

**CHAPTER FOUR –**

**GEOPOLITICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NEW ERA: THE  
QUEST FOR CERTAINTY AND THE SEARCH FOR NEW ENEMIES**

Our aim must be to make our whole people think Imperially---think that is to say in spaces that are world wide---and to this end our geographical teaching should be directed.

Halford Mackinder

(quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, 75).

The only way to save our empire from the encroachment of the people is to engage in war, and thus substitute national passions for social aspirations.

Catherine II of Russia

(quoted in Mayer, 1991, 11).

History is marked by alternating movements across the imaginary line that separates East from West in Eurasia.

Herodotus

(quoted in Frank, 1998, ii).

## Introduction:

In Chapter 3 we provided the broad outlines of the American intellectual response to the end of the Cold War, both at the level of policymakers and the public. We also provided the historical and material grounding for the way America perceives the outside world and relates to it. The task here is to flesh out the details of the particular ideas being put forward by the practitioners of geopolitics in the US foreign policy establishment. Geopolitics in America deals with issues other than foreign policy and the global balance of power, placing internal concerns above all else, and determining foreign policy on the basis of these internal concerns. Moreover, geopolitics has an important class dimension, being materially grounded among certain sectors, and representing the culture, values and outlook of certain groups. The (unique) position of the first generation of geopoliticians within the establishment also has to be factored into our account. Therefore, we have to connect the writings of strategic thinkers and geopoliticians to America's diplomatic traditions and political thought. We have to deal with these intellectual efforts in Gramscian terms, using such concepts as organic intellectual, traditional intellectual, and conceptualising their writings as part of a hegemonic ideological project. Just as we must historicise their ideas and trace their genealogy, we must also relate these individuals and their ideas to the establishment and the various social forces vying for power.

I have divided this chapter into sections based on the writings of individual geopoliticians, namely Samuel Huntington, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Henry Kissinger. I do not take this approach in Chapter 5, given that no such dominant

figures exist among the proponents of geo-economics. The thinkers dealt with here are not merely academics, but also public figures and people who have held office. They are highly regarded in academic and political circles, have media appeal, and have the strength of personality and intellectual power to determine whole schools of thought and synthesise a multitude of different ideas into a coherent whole. Dealing with them individually is the most prudent way of writing this chapter. This also means that the job of connecting their ideas to their relationship with different social forces, and tracing the origins of their ideas, is best dealt by means of the tool of intellectual biography. The final point that needs to be made by way of introduction is the relationship of geopolitics to geo-economics. As we made clear in the plan of this thesis, this distinction is analytical, aimed mainly at simplification. The material here *is* relevant to the contents of the next chapter, and I will try to show how geo-economic ideas fit into the writings of these thinkers. Subsequently, I shall certainly bring the geopolitical concerns of these writers to bear on the geo-economic approach.

## Section 1 – Samuel P. Huntington and the ‘American’

### Clash of Civilisations: Realism and Geopolitics in Disguise

#### 1.1 – The Question of Chronology:

##### Why Civilisations, and Why Now?

Ever since the publication of Samuel Huntington’s article “The Clash of Civilizations?” in the Summer 1993 edition of *Foreign Affairs* – followed up by his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* in 1996 – foreign policy debates across the globe have been captivated by this idea. By the admission of both supporters *and* critics, Huntington’s thesis of the future configuration of international relations, conflict, and world order has generated a dialogue over his ideas that has gained considerable currency among various academics, journalists and officials, and has even entered popular debate. One of the most vivid illustrations of how popular a thesis it has become is an interesting story recounted by Gwyn Prins, writing in the 1998 edition of *International Affairs*. While travelling in Zagreb in 1997 he came across a Pakistani policeman who was one of the UN monitors sent to Eastern Slovenia. Although he “expressed pessimism about his mission”, he nonetheless concluded that there really was no other choice but to go there, since this is a “conflict on a fault-line between Muslims and the rest and, as Professor Huntington has explained, these are the battle lines of the future” (quoted in Prins, 1998, 798).



The general consensus is that, not “since the publication of George Kennan’s ‘Mr X’ article has a single academic had so wide and... so pervasive an influence on perceptions of security” (Prins, 1998, 798). The editors of *Foreign Affairs*, the original journal that published Kennan’s article, have been actively promoting the debate on it by taking up this claim, saying that “some” have described it as “the ‘X’ article of the post-Cold War era” (*Foreign Affairs*, 1993, 26). Whether his claims are correct or not is of no real significance for this thesis simply because we are not interested in how the world is ordering itself, but how the US believes the world is ordering itself, and why US leaders adopt such views. The importance of Huntington’s arguments for this thesis lie essentially in what his claims tell us about how intellectuals see the post-Cold War world, and what they intend to do about it; in other words, how exactly does his thesis *fit into* the contemporary debate? Why and how did he develop this thesis, how do others see it, what category does it fit into, and, most importantly, how does Huntington himself see it?

The most prudent approach to take, following Michael Cox, is to focus on the ‘timing’ of the argument. The example he uses to illustrate the importance of this factor is Paul Kennedy’s *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, which also caused a considerable stir in its days. Kennedy was originally writing a book about the rise and fall of great powers generally, and not making a contribution to the debate on American decline raging at the time. Moreover, he only included a section on the US on request from his publishers who wanted to reach a wider and less intellectual readership. In other words, the book that appeared to hold the secrets for determining whether the US would decline or not, and what to do about it, in intention actually had nothing to do with the decline debate! Its popularity in political circles had more to do with its usefulness as a political instrument for winning debates about the economic

and social costs of the Reagan build-up, than its intrinsic intellectual credentials (see Kaplan, 2000). In the case of Huntington, the matter is more complex, and the timing seems very deliberate. Once we bear in mind the timing, we can then compare and contrast his initial argument with what he has written before, and since. This ‘tracing’ of the development of his thesis, and the pattern of continuity and discontinuity of his views, will give us the appropriate insights needed to place this contribution to the post-Cold War debate in its appropriate category.

According to Gearóid Ó Tuathail’s very well researched account of Huntington and his views, it is the “overarching ambition, conciseness, and sloganistic simplicity” of his “mediagenic thesis” that “accounts for its appeal to opinion makers, news journalists, and professional politicians” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 243). His article in *Foreign Affairs* was followed up immediately with a response to criticisms in the journal, then a “*New York Times* opinion editorial piece and subsequent syndicated columnist debate, and... a special Council on Foreign Relations reader” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 243). The follow-up response article he wrote in the November-December 1993 edition of *Foreign Affairs* certainly does give the impression that he was fully prepared for taking his thesis further. In “If Not Civilizations, What?” he does not actually respond in the strict sense of the word, only taking issue with one of the eight pieces of criticism (Fouad Ajami’s article). Of the five sections in the response, only one deals with providing a response, and is directed mainly at Ajami. Instead, he expands on his argument, develops its theoretical foundations, explores new dimensions, and organises the article in a way that curiously resembles the order of the contents in his book. The initial article was a very subdued affair, and did not contain any of the inflammatory remarks and extreme conclusions found in the book.

It is, therefore, safe to conclude that Samuel Huntington knew full well what he was getting into when he wrote the article, and intended to stir up controversy to give him the opportunity to get his views across and gain as wide an audience as possible. According to Ó Tuathail, the thesis was tailored to the various relevant audiences who were “casting about for a new interpretative system by which to order global affairs, given the waning interpretative power of the more optimistic vision of Francis Fukuyama and Bush’s New World Order” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 243). One of Huntington’s supporters, David R. Gress, seconds this view, saying that by the time he wrote the book this “optimism seemed unwarranted”, thereby proving the futility of much of the “foreign, security, and economic aid policies” aimed at promoting democracy and human rights (Gress, 1997, 288). According to Robert Kagan, only a “scant three years after the end of the Cold War, much of the intellectual world was already sick of optimism” (Kagan, 2000, 33). The faith of the foreign policy establishment in the persistence of conflict soon reasserted itself and placed demands on the academic community to produce an adequate analysis of future threats, their nature, and how best to deal with them. According to another supporter of Huntington, James Kurth, up to and until Huntington developed his civilisations thesis there were “at least four major candidates for the definition of the post-Cold War central axis of international conflict” (Kurth, 1994, 4). These were: trade wars, religious wars, ethnic wars, and renewed cold wars. Huntington “*subsumed* the four different kinds of wars into” the clash of civilisations (Kurth, 1994, 4; my italics).

These four “contenders” all represented “reasonable” accounts of the emerging order and were popular in political circles because they were “grounded, by continuity and analogy, in past concepts and experiences” (Kurth, 1994, 5). It was their very popularity that made the formation of a “consensus on the nature of the new



era” and an adequate “focus” for foreign policies near impossible (Kurth, 1994, 5). Huntington, then, was keenly aware of the intellectual problems that faced the foreign policy establishment, which, in turn, suggests that the *rhetorical viability* of his thesis was a major concern from the start. This was the context in which Huntington was operating. However, what Kurth does not do in his account is factor in the issue of what Huntington believed in before he switched to this new thesis. This is one of the most perplexing problems faced by those studying the genealogy of Huntington’s post-Cold War views. Here I am referring to his previous works, specifically his articles “America’s Changing Strategic Interests” (*Survival*, 1991, pp. 3-17) and “Why International Primacy Matters” (*International Security*, 1993, pp. 68-83).

Both articles attempt to map out a new post-Cold War strategy for the US and both express the same policy recommendations, ideas and analysis. But neither even mentions the word – let alone explicates the concept and dynamics of – ‘civilisation’. Huntington invested significant intellectual and political capital in these articles, attempting both to develop a cogent worldview and sell it to the decision-makers. Huntington has a long history of involvement with the International Institute for Strategic Studies, which publishes *Survival*. As the publishers of this journal themselves say, he was a former “Senior Research Associate at the IISS in 1990” and began “preparing an Adelphi Paper on the subject of this article” (Huntington, 1991, 3). Huntington was so confident of the views and policies he put forward in these articles that they “led” him to “support Bill Clinton for the presidency in 1992” and write a “symposium on advice” for Clinton, because Clinton advocated similar policies (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 242). By doing this Huntington deliberately sought to tie in his academic reputation, and the efficacy and popularity of his ideas, with the



fortunes of the most powerful man in the world, the first Democrat to hold presidential office for decades, and the first true post-Cold War president.

Why, then, the sudden and radical change of focus? Without detailed biographical material it is impossible to answer this question conclusively. What interests us primarily here is how his pre-civilisational writings relate to his civilisational writings, if they do at all. But to make these connections we have to look first at what is being connected to his past works, the clash of civilisations thesis, which I proceed to do now. I will incorporate his arguments in these pre-civilisational articles into the corpus of my account of his civilisational thesis.

## 1.2 – The Focus of Huntington’s Thesis: Clash

### of Civilisations, or Clash *Because* of Civilisations?

Given the importance of chronology to understanding Huntington’s thesis, I will focus mainly on what he wrote in his first two articles in *Foreign Affairs*, and bring in various material from the book to supplement my analysis. As the very first subtitle of the clash article indicates, Huntington’s essay was “promoted... as a comprehensive vision of the ‘next pattern of conflict’ in world politics” (Huntington, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, 243). Despite the question mark in the title of the article, he clearly states that his “hypothesis” is that the “fundamental source of conflict in this new world *will not* be primarily ideological” or economic, but instead the “great divisions... and the dominating source of conflict *will* be cultural” (Huntington, 1993a, 22; my italics). He believes that conflicts between civilisations are the product of the “latest phase in the evolution of conflict” in modern history, with conflict shifting from wars between princes, to nation-states, to ideological superstates, and finally to

civilisational states (Huntington, 1993a, 22). The evolutionary leap in this new phase of conflict consists mainly of the fact that in all the previous conflicts of the modern world, these conflicts were “primarily conflicts *within* Western civilization” (Huntington, 1993a, 23; my italics). They could very well be described as “Western civil wars” (William Lind, quoted in Huntington, 1993a, 23).

In the post-Cold War world, conflict “moves out of its Western phase” with the non-Western civilisations moving from being mere “objects of history” and “targets of Western colonialism” to “movers and shapers of history” in their own right (Huntington, 1993a, 23). Hence, the “center-piece” of international politics – the new axis of conflict – “becomes the interaction between Western and non-Western civilizations and among non-Western civilizations” (Huntington, 1993a, 23). The question that has to be answered here is: what exactly does Huntington mean by the ‘Clash of Civilisations?’ What is ‘civilisational’ about these new conflicts? Why should the post-Cold War era merit the label ‘the clash of civilisations?’ Specifically, *why* exactly do civilisations – however defined – clash? He provides an answer to this when he discusses the evolution of conflict over the ages. For Huntington the shift that transformed conflict from “wars between princes to wars between nations” was a shift in the “principal *lines* of conflict”, that is, the nature of the *entities* conflicting (Huntington, 1993a, 23; my italics). This does not necessarily mean that the reasons why these particular entities were conflicting are any different or change fundamentally with the passage of time.

What caused princes to conflict was their attempt to “expand their bureaucracies, their armies, their mercantilist economic strength, and most important, the territory they ruled” (Huntington, 1993a, 23). But, and this is crucial, when Huntington provides his account of the evolution of conflict, he gives no other

different reasons as to why nation-states, ideological-states, and civilisations will conflict. Conflict happens because of this, regardless of *who* is conflicting. What Huntington is talking about is the scope (who engages in conflict) and nature (the nature of the tools used, the particular *way* in which conflict takes place) of conflict, and *not* its sources. The evolution of conflict is an evolution of the nature and methods of the entities conflicting, and *not* an evolution of the reasons why different entities conflict. The most important piece of evidence that proves Huntington does not think that ‘civilisation,’ as such, causes conflict – contrary to what he says – can be found in his discussion of why civilisations will clash. He lists six reasons: how they deal with the fundamental social/political relations, globalisation, identity crises brought about by modernity, responses to Western domination, the stability and power of identity, and the role of culture in promoting economic regionalism. But, when he maps out the new pattern of conflict – the “levels” that conflict occur on – he says that on the “micro-level, adjacent groups... struggle... over the control of territory and each other” (Huntington, 1993a, 29).

At the “macro-level” states “compete for relative military and economic power... control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values” (Huntington, 1993a, 29). Civilisational groups fight for territory and domination only, and civilisational states fight in tandem with groups, and compete for military, economic and political power, with the promotion of what is distinctively cultural about them coming afterwards. Civilisation, in other words, tells us ‘who’ is fighting, but *not why* they are fighting. Civilisations fight for the very same reasons that princes, nation-states and ideological states have fought in the past – the pursuit of self-interest through the acquisition of territory, wealth and power. Huntington practically admits this in an article he wrote



attacking one of his critics, Pierre Hassner. One of the comments he took issue with concerned the neglect of 'power politics' in his book, and Hassner's description of him consequently as a 'cultural determinist'. Huntington tried to prove how seriously he took power politics by quoting from his book these words:

'The distribution of cultures in the world reflects the distribution of power. Trade may or may not follow the flag, but culture almost always follows power' (p. 91)... Similarly, twice in the book (pp. 129-30, 208) I emphasize that conflicts in a world of civilizations will continue to have their origins in those factors 'which have always generated conflict between groups: control of people, territory, wealth, and resources, and relative power' (p. 129).

(Huntington, 1996, quoted in Huntington, 1997, 101).

This means that civilisations are not responsible for the conflicts of the post-Cold War era at all and that culture is not 'to die for,' as he says (see Huntington, 1993b). At the end of the day, all his thesis boils down to is an attempt to determine the new "groupings of countries" – the entities they "belong" to –that will be conflicting (Huntington, 1993b, 194).

Civilisations, as such are relegated merely to the status of "meaningful entities", with the "civilizational paradigm" being only a "useful starting point" for analysis (Huntington, 1993b, 194). The only thing 'new' about this phase is that in the past conflicts were all West-West conflicts, and the only thing civilisational about this phase is that different civilisations are conflicting. Civilisation is, at best, an unintentional by-product of conflict, at worst a (cynically used) tool of conflict, but it is *never* the prime mover of conflict. I will continue to flesh out the contents of his thesis later on in this section, but what has to be dealt with next are the reasons behind his adoption of this particular rhetorical device. Here the dominant concern is the *audience* that Huntington sought to engage with, political and academic. This also



means taking into account chronology, that is, the particular historical context in which he was operating in.

### 1.3 – The Changing Nature of Strategic Discourse:

#### The Rhetoric of Civilisations and the Dilemmas of Realism

As we said above, the immediate backdrop to the emergence of Huntington's thesis was the 'intellectual vacuum' that developed with the collapse of Bush's New World Order project and the ideological rationale provided for it by Francis Fukuyama. But of greater significance was the end of the post-war Cold War order that led to the New World Order and End of History theses. Huntington's shift to a civilisational discourse is a product of the changing language, concepts and theories of foreign policy academics. As he himself says in his IISS article, the "world changed in 1990, and so did *strategic discourse*" (Huntington, 1991, 3; my italics). In the international relations community strategy has historically been a realm dominated by the *realist* academic. The changes the world went through confronted the realist school of thought with a number of dilemmas that threatened the very existence and viability of the realist paradigm. Many in the international relations community saw the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism as the "culmination of the Whig interpretation of history" (Prins, 1998, 794-795). The triumph of democracy and capitalism meant that conflict was a problem of the past and that the only "task" remaining for politicians was "one of fine-tuning this global triumph of the winning formula" (Prins, 1998, 795). This was the intellectual backdrop to Fukuyama's thesis and Bush's use of Wilsonian rhetoric.

These changes had two main consequences for the realist school of thought. The first was that it removed from the international scene the main justification for its paradigm, which was conflict. The historic debate between liberals and realists in international relations seemed to have been resolved in favour of the liberals. This was less of a problem than it seemed because liberal euphoria was soon smashed by political reality, with the conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia, and Central Africa bringing into being new problems that were neither predicted by the liberal paradigm nor soluble by it. This gave realists some breathing space to develop an alternative account of world politics. Huntington's article quite deliberately "struck a chord among" realists who were "troubled by Fukuyama's liberal determinism, or who were disillusioned at the depressingly illiberal direction in which some parts of the world had moved" after the Cold War, "or who were simply unhappy... about Fukuyama's notion that the grand ideological debate was over" (Kagan, 2000, 33). The second problem realists faced was the way in which the Cold War had ended. The Warsaw Pact largely fell apart because of the velvet revolutions of the late 1980s in Eastern Europe. For realists the "great shock" of these revolutions was the "degree to which individuals, armed with ideas and aspirations, proved able to challenge and break the iron grid of structure" (Prins, 1998, 795). Realists, or neo-realists to be specific, use the structure of uncertainty and anarchy in the security sphere as the main justification for their black-box approach to understanding state behaviour; what counts are external factors, not internal factors – hence, Russia is Russia is Russia. The revolutions demonstrated the fact internal factors could no longer be ignored. Also important was the emergence of a new variable on the political scene that did seem to explain many of the *new* conflicts that were emerging in the world, namely, the variable of 'culture'.

The case of Yugoslavia in particular brought to the fore this new variable because it was believed to be one of the root causes of the conflict there. Culture is an intangible variable that generally operates outside of the frame of reference of realists. There was also the problem of globalisation on the horizon, and the previously marginalised issues of economic and social approaches to security that needed to be dealt with. It was in this environment that Huntington was working and thinking about what the future shape of politics would and should be. His response to the various challenges to realism consisted of substituting the confrontations of the Cold War with an “equally big and simple idea, namely that future clashes would be between discrete ‘civilisational blocs’ ” (Prins, 1998, 795). One of the reasons his thesis became popular in policy circles was specifically because it “seems so familiar; it builds on what we know” (Pfaff, 1996, 7). Huntington’s ‘civilising’ of world politics was in reality an attempt to re-impose a realist paradigm on the new cultural variables that had entered the fray, civilising these new factors by *making* them *conform* to the dictates of realism. In the clash of civilisations the “behaviour” of states is still “structurally prescribed,” thus accommodating the cultural variable in a way that is “harmonious with the central assumption of neo-Realism, as defined by Waltz and refined by Buzan” (Prins, 1998, 795).

His usage of civilisation to analyse any conflict allows him to “determine its character in a definitive and totalizing manner” and “impose a closure upon events, situations, and peoples” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 244). This follows the Cold War model of creating a “depluralized and homogenized global space” which transforms contemporary “ambiguities and indeterminacies into graspable certainties and solid truths” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 245). William Pfaff believes that Huntington’s “formulation... found a considerable response”, simply because of its “utility to



bureaucrats dependent on simple policy paradigms” (Pfaff, 1996, 7). Two writers noted that in his thesis he had “replaced the nation-state... with a larger counter: the civilization. But in crucial respects, the game itself goes on as always” (Rubenstein and Crocker, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, 246-247). According to J.G. Ruggie, the way Huntington analyses and pictures the Islamic threat is reminiscent of Cold War, bipolar logic. Ruggie even cites the work of former British intelligence officer John le Carré to support his claim. Le Carré has catalogued and exposed this “demonization of Islam as a substitute for the anti-Communist crusade” in his novel *Our Game* (Carré, 1995, quoted in Ruggie, 1996, 163). According to Muqtedar Khan, “policy entrepreneurs” such as Huntington deliberately “draw a parallel” between Islam and the “former communist threat”, conceptualising them both as consisting of “centralized international infrastructures” conspiring against the West (Muqtedar Khan, 1998, 455; see also Robert Johnson, 1997). Huntington also attempted to resurrect “Cold War dualism” by means of his unification of Islam and Confucianism in a global alliance against the West; hence “bipolarity redux” (Robert Cox, 1997, xxx; Ruggie, 1996, 163). Huntington himself says as much when he explains why the West should expect an Islamic-Confucian connection in the future. He sees this as a natural reaction of Islamic and Confucian civilisations to Western universalism and American hegemony, according to “realist theory”, which “predicts that the core states of non-Western civilizations *should* coalesce together to balance the dominant power of the West” (Huntington, 1998, 185; my italics).

As David Gress puts it, Huntington’s thesis is an “exciting new version... of what has remained the most productive and insightful tradition in the study of the world, namely, realism” (Gress, 1997, 285). This is evident in the way Huntington constructs civilisations and civilisational dynamics. How he handles these issues is



indicative of his real purposes, and his status as a realist thinker. He “uses the assumptions, goals, and methods of Cold War strategic culture to reterritorialize the global scene in a way that perpetuates the... ahistorical realism found in... Cold War strategic discourse” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 246). In terms of the overall dynamics of world politics, he produces a world unusually similar to the one we are leaving behind. It is a world where the US and the West (it leads) are “actively containing, dividing, and playing off other civilizations against each other” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 247). This is not only the opinion of Ó Tuathail, a post-modernist, but is the most familiar interpretation of Huntington. William Pfaff says in no uncertain words that:

His ‘civilizations,’ when examined, prove to be more or less today’s national power centers writ large, so the scheme that results is really an elaboration and naive projection of today’s power rivalries, with their conflicts ascribed to cultural causes rather than political ones.

(Pfaff, 1996, 7).

William Pfaff is a very distinguished international relations theorist, a member of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, a person with long experience in political circles, and a realist himself (he was a friend and colleague of Hans Morgenthau). The fact that he is a realist – and thus familiar with the territory, in theory and practice – adds to the credibility of his remarks. This is in addition to the fact that we are confronted here with a situation where a realist and a post-modernist are coming to the same conclusion, even though they are at opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum.

This would also mean that Pfaff would have no problem with Ó Tuathail’s final conclusion on Huntington, which is: the thesis is “not about the clash of civilizations. It is about *making* global politics *a* clash of civilizations” (Ó Tuathail’s, 1996, 249; italics in original). Civilisation is just a generic term used to summarise the

various ideational factors working away at US primacy. As Stephen Chan says, Huntington's (contradictory, broad, fluid) notion of civilisation "rests finally on a collective *mythos*", a "political unconscious, in which whole races and nations... carry ideas and tendencies collectively" (Chan, 1997, 138-139). Huntington does not base his thesis on real civilisations, but opts instead for a concept that has common sense appeal. It simplifies the myriad complexities of world politics in a comprehensible way for the policymaker, while also providing rhetorical value for the public and the press. He only "simulates civilizations and an ordered global political scene", producing – in Baudrillardian terms – "truth effects that hide truth's nonexistence" (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 247).

#### 1.4 – Realism and the Disintegration of the 'the West': Preponderance and the Clash of Western Civilisations

Huntington's real civilisational concerns, at the level of international relations, lie elsewhere. Huntington's realist vision of the ideal state of the new world order is based on the circumstances that developed with the end of the Cold War, namely, unipolarity. After Brzezinski and Kissinger, Huntington is probably the most prominent 'primacy' theorist in America today (see Posen and Ross, 1996-97, and McGrew, 1994). Like all preponderists, he sees primacy over the rest of the world as desirable because it is the only viable "alternative to war" and provides the prerequisites for "doing good and promoting collective goods" in the international system (Huntington, 1993, 70). This is the historic ideological rationale of dominance and hegemony in international affairs. What is most important to this thesis, though, is the nature of the 'threats' to this primacy that Huntington identifies. In geopolitical



terms, maintaining primacy involves preventing the “emergence of a political-military hegemonic power in Eurasia” which could threaten its primacy (Huntington, 1991, 9). In his opinion the “principal threat to stability” now is, with Soviet decline, the “possibility of a major vacuum of power emerging in Mackinder’s heartland” (Huntington, 1991, 11). This security vacuum almost makes it a foregone conclusion that a new power will rise. A vacuum opens up the opportunity for other states to fill it, while also demanding that a new power emerge to restore order.

One candidate is a “United Germany” using its economic power to “dominate the European Community” and “extend its economic hegemony and political control through Central and Eastern Europe” (Huntington, 1991, 12). By doing this Germany would be following in the footsteps of German history, “imperial, Democratic and Nazi” (Huntington, 1991, 12). Just as Russia is Russia is Russia in realist doctrine, Germany is Germany is Germany. An even bigger threat exists in the possibility of the “*political integration* of the European Community” (Huntington, 1991, 12; my italics). He says that in the context of multipolarity the upcoming disintegration of the USSR “may be *countered* by the coming together of Western Europe” (Huntington, 1991, 5; my italics). This “would *also* bring into existence an extraordinarily powerful entity which *could not help but* be perceived as a *major* threat to American interests” (Huntington, 1991, 12; my italics). This does not mean, though, that he discounts Russia as a future potential threat. Again following standard geopolitical and realist logic, he says that, for “*centuries* before 1917, Russian governments regularly intervened militarily in Eastern European affairs,” just as the US “regularly finds reasons to intervene in Central America and the Caribbean” (Huntington, 1991, 12; my italics). Therefore, we should expect that Russia “will find compelling

geopolitical reasons to intervene again” – after all, Russia is Russia is Russia (Huntington, 1991, 12).

At the other end of the Eurasian continent, the Far East, the main threat is China, given its growing economic and military prowess. Based on this analysis he produces a list of recommendations needed to fulfil the task of equilibrium:

- (i) ... prevent the total disintegration of the Soviet Union...
- (ii) ... prevent the reimposition of... Russian military political control in Eastern Europe... best achieved by NATO...
- (iii) ... limit German power in the new Europe, by encouraging German involvement in NATO...
- (iv) ... encourage stability in Central and Eastern Europe by strengthening the new democracies;
- (v) ... promote the evolution of the European Community in the direction of a looser, purely economic entity...
- (vi) ... provide constraints on Japanese power in East Asia...
- (vii) ... prevent or... limit possible Chinese expansion...

(Huntington, 1991, 12).

This vision of the post-Cold War order, and America’s place and role in it, still animates much of Huntington’s civilisational thesis. The clearest example of this is the list of policy recommendations for the West and the US which Huntington produces in the final chapter of the book (14):



... achieve greater political, economic, and military integration and to coordinate their policies so as to *preclude* states from other civilisations exploiting differences among them;  
... incorporate into the European Union and NATO the *Western* states of Central Europe that is, the Visegrad countries, the Baltic republics, Slovenia and Croatia;  
... encourage the 'Westernisation' of Latin America...  
... restrain the development of the conventional and unconventional military power of Islamic and Sinic countries;  
... *accept* Russia as the core state of Orthodoxy and a major *regional* power with *legitimate* interests in the security of its southern borders;  
... maintain Western technological and military superiority...  
... most important, to recognize that Western intervention in the affairs of other civilizations is probably the single most dangerous source of instability and potential global conflict in a multicivilizational world.

(Huntington, 1998, 312; my italics).

This list is very similar to the list of recommendations we quoted above, particularly in relation to the functions of NATO and the position of Russia. He still believes in NATO expansion eastwards, but within the limits of Russia's sphere of influence, respecting Russia's role as a regional balancer. Even the new additions to the list fit in quite well with what he said in his first article.

What we see here is how two (supposedly) completely different paradigms and analyses of the challenges America faces in the new era led, for all intensive purposes, to the same conclusions! When he uses the realist paradigm he deduces a set of threats emanating from within America's alliance, the EU and Germany. When he uses the civilisational paradigm, he deduces the existence of a potent threat in the form of Islam and the Far East, and yet his recommendations are essentially the same in both cases. This inconsistency can actually be explained with reference to the commonalties between his two groups of writings. His recommendations in the first list are aimed at maintaining the unity of the Atlantic alliance, *as are* his recommendations in the second list, which means that he sees potential problems developing within 'the West' even in his civilisational writings. He does not really

deal with the Islamic and Confucian threats at all in his second list, using his civilisational analysis to reinforce his previous realist analysis. The shift to the civilisational thesis seems to have come about *because of* these internal threats, threats posed to 'the West' from within the West itself. His usage of civilisations serves two functions, then, searching for common ideological and cultural bonds to help hold together the West, and manufacturing new threats to 'the' West as a whole – as a civilisation – to prove that these countries also have common interests.

Moreover, Huntington sees internal threats originating to the West from within the US itself. The threat of isolationism is once again on the horizon now that the Cold War is over. This is at the root of his usage of the term 'Western civilisation'. The whole concept was an ideological construct of the Cold War, an idea deliberately invented by the US to gain the "broad popular base for a comprehensive and consistent American commitment to NATO over the long run" (Kurth, 1997a, 561). Outside of the "foreign-policy establishment" there was little comprehension of, or sympathy for, the "strategic argument for continued involvement in Europe through NATO" (Kurth, 1997a, 561). Containment was seen as "too depressing a goal" for the isolationist American public, "since there was no prospect of the duty ever ending" (Vlahos, 1991, 60). A "philosophical vision" was needed, not a mere "strategic category," and the best way of constructing this vision was to make America and Europe see themselves as "parts of something... bigger... that they shared" and this was "Western civilization or more simply 'the West' " (Kurth, 1997a, 561). Through the concept of the West, containment was "transformed into the heroic defense of an extended family; in the process, a new world was born" (Vlahos, 1991, 60). Huntington quotes from the work of James Kurth (another primacy theorist) in his book, and both structure their views in similar ways, so I cite Kurth to help flesh out



the inner logic and motivations behind the civilisational thesis. The issue of the West is being widely debated in academic circles in America, and Huntington's writings are part of this debate (see Kurth, 1994).

Owen Harries says that behind the "recent debates over Bosnia, the Balkans and Eastern Europe more generally", there lies a "much broader and unanswered question about the condition and future of the West" (Harries, 1993, 41). He also says that NATO expansion is based on the "questionable premise" that the West "continues to exist as a political and military entity" (Harries, 1993, 41). State department official Michael Vlahos is even more blunt, describing the concept of the West as nothing more than a "highly useful political tool", and denouncing the notion of the Atlantic community as "false" and representing a "geostrategic slight of hand" (Vlahos, 1991, 60). NATO expansion, as we established in Chapter 2, is aimed specifically at rescuing the Atlantic alliance – and by extension, 'the West' – from disintegration. According to Bruce Cumings, Huntington's writings are part of a growing "plea for a renewed Atlanticism" in America (Cumings, 1999, 272). It must be remembered that Huntington, as a realist, has no illusions as to how the Atlantic alliance was established, and what America's true objectives were during the Cold War. As he himself says in his *International Security* article, if it were not for the Soviet threat, the Atlantic "alliances would *never* have come into existence" (Huntington, 1993, 71; my italics). As for America's involvement in the Cold War itself, this was a product of America's "interest in promoting balances of power in Europe and... Asia", given its geopolitical imperative of preventing dominance in "Mackinder's heartland" (Huntington, 1991, 11). These objectives have animated US foreign policy for the past "two hundred years", while 'containment' and 'deterrence'



were aimed at achieving these “long-standing American” goals in the context of the Cold War (Huntington, 1991, 11).

With the Cold War over, the alliance is coming under severe strain from “conflicting interests” which had previously been “subordinated to the common need to unite against” a common enemy (Huntington, 1993, 71). But this concern over isolationism as an internal US threat to the West is only the beginning of the story. Pursuing this line of analysis pulls us into the core of Huntington’s thesis and a number of critical themes with which we still have not dealt. Moreover, dealing with the internal dimension gives us the opportunity to fit Huntington’s writings into the overall frame of what we have said in Chapter 3 about American identity and how it interfaces with geopolitical concerns. Of equal importance is the application of Gramscian categories to Huntington, exploring how he is part of the hegemonic power-play of ideas, individuals and groups that has dominated the American scene since the implosion of the establishment in the 1970s and 1980s.

### 1.5 – Decline and the Internal Dimension:

#### Huntington as an ‘American’ Geopolitician

We have already placed Huntington within the appropriate context as far as the primacy school and realism are concerned. From the analysis above the words ‘realism in disguise’ would seem an appropriate subtitle for this section on Huntington. Huntington certainly has assigned himself the role of rescuing realism from the twin evils of an end to war and a proliferation of culturally driven wars. But ‘geopolitics in disguise’ is a better title because of the distinctly internal slant given to geopolitics in American history. As we shall see below, Huntington’s civilisational

project is moved by the same vision and concerns over the fate of America and the West as the writings of the American geopolitical tradition. In his second article on civilisations, and in the book, he takes up a new set of themes that are focused exclusively on the American context. In his defence of his *Foreign Affairs* article Huntington wrote a section called “America Undone?” (Huntington, 1993b, 189). He justifies inserting this section into this article under the mantle of paradigmatic analysis. He says that one of the important functions of paradigms is to “place familiar phenomena in a new perspective” and then says, in this “respect, the civilizational paradigm may have implications” for the US (Huntington, 1993b, 189). He notes that the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, communist, ideological states, came apart because they existed on civilisational fault lines, and proceeds to compare the US to these two countries, analysing the US according to his paradigm.

For Huntington the “unity” of the US has “historically rested on the twin bedrock's of European culture and political democracy” (Huntington, 1993b, 190). The whole structure and heritage of ideas that America's political system is based on is the American creed, and a fundamental part of that creed has been the belief in equality. Given that America is a nation of migrants, this is not just a matter of political principles, but a matter of life or death. The US could not afford not to treat its (European) migrant populations unequally because this would have lead to the dissolution of the US and its collapse into separate ethnic enclaves scattered over the massive continental landmass that is the United States of America. America's Founding Fathers and generations of national leaders have always known that the American creed by itself, without an “underlying common culture”, forms a “fragile basis for national unity” (Huntington, 1997a, 34). He cites Theodore Roosevelt as an example of this, and uses his words to clarify the dangers America faces now from



multiculturalism and immigration. As Roosevelt put it, the “one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin... would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities” (Roosevelt, quoted in Huntington, 1998, 306). It is because of this that the American creed was coupled with European culture, so as to nip in the bud any cultural dynamics that could pull the country apart.

Huntington does admit that equality was never applied to the non-European, non-White population, but says that all those that campaigned for equality never challenged the European cultural foundation. But that was in the past. It is no longer the case. Minorities today are adopting an ideology known as ‘multiculturalism,’ which both rejects cultural ‘assimilation’ and goes even further in a wide-ranging cultural and ideological critique of all things American, as understood by the European founders. They have also developed an alternative conception of equality which is group-based; positions in the legal, political and economic systems are equally portioned out to the various groupings according to the proportion they make up in society. If implemented such policies will both severely dilute European culture, and attack the American creed at its core, with the influx of immigrants providing the demographic political base for the multiculturalists to push their agenda on the political system. All of this, put together, may “encourage a clash of civilisations *within*” the US (Huntington, 1993b, 190). It could lead to what Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., calls the “*disuniting* of America” (Schlesinger, Jr., quoted in Huntington, 1993b, 190; my italics). Unless something is done soon, the US “as we have known it will cease to exist and will follow the other ideologically defined superpower onto the ash heap of history” (Huntington, 1993b, 190). Michael Vlahos also warns that the “Patchwork Quilt” vision of America put forward by multiculturalists could lead to a “Balkanized America” (Vlahos, 1991, 78).



This demographic/ideological factor represents only one aspect of the larger American identity crisis brought on by the collapse of communism. The end of the Cold War by itself could cause the country to fall apart. Huntington says that from the “start, Americans have constructed their creedal identity in contrast to an undesirable ‘other’ ” – first Britain, then Napoleonic Europe, then Nazi Germany, then the Soviet Union and world communism (Huntington, 1997a, 30). This is the product of America’s ideological nature and its lack of cultural and historical rootedness. The normal role played by wars and enemies in promoting identity and cohesion is much more pronounced and far reaching in America than it is in other countries. He quotes from a speech made by Abraham Lincoln on the eve of the Civil War to make his point as bluntly as possible:

‘The jealousy, envy, avarice incident to our nature, and so common to a state of peace, prosperity, and conscious strength, were for a time in great measure smothered and rendered inactive... and... instead directed against the British nation.’ But he warned, ‘this state of feeling must fade, is fading, has faded, with the circumstances that produced it.’

(Lincoln, quoted in Huntington, 1997a, 31).

The Cold War “fostered a common identity between American people and government” (Huntington, 1997a, 31). With the end of the Cold War there has been a “rising opposition to *federal* government, which is, after all, the principal institutional manifestation of American national identity and unity” (Huntington, 1997a, 31; my italics).

The most violent example of this growing opposition was the attack on the Oklahoma building. Huntington says that the fact that Americans, and not Islamic fundamentalists, carried out this act of terrorism proves how deep anti-federalist sentiment is, and how much America is in need of an enemy. The absence of an

enemy, coupled with multiculturalism, has also had severe repercussions for America's role as the only remaining superpower. He is referring here to the "domesticization of foreign policy" which is eating away at the Cold War conception of foreign policy as "actions consciously designed to promote the interests of the United States as a collective entity" (Huntington, 1997a, 41-42). Other countries, whether they be allies or rivals, cannot organise their relations with the US properly if they cannot predict what the US is going to do in the future, based on its openly stated policies and interests. The tremendous amount of incoherence this has created in the making and implementation of foreign policy has strained relations considerably with allies and hurt America's image as a great power. He cites James Schlesinger here, as we do above, in relation to the growth of the ethnic vote and the changing mores of politicians, and also uses Schlesinger's description of foreign policy now as a stapling together of different, conflicting objectives. Multiculturalism makes this problem worse because it has legitimised the ethnic vote in the eyes of both the politicians and the public. But the greatest danger multiculturalism poses, short of a civil war, is its attack on the cultural basis of US Cold War foreign policy.

Multiculturalism's belief in collective rights for minorities and cultural relativism in general poses a threat to 'the West' because it intends to *de-Westernise* the US. A de-Westernised US would probably mean an isolationist US, or at least one concerned with purely economic issues and issues of world order. Even if the US does not disintegrate internally, the West will disintegrate internally, leading "effectively" to the "*end of Western civilization*" (Huntington, 1998, 307; my italics). As he puts it, without the US the West "becomes a minuscule and declining part of the world's population on a small and inconsequential extremity of the Eurasian land mass" (Huntington, 1998, 307). Europe would be left all on its own to fend for itself, while



the US is safe and secure in its geographic isolation. This possibility, in addition to the demographic and economic changes identified by Huntington, has helped generate a “deep sense of unease about the future” and a developing “siege mentality” in the West (Mahbubani, 1993, 10). Paul Wolfowitz calls this situation, in classical terminology, “*Fin de Siécle All Over Again*” (Wolfowitz, 1997, 3). The entry of the world in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century has raised fears of what lays ahead for the Western world, the same fears that developed as the West was on the verge of entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Chapter 3). America, secure in its geographic isolation and self-confidence, is oblivious to these fears. In many ways, the greatest threat of all is American “complacency”, the fact that for most Americans the US is at peace, and “threats to that peace seem distant, if not rather contrived” (Wolfowitz, 1997, 3). Part of the challenge the US faces, as the leader of the West, is to “invite Americans to think about where” they “stand at the end of this century in comparison to where the world was... at the end of the last” (Wolfowitz, 1997, 3). Huntington hopes to both shake America out of its complacency, and exploit these European fears. More specifically, he hopes to shake America out of its complacency *by* exploiting these threats, by transferring European anxieties about the future to the American body-politic. According to Kishore Mahbubani, Huntington’s essay was “bound to resonate” with Western audiences, specifically because of these growing anxieties (Mahbubani, 1993, 10). He even describes Huntington’s theorisation of an Islamic-Confucian connection as an attempt at “conjuring up images of the two Asian hordes that Western minds fear most---two forces that invaded Europe, the Muslims and the Mongols” (Mahbubani, 1993, 13).

In all cases, Huntington sees the clash of civilisations as hinging on an intellectual and political clash occurring “within the American segment of Western



civilization” (Huntington, 1998, 307). Huntington summarises his analysis by using James Kurth’s description of the “clash between the multiculturalists and the defenders of Western civilization and the American Creed” as the “*real* clash” of civilisations (Huntington, 1998, 307; italics in original). This clash also has a powerful class dimension, given that the concept of the West developed by the US during the Cold War helped consolidate the power of the American establishment and its hold on foreign policy. Or, to be more accurate, this concept helped bring together and insure the dominance of the East Coast establishment. The adoption of the concept of the West did not only reflect the importance of Europe to the US because “America originated as a transatlantic projection of European civilisation” (Parker, 1985, 108). The concept of the West was also adopted because the “most important regions in the United States were naturally oriented eastwards toward the Atlantic” (Parker, 1985, 108). The East Coast was, in effect, ‘selected’ to manage transatlantic relations given the Anglo-Saxon cultural bonds that tied the East Coast elites to the Western part of the European continent. The ethnic demography of America’s capitalist class was behind the development of the highly artificial notion of the West, and the concept of the West itself helped consolidate this particular cultural segment of America’s business elites. According to Cumings, much of Huntington’s work and the ‘plea’ for renewed Atlanticism is driven by a “disillusioned lament on the passing of the Eastern establishment and its Anglo-Saxon counterparts in Europe” (Cumings, 1999, 272). The cultural basis of the elites in the countries that helped tie the fates of the US and Western Europe together has gradually been falling apart. Huntington is worried about the “decline in the ethnic identities of European Americans” and how this would affect the traditional Eurocentric focus of American foreign policy if these

new groups could “construct a broad national consensus to support their particular foreign policies” (Kurth, 1996, 15).

As a realist, and as a scholar of American exceptionalism, Huntington is well aware of the threats posed by the end of the Cold War and the growth of multiculturalism to US foreign policy and its Western focus. The real clash of US civilisation manifests itself domestically in the form of multiculturalism, and internationally in the form of the “elusive and illusionary calls to identify the United States with Asia” (Huntington, 1998, 307). The internal threat is not only driven by domestic cultural and demographic forces, but also by external developments that *tie into* these internal forces. The calls for renewed Atlanticism are coming “precisely at the same time when American trade with Asia towers over Atlantic exchange” (Cumings, 1999, 272). From a realist, interest-driven perspective, the US should readily ‘abandon’ Europe and shift the focus of its policy towards Asia, given the greater economic importance of East Asian trade to the US. Although Huntington does not elaborate much on the nature of this call for an Asian focus, he says that the only things the US and Asia “may” have in common is “economic connections” (Huntington, 1998, 307). He also castigates the Bush and Clinton administrations for taking up the mantle of APEC, which he describes as a project aimed at “multicivilizational economic integration” (Huntington, 1998, 308-309). From an exceptionalist perspective, there does not really exist any ideational barrier to a reformulation of American identity that could help facilitate the shift of its priorities from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Americans have never readily identified themselves with Europe, and they have always been willing to reformulate their identity in order to shift their geographic priorities. Isolationism itself was a product of this. After the revolutionary war Americans did think of themselves as Europeans and tied their



perception of themselves with the fate of Western Europe. But with America's growing power and growing conflict with European nations in the Western Hemisphere, this European image of America began to break down. The US victory in the 1898 Spanish-American War in particular produced a "prevailing mental picture" of the US as "being located in a separate hemisphere or at the centre of the world shielded by two vast oceans" (Henrikson, 1994, 60). This image "removed the Eastern Hemisphere from any contact with the New World altogether" and "split the mighty Eurasian landmass in two", with the "European's Far East" ending up "on the far west of American world maps" (Henrikson, 1994, 60-61). As Huntington himself points out, from an "American viewpoint... the Far East is the Far West" (Huntington, 1998, 47). As he further clarifies, the whole practice of using such terms as East and West to "identify geographical areas is confusing and *ethnocentric*" because the appropriate question is, "east and west of what?" (Huntington, 1998, 47; my italics).

Moreover, as we pointed out in Chapter 2, the relative weight of Europe in the global balance of power is declining, leading paradoxically to the growing importance of Europe to the US. This dynamic is reminiscent of the concerns that drove the first generation of geopolitical thinkers in America, with the West seemingly in decline relative to the growing power and assertiveness of the East. The way he analyses the connection between internal and external problems facing the Euro-centric focus of US foreign policy points him in the direction of the geopolitical tradition. The way he analyses the decline of the West as a whole, whether it be the US or Western Europe, also points him in that direction. He first deals with the *relative* decline of the West in relation to the growing power and assertiveness of other civilisations, which is consistent with his initial civilisations thesis. The West is declining relatively because of its declining share of world GNP, production and investment, the diffusion of



weapons technology, and – most importantly, for he lists it as the first factor – *demographics*. In quantitative terms the West is in decline, while the rest is catching up in qualitative terms. He then goes on to discuss decline in *absolute* terms. The West is now being compared to the West in the past, and it focuses mainly on what could be called *moral* decline. Here he talks about unemployment, deprivation, rising crimes rates, the weakening of family bonds, and what has been called “civil wars between vested interests” (Quigley, 1961, quoted in Huntington, 1998, 303).

Huntington ties relative decline to absolute decline in this way – the solution for internal decline is external expansion. Or, as he puts it, what happens “within a civilization is as crucial to its ability to resist destruction from external sources as it is to holding off decay from within” (Huntington, 1998, 303). He makes a historical connection here by saying that civilisations “grow... because they have an ‘*instrument of expansion,*’ a military, political, cultural and economic ‘organization that *accumulates surplus* and invest it in productive innovations’ ” (Quigley, quoted in Huntington, 1998, 303; my italics). Civilisations decline only when they stop the “application of surplus to new ways of doing things” (Quigley, quoted in Huntington, 1998, 303; my italics). This comes about because of internal, moral decay. Social groups that control the surplus have a “vested interest in using it for *nonproductive* and *ego-satisfying* purposes... which distribute the surpluses to *consumption*” (Quigley, quoted in Huntington, 1998, 303; my italics). Only after this long chain of argumentation does he get to America to re-discuss the multiculturalist problems his country is facing. But even here, he enters into the debate on America by discussing the American problem as part of (a species of) the problem of the West as a whole. Despite the importance of demography and immigration to the American and Western European problems, he says:

*Far more significant* than economics and demography are problems of *moral decline, cultural suicide, and political disunity* in the West. Oft-pointed-to manifestations of moral decline include:... increases in antisocial behaviour... family decay... general weakening of the '*work ethic*'... decreasing commitment to learning and intellectual activity...

(Huntington, 1998, 303; my italics).

These factors, when combined with those perpetuating the West's secular relative decline, could doom the whole of Western civilisation and lead to its replacement by the growing Sinic and Islamic civilisations. This forms a lethal mixture when you add the factors of growing economic and military power – not only do you have more non-Western people, you have more non-Western people with more weapons and more money. His demographic concerns also have a powerful cultural component to them because the decline in Western birth rates has led to the need for extensive immigration.

This has threatened Western culture even more because it is now being “challenged by groups *within* Western societies... who *reject assimilation* and continue to adhere to and to *propagate* the values, customs, and cultures of their home states” (Huntington, 1998, 304; my italics). Immigration *can* function as a “source of new vigor and human capital *provided*” that those that migrate have the skills needed by the West, and that they and their “children were assimilated into the cultures” of the West (Huntington, 1998, 304; my italics). This new source of Western vigour is instead being turned into an instrument for furthering the power of those civilisations that are already gaining in the population race. Immigrants in this case are functioning as a ‘Trojan Horse’ or a ‘Fifth Column’ in the upcoming civilisational/demographic war, with the US as the country that faces the greatest risk, given its federal and ideological nature. The structuring of the argumentation, and the variables and

processes he identifies, all betray the operation of the kind of geopolitical logic we have outlined above. Talk of moral decay, consumption, the loss of the simplicity of life, frugality and the Protestant work ethic all refer to the historic concerns and anxieties in America voiced early on by Richard Henry Lee (see Chapter 3). The economic analysis of surplus has a Malthusian, ‘Dismal Science’ quality to it. This has also been a historical concern of Americans, voiced early on by Secretary of State Elihu Root who, in 1906, advocated external economic expansion because the US had “*accumulated a surplus of capital* greater than that required for internal development” (Campbell, 1994, 157; my italics).

The notion of vested interests, those that control the surplus, ties the themes of moral decay and economic decline together, with prosperity causing complacency and thus destroying the foundations of prosperity – Daniel Bell’s ‘cultural contradictions of capitalism’. But most important of all is the connection between the predicament of western Europe and America brought about by demographic transformations, with America serving as microcosm of the whole Western world. This closely parallels Mahan’s views of the West as an oasis surrounded by hosts of outsiders (see Chapter 3). Moreover, Huntington’s writings are part of an intellectual project being driven by the cultural and geopolitical concerns of primacy theorists that draw on the American geopolitical tradition. As we know from above, this tradition of geopolitics in America is not only concerned about keeping America together *per se*. It is also concerned with developing a certain kind of America, one that is consistent with and based on its *antidemocratic* ideals. I will move now to this aspect of Huntington’s civilisational project, while also discussing his remedies for the dilemmas and challenges he has set out.



## 1.6 – The Hegemonic Function of the Clash of

### Civilisations: Decline, Renewal and Exceptionalism

What has puzzled many observers – particularly those who have followed Huntington’s career – is his belief that the West in general, and the US in particular, is in decline. This is in complete contradiction with his past positions of criticising and denouncing vehemently the “simplifications and contradictions of the theorists of... ‘declinism’ ” (Hassner, 1996-97, 63). According to Lawrence Kaplan, Huntington “debunked many of the arguments that he now advances” and “dismissed” them as “wishful thinking” (Kaplan, 2000, 22). Huntington has been arguing against the thesis of US decline since the 1970s, when it first began as a product of the defeat in Vietnam and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, and he has continued to be a severe critique of this position. In the 1988-89 edition of *Foreign Affairs*, Huntington wrote a well-known article entitled “The U.S.---Decline or Renewal?” where he summarised and sought to refute many of the main declinist arguments. But, despite this, even in his pre-civilisational articles, he argued *for* the reality of the “relative decline in American economic power after World War II” (Huntington, 1991, 3-4). The reasons behind this sudden and significant reversal in opinion are twofold. The first deals with what exactly he means by decline and how it is portioned out to the various parts of the West. The second deals with how he argues the case for decline, and his opinions on how to reverse it.

