinese economic interests in the nation's foreign policy, along with other trends. However, this fragmentation and

[780] Brookings Institution Podcast with Cheng Li, September 20, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/chinese-politics-economy-and-rule-of-law/?utm_campaign=test-emails&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=34821814'

diversification of the Chinese elite has occurred alongside Xi's attempts to recentralize power within the system. Therefore, there are also a number of aspects regarding the actors (some new and some old) in the upper echelons of Chinese leadership, as well as Xi Jinping, his background and leadership style that are worth discussing in terms of their influence on the Chinese policymaking process.

i) Centralized Foreign Policy Actors: the PSC, LSG's and the New National Security Commission

While a number of changes have occurred under Xi Jinping in terms of relevant policy actors and processes, the Politburo Standing Committee remains the ultimate decision-making body on foreign policy issues. As Jakobson notes, "The PSC oversees consequential decisions affecting China's major relationships, including the United States, Japan, Russia and North Korea. The PSC also has to deal with emergencies or international crises, such as border skirmishes or international incidents."[781] While the Central Committee must officially endorse all changes in long-term strategic policy, the Central Committee meets only once a year, meaning that issues are more likely to be discussed in the PSC, which meets weekly. Within the PSC, there are 'point men' for designated issues in foreign affairs. For example, after the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, such 'point men' for Sino-US relations, the European Union, and North Korea, became Wang Qishan, Li Keqiang and Zhang Dejiang, respectively.[782]

Leading Small Groups (LSGs) under Xi have played a more significant role in the development of Chinese foreign policy and national security. As previously discussed, these committees report directly to the PSC and advice leaders on specific issues. Their importance, according to Jakobson and Manuel, is typically dependent on the rank of the most senior leader of the LSG and therefore, "the more powerful the head of the LSG, the more powerful the LSG is seen to be, and the more able it is to prosecute its coordinated interest within the Chinese system."[783] Xi Jinping after being appointed general secretary quickly became the head of the Leading Small Group on Foreign

[781] Linda Jakobson and Ryan Manuel, "How are Foreign Policy Decisions Made in China?" Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies, Vol. 3, Issue 1, January 2016.
[782] Jakobson and Manuel.
[783] Ibid.

Affairs and National Security in March 2013. At the Third Plenum in November 2013, Xi also became chair of the newly established National Security Committee (NSC) and the Small Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms. While the idea of creating a centralized NSC was considered under previous generations of Chinese leadership, Xi's follow through signified a major shift in the development of foreign policy at the highest levels of leadership and the illustrated the importance Xi placed on China's ability to carry out his vision of great power diplomacy.

Outside the PSC, the LSG's, and the NSC, Xi's new foreign policy team including Yang Jiechi, who replaced Dai Bingguo as State Councilor and China's top foreign policy official, and Wang Yi, who was named as Yang's successor as Foreign Minister. Over time, the Foreign Ministry would become less involved in the foreign policy making process, ceding its influence to the more centralized National Security Council headed by Xi.

ii) The Role of the Military under Xi

As under previous party congresses, the formal military apparatus is kept at arm's length from the political decision making processes. Xi took a strong interest in the military after becoming Chair of the Central Military Commission in March of 2013, which was only five months after being named general secretary.[784] Unlike the other PSC members appointed at the 18th party congress in November 2012, Xi has experience as a party operative within the military command system, and a brief stint as an active service military officer. His wife is a senior PLA non-ranking civilian who heads to PLA song and dance corps, perhaps exposing Xi to senior PLA leaders prior to his takeover in 2012. As such, many analysts at the start of his tenure perceived that Xi might be a possible channel for PLA influence in the CCP command. One political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing attests to this channel of influence: "The military drives policy through the procurement of weapons and they have a strong connection with a leader who wants to take care of the military and be seen as *the* leader of the military."[785] Xi's later purging of the officer corps, however, may

[784] It took Hu Jintao over two years after being named General Secretary to became Chair of the CMC.
[785] Author interview with political officers (names undisclosed) at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, October 21, 2016.

have proved this theory wrong. As will be discussed in coordination with Xi's centralization efforts and military reforms, the PLA lost a great deal of autonomy through Xi's "purges," in which hundreds of military officials were removed from power often on charges of corruption and graft. Xi's military reforms also included cutting the PLA land force by 300,000 and restructuring the command and control structure to fall more directly under the purview of the CMC, which he chaired.

The PLA, particularly retired military officers, remain one of the most ardently nationalist groups in the Chinese policymaking sphere, often publishing in Chinese media arguments for more confrontational stances with other regional powers including the U.S. and Japan. Overall, however, the PLA's precise role in China's foreign policymaking process remains elusive. According to Michael Swaine, "very little is known about the decision-making structure and process of China's military related policy… both in normal times and especially during political-military crises."[786] There is no solid body of evidence to support the notion that the military under Xi has enjoyed any greater degree of autonomy than they had under Jiang or Hu. In fact, one of Xi's objectives in his military reforms was to avoid the perceived coordination problems that Hu experienced with the military, particularly on the controversial 2007 ASAT test, which seemingly occurred without a coordinated response from the political leadership under Hu.

iii) Xi Jinping and the Inner Circle

In Xi's time as general secretary, Chinese foreign policy has taken on a more personalized style. As such, Xi's own personality and background have come more into focus. Unlike Hu Jintao who emerged from the *Tuanpai* tradition and rose through the ranks of the Chinese Communist Youth League, Xi Jinping is known as a "princeling," or someone with a prominent family background in the revolutionary era. Born in 1953 in Shaanxi province, Xi is the son of a prominent revolutionary, Xi Zhongxun, who fought alongside Mao, rose through the ranks as Mao's minister of propaganda and education, and was later Zhou Enlai's vice premier and secretary general of the

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[786] Michael Swaine, "China's Assertive Behavior: Part 3: The Role of the Military in Foreign Policy," *China Leadership Monitor,* no. 36. Accessed at: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CLM36MS.pdf

State Council before being 'purged' during the cultural revolution. While he was eventually reintegrated into the party, the elder Xi's experience illustrated for the younger Xi the supreme power of the Communist Party. Under another of Mao's policies during the Cultural Revolution, Xi Jinping was one of the millions of "sent-down youth" who were sent to the countryside to carry out agricultural labor. He spent six years in a rural village in Yan'an, Shaanxi, which Xi later described as the defining time in his life. He then earned his degree in chemical engineering at Tsinghua University before serving as an aide to Geng Biao, a senior defense official who Xi's father called, "my closest comrade-in-arms from the revolution."[787] Xi rose through the ranks of the CCP, serving as the Secretary of the CPC in Shanghai before moving to the PSC. Unlike Jiang and Hu who serve for years on the PSC before becoming general secretary, Xi only served one-term on the PSC and two years as vice chairman of the CMC before taking control of the party in 2012.

Because of his upbringing in a "princeling" family, "Xi is said to be skeptical of the loyalty of those 'hired hands' who have muscled their way to the top of the party hierarchy on the strength of merit and educational pedigree but whose fathers never bled for the revolution," write Blackwill and Campbell.[788] Xi's background is also speculated to have influenced his decision-making style. They add, "His political style, such as his heavy emphasis on the centrality of the party and his penchant for keeping his political peers off balance, bears many of the hallmarks of Mao while also manifesting, at least in the economic sphere, some reflections of Deng's trademark pragmatism."[789] Chinese expert Chris Johnson argues, "Xi is of a generation that is unusually conservative, due do its cultural revolution experiences… Xi's experience in particular transplanted into a Hobbesian view of how the political system operates… His political strategy is Maoist: keep things close to the vest, keep the plates spinning, and never let anyone know where you really are until it's too late."[790]

Xi spent much of his early years and early career in Shaanxi province (where his father also grew his prolific political and military career) and went on to rely on fellow natives from Shaanxi

[787] Originally cited in Evan Osnos, "Born Red," *The New Yorker,* April 6, 2015.
[788] Blackwill and Campbell, 8.
[789] Ibid.
[790] Author interview with Chris Johnson, Washington DC, October 2016.

throughout his political rise. While analysts differ on the importance of "factions" within the upper circles of decision making, there is consensus that CCP leaders in contemporary China often disproportionally represent geographic regions.[791] According to Cheng Li, "Like other sources of elite divisions, birthplace ties can be instrumental in either political consolidation or factional conflict. During the Jiang era, for example, leaders from Shanghai and its neighboring areas dominated the PSC..."[792]

Two other members of the PSC, Yu Zhengsheng and Wang Qishan, are also so-called princelings whose careers overlapped with Xi's in Shaanxi. Together with Xi, the three formed what is known as the "Iron Triangle" on the PSC. As Cheng alludes, "both [Yu] and [Wang] have been remarkably supportive of XI's new policy agenda." Immediately before the significant Third Plenum of the 18th Central Committee, "Yu aimed to mobilize broad support from both the political elite and the public for Xi's new economic reform platform..."[793] Similarly, Wang Qishan has been a staunch supporter of Xi's agenda. Cheng argues that "Xi's close relationship with Wang Qishan has arguably been the most important factor in the consolidation of Xi's power and the implementation of his new policy initiatives..."[794] Moreover, "the Chinese public has long regarded Wang as a leader who is capable and trustworthy during times of emergency or crisis – a "go-to guy" in the Chinese leadership for handling some of the country's most daunting challenges."[795] Perhaps most importantly, Wang was charged with the responsibility of leading Xi's anti-corruption campaign as secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). Together, the three have presided over significant developments in China's internal reforms.[796]

B. Consolidation of Control (IV #2)

Alongside Xi's reputation for developing a more assertive foreign policy is his reputation for consolidating power within the CCP to an extent not seen since Chairman Mao. One of the primary hypotheses advanced in this research is the argument that the centralization of political and

[791] Cheng Li, "Xi Jinping's Inner Circle; Part 1: The Shaanxi Gang," *China Leadership Monitor,* no. 43.
[792] Li, 5.
[793] Li, 7.
[794] Li, 9.
[795] Ibid.
[796] Ibid.

institutional authority, the removal of political opposition, and the weakening of formal institutions can allow authoritarian leaders to enact risky foreign policies with less accountability and fear of retribution. Circumstances in which power has been consolidated into a smaller group of individuals also means that their own perceptions of threat and interests will carry more weight. In the case of contemporary China, it is important first to understand the decision-making processes and institutions under Hu Jintao in order to see the extent to which Xi Jinping has truly consolidating power and altered China's traditional decision making process of rule by consensus. Unlike Russia, which experienced a brief period of democratic opening after the fall of the Soviet Union, China has remained a politically closed Communist society with no political opposition and minimal independent media since 1949. Therefore, ascertaining shifts towards centralized control is a more difficult and nuanced process. This is even more true when one considers that the legislature in China (the National People's Congress) does not play a role in Chinese foreign policy decision making.

