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# **Nationalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and its impact on revisionist great powers**

A Case Study of Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy

This Thesis

submitted In fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

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# Table of Contents

<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	7
<i>List of Figures</i>	10
<i>Abstract</i>	11
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	13
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Significance of Research</i>	15
<i>Research Aims, Questions and Hypothesis</i>	16
<i>Methodology</i>	17
<i>Data Collection and Analysis</i>	18
<i>Theoretical and Conceptual Framework</i>	20
<i>Classical Realist</i>	22
<i>Neo Realist</i>	23
<i>Scope of the Study</i>	24
<i>Structure of Thesis</i>	24
<b>Chapter One: What is Contemporary Nationalism?.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>The State</i>	28
<i>The Nation</i>	31
<i>The Nation State</i>	34
Nationalism	35
<i>Primordialism</i>	37
<i>Modernism</i>	39
- <i>Economic Transformation</i>	39
- <i>Political Transformation</i>	41

- <i>Social Transformation</i>	45
<i>Ethno-symbolism</i>	48
Contemporary Nationalism	50
<b>Chapter Two: Chinese and Russian Nationalism.....</b>	<b>53</b>
Chinese Nationalism	54
Pre-Modern China	55
<i>A Formative age</i>	55
<i>Early Imperial Age</i>	56
<i>Late Imperial Age</i>	58
Modern China: 1800's – Present	59
<i>Social Orientated Nationalism</i>	66
<i>Liberal Nationalism</i>	68
<i>Patriotic Nationalism</i>	69
<i>Cyber Nationalism</i>	72
Contemporary Chinese Nationalism	73
Russian Nationalism	77
Pre-Modern Russia	78
<i>Principality</i>	78
<i>Muscovite</i>	80
<i>Russian Empire</i>	81
Modern Russia 1800's – Present	84
<i>Ethnic Nationalism</i>	84
<i>Socio-economic Nationalism</i>	86

<i>Cultural Nationalism</i>	91
Contemporary Russian Nationalism	93
Conclusion	98
<b>Chapter Three: Chinese Foreign Policy.....</b>	<b>101</b>
Actors involved in the Foreign Policy Process	105
<i>Xi Jinping – President of the People’s Republic of China</i>	105
<i>The Communist Party’s Politburo Standing Committee</i>	106
<i>Leading Small Groups</i>	108
<i>The People’s Liberation Army</i>	109
<i>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>	110
Foreign Policy Strategic Thinking	112
<i>Peaceful Development</i>	114
<i>China Dream</i>	115
<i>Core Interests</i>	117
<i>Continuity</i>	118
Case Studies	119
<i>South China Sea (Spratly and Paracel Islands) Case Study</i>	121
<i>East China Sea (Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands) Case Study</i>	130
<i>Taiwan Case Study</i>	135
Conclusion	141
<b>Chapter Four: Russian Foreign Policy.....</b>	<b>145</b>
Actors Involved in the Policy Process	149
<i>Vladimir Putin – President of the Russian Federation</i>	149

<i>Presidential Executive Office and the Security Council</i>	152
<i>The Government and State-owned Think Tanks</i>	154
<i>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>	156
<i>The Defence Ministry</i>	156
<i>The Federal Security Service</i>	157
<i>The Russian Elites</i>	158
<i>The Russian Orthodox Church</i>	159
<i>Russian State-owned Energy Companies</i>	160
Foreign Policy Strategic Thinking	161
<i>Russia's Geopolitical Position and Self-perceptions</i>	163
<i>Russia's Relations with the West</i>	165
<i>Core Interests</i>	166
<i>Great Power Restoration</i>	170
<i>Continuity</i>	172
Case Studies	172
<i>Ukraine Case Study</i>	173
<i>Syria Case Study</i>	178
<i>Arctic Case Study</i>	182
Conclusion	186
<b>Chapter Five: Great Power Politics.....</b>	<b>189</b>
<i>Great Power Definition</i>	191
<i>The Link between Great Power Ambitions and Nationalism</i>	199
<i>Great Power Competition and a Framework for Analysis</i>	201

<i>Revisionist vs Status-quo</i>	204
Chinese Nationalism and Great Power Politics	205
<i>South China Sea</i>	209
<i>East China Sea</i>	213
<i>Taiwan</i>	217
Chinese Nationalism and Great Power Politics Conclusion	221
Russian Nationalism and Great Power Politics	225
<i>Ukraine</i>	229
<i>Syria</i>	234
<i>Arctic</i>	239
Russian Nationalism and Great Power Politics Conclusion	242
Conclusion	244
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>247</b>
<i>Limitations of the Study</i>	261
<i>Further Research Recommendations</i>	261
<i>Bibliography</i>	262

## List of Abbreviations

AIDZ	-	Air Defence Identification Zone
AIIB	-	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	-	Association of South East Asian Nations
AZRF	-	Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation
BRI	-	Belt and Road Initiative
CCD	-	Community of Common Destiny
CCG	-	Chinese Coast Guard
CCP	-	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	-	Chinese Central Television
CGTN	-	China Global Television Network
CIS	-	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMC	-	Central Military Commission
CNOOC	-	China National Offshore Oil Cooperation
COC	-	Code of Conduct
CSTO	-	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
DECR	-	Department of External Church Relations
DOC	-	Declaration of Conduct
DPP	-	Democratic Progressive Party
EAEU	-	Eurasian Economic Union
ECFA	-	Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement
EEZ	-	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	-	European Union
FSB	-	Federal Security Services
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
HKSAR	-	Honk Kong Special Administrative Region
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
IR	-	International Relations

IS	-	Islamic State
KMT	-	Kuomintang (National People's Party)
LSGs	-	Leading Small Groups
MFA	-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China
MID	-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia
MIDC	-	Million Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria
MSAR	-	Macao Special Administrative Region
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDS	-	National Defence Strategy
NOD	-	National Liberation Movement
NPC	-	National People's Congress
NSR	-	Northern Sea Route
NSS	-	National Security Strategy
PAP	-	People's Armed Police
PLA	-	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	-	People's Liberation Air Force
PLAN	-	People's Liberation Army Navy
PMCs	-	Private Military Companies
PRC	-	People's Republic of China
PSC	-	Politburo Standing Committee
RIAC	-	Russian Internal Affairs Council
RISI	-	Russian Institute of Strategic Studies
RNE	-	Russian National Unity
ROC	-	Republic of China
RT	-	Russia Today
SCO	-	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SDLP	-	Social Democratic Labour Party
SIT	-	Social Identity Theory
SOEs	-	State-owned Enterprises

SVOP	-	Council on Foreign and Defence Policy
TSMC	-	Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company
UK	-	United Kingdom
UN	-	United Nations
UNCLOS	-	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	-	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
U.S.	-	United States of America
USGS	-	U.S. Geological Survey
U.S.S.R	-	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## **List of Figures**

- Figure 2.1. List of historical schools of thought defining Russian identity.
- Figure 3.1. List of Politburo Standing Committee members.
- Figure 3.2. List of top seven export countries through South China Sea.
- Figure 3.3. List of world's largest container ports.
- Figure 3.4. Map of South China Sea
- Figure 3.5. Number of Chinese incursions into Japanese maritime/airspace around Senkaku Islands.
- Figure 3.6. China – Taiwan Trade 2012-2018.
- Figure 4.1. List of Vladimir Putin's inner circle.
- Figure 4.2. List of Security Council members.
- Figure 4.3. List of different schools/traditions of Foreign Policy thinking.
- Figure 4.4. List of top five Russian energy companies.
- Figure 5.1. Chinese and Russian military expenditure 2012-2020 current.
- Figure 5.2. Top seven countries natural resources based on economic value.
- Figure 5.3. Resource-based determinants and influence-based determinants of power.
- Figure 5.4. Lowy Institute Asia Power Index Rankings.

# Abstract

Since 2012, there has been a rise in the assertiveness of both China and Russia's foreign policies. Both countries have framed their actions as justifiable for various reasons including: historical claims; the assertion of territorial sovereignty rights; or, in coming to the aid of an ally. What is most concerning is the nationalistic rhetoric which has accompanied these actions with its central focus on the attainment, or re-establishment, of great power status. Both President's Xi and Putin contend that this status is a vital part of their countries national identities. Because of the close association between nationalism and the attainment of great power status both China and Russia have become more willing to challenge the international status quo which has led to a rise in great power competition. As a result, they now represent the first revisionist challenge to the liberal international order since the demise of the Soviet Union. This research investigates the impact of contemporary nationalism on revisionist great powers, and does it increase their threat to the international order?

This thesis aims to contribute to the current literature on Chinese and Russian nationalism and how nationalism drives the foreign policy choices of both countries. Whilst work has been done on contemporary nationalism, there is a limited amount that examines its impact on the foreign policy of great powers. Through a case study analysis of China's foreign policy regarding the South China Sea, the East China Sea and Taiwan, this thesis has investigated if nationalism is responsible for China's more assertive policy in these instances. Similarly, a case study analysis of Russia's foreign policy is applied to the Ukraine, Syria and the Arctic to see if nationalism is responsible for Russia's more robust foreign policy which has resulted in their annexation of the Crimea; their involvement in the Syrian civil war; and the modernisation of their armed forces and attendant military build-up in the Arctic.

The thesis concludes that nationalism largely drives and frames Beijing and Moscow's foreign policy choices and that both the Chinese and Russian leaders use it for four principal reasons. First, to frame their interests with regards to their territorial integrity. Secondly, as a means to unite the populace around a national goal or objective.

Thirdly, as a means to strengthen and legitimise their authoritarian regimes in the face of Western democratic ideals. Lastly, as a way to compensate for failures in their performance legitimacy.

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# Introduction

How to understand China and Russia's new foreign policy assertiveness and its implications for their respective regions and the world as a whole is an imperative task for both scholars and policymakers. Since 2012 both countries have seen a dramatic shift in their respective foreign policies as they have attempted to assert themselves more actively in international affairs. This new assertiveness has also coincided with a rise in nationalistic rhetoric by both regimes, especially China's.

As will be shown, both countries have a rich and unique history that has shaped the modern nations that we see today. China's history dates back over 5000 years when China's first emperor united many kingdoms. Since then, China has witnessed times of great power and prosperity, but also times of conquest and foreign domination. This foreign dominance, and the sense of grievance it led to, can still be felt today through constructed Chinese national discourse referring to the "Century of Humiliation". Russia's history, on the other hand, dates back to the 9<sup>th</sup> Century when the Rurik tribe united other tribes around Kiev into the beginnings of a Slavic nation. Like China, Russia has witnessed times of great power and prosperity, but also times of conquest and foreign domination. Though the feeling of animosity is very different within Russia compared to China, there is still a sense of grievance towards the West, particularly the U.S., which Russia has held since the end of the Cold War.

Even though communism has diminished, both countries have still maintained an authoritarian system of governance known as autocratic nationalism – authoritarianism mixed with nationalism. The centralisation of power in the hands of President's Xi and Putin has allowed both of them to frame their respective nationalist discourses and control the direction of both domestic and foreign policy. China has grown to become the second largest economy in the world, behind only the U.S., and has been asserting itself in various geographical regions where they feel they have an interest. Meanwhile, Russia has reasserted itself with regard to various global geopolitical situations reminiscent of their Soviet era days.

China and Russia have used their wealth to modernise their militaries which has resulted in a more confident and assertive foreign policy; one that challenges the international status quo. When great powers pursue a more nationalistic foreign policy, evidence suggests that conflict is inevitable as they tend to challenge the international status quo. There is genuine concern throughout Asia, Europe and the Pacific Rim that the expansion of military power is a prelude to a more aggressively assertive stance by either nation with each being prepared to use its armed military might to press its national interests or back up their various geopolitical claims (Bitzinger, 2015). China has been expanding its presence in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and the Straits of Taiwan. Russia, on the other hand, has been expanding its presence in the Black Sea region (notably annexing Crimea), in the Middle East (with their involvement in the Syrian civil war), and in the Arctic. A fundamental question which arises then is to what degree is contemporary nationalism driving this more assertive stance?

As will be discussed, China and Russia present the first revisionist challenge to the international order since the demise of the Soviet Union. China is a rising great power and Russia is pursuing the restoration of their great power status with contemporary nationalism, as employed by Xi and Putin, being a major component in Chinese and Russian power status. Chinese and Russian assertiveness has also coincided with a rise in the competition between the great powers whereby, as Brands (2018) notes, liberalism is pitted against authoritarianism. Great power status is attached to both China and Russia's sense of national identity, and is a construct by the state that forms part of a national discourse that frames the narratives around their foreign policy ambitions.

### *Significance of Research Thesis*

The significance of the research lies in its contribution to the current literature on Chinese and Russian nationalism and the impact it has on the foreign policy of potential revisionist great powers. China desires a "Beijing consensus" over the current "Washington consensus" whilst Russia wants NATO to be abolished and a new European framework established where Russia plays a significant role similar to other major European powers in determining the security of Europe.

As a result of China's rise and a resurgent Russia, the international liberal order which has helped to maintain a stable international system, one built on cooperation is under threat. Current research and publications suggest that the world is shifting from one characterised by cooperation to one of competition, especially among the major powers. As Kagan (2017) contends, the liberal world order that has held sway over international affairs for the past seven decades has been fragmenting under the pressure of systematic economic stresses, growing tribalism and nationalism and a general loss of confidence in established international institutions.

This thesis aims to contribute to the current literature on Chinese and Russian nationalism by showing how important nationalism is as a driver of the foreign policy choices of both countries. Although there are a number of publications related to contemporary nationalism, few of these examine nationalism's impact on the foreign policy of great powers. Others, have an explicit domestic focus with little direct engagement with the foreign policy domain (March, 2018). The significance of this study is to determine what impact contemporary nationalism has on the foreign policy of putative revisionist great powers.

### *Research Aims, Questions and Hypothesis*

The purpose of this thesis is to study the impact of contemporary nationalism on two potentially revisionist great powers – China and Russia – through an examination of their foreign policy. The central question of this thesis is: What is the impact of contemporary nationalism on revisionist great powers, and does it increase their threat to the international order? Secondary questions include the following. First, what is contemporary nationalism? Secondly, how influential is contemporary nationalism in determining a states' foreign policy? Thirdly, does contemporary nationalism make great powers more revisionist?

The hypothesis of the thesis is that both China and Russia use nationalism as a political tool, so as to construct a narrative in which "great power" is attached to their national identities in the pursuit of national unity, regime legitimisation, territorial expansion and the overthrow of the existing liberal international order.

## Methodology

In order to address the research questions, this thesis will employ a qualitative, systematic, examination of Chinese and Russian International Relations (IR) scholar's perceptions and debates. As Bengtsson (20216) contends, qualitative research contributes to an understanding of the human condition in different contexts and of a perceived situation. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings and produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures (Golafshani, 2003).

In Chapter 2, this thesis has applied Social Identity Theory (SIT) to test how differences in language, culture and ethnicity define the Chinese and Russian nations and their relationships with other states. SIT is a social psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes and, intergroup relations (Hogg, 2018). The central hypothesis of SIT is that the members of an in-group (us) will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group (them), thus creating and enhancing their self-image. The theory is explicitly framed by a conviction that collective phenomena cannot be adequately explained in terms of isolated individual processes or interpersonal interaction alone and that social psychology should place larger-scale social phenomena near the top of its scientific agenda (Hogg, 2018). To a lesser extent, this thesis has also applied a psychobiography method to analyse the role of President's Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin. Psychobiography can be understood as the study of the lives and personalities of public figures from artists to politicians (Schultz & Lawrence, 2017) and aims to understand these individuals.

This study applies a qualitative, comparative case study analysis in the chapters on Chinese and Russian foreign policy and in the chapter on great power politics. The chapter on Chinese foreign policy examines the role nationalism plays in framing the foreign policy discourse by investigating three case studies: the South China Sea; the East China Sea; and Taiwan. The Russian foreign policy chapter examines the role nationalism plays in framing the foreign policy discourse by also investigating three case studies: this time, the Ukraine; Syria; and Russia's Arctic policy.

The case study research method is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within real-life context; when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and, in which multiple sources are used (Yin, 1984). The case study approach is particularly useful to employ when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest (Crowe et al, 2011). Case studies in the IR subfield are not the unconnected, atheoretical, and idiographic studies that their critics decry. Instead, they follow an increasingly standardised and rigorous set of prescriptions which have contributed to cumulating improving understandings of world politics (Bennett & Elman, 2007). As Crowe et al (2011) explains, a case study can be defined in a variety of ways. This thesis has used critical cases, the central tenet being the need to explore an event or phenomenon in depth and in its natural context. Context-dependent knowledge and expertise are at the heart of expert activity and such knowledge also lies at the centre of the case study as a research and teaching method (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, one critique that does occur with the case study approach is that there seems to be an abundance of data to collect but time can be of constraint.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

As Bryman (2012) suggests, to many people, data collection represents the key point of any research project and there are a variety of methods of collecting data. Information gathering can be from various sources, and there is no best method of data collection. In principle, how data is being collected depends on the nature of the research or the phenomena being studied. My grasp of both the Chinese and Russian language is insufficient for surveying sophisticated discourses on foreign policy and national identity, in these languages and thus I have had to rely on some secondary sources for translation. This thesis has used a number of different primary and secondary sources including related academic literature and, government reports and documents. Among the latter are the Chinese Defence White Paper 2019, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs press releases and documents, Chinese Ministry of Defense press releases and documents, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs press releases and documents, Russian Ministry of Defence press releases and documents, Russian Presidential Administration press releases, Japanese Defence Ministry documents and U.S State Department press releases. Political speeches; newspapers; magazines; online published papers and articles have also been utilised.

The search for documents relevant to one's research can often be frustrating and a highly protracted process. Moreover, once they are collected, considerable interpretative skill is required to ascertain the meaning of the materials that have been uncovered (Bryman, 2012). According to Waltz (2008), methodological presuppositions shape the conduct of inquiry and the established paradigm of any field indicates which facts to scrutinize and how they are interconnected. In order to analyse the data collected this study uses a variety of qualitative methods of analysis.