As Huntington himself says above, there is both relative and absolute decline, and his main concerns lie with absolute decline, and particularly the non-economic dimensions. Therefore, when Huntington discusses the decline of the West, he is discussing the decline of a specific ‘ideal’ version of the West. Or, to be more

accurate, a specific ideal version of the US, given that there is not a single chapter title, or subheading within a chapter, in the whole of his book that has the words “United States” or “America” in it. US decline is discussed under the rubric of “The Fading of the West: Power, Culture and Indigenization” (Chapter 4). The specifics of his vision of America can be gleaned in considerable detail from his pre-civilisational writings, especially those written before the end of the Cold War. Again, we must bear in mind Huntington’s intellectual history, his past positions and allegiances. Huntington’s field of specialisation is domestic politics and the nature of different regimes. According to Vincent Ferraro, Huntington’s “link to the realist tradition in America... is... very weak” (Ferraro, 1999). He is not an international relations theorist at all, but an “intellectual of *statecraft* who specializes in questions of *governance*, particularly the problems of *hegemonic* governance” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 240; my italics). In fact, even though Huntington “likes to style himself as a realist... his writings all betray a fascination with the universalistic projection of American values” (Ferraro, 1999). He is, in effect, a distinguished scholar of “American exceptionalism” (Ferraro, 1999). Throughout his career he did not just apply his theories to the Third World, he applied them to the First World as well, and to America in particular. Huntington is the well known (co)author of the Trilateral Commission’s “report on the governability of developed democracies” entitled *The Crisis of Democracy*, 1975 (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 241; my italics). This study was sanctioned in response to the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, brought on by the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. Huntington analysed these developments “in terms of growing *disrespect for authority* and a general ‘*excess of democracy*’ ” (Huntington, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, 241; my italics). His response came in the form of recommendations for a “greater degree of *moderation* in democracy” and a



*restoration of a “democratic balance”* (Huntington, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, 241; my italics). All of this was to be achieved through a “*re Disciplining* of society around *elitist* and *hierarchial* notions of ‘expertise, seniority and experience’ ” (Huntington, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, 241; my italics). Huntington took the Truman presidency as his ideal, looking back “nostalgically to the old days before the crisis” and marvelling at how Truman “was able to ‘run the country with the help of a few Wall Street lawyers and financiers’ ” (Huntington, quoted in Chomsky, 1993, 5).

This book represents an important juncture in post-war US history. The old establishment and its historic bloc were in tatters, while the formation of a new establishment and a new hegemonic configuration of power was on the horizon. The institute that sanctioned and published this report, the Trilateral Commission, was set up both to imitate and replace the Council on Foreign Relations. Intellectuals like Huntington (and Zbigniew Brzezinski, who also co-authored the report) were supposed to take the place of such intellectuals as George Kennan and Dean Acheson. The ‘Crisis of Democracy’ project, according to one of the authors of the report, was aimed at providing a “diagnosis of the ‘*delegitimation* of the traditional modes of *social control*’ ” (Michel Crozier, quoted in Mattelart, 1994, 227; my italics). Of particular importance to the authors of this report was the role of the media (in relation to Vietnam, Watergate) in producing these “dysfunctions of democracy,” necessitating its regulation to “assure to the government the right and ability to withhold information” (Crozier, quoted in Mattelart, 1994, 228). The growing tide of “disgust with the corruption, materialism, and the inefficiency of democracy and with the subservience of democratic government to ‘monopoly capitalism’ ” was allegedly finding an outlet in the media (Crozier, quoted in Mattelart, 1994, 227). In their opinion, this evolution of the media into an instrument of protest had to be countered



through an ideological offensive that reasserted the virtues of the capitalist system and the international order. Control over the media would facilitate the control of the dysfunctions of democracy, *without* “resort on an everyday basis to the direct involvement of state power” (Mattelart, 1994, 228). This is the hallmark of a hegemonic project, the attempt to avoid violence and coercion through the use of consensual techniques. In other words, given these observations, it is quite safe to conclude that Samuel Huntington is an organic intellectual of the American establishment, or at least what remains of it in the East Coast.

But it is important that we do not overemphasise Huntington’s role in this hegemonic project. We must not forget that this particular project fell apart by the mid-1980s, and that only certain elite groups (transnational capital) continue to support it. We must also remember that the hallmark of geopolitics in American history is the distinctly non-consensual, coercive vision geopoliticians have of America and the world. Economics is also not high on their list of priorities. His refusal to identify the US with Asia, and his scolding of commercialism in foreign policy decision-making, demonstrates this. Huntington’s clash of civilisations in many ways is a protest against the economically dominated agenda that motivates Clinton’s and America’s post-Cold War foreign policy, and how this is believed to be ‘wrecking’ the country internally. He only takes the transnational agenda so far. According to Pierre Hassner, Huntington takes a critical view of the arguments put forward by “transnational” theorists over how globalised “multinational corporations” are (Hassner, 1996-97, 63). In one of his most recent articles – “Robust Nationalism” (*The National Interest*, Winter 1999-2000) – Huntington complains about how “economic globalization is creating a growing gap between denationalized elites and nationalist publics” across the world, but particularly in the US (Huntington, 1999-

2000, 40). He is highly critical of the fact that patriotism has become “passe among large sectors of American elites” and accuses these elites of posing an equal threat to America’s “national unity” and “cultural integrity” as multiculturalism (Huntington, 1999-2000, 40). Moreover, although Huntington’s application of his field of study to the US is driven by his class allegiances, it is *also* driven by his historic concern with the political and social consequences of the fact that the US is a founded society. The 1960s and 1970s also represented an important juncture for the US – in Huntington’s eyes – given its uniquely ideological nature. Huntington explored these challenges and threats extensively in his two works, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, and *The Dilemma of American Ideals and Institutions in Foreign Policy*, both published in 1981. Unlike other societies, the US “has no meaning, no identity, no political culture or even history apart from ideals of liberty and democracy and the continuing efforts of Americans to realize those ideals” (Huntington, 1989, 256). Every society has a set of ideas and values its citizens strive towards, although they will never achieve them, given that they are ideals and human nature is imperfect. But this very inability to achieve these ideals is itself a healthy characteristic of any society because it demonstrates that people are trying to achieve these goals, and it generates the drive to continue attempting to fulfil these goals. He calls this the ‘Promise of Disappointment’ (see Huntington, 1989). The material, tangible manifestation of this inability in the real world is what Huntington calls the ‘ideals-versus-institutions gap’. This gap generates a “tension” in society that is “America’s distinguishing cleavage” and which “defines both the promise and agony of American politics” (Huntington, 1989, 256). Historically, this tension came about because of the degradation of the initial state of affairs within the US when it was founded, the ideal state, often termed ‘American exceptionalism’. In common parlance, this refers to



various features of US society and polity that have distinguished the US from its European ancestry, namely the “relative lack of economic suffering, social conflict, political trauma... ‘standing armies... monarchies... aristocracies’ ” (William Clarke, 1881, quoted in Huntington, 1989, 255). By the 1960s and 1970s many of these distinguishing characteristics had gone, with an America developing that looked “very like a monarchy” with “some of the elements of aristocracy” (Henry Fairlie, 1975, quoted in Huntington, 1989, 255). This has signalled what Daniel Bell has called the “end of American exceptionalism”, the main manifestations of which have been:

the end of empire, the weakening of power, the loss of faith in the nation’s future... deep structural crises, political and cultural, that may prove *more intractable to solution* than the domestic economic problems.

(Bell 1975, quoted in Huntington, 1989, 255; my italics).

Although Huntington accepts the weight of these many changes, he does not see this as an end to American exceptionalism because of the natural impossibility of making the ideal real. He actually sees this as a good thing because it gives people the motivation to improve their society. In fact, he believes that if that “tension disappears, the United States of America as we have known it will no longer exist” (Huntington, 1989, 256).

Huntington makes his case on this point by *tying* the fate of the US system to its foreign policy. An obsession with achieving these ideals of the past could force America into adventures of imperialist expansion to spread America’s universal values, which would lead to military disaster (as in Vietnam). The opposite option, apathy and acceptance, could lead to equally expansive imperialist adventures, with no moral constraints, and so the “corruption and decay of American liberal-democratic institutions” (Huntington, 1989, 256). Promoting liberty abroad for Huntington means



using all the instruments of state power, including the military, to reorder the internal affairs of countries around the world. This brings about the dreaded centralisation of power and the expansion of bureaucracies that Americans have feared since the days of Washington and Jefferson. This produces a “paradoxical” situation where the “promotion of liberty abroad... requires the *expansion* of American power” at home, while the “operation of liberty at home involves the *limitation* of American power” abroad (Huntington, 1989, 254; my italics). This contradictory state of affairs became worse, both internally and externally, thanks to the problems the US faced in the 1960s and 1970s (declining power and hegemony, and social strife and moral decay). Huntington’s advice to future generations of Americans is to continue believing in America’s ideals, despite the reality of the limits of achieving them, and specifically because of the existence of these limits. He sees the centralisation of power in federal hands as a good thing, to be accepted and cherished by the American people. More importantly, he has no problem with the centralisation of political power (through an active foreign policy) participating in the creation of an aristocratic economic and social order.

This completes the circle and places Huntington firmly and squarely in the tradition of American geopolitical thinkers who have wished to expand American power abroad to hold the country together around a semi-aristocratic cultural, political, economic and social order. According to Lawrence Kaplan, one of the reasons why Huntington has adopted declinism is because of his “hostility... toward the American idea” and the excessively open and egalitarian political and economic system it represents (Kaplan, 2000, 22). Or, to be more accurate, his hostility to the liberal, Jeffersonian American idea. In his article, “Robust Nationalism”, Huntington describes himself as a follower of a “conservative form of liberalism” that is “opposed

to popular or democratic liberalism” (Huntington, 1999-2000, 32). This form of conservatism first “manifested itself” in America in the form of “Hamiltonianism” (Huntington, 1999-2000, 32).

This covers the first reason behind his adoption of declinism; all that remains is to flesh out the details of his analysis of decline and his remedies. This is best approached through an important aspect of his declinist turn, namely, the position of Japan in his writings. Declinists of all colours focus on Japan’s dramatic rise to economic pre-eminence, the trade deficit with Japan, growing Japanese penetration of the US economy, and the marked contrast between the savings and investments rates of Japan and the US. Huntington, in his first two post-Cold War articles, tackles the issue of the Japanese ‘threat’ and takes up much of the geo-economic agenda. He agrees with all these points and concludes that the US is, and should be, “obsessed with Japan for the same reasons that it was obsessed with the Soviet Union. It sees that country as a major threat to its primacy in a crucial area of power” (Huntington, 1991, 8). He even talks of an ‘economic cold war’ between the two countries. But, by the time that Huntington makes his final transition to the civilisations thesis, the Japanese threat disappears from his list of priorities. The way that Huntington handles the Japanese ‘challenge’ is actually explained, in his own words, by an article – “The Erosion of National Interests” – he wrote after the publication of his book. Here he says that during the 1980s the “*perceived* economic challenge from Japan... generated public and private efforts to increase American productivity and competitiveness” (Huntington, 1997a, 32; my italics). This article exposes much of what has really been going on in Huntington’s mind in general. In it he also says that the Islamic fundamentalist threat is “too diffuse and too remote geographically” while “China is too problematic and its potential dangers too distant in the future” (Huntington,



1997a, 32). In fact, “thanks to the extent to which democracy and market economies have been embraced throughout the world, the United States lacks any single country or threat against which it can convincingly counterpose itself” (Huntington, 1997a, 32). These remarks also confirm the remarks made Ruggie about Huntington’s analysis of the Islamic-Confucian ‘threat,’ namely, that it merely represents an attempt to resurrect a “new and different strain” of “strategic bipolarity” (Ruggie, 1996, 163; see le Carré, 1995). The Confucian world is used as an economic threat to motivate Americans to produce more, while the Islamic threat is intended to reunite America and the West strategically. Huntington finishes off by saying that the ‘End of History,’ “if it occurs, could be the *most traumatic* and *unsettling* event for America” (Huntington, 1997a, 32; my italics).

The reason, again, is that the US, “perhaps more than most countries, may *need* an opposing other to maintain its unity” (Huntington, 1997a, 32; my italics). Even psychologically, the “existence of an enemy may have positive consequences for group cohesion, morale, and achievement” (Huntington, 1997a, 32). The geopolitician’s instrument for altering the domestic attitudes and the structure of state-society relations is foreign policy. Huntington hopes to use external threats, Japanese or otherwise, to overcome the problems the West as a whole is facing. Even in his first two post-Cold War articles, however much blame he places on the Japanese, the emphasis is on the internal determinants of success and his advice is that America and Americans should do more. More specifically he advocated “significant changes in US attitudes and behaviour” be made if the US is to successfully meet the Japanese challenge (Huntington, 1991, 16). This requires that the US “absorb some of its adversary’s virtues” (Huntington, 1991, 16). These virtues are “collectivity, consensus, authority, hierarchy, discipline” which contrast with US virtues, which are



“individualism, competition, dissent, egalitarianism, unbridled self-interest” (Huntington, 1991, 16). Japan historically was a feudal society, and still contains many of its feudal traits in terms of its social structure (which is closer to a caste than a class system), its weak and rather undemocratic political system, and its traditional, group-oriented, family-oriented value-system.

The end result of these cultural differences is that Japan “fixes on the long haul and saves and invests”, while the US “focuses on the short term and spends and consumes” (Huntington, 1991, 16). Even in his article on decline Huntington agreed with the declinists that during the Reagan era far too much of the influx of money into the US was spent on consumption. The US was “living in a style it cannot afford and is imbued with an ‘eat, drink and be merry’ psychology” (Huntington, 1988-89, 78). He also agreed that some of the characteristics of American society create various weak spots that need to be tackled. Individualism, mobility and competition “weaken cooperation, institutional loyalty and commitment to broader community” (Huntington, 1988-89, 93). The country he contrasts these features with, a negative used to bring out the US deficiencies, is Japan, with its brand of “corporatism, hierarchy, consensus and... close business-government” relations which are the spur of its export drive (Huntington, 1988-89, 93). Again he ties the foreign strategy to internal economic and social structures, talking of the “priority” given to “producer interests” over “consumer interests” in Japan (Huntington, 1993, 73). The real culprit is ‘consumerism’. For Huntington, then, Japan functions mainly as a kind of conceptual ‘mirror’ used to point out the deficiencies of the US, and provide an outline of the appropriate remedies. Huntington exhibits a “reflexive sympathy for America’s detractors abroad” and Japan’s “authoritarian ‘Asian values,’ in particular”

in order to overcome the “cultural rot” and “excess of democracy” America suffers from (Kaplan, 2000, 25-26).

More importantly, though he does not believe in a Japanese threat, Huntington does develop his own theory of the rise and fall of great powers. He believes that it is ‘internal stagnation’ that causes nations to decline. He traces his views to an intellectual tradition “going back to Plato and Aristotle which focuses on the inability of a society to renew itself” (Huntington, 1988-89, 88). The one decline theorist with which he sympathises is Mancur Olson and his theory that it is the “development of *vested interests*... that reduce economic efficiency and constrain economic growth” (Olson, quoted in Huntington, 1988-89, 88; my italics). Huntington is also aware of the internal obstacles America faces in overcoming internal stagnation and consumerism. The American constitutional system is “ill designed to produce sustained and coordinated action to deal with serious and long-term problems”, and often leads to the subordination of the national interest to “parochial and short-term concerns” (Huntington, 1988-89, 93; Huntington, 1991, 15). In the post-Cold War context this becomes a much greater problem because there is no longer any enemy around which to unite the public and political elites. The US must now “create the institutional means to develop a more comprehensive approach to national security, to pull together what is foreign and domestic, and what is military and economic” (Huntington, 1991, 15). The best way to pull together these various aspects of policy and create a comprehensive institutional structure is, unsurprisingly, through the presence – real or imagined – of *enemies*.

The fictitious quality of these threats does need to be emphasised here, given what Huntington himself says in his 1997 *Foreign Affairs* article. By extension, the whole thesis of decline should be taken as insubstantial. The way he handles the



Japanese threat is highly indicative of this. When discussing decline in his 1988-89 article he talks about how the Japanese economy cannot “grow indefinitely at ten percent or more per year” and how it has already “lost its edge in growth” (Huntington, 1988-89, 83). He was particularly critical of Clyde Prestowitz, an American official known for his pessimistic views on American decline and the Japanese threat. Huntington’s response is: “With all due respect to Clyde Prestowitz, this proposition will not hold up. Japan has neither the size, natural resources, military strength, diplomatic affiliates nor, most important, the ideological appeal” to do this (Huntington, 1988-89, 92). Not only does he not see Japan as a threat to the US, let alone the West, but he sees a larger potential threat in a politically ‘united European Community’. Europe does have all the needed determinants to fulfil the role of global hegemon, making the “next century... most likely to be the European century” if it can unite politically (Huntington, 1988-89, 93). But in his first post-Cold War articles he sees Japan as a country bent on economic domination and a serious rival to America’s status as a unipolar power. In fact, he cites Prestowitz in his *International Security* article when he discusses the reality of the Japanese threat! Again, the emphasis in Huntington is on the internal dimension, on the function Japan serves in highlighting shortcomings that need to be rectified.

The content of his analysis of the strongpoints of Japan and the weakpoints of the US in his *Foreign Affairs*, *Survival* and *International Affairs* articles are for all intensive purposes the same. More importantly, the position of Japan in his first decline article and in his civilisational writings is essentially the same. In the 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article Japan is only mentioned sparsely and is analysed in a way that deliberately tries to downgrade its status as a threat. Although he does say that, “apart from Japan, the West faces no economic challenge”, he also says that, despite this, the



West “dominates international political and security institutions *and with* Japan international economic institutions” (Huntington, 1993a, 39). In his decline article he says that the vision of “renewal is far closer to the American truth than the image of decadence purveyed by the declinists” (Huntington, 1988-89, 77). As we should expect, Huntington as an adherent of the American geopolitical tradition that believes that the US is uniquely suited to guiding the West out of its shared predicaments. What has and will continue to rescue the US from decline is its emphasis on “competition, mobility and immigration” – these are the “central sources of American strength” (Huntington, 1988-89, 90). The US is “distinguished by the openness of its economy, society and politics”, *in contrast* to Europe and Japan (Huntington, 1988-89, 89). Immigration only becomes a threat in the context of multiculturalism, while assimilation makes it a source of strength.

There is also an echo of the admission Huntington makes in the 1997 article of *deliberately* searching for enemies to maintain unity, *regardless* of their viability, in his decline article. His theory of decline dictates that the appropriate method of overcoming decline – particularly in the US – paradoxically comes through emphasising the ‘reality’ of decline. This is because declinism is a “theory that has to be believed to be invalidated” (Huntington, 1988-89, 96). Declinism actually plays an “indispensable role in preventing” what is being predicted because it forces political and economic elites to do something about decline and reverse it (Huntington, 1988-89, 96). Since the US has such an open political and economic system it can internally renew itself; all it needs is an adequate spur to galvanise the fragmented political system and motivate the public and press. Arguments about decline, therefore, “serve a useful historical function” (Huntington, 1988-89, 96). In consequence, there is “every reason... to *encourage* belief in such prophecies *in order to disprove them*.”

Happily, the self-renewing genius of American politics does exactly that” (Huntington, 1988-89, 96; my italics). Huntington, as such, is consciously using decline as an “instrument for claiming political power” because he “who understands the causes of decline must be given the power to avert it” (Minogue, 1997, 87). This is, by extension, also the ‘historical function’ that the *Clash of Civilizations* serves.

By emphasising the Western (American) creed of political and moral values, and creating culturally-driven foes, the US can keep the West together and maintain its primacy. The West, in Huntington’s schema, is not just a “geographical community but a universalistic creed” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 246). The US is now the “only major power” remaining “whose national identity is defined by a set of universal political and economic values” (Huntington, 1993, 82). But the US cannot convince its own population of the need to spread these values across the globe if there are no counter-cultures in competition with it. His approach thus resurrects an important tool of the Cold War by transforming the struggle between the West and the rest into a “cultural and spatial struggle that occurs *everywhere* (just like the Cold War, for it too, for Huntington was a clash of civilizations)” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 247; italics in original). He structures the “new source of global conflict in a form of Bismarkian *Kulturkampf* between ‘the West and the rest,’ ” and uses this to ‘reterritorialise’ the global scene (Clarke, 1993, 54). Huntington also takes this analysis further and adds to the list of problems internal ideational threats in the form of multiculturalism, immigration and demographic competition. A civilisational problem is countered by a civilisational remedy. As Ó Tuathail puts it, the “struggle” between the West and the Rest, “therefore begins on the home front in the fight” against America’s “dependence on foreign capital” and against “multiculturalism” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 248). This is an internal *Kulturkampf* driven by an external dynamic –

the so-called civilisation threats and the very real threat of the de-Westernisation of the US. That is the very essence of what the clash of civilisations means to Samuel P. Huntington and what he hopes it will mean to America and the West as a whole.



**Section 2 – Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Paradoxes of  
American Power: Globalisation and the Necessity of Geopolitics**

**2.1 – Hegemony and the New World Disorder:**

**The Ideological Imperative of American Primacy**

Zbigniew Brzezinski's initial intellectual foray into the post-Cold War debate came in the form of his book *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century*, published in 1993. Although a strategist and geopolitician, Brzezinski began his strategic analysis of the post-Cold War era by dealing with issues other than power politics in this first critical book. He does make policy prescriptions for America here, but only after first providing an adequate paradigm to understand the broad contours of the shifting and changing world order. He wants to, as Haass would put it, find a replacement for the 'lost' Cold War containment paradigm. But his concerns are much larger than those of Haass and many policy practitioners, since it is not only the collapse of communism that has changed the world order in his opinion. The whole post-war system of states, with its economic, political and military rules and constituents, is breaking down, and had been breaking down long before the collapse of communism. Brzezinski's significance to this thesis, and to American foreign policy, lies in the fact that his career and his (changing) ideas are both highly representative of the ideas of those in power *and* representative of the successive phases America's foreign policy strategy has been through. As Armand Mattelart puts it, with Brzezinski, "we enter into the geopolitics of empire in the age

of scientific and technological revolution” (Mattelart, 1994, 133). Brzezinski’s “geopolitical framework has a rich intellectual pedigree”, covering such important names in American history as “*Alexander Hamilton*, Thomas Boylston Adams, John Randolph... Thomas Jefferson... *Alfred Thayer Mahan*... Walter Lippmann” and “Nicholas Spykman” (Sempa, 1998, 72; my italics).

The geopolitical worldview to which Brzezinski adheres is “essentially Mackinder’s... updated to account for the events of the last 50 years” (Sempa, 1998, 73). Brzezinski places his analysis of the current state of the world within the framework of two interrelated processes, the older being the general path of modernity, and the newer being globalisation. Industrialisation, urbanisation, literacy and the French Revolution all served to put the masses on the political map, replacing religion with secular ideologies, identities and authorities. One of the by-products of this process in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was the development of ‘metamyths’. These are “grand transcendent fictions” that are made up of an “irrational but compelling blend of the religious impulse to seek salvation, of the nationalistic self-identification as being superior to outsiders, and of utopian social doctrines reduced to the level of populist slogans” (Brzezinski, 1993, 19). The most prominent and destructive metamyths of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been Nazism and Communism, which lead to war and genocide, what Brzezinski calls ‘megadeaths’. This phase in human history has largely come to an end with the collapse of communism. But the effects of these metamyths have not ended since they have left a vacuum in the former communist bloc, and much of the Third World, that has not been adequately filled. In the Western context, the “manifest failure” of metamyths has led to a form of apathy and lack of faith in everything political, a “relativistic agnosticism” that takes “all values” as “subjective and relative” (Brzezinski, 1993, 203-204).



In Brzezinski's opinion the age of 'coercive utopia' has given way to that of 'permissive cornucopia' where "too much control" has been replaced by "too little" (*Economist*, 1993, 81). But humanity is unaware of this fact. The triumph over the threat of totalitarianism has led to the 'illusion of control,' the mistaken impression that man is in charge of his destiny because of the endless advances in technology, and the growth of democracy and individual freedom. In reality, (Western) man has become the "prisoner of the process of invention" (Brzezinski, 1993, 204-205). Thanks to this, Western society has come to embody the "antithesis" of metamyths with only a "minimum of control over personal and collective desires, sexual appetites, and social conduct" (Brzezinski, 1993, 203). Moreover, there is no end in sight to this process because the pace of progress is so fast, and the lack of moral control so total, that Western society has been driven into a never ending spiral of increasing demands, self-gratification and cultural hedonism. This process, and its results, have now entered a new phase led by the West, thanks to the development of globalisation. The growth of capitalism and the new communications technologies are leading to the "dilution of the primacy of the nation-state and the emergence of a much more intimate connection between domestic as well as global economics and politics" (Brzezinski, 1993, 91). There is a growing congruence between the global and the domestic, with "domestic trends" transcending "frontiers" and shaping "world affairs" (Brzezinski, 1993, 91). This process is led by a "bureaucratically controlled and supranational capitalism" that is shifting the world away from the "dogmatic" dual "ideological" split of the "world into 'good' and 'evil' social systems" (Brzezinski, 1993, 92).

A world is developing that is more ideologically homogenised, takes globalising capitalism as its "universal social system", and is increasingly developing



a “global political process” (Brzezinski, 1993, 92). This fledgling political process has the potential of “shaping an initial worldwide consensus that might be the beginning of a universal moral standard” and world political community (Brzezinski, 1993, 92). This world community can “occasionally” – and increasingly – “summon powerful agents of enforcement... foreshadowing more future intrusions that will seek to alter the pattern of behavior of nations” (Ralph Buultjens, 1992, quoted in Brzezinski, 1993, 93). The few countries in the world, such as Iraq, that still cling to vestiges of the age of metamyths can now be singled out and reformed, so that the West can spread its political, social, moral and legal order to the rest of the world. The West can also increasingly fill the vacuum left by metamyths world-wide and make it impossible for them to return again. The problem is that, at the very same time that the West has triumphed over the dark side of modernity, the West itself has lost its faith in the very values that won the war against the metamyths.

How can the West expect to convert others to its virtues if it itself no longer believes in them? This poses grave dangers for the project of creating a world community. Even Buultjen says that the development of such a community “is not yet assured” (Buultjen, quoted in Brzezinski, 1993, 93). It is a fragile entity that could easily be destroyed by the very processes (globalisation and modernism) that have created it. Even if the non-Western world is “not soon likely to be infected by a new metamyth,” the growing demands of the masses brought on by modernity could make “likely” new “spasms of political irrationality” and “violence in the absence of tangible progress” (Brzezinski, 1993, 206). Globalisation itself is a paradoxical process because it creates a “unified *and* fragmented” world “at the same time” (Mattelart, 1994, 134; my italics). In his book on the information revolution, *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era*, (1969) Brzezinski even

substituted McLuhan's famous label 'global village' with 'global city,' a better term because "McLuhan's striking analogy overlooks the personal stability, interpersonal intimacy, implicitly shared values, and traditions that were important ingredients of the primitive village" (Brzezinski, 1970, 19). These characteristics of village life are not found in the globalising world. Instead, what exists is a "nervous, agitated, tense, and fragmented web of interdependent relations" (Brzezinski, 1970, 19). These are the dominant features of city life, where "interdependence... is better characterized by interaction than by intimacy" (Brzezinski, 1970, 19).

Instability is the dominant feature of the new world 'order'. The world is homogenising under the effects of globalisation and modernity, but this homogeneity is a "homogeneity of insecurity, of uncertainty, and of intellectual anarchy" (Brzezinski, 1970, 23). Even the industrialised nations themselves are likely to "group together" into "several principal clusters" which will be both "regionally competitive blocs as well as political alliances" (Brzezinski, 1993, 207). The threat of growing regionalism and multipolarity will kill the "new world order" concept in its tracks (Brzezinski, 1993, 206). The political glue engendered by the Cold War was as essential to the formation of a world community as modernity and globalisation are. This paradoxical situation facing the West is the basic starting point of his analysis of America's position in the post-Cold War world, which follows quite naturally from its status as a Western country and the leader of the West. It is when the consequences of these two processes are combined in the American context that Brzezinski's policy recommendations begin. The US is uniquely qualified to take on the task of creating a world community, furthering globalisation, and democratising the world. In fact, the US is "not only the key player, but a player whose internal structure and dynamics make it *organically congenial* to that emerging process" (Brzezinski, 1993, 92; my



italics). It is uniquely structured because of its very open political system, even open to foreign influence, whether it be lobbying or the growing foreign ownership of its assets. It is not just the US as a nation-state that is the leader of economic, political, and cultural globalisation, but the US system as a whole, its domestic constituents, that are the leaders of globalisation. But it is specifically the domestic power of the US over the emerging world order that is also the very same cause of all its problems in moving the globalising process forward.

The US, like the West as a whole, finds itself in a paradoxical position at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though Brzezinski is a realist and geopolitician, he places particular emphasis on America's cultural and ideological hegemony. Given that the world today is one of "rapid change, one must ask: Can America sustain its special position over the long haul?" (Brzezinski, 1993, 88). The nature of the contemporary context is the reason why he focuses on America's cultural/ideological power. Brzezinski likens the problems the US faces globally to the problems that the US president faces inside his own country. Not only is the president's power limited constitutionally, it is also limited given the very "complexity of the problems" he has to deal with (Brzezinski, 1993, 99). The very success of the American model is increasing this complexity because of the spread of democratisation. Democratisation "galvanizes more and more demanding constituencies" and transforms "entitlements" into "rights, and expanding rights inherently become obstacles to the exercise of power" and particularly to "military power emanating from a single power center" (Brzezinski, 1993, 99). Power, in the sense of raw physical power, is no longer enough by itself. Even in the military arena itself, there are growing constraints on US power, a vivid example of which was the Gulf War. The US had to "solicit financial and political support from a coalition that did not fully share" its view of the war



(Brzezinski, 1993, 99). This in turn placed limits on the “military scope and... political aims of the war” which denied the US a “decisive political triumph” – which would mean removing Saddam and restructuring the Iraqi regime, as the US did in Panama (Brzezinski, 1993, 100). The whole process of globalisation is producing a world that is increasingly less and “less susceptible to neat definitions and clear-cut power arrangements” (Brzezinski, 1993, 100).

In such circumstances, the ideological side of hegemony takes on a much higher status and profile. More importantly, in this fluid and chaotic state of affairs, the whole concept of “American preponderance... has a different meaning” (Brzezinski, 1993, 100). In the face of this “politically awakened community” – of this new world “order” – it must be understood that “*American global power is not the same thing as American global authority*” (Brzezinski, 1993, 101; italics in original). The old post-war order no longer exists, but a new world ‘order’ is yet to emerge. What does exist now is a “global hierarchy of power” with a preponderant America (Brzezinski, 1993, 100). But this preponderance is not accompanied by a legitimising ideology since the threat of communism – which gave US dominance legitimacy – no longer exists. The US cannot even keep its own allies together, let alone the rest of the world. A world of separate political and economic blocs could emerge, leading to “declining American capacity to decisively determine the internal policies of clusters other than its own” (Brzezinski, 1993, 206-207). America’s position of primacy cannot be maintained in the long-run if it does not strike new ground and create a thoroughly new order, based on a new vision with ideological and cultural content. What is at issue, from this perspective, is the country’s capacity to assert ‘positive control’.

For the US to exercise “authentic authority” its power must be accompanied by a substantial “perception of legitimacy, based... on shared values” (Brzezinski, 1993, 101). Following Gramsci’s logic, Brzezinski says that authentic authority is preferable to the use of traditional “power in that a lesser level of energy is required in order to exercise it---because it tends to be almost automatic” (Brzezinski, 1993, 101). It is fairly safe to say that the primacy school – which he represents – is using the ideas of new internationalists extensively. Such notions as ‘positive control’ and ideological/cultural (or ‘soft’) power belong to the new internationalist lexicon and form the backbone of their vision of America’s role in the new era. But, as we also know from Chapter 3, primacy theorists are highly sceptical of the effectiveness of international organisations, and see real, substantial international institutions as a threat to American power and independence. If new internationalism is anything, it is a call to “renew the American commitment to multilateral institutions”, specifically the UN (Nye, 1992, 96). Preponderists see international institutions as “diplomatic cover” that provides a “facade of multilateralism” which would allow the US to pursue its interests and still maintain a cordial international order (Posen and Ross, 1996-97, 40).

Ideology without substance is the basic objective of preponderists; ideology is important in this approach, but not as important as it is in the new internationalist approach. The *realpolitik* component is also much more important for preponderists. There are also considerable differences between new internationalists and primacy theorists over what kind of American society they want to see, and over the role of the government in the economy. Interestingly, there is one area in which Brzezinski does agree almost completely with the new internationalists, and that is over the overwhelming reality and desirability of globalisation. Brzezinski is not only a



theorist of globalisation, but an *advocate* of it too. But this commitment to globalisation creates a very serious problem for his categorisation as a primacy theorist. This is because promoting globalisation does not square well with promoting American primacy, simply because globalisation eats away at this primacy. Moreover, Brzezinski is well aware of this. He makes this perfectly clear when he says:

America is shaping a pioneering new pattern of global politics, the inherent characteristic of which is not only the progressive dilution of the sovereign integrity of the nation-state but also the reduction in the capacity of a superstate to exercise decisive global power.

In effect, America's global preeminence reinforces and even generates the conditions that prompt American's increasing global impotence.

(Brzezinski, 1993, 98).

This is what he calls the "The Paradox of Global Power" (Brzezinski, 1993, 91). This paradox of power is also at the heart of the thrust of his policy recommendations, summarised in the phrases "the catalytic state" and "the catalytic nation" (Brzezinski, 1993, 94). He believes that throughout history the "pace and style of political change is set" by such nations (Brzezinski, 1993, 94). An excellent example of this was France after the French Revolution, which "set in motion, then exemplified, the concept of the nation-state" and thus became an "agent of history, transforming" the rules of the game instead of being swept up by the direction of history (Brzezinski, 1993, 94). The US fulfils this role today since it "dominates the global chatter, the global perceptions, and the global educational interactions" and is the most powerful nation in human history (Brzezinski, 1993, 95). In fact, the ethnic and racial diversity of American society means that it is a "global society in microcosm" with a "magnetic polity" (Brzezinski, 1993, 96-97).



The above account provides the broad contours of Brzezinski's world-view and his set of policy recommendations. But before we can go further we must place Brzezinski's writings within the context of his intellectual and political allegiances, as we did with Huntington above. We also need to apply Gramscian terminology to him. Brzezinski is an advocate of globalisation and an organic intellectual of transnational capital, like Huntington but even more so. He was one of the founding fathers of the Trilateral Commission, in addition to being one of the co-authors of the *Crisis of Democracy* report. All of his post-Cold War writings demonstrate his continuing commitment to the forces of global integration, and his concern over how best to pacify people and gain legitimacy in their eyes. Moreover, by taking on board – like so many other primacy theorists – much new internationalist rhetoric he has, indirectly, adopted Gramscian and Coxian insights. Joseph Nye, Jr., the new internationalist originator of such concepts as 'soft power' and 'co-optive power,' cites both Antonio Gramsci and Robert Cox as sources for his ideas and uses them to back up his views (see Nye, 1990). As we shall see below, co-optive power – the "attraction of one's ideas... the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences" of others – is explicitly incorporated in Brzezinski's lexicon (Nye, 1990, 181).

Of equal importance, Brzezinski also has a deep appreciation and understanding of the techniques of consent building because of his views on the role of the intellectual. Brzezinski is one of the elitist intellectuals Chomsky famously described as the 'New Mandarins' – the list includes Huntington and Daniel Bell. During the 1950s and 1960s a theory developed over the proper role of the intellectual, with many seeing them as the "technical intelligentsia", the people who would "provide the knowledge by which 'men of power are humanized and civilized'

” (Ithiel Pool, quoted in Chomsky, 1969, 25). Brzezinski was happy to see that the new persona of the intellectual, the dominant strain, was no longer the “humanist-oriented, occasionally ideologically minded intellectual-dissenter” (Brzezinski, quoted in Chomsky, 1969, 28). They were being replaced by “experts and specialists”, “application-minded intellectuals” who were “house-ideologues for those in power” (Brzezinski, quoted in Chomsky, 1969, 28). In Gramscian terminology intellectuals were fast becoming traditional intellectuals who were subsumed into the institutional set up, often by becoming “involved in special government undertakings” (Brzezinski, quoted in Chomsky, 1969, 28). The kind of work they produce, in the terminology of Robert Cox, is problem-solving theory. Or, as Brzezinski puts it, their job is “providing the overall integration for disparate actions” – tying cause to effect, without reflecting on the ends of policy (Brzezinski, quoted in Chomsky, 1969, 28). This material will help us better understand the specifics of the intellectual project in which Brzezinski is engaged. But, as was the case with Huntington, we have to bear in mind the balance between Brzezinski’s transnational allegiances and his geopolitical concerns. As we shall see below, the term and slogan ‘Catalytic State’ was dropped after he finished *Out of Control*. His geopolitical concerns reasserted themselves, as has the conflictual nature of international relations, forcing him to modify his views and return to the certainties of realism. There is also the matter of his internal geopolitical concerns, how he ties the foreign to the domestic in the American context, and his ideal vision of democracy.



## 2.2 – The Geopolitical Foundations of the New World

### Order: Primacy, Hegemony, Anarchy and the Eurasian Heartland

Brzezinski's second major work after *Out of Control* was his book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperative*, published in 1997. This book contains the fullest and most up to date statement of Brzezinski's ideas and takes as its point of departure what he wrote in *Out of Control*. In the new volume he takes these long-term trends and transformations as givens, as background assumptions, and moves on to flesh out the details of an American strategy, given these changes, and given the more concrete geopolitical reconfiguration of power brought on by the collapse of communism. Brzezinski's overall objective in doing this is finally to find a "doctrine or world view to guide statesmen in the post-Cold War era" (Sempa, 1998, 71). As we saw in Chapter 3, Ernest Haass's term "Paradigm Lost" describes the contemporary state of foreign policy thinking and planning in the US. Brzezinski wanted to "fill" this "void" by "presenting a global geopolitical framework for the conduct of American foreign policy" (Sempa, 1998, 71). In geopolitical parlance, what Brzezinski was after was an "organizing principle" for US foreign policy (Sempa, 1998, 71). Containment, as such, was not America's organising principle during the Cold War. It was only a "means to implement the ongoing effort to prevent a hostile power from dominating Eurasia" (Sempa, 1998, 71). This effort was the organising principle, the objective behind the means of containment. More importantly, this was the organising principle of the US in the whole *post-war* period, even before the Cold War began. This is at the heart of Brzezinski's understanding of what America's post-Cold War organising principle should be, the element of continuity that draws together his Cold War and post-Cold



War writings. Continuity is the dominant characteristic of his thinking. For Brzezinski, the collapse of communism “did not end history or render geopolitics irrelevant”, having no real impact whatsoever on America’s post-war organising principle (Sempa, 1998, 73). The particular, contingent, configuration of power has changed, and considerably, but the geographical context in which configurations of power form has not changed. The world has not changed as much as it appears to have changed, at least as far as Brzezinski is concerned. Despite the reality of globalisation, and the wages of modernity, he still believes – and wants to ensure that others believe – that “political geography remains a critical consideration in international affairs” (Brzezinski, 1997, 37).

However, because of the realities of globalisation and modernity, our “understanding of the importance of political geography... must adapt” (Brzezinski, 1997, 37). In stark contrast to most of human history, “territorial control” – the “territorial imperative” – is no longer the “focus of political conflict” (Brzezinski, 1997, 37). Power is no longer “equated with the acquisition of territory” (Brzezinski, 1997, 37). The main reason for this is the development of nuclear weapons which have made the costs of all-out war unbearable and even inconceivable. Also important is the collapse of the nationalist imperative with the Second World War, and the collapse of the ideological imperative with the end of the Cold War. But “competition” – of whatever kind – “based on territory still dominates world affairs”, while “geographical location is still the point of departure for the definition of a nation-state’s external priorities” and a “major criteria of status and power” (Brzezinski, 1997, 38). Powers in the past, whether empires or nation-states, always competed for dominance. In terms of power politics, “hegemony is as old as mankind” (Brzezinski, 1997, 3). Global hegemony, though, only became a possibility

when the “continents started interacting politically, some five hundred years ago” (Brzezinski, 1997, xiii). This is quintessential geopolitical thought, grounded as it is in notions of a ‘closed’ international system and the beginning of the Colombian era (see Parker, 1985, and Ó Tuathail, 1996).

All of this competition was competition by Eurasian powers over Eurasian territory. Eurasia was at the centre of this game. Not only did the collapse of the Soviet Union destroy the bipolar order that denied America unipolar primacy, it also finally destroyed the historic attempt by Eurasian powers – from Hitler’s Germany, to de Gaulle’s France, to Stalin’s Russia – to ensure that America remained “excluded from Eurasia” (Brzezinski, 1997, xiv). America already had a bridgehead on the Eurasian continent thanks to the European members of NATO, but it could never “inject its political presence” deep into the heart of the continent, thanks to the Cold War and the loss of China (Brzezinski, 1993, 156). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, “three unprecedented conditions” have come to “define the geopolitical state of world affairs” (Brzezinski, 1997, 197). For the first time in history one state has “truly” become a “global power”; and that power is “non-Eurasian”; and the “globe’s central arena, Eurasia, is dominated” by that non-Eurasian power (Brzezinski, 1997, 197). This is the “tectonic shift” that should be seen as the starting point of America’s “comprehensive and integrated” foreign policy strategy generally, and for its “geostrategy for Eurasia” in particular (Brzezinski, 1997, xiii, 197, 197). Eurasia is still at the centre of the world power game given that it contains the vast majority of the world’s landmass, resources, and population. Therefore, America’s historic strategy of preventing the “emergence of a dominant and antagonistic Eurasian power---remains central to America’s capacity to exercise global primacy”



(Brzezinski, 1997, xiv). For Brzezinski, Eurasia is the “chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played” (Brzezinski, 1997, xiv).

None of this should be interpreted, though, as an abandonment of the strategy and list of priorities outlined by Brzezinski in his previous book – far from it. From the very beginning of this book he says that the “ultimate objective of American policy should be... to shape a truly cooperative global community, in keeping with long-range trends and with the fundamental interests of humankind” (Brzezinski, 1997, xiv). He describes America’s hegemony as one ideally suited to this task since it is a ‘hegemony of a new type,’ a “*benign*” and “*consensual*” hegemony (Brzezinski, 1997, 199, 27; my italics). The US system of global hegemony emphasised the “technique of co-optation” and relied “heavily on the indirect exercise of influence”, the “appeal of its democratic principles and institutions”, and its “domination” of global mass culture and information flows (Brzezinski, 1997, 25). He lays particular stress, in the contemporary context, on the domination of the media, given that the world has entered what he calls the ‘techetronic era,’ where society is “shaped culturally, psychologically and economically by the impact of technology and electronics” (Brzezinski, quoted in Mattelart, 1994, 134). The US is at the cutting edge of this transition from industrial to post-industrial and is the “only country that has succeeded in proposing a global model of modernity, of patterns of behaviour and universal values” (Mattelart, 1994, 135). But, as he says, “*in the meantime*, it is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus also of challenging America” (Brzezinski, 1997, xiv; my italics).

It is all a question of priorities and timing. The chess analogy itself forces one to think about the future, to “think several moves ahead” (Brzezinski, 1997, 198). Given the forces unleashed by globalisation and modernity, in the “long run, global



politics are bound to become increasingly uncongenial to the concentration of hegemonic power” (Brzezinski, 1997, 209). Brzezinski accordingly develops a timetable stretching from the short-run to the very long-run, where the coercive elements of strategy gradually give way to a more consensual mode of policy and international order. In the short-run America’s chief interest (or organising principle) is to “*consolidate and perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism*” in Eurasia (Brzezinski, 1997, 198; italics in original). In the medium run the new organising principle (once the original is achieved) is to try and create, at least in embryonic form, a “*trans-Eurasian security system*” (Brzezinski, 1997, 198; italics in original). With that achieved, the world will be ready to enter a thoroughly global era with a “*global core of genuinely shared political responsibility*” (Brzezinski, 1997, 198; italics in original). Also significant in this combination of geopolitical management with the process of globalisation is the *merging* of these two concerns in his analysis of the contemporary world. He says that the “only real alternative to American global leadership in the foreseeable future is international anarchy” (Brzezinski, 1997, 195).

The variety of factors, such as urbanisation, overpopulation, literacy etc. discussed above, would create an “unmanageable” world “if the existing and underlying nation-state-based framework” of geopolitical stability were to break down (Brzezinski, 1997, 195). The whole principle that the “threat of war is off the table” is geographically “restricted to those parts of the world where American power” is exercised, and where international relations are ordered through multilateral forms that are “also American-dominated” (Brzezinski, 1997, 196). America, therefore, is the antidote to the “global forces of disorder” (Brzezinski, 1997, 195). To maintain order in the world at large, and in Eurasia in particular, the US has to expand its sphere of influence to encompass these regions. But what is particularly interesting

about the way Brzezinski talks about these realities, and the appropriate America response, is what he *leaves out* of his account. What he leaves out is what he also left out in his previous book, and what primacy theorists like him generally downgrade and ignore as much as possible, that is, the United Nations. Brzezinski only mentions the UN on two pages in the whole book, and the UN Security Council on three pages, according to his own index. In fact, when he does mention the UN at any length, he mentions it on page 215, the last page in the “Conclusion.” On this page he only says that a trans-Eurasian security system “*can also help* to foster the preconditions for an *eventual* upgrading of the existing and increasingly antiquated UN structures” (Brzezinski, 1997, 215; my italics). He only says that this system can (and not will, or has to) do this, but he does not explain how it will do this and does not give any indication of what shape the UN will be in once this system comes into being. He does not even deal with what he really thinks is wrong with the UN, nor provides an account of the ideal UN he would like to see. His usage of the word ‘also’ indicates that the UN and everything it represents, for Brzezinski, is *secondary*, in contrast to the trans-Eurasian security system. This hardly squares well with what he has to say about his faith in the emerging global political community, and how fostering it should be America’s ultimate objective. Then again, this was a major problem with his first book, and it is not surprising that it should carry on into his next book.

The persistency of this inconsistency helps shed light on what is really going on in Brzezinski’s writings. He is fundamentally a primacy theorist, and this is what explains his disdain for the UN. It is hard to imagine America’s unprecedented geopolitical primacy declining and receding into history without an appropriate political organ capable of running international affairs in the absence of the US. The trans-Eurasian security system is certainly not qualified or capable of such a task



since it is an extension of the trans-Atlantic alliance, the American-dominated multilateral framework of NATO. Benjamin Schwarz describes Brzezinski's plan as an "oxymoronic formula" given that the "entire logic of Brzezinski's argument rests on the assertion that the indispensable foundation of cooperation and integration... was---and remains---American hegemony" (Schwarz, 1998, 56). In December 1990, with the end of the Cold War, Brzezinski expressed his belief that " 'Washington was the only superpower,' challenging those" who thought that the concept of "superpower" was "dead and that the new world order" would be "multipolar, with no hegemonic power" (Brzezinski, quoted in Mattelart and Mattelart, 1992, 163). Brzezinski is, after all, a primacy theorist; someone who believes that the US is a unipolar power, has the ability to remain a unipolar power, and should continue to remain this unipolar power. Towards the end of the Cold War, with the Soviet Union in decline, he expressed a similar opinion and outlined a vision for the future identical to the one he put forward in *The Grand Chessboard*. In his book *In Quest of National Security*, published in 1988, Brzezinski admitted that it was an "undeniable" fact that American "economic primacy" was in "relative decline" (Brzezinski and Stremki, 1988, 45). But, at the same time, he insisted that the "*only alternative to American leadership is global anarchy and international chaos*" given the fact that an "international system cannot operate on the basis of goodwill and sheer spontaneity alone" (Brzezinski and Stremki, 1988, 47; my italics). His understanding of the future roles of America's allies in the trans-Eurasian security system is essentially based on the notion of 'burden-sharing,' where Europe and Japan "remain junior partners" that pay a larger portion of cost than before, "while really granting them no greater authority than before" (Schwarz, 1998, 56). Again, in his 1988 book he explored the notion of "consensual leadership" and the possibility of larger roles for America's

allies, but insisted that “such consensual leadership still requires a vital, dynamic and powerful America” or else this leadership would “easily degenerate into a gridlock” (Brzezinski and Stremki, 1988, 48). If all powers have an equal say on how the world is to be run, then no decisive decisions will be taken and stasis will become the norm. Brzezinski goes as far as concluding that, because of this reality, “both Western Europe and Japan will continue” to have a “vested interest” in the “preservation of some kind of a central American role” (Brzezinski and Stremki, 1988, 47).

This reiterates all the points we made in Chapter 2 on the importance of NATO to America, the America fear of multipolarity and renationalisation of security policy, and the role played by Brzezinski in justifying and promoting NATO expansion. Dealing with Eurasia through alliances like NATO is his main concern, not managing global politics through institutions like the UN. This invariably brings us to the issue of the Russian threat, the main rival power on Eurasia that can wreck America’s plans for primacy. Like most realists, Brzezinski does assume that Russia is Russia is Russia. But he bases his conclusion on ideas that do not square well with realism, or agree with the official position of the US during the Cold War. That position was that the US and its allies were fighting the Cold War “not, it was always insisted, against Russia and the Russian people, but against the Soviet regime and the ideology it represented” (Harries, 1997-98, 3). It was assumed that totalitarianism and Marxism were the causes of the Soviet Union’s expansionist posture and that, once the country was converted to a “more or less normal state, and, if possible, to democracy”, conflict would end (Harries, 1997-98, 3). This is actually a pluralist or liberal analysis of the Soviet threat, since liberalism assumes that non-democratic countries are more prone to aggression, given that people’s misgivings about war are kept under control. Although the US has had misgivings about spreading democracy



to the Third World, it has not hesitated to spread it – even impose it – to Germany and Japan, to keep their imperial instincts in check. This same logic is being applied to Russia today under the Clinton administration (see Michael Cox, 1995). This view was, and still is, held earnestly by many in the US. As former NSC staffer Stephen Sestanovich explained, “we thought that the main reason the Soviet Union made trouble... was that it was not a democracy” (Sestanovich, 1996, 3). The internal dynamics responsible were seen to be ideologically and institutionally grounded and as having nothing to do with the character or culture of the Russian people. Brzezinski does not belong to this school of thought. Brzezinski is an ‘essentialist,’ an attitude of mind characteristic of many other prominent Cold War warriors who dominated the American foreign policy establishment during the Cold War. The “essentialist approach” is a particular school of thought in the US “regarding the nature of the Soviet system” (Dallin and Lapidus, 1987, 199). It focused “not on what the Soviet Union” did, “but rather on *what it is*” or was, in the present context (Dallin and Lapidus, 1987, 199-200). Although essentialists “differ on whether the reason is its Russian, communist, or totalitarian essence” they see the Soviet Union as “substantially unchanging” (Dallin and Lapidus, 1987, 200).