Furthermore, and according to Blackwill and Campbell, Xi's tightening control of decision making has made it harder for outsiders to anticipate China's next moves, or the driving influences behind foreign policy decisions. For example, by 2016, "Familiar interlocutors at the State Council and Foreign Ministry, who once provided much-needed insight into an often mysterious policymaking process, are no longer central within it."[797] With those caveats in mind, however, it is still possible to assess the several clear measures Xi Jinping has taken to centralize foreign policy decision making. Foremost among them are Xi's amassed titles and leadership of key bodies within the policymaking sphere, and his extensive anti-corruption campaign, which has led to the takedown of thousands of political and military officials.

i) The "Chairman of Everything"

In 2015, New Zealand academic Geremie Barme coined the term, "Chairman of Everything" to describe Xi's accumulation of official leadership positions within the CCP. Indeed, since becoming General Secretary in November 2012, Xi has accumulated thirteen official top posts in China's most powerful leadership bodies (see table below). Observers also argue that Premier Li

[797] Blackwill and Campbell, 4.

Keqiang has been marginalized in the policymaking process, as Xi has taken over top economic posts that are often reserved for the premier's portfolio.[798] In terms of China's foreign policy, the Third Plenum in November 2013 served as an inflection point in Xi's centralization of power in defense and national security decision-making.[799] Following the plenum, two new high-level bodies were established: The Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform and the National Security Commission. Both were developed to enhance policy coordination and implementation, and both are chaired by President Xi. Xi's military reforms following the Third Plenum in were also seen as a move to bring the military under the firmer control of the Central Military Commission, which he chairs.

Outside of his official titles, Xi was granted the unofficial title of "core leader," a significant designation granted by the Party in October 2016. The title has been bestowed upon leaders Mao, Deng and Jiang, but not to Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao. Moreover, it is speculated that Deng designated the title to Jiang as a way to strengthen his legitimacy amidst the Tiananmen Square crisis. Unlike this instance between Deng and Jiang where the term was bestowed by one leader to another, many analysts speculate that Xi 'awarded' himself the title. The title does not grant any specific powers, but according to Christopher Buckley, a Beijing correspondent for the *New York Times,* "It gives Mr. Xi special stature and sends an intimidating signal that he should not be crossed. By giving Mr. Xi the honor in a formal document, senior Communist Party officials have shown that, willingly or not, they've bowed to his dominance."[800] The new title also served to reinforce Xi's leadership as he attempted to carry out an unprecedented anti-corruption campaign along with significant economic and military reforms.

Leadership Body	**Post**	**Tenure since...**
Central Committee of the CCP	General Secretary	11/2012
Central Military Commission of the CCP	Chair	11/2012

[798] Li, 12.
[799] According to Alice Lyman Miller, the 60-point document laid out at the Third Plenum incorporated over 300 reforms (including in defense and in the military), indicates that the policies including the anti-corruption campaign carried out by Xi was debated before Xi took power.
[800] Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping, 'Core Leader' of China, Appears Both Triumphant and Anxious," *New York Times,* November 1, 2016.

Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs	Head	11/2012
Presidency of the PRC	President	03/2013
Central Military Commission of the PRC	Chair	03/2013
Central Leading Group for Foreign Affairs and National Security	Head	03/2013
Central Leading Group for Financial and Economic Work	Head	03/2013
National Security Committee	Chair	11/2013
Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms	Head	11/2013
Central Leading Group of Network Security and Information Technology	Head	02/2014
CMC Leading Group for Deepening Reforms of National Defense and the Military	Head	03/2014
PLA Joint Operations Command Center	Commander in Chief	04/2016
Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development	Chair	01/2017

Source: Adapted from Cheng Li, *Chinese Politics in the Xi Jinping Era,* page 13.

When assessing the *effect* of Xi's accumulation of titles, the most important question is, as Cheng Li writes, "Will Xi's ongoing concentration of power reverse the trend of collective leadership, which has been a defining characteristic of post-Deng Chinese politics?"[801] There is no definitive answer to this question. Some believe that Xi has moved from a first among equals' status on the PSC to an entirely different rung of leadership, while others see Xi as constrained by the collective leadership processes put in place by Deng Xiaoping. Moreover, outside of the highest levels of the CCP, Xi still faces significant pushback from provincial leaders throughout China. Deng Maosheng, who helped draft the decision to raise Xi's status to 'core leader,' complained to reporters in Beijing at the time of the designation, "Many of party's policies can't get implemented, challenged by cities and provinces acting like 'independent kingdoms.'" Deng added, "We must

[801] Ibid.

strengthen centralized and united leadership at the center... if we don't, we can't solve the problems that we're confronting."[802]

There is also an argument to be made for a growing 'personality cult' around Xi. In the state-run press, media outlets have given Xi Jinping affectionate nicknames such as "Uncle Xi" (Xi Dada) and "Grandpa Xi." These titles have also found their way into children's songs taught at Chinese elementary schools. Unlike Hu Jintao, who was never the object of such media adoration, or Jiang Zemin (who, after Mao, eschewed personality cults and instead favored collective leadership), Xi has become idolized in patriotic education campaigns enacted throughout the country.

ii) Xi's Anti-Corruption Campaign: Tigers and Flies

Xi's anti-corruption campaign, enacted soon after he became general secretary, has become one of the defining policies of his leadership. To some analysts, Xi's purging of senior military and political officials on charges of graft and corruption are seen as efforts to remove political opposition. To other China experts, Xi's empowerment of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) run by Wang Qishan to carry out the extensive anti-corruption campaign was necessary to counter a direct threat to the CCP's legitimacy. As discussed, President Hu saw corruption as one of the most direct threats to the power and legitimacy of the Communist Party, even calling attention to corruption and abuses of power in his outgoing speech at the 18th Party Congress. Hu warned that corruption among party ranks, "could prove fatal to the party and even cause the collapse of the party and the fall of the state..." thereby giving Xi a mandate to carry out the campaign. The high-profile case of Bo Xilai's fall from grace right before the transfer of power from Hu to Xi in 2012 also served as an impetus for the campaign.

State propaganda refers to the anti-corruption campaign as "killing tigers and swatting flies," where the tigers are high-level party cadres and the flies are mid- and low-ranking party cadres.[803] Since Xi's accession to power in 2012, a total of 1899 individuals have been either investigated,

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[802] Original citation from Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping, 'Core Leader' of China, Appears Both Triumphant and Anxious," *New York Times,* November 1, 2016.
[803] Christopher K. Johnson and Scott Kennedy, "China's Un-Separation of Powers," *Foreign Affairs,* July 24, 2015. Accessed at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-07-24/chinas-un-separation-powers

expelled/arrested or sentenced, comprised of 185 "tigers" and 1714 "flies."[804] One of the most high profile "tiger" cases involved the December 2014 arrest of Zhou Yongkang, a retired PSC member and former domestic security chief. Other "tigers" who have fallen as a result of the campaign include Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong, both former vice-chairs of the CMC, who were found guilty of extraordinary corruption charges. Interestingly, all three arrests have involved individuals considered to be Jiang's protégés and from the "princeling" background, similar to Xi and Wang Qishan. Cheng Li writes, "in demonstrating that princelings can crack down on other princelings or their political allies, Xi and Wang have effectively headed off criticism that the new leadership's anticorruption campaign is merely motivated by factional politics."[805] These factors indicate that Xi's corruption campaign might be less about removing political opposition and more about boosting the legitimacy and efficiency of the party. However, one could also argue that their removal from power allows Xi to possibly promote more of his protégés to top leadership positions at the 19th party congress in the fall of 2017.[806] The validity of either perspective is difficult to prove and it may be the case that both factors play a role in Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

A worrying effect of the anti-corruption campaign for Xi is that it has made him unpopular among party elites. Combined with China's weaker economy, both factors could serve to undermine Xi's position among elites. A possible backlash could emerge from within the elites, many of whom are not used to being chastised for their lavish habits, as well as from the Chinese public. Although the Chinese public is in favor of removing corrupt officials from power, public support for Xi's policies would fall if the campaign looks to be driven by factional politics.[807] The more long-term effects of Xi's anti-corruption campaign will be seen after the 19th Party Congress, after Xi has signaled his intentions for promotions within the Politburo and PSC.

iii) Media Consolidation Under Xi

[804] *China File's* anti-corruption database managed by the Center on U.S.-China Relations at the Asia Society. Accessed at: https://anticorruption.chinafile.com/#
[805] Li, 23.
[806] Ibid.
[807] Li, 375.

Propaganda, at home and abroad, is a significant undertaking of the CCP. The Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party is vast and supervises 3,300 television states, 2000 newspapers and nearly 10,000 periodicals. In 2016, the department spent around $10 billion carrying out propaganda activities overseas.[808] Internally, massive amounts of information are pushed out by three state media organs – *People's Daily,* Xinhua and the omnipresent CCTV. The media landscape has never been remotely free or independent in China, yet in addition to Xi's consolidation of official titles and his robust anti-corruption campaign, Xi has also taken steps to gain tighter control of the media in China. According to China expert Chris Johnson, "Under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, the objective was *information control*, which was not that hard given state controlled media and no real competition for information,"[809] meaning that the party could control what people had access to. Xi has moved the goal post to *information shaping,* by creating a narrative for the party and pushing it out to various media outlets. This has had an effect on how the Chinese public views contentious foreign policy issues. For example, a tightly controlled narrative was developed by the party on the ruling adjudicated by the international tribunal on the South China Sea case brought forward by the Philippines. After the ruling, "State media dismissed the tribunal as an American puppet... and China's social media started to call on people to boycott bananas from the Philippines and American brands such as iPhones and KFC."[810]

While the CCP under Xi has engaged more in information shaping, Xi must also control nationalist sentiments. For example, in response to the fervor over social media after the tribunal ruling, Xinhua and People's Daily started criticizing the "irrational patriotism" of social media, and "a picture that circulated on social media of a protest outside a KFC outlet was deleted by censors."[811] As *the Economist* reported, "If there is one thing more important than Chinese nationalism... it is party control."[812] Xi's moves to shape the image of party – and his own – through Chinese media is done with this ultimate objective in mind. In February 2016, Xi made a tour of the China's top three state-run media outlets to tell "editors and reporters they must pledge absolute loyalty to the

[808] The Economist, "Who draws the party line," June 25, 2016.
[809] Author interview with Chris Johnson, Washington DC, October 2016.
[810] The Economist, "My nationalism, and don't you forget it," July 23rd, 2016.
[811] Ibid.
[812] Ibid.

Communist party and closely follow its leadership in 'thought, politics and action.'"[813] His efforts seem to be working. When he visited CCTV's headquarters, he was met by a placard pledging loyalty to the party stating: "The central television's family name is the party."[814] It was an indicator to China analysts that the light between the party and the state media was diminishing further.