In particular, this thesis draws upon content analysis of official state documents, state-media narratives, and relevant academic literature and various theoretical concepts from different schools within the Social Science field. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes or concepts. This thesis has applied content analysis to study certain words, themes and concepts around Chinese and Russian nationalist discourse in chapters 1 and 2 and how these words, themes and concepts can assist in determining the type of nationalism that exists in each respective country, and also how this nationalist content appears in their foreign policy determinations and actions studied in chapters 3 and 4. According to Bengtsson (2016), qualitative content analysis is not linked to any particular science, and there are fewer rules to follow. Therefore, the risk of confusion in matters concerning philosophical concepts and discussions is reduced.

This study also draws upon critical discourse analysis. Unlike content analysis, critical discourse analysis is an approach to language that can be applied to forms of communication other than talk such as text from newspaper articles. As Bryman (2012) notes, critical discourse analysis emphasises the role of language as a power resource that is related to ideology and socio-cultural change. This thesis has applied critical discourse analysis to examine the language of nationalism in chapters 1 and 2 and has also applied it to the strategic thinking of the policy actors involved in the formulation of foreign policy in chapters 3 and 4. Discourse analysis is the study of written or spoken language and is designed to investigate the purpose and effects of different types of language; cultural rules or conventions in communication; how values, beliefs and assumptions are communicated and how language use relates to its social, political and historical context. As Fairclough (2010, p4) suggests, "the power of, for instance, the people who control a modern state is

partly discursive in character; it depends on sustaining the ‘legitimacy’ of the state and its representatives, which is largely achieved in discourse”.

To adhere to a qualitative perspective it is clearly necessary for this thesis to display credibility that makes the results of the thesis as trustworthy as possible. To achieve trustworthiness this thesis has applied a data triangulation to check the validity of collected data by cross referencing official documents, state-owned and private media articles, newspapers and academic journal and articles in chapters 2,3,4 and 5. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena and is viewed as a research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter et al, 2014).

As noted by Davidson (2006), secondary sources, in addition to providing a narrative, point to the current “state of knowledge” or historical consensus on a particular subject, and can be used with primary sources to triangulate, or provide multiple pieces of evidence for the same conclusion and, is applied throughout the thesis. Theory triangulation is also another method that this thesis has applied in an effort to test validity. In this thesis, chapter 1 has applied a number of theoretical approaches to nationalism such as primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism whilst in chapter 5 it has applied realist ones including classical realism, defensive realism and offensive realism. In doing so, the intention is to analyse and interpret data where different theories or hypotheses can assist the researcher in supporting or refuting findings (Carter et al, 2014).

### *Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

Theories are developed by researchers to explain phenomena, draw connections, and make predictions, but there is no predictive theory about how predictive theory actually comes about. A scientific activity is acknowledged or rejected as good science by how close it is to one or more exemplars; that is, practical prototypes of good scientific work (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

To formulate an explanation, and understand the phenomena of contemporary nationalism’s impact on the foreign policy of revisionist great powers, I will apply theoretical and conceptual frameworks concerned with the general study of nationalism, Chinese and

Russian nationalism in particular and International Relations theories such as realism and great power politics.

In chapters 1 and 2 this thesis draws upon three explanatory theories of nationalism: primordialism; modernism; and ethno-symbolism. Within the modernist theoretical approach this thesis uses three conceptual models – economic transformation, political transformation and social transformation – to best explain the evolution of nationalism in China and Russia. As mentioned above this thesis also draws upon SIT to highlight the distinctive differences of the Chinese and Russian nations when compared to other nations.

To provide analysis of Chinese and Russian foreign policy assertiveness this thesis applies a realist theoretical framework. Knowing how to apply realist theories requires careful thought about how precisely they are related to realism's own core assumptions, scope conditions, and expected outcomes as well as to the real-world foreign policy scenarios to which they are applied (Wohlforth et al, 2016). Theory cannot explain the accidental or account for unexpected events: theories deal in regularities and repetitions and are possible only if these can be identified (Waltz, 2008).

Realist theorists are, by and large, pessimists when it comes to international politics and, though they do agree that creating a peaceful world would be desirable, there is no easy way to escape the harsh environment of security competition and war (Mearsheimer, 2014). The rationale for applying a realist theoretical approach is that realism is one of the dominant theoretical frameworks in the study of International Relations. Both China and Russia show clear signs of pursuing a realist foreign policy as they have become more competitive and confrontational. Also, nationalism seems to be at odds with liberalism and is an ideology that belongs in the realist framework as it promotes competition over cooperation.

The realist framework now consists of two major theoretical approaches; classical realism and neo-realism. Realism has three core beliefs: that states are the principal actors in world politics (with a focus on great powers); that the behaviour of great powers is influenced mainly by their external environment, not by their internal environment; and, that calculations about power dominate states' thinking, with states competing for power amongst themselves (Mearsheimer, 2014).

### Classical Realist

According to Morgenthau (1985), states strive for ever more power. As Waltz (2008) argues, from a classical realist point of view, power is seen as an end in itself. It is human nature to desire more and more power which, as Morgenthau argues, brings to attention the role of the individual leaders' relation to power. Classical realism focuses more on the human nature of statesmen and this is important in the study of contemporary nationalism's impact on revisionist great powers foreign policy as both China and Russia are governed by strong authoritarian leaders who hold almost absolute power. According to Morgenthau (1985) there are six principles that are fundamental to realist theory: (1) political realism believes that politics is governed by laws that have their roots in human nature; (2) the main signpost that helps political realism find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power; (3) realism assumes that its key concept of interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid, but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all; (4) political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action; (5) political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe; and (6), the difference between political realism and other schools is real.

For classical realists, anarchy is a general condition rather than a distinct structure. It is based on the simple assumption that states are led by human beings who have a "will to power" which means they constantly look for opportunities to take the offensive and dominate other states (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Proponents of classical realism, such as Hans Morgenthau, agree on the pessimistic assumption that human nature is selfish and that the international system is anarchic, however, this is where their convergence stops. As a critique of classical realism, neo-realism emerged to assist in explaining phenomena that classical realism struggled with. The claim that anarchy leads to security seeking is at the centre of neo-realist theory which claims that because no authority exists to keep any state from harming others, all must fear for their survival (Davidson, 2006). He adds that anarchy leads to autonomy concerns. Just as no central authority keeps one state from inflicting harm on another, no central authority keeps one state from controlling the internal and external affairs of others.

### Neo Realist

Whereas Hans Morgenthau argued that states strive for ever more power, Waltz (2008) proposes a structural theory built on the assumption that survival is the goal of states and that power is one of the means to that end. Structural realism, or defensive realism, assumes that the dominant goal of states is security since to pursue whatever goals a state might have in mind requires that they first must survive (Waltz, 2008). For neo-realists, states are made functionally similar by the constraints of structure, with the principal difference among them defined by capabilities (Waltz, 2008). Defensive realism contends that states merely aim to survive: above all else, they seek security. Moreover, the structure of the international system forces great powers to pay particular attention to the balance of power. Waltz (2008) suggests that defensive realism offers a theory that explains how structures affect behaviour and outcomes (explored in chapters 3, 4 and 5).

As a critique of defensive realism, offensive realism emerged to offer a different theoretical approach. Just like defensive realism, offensive realism sees great powers as concerned with power and survival. However, according to Mearsheimer (2014), status quo powers are rarely found in world politics because the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals and, to take advantage of situations when the benefits outweigh the costs. Mearsheimer places the main emphasis on security competition among great powers within the anarchy of the international system, not principally on the human nature of statesmen and contends that states are not satisfied within a given amount of power, they always want more. The ultimate goal of a great power according to this theory is hegemony.

A conceptual framework is generally developed based on a literature review of existing studies and theories about the topic and is concerned with the measurement of variables and how these variables relate to each other. A conceptual framework illustrates what you expect to find through your research. It defines the relevant variables for a study and maps out how they might relate to each other and, represents the theories relevant to the topic.

From the literature review conducted in chapters 1 and 2, this thesis created a conceptual model and a workable definition of contemporary nationalism. This thesis, as

noted above, also used social identity theory as a conceptual model to differentiate between Chinese and Russian contemporary nationalism. In chapters 3 and 4, this thesis created a conceptual model for analysing the strategic thinking behind Chinese and Russian foreign policy by investigating the leading policy actors in the formulation of foreign policy. Chapter 5 draws upon the great power framework as a conceptual model to explain Chinese and Russian great power politics.

### Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is an investigation of the impact of contemporary nationalism on Chinese and Russian foreign policy concentrating on the time period from 2012-2021. There are a number of reasons for choosing this period. First, in the case of China, it was in 2012 that Xi Jinping became CCP Chairman and President of China and, in Russia, President Putin was elected for a third presidential term. In both cases, 2012 is also the time that both countries foreign policies took a decisive shift becoming more assertive and confrontational with increased nationalistic overtones.

The study here of China and Russia's foreign policy stops in April 2021 as this represents a milestone in the CCP's history as it marked the 100-year centenary since its founding and, for Russia, it marked just over two decades since President Putin came to power. An almost two-decade timeframe allows for a thorough and extended analysis of each respective country.

### Structure of Thesis

Nationalism is intrinsically connected to the formation of the state. It holds dear the principle of national identity and state sovereignty, and that it is a nations right to pursue its national interests. Every nation is defined in a particular way whether by race, culture, languages and religion with every modern state distinguishing themselves by their names, flags, anthems and other such means.

The first question this thesis is concerned with, and thus the focus of chapter one, is what is nationalism? To answer this question this chapter will conduct a literature review focusing on investigating three inter-related factors that assist in framing a definition of nationalism: the state; the nation; and the nation-state. How a nation should be defined has led to a variety of theoretical concepts and a number of competing theories of nationalism.

Nationalism can manifest itself as part of an official state ideology or as a popular movement along civic, ethnic, cultural, religious or ideological lines. Applying content analysis of different academic literature and theoretical perspectives, this chapter provides a detailed examination of nationalism and its evolution from an identity-building project to how a modern society organises itself.

A distinctive feature of the evolution of the modern international system is the emergence of ideologies so universalist in their assumptions that they have ignored or, at worst, denied the cultural and political diversity of human diversity (Howard, 1989). It is in this space, that nationalism, as an ideology, has once again started to impact global politics. Nationalism, however, is not just an ideology, it is increasingly being used by authoritarian governments as a political tool as they attempt to find new ways to identify with the nation and legitimise their rule.

Through an examination of historical literature and employing Social Identity Theory and psychobiography chapter 2 focuses on investigating the origins and evolution of both Chinese and Russian nationalism. To achieve this, the chapter will examine academic literature related to Chinese and Russian history dividing their respective histories into two eras: pre-modern and modern. A nation's identity clearly evolves over time and can be shaped by the interactions with others. These interactions often produce positive outcomes such as technology breakthroughs and economic trade partnerships, but they can also produce negative outcomes such as conquest and domination which can create a sense of grievance among the indigenous populace and also influence a state's foreign policy

Foreign policy analysis allows for a better understanding of how political actors make policy decisions and how they relate to other foreign governments and non-government entities. The foreign policy of a state is formulated and implemented by its policy makers and professional diplomats who take into account the national interest, the internal and external environment, the foreign policy goals and decisions of other nations/states and the nature of the international power structure (Kitol, 2012).

Chapters 3 and 4 assess the impact which contemporary nationalism has on China and Russia's foreign policy. Both chapters draw upon academic literature, media sources, and official state documents and content and critical discourse analysis of, respectively,

President Xi and President Putin's language through speeches and press releases to investigate the main policy actors and analyse the strategic thinking behind the formulation of both respective foreign policies. Finally, case study analysis is introduced to examine how nationalism impacts foreign policy by investigating three particular case studies of central importance to each country. For China, these are the South China Sea, the East China Sea and, Taiwan and, for Russia, they are the Ukraine conflict, Syria and, the Arctic.

All states seek to preserve their culture and national identity and maintain their independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty and security. When states amass enough material capabilities and become major players in the international system, realism argues that a state's relative power defines its foreign policy and that capabilities shape intentions (Zhang, 2014).

Chapter 5 is designed to examine the connection between nationalism and great power politics and consider the extent to which, if at all, nationalism leads to rising powers becoming revisionist? It first defines what great power status means by investigating quantitative measures. The chapter then examines the link between great powers and nationalism by examining 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century European powers and nationalism. Next, it will look at great power competition so as to provide framework for analysis. The chapter will then investigate the difference between a revisionist and status quo power in order to determine the nature of Chinese and Russian foreign policy intentions. It finishes with an examination of the relationship between Chinese nationalism and Russian nationalism and great power politics by returning to the case studies explored in chapters 3 and 4.

This thesis will conclude by offering a summary of the research findings, outlining the limitations of the study and making recommendations for further areas of importance to research.

# Chapter One

## What is Contemporary Nationalism?

Over the past decade, there has been a resurgence in nationalism as a political, economic and social system that has once again come to shape global politics. In the context of globalisation, national identity is increasingly becoming a problem and technological progress extends the defined temporal-spatial boundaries and fixed network of contacts (Liu & Turner, 2018). Global advances in technology may have brought us closer to people in other countries through the internet, which is generally accepted as a good thing for economic and social reasons, but, at the same time, the fear of outsiders/foreigners has prompted sovereign states to become increasingly protective over their geographical borders (Das, 2016). This type of sentiment has given rise to a number of new nationalist political parties that have gained popularity in Europe, and to the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President in 2016 on a populist, nationalistic, platform of 'America First'.

However, there are also some political leaders from authoritarian regimes using nationalism as a tool to legitimise or consolidate power, or to rejuvenate or re-establish the previous prestige that their respective countries may have enjoyed at one point in time. Groups strive for social identities that are positively distinctive: group members want to be both better on relevant dimensions than other groups and different from them as well (Larson, 2015). National identity is the product of the development of modern nationalism. Liu and Turner (2018) contend that, since the French revolution, modern nationalism is an ideology, a political tool and social movement based on this ideology, but what is nationalism?

This chapter is not designed to argue when or how nationalism originated as, very often, we are dealing with theories, models and approaches that are equally plausible and valid because they seek answers to quite different questions as to the causes and consequences of nationalism (Smith, 1998). Several different social science schools, who view the subject from their varying perspectives (for example, anthropology, sociology and political science) have approached the study of nationalism. This chapter aims to develop a field of overlapping research that crosscuts and integrates the various domains, disciplines,

subjects and themes of nationalism in order to establish a framework to measure its impact on the foreign policies of China and Russia. Kellas (1998) asserts that the study of nationalism in International Relations (IR) is often confusing because sometimes it deals with states and, at other times, with nations, nationalities and ethnic groups, none of which are states. As Mearsheimer (2011, p 4) points out, the central unit of analysis for realism is the state, in contrast the central element of analysis for nationalism is the nation. So, with this in mind, before defining contemporary nationalism, a clear distinction is needed between the state, the nation, and the nation-state. This chapter will then examine three theoretical perspectives used in the study of nationalism such as primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism. Each of these theories is used to explore and address the varying types of nationalism as they add a different perspective and can account for how Chinese and Russian nationalism has evolved from the pre-modern era to the present day countries that we are familiar with (to be explored in chapter 2). This chapter will then conclude by offering a clear definition of contemporary nationalism.

The first section of this chapter will examine and define the state.

### *The State*

“The state can be a difficult concept to grasp intellectually as it is closely associated with other concepts that are often used interchangeably with it, such as government and regime, but is distinct from both” (Hislope & Mughan, 2012, p7). It does not help that different cultures also conceive of the state in different ways. The Anglo-American political tradition argues that the government is acting on behalf of the state, whereas the Continental European tradition argues that the state is a moral agent greater than the sum of its individual parts and capable of transforming and elevating humankind. According to these political traditions, the state is either an apparatus to corral and control its citizenry (Strayer, 2005), or, an artistic institution and its purpose is culture (Fichte, 1796).

As Breuilly (1993) contends, the modern world consists of sovereign states with sharply defined boundaries. In 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia was signed bringing an end to the ‘Eighty Years War’ between Spain and the Dutch and the German phase of the ‘Thirty Years War’. The Treaties that were signed provided the foundations of the modern state system and articulated the concept of territorial sovereignty. An enduring feature of the

Westphalian model was a recognition that the claim of states to jurisdiction within their own territories was absolute (Pierson, 2011). This is a core principle that China and Russia practise and is discussed further in chapters 3 and 4. However, as will be mentioned in Chapter 4, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is arguably a violation of Westphalian principles. The state has a looming presence in the lives of every one of us. "There are few people that live outside the reach of the state and there is little valuable land on the planet that has not been claimed by one or several states" (Hislope & Mughan, 2012, p2).

A commonly used definition, and a frequent starting point when defining the state, is by German sociologist Max Weber. He describes the state as a compulsory political organisation with a centralised government that maintains a monopoly over the legitimate use of force within a certain territory (Hislope & Mughan, 2012). Flint (2012) asserts that most definitions identify territory as a bounded space that is under some sort of political control and that territory is related to the political geography of sovereignty, or the idea of absolute power or control. Strayer (2005) comments that the state is a form of social organisation and, for a state to exist, a human community must persist in space and time; only through living together over generations can groups of people develop the patterns of organisation which are essential for state-building. The state can be defined as groups of people who have acquired international recognition as an independent country and which have a population, a common language, and a defined and distinct territory (Duhaime, 2018).

Held (1989) argues that, historically, there have been five main types of state systems: traditional tribute-taking empires; feudalism (a system of divided authority); the polity of estates; absolutist states; and modern nation-states. Traditional state systems generally lacked conceptions of sovereignty, monopolistic authority, nationality, and constitutionality and these conceptions are a common theme in modern states (Pierson, 2011). This thesis is only concerned with the definition of the modern state as it is the prevailing mode of political organisation in contemporary society and inter-state relations are the cornerstone of IR.