The brand of essentialist thought in which Brzezinski believes is closest to that held by George Kennan. Kennan believed that the West should explain “soviet aggressiveness... with reference to what... the country was all about” (Stephanson, 1989, 13). Although he did factor in the role of communist ideology, he focused mainly on how the “Russian personality” had been “molded by geography and history” (Stephanson, 1989, 14). While the West had “inherited a superior religious and cultural tradition from Rome... the Russian mentality had been shaped by the dogmatism, cruelty, backwardness, and ‘utter lack of chivalrous spirit’ of Byzantium”

(Kennan, quoted in Hixon, 1989, 14). Because of this the West could not “be expected to conduct normal diplomatic relations” with the Soviet regime because of the weight of Russian history (Hixon, 1989, 14). These ideas are not exclusive to such thinkers as Kennan, but are part of the cultural baggage of the West, the historical perception of Russia as a threat in Western history (see Chapter 3). Arnold Toynbee believed that Russians saw their country as the “universal state of the final stages of Orthodox Christian civilization” (Mason, 1958, 34). Russians see their country as the ‘Third Rome,’ all that is left of the Roman Empire after the fall of Rome and Constantinople, the first two Rome’s (see Mason, 1958). Kennan even believed that the Russian adoption of communism was a product of their “Oriental” and “Byzantine” obsession with “religious dogmatism” (Kennan, quoted in Stephanson, 1989, 14). Like many essentialists, Brzezinski believes that it was the “Russian-dominated Soviet Union” and its historic imperialist drive that was behind the Soviet side of the Cold War (Brzezinski, 1997, 89). The ideology of communism took the role of Tsarist Russia’s self-proclaimed role of “standard-bearer” of the “pan-Slavic identity” as an intellectual substitute to win allies and fight the West (Brzezinski, 1997, 89). For Brzezinski the collapse of the Soviet Union therefore not only represented an “ideological turning point”, but it also marked an “event even more historically important”, which was the final collapse of the 300 year old “Russian Empire” (Brzezinski, 1993, 155).

Brzezinski believes the end of the Russian empire to be more significant than the end of communism because, at the very least, communism is a Western ideology. Historically, Western intellectuals have had considerable difficulty in understanding the Russian revolution because they saw it as a revolution against the Westernising Tsarist Russia, led by an ideology that was Western in origin. Toynbee was able to



rationalise this apparent contradiction (in Western thought) by hypothesising that the revolution was actually an attempt to “restrict Westernization” to “one element” of that “alien culture, technology” (Mason, 1958, 36). For Kennan the Soviet Union was the “resurrection of Old Muscovy”, with the Russian revolution merely representing “another chapter in the continuing dialectic between ways of modernizing---that of following the West and that of going it alone” (Stephanson, 1989, 14). Adopting communism also had the added advantage of giving Russia the opportunity to challenge the West on its own ground and use communism – a Western ideology – for “world-wide psychological warfare purposes” by engaging in the Cold War (Mason, 1958, 37). It must be made clear here that this interpretation of Russia and Bolshevism is not circumscribed to historians, anthropologists, and pre-Cold War intellectuals generally. This interpretation actually represents a staple of Western geopolitical thought, the view that the “most *Occidentalised* of Russian revolutionary ideologies” paradoxically led to the “*de-westernization* of Russia” (Sarkisyanz, quoted in Parker, 1988, 124; my italics).

Brzezinski deals with these themes and concerns through the conceptual instrument of ‘Eurasianess,’ the issue of which part of the Eurasian continent Russians identify themselves with more. Do they see their country as a primarily European power, with its roots in a European civilisation, or an Asia power with a European component? George Kennan first posed this question in 1947, believing that what should concern Western leaders the most was not to what degree the communists were changing Russia, but to what degree Russia was changing the communists (see Parker, 1988). The weight of Russian history and the realities of Russian geography were seen as playing a far more significant role in determining the country’s foreign policy than the ideology of Marxism. Brzezinski describes Russia as

going through a phase of “Geostrategic Phantasmagoria”, a period of “historic and strategic confusion” centred around such questions as: “What is Russia? Where is Russia? What does it mean to be a Russian?” (Brzezinski, 1997, 96). More specifically, what is Russia’s “true mission and rightful scope?” (Brzezinski, 1997, 109). The post-Soviet crisis of the Russian state is a crisis over the country’s ‘essence’. This is not a theoretical issue since “any reply contains significant geopolitical content” (Brzezinski, 1997, 97). The causes of this debate over identity are geopolitical too. It was the loss of Ukraine in particular that led to this latest phase of soul-searching. With the loss of Ukraine, all that is left of worth for Russia is its predominantly Asian landmass, leading to a tipping of the internal Russian scales away from the West and towards the East. Any “imperial restoration” therefore “would eventually mean a Russia that would become more ‘Asianized’ ” and thus “more remote from Europe” (Brzezinski, 1997, 113). On a more strictly political level, post-Soviet Russian history represents a battle for Russia’s soul between Yeltsin’s ‘democratic Westernizers’ and communists and nationalists who believe in a group of ideas that could be categorised loosely as ‘Eurasianism’.

Eurasianism is a ‘supranational doctrine’ that could group together the Russian and various non-Russian and non-European peoples of Russia around a common Eurasian identity. It was originally developed by Russian émigrés in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a non-Western alternative to communism. It argued that Russia was “neither quite European nor quite Asian” and that, therefore, it had a “distinctive Eurasian identity of its own” (Brzezinski, 1997, 109). This ideology believes in creating “Russia-Eurasia, the conscious heir to and bearer of the legacy of Genghis Khan” (Prince N. S. Truetzkoy, quoted in Brzezinski, 1997, 110). Brzezinski’s logic appears to be as follows: it stands to reason to think of Russia as anti-Western and a



threat to the West, if even Russian émigrés opposed to communism living in the West also refuse to become Western, *just like* the communists back in Russia. Brzezinski has such faith in this strain of thought that he will not allow Russia's transition to democracy to get in the way of Russia's inherent imperial instinct. On the contrary, he sees democracy as a very probable *cause* of an "imperial restoration", given that a "democratic Russia would have to accept a high degree of decentralization" which would create more pressures for "autonomy" for the various ethnic groups (Brzezinski, 1993, 159, 160). If Russians abandon their "imperial ambitions" their country risks "further geopolitical dispersal" (Brzezinski, 1993, 160). For "many" Russians the "reconstitution of the empire... represents a more attractive option", even though this means dooming Russia to "endless conflict" and to "becoming again an autocratic state" (Brzezinski, 1993, 161).

The ideological excuse this time would come in the form of the "emotionally appealing slogan" of "we must defend the millions of Russians outside of Russia" (Brzezinski, 1993, 161). Brzezinski is clearly putting much of the blame of Russia's "deeply rooted imperial instinct" on the Russian people themselves, and not only on political, military and economic elites (Brzezinski, 1993, 161). Even when he discusses the collapse of the Soviet Union, he also emphasises the role of the people, or the lack of it in this case. The "Russian people" – who were kept out of the picture by their elites – "suddenly discovered that they were no longer the masters of a transcontinental empire but that the frontiers of Russia had been rolled back" to their location in the days of "Ivan the Terrible" (Brzezinski, 1997, 88). His words imply that the Russian people have not been pleased by the destruction of 'their' empire, and that, if they had a say in their country's affairs, they would have never settled for such an arrangement. Brzezinski here is attacking the very entity that is Russia, blaming

the totality that is Russia for all the crimes of the past and for future crimes yet to come. This is actually a common characteristic of essentialist thought, even the variety that sees the Soviet Union's communist (ideological and not cultural) essence as the cause of its aggressiveness. Essentialists often take an "irrational/determinist" interpretation of communist behaviour, refusing to believe that communism was a "belief system subject to change and abandonment under certain condition" (Rubenstein and Crocker, 1994, 114). Instead they believe that an "ineffable and immutable 'something' in Russian, Chinese, or Vietnamese culture... inclined those people toward aggressive totalitarianism" (Rubenstein and Crocker, 1994, 114). This was in marked contrast to the liberal interpretation of the Soviet Union which saw "Russia and its people as the first victims of communism" (Padhoritz, 1999, 26). Based on this interpretation of Russia and its people, Brzezinski advocates a 'loosely confederated' Russia that is highly decentralised from the inside, thus making it difficult to mobilise its resources and political will behind an imperialist posture. He also advocates expanding NATO membership continuously until the NATO alliance has "actually reached the frontiers of Russia", protecting the states of the near abroad and making Russian expansion in these territories impossible (Brzezinski, 1994). Only then, after Russia is paralysed internally and externally, can Russia be allowed to apply for NATO membership, and so be included – in the long run – into the trans-Eurasian security system (see Brzezinski, 1997).

To finish off this subsection, we have to bring back the issue of the balance between globalisation and primacy we dealt with above. The conclusion that can be drawn from Brzezinski's writings is that he is now placing geopolitical concerns *over* his promotion of globalisation. Or, to be more accurate, he places geopolitics and globalisation into two different compartments. He is completely behind globalisation,



provided it is exclusively restricted to economic and cultural matters, while the political sphere of international affairs remains an exclusively American preserve, run according to geopolitical priorities. There is no actual inconsistency here at all since it all depends on what you mean by globalisation, or what particular aspect of globalisation you focus on. Economic and cultural globalisation are not anathema to American primacy, while real, substantial political globalisation *is* anathema to American primacy. In fact, globalisation existed during the Cold War geopolitical order, and existed *because* of the Cold War. The Soviet threat kept the allies together and convinced them to keep their markets open. One can say that primacy does take a higher status in his 1997 book than his 1993 book, but the true status of primacy was implicit even in the earlier volume. For Brzezinski, primacy comes first, and then globalisation; and globalisation itself comes from primacy. This is not only my observation, but a conclusion that can be reached with reference to Brzezinski's own writings, and particularly the works he produced during the Cold War. The corrosive effects of globalisation have been a major concern of Brzezinski's since the 1960s and 1970s. He first analysed them in his 1969 book, *Between Two Ages*. According to Michèle and Armand Mattelart, Brzezinski argued that the emergence of a global technetronic (information-based) economy and society had "marked the end of the idea of imperialism", while the "era of the strategy of domination by the gunboat was thus placed in a museum display case" (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1992, 168). This was because globalisation had increasingly made the concept and reality of 'the state,' and such state-centric concepts as imperialism, redundant. Thanks to globalisation the relations of dependence and interdependence characteristic of imperialism had moved out of their state-centric phase and gained a life of their own. The global information economy forced "imitation of the more advanced by the less advanced" of its own

accord, without any need for state-sponsored coercion (Brzezinski, quoted in Mattelart, 1994, 135). But, critically, none of this means that US primacy has ended or become impossible. This is because what Brzezinski was really discussing in his 1969 book was not imperialism *per se*, but the “imperialism the United States was blamed for practicing” (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1992, 168). He believed that the “concept ‘imperial’ shields rather than reveals a relationship between American and the world” because it ignores the “part played” in this relationship by the “crucial dimension of the technological-scientific revolution” (Brzezinski, quoted in Mattelart and Mattelart, 1992, 168). Brzezinski, thus, does not deny the existence or feasibility of America’s global hegemony, he merely believes that it is wrong to believe that American imperialism is driven by an “imperial drive” (Brzezinski, quoted in Mattelart and Mattelart, 1992, 168). The US relationship with the world is “no doubt... asymmetrical... but the content of that asymmetry must be examined before it is called imperialism” (Brzezinski, 1970, 33-34). Brzezinski’s main objection is the description of America’s relationship to the world as imperialism because of the technological benefits the world accrues from this relationship. He also tries to categorise the US a ‘benevolent hegemon’ of sorts because it is not committed to the principle of ‘divide-and-rule’ in its management of the world. Instead the US has “striven to promote regionalism” which “both promotes and undermines American interests” (Brzezinski, 1970, 34).

In effect, what Brzezinski is trying to do is use the technological/communicative basis of globalisation as an ideological rationale for continued imperialism. Brzezinski achieves this ideological task by nullifying the “notions of imperialism and colonization, which are relegated to an earlier, ‘pretechnetronic’ or industrial era” (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1992, 167). Even the



liberal vision of the new world order that he borrowed from the new internationalists can be found in his Cold War writings. The concept of 'global society' that he explores in *Out of Control* was first explicated in *Between Two Ages*. In his 1969 book he describes America as the "first 'global society' in history...the only society to propose a 'global model of modernity' ", with "universal forms of behaviour and values", transmitted through the products of its "cultural industries" and "also through its 'new technologies, methods and organizational skills' " (Brzezinski, quoted in Mattelart and Mattelart, 1998, 102). He also described the US as a "catalyst for change" in the world and a country that had a "magnetic pull" on the world populace, and drew a parallel between the task of managing the world to that of managing race relations within America (Brzezinski, 1970, 24, 29). According to Michèle and Armand Mattelart, Fukuyama's theory of the End of History "was already present in Zbigniew Brzezinski's analysis of 'global society' " (in Mattelart and Mattelart, 1998, 140). Therefore, in the post-Cold War context all that Brzezinski has done is to update his initial notion of global society by taking on new internationalist rhetoric and using the new concept of 'catalytic nation'. But his objectives during the Cold War and after the collapse of communism are essentially the same – US primacy – with the much of the new internationalist rhetoric being discarded in his book *The Grand Chessboard* with the reassertion of power politics and the Russian imperialist drive. We must also remember that Brzezinski does not believe in the benign global village vision of globalisation, but sees instead the emergence of an unstable global city, with the US as the only power capable of guaranteeing the stability of the nation-state order. His vision of globalisation almost necessitates the persistence of US primacy. With that clear, I can now move to the final relevant issues in Brzezinski's writings, which are

the domestic, internal factors that stand in the way of American hegemony, and his remedies for these problems.

### 2.3 – The Democratic Foundations of American Hegemony: The Domestic Need for Empire and the American Geopolitical Tradition

For Brzezinski history “teaches that a superpower cannot long remain dominant unless it projects---with a measure of self-righteous confidence---a message of worldwide relevance” (Brzezinski, 1993, 89). Despite the absence of “rivals capable of matching its comprehensive global power... the dynamics of America’s social change as well as the value content of the American message to the world threaten to undermine America’s special role as the global leader” (Brzezinski, 1993, 87). The main threat Brzezinski sees, then, lies in America itself, and not in the potential threat posed by Russia, which mainly threatens US preponderance on the Eurasian continent. Brzezinski’s concern, apparently, is over whether the “values and... realities of contemporary America” are “relevant” or not for a “highly differentiated world undergoing a massive political awakening” (Brzezinski, 1993, 89). America’s message must have “cultural content” that is “*derived from an inner moral code of its own, defining a shared standard of conduct as an example for others*” (Brzezinski, 1993, 89; italics in original). For America’s message to have cultural content for others, it must originate from a society that has cultural content for its own citizens. Without cultural content “*national self-righteousness can degenerate into national vanity, devoid of wider appeal*”, and so “*will be eventually rejected by others*” (Brzezinski, 1993, 89; italics in original). Therefore, it is the “*internal dynamics*” of American society that will constitute the primary ideological



and cultural battleground where the persistence of American primacy will be decided (Brzezinski, 1993, 89; italics in original). This is actually a common concern among many primacy theorists. A good example of this is James Kurth, another primacy theorist, and his concern over the need for an “imperial idea” to accompany American hegemony (Kurth, 1997, 6). He goes as far as saying that the “most important feature of an empire is how it seeks to order not just its own territories but an entire world, to set a standard for a way of life and for the spirit of an age” (Kurth, 1997, 6). This covers the “particular vision of politics, economics, culture, and ultimately of such fundamentals as human nature and the meaning of life itself” (Kurth, 1997, 6). I cite Kurth here for the same reason that I cited him above with reference to Huntington. His ideas help clarify Brzezinski’s ideas, and also helps show how popular Brzezinski’s ideas are with the primacy school.

The reason that internal cultural decay is a greater threat to American hegemony today than it was in the past is because of the higher status of ideology in the new world and the relative decline of power politics. In the past, the US itself did not have to exert any real effort to project a particular positive and detailed image, congenial to America’s identity (its vision of itself) to the world. A combination of geographic isolation and ideologically driven power politics did the job for it. This is no longer the case. There are no longer any totalitarian challengers, even potential ones, while globalisation has “shrunk” the world to the “level of instant visibility, immediate communication, and growing intimacy” (Brzezinski, 1993, 102). People around the globe have a “close-up perception” of “American society as it *actually is*, and *not* in its idealized form” (Brzezinski, 1993, 102; my italics). This is another symptom of a world that is progressively growing more and more uncontrollable, and eating away at American primacy, particularly if understood in terms of true

leadership and genuine authority. America's social reality is increasingly becoming the subject of American primacy abroad. What happens domestically automatically has an affect on America's posture abroad since it effects the perceptions of America, and therefore its policies, abroad. As such, domestic and foreign policy become one. Politics no longer ends at the water's edge, if it ever did.

The world audience now is increasingly moved by the "cravings of the newly activated masses" in the Third World and former Soviet Bloc (Brzezinski, 1993, 103). How America deals with its various domestic "tangible and intangible challenges" will be "decisively important in shaping America's capacity to... *transform its power into a leadership that commands moral legitimacy*" (Brzezinski, 1993, 103; italics in original). These internal "dilemmas... constitute, in effect, the agenda for America's renewal *and* for effective reaffirmation of America's capacity to exercise sustained global leadership" (Brzezinski, 1993, 103; my italics). These dilemmas, in summary form, are:



1. *Indebtedness...*
2. *Trade deficit...*
3. *Low savings and investment...* generating a relative decline in America's global lead in research and development;
4. *Industrial noncompetitiveness...* which... is aggravated by the absence of any long-term national target setting...
5. *Low productivity and growth rates...* which are further adversely affected by higher levels of labor unrest and strikes and a declining work ethic;
6. *Inadequate health care...*
7. *Poor-quality secondary education...*
8. *Deteriorating social infrastructure and widespread urban decay...*
9. *A greedy wealth class...* which tends to oppose genuinely progressive taxation... which in some egregious cases is quite prepared to practice massive illegality in an effort to enrich itself...
10. *A truly parasitic obsession with litigation...*
11. *A deepening race and poverty problem...*
12. *Widespread crime and violence...* With a TV and film culture that extols violence...
13. *The spread of a massive drug culture...*
14. *The inbreeding of social hopelessness...*
15. *The profusion of sexual license...*
16. *The massive propagation of moral corruption by the visual media...*
17. *A decline of civic consciousness...* which no longer demands of the citizen any form of service or sacrifice on behalf of the nation-state;
18. *The emergence of potentially divisive multiculturalism...* which... threaten to balkanize multiethnic America by the deliberate deemphasis of the nationally unifying and socially equalizing effects of a common language and of shared historical traditions and political values...
19. *The emerging gridlock in the political system...* making the electorate feel that their government is remote, irresponsible, and corrupt, with special interests enjoying privileged access...
20. *An increasingly pervasive sense of spiritual emptiness...* also handicapped by their inability to compete for allegiance in the face of the cultural onslaught promoting licentious values.

(Brzezinski, 1993, 104-107; italics in original).

These are the “economic, social, and even metaphysical” factors that need redressing if “America is to remain globally vital and appealing” (Brzezinski, 1993, 107). Their cumulative impact form what Brzezinski calls the ‘Dissonant Message’ that America is broadcasting to the rest of the world.

Of these problems, the economic ones are the least perplexing since they are problems amenable to policy and policy discourse and can be solved by concerted political action. Moreover, there is a growing consensus – this was in 1993 – over the need to retrain American workers, get the budget deficit down, and develop a “national competitiveness strategy” (Brzezinski, 1993, 110). It is the social and philosophical problems that are “less likely to prove susceptible to decisive correction” because it is difficult to construct the “needed social consensus” over such vague issues (Brzezinski, 1993, 108). Also significant is the “complex and interlocking” nature of the “U.S. constitutional system”, which makes the kind of “resolute political action” needed here “difficult” to achieve (Brzezinski, 1993, 108). America’s social dilemmas are perpetuated by this political gridlock. These social and cultural problems are turning the idea of “America as a society of opportunity” into a “hallowed” and “increasingly ritualistic” notion (Brzezinski, 1993, 112). With the declining influence of “religion” and “patriotism, the ‘Horatio Alger’ philosophy” has become the “dominant ethic” which, when misinterpreted, leads to “contempt for failure and the conviction that poverty is somehow self-inflicted” (Brzezinski, 1993, 112). One of the worst influences is that of mass culture, with its “propagation” of the “worship of material wealth,... consumption, and... self-indulgence as the definition of the good life,” while also “inhibiting a response” by blinding people to the realities of these “key social dilemmas” (Brzezinski, 1993, 112). Of particular concern for Brzezinski is the “decline of the nuclear family as the basic social unit” of American society (Brzezinski, 1993, 113). With its decline, “structure, responsibility,... restraint... the obligations of sacrifice, loyalty,... trust... enduring principles” and “self-denial” have declined in tandem, to be replaced by “uninhibited hedonism” and “egocentrism” (Brzezinski, 1993, 113). For Brzezinski, *“America clearly needs a*



*period of philosophical introspection and of cultural self-critique*” if it is to overcome these problems (Brzezinski, 1993, 113; italics in original).

Such problems are bad enough by themselves, but they have a particularly divisive effect in the American context, as opposed to the general cultural malaise the West is suffering from. They are particularly dangerous in the American context because America is an “artificial nation, not a natural one, a nation that has been socially constructed”, and not “organically grown” (Kurth, 1996, 19). America is, after all, a ‘founded society,’ an ‘ideological-state’. As Brzezinski puts it, the US “*must come to grips with the realization*” that a community that “*partakes of no shared absolute certainties but which instead puts a premium on individual self-satisfaction is a community threatened by dissolution*” (Brzezinski, 1993, 113; italics in original). This is because these problems have developed at the same time that the “ethnic and cultural composition of America is changing profoundly” (Brzezinski, 1993, 114). Like Huntington, Brzezinski focuses on the demographic transformations America is undergoing and their impact on the cultural basis of American unity. By 2050 the “European composition will drop from 60 percent to about 40 percent”, creating an America very different from the “largely European America” of the past to one that is “more likely to mirror the cultural and philosophical cleavages that already divide the world” (Brzezinski, 1993, 114). What will be created in America is a “global mosaic”, which will replace the originally dominant “white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture” (Brzezinski, 1993, 114). This demographic transformation could be highly “disruptive, even potentially divisive, especially if in the process the unifying function of a common language... political philosophy... and... shared constitutional commitment” are corroded (Brzezinski, 1993, 114). The threat of “escalating urban guerrilla warfare” and total “disintegration” could not be far off if

this occurred (Brzezinski, 1993, 114-115, 114). Brzezinski does not, apparently, take the “words breakdown or balkanization... literally”, and does “not accept an apocalyptic vision” of an America that will “collapse or fragment along ethnic lines” (Brzezinski, 1995, 38, 39, 38).

At the same time, though, we should not underestimate how seriously Brzezinski takes these ideas. He has been analysing the phenomenon of moral decline and cultural decay since the 1960s and 1970s, and expressed his views in the report on the *Crisis of Democracy* (with Huntington and Crozier, see above), and in his book on the Technetronic society. In the report he had this to say: “In some respects, the mood of today is reminiscent of that of the early twenties, when the views of Oswald Spengler regarding ‘The Decline of the West’ were very popular” (Brzezinski, quoted in Mattelart, 1994, 227). Spengler was a thinker who tried to analyse the causes of the rise and fall of civilisations. He believed the West was in terminal decline and adhered to the view shared by many decline theorists that “virtue and truth produced strength, strength domination, domination riches, riches luxury and luxury weakness and collapse” (Froude, quoted in Minogue, 1997, 87). This is Daniel Bell’s cultural contradictions of capitalism on a grander historical and sociological scale, expressing the cyclical view of history. Brzezinski may not think that the US is headed for a new civil war, but he does take the consequences of decline very seriously and does tie the maintenance of primacy to it. Brzezinski believes that “*America’s principle vulnerability*” is the “*intangible threat posed by its own culture, which increasingly weakens, demoralizes, divides, and incapacitates America domestically, and which simultaneously attracts, corrupts, alienates, and revolutionizes the outside world*” (Brzezinski, 1993, 146; italics in original). Internationally, the American empire is being “relentlessly attacked and undermined” by its own “soft power” (Kurth, 1997,



14). In the context of internal US politics he is mainly concerned over social unity and political allegiance. In the past, the “family, the schools, and the churches were the primary instruments for cultural induction of the new immigrants into a society that was open to change but which was guided, at least formally, by a moral code” (Brzezinski, 1995, 38). This was the major feature of an American society dominated by a “North Sea culture” and its “Protestant religious-ethical values” of “self-discipline, tradition, and personal probity” (Brzezinski, 1995, 38). But the “Wasp elite” and its “traditional instruments” have collapsed (Brzezinski, 1995, 38). The culture that has taken its place is a “Mediterranean Sea culture” which is driven by a “TV-Hollywood-Mass-Media cartel” which stresses “self-enjoyment, entertainment, sexual promiscuity, and the almost explicit repudiation of any social norms” (Brzezinski, 1995, 38). He is particularly worried that the “increasing multiculturalism---since it is not being subjected to a binding ethical code---might become quite disruptive, making a viable cultural compromise less attainable” (Brzezinski, 1995, 39).

For all this, such a future is not “inevitable” and a “reversal of America’s cultural-moral degeneration is feasible” (Brzezinski, 1995, 39). Being constructed, America can and should be “socially reconstructed periodically” (Kurth, 1996, 19). Foreign policy has an important role to play here because the “grand strategy of the United States has always required that the United States itself be united” (Kurth, 1996, 19). Brzezinski hopes to demonstrate to Americans how the country cannot continue to lead effectively without unity at home. The main strategy he adopts in this attempt is the resurrection of the Cold War, its world-view, terminology, and priorities. The introduction to *The Grand Chessboard* is “Superpower Politics”, while his summary of America’s grand strategy is written in “terminology that hearkens

back to the more brutal age of ancient empires,” as he himself says (Brzezinski, 1997, 40). He says America’s “three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together” (Brzezinski, 1997, 40). Brzezinski seems to be trying to prepare America and mobilise the American people for a new bout of external expansion with this rhetoric. He also panders to the vanity and sense of exceptionalism of Americans here by referring to America’s erstwhile imperialist project as “Hegemony of a New Type” (the title of the first Chapter).

Although Brzezinski is well aware of the limits to American power and the limits to imperialistic politics, he makes no secret of his disdain of the internal, democratic constraints placed on American policy. This, of course, would imply that he would want them removed and prefer a more old-fashioned form of imperialism. When discussing the distinctive American approach to hegemony, he says it developed out of the “domestic American experience”, given its “pluralistic character” (Brzezinski, 1997, 24). What he means by this, though, is the class structure of American society, the openness of the political system, and the attitudes of the public to foreign policy. US hegemony was not, unlike previous empires, “built by aristocratic political elites” and “authoritarian or absolutist regimes” that did not give the people a say in how affairs of state were run (Brzezinski, 1997, 24). This is in direct contrast to the American political system, with a public that has a “much more ambivalent” “attitude... toward external projection of American power” than was the case with previous empires (Brzezinski, 1997, 24). This puts internal restraints on governments which prevent them from exercising power in the same way that traditional empires did. An interesting contradiction develops here. On the one hand,



Brzezinski is praising the democratic uniqueness and durability of American hegemony, as opposed to American imperialism. On the other hand, he laments this very democracy that constantly ties America's hands. Given his other criticisms of the internal state of American society and its political system, it is fair to say that his views are better represented by his scolding of these democratic limits to American power. This conclusion is also born out by Brzezinski's analysis of these democratic constraints in his previous works. In his 1988 book, *In Quest of National Security*, he explained that the problems the US faced in dominating global politics after Vietnam were not the product of "objective circumstances but rather a matter of subjective indecision", the fact that America "remained torn by the conflicting imperatives of power and principle" after Vietnam (Brzezinski and Stremki, 1988, 19, 14). He explained that this was rooted in America's "national tradition," the fact that "Americans do not wish" their country "to become an imperial nation, exercising its power in the manner of a hegemonic power" (Brzezinski and Stremki, 1988, 19). He also reiterated his belief that Americans had no choice but to accept a policy of "constructive globalism" with all its imperial overtones, or else they would have to face a world "out of control" (Brzezinski and Stremki, 1988, 19).

Brzezinski also has no problem with exploiting foreign threats and demonising enemies. Russia is a good example of this. Despite his extensive analysis of the Russian 'threat' it seems that, paradoxically, he does not take this threat very seriously. In an article he wrote in the 1994 edition of *The New York Times* – after he wrote *Out of Control* – he made it clear that, in "advocating the expansion of NATO, one should note that neither the alliance nor its prospective members are facing any imminent threat... even by worst-case scenarios for the near future" (Brzezinski, 1994). He also warned that the expansion "should not be driven by whipping up anti-

Russian hysteria” because this could lead to a “self-fulfilling prophecy” (Brzezinski, 1994). The ‘anti-Russian hysteria’ he has stirred in his books then is not aimed at informing the West of a threat they are unaware of, but aimed at preserving NATO and US primacy on the Eurasian continent. As the title of his 1994 article itself says, ‘NATO --- Expand or Die?’ A similar pattern of contradictions is evident in Brzezinski’s attitude to the views advocated by Samuel Huntington on Islam. Brzezinski does not advocate an all-out war with Islam, seeing “attempts to portray ‘fundamentalist’ Islam as the new central threat to the West---the alleged successor in that role to communism” as “grossly oversimplified” (Brzezinski, 1993, 210). Islam, by and large, is not militant, and is very divided politically. To base policy on a perception of the “Moslem world... as almost ready to embark (armed with nuclear weapons) on a holy war against the West” would “risk... engaging in a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Brzezinski, 1993, 210). Brzezinski advocates a more selective approach to dealing with the Islamic threat so that it does not transform into an ‘Islamic’ threat, as opposed to just an threat posed by Islam in certain key – but geographically limited – areas. At the same time, though, he talks about how “Islam is... pushing northward” in the Eurasian Heartland, and how “Islam... in time is also likely to contest American domination” in the Middle East, Persian Gulf and Pakistan (Brzezinski, 1993, 163). Although he wrote his 1993 book at the same time as Huntington wrote his *Foreign Affairs* article, he did have the “opportunity to read the unpublished---and *highly compelling*---essay” (Brzezinski, 1993, 166; my italics). He described Huntington as making a “*powerful case* that conflicts along the fault lines of what he defines as Islamic, Confucian, and Christian civilizations will pose in the future the major threat to world peace” (Brzezinski, 1993, 166; my italics). Even his description of the



perception of an Islamic threat as 'oversimplified' would imply that he thinks it is exaggerated and more complex than it seems, but not that it is not there.

The point is that Brzezinski does support a foreign policy with a *Kulturkampf* component because he believes it will help solve some of America's internal problems. He does believe in using foreign policy and the imperialist drive to unite Americans and bring some order to the political system. Brzezinski is a member of the American geopolitical tradition in the purest sense of the word, taking as his intellectual mentors Hamilton and Mahan, and has no problem admitting to his imperial instincts and ambitions. His permanent 'organising principle' is the maintenance of America's internal balance of power by means of maintaining the balance of power on the Eurasian continent.

**Section 3 – Henry Kissinger and the Challenge of  
Balancing Powers: The Fusion of Idealpolitik and Realpolitik**

**3.1 – Diplomacy in the American**

**Tradition: Wilsonianism and the Realist Predicament**

Kissinger, like all realists, wants to fashion the ideal foreign policy strategy and mode of diplomacy for America so that it can successfully pursue its interests and fulfil its objectives in the world. He is after a science of diplomacy grounded in the supposed reality of the zero-sum – cynical – logic of national interests. Naturally then, he is less impressed with accounts of a New World Order and the titanic shifts brought about by the end of communism and globalisation than most foreign policy thinkers, particularly liberals. Writing on the New World Order pronouncements of George Bush in the aftermath of the Gulf War, he said that the “new world order cannot possibly fulfill the idealistic expectations expressed by the president; I doubt indeed whether they accurately describe what happened during the Gulf War” (Kissinger, 1992, 238-239). He described this “conventional” mode of thinking as irrational because “such an approach... assumes that every nation perceives every challenge to the international order in the same way, and is prepared to run the same risks to preserve it” (Kissinger, 1992, 239). Although he is not opposed to the New World Order vision in principle he implores US policymakers to “recognize” the fact that the “new world order cannot be built to American specifications”, while the US “cannot be force-fed a global sense of community where none exists” (Kissinger,



1992, 241). He takes this as his starting point and concludes that the “deepest challenge” facing America “will be philosophical: how to define order”, and that the lessons of history demonstrate “only two roads to international stability: domination or equilibrium” (Kissinger, 1992, 239).

The US has neither the resources nor the values for domination, which forces the country “back to a concept maligned in much of America’s intellectual history--- the balance of power” (Kissinger, 1992, 239). The challenge is not one of articulating policy, but one of being able to face the facts and realise what kind of policy is needed. Such an approach means that Americans “must operate by maxima that historically have made Americans uncomfortable”, since they involve “moral neutrality” (Kissinger, 1992, 242). Kissinger is very pleased with this outcome of the Cold War, in that it signals in his mind the final triumph of his brand of foreign policy over the historic orientation of the American polity. He describes the result of America’s “triumph” in the Cold War as an “irony” from which there can be “no escaping” (Kissinger, 1992, 242). He quotes Winston Churchill to hammer home his message, saying that policy should take “no account” of the kinds of nations it deals with, but should instead be “concerned solely with whoever is strongest” (Churchill, quoted in Kissinger, 1992, 242). Churchill – and so Kissinger – described this as a “law of public policy... not a mere expedient dictated by accidental circumstances of likes or dislikes” (Churchill, quoted in Kissinger, 1992, 242). Kissinger is thus implying that the positions of liberals, and their new world order policy, have no appreciation of the enduring reality of international politics, and excessively dependent on emotions, thereby lacking rational basis. Liberalism is therefore both irrational and unrealistic.

Kissinger has long professed an admiration for the British tradition of diplomacy, which is diametrically opposed to the American tradition, grounded as it is in a “Hobbesian” view of the world that is “competitive... cynical... relativistic” and “expects the worst” (Kissinger, 1985, 5). This is quite a natural position for a realist to take, particularly so in the case of one of the pioneers of realism such as Kissinger. But, at the same time, Kissinger knows full well the obstacles that confront a realist policy from his experiences within government. As he once put it, the “*acid test* of a policy... is its ability to obtain domestic *support*”, which involves “*legitimizing* a policy within the government apparatus” and “*harmonizing* it with the *national experience*” (Kissinger, quoted in Alexander George, 1989, 583; my italics). Kissinger’s importance to this thesis partly lies in these rhetorical strategies, given that they represent how a whole school of thought and a side of the foreign policy elite are *legitimising* their ideas within America’s civil society. Through Kissinger we gain a grasp on the *ideological hegemonic* strategies realists employ. Kissinger’s rhetorical strategy involves taking on board many of the mainstays of liberal international thought, enveloping his realist initiative in a cloak of idealism. The most thorough account of this can be found in his book *Diplomacy*, published in 1994. Liberals in America have taken Kissinger’s apparent liberal turn at face value and seen it as a vindication of their paradigm. One prominent liberal, Robert W. Tucker, describes Kissinger’s book as representative of the “author’s conviction about the triumph of Wilsonianism today” and “eloquent testimony to the optimism that ultimately informs even the more resolute of pessimists among us” (Tucker, 1994, 78).

The liberal reading of his text is understandable given that Kissinger himself says that “America cannot change the way it has perceived its role throughout its



history, nor should it” (Kissinger, 1994, 19). In the book he takes up the mantle of achieving the New World Order, and much of the liberal rhetoric associated with it. It is just a question of what exactly Kissinger means by these various statements. The triumph of Wilsonianism for Kissinger is a statement of a political fact, the triumph of a paradigm within policy circles and the general public. But the ‘acceptance’ of an approach does *not* prove that the approach is correct at all. All it proves is that any policy practitioner will have to take its near universal acceptance into account if he intends to get his own brand of policies across. For Kissinger the collapse of communism both “marked the intellectual vindication of American ideals and, ironically, brought America face to face with the kind of world it had been seeking to escape throughout its history”, that is, a world of nation-states pursuing their selfish interests without recourse to international organisations and universal ethical standards (Kissinger, 1994, 19). There is no real “evidence to suggest that this age-old mode” has changed or will change (Kissinger, 1994, 19). He believes that the “future will resemble the past;... continuity... will predominate. International politics is the realm of the unchanging” (Tucker, 1994, 80). Kissinger’s conclusion that equilibrium, and not hegemony or withdrawal, is the only viable option is itself a product of this continuity on the part of Kissinger. In 1988 he stated that the maintenance of world peace “requires either hegemony or balance of power. We have neither the resources nor the stomach for the former” (Kissinger, quoted in Stuart and Tow, 1995, 4).

The problem is convincing America of this fact. He also gave voice to this dilemma before the end of the Cold War. What he, as a realist, comes up against is the whole history of America as a nation, and not just a school of thought held by certain academics and statesmen. Kissinger places his adoption of this goal in the frame of a historical analysis of America’s diplomatic traditions, a historicisation of American

foreign policy beliefs grounded in the national identity and notions of American exceptionalism. Kissinger distinguishes between two thoroughly American foreign policy traditions, labelled “isolationist” and “missionary” (Kissinger, 1994, 18). American foreign policy and political “thought” has always “oscillated between isolationism and commitment,” with the country torn between “nostalgia for a pristine past and yearning for a perfect future” (Kissinger, 1994, 18). Isolationism harks back to the vision of “America as beacon” which believes that America “serves its values best by perfecting democracy at home, thereby acting as a beacon to the rest of mankind” (Kissinger, 1994, 18). The missionary tradition sees “America as crusader”, and calls for America to impose its vision on the rest of the world (Kissinger, 1994, 18). Both visions, as “contradictory” as they are, “envision as normal a global international order based on democracy, free commerce, and international law” (Kissinger, 1994, 18). They represent two sides of the same exceptionalist, liberal American coin. The real contrast in American history is between these two American traditions and the European, *realist* tradition to which he belongs.

The European tradition follows the doctrine of “*raison d’etat*” which assumes that the “interests of the state justify the means used to pursue them” (Kissinger, 1994, 810). It contrasts sharply with the American tradition that believes that America had “rejected” this “ancient reason of state, that it stood for something new under the sun, and that its destiny was to lead the world from the old to the new” (Tucker, 1994, 79). The first American representative of the realist tradition, according to Kissinger’s reading of history, was Alexander Hamilton. But the most important representative was Theodore Roosevelt, and it is the story of Roosevelt’s presidency that forms the essential backdrop to Kissinger’s partial conversion to Wilsonianism. Roosevelt, for Kissinger, “started from the premise” that the US was “not a cause”, but a “power like



any other” (Kissinger, 1994, 39-40). Therefore, Roosevelt “identified the national interest” with the “balance of power” (Kissinger, 1994, 39). He wanted to enter his country into the First World War on this basis, fearing that a single power (Germany) dominating Europe would tip the global balance of power in the favour of Europe and so threaten America. The main problem that he faced, as he suggested in a letter to Rudyard Kipling, was that “if I should advocate all that I myself believe, I would do no good among our people, because they would not follow me” (Roosevelt, quoted in Kissinger, 1994, 43). His balance of power logic had “no influence whatsoever in shaping public action” (Roosevelt, quoted in Ruggie, 1996, 4).

Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, “grasped the mainsprings of American motivation” (Kissinger, 1994, 44). He understood that America “simply did not see itself as a nation like any other” and that Americans “could be moved to great deeds *only* through a vision that coincided with their perception of their country as exceptional” (Kissinger, 1994, 44; my italics). The historic “dilemma” for realists in America is that their “country simply” does “not see itself” as “normal” (Ruggie, 1996, 3, 10). By appealing to the country’s sense of identity and liberal principles Wilson *was* able to move the country into war. The “core problem” America’s leaders face today, that of devising a “coherent rationale to ensure continuous and active international engagement”, is reminiscent of the problem Roosevelt faced (Ruggie, 1996, 6). The most successful rationale has been Wilsonianism, and it is the only rationale now present with the collapse of the communist threat. It is because of this that Kissinger “now agrees” with the liberals that “*à la carte* interest calculations are unlikely to suffice” in this effort of mobilising the public (Ruggie, 1996, 6). But, despite this, he still has faith that realism and the European tradition will win out in the end.

Kissinger believes that Americans really have no choice in the matter, given the state of world politics. For Kissinger, “what *is* new about the emerging world order” is that both isolationism and Wilsonianism have become impossible (Kissinger, 1994, 19; italics in original). Not only does the US no longer have the power or the will to dominate the world and make it safe for liberalism and democracy, it does not have the ability to withdraw either. International affairs have become too interrelated and interdependent for America to isolate itself and thus practice policy in an ideal way for isolationism to be a viable option. Therefore, the two traditions have to be discarded and a completely new approach – his approach – adopted instead. Moreover, it is in America’s best interest to take up the European tradition given the dangers inherent in Wilsonianism, particularly within the current post-Cold War context. He fears that too strong an attachment to Wilsonianism may “open a gap in American policy “between its pretensions and its willingness to support them” which could lead to disillusionment that will be used as an “ ‘excuse for withdrawing from the world affairs altogether’ ” (Kissinger, quoted in Tucker, 1994, 86). This has been a major concern of Kissinger throughout his career. In 1977 he warned that a “distorted and misunderstood human rights policy” – in other words, the missionary approach – “can become the basis and justification of a modern isolationism” (Kissinger, 1998, 192). The European tradition must be used to temper the idealist fervour. The best example of this combination of liberalism with realism is the presidency of Richard Nixon. Kissinger says that “Nixon’s point of departure was American exceptionalism,” in the sense of operating on “two tracks simultaneously” where “Wilsonianism and *Realpolitik* would merge” (Kissinger, 1994, 706-707). According to Mazlish, Kissinger has always believed that US foreign policy should “unite goodwill and will, idealism and realism” (Mazlish, 1976, 189). But, to be more



accurate, the kind of synthesis Kissinger envisions, and the kind practised by Nixon, involved pursuing a foreign policy “invoking Wilsonian rhetoric to *explain*” its “goals while appealing to national interests to sustain” its “tactics” – as Nixon did (Kissinger, 1994, 706; my italics). In time, when the realist dynamic of self-interest begins to reassert itself in full, America will discover that the European tradition is even “more” “relevant” now than it was in the “period of the Cold War” (Tucker, 1994, 85). Even Tucker, who has taken a very optimistic, liberal reading of Kissinger, admits that Kissinger has “not, of course... become a convert to what he sees as the American tradition” (Tucker, 1994, 83). The reality of the matter, as far as Tucker can surmise, is that Kissinger has “come to credit” America’s liberal, missionary “tradition in foreign policy as having had, and as still having, a remarkable hold over the nation’s thought and action” (Tucker, 1994, 83). In a sense, Kissinger himself appears to be suffering from the ‘Kissinger syndrome,’ being forced to adapt his views and how he expresses them to please those in power and influence policy.

Before we move on to the details of Kissinger’s vision and his recommendations for US policy in various regions of the world, we must first deal more fully with Kissinger’s critique of the current Wilsonian rhetoric that dominates policy discourse. We only dealt with his criticism of Bush’s New World Order project. Of equal importance are his attitudes towards such important liberal notions as the ‘end of history’ and ‘globalisation’. We have touched on these issues above in relation to both Huntington and Brzezinski. It only remains for us to deal with Kissinger’s take on these issues to provide a fuller account of the geopolitical response to the end of the Cold War order. Kissinger’s response is doubly important because of his own importance to the realist community.

### 3.2 – Regionalisation and Geopolitical Equilibrium:

#### The Realpolitik Foundations of the New World Order

Despite Kissinger's advocacy of such Wilsonian notions as the New World Order, he only takes his usage of liberal rhetoric so far. The word 'globalisation' is not even listed in the index to his book, and there is no separate chapter or section of a chapter that deals with it head on. He generally does not discuss it, theorise it, or attempt to account for it and the possible affects it may have. It is true to say that he acknowledges its existence, and the fact that the "substance, method, and above all, the reach of international relations... have radically changed" (Tucker, 1994, 85). He also does say that the international system in the next century will be "marked by a seeming contradiction: on the one hand, fragmentation; on the other, growing globalization" (Kissinger, 1994, 23). Globalisation for him represents the fact that "international relations have become truly global for the first time", thanks to the communications revolution, the simultaneous operation of a "world economy" and the fact that a "whole set of issues... can only be dealt with on a worldwide basis" (Kissinger, 1994, 24). But this is *all* that globalisation means to him, and he does not pursue these phenomena further in the rest of the book. It is true to say that Kissinger's appreciation of the importance of globalisation has expanded to a considerable degree since writing *Diplomacy*, given the remarks he made on globalisation at a conference in Prague in 1998. He argued that "globalization was doomed if left to the control of currency speculators" and multinational corporations, and he also admitted that he had been " 'uneasy for years about this view of the global economy' " (Kissinger, quoted in *Christian Century*, 1998, 990). But such comments designate Kissinger as an enemy, of sorts, of globalisation, a concept that "technical



economists have treated... without regard for the political and moral capacities of the people that were involved” (Kissinger, quoted in *Christian Century*, 1998, 990). As early as 1983, in the context of global stagflation and the floating exchange rate system, Kissinger warned that a popular loss of faith in the ability of Western democratic governments to “control... their destinies” could lead to a “crisis of Western democracy” (Kissinger, 1985, 128). Kissinger takes a similar position to globalisation as Samuel Huntington, with the proviso that Kissinger does not see anything good coming from it, and does not factor it in to his account at all, as we shall see below.

For Kissinger, continuity, again, is the core feature of international relations, and the core feature of his understanding of international relations. In such a context of continuity, what interests Kissinger the most is the issue of ‘fragmentation,’ which also bears on his rejection of the liberal notion of globalisation. Kissinger does not use this word in the conventional context of the breakdown of the nation-state complex, which is itself a by-product of globalisation. By fragmentation he means the fragmentation of the world order *of* nation-states, *because of* the continuing reality and cogency of the nation-state complex. Kissinger discusses fragmentation at the “level of the relations among states” and predicts that the “new order will be more like the European state system of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than the rigid patterns of the Cold War” (Kissinger, 1994, 23). It is this state-based fragmentation that he pursues in this first chapter, and builds his whole book around; investigating the history of the European system and tradition, to provide the historical grounding needed for future American policy. Kissinger in this respect is much like the realist community at large which has not made any “postulates, predications, and predilections... linked in any way to a serious analysis of economic

globalization---the significance of which... realists discount if not reject” (Ruggie, 1996, 164). Much the same can be said for Kissinger’s attitude to the End of History thesis, with the exception that he does not even acknowledge it. He also does not list it in the index or deal with it separately anywhere in his book. The closest he comes to dealing with it all is a vague reference he makes to the thesis when discussing Woodrow Wilson. He says that Wilson’s ability to universalise the American experiment involved, “if not the end to history, then surely its irrelevance” in the eyes of Wilson and the public he succeeded in moving behind his vision (Kissinger, 1994, 48). Kissinger only mentions it in passing, and it is not entirely clear if he is just talking about the notion of the ‘end of history’ in general, or Francis Fukuyama’s specific thesis; he does not mention Fukuyama’s name in the index either.

Kissinger, and other realists, sees a world order developing that is primarily characterised by multipolarity. Although he does believe that America is “more predominate than it was ten years ago, yet, ironically, power has also become more diffuse” (Kissinger, 1994, 809). This means that America’s “ability to employ” its power to “shape the rest of the world has actually decreased” (Kissinger, 1994, 809). This “prediction” of multipolarity has actually been “most common” among realists, with Japan and Germany expected to gain great-power status in the next century, Russia remaining a great-power, and China possibly even becoming a superpower if current trends persist (Ruggie, 1996, 163). Kissinger believes that the new major powers will be the US, Europe, Russia, China, Japan, and possibly India, in addition to a number of smaller important powers. Kissinger does not foresee any threats from Europe because he conceives of it within the context of NATO and the Atlantic alliance and community. He does “foresee the gradual decline of America’s *relative* power” with the US currently remaining “*primus inter pares*... ‘the greatest and most



powerful nation, but a nation with peers' ” (Kissinger, quoted in Harkavy, 1997, 577). Multipolarity means a return of history, and not an end of it, since the traditional pattern of international relations has historically been multipolar. This pattern is now reasserting itself.

Many theorists see the current shift in favour of peaceful economic competition from political conflict as only the “latest expression of a long-established historical cyclicity” which leads to the dominance of one mode of competition over another, *temporarily* (Harkavy, 1997, 571). Moreover, realists believe that the “recurrence of multipolarity will go hand in hand with a resurgence of economic blocs”, which is another reason why they do not take globalisation seriously (Ruggie, 1996, 164). For Kissinger, the multipolar order he sees developing has its origins in the transformations the world went through during the Nixon presidency. Bipolarity broke down with the Sino-Soviet split and the Vietnam debacle. It was in this context that the need for a balance of power approach made itself felt. Multipolarity and America’s status as first among equals assumes that no one of two powers have the power totally to dominate world politics. This transformation, in itself, represented a ‘return of history’ of sorts for Kissinger, given that he had always taken multipolarity to be the ideal format for managing international relations. The “model” for maintaining the balance of power and world peace Kissinger took was the “ ‘conference system’ which resolved the Napoleonic wars”, commonly known as the Consort system of great powers (Landau, 1974, 26). The Cold War, bipolar order represented a historical exception brought about by the Second World War, a highly artificial situation that could not be expected to persist indefinitely. The Nixon presidency represented a growing perception of this fact, and that the strategy and paradigm of containment had to be fundamentally updated as a consequence. As

Kissinger himself puts it, “Vietnam was the trauma and catharsis” that led to the “recognition” that the US had to run policy on a “European” basis, “as one country among many, unable either to dominate the world or escape from it” (Kissinger, 1985, 8). But, at the same time, Nixon’s presidency “also seemed to promise new scope for control and imaginative tactics” (Dijkink, 1996, 62).