Online censorship has also grown more repressive and has even become colloquially known as "the great firewall of China." Baidu, the Chinese version of Google, blocks search results critical of the political leadership, and private companies that refuse to abide by China's censorship laws – including Google, Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter -- are blocked from the country. Furthermore, journalists are often the target of the state's repressive tactics. Hundreds of lawyers and activists have been jailed since Xi came to power. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, "at least 49 journalists were in prison in China in December 2015."[815] So successful are China's censoring tactics that other countries have sought to replicate their model, including Russia. In April 2016, Chinese and Russian officials met at the Seventh International Safe Internet Forum to share ideas on how to control their citizens' access to the internet. The goal of the forum was "to harness Chinese expertise in internet management to gain further control over Russia's internet, including foreign sites accessible there."[816] Clearly, Xi's efforts are seen as a success by other autocratic leaders seeking to maintain control through censorship and repression of the press.

iv) Moderating Accounts of Xi's Consolidation of Power

While these numerous examples paint the picture of a Chinese leader that has vastly consolidated power under his own rule, many China analysts and experts are less quick to judge Xi's consolidation of power as anything but a slight shift away from business as usual in the Communist Party's policymaking. Thomas Fingar of Stanford University argues, "Xi is not doing things

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[813] Associated Press, "Xi Jinping asks for 'absolute loyalty' from Chinese state media," *The Guardian,* February 19, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/19/xi-jinping-tours-chinas-top-state-media-outlets-to-boost-loyalty
[814] Ibid.
[815] Reported in "The Muzzle Grows Tighter," *The Economist,* June 4, 2016.
[816] Mark C. Eades, "China and Russia Join Hands for Internet Censorship," *Foreign Policy Association,* May 2, 2016. Accessed at: http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2016/05/02/china-and-russia-join-hands-for-internet-censorship/

differently than what he was put in power to do; he is not running away with the system. He may be acting in ways that are slightly different from what was expected by the people who put him in power – but ultimately, he's doing what he was put there to do."[817] Xi is also operating within a tightly controlled and formalized system that was developed by Chinese leaders after Mao in order to make it extremely difficult for a single individual to run away with policy, as Mao did.

Xi may also be acting to make the system put in place by Deng more efficient and coordinated. China's consensus style decision making and hierarchical chain of command developed under Deng was designed to prevent interparty debates that would have otherwise lead to significant fissures within the party. Fingar notes that "[this model] is running out of gas; it succeeded and is now a victim of its success; it is no longer adequate for the more diverse reality that is China and this is one reason that Xi's reform agenda has stalled."[818] From this perspective, Xi's consolidation of control has been necessary to improve coordination throughout the bureaucracy, Chinese SOEs and the provincial actors, which at times has been lacking in Chinese foreign policy. Chris Johnson and Scott Kennedy write that under Hu, "policy discussions lacked forceful direction from the top and descended into extended debates involving too many actors... Central and local officials sought to protect their fiefdoms, and state-owned enterprises sought to maintain their protected status. Xi's answer to this slide towards gridlock and declining economic performance has been a radical centralization of power and a much greater governance role for the CCP itself."[819]

To this point, Ryan Hass who served in the Obama Administration as the NSC director for China, Taiwan and Mongolia reminds us of the 'sobering' effects Xi's consolidation has had on China's foreign policy. "There seems to be a greater degree of coordination and less discordance in the actions of Chinese SOE's and the military... but the broader point is that because there is such a wide understanding within the system of Xi's centrality, it has a sobering effect on the rest of the bureaucracy; it raises the opportunity cost of taking action because no one has complete knowledge of Xi's support. Actors within the bureaucracy have less ability to act unilaterally because they

[817] Author Interview with Thomas Fingar, Stanford University, June 16, 2016.
[818] Ibid.
[819] Christopher K. Johnson and Scott Kennedy, "China's Un-Separation of Powers," *Foreign Affairs,* July 24, 2015. Accessed at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-07-24/chinas-un-separation-powers

don't know where Xi stands on any particular issue."[820] Hence, policymakers are becoming *more* risk averse, not less.

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Moving forward, when it comes to China's strategies on contentious issues such as the South China Sea or tensions with Japan in the East China Sea, it is unlikely that a "runaway general" will dictate policy without a coordinated policy from Zhongnanhai. That being said, it is evident through the consolidating moves outlined here that if Xi indicates his support for a policy shift – whether aggressive or cautious – his decision is unlikely to meet any pushback. This can lead to damaging policies when decisions that turn out to be mistakes are not reversed.

When the 19th Party Congress takes place in the fall of 2017 (the exact date is undisclosed), Xi will indicate his intentions (or lack of intentions) to "choose" a successor who would take over in 2022 and to abide by formal retirement rules for his allies on the PSC. These decisions may foreshadow Xi's plans to further consolidate policymaking under his control.

C. Challenges to Regime Legitimacy (IV #3)

Between 2013 and 2016, Xi Jinping addressed similar legitimacy challenges to that of his predecessor Hu Jintao. Yet Xi also dealt with slower economic growth and a population that has, in many regards, grown more nationalistic and proud of China's increasing power on the world stage. Specifically, and as Cheng Li alludes, there were three urgent challenges for Xi Jinping when he ascended to power in November 2012: rampant official corruption, the trial of Bo Xilai, and the slowdown of the Chinese economy.[821] Xi's massive anti-corruption campaign has proven relatively successful at addressing the first of these challenges. Xi's approaches to political fissures and slowing economic growth and their relationship to China's evolving regional foreign policy strategies are explored below.

[820] Author interview with Ryan Hass, Washington DC, April 2017.
[821] Li, 10.

i) Bo Xilai: The 21st Century 'Tiananmen' Crisis for the CCP

The public downfall of Party Secretary of Chongqing and member of the Politburo, Bo Xilai, marked the most significant challenge to the CCP's legitimacy since the Tiananmen Square crisis in 1989. Bo Xilai, also a princeling, became mired in an investigation of the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood in Chongqing in 2011. Chongqing's police chief, Wang Lijun, implicated Bo's wife in the murder (she was later charged) and was demoted from his position in Bo Xilai's attempts to obstruct the investigation. When Wang fled to the U.S. consulate to seek asylum, the case and the Bo family's involvement became public. Bo Xilai was eventually stripped of his party posts for his handling of the situation, summarily ending what would have been his likely promotion to the politburo standing committee. Bo's downfall illustrated the inherent flaws within the CCP's highest echelons of leadership at a critical point in time before the leadership transition in November 2012.

Despite the severity of the charges and the very public nature in which the case unfolded, the scandal did not prove catastrophic to the CCP, especially at this politically sensitive time. Conversely, the party managed to deftly handle the crisis, and the leadership succession from Hu to Xi proceeded smoothly. As Chris Johnson argues, "The CCP can thus claim some credit for managing to stage another relatively peaceful handover of power; even though it was the first transition staged without the guiding hand of the revolutionary-credentialed elders of a bygone era."[822] It also demonstrated the resilience of the CCP leadership in confronting challenges to its legitimacy and set the stage for Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

ii) 'Power for Prosperity' in an Era of Slowing Economic Growth

More critical and longstanding than the Bo Xilai scandal was the CCP's ability to manage economic growth after decades of record-setting prosperity. In recent years of Xi's leadership, the desire for a national and unifying identity under the Chinese Dream has served to bolster the legitimacy of the CCP as it pursues significant economic reforms and seeks to diminish the social instability that may accompany such reforms. Political officers at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing also

[822] Johnson, 4.

note the importance of a strong economy for Xi's legitimacy: "Xi does not have an ideology to justify his power, so he had to make a deal with his people – prosperity for power.... China is the fastest growing economy in the world and many people are doing well, but they also have concerns, from pollution to inequality, and from food security and housing to corruption."[823] The sudden stock market declines in the summer of 2015 and in January 2016 destroyed trillions of dollars in wealth and temporarily reversed the economic gains made the preceding year in the Chinese economy.

It is necessary, however, not to overstate the importance of the stock market to the majority of Chinese citizens. Blackwill and Campbell point out, "Less than a fifth of household wealth is in stocks, and much more of it is invested in a property market that has remained stable throughout the stock market's recent swings. Moreover, the stock market has a tradeable value less than a third of China's economy, compared with more than 100 percent in developed countries."[824] More important in the stock market declines was the damage it did to the government's credibility and reputation for effectively managing the economy. Xi's consolidation of power also hurt him politically during these challenging periods. As Blackwill and Campbell note, "One downside to Xi's breathtaking success in consolidating power is that it has left him with near total responsibility for his government's policy missteps on matters ranging from the stock market slowdown to labor market unrest."[825]

In the backdrop of the stock market woes were diminishing expectations for China's economy, which after three decades had entered into an era of slow growth that forced the government to reduce its growth target for 2016 to a record-low 6.5-percent.[826] As mentioned in earlier case studies of this chapter, China's economy responded remarkably well, relatively speaking, following the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, due to a significant government stimulus package and significant investments in infrastructure. Yet the moves were not enough to diminish the longer-term vulnerabilities within China's growth model, which was based on agricultural laborers moving into manufacturing jobs that would power China's export-heavy industries. All of these economic concerns boil down to a potential existential crisis for the Party: massive social unrest

[823] Author interview with political officers (names undisclosed) at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, October 21, 2016.
[824] Blackwill and Campbell, 11.
[825] Ibid.
[826] Ibid.

among a population that is used to rapid income growth, particularly if the slow growth leads to high unemployment and declining standards of living.

iii) **China's Aging Population**

In October 2015, the Chinese government announced a formal repeal of its one-child policy, a practice that was initiated in 1979 and had been in place for over 36 years. The policy limited urban couples to a single child, and as a result "China's fertility rate fell dramatically, from 2.8 children per woman in 1979 to 1.7 in 2014."[827] The Central Committee stated that the objective of its decision to repeal the law was to "counter the aging of the population." Yet the CCP's decision, while important, represents only a small step in dealing with the significant social and economic challenge of China's aging population.