The state is the most powerful social organisation linking individuals to groups and plays an important role in society: it establishes balance and reconciliation between individuals and groups providing security to individuals and safeguarding their rights

(Kumar, 2012). To achieve a particular type of social organisation, however, the state needs certain tools which take shape in the form of institutions. A composite definition of the state contains three elements: first, the state is a set of institutions manned by the state's own personnel; second, these institutions are at the centre of a geographically bounded territory, usually referred to as a society; and third, the state monopolizes rule making within its territory (Hall & Ikenberry, 1989).

In order for a state to possess these elements though, it must have sovereignty, authority, legitimacy and power over its domain. Gould (2018) adds that if a nation does not have sovereignty (e.g. the Kurds, Native Americans and Australian Aboriginals), it cannot be called a state. Sovereignty is an essential part indicating possession of supreme authority over a given territory such that no other entities, whether domestic or international, may interfere with the exercise of that authority. Authority refers to the moral right to rule coupled with the obligation of the ruled to obey, whereas legitimacy indicates that compliance in an authority relationship is acceptable and given voluntarily (Hislope & Mughan, 2012). Power is another essential component part of the state and is usually institutionalised through an executive, a bureaucracy, courts of law, the military and police force. A basic definition of power is offered by Dahl (1957) who sees it as the use of force/coercion to get someone to do something they would otherwise not do. Therefore, through the combination of these elements the state possesses an elaborate institutional structure that delimits, justifies and exercises the claims attached to sovereignty (Breuilly, 1993). As Farooq (2012) argues, in the field of IR the term 'state' has a symbolic sense signifying the existence of an independent sovereign entity. As Koshal (2011) contends, the state is the political unit that has sovereign power over a piece of land, but can also be defined as an organised community that lives under the power of the government.

In conclusion, a state can be defined as a community/people that have acquired international recognition, with the means of rule over a defined or sovereign territory comprising of an executive, a bureaucracy, courts of law, a legislature and other institutions.

The following section will focus on providing a definition of the nation.

## The Nation

Human history is the history of civilisations stretching through generations as an organised culture encompassing many communities, often on the scale of a nation or a people (Huntington, 1996). The nation is a concept that has a number of competing theories about its origin and definition, but which are essentially about identity construction. In the West, modernist theory suggests that the nation and the state emerged together which has led many theorists of nationalism to regard the modern, bureaucratic state as the source and framework of modern nations (Smith, 1998). Elsewhere, however, other nationalist theorists argue that China has been a nation for a much longer time. Gat (2013) notes that China is one of the world's oldest civilisations and states having survived and exhibited a virtually unbroken culture and political continuum. This has profoundly affected the development of its neighbours throughout East Asia over millennia which is explored in depth in chapter 2. According to Malinova (2020, p1), "the concept of civilisation is not a new tool for identity construction and that both 'civilisation' in the singular and 'civilisations' in the plural have been used for this purpose".

As Ozkirimli (2017, p117) contends, "it is too simplistic to suggest that nations grew out of, and replaced, religious communities and dynastic realms". Indeed, religion was a crucial component that has assisted to shape national identity stemming from its historical role as a major element of culture (Gat, 2013). He adds that religion can bind groups together as a proto-nationalism in the form of devotion to the interests or culture of a particular nation.

According to Connors (1978), nation-formation is a process, not an occurrence. Malesevic (2013, p55) contends that whereas political units such as the state have clear empirical referents, it is not certain at all what a nation is or who counts as a member. Membership of some national communities will be defined very restrictively by the likes of descent, linguistic ability or religion, whereas others may adopt a voluntarist model according to which anyone wishing to do so may join by living on the national territory (Sutherland, 2011, 73-74). Gat (2013) proposes that a people becomes a nation when it is politically sovereign, either as a dominant majority within a national state or as the politically central element within a multi-ethnic state or empire. He adds that if a people do

not have independent statehood, they can still be regarded as a nation if they possess elements of political self-determination or actively strive to achieve them.

“Attempts to establish objective criteria for nationhood have often been made based on single criteria such as language or ethnicity, or a combination of criteria such as language, common territory, common history and cultural traits” (Hobsbawn, 1990, p5). This is perhaps best demonstrated by Joseph Stalin’s view that a nation is an historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture (Stalin, 1936). The Oxford Dictionary adds that the nation can be defined as a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory (Oxford Dictionary, 2018).

Applying an objective definition may assist in empirically measuring certain elements of a nation, but it fails to adequately explain a number of factors such as why people have certain attachments to some people and not to others, and why people would give up their lives for their nation. As Connors (1978) suggests, defining and conceptualising the nation is much more difficult because the essence of a nation is intangible. Even in modern industrial society, let alone in pre-modern or modernising societies, most people develop attachments that have a deeply emotive significance that remain with them throughout life consciously (Brass, 1991). The close interaction that comes with a shared territory also constantly sustains and reinforces the commonality of culture and kinship, creating a sense of community and linking individuals together through shared historical memories (Gat, 2013). Ferdinand Tonnies’ famous distinction asserts that the community refers to a form of order which people are bound by, that derives from language, ethnicity, religion, tribe and other natural social forms (Harris, 2001). There is a strong correlation – and causal connection – between ethnicity, language, religion, and territory and the shaping of national identity (Gat, 2013).

As Kedourie (1993) argues, language, race, culture are some identifiable markers constitute different aspects of the nation and that nations are formed based on attachments to the cultural givens of social existence (Kedourie, 1993; Smith, 1993). “A culture is a way of life of a group of people – the behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next” (Fatimah, 2018, p1). It is

cultural differences that make nations unique and is best explained through a subjective lens.

An anthropological definition of the nation, one best associated with Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, is that the nation is an imagined political community which is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. "It is imagined in the sense that people, even in the smallest nation, will never know their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet, in the minds of each, is an image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983, p6). Anderson is a modernist who contends that there are real communities that can be advantageously compared to nations, however, all communities whether large or small are essentially imagined, a construct. It is important to stress, as Sutherland (2011) points out, that Anderson defines nations as imagined, not imaginary, they may be creations, but are not thereby false fabrications. Anderson's subjective definition moves away from a tendency to treat the nation as an ideological construct, instead referring to it as belonging to the same family as kinship or religion. Regardless of the inequality that may prevail in each community, the nation is always conceived as a comradeship and it is this sense of fraternity that makes it possible for people to willingly lay down their lives for their nation (Anderson, 1983).

When defining the nation, the solution generally adopted has been to choose criteria which span the objective-subjective spectrum (Smith, 1998). Objectively, a person is not influenced by their personal feelings in defining the nation whereas subjectively a person's definition of the nation is defined by their personal feelings towards it. Because a nation is neither a state nor an ethnic community, nations are felt and lived communities whose members share a homeland and a culture (Smith (1998). Therefore, the concept of nation is best defined as an identifiable human community residing in a perceived homeland, having common myths and a shared history, a distinct public culture, and common laws and customs for all members.

The next section of this chapter will investigate the nation-state.

## The Nation-State

The term “nation-state” is a contentious concept with a number of competing ideas on what it actually constitutes. “A nation-state is an independent state that consists of people from one particular national group” (Collins Dictionary, 2018). The term nation-state is a mix of two linked, though as previously pointed out, different concepts, the nation and the state. The nation-state fuses state sovereignty and national sovereignty and is based on the moral-philosophical principle of popular sovereignty (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021).

Malesevic (2013, p88) argues that the nation-state is the dominant form of organisation rooted in long-term organisational and ideological transformations grounded in the dispositions of previous creeds and doctrines and, consists of a group of people that maintain a national identity, occupy a bounded territory and possess their own government. A nation-state has also been described as a geographic area where the great majority are conscious of a common identity and share the same culture, and where the cultural boundaries match up with the political boundaries (UNESCO, 2017).

Walby (2003), however, disputes Malesevic’s connotation that the nation-state is the dominant form of social organisation, suggesting instead that, in practice, the nation-state rarely occurs: it is more mythical than real and that several key examples of presumed nation-states are actually empires. According to Colomer (2017), the current world is organised into a number of very large size political units with some academic authors finding it useful to analyse it by categorising countries like modern Russia, China and even the United States as empires. He adds that an empire can be conceived of as a very large sized polity with moveable frontiers and a government formed by multiple institutional levels and overlapping jurisdictions, typically encompassing a high number of small political units, including states, but also regions, cities, and other communities. It is important to note that both China and Russia are not considered nation-states.

In conclusion, though there are differing views on what constitutes a nation state, there can be no disputing that, even though it is not necessarily the dominant form of social organisation, the nation-state is still a means of social organisation. A nation-state can be defined as a secularised social organisation with a fixed and stable territory and having a centralised political authority underpinned by intensive ideological particularism and the

promotion of moral egalitarianism, social solidarity and cultural homogeneity among its populace.

The next section of this chapter will examine three theoretical perspectives associated with nationalism: primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism.

### **Nationalism**

Nationalism can be understood as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation (Guo, 2004, p14). Nationalism can manifest itself as part of official state ideology or as a popular movement expressed along civic, ethnic, cultural, religious or ideological lines. Nationalism can be associated with challenges to the state as well as the defence of it. Whether expressed through the state, regional political institutions, political parties, or civil society organisations, nationalism is always embedded in a twofold dynamic coupling inclusion with exclusion (Gagnon et al, 2011, p8).

It was only during the last century that the term nationalism acquired a range of meanings that are associated with it today (Smith, 2010). These include a process of formation, or growth, of nations; a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation; a language and symbolism of the nation; a social and political movement on behalf of the nation; and a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation both general and particular. As a result of this wide range of meanings, the study of nationalism has produced a plethora of related terminology such as nation, nation-state, nation-building, nationhood, national, nationality, national self-determination, national self-consciousness, nationality-state and nationalist (Sullivan, 1995). This, in turn, has led to a number of typologies of nationalism such as civic nationalism, cultural nationalism, ethnic nationalism, religious nationalism, imperial nationalism, state or patriotic nationalism, liberal nationalism, economic nationalism and racial (right-wing) nationalism each suggesting how to define the nation.

According to Sutherland (2011), the way in which the nation is defined is what opens up the fault lines between nationalism's many variants. In other words, just as nationalism can be chauvinistic and exclusionary, so it can be defined more openly by offering a share in a common project. "If we dismiss all nationalism as inherently pernicious, then the current

international political system, and an important component of most people's identities, are necessarily compromised because nationalism also underpins the world order of nation-states and citizenship" (Sutherland, 2011, p67).

The nation and nationalism mean so many things to people that a sensible discussion is hardly possible (Guo, 2004, p9). As Smith (2010, p9) suggests, the ideology of nationalism has been defined in many ways, although most of the definitions overlap and reveal common themes including that of an overriding concern with the nation, placing it at the centre of its concerns and seeking to promote its well-being, albeit in a rather vague way. Indeed, the core of nationalist theory is that nationality is an inherent attribute of the human condition and that humanity is made up of objectively identifiable nations (Ozkirimli, 2017). Nationalist theory, however, contains both descriptive and prescriptive elements: the world is divided into distinct nations and loyalty to them should trump all other loyalties and nations should be politically independent (Kostagiannis, 2017). Political independence is at the core of many countries' national interests.

In his book, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (1998), Kellas mentions three prominent theoretical models used in the study of nationalism: the pre-modern (ethnic) model, the modern (socioeconomic) model, and the post-modern (cultural) model. Brown (2005) contends that theories see nationalism as an instinct (primordialism), an interest (situationalism) or an ideology (constructivism), which provide the points within which the various writers of nationalism may be located. These theories can best be examined using the primordialist, modernist and ethno-symbolist perspectives (Smith, 2010).

To assist in investigating contemporary nationalism, this thesis will examine the primordialist, modernist and ethno-symbolist theoretical approaches as they are fundamental to the study of nationalism and will assist in gaining a clearer understanding of it. Each perspective generates differing narratives as to the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism, the rise of nation-states, and the problematic character of contemporary nationalism (Brown, 2005).

The first theoretical concept of nationalism the chapter will examine is primordialism.

## Primordialism

What is primordialism? Ozkirimli (2017, p51) asserts that “primordialism is an umbrella term used to describe the belief that nationality is a natural part of human beings; as natural as speech, sight or smell, and that nations have existed since time immemorial”. Primordialism’s underlying premise is that the nation is an ancient, natural phenomenon and that humanity has evolved into distinct, organic communities each with their own language and culture (Brown, 2005, p6). Like other models of nationalism, there are a number of varieties of primordialist concepts such as the organicist approach, the socio-biologist approach and the cultural approach.

As Smith (2010) contends, the basic premise of the organicist approach holds that nations are ‘primordial’, they exist in the first order of time. This approach holds that primordial identities or attachments are ‘givens’, underived, prior to all experience and interaction, and ‘natural’ even ‘spiritual’ rather than sociological (Ozkirimli, 2017, p57).

The socio-biological approach describes the nation as belonging to the same kin-selection, emphasising genetic links. It is most closely associated with socio-biologist Pierre Van De Berghe (1978) who asserts that the cultural group is treated as a wider kin network, and that cultural symbols like language, religion, ethnicity and race are used as markers of biological affinity. Smith and Hutchinson (1994, p98) comment that the cultural inventions of the unilineal descent and lineage exogamy permitted the extension of social organisation. Exogamy is usually defined through kinship rather than ethnicity, religion or class. It is also referred to as out-marriage; a custom enjoining marriage outside one’s group (Pauls, 2018). Scholars of this theoretical perspective view ethnic and racial group affiliation as an ascribed ‘primordial identity’ deeply rooted, given at birth and largely unchangeable. Ozkirimli (2017) argues that, in the simplest terms, the sociological view of these groups is that they are fundamentally defined by common descent and maintained by endogamy and that ethnicity is simply kinship writ large. Endogamy refers to marriage within a specific group as required by custom or law (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

The culturalist approach can be described as one that focuses on the role of perceptions in understanding ethnic and national sentiments (Ozkirimli, 2017, p59-60). The most influential version of primordialism is associated with the American anthropologist

Clifford Geertz and can be associated with Social Identity Theory. He asserts that ethnic groups and nations are formed based on attachments to the social givens of social existence which persist alongside secular and civil ties, even in industrial societies (Geertz, 1973). Each distinct linguistic nation ought to enjoy political self-determination by forming its own sovereign state held together by the necessary common values to develop a harmonious society (Brown, 2005, p9). The common theme with primordialism is that one is born into a particular linguistic, racial or homeland community (motherland or fatherland), and the individual therefore inevitably feels an overwhelming emotional bond with that community. Van De Berghe (1978, p1) notes that “both racist and nationalist ideologies were a popular expression of this early version of primordialism”.

Few would deny that primordial attachments have been a persistent feature of human life. According to Smith (1998), primordialists’ attempt to understand the passion and self-sacrifice characteristics of nations and nationalism by deriving them from natural attributes like language, religion, territory and kinship. Individual identity is embedded in, and defined by, the culture of the community of birth and childhood (Brown, 2005, p8). As Ozkirimli (2017, p58) suggests, one is bound to one’s relatives and neighbours and that the strength of such primordial bonds differs from person to person and from society to society

No one disputes that there were peoples, communities and forms of social organisation in pre-modern or early times; the contention is over what these attachments meant to those who possessed or were affected by them and how they relate to the attachments we associate with modern nations and nationalism (Ozkirimli, 2017, p236). Primordialist approaches to nationalism do not try to specify the precise nature of the ethno-national bond, they simply claim that ethnicity and nationalism refer to an emotional and spiritual bond which is ineffable and unaccountable and which cannot be explained rationally (Brown, 2005, p8). The primordialist perspective views nations as something intrinsic to human nature; a type of social organisation that human beings need to form in order to survive in this world (Ichijo & Uzelac, 2005). What is important about the primordialist contribution is that we, as individuals and members of collectivities, feel and believe in the primordality of our ethnicities and nations, their naturalness, longevity and power (Geertz, 1973).

This second theoretical concept this chapter will investigate is the modernist approach to the study of nationalism.

### Modernism

Modernists argue that it is not only nationalism that is modern, so are nations, national states, national identities and the whole inter-national community (Smith, 2010, p50-51). Modernism emerged as a reaction to primordialism's inability to explain the origins of ethnic and national ties, the date of the emergence of nations, and the question of emotion and effect (Ozкимli, 2017, 81). He adds that nations and nationalism, according to modernism, appeared in the last two centuries and are the products of specifically modern processes like capitalism, industrialisation, urbanisation, secularism and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state. Modernism is a belief that nations and nationalism are intrinsic to the modern world and the revolution of modernity.

Modernity differs from previous epochs not only in terms of economics and politics, but also in cultural values (Malesevic, 2013). Smith (2010, p50) argues that modernism comes in two forms, chronological and sociological. The chronological form implies that nationalism is an ideology, movement and symbolism; it is a modern concept. The sociological form that nationalism is an innovation and qualitatively novel. Apart from their basic belief in the modernity of nations and nationalism, modernists have very little in common. Their perspectives divide into three categories in terms of the key factors they identify: economic transformation; political transformation; and social/cultural transformation (Ozкимli, 2017). In his book *Nationalism* (2010), Smith instead mentions five overall modernist theories: socioeconomic; sociocultural; political; ideological, and constructionist. These theories, however, can be placed into the three theoretical perspectives mentioned above: economic transformation (socioeconomic); political transformation (ideological and political); social/cultural transformation (sociocultural and constructionist).

### *Economic Transformation*

The first perspective associated with modernism is economic transformation (socioeconomic). This perspective stresses the importance of socioeconomic transformations in understanding nationalism. The basic premise of the socioeconomic

concept is that nations and nationalism are derived from such economic and social factors as industrial capitalism, regional inequality and class conflict. For socioeconomic theorists, the root of nationalism is found in the general process of historical development. Nairn (2003) argues that the process of historical development has led to the uneven development of capitalism. As Brass (1991) points out, this might be because multi-ethnic societies tend to proceed unevenly.