Kissinger mapped out this new strategy and labelled it the ‘geopolitical approach’. Kissinger complained that America has an “ ‘idealistic tradition... a pragmatic tradition... a legalistic tradition”, but it has “ ‘no geopolitical tradition’ ” (Sloan, 1988, 167). Of course, it is not that there was no geopolitical approach, but that the one present was never openly acknowledged. Again, this is a product of American exceptionalism and the American public’s lack of interest in, and aversion to, realism and power politics. It was the association of the word ‘geopolitics’ with Nazism during the Second World War in particular that transformed it into a dirty word, forcing even military strategists to avoid using it publicly in America (see Parker, 1985). It was largely through Kissinger’s efforts that the word regained some of its popularity in America (see Sloan and Gray, 1999). Therefore, when he says that today “American idealism needs the leaven of geopolitical analysis”, he does not mean this in the general sense of needing to think strategically (Kissinger, 1994, 812). Kissinger’s dominant concern here is with the rhetoric and narratives used to legitimate policy in the eyes of the public and political elites. He has a very specific meaning in mind, one grounded in the historical context of the Nixon presidency. According to Geoffrey Sloan and Colin S. Gray, Kissinger used this ‘new’ geopolitical approach to “combat the American liberal policies of idealism” and to present an “alternative to the conservative politics of an ideological anti-Communism”, which had both furnished the ideological rationale for entry into the



Vietnam (Sloan and Gray, 1999, 1). To extract America from Vietnam, without making it look like a loss, Nixon knew that he “could not invoke the lessons of the 1930s” – lessons that provided much of the ideological basis for global engagement for both liberals and conservatives (Dijkink, 1996, 62). Nixon had to “demonstrate the important ways in which the world had changed” by creating a new “narrative” to replace the “preceding image of two bipolar powers with clearly demarcated spheres of dominance” (Dijkink, 1996, 62). To break from the post-war tradition he had to develop a new tradition centred round the cardinal realist notion of equilibrium. Kissinger’s “revitalized” geopolitics fulfilled this task by refining the old order and acknowledging the “existence of diverse regions with their own geopolitical niches and consequent legitimacies” (Dijkink, 1996, 62). The vision he produced “naturalized the existing international state system with its multiple players and stakes, while dropping any fixed geographical meaning” (Dijkink, 1996, 62).

The moralistic Manichean dualism of the Cold War was replaced by a far more morally ambiguous world where Americans could not be certain who was on their side or against them, and so who was right and who was wrong. This made it much easier to withdraw and not intervene in locations all over the world if the Soviet threat and moral imperative could be ‘removed’ from the scene, in people’s minds. Maintaining equilibrium, a balance of power, makes no assumptions about the character of the powers being balanced and releases America from the need to convert or defeat these powers. Moral ambiguity and harsh objectivity is part and parcel of the realist approach. Kissinger hoped that in time such a narrative would prepare the American people for the kind of hard and cold decisions that had to be made in international power politics. He certainly wants to do this now. There is no longer a bipolar order or any major ideological or security threat that would allow the US to

maintain its Manichean system, so it will be faced with tremendous ambiguities and has no choice but to adopt this approach.

Kissinger also believes that a “great president” – again taking the example of Theodore Roosevelt – “must be an educator, bridging the gap between his people’s future and its experience” (Kissinger, 1994, 39). For Kissinger the “statesman” in general is an “educator, a teacher of his people, explaining to them the real relationship of forces” in international politics (Mazlish, 1976, 193). The kind of lessons that Roosevelt wanted to teach the American people included the facts that: “international life meant struggle, and Darwin’s theory of survival of the fittest was a better guide to history than personal morality” (Kissinger, 1994, 40). The world was “regulated by power” and nothing else but power since “international law” was useless and “world government” impossible (Kissinger, 1994, 40). Today the opportunities to push through a realist doctrine are greater than ever before, and the very nature of the international system imposes this doctrine on America. It is the job of American leaders to wean the people off their exceptionalist myths and develop a “wider consensus” – re-centre policy – around “some definition of what constitutes a vital interest” (Kissinger, 1994, 813, 812). The ‘role’ of idealism is reduced to providing the “faith to sustain America through all the ambiguities of choice in an imperfect world” (Kissinger, 1994, 834). It functions as a psychological crutch while *realpolitik* does all the real work of determining the national interest and strategizing from there. Idealism served this same psychological purpose during the Nixon presidency. In a speech given by Kissinger in 1977, he advised the Carter administration it uphold its commitments towards the human rights agenda, provided it was understood that America best served the “cause of freedom... by strengthening international security” (Kissinger, 1998, 192). The slogan he developed to encapsulate



this merging of idealism and realism was: “Morality without security is ineffectual; security without morality is empty” (Kissinger, 1998, 192). Of course, merging these two concerns involves a “sense of balance” and “proportion”, and it is safe to say that Kissinger sees the balance tilted in the favour of security (Kissinger, 1998, 192).

This account not only covers the rhetorical side of Kissinger’s advice to those in power, past and present, but also the substantial side, given that Kissinger’s rhetorical strategy was grounded in what he believed was the world ‘out there’. The whole job of the statesmen was to make rhetoric conform to reality. But before we can go in to the details of Kissinger’s vision below, we must explore first the distinctiveness and uniqueness of his realist vision. Kissinger does not belong to the dominant strain of realism in America, which is neo-realism. Kissinger is a classical realist, one of the founding fathers of realism as such, along with his colleagues Hans Morgenthau, John Hertz and Raymond Aron. Neo-realists focus almost entirely on the here and now of world politics and do not take the influence of ideology, history and culture on state politics seriously. According to Robert Cox, the “early realists understood that economic, social, and ideological forces shaped the forms of states and the power relations among states” (Robert Cox, 1997, xv). Unlike the neo-realists, they “thought in historical terms”, taking a “historically conditioned approach” (Robert Cox, 1997, xv). We must also remember that Kissinger is not just a realist, but a geopolitician, and one schooled in the classical writings of Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman. Like all geopoliticians he believes that “political predominance or equilibrium is a question not just of having power but also of the structure of the field within which that power is exercised” (Sloan, 1988, 177). The power of America and the Soviet Union could not – and still cannot – just be measured in terms of raw materials, population, and economic and military potential. These factors must be

placed in the appropriate geographical context if their influence on world affairs is to be properly gauged. America has to be seen as an “island off the shores of the large landmass of Eurasia, whose resources and population far exceed” those of the US (Kissinger, 1994, 813). The overriding threat produced by this geographic reality “remains” the same, “Cold War or no Cold War”; the threat of “domination by a single power of either of Eurasia’s two principle spheres---Europe or Asia” (Kissinger, 1994, 813).

Another central aspect of geopolitical thought was the relationship drawn between geography and foreign policy, the analysis of how geographical realities helped determine both policy and politics, moulding the very regime in power and the strategies it took. For Kissinger, the decisions taken by a state could not be gauged with reference to the material determinants of power alone, but demanded a “historical assessment” of the “relationship between” strategic geographical location and the “political development of a particular state or region” (Sloan, 1988, 179). Kissinger generally saw that “one of the most important roles... geopolitics fulfilled, as a tradition of action in foreign policy,” was this “interpretative” role (Sloan, 1988, 179). As a classical realist and a student of historical scholarship, his approach to foreign affairs was also based on a combination of the “historical and psychological” study of situations, nations, and leaders (Mazlish, 1976, 187). For Kissinger, nations are “not abstractions or interchangeable parts”, but entities that are the “result of past actions and historical aspirations” (Mazlish, 1976, 190). Kissinger advised statesmen to always bear in mind the role of ‘memories’ and ‘illusions’ in the construction of foreign policy, however ‘irrational’ or ‘unrealistic’ the resulting policies may be. In simpler terms, the ‘geopolitical tradition’ Kissinger believes in and advocates appreciates the fact that every “nation views international events through the prism of



its history” (Kissinger, 1999, 42). It is from this central premise that he deduces what the post-Cold War threats are to the new world order, conceptualising these threats from a balance of power perspective, and from there develops the appropriate remedies.

Kissinger factors in regional, cultural and historical variability into his account in *Diplomacy*, placing his whole balance of power project in a historical frame. He criticises realist thinkers for “often” giving the “impression” that the balance of power system is the “natural form of international relations” (Kissinger, 1994, 21). In reality, such balances have only existed “rarely in human history... empire has been the typical mode of government”, and empires have “no interest in operating within an international system; they aspire to *be* the international system” (Kissinger, 1994, 21; italics in original). This system is not part of the historical experience of most nations, particularly America. This means that the only country in the world that has the power to maintain equilibrium throughout the world is also the country that is least qualified to carry out this task. Everything about America’s perception of itself is inimical to the reason of states. But he has faith in history and the “vast global forces” that will, in time, “render” the US “less exceptional” (Kissinger, 1994, 809). On a broader level, the problem that faces the “order now emerging” is that it will have to be “built by statesmen who represent vastly different cultures”, and practically “none” have “had any experience” with balance of power systems (Kissinger, 1994, 27). Balance of power systems do not come into being by themselves; they have to be created through determined and highly enlightened concerted action by the powers in question. Of particular relevance here is the fact that those nations that prefer empires to equilibrated systems of independent sovereign states form a *threat* to this world order project. Such nations fall out of the pale of the current direction of history and

have to be considered as threats to the system America is trying to construct. Particularly notable among these countries is the upcoming superpower China, the upcoming economic superpower Japan, and Russia. After the US, they are the least imbued with the needed historical experience. They are also the nations most captivated by the imperial mindset. It is from this premise that Kissinger begins to predict and study the various potential threats that exist to America's, and Europe's, project of building a new world order – on the realist foundation of equilibrium – and the policies that should be taken in response to these threats. I move now to this critical side of Kissinger's work in the subsection below.

### 3.3 – Western Primacy and the Russian Threat: The Psychology of Imperialism and the Logic of Realism

From the very beginning of his book, *Diplomacy*, Chapter 1 “The New World Order,” he deals with possible threats from this cultural and historical frame of reference. He says that, with reference to the reason of states that originated in Europe, Russia has always been a “special case”, *despite* its Europeanness (Kissinger, 1994, 24). This was because Russia did not match other European powers, “none of the traditional principles of European diplomacy seemed to apply to it” (Kissinger, 1994, 24). Russia bordered and incorporated into it “three different cultural spheres--- Europe, Asia, and the Muslim world”, thus denying it the status of “national state in the European sense” (Kissinger, 1994, 24). The “character of the state” was highly fluid and unstable thanks to the continuous adaptations it had to go through whenever it “incorporated another brand-new, restive, non-Russian ethnic group” (Kissinger, 1994, 24). Its incredible size and internal instability tore the country “between



obsessive insecurity and proselytizing zeal, between the requirements of Europe and the temptations of Asia” (Kissinger, 1994, 24). Therefore, Russia “always had a role in the European balance of power but was never emotionally part of it” (Kissinger, 1994, 24).

That is, Russia never really saw itself as part of Europe, and all that Europe represents and embodies, including the balance of power system, which was in many ways an outgrowth of the Enlightenment. The balance of power system in Europe first developed out of the collapse of the “medieval dream of universal empire” into a system of equally powerful states (Kissinger, 1994, 20). These states understood that no one state could dominate all the others. This meant that it is was to everyone’s advantage to keep the peace through power balancing to avoid protracted and endless warfare. This also fitted in well with the Enlightenment vision of the “universe, including the political sphere, operated according to rational principles which balanced each other” (Kissinger, 1994, 21). Russia, as a latecomer to the European concert of power, was locked *out* of this historical and intellectual tradition. It has never had an “autonomous church; it missed the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Age of Discovery, and modern market economics” (Kissinger, 1994, 816). It was also locked *into* the mediaeval period of universal multiethnic empires that want to incorporate all countries into their fold, want to be ‘the’ system, the world order, and shun the rational dictates of equilibrium. Russia, in this view, is a throwback to the primitive politics and dreams of the Middle Ages, and is still marching to a “different drummer from the rest of the *Western* world” (Kissinger, 1994, 816; my italics).

Kissinger here is drawing on the historic vision in Western eyes of Russia as a country with a “demonic determination... to preserve” its political and *cultural* “independence against all intruders” (Mason, 1958, 34). This policy of cultural

isolationism has pitted Russia against the modernising West and forced it to go through bouts of soul-searching centred around whether it should discard its culture, become Western and modernise, or remain primitive but true to its culture. For Kissinger, such a mentality had a solid geopolitical grounding, given that the situation Russia found itself in meant that the “requirements of conquest and of security became merged in the minds of Russian leaders” (Kissinger, 1994, 24). The intellectual and emotional response of Russian people to the reality of their country, according to “Russian writers” themselves, has been “expansionism... often justified... as a messianic vocation... For most of its history, Russia has been a cause looking for an opportunity” (Kissinger, 1994, 25). Its history has been cyclical, with bouts of expansion that “rarely showed a sense of limits; thwarted, it tended to withdraw into sullen resentment”, only to take up the mantle of expansion again once it has put its house into order (Kissinger, 1994, 25). Present day Russia “finds itself within borders which reflect no historical precedent” and it will have to “devote much of its energy to redefining its identity” (Kissinger, 1994, 25). In other words, Russia is back at square one, forced back into another period of introversion where it has to reorder itself and determine what it is, what it wants, and how to achieve it.

There are many reasons, according to Kissinger, to believe that Russia will return to its old ways and begin another bout of imperial expansion with Masonic zeal. Again, continuity is the dominant characteristic in his analysis. He once described the Soviet Union as a “nation that had survived not by civilizing its conquerors but by outlasting them, a people suspended between Europe and Asia and not wholly of either, with a culture that had destroyed its traditions without yet replacing them” (Kissinger, quoted in Sloan, 1988, 180). He believed that its diplomatic style of accumulating “marginal gains until they amounted to a major



difference” and of “boisterousness and... occasional bullying” were a direct product of its inferiority complex and its traditional approach of dealing with enemies (Kissinger, quoted in Sloan, 1988, 180). Indecisive aggressiveness, prolonged combat, and a sense of patience in whatever policy Russians take were, and still are, the hallmarks of the Russian approach to foreign policy. Following a similar logic to Brzezinski, Kissinger believes that “democratization and a restrained foreign policy may not necessarily go hand in hand” (Kissinger, 1994, 817). He is not convinced that the present leaders and bureaucrats of Russia are true democrats since they are the same people who were in charge of the communist system. Moreover, the “overwhelming majority of Russia’s leading figures---whatever their political persuasion---refuse to accept the collapse of the Soviet Empire or the legitimacy of the successor states,” and still believe in Russia’s “ ‘civilizing’ mission” (Kissinger, 1994, 815). This means that Russia will strike out and try to reassert its empire, thus becoming a threat once again.

Kissinger uses this analysis to make two very important, and interrelated, points about American foreign policy in the new era. The first covers how best to deal with Russia in the upcoming years. American policy should treat Russia as a “vast... empire... in a state of disintegration” and base its policies on the management of this “decline” (Kissinger, 1994, 814). The management of decline is one of the historic tasks of diplomacy and, like all empires, Russia will try to reassert its control while other states try to take advantage of this decline to further their own interests. Although he does not advocate an expansion of NATO deep into former Soviet territory, he does believe that the US should “create” a series of “counterweights to foreseeable tendencies” among the near abroad states and “not place all the chips on domestic reform” (Kissinger, 1994, 817). He does believe that Russia should be

allowed to have some say in the affairs of the near abroad, particularly given the shared interest Russia and America have in defeating the potential threat of Islamic fundamentalism and Iranian influence. But the problems of the near abroad should be dealt with as “international” problems, and not as Russia’s “unilateral” preserve (Kissinger, 1994, 816). What the US must never do is allow Russia’s leaders to think that they are “entitled to be handed the sphere of influence that tsars and commissars have coveted all around Russia’s vast borders for 300 years” (Kissinger, 1994, 818).

To do otherwise, to engage Russia in active dialogue and decision-making on a global and regional scale, would only serve to make “all these pathologies worse” (Sestanovich, 1996, 5). By pathologies Sestanovich means the imperialist, expansionist imperative Kissinger believes captivates Russia’s leadership and populace. Partnership and dialogue would encourage the country to resume its imperialist drive. With these words Kissinger places himself within the ranks of the ‘essentialists’ and their analysis of the Russian phenomenon. His views on the danger Russia poses to the West go beyond a standard realist account of motivation – the national interest – and places history and culture centre stage. The main essentialist school of thought in US foreign policy circles today is what Sestanovich calls the “psychiatric school” of “geotherapists” (Sestanovich, 1996, 4, 11). Sestanovich describes this group of geotherapists as psychiatrists and therapists because they all use very explicit psychological terminology to diagnose Russia’s predicament – for example: “anguish”, “loss of status”, “identity” and a “sense of belonging”, “repentance”, and “self-deluding obsession” (Sestanovich, 1996, 5). Like Kissinger, they argue that the Russian transition to democracy is not enough to cure Russia of its “deep psychic and socio-cultural torments,” namely the unbearable “torment... of being a fallen superpower” (Sestanovich, 1996, 3).



The second point, which is closely related to the first, deals with the lessons that can be learnt from the nature of US policy towards Russia. Kissinger makes a major distinction between how America's post-war leaders dealt with Russia, based on an "assessment of its intentions", and Nixon's approach, which was to deal with it as a "geopolitical challenge" (Kissinger, 1994, 813). As we know from experience, this is a very conceptually loaded term. Kissinger is again trying to make a distinction between the idealist approach rooted in American exceptionalism and the way *he* ran affairs under Nixon, which was rooted in a geopolitical approach. From a geopolitical perspective America should not overestimate its "ability to shape Russia's internal evolution" from an undemocratic to a democratic state, and favour "cooperation projects on global issues" with it (Kissinger, 1994, 814). Such policies are based on a mistaken analogy made between Russia today and Western Europe in the post-war period. A Marshall Plan-type initiative will not work because Russia does not have a "functioning market system, well-established bureaucracies," or "democratic traditions" (Kissinger, 1994, 814). Moreover, Western European nations were allied with America because they and America all faced a common threat in the Soviet Union. No such common threat binds Russia with the West. On the contrary, Russia may be the only common threat the West still faces because it "sits astride the territory Halford Mackinder called the geopolitical heartland, and is the heir to one of the most potent imperial traditions" (Kissinger, 1994, 814). Therefore, the US should base policy on the assumption that Russia is a threat, "regardless of who governs it"; i.e. Russia is Russia is Russia (Kissinger, 1994, 814). What Kissinger is doing here is advising policymakers to break with their country's past, the way America has traditionally dealt with the enemies it vanquished. The US since 1945 has been engaged in the process of creating an "international system in which the defeated

powers found a place that they... could clearly see served their interests. Doing so served *our* interests” (Sestanovich, 1996, 13; italics in original). This is one of the clearest statements of hegemonic logic one can come across from a decision-maker, and it fits in completely with the whole subject and contents of this thesis. Sestanovich asks a pertinent question here when it comes to Kissinger’s (and, for that matter, Brzezinski’s) view on Russia: “Why, this time around, should we choose differently?” (Sestanovich, 1996, 13).

What is particularly confusing as regards Kissinger is that he did originally follow this classical American logic. As “recently” as 1990 Kissinger “would have been delighted to accept the neutral status of East European countries (whose relationship to Russia is ‘organic’ according to his earlier logic!) in exchange for the truly non-belligerent, peaceful posture of Russia” (Trofimenko, 1997, 51). He even advocated the “creation of a neutral belt composed of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary – on the Austria model” (Kissinger, quoted in Trofimenko, 1997, 51). But Kissinger now justifies the expansion of NATO eastwards on the grounds that “without ties to West European and Atlantic institutions,” this area will “become a no-man’s land” between Germany and Russia which is “bound to prove tempting to potential aggressors and demoralizing to potential victims” (Kissinger, quoted in Trofimenko, 1997, 52). These countries would be sandwiched between Russia and a “reunified Germany”, the two giants that have “historically” dominated this region, creating a dangerous “security vacuum” and so a need and “intense desire for American protection---as expressed in NATO membership” (Kissinger, 1994, 821). But, if this is so, then why did he not hold this position previously? Partly, he has changed his views because the Soviet Union no longer exists. While still in existence, it deserved to be appeased, a continuation of the Kissinger-Nixon détente policy. With



no USSR, there is no longer any reason to pursue détente, and every reason to take advantage of Russia's state of weakness and open up Eastern Europe to Western dominance. In less technical terms, what Kissinger is saying is: "Let's take them, while we can. It might become more difficult later!" (Trofimenko, 1997, 52). Part of the answer also lies in Kissinger's explanation, which is that expansion will guard against *both* Russian *and* German domination. Ironically, the collapse of the Soviet Union has created as many problems as it has opportunities. As we made clear with reference to Sestanovich in Chapter 2, it is really the weakness of Russia, rather than its strength that forms the major threat. As we also made clear with reference to Huntington above, the security vacuum left by the Soviet Union has given Germany, and the EU, the opportunity to be the newest rival superpowers. In a speech given to the Trilateral Commission in 1998 Kissinger expressed his "anxiety that a united Europe might be a rival to America rather than an ally" (O'Sullivan, 1998, 52). Expanding NATO guards against this by ensuring that NATO and the Atlantic alliance continue to exist. Another central aspect of this concern over maintaining NATO is, obviously, the maintenance of the US position on the European continent. Without NATO, the US would lose its dominance of European affairs. One of the few times that Kissinger credits the Wilsonians with a major foreign policy success concerns the trans-Atlantic relationship. He admired their "recognition that, unless America was organically involved in Europe, it would be obliged to involve itself later under circumstances far less favorable to both sides of the Atlantic" (Kissinger, 1994, 821). NATO and the idea of the Atlantic alliance, its shared democratic values and respect for international law, provided the ideological glue that bound America organically to Europe. And that binding must be kept in place at all costs.

Kissinger also seems to be using the Russian threat – much like Huntington and Brzezinski – as a way of avoiding isolationism. He says that one of the “more important” reasons that NATO’s popularity has declined within the US is because the “generation of American leaders which has reached prominence in the last decade and a half has been drawn mostly from the South and the West” (Kissinger, 1994, 819). These regions have “fewer emotional and personal ties to Europe than among the old Northeastern establishment” (Kissinger, 1994, 819). Kissinger is also concerned about the cultural impact this demographic change will have on the intellectual abilities and strategic skills of this new generation of leaders. For Kissinger, foreign policy is ideally an “architectural endeavour... the art of building for the long term” (Kissinger, 1998, 193). This means policymaking should be based on “patience, continuity, and, above all... national unity” (Kissinger, 1998, 193). Great leaders are “not technicians or intellectuals, they are the people who have a view of the future and the courage to go there” (Kissinger, 1996, 489). Such leaders were produced by the “older educational system” with its cultural heritage, whereas today’s politicians are “quick, flip, picture oriented” and incapable of thinking strategically (Kissinger, 1996, 489). Another challenge posed by this generation is the historical time frame they belong to. America’s political leadership now suffers from a “generation gap” of sorts, with the “formative experience of the Clinton administration’s key personnel” either being the “trenches of the Vietnam protest movement, or in presidential campaigns---or both” (Kissinger, 1999, 41). Such people are highly suspicious of the “role of power in foreign policy... have little concern with notions of international equilibrium or of traditional U.S. interests”, and they are obsessively “driven by public-opinion polls” (Kissinger, 1999, 41). This explains why they treat foreign policy as an “extension of domestic policy”, and use power “ineffectively and without conviction” in



international relations (Kissinger, 1999, 41). What Kissinger is doing here is giving voice to a dominant concern of all primacy theorists, a central aspect of the cultural malaise they believe America is suffering from. The American ideal human type, grounded as it is in “popular culture”, is the “popular entertainer or sports star”, based on the qualities of “inherent talent, self-centeredness, energy, and aggressiveness” which are “not the distinguishing qualities of a mature person”, but an “adolescent” (Kurth, 1997, 14-15). Foreign policy cannot be managed by such adolescents, and their dominance of foreign policymaking has put the whole US hegemonic project at risk. A reassertion of NATO’s viability by manufacturing an appropriate threat would certainly help to regroup America’s leaders around the East Coast culture that bound America to Europe organically, and solve many of these other problems in tandem.

The final reason that he has changed his views on expansion lies in the lesson he hopes America will learn, which is to treat Russia as a geopolitical threat, that is, to accept his vision of international relations and the viability of the ‘new world order’. For Kissinger, the “overriding meaning of history is that it is tragic,” an “insight into history possessed by Europeans” which he persistently castigates Americans for not making: “ ‘Nothing is more difficult for Americans to understand that the possibility of tragedy’ ” (Kissinger, quoted in Mazlish, 1976, 188-189). This brings us back to the geopolitical tradition in America. Those associated with this tradition in America, and those of a realist disposition, generally do not buy into the hegemonic vision of America. Consent for them is not the normal state of world affairs, nor should it be. This would doom the human race, and particularly the Western contingent of it, to a fate worse than death. Kissinger certainly does not buy into this liberal, consensual vision. His realism is not only grounded in his study of international affairs, but his whole vision of history and human nature. According to Peter W. Dickson, Kissinger

was, in his youth, actually associated with the liberal tradition via the political and philosophical thought of Immanuel Kant. The main reason that he later embraced realism was because “Auschwitz made it impossible for Kissinger to believe in the universal moral principles and eternal values that formed the basis for Kant’s faith in human progress” (Dickson, 1977, 8). This may explain Kissinger’s extreme hatred of Woodrow Wilson, as a person, thinker, and politician. He categorised him as a “prophet-priest” who, like all prophets, saw the “real” world as the “one they want to bring into being” (Kissinger, 1994, 47). He describes him as an “academic who arrived in politics relatively late” and describes his interesting reading of American history as “proving that the time spent in faculty meetings, where hair splitting exegesis reigns supreme, had not been wasted” (Kissinger, 1994, 44, 47).

Kissinger does not belong to any tradition of exceptionalism in general, liberal *or* geopolitical. His Central European origin has given him a very different perspective on politics. Kissinger brings a European sensibility – and scepticism – to American politics, looking at America as a foreigner, from the outside in; seeing its mode of politics as the exception to the rule in international relations. But, at the same time, it is true to say that he is more comfortable with the exceptionalist tradition established by Hamilton and exemplified by Roosevelt. Kissinger’s philosophical predisposition’s as regards history and power politics bring him much closer to this tradition of exceptionalism and its world vision. As a Hegelian, Kissinger believed that “in each epoch, there will arise a civilization and, more rarely, an individual, whose duty it will be to guard and transmit the historical spirit” (Landau, 1974, 22). He believed that America served this function in this historical epoch, and advised that the US “and its President must not merely grasp at power and glory for their own sake, they must behave in a manner that dignifies their role as historical agents”



(Landau, 1974, 22-23). This Hegelian understanding of history as an “organic process” that pushed the whole of humanity forward was at the heart of Kissinger’s understanding of America’s “global responsibilities,” and has much in common with the beliefs of the American geopolitical tradition (Landau, 1974, 22). Moreover, as a “scholar and... Secretary of State, he seemed haunted by the West’s incipient decline” and Spengler’s belief in the “inexorable transformation of European culture into a ‘soulless’ urban civilization... whose ethos was thoroughly material and utilitarian” (Dickson, 1977, 29). Kissinger himself admitted that he had a “ ‘perverse fascination’ with Spengler’s historic pessimism”, and has been accused by his critics of believing that “American civilization has passed its high point” (Kissinger, quoted in McInnes, 1997, 69-70). His Spenglerian beliefs were a “major factor” in his “low opinion of modern democracy” – a central position taken by the American geopolitical tradition (Dickson, 1977, 29). But Kissinger also “rejected Spengler’s notion of the inevitability of decay” (McInnes, 1997, 69). The answer to Spengler’s pessimism came in the form of “Toynbee’s theme of ‘challenge and response’... the dynamic law of history” (Dickson, 1977, 30).

This also places him squarely within the American geopolitical tradition, as does the fact that he adopts the vision of the world put forward by Theodore Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill. History for Kissinger was “nothing more than the survival of the fittest” (Dickson, 1977, 32). The caricature of the Rooseveltian interpretation of history and politics painted by Kissinger is also representative of what Kissinger considers to be real and illusionary, of what he thinks is possible, feasible, and desirable. For Kissinger, the “new geopolitics was actually the *absence* of a mission or aim in foreign affairs” (Dijkink, 1996, 63; my italics). For Kissinger the “management of a balance of power is a permanent undertaking, not an exertion

that has a foreseeable end” (Kissinger, quoted in Lowe, 1992, 98). (Kissinger, 1994, 706-707). Nixon himself conceived of his presidency in similar terms, readily acknowledging the fact that Wilson provided the “ ‘greatest vision of America’s world role’ ”, while also believing that Wilson “ ‘wasn’t practical enough’ in conducting diplomacy” (Nixon, quoted in LaFeber, 1994, 636). According to Mazlish, Kissinger has a cyclical, “Sisyphean” vision of history “where ‘each tragedy was followed by a new burst of creativity’ ” (Kissinger, quoted in Mazlish, 1976, 189). The last words in Kissinger’s book (*Diplomacy*) advise Americans to be aware of the fact that the quest of achieving Wilson’s goals “will have to be sought in a journey that has no end” (Kissinger, 1994, 835). He even quotes a proverb to dramatise this point, advising the “Traveler,” that “there are no roads. Roads are made by walking” (Spanish proverb, quoted in Kissinger, 1994, 835). For Kissinger, the “grand lesson” of history is that it is “tragic, without final solution” (Mazlish, 1976, 191). He, therefore, wants his, and Roosevelt’s, bleak picture of the world to become America’s picture of the world. Ultimately, this is why Kissinger should be classed with the other members of the American geopolitical tradition discussed here.



#### **Section 4 – Conclusion:**

Essentially the content of this chapter follows on directly from the themes outlined in Chapter 3. In the immediate post-Cold War context the problems faced by policymakers and policy intellectuals are the need for a single, identifiable territorial and ideological enemy, and the ideational problems thrown up by geopolitical vertigo and the loss of the containment paradigm. The larger problems policymakers and intellectuals face in the longer term are the effects the absence of enemies may have on national unity, federal authority, economic and social vitality, and the dominant position of Anglo-Saxon culture and Anglo-Saxon centres of power. The geopolitical thinkers dealt with here tackle these issues, to varying degrees and in different ways, but these and other concerns are present in their writings. Also present is evidence that these writers are relying on America's political heritage when it comes to dealing with these larger issues, referencing them or following ideas first developed by America's first generation of geopolitical thinkers.

Samuel Huntington has produced the most ambitious intellectual attempt to recreate the conditions present during the Cold War in the modern context. He has produced a civilisation paradigm that functions on realist principles, replacing ideological bipolarity with civilisational bipolarity, while maintaining America's historic geopolitical imperative of balancing powers on the Eurasian continent. On the internal front he has tried to use these new threats in an effort to reinforce the position of the East Coast establishment and its cultural hegemony in US society. He follows the same logic as Theodore Roosevelt, and cites him to support his own views about

the need for enemies and the dangers of immigration. He also backs up his views with his considerable knowledge and expertise in the area of American exceptionalism, further replicating their logic. Brzezinski is even more explicit when it comes to issues of internal unity, culture, and class position. But he does not manufacture threats to the same degree, nor does he construct a vision of the new world based exclusively on facilitating unity. From a Gramscian perspective Huntington and Brzezinski are both organic intellectuals, and ones associated with transnational capital and the remnants of the post-war American establishment. Much of their analysis and recommendations are based on a hegemonic project explicitly developed by these centres of power during the 1970s. Both writers still show considerable allegiance to the specifics of this project, whether it is the ideal vision of democracy it puts forward, or the replacement of internationalism with globalisation. But both place their geopolitical concerns and analysis of American exceptionalism before these concerns. This does not contradict their advocacy of globalisation, given that the world's political economy is based on the stability and peace ensured by US preponderance. But it is important to highlight their prioritisation of economics relative to security, stability and unity. Moreover, their belief in the transnational critique of democratic excess is driven by their analysis of American exceptionalism, particularly so in the case of Huntington.

There is some difficulty in fitting Kissinger into this mould, given that he is not a believer in exceptionalism and has a European perspective. Even classing him as a primacy theorist is difficult because he does not believe in strict unipolarity, believing that America has peers. He could be described as a 'traditional intellectual' who has followed suit because of the similarity between the ideas of the American geopoliticians and his *realpolitik* views. But it is best to describe him as an organic



intellectual, given that he is very well aware of the ideological obstacles that confront a realist such as himself, and designs his strategies explicitly on that basis. He hopes to transform how Americans see the outside world, and how they see their own country, and is willing to draw on the country's reservoir of ideas and images to get the job done. He places ideology and ideational factors centre stage. Kissinger is also less of a globalist than the other two. He is not interested in America's global posture but its position in certain critical regions in the world, and he has always been trying to break the ideological hold of globalism on US foreign policy. He is also far less concerned with using ideology to pacify the leaders and populations of other countries, taking Roosevelt's vision further than the other two thinkers dealt with here. On the contrary, he hopes to use America's liberal culture to acclimatise the country to the use of coercive techniques in its foreign policy, in the long-run. Even though Huntington and Brzezinski want a globalism shorn of much of its consensual content, they still do take on board many of the consensual techniques of maintaining stability, and develop new ones in the context of the absence of communism. According to Stephen Gill, Kissinger is also associated with transnational capital and the Trilateral Commission (see Gill, 1990), but there is no evidence at all that this association has had any effects on his ideas and policy positions. He belittles globalisation and sees regionalisation as the wave of the future. When he takes globalisation seriously, he sees it a threat to be fought. Kissinger's whole approach to foreign policy predisposes him toward 'intellectual independence' from elite influence. As early as 1959 Kissinger advised that the foreign policy intellectual "deal with the policymaker from a position of independence, to reserve the right to assess the policymaker's demands in terms of his own standards" (Kissinger, quoted in Landau, 1974, 57). Landau characterises him as a 'philosopher-king,' someone "quite

careful not to abandon his intellectual priorities for the sake of social or political gain” (Landau, 1974, 56). It is still safe, though, to say that Kissinger is an organic intellectual, and does support the dominant position of the East Coast elite, but largely on his own terms, in order to find a way to push his ideas to the top of the agenda. His membership of the primacy school also places him at the centre of the hegemonic project which Huntington and Brzezinski are part of, even though he does not share many of their views and concerns.

With this as background we can now move on to the subject of geo-economics, comparing and contrasting the positions its advocates take with the geopolitical interpretations of the ‘new world order’ debated here. Only then will it be possible for us finally to decide what the exact position and nature of US globalism is to be in the new era.



## CHAPTER FIVE –

### GLOBALISATION AND THE CHANGING ECONOMICS OF GLOBALISM: THE DEVELOPING DOCTRINE AND NARRATIVE OF GEO-ECONOMICS

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back...soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil.

John Maynard Keynes  
*The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*

(quoted in Krugman, 1995, 1).

Nothing in our economic policy is so deeply ingrained, and so little reckoned with by economists, as our tendency to wait and see if things do not improve by themselves.

John Kenneth Galbraith  
(quoted in Nester, 1997, 1).

We did the opposite of what the American economists said. We broke all the rules.

Naohira Amaya  
former MITI vice minister  
(quoted in Prestowitz, 1992, 67).



## **Introduction:**

The task here is to outline in detail the ideas of, and motivations behind, the new approach of geo-economics, with reference to the conclusions reached in the previous chapters. Not only must these ideas be placed in the appropriate historical context and grounded materially, this approach must also be related to the old and new geopolitical interpretation of America's place in the new world. From the start of this chapter to its end I compare and contrast geo-economics with geopolitics, given that the starting point of geo-economics is inevitably geopolitics. The nature of the new world order necessitates, in the opinion of geo-economists, a new approach to foreign policy and international relations. The history of geopolitics in America, and how it impinges on issues of identity and ideology, is also relevant, given the highly political origins of much economic thought in American history. Although I structure this chapter according to the particular ideas put forward, drawing similarities and contrasts between the different geo-economic positions, I also try and connect all these ideas together when it comes to the material grounding of these groups of thinkers. The paramount issue here is globalisation, how the geo-economists deal with it as a phenomenon, and how the vested interests behind globalisation deal with them as thinkers.

Here I draw on all the material in the thesis, beginning with the first chapter and our analysis of the growth and decline of the American historic bloc. This process even involves using material from Chapter 4, where we explored some of the current hegemonic strategies employed by the East Coast establishment. The relationship

between Huntington and Brzezinski and the Trilateral Commission and the hegemonic project driven by transnational capital is also of great importance here. Contemporary American politics really began in the 1970s, not 1989, and this is particularly true in relation to economic policy and ideology. As we shall see below, even the geo-economic conception of world order, and much geo-economic terminology, really began to be developed during the Nixon administration. By the end of this chapter I will try to have produced an account of the overall function of geo-economics, the relationship between geo-economics and geopolitics, and the role of transnational capital in the propagation of geo-economics.



## Section 1 – The Three-Bloc/Geo-Economic

### Paradigm: The New Language of International Relations

#### 1.1 – Historical Transformations: Geo-Economics Contrasted with Geopolitics

It is unclear when exactly the term geo-economics came into usage, or who exactly first used the term and made it popular. Most accounts – for instance McGrew (1994) – cite Edward Luttwak and his article published in the Summer 1990 edition of *The National Interest* as the original source – “From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce.” But much of the substance of this new paradigm or approach was actually present in intellectual and political circles long before Luttwak’s article. Luttwak, as will become apparent below, is actually a comparative latecomer to this paradigm, and could even be accused of hopping onto the bandwagon after this approach had made significant headway in to the political system. Another important point to make early on is that there are several strands of thought in this approach; they do not all pursue the same logic, nor do they come to the same conclusions, and they can often hold very conflicting opinions of each other. Finally, we must bear in mind that this view is not economic, but geo-economic. It tries to fit in the new-found prominence of economics in world affairs into the wider context of international relations theory, investigating the issues of war, conflict, and world order from an economic perspective. Its basic impetus and starting point is political.

Much of the immediate intellectual input into this paradigm comes from the major shift in priorities from military to economic that has occurred with the end of the Cold War. We have already dealt with this extensively above in relation to the Bush and Clinton presidencies. We have also seen above how Edward Luttwak's ideas are widely shared by the three main schools of thought in foreign policy in America (see Chapter 3). This paradigm's basic thesis is that in the "new international system... geoeconomics" will replace "geopolitics as the most crucial determinant of the rise or decline of nations" (Harkavy, 1997, 570). Military power will subsequently become less relevant, and even wasteful in this new context. Most of the intellectual analysis of this shift saw it in essentially benign terms. Some even took a "linear view that borders on teleology", the most famous being Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis which saw ideological conflict being replaced by "milder economic rivalries" (Harkavy, 1997, 571). But, even within this benign account, the broad contours of geo-economic thought could be seen. Even those that took the teleological view placed great emphasis on the "New Criteria of Power" (Gaddis, 1992, 156). Because of this the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism were seen as "only the surface manifestations of underlying trends that had been present for years" (Gaddis, 1992, 156). 1989 represented a major "shift of geopolitical fault lines" that brought "certain long-term historical forces to our attention" (Gaddis, 1992, 156). The "historical tectonics" that determine how states and nations interact, compete and dominate had changed fundamentally, with the source of this transformation lying in the coming "apart" of the "500-year-old linkage between military and economic strength" (Gaddis, 1992, 156-157). In the past one was seen as reinforcing the other, with military power allowing a country to capture more resources to fuel its economy, while economic power allowed it to build up its military potential.



What changed this equation was the development of nuclear weapons. The tremendous destructive potential of nuclear weapons made it impossible to use them. This, in turn, ruled out the kind of full-scale war of the past which built up economic strength through acquiring territories, lest it provoke a nuclear war. The major powers became imprisoned behind their borders, unable to do anything but to spend more and more money on their armies to threaten their rivals. Edward Luttwak, a military strategist himself, confirms this analysis, saying that “for some decades now the dominant elites of the greatest powers have ceased to consider war as a practical solution for military confrontations... because non-nuclear fighting would only be inconclusively interrupted by the fear of nuclear war, while the latter is self-inhibiting” (Luttwak, 1990, 21). This reality also made it impossible to “simultaneously... maintain economic vitality and military capability”, with the opposite actually occurring, namely, military expenditures sapping economic strength (Gaddis, 1992, 157). Moreover, this stasis in international conflict allowed Germany and Japan to exploit this divorce between military and economic power in such a successful way that it led many to see them as the real ‘victors’ of the Second World War. These transformations had major ramifications on the perceptions of the industrialised world’s political and military elites. Decision-makers shifted their priorities in tune with this “fundamental tectonic shift” and understood that the conditions as to what is “required to gain influence in the world” had changed (Gaddis, 1992, 159).

In the American context, it was the Vietnam War that was instrumental in shifting the focus of US strategy from a military to an economic footing. It was the Nixon administration specifically that engendered this shift, developing an ideological rationale that advocated the growing role of economics and the declining utility of

warfare, in order to justify the policy of 'no more Vietnams'. Richard Nixon explained to the American public that, "as we move into the post-Vietnam world, military confrontation will be replaced by economic competition" and in this new era the "competitive position" of the US had be ensured (Nixon, quoted in Kunz, 1997, 218). In another speech Nixon proclaimed that in the future "economic power" would be the "key to the other kinds of power" and would determine the "future of the world in other ways in the last third of the century" (Nixon, quoted in Kunz, 1997, 216-217). He even posited the existence of 'economic superpowers' and concluded that the trade and industrial policies developed by Germany and Japan would determine the position of nations in the future. These realisations were taken a step further with the end of the Cold War. The elites of the industrialised world have finally concluded that "military confrontations... are only dissuasive of threats that are themselves most implausible", and it is this conclusion that has "caused the decisive devaluation of military strength as an instrument of statecraft" (Luttwak, 1990, 21). Instead, in the geo-economic era "not only the *causes* but also the *instruments* of conflict must be economic" (Luttwak, 1990, 21). This, then, sets out the overall geo-economic understanding of the basic determinants of power politics in the new era. I will now deal with the specifics of the geo-economic vision, its theoretical grounding, and its recommendations for US policy.

## 1.2 – The Geopolitical Logic of Geo-Economics:

### American Decline and the Shape of the World to Come

Gaddis' ideas are representative of the general framework of ideas with which geo-economists are operating, and the overall groundwork of ideas they share with



other policy planners and intellectuals. But the geo-economists break away from this shared historical understanding of these transformation in international relations and reach a very different vision of the future. One of the most important reasons behind this break is the concern of geo-economists with American decline. Decline changes everything, turning the apparently benign historical transformation from a recipe for peace to a recipe for conflict. In the words of several geo-economists – Michael Borrus, Steve Weber, Joseph Willihinganz and John Zysman – US decline is “not just the result of temporary trends, and it will not be reversed by balanced-budget amendments, the end of the current recession, or other tinkering at the margins” (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 21). Instead, decline is the product of a “fundamental change” brought about by America’s loss of its “technological and industrial hegemony”, a consequence of the failure of American firms to invest extensively in certain production revolutions that have created a whole set of “technology-intensive, high value-added industries” (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 22). These industries embody a whole new model of making and selling commodities, “labeled variously as flexible volume production, flexible automation, or lean production” (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 22). America’s failure to invest in these new techniques has left the economy open to technological dependency, threatening the country’s very autonomy. Even America’s national security is under threat because of the difficulty in maintaining “leading-edge military” technologies without these innovations (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 27). The nature of lean production also gives the US an additional reason to worry because of the notion of ‘first mover advantages’. If a country does not move into a certain industry first then the country that does will gain these advantages in a way that can have “potentially devastating” effects on the late comer as it loses markets and technologies

to its rivals (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 23). Foreign governments can penetrate deep into a country's economy and influence its 'technology trajectory'.

If it were a matter of individual industrialised nations competing in these industries then the problem could be avoided, given the tremendous advantages America has both in terms of financial and technological resources and its huge domestic market. Of equal importance to geo-economists, then, is another major development on the international scene, and one not entirely unrelated to the process of US decline, namely, the proliferation of regional trade groupings and the tri-polarisation of economic activity around East Asia, North America and Europe. This is why geo-economics is also known as the "three-bloc" economic model or the "three-bloc neo-mercantilist thesis" (Harkavy, 1997, 570). Power is relative, meaning that as powerful and rich as the US is, its competitive troubles – in the context of this growing regionalisation – will give such groupings the ability to "create the basis for a wholly new system of relations among the major powers that will" leave the US exposed to the "kinds of constraints that it used to impose on others" (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 21). As indicated, the geo-economists see the "world evolving into three competitive economic blocs... a Japan-led Pacific Rim;... a U.S.-led Western Hemisphere bloc; and... a German-centered European bloc, assumed to include Russia and other ex-Soviet states and perhaps also North Africa" (Harkavy, 1997, 572). In their schema the world is not split up into regional groupings, but only separated into three main groupings with the "less-developed" countries "relegated to the status of neocolonial resources zones to be courted by the three major blocs" (Harkavy, 1997, 572). Geo-economist Lester Thurow sees the EU transforming North Africa into "Europe's preferential low wage manufacturing area", thus replicating America's plans for Mexico through NAFTA (Thurow, 1992, 10).



The growing mercantilist dynamic of international relations has thus created a new threat other than American technological dependency. This is the threat of 'mercantile rivalry' leading to a trade war. The logical outcome of technology intensiveness is the "possibility that nations or regions could come to see themselves competing in a win-or-lose, zero-sum game for their economic futures" (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 23). This is why this new paradigm has been labelled a 'neo-mercantilist' model of international affairs, given that zero-sum games are the mainstay of mercantilist economic theory and political practice. This is also why geo-economics is also known as '*realekonomik*,' an application of zero-sum logic to a discipline (economics) that takes trade to be a positive-sum game. The economics of these new high-tech industries facilitates this by making zero-sum gains a viable economic option. Borrus *et al* are not entirely certain whether policies could be designed to give a country permanent advantages over others, but this does not concern them. All that matters is "whether nations *believe* they can" make zero-sum gains (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 26; italics in original). At the same time, this belief in zero-sum gains can help maintain the trading system because of the factor of 'fear,' the "fear of one another" – fear of mercantile rivalry (Borrus *et al*, Fall 1992, 27). The "trick" is to "re-establish American economic strength while avoiding beggar-thy-neighbour trade and technology practices" (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 29). The policies they advocate are mainly short-run and fall short of challenging the post-war multilateral order established by the US, an order they do believe in reinvigorating, albeit on America's terms.

The views geo-economists hold on regionalism, zero-sum gains and technological dependence represent one of the most important, and distinguishing, features of the geo-economic paradigm, which is that their views fly in the face of the globalisation thesis. Geo-economics goes against the grain of much of the academic

and journalistic theorisation of globalisation and has been subsequently accused of being “too state-centric, too prone to viewing trade as occurring between nations rather than between firms operating in a complex global environment” (Harkavy, 1997, 572). The justifications geo-economists put forward for this state-centricity do not come in the form of a radical critique of the globalisation thesis. They largely avoid dealing with it head on, saying that, though the “world may be ‘globalizing,’ its major components are these three regions” (Borras *et al*, 1992, 23). They use the examples of Japan and the EU, and how they trade and invest predominantly within their respective regions as proof of this. They believe that the US, being the largest economy in the world and situated at the centre of the Western hemisphere, could easily pull off the same feat, keep globalisation in check and reinforce the ‘drive toward autonomy’. More importantly, their economic models instruct them that production “technologies accrue locally in networks of shared knowledge, learning, and experience”, none of which can be traded across borders (Borras *et al*, 1992, 26). This allows countries to build up their national assets and thus regain some degree of autonomy, spreading the benefits of these technologies to the rest of the economy through externality effects.

There is also a more simplistic and less sophisticated logic at play here too. Lester Thurow avoids the globalisation problem by looking at trade in zero-sum terms and envisioning the three blocs as competing on a “world economic chessboard”, aiming at world domination, the task of trying to “own the twenty-first century” (Thurow, quoted in Harkavy, 1997, 573, 572). Thurow’s analysis of this ‘eventuality’ of international economic relations is not grounded in any appreciation of the revolutions in production brought about by technological advances, but focuses instead on the political and economic consequences of US decline. The post-war



global economy was based on “unilateral global Keynesianism” with the US as the “manager of the system” (Thurow, 1992, 10). The unprecedented global prosperity generated was not the result of America’s “altruistic” disposition, but a consequence of the fact that “as the world’s biggest economy, it had more to gain from an open global economy than anyone else. America believed that it could not be prosperous unless the world was prosperous” (Thurow, 1992, 10). This is an example of hegemonic logic, where the hegemon transcends a narrow conception of its self-interest and adopts a stance that benefits all. But with the evolution of the world from ‘unipolar’ to ‘multipolar’ this state of affairs is no longer possible. The US no longer has the power to be the world’s economic ‘locomotive,’ and the other major economic powers – Germany and Japan – refuse to expand their economies in order to avoid inflation, making global prosperity impossible. This led the US in to “opting out of its leadership role in order to look after its narrow self-interests” through bilateral and unilateral trade initiatives (Thurow, 1992, 11). It is this strictly political impetus that Thurow believes is more than enough to push aside the integrating effects of globalisation and replace interdependence with a drive to make regions independent of each other. Even in his latest book, *The Future of Capitalism: How Today’s Economic Forces Shape’s Tomorrow’s World*, (1996), he still clings to essentially the same analysis. He lists five factors that are shaping the world’s future “ ‘economic topography’... the end of communism, the global economy, the new ‘brainpower’ technologies, ‘a *multipolar world*’ with *no dominant power*, and the demography of ‘growing, moving, getting older’ ” (Thurow, quoted in Du Boff, 1996, 1; my italics).

Edward Luttwak does not even pretend to deal with the question of globalisation with any sophistication. He only deals with the issue of ‘world business’ (globalising capital) on the first page of his seven-page article. He says that, left to itself, the logic

of global business and growing interdependence would lead to displacement of “not only military methods but the logic of conflict itself---which is adversarial, zero-sum” (Luttwak, 1990, 17). But, as Luttwak says, “things are not quite that simple” (Luttwak, 1990, 18). This is because states are “territorial entities, spatially rather than functionally defined,” meaning they “cannot follow a commercial logic that would ignore their own borders” (Luttwak, 1990, 18). States do function according to a “zero-sum” logic that aims at maximising “benefits within their own boundaries” and at the expense of others, in direct contrast to the “nonterritorial logic” of commerce (Luttwak, 1990, 18, 19). He takes this argument further and posits another factor, namely the ‘internal impulses’ of state bureaucracies. In the context of globalisation and the end of the Cold War this factor will actually function to expand the already inherent conflictual dynamic of states. Or, as he says: “*As bureaucracies writ large, states are themselves impelled by the bureaucratic urges of role-preservation and role-enhancement to acquire a ‘geo-economic’ substitute for their decaying geopolitical role*” (Luttwak, 1990, 19; italics in original). In a similar exercise to Thurow, with even less economic justification, Luttwak is in effect gambling on zero-sum dynamics and vested interests to get around the problem of globalisation. He makes it fairly clear that he is ‘riding-the-wave’ of the growing geo-economic competition that is overcoming the world with the end of the Cold War. He says that trade quarrels will “no longer simply be suppressed by political interventions... motivated by the strategic imperative of preserving alliance cooperation against a common enemy” (Luttwak, 1990, 20). On the contrary, if “internal cohesion has to be preserved by a unifying threat, that threat must now be economic” (Luttwak, 1990, 20). The crucial point here is that this economic threat, the new enemy needed, comes from within the Cold War alliance. He gives the examples of European fears over the



“new undivided Germany,” and the case of American “attitudes toward Japan” (Luttwak, 1990, 20). In fact, in the particular case of Japan – we shall see how important Japan is to the whole debate below – “Gorbachev’s redirection of Soviet foreign policy had barely started when Japan began to be promoted to the role of the internally unifying Chief Enemy” (Luttwak, 1990, 20).