The policy was originally put in place because the government believed that lower birthrates among its population would, according to CSIS analyst Richard Jackson, "Lay the foundations for future prosperity."[828] Ironically, China now has the opposite problem: maintaining breakneck economic growth with a population that is increasingly aging out of the workforce without enough young laborers to take their place. China's population is aging at a faster rate than almost any other country, which is particularly worrisome as China's development has been tied to its youthful population.[829] Specifically, China's aging population could diminish its surplus labor pool, meaning that "manufacturing wages are likely to increase and the sector will decrease in profitability."[830] China's demographic problem also has important implications for the CCP's legitimacy. Feng Wang writes, "Political legitimacy in China over the past three decades has been built around fast economic growth, which in turn has relied on a cheap and willing young labor force. An aging labor force will compel changes in this economic model and may make political rule more difficult."[831]

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[827] China Power Team, "Does China have an aging problem?" *China Power, Center for Strategic and International Studies*. February 15, 2016. Accessed at: https://chinapower.csis.org/aging-problem/
[828] Ibid.
[829] Ibid.
[830] Ibid.
[831] Feng Wang, "China's Population Destiny: The Looming Crisis," *The Brookings Institution,* September 30, 2010. Accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-population-destiny-the-looming-crisis/

The demographic problem has clear implications for the future of China's economy, but less clear ramifications for the nation's foreign policy. On the one hand, Chinese leaders, who are known to have a longer-term vision when it comes to their nation's international relations, may see their aging population as an impetus to accomplish what it can regionally – vis-à-vis its neighbors and major powers such as the Japan and the United States – soon, while its economy is still booming and its military still on the rise. On the other hand, China's aging population will demand that national resources and priorities move more toward it welfare system, health care and pensions, limiting the political and popular will for significant allocations toward military and defense endeavors.

iv) Managing Chinese Nationalism on Regional Issues

Amidst economic concerns and a looming demographic crisis, China's leaders have attempted to boost the country's other pillar of legitimacy: patriotism and nationalism among its population. As such, Xi Jinping has had to deal with the same fickle Chinese nationalism that challenged his predecessors. On one hand, the CCP must continue to promote nationalist and patriotic sentiments among the people so that the Party is seen as the defender of the people and a strong force in the face of challenges from abroad. On the other hand, nationalism must be carefully managed so as not to evoke excitement that cannot be contained without overt repression. In this sense, nationalism has a constraining effect on foreign policy. An example of this balance can be seen on the sensitive foreign policy issue of Taiwan. Unless provoked, Beijing would not risk a war in the Taiwan straits for fear of losing to a Taiwan backed by American forces. A military defeat for the PLA, however small, on such an emotional issue for mainlanders would be calamitous for the CCP. Yet remaining strong on foreign policy issues such as Taiwan is part of Xi's "Chinese Dream." As Dr. Thomas Fingar of the Hoover Institute notes, "The CCP under Xi Jinping bases its legitimacy on 'ending Chinese humiliation' at the hands of international actors." This is a challenge being pushed from the bottom, "as two-thirds of the population know only of Chinese success, which magnifies the Party's weaknesses on issues like pollution and income inequality. There is a danger that the population will organize around such problems and trigger local demonstrations... This is why we are seeing the political leadership stand up for sovereignty claims

instead. The CCP has to stay out in front of territorial issues, which limits the ability of the party to compromise."[832]

In this regard, Chinese foreign policy under Xi has remained an extension of domestic politics. Regional issues such as Taiwan, the East China Sea and the South China Sea are even more emotional issues for the public and are therefore directly linked to the domestic legitimacy of the CCP. As China has taken a more assertive posture on territorial claims, most evident in the South China Sea, the leadership must now maintain this posture for fear of looking weak if it is perceived as backing down from its claims. A political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing attested to this legitimacy concern: "From the domestic perspective, the regime cannot be perceived as weak on core issues, such as Taiwan, Tibet and the South China Sea... in the South China Sea, it is about honor and standing up after generations of victimization, especially on the periphery where national interests are at stake."[833]

Xi must manage this balance for a population that has increasingly only known a strong China. "Expectations of the Chinese people for the nation are very high." says Paul Haenle, former Director for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia Affairs on the NSC from 2007-2009 and now Director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing. "Many Chinese maintain a 'middle kingdom mentality,' in which China is not meant to be 'second in the world' and therefore there is a sentiment of dissatisfaction." Concurrently, Haenle adds, "there is also a mentality of the 'inner victim', which dictates that they must restore the state to its rightful place in the world.... Whereas Americans might view China as 'rising,' they see it as 'China's renaissance.'"[834] The CCP has also taken its own steps to increase this sentiment among the Chinese people, and Xi has intensified the Party's 'patriotic education campaign.' Blackwill and Campbell note, "In December 2014, the CCP Central Committee held a group study of Chinese patriotism and Xi himself called for further 'promoting patriotism to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.'"[835] By connecting linking to Xi's central message of the "Chinese Dream," the link between China's assertive role in the region and its own national and domestic 'rejuvenation' is becoming even more concrete.

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[832] Author interview with Thomas Fingar, Stanford University, June 15, 2016.
[833] Author interview with political officers (names undisclosed) at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, October 21, 2016.
[834] Author interview with Paul Haenle, Beijing, October 19, 2016.
[835] Blackwill and Campbell, 15.

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Xi has proven that he is committed to the Chinese Dream and making it a foundational pillar of legitimacy for the Party. Therefore, stability within China will depend first and foremost on the government's ability to manage economic expectations and continue along the country's path of economic prosperity. Foreign policy matters, particularly Taiwan and regional territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas are issues on which the CCP leadership must remain strong so that they are not perceived as ceding ground on emotionally charged issues for the Chinese public. Yet this research does not find that these legitimacy challenges within the CCP have reached the level at which the government would carry out more aggressive foreign policies to appear legitimate in the eyes of the people. Moreover, China is fundamentally reliant on stable relations with the United States and other major powers for its economic development. As such, economic integration might prove successful at keeping China largely within the bounds of international norms and rules, even in its critical maritime periphery.

Conclusion

As of 2017, the Asia Pacific represents a region of increasing great power competition. On one side of the balance, the U.S. is intent on preserving its regional supremacy through a combination of military power and political and diplomatic arrangements that challenge China's positions. On the other side of the equation, China sees the United States as a key partner in furthering its own economic rise. It accepts America's role as a leading state in the Asia Pacific, but wants to be placed on equal footing. In pursuit of this goal, China is shifting its naval capacities from a brown water navy to a burgeoning blue water navy. While America is not considered an *adversary* by Chinese political leaders (more would consider the U.S. a competitor), many Chinese see the United States as a revisionist power on the world stage, with its close ally Japan seeking to upend the postwar order in Asia. In the short to medium-term, China ideally seeks to be a preeminent power in the Asia Pacific, allowing it to act unconstrained in its military and diplomatic affairs. A key factor in China's strategy, moreover, is to reach these objectives without prompting an overt conflict with other regional powers, particularly with the U.S., which China's leadership recognizes it would handily lose and thereby threaten the stability of the CCP.

As Thomas Wright argues, there is nothing new about a rising power calling on an established power to accommodate its core interests. Virtually all rising powers in modern history have made the same argument.[836] Indeed, and similarly to Russia, China over the course of the twenty-first century has proven that it wishes to build a regional sphere of influence where it can hold leverage over its smaller neighbors without the outsized influence of the United States playing a significant balancing role. Yet geopolitics only explains so much in China's resurgence in the Asia Pacific. China's economic power has grown, but its international and regional security environment has remained largely benign. Therefore, it is useful to assess key indicators within China's domestic context to understand why we have seen a shift in China's internal preferences, including Xi's more bellicose rhetoric, massive defense spending increases, military modernization and reform as well as aberrant behavior in its foreign policies, including the extensive island reclamation campaign carried out under Xi Jinping.

Many assert that China is not a revisionist power in East Asia, let alone in its other initiatives elsewhere in Asia such as the One Belt One Road initiative, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Yet in the Asia Pacific, China has used its power advantages to create new realities. It has rejected international and regional efforts at arbitration and is using its capabilities to act unilaterally to upset the equilibrium in the South China Sea. Specifically, China uses coast guard and civilian fishing vessels to assert its claims on disputed territories, instead of using overt military force. Beijing has also undergone a massive dredging and island construction project at all seven of the islets and reefs its occupies in the Spratly island chain, and has recently moved to militarize these islands. Moreover, Beijing has long expressed dissatisfaction with America's policies and efforts to further integrate political-military ties with its regional allies and security partners. China views these moves as attempts to contain China's economic and military rise, and sees them as impinging on its vital national interests.

i) China's Path to Revisionism

For the years under investigation in this study, China has not pursued a linear path from a status quo to a revisionist power. On the contrary, over the course of the twenty-first century China has both conceded and has demanded concessions from other powers in the Asia Pacific. Beijing has

[836] Wright, 84-85.

pursued cooperative strategies with its ASEAN neighbors over the South China Sea while growing increasingly combative with Japan in the East China Sea. It has pursued great power diplomacy on the North Korea nuclear issue while taking a firmer and militaristic stance on Taiwanese independence. In its relations with the U.S., Beijing has sought further collaboration on security-related matters while forcefully pushing back on America's Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea and America's position that contested territories should be settled through international arbitration. Most strikingly, China has in recent years developed and militarized contested islands in the South China Sea as part of what many analysts see as a concerted effort to become the predominant military power in the region at the expense of America's security arrangements and national interests.

Throughout the complex narrative of Chinese twenty-first century foreign policy, this chapter has provided an assessment of China's evolving political leadership, factional interests, consolidation and coordination of power from the fourth generation of leadership under Hu Jintao to the fifth generation under Xi Jinping, and ongoing legitimacy issues facing the Chinese Communist Party. Behind the veil of authoritarian impenetrability, this research has surmised a few details about the party's leaderships motivations and intentions. What we have seen is a complex and intricate game being played in the power chambers of Zhongnanhai to maintain political stability in the midst of dynamic (and waning) economic growth; to centralize bureaucratic processes without stirring political dissent; to balance political factions while cracking down on corruption; to promote China's interests abroad without rattling its neighbors; and to spur nationalism and pride without inciting protest. It is a story of tremendous success, but one that has provoked trepidation at home and abroad.

ii) Validity of Hypotheses

The composition and interests of elite (IV #1) are complex factors in China's foreign policy processes and present several contradictions. Under Hu, a myriad of foreign policy actors gained a greater stake in the policymaking process, albeit indirectly. These actors include China's state owned enterprises and energy companies with significant economic interests, as well as academic institutions and think tanks that gained a greater voice and audience with senior officials. Yet the policymaking process under Hu and Xi was, and remains, dominated by the highest echelons of

Chinese leadership in the Politburo Standing Committee and on Leading Small Groups that report directly from the Central Committee to the PSC. This reality makes understanding the composition and interests of the PSC members important, but not conclusive. To a certain extent, Hu and his allies' emergence from the Communist Youth League and *tuanpai* tradition may have led to a different leadership style than those of Xi Jinping's *princeling* background. This is most evident in Xi's emphasis on strengthening the party and his Maoist tendency, according to China hands, to keep his peers off-balance and his cards close to his chest.[837] Yet at the heart of the Chinese decision-making system, the Party is paramount, and individuals are defined more by their positions with the party apparatus than they are by their own personal interests and ambitions.

In terms of **consolidating control (IV #2),** Xi has taken many steps to centralize his command within the CCP leadership. This is evident in his accumulation of official titles and oversight of important deliberative bodies. Xi has also brought the PLA under firmer control of the party, making the military even less of an autonomous actor. While Hu's administration heavily emphasized collective leadership and consensus decision making, foreign policy decisions were also perceived at times to lack coordination and efficiency. Under Xi, there appears to be a greater degree of coordination and less discordance in the actions of Chinese SOE's and the military. Moreover, Xi's anti-corruption campaign has resulted in the dismissal of high-ranking military and political officials. Yet Taylor Fravel argues that despite Xi's anti-corruption drive having eliminated many top officials and his accumulation of official responsibilities within foreign policy decision-making, "the party's internal system of controls to enforce discipline and consensus-based decision making suggest that log-rolling politics among bureaucratic actors is unlikely."[838] Indeed China is an institutionalized single-party authoritarian state with a massive bureaucracy comprised of significant checks and balances on the political leaders and on the military.