According to the socioeconomic perspective, nationalism derives from the unequal encounter between the centre and periphery which creates inequality. Smith (1998) contends that this inequality partly derives from the uneven and often violent and discontinuous imposition of capitalism by a Western bourgeoisie on undeveloped and backward regions in the world. The redistribution of real income may be a prerequisite to nationalism in that it may perform a necessary function in the early stages of forming a nation: creating a middle class creates stability in society (Hutchinson & Smith, 1994).

There are four common themes with economic transformation; (1) an intelligentsia increasingly squeezed between big capital and the great proletarian movements; (2) the use of nationalist ideologies by a bourgeoisie to induce a 'false consciousness' to divide and divert the masses who threaten their position; (3) nationalisms led by nascent colonial bourgeoisie against the exploitation of imperialist capitalists; and (4) the right for nations (no matter their size) to secede from other polities until such a time as a socialist regime is established in the area (Smith, 1998). It is clear from the last theme that socioeconomic nationalism is closely aligned to the Marxist theory of class struggle and that the nation is a cause of this class struggle according to communist theory. This point is reiterated by Nairn (2003) who argues that nationalism can be understood in material terms, it is an internally determined necessity, associated by Marxists with the creation of a national market economy and a viable national bourgeois class. Marxists adhere to a largely economic analysis which either explains or reduces nationalist struggles to the workings of a particular stage of capitalism (early, late, monopoly, imperialist) held to be responsible for these political developments (Smith, 1998). The Marxian standpoint links nationalist movements of varying forms to different stages of capitalist development in their respective nations (Sutherland, 2011).

### *Political Transformation*

The second perspective associated with modernism is political transformation (ideological and political). This perspective stresses the importance of ideological and political transformations in understanding nationalism. “Political transformation scholars focus on the rise of the modern bureaucratic state, the extension of suffrage, the growing role of elites and its power struggles or the changing nature of warfare to account for the rise in nationalism” (Ozkirimli, 2017, p92).

Ideology has a special place in nationalist movements differentiating it from other ideological movements by using special symbols, images and concepts such as ‘the people’, the ‘homeland’, ‘the motherland/fatherland’, ‘authenticity’, ‘destiny and autonomy’ (Smith, 1998). It is these constructs that the state uses to frame their political narrative (examined in chapters 3 and 4). As Kohn (1960) notes, nationalism has its roots in the order of group feelings. Though there are different kinds of nationalist ideology such as ethnic, religious, secular, conservative, radical, imperial, and secessionist, they each reveal common basic elements and are stamped with an identical hallmark; the singular pursuit of nationhood (Smith, 2010).

When nationalism is defined as an ideology, the nation is seen as an ideological movement that seeks to attain and maintain the autonomy, unity and identity of a human population. Nationalist ideology operates with three notions: first, the notion of the unique community; second, the idea the nation as a society should have its own state; and third, the nation is thought of as the body of citizens and self-determination is justified in terms of universal political principles (Smith & Hutchinson, 1994, p109-110).

The core doctrine of nationalism asserts that the world is divided into nations, each with its own character, history and destiny; the nation is the sole source of political power; loyalty to the nation overrides all other loyalties; to be free, every individual must belong to a nation; every nation requires full self-expression and autonomy; and global peace and justice requires a world of autonomous nations (Kedourie, 1993). These core elements of nationalist ideology operate on various levels designed to enhance their political significance with an emphasis on cultural distinctiveness and values which assist in mobilising mass support or coordinating a wide variety of elites in a bid for territorial

independence (Smith & Hutchinson, 1994). The core doctrine provides the rationale and impetus for the various kinds of nationalist activity as well as for the symbols and institutions that express the idea of the nation (Smith, 2010, p25).

Though different nationalist ideologies share common tenets, ideals and core concepts, it is important for a basic typology of nationalist ideology not to overlook systematic differences. According to Smith (2010), there are two kinds of nationalist ideology: 'voluntarist' and 'organic'. The voluntarist kind is based on the idea that the nation is a rational association of citizens bound by common laws and a shared territory and is consensual in nature, whereas the organic kind is historical in nature and based in a belief of a common culture and ethnic origins (i.e. a cult of ancestors).

Nationalism is an ideological instrument for social development (Kedourie, 1993). If nationalism is a narrative, or discourse, it is one which is institutionally and socially constituted and that has all the backing of the ideological apparatus of the state and civil society (Ozkirimli, 2017). As Breuilly (1993) suggests, because nationalist ideology is particularly adaptive, it can have great popular appeal and is a powerful force essential in the work of coordination, mobilisation and providing legitimacy. The most important ideological ingredient of nationalist ideology is the connection between the community and political demands. According to Smith (2010, p24), nationalist ideologies have well-defined goals of collective self-rule, territorial unification and cultural identity, and often a clear political and cultural programme for achieving these ends. In this respect, nationalism can be used to unite the nation towards a common goal or great revival.

When explaining nationalism as an ideology, the focus is mainly on the European origins of nationalism and the modernity of nationalist ideology, its quasi-religious power and its role in the breaking up of empires and creating nations in their place. Nationalist ideology is a quasi-solution to the problem of the relationship between state and society (Smith & Hutchinson, 1994). The nationalist argument can only possess a wide appeal when modern conditions have created a sense of alienation and frustration among many educated people, who then look to doctrines that promise the reintegration of state and society (Smith, 2010, p79).

However, according to Freedon (1998), nationalism is a thin-centered ideology, as it has few core characteristics beyond prioritising the nation. Thin-centered ideologies are those that do not provide answers to all the major socio-political questions and could therefore be compatible with other, more extensively developed, political belief systems such as socialism or liberalism (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). Sutherland (2011, p38) notes that the core of a thin-centered ideology like nationalism must be supplemented with elements of other ideologies. Conversely, a thin-centered ideology like nationalism can be used to supplement an otherwise 'thick' ideology lacking in one fundamental area (discussed in chapter 5). Consequently, as Guibernau (1999) asserts, the political ideologies to which nationalism is attached are crucial to understanding the significance and character of nationalism in each particular case.

Modernist believe that nations and nationalism belong to a particular, historically recent period that political transformation is the source of nationalism (Hobsbawn, 1990). For much of history, ethnies were a form of (largely non-political) cultural identity but, in the modern era, they became politicised and began to move towards nationhood as they took on some of the attributes of *Gesellschaft* (Smith, 1986). *Gesellschaft* is a German term that refers to a society or group characterised by formal organisations, impersonal relations, the absence of generally held or binding norms, and a detachment from traditional and sentimental concerns. It often tends to be rationalistic and secular in outlook. *Gemeinschaft* is the opposite of *Gesellschaft* and refers to social relations between individuals being based on close personal and family ties (Dictionary.Com, 2018).

According to Breuilly (1993), the modern state originally developed in a liberal form and involved a double transformation: institutions such as the monarchy lost their 'private' powers and other institutions, like the church and guilds, lost their 'public' powers to government which led to a clearer distinction between the state as public and civil society as private. This led to the de-politicisation of religion as it lost its element of coercion, religion retreated into the individual conscience (Kohn, 1960). However, as Smith (2010, p79) suggests, nationalism's importance lies in its ability to offer a common platform for various sub-elites through the mobilisation, coordination and legitimation of their goals and interests. He suggests that it is political relations and institutions that shape the goals of nationalism and uses the example of the creation of the German nation-state in 1871,

noting that it had very little to do with culture and everything to do with power politics, geopolitics and economics. As Brass (1991) points out, nationalism, is by definition a political movement which requires political organisation, skilled political leadership, and resources to gain support to make successful demands in the political system.

In his book *Nationalism and the State* (1993), John Breuilly argues that nationalism refers to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments. "A nationalist argument is a political doctrine built upon three assertions: there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character; the interests and values of the nation take priority over all other interests and values; and the nation must be as independent as possible which usually requires the attainment of political sovereignty" (Breuilly, 1993, p2).

Nationalism is above all about politics and politics is about power (Breuilly, 1993, p1). It is the modern state, centralised, professionalised and territorialised that conjures up nationalisms and engenders the concomitant coordination of administrative power (Smith, 2010). The rise of the infrastructural powers of the state meant that modernising polities gradually became capable of monopolising the use of force on their territory. This allowed them to introduce mass conscription and enhance judicial control, by using advanced transport and communication networks to link the provinces with the capital (Malesevic, 2013).

Ozkirimli (2017, p102) comments that instrumentalist, elite competition for power and resources remains the key to an understanding of nationalism. The political transformation concept contends that nations and nationalism are forged in, and through, the modern professionalised state, either directly or in opposition to such things as imperialism and colonialism. When examining nationalism through the lens of the political transformation theory there is a clear and distinct connection between ideology and politics. Ideology is a system of ideals and beliefs that a human community feels and, in order to achieve these aspirations, the community must mobilise becoming essentially a political entity. Nationalism in this sense is a politically driven ideology for maintaining and sustaining the political autonomy of a human community.

## *Social Transformation*

The final perspective associated with modernism is social transformation (social and cultural). This perspective stresses the importance of social and cultural transformations in understanding nationalism. The social transformation approach emphasises that nations and nationalism are sociologically necessary phenomena of the modern industrial age and are expressions of culture. As Ozkirimli (2017) suggests, nationality and nationalism are artefacts of a particular kind. This implies that the character of nations and nationalism owes much to traditions. In his book *Cultural Intimacy* (2005, p28), Michael Herzfeld asserts that nationalism is directly predicated on resemblance, whether biogenetic or cultural.

According to Anderson (1983), nationalism is to be understood not as a political ideology, but as the result of large cultural systems like the religious community and dynastic realm's gradual decline in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century providing the space historically and geographically for the rise of nations. Ozkirimli (2017, p119) adds that the cultural origins of the modern nation are located at the juncture of three developments: a change in the conceptions of time; the decline of religious communities and dynastic realms; and the development of print capitalism.

In his book *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Gellner argues that nationalism is a direct consequence of industrialisation which fosters the development of large-scale educational systems that, although created to fulfil the needs of industrial growth, ultimately forge cultural homogeneity. Anderson (1983, p46) suggests that the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the diversity of human languages created the possibility of a new form of 'imagined community'. Culture is no longer merely the adornment, confirmation and legitimation of a social order, it is now the shared atmosphere within which the members of a society can survive and produce (Gellner, 1997).

According to Ozkirimli (2017, p109-110), culture plays an active role in industrial societies which are characterised by high levels of social mobility and in which roles are no longer ascribed. What this means is that the development of large-scale educational systems standardised social and cultural norms and made it possible for everybody to learn to read and write. Breuilly (1993) relates nationalism to a process of modernisation that involved a fundamental change in the division of labour transitioning from a 'corporate' to a

‘functional’ one. A functional division of labour is based on each major social function being carried out by a particular institution, instead of one institution doing everything (Ozkirimli, 2017). A major part of training in industrial society is generic so that citizens of that particular society have the basic skills to potentially do any job instead of only a select few having the skills, as was the case in pre-modern times (Gellner, 1983). He adds that cultural homogeneity is created through the generalised diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised educational system that is developed to inculcate the values, principles and contents of the standardised national culture.

According to Hobsbawm (1990), nations owe much of their existence to invented traditions. Thus, there is an automatic continuity with the past. Smith (1998) contends that invented traditions must be distinguished from both custom and convention or routine. Traditions are invariant; the past to which they refer imposes fixed patterns, whereas customs are more flexible sanctioning change up to a point through the sanctity of precedent and continuity. Modern invented traditions belong to three overlapping types: the first establishes or symbolises social cohesion or membership of groups; the second establishes and legitimises institutions, status or relations of authority; and the third aims to socialise by inculcating beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour (Smith, 1998). He adds that traditions are specific and strongly binding whereas invented traditions tend to be unspecific and vague in the content of values and the obligations of group membership they inculcate such as patriotism, loyalty and duty. Despite some room for contradictory interpretations and manipulation, the national past has to be based on existing and critically verifiable sources of information (Hroch, 2015). Bergmann (2017) notes that right-wing nationalists operate within a nostalgic framework and are prone to apply myths in order to bring people together within cohesive and common national boundaries.

For Hobsbawm (1990, p87), the original, revolutionary, popular idea of patriotism was state based rather than nationalist since it related to the state exercising power in the name of the sovereign people. This implies that patriotism itself is an invented tradition; a construct in the sense that it never existed among the nation before. It was not until the nation went through social and cultural uniformity that the term patriotism emerged. However, March (2018) contends that nationalism needs to be conceptually distinguished from patriotism as patriotism entails individual feelings towards the community (pride in

one's country), whereas nationalism involves group feelings towards the state (primarily, the desire for the state to represent the nation). However, "nationalism and patriotism both refer to feelings of solidarity towards a territorial community seen as the bearer of a distinct political status that allows it to self-govern" (Gagnon et al, 2011, p8).

It is hard to envisage a fully functioning nation-state without effective, state-wide educational systems, relatively high literacy rates, centralised authorities that reside in capital cities, standardised dialects, a degree of cultural and even linguistic uniformity, the use of calendric time, state-wide mass media networks, the wide spread institutions of 'high' culture, sustainable systems of transport and communications and monopolies on the legitimate use of force (Malesevic, 2013). According to Gellner (1997), nationalism is a political principle which maintains that similarity of culture is the basic social bond of society. "As a social movement, nationalism serves as a primary instrument both for popular aspirations and for ruling ideology" (Goodman, 2017). The social transformation theory contends that nations, and therefore nationalism, is a relatively modern concept. Nations are a sociologically necessary phenomenon where new social understandings are maintained and reinforced by specific cultural products such as a state-wide education system and print capitalism that links people together through shared beliefs, values, and language which forge a common identity.

As Smith (1998) suggests, if restricting nationalism to purely political aspirations is too constraining as it omits other important dimensions such as culture, identity and the 'homeland', and pays little attention to the character of the object of nationalists' strivings – the nation. The result, he adds, is a serious underestimation of the scope and power of nationalism and its ethnic roots. Modern nations often have historical roots in old ethnic identities but nationalism, according to Calhoun (1997), is a different way of thinking about collective identity from ethnicity, and ethnicity itself is only an aspect of the way most collective identities were organised in the past.

The next section of this chapter investigates the ethno-symbolist approach to the study of nationalism.

## Ethno-Symbolism

Ethno-symbolism refers to an approach which emphasises the importance of myths, symbols, memories, values and traditions in the formation, persistence and change of ethnicity in understanding nationalism, (to this extent, it subscribes partly to the primordialist approach). Ethno-symbolism emerged as a critique of both modernist orthodoxy and primordialism that modernism has largely displaced. For ethno-symbolists like Anthony Smith, nationalism as a doctrine is modern, mainly emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, although several elements emerged earlier and can be found in the certain kinds of vernacular nationalisms in England, Scotland and the Netherlands. Throughout history, and on several continents, there was considerable evidence not just of objective cultural (linguistic, religious) differences and categories, but also of subjective ethnic identities and ethnic communities that point to both ethnic continuity and ethnic recurrence (Smith, 1998). Ethnic continuity refers to the unbroken and constant existence of the ethnic group/community, whereas ethnic recurrence refers to the ethnic group/community being a product of repetition.

According to Leoussi and Grosby (2007), ethno-symbolism offers a distinct approach to the study of nations and nationalism by focusing on the role of elements such as ethnic myths, historical memories, and symbols and traditions in the creation and maintenance of the collective identity in modern nations. These myths and symbols connect people with one another through a shared sense of memories and culture. Myths and symbols possess many features: formal, aesthetic, psychological, social and political. For ethno-symbolists, what gives nationalism its power are these elements of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted (Smith, 1999). Traditions are not inherited, they have to be reproduced, stories have to be told repeatedly and parts of traditions have to be adapted to new circumstances to keep them meaningful (Calhoun, 1997). This will be explored more in Chapter 2.

Ethno-symbolists believe that the emergence of the modern nation-state cannot be understood properly without taking into consideration the ethnic forebears. "The rise of nations needs to be contextualised within the larger phenomenon of ethnicity that shaped them (Ozkirimli, 2017, p143). Ethnicity and ethnic ties play a key role in the formation of the nation, but the cultural foundations of nations are also relevant because ethnic

communities and nations are cultural and symbolic rather than demographic (Smith, 1999; 2008). Ethno-symbolists argue that pre-modern cultural materials that form the basis of modern national cultures persist over many generations, even centuries. “Groups tend to define themselves not by reference to their own characteristics, but by exclusion; that is, by comparison to strangers” (Ozkirimli, 2017, p156).

Ethnic identity and national movements are encapsulated in distinctive ethnic myths, which, like all myths, bring together in a single, potent vision, elements of historical fact and legendary elaboration to create an overriding commitment and bond for the community (Smith, 1999). Matters of descent, birth and a sense of kinship become important to ethnic group members for the methods of inclusion in and exclusion from the group which often involves the explicit or tacit adoption of rules of endogamy and exogamy (Brass, 1991). He suggests that the process of creating communities from ethnic groups involves the selection of particular dialects or religious practices or styles of dress or historical symbols from a variety of available alternatives. No national movement and no persisting ethnic identity can emerge without a bedrock of shared meanings and ideals (Smith, 1999).

Ethno-symbolists posit a two-way relationship between elites and the ‘masses’ and emphasise the recurrent conflicts of national vision and the constant reinterpretations of the ‘character’ and ‘destiny’ of ethnic communities and nations (Smith, 2015). For national identity to work, people must know what that identity is and they must have an assumption about what a nation is (Billig, 1995).

In conclusion, nationalism is not simply a claim of ethnic similarity, but a claim that ethnic similarity should count as the definition of the political community thus asserting that national identities should be prioritised over all other individual or collective identities (Calhoun, 1997). The claim is that ethnic identity and national identity are both intimately linked to the beliefs in a shared ancestry and ideas of a common culture, however, these claims about ancestry and culture may in both cases be as much a matter of fiction and myth as a matter of fact (Fenton & May, 2002).