Moreover, Luttwak is perfectly happy with these developments. He is far less concerned with the perils of mercantilism and the economic structuring of the world into trade blocs than Borrus *et al.* He dispels the threat of mercantilism by saying that “mercantilism was a *subordinated mentality*, limited and governed by the ever-present” possibility that the loser in the mercantilist competition would “switch to the grammar of war” (Luttwak, 1990, 20; italics in original). By this, he means that the economic imperatives of mercantilism were subordinated to the military and strategic interests of mercantilist power. Economics was a means to an end, and that end was geopolitical competition that could easily explode into war. This is not the case with geo-economics because in the contemporary world there is “*no superior modality*” (Luttwak, 1990, 20; italics in original). People cannot be forced to buy goods through military means; “supercomputers cannot be forcibly delivered by airborne assault to banks and universities in need of them,” and military conflict is no longer an option (Luttwak, 1990, 20). Unlike the age of mercantilism, in the age of geo-economics “not only the *causes* but also the *instruments* of conflict must be economic” (Luttwak, 1990, 20; italics in original). Luttwak thus deals with mercantilism from a political perspective, largely side-stepping the economic justifications of geo-economics which argue that trade can be a zero-sum game. In fact, he seems completely unaware of the economic grounding of geo-economic arguments, especially as regards first-mover advantages, the importance of high-tech, and their potential for pushing the world into

a cycle of mercantilist economic warfare. The only economic goal we hear of in the article is “employment” and the only instruments are the “restriction of imports... subsidization of exports, the funding of competitive technology projects, the support of selected forms of education, the provision of competitive infrastructures, and more” (Luttwak, 1990, 21). But he does not say in the piece why they are important to the economy, or if there are any theories or people who provide explanations of why they are important. He brackets technological imperatives with other weapons of commerce without giving any unique status to them. It is only in his book, *The Endangered American Dream* (1993), written and published three years after the article, that we hear of the fact that the real “goal of nations in geo-economic warfare” is to “hold the high ground in a world of technological rivalry” (Vernon, 1993-94, 102). Yet, in this same book, Luttwak again “assures us, trade is not a zero-sum game” (Vernon, 1993-94, 102). For Luttwak, the territorial imperative of states is the only factor that can change benign commerce into economic warfare.

The reason why Edward Luttwak’s ideas diverge so much from the nuts and bolts of much geo-economic theorising is that he does not belong to the group of thinkers that developed the economic core of the geo-economic approach. Luttwak is actually a member of a group of thinkers that are “not instinctive or philosophical economic nationalists” (Tonelson, 1993-94, 11). Tonelson categorises this group as ‘conservative realists,’ thinkers from the rightwing of the American political spectrum, most of whom are foreign policy and international relations specialists. Next to Luttwak, some of the most prominent members of this group (or sub-group) include Henry Kissinger and Cyrus Vance. Although internationalists in the broadest sense of the word, they have been “entertaining doubts about internationalism’s firm commitment to GATT-style multilateral trade liberalization and *laissez-faire*



economics” (Tonelson, 1993-94, 10). In fact, both Kissinger and Vance have openly “endorsed a policy of managed trade vis-à-vis Japan” and “supported NAFTA not on ideological grounds but in preemptive response to the prospect” of the growing pace of regionalisation (Tonelson, 1993-94, 11).

Luttwak, however, has “gone much farther” than them and offered his “ambitious theoretical argument for the advent of an age” of geo-economics (Tonelson, 1993-94, 11). The real importance of Luttwak to this study lies in his role as the representative of this group that has done the most to try and form a coherent ideology, set of priorities, and strategy for them. Most of the views researched here, though, belong to the two main schools of thought of geo-economics, ‘strategic trade theory’ and ‘revisionism’. I will deal with these two groups below in separate sections, but before we can go further we must first categorise the various economic positions held by different political actors in post-Cold War America. Geo-economics, as we saw in Chapter 3, is not attached to any one of the three foreign policy schools, but represents a larger body of ideas that is drawn on – albeit differently – by each school. It is not possible therefore to deal with geo-economics as a distinct school of thought based on a cogent philosophy. Instead, it represents a set of policy positions and economic ideas that break with the mould of post-war American foreign economic policy, bridging the gap between foreign and domestic, and joining the political and the economic. Because of this it is best to approach geo-economics from this historical perspective, mapping out the changing landscape of economic policy, then placing the different geo-economic groups within this frame as outlined in the subsection below.

### 1.3 – Cold War and Post-Cold War Positions:

#### Trade Policy and the Changing Status of Globalism

As we have seen, isolationism and internationalism were the standard and dominant narratives in American foreign policy debates up to and until the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of communism spawning new variants of these old ideologies (neo-isolationism, new internationalism), in addition to a third school of thought (preponderance). In the case of foreign economic policy, or more specifically trade policy, “historically” there have also been two dominant positions, “centered on free trade versus protectionism” (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 491). This tallied well with the internationalist-isolationist division of US politics, with isolationists adopting protectionist positions to isolate the US economy from global involvement, and internationalists supporting free trade to do the opposite. With the end of the Cold War this dichotomy between free traders and protectionists has finally broken down. It came under considerable stress even during the Cold War, with the economic difficulties of the 1970s and 1980s leading to new positions developing. The free trade/protectionism dichotomy broke down into a four way division of economic opinion, consisting of ‘free trade,’ ‘fair trade,’ ‘strategic trade,’ and ‘protectionism’ (see Nollen and Quinn, 1994). In the contemporary context the appropriate distinction is not between those who wish to engage in the global market and those who do not, given that the reality of globalisation has largely transcended America’s traditionally isolationist positions. The “ultimate struggle” today is between those who support a truly free market and those who favour “government intervention... in the international marketplace” (Griswold, 1999, 1). The emphasis is more on the particular *kind* of global engagement envisioned. Political actors can either: “(1) favor



trade and oppose subsidies, (2) favor both trade and subsidies, (3) oppose both trade and subsidies, or (4) oppose trade and favor subsidies” (Griswold, 1999, 3).

The first group covers the traditional category of ‘free trade’. These are the true free traders, adherents of neo-classical economics who believe in freeing trade of all restriction and forms of intervention that could distort market signals and prevent markets from clearing. For this group trade is “always” seen as a “positive sum game; one country cannot gain at the expense of another” (Prestowitz, 1992, 68). Beyond this there is not much to be said.

The second group covers the ‘internationalists,’ those who traditionally took a position identical to that of free traders. This group supports trade liberalisation, but also supports “subsidies that *they* believe promote the *same end*” as free trade – expanding US exports (Griswold, 1999, 5; my italics). They believe in increasing international trade (hence, the title ‘internationalist’), but they are willing to do this at the expense of the proper functioning of markets. Their economic rationale is that the US can “compete in an open global economy *only* if the playing field is ‘*leveled*’ by *aggressive* export promotion programs” (Griswold, 1999, 4; my italics). They adhere to what is known as ‘fair trade,’ an attempt to “combat unfair trading practices... in order to restore outcomes that would prevail under free(er) trade” in both foreign and domestic markets (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 495). The intention is to generate gains for US firms in foreign markets, while also preventing losses in the domestic market. Although this group likes to designate itself as anti-protectionist, it effectively practices what many free traders called ‘export protectionism’ (see Bhagwati, 1996), where exports are protected indirectly through government interventions that prop up exporting industries, or through market-opening initiatives. The intention here, as is the case with protectionism generally, is to expand employment, and not to maintain

efficiency. Trade is seen as more of a zero-sum game, with trade benefiting all, but only on condition that trade in certain critical sectors is carried out fairly.

This second group and its philosophy developed in the 1980s as a political response to growing import penetration and declining competitiveness. Protectionists took up the slogan of 'fair trade' in an effort to find an "effective symbolic counterweight" to 'free trade' (Tierney, 1994, 122). The label allowed them to distinguish themselves from the "old-fashioned demand for import protection", while also lending "critical ideological support to export lobbies" that claimed that they were upholding free trade by calling for "lower import barriers" by other countries (Bhagwati and Irwin, 1996, 50). This justification is lent support by the fact that the main supporters of this group do not only include the "mature, relatively low-tech industries... but also the high-tech" sectors (Tierney, 1994, 123). Organised labour also lent support to this reformulation of the language of trade policy. From the 1970s onwards labour argued that the "old 'free trade' concepts and their 'protectionist' opposites" were "increasingly obsolete" in the context of the 'new competitive situation' faced by the US (AFL-CIO Economic Policy Council, 1970, quoted in Destler, 1992, 43). In the lexicon of international trade, fair traders support 'managed trade' and 'results-oriented trade' (see Bhagwati, 1991). Managing trade refers to attempts to determine the amount imported and exported between countries according to fixed quotas (quantities), thus fulfilling a politically pre-determined economic result. Griswold classifies the Clinton administration as internationalist, which tallies well with the fair trade policies he has pursued since he has come to office (see Chapter 2).

The third group are the 'isolationists,' people who favour protectionism and oppose initiatives aimed at expanding "American involvement in the global economy"



in general (Griswold, 1999, 5). Isolationists, or protectionists, represent the oldest economic school of thought in American history. Their basic purpose is to “block or slow down the economic adjustments that otherwise would have to be made because of international trade” (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 494). They also oppose subsidies for international transactions, refusing to penalise the US taxpayer for the sake of international trade.

The fourth group are the ‘interventionists,’ adherents of ‘strategic trade’ theory. I have already fleshed out much of the theoretical content of their position above with reference to Borrus *et al* (all of whom are strategic traders), but will go into the details of their historical genesis below. Here I merely want to position them within the overall debate. They are not concerned with expanding America’s international involvement, even though they do support subsidies for maintaining the international system and for American industries operating abroad. House Democrat leader Richard Gephardt – a populist supporter of labour, and an early strategic trader – exemplifies this seemingly contradictory position. In the debate over expanding the funds of the IMF in the wake of the East Asian financial crisis, Gephardt surprisingly supported more funding, even though this policy position was advocated by American multinationals that wanted the IMF to stabilise the global economic environment after the Asian crash. This inconsistency in their positions is a product of their economic philosophy and its emphasis on the domestic foundations of wealth creation. Their focus is essentially domestic, on how domestic firms fair within their own home market in relation to foreign competitors. In this sense, they are much like protectionists. But the crucial difference between them and protectionists is that the firms they subsidise belong to sectors dominated by “*global oligopolies* in which only a few very large companies in the world can compete” (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 497;

my italics). These are the industries that are technology-intensive, practise lean production and are characterised by large externalities dealt with above. Therefore, funding them means subsidising US firms internationally. Trade, in this sense, is important to this group, at least at the level of maintaining competitiveness and export markets – the minimum of internationalism. But the crux of strategic trade policy is the use of subsidies to “support trade-related technology development in nascent product markets” (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 497). Their positions are closest to those of the fair traders, and they have much in common with the Clinton administration’s economic plans, especially when it comes to industrial policy and the generalised rejection of laissez-faire. But they are *not* fair traders. In fact, strategic trade policies actually “undercut the logic of U.S. fair trade demands” (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 498). Fair trade is invoked when other countries unfairly aid their companies in international competition. Strategic traders believe in taking the initiative and are not too concerned about the international consequences, thus removing the justification for complaints about others using unfair trade policies. The whole logic of strategic trade theory actually dictates that the attempt to “raise national income” through industry targeting comes “*at the expense of... trading partners*” (Pietro Nivola, quoted in Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 498; my italics). This is one of the consequences of the first-mover-advantages argument discussed above. Strategic trade is zero-sum in the extreme, believing that the development of strong industries at home will shift profits and capital investment away from rival countries and into the home market. Given how oblivious this group is to the retaliation their policies will engender, strictly speaking, strategic trade policy is more a “form of industrial policy” than it is a trade policy (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 497).



To finish off this section, we have to relate these four positions to geo-economics, and from there relate them to the wider issue of globalism, of America's relationship to the global economy. Geo-economics essentially draws its intellectual and political support from three of the above groups, the isolationists/protectionists, the interventionists/strategic traders, and the internationalists/fair traders. All reject the ideology of laissez-faire and the policy of free trade, leaving the free traders as the only school that denies the government the right and the economic rationale to intervene in the economy in such a way to facilitate zero-sum, *realeconomik* gains. In terms of globalism, then, geo-economics is an ideology that rejects much of the core of globalist doctrine. Globalism does not just consist of global engagement, whether it be economic or military, but engagement that fosters the proper running of a consensual global order. The ideological grounding of globalism lies in the laissez-faire assumption that trade is a positive-sum game. This should mean that "U.S. welfare" is "identical to that of the entire world economy" (Prestowitz, 1992, 68). This also involves accommodating the two divergent concepts of 'national sovereignty' and 'interdependence'. The kind of economic interdependence engendered by free trade is inconsistent with economic sovereignty, because free trade is about importing what you cannot produce efficiently yourself, even if that involves importing critical technologies from others. As a Reagan official once put it, "why do we want a semiconductor industry?... If our guys can't hack it, let them go" (quoted in Prestowitz, 1992, 68). Needless to say, such an extreme ideological position on free trade was never really adhered to seriously by decision-makers, even in the heyday of US globalism. Free trade has never been a "genuine doctrine", but rather an ideology used when convenient and fitted to the "current perception of the

national interest” and “overlooked and forgotten when it did not” (Strange, 1987, 562).

In the post-Cold War era, and increasingly since the 1970s, the dominant conception of the national interest has not tallied well with free trade, even as the officially stated policy of the US. The breakdown of the dual split between internationalist free traders and isolationist protectionists is part of this ideological re-evaluation of America’s priorities, as is the development of a fair trade internationalist school. Globalism is being shorn of its ideological content with the advent of geo-economics and the various schools of thought that rely on it. According to the CATO Institute study by Griswold, most of the Congress is interventionist, most interventionists are Democrats, while the isolationists, free traders and internationalists are predominantly Republican. The dominant school in terms of policymaking at the presidential level is (fair trade) internationalism. There is still a strong commitment to global engagement and an aversion to any policy position that would endanger the world trading order, which is why Clinton has not adopted the more extreme interventionist or isolationist positions. But (free trade) ‘liberal internationalism’ is no longer the “basic and only point of reference for American trade policy” (Falke, 1996, 264). Determining the final place of globalism in the new era is the job of the final chapter. But this account gives us a grasp over the larger foreign policy context within which geo-economics has developed. With this as background we can move to explicate the details of the specific views held by geo-economists, and how they categorise themselves.



**Section 2 – The ‘Strategic’ Traders: Trade Theory,  
Industrial Policy, and the Meanings of Competitiveness**

**2.1 – Diverging Conceptions of the ‘Strategic’: Economic and  
Political Discourse, and the Industrial Policy/Competitiveness Debate**

Although the task of providing a detailed account of the intellectual lineage of strategic trade theory is not directly relevant to this work, one important aspect of such an account is relevant, namely, the exact meaning of the word ‘strategic’. There is a very significant difference between how economists and politicians use and think of strategic trade theory. In political discourse the word strategic refers to “high profile, high status industries (such as microelectronics and aerospace) or to emerging technologies... that are argued to be ‘platform’ technologies for many related product lines” (Nollen and Quinn, 1994, 497). These are the industries that are characterised by significant technological spillovers, where “innovations occurring in one product line can be taken advantage of in other product lines... within firms... industries, and within or between nations” (Yoffie and Gomes-Casseras, 1994, 27). In other words, these industries are strategic because of their strategic (critical sectoral) *importance* to the whole economy. The word strategic in academic discourse refers to game theory and decision-making in certain kinds of environments. In economics specifically it refers to decision-making in oligopolistic markets, where the small number of firms allows each to alter significantly the behaviour of other firms, forcing them to incorporate these responses into their initial decisions. Such firms operate within a

‘strategic environment,’ they ‘strategically interact’ with one another, while such markets are characterised by ‘strategic independence’ (see Irwin, 1996, and Stegemann, 1989). The use of subsidies and protection give a firm in such a market a “*strategic* advantage that allows it to win... Thus the subsidy is a *strategic trade policy*” (Krugman, 1995, 238; italics in original).

For economists, that is what the word means, and that is all that it means. But this original usage “must be *contrasted sharply* with the wholly different and conventional uses of... the word... as applied to industries... that *politically* are considered to be at the ‘commanding heights of economy’ ” (Bhagwati, 1991, 103; my italics). There is “*absolutely no necessary reason* for industries that are ‘strategic’ under the latter definitions to also be candidates for ‘strategic’ trade policy because they are oligopolistic as well” (Bhagwati, 1991, 103; my italics). In economics, strategic trade theory is a theory of oligopoly in the context of international trade, and *not* a theory of the importance of particular industries to the economy at large. Contrasting these two usage's of the term is very important because the birthplace of strategic trade theory was the economics discipline and its (different and contrasting) usage in politics actually depends on its status within the ranks of economists. Given its point of origin, there should *not* be any difference in how the term is used. As we shall see below, the different usage is the product of an *ideologisation* of the term, a *conscientious* usage of it by vested interests with a particular agenda in mind. The way the term has been altered is also part of a larger project of changing the meaning of competitiveness and transforming globalisation into an ideology.

To flesh out the details of this project we must first outline the origins of this term and provide an account of how it entered the political debate and was subsequently altered. In economics, strategic trade theory is a subset of ‘new trade



theory,' theories that developed in the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt to 'update' theories of comparative advantage by studying the effects of oligopolistic market structures on the composition and direction of international trade. One of the major conclusions of new trade theory was that the composition of trade was not static and predetermined by factor endowments, but dynamic and alterable, opening up the possibility of an active role for the government in the promotion of trade, growth and employment. The initial reaction of the economics community in terms of policy applications was very positive, given that strategic behaviour of firms implied the possibility of strategic behaviour of governments in promoting firms in such markets. Business school academics also helped further the confidence in government intervention by replacing the notion of comparative advantage with that of 'competitive advantage' (see Yoffie and Gomes-Casseras, 1994). A country's manufacturing base and trade portfolio were seen as resembling the inner workings of a corporation, and thus subject to the same kind of corporate direction, with decisions made at the top determining what the corporation makes, and how successfully.

The relevance of strategic trade theory to politicians began with its policy implications. The entry points of this body of theoretical literature into the political domain were many and varied. One entry point was the debate over US industrial competitiveness that began from 1982-83 when several "congressional Democrats began holding hearings" and drafted legislation over the issue of competitiveness and industrial policy (Cohen, 1994, 250). The early 1980s witnessed growing anxiety in political circles over what many saw to be an 'alarming decline' in productivity rates and a considerable growth of import competition in steel, automobiles and consumer electronics. The perennial issue of 'de-industrialisation' was instrumental in moving calls for protectionism out of the narrow confines of lobbying to a debate over the

'national interest' and how declining competitiveness threatened to damage the whole US economy. The image that developed of America's future was of the 'Taco Bell economy,' a country shorn of heavy and high-tech industries and reduced to menial, service production. (see Bhagwati and Irwin, 1996). Arguments favouring the transition from an industrial to a 'post-industrial' society were greeted with aversion and only helped to make things worse. Industrial policy advocates rejected this image and counterpoised it with the image of 'Silicon Valley,' their vision of an ideal, high-tech manufacturing future. Fears over de-industrialisation were accompanied by geopolitical concerns, in the form of a debate over decline, with pessimists predicting that America would decline as Britain had. Noted decline theorists joined the ranks of industrial policy advocates and gave a historical rationale to concerns over competitiveness. The list of declinists includes Paul Kennedy, the author of the infamous *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, James Fallows, author of *Looking at the Sun*, and Clyde Prestowitz, author of *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead*, (see Galbraith, 1997). The rest of the strategic traders were made up of a diverse group of advocates ranging from: domestic and international economic policy specialists, public policymakers, scientific and engineering specialists, to a "critically important new voice... the business sector" (Cohen, 1994, 251). This group included academics such as Robert Reich, Lester Thurow, Laura D'Andrea Tyson, Robert Kuttner and Amatai Etzioni, "business persons like Felix Rohatyn and Ira Magaziner", private sector advocates such as Lee Iacocca of Chrysler and Irving Shapiro of DuPont, and "most... Labor leaders; and numerous Democratic politicians" (Casey, 1992, 31).

Another critical feature was the association of many of the policy intellectuals that took up these theories with the Democrat party and left-liberal thought. At the



level of politics, strategic trade was more a “liberal response to Reagan’s victory” pioneered by “liberal policy entrepreneurs” than it was a theory with policy implications developed by economists (Krugman, 1995, 247). The Reagan victory and the right-turn of American politics and economic thought came in the wake of the collapse of the Keynesian consensus in the 1970s. This was a “defining intellectual event” because it “ruptured a quarter century’s alliance between political progressives and liberal economists” in the US (Galbraith, 1997, 125). Progressives were forced to look elsewhere for economic ideas that would justify their agendas. It was this “search for an out—any way out at all” (and *not* developments in trade theory) that “drove political progressives such as Reich, Magaziner, Kuttner, and Thurow *into* the trade arena” (Galbraith, 1997, 126; my italics). From the very beginning, then, this group of thinkers and their ideas were “tied closely to the political world” (Krugman, 1995, 247). Many Democrats who favoured industrial policy generally came to support them, as did a new faction, dubbed the ‘Atari Democrats,’ who focused specifically on new high-tech industries (see Cohen, 1994). For progressives it was a Godsend. Many academics believed they were “witnessing a doctrinal revolution: the Young Turks of the profession had joined popular ‘defrocked’ economists attacking the old wisdom, ‘strategic’ seemed synonymous with ‘divine,’ and the salvation of the American economy seemed to depend on the acceptance of the new gospel” (Stegemann, 1989, 90). Paul Krugman, an early advocate of the theory, proudly proclaimed that free trade was an idea that had “irretrievably lost its innocence” and could “never again be asserted as the policy that economic theory tells us is always right” (Krugman, quoted in Irwin, 1996, 212). It was even reported that in 1982 Walter Mondale once remarked to his wife, after reading a draft of Reich’s *The Next*

*American Frontier*, this “should do it for the Democrats in 1984” (Mondale, quoted in Krugman, 1995, 250).

Ironically, another major entry point of this literature into politics was the Reagan administration itself. Despite Reagan’s liberal credentials, his administration witnessed the first non-military, direct industrial policy in US post-war history, also brought about by de-industrialisation and high-tech competition. The most important industrial policies initiated during the Reagan years were policies directed at the semiconductor industry, such as the Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology Corporation (Sematech) initiative. Sematech was a meeting point for politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats and academics, leading to an intermingling of economic and political interests and a merging of intellectual and political discourse.

It was because of this entry into the political arena that the word strategic took on its new meaning, moving out of the realm of oligopoly theory to technology theory, and being transformed from a theory with implications for trade policy into a theory justifying industrial policy. The consensus view developed by the industrial policy advocates, and particularly those in the Democrat party, was that US decline was the product of a ‘competitiveness crisis’ brought about by a “fundamental change in the nature of the international economy” (Casey, 1992, 31). There was a growing “perception that trade and domestic policies for... specific sectors” were “inextricably linked to each other” (Stegemann, 1989, 96). The two conceptions of strategic became confused in this process because these advocates had developed their own ideas, beforehand, about the “integral role” manufacturing played in the US economy, given the “important linkages” manufacturing had to the “broader economy” (Dornbusch, Potebra and Summers, 1988, quoted in Bhagwati and Irwin, 1996, 42). Such arguments about ‘linkages,’ though forwarded by economists, were soon



misunderstood by “noneconomists to infer *externalities from linkages*” (Bhagwati and Irwin, 1996, 42; my italics). Also instrumental in this confusion was the way strategic trade theory was used as an economic rationale for industrial policy by the Reagan administration. The Sematech initiatives were rationalised on the basis of theories that tied together the issue of linkage and externalities. It was argued that the “competitive fortunes” of the semiconductor industry were “interlinked in a complex ecological system that makes each dependent on the health of others” (Flamm, 1996, 375). Taken to its logical conclusion, this argument “ends up declaring virtually *all* industries strategic” because all goods “produced by any industrial sector also serve as inputs into most other sectors” (Flamm, 1996, 376; my italics). Sematech advocates also argued that the oligopolistic nature of the world semiconductor market meant that, if the monopoly power of these firms was expanded by mergers with related (linked) industries, then these firms would become more successful at beating foreign competition. This, in turn, would mean that, as profits expanded, the benefits would spread (spillover through externalities) to related sectors and thus benefit the whole economy. Hence, one concept of strategic was rolled into another.

The word strategic underwent this transformation because the task of determining what the word meant, and what its policy implications were, fell to *non-economists*, namely, politicians, bureaucrats, journalists, and businessmen. As Jagdish Bhagwati puts it, the job of making strategic policies was taken over by “laymen” who did “not understand the... theory to begin with” (Bhagwati, 1991, 104). In this view, the theory was removed from the economics community and subjected to the rule of vested interests, politicising the word strategic and making it into a slogan for industrial policy. The majority of “non-economists tend to perceive many more matters of trade and industrial policy as being ‘strategic’ in the sense that foreigners

are trying to gain something at our expense or that we ought to try to get something at their expense” (Stegemann, 1989, 96). This meaning of the word had much more popular appeal, which led to it being used more as a way of gaining support for these initiatives. At the same time, though, it is important to highlight the fact that many strategic traders *did* know the difference. The body that oversaw the Sematech initiatives and evaluated their results was the National Advisory Committee on Semiconductors (NACs). This group did actually distinguish between the two definitions of strategic. One usage designated “critical” industries that were strategic “because of their linkages to the rest of the economy”, while the other referred to “game theory” and strategic “behaviour” (Flamm, 1996, 372-380). They also acknowledged the fact that, in “principle... ‘strategic trade policy’ is not conceptually equivalent to ‘government policy in strategic sectors’ ” (Flamm, 1996, 382). But, as a “practical matter, though, the two ideas are closely identified with one another” and the competitiveness debate “typically captures basic elements of all... distinct uses of the word” strategic (Flamm, 1996, 382). According to Bhagwati, the economists involved in this debate knew the difference and deliberately “encouraged this fuzziness by talking somewhat loosely about the strategic trade theory’s being important because of both oligopolistic market structure (which is true) and externalities (which is false)” (Bhagwati, 1991, 104). They could even be accused of taking advantage of the ignorance of the laymen who make strategic policies (politicians) and those laymen who popularised these policies (journalists). J. D. Richardson describes many of these theorists as “educated protagonists” who “seize every opportunity to chide, needle, provoke, or wax eloquent and metaphorical” and who know that “passionate persuasion overwhelms dispassionate logic in regard to



many issues of public policy” (Richardson, 1990, 113-114). In short, they knew how to use words, mince words, and misuse words.

We can see many examples of this deliberate confusion in the writings of the strategic traders. For instance, Clyde Prestowitz, when discussing the debate in academic economics over the issue of strategic trade theory, says that the “validity of the concept of *economically strategic* industries has been confirmed by the recent work of James Brander, Paul Krugman, and Barbara Spencer” (Prestowitz, 1992, 71; my italics). He discusses this, correctly, under the mantle of oligopoly theory and imperfect competition, but the words ‘economically strategic’ carry a very different emphasis. The term indicates the more conventional meaning of strategic, of how an industry is strategic (in its importance) ‘to’ the economy. Moreover, he discusses this work on oligopoly theory after talking about the importance of certain industries that have a “major impact on many other sectors” and uses the semiconductor industry as an example (Prestowitz, 1992, 70). Here he is ‘sandwiching’ the proper economic understanding of strategic within a larger account of strategic, as understood by policymakers. His knowledge of the intricacies of oligopoly theory and the debate over strategic policy also point in the direction of a conscious misuse of this word. Brander and Spencer, the first to develop a mathematical model of strategic policy, actually refuted this model early on. Brander himself concluded that the “case for interventionist trade policy presented here is limited and narrow” (Brander, quoted in Irwin, 1996, 211). Krugman also recanted on his ideas from the early 1980s and has become one of the most virulent critics of strategic trade theory. Prestowitz, thus, was citing people who had long ceased to recognise the ‘validity’ of these ideas. Even the word ‘validity’ itself is very elastic, vague, and open to interpretation. All that it implies is that the ‘concept’ is worth dealing with and should not be rejected out of

hand. His own words give this impression. He says: “*moreover*, domination by national producers of an imperfectly competitive industry *may* result in extra profits and wages for the domestic economy” (Prestowitz, 1992, 71; my italics). He treats the theory as an additional justification for government intervention, after discussing the main justification, which is the importance of these sectors to the rest of the economy. Even Borrus *et al* engage in this linguistic subterfuge. They talk of how the “logic of strategic trade *coupled with* the notion of technology trajectories” will have major economic implications for policy (Borrus *et al* 1992, 27; my italics). Technology trajectory, in their account, refers to the externalities argument, while strategic trade refers to first mover advantages brought about by the nature of oligopolistic markets.

In the contemporary context, strategic trade discourse and the industrial policy agenda represents an *intensification* of this process. Vested interests and laymen play an even larger role than before, while the economists involved have continued to combine the different definitions of strategic. Strategic trade theory from the early 1980s onwards took a further step away from the economics community and became a doctrine that “comes from *outside* of the mainstream of economic argument” (Krugman, 1995, 247; my italics). This is because, ironically, the “critical point on which” strategic trade theory “differs” from new trade theory is over the reinstatement of a ‘positive-sum logic’ to trade theory (Stegemann, 1989, 77)! Even though new trade theorists agreed that comparative advantage was not the prime determinant of the composition of manufacturing trade, they also concluded that the composition of trade was best determined by the market and that trade did not follow a negative-sum logic. Strategic trade theory as a whole broke down and lost its appeal in academic economics when it was discovered that the theory became unworkable in terms of its policy implications. This “erased any belief that the theory constituted a general case



for departing from free trade, confirming the views of the skeptics” (Irwin, 1996, 212). Only a few years after it began to gain prominence – in the early 1980s – “all signs” were pointing towards a “restoration” of free trade doctrine, with the “heretics... recanting, and the economics profession... again closing ranks against any kind of protectionist ideas” (Stegemann, 1989, 90). Moreover, there was a backlash against this theory within the Democrat party, led by the traditional party economists who feared that industrial policy might take the US down a “path running counter” to its “historical experience” that evoked a “vision of the ‘slippery slope’ to socialism” (Cohen, 1994, 248). This long-held perception in itself forced the industrial policy debate to go underground. Even the term disappeared from the political scene, being replaced by such distinctions as ‘competitiveness policy’ and ‘science and technology policy’. Such labels were “more euphemistic, more politically neutral, and less pejorative phrases” that implied “less extensive government activism” (Cohen, 1994, 248).

In the end the *only* remaining advocates were the non-economists listed above, with most of the remaining academics associated with policymaking and journalism. According to Krugman, what is called strategic trade theory today was “largely created by journalists, and largely argued in the pages of newspapers and popular magazines” (Krugman, 1995, 247). Bhagwati also charges that the dominant conception of strategic is journalistic, a product of the writings of journalists, or academics arguing their ideas in popular periodicals and outside of the established academic journals. This growing rejection of strategic trade and arguments for industrial policy served, accordingly, to set the scene for the contemporary interventionist turn. The quarters that embraced the industrial policy/strategic trade agenda from then on were on the rightwing of the political spectrum. They

transformed this theory into an ideological instrument for vested interests that were not closely associated with progressivism and liberal thought. I will provide an account of this process below, while also dealing with the ideological rationale used by the Clinton administration for its industrial and trade policies, and how globalisation fits into this rationale.

## 2.2 – Strategic Industries and Corporate Welfare: Globalisation, Clintonomics, and Mercantilist Conceptions of Competitiveness

As we pointed out above, a considerable contribution was made by the journalists and editorial boards of academic and quasi-academic journals. The list included *The New Republic*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *Harvard Business Review* and *Business Week*. The fact that *Business Week* supported this interventionist economic theory is indicative of the true agenda behind strategic trade. This periodical is America's "leading business magazine" and is as "much as a symbol of capitalism as *The Wall Street Journal*," which makes it difficult to understand why it did not take a "strongly pro-market stance" over such a controversial issue as industrial policy (Krugman, 1995, 249). After the rejection of strategic trade by the Democrat party, most of the intellectual input for strategic trade theory came from a number of important policy groups and think-tanks grounded in university economics departments and business schools. These think-tanks and policy groups, like *Business Week*, were also pro-market and funded by the private sector. The most important, the Berkeley Roundtable on International Economics, was a "corporate-funded trade and technology research institute that *advocates unconcealed state industrial policy*" and has longstanding connections with Silicon Valley (Chomsky, 1997, 109; my italics).



The most important strategic traders came from this institute, including Laura Tyson, Steven Cohen and John Zysman. In fact, Tyson (Clinton's first head of the Council of Economic Advisors) was a founder and co-ordinator of the Roundtable. The intellectual platforms and the vested interests that supported these ideas are proof that "strategic trade has nothing to do with traditional liberal concepts of equality and social justice" at all, but really functions as an economic justification for protectionism (Krugman, 1995, 249). The actual agenda of the strategic traders lends support to this claim, given that it was "for the most part, quite tame" (Galbraith, 1997, 126). Reich and Thurow emphasise investing in education, Kuttner has a similar social democratic agenda, while Zysman and Cohen focus on the externalities and technological spillover argument. The point is that whether these ideas are right or wrong, they are not very radical and, for the most part, "would be defensible in an economy with no trade at all" (Galbraith, 1997, 126). As said above, strategic trade theory is fundamentally about industrial policy, with Silicon Valley as its ideal. One could go as far as saying that the "internationalist dimension... adds pizzazz and political appeal more than anything else" (Galbraith, 1997, 126).

According to J. K. Galbraith, Bill Clinton sold "competitiveness policy to certain branches of industry, notably aerospace and electronics", in order to "forge a winning coalition" for his election (Galbraith, 1997, 126). This won Clinton the votes of the Western states and helped him get progressive support for his deficit-cutting policy. Once he was elected, his plans for extensive spending on education, training, and research and development were never finalised because of the higher priority he attached to reducing the budget deficit (see Woodward, 1994, for details). According to Canterbury, the then Chairman of the Federal Reserve – Alan Greenspan – was instrumental in shifting the administration away from its economic and social agenda

towards the “preferences of the bond-market for deficit reduction and free trade” (Canterbery, 1995, 61). Greenspan convinced Clinton and his cabinet that if the deficit was not reduced and inflation kept under control, bondholders would panic and start a new recession. From early on in his electoral bid for the presidency Clinton described himself as a New Democrat who was opposed to the excesses of big government, thereby taking on much of the Republican agenda and distancing himself from the liberal wing of his party. The conflicts between Clinton and the Democratic Congress over NAFTA, health reform and the crime bill actually paved the way for the Republican victory in the congressional elections of 1994. According to Martin Walker, Clinton believed that this victory represented a historical turning point, establishing a “firm new American consensus to cut government spending and balance the budget” (Walker, 1996, 344). Clinton took full advantage of the new Republican Congress finally to destroy the New Deal consensus, something he had not been able to do with a Democrat Congress. Galbraith goes as far as to accuse Clinton of *hijacking* the progressive agenda. He also says that most of the supporters of strategic trade are people “rather crudely pursuing political agendas---among them subsidies for training, industrial infrastructure and research, tax breaks and tax reform, even deficit reduction---*under the guise* of a strategy for ‘competitiveness’ ” (Galbraith, 1997, 126; my italics).

The significance of the fate of the skills/education agenda should not be underestimated given that the issue of skills training and the position of labour was at the very heart of the strategic trade agenda. As far back as 1982, Robert Reich and Ira Magaziner outlined this vision very clearly in their book *Minding America's Business*. They believed that the country’s “real income can rise only if... labor and capital increasingly flow toward businesses that add greater value per employee” (Reich and



Magaziner, quoted in Krugman, 1995, 251). The role of labour is also at the heart of their analysis of globalisation. Thanks to technological advances and globalisation, 'skilled' labour has become the "only dimension of production where advanced industrialized nations can create and retain an advantage" (Reich, 1983, 782). Clinton's policy stances have effectively emptied strategic trade of its theoretical and practical core. The fact that the Clinton administration has adopted a fair trade/internationalist posture, instead of the more radical strategic trade/interventionist policies advocated by leftwing Democrats like Gephardt, supports these claims. All of Clinton's real 'interventionist' efforts have been directed at trade policy, at opening up foreign markets and expanding exports. In fact, Clinton's policies are intended to have the opposite effect on labour and "raise, not lower, the share of capital in national income" (Krugman, 1995, 249). This is because all the subsidies and funding have gone to corporations, not to labour. These subsidies have not even been designed to encourage corporations to spend more money on educating and re-skilling their workers. What liberal commitments Clinton has to re-skilling American labour seem also to stem from the demands and needs of his 'corporate constituency'. According to Ronald Cox, Clinton was instrumental in gaining corporate support for the Democrats, particularly among businessmen who supported an "activist federal role in such areas as health, vocational training, infrastructure, and public investment in new technologies" (Ronald Cox and Skidmore-Hess, 1999, 205).

In economic parlance, what Clinton has been doing is known as 'corporate welfare,' the usage of public funds to compensate corporations for their inability to compete successfully (Ronald Cox uses the term 'corporate liberalism'). America's own fair trade legislation is explicitly *not* only aimed at correcting imbalances resulting from unfair trade practices. Section 337 (Unfair Trade Practices and

Intellectual Property Rights) of the 1988 Omnibus Trade Act actually states that the US “persons who relied on this protection were ‘among the *most advanced* and *competitive* in the world’ ” (Section 337, quoted in Yoffie and Gomes-Casseras, 1994, 448; my italics). Moreover, employment and the wider issue of the welfare of the national economy are often *not* the paramount objective behind such forms of government intervention. The 1986 Semiconductor Trade Agreement defined the ‘nationality’ of a firm on the basis of the “nationality of the producing firm, not the location of production” (Bergsten and Noland, 1993, 130). This meant that industrial assistance given to an ‘American’ firm would go to this firm regardless of whether its main productive facilities were located in America or not, thus “furthering the interests of (internationally mobile) capital rather than (internationally immobile) labor” (Bergsten and Noland, 1993, 130). This agreement gave US semiconductor firms the best of both worlds, the option of moving to low wage areas in the Third World, coupled with government assistance through research and development funding, cartelisation and market opening initiatives. The true objective of this treaty then, and much fair trade legislation, was the satisfaction of “relatively organized and concentrated producer interests more than the relatively less organized and more diffuse interests of labor and consumers” (Bergsten and Noland, 1993, 130). By extension, satisfying the national interest was not the prime objective either.

According to a study by Scott Latham of the CATO institute, US policy towards Japan in particular is driven by US “firms’ enlisting government help to make up for their earlier neglect of Japan’s market” (Latham, 1996, 1). The sectors guilty of this are auto-manufacturing, the semiconductor industry, and film manufacturers such as Kodak. Economist Herbert Stein charges that these interests ‘knowingly’ promote the “necessary fiction” of “Fortress Japan” in order to convince the US government to



'open up' the already open Japanese market (Latham, 1996, 21). Bhagwati has also made this argument repeatedly, citing reports and pronouncements made by European corporations that have had no problem entering into and competing successfully within the Japanese market (see Bhagwati, 1996). Latham uses the same evidence and goes through the many mistakes US firms have made in their operations in Japan. He quotes a former Kodak executive who says that the company's loss of market share in Japan was because it cut funding to its R&D facilities in Japan, and not because of the officially stated explanation, which is Japanese favouritism towards Fuji in an attempt to close the market. The 1995 auto dispute (see Chapter 2) demonstrates to what degree Clinton's trade policy has been dominated by vested interests. This is because it has been a "consensus" view among most economists and many policymakers that, "if all trade barriers between" the US and its trade partners were "removed, the U.S. trade balance would change by no more than 10 to 15 percent" (Barfield, 1997, 8). The main causes of the trade deficit are domestic, a product of the imbalance between savings, investment, and consumption. The 1996 *Economic Report of the President* explicitly stated that the cause of the trade deficit was that "our expenditures exceed our income", thus highlighting "macroeconomic factors, not trade policy" (*Economic Report of the President*, quoted in Barfield, 1997, 8). Moreover, the report castigates arguments for import quotas as a solution, saying that the best way to reduce the trade deficit was by the "reduction or elimination of the Federal budget deficit" (*Economic Report of the President*, quoted in Barfield, 1997, 8)! By the admission of the former Under Secretary for International Trade, Jeffrey Garten, it was the "Big Three auto companies" that "pushed the first Clinton administration to the brink of a trade war with Japan" (Garten, 1997, 68). According to Jeffrey Winters, US post-Cold War foreign policy in general – and in East Asia in particular – is a "nakedly corporate

foreign policy” (Winters, 1998, 223). The lesson is that vested interests outweigh all other interests, whether it is the national economic interest, or matters of national security and geopolitical concerns.

This is not the only contradictory position the US government has been forced into thanks to its reactive strategy of following the lead of business interests. Even before the auto dispute in 1995 there were growing signs that corporate America had largely lost its interest in Japan and was shifting focus to Latin America and the rest of Asia, the “so-called bypassing-Japan strategy” (Latham, 1996, 22). According to Andrew Pollack of *The New York Times*, this change in business strategy was also “forcing the Clinton Administration” – he wrote these words in November 1994 – to “shift” the focus of its trade policy to “other areas of Asia and to Latin America” (Pollack, 1994). This shift has been so powerful that it has helped to “undermine Washington’s will to press for new trade agreements with Japan” (Pollack, 1994). According to David Sanger, officials believed that these regions would “outstrip” Japanese demand for US goods, “*even if every trade barrier*” the US has “complained about in Japan is dismantled” (Pollack, 1994; my italics). According to Garten, in the aftermath of the GATT Uruguay Round and the ratification of NAFTA, both the government and the business sector lost interest in further market opening initiatives. From 1995 onwards the business community became “complacent about its long-term competitive position in the world economy”, was satisfied with these initiatives and was only interested in further “tax cuts and deregulation” (Garten, 1997, 68). The principle of ‘exporting our way to prosperity’ (see Morici, 1995-96) fell on deaf ears in the business world, and the export-led growth model adopted by the Clinton administration (see Chapter 2) ran its course. Even Clinton’s technology policies came up against the ‘adversarial tradition’. Many firms took an “ambivalent” attitude



towards the government intervening in their industries, and the Republican congressional victory of 1994 lead to “deepening hostility” among elected officials to industrial policy initiatives (Ham and Mowery, 1997, 284). The example of NAFTA is instrumental here because corporate welfare was the true objective behind it. The Big Three that were behind the auto-dispute were also behind NAFTA (see Chapter 2), a treaty that aided these firms in their drive to restructure production on a continental basis as part of their effort to make up for the losses experienced in competition with Japan and Europe. Martin Walker charges that the opposition engendered by NAFTA in the ranks of the Democrat party exposed the fact that the pact was not intended to help blue-collar workers, members of the lower-middle class and under-class (see Walker, 1996).

This reiterates the points made by Galbraith and Krugman above, namely, that the competitiveness doctrine – whether under the mantle of strategic or fair trade – never really had anything to do with promoting growth, employment, or equality. The whole internationalist doctrine Clinton adheres to was in reality aimed at bailing out unsuccessful firms through market opening initiatives. But if this is so, then why is Clinton a fair trader and not a strategic trader, given that strategic trade theory is aimed at serving the interests of corporate America? We have said that the transformation the word strategic underwent was the result of the activities of vested interests, which would presume that vested interests would support the Clinton administration’s call for industrial policy. Part of the answer to the question lies in the ideological resistance to industrial policy mentioned above, in addition to the obvious danger posed by proper strategic trade policies to the international economy. A more important reason, though, is the exact nature of the interests behind the so-called strategic trade agenda. Just as Clinton hijacked the progressivist strategic trade

agenda, the Clinton administration itself and its strategic traders were hijacked by *transnational* capital. We can see a clear example of this in the controversy that ensued over Clinton's spending plans (see above). According to Canterbury, the pressure Greenspan placed on the new administration made Clinton a 'hostage' of the bond market. But Canterbury also emphasises how the administration was quite willingly taken hostage, given that Clinton's cabinet was filled with deficit hardliners who were happy to embrace " 'the bond market' as the American icon" (Canterbery, 1995, 63). They were less troubled by the fact that a "small and rich minority of the population in the bond market... would set the President's own agenda" (Canterbery, 1995, 63). William Pfaff calls this stance towards the bond market "corporate socialism: public support for investors, justified by the fact that if things go badly wrong for them they will go worse for everyone else" (Pfaff, 1999, 7). In the realm of trade policy, NAFTA, again, is an excellent example. Members of the Clinton administration justified their backing of NAFTA, which was a Republican initiative, through references to globalisation. Clinton's advisors believed that his electoral commitment to further promoting globalisation meant that he had to "demonstrate his readiness to take on an interest group in his own party" – labour – to do this (Woodward, 1994, 318; see also Rupert, 1995). As Clinton himself explained to his cabinet, "I have to be a president *beyond the borders*" of the US, and not a president with purely domestic concerns on his mind (Clinton, quoted in Woodward, 1994, 318; my italics). In a speech given in 1993 Clinton went as far as acknowledging the fact that "freer trade had increased unemployment and lowered wages", while also making the argument that when it came to his position on globalisation " 'far more is at stake' " than American prosperity and job security (Clinton, quoted in Aaronson, 1994, 48). He believed that the mixed blessing of globalisation was well worth the negative



consequences because this “new fabric of commerce will also shape global prosperity or the lack of it, and with it the prospects of people around the world for democracy, freedom and peace” (Clinton, quoted in Aaronson, 1994, 48).

The ‘competitiveness doctrine’ that Clinton adopted originated outside of the confines of US policymaking and academia. The whole rhetoric and cult of competitiveness began in the 1970s, as a reaction to the collapse of the post-war boom and the growth of Japanese and East Asian competition. By 1980, with the issuing of the World Economic Forum’s “World Competitiveness Report”, the practice of ranking countries according to “competitiveness became the ‘major criterion’ ” – the accepted norm – by which “national performance was judged” (Krugman, 1996, 17). Here the very “economic success of a country” was assumed to “depend on its international competitiveness” (Krugman, 1996, 17). The World Economic Forum as an idea and an entity was inaugurated by the Trilateral Commission, and the transnational business interests that established it (see Holland, 1991). Much of the ‘Europe 1992’ project was a product of this same logic, pushed by such transnational interests (see Cowles, 1995). Former European Commission president Jacques Delors gave a speech in June 1993 where he said that the cause of unemployment in Europe was a “lack of competitiveness” with the US, Japan and the newly industrialised countries (NICs), and that the “solution was a program of investments in infrastructure and high technology” (Krugman, 1994, 29). The point is that this “language” was “comfortable for him and a wide audience on both sides of the Atlantic” (Krugman, 1994, 30). By extension, geo-economics itself is an intellectual representation of the interests of transnational capital. As early as 1988 French president – in his ‘Letter to the French’ – Francois Mitterrand went even further than appealing to strategic trade and made one of the most explicit cases for geo-

economics. He said:

Let us consider the world economy; it appears as nothing but a battlefield where businesses wage a pitiless war. No prisoners are taken. Whoever falls, dies. As in military strategy, the victor always follows simple rules: have the best preparation, the fastest moves, take the offensive on adverse territory, have good allies and the will to win.

(Mitterrand, quoted in Mattelart, 1994, 207).

The views expressed by Delors and Mitterrand belong to a body of “neomercantilism” economic thought that calls for the “competitive modernization of the economy” (Hager, 1987, 62-63). This doctrine also developed in the wake of the breakdown of the Keynesian consensus, but, more importantly, it endorsed the results of this collapse. This doctrine has “de facto excluded” any return to demand management, and it contains an “overall bias in favor of *lower* wages... and of accepting the *unemployment* consequences of productivity-enhancing investment in the context of *low* growth” (Hager, 1987, 62; my italics). It places the emphasis on the supply-side and aids capital at the expense of labour. The description of this new paradigm as neo-mercantilist is also highly indicative of its true motives. Mercantilism is a *trade* doctrine, and *not* a call for ‘industrial policy’ driven by concerns over living standards. Even the most economically interventionist member of Clinton’s cabinet, Laura Tyson (see Michael Cox, 1995), wants America’s unilateral trade policies to be “*complemented*” with a “ ‘*cautious* industrial policy’ ” (Tyson, quoted in Howes, 1995, 6-7; my italics). The social objectives of this cautious industrial policy are also in line with the shift toward supply-side initiatives. Lester Thurow, a ‘left-of-centre’ economist, shocked and angered many liberals in America with the publication of his book *The Future of Capitalism* in 1996. In this book he adopted the “right-wing argument that the welfare state has caused government spending to spiral out of



control and that a major culprit in the United States is Social Security” (Du Boff, 1996, 1-2). Thurow also advocates the ‘American model’ of management that believes in “industrial flexibility” in the “employment practices” of firms, using worker layoffs in order to grow and compete better (Thurow, 1997, 8). Strategic trade theory, then, is seen essentially as an important additional measure aimed at facilitating a doctrine that essentially belongs to the ‘fair trade’ quadrant of US economic policy.

Fair trade policies are aimed at opening up foreign markets, not at closing the domestic market. Fair trade is about *export* protectionism, helping US firms in their international markets. Clinton’s fair trade doctrine is mercantilist in all of its core assumptions and ties these assumptions to the process of globalisation. Clintonomics is thus based on a ‘new economic paradigm’ that has drawn an analogy between how the US competes in the global economy and how an individual corporation competes in the marketplace. In the words of Bill Clinton himself, the “American economy today is like a big corporation competing in the global marketplace” (Clinton, quoted in Krugman, 1995, 251). This analogy is intended to encapsulate the vision of global trade relations as a zero-sum game. The more exports a country produces, the more export-related jobs are created, the more employment as a whole is produced. Any country that does not “match other nations in productivity or technology will face the same kind of crisis as a company that cannot match the costs or products of its rivals” (Krugman, 1996, 17). This conception of the economy, and this conception of international trade, is the hallmark of mercantilism. A central theme in mercantilist thought long has been the idea that the volume of world trade was fixed and that the “wealth of every nation consist[s] chiefly in the share which they have of foreign trade with the whole commercial world” (William Petty, quoted in Irwin, 1996, 207-

208). It was on this basis that mercantilists concluded that, in modern day terminology, wealth is determined by 'market share'. The cardinal policy of mercantilism was improving the terms of trade in such a way that the country always traded at a surplus – exports exceeded imports. This logic is echoed again today in the intellectual output of the strategic traders. The 'a country is a company' logic dictates that the "bottom line of a national economy is simply its trade balance, that competitiveness can be measured by the ability of a country to sell more than it buys" – which is no more and no less than the position adopted by the Clinton administration (Krugman, 1994, 31). Paul Krugman classes all of the economic ideas put forward by the 'strategic traders' as mercantilist in origin, whether it is the comparison between countries and companies, the concept of "competitive advantage", or the emphasis on "high-value" sectors (Krugman, 1996, 18).