Legitimacy concerns (IV #3) within the CCP were most evident during the leadership transition from Hu to Xi in 2012. During this time, the Bo Xilai scandal shook party stability and Hu indicated that corruption within the political ranks had the ability to destroy the party. Xi's extensive anti-corruption campaign has quelled concerns over rampant corruption. It has also led to a "purging" of senior political and military officials for possible reasons other than corruption,

[837] Johnson, 7.
[838] Fravel, 522.

although this is still in the realm of speculation. More endemic legitimacy concerns within China involve the future of its economic growth and the party's ability to improve its citizens' standards of living. Whether the CCP will be effective given significant economic inequality and its managed economy remains an open question. On foreign policy issues, the CCP's ability to boost nationalism and patriotism on regional issues involving Japan and the United States has proven challenging. How far the Party will go in spurring nationalist sentiment at times when it is challenged abroad is unclear, particularly since the CCP's ultimate goal is to maintain social stability. Above all else, the Party must maintain an international environment that is conducive to its economic needs, and therefore it is highly unlikely that the CCP would pursue 'diversionary war' tactics or overly hyperbolic policies abroad in order to appear stronger in the eyes of its people. Yet China's population has become increasingly used to a strong China on the world stage, and history provides the current leadership with a stringent warning of what may happen if it does not defend the nation's interests abroad.

Moving forward, the CCP will continue to wrestle with the benefits and potential pitfalls of instilling nationalist fervor to quell social instability that may emerge from economic reforms. Henry Kissinger in 2014 aptly wrote, "China's [leaders] will recognize that the reaction of the Chinese population to their vast agenda cannot be known; they are sailing into uncharted waters."[839] This has important implications for U.S. foreign policy, and indeed world order, moving forward. China's leaders will not seek foreign adventures, but it would be wise to anticipate that China will pursue a foreign policy that places itself at the center of the Asia Pacific order. Washington and Beijing's ability to manage this complex relationship will determine the contours of great power competition in the twenty-first century.

[839] Kissinger, 231.

Conclusion

There appears to be growing contest between authoritarianism and liberalism right now... I know that some countries, which now recognize the power of free markets, still reject the model of free societies. And perhaps those of us who have been promoting democracy feel somewhat discouraged since the end of the Cold War, because we've learned that liberal democracy will not just wash across the globe in a single wave. It turns out building accountable institutions is hard work -- the work of generations. The gains are often fragile. Sometimes we take one step forward and then two steps back.

- **President Barack Obama's Final Speech to the UN General Assembly, September 20, 2016**

Over the course of the twenty-first century, Russia and China have pursued revisionist courses in their respective regions to the detriment of stability and to the consternation of smaller states and great powers alike. As stated at the outset of this research, political leaders in both nations have also consolidated internal control to varying degrees, leading to a resurgence of authoritarianism within their borders. Given these realities, this research has sought to better understand the connections, if any, between these domestic and foreign policy trends. The primary argument of this research is that there are internal dynamics within Russia and China that are influencing their foreign policy preferences, objectives, and ultimately, behavior. We cannot understand their international objectives unless we extend our focus across the boundaries of the international, domestic and individual levels of analysis.

The purpose of this conclusion is to determine whether and to what extent the theoretically-founded hypotheses articulated at the beginning of this research fit appropriately with the six case studies – three from contemporary Russia and three from contemporary China covering time intervals between 2000-2017 – presented in previous chapters. I conduct this assessment not for the sake of proving an abstract research objective, but to better understand the factors of resurgent authoritarianism that are most influential on foreign policy decision making, and ultimately, in the pursuit of revisionist goals. This chapter also compares evidence gathered from the Russia and

China case studies to assess differences and similarities in their foreign policy decision making processes and their ability (and desire) to carry out revisionist strategies. The final sections of this chapter draw implications from this research for the scholarship and policy communities, in terms of theory and concept development and insights that apply to ongoing policy debates on U.S. strategy towards Russia and China.

I. Are Structural Explanations Conclusive?

Before delving into a discussion on the validity of the specific domestic-level hypotheses proposed in this research, it is important to ask whether structural explanations are entirely conclusive in depicting accurately Russian and Chinese foreign policy over the course of the twenty-first century. In short, international factors influenced their trajectories in presenting new power dynamics, perceptions of threat and windows of opportunities to these nations' leaders. Yet these factors are only partly conclusive, as discussed below.

Russia Case Studies

In the Russia case studies (2000-2007; 2007-2012; 2012-2016), foreign policy displayed many consistencies with realist explanations. Russia's political leadership over the course of each case study articulated what it saw to be intrinsic security threats emanating from Western challenges including NATO expansion and ballistic missile defense initiatives in Europe. When Russia's economy and military were strong enough to take a stance against these threats, it did.

In this realist framework, many Russia analysts consider 2007 and 2008 to be turning points in Russia's confrontational posture with the West and revisionist orientation in Eastern Europe. These years were characterized by Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007, in which he stated that the world had reached "that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security."[840] Foreshadowing Russia's enhanced role on the world stage, he added, "There is no reason to doubt that the economic potential of the new centers of global economic growth will inevitably be converted into political influence and will strengthen

[840] Vladimir Putin, "Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," Munich, Germany, February 2007.

multipolarity."[841] Putin's remarks indicated that Russia was dissatisfied with the status quo and would actively seek to change it moving forward. This turning point was then followed by the cyber-attacks on Estonia in April 2007 and the war with Georgia in August 2008.

By 2008, Russia's economy was stronger than it had been at any other point during its post-Soviet existence. Russia's renewed economic power and its subsequent military modernization efforts then gave Russia the capability and power to challenge the West on key diverging interests. However, despite the troubling nature of Russia's actions in 2007 and 2008, this research argues that Russia's decisive turn away from engagement with the West did not align with purely realpolitik considerations and constraints, nor was it entirely reactionary to changes in the international balance of power.

Despite Putin's striking remarks in Munich and Russia's aggression in Estonia and Georgia at the height of Russia's economic power, from 2007-2012 Russia still operated within the confines of the status quo in Europe and in its relations with the West. Medvedev pursued cooperation with the West over Iran's nuclear program (which began under Putin's presidential tenure), the U.S.-Russian "reset" and enhanced arms control agreements. Medvedev even abstained on a 2011 UN Security Council resolution to intervene in Libya, a policy that Russia disagreed with. Moreover, Russian revisionism did not occur immediately following NATO's encroaching expansion in 2004, or even later in 2007, when the Baltic States, along with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia were admitted to the European Union. Instead, and despite denunciations issued by Russia's political and military leaders, Russia's response was relatively muted and it still sought cooperation with the West.

Russia's aggression in its near abroad came most notably after the 2013 Maidan movement in Ukraine. It was at this point when Moscow reached the conclusion that the European Union had become completely intertwined with NATO, presenting a triple threat in the near abroad's political, economic and military movement away from Russia. In the immediate chaos following Viktor Yanukovich's downfall, Putin saw a unique opportunity to act and annex Crimea for the

[841] Ibid.

Russian state. Overall, international conditions were ripe for revisionist action, with the heightened threat of democratic contagion and Putin's perceived window of opportunity to act on Crimea.

However, these international factors were compounded by internal dynamics and challenges within Russia, which affected Putin's calculus on the costs and benefits of revisionist action in Russian foreign policy. Foremost among them were domestic instability and Putin's weakened legitimacy, illustrated in the massive anti-Putin protests following Putin's return to the presidency in 2012. Putin's latitude on foreign policy and ability to carry out decisions quickly were helped by his consolidation of power in Russian political and societal life. Putin over of the span of his years in power implemented measures to "deinstitutionalize" the foreign policy establishment, taking power away from institutions and moving it into the hands of a few individuals associated through informal networks and shared backgrounds in the security services. As will be further discussed, these domestic factors should be taken into account if we are to develop an accurate description of why Putin moved Russia in a revisionist direction.

China Case Studies

Chinese foreign policy in East Asia across three case studies (2002-2007; 2007-2012; 2012-2016) operated in the context of "strategic opportunity," meaning that China's benign international environment presented the nation with an opportunity to continue its economic development in the absence of critical external security threats. In this context, Chinese political and military leaders went to great lengths to alleviate concerns and avoid a balancing coalition against the nation's rising economic and military power.

Moreover, for the years under investigation in this study, China did not pursue a linear path from a status quo to a revisionist power. In general, China both conceded and demanded concessions from other powers in the Asia Pacific. At various times, Beijing pursued cooperative strategies with its ASEAN neighbors over the South China Sea while becoming increasingly combative with Japan over territory and energy resources in the East China Sea. At other times, China used its economic leverage and military advantages to force its smaller regional neighbors to bend to its will. In China's relations with the U.S., Beijing sought further collaboration on security and

economic-related matters while vehemently pushing back on America's Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea and America's stance that contested territories should be settled through international arbitration.

Under Hu Jintao (2002-2012), China pursued vigorous "energy diplomacy" to acquire alternative energy sources in Africa and Latin America. Hu took steps to secure routes for China's energy supplies by devoting more resources to the Chinese maritime capabilities. Hu between 2002-2007 also sought cooperation with its ASEAN partners, settling disputes in the South China Sea and negotiating free trade deals. Over the next five years (2007 to 2012), China contended with "America's pivot to Asia" carried out by the Obama administration in the wake of the global financial crisis. Concurrently, China's economy gained ground relative to Western economies, and even surpassed Japan as the second largest economy in the world by 2011. As China's economic strength grew, the nation became increasingly assertive in its maritime periphery. Hu's outgoing political report as general secretary in November 2012 reminded China's neighbors that the world's second-largest economic power had a commitment to "enhance our capacity for exploiting marine resources... resolutely safeguard China's maritime rights and interests, and build China into a strong maritime power."[842] To do so, he called for building a PLA that would be "commensurate with China's international standing."[843]

As China's leadership transitioned from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, one could argue that China's foreign policy strategies were relatively pragmatic and made sense in the context of China's increasing power. In a realist framework, China's increasingly assertive stance in East Asia is an illustration of the Thucydides adage: "The strong will do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." In other words, China is pursuing revisionist actions because it *can.* Yet certain aspects of Xi Jinping's foreign policy rhetoric and actions immediately upon assuming power do not hold with realist explanations for why a state would seek to maximize its power beyond its security requirements.

[842] Ibid.
[843] Ibid.

One reason is that Xi Jinping seems to maintain the perspective that his predecessors held: China is still operating in a benign environment that serves its domestic development goals well. Yet Xi early on in his tenure as leader of the CCP articulated a new grand strategy under the auspices of the "Chinese dream" and a "new type of great power relations," which signaled a shift in Chinese internal preferences toward seeking a great role for China in the region and vis-à-vis the United States. Xi's rhetorical cues took place alongside significant military modernization programs and defense reforms aimed at transforming China's maritime capabilities from a brown water navy to a blue water navy. Particularly in the South China Sea, where it began reclaiming and militarizing islands, China under Xi has exhibited a turn towards revisionism not seen in China's reform era beginning with Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s.