The final section of this chapter will analyse how nationalism has evolved to form contemporary nationalism.

## **Contemporary Nationalism**

As this chapter has shown there are a variety of nationalisms that each define the nation in a different way, but how does this relate to contemporary nationalism. What is contemporary nationalism? For Fotopoulos (2016), “whereas classic nationalism’s emphasis was on the nation-state (or aspirations for one), contemporary nationalism’s emphasis is not so much on the nation but, rather, on sovereignty at the economic, political and cultural level”. In this respect, Cotillon (2017) suggests that nationalism itself has merged with geopolitical thinking and that ‘Geopolitik’ nationalism likens the state to a living organism that requires geopolitical space of its own in order to develop and function. “Far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, nationalism is the endemic condition” (Billig, 1995, p6).

Ozkirimli (2017, p182) comments that contemporary nationalist approaches highlight a different problem with earlier theories, questioning the fundamental assumptions of classical nationalism by exploring the issues neglected or ignored by proposing new ways of thinking about national phenomena. Contemporary nationalism entails elements of all three theoretical perspectives: primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism. Primordialism assists in explaining the perceived natural connection that humans have through kinship, but also as social creatures, best demonstrated by the formation of communities. Modernism connects the state together with the nation through institutions such as education which standardises vernacular language. This allows for more inclusion into parts of society that were previously off limits to the lower classes, or to those living on the periphery. Ethno-symbolism draws on myths and symbols and, like primordialism, it connects humans with one another through shared memories, stories and culture. Ethno-symbolism is the glue that holds nations together and is the reason why people are willing to lay down their life for their respective country. Modern states draw on each of these theoretical perspectives which assist in framing and forging a common national identity.

Michael Billig (1995, p16) broadens the concept of nationalism to cover the ways in which established nations are routinely reproduced. He adds that this frequently involves banal nationalism in contrast with the overt, articulated and often fiercely expressed nationalism of those who battle to form new nations. Instead, banal nationalism

encompasses reified folk culture, everyday habits, and routines grounded in common sense, landscapes, body politics, and social norms. This is embodied in the flags flown, stamps and advertisements, the world around most citizens normalises the nation (Bieber, 2018). Therefore, nation-building strategies, discourse and rhetoric adopted to promote the nation can thus be subsumed under the practical 'action plan' aspect of ideology (discussed in chapter 3).

This thesis is concerned with official state-led nationalism and how the state controls the popular nationalist narrative. The reason for concentrating on these particular types of nationalism is that China and Russia both display elements of each, particularly state-led nationalism, common with authoritarian governments. Authoritarianism is a political system characterised by a single leader or a small group of leaders, little mass mobilisation, and limited political pluralism (Huntington, 1991). "In authoritarian or totalitarian regimes state-sponsored nationalism helps to increase social cohesion and the inclination of the citizens to identify with the state" (Arakelyan, 2015, p76). State nationalism posits the state as the embodiment of the nation's will and the object of national loyalty, claims the right to name the nation and is best associated with authoritarian states (Guo, 2004). Broadly speaking, popular nationalism refers to a Manichaean and antagonistic dichotomy between a pure, uncorrupted 'common people' and a corrupted 'elite' group that are against the interests and will of the people (Weili & Toomey, 2017). Populist politics, however, is a broad church and what constitutes populist politics and populist political movements can be a daunting task as they are quite different groupings, holding varieties of positions, which can be changeable from country to country and are most often constructed around respective national interest (Bergmann, 2017).

According to Breuilly (1993), there is a significant conceptual problem with identifying state nationalism as nationalist governments whose policies defend the national interests and which other state might regard as "assertive" or "aggressive" are universal and can become meaningless unless there is a direct link between government and a nationalist movement. However, as Gagnon et al (2011, p7) note, "in social science and political philosophy, majority nationalism has sometimes vanished thanks to the deliberate distinction between patriotism and nationalism which treats allegiance to the state as patriotism rather than nationalism". They argue that such a contradistinction is artificial as

nationalism and patriotism both refer to the feelings of solidarity towards a territorial community seen as the bearer of a distinct political status.

“Contrary to common assertions, nationalism is not a uniformly malevolent ideology. In fact, its power to create and consolidate a collective identity and to posit common goals is one that can be harnessed toward propitious ends” (Tuminez, 2000, p1). In today’s era, the state plays a major role in the lives of most people either directly or, in most cases, indirectly. As Giannokos (2019) contends, “at the end of the day, nationalism is nothing but a tool. In itself, it can neither kill nor cure, but it depends on how it is being framed and used by both governments and people. Nationalism is impotent until connected to specific interests of state and national security” (discussed in chapters 3 and 4).

In conclusion, contemporary nationalism has evolved from being a way to study the attainment of nationhood to being a political tool belonging to a loose family of ideologies, used not only to replace thin-centred ideologies, but to install a type of national doctrine. Contemporary nationalism is very much constructed on myths and symbols. As Smith (1999) notes, symbols, emblems, hymns, festivals, habitats, customs, linguistic codes and sacred places are powerful differentiators and reminders of a unique culture linked through shared memories of key events and epochs in their history, memories of liberation, migration, golden age (or ages), of victories and defeats, of heroes and saints and sages.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Chinese and Russian Nationalism**

Since 2012, there has been an increase in Chinese and Russian nationalistic sentiment and official state nationalist rhetoric accompanied by assertive actions which, at times, has led both countries to challenge the international status quo. Both China and Russia are authoritarian governments which means the types of nationalism displayed in each country differ significantly from that of a democratic society. In authoritarian, or totalitarian political systems, political power is usually centralised in the hands of an individual or a select few. Therefore, state-sponsored nationalism is often the interpretation or construct of the individual and, due to the nature of control over society in an authoritarian regime, nationalism can either be nurtured or squashed by the state apparatus. Even authoritarian regimes, though, have incentives to make policy concessions in accordance with public opinion because they can more effectively govern when people engage in “quasi-voluntary compliance” (Mastro, 2017).

According to Brands (2018, p66), “both Chinese and Russian leaders give every indication that they view authoritarianism as a superior method for organising a society”. Since the demise of communism both countries have been left with an ideological void, however, China is still politically a communist state. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the state is the dominant form of social organisation so, with this premise, are the Chinese and the Russian states using contemporary nationalism as a political tool to galvanise and organise their society? Before answering this important question, though, one must first analyse and identify what exactly is Chinese and Russian nationalism.

As noted in chapter 1, there are a number of competing types of nationalism. Though China and Russia may share some nationalistic similarities, as will be discussed, the drivers of nationalism in their respective countries are very different to one another due to factors that form an identity like culture, history and religion. The aim of this chapter is to investigate both Chinese and Russian nationalism through the prism of their historical identity and their interactions with others. This chapter does not proclaim to be a complete historical guide to each country. To achieve this, the chapter will examine the history of

both countries focusing on four epochs from their pre-modern era through to the present era. The importance of this chapter is that it ties in the three main theories of nationalism (primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism) mentioned in the previous chapter and considers how they have shaped and framed both countries' national identity and the variety of nationalism they each use to frame their respective nationalist arguments.

The first section of this chapter will investigate China's history and how it has framed and shaped Chinese nationalism

### **Chinese Nationalism**

When explaining the development of Chinese nationalism, one needs to look at the external as well as the internal historical causes as doing so can allow for a fuller and more balanced understanding of this intriguing phenomenon (Jia, 2005). As Gries (2004) notes, like all forms of identity, national identity does not arise in isolation but develops and changes in the encounters with other groups. He adds that, in this regard, Chinese nationalism cannot be comprehended in isolation; instead, it must be understood as constantly evolving as Chinese interact with other nationalities. Understanding Chinese nationalism and national identity is of primary importance in comprehending the increasingly assertive role that China plays on the global political scene (Bislev & Li, 2014).

China has a long and complicated history and can boast of an ancient civilisation. Like other great civilisations, China can trace her culture back to a blend of small original tribes which then expanded until they became the country that exists today. The Chinese civilisation emerged in the north, along the Yellow River, a sphere of Neolithic agricultural expansion (Gat, 2013). Indeed, the general acceptance is that the Chinese "cradle of civilisation" is the Yellow River valley which gave rise to villages sometime around 5000 B.C. (Mark, 2012).

Contrary to the common perception of China being historically weak and isolated, many Chinese dynasties were very powerful and have impacted history (Pillalamarri, 2015). The impact that China had on global history also had a philosophical impact on China's national identity and is a driver of nationalist discourse within modern day China (discussed later in the chapter). In his book, *China's Imperial Past*, Charles Hucker (1975) divides the history of pre-modern China into three major epochs: a formative age (from high antiquity

into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C.), an early imperial age (from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. into the 10<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) and, a late imperial age (from 10<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century). This section of the chapter will then introduce a fourth epoch from 1800-present (modern age). Within this modern age, four classifications of nationalism in China from 1949-present will be examined. Modongal (2016) classifies nationalism, in a broader sense post-1949, into four stages or waves: socialist-orientated nationalism (1949-1976), liberal nationalism (1976-1989), patriotic nationalism (1989-2001), and cyber nationalism (2001-present). Each of these periods is responsible for constructing the national narrative and shaping the national identity of modern day China.

The next section of the chapter will examine Pre-Modern China.

## **Pre-modern China**

### *A Formative Age*

According to Chinese legend, the Xia dynasty was the first imperial dynasty in China. Yu, who is credited with having drained the waters of a great flood led it, but there is no historical or written evidence to verify this (Gill, 2019). Lai and Takahashi Brown (2006) contend that the first written and archaeological evidence, however, points to the Shang Dynasty as the founders of China, during the “bronze age” (mid-18<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.). Like many other ancient cultures they created a social pyramid, with a king at the top, followed by military nobility, priests, merchants and farmers all united by a common religion in this case (ancestor worship). Gat (2013) suggest that religion is the principal form of a broader common identity and attachment in pre-modern societies.

China was divided into at least a dozen independent states ruled by kings that often fought each other and walls were built to fend off barbarians from the north. In 1046 B.C., the Shang Dynasty was overthrown and the Zhou Dynasty was established (Du Temple, 2003). The Zhou Dynasty was the longest lasting dynasty in Chinese history sharing the same language and culture as the Shang and, through conquest and colonisation, extended Shang culture through much of China proper north of the Yangtze River (Chinaeducenter.com, 2019). It was during this period that some of China’s greatest philosophers like Confucius and Laozi (the teacher of Daoism), were born. According to Cartwright (2017), the Zhou Dynasty created the “mandate of heaven”, the idea that there could be only one legitimate

ruler of China at a time and that this ruler had the blessing of the gods. The idea that there can only be one legitimate ruler of China is still a point that is felt today and is a contentious point between China and Taiwan, and will be explored in depth in Chapter 3

The next dynasty, and one that would have a lasting impact on the many dynasties that followed, was the Qin Dynasty. The early imperial dynasty only ruled over China for 15 years but, in spite of such a short duration, it played an important role in Chinese history. The Qin established the first empire, and centralised system of government in China, which started in 230 B.C. when they engulfed six Zhou states (Mark, 2012). It was during the Qin Dynasty that the emperor unified the various walls, creating the early stages of the Great Wall, to secure China's northern border against barbarian invasion (Du Temple, 2003). Lewis (2007) contends that the state created by the Qin resembled nothing of the modern China with which we are familiar, and that the western third of contemporary China (Xinjiang and Tibet) was an alien world unknown to the Qin.

The Xia, Shang, Zhou and Qin Dynasties are an example of primordial nationalism. The myths around each of these dynasties are an integral part of what frames the Chinese national narrative of a 5000 year history and the primordial attachments of ancestor worship still practised in China.

### *Early Imperial Age*

After the death of the Qin Emperor, the Han Dynasty became the new rulers of China. Like the Qin dynasty, the Han Dynasty was also one of China's most influential dynasties (206B.C-220A.D.). They greatly expanded the Chinese empire extending the Great Wall to protect the Silk Road trade. They retained the centralised bureaucracy and unified political system of the Qin, but also adopted the Confucian view that government should be ran by educated, ethical men (McLeod, 2022). Under the Han, the codification of Confucian textbooks took place and Confucianism (linked to the cosmic framework of traditional Chinese thought) became the foundation of the official system of education and scholarship (Teiser, 1996). So thoroughly did the Han Dynasty establish the foundations of Chinese culture, that "Han" became the Chinese word denoting someone who is ethnically Chinese (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). It was during the Han Dynasty that Buddhism first reached China and, as it spread in the country, it adapted to and influenced Chinese culture (O'Brien, 2018).

After four centuries the Han Empire crumbled away, falling apart from a mixture of internal corruption and external rebellion (Szczepanski, 2019). In the chaos that ensued after the fall of the Han Dynasty, no one knew if a unified China would ever again be possible as warring clans, political murders, and foreign invaders characterised the next four centuries. This period was known as the Three Kingdoms, Six Dynasties era. Muscato (2019) comments that the feuding clans of China were finally united again under the Sui Dynasty. The Sui Dynasty only ruled China for about 40 years, but was still influential. They united the country after nearly 400 years of division and completed the Grand Canal, the longest artificial river in the world (Muscato, 2019). However, the Sui leadership was ruthless in taxing peasants and forcing them into hard labour. This eventually took its toll and the dynasty fell apart when the general population lost faith and revolted.

The rise of the Tang Dynasty, like the Han Dynasty, occurred after the fall of a ruthless leadership. Pillalamarri (2015) notes that the Tang dynasty was one of China's most cosmopolitan and urban dynasties and opened China up to a period of foreign influences (618A.D.-907A.D.). She adds that, during this time, China continued to expand its territorial boundaries northeast and south, incorporating much of Manchuria and Vietnam. O'Brien (2018) comments that during the Tang Dynasty Buddhism reached its peak in China thoroughly permeating Chinese culture and influencing its rival religions of Confucianism and Daoism. It was also during this era that the Chinese invented woodblock printing and gunpowder and this was seen as a "golden age" in Chinese history (Lewis, 2009). As with most dynasties in China, however, infighting and rival succession claims ended up tearing the Tang Dynasty apart. The chaos and political void caused by the collapse of the Tang Dynasty led to the break-up of China into five dynasties and ten kingdoms, but one warlord would rise to the challenge, as had happened in previous eras, and collect at least some of the various states back into a resemblance of a unified China (Cartwright, 2017). Primordialism and ethno-symbolism best define the type of nationalism that is associated with China's imperial age. The Chinese nation was forged with religion, myths and ethnic symbolism that united the Chinese people with a sense of community through beliefs, myths and shared memories.

### *Late Imperial Age*

The next Dynasty to rule China was the Song Dynasty. The Song Dynasty's reign can be best characterised by two periods: the northern Song (960-1125A.D) and the southern Song (1125-1279A.D). In the early period, the northern Song ruled a largely unified China until invasion in the northern part forced them to move their capital south, ushering in the southern Song period (Cartwright, 2017). The Song Dynasty made a number of remarkable cultural achievements in painting, calligraphy and glazed porcelain. The improvement of shipbuilding and the use of the compass under the Song allowed for far reaching and flourishing maritime trade with Asia and the Middle East on a sea route that became known as the maritime silk route. By 1279A.D, however, Genghis Khan's grandson, Kublai Khan, had defeated the Chinese southern Song Dynasty and, for the first time, all of China was under foreign rule (Johnson, 2018).

Lacking experience in the administration of a complex empire, the Mongols gradually adopted the Chinese political and cultural models of previous Chinese Dynasties and, changed their name to the Yuan Dynasty. The Mongol conquest unfortunately imposed a new political reality upon China. As Johnson (2018) notes, the Yuan Dynasty largely ignored Chinese for prominent public positions and those that did enter government service often received minor appointments either as local teachers or as low-level clerks. This grievance left Chinese with a sense of animosity towards the ruling Yuan Dynasty. The Chinese always resented the foreigners and, in the end, a Buddhist monk led a revolt and founded a new dynasty, the Ming (Johnson, 2018).

The Ming Dynasty ruled China from 1368-1644 A.D, during which China's population would double, and was a period of trade expansion to the outside world that established cultural ties with the West (Hucker, 1978). During the Ming period, China exerted immense cultural and political influence on East Asia and the Turks to the West, as well as on Vietnam and Myanmar to the south. Du Temple (2003) notes that most of today's Great Wall was built or restored by the Ming Dynasty and that this allowed China to develop a unique culture. The period from 1400-1450 A.D was the Ming Dynasty's golden age, a spectacularly dynamic and culturally fertile period when China became not only a regional great power, *but had the opportunity to become a global great power* (Brown, 2014). However, Emperor Hong Xi shut down Admiral Zheng He's expeditions and China chose not to become a global

great power. It was also during this time that China reformed its tax system introducing coinage, replacing the old system of paper money, labour, and goods payments with copper and silver. This, however, created a problem for China, as there was not enough silver locally to meet demands so they had to rely on a foreign source, the Spanish (Moloughney, 1986). The silver trade between the Chinese and the Spanish is one of the earliest examples of trade globalisation and economic power in China.

Not only was it a great age of exploration for China – with trade routes to Africa and throughout the Indian Ocean – but, the Chinese were also open to foreign influence with a multinational imperial court (Brown, 2014). In 1616, Manchurian forces from northeastern Asia defeated the Ming army and occupied several cities on China's northern border (History.com, 2018). This was the start of the eventual defeat of the Ming Dynasty and, like the Yuan Dynasty, the new Manchu rulers were also foreign. The Ming Dynasty provided an interval of native Chinese rule between the eras of Mongol and what would become Manchu dominance.