Clintonomics, thus, adopts the basic logic of mercantilism, economically strategic industries or no economically strategic industries, externalities and technological spillovers or no externalities and technological spillovers. Mercantilists "may try to put an intellectual gloss on their views by citing the works" of strategic traders, but they only use their ideas as a "source of support" (Krugman, 1996, 18). This is why strategic trade was transformed from an argument about oligopolistic markets to an argument for industrial policy, in order to accommodate it to the needs of transnational capital, and its need for subsidies and market-opening initiatives. Although Krugman belittles the theoretical content of strategic trade theory and mercantilism, it is important not to underestimate the economic benefits that such a combination of industrial policy and trade policy can have for the industries in question. In our account of the composition of the strategic traders above we said that a 'critically important new' source of support was the business sector. The



membership of the business sector has puzzled many observers because it goes against standard economic doctrine for such sectors to support government intervention and a mercantilist trade posture. Transnational capital is supposed to support unfettered free trade grounded in stable multilateral institutions like GATT. The fact that the main business supporters of fair trade are high-tech industries, not maturing, labour-intensive industries, has confounded this problem for observers. The traditional dichotomous position of either being for free trade or for protection in American politics was itself a product of the fact that manufacturers only supported one of these two positions. The development of internationally oriented business that supports protectionism, then, is a major event.

The mercantilist turn among such industries is the product of more than US decline and growing competition from Japan and Western Europe. It is also, ironically, a product of globalisation. The growing dependence of certain industries on foreign markets has precipitated growing demands for government intervention. The development of new technologies requiring large economies of scale, steep learning curves and sizeable R&D requirements made these industries highly vulnerable to foreign governments that might try to use subsidies or protectionism to give their firms first-mover-advantages. This growing 'interdependence' transformed these firms from 'unconditional' advocates of free trade, to supporters of a " 'strategic' trade policy of demanding trade barriers for the home market if foreign markets are protected" (Milner and Yoffie, 1989, 240). Wolfgang Hager also believes that this mercantilism of transnational capital was a by-product of the third industrial revolution. In other words, the very technologies that are driving interdependence and the 'webbing' of the global economy are producing the opposite effect. Milner and Yoffie call this a 'strategic' trade policy, but in reality it is a call for "free trade at

home” to be “contingent on *reciprocal access* to foreign markets” – in sum, *fair trade* (Milner and Yoffie, 1989, 241; my italics). Even Borrus *et al* use strategic trade, and arguments about first-mover-advantages and technological trajectory, to justify trade policies based on “reciprocal access to regional markets, investment opportunities, and supply-base technologies” (Borrus *et al*, 1992, 29). Subsidies and funding for R&D – industrial policy – does have a role to play, though, in complimenting this trade policy.

Strategic trade, as politically understood, does serve a function of considerable importance, giving ideology an important role to play in the economic and political plans of these industrial sectors. This whole neo-mercantilist paradigm has significant ideological content, positing a completely new “economic goal structure” characterised by the “pursuit of a new and quasi-existential goal, technological excellence, with competitiveness acting as both a means and an ultimate goal” (Hager, 1987, 62-63). The strategic traders, then, must be seen as *organic intellectuals* trying to use trade policy as a substitute for demand management (neo-mercantilism instead of Keynesianism) to placate the masses and satisfy businessmen. Strategic trade is part of a larger hegemonic project led by these globalising industries, in tandem with certain groups of intellectuals (such as the strategic traders) and politicians (such as Bill Clinton) involved in the formulation of geo-economics as the defining characteristic of global affairs in the coming era. More importantly, geo-economics also represents an attempt to reformulate the role of the state in the context of globalisation, given that the state mediates between domestic and global social forces. According to Armand Mattelart, the statements made by Mitterrand were the product of the progressing “transition... from the *hegemony* of the state” to the “*supremacy* of the corporate status” (Mattelart, 1994, 208; my italics). As is widely accepted, the



state has undergone a “paradigmatic crisis” that involves the “demotion of the state to a mere pragmatic association for common ends” (Cerny, 1997, 255). The contemporary world is one where the state has undergone a significant “shift in perspective”, becoming a “tributary” to the global economy (Robert Cox, 1993, 143-144). The concerns of the entrepreneur have moved centre-stage. The end result of this process, at the level of the state, is what could be loosely called the ‘competition state’ (see Cerny, 1997). Here the state no longer functions as a buffer between the international and domestic economies, but rather as a “vehicle for transmitting” global forces to the domestic economy (Hoogvelt, 1996, 134; see also Rupert, 1997). With the passing of the welfare state and the growing acknowledgement of the power of globalisation, a major redistribution in the hierarchies, priorities and roles of economic and political actors has resulted, changing the “whole way of producing consensus, of cementing the general will” in industrialised societies (Mattelart, 1994, 208). At the ideological level this reformulation of the role of the state has led to the dominance of the ‘managerial logic’ of the global corporation as the “norm for managing social relations” (Mattelart, 1994, 208). Put another way, the corporate task of adjusting to “global competitiveness” has become the “new categorical imperative” of the state (Hoogvelt, 1996, 138). In this ideological schema the “individual consumer” is seen as ‘the sovereign,’ not the state, and the “proper subject of universal justice” (Hoogvelt and Waylen, 1997). It is the role of the state to facilitate this reality and insure that the “business of society is business” (Sklair, 1997, 523).

In neo-Gramscian terminology, the instrumentalities of creating and sustaining consent for a particular social order needed to be updated significantly in order to keep track of the changing economic reality. The very modes of thought of the populace, their common sense, had to be adapted to the demands and interests of the

new corporate elite. The mindset of the corporate executive was applied to all aspects of economic life, leading to a whole body of management literature that tried to solve the new economic problems of the industrialised world from a management perspective. All of the mainstays of geo-economics, the new mercantilism and strategic trade theory can be found within this body of literature, and a considerable amount of the ideas of these three approaches originate in this intellectual wave. The most explicit case of this is the analogy between corporation and country. The concept of 'competitive advantage' was developed by business academics, while the analogy between country and company was based on the application of concepts from business management to the economy (see Krugman, 1995). The importance of 'economies of scale' is another example, given that it was one of the most important "slogans of the decade" used by corporations in their efforts to expand globally in the 1980s (Mattelart, 1994, 210). As three prominent members of the corporate-funded Council on Competitiveness – Daniel F. Burton, Jr., Erich Block, Mark S. Mahaney – explained, the "enormous capital costs associated with many high-technology products require economies of scale in production that can only be satisfied through access to, and sales in, the largest world markets" (Burton, Bloch and Mahaney, 1994, 36). These three authors also advocate a policy of "reciprocity" in order to prevent foreign competitors from earning "monopoly profits in protected home markets", which could turn the benign logic of economies of scale in to a tool of economic warfare (Burton, Bloch, and Mahaney, 1994, 36). The global business advocates of the 'a country is a company' argument also take up a nationalist perspective on the 'who is us?' debate begun by Robert Reich in the 1980s. Ironically, despite their global commitments, they reject the claim that what is good for General Motors is no longer good for America (see Chapter 1). For example, the three members of the



Council on Competitiveness quoted above claim that “nationality matters” and that US multinationals still are “effective vehicles for improving national economic well-being” (Burton, Bloch and Mahaney, 1994, 34). Again, voicing such views and lobbying for policies on this basis by the business sector represents an attempt to find an ideological compromise between the growing appeal of protectionism, and the interests of these globalising business elites.

In fact, the corporate origins of geo-economics are so pervasive that even a military strategist like Luttwak has been influenced by this management mentality and the literature it produced. Luttwak’s geo-economic understanding of mercantilism can be found in the corpus of this literature. The doctrine of ‘competitive modernisation’ of the economy also believes that the new mercantilism, in contrast to the old, posits that “not only the means but also the ends” of policy and global competition are “economic” (Hager, 1987, 63). In conclusion to this section, then, we can say the strategic traders are the organic intellectuals of an emerging global class that is trying to use what is left of state authority to cement its position internationally (through trade and industrial policies) and domestically (through an ideological offensive). This particular aspect of our analysis of geo-economics has to be dealt with below in relation to the two other main groups that support geo-economics, the ‘conservative realists’ and the ‘revisionists’. With this task completed, we can move to the conclusion of this chapter, and from there move to the final chapter of this thesis.

## Section 3 – Revisionism and the Wider Significance of Geo-Economics:

### US Decline, Japan and the Place of Liberal Political Economy in the New Era

#### 3.1 – Geo-Economics and Japan: The Revisionist

##### Assault on Mainstream Liberal Political Economy

As we saw in Chapter 2, Japan has had a tremendous effect on American trade policies and economic thinking in both the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. The Pacific Rim as a whole holds a particular place in American foreign policy, if only because of its historical importance to the US. The real birthplace of globalism was China (see Chapter 1). It was under globalist pretences that the US forced Japan to open its harbours to international trade, thus releasing Japan from its own self-styled isolationism and setting in motion the policies that created the economic colossus that it is now. The importance of the historical dimension to contemporary policy is not of my own theorisation, but was made explicitly by President Bush's Secretary of State, James Baker. He described America's "historical and continuing interests" in East Asia as being the very same ones pursued since "1784" when the "open door approach" was first put in place (Baker, quoted in Michael Cox, 1995, 84). This historical dimension, in addition to Japan's economic peculiarities, has moved the various dialogues over industrial policy and competitiveness out of a more purely economic context to embrace matters of culture, ideology, and identity. It has shifted these smaller debates towards a "far-reaching debate about Japan as a *particular type of society*", requiring a "*radically new* US approach... to *defend the West* against



Japan's drive for *economic supremacy*" (Michael Cox, 1995, 88; my italics). Also important in this regard is a 'valuation' of globalism, a historical meditation over the 'costs' of globalism; of whether it was an approach and paradigm worth adopting in the long-run. Globalism was first adopted in relation to East Asia, and the future viability of globalism must also be determined there (that is, tested with reference to the historical consequences).

At the centre of the "agonized debate" over competitiveness America went through in the 1980s was a group of commentators that were dubbed the "revisionists" by Bob Neff of *Business Week* (Lindsey and Lukas, 1998, 1-2). At the centre of this group was a smaller collection of thinkers that formed the nucleus of the group, commonly known as the 'Gang of Four' (see Ó Tuathail, 1993). These four intellectuals determined the basic contours and contents of the revisionist school. They were historian and "political scientist Chalmers Johnson... former Reagan administration trade negotiator Clyde Prestowitz... former *U.S. News & World Report* editor James Fallows... and Dutch journalist Karel van Wolferen" (Lindsey and Lukas, 1998, 2). I will focus here mostly on the writings of Chalmers Johnson for a number of important reasons. The first is that he has been described as the "godfather of revisionism"; he is this group's unofficial leader and his views represent the lowest common denominator among them (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 101). The revisionist school is mired in controversy, with internal disagreements signalling to many "historical overtones of Marxist infighting" (Fallows, Johnson, Prestowitz, and Wolferen, 1990, 54). Karel van Wolferen has certain extreme cultural interpretations and anthropological views of Japan not shared by many in the ranks of revisionism. James Fallows adheres to a very different set of recommendations for US decline on the cultural front, and thus holds quite an exceptional position among revisionists. As

for Clyde Prestowitz, he has actually recanted on many of his revisionist beliefs about Japan and East Asia, in response to the East Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the financial difficulties Japan has encountered in the 1990s. While still a loud advocate of geo-economics, he has pioneered a new approach towards Japan and lampooned the Asian economic 'miracle' in his book with Selig Harrison, *Asia after the "Miracle": Redefining U.S. Economic and Security Priorities*, published in 1998. He has even broken ranks with the strategic traders, claiming that the obsession with "building massive production capacity in 'strategic' industries such as steels, autos, semiconductors and shipbuilding" was partly responsible for the East Asian crash (Prestowitz, 1999, 2). He describes the obsession with these "sensitive" industries as a product of the East Asian "crony mercantilism" rooted in the "Napoleonic complex;" the belief that "building massive production capacity in 'strategic' industries... is a prerequisite for becoming a power broker in the global economy" (Prestowitz, 1999, 1-2). Geo-economics, for Prestowitz, consists of removing the "unfair trade that ensues from the vestiges of crony mercantilism", given the distortions they have created in the international economy, and the job loss and de-industrialisation they have inflicted on the US economy (Prestowitz, 1999, 1). Chalmers Johnson, however, has not changed his views on the viability of the East Asian economic model after the 1997 financial crisis. On the contrary, he actually sees the crisis as a confirmation of his views, which is another reason why I focus mostly on him. The consistency of his views makes the analysis of revisionism easier and gives a more accurate picture of what revisionism is about.

One of the most important points of commonality among these thinkers is that none of them are qualified economists. The list includes "academics, former government officials, journalists, and corporate strategists," but few professional



economists (Campbell, 1994, 153). Chalmers Johnson did his undergraduate degree in economics, but he did not pursue economics, becoming a political scientist instead. Clyde Prestowitz also has considerable experience with economics, but he too is not a professional economist. Most revisionists, including Pat Choate, Marie Anchorodoguy, Steven Schlosstein (a businessmen), and Michael Crichton (a novelist and filmmaker), fall into this same category. A notable exception is Rudiger Dornbusch, who is a well-known economist. Nevertheless, the point is that membership is diverse and proficiency in economics is not a condition of membership. If anything, it could be said that *not* being specialised in economics is a condition. This school of thought actually rationalises the views of non-economists towards the economics discipline and the status of economists in policymaking. For Chalmers Johnson the economic friction between Japan and the US is “theoretical and intellectual” in origin, a product of the inability of Americans in power to analyse and understand Japan, and make policies on this basis (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 99). More specifically, the problem lies with “economists” and their “overly elevated position... as ideologists and justifiers” of US Cold War policy; the “high priests of the American style capitalism” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 98-99). The laissez-faire paradigm to which they are so attached is not viewed as adequate for the task at hand because the Japanese problem is not economic at all, but political. Japan’s economic peculiarities are a deliberate product of Japan’s political economy. The trade friction between Japan and the US is a reflection of the fact that the two countries have significantly different political systems. This is why the US cannot formulate appropriate policies to deal with Japan. The people – economists – entrusted with the job look at the world through “ideological blinders” and so “consistently misinterpret data” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 96-97). The revisionists believe very strongly in

Gertrude Himmelfrab's conclusion that "ideas have consequences" (Himmelfrab, quoted in Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 18). There is a very strong, and "intimate, pervasive relationship between what happens in our... intellectual and artistic communities, and what happens in society and the polity" (Himmelfrab, quoted in Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 18).

Historically, the application of laissez-faire principles to Japan came in the form of "modernization theory", the belief that Japan would shift from a producer-oriented to a "consumer-oriented society like the USA" (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 190). This theory is itself part of a larger development model which assumes that "all states progress through particular stages of economic development and eventually become similar to the advanced industrial states" of the West (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 190). The label 'revisionist' reflects the fact that this group insists on 'revising' and challenging the "conventional wisdom... among American policymakers" about Japan (Peter Ennis, 1990, quoted in Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 69-70). They reject the assumption that Japan is "fundamentally similar to... other Western capitalist democracies" and believe that Japan's "economy and society are not organized around classical notions of free markets" (Ennis, quoted in Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 69-70). They reject this theory and view of development completely and paint a very different picture of Japan, its course of development, and its future. They argue that Americans fail to realise that the whole economic goal structure of the Japanese is completely different. It is an "operational reality" that Japan is " 'more likely to sacrifice the consumer's welfare in order to strengthen its business,' (Fallows, *et al*, 1990, 54)" (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 191). The interests of the group are always elevated over the interests of the individual, the interests of the producer always over the consumer, so much so in fact that the Japanese have suffered considerably because they must pay "exorbitant prices



for everything they buy, so foreign buyers can pay less for Japanese products. As Prestowitz puts it: 'While Japan is rich, the Japanese are not' " (Prestowitz, quoted in Brock, 1989, 34).

From this revisionists conclude that Japan's "conquest of foreign markets" is not part of a "straightforward desire to make money" (Brock, 1989, 34). Instead, the Japanese are driven by the "desire to be self-sufficient and independent as a people" (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 95). For the Japanese, "economics is the continuation of nationalism, maybe of war, by other means" (Jones, 1994, 97). Again, the 'key variable' to analysing the Japanese system is the role of the 'state'. The country has a long history of a strong state, and its people have a long history of passivity towards political and economic elites. Because of this, Japan cannot be subsumed under the theories of "economic determinists" and their attempt to categorise Japan as a "bourgeois society" or the idea that all states are captured by the interests they are supposed to regulate" (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 8). Japan is neither a "capitalist regulatory state" nor the opposite "socialist developmental state" (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 8). Instead, it occupies a position in between, it is a "capitalist developmental state" (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 8). Japan has taken on itself the role of developing and transforming (like a socialist state) its economy and society from agricultural to industrial, but in such a way that the state has remained in command (unlike capitalist states). The role of the state itself is a by-product of Japanese 'culture,' another variable not accounted for by liberal political thought. Such liberal political theories as 'behaviourism' and 'rational choice' have deliberately removed culture as a variable of analysis by placing the emphasis on the 'universal' and 'cross-cultural' concept of individual rationality. By doing this American political scientists refuse to "acknowledge that rather than going beyond culture, they are actually

overgeneralizing their own culture, that of the Anglo-American West” (Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 15). They have substituted the variable of culture with a “*reductio ad absurdum*” by assuming that what applies in the West also applies in the East, and everywhere, a false universalisation of the values and social realities of one culture (Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 15). Such a mentality led to a “hostility to history” and an “arrogant disregard for Japanese scholarship about Japan that borders on academic malpractice” as “facts are bent and history ignored to retain the integrity of the model” (Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 16-17). Most economics and political science about Japan in America, therefore, is actually “ideology masquerading as theory” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 100).

It is mainly because of the opinion revisionists have of the economics and political science professions that they have come to accept the label revisionist, even though they did not invent it. This is because, as they see it, the “antonym” of revisionism “would appear to be ‘ignorance’ ” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 94). They do have a strong aversion, though, to the term “Japan-basher,” which is the traditional term used by “Western apologists... and the Japanese themselves” (Brock, 1989, 31). This label is often used as a “euphemism for racism” and is “indiscriminate”, not designating any specific school of thought, with a well thought-out analysis, set of principles, and policy programme (Brock, 1989, 31). They designate their position as “Beyond Japan-bashing,” the title of an important article by the gang of four in the 1990 edition of *U.S. News & World Report* (Fallows, Chalmers Johnson, Prestowitz, and Wolferen, 1990, 54). They also claim that “*Japan is neither ‘fair’ nor unfair,’ just different*”, which means that analysis that acknowledges this difference should not be seen as racist (Fallows, Chalmers Johnson, Prestowitz, and Wolferen, 1990, 54; italics in original). Although their ideas are not indiscriminate or arbitrary, there is actually



good reason to use the label 'Japan-basher,' as we shall see below, since their ideas are very similar to those used in the press and public discourse. Moreover, their views fit into a historic pattern, proving that much of the intellectual core of revisionism is rooted in a long history of Japan-bashing in America, which is also surprisingly consistent and non-arbitrary. There is some acknowledgement of this by revisionists themselves, as evidenced by the remarks of Chalmers Johnson and Keehn. They have complained about how those specialised in "area studies" were never "given the status and respect accorded to theorists within the American academy" (Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 19). Area studies, in the post-war period, was developed by the US in order to collect "accurate information about parts of the world that were thought to be exotic from an Anglo-American perspective... previously explored only by anthropologists" (Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 19). The views of area studies experts on Japan are surprisingly similar to those of Japan-bashers and the ideas of both have historical roots. But I will use the term revisionist instead of Japan-basher as much as possible because it demonstrates how the revisionists think of themselves, and how they have presented themselves to the public and the policymakers.

For revisionists, the standard problems of the American mindset have now been blown out of all proportion thanks to the end of the Cold War. The opposing approaches have been swept away in the elation over the "perception" that the US won, with the "president prattling about America as a 'unipolar superpower' " (Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 20). A serious analysis of the Japanese threat, on its own terms, would constitute a "mortal threat to American explanations of their own Cold War victory" (Chalmers Johnson and Keehn, 1994, 21). James Fallows has described the situation the US has found itself in the title of his book, *Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System*. Fallows explains

that it is “difficult to look directly at the sun, so we turn away, view it obliquely, look at the shadows it casts” (Jones, 1994, 19). Americans, dazzled by Japan’s stunning success, have refused to face the facts (about how different Japan is), and instead “reassure” themselves about unseen events in the future, that “Japanese economics must be riding for a fall” (Jones, 1994, 96). The reality, in their opinion, is completely different. The Japanese economy is guided by a state strategy that takes on much of the structure and logic of military strategy, applied to both the state and societal levels. At the level of the state, “indirection, disinformation, and deception” are the norms of Japanese trade policy (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 97). At the societal level, the norms of military life have been enshrined in “Japanese economic life---long hours, service to the group, wearing uniforms, equitable pay, and long-term goals” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 97). Daniel Burstein, author of *Yen! Japan’s Financial Empire and its Threat to America*, talks about the ‘warrior culture’ in Japanese companies and claims that the “drive to empire... is alive and well in Japan and so are the racist and expansionist attitudes” needed to support this drive (Burstein, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 193). The end result is what Clyde Prestowitz calls the “Japanese juggernaut... a kind of automatic wealth machine” (Prestowitz, quoted in Lindsey and Lukas, 1998, 2). Revisionists are of the opinion that the US “must either begin to compete with Japan or go the way of the USSR”, to quote Chalmers Johnson himself (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 95).

This is no exaggeration or overstatement of their views. The revisionists are particularly afraid of the possibility that America will be shorn of its high-tech sectors and transformed into a ‘giant Denmark’ – that is, something akin to a country that is mainly an exporter of resources and raw material – in other words, a Third World country (see Huntington, 1993). Prestowitz warns that the mismatch between the



American and Japanese systems was transforming the US into a “colony-in-the-making” (Prestowitz, quoted in Lindsey and Lukas, 1998, 4). Revisionists expand on this threat to the US see in Japan is a “threat to the stability of the world trading system because of its ‘continued displacement of industrial sectors and the shift of technological capability towards Japan’ ” (Fallows *et al*, 1990, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 191). With state direction, co-ordination with business, and a regimented, passive populace, the Japanese have been able to “drive foreign competitors out of sector after sector, leading eventually” – if left unchecked – to “world economic domination” (Lindsey and Lukas, 1998, 2). The Western world is faced with the possibility of the “emergence of Japan as a major superpower” – possibly even Japan as the new global hegemon (Prestowitz, quoted in Huntington, 1988-89, 92). As David Brock puts it, the “Japan-bashers resemble nothing so much as the America-is-in-decline school” and its “apocalyptic” belief that “not only is ‘American hegemony’ ” over, “but that the process is somehow irreversible” (Brock, 1989, 36). According to Prestowitz, the stock market crash on October 19<sup>th</sup> 1987 – Black Monday – “signalled ‘the end of the American century’ ” (Prestowitz, quoted in Brock, 1989, 36). Other revisionists describe it as “one of those rare days in American history when the shift in power from one empire to another can be marked, precisely and indelibly” (Franz and Collins, 1989, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 192).

Chalmers Johnson is actually very critical of much declinist thinking, specifically the “line of reasoning” pioneered by the “intellectual godfather” of declinism, Paul Kennedy and his “unexpected best-seller” *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 88). Kennedy, for Chalmers Johnson, represents a defeatist strand of declinism that says America should move over and make way for the growing Japanese hegemon. But, like “Kennedy, geo-economic

discourses explicitly place this decline in the context of the rising power of Japan” (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 191). Much of the corpus of Kennedy’s theorising has been incorporated by revisionists. Prestowitz specifically ties “economic decline to military issues, lifting the ‘imperial overstretch’ chapter from the declinist book” (Brock, 1989, 37). He scolds American administrations for constantly “bargaining away economic goals in exchange for military ones” (Prestowitz, quoted in Brock, 1989, 37). Instead, the US should take up the Japanese view that “trade is national security” (Prestowitz, quoted in Brock, 1989, 37).

Although these arguments were most widely advanced in the 1980s, this demand is more pertinent today than ever before because of the end of the Cold War. In keeping with much political analysis, and the geo-economic perspective, revisionists believe that “economic power has come to prevail over military power and that pragmatic institutional innovation has come to prevail over ideological pretensions” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 94). In this new environment, there is an even greater need to “undertake a massive analysis of the Japanese political economy”, simply because today trade has come to be seen as a matter of national security (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 95). Such an analysis is also of paramount importance now because the apparent success of the US has blinded it even more to the shaky foundations of its success, multiplying the dangers ahead of the US in the future. It is the overwhelming reality of decline, coupled with the equally powerful reality (in their minds) of Japan’s economic and cultural uniqueness that forms the essential backdrop to all their policy recommendations.

Chalmers Johnson has continued his declinist analysis of the US (see Kaplan, 2000), and expanded on it in his latest book *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. Here he expresses the belief that “our very hubris ensures our



undoing”, describing the East Asian financial crisis as the result of an American “meglomaniacal attempt to make the rest of the world adopt American economic institutions and norms” (Chalmers Johnson, quoted in Prasso, 2000, 19). In addition to the economic threat posed by the American liberal mindset, he also believes that the world nations and peoples will eventually rebel against America’s unipolar dominance, a threat Americans do not see because of their liberal mindset. Interestingly, Chalmers Johnson has actually become more pessimistic about decline with the end of the Cold War. His advice is for the US to take up the “quintessentially European inclination to accommodate and adapt to decline, to surrender control over one’s destiny” and adopt an isolationist posture (Kaplan, 2000, 25; see also Prasso, 2000). Although there is considerably less consistency in the recommendations of the other revisionists, such as Clyde Prestowitz and James Fallows, much of the initial analysis of the Japanese threat is essentially the same. As a consequence, the recommendations put forward, and particularly in the case of Chalmers Johnson, are also for the most part the same. With this in mind we can move to the issue of the overall agenda revisionists produce in response to the reality of US decline and the Japanese threat.

### 3.2 – The Agenda of Revisionism:

#### Remaking America in *Japan’s* Image

For revisionists, the basic starting point of their policy recommendations is their observation that “Japan... is the *mirror image*” of the US (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 192; my italics). Or, as Burstein elaborates, Japan is “strong precisely where we are weak; its economy reverberates with the equal and opposite reactions to our American

actions” (Burstein, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 192). Sebastian Mallaby, in his account of the revisionist debate, entitled his article “In Asia’s Mirror: From Commodore Perry to the IMF” (*The National Interest*, Summer 1998, pp. 13-21). We have also demonstrated the popularity of this conceptual exercise in the previous chapter with relation to Samuel Huntington, who has drawn from the works of revisionists in the effort of finding a new unifying enemy for the US. Revisionists use Japan to highlight the deficiencies in the American system and advise that America becomes “just like Japan” in order to remedy these problems (Brock, 1989, 35). The Japanese system works, the American system does not, therefore America should ‘imitate’ Japan. This is a radical break from almost all of America’s foreign policy traditions since most of American foreign policy, at the official and popular levels, is based on the assumption that America is, and should be, the ideal for the rest of the world. The whole globalist project was adopted because it was believed that the world could, and should be, remade in America’s image; and we have dealt with how much of America’s diplomatic tradition is actually an externalisation of the domestic politics and ideology of federalism. In the past Americans assumed that the Japanese work ethic simply allowed them to “compete in the economic game better than the West” – but that the rules of the game were still Western, and remained unchallenged (Brock, 1989, 32). This latest call is completely different given that the revisionist analysis of the Japan problem, apparently, *delegitimises* the cultural foundations of America’s economic success. The revisionists actually “reject” the traditional cultural explanations and believe instead that Japan is “playing an entirely different game, one that does not go by the name of free-market capitalism” (Brock, 1989, 32).

The revisionists also break with America’s free trade tradition, the hallmark of US globalism and its internationalist ideology. Japan is believed to have exercised



“adversarial trade” where it “uses trade barriers combined” with an industrial policy “to obtain advantages over” trading partners (Brock, 1989, 33). The assault of the revisionists on mainstream political economy becomes, on the policy level, an assault on free trade. Central to this is the call for managed trade and a national industrial policy. Although they do support calls for ‘fair’ trade and a ‘level playing field,’ they believe that this in itself is not enough. Their argument is that the problem with such policies is that they flow from an “inherently flawed framework” (Brock, 1989, 35). This framework mistakenly assumes that there is a difference between Japanese business interests and the economic strategies of the Japanese state, as is the case in America. Pat Choate cites an example of a discussion between Paul Krugman and some Japanese economists to prove this. According to Krugman, he has had the “experience of finding Japanese economists *from the private sector* refuse to acknowledge” Japanese protectionism, “even in informal conversations. When pressed hard, they explained that they did not feel it was their place to criticize their government to a foreigner” (Krugman, quoted in Choate, 1990, xvii; italics in original). Despite the extensive opening of Japanese markets and the removal of ‘formal’ barriers, market penetration for US goods has hardly increased. This is because the standard response of Japanese officials, in tandem with their corporations, is seen to be to bypass these agreements by inventing new non-tariff barriers and strengthening the closed system of their corporations. At the level of business and the economy, “what Americans would regard as collusion is the basis of Japan’s industrial structure” (Brock, 1989, 33). Japanese corporations think and act as one, and function this way because of their organic relationship with the state. This government/business response is culturally rooted, a product of the “Japanese understanding of the term ‘openness,’ which they take to mean permission from a

government agency to do something” (Brock, 1989, 33). Openness and the demand for openness is not found inside Japan at either the corporate or state level; it has to be imposed from above and from without, and through inventing a whole set of new regulations. This is in contrast to the American understanding, which consists of removing such regulations. The absence of regulations and directives from government as an ideal way to organise trade, apparently, makes no sense to the Japanese.

According to Prestowitz, not only do the Japanese use a ‘double standard’ in their trade policy, they are also *unaware* of doing this. Or, to be more accurate, they are “unconcerned about” this because of the “ultimate values of Japanese political life---or what can be called the lack of them” (Prestowitz, quoted in Brock, 1989, 35). Japan lacks the ‘Greek’ and ‘Judeo-Christian’ background of the West, which means it suffers from a “weakness of universal principles... of ideas that make the Japanese feel that their lives run according to axioms similar to those of human beings’ living around the world” (Prestowitz, quoted in Brock, 1989, 35). Therefore, the revisionist logic questions how the US can expect to negotiate over such procedures with a “foreign culture” in the hope of “obtaining an undefined ‘open’ market... We cannot negotiate philosophy” (Prestowitz, quoted in Brock, 1989, 35). As Lester Thurow recently put it in his commentary on the Clinton administration’s Japan policy, “talking doesn’t work. Negotiating doesn’t work. Yelling and screaming don’t work” (Thurow, 1997a, 6). This problem is confounded by another, no less important, and no less culturally rooted, problem, namely, the nature of Japan’s institutional structure. Karel van Wolferen is the main originator and propagator of this idea. He has argued that the balance of power within Japan between the bureaucrats and businessmen leaves the elected government largely powerless to make radical changes in policy,



and that even within the bureaucracy there is no centralised structure with one agency or group of people in charge. The problem for the US then is: “how can one negotiate with a people who have no penultimate decision-maker and who believe in situational ethics?” (Brock, 1989, 36). Because of these cultural factors it is assumed at “bottom... that the Japanese simply cannot change” (Brock, 1989, 35). Therefore, the onus is on America. If Japan will not change, and has no reason to change, the US must change instead. It must “adopt the Japanese way” (Brock, 1989, 36).

Plans for adopting the Japanese way should be based on a major shift in the assumptions underlying America’s political economy. From this perspective, the problem with the US is that it has historically a “relatively weak state, except for its military-industrial complex, which American political and economic theory considers exceptional and does not allow to contaminate sociopolitical orthodoxy” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 99). The pioneer of Japanese industrial policy, MITI, is taken as an ideal, and then made “comparable to the US Defense Department” since “both... practice long-term ‘strategic’ planning” (Prestowitz, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 193). Because of the anti-statist tradition and laissez-faire ideology, the American state has been “split between ‘traders’ and ‘warriors’ ”, allowing security interests to outweigh economic interests in negotiations (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 193-194). America’s own political institutions are separated between these interests, denying America the organisation and co-ordination needed for successful negotiations. According to Alan Tonelson’s documenting of the geo-economics debate, of which he is a participant, the “main challenge posed by the post-Cold War world at home and abroad” is that of “sensibly integrating security and economic policies” (Tonelson, 1993-94, 9). This is the challenge the revisionists, and geo-economists generally, have risen to, believing as they do that the US should imitate Japan and its ‘integrated’ strategy.

Another important aspect of the political economy plans of the revisionists is the need to “initiate new legislation to protect” America’s “economic and political system from foreign interference” (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 196). The main advocate of this view is Pat Choate, author of *Agents of Influence*, published in 1990. In his book, he drew a disturbing picture of Japanese penetration of the political system by lobbies working in tandem with Japanese diplomats and businessmen to keep the American market open, while Japan’s markets remained closed and its political system insular. If there was reciprocal influence, the revisionists would be less concerned, since America would get out of Japan what Japan got out of America. But America is clearly seen to be the loser in this relationship since Japan gets more out of America than America does out of Japan. Revisionists liken Japanese efforts to “enlist influential Americans to serve its interests” to how the “Soviet Union used its ideology to enlist influential Americans to serve its interests” (Huntington, 1991, 10).

But changes on the home front covering the relationship between the government, business, and the economy as a whole are the most important changes that need to be made. Next to a national industrial policy, the state should “structure the economic environment, through fiscal and other means, so that savings are encouraged, the budget deficit eliminated, and overconsumption discouraged” (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 196). The very structure of business itself should be changed and made to resemble the collusive organisation of Japanese firms by means of removing much of the anti-trust provision. One of the main criticisms offered of the American system is the obsession of American corporations, and the stock markets that rule them, with short-term profits so that they can keep their share prices up and their stockholders satisfied. This usually takes the form of layoffs and cutbacks in expenditures, even in R&D funding, which is not conducive to employment,



technological innovation, and, by extension, competitiveness. In this argument, the focus of American firms has to be shifted from short-term profits to the longer-term objective of 'market share,' which can only be achieved by providing access to 'patient capital' (see Lindsey and Lukas, 1998). Needless to say, the collusive organisation of American business would also imitate the Sematech consortiums that were set up to challenge, and imitate, the Japanese semiconductor industry. As Fingleton puts it, the reason why "Japanese competition is especially fierce" is that "Japan's cartel/*keiretsu* matrix does seem to be a more successful mode of international competition than the atomistic Western corporate model" (Fingleton, 1992, 33).

The whole set of economic and political measures which revisionists advocate can be summarised in the term 'economic nationalism' (see Chalmers Johnson, 1995). Yet, this is a problematic term – not unlike 'strategic' trade – that demands considerable elaboration. The association of revisionists with arguments for industrial policy, managed trade, collusive business structure and the idea of economic nationalism has led many to accuse them of being mercantilists. Chalmers Johnson, however, denies that economic nationalism, the basis of Japan's economic strategy, is tantamount to mercantilism. This is because he defines economic nationalism as "economic activities primarily in order to achieve independence from and leverage over potential adversaries rather than achieve consumer utility... or any other objective posited by economic determinists" (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 105). What Chalmers Johnson has done here is handle the concept of economic nationalism in a way that does not involve making a comparison with mercantilism, by simply not defining mercantilism. Moreover, advocates of neo-mercantilism are known as 'economic nationalists,' given that they follow the standard nationalist (and

mercantilist) doctrine that “economic activities are and should be subordinate” to the interests of the nation-state (Gilpin, 1998, quoted in Kegley and Wittkopf, 1999, 213). Other revisionists are less shy about using the word mercantilist and challenge its negative connotations. One example is Eamonn Fingleton, author of *Blindside: Why Japan is Still on Track to Overtake the U.S. by the Year 2000*, interestingly published in 1995, after the Japanese economy slowed down and financial problems began to appear in the early 1990s. Although Fingleton is thus a newcomer to the revisionist cause, he is “no crack: he was formerly an editor at *Forbes* and *Financial Times*, and his book was named one of *Business Week*’s top 10 business books of 1995” (Lindsey and Lukas, 1998, 11). His views count and should be taken seriously. Fingleton’s own views on revisionism, and how it is contrasted with neo-classical economics, are that:

mercantilism works: if you wall off your economy to imports of consumer goods while concentrating your industrial firepower on exporting, it is a mathematical certainty that your country will have a high savings rate. And savings, everyone agrees, are what fuelled the Far Eastern miracle.

(Fingleton, 1992, 33).

He describes this as the ‘real issue’ behind the whole controversy between revisionism and neo-classical economics. In effect, his thinking is an example of mercantilist economics in the extreme, in its most traditional sense. Fingleton even advocates an “enforced savings policy and limits on consumption”, which “necessitates” significant “curbing” of “individual economic freedom” by the government for the greater economic good, another feature of mercantilism (Sender, 1995, 60). James Fallows follows suit and develops a whole critique of the Anglo-American model of economics, based on the writings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century mercantilist economist Friedrich List. The Listian model he subscribes to favours the interests of



producers over consumers, sees business as warfare, favours power over morality, and privileges the nation over the individual (see Fallows, 1994, 179-190). Fingleton takes the same line and rests his policy recommendations on the assumption that “everyone benefits from improved economic performance, even if it necessitates curbing individual economic freedom” (Sender, 1995, 60).

Evidence of the operation of a mercantilist paradigm in the revisionist package of policies can also be found in the very prominent role culture holds in their plans to remake America. Most revisionists advocate what Ó Tuathail calls ‘positive Japanisation’. This drive to imitate also extends to the social and cultural levels. They advocate a “re-invigoration of the moral, education and cultural values of American society” which also involves a “revitalization of the family” (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 196). Schlosstein, in particular, is concerned about how the US is the “most sexually permissive society in the world” (Schlosstein, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 196). This is seen to be shaking the foundations of the family, “ ‘society’s fortress’ ” in direct “contrast to the stability” of family life in East Asia (Schlosstein, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 196). He advocates tax policies and corporate policies aimed at encouraging families to stay together. Although revisionists do not generally go as far as advocating a strict, hierarchical, regimented society as Japan, their ideas generally flow in that direction. Chalmers Johnson himself described how the military nature of the Japanese is central to their passivity towards the state and the economic hardships they face thanks to mercantilism (high prices at home in exchange for exports abroad).

The seriousness with which revisionists take their ideas should not be underestimated. Their commitment to the economic agenda is so strong that they are willing to risk giving Japan more military and political independence so that the US

can ease the defence burden and spend more of its money on the economy. Prestowitz has been the loudest advocate of this, and has continued to hold this position even after the 1997 financial crisis. On the contrary, he believes that the “meltdown... has dramatically underlined the need for a new emphasis on economic priorities... reflecting a new recognition that the basic threats to American security in this critical region are economic, not military” (Selig and Prestowitz, 1998, 9). Fingleton has not changed his views on Japan, has held to his predictions of Japanese pre-eminence, and has continued to make the same mercantilist recommendations. He believes that the financial problems and the recession Japan has suffered in the 1990s are largely illusions, only existing in the minds of American journalists, economists and politicians. He charges that the American press has “egregiously blindsided Americans” by interpreting Japan through the conceptual filter of laissez-faire ideology and so “powerfully stayed Washington’s hand in taking realistic action to open the Japanese market” (Fingleton, 1999, 2). Laissez-faire, then, must be discarded. In his latest book, *In Praise of Hard Industries: Why Manufacturing, Not the Information Economy, is the Key to Future Prosperity*, (1999), he has taken his argument a step further, making the claim that “Japan *has* already today *decisively passed* the United States” in many crucial areas (Fingleton, 2000a, 1; my italics). With this account of what the revisionists want to do largely complete, we need now to evaluate their position as regards American exceptionalism. The larger issues raised about identity by the end of the Cold War mean that we need to provide an account of how geo-economics fits into America’s identity crisis. The apparent rejection of exceptionalism by this group also places identity centre stage. The next section turns to this issue.



### 3.3 – Japan in the American

#### Mind: Geo-Economics or Geo-Culture?

The central role of culture in the revisionist project demands that we provide our own account of the cultural factors behind this school of thought in geo-economics. I have no intention of engaging in an anthropological analysis here, given that this is a thesis in international relations and political economy. But the thesis *is* about the foreign policy debate and the various views, ideas, paradigms and schools of thought competing for dominance. We have dealt with much of the content of these ideas above, but as indicated, one aspect that demands further analysis is the apparent radical break of revisionism with American history. Arguably, it has overturned all the traditional assumptions, theories, and ideologies sacred to Americans as a whole, and not just its academics. Indeed, it challenges ideas central to America's perception of itself, its identity and core values. Much of this rejection is rooted in declinism, no doubt, although, on its own this does not explain the content of revisionist analysis and predictions. Not only do the revisionists break with American political and economic thought, they also have major disagreements with much strategic trade and geo-economic literature. Lester Thurow expects the EU to overtake America *and* Japan. Even Walter Russell Mead – who fears the economic consequences of a Japan-led Asian bloc – also believes that Europe is the true long-term threat to US dominance and prosperity, and he predicts that it will overtake the US and Japan (see Harkavy, 1997). Although they do not underrate Japan at all, they are well aware of the problems it faces in organising any regional grouping equivalent to the EU or NAFTA, given Japan's history with its neighbours. The resilience of most revisionists in the face of the economic hardships faced by Japan and East Asia since the mid-

1990s also indicates that revisionism, and its assault on America's fundamentals, is not a transient phenomenon. Although revisionism is rooted in much of the strategic trade literature, and has contributed extensively to it, its true intellectual sources and genealogy lie elsewhere. To trace these origins, and understand what exactly revisionism means to revisionists, we have to see how its advocates deal with America's past and what intellectual traditions they reject. This will also allow us to draw a comparison between how revisionists see Japan and how Americans have traditionally seen Japan, and from there determine to what extent revisionism does truly depart from American exceptionalism.

A good entry point into this literature is James Fallows, the only member of the 'gang of four' who *does* accept the exceptionalist tradition. His writings encapsulate America's traditional vision of itself and Japan and rest thereby on a series of 'dichotomies' that are used in order to "explain American uniqueness largely through contrasts with Asian societies, especially with Japan" (Fallows, quoted in Campbell, 1994, 154). The source of Japan's strength is its groups, the fact that it organises people to succeed, while the US relies on its individuals and allows them to succeed. Japan is clearly demarcated from American society because it is "authoritarian, hierarchical, rigid, and... closed and orderly" (Campbell, 1994, 153-154). Individual freedom is also central to American strength because it is only through individualism that America has acquired its distinctively multicultural, ideological nature. America is uniquely a society "built of individuals with no particular historic or racial bond to link them together" (Campbell, 1994, 154). By contrast, being a citizen of Japan means being bound by "some mystical tribal tie" to the land, its people and its history (Fallows, quoted in Campbell, 1994, 154). Fallows sees collective conceptions of identity and history as factors that impede progress by



holding back the creative potential of individuals. This is why he fears the “cultural danger” posed by Japan and condemns the “unhealthful, alien” allure of Confucian culture on the American mind (Fallows, quoted in Campbell, 1994, 154-155). This is also why he still believes that, despite Japan’s advances, the American “frontier”, as manifested in its “brave, big-shouldered nineteenth century days,” is “still open” (Fallows, quoted in Campbell, 1994, 155). Unlike the other revisionists, he is an advocate of “negative Japanization” where Americans should glory in their “ ‘talent for disorder’ ” and reject homogeneity, thus becoming *More Like Us* – the title of his 1989 book (Fallows, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 197).

All of Fallows’ core themes, his cultural analysis and his methodology are identical to and drawn from America’s past experiences with Japan, and its vision of itself generally. The American businessmen who were behind the American move to open Japan, and the Open Door policy in the Far East, justified their objectives by saying: “we do not admit the right of a nation of people to exclude themselves and their country from intercourse with the rest of the world” (quoted in Campbell, 1994, 157; see also LaFeber, 1997). A Senator described Japanese resistance as something to be expected from people who did not belong to the “civilized portion of mankind” and advised that America should “deal with barbarians as barbarians” (quoted in Campbell, 1994, 157). The American definition of what constituted ‘barbarism’ is central here because the way America represented this episode was not a matter of mere ideological justification. Americans visualised Japan as “Indian country” because they perceived in it the same dominant characteristics of Indian society, namely, their “communal nature” (Campbell, 1994, 159-160). As a commissioner of Indian Affairs once clarified, “[a] fundamental difference between Barbarians and a civilized people is the difference between a herd and an individual” (1875, quoted in

Campbell, 1994, 160). This perception of what constitutes civilised life to Americans has been at the root of many of their attitudes towards opposed social orders, ideological or cultural. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century American labour activists were described by their fellow countrymen as “ ‘savages’, as people displaying the features of ‘tribalism’ ” (Dijkink, 1996, 51). Any form of “group orientation against the emerging capitalist order” was seen as a “kind of tribalism, a throwback to a savage past, and a symptom of degeneracy” (Campbell, 1994, 161). The Japanese have similarly always been seen by Americans – before, during and after the Second World War – as “primitive, savage, tribal, and generally uncivilized” (Campbell, 1994, 158). The mythology of the frontier is also part of this dichotomous split between what is civilised and what is barbarous.

As said above, the Open Door represented a substitute for the geographical expansion of the frontier, substituting the economic gains of geographic expansion for markets abroad. But this exportation of the frontier also represented, in the American mind, a transfer of the “frontier experience to other domains such as industrialization, acquisition of personal wealth, science, and foreign markets” (Dijkink, 1996, 53). This experience represented a “moving zone separating the civilized world from the wild, unsettled, Indian area” (Dijkink, 1996, 52). This mythology sees “American history as a full-scale Indian War in which race fights race as part of the *rites of modernization* and development of the national state” (Campbell, 1994, 160; my italics). Part of the hopes of those who believed in Manifest Destiny was that the “westward march of civilization... could be extended” to the “Pacific” and that the “Asian lands... were the natural destiny of America” (Dijkink, 1996, 52). When Commodore Perry forced Japan’s ports open, Americans “rejoiced that America’s *manifest destiny*, its mission to spread free trade around the world, had triumphed



over Japan's attachment to its *feudal order*. Walt Whitman was moved to verse: 'I chant America, the Mistress / I chant a great *supremacy*.' " (Mallaby, 1998, 21; my italics). In short, the American perception of this episode in its history pitted its manifest destiny, and the related frontier myth, against a country organised in a diametrically opposed way. Japan has thus *always* been a '*mirror*' in America's mind.

Moreover, the US-Japan relationship, in American eyes, represents a tremendous intellectual, ideological and cultural investment dating back to the time of Perry. All interpretations of subsequent events have been premised on America's perception of his mission in East Asia. The results of this relationship have an *existential* dimension to them, determining in America's eyes the validity – and invalidity – of the American way of life, its model of civilisation. By extension, the outcome of this American project is seen as having consequences for the Western model of civilisation as a whole. Americans have an "expansive" vision of history, seeing it as a "straight line with themselves standing at the cutting edge of it as representatives of all mankind" (Frances FitzGerald, quoted in Dijkink, 1996, 53). Japan's entry into the West's orbit, and into international relations generally, was a direct product of an American initiative. Therefore, the consequences of – or responsibility for – this historical turning point for the West lie essentially with America. What the revisionists perceive is a historical cycle where the West, led by the US, forces its ideas on the East through coercion, thus proving (in its eyes, at first sight) the superiority of Western ideas, only to be disproved by events later. The American-led West has thus been engaged in a century-old project of cultural hegemony in the Far East, and specifically in Japan, and has been analysing the results ever since. The Asians are constantly able to adapt and transcend their initial failure, and even turn the tables on the West and produce a model of development that

may very well be more successful than the Western model. In this vision Commodore Perry was not only after Japanese markets, but also “bent on asserting American economic ideas” on Japan and East Asia (Mallaby, 1998, 14). The history of the “adoption of Western policies and ideas” has never been “instantaneous or continuous” and this “stop-go” pattern has had significant effect on “Western intellectuals” (Mallaby, 1998, 15). It is because the “gains” – the move forward of Western ideas – are “always gradual, reversible, ambiguous,” that there is “always room to debate whether they are real at all” (Mallaby, 1998, 15).

After Commodore Perry came General Douglas MacArthur, a man who personified the superiority of Western/American ideas. For Americans the Second World War represented the latest phase of this struggle over Japan’s soul, with the inevitable defeat and occupation of Japan representing the *final* episode of this tug-of-war between Western and Eastern ways of modernising Japan. Western ideas had finally triumphed, and the job of remaking “Japan’s economy and society along Western lines” was entrusted to MacArthur (Mallaby, 1998, 15). It was he who rewrote the Japanese constitution, forced the emperor to admit that he was not a god, broke up the big conglomerates, expanded union legislation significantly, reinstated the parliament, and even changed the school curricula. This reshaping of Japan even went to the point of forcefully moving peasants from the countryside to the cities to provide labour for industrialisation (see McCormick, 1995, and LaFeber, 1997). As Clyde Prestowitz *now* says, the “high growth rates achieved by many Asian countries have been a ‘miracle’ *made in America*” (Harrison and Prestowitz, 1998, 10; my italics). MacArthur was so confident in Western ideas and the power America had over Japan that he “likened Japan to a small child: backward, immature, but certain to grow up to be like American-the-father” (Mallaby, 1998, 16). This was also in line



with the traditional American view of the Japanese as “children”, their “use of theories concerning childhood traumas and adolescent behaviour to analyze them; and the description of them as being emotionally and mentally ill” (Campbell, 1994, 158).

The post-war experience, though, belies this confident image and has led the revisionists to see MacArthur as an “abject failure” (Mallaby, 1998, 15). The revisionists are so confident of their conclusions, and so doubtful of American ideals, that they have interpreted the Asian financial crisis as an event that has “actually strengthened the case for some aspects of the Asian model” (Mallaby, 1998, 17; see Lindsey and Lukas, 1998). Their basic analysis is that it was the product of the “management of the crisis rather than the fundamental features” of these economies and their “economic strategies” (Feldstein, 1998, 23). They also put most of the blame on the US and its handling of the situation through its preferred coercive device, the IMF. Their analysis tallies well with the analysis we put forward above in Chapter 2. Even Sebastian Mallaby, an extreme critic of this group, admits that “nobody doubts that the IMF represents American views” and goes on to say that its so-called status as a “supranational arbiter” is a fiction (Mallaby, 1998, 14). He even compares the powers of the IMF to the “ ‘full and discretionary powers’ ” given by President Fillmore to Perry to “deal with the Japanese as he saw fit” (President Fillmore, quoted in Mallaby, 1998, 14). The revisionists, thus, see a ‘parallel’ between the IMF and MacArthur; as one became an abject failure, so will the other. But none of this should be taken as conclusive proof that the revisionists have broken from the ideological mould of American political opinion. As we mentioned above, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ is actually an adequate designation of revisionism. This is because when it comes to Japan both the revisionists and the Japan-bashers recant on many of the mainstays of US ideology.