Despite China's growing economic and military clout in the region (which is still dwarfed by U.S. economic and military power), relative power dynamics and changing international conditions do not explain fully why Beijing moved with such speed and alacrity on its territorial disputes when it had previously pursued more diplomatic advances. Why did Beijing unilaterally pursue an ADIZ in the East China Sea in 2013 and launch its extensive land reclamation projects in the South China Sea the same year, flaming tensions with the regional actors and the United States?

Greater insight into the domestic developments under Xi Jinping lend understanding to the changes in China's foreign policy strategy and tactics in the region mentioned here. Indeed, the complex narrative of Chinese foreign policy in the twenty-first century requires an assessment of China's political leadership, factional interests, consolidation of power under Xi Jinping and ongoing legitimacy issues facing the Chinese Communist Party. As an authoritarian state, China must maintain political stability in an era of dynamic but waning economic growth and spur nationalism among its population without inciting protest. The implications of walking this fine line do not stop at the water's edge.

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Finally, the most revisionist of Russian and Chinese actions belie rationalist and structural explanations. Why would Russia choose to annex territory belonging to another state if the repercussions could be international sanctions and isolation that would weaken an already

struggling economy? Why would China reclaim territory in international waters rebuffing international law and risking confrontation in a region whose stability China relies on for its continued economic development? In part, these questions can be assessed from the perspective of Russian and Chinese history and strategic culture. In the case of Crimea, Vladimir Putin and many Russians have never accepted Ukraine as the rightful sovereign over this territory. Moreover, Russia's emphasis on protecting the country's near-abroad is influenced by Russian strategic culture, usually recognized as a deep-set feeling of insecurity along its Western border and a desire to constitute the post-Soviet space as a political, economic and military buffer zone.

In the Asia Pacific, one could argue that China under Xi Jinping is merely asserting itself in waters that the nation believes have historically "belonged" to China. It is also seeking to develop bilateral relations with other states in the region from the perspective of a "middle kingdom" mentality in which China's smaller neighbors will kowtow to China's superior strengths. But strategic culture does not explain the level of intensity and timing with which Russia and China have carried out their revisionist strategies. Taking domestic factors in account can help make sense of why both states have pursued policies that on the surface appear overly bellicose or not worth the risks they entail. Simply put, incorporating an analytic focus on domestic political, economic and societal conditions leads to a more accurate depiction of the origins of revisionist goals, the timing of articulated policies, and the implementation of foreign policy and military strategies.

II. Validity of Propositions

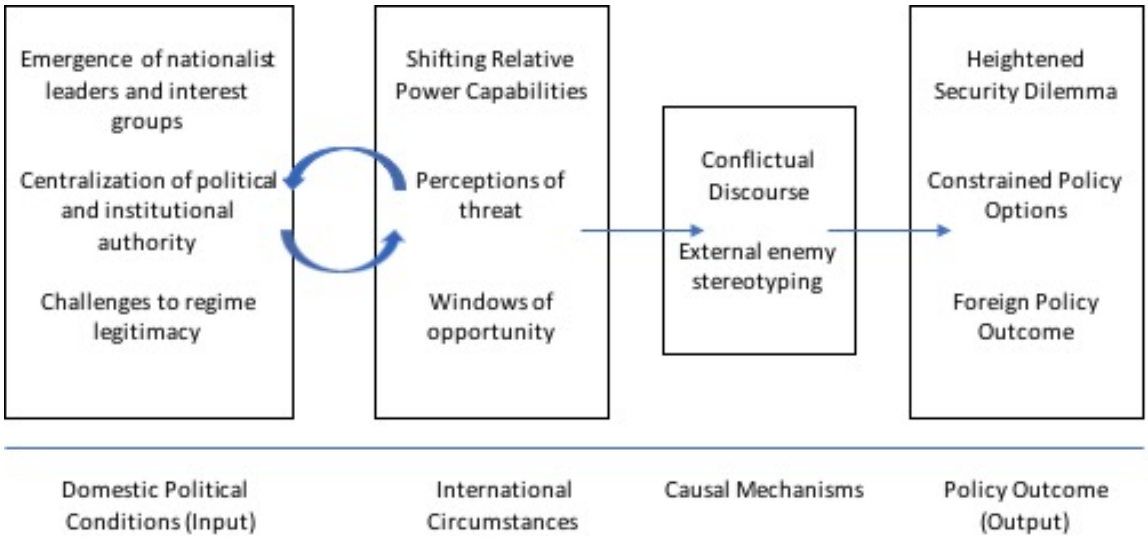
How did the hypotheses fare in explaining twenty-first century Russian and Chinese foreign policy? In other words, what factors in resurgent authoritarianism prove to have the greatest implications for regional and global security? To recall, this research set forth hypotheses regarding internal processes that might influence great power authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China to adopt and implement revisionist strategies. These hypotheses were articulated as follows:

Primary Hypotheses
H1: Authoritarian government preferences will mirror the ideas and interests of the political leaders, political organizations and economic groups that control the resources the regime needs to survive politically. Revisionist foreign policies are more likely when nationalist individuals and groups dominate the political system.
H2: The centralization of political and institutional authority over wide ranging policy areas, the removal of political opposition and the weakening of institutions[844] allow an autocrat to carry out policies with less accountability or retribution. This also means that individual preferences will have more influence over decision-making.
H3: Domestic legitimacy problems – internally or externally inspired – threaten an autocratic leader's ability to retain effective control and power over his office and therefore influence his decision making in the domestic and foreign policy realms.

Each hypothesis relied on preexisting theoretical assumptions, which were explored in Chapter 3 and then tested throughout the case studies. Each hypothesis was also designed under the supposition that structural factors alone are not entirely conclusive in understanding a state's foreign policy preferences and behavior. Ultimately, every case study under consideration was defined by complex causality and an interaction of several evolving factors – both domestic and international. Importantly, the hypotheses on the influence of domestic factors on foreign policy decision making were not designed to stand in isolation from international conditions that also affect a state's foreign policy trajectory. As such, this research proposed a causal logic (illustrated below) in which internal political, economic and societal factors interact with evolving international circumstances to influence the policy options available to leaders:

[844] The weakening of institutions includes the repression of independent press through heightened censorship and surveillance of civil society.

Causal Logic



When we focus specifically on the domestic-level variables influencing foreign policy decision making, certain aspects of each hypothesis proved more tenable than others in the context of this case study research. Below are several insights that we can draw on the validity of these hypotheses.

H1: The Dominance of Nationalist Leaders in Political Processes

To recall, this hypothesis stressed the influence on foreign policy of individuals, elite groups and the ideologies they propound. It argued that revisionist foreign policies, or "overexpansion," in Jack Snyder's words, are the product of nationalist domestic political coalitions formed among groups that stand to benefit from expansion and military preparations. These groups, including economic or military actors, or state bureaucracies, carry out political activities to pursue their various hawkish and militarist interests and rely on propaganda tools of the state to justify their self-serving policies in terms a broader public interest. Ultimately, when unitary systems become dominated by individuals or parties that might gain from expansion and have no countervailing political forces to keep them in check, revisionism is quite possible.

The composition and interests of elite (IV #1) had a strong influence on Russian foreign policy, particularly in the case study covering the period 2012-2016, in which Putin further "destinstitutionalized" the foreign policy sphere and relied more heavily on an informal network of close advisors. Over all three Russian case studies, there is little doubt that Putin's power base resided with individuals from the Russian security services and the FSB, especially following Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 when he steadily removed non-intelligence personnel from his inner orbit. Unlike the Chinese national security decision making process that operates in a formalized system, Putin relies on a small group of individuals through informal networks tied together by backgrounds in the Russian security services.

This has influenced Russia's foreign policy in that the use of non-military instruments and tactics from the intelligence realm (specifically the FSB and the GRU) have made their way into what might be considered the realm of traditional military and security affairs. As illustrations, GRU operatives and tactics were employed during the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of eastern Ukraine in the training of local militias. The FSB also made attempts to infiltrate Ukrainian civil service organizations and spread disinformation among the local population about Russia and the central Ukrainian government. Internally, the rise of the security apparatus to the forefront of Russian politics also furthered Putin's consolidation of control through the jailing of journalists, the harassment of political opposition figures and the monitoring of civil society groups.

The role that elites and their interests play in the development and implementation of Chinese foreign policy is more complex. In some respects, the Chinese foreign policy apparatus throughout the twenty-first century has incorporated a more diverse set of voices, even if many of these voices play an indirect and informal role in debates. New actors include a myriad of interests, such as Chinese state-owned enterprises, think tanks, and energy companies. Yet central authority within the Chinese political system lies with the Central Committee, the State Council, the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee, making the interests of individuals on these select bodies paramount to any diversification that may occur among lower-level voices.

From the Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping eras of political leadership, the composition of elites on these decision making bodies shifted from those with a *tuanpai* background in the Communist Youth League, to *princelings,* or those whose parents were of the revolutionary generation and held

prominent positions in the early years of the CCP. Xi Jinping's *princeling* background may influence his political style and preference for keeping his peers off-balance and his cards close to his chest. However, across the Chinese case studies, research showed that the interests of the *party* were paramount to individual preferences. Furthermore, high powered individuals are defined more by their positions within the party apparatus than by their own personal interests or ambitions. Therefore, this research finds that the central role and overriding power of the Communist Party in Chinese decision making leads this independent variable and hypothesis to be less explanatory and conclusive than in the Russian case studies.

H2: Consolidation of Control and Removal of Opposition Forces

This hypothesis argued that institutions responsible for maintaining an autocrat's power internally can also affect a state's foreign policies. When institutional processes shift to enhance authoritarian control within a society, foreign policy decision making processes can also change. Such processes analyzed in this study included the centralization of authority over wide ranging policy areas, the repression of political opposition, and the weakening of institutions (such as an independent press) through heightened censorship and surveillance of civil society. This hypothesis also argued that under conditions of ineffective or nonexistent constraints on an autocrat, the personal preferences, background and perceptions of the individual leader will weigh more on foreign policy objectives and behavior.

In the Russia case studies, the reemergence of the security services, or "siloviki," as a powerful political force occurred in a competitive authoritarian system led by an increasingly hyper-presidency and networks of informal advisors and patrons. Under Putin's rule, Russia's political system shifted even further in the direction of a personalist system, in which Putin was not constrained by powerful elites or a critical public. Politically, Putin coopted various political parties and factions under the umbrella of his political party, *United Russia,* appealing to the support of various groups when necessary for his own aims. This allowed him to avoid serious debate in the legislature over critical issues of national security and foreign policy. The centralization of power under Putin also means that his individual intentions, perceptions and worldview matter more in understanding Russia's foreign policy. While Putin has

deinstitutionalized the political system far more than Xi, the steps that Xi has taken to centralize decision making authority may also mean that his own perceptions matter more than under previous generations of leadership, where collective leadership was emphasized to a greater extent.