The Manchus owed their succession to conquest or, more precisely, to a breach in contract for having come in at the invitation of one of China's rival contenders for the Dragon Throne, and then refused to leave (Purcell, 1963). The Manchurians adopted the title of the Qing Dynasty as was the case earlier with the Mongols attempts at assimilation of Chinese dynastic culture. The Qing was the last of the imperial dynasties spanning from 1644-1911/12A.D. Under the Qing, the territory of the empire grew to three times its size and the population grew from 150 million to 450 million, many of whom were non-Chinese minorities within the empire who were assimilated. An integrated national economy was also established under the Qing when the emperor issued a decree in 1648 to establish 'custom houses' to tax the goods arriving at newly established trade ports like Canton (Guangzhou).

The final epoch that this section of the chapter will examine is Modern China

### **Modern China: 1800's - Present**

19<sup>th</sup> Century Qing China was a large, mostly land-based empire administered by a 2000-year-old bureaucracy and dominated by century's old and conservative Confucian ideas of political, social and economic management. 19<sup>th</sup> Century Qing China drew on

primordial attachments and ethnic symbolism to define the Chinese nation. However, this made China dramatically different from the European powers of the day and it struggled to deal effectively with their encroachment (Hayes, 2017). China's perception of itself at the time was that of a great power and, therefore, it should be treated as such. However, as Modongal (2016) observes, from the mid 1800's the Chinese people suffered a series of military confrontations *not only internally but externally* with the West and Japan. *Internally, from 1850-1864, a massive rebellion and civil war broke out in China between the Manchu-led Qing and the Han Chinese known as the Taiping rebellion. As Szczepanski (2019) asserts, the Taiping rebellion was the bloodiest civil war in world history in which the goals of the Han Chinese were religious, nationalistic and political in nature, and where they sought to upend the moral and social order of China. The Taiping rebellion was defeated, but it left the ruling Qing Dynasty weakened which Japan and the West would attempt to take advantage of.* The conflict with Japan and the West would shape the future of China's national identity and usher in what the Chinese have termed "the Century of Humiliation". This would also have a dramatic impact on Chinese nationalism as it shifted away from the primordial attachments that defined early imperial China towards ethnic nationalism. Herein lay the beginnings of anti-Western sentiments which would later become a central part of what defines the Chinese nation; best described using the nationalist theories of modernism and ethno-symbolism.

In the decades leading up to the first conflict between China and the West (the First Opium War), trade between China and the West took place within the confines of the Canton System based in the southern Chinese city of Canton (Hayes, 2017). This was because the Qing Emperor ordered in the year 1757 that Canton would be the only Chinese port open to trade with foreigners. This effectively restricted foreign trade and subjected it to regulations imposed by the Chinese government. This was an era where the foreign imperial powers were dramatically increasing their colonies and trade routes and China happened to hinder European prosperity. According to Chen (2017), British merchants in Canton fought a fierce war of words among themselves on the question of whether to ask their government to take military action against China. Believing Britain to be "the most powerful nation in the world", some British merchants considered China's trade restrictions, as an insult to British "national honour" and that the advance of British rule in India and

other places in Asia led merchants to believe the British government would intervene in China to restore British honour (Chen, 2017).

In 1840, British forces landed on mainland China and started to attack coastal villages in what was the beginning of the First Opium War (Goldfinger, 2006). The Qing army were not as well equipped or organised as the British, who were one of the finest fighting forces of the time. China lost the war forcing it to pursue a peace treaty. The terms of China's defeat in the Nanking Treaty were a bitter pill for the country to swallow: China had to cede the territory of Hong Kong to British control, open treaty ports to trade with foreigners, and grant special rights to foreigners operating within the treaty ports. In addition, the Chinese government had to stand by as the British increased their opium sales to the people in China (Hayes, 2017). Szczepanski (2019) comments that the treaty of Nanking opened five ports to the British traders, instead of requiring them all to trade in Canton.

Following the First Opium War, the other Western powers concluded a series of treaties with China in an effort to open up its lucrative markets to Western trade. Qing officials, however, proved quite reluctant to enforce the terms of the British Treaty of Nanking, as well as the similarly odious unequal treaties imposed by France and the United States (Szczepanski, 2019). In the 1850's, the United States and the European powers grew increasingly dissatisfied with both the terms of their treaties with China and the Qing government's failure to adhere to them (United States Department of State, 2019). In 1856, a number of incidents would take place that would set in motion a Second Opium War (Szczepanski, 2019). First, the execution of a French missionary charged with preaching Christianity outside of the treaty ports, and then the arrest of British sailors by Chinese officials in Hong Kong, was viewed as a violation of the treaty in the British minds. However, this mind-set was the beginning to change as this particular moment in Chinese history is the first instance of nationalism, in the modern sense, being expressed by the Chinese against imperialist powers.

The Second Opium War (1856-58) had the exact same outcome as the first; the Chinese were simply outmatched by superior powers. According to Ting Sun-Pao (2019), the first phase of the war concluded with the treaty of Tianjin in 1858, but the war was renewed in 1860 briefly when French and British forces launched an attack and occupied the capital.

This resulted in two extra clauses being added to original Tianjin Treaty. The new treaty allowed Britain, Russia, France and the United States to establish official embassies in Peking (Beijing). It opened eleven additional ports to foreign traders; established free navigation for foreign vessels up the Yangtze River; allowed foreigners to travel into the interior of China; made China pay war indemnities; and Britain received parts of Kowloon, on the mainland across from Hong Kong (Szczepanski, 2019). Ting Sun-Pao (2019) adds that two extra clauses allowed the legalisation of opium and the ability to carry indentured labour to the Americas. The actions by the Western powers, in Chinese minds, relegated them to second-class citizens in their own country, and created a sense of grievance.

The next conflict the Qing Dynasty faced was the First Sino-Japanese War. The First Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95 originated as a struggle for supremacy in Korea between the two countries. Korea had long been China's most important client state, but its strategic location opposite the Japanese islands and its natural resources attracted Japan's interest forcing Korea to declare itself independent from China in its foreign relations (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). Paine (2002) asserts that despite China's vastly larger population, army, and resource base, and despite its shorter lines of communication, superior battleships, and years of military modernisation, China lost every battle in which its troops would usually flee abandoning vital supplies. The Treaty of Shimonoseki signed by China and Japan put an end to the First Sino-Japanese War. However, the agreement was once again one-sided and stated that China would relinquish any hold it had on Korea and give up Taiwan, the nearby islands of Pescadores (Penghu islands), and eastern portions of Liaodong Peninsula (near the Korean Peninsula) to Japan, and pay reparations for war damages (Yanagihara, 2018). A shift in regional dominance in Asia from China to Japan, and the demise of the Chinese classical tradition, represented the principal results of the war. Paine (2002) notes that China's defeat shattered any basis for their tenacious sense of unbreakable superiority and forced them to reappraise their place in the world.

In the final years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, China was in grave danger of becoming a colony of the West and there was genuine concern within the country that China might be taken over by colonial powers. China was an empire before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the Chinese people not imbued with an enduring sense of nationalism based on loyalties to the nation-state (Zhao, 2004). As Zhimin (2005) contends, the reason Chinese did not know

patriotism is that they did not know that China was a state, rather, Chinese people of the time tended to regard China as the universe (Middle Kingdom). China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War undermined the traditional Chinese world order and they were forced to accept Western concepts such as nation, sovereignty, race and citizenship, and to change their traditional cultural identity (Zheng, 1999). "The traditional Chinese self-image, generally defined as "culturalism", is based on a common historical heritage and acceptance of shared beliefs, not as nationalism, based on the modern concept of the nation-state" (Townsend, 1992, p98), as mentioned in chapter 1. This was the first time in Chinese history that there was a shift away from traditional culturalism to a new nationalism with Chinese characteristics.

China slipped into chaos in the summer of 1900 as tens of thousands of adherents of a rebellious cult called "The Boxers" marched on Beijing (Silbly, 2012). The Boxers (Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists), was a reactionary movement – mystical, nationalistic and virulently anti-Christian – that began to spread like wildfire among the Chinese peasants (Preston, 2000). The Boxer rebellion was an attempt by the Chinese to expel the foreigners from China. Though the Boxer rebellion was a disaster for the Chinese, this was the start of the ethnic Chinese nationalism which was an amalgamation of primordialism and ethno-symbolism and would come to the forefront over the next few decades.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a shifting attitude towards the ruling Qing Dynasty by the Chinese as they regarded them as corrupt and incompetent which led to food shortages and famine as the population grew, causing peasant unrest. Muscato (2019) asserts that discontented Chinese citizens started talking about overthrowing the Emperor and those citizens started supporting the Revolutionary Alliance, a new group established in this effort. In 1911, the growing Revolutionary Alliance captured the major city of Nanjing in the Xinhai Revolution, and established it as a capital city of the newly declared Republic of China (ROC), with nationalist Dr Sun Yat-Sen as their president (Muscato, 2019). However, after the 1911 revolution, the new republic split into three primary factions: Sun Yat-Sen's nationalists; Yuan Shih-Kai's former imperial army; and warlords in northern China who continued to reign over several provinces.

When the Qing Dynasty ended so too did the ancient imperial system. In China, the modern concept of the nation-state was an import from the West and nation-state building

was influenced significantly by Western nationalism. According to Zheng (1999), when nationalism came to China a grand transformation occurred: national sovereignty was separated from popular sovereignty; the former was given the highest priority, the latter was replaced by state sovereignty, and individual freedom by national freedom. In 1912, Sun Yat-Sen established the “National People’s Party” (the Kuomintang or KMT) and, in 1913, the nationalists won the first fully democratic election in China. The KMT would remain the governing party in China until 1949 (Seng, 1961). In 1919, after the end of the First World War, there were protests by students that ultimately changed the cultural and political trajectory of the country. Panda (2015) suggest that the protests were about the perceived capitulation by China to the whims of Western powers at the Treaty of Versailles. However, the fact is that the former German colony on the Shandong Peninsula was given to Japan so China refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles. China would eventually get the territory back in 1922. Inspired by intense nationalism, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement called on all Chinese to restore their nation’s former independence and greatness by ridding China of foreign domination (Lynch, 2010). From the atmosphere created by the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, a new radical party was born in Shanghai in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

At the beginning, because all Chinese revolutionaries shared the same basic ambition as Sun Yat-Sen’s nationalists – the defeat of China’s external and internal enemies – the CCP and the KMT, in the early stages, were not rivals but collaborators with some communists even joining the KMT (Lynch, 2010). However, in 1925, Chiang Kai-Shek succeeded Sun Yat-Sen as leader after his death and started to expel Chinese communists from the party. In 1927, the KMT massacred Chinese communists in several Chinese cities, starting in Shanghai, where groups were organised to join in the killing of workers and trade unionists in Chiang Kai-Shek’s purge, thus igniting a civil war in China (Nolan, 2002). During the two decades after the establishment of the Republic, China divided into a patchwork of military satraps under an assortment of military figures (Lary, 2015). However, in 1928, the powerful nationalist movement, the KMT, finally unified the country, setting up its capital in Nanjing in the south to distinguish itself from the old imperial regime whose capital was in Beijing, in the north of the country.

In 1934, the Chinese Nationalist Party inaugurated the “New Life Movement” with the express goal of ‘revolutionising’ Chinese life through a movement of hygienic and

behavioural reform to revitalise the country, without sacrificing native traditions (Dirlik, 1975). Fan (2007) adds that, in the 1930's, two political movements occurred in China: the Blue Shirts (Lanyishe) and the New Life Movement (Xinshenghuo Yundong). The Blue Shirts were an imitation of the Fascist youth movements in Italy and Germany and the New Life Movement was an attempt at social regeneration through the revival of the ancient moral principles of Confucianism. Chinese nationalists believed that the structure and organisation of the Italian and Japanese fascists led to their success and that if they wanted their revolution to be a success they must create a party dictatorship (Wakeman Jr, 1997).

It was actually during China's Civil War that another war would erupt and have a profound impact on how China would frame its national identity narrative in the future. The Second Sino-Japanese War (referred to by the Chinese as the eight year War of Anti-Japanese Resistance) started in 1937 when China resisted Japan's expansion in the region. Japan's all-out invasion and Chinese resistance would be second only to the clash between Germany and the Soviet Union in terms of destruction and the number of dead (Phillips, 2013). The war was very devastating on the Chinese population due to its extreme brutality in some circumstances. There is one particular incident entrenched in Chinese memory, the Nanking Massacre. Chang (2012) asserts that, in late 1937, Japanese troops murdered more than 300,000 Chinese civilians and soldiers in the city of Nanking. The Japanese also sexually assaulted Chinese women and seized or destroyed Chinese property. (Bush, 2007). The Nanking Massacre deeply traumatised the Chinese setting the tone for future Sino-Japanese relations in which animosity still runs deep.

After eight long years, the war with the Japanese was finally over, but this only meant that the Civil War between CCP and KMT forces could regather pace. By the time the Second World War was ending, the CCP were no longer retreating from the nationalists; they were instead challenging them for control of China (Byrne, 2007). He adds that the CCP, in areas they controlled, seized land from the owners and turned it over to the peasant farmers, which earned them much support among the peasants who had acquired land. China's Civil War was a military struggle for political power in the nation between those who occupied positions of public power and the individuals, groups, sectors, and classes of the population over which power was exercised (Pepper, 1999). According to Lary (2015), China's civil wars have had two critical elements: the regional divide between north and

south; and the urban/rural divide. They have, however, lacked two of the most common elements of civil wars elsewhere – religious conflict and ethnic hostility. The Chinese Civil War was a struggle between two ideas of nationalism because the CCP promoted state-orientated nationalism, and the KMT argued for Han-centric ethnic nationalism (Modongal, 2016).

By 1949, the nationalist grip on northern, central and southern China had been broken in a series of victorious People's Liberation Army (PLA) campaigns with Mao Zedong claiming the creation of a new nation, the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Lynch, 2011). In late 1949, the KMT had fled to Taiwan and established a separate nationalist state that claimed to be the legitimate government of China (examined in chapter 3). The end of the civil war in China also marked the end of "the Century of Humiliation".

The next section will investigate Modongal's (2016) classification of nationalism's waves starting with social orientated nationalism.

### *Social Orientated Nationalism*

The period in Chinese history from 1949-1976, under Chairman Mao Zedong, had one of the most profound impacts in shaping the Chinese nation. After the 1949 revolution the CCP created a political view of the nation which defined China as a unified but multi-ethnic society (Bislev & Li, 2014). As was noted in chapter 1, multi-ethnic societies tend to proceed uneven benefiting some groups or regions more than others (Brass, 1991). Cheng (2007) contends that the Leninist revolution in China by the communists was, above all, a struggle for national liberation from the control of imperialist powers. It was a nationalist movement based on mass participation which enjoyed widespread popularity, especially among the peasant population. He notes that, unlike in Russia, the Chinese regime more explicitly fostered nationalism, adopting and modifying Leninism to fit Chinese conditions and to serve China's national development agenda. In 1950, China invaded Tibet as the PRC asserted its national sovereignty over the Tibetan region. A year later, the PRC coerced the Tibetan government to sign the Seventeen Point Agreement under the guise of driving out imperialist forces, but it was just a ruse so that the PRC could incorporate Tibet into the PRC. It also had an ethno-national dimension to it which resulted in the deaths of over 86,000 Tibetans. By 1959, after years of fighting, the PRC had dissolved the Tibetan government and the country became an autonomous region of the PRC (Szczepanski, 2018).

In 1958, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward, an economic and social campaign aimed at reconstructing the country from an agrarian economy to a communist society introducing communal living. It was during this period of history that there was a split in Sino-Soviet relations driven by differences over communist ideology and national self-interest when the U.S.S.R offered moral support to the Tibetan people. According to Szczepanski (2019), in Mao's Great Leap Forward, he wanted China to pursue nuclear weapons as he wanted the PRC to take the place of the U.S.S.R as the communist superpower. The Soviets, however, refused to help China develop nuclear weapons.

Under Mao, nationalism was one of the core sources of loyalty to the state, but its salience was shrouded by an overlay of revolutionary ideology (Unger, 2016) which caused tensions between nationalism (in the primordial form of ancestor worship) and communism. This revolutionary ideology soon came to the forefront when Mao implemented his Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution was an ideological struggle in which there were differences within the Communist Party leadership on policy direction (Chi, 1969). Believing that the current communist leaders were taking the party, and China itself in the wrong direction, Mao called on the nation's youth to purge the "impure" elements of Chinese society and revive the revolutionary spirit that had led to victory in China's Civil War (History.com, 2018). The movement escalated as students formed paramilitary groups, the so-called "Red Guards" and attacked and harassed members of the elderly and intellectual population, suppressing traditional Chinese thought. Under Chairman Mao, traditional Chinese culture was suppressed (Guo, 2004).

Walder (2015) contends that two distinctive institutions defined Mao's China: a Party apparatus that exercised firm discipline over its members and cadres; and a socialist economy modelled after the Soviet Union. According to Phillips (2016), the Cultural Revolution only caused political and social chaos and was ultimately an attempt by Mao to use the Chinese masses to reassert his own control over the party at the expense of millions of Chinese citizens. Walder (2015) notes that the first quarter century of Communist rule in China was dramatic and disastrous, the mark of a political regime whose extremism created a distinctive epoch in the history of revolution. He adds that the period bore the unmistakable imprint of Mao Zedong, who dominated his era as thoroughly as any leader in modern history, creating his own cult of personality.

China's Communist leaders emerged in the early 1970's after the Cultural Revolution more divided than ever. On the one side were those that had risen to prominence during it who wanted to carry on its radical economic policies whilst, on the other, were moderates and veteran bureaucrats who had survived Mao's purge. As a direct result of the Sino-Soviet split the Chinese allied themselves with the United States which would usher the way for a transformation of Chinese society that is still being felt today. Within two years of Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping rose to power on the promise of reversing the Cultural Revolution as there was a decisive shift towards the moderates in both economic and foreign policy (Hore, 2016).

The second wave of nationalism this section will investigate is liberal nationalism.