The reaction of the revisionists to the rise and rise (they do not see its current problems as a historical turning point) of Japan closely parallels the reaction of the public, the media, and many officials and businessmen in America to the whole post-war experience of Japan. Much of the popular appeal of revisionism and Japan-bashing is the product of the “fear, envy, and frustration” brought about by Japan’s rise, and anger “among the generation that... remembers Japan as a war-time enemy” and “also remembers the benevolent U.S. role in the postwar reconstruction of the country” (Brock, 1989, 16, 30). There is a sense of treason, a powerful impression that Japan is biting the hand that fed it. With the expansion of Japanese economic power to the very shores of America, Japanese progress has taken on a much more ominous character with the threat of ‘colonisation’ being raised by many, even outside of revisionists circles. When Sony bought Columbia Pictures, *Newsweek* warned that the Japanese had “bought part of America’s soul” (1989, quoted in Wark, 1999, 19). Sociologist and media specialist Herbert Schiller described this event as evidence that America was increasingly becoming subject to “cultural domination by an external power” now that the “apparatus of human consciousness production” had been acquired by foreign competitors (Schiller, 1990, quoted in Wark, 1999, 19). Much of this anger and fear is also driven by Japan’s growing prowess in East Asia. This anxiety does have a solid geopolitical and economic grounding, but there is also a strong cultural component to it. As said above, manifest destiny dictates that the spread of civilisation to the Pacific Rim was America’s ‘natural destiny’. This vision of a “remove into an uncivilized wilderness” was behind Henry Luce’s idea of “Asia-firstism”, and helped give East Asia a prominent place in the Council on Foreign Relation’s “Grand Area” strategy (Cumings, 1999, 280-281). Many New Dealers believed that the ‘Great China Market’ was important to the “restoration of the Open



Door world order”, which in turn was needed for America’s recovery (Robert Smith, quoted in Russett, 1997, 59). Japan has always threatened this distinctly American vision of East Asia and, in the contemporary context, the possibility of Japan playing a “role in world politics more independent than the one... assigned to it” has revived these fears (Schwarz, 1996, 98). Another scenario that Americans fear involves Japan as the leader of an East Asian bloc, driven by a culturally different mode of capitalist production to the West (see Chapter 2). The perception of a Japanese threat, therefore, has spilled over into the popular perception of a larger East Asian threat. Moreover, as is the case with much revisionist literature, this perception has not abated with the apparent passing of the East Asian economic ‘miracle’. On the contrary, this perception has been modified and updated to keep track of events, and post-miracle East Asia has become a threat *because* of the 1997 financial crisis. Tom Clancy, following in the footsteps of Michael Crichton, wrote a novel called *ruthless.com* (1998) where a group of East Asian businessmen, military leaders and drug lords conspire against America in the Pacific, in revenge for the American instigated financial crash. Though Japan as a country does not play a direct role, Japanese business interests, crime bosses, and certain nationalist politicians function as unofficial sponsors of this conspiracy.

The revisionists capitalise on all these fears, and particularly in relation to their “well-placed” readership of public officials and businessmen who are “skeptical of Japan and hungry to make sense of the Japanese challenge” (*Boston Globe*, quoted in Brock, 1989, 32). Well-placed is an excellent designation of the readership of revisionist literature, since many well-placed people in America had been moving against Japan in their minds throughout the 1980s, even as the revisionists were still forming themselves and beginning to argue their case. The CIA once published a

report entitled *CIA 2000* which referred to Japan as a “lamprey eel, living off the strength of others” (Dower, 1986, quoted in Campbell, 1994, 157). The Rochester Institute of Technology also composed a report for the CIA which, in its own words, wished to “avoid harsh stereotypes and stereotyping,” but, despite this, described the Japanese as “creatures of an ageless, amoral, manipulative and controlling culture” (Cummings, 1991, quoted in Campbell, 1994, 156). The revisionists hold essentially the same ideas, even if they are put in more sophisticated terms.

The ‘treacherous’ disposition of the Japanese is at the heart of the revisionist critique of ‘fairness’ in Japan’s trade practices and policy. According to Fallows, “Japanese society’s *lack of interest in principles...* makes sheer power the main test of what is ‘fair’ ” (Fallows, quoted in Bhagwati, 1991, 24). This forces negotiators to “run up against *not only* Japan’s special interests that would be hurt by imports but also a broader Japanese *discomfort* with the very prospect of *abiding* by abstract *principles*” (Fallows, quoted in Bhagwati, 1991, 24; my italics). Japan’s ‘situational ethics’ – thanks, it is said, to its non-Judeo-Christian (non-Western) background – means that Japan insists on launching “new industrial assaults *rather than simply* buying better, cheaper products from abroad,” and “suggests that it *does not accept* the basic reciprocal logic of world trade” (Fallows, quoted in Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 85; my italics). What James Fallows is saying here is that Japan cannot stand to play by the rules and trade fairly because it has no principles, ethics, or morals. It is not merely vested interests that are behind its unfair exploitation of the trade system, which is to be expected in all societies, but also the unprincipled nature of its people. Moreover, the Japanese are doing something *irrational*, something that is not in their best interests because they are denying themselves cheaper *and* higher quality good from abroad. Their chauvinism and dedication to self-sufficiency and domination has



blinded them to good economic sense. In his book *Looking at the Sun*, he charges that the Japanese refused to import a tried and tested vaccine for a certain disease, simply because it was American, and developed a Japanese substitute that was dangerous and failed many tests. Chalmers Johnson, who quotes him on this point, takes the argument further and says that Japan takes full advantage of its culture as a negotiating tool, using the excuse of “semantic problems and alleged misunderstandings” as substitutes for “substantive attempts to resolve problems” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 85). Indeed, all revisionists charge that Japanese “cultural ‘uniqueness’ is listed” as a “justification” for trade barriers (Brock, 1989, 33).

The implication here is that the Japanese *are* fully aware of their obligations towards the trade system, but despite this they consciously and deliberately refuse to follow the rules, and only then use culture as an excuse when they are caught. The examples cited by Fallows are designed to make the same point. Situational ethics are also just an excuse. This means that revisionists cannot make the claim that they “not only sympathize with the Japanese people but regard them as the Japanese system’s greatest victims” (Fingleton, 2000). It also completely contradicts the assertion made above that revisionists do not consider Japan to be either ‘fair’ or ‘unfair’, but only different. Revisionists adopt a mode of analysis reminiscent of the essentialist analysis of Russia discussed at length in Chapter 4, blaming the people as much as they blame the elites. This suggests two things about the revisionists. The first is that they do not really believe in their own cultural theories about Japan, that is, the culturally deterministic idea that the Japanese cannot understand the rules of the trade order. The second point is that almost all of the mainstays of revisionist thought have corollaries in the historic American interpretation of Japan. According to David Campbell, the “most persistent association with the Japanese” in the past which now “pervades

contemporary economic discourse is the conviction that the Japanese are ‘treacherous’” (Campbell, 1994, 159). The key role of the state in irrationally denying the Japanese the benefits of free markets and trade with the West was actually part of the cultural baggage that went with Commodore Perry’s expedition. The press coverage of the expedition “pictured the people as living *restlessly* under a harsh *totalitarian regime* which crushed their *natural instincts for freedom and individuality*” (Neumann, 1954, quoted in Campbell, 1994, 157; my italics). According to Jung-en Woo, Karel van Wolferen’s analysis of Japanese tyranny and inability to make decisions fits into a pattern of perceptions of Japan as “enigmatic... and run by a mysterious system” that “recalls stereotypes that go back to the first Western encounters” with Japan (Jung-en Woo, 1991, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 200). He has even charged that the revisionists have developed a ‘new Orientalism’ or ‘techno-Orientalism’ based on the historic American vision of “East Asia as a frontier to be conquered, organized and civilized” (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 200). Jagdish Bhagwati holds similar views, accusing these writers of not being revisionists at all, but “regressionists, whose prejudicial ‘findings’ against Japan should produce only a sense of *deja vu* and despair among us” (Bhagwati, 1991, 35).

In sum, the key point to stress here is that there is nothing new in revisionist accusations, their evidence, or their policy recommendations. They are not revising history but *returning* to it, dredging up old theories and accusations about Japan, and not adding anything new in the process. The causes of the present reaction are contemporary, but the analysis, symbols and representations being used “have popped in and out of American consciousness ever since... Perry’s” expedition to Japan in 1852 (Woo, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 200). Chalmers Johnson, the intellectual godfather of revisionism, is thus part of an (institutionalised) American tradition of



studying Japan in a particular way – area studies. This, in turn, means that revisionism as a whole is also part of this tradition, which sheds doubts over the whole revisionist critique of the American system and its ‘rejection’ of American exceptionalism. Exceptionalism, after all, was the primary source of this image and analysis of Japan. It is not so much a question of rejecting exceptionalism as it is of rejecting a *particular* tradition of exceptionalism. The task of determining which tradition of exceptionalism they do embrace wholeheartedly is the job of the next section below where I place the debates over industrial policy, managed trade and mercantilism within their appropriate historical and ideological context. Geo-economics as a whole needs to be placed within the larger corpus of America’s diplomatic traditions and political thought. What we have witnessed here is an attempt by revisionists to re-introduce aspects of American history that are important to America’s identity and political economy construction under the guise of geo-economic and cultural analysis. Within this section I will also discuss the geo-economic doctrine outlined by Edward Luttwak and examine how he has also re-introduced aspects of American history, identity and political economy under the guise of economic policy. Of particular interest here will be the relationship between his writings, geo-economics generally, and the American geopolitical tradition.

## Section 4 – The Needs of Geo-Economics and the Need for Geopolitics:

### The New Mercantilism as Corporate Welfare, and Japan as the Unifying Threat

#### 4.1 – The Controversy over Industrial

##### Policy: Jefferson and Hamilton Revisited

Above we have highlighted the fact that industrial policy is an issue that always stirs up a considerable degree of controversy whenever raised, but without explaining why. As one advocate of industrial policy – William Nester – puts it, “perhaps the biggest difference” between America and other industrial countries in economic policy is that industrial policy is a “*dirty word* for most American political and economic leaders” (Nester, 1997, 3; my italics). Historically it has been “seen” by Americans as “an axiomatic aspect of American political economy that the U.S. did not have an industrial policy” (Casey, 1992, 29). The reason is that the issue of industrial policy ties into positions classically taken by Americans over the question of the ‘proper role’ of government in the economy. It opens up a Pandora’s Box of issues relating to laissez-faire, free trade, macroeconomics, microeconomics, and the role of the private sector. We can see this clearly in the divisions between the various schools of thought over America’s relationship to the international economy. Trade policy and industrial policy impinge on the proper functioning of markets, bringing liberal ideology to the forefront, an ideology that is integral to America’s conception of itself. The title of Nester’s book summarises the economic issues brought to the fore by the debate: *American Industrial Policy: Free or Managed Markets*.



This, again, returns us to the issue of American exceptionalism. For Americans industrial policy represents more than just a government impinging on the free-flow of goods; it involves the *federal* government impinging on the rights of citizens to buy and sell as they please within the borders of their states. With the end of the Cold War there has been a growing assertiveness by officials at the state level, coupled with a growing dissatisfaction at all levels with the capabilities of the federal government. As we pointed out in Chapter 3, with no Cold War much of the federal government has lost its *raison d'être*, while the issue of 'normalcy' has forced itself centre stage once again. Normalcy does not only cover the balance of power within the federal government, but also the balance of power between the federal and state levels of government. According to Kapstein, this "great unresolved issue of American political life... is once again dominating America's public debate" (Kapstein, 1997, 35). In the 1996 presidential elections it was raised by the Republican candidate Bob Dole and his call for a "rejuvenated Tenth Amendment" which would reserve for state authorities certain powers not explicitly delegated to the federal government by the constitution (White, 1997, 257). The Republican platform also called for the elimination of the Department of Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Energy. Even Clinton, an interventionist Democrat, signed into law the 'Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,' a "historic piece of legislation" that "reversed 50 years of federal domination" in the area of welfare (Kapstein, 1997, 35). He himself said that the "governors *asked* for this responsibility", giving him the opportunity to reduce the budget deficit (Clinton, quoted in Kapstein, 1997, 35; my italics).

Industrial policy advocates are well aware of this link to the deeper issues of American political economy, history, and identity. According to Nester, the industrial

policy debate is really a debate about “conflicting visions” of America that are as “old as the... Republic” itself (Nester, 1997, 2). Moreover, the two leading voices in this historic debate, the two architects of these visions, are, again, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. According to Terrence Casey, the “roots of this debate can be traced back to Alexander Hamilton’s *Report on Manufactures* (1791), which elaborated an approach not unlike that being put forth by industrial policy advocates two hundred years later” (Casey, 1992, 29). Hamilton advocated: “high tariffs to protect infant industries... an active role for government in promoting new technologies... an emphasis on infrastructure development for commercial purposes... and, overall, that the U.S. must counter” foreign mercantilist policies with “mercantilist” policies of its “own” (Casey, 1992, 29). In contrast, Jefferson believed that the “government that governs least, governs best; markets rather than officials should determine that nation’s economic fate” (Nester, 1997, 2). In other words, it was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that exchanges between Jeffersonians and Hamiltonians developed the economic ideas that established the parameters around which debate over industrial policy and economic authority would subsequently turn.

These contrasting positions and visions are so well known that there is a considerable “sense of *deja vu*” among observers and participants of the current debate (Richardson, 1990, 111). This has made it “easy” for them to “form the frustrating suspicion that these are merely old mercantilist and *federalist arguments*... all decked out in the emperor’s new clothes of strategic international competitiveness” (Richardson, 1990, 111; my italics). According to Chalmers Johnson, one of the reasons why Americans are “distrustful” of ‘state’ economic intervention is that they “do not even understand the concept” of the state “since the word” refers to what people in other countries call a “province” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 7). The “history



and nature of federalism and structurally divided sovereignty” has conditioned them to accept government intervention only when it is “unavoidable,” and even then it is frowned upon and seen as “exceptional” (Chalmers Johnson, 1995, 7). Again, we must conceive of ‘America’ the same way Americans do, see it through their ‘political imagination’ and understand that the country is a ‘system’ that should be referred to in the ‘plural’. It is the political and ideological dimension of federal economic intervention that is paramount in the minds of Americans, or, put another way, how economic policy will affect their independence and freedom as individuals living in states.

The “intellectual forebear of the Jeffersonians” is Benjamin Franklin, and he developed his economic ideas within a larger ideological framework that included concerns over federal-state authority (Goldstein, 1993, 30). One of the reasons that Franklin rejected arguments for industrial policy is that he “opposed manufacturing... on both economic and moral grounds” (Goldstein, 1993, 30). Economically, Franklin took his ideas from the French Physiocrats and their belief that it was only agriculture that was “truly productive of new wealth” (Lewis J. Carey, 1928, quoted in Goldstein, 1993, 30). More fundamentally, he “feared for the future of the American worker” which he “glorified” and considered “free, well paid, and prosperous” in contrast to the British worker who was “enslaved, underpaid, and impoverished” (Goldstein, 1993, 30). The fact that the US has never had an institutionalised class structure helped develop the “myth” that the “American worker was not only efficient but also free. Farm life was idealized, and free land symbolized America’s economic uniqueness” (Goldstein, 1993, 28). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “American society... saw itself as an embodiment of Smith’s logic” (Goldstein, 1993, 28). Franklin and the Jeffersonians saw free trade, laissez-faire economics and a weak federal government

as guarantees that the economy would develop on agricultural lines, and thus ensure that Americans remained free. Any attempt to restrict the free flow of manufacturing goods across borders would mean skewing trade in favour of manufactures, growing government intervention, less state sovereignty, and an economy in which the American worker could never be free.

Hamilton, of course, represents a very different tradition of thought, and one that is also solidly grounded in exceptionalism. This argued that the massive agricultural and mineral resources of the new continent, if left to the machinations of the market and businessmen, would only have been used to satisfy the demand of the markets of (resource poor) Europe. America would have become a supplier of primary products; in effect, a Third World country, or a 'giant Denmark'. The economy could not be left to run itself. A political logic and set of social priorities had to be imposed on to the economic system, or else the brave new experiment in government would collapse, deprived of the industry it needed to defend itself. Many Americans, "most prominently Alexander Hamilton, knew that the key to economic development lay in the creation of manufacturing capabilities" (Ferro, 1998, 1). There was also an important philosophical difference between Hamilton and Jefferson. Hamilton thought of the American economy and society in 'national' terms. The appropriate unit of analysis was not fragmented and divided among individuals living in their various states. Another prominent protectionist and Hamiltonian in American history, Daniel Raymond, made this point quite explicitly in his works. He took issue with "Smith's methodological individualism" and believed it was "incorrect to identify the interests of the individual with those of the nation" (Goldstein, 1993, 34). Like Friedrich List, he defined national wealth in terms of the "productive powers of a nation" and argued that "factors unrelated to production such



as type of government and the moral character of labor also influenced wealth” (Goldstein, 1993, 34). Like Hamilton, his work called for “social solidarity and government responsibility” (Goldstein, 1993, 35). Neither believed that the invisible hand would lead to a convergence between public and private interests and both considered private interests as “contemptible” and public interests as “more expanded and noble” (Raymond, 1820, quoted Goldstein, 1993, 34).

This does not mean that the Hamiltonians rejected the whole mythology of individualism and freedom so central to the American experiment. They just did not see a congruence of public and private, *if* the private sector was left to itself. With government intervention such a congruence could be found. Moreover, there were many meeting points between Adam Smith and the Hamiltonians. As Theodore Moran has pointed out, Adam Smith did in fact acknowledge that the “great object of political economy of every country... is to increase the riches and power of that country” (Adam Smith, quoted in Moran, 1996, 181). The very “objective of national welfare maximization was common to mercantilists and free traders” (Stegemann, 1989, 80). Free trade doctrine is “cosmopolitan” – believes that its benefits are spread equally to all countries – “only in its consequences” (Stegemann, 1989, 80). It was actually “out of concern for the interests of their own country that free trade theorists demanded free exchange with other countries” (Eli Heckscher, quoted in Stegemann, 1989, 80). In fact, Adam Smith’s “view of international relations was often closer to the Realist or mercantilist traditions than to the Liberal Internationalism with which some scholars have associated him” (Harlen, 1999, 733). Smith did not have much faith in the ability of free trade to “improve the cultural and political life of a country”, and “allowed the greatest role for government activity” when economics touched on matters of national security (Harlen, 1999, 736). Liberal ideology and

economics, thus, can easily tip over into protectionism without the liberals giving up on their economic belief system. Hamilton was also not an advocate of “autarky--- protection was only a means... a temporary necessity, a political expedient that would eventually give way to a policy of free trade” (Goldstein, 1993, 32). Much like modern-day fair traders, he was concerned that ‘unfair’ trade abroad would severely hamper industrial development in his country, leading him to demand intervention till these policies were removed. Hamilton’s main political difference with the Jeffersonians was over the relevant political unit, the overall context in which individuals and individualism could prosper, and the proper political framework that could guarantee the convergence between public and private interests. In the American context this brought up the whole problem of federalism, the appropriate balance between state and federal authority, and – most important of all – the ability of individuals and their states to keep the country together. Entropy, fragmentation and war were ever-present concerns in the minds of Hamiltonians. The Founding Fathers themselves “recognized the danger of concentrating too much economic authority in the hands of the state legislatures” and they were particularly concerned over the consequences state power would have for the proper running of a single market, since giving too much power to the states could lead to protectionism at the state level (Kapstein, 1997, 36).

The battle over ‘economic sovereignty’ did almost drive the country to the brink of civil war, thanks to the radicalised political atmosphere created by the French Revolution and Hamilton’s attempt to establish a central bank and national currency. Jefferson, who eventually won this battle and became president, developed a theory of federalism and a body of legislation that later provided the “theoretical underpinnings for the South’s secessionist movement” which led to the Civil War (Kapstein, 1997,



40). It was the Civil War that eventually tipped the balance in the favour of the Hamiltonians, for even Jefferson as president was forced to exercise the power of the executive to its fullest extent because of the threat posed by Napoleon's near domination of the European continent (see Kegley and Wittkopf, 1996). His presidency demonstrated the reality of the link Hamilton surmised between the external balance of power and the internal balance of power. Even at the economic level, Hamilton's opponents actually admitted to the "efficiency" of a national currency, it was just that the "other issues at stake... went beyond economics alone and were ultimately more important" (Kapstein, 1997, 37).

This brings us to our final point before we move on, which is that Hamiltonian ideas – like those of Franklin and Jefferson – were more driven by ideology, philosophy, mythology and law than by economic thought. A great deal has changed in economic thought since their time, with mercantilism taking on an updated, more technologically sophisticated form, and the importance of manufacturing industry being reinstated. The simplistic division of free traders and protectionists has broken down, thanks to developments in economic theory (strategic trade) and economic reality (globalisation), significantly diversifying the arena of economic policy and decreasing the number of true laissez-faire advocates. Political thought has also changed significantly, with Hamiltonianism and Jeffersonianism acquiring a strong geopolitical dimension, and with all American political thought acquiring a strong geo-economic dimension with the ending of the Cold War.

## 4.2 – The Internal Imperative and the Need

### for an Enemy: Geo-Economics or Geopolitics

Probably the best and most conclusive piece of evidence that proves the connection between geo-economics and the American geopolitical tradition is the commentary on geo-economics made by one of its most important figures, Edward Luttwak. In his book, *The Endangered American Dream: How to Stop the United States from Becoming a Third World Country and How to Win the Geo-Economic Struggle for Industrial Supremacy*, published in 1993, he introduces his account of “Our Japan Problem” (title of Chapter 2) with these words:

American society is *unique* in that it is *based on ideas* and *not* on a national culture or ethnic solidarity, as are almost all other societies. An *idea-based society* has *only* two modes: *internal strife over ideas* (reaching the point of civil war---and the US Civil War was the bloodiest of all wars till then), or a marvelous cohesion in the *presence of a threatening external enemy*. The Soviet Union performed that function very well for more than forty years, finally resigning exhausted in August 1991. Saddam Hussien volunteered Iraq for the post but was much too weak to keep at it for very long. In that *enemyless condition*, the United States *could have been riven by controversies*, over abortion, sexual harassment, affirmative action, etc.

But *fundamentally* Americans *strive for unity*, no matter how much they enjoy their controversies. It is therefore a *basic instinct* of American society to *search for an external enemy than can assure its cohesion---and Japan is the only possible candidate*. True, Japan has no rival ideology, except for its ‘developmental capitalism’ which *hardly attacks core American values*, while ideological enemies are much better for America’s *deeply ideological* society. But *necessity* is the mother of invention, and any careful student of the American media has been able to see how Japan has gradually been turned into the new Chief Enemy, headline by headline...

The *standard preliminary* is also well under way. After the Second World War, the gradual emergence of the Cold War was accompanied by an intensifying witch-hunt aimed at American Communists (*some* of whom were indeed Soviet agents), which culminated in McCarthyism. This time it is those Americans who lobby and speak for Japan that are being exposed as *agents of influence*. The *purpose is the same: to prepare for external conflict by weeding out the disloyal within*.

(Luttwak, 1993, 45-46; my italics).



This account strongly supports most of what we have said above about the ‘historical function’ – to borrow a term from Huntington – Japan has come to serve now that the Soviet Union no longer exists. Although he does not specify who exactly has transformed Japan into the new enemy, it is safe to say Luttwak is accusing the revisionists and Japan-bashers. The effort of Japan-bashing is dominated by the revisionists, and the words ‘agents of influence’ could be a reference to Pat Choate, the well known revisionist and author of *Agents of Influence: How Japan’s Lobbyists in the United States Manipulate America’s Political and Economic System*. According to the gang of four, revisionists have always been “accused of creating an atmosphere of ‘McCarthyism’ against anyone with the courage to speak up for friendly relations and free trade” (Fallows, Chalmers Johnson, Prestowitz, and Wolferen, 1990, 54; see also Choate, 1990). The fact that this accusation is one revisionists are all too aware of further supports the claim that Luttwak is deliberately attacking the revisionist attempt to demonise Japan. Luttwak’s scandalisation of revisionism also supports our account above of the extent to which many of their ideas are driven by racism and opportunism. More importantly, though, he places the American adoption of geo-economics into the appropriate historical context. The search for an enemy is not just a product of the end of the Cold War, since the Cold War focus on the Soviet enemy was itself partly motivated by something deeper and more basic to the character of American society.

This point fits in well with what we said in Chapter 3 about America being a founded society that lacks the ability to unite itself through culture, and so needs an enemy to avoid social unrest and national division. This furthers our understanding of revisionism, allowing us to see it as a product of the internal “fragmentation” of the American hegemonic project “under fire from competing pressures from class

factions, social forces, and regional demands” (Wark, 1999, 20). The US is compensating for its social ills at home by “projecting its force abroad” in an attempt to “rally a sense of identity at home... a desperate effort to hold the center” (Wark, 1999, 20). Luttwak’s remarks bring us back too to Hamiltonianism and the place of the American geopolitical tradition in our analysis of geo-economics. The internal dimension is always paramount in Luttwak’s work. Although Luttwak deals extensively with America’s competitive problems, particularly in relation to Japan, he is mainly interested in how America is ‘falling behind’ in a *social* sense, that is, in terms of the standard of living, educational achievement, crime, delinquency and social cohesion. He coins the term ‘Thirdworldization’ to describe the gradual evolution of America’s society and economy in the direction of Third World countries. Symptoms of this process include the “chronic disorganization of perfectly routine procedures” and “lack of skill” found in the US labour force (Luttwak, 1993, 16). Even more serious is the lack of “diligence in the labor force, the will to work well, not for a tip or supervision, but out of respect for the work itself, and for self-respect of course” (Luttwak, 1993, 16). This is why the only people who want to migrate to America now are from the Third World, and not Europe as in the past. In fact, America has become “Europe’s own Mexico” with “European corporations... establishing plants” there because they are “attracted by the cheap labor and the American willingness to work long hours and to accept very short vacations by European standards” (Luttwak, 1993, 20). In academic circles what Luttwak is referring to is what is known as the ‘South Africanization’ of the US (see Ó Tuathail, 1993). The information revolution, the global spread of lean production techniques, and neo-liberal deregulatory policies have led to growing poverty, income disparity, urban violence and racism. South Africanization, and Thirdworldization, also refer to



the measures taken by society and the state in response to growing economic dislocation, crime and racism; that is, the “nightmare vision of the ‘warfare state’ ” based on police surveillance and violence (Wark, 1999, 20). Luttwak draws a parallel between what has happened to America throughout the 1980s and 1990s and the “political chaos, dictatorships, and war” brought about by the Great Depression (Luttwak, 1997, 25). He believes that the economically “insecure majority” of Americans are “venting their anger and resentment by punishing, restricting, and prohibiting all that can be punished, restricted, and prohibited” – America’s “own product-improved fascism” (Luttwak, 1996, 48).

Luttwak places the lion’s share of the blame for all of this on the “ideology of free trade” which Americans follow with “unquestioning faith” (Luttwak, 1993, 23). This prevents America from using trade barriers to develop its industries, allows others to take advantage of its openness, and denies it the advantages of industrial policy. The most serious problem laissez-faire has created is its effect on the very values Americans use to evaluate and measure economic success. These “favor only the consumer interest... never industry” (Luttwak, 1993, 109). Here Luttwak is taking a page out of Listian economics and its valuation of economic performance. He makes this quite clear when he talks about how the Japanese have to pay twice for their industries, as consumers and taxpayers, having to buy inferior home-made goods and having to pay taxes to fund the industrial policies that make these inferior goods. This does not invalidate laissez-faire in principle for Luttwak because he does not believe that a country can be self-sufficient and have an efficient economy. On the contrary, the “overall results” are “consumer-inefficient,” and “must” be so because it would in fact be “better” for the Japanese to rely on “imports” (Luttwak, 1993, 11). But, as Luttwak reminds us, that depends on what is meant by ‘better off’. For Luttwak, and

the Japanese, being “producer-efficient” is more important because it ensures the “dignity of employment... to virtually all almost from the start, along with the increasing satisfactions of personal and national achievement” (Luttwak, 1993, 110, 25). His critique is primarily ideological and cultural, focusing on values and not economic theory. He is not putting forward a new economic theory that can justify, on economic grounds, the efficacy of protection. He is not even using other theories that do justify protection on economic grounds. He is justifying his views on moral grounds, transcending the economic debate altogether. It is a question of the appropriate measure, and the appropriate measure should be social. This is why he can say that “it is absurd to moan over GNP growth rates, bad as they are, while ignoring all the blatant evidences of a society internally fragmented to a most unhappy degree” (Luttwak, 1993, 114). Laissez-faire measures of well-being and wealth, and much of econometrics generally, miss the point. What do all these figures mean, do they really measure well-being as felt by real people? What would the population prefer: cheap, high quality products, or good and stable jobs?

From this Luttwak concludes that America’s “central problem”, in a word, is “*overconsumption*, which arithmetically results in undersaving, which almost arithmetically results in underinvestment, which absolutely results in the undercapitalization of research and development, public infrastructures, and private plant and equipment” (Luttwak, 1993, 295; my italics). Luttwak claims that the “Calvinistic spirit of previous U.S. generations has disappeared,” leading to a “carnival of consumption for affluent, post-Calvinist Americans” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237; Luttwak, 1993, 295). He even “medicalizes” this “condition” and likens it to AIDS, describing “American society as stricken by a dreaded ACDS (Acquired Calvinist Deficiency Syndrome)” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237). What in essence Luttwak is



talking about is the Protestant work ethic which abhors consumption and believes in frugality, saving, dedication and hard work. His analysis of what has gone wrong with America has many shades of Daniel Bell's 'cultural contradictions of capitalism,' for another central aspect of his argument is that American culture has also "decisively tilted towards an unrestrained individualism that knows no balance" (Luttwak, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237). Individualism combined with the culture of hedonism, has led to the pursuit of individualism at the expense of the family and community. The US underclass has come to live in Third World conditions, while the elites "act like a Third World-rentier class and live off... stocks and bonds" and are "unwilling to pay for public investment with their taxes" (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 236). Other symptoms of decadence include the legal system, which is a "grotesque" failure, while government agencies are "guilty of legalistic extremism" (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237). Both combine in such a way to create an environment that erodes the "competitiveness and innovative potential of U.S industry" (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237). It is because of these cultural transformations that Americans are forgetting what made them great in the past. It is because of these changes that America has a tax system that encourages consumption and discourages savings, and a polity that is happy with deficits that deprive business of investment capital and fund consumption instead. This is, of course, in addition to American's slavish, ideological obsession with free trade, which is also not congruent with its history. Although America has never had a "systematic industrial policy" it has always had "all sorts of partial interventions" (Luttwak, 1993, 302).

What is worse, in Luttwak's opinion, is that America's future generations are being taught to forget this past and reject it as a racist fiction. Laissez-faire and economic ideologies are not the only things responsible for the country's problems.

The new ideology of “multiculturalism” – which he describes as “racist, absurd, and countereducational” – is responsible for many of the problems in the educational system (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237). Not only is America now attracting immigrants from the culturally different Third World – and not the culturally similar Europe, as in the past – but these immigrants have their cultures taught in America’s schools, while American history and culture take a back seat. Not only is this retarding the educational system, it is a symptom and cause of America’s march towards a Third World status. This is more important to him than the inefficiencies of the education system. He says that Americans seem to have “forgotten” that in the past in the “effective” schools that educated “new immigrants and the children of the poor, their teaching was not performed by new immigrants or poor, but rather by solidly middle-class ‘Anglo’ teachers whose language and manners truly were educationally useful models for the pupils” (Luttwak, 1993, 273). He contrasts this successful historical approach with the new one of using ‘role models’ for children from the same race as the particular children in question. Luttwak says all of this *before* he goes on to analyse multiculturalism at the curriculum level and all its deleterious effects. What he is really worried about is that America’s cultural bonds will fray and the country’s dominant cultural identity will collapse under the weight of immigration. Moreover, he connects multiculturalism – albeit implicitly – with the cultural causes of America’s economic problems. He says the old system of cultural assimilation transformed the “masses of poor immigrants into *productive* citizens” (Luttwak, 1993, 274; my italics). He also places multiculturalism in the new, post-Cold War geo-economic frame, condemning the “distinct economic uselessness of much of what goes on under the heading of multiculturalism” since one “cannot compete in world markets with a sound knowledge of... Afro-centric history” (Luttwak, 1993, 286-287).



The other leg of the educational problem that worries Luttwak is the structure of the educational system. This is the problem of conflicting and overlapping jurisdictions brought about by America's federalist system that makes education unresponsive to "nationwide solutions" (Luttwak, 1993, 271). The reason why the President and Congress cannot solve these problems is because the country's school districts are "independent" and "self-governing", which makes anything "resembling a 'national educational policy'... *constitutionally impossible*" (Luttwak, 1993, 271-272; my italics). It is this lack of federal authority that leaves "local politicians and bureaucrats" open to "divisive ethnic and racial politics" and other influences (Luttwak, 1993, 272). He believes that immigration and a balance of power that favours the states is the root cause of much of America's malaise in public education, an institution "more important" than any other for the "nation's future" (Luttwak, 1993, 271). The various remedies he outlines – all involving federal intervention – will "address America's labor problem, i.e., the lack of skill and *discipline* in the labor force" (Luttwak, 1993, 291-292; my italics). Apparently multiculturalism is as much a cause of ACDS as is the slavish adherence to laissez-faire. In his hands, therefore, geo-economics contains a powerful cultural (*Kulturkampf*) component, being facilitated by a reassertion of America's Anglo-Saxon values, while geo-economics itself helps facilitate this reassertion.

Needless to say, given Luttwak's own perceptive analysis of America's society and polity, such a task cannot be carried out without an external threat to overcome Americans' penchant for entropy and ideological disagreement. Yet, for all that, he *does not* provide such an enemy. He has avoided revisionism, and even scolded revisionism, to such an extent that he cannot even allow himself to present Japan as a viable threat, ideologically, culturally, or even economically. He says that

the argument that the “true secret of their success is locked within the nonimportable totality of their culture” is “exactly wrong” (Luttwak, 1993, 106). The harmonious, obedient and structured nature of their society was actually a result of its “economic success... not the other way around” (Luttwak, 1993, 106). He goes as far as saying that Japan, Inc. is a “myth” and he denounces theories about a “bureaucratic big-business conspiracy to conquer the world economy” as “nothing but a sinister fantasy, distinctly evocative of anti-Semitic libels” (Vernon, 1993-94, 103). It is true that he describes Japan as a country “engaged in a determined drive for geo-economic superiority” and even predicts that by 2020 its workers “will be five times more productive” than American workers (Vernon, 1993-94, 103; Bartlett, 1994, 295). At the same time, though, he says that, “contrary to widespread belief the productivity of American labor in manufacturing across the board is still much higher than that of Japanese labor” (Luttwak, 1993, 21). He also warns that European labour will also be twice as productive as American workers by 2020 (see Bartlett, 1994). He is hoping, in other words, that the generalised fear of economic competition will carry his project through and galvanise America into doing what he wants it to do. Stirring up fear about Japan is coupled with stirring up fear about other countries that also have industrial policies and follow similar economic strategies. When he compares the images of efficiency and dedication evident in Tokyo, in direct contrast to the sorry state of New York, he also says that “much” of the “same” impression can be gained by going to “Zurich, Amsterdam, or Singapore” (Luttwak, 1993, 235).

Luttwak is also mindful of not exaggerating the Japanese threat because he is aware of the dangers inherent in provoking Japan for international peace and the stability of the global trading order. He says the US government has “ignored the... perfectly understandable desire” of the Japanese to be “treated as one of the world’s



greatest nations, entitled to a measure of recognition” and a seat on the UN Security Council (Luttwak, 1993, 46). The US should, and must, treat Japan as a “valid global partner worthy of global respect” (Luttwak, 1993, 46). He expands on this caution and applies much of his criticism of the myth of the Japanese threat to his whole geo-economic theory. He begins his Chapter “Models and Myths: Prussia and Japan” with a comparison between American anxiety over Japan and European anxiety over Bismarck's Germany, together with reference to British resentment of the success of others, “as if the success of others was the cause of their own travails” (Luttwak, 1993, 97). He admits that trade relations in the real world do not follow the “idealized depiction’s of textbook free-trade theory,” but “at the very least it may be agreed that international economic relations are not inherently adversarial ‘zero-sum’ ” (Luttwak, 1993, 96). The only hurdle in the way of the positive-sum logic of free trade is unfair trade policies. The “success of one country today can positively help the economies of other economies *if the successful country imports in equal degree over time*” (Luttwak, 1993, 96; my italics). In terms of US-Japan trade relations, the main problem is a pattern of trade “typical of colonial relationships” (Luttwak, 1993, 96). With reciprocal trade relations instead, this problem will disappear and the US will no longer face the threat of becoming a giant Denmark. Based on the categorisation of economic positions identified earlier, Luttwak is a ‘fair trader,’ hoping to use policy instruments to open up foreign markets, so that the market can work its magic. This also means that he is an internationalist and an adherent of globalism, of sorts. His internationalist credentials force him to warn others of confusing the zero-sum logic of geopolitics with the positive-sum logic of economics. He even calls geopolitics a “pseudo-science” and describes it as the “mass delusion” of its age, while geo-economics is the “parallel delusion of our age” (Luttwak, 1993, 102, 104-105)!

Luttwak is obviously not criticising the whole paradigm of geo-economics, which he has done a great deal to bring into existence. Rather, he is trying to keep the geo-economic impulse – the “always compulsory” “game of nations whatever its form” – in check so that it does not produce the “same potential for misguided action” as geopolitics did in the past (Luttwak, 1993, 106, 115). His concerns over mercantilism are the same as those of the strategic traders dealt with above. They are also well aware of the power of ideas and impressions, and of how fear by itself will drive industrialised countries towards such policies. And they exploit it, just as Luttwak does.

All of Luttwak’s qualifications are a product of the real motivation behind his geo-economics – curing America’s social ills, be they economic, educational, or cultural. He more or less says this at the end of his Models and Myths chapter, just after he has criticised the concerns over GNP growth rates (see above). He says that these “statistics, for all their abstract character... are today as politically compelling” as the geopolitics of the past (Luttwak, 1993, 114). It is because of the compelling nature of national comparisons that we should not lose sight of the real purpose of geo-economics, which is to produce statistics that do not “sacrifice real comforts and real cultural satisfactions” (Luttwak, 1993, 115). Economic success abroad does not cause social hardship at home, provided the appropriate measures are used. In sum, the logic of the American geopolitical tradition, with its internal focus and domestic measures of success, is what really animates his geo-economics. Luttwak is, as we said above, a military strategist, and a man of considerable independence of opinion and personality. His view of the role of the policy intellectual is similar to Kissinger’s (see Chapter 4). Luttwak’s concern over America’s techno-fascism is grounded in his personal experience, having grown up in Italy during the rise of Mussolini (see Smith,



1999). Much as the case was with Huntington, Luttwak is a geopolitician in disguise. And, given what he said about the revisionists, much of the same can be said about the revisionists and industrial policy advocates – though they do take Japan seriously for economic and cultural reasons. The only difference in their case is that geopolitics is secondary to geo-economics. With Luttwak, and Huntington before him, it is the other way round. Indeed, the fact that Henry Kissinger is a member of the group Luttwak belongs to – the conservative realists – of itself confirms that, at the end of the day, Luttwak places geopolitics above geo-economics.

#### 4.3 – The Geo-Economists as Organic Intellectuals:

##### Globalisation and the Efficacy of Neo-Mercantilism

Above we described the ‘strategic traders’ as the organic intellectuals of geo-economics, as engaging in an ideological project aimed at organising relations between classes in a hegemonic fashion. Here I repeat the task with reference to the ‘conservative realists’ and the ‘revisionists’. To repeat, the core ideational function of the organic intellectual is the construction of a coherent world view that covers philosophy, political theory, and economics, aimed at modifying the modes of thinking and behaviour of the masses (see Chapter 1). This classification fits all three groupings. The strategic traders conceptualise competition in zero-sum terms (using the analogy of a corporation) in order to put Americans into an adversarial frame of mind, which is also the purpose behind their usage of the word ‘strategic’. The revisionists put forward probably the most extensive ideological project of all three groups. They have developed a whole political economy and a list of recommendations that encompasses all aspects of public and private life, even family

life and sexual habits. Ó Tuathail considers the revisionists to be the “primary organic intellectuals of geo-economic discourse” because their ideational efforts are so wide-ranging and well thought out (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 191). The conservative realists have also put forward a cultural diagnosis of America’s problems and posited a solution that comprises an important cultural component. The mindset and individual values of people are important targets for all three groups, following on from Gramsci’s belief that ideology affects every aspect of social life, operating on the higher and lower levels of the consciousness. When placed in the historical frame – historicised – we discover that all belong to the Hamiltonian tradition of centralisation and strong federal governments. The conservative realists, and to a lesser extent the revisionists, follow the advice of the American geopolitical tradition in relation to using enemies to unite the populace behind the federal government. The strategic traders are less concerned with geopolitics and do not directly deal with such ideological issues, but they do believe in a Japanese threat of sorts and do uphold an economic programme that involves a return to federalist, mercantilist traditions.

The intellectual structure of these various intellectual efforts is also organised in classical hegemonic fashion. There is a hard core of thinkers who develop the parameters of the debate and determine the core of the approach put forward, while a “variety of other secondary intellectuals” – the ‘traditional’ intellectuals – disseminate their ideas to a wider audience (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 191). With regard to the strategic traders, the central figures are Robert Reich, Laura Tyson, Clyde Prestowitz, John Zysman and Lester Thurow. Although many economists, such as Krugman, belittle their intellectual credentials it is a “mistake to underrate Thurow, or Kuttner, or Reich, or the Berkeley professors Steven S. Cohen and John Zysman” (Galbraith, 1997, 125). The tools of the strategic traders come from the economics discipline and they have



produced “provocative, if not compelling, evidence for the role of government in promoting nationally beneficial corporate champions” (Richardson, 1990, 111). Below the “level of Reich, Thurow, and some others, the field is clogged with people, including aggressive businesspeople, rather crudely pursuing political agendas” (Galbraith, 1997, 126). In the case of the revisionists there is a hard core of four intellectuals – namely, James Fallows, Clyde Prestowitz, Chalmers Johnson and Karel van Wolferen – surrounded by “professional business journalists... freelance economic affairs writers... and business executives turned authors” who have “plundered, popularized and propogandized” their ideas (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 191). Again the structure is hegemonic, with a limited number of organic intellectuals and an unlimited number of traditional intellectuals following their lead. The application of Gramscian categories to the conservative realists is considerably more difficult, given that they are not economists, not economic nationalists instinctively or philosophically, and in many ways not even geo-economists! Luttwak is a good illustration of these points, since he follows a geopolitical logic and places cultural and political considerations before all else. He has also been following this intellectual trend, much like a traditional intellectual, and hopes that the growing popularity of economic nationalism will help push forward his agenda. But it is still best to describe conservative realists as organic intellectuals, given that they are not only popularising the ideas of others, but have their own agenda, set of values, priorities and vision of the ideal world order and ideal America.

The one remaining area that demands clarification is the position of these groups as regards globalisation. We have already dealt with this above in relation to the strategic traders. We said that they were the organic intellectuals of the transnational capitalist class identified in Chapter 1, and we used their own economic

rationale for interventionism to sustain this claim. We even traced the origins of the managerial, corporate terminology used by geo-economists on both sides of the Atlantic (see Krugman, 1995, and Mattelart, 1994). Here I intend to carry out the same exercise in relation to the two remaining geo-economic groups. Officially, the transnational class adheres to the ideology of 'transnational liberalism' which was first articulated in the confines of the Trilateral Commission in the 1970s. This ideology calls for the continuation of the commitment to free trade and open markets, now "presided over by a cooperative trilateral alliance between the USA, EC *and Japan*" (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 182; my italics). Any attempt to castigate Japan is viewed with alarm, and those attacking Japan are condemned as 'protectionists,' 'isolationists,' and 'Japan-bashers'. Yet, at the very same time, positive Japanisation itself has been promoted by these same transnational interests! According to Timothy Luke's extensive analysis of revisionism, "images of Japanese life are being imperfectly and incompletely reprocessed in the media by the *corporate sector*, academics and some legislators to serve as a *positive model* for America's future social and economic modernization" (T. W. Luke, 1990, quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1993, 202; my italics). The reason that Japan is held up as an ideal is because the Japanese economic system is based on a 'dual economy' or 'dual labour market' structure. The labour force is segmented into a high-paying, lifetime employment sector for high-skill jobs, and a low-paying sector that is hired on a temporary basis through subcontracting for low-skill jobs. In this system the responsibilities and duties of the welfare state are 'offloaded' on to the private sector and the family.

Positive Japanisation, then, is actually perfectly consistent with Reaganomics, which is why corporate elites and revisionists advocate it. Japanisation, in a sense, represents an updated, modified version of Reaganism. It bridges the gap between the



demands of the corporate sector for further restructuring along the lines of flexible specialisation (see Chapter 2, and also Ó Tuathail, 1993) and the demands of labour that are still present, in a weaker state. It must be made clear that the liberal, New Deal tradition has “witnessed a *decline*, not a *demise*” (Ronald Cox and Skidmore-Hess, 1999, 215; italics in original). It still exists in a residual form, and progressives have taken advantage of economic nationalism and strategic trade to regroup politically. As for the choice of Japan by corporate elites, this is a logical decision, given that flexible specialisation techniques were first developed in and pioneered by Japan (see Faux and Lee, 1993, and Kreklewich, 1993). These production revolutions have signalled the “passage from Fordism to Sonyism” – also known as Toyotism – which also “means the passage from standardized mass labor and mass consumption to a *split workforce*, some of whom perform complicated high-tech functions, while the majority work in sweatshops and service industries for low pay” (Wark, 1999, 22; italics in original). It was this new mode of production and management that gave Japan a competitive edge over US auto firms and semiconductor manufacturers, forcing them to retreat to the Western hemisphere and restructure their industries through treaties like NAFTA. The arguments for a ‘producer-oriented’ society are not far from the concerns of the transnational class, given that the call for such a society rationalises capital accumulation and supports export-oriented industries through subsidies, tariffs, and market-opening initiatives (exporting protectionism). In fact, the concern over producer versus consumer-orientation is an anxiety that originated within the American establishment, or what remains of it, during the 1980s. According to Warren Susman, American culture traditionally was based on the:

principle that ‘the highest development of self ended in a version of *self-mastery*, which meant fulfilment through *sacrifice* in the name of a higher law, ideal of duty, honour, integrity.’ This sustained ‘the human needs of a *producer-oriented society*.’ But the new *consumer oriented society*... required a different sort of person... and early on ‘interests grew in personality, individual idiosyncrasies, personal needs and interests. The vision of self-sacrifice began to yield to that of self-realization.’

(Warren Susman, quoted in *Wilson Quarterly*, 1991, 57; my italics).

The social values advocated by revisionists are identical to those held by Americans in their early history, and identical to those advocated by the US establishment. James Fallows is the most explicit case of this, but the values of all the revisionists – particularly Schlossstein – take on board these precepts of the character of American society. Although the revisionists like to characterise themselves as people holding views “beyond traditional ideological categories”, their proposals can be classed as conservative or liberal, with all revisionists believing in the need for a re-invigoration of the values of American society. Their work follows the same pattern as Huntington’s early writings on Japan, using that country not only as a model of what the US should be, but also of what it *was* and should become *again*. Luttwak is even more explicit when it comes to this historical dimension. When he makes his comparison between New York and Tokyo, he is not just contrasting America with Japan, but comparing America *now* with Japan now. He is saying to his American audience, ‘this is what our country has come to’. The comparisons Luttwak uses are “allegorical snapshots” which “function as visual shock scenes that assault and offend the faculties and sensibilities of the... strategist who remembers when things were different” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 238). Luttwak’s comparison is with the past of America as much as it is with the present of Japan, which is the basis of his diagnosis that his country suffers from ACDS.



More importantly, the fact that representatives of the once dominant US establishment have used these values to produce an identical analysis of what is wrong with the US provides further evidence that revisionism is part of a corporate-led project. The same is true of the conservative realists, possibly even more so given the weakness of their commitment to economic nationalism. Luttwak's analysis of globalisation and its role in the American malaise also supports this claim. It is true that he believes that one of the causes of urban decay is globalisation. But he, again, does not theorise globalisation or provide a history of it in the world or in America. He only provides a quick summary, saying that the causes of globalisation are the reductions of "trade barriers," the rapid decline in "transport costs" and the "global diffusion of mass production methods" (Luttwak, 1993, 20). On the financial front he says that all the advances of globalisation "could have been, and should have been, offset by added investment, both in people by way of education and training and in the overall working environment: public infrastructures, plant, machinery, and technology" (Luttwak, 1993, 20). He is talking here about industrial policy, and not about rectifying the excesses of financial capital. He does talk at one point of how the failure to "manage" globalisation in the "interests of the vast majority of Americans" has benefited the "small minority" of "corporate management, shareholders, and elite design and development employees" (Luttwak, 1993, 20-21). He calls this 'one-sided' globalisation where the US has "steadfastly opened the US market, while failing to insist on a parallel opening of the markets" abroad (Luttwak, 1993, 23). Again, he is talking about trade policy and advocating a fair trade analysis of what this problem is. His solutions, next to market opening and industrial policy, basically cover the 'tame' policies of re-skilling and educating the labour force put forward by Robert Reich. Luttwak does take up the issue of how US "industry often fails to reinvest its profits

productively” and how it instead “reinvests its profits in building manufacturing plants overseas” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237). But even here he places most of the blame on the government, believing that US “deficit spending and conspicuous consumption have resulted in a lack of patient investment capital... available for long-term strategic investment projects” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, 237). According to him, the absence of a federal “investment bank” has actually meant that the government “competes for scarce resources with private industry” to fund its deficits (Luttwak, 1993, 106).

Luttwak’s critique of corporate America as a whole is muted. According to Patrick Smith’s review of his work, Luttwak steadfastly believes that corporations are “not moral entities and shouldn’t be” (Smith, 1999, 15). Luttwak “only writes like a leftist”, while his book *The Endangered American Dream* in fact expresses his “abiding admiration for the market’s way of sweeping aside inefficiencies and releasing new economic energies” (Smith, 1999, 15). Luttwak was actually a policy advisor in the ultra-right Reagan administration. Luttwak’s criticisms of capitalism, though harsh, are very restrained, especially when compared to the accusations made by the revisionists. According to revisionist Pat Choate, the Japanese have taken advantage of the “themes of ‘globalization’ and ‘internationalization’ ” in an effort to convince Americans that such concepts as autonomy, “national pride and national security” are out of date in the new borderless world (Choate, 1990, 157). Japan, then, cannot be a threat to the US because all economies – including Japan’s – are equally open. Eamonn Fingleton is highly critical of how American “corporate executives openly proclaim their commitment” to globalisation above all else, including the national interest (Fingleton, 1999a, 27). To prove this he cites NCR president Gilbert Williamson and his remark that the competitiveness of the US was something he did not “think about *at all*”, explaining that “We at NCR think of ourselves as a globally



competitive company that *happens* to be incorporated in the United States” (Fingleton, 1999a, 27; my italics). Luttwak does not level any such criticisms at globalisation. Even in his latest book, *Turbo-Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy*, he does not take his critique much farther. Luttwak is very critical of how American business elites “treasure” globalisation as their “only common ideology, almost a religion”, but he still does not theorise globalisation extensively and looks at it as something that is politically tameable (Luttwak, quoted in Smith, 1999, 15). He considers globalisation to be nothing “more than a passing phase” which “will either evolve or collapse from its own excess”, and he only provides remedies based on a New Deal format that fall short of his call for a ‘new political economy’ (Smith, 1999, 15). Elsewhere Luttwak takes Alan Greenspan to task for his obsession with low inflation and high interest rates – Luttwak calls this the “fanatical religion” of “Central Bankism” – but still believes that the main responsibility for this lies in the hands of the US government (Luttwak, 1997, 23). He does say that turbo-capitalism is the “enemy of family values”, but he believes that technology is “not an independent force; it can be conditioned by even weak regulations” (Luttwak, 1995, 13). Even his concept of ‘turbo’-capitalism itself encapsulates this vision of technology and the relationship between politics and economics. Turbo-capitalism for Luttwak is the product of “20 years of relentless deregulation and market opening” which have “turbocharged the destruction-and-creation process *essential* to a competitive economy’s advance” (Smith, 1999, 15; my italics). Luttwak, thus, has no qualms with the natural destructive tendencies of capitalist production and innovation, given how important they are to the proper running of capitalism. His main concern is with the government policies and the obsessive belief in laissez-faire ideology that have turbo-charged and globalised capitalism beyond a tolerable limit.