This research found Putin's cooptation of the Russian media landscape to be one of the most important factors of authoritarian control behind foreign policy decision making. Specifically, the state-controlled television environment allowed the Kremlin to project tightly honed messages about domestic and international events. It also allowed Putin to shape perceptions about himself, his hold on power, and his ability to defend Russia from outside threats. Regarding Russia's military endeavors in Ukraine and in Syria, Russians see glorified images of Russian airstrikes on state-run channels that fit into the national psyche of Russia as a great power and as a decisive force in international politics.

Manipulation of the media landscape has helped Putin to maintain high popularity ratings, typically above 80 percent, while satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Russian government remains far lower around 40 percent. The gap in Putin's popularity and that of the Russian governments is due, in part, to the "cult of personality" Putin developed through the media landscape, which allowed him to avoid blame for poor policy outcomes domestically and internationally.

The consolidation of control under Xi Jinping in the third case study (2012-2016) occurred through different means. Most blatant among the actions taken by Xi was his accumulation of official titles and oversight of important bodies. Since becoming general secretary, Xi has acquired thirteen official top posts in China's political system. The Third Plenum in November 2013 served as an inflection point in Xi's centralization of power in defense and national security decision-making. Following the plenum, two new high-level bodies were established: the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform and the National Security Commission, both of which report directly to Xi. Xi also carried out military reforms following the third plenum that are perceived as bringing the military under firmer control of the party and specifically under the Central Military Commission, which Xi chairs.

In the media space, Xi has (similar to Putin) developed a distinct cult of personality around his rule. This practice stands in contrast to Hu Jintao, who never enjoyed the media adoration that Xi has received, and Jiang Zemin, who eschewed personality cults and favored images of collective leadership. In Xi's case, state propaganda portrays Xi as an "incorruptible and self-sacrificial 'mix of everyman and superman.'"[845] He is also idolized in patriotic education campaigns. Xi's propaganda efforts have led to high domestic approval ratings and perhaps a sense of insulation from blame the government might receive for poor policy outcomes. A similar phenomenon was identified throughout the Russia case studies in Putin's high approval ratings and protection from strong public criticism, particularly after Russia's intervention in Ukraine starting in 2014.

While these numerous examples paint the picture of a Chinese leader that has vastly consolidated power under his own rule, there is still speculation that Xi's consolidation of power is anything but a slight shift away from business as usual. Moreover, many implications of Xi's consolidation of control are still uncertain. As Cheng Li questions, "Will Xi's ongoing concentration of power reverse the trend of collective leadership, which has been a defining characteristic of post-Deng Chinese politics?"[846] There is no definitive answer to this question. Furthermore, implementing a centralized policy from Beijing still faces significant pushback from regional and provincial leaders, which led party leadership to anoint Xi with the title of "core leader"[847] in the hope of building support within the party for Xi's economic and anti-corruption policies. Finally, Xi is operating within a tightly controlled and formalized system that was developed by Chinese leaders after Mao in order to make it extremely difficult for a single individual to run away with policy, as Mao did.

Keeping both sides of this debate in mind, this research argues that this consolidation of control under Xi has three important effects on Chinese foreign policy. First, Xi's consolidation has had a "unifying" effect on Chinese foreign policy; there is more coordination and less discordance in the actions of Chinese companies and military actors than there was under Hu Jintao, as direction now comes from centralized bodies chaired by Xi Jinping. Second, Xi's centrality within the political

[845] Tony Saichs, "Reflections on a Survey of Global Perceptions of International Leaders and World Powers," Ash Center Occasional Papers Series, December 2014.
[846] Ibid.
[847] There is also speculation that Xi anointed himself with this title.

system and his surreptitious governing style raises the opportunity cost for individuals within the bureaucracy of taking meaningful action, because few actors have complete knowledge of Xi's support. This may cause policymakers to be more risk averse, rather than less. Third, for Chinese strategy on contentious issues such as the South China Sea or tensions with Japan in the East China Sea, it is unlikely that a "runaway general" will dictate policy without a coordinated policy from Zhongnanhai. That being said, it is evident through the consolidating moves outlined here that if Xi indicates his support for a policy shift – whether aggressive or cautious – his decision is unlikely to meet any pushback. Therefore, consolidation under Xi, in line with this purported hypothesis, might lead to damaging policies in the future when decisions that turn out to be mistakes are not reversed.

H3: Challenges to Regime Legitimacy

This final hypothesis argued that authoritarian regimes, lacking the legitimacy provided by electoral processes, rely on a combination of economic performance and nationalism as their main pillars of legitimacy. When economic performance falters and the potential for domestic instability rises, a regime will rely more on coercive measures and other pillars of legitimacy, such as nationalism, to quell dissent. As part of their legitimation strategies, Illiberal states can use identification enhancing tactics[848] to contrast the regime and its supporters with "outsiders" or "external enemies." Moreover, if an autocratic regime fears a fracturing of regime support among elite groups, it may adopt certain hardline foreign policy rhetoric and positions to mobilize their base, enhance their credibility, and discredit opposition.

This hypothesis also incorporated external challenges to autocratic regime legitimacy, emanating from outside actors and central norms of the international order. Specific challenges include U.S. democracy promotion efforts, which the Russian and Chinese regimes perceive as directed against them and nations in which they have vested interests. Other challenges include norms that the U.S. and international institutions uphold, such as the notion that states have a right to self-

[848] Jason Lyall puts forward a convincing argument that the origins of revisionism are found in the nature of the collective identity that a regime uses to legitimate its rule. For an extensive and detailed study on this hypothesis, see Jason Lyall, "Paths of Ruin: Why Revisionist States Arise and Die in World Politics," PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2005.

determination and governance without interference. This principle inhibits Russia and China from developing spheres of influence in which they can influence the domestic politics of their smaller neighbors – a practice that great powers have traditionally seen as their legitimate right.

In general, this research finds that diversionary war theories and arguments that ground international aggression in domestic weaknesses are overly simplistic. That being said, a series of domestic and international challenges to the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes in Russia and China have influenced their foreign policy decision making. In contemporary Russia, the link between challenges to internal legitimacy and revisionist foreign policies came most notably during the 2011 and 2012 Russian parliamentary and presidential elections and the massive anti-Putin protests that ensued. Internal political objectives of "regime-proofing" prompted a a nationalist foreign policy approach that emphasizes Russia as the conservative and true Europe, while characterizing the U.S. and the EU as threatening to Russian interests.

Russia has a history of revolution in which the population, and factions of the political elite, have attempted to overthrow the nation's leaders with little warning. In the economic stagnation following the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, the Russian elite who amassed a great deal of wealth under Putin were watching closely for any perceived signs of weakness from Putin and his inner circle. Indeed, for Putin to lose the support of the political and economic elite, all that is needed is the *perception* that he is losing control. To this extent, Putin from 2012-2016 based his legitimacy around building Russia's military into an international force that Russians could be proud of, and developing the perception that he serves as the "defender of the people" from Western threats. Moreover, winning full sovereignty in Russian domestic politics (through the removal of outside influences) and in its foreign policies (allowing Russia more room to maneuver absent meaningful constraints from other great powers) became more important following Putin's return to the presidency in 2012.

Furthermore, the Kremlin's shock at the anti-Putin protests led it to ramp up anti-Americanism and anti-Western rhetoric to levels not seen since the U.S. condemned Russia for its war with Georgia in 2008. This is why the Kremlin's rhetoric and posturing took on a decidedly anti-Western character, even prior to the fall of Yanukovich and Russia's annexation of Crimea.

However, legitimacy concerns within the Kremlin during this time should be analyzed in conjunction with evolving circumstances in Russia's near abroad. Specifically, the 2013 Maidan movement in Ukraine represented a red line for Moscow and provided Putin with an opportunity to take swift action. Due to Ukraine's symbolic, political, and economic importance to Russia, Putin could not afford to lose Ukraine to the European Union. Therefore, the third case study (2012-2016) in which Russia moved in a fully revisionist direction, considers both domestic and international circumstances important.

In China, domestic instability and challenges to the CCP's legitimacy are even more fickle influences in foreign policy decision making. In general, Chinese leaders must promote nationalism alongside economic prosperity as the main pillars of the CCP's legitimacy. Yet Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping faced an additional challenge to the CCP's legitimacy: rampant corruption within party ranks that had the ability to destroy the party from the inside out. As such, Xi enacted an extensive anti-corruption campaign after coming to power in 2012, which was aimed at quelling the public's concerns over rampant corruption. Importantly, Xi's campaign has also led to a "purging" of senior political and military officials for possible reasons other than corruption, but this is still in the realm of speculation.

In its connection to Chinese foreign policy, this research finds that legitimacy concerns help to explain China's more assertive posture on territorial claims in its maritime periphery and particularly in the South China Sea, which leadership first articulated as a core interest in 2009. As a political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing attested, on China's core interests, "It is about honor and standing up after generations of victimization, especially on the periphery where national interests are at stake."[849] Xi must lead a population that has increasingly only known a strong China. Therefore, Chinese leadership cannot afford to look weak if it is perceived as backing down on important and emotional issues to the Chinese public.

However, the CCP must also manage nationalist sentiment among its population so that it does not move beyond the control of the Communist Party. This is particularly important as the CCP under Xi Jinping seeks to implement significant economic reforms in an era of high economic inequality.

[849] Author interview with political officers (names undisclosed) at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, October 21, 2016.

With the ultimate goal of social stability, it is unclear how far the CCP will go to boost nationalism over international challenges, especially when a stable international environment is needed for China's continued economic development. Yet China's history provides a stark warning to the current political leadership of what can happen when the government appears weak and unable to defend the nation's interests abroad. Thus, legitimacy will remain an important factor in Chinese foreign policy.

III. Implications for Scholarship

This dissertation makes contributions to two fields of study: comparative politics and international security. First, this research contributes to the field of comparative politics through its analysis of modern authoritarianism as a new and evolving phenomenon that deserves greater conceptual clarity. Specifically, the first two chapters of this dissertation assessed how modern authoritarian regimes differ from their twentieth-century totalitarian predecessors in the mechanisms they use to maintain institutional power, legitimacy and control. In discussing the adaptations authoritarian regimes made in the transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era, this research explored the concept of "competitive authoritarianism" as a new framework for assessing power dynamics within authoritarian regimes. Essentially, competitive authoritarian regimes contain elements of both authoritarianism and democracy, but are often capable of keeping power in the hands of undemocratic rulers in ways that are important to understand – including the creation or coopting of political parties, new and subtle instruments of coercion, and state capture of the economy. This research also assessed the key differences between institutions and leadership-elite dynamics across various forms of authoritarian regimes – including personalist, single-party and military controlled governments – and addressed what types of threats these authoritarian regimes face, and how such threats are traditionally handled. This was an essential conceptual framework to develop before ascertaining the political exigencies that authoritarian regimes in Russia and China face and how they operate internally to make key decisions on domestic and foreign policy.