### *Liberal Nationalism*

Deng's arrival as leader ushered in a new stage of nationalism, liberal nationalism (1976-1989) and is best explained through the modernist paradigm. Modongal (2016) argues that the theme of this nationalism was to seek China's rise through "learning from the West" and that the feature of this wave of nationalism was its pro-Western attitude. Zheng (1999) asserts that in many countries, modernisation and centralisation were almost identical but, in modern China, modernisation was characterised by decentralisation. He adds that decentralisation promoted rapid economic growth and dramatic social change.

Since the start of China's reforms in the late 1970's, China's political economy has come to rest on a grand, but unspoken, bargain between the Communist Party and the Chinese public in which the Party ensures economic growth and promotes China's global standing in return for public acquiescence to its autocratic and anachronistic ideology (Keller & Rawski, 2007). Deng Xiaoping also left a maxim that has underpinned China's foreign strategy ever since - "*taoguang yanghui*" – meaning "keep a low profile and bide your time" and that by no means should China take the lead (Daekwon, 2017).

Zhou (2007) asserts that over time, Chinese leaders have replaced ethnic and liberal nationalism with a new pragmatic nationalism. The Chinese government practise a pragmatic nationalism tempered by diplomatic prudence which was state-led and largely reactive (Zhao, 2008). The idea of state-guided nationalism sought to prevent more harmful chauvinistic nationalism from challenging and undermining the government (Lanteigne,

2013, p171). Zhao (2008) adds that pragmatic nationalism does not have a fixed, objectified, or internally defined content, nor is it driven by any ideology, religious beliefs or other abstract ideas.

During the post-revolutionary era, nationalist objectives gradually became more prominent and finally trumped Leninist ideology in a decisive way. Deng's pragmatism further demoted the Marxist/Leninist position as a fundamental doctrine. The perception was this period of China's history was going to lead towards democracy, but one incident would shatter that and damage China's international status. In 1989, a pro-democracy movement demonstrating against China's central government and calling for greater freedoms took place in Tiananmen Square. While the movement began as mourning for the death of the reformer Hu Yaobang, the drama took on a different character when students turned their attention towards the perceived failures of the Communist Party of China and corruption (Kluver, 2010). The movement ultimately culminated in a bloody military crackdown ending the demonstrations.

The chapter next investigates patriotic nationalism.

### *Patriotic Nationalism*

The Tiananmen Square incident affected the relations between China and the West, and a strong anti-Western patriotic nationalism emerged in the country from 1989-2001 (Modongal, 2016). In one of its most important actions to promote nationalism shortly after the Tiananmen Square crackdown, the state launched an extensive propaganda campaign of education in patriotism appealing to nationalism in the name of patriotism to ensure loyalty in a population that was otherwise subject to many discontents (Zhao, 2004). He notes that three themes dominated the content of the patriotic education campaign: Chinese tradition and history; territorial integrity; and national unity. This form of nationalism is best explained using the modernist theory. According to Weili and Toomey (2017), patriotic education, or state-led nationalism, is a proactive form of traditional propaganda that created antagonism between China and "imperialist countries". What resulted was an anti-Western, neo-nationalism that emerged in China during the 1990's based on two conceptual understandings: that the success of the West should at least be partly attributed to its aggressive and exploitative colonial and imperial history; and, that the Western model of

modernisation was not the only model and China should seek an alternative model (Modongal, 2016).

It was during this time that China was also experiencing twofold transitional pains. On the economic front, Wu (2005) states that China was struggling to shrug off the command to move away from an agrarian economic structure, racing instead towards a modern, urbanised and industrialised market economy. On the societal front, thousands of years of authoritarian political heritage, Confucian philosophy and Sino-centric cultural tradition inevitably clashed with foreign ideas, value systems and various political philosophies (Wu, 2005).

Zhao (2004) argues that Chinese nationalism can be observed at three levels: in the state apparatus; in intellectual discourse; and in popular society. It is a powerful force openly promoted by the Communist state but also advocated by many Chinese intellectuals, both liberal and conservative, and is reflected in the sentiment of the general population. In the debate over the content of Chinese nationalism were two competing thoughts: one that viewed Chinese nationalism as eternal and objective, reflecting the country's domestic and international position pursuing modernisation, and the other taking an instrumentalist approach, defining Chinese nationalism as an expression of the interest of the ruling elite. Cabestan (2005) notes that the central place occupied by nationalism in the ideology of the CCP since 1989, has favoured the expression, particularly among the intellectual elites, of an autonomous popular nationalism with populist tendencies. This began in the second part of the 1990's, a period marked by the crisis in the Taiwan Strait (1995-96), the American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade (1999), and the demonstrations against Japan (2005). Gries (2005) notes that many Chinese saw the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as a U.S assault on Chinese dignity.

Zheng (1999) suggests that, over time, and as a political construct, patriotism has changed considerably to meet the states various needs in accordance with changing environments. He adds that many Chinese believe that containing China is the West's strategy towards China so, to a degree, China's patriotic nationalism is a response to the West's policy towards China. Both popular nationalism and patriotism aim at building a strong and wealthy China but, according to Zheng (1999), this does not mean there is no conflict between the two. He contends that while popular nationalists regard

democratisation as the way to a strong China, the CCP puts its highest priority on economic development and political stability.

Lacking procedural legitimacy according to democratically elected governments, and facing the collapse of communist ideology, the CCP is dependent on its nationalistic credentials to govern (Gries, 2005). However, the idea that the CCP lacks the procedural legitimacy to govern is a western perspective that can be contentious. Just because the government is un-elected does not mean that they are illegitimate rulers of China according to Chinese tradition of “mandate of heaven”. Mastro (2017) notes that the Chinese government increasingly surveys the Chinese public on a wide array of topics in order to respond to (or manipulate) public concerns. As noted above, China views the Western model as flawed and seeks its own model, one with Chinese characteristics, (explained in depth in chapter 3). China does not subscribe to Marxist-Leninist socialist principles, but instead embraces elements of capitalism implying it is no longer communist in the conventional sense.

As the political and ideological environment has changed, patriotic nationalism seems to define what it means to be “Chinese” but, what is “Chineseness”? Gries (2005) notes that the Chinese story of victimisation in the Century of Humiliation, as well as the stories of their glorious 5000-year-old civilisation, is central to the narrative of what it is to be Chinese. Christensen (1996) suggests that since the CCP is no longer communist, it must be Chinese. Cultural nationalism plays a role in the construction of a national identity and that there has been a considerable shift in the CCP as the Party has started to take on board some of the ideas of cultural nationalism as it shifts away from Marxism and starts looking Chinese (Guo, 2004). The CCP’s historical narrative starts with the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s “century of humiliation” which points to a modernist framing of nationalism.

According to Brands (2018, p73), China is hardening its defences against an aggressive liberal world. One method by which they are doing this is through ideological indoctrination through a patriotic school curricula and the use of state media and other approaches that emphasise the virtues of the Chinese system. As Mattingly and Yao (2020) point out, the CCP has built one of the most extensive propaganda apparatuses in the contemporary world, directly controlling a constellation of state-run newspapers, publishers, radio stations, and television channels, (discussed in chapter 3). Another method

is the growth in electronic communications and forums, which have favoured wider expression by society on political matters, particularly on nationalism (Cabestan, 2005).

The final wave of nationalism, as classified by Modongal (2016), is cyber nationalism.

### *Cyber Nationalism*

As Bajoria (2008) comments, the emergence of the internet in the past two decades has given nationalists more power to vent their anger after particular incidents, giving rise to “cyber nationalism” (2001-present). Chinese cyber nationalism, according to Wu (2005), is a distinctive phenomenon derived from the intermixing of multiple historical factors including, but not limited to, culture, technology, politics, history, geography, and conflicting ideologies. It is a non-government sponsored ideology or movement that has originated, existed and developed in China’s online sphere. However, given the nature of China’s political system this online sphere is heavily monitored.

On the mainland, there has been a growth in cyber nationalism, particularly among the youth displaying elements of populist nationalism, which may be associated with the ideological indoctrination of school curricula and the use of state media. Zhuang (2017) notes that there are two groups of youths fired with patriotic zeal: the “Little Pink”, a group that are regularly online trying to guard China against even the remotest hint of criticism and the “50 Cent Gang”, internet commentators paid to sing the praises of the government. According to Jiang (2012), Western netizens see the internet as a tool for free speech and criticising illiberal regimes, however, the majority of Chinese bloggers do not see the need for this and often react in an angry manner at any Western commentary on Chinese political actions. The development of tensions between Chinese bloggers and Western media highlights a major difference in the understanding of the natures of nationalism and censorship between China and the West (Jiang, 2012).

This anger by Chinese netizens was on display when Xi first became president. Sino-Japanese relations reached a new low point when Japan decided to nationalise the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea, discussed in chapter 3. This led to demonstrations against the Japanese on the Chinese mainland. As Weiss (2014) argues, China’s government selectively allows or represses nationalistic protests in order to achieve certain diplomatic aims and the same is true about how they can selectively censor the

internet. This particular event offers an insight into Chinese nationalism and the rationale that encompasses it, as it was the Chinese government that allowed, and even orchestrated demonstrations against the Japanese.

The next section of this chapter will define contemporary Chinese nationalism.

### **Contemporary Chinese Nationalism**

The study of Chinese nationalism does not fit neatly into the study of nationalism more generally (Zhao, 2014). First, China was never fully colonized which sets it apart from most developing countries and, second, China as a state has inherited the legacy of an empire-turned-nation instead of nationalism developing as a reaction to the oppression of empire, as was the case in Europe. In China, there are many different actors and drivers of nationalism – history, the military, Chinese elites, cultural nationalists, civic nationalists and the state – Chinese nationalism is constantly evolving. Humiliation plays a part in the construction of a collective memory, but revivalism is of importance to President Xi Jinping. Johnston (2017, p36) notes that President Xi is presiding over an unprecedented revival of anti-foreign discourse in China.

Since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, Chinese nationalism has grown as he seeks to make China a great power in the modern era. Revivalism is of considerable political import and the notion that “what once was, could be again” is of wide appeal to the Chinese (Guo, 2004). Revivalism points towards nationalism being framed in a primordial context. According to Zhao (2016), Chinese people have begun putting more emphasis on their historical and cultural legacy, and the revival of Confucianism has permeated the field of history. Confucian traditions, popular among the Hans do not solely define contemporary Chinese nationalism; rather, it is a trans-cultural concept shared by different ethnic groups (Zhao, 2014). In their book, *Separate but Loyal: Ethnicity and Nationalism in China* (2010), Tang and He examine if contemporary Chinese national identity is based on the ethnic Han dominant Confucian tradition or a multi-ethnic society similar to that which originated during the Qing Dynasty. They conclude that China’s national identity is based on a multi-ethnic state. Language and regional identity are important aspects of China’s uniqueness and the existence of several dozen mutually unintelligible regional vernaculars that date back to pre-modern China is associated with the primordial theory of nationalism. Kerr (2015) contends that the term used for the Chinese nation – *Zhonghua minzu* – does not

refer to China as a state, but addresses a community of peoples bound together in the past by culture and sacrifice and in future by progress and achievement.

As mentioned above, China's geography is very diverse and this is true about its population which consists of 55 different ethnic groups: Han; Uighurs; Tibetans; Mongols; Huis; Dai; and Kazakhs, just to name a few. As Joniak-Lithu (2015) asserts, the Han Chinese officially constitutes around 91.5 percent of modern China's population and are recognised by the state as the national majority and as the core of the Chinese multi-ethnic nation. However, this dominance by ethnic Han Chinese does raise the question if ethnic tensions exist, or could exist in China? According to Li (2008), one strategy that reconciles ethnic tensions in Han-dominant China has been to recruit more ethnic minority elites into the political establishment. However, in an article, *China's Hidden Camps*, Sudworth (2018) argues that Chinese authorities have rounded up hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other Muslim minorities and interned them in what authorities call "re-education camps". This seems to contradict Tang and He's findings and calls into question whether the Chinese state really prescribes to a multi-ethnic Chinese identity?

The government, however, denies they are holding people against their will; instead, they are willing participants at special "vocational schools" which combat "terrorism and extremism" and teach new skills. According to Xinhuanet (2020), the vocational education and training centres are established in accordance with Chinese law and are no different in nature from the community corrections in the U.S., the Desistance and Disengagement Programme (DDP) in the U.K, and the de-radicalisation centres in France. However it is framed, there is no doubt that the optics of re-education schools do not look good for the Chinese government and one could argue that actions like these suggests there is a certain criteria to being "Chinese".

Some scholars argue that Chinese nationalism is driven from the bottom up (populist nationalism) and that Chinese nationalism is the will of the people for the development of the nation. However, as Flint (2012) contends, bottom-up nationalism is the goal to create a "pure" nation-state in which one, and only one, culture or national group exists. This geopolitical perspective views a nation-state as weak or a tainted geographic anomaly if it contains multiple nations or ethnicities. According to Zhang (2013), the development of popular nationalism in China was not a coherent socio-political discourse, the themes,

intensity and forms of expression of popular nationalistic currents have varied over time and among different social groups.

Other scholars however, believe that Chinese nationalism is driven from the top down (elite nationalism), and is imposed by the state. Flint (2012) explains that top down nationalism refers to the role of the state in creating a sense of a singular, unified national identity. State-led nationalism serves the statesman's purpose of fuelling regime legitimacy (Duan, 2017). Compared with state nationalism promoted by the elite, Chinese populist nationalism is more socially complex with a wider divergence in beliefs and lacks any organisation (Zhao, 2016). This may explain, as Whitmeyer (2002) notes, how elites can affect expressions of popular nationalism and take advantage of popular nationalism using it to their own ends. However, Chinese nationalism is not simply an elite instrument, but has deeply political, historical, cultural and external origins (Duan, 2017).

This generation of Chinese are very proud of their nation due to rapid economic growth and rising status (Modongal, 2016). As Brown (2018) asserts, there is no doubt that a belief in a strong, powerful Chinese nation operates almost like a state religion under Xi Jinping. This was nowhere more evident than at the 19<sup>th</sup> Party congress where his thought, "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a new era", was enshrined in the Chinese Communist Party constitution (Bo, 2017). "The culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics is a powerful source of strength that inspires all members of the Party and the people of all ethnic groups in China" (Xi, 2017). As noted in chapter 1, nationalism is a thin-centered ideology, but once attached to another ideology like socialism, nationalism can act as a glue to provide common objective goals for the nation. In this case, nationalism is the central operating idea of the Xi era, manifested in the desire for national respect (Brown, 2018).

As noted in chapter 1, nationalism has merged with the realpolitik geopolitical thinking based on territory and sovereignty which is embedded into structure of Chinese political thought. Guang (2005) notes that realpolitik, in keeping with Westphalian norms of the modern state system, has been internalised by successive Chinese leaderships and that these norms have become part of the modern state's self-identity around which nationalist ideas, sentiments, and practices can be mobilised. This suggests that Chinese contemporary nationalism has acquired geographical sovereignty and self-identity undertones associated

with realpolitik and the attainment of great power status. As noted above, the CCP's historical narrative starts with the 19<sup>th</sup> century's "century of humiliation" which points towards a more modernist framing with elements of ethno-symbolism.

Under President Xi, the Chinese identity is being re-shaped and re-discovered, shifting slightly from the victimisation mentality to one of strength as was displayed in his address at the 19<sup>th</sup> Party congress when he commented that the era of Deng's low profile policy was over (Clover, 2017). Contemporary Chinese nationalism, as analysed and framed by Xi, promotes the cultural and national unity of the Chinese. This hybrid form of nationalism that seeks the re-juvenation of the country recreating the (Middle Kingdom) on the global stage.

Contemporary Chinese nationalism, however, is characterised by an uneasy relationship between popular feelings of pride, disappointment and hope for China as a nation and the Communist Party's efforts to utilise such feelings as a tool for social management and Party control. "As ideas spread and norms begin to take root, governments cannot wholly ignore them. They are required to respond, lest they risk losing legitimacy and, consequently, influence and power" (Cannady & Kubicek, 2014). One way the Chinese government has responded has been to produce banal nationalism, national holidays and anniversaries which are always more than just an extra day of rest. These dates and the special attention given to them are significant and used by elites to remind the citizenry repeatedly of their history as a people (Wang, 2012).

In conclusion, nationalism has the effect of removing differences within the country and replacing it with a common, hegemonic order of political values. As Brands (2018, p70) contends, lacking organic legitimacy, the Chinese government works to manufacture it by fanning nationalism in a populist message through educational curricula that stress China's historical victimisation at the hands of foreign powers which is *consistent with framing nationalism in a modernist context*. Contemporary Chinese nationalism displays elements of popular nationalism but is essentially state led as the Chinese state uses nationalism as a tool to shape the public discourse, another factor that suggest modernist framing. Contemporary Chinese nationalism has also sought to incorporate the experiences of Chinese diaspora across the world into an expanded, Sinocentric imagined community (Wang, 2020), an example of ethno-symbolist framing.

This chapter will now examine Russia's history and how it has framed and shaped Russian nationalism.

### **Russian Nationalism**

As this chapter noted above, national identity does not arise in isolation but develops and changes in the encounters with other groups. Unlike China, Russia's history is neither as long nor as complicated; instead, Kort (2008) suggests that Russia's history is an epic saga of strength, suffering and, ultimately, survival. The beginnings of what is now modern day Russia date back to the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. Coyle (2018) contends that according to the mythology surrounding the creation of the Russian state, Kiev is the birthplace of Mother Russia. In 879, Oleg the Viking established the first Eastern Slavic state and, shortly after, made Kiev its capital. The heart of the Kievan state was the Dnepr Valley, along the river route that ran from Novgorod in the north, gateway to the Baltic, down south past Kiev to the Black Sea and Constantinople (Halperin, 1985).