More importantly, Luttwak's fears over 'Thirdworldization' actually originate *in* the corporate sector and make up an important aspect of the revisionist project. The information revolution, the global spread of lean production techniques (and their dual labour market structures), and Reagan's deregulatory policies have lead to the (see above) 'South Africanization' of America. As the corporate elite and more prosperous members of the middle class become more integrated into the world economy, they become less integrated with their own economy and society. As they move forward and become wealthier, the rest fall behind and become poorer. South Africa is used as a model for the kind of society that develops as a consequence because of the racism and violence that attaches to such situations (this process is also known as 'Brazilianization' and 'Thirdworldization'). In the post-Cold War era, with the intensification of globalisation, the fear of Brazilianisation has become a near universal fear among intellectuals and political leaders in the industrialised world. In a speech given in San Francisco in 1995, Mikhail Gorbachev posed the question, "Will the whole world turn into one big Brazil, into countries with complete inequality and ghettos for the rich elite?" (Gorbachev, quoted in Martin and Schumann, 1997, 163).

What a call for Japanisation, then, does is to formalise this dual split of society, using globalisation and technological change as a rationale and keeping the social unrest created within tolerable limits. With the coming apart of the American establishment and the failure of the coming together of a new globally-oriented establishment, many members of the transnational elite in America have come to realise the dangers posed to their project of globalisation with the growth of social unrest and demands for protectionism. Ethan Kapstein, Director of Studies for the Council on Foreign Relations, has warned that "if the post-World War II social contract with workers... is to be broken, political support for the burgeoning global



economy could easily collapse” (Kapstein, 1996, quoted in Rupert, 1997, 107; see also Ruggie, 1996). Klaus Schwab and Claude Smadja, organisers for the Davos World Economic Forum, went even further and said that globalisation was testing the “social fabric of industrial democracies in an unprecedented way” (Schwab and Smadja, quoted in Rupert, 1997, 108). Accordingly, the “social forces leading globalisation... face ‘the challenge of demonstrating how the new global capitalism can function to the benefit of the majority and not only for corporate managers and investors’ ” (Schwab and Smadja, quoted in Rupert, 1997, 108). These statements demonstrate that the transnational elite, represented by such think-tanks and forums, is aware of the “political fragility of globalisation”, understands that globalisation is not inevitable, and acknowledges the “importance of ideological struggle” in the effort of promoting globalisation (Rupert, 1997, 108).

Revisionism, strategic trade, and conservative realism thus represent an attempt to “fill the vacuum” in the liberal tradition “left by Reaganite attacks on the managerial state with a call for a new kind of ‘guided capitalism’ ” (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 202). Lester Thurow has characterised this as the shift “from the welfare state to the investment state” (Thurow, 1997, 7). In Gramscian terms, geo-economics is part of a larger ideological and ideational struggle “over the meaning of globalization in ‘popular common sense’ ” (Rupert, 1997, 105). At the level of vested interests geo-economics as a whole represents the efforts of US-based transnational capital to “instrumentalize the state, to make it more responsive to their interests in the new world order” (Ó Tuathail, 1993, 203). A degree of congruence exists here between the interests of capital and the interests of labour because of the peculiarities of the Japanese economy and trade portfolio cause major dislocations in the US economy, hitting both workers and their corporations. Clyde Prestowitz’s transformation from a

strategic trader to a fair trader (see above), following the progression of the Clinton administration, confirms this. The progress of the strategic trade agenda as events have unfolded themselves during the Clinton administration have exposed the true 'political economy' concerns of the strategic traders. Though Prestowitz no longer believes that America's trade deficit is a "reflection of the weakness of the American economy or its policies" or the country's financial excesses, he does still believe it is a product of "unfair trade" practices (Prestowitz, 1999, 1). At the same time, he explains that more than American jobs are at stake. He says that the "long-term stability of the world trading system, (and, arguably, the future of globalization) rests on dismantling crony mercantilist structures and eliminating the accompanying anti-competitive practices" (Prestowitz, 1999, 2). Dismantling 'crony mercantilism' – while the US practices its own mercantilism – both serves the interests of the US and transnational capital. America's transnational companies can penetrate Asian markets more successfully, while also being subsidised by the US government. Ó Tuathail describes this merging of transnational liberalism with geo-economics as 'transnational liberal pragmatism,' an attempt by global capital to avoid free trade when it comes to trade relations with Japan – and by extension, East Asia – in particular. In other words, what is being highlighted here is nothing less than *corporate welfare*. This is the true basis of the obsession with competitiveness and the development of the new technological mercantilism by strategic traders, progressives, and management experts since the early 1980s.



## Section 5 – Conclusion:

In this chapter we have continued a line of analysis initiated much earlier in the thesis, which has traced the development of a new configuration of power within the US after the original hegemonic configuration broke down in the 1970s. Out of the collapse of the New Deal coalition and the American establishment came a set of protectionist business interests which had no respect for America's hegemonic responsibilities and were driven towards protectionism by the forces of globalisation. With the passing of the Cold War, the true colours of corporate America were exposed as the ideological rationale for America's turn toward free trade (fighting communism) disappeared. The protectionist turn, even before the end of the Cold War, also engendered a re-evaluation of globalism by the increasingly dispersed economic and political elites in the US. The present economic schools resulted, as did a wide-ranging debate on industrial policy. The positions taken by these groups, and the historical significance of the industrial policy debate, have determined the content and parameters of the geo-economic approach. The economics of globalisation also contributed to this growing tide of geo-economic thought, as competition became riskier, technological advances demanded more government support, and market opening became more important. Decline, in addition to the industrial policy debate, gave geo-economics its ideological depth, bringing up issues of identity and the proper role of the federal government.

Out of these conflicting forces emerged the three dominant groups of geo-economists – the strategic traders, revisionists and conservative realists. Each group

ties into certain aspects of the changing internal balance of US power. The strategic traders are the most economically literate of the geo-economists, and the most progressively inclined. They represent what remains of the New Deal coalition, but have remade themselves and found a new avenue to power via the vested interests behind globalisation, particularly the more high-tech and regionally-oriented elements (see Chapter 2). The revisionists are more conservatively inclined, developing largely as a response to the economic dislocation generated by Japan's expansion, and supported by the same sectors that are behind the strategic traders. They also represent groups within America that have never been satisfied with the ideological rationale of the Cold War (free trade), and which have never changed their minds as to the nature of the Japanese and their questionable loyalty to Western causes. Although progressively inclined, they mainly voice the anxieties of the old establishment over the changes in US cultural values, hoping to stem the tide by means of extensive government intervention, a more disciplined society and a siege mentality directed at an external enemy. Finally, the conservative realists operate essentially outside of the picture at the level of economic thought, and only take up economics as a means of furthering their geopolitical agenda.

All three groups, and the whole geo-economic literature and protectionist turn, are driven by the remnants of a hegemonic project developed in the 1970s, aimed at replacing the old establishment with a new one and substituting internationalism with globalisation. The collapse of this new establishment under the onslaught of the very globalisation it advocated forced the various elite groupings within this establishment to take diverging strategies. America's corporate base split over the viability of free trade in the context of US decline, and growing Japanese competition coupled with Japan's impenetrability. Although not representing a united front, the attitudes of



these business groupings have converged on a set of solutions involving more government intervention and a generalised rejection of unfettered free trade, thus gaining the best of both worlds. Capital accumulation was aided by a progressivist veneer, making the project more appealing to the populace. But this economic vision by itself could not carry out the task, given the controversy surrounding industrial policy in American history, and given the identity crisis brought on by the end of the Cold War. The anxieties of the public needed to be pandered to in matters of identity, leading to a demonisation of Japan and the call for a stronger federal government, and a reassertion of America's Protestant work ethic and its Anglo-Saxon culture in the face of new waves of immigrants. Hence, we can refer to the return to America's geopolitical tradition.

To be more accurate, though, geopolitics here represents one aspect of a largely geo-economic project, which hopes to substitute economic enemies and conflict for the geopolitical struggles of the past. The previous chapter mapped out the efforts of geopoliticians to carry out the task of rebuilding America's internal power structure through largely geopolitical means, despite the connection between such geopolitical thinkers and transnational capital. As we have seen, federalism, cultural assimilation and the threat of civil war are important to the geo-economists too, but only indirectly and largely through the efforts of the conservative realists. For the geopoliticians they represent their top priorities, outweighing all else, including their beliefs about globalisation. With this final point clarified, we can move to the conclusion of this thesis and summarise all our findings, attempting in so doing to produce a complete and coherent picture of what kind of globalism operates at all levels of US foreign policy and whether indeed this can be properly described as globalism, given our definition of it in Chapter 1.

## **CHAPTER SIX –**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: THE STATUS OF AMERICAN GLOBALISM IN THE POST-COLD WAR, POST-HEGEMONIC ERA**

There is no guarantee whatsoever that there would be any better history written should we participate again to bring complete victory to one side... Great as is the power of America... Nor can we expect that a nation having as many unsolved problems as we have, and as little understanding of the problems that lie beyond our borders, would be given, under the all-embracing hysteria of war, wisdom for the perfect solution of all the world's ills.

Norman Thomas

(1940, quoted in Russett, 1997, 6).



The events of the coming year will not be shaped by the deliberate acts of statesmen, but by the hidden currents, flowing continually beneath the surface of political history... In one way only can we influence these hidden currents---by setting in motion those forces of instruction and imagination which change *opinion*.

John Maynard Keynes  
*The Economic Consequences of the Peace*

(quoted in Chace, 1992, 1; italics in original).

We are doing something really terrible to you  
---we are depriving you of an enemy.

Georgiy Arbatov  
former Gorbachev advisor

(1987, quoted in Huntington, 1997a, 30).

## Introduction:

As was stated at the beginning, the objective of this thesis centres on determining how the US ideology of globalism has fared in the post-Cold War era, with specific reference to how globalism is being dealt with by the participants in the US foreign policy debate. Moreover, our analysis of globalism as an idea, the forces behind it, the foreign policy debate, and actual US foreign policy past and present, must be based on the neo-Gramscian approach. The central issue here is the distinction between globalism as the call for global engagement *per se*, and the neo-Gramscian understanding of globalism. We see globalism as an ideology that favours consent over coercion in its vision of world order, and a doctrine that calls for the usage of the ideological and economic resources of the hegemonic power in the pursuit of this world order. Also important is the ideational dimension which takes globalism out of the narrow confines of capitalist ideology and ties it to larger historical and cultural forces. This, in turn, brings us to the issue of historicism, of placing globalism and the hegemonic project it legitimises in the appropriate historical context. This allows us to see how globalism fits into the perceptions of a whole society, and how it can change as that society itself changes.

Our first task here is to provide a brief summary of the contents of the chapters of the thesis; the findings and conclusions we came to concerning the various dimensions of globalism. Our broader concerns lie in determining how our understanding of the issues surrounding globalism (hegemony, consent, historic blocs, organic intellectuals) have been advanced by this thesis. The material presented in this



thesis has to be categorised and analysed according to these themes in order to provide a conclusion on the status of US globalism in the post-Cold War era. I will order this chapter according to several headings where we explore a specific issue, and discuss it with reference to our conclusions on the relevant themes brought up by this issue. This gives our analysis a logical structure, while allowing us to discuss different aspects of globalism in tandem.

## Section 1 – What is Globalism? A Broader

### Perspective on Consent and Hegemony in the American Context

As an abstract concept, globalism refers to a state-led political project conceived at the global level, aimed at reorganising the world along defined economic and political lines at this level. At a more concrete, historical level, globalism refers to the policies and ideas initially used to run the domains of the British Empire. This places the neo-Gramscian concept of hegemony at the centre of globalism, given that the first global hegemonic power developed globalism to manage world affairs. The ideological rationale Britain used also links globalism to central themes in the neo-Gramscian approach, namely maintaining order and stability in global relations. The justification for globalism is that world peace and a stable, open world economy cannot exist without a single, dominant world power to guarantee the balance of power and oversee trade relations. But the purpose behind this apparently 'cosmopolitan' project is to open up the world's markets to the industry and commerce of the hegemon and to benefit the elites of the hegemonic power. This account represents the bare minimum of what constitutes and counts as globalism, given its historical genesis and our methodology. Globalism, then, is a state-led project aimed at reorganising the world along consensual economic and political lines. Globalism is primarily driven by economic considerations, and should properly be seen as a derivative of free trade imperialism and liberal political thought.

In the American context globalism took on additional meanings rooted in the peculiarities of America's society and polity and the country's ideological and



cultural landscape. Globalism served a very specific additional social function in the US, providing the economic prosperity needed to pacify the working classes in such a way that the state did not have to run the economy and get directly involved in the day-to-day affairs of businesses. This is not only a product of the aversion of America's business elites to government intervention and their dogmatic attachment to laissez-faire. There is also popular aversion to such intervention by the 'federal' government, a form of intervention that is seen as impinging on the economic and political rights of all. One could argue that an industrial policy and Keynesian demand management are in the long-run beneficial to the upper classes and would not have led down the slippery slope to socialism. Be that as it may, in the popular perceptions of capitalists, politicians, intellectuals, and much of the populace, this is a viable threat posed by federal government intervention. This perception goes beyond ideology to issues of identity, America's creation myths and the 'national character' of its people. Subsequently, alternative sources of demand are needed to boost the economy and create jobs and raise living standards. Trade was seen as the ideal solution, given that it kept the government at bay and was congruent with liberal notions of empire.

Although traditionally averse to free trade, the US turn toward free trade was a product of the maturation of the US economy, the saturation of the domestic market and the growing ability of the country's industries to compete internationally. Free trade imperialism in US history is associated with the 'Open Door policy,' an approach to trade taken with China in 1839, representing the first American foray into international economic affairs. The Open Door policy itself was part of an attempt to externalise America's internal problems, using foreign markets as a substitute for territorial expansion. In the context of the Great Depression this process took a further step forward, with free trade expansion becoming indispensable as a *modus operandi*

of social control. Trade fulfilled the objectives of both rich and poor, thus facilitating a hegemonic compromise. Globalism also served a much more direct social function for the upper classes by helping to consolidate them into a single hegemonic class – the American ‘establishment’. Just as America must be conceived of politically in the plural, as a collection of states and respective population centres, its economic elite must be seen as sectorally, geographically and culturally divided. It was the commitment to economic expansion and the management of the globe’s affairs that pulled these disparate groups together and gave them a strategic, long-term vision of their interests and the national interest. As for the consolidation of the American historic bloc, this was a by-product of the Cold War, where the threat of socialist upheaval and the demands of America’s allies forced the establishment to sanction a degree of government intervention. At the same time, the Cold War gave the establishment the opportunity to keep this intervention in check and under control. Anti-communist hysteria and the creation of a Pentagon-sanctioned military Keynesian model of demand management also benefited the economy and working classes indirectly, while benefiting the establishment directly.

Although economic interest was the basic driving force behind the coming together of the establishment, the role of ideology should not be underestimated. How Americans relate the external to the internal situation is essentially determined by their ideological preferences. The vision that drove the establishment behind globalism related the maintenance of political freedoms at home to the maintenance of political freedoms abroad. America’s political economy of freedom (keeping federal authority within certain limits) was seen to be dependent of the global balance of power, the elimination of the conditions of war. The only way to make the world safe for America was to remake the world in America’s image. For Americans globalism



was not only a derivative of liberal political thought generally, but also a derivative more specifically of 'federalism'. The social function globalism served domestically was a function of the domestic preferences of different factions of the American establishment. The federalist tradition that advocated globalism, as we understand it (consensual domination), is Jeffersonianism. With the entry of the US into the First World War this tradition's foreign policy posture became known as 'internationalism'. Even though this term is highly politicised, given how it is used to ostracise 'isolationists,' it is useful because it distinguishes between those who hold a consensual model of global engagement and those who do not. Internationalism, as articulated by Woodrow Wilson, is synonymous with multilateralism, the ordering of international affairs through such organisations as the UN. Many in America do believe in global engagement, but are not willing to compromise America's sovereignty in the process and do not share the same faith in the ability of international institutions to guarantee peace. David Mayers distinguishes between these two types of internationalism through the labels "collective universalism, and unilateral universalism" (Mayers, 1990, 4). Both are universalist in the sense of embracing universal or global engagement, but are different when it comes to the issue of how best to order global affairs and how this global role should impinge on US autonomy. More importantly, these so-called non-internationalists adhered to a different tradition of federalism, the Hamiltonian tradition.

Like Jeffersonians, Hamiltonians also believed that turmoil and instability abroad meant the centralisation of power domestically, but they saw this as something to be encouraged. Although just as inclined to favour arguments for global US engagement as their liberal internationalist counterparts, they based their external and internal preference on the realist and federalist traditions established by Hamilton.

This ideological divide split them off from much of the establishment and led to many of them being categorised as isolationists. Their class origins also wed them to an ideological and cultural heritage that was at odds with the establishment mainstream. The fact that they were accused of being isolationists is doubly ironic, given that true isolationists, such as Robert Taft, were just as concerned as the internationalists were over America's political economy of freedom. Such true isolationists hoped to isolate the US from direct involvement in running world affairs, opting instead for the indirect balance of power approach, thus keeping true to George Washington's legacy and avoiding an oversized military. But the globally oriented among the 'isolationists' were incorporated into America's post-war hegemonic project, thereby giving American globalism its *realpolitik* component and its geopolitical bearings.

To sum up, whereas globalism in the case of Britain was a logical ideological extension of its empire and a natural outgrowth of the economic interests of a country that pioneered the industrial revolution, this was not the case with America. Much more was involved in US globalism because it took more than industrialisation and growing economic power to force the US to move out of its quadrant in the Western hemisphere and involve itself in global affairs. America is a founded society, a country whose Founding Fathers sought to design the governing structure in such a way as to *avoid* globalism. Washington's warnings and the complicated and controversial nature of foreign policymaking in America were driven by the fear that the country would become, in the words of Washington, a 'nascent empire,' and so betray all the principles it developed in its revolt against Britain and British ways (see Calleo, 1987, and Bacevich, 1997). It took two world wars and the threat of global communism finally to pull the establishment together, and pull the rest of the country behind the establishment. US globalism was not therefore a logical extension of



empire or a natural outgrowth of economic interests, at least as far as most of the populace and many elite groups were concerned. It represented instead a tremendous ideological effort, drawing on the country's ideological identity by visualising globalism as a continuation of manifest destiny and the frontier, while also playing on the paranoia of Americans over external enemies.

The internal functions served by US globalism were also unique, playing the critical role of arbitrator between the different classes vying for domination. Globalism in America meant a hegemonic establishment, a historic bloc, a consensus on foreign policy, a benign balance of power between state and federal authority, and a particular view of the outside world and the threats and opportunities it posed. Globalism existed at the interrelated levels of ideology, identity, political function and socio-economic basis. The progress (or regress) of globalism in the post-Cold War era involves all of these dimensions of analysis, and cannot be separated from them. The nature of globalism in the US context – the task of historicising globalism – sets the parameters of the foreign policy debate, and our account of the post-Cold War fate of globalism.

## Section 2 – The Place of Globalism in the Foreign Policy

### Debate: The Changing Theory, Practice, and Social Basis of Globalism

At the level of rhetoric and policy pronouncements, globalism is alive and well. Because of this former State Department official Jonathan Clarke has derided what he calls the “Conceptual Poverty of U.S. Foreign Policy” (the title of his article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1993, pp. 54-66). In his view foreign policy dialogue has largely been based on “embracing stale concepts from the bygone era” of the Cold War in an attempt to avoid the fact that the US “stands at a historical crossroads” (Clarke, 1993, 54). In fact, some analysts have “inverted” Paul Kennedy’s imperial overstretch into an argument denouncing “imperial *understretch*” – they believe America should engage itself globally more and not less, or else its power would decline (Layne and Schwarz, 1993, 19; italics in original). But this is only at the level of rhetoric, not at the level of serious policy decision and policy debate and analysis. According to Huntington, the “consensus” view now is that “national interests do not warrant extensive... involvement” around the world (Huntington, 1997a, 37). Clarke has described the true position of US officials as suffering from “directionless vacillation” and lacking an “intellectual underpinning or mooring in a vision of the country’s mission in the world” (Clarke, 1993, 54). More importantly, the response of officials to these criticisms is *not* denial, but *affirmation*. Their answer is that “trying to think strategically about foreign policy is a waste of time” (Clarke, 1993, 54). Indeed, one Clinton administration official once described these concerns as “stratocrap and globaloney” (*The Weekly Standard*, 1997, quoted in Huntington,



1997a, 38). I assume these terms refer to the words 'strategy' and 'globalism,' two integral components of America's Cold War foreign policy.

The bipartisan consensus that sustained globalism at the level of party politics has also fallen apart. At the level of Congress all that exists now is a body of "535 independent political entrepreneurs" with "no party cohesion" and party loyalty, with neither the Republican or Democrat parties having the "ability to control them" (Reischauer, 1995, 11). The simplistic separation of foreign policy positions into internationalist-isolationist has also broken down. This definition of foreign policy allegiances was largely a product of the Cold War and never really represented the diversity of opinion and thought within the American political landscape. As we made clear above, these stark opposites were the product of the dominance of liberal internationalism and its attempt to discredit its opponents. With the end of the Cold War a new configuration of opinion has developed that more closely resembles the actual positions taken by political and economic actors *during* the Cold War. Our extensive elaboration of the concept of isolationism has revealed that there have always been three basic schools of thought. There are the liberal internationalists (idealists and Wilsonians), other people who could be described as isolationists or minimalists in their conception of the national interest (such as Robert Taft), and a quite independent third group. This last group consists of realist internationalists who ground their global concerns and vision of world order in a geopolitical perspective, first pioneered by Alexander Hamilton, and further developed by Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. Moreover, the 'new' three-way division of positions explicated in Chapter 3 is rooted in American history, as evidenced by the three historical foreign policy traditions identified by Henry Kissinger in his book *Diplomacy*. Isolationists want to protect America's unique institutions by keeping

America out of other nation's affairs, while liberal internationalists also want to maintain its democratic system through ordering world affairs on the basis of the principles of American governance. Then there is the realist, geopolitical tradition to which Kissinger belongs, which hopes to change America by leaving the world essentially as it is. In other words, what the end of the Cold War has done is bring to the surface configurations of ideas and historical narratives that have been dormant under the ideological impact of anti-communist hysteria.

Of equal importance has been the effect of the end of the Cold War on the set of compromises brought about between isolationism and internationalism that went into the construction of American globalism. It was isolationism proper that was marginalised during the Cold War, while the realist, geopolitical tradition was incorporated into the liberal mainstream. With the collapse of the Soviet Union this delicate balance has fallen apart, with the non-consensual security side of globalism now upheld by preponderists, and the consensual, economic side of globalism advocated only by new internationalists. The preponderists are well aware that the free trade order on which the US built its hegemony cannot exist without the unifying logic of realism driven by security threats. But there are simply no major threats of the Cold War-kind present, so this view's hands are ultimately tied. On the ideological front the new internationalists have been able to maintain a powerful presence in policy circles and in the public mind by adhering to the openly stated goals of US globalism (spreading free trade and democracy). But they do not have the realist instincts to realise how best to serve the country's interests. Neither aspect of globalism is advocated by neo-isolationists, and all three groups disagree on ends as well as means. The breakdown of the compromise between the geopolitical tradition and liberalism, and the resurgence of isolationism, have led to the *re*-emergence of



significantly different visions of American identity and security. Constitutional and ideological issues raised by the issue of 'normalcy' have divided the political elite and the public even further. The end result of this fracture of policy instruments and outpouring of different approaches to world affairs has been, in a word, nought. According to Senator Joseph Biden, of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, there still remains as yet "no consensus on the US role in the world" (Biden, 1998, quoted in Dumbrell, 1999, 29). No one school has forced itself on the political elites and caught the public imagination. The terminology, methods and analyses of each have been taken up by different politicians for different reasons. No dominant conception of the national interest and national identity has emerged, as has no shared understanding of how foreign policy impacts on the domestic order.

Central to the emergence of these various dilemmas is the absence of an enemy, the presence of which during the Cold War reconciled these major differences and kept them under control: hence the profound importance of the 'search for enemies' for the maintenance of the US as a unified political entity, in addition to the more obvious interest the country has in maintaining its post-Cold War ascendancy (see Huntington, 1997a, and Luttwak, 1993). But the deeper reasons behind this search should not blind us to the "crass political and institutional agendas" of politicians, bureaucrats *and* intellectuals, whose careers and status have been threatened by the absence of the Soviet threat (Carpenter, 1992, 157). The details fleshed out in Chapter 3 on the elevated position given to intellectuals in developing and defending globalism, past and present, underpin part of our larger objective of historicising globalism. This elevated position is a product of American exceptionalism, the status of the intellectual in the American mindset, and the uniquely American interrelationship between the state, the business community and

academia. This is a fact acknowledged by many of the observers and participants in the debate, as the example of Ted Galen Carpenter – whom I quote here – demonstrates. He described these intellectuals and officials as “scrambling for alternative rationales” for global US intervention and engagement, while exhibiting an “astounding degree of creativity in formulating new missions” (Carpenter, 1994, 81). When he wrote these words he was the director of foreign policy studies at the libertarian CATO Institute. The example of New Age Strategists is a case in point (see Chapter 3). This considerable degree of creativity is a product of the fact these policy intellectuals have become “displaced experts” desperately trying to “find new things on which to be experts” (Bartlett, 1994, 293). Bartlett, another observer of the debate, likens the plight of these experts to the middle-age autoworkers who have lost their jobs because their company is rationalising production, forcing them to go into the service sector for much less pay.

But even these more limited, parochial motivations are a product of larger historical forces that have changed the intellectual structure of policy in America, even before the collapse of communism. We must remember that the post-war bipartisan consensus was destroyed during the Vietnam War. The contemporary attack on globalism is the latest stage in a developing process originating in the 1970s with the collapse of the American establishment, also a result of the Vietnam War, globalisation and the growing unpopularity of the Council on Foreign Relations. The intellectual unity of elite thought has broken down, leaving in its place an increasing number of think-tanks that have tried and failed to fill this vacuum and provide a unifying intellectual framework for a new establishment, as was the case of the Trilateral Commission and the elites it represented. This has led to institutes that function essentially as lobby groups, forcing domestic concerns on to the foreign



agenda, and only representing certain factions of the capitalist elite and various vested interest groups. The ideational disunity found in the new era is merely a culmination of this process, with the final unifying factor – the Soviet threat – disappearing. The end of the Cold War has also led to a growing dissatisfaction with the idea and practicability of ‘big government,’ creating a new threat to the political institutions that sustain globalism and the establishment that benefited from globalism. Bob Dole’s attempt to reassert the 10<sup>th</sup> amendment was actually part of the Republican assault on big government, which the Republican party placed at the centre of its post-Cold War electoral platform (see White, 1997). Clinton also attacked big government and took on much of the Republican agenda, to the point of applying the 10<sup>th</sup> amendment himself by significantly devolving and dismantling the welfare state.

The fracturing of the establishment in the 1970s also set the scene for the controversies over economic policy in the post-Cold War era, given that contemporary economic discourse also originates in this period. The traditional dichotomy between free trade and protectionism broke down into four fairly distinct positions with their own philosophies and constituencies (fair trade, free trade, strategic trade and protectionism). The forces of protectionism and economic isolationism also began to reassert themselves from this period onwards. The establishment, or what remained of it, was pulled in different directions as certain segments of it became increasingly internationalised and took up the mantle of globalisation and unfettered free trade, while others suffered from foreign competition and demanded protection. Neither side was able to dominate, leading to a standstill in hegemonic terms (no new establishment) and the development of the two intermediary positions between free trade and protectionism: ‘fair trade’ and ‘strategic trade’. Also instrumental was the emergence of a debate over industrial policy, a

debate that went beyond economics to encompass ideology and identity. It is in this context that the origins of geo-economics lie. Both the political elite and certain economic elites began to draw connections between conflict, competition and world order, trying to substitute economics for security. For political elites, as evidenced in Nixon's remarks about competition and conflict (see Chapter 5), shifting the state from a military to an economic posture was a logical response in the context of the Vietnam debacle and the growing dissatisfaction of the populace with wars. The end of the Cold War completed this process, inaugurating a new set of rules for the rise and fall of nations.

The economic elites that endorsed this geo-economic project took a different approach, though. They saw geo-economics as a way of engendering a compromise of sorts between the different squabbling factions of the establishment, reconciling progressives with more crass vested interests. At a more purely economic level protectionism, of a new kind, could be of benefit to those very globalising industries. The economics of high-tech manufacturing changed significantly over the years, making government funding of research and short-term efforts to close markets a necessity for economic survival. The emergence of Japan on the world economic scene led to a major dislocation in trade patterns because of the peculiarities of its economy, and its innovation of the lean production techniques that changed the economics of manufacturing. Globalisation by itself meant more US firms coming up against competition in their once secure US market. The relative decline of the US economy also meant that the US was losing out in competition with the new economies of Germany, the EC, Japan and the East Asian tigers. The industrial dislocation and deficits brought about by Reaganomics convinced many in the business sector that a strict adherence to laissez-faire principles could no longer be



afforded. The US was in dire need of a major overhaul of its manufacturing substructure. The US needed to construct a regional market to pool its resources and protect its industries, it needed an ideological rationale for economic intervention, and a political party was needed to serve as a vehicle for these initiatives. Mexico, NAFTA and a prospective Western hemispheric bloc fulfilled the first condition. The ideological rationale came from several quarters. New trade theory, strategic trade theory, and theories from business and management schools provided the economic groundwork needed to justify intervention. The Democrat party was the natural choice as a political vehicle given its interventionist stances. Liberals and progressives such as Richard Gephardt saw industrial policy as a way of reintroducing a liberal agenda aimed at generating employment and equality. New Democrats such as Clinton saw this as a way to get support from liberals and the business sector to get elected and cut the budget. The fact that these advocates are mercantilists and economic nationalists does not mean that they reject globalisation. The more liberal oriented wanted to harness the power of globalisation to give America a competitive edge and hopefully, through this, avoid the harsher consequences of globalisation. Only the strategic traders were willing to risk a trade war, with fair traders dominating at the level of the administration. Even strategic traders/interventionists like Gephardt support the IMF and the subsidisation of US firms that operate internationally. Therefore, it is best to conceive of the geo-economists as the organic intellectuals of certain sectors of the American upper class.

Gephardt can be classed as a traditional intellectual representing the old historic bloc that has been unwittingly swept up in the hegemonic project of these new sectors. The designation 'organic intellectual' fits the revisionists more than the other groups (see O Tuathail, 1993) because they explicitly advocate the Japanese economic

model. This is a model that serves global capital by promoting a dual labour market and a privatisation of many of the functions of the welfare state. The strategic trade doctrine is also very important on the ideological front because it helps further the management doctrines developed by global capital from the 1980s onwards (see Mattelart, 1994). The strategic traders conceptualise the national economy as a corporation, giving primacy to the need to upgrade the technological infrastructure of the economy in the new 'zero-sum' environment created by globalisation and lean production techniques. From a Gramscian perspective, the formulation of geo-economics is an example of how common sense is continually transformed and enriched with every intellectual innovation, taking advantage of advances in science and philosophy in an effort to update the intellectual instruments of power. The adversarial frame of mind created by these geo-economic theories itself represents an attempt by global capital to shape the common sense perceptions of the populace in a way commensurate with their narrow interests.

But the geo-economic turn by itself was incapable of dealing with the dilemmas and challenges America faced in the new era. There was also the matter of unity, with migration and a reassertion of state rights threatening the stability of the country. The unique brand of geopolitics in US history provided the answers here. In short, an enemy was needed, and Japan was selected as the most appropriate candidate. The groundwork for conceptualising and exploiting the Japanese 'threat' had already been laid during the 1980s by a wide range of industrial policy advocates, ranging from strategic traders, to progressives, to revisionists. The revisionists did the most extensive job of picturing Japan as an enemy, developing a whole programme of policies in response which aimed at more than just altering economic policy. They hoped to re-discipline American society and reform its mores. With the end of the



Cold War the demonisation of Japan has taken on a wider significance, being exploited by non-economists such as Edward Luttwak (and to a lesser extent by Huntington) to keep the country united and revive America's Anglo-Saxon culture. Taking up Japan's cultural traits does not contradict this in any way because the values America was built on are very similar – frugality, dedication and pride in work, a sense of personal responsibility, and a commitment to family and community.

This geopolitical dimension brings us to the other side of our analysis of how America and its elites are adapting to the post-Cold War, post-hegemonic era. Despite the apparent growing irrelevance of geopolitics with the end of the Cold War, talk of the 'death of geopolitics' and the 'death of geography' have been seen as premature by many strategic thinkers (see Henrikson, 1994, and Brzezinski, 1997). The Clinton administration initially took this position (see Walker, 1996), believing that the age of geo-politics had thoroughly given way to a new era of geo-economics. But the realities of the balance of power and the threat of instability demonstrated how fragile the bases of the geo-economic strategy were. Harvey Sicherman described this process of discovery and *relearning* of the lessons of the Cold War as the "Revenge of Geopolitics" (*Orbis*, 1997, pp. 7-13). The world economy which America established in the post-war era could not have come about had it not been for NATO and the variety of security treaties America signed with its allies across the globe. If left to guarantee their own security, national markets would have been closed in preparation for war. The 'renationalisation' of security policy would have led to the critical economic regions of the world becoming geopolitical 'morasses'. The US confronts the very same problem today, especially given the fact that Germany and Japan have always been the real threats to international stability, with the Soviet Union functioning as a justification for the containment of America's own 'allies'. Their

growing economic prowess and the regional economies developing around them make them more of a threat today than in the early post-war years, necessitating a renewed bout of 'dual containment' – hence, NATO expansion. APEC serves a similar purpose, but has been far less successful in containing East Asia, and thus less successful at protecting East Asia from America's economic wrath.

The very utility of security arrangements in the service of narrow economic interests has also led to a reassertion of geopolitics. America's unipolar dominance has also given added impetus to geopolitics. The US now has an unprecedented opportunity to force itself on the world and finally achieve its historic strategic objectives. This partly explains why NATO was expanded eastwards, namely, in an effort to prevent a new Eurasian power from ever rising again (following Mackinder's dictum about Eastern Europe). But geopolitics in the American context serves another very specific, internal, function. Unlike other countries, the US government does not take decisions against the backdrop of a stable, unified political order. Decisions about foreign policy are fundamentally about domestic policy, dredging up constitutional issues and placing ideology centre stage. American geopolitics is about geopolitics *in* America, the balance of power between different states on the American continent. This is not to discount the ability of America's geopoliticians to update their paradigms and keep track of the major changes in technology and economics. On the contrary, thinkers such as Brzezinski and Huntington are actually people ahead of their time, analysing the major social transformations brought about by globalisation and the information revolution from the early 1970s onwards. Only Kissinger stands aloof from these issues, seeing the world as substantially unchanging despite these transformations. The point is that the priorities of these thinkers are rooted in American history. The internal dilemmas America faces today are the same



as those it faced in the past: unity, stability, separatism, and a variety of cultural and demographic threats.

What Brzezinski and Huntington have considered to be in need of updating were the specifics of this project of internal unity and external dominance, the exact methods used to overcome the variety of challenges faced by America. Particularly important in this respect was the changing relationship between the US – as a polity, economy and society – and the world, given the titanic changes the world has lately gone through. Again this is an example of the need constantly to update ideology, common sense and policy discourse in order to keep globalism in track with developments on the international and domestic scenes. The communications revolution gives the US the ability to project its values deep into the minds of other peoples around the world without any respect for borders or sovereignty. But this also creates the opposite problem by exposing all of America's social ills. The US has to strike a balance between its domestic needs and foreign responsibilities, using domestic renewal to project a positive image abroad, while using the country's image abroad as a way to get Americans to reform their ways. This represents Brzezinski's views. Huntington is less interested in the image America projects abroad and is more concerned with changing how Americans (and Westerners generally) see the outside world. But Brzezinski does believe, like Huntington, that, at base, the best way to motivate the American people and reform them is to construct enemies. Brzezinski is less ambitious than Huntington in his exploitation of new possible threats, such as Islam, and focuses instead on the traditional Russian geopolitical threat – even though Brzezinski is supportive of many of Huntington's claims.

Moreover, the geopoliticians, like the geo-economists, are also trying to patch together the different factions of the former American establishment, creating again

some form of class compromise between capital and labour. Both Brzezinski and Huntington are intellectual representatives (organic intellectuals) of the establishment and are associated specifically with those elements of the establishment that advocate globalisation. The forces of globalisation that created the geo-economic doctrine also promoted the writings of these two thinkers. But Brzezinski and Huntington approached the task of setting up a new establishment and promoting globalisation from a geopolitical perspective, applying their insights on American exceptionalism. For them these concerns outweigh their belief in globalisation and form a necessary condition for the promotion of globalisation. Globalisation thus involves US primacy, the ability of the US to guarantee the security of its allies so that trade does not follow a regionally exclusive pattern. Globalisation also means a US committed to internationalism, thus quelling the forces of isolationism, economic, cultural or political. Brzezinski and Huntington are also concerned that globalisation, by itself, may drag America towards an East Asian destiny, and so move it away from its European origins. This fear has a powerful internal component because the growth of ties to Asia could strengthen the power of the multiculturalist agenda in the US. Their work is part of an attempt to reassert the power and position of the American (predominantly East Coast) establishment, which is Anglo-Saxon in origin, and has most of its international economic interests in Europe. Even Kissinger is concerned that the demographic and economic shift away from the East Coast (now the Rust Belt) to the West Coast and the South (the Sun Belt) will weaken America's ties with Europe, and either push the country towards a non-European destiny or an isolationist posture.

The foreign policy recommendations of Brzezinski and Huntington represent to a considerable extent an externalisation of these dilemmas and challenges. The



'clash of civilisations' in America has led Huntington to posit the existence of such a clash globally, with the specific intention of quelling the fires of the clash at home by creating a united front in the face of a new set of civilisational enemies. Brzezinski hopes to cement relations with Western Europe in order to overcome the Mediterranean, entertainment culture that is overcoming America and reassert the North Sea, Protestant culture of the East Coast. In many ways, they are more organic as intellectuals than the geo-economists, because they are explicitly concerned with the need for a hegemonic establishment. The geo-economists are content with serving certain manufacturing sectors as vested interests, and are not representatives of the collective interest of the whole capitalist class. To be sure, the geo-economists are engendering a compromise of sorts between different classes and class factions, but this compromise is more a product of inertia than design. Most of the input here comes from intellectuals and politicians, while the vested interests involved have been content with the creation of NAFTA and the Uruguay Round (see Garten, 1997). There is no detailed awareness of the need for an establishment to steer US policy and unite the country around it. According to Mark Rupert, the Gramscian approach insists that "progressive social change will not automatically follow economic development but must instead be produced by historically situated social agents whose actions are *enabled* and *constrained* by their *social self-understandings*" (Rupert, 1997, 113; my italics). This social self-understanding – awareness of the need for a hegemonic establishment, and awareness of what needs to be done to achieve this establishment – is only to be found among the geopoliticians. Brzezinski was directly involved with the establishment from early on in his career and was actively involved in an attempt to create a new establishment out of the remnants of the old one, as was Huntington. This is not the case with the geo-economists.

Brzezinski and Huntington are also more attuned to the dilemmas facing America as a whole, as a collective entity that faces internal challenges because of immigration and federalism. The only geo-economist who shares these concerns is Luttwak, and he is a geopolitician by profession.

But, at the end of the day, the geopoliticians only really represent organic intellectuals of a certain faction within the establishment, certain sectors within the capitalist class. These are sectors that hold a vision of America and a vision of world order that is basically non-consensual. They do not adhere to the liberal conception of internationalism, which represents the establishment mainstream. Their attachment to the establishment itself is more driven by their awareness of the positive social function it serves in uniting the country and determining foreign policy. Kissinger is the most explicit illustration of this, openly taking advantage of liberal rhetoric in order to counter the threat of isolationism, while promoting a realist, geopolitical vision beneath the veneer of idealism. Whether their ideas, or those of the geo-economists, have succeeded and helped put back together an establishment and historic bloc (class compromise) is a completely different matter altogether. This is the question I ask in the final section below. I will discuss this in tandem with the larger issue of whether America has again become globalist in its foreign policy in an effort to reach a conclusion for the whole of the thesis.



### **Section 3 – Conclusion: The Fate of Globalism**

Having summarised our findings, we must now synthesise our results and conclude finally as to whether America is still a country that adheres to a globalist foreign policy, as understood in neo-Gramscian terms. As said above, US globalism for us represents the existence of a hegemonic establishment at the centre of a historic bloc and a consensus on the ends and means of foreign policy. It also means a benign balance of power between state and federal authority based on a shared view of how the outside world interacts with the internal order. Most of all, it represents the application and theorisation of a consensual foreign policy aimed at creating a free trade, liberal world order. Given this conceptualisation of globalism, it can be conclusively said that US globalism of the form that developed from 1944 to 1947 (Cold War, Keynesian globalism) no longer exists, at either the domestic or international level. Domestically, the hegemonic establishment of the past has “disintegrated” into a myriad of different “narrow lobbies and pressure groups” that do not “represent an underlying consensus” and only wish to represent their “own separate interests” (Judis, 1991, 55). Its former members are now simply self-interested citizens like the rest. They do have more power, but have no sense of what higher purposes that power should serve. The New Deal historic bloc has both collapsed and been discredited in the eyes of political and economic elites. Foreign policy has become far more coercive, particularly in the realm of trade and monetary policy. The laissez-faire ideological consensus has also broke down, with those who believe in free trade becoming a minority under the onslaught of fair trade and

strategic trade. The class compromise that guaranteed that both workers and businessmen benefited from open markets has also broken down, turning labour and many domestically oriented businesses against free trade. The whole idea that free trade is a positive sum game has fallen out of favour in almost all quarters.

But the central question remains: has the US been able to *overcome* these challenges and create a new hegemonic establishment, a new historic bloc, and a new foreign policy consensus? In short, has it been able to formulate a new form of globalism with the end of the Cold War? The answer is, simply, *no*. The dominant characteristic of post-Cold War history has been the *persistence* of history, the fact that the US is essentially in the same position as during the Nixon administration. According to economic journalist Hobert Rowen – author of *Self-Inflicted Wounds: From LBJ's Guns and Butter to Reagan's Voodoo Economics*, (1994) – the questions facing the Bush and Clinton administrations during the 1990s over economic policy originated in the 1960s and 1970s and, more importantly, “no new answers were found” (Rowen, 1994, 18). Instead, what Clinton and all the presidents since Nixon have done is to “reach for the same solutions or semi-solutions time and time again” (Rowen, 1994, 18). The larger controversies over foreign policy and the relationship between different classes that emerged in the 1970s have also for all intents and purposes not changed. On the contrary, all of these problems have been exacerbated by the end of Cold War, with the collapse of communism bringing to the surface new problems over the issues of identity and federal authority. Despite the strong disagreements that existed over how to deal with communism and how to manage the world economy, US foreign policy during the Cold War was driven by strategic considerations, whether in the realm of security or economics. The main differences were over which strategy was the most appropriate, but strategy was paramount in all



cases. This is no longer the case. The current state of American foreign policy, from a hegemonic perspective, is best described as a “ ‘reflex of internal political forces’ as well as of economic institutions... rather than ‘a judgement about the national interest, involving strategy decisions based on the calculations of an opponent’s strength and intentions’ ” (Richard Goodwin, 1968, quoted in Chomsky, 1969, 26). In terms of foreign policy little has changed. Just as Nixon has sanctioned post-hegemonic America, so has Clinton, a president even less willing to sacrifice American prosperity to the benefit of the world than Nixon. The ‘hegemony on the cheap’ model developed by Nixon and the whole issue of ‘burden-sharing’ have persisted in the new era under Clinton. In the case of NATO, the power and responsibilities of the European component have expanded, while the new countries entering NATO have been forced to pay for their membership in a variety of ways. America’s Asian allies are also being forced to pay more for essentially the same defence arrangements that were put in place during the Cold War. The threat of trade wars begun under Nixon has continued, with the latest example being the 1995 Japanese-American auto dispute. Nixon’s unilateral approach to monetary policy – such as the destruction of Bretton Woods – has also continued, with the latest example being the 1997 East Asian financial crisis.

It is true to say that, in the case of NATO and the EU, the US has become more consensual in both issues of security and economics. But this is a product of the growing power of Europe, the declining power of the US, and the common threat posed to Europe and the US from the emergence of a possible Japan-led East Asian economic bloc. In Gramscian terminology the US is not transcending its narrow parochial interests in an effort to incorporate the interests of other states. It is not pursuing a strategic conception of its interests that allows for the interests of others

and constructs a consensual policy to carry this out. As said above, hegemony has given way to domination, coercion has come to replace consent, and post-hegemonic America has become the norm, internally and externally. This means that the US is no longer globalist in its policies, given our hegemonic understanding of globalism.

The intellectual output of post-Cold War America has also been grounded in historical narratives and diplomatic traditions that had been suppressed during the Cold War and resurfaced with the Vietnam War. The three foreign policy schools actually represent, as pointed out above, different approaches to America's political economy of freedom as old as the Republic. Even geo-economics, which appears to herald a new approach to international relations, is also rooted in the failure in Vietnam and the post-war experience of the growing impossibility of large-scale wars. The economic actors who support the geo-economists, whether protectionists or globalising corporations, also emerged on the political scene in the 1970s thanks to the tug of war between Nixon and a new globalising establishment. The economic ideas that constitute the doctrinal and theoretical core of geo-economics also originate in this period. The content of the economic policies advocated by geo-economics does not really differ from the military industrial policy America has always had and the market opening initiatives begun under Nixon. It is the only the term 'geo-economics' that arrived late on the scene, and it mainly emerged as a conceptual rationale for industrial and trade policies that have always been in place. The geopolitical initiative led by Brzezinski, Huntington and Kissinger also has its roots in American history, while the main concerns that animate their work originate in the 1970s. The most explicit case of this is Kissinger, who takes the Nixon presidency as the ideal model for future US policy, because of Nixon's geopolitical credentials, and because the world of today became multipolar during his presidency. This all means that the post-



Cold War intellectual output has not been able to extract itself from the controversies of the 1970s and the problems created by the collapse of communism. That is, a new ideological rationale for globalism and external hegemony has not been found. No convincing enemy has been found, the American people are still isolationist, the American body politic is still suffering from an identity crisis, and the country's elites have not developed a shared perspective on the nature of the national interest and the appropriate method to fulfil it.

Finally, there is the issue of the establishment and the internal configuration of power, ideas and interests that drive policy. This is an entity that must exist in order for America to be globalist given the highly permeable and static nature of the foreign policymaking process. According to Tierney, the old and new "establishments (if such a word can be used) are so different as to make a drawing of contrasts almost superfluous" (Tierney, 1994, 124). An establishment exists in the sense of a ruling elite, and exists *only* in this sense. From a Gramscian perspective, what exists in America today is an aggregate of different businessmen scattered over the American continent. There is a considerable degree of group behaviour and strategic thinking within the capitalist class, but it all operates at the level of certain sectors and within certain regional concentrations of economic activity. The fracturing of American identity brought about by the end of the Cold War, and the issue of normalcy, has gained a powerful economic and cultural dimension. The traditional centres of power of the establishment in the East Coast continue to support an Anglo-Saxon conception of American identity and an Atlantic focus to foreign policy, given their cultural background and economic interests. The rival Sun Belt is drawn economically, culturally and demographically to the Pacific Rim and Latin America. It is true that the East Coast has 'won out' in relation to the relative importance of Europe and East

Asia to US policy, but it is also true that Latin America is outweighing both Europe and East Asia economically. The fact that Brzezinski, Huntington and Kissinger are trying to revive the old establishment indicates of itself that it still does not exist. Brzezinski himself was one of the first to pronounce it dead.

The election victory of Bill Clinton can be said to represent the last nail in the coffin of the establishment. He has openly embraced multiculturalism, has decentralised federal power, and has allowed the directionless vacillation of foreign policy to continue, encouraging the narrow agendas of lobbies to take the place of strategy. Clinton even has some ties to isolationism himself, as evidenced by the fact that he had “worked for George McGovern’s presidential campaign”, a candidate who was accused of being an “isolationist” (LaFeber, 1994, 767). Kegley and Wittkopf have also identified a “kind of neo-isolationism” in the Clinton agenda, a product of the fact that he believes that “domestic problems require priority not only at home but also abroad” (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1996, 539). It was his near exclusive concern with economics, as opposed to Bush, the ‘foreign policy’ president, that helped him to take advantage of the growing isolationist inclination of the US public. Indeed, the very election of Clinton itself at the outset of the post-Cold War era is indicative of the public’s continuing attitude of mistrust and resentment towards the East Coast establishment and their rejection of the very idea of an establishment. Even Clinton’s personality is indicative of this. Martin Walker describes Clinton as the “president America deserved” because his personality represents the “archetypal postwar American, his life unfolding to the rhythms of the vast social revolutions” that changed America (Walker, 1996, 347). In other words, his personality and his life represent the forces that led to the desolation of the establishment. This is in direct contrast to George Bush, who represented the generation that lived through the



Second World War, a person who epitomised the establishment that emerged from this war. All of Bush's attempts to distance himself from the establishment's elite forums – such as the Trilateral Commission – and so the establishment came to no avail in the eyes of the public. His espousal of WASP values and his “corny geniality and his platitudes about public service” only earned him the title the ‘wimp’ president (*Wilson Quarterly*, 1991, 57). In sum, then, there is no longer an establishment that supports globalism, and no longer any demand for an establishment that supports globalism. In this new world, globalism in the sense of global engagement does have a place, but globalism, understood hegemonically, does not. US globalism, as we have known it, no longer exists.

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