In the field of international security, this research developed conceptual clarity and integrated theoretical frameworks around the study of foreign policy revisionism. This dissertation first developed a concept of "measured revisionism" that builds from existing literature on twentieth-century revisionism and is adapted to meet the realities of the twenty-first century. Measured

revisionist powers seek to alter the balance of power in their regions primarily through strategies and tactics that incorporate the use of non-military or non-kinetic tools over a series of long-term and incremental steps. In practice, the aim of measured revisionist strategies is to achieve national objectives while remaining below the threshold of costly obligatory responses and escalatory thresholds from balancing coalitions. This conceptual framework also brings into focus a wide range of tactics – including cyber and complex influence operations – available to states today.

Theoretically, this research advanced and tested theories primarily from the neoclassical school, which assess the origins of state behavior through a focus on factors that exist below the systemic level. Primary factors of analysis in these theories are political and economic variables within states and societies, including elites and the political institutions in which they operate. The purpose of advancing such theoretical arguments is to provide a complementary narrative to existing realist and rationalist explanations of revisionism that rely primarily on structural distributions of power. After advancing these theories, the case studies on domestic politics and foreign policy in contemporary Russia and China served as qualitative studies that lend credibility to the theory of neoclassical realism and to mid-range theories that highlight the influence of domestic contingencies on foreign policy decision making.

Finally, in contemporary studies on authoritarianism, few works synthesize insights from analysis of comparative politics with security-related works of conflict initiation and revisionism. This is a particularly potent gap in academic acumen, given the rise of authoritarianism as a global trend, as well as the increase in assertive foreign policy behavior being exhibited by great power authoritarian regimes today. The conceptual and theoretical aims of this research are therefore to integrate a focus on the sources of stability in modern authoritarian regimes with an assessment of the factors behind conflict and revisionism in international relations.

IV. Implications for Policy: What do Russian and Chinese Revisionism Mean for U.S. Foreign Policy?

As Samuel Huntington wrote in his seminal piece, "The Clash of Civilizations" in 1993, "The central axis of world politics in the future is likely to be... the conflict between 'the West and the Rest' and the responses of non-Western civilizations to Western power and values." Huntington

put forward three courses for non-Western states to take in response to the West's preeminent power: isolation (as in the case of North Korea); "band-wagoning" to join Western institutions and abide by Western norms; and "balancing" to challenge the West by developing new economic and military power centers. Using Huntington's three courses as a guide, it is clear that Russia and China's trajectories have shifted from predominantly those of band-wagoning to balancing, albeit to different degrees. Russia has moved from superficial bandwagoning with the West in the 1990s over a European security order it never believed in to outright balancing – seeking to destabilize NATO, fracture the European Union and create chaos in the United States. China's course has thus far been subtler. It still relies on close cooperation with the West for its own economic development, whereas Putin has recently promoted a sort of economic autarky to strengthen domestic industries. As such, China has not attempted outright balancing against the West on transnational economic or security issues, but it has shifted toward balancing against U.S. preeminence in the Asia Pacific.

Within this framework, Russia and China, while both great power authoritarian regimes with revisionist aims, present different challenges to U.S. foreign policy and the liberal world order. Both have proven interested in developing a sphere in influence in their respective regions and are guided by pragmatic interests, instead of ideological pursuits. Why then do the challenges they pose differ when both are carrying out revisionist acts– including territorial aggression – that have not been seen since the end of the Cold War? First, Russia and China represent two different propositions of the authoritarian model, one as a declining power and the other as a rising power. This affects their ability to carry out sustained acts of coercion and aggression through economic and military means. Second, each has exhibited a varying tolerance for risk in their foreign policies, as Russia's tolerance under Putin appears higher than China's under Xi. This makes Russia a more overtly revisionist power than China, and one that has proven more willing to rely on its hard-military capabilities to achieve its interests.

Third, each has a fundamentally different relationship with the United States and a different perception of America's role in the world. For Russia, real rapprochement with the U.S. in the near-term is unlikely as Putin's view that the U.S. is an instigator of chaos has only hardened in recent years. China, on the other hand, has powerful vested interests in maintaining a good

relationship with the United States that relies in part on cooperation and accommodation. Specifically, good relations with the United States are needed to achieve China's two 'centenary goals' of economic development. Moreover, China's vision of a "new type of great power relations" is more benign than Russia's objective, which is to prove its equality, and ideally its own superiority, by weakening the United States.

Finally, each has a distinct perception of the current international system and a vision for the future world order. Russia sees the current international system, and particularly its regional security orders, as anathema to its own interests. By contrast, China has a significant stake in maintaining the current order and is a beneficiary of its stability. As an example, China would prefer to see a stable and prosperous Europe that can serve as an export market for its goods. Russia sees European solidarity, and particularly the European security order, as inherently slanted against Russian interests. As such, Putin has taken steps to actively expedite its decline. Russia sees future world order in a multipolar framework, in which it is one of the key poles of influence and power; China looks at the future of the international system as fundamentally bipolar, where the U.S. and China maintain preeminent positions and Russia is lower on the spectrum of importance and influence.

Based on these similarities and differences, Russia and China's trajectories have tremendous implications for regional and global security, particularly as their revisionist courses occur alongside deepening authoritarianism in both countries. As discussed, this research has found that specific internal factors have an influencing role on foreign policy decision making, and therefore are necessary in developing an accurate depiction of why states develop goals and take actions in the international realm. Keeping the findings presented in this conclusion in mind, what are the implications for U.S. foreign policy? To note, this research does not promote specific policy *recommendations.* The endeavor of this exercise should not be to cast judgment on political debates nor to choose sides based on normative arguments. That being said, there are insights from this research that apply to ongoing policy debates over U.S. strategy towards Russia and China. If U.S. strategy in the post-Cold War era has been to promote greater cooperation and incorporate Russia and China into Western institutions, U.S. strategy over the next several years might be to limit the expansion of their military might and prevent the escalation of possible conflict. If this is

the case, what considerations should policymakers keep in mind as they craft the contours of this strategy?

First, the U.S. must determine whether and how it will choose to confront revisionism in Russia and China's regional strategies. The U.S. is not a passive observer to the effects of Russia and China's foreign policies. This is primarily because the U.S. has national security interests in the regions of Eastern Europe and in East Asia where both countries are pursuing more assertive military strategies with destabilizing effects. Moreover, their preferences and actions have proven unsettling to their neighbors, and in certain instances, to U.S. formal security allies. Should the U.S. accommodate China's rise in Asia, accepting that its rising power will lead to a commensurately larger role in regional security? Should the U.S. confront Russian aggression everywhere, or only where the U.S. has vital national interests at stake? It is beyond the scope of this research to answer the questions posed here, but they are fundamentally important for policymakers to address in crafting the future of U.S. grand strategy. Determining where and on what issues the U.S. and its allies (such as NATO) are willing to risk confrontation will help to avoid reactionary strategies that give revisionists the upper hand.

This leads to the second component of a U.S. strategy vis-à-vis Russia and China: The U.S. must maintain the military, political, economic, and soft power needed to secure its interests and those of its closest allies. Furthermore, the U.S. must do so in a geopolitical context where the West is no longer at the peak of power it enjoyed at the end of the Cold War**.** As discussed throughout this research, revisionist states are more willing than status quo states to carry out risky foreign policies and to perceive the benefits of expansion as outweighing the costs – whether those costs be in domestic retribution or the likelihood of a meaningful international response to aggressive behavior. In other words, they value what they covet more than what they possess. The extent to which the U.S. can raise the costs of revisionism in regions where it has national security interests at stake, including in Eastern Europe and the Asia Pacific, diminishes the ability of revisionist powers to act on their expansionary impulses.

Third, this research has argued that successful U.S. strategy towards Russia and China requires deeper understanding of the internal dynamics in which their leaders operate. It is

not enough to assess power shifts in the international system, "windows of opportunity," or threats to Russian and Chinese national security in order to determine what foreign policies they will craft. These factors alone have not explained their foreign policy shifts over the past sixteen years and they will not be fully conclusive moving forward. Instead, we must assess the changing role of domestic institutions in foreign policy decision making, the emergence of new leaders and new ideas, and the pillars of legitimacy that regimes rely on to stay in power. In other words, we must broaden the lens of inquiry beyond relative material capabilities to understand why great powers pursue revisionist strategies. Internal legitimation strategies, changing actors in the decision-making processes, and their ability to consolidate control all have important influences on the path a nation pursues in the international sphere.

Finally, policymakers must continue to wrestle with the role of values and norms in U.S. foreign policy. The United States has traditionally – over the past 70 years – placed an emphasis on maintaining the security, stability and norms of the liberal world order. The United States and its allies have done this through trade deals, security partnerships and alliances, and, as a last resort, military intervention. The U.S. has carried out these efforts alongside the promotion of democratic institutions and human rights. In championing these values, the U.S. has not always been consistent, but it has been persistent. Successive presidents have found ways to cooperate with Russia and China on issues of mutual interest, while challenging their leaders on human rights abuses at home. Currently, there are signs that the worldwide appeal of liberal democratic institutions is waning,[850] and the U.S. under the Trump Administration has thus far championed a transactional foreign policy lacking (or devoid) of support for democratic values. Objectively, the promotion of a transactional foreign policy may help to secure greater cooperation from autocratic leaders who are tired of having their legitimacy challenged by the United States and the international community. But policymakers should continue to ask themselves, at what cost does this alleviation of pressure come?

V. War Need Not be Inevitable...

[850] There is survey data that illustrates this trend. See the World Values Survey, 2016 and corresponding article by Roberto Stefan Foa and Yasha Mounk, "The Signs of Deconsolidation," *The Journal of Democracy,* January 2017.

On June 10, 1963, President John F. Kennedy gave the commencement address at American University in Washington, DC. Nine months prior, the world had only narrowly survived the Cuban missile crisis. The United States and the Soviet Union remained on the brink of nuclear war, as each tried to outpace the other in developing weapons of mass destruction. Yet Kennedy offered a different path forward. He said, "Too many of us think [peace] is impossible. Too many think it unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable – that mankind is doomed – that we are gripped by forces we cannot control... we need not accept that view."[851]

Today, the uncertain intentions associated with China's rise and the aggressive character of Russia's decline presents our era with a new set of challenges that make it easy to dismiss longstanding peace between the great powers as impossible. Yet as Kennedy urged, "Peace need not be impracticable, and war need not be inevitable." Peace between great powers may be an aberration of modern history, but the likelihood of conflict between the United States, Russia and China can be diminished if each nation sees the benefits of cooperation as outweighing the costs of competition. Revisionist powers alter this cost-benefit calculus by perceiving fewer costs to their actions. Avoiding escalation will require an understanding of the motivations behind Russia and China's evolving foreign policies and the internal roots of their revisionist agendas. The future of stability and peace in the international system rests on this great power trifecta.

[851] John F. Kennedy, Commencement Address at American University, Washington DC, June 10, 1963. Accessed at: https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/American-University_19630610.aspx

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