Malfliet and Laenen (2007) comment that Eastern Slavic peoples occupying present day Belarus, Ukraine and European Russia were consolidated by Kievan princes into a linguistic and cultural community possessing a relatively high level of agricultural, commercial and technological development. As Kluchevsky and Hogarth (1970) note, the Eastern Slavic people became fixed in a geographical and ethnographical setting widely different from those of their kinfolk, the western Slavs (Poles, Czechs and Slovaks), thus creating a separate Eastern Slavic culture and identity.

When studying Russian nationalism, history is of great importance as it takes time to forge a national identity. Like China, many internal and external factors have contributed to shaping Russia's national identity and, ultimately, Russian nationalism. The history of Russian nationalism divides into two main epochs: the pre-modern period 860 A.D–1850 A.D, which can subsequently be broken into three stages (Principality, Muscovite Empire, and Russian Empire) and the modern period from 1850 A.D–Present Day. Three prominent models can further assist in explaining Russian nationalism from 1850 to post-Soviet Russia - ethnic, socio-economic and cultural (Hosking & Service, 1998, p166).

We turn first then to pre-modern Russia with its three stages.

## **Pre-modern Russia**

### *Principality*

Kievan Rus was a powerful East Slavic state dominated by the city of Kiev and, traditionally, was seen as the beginning of Russia and the ancestor of Belarus and Ukraine (Russiapedia, 2019). The early geographical space that the Kievan Rus occupied was only a tiny portion of the geographical entity of modern Russia. In the early 10<sup>th</sup> Century, Kievan Rus was hardly a state; rather, it was an assembly of tribes from Kiev to Novgorod, ruled by a prince, to whom the tribes paid tribute (Bushkovitch, 2012). Near the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, Vladimir I came to power forever changing the fabric of the Russian nation. Martin (1995) comments that eastern Slavs and integrated tribes with Iranian origins primarily populated the lands of Vladimir's realm and that during the period 980-985 A.D, Vladimir conducted several military campaigns consolidating his power and territory. During this time, there were a number of princes controlling different cities (principalities) within the Kievan Rus territory. Vladimir Putin has often made reference to this period of Russia's history and has compared himself to Vladimir I, drawing parallels to his historic quest to win back Russian lands, which points towards nationalism being framed in a primordial context.

However, as Coyle (2018) contends, the line from Kiev to Moscow is not that direct, though it is thought that a group of Slavs followed a Kiev prince north and founded Vladimir-Suzdal, later known as the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Gat (2013) suggests that the eventual political coalescence was crucial for consolidating the identity of various tribal groups of East Slavic speakers into a Russian people and nation. He adds that, though not wholly deterministic, the formation of an ethnic space of related kin-culture traits (closely associated to primordialism) was the sub-stratum upon which the huge Russian national state was forged.

During the Kievan period, the principalities of Kievan Rus came under the sphere of influence of the Byzantine Empire, one of the most advanced cultures of the period, and this would have an enormous effect on the Kievan Rus. Prince Vladimir wanted to replace Paganism with a new religion and converted to Orthodox Christianity. The adoption of Christianity when the Russian principalities were included into the Byzantine domain and assimilated their culture, laid the foundation of Russian culture (Ivanova, 2014). She adds that the Church's Slavonic writing brought from Byzantium and Bulgaria provided the basis

for the development of the Russian writing system. Bushkovitch (2012) notes that The Caves Monastery and others soon arose around Kiev and Novgorod providing libraries and writing skills, but their main purpose was spiritual in the spreading of a new religion. The translation of Greek scripture allowed Mass in Church Slavic. This ushered in the beginning of a uniquely Russian identity. Russian monasteries became centres of learning where the monks translated a great variety of books from the Greek language including Christian scriptures, but also various collections, teachings, legends, and hagiography of saints (Ivanova, 2014).

In the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a split in the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church was formed. This split was over several points of doctrine, including the supreme authority of the pope, which Orthodox Christians reject. This split would create a religious identity uniquely different from that of the Roman Catholic Church and would influence the culture of Eastern Slavs. Before his death, Yaroslav the Wise, assigned princedoms to his sons, which would set the future of Kievan Rus for the next two centuries, plunging the federation into civil war (Hosseini, 2005). By the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century a number of southern Rus lands, such as Chernigov, were emerging as distinct and politically significant principalities. However, the civil war would eventually ravage the territory, draining it of much needed resources and leaving it ripe for takeover (Martin, 1995).

Around 1219 A.D the Mongols arrived in an area near Kiev Rus and sent envoys requesting peace, who were killed, ending any chance of peace (Hosseini, 2005). He notes that Batu Khan (Ghengis Khan's grandson) marched his Mongol army into the lands of Kievan Rus and one by one razed the principalities of Ryazan, Moscow, Vladimir, Suzdal, and Rostov, eventually capturing and destroying Kiev, the symbolic centre of Kievan Russia. The army of the western Khanate, known as the 'Golden Horde', pressed into what is now modern Russia and beyond, conquering one realm after another in areas that were geographically and culturally different. By the end of its conquest, the Golden Horde ruled present-day Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova and the Crimea (Byers, 2017). To rule over their Rus possessions, including Novgorod, the Mongols relied on subordinates to administrate holding the title of Grand Prince and, would pass the title from one Rus prince to another as a type of carrot, playing each family off against the other, so that no one native Rus family became too politically strong (Ploky, 2017).

Hosseini (2005) contends that the Russian populace believed God had sent the Mongols as punishment for their sins. However, due to the loss of political unity after the humiliation of losing the battle to the Mongols, this allowed the Orthodox Church to rise as the embodiment of both religious and national identity while filling the gap of lost political identity (Riasanovsky, 2000). This is the first example of proto-nationalism in Russia. “The Russian people would turn inwards, seeking solace in their faith and looking to the Orthodox Church for guidance and support” (Hosseini, 2005). He adds that a significant event for the Orthodox Church was the issuing of *Jarlyk*, a Mongolian decree that formally decreed protection for the Orthodox Church and said that it was now exempt from taxation. The Orthodox Church would grow to become a powerful beacon during the darker years of Mongol subjugation.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the city of Moscow emerged as an important centre of power in the lands of Mongol Rus. Before the Mongol invasion, Kiev was the ecclesiastical centre but, following the destruction of Kiev, the Holy See moved to Moscow in 1322 A.D. assisting in bolstering the importance of the city, which, in turn, allowed Moscow to maintain its Slavic and Orthodox traditions (Hosseini, 2005). In 1327 A.D., Prince Ivan I of Moscow took a large Tatar contingent and quashed a rebellion, and for his efforts, the Khan of his Mongol overlords granted him the *Jarlyk* and, with this, Moscow took another step towards prominence and power.

### *Muscovite Empire*

In the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the Golden Horde disintegrated into several smaller Khanates which would signal the end of Mongol rule over Slavic lands. In 1472 A.D., Ivan III married Sophia from the Greek polity of Morea and, in doing so, became a relative and continuator of the Byzantine emperors (Plokhy, 2017). Malfliet and Laenen (2007) comment that an independent Muscovy emerged from the decaying Khanate at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, and that its leaders sought to rebuild the nascent cultural-linguistic community by focusing on state building and defence. They add that the Orthodox Church propagated Russia’s mission as the “third Rome” which was used by the state as a proto-nationalism to attract the loyalty of scattered people.

In the late 1470’s Ivan III consolidated his power and territory by annexing the principality of Novgorod into Muscovite lands (Plokhy, 2017). Ivan III also continued to

challenge the suzerainty of the Mongol Khans, over, the control of Rus lands. In 1480, Ivan III, the Grand Prince of Moscow, gained independence from the Mongol Tatars ending 200 years of their rule. Ivanova (2014) contends that this period (i.e., the Middle Ages) played a special role in shaping Russian culture. At this time, the Kievan roots of the Muscovite dynasty and the Church helped form a powerful myth of origin that distinguished Muscovy from its immediate Mongol Past (Plokhly, 2017). This stage of Russian history is indicative of Russian nationalism being framed in a primordial and ethno-symbolist context.

### *Russian Empire*

In 1547 A.D., Ivan IV (known as Ivan the terrible) came to the throne becoming the first proclaimed Tsar of Russia (Andreyev, 2018). Perrie and Pavlov (2003) comment that Ivan IV is one of the most controversial rulers in Russian history, acquiring a cultural significance which transcends that of most historical figures. Though many found Ivan IV to be mentally unstable and a brutal autocrat, he was a brilliant leader who modernised Russia and laid the foundations for the Russian empire (Andreyev, 2018). Part of this modernisation involved the introduction of the printing press and he changed the nature of the Russian army by establishing the first standing one in Russian history. Another important act that Ivan IV undertook, was in 1549 when he established the *Zemskii Sobor* (parliamentary assembly) to address initiatives taken by the lower nobility and townspeople (Brown, 1983). The *Zemskii Sobor* would later appoint the future Tsars. During Ivan's reign, Russia colonised Siberia thus expanding Russian lands and its geopolitical outreach. Despite being a devout Orthodox Christian, Ivan IV pursued a policy of tolerance towards his numerous Muslim subjects and, during his reign, saw the completion of the construction of a centrally administrated Russian state and the creation of an empire that included non-Slavic states (Andreyev, 2018).

In 1613 A.D., the *Zemskii Sobor* appointed Mikhail Romanov Tsar of Russia. This action would put an end to the Rurik Dynasty that had ruled over Russian lands in one way or another since the 800s A.D. and would mark the start of an imperial dynasty that would last into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1649 the *Ulozhenie* (code), the summary of Russian law, was published and distributed widely (Hellie, 1988). The *Ulozhenie* would have a dramatic impact on Russian society as it was a starting point for oligarchy when issuing new laws, the guidebook for practical judicial administrators in everyday conflict resolution, and the

popular reference point for justice. The code of laws effectively divided society into ranks and occupational classes from which neither the individual nor their descendants could move (Hallie, 1988). The laws imposed on the peasantry were particularly harsh as they not only froze social status but their residency status too and imposed a harsh form of serfdom. In Russia, the traditional relationship between lord and serf is based upon land and because he lived on the lord's land, the serf was bound to the land (Lynch, 2003).

In 1696, Peter I (who became Peter the Great), was declared sovereign of all Russia. After winning access to the Baltic Sea through his victories in the Great Northern War, Peter founded the city of Saint Petersburg and moved the capital there (History.com, 2010). It was part of Peter's vision to move Russia in a new direction politically and socially. Peter initiated a wide range of reforms by creating a strong navy, reorganising his army according to western standards, secularised schools, introduced new administrative and territorial divisions to the country, and administrated greater control over the Orthodox Church (Biography.com, 2014). Before Peter, the Orthodox Church had been semi-autonomous.

Trueman (2015) notes that in 1700, the head of the Orthodox Church died and Peter did not replace him, as was his duty, effectively making the Church within Russia subordinate to him. In 1721, Peter had the Church hierarchy officially abolished by the Ecclesiastical Reservation, which placed the Church under the control of the Holy Synod, a ruling body of clergy elected by Peter (Trueman, 2015). The regulation specifically stated what the clergy could and could not do; in essence, it was designed to control their daily life so that they became an apparatus of the state. This allowed the growth of proto-nationalism controlled exclusively by the state. Peter's reforms would end the dominance of traditionalism and religion in Russia initiating the country's Westernisation. Under his rule, Russia became a great European nation and, in 1721, Peter proclaimed Russia an empire accepting the title of Emperor of all of Russia (Biography.com, 2014). President Putin often refers to Peter the Great and draws parallels between his historical quest for territory and his own desire to win back Russian lands.

In 1762, Peter III became Tsar of Russia but he was soon overthrown and his wife Catherine II (Catherine the Great) declared empress (BBC, 2014). Catherine II was similar to Peter the Great in that they both modernised and grew the Russian empire. Oldenbourg-Idalie (2019) asserts that Catherine II led her country into full participation in the political

and cultural life of Europe and, with her ministers, she reorganised the administration and law of the Russian empire. Catherine II organised and strengthened the *Ulozhenie* system, and imposed serfdom on the Ukrainians. Catherine's major influences on the country were furthering the modernising reforms of Peter the Great and expanding Russia's borders southwards and westwards, adding territories that included Crimea, Belarus, Lithuania, and parts of Poland (BBC, 2014). Under Catherine's rule, Russia would experience a "Golden Age" immersing itself in European philosophies and culture.

When Alexander I came to the throne in 1801, Russia was in a state of hostility with most of Europe, so the new emperor quickly made peace with France and Britain and normalised relations with Austria (Medvedkov & Seton-Watson, 2019). During Alexander's reign he helped form a coalition that defeated Napoleon I, the Emperor of France (Oliver, 2018). In 1812, Napoleon invaded Russia but was eventually defeated after two years of heavy fighting and Russia emerged as Europe's greatest land power and the first among the continental victors over Napoleon (Medvedkov & Seton-Watson, 2019). The great powers (Russia, Great Britain, Austria and Prussia) invited other states in Europe to a peace conference, called the Congress of Vienna, designed to deal with territorial issues left over from the Napoleonic Wars (Ghervas, 2014). Lievan (2015) argues that the Napoleonic Wars had a big impact on Russia's state, society and economy. The wars left Russia in a very powerful position in Europe, ushering in a period of great cultural enlightenment with Russian literature and arts flourishing.

In 1825, Nicholas I was appointed Tsar of Russia. Riasanovsky (2019) asserts that Nicholas's ideological views were reactionary, due to growing-up during the Napoleonic Wars, and that he represented the right-wing of European reaction, which found its ideological expression in the doctrine of official nationality. Official nationality rested on three principles: orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. Orthodoxy refers to the official Church and its important role in Russia and also to the ultimate source of ethics and ideals that gave meaning to life and society; autocracy is the affirmation and maintenance of the absolute power of the sovereign; and nationality describes the particular unique nature of the Russian people (Riasanovsky, 2019). He notes that Nicholas I was determined to defend the existing order in his Motherland, especially autocracy, and was evident in the way he conducted foreign policy, often-bypassing deliberation, consultation and other procedural

delays. Tsar Nicholas determination to defend the existing Russian imperial order hindered the emergence of civic and ethnic nationalism seen in much of Europe at the time. By 1848, revolutions were convulsing Europe and Russia and Great Britain were the only great powers that are unaffected (Medvedkov & Seton-Watson, 2019). The Russian empire stage of Russian history points towards a modernist framing of the Russian state with elements of ethnic nationalism that was used to distinguish the nation from previous occupying forces, which would continue on into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The next section of the chapter will focus on is the modern Russia period and how this period shaped Russian nationalism.

### **Modern Russia 1800's - Present**

As noted above, Hosking and Service (1998) suggest that three prominent models – ethnic, socio-economic and cultural – that assist in explaining Russian nationalism and its history from 1850 to post-Soviet Russia.

#### *Ethnic Nationalism*

In 1853, the Crimean War (1853-1856) broke out between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The war would have a lasting impact on Russia and its people as it was the beginning of Russia's decline as a great imperial power. The Crimean War pitted Russia against Great Britain, France and Turkey and arose from a series of misunderstandings among the powers over their conflicts of interests in the Middle East (Medvedkov & Seton-Watson, 2019). The Crimean War originated within the context of 19<sup>th</sup> Century developments in industrial capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism, and shifts in the European balance of power between England and Russia, which in turn triggered efforts to modernise the Russian state. The war ended with the Treaty of Paris (1856) which obliged Russia to surrender southern Bessarabia, at the mouth of the Danube River, neutralising the Black Sea and opening the Danube River to international shipping (Treaty of Paris, 1856).

The process of nation-building, a prerequisite to the political empowerment of nationalism was stunted in Russia due to Russia being a multi-ethnic empire, and because of the division between the Russian peasantry and the narrow Westernised nobility (Tuminez, 2000). From its inception, Russian lands included many non-Slavs such as Finno-Ugric and Tartars and the incorporation of Catholic Poland and some Germanic peoples at the end of

the 18<sup>th</sup> Century which made for difficulties in nationalising the empire-state in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

In 1855, Alexander II was appointed to the Russian imperial throne. Moss (2002) comments that the coronation of Alexander II symbolised a new beginning and, in that spirit, he granted numerous amnesties to prisoners and exiles and also ended some injustices such as the practice of drafting selected young Jewish into the military, who were then pressured to convert to Russian Orthodoxy. Radzinsky (2005) notes that Tsar Alexander II was the father of the first Russian perestroika, which brought about a great spiritual awakening of Russian ethnicity. He adds that Alexander II was the greatest reformer since Peter the Great, the Russian Lincoln, putting an end to Russian slavery by emancipating the serfs.

One of Alexander's reforms included permitting Jews to move from isolated and/or rural areas to the large cities and encouraged them to go into manufacturing, learn trades, become merchants, and take professional training at university (Scharfstein, 1997). However, in 1881, the assassination of Alexander II sparked a complete reversal of the Tsar's reforms towards the Jewish population after the assailant implicated a Jewish girl as a fellow conspirator. Government officials used this to incite programs against the Jewish population murdering thousands, destroying their homes and businesses (Scharfstein, 1997). The period from 1870, under Alexander III, saw the proliferation of ethno-linguistic nationalisms in Europe and Russia, together with a rapid expansion of the franchise consequent on an explosion of urban industrialism.

In 1894, Nicholas II inherited the throne of Russia when his father, Alexander III, died. He would be the last imperial ruler of Russia. Tsar Nicholas II, like other Tsars, was surrounded by a circle made up of his family, the court and the administration, which cut him off from the outside (Ferro, 1990). In 1898, the various Marxist groups in Russia met and decided to form the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) and in the early 1900's began publishing a newspaper called *Iskra* (spark). Vladimir Lenin argued for a small party of professional revolutionaries with a large fringe of non-party sympathisers and supporters instead of a large party of activists, and in 1903 formed the Bolshevik Party (Simkin, 1997).

In 1904, Russia and Japan went to war. As Keep (2019) argues, Tsar Nicholas's attempt to maintain and strengthen Russian influence in Korea, where Japan also had a

foothold, was partly responsible for the Russo-Japanese conflict. In the end, Russia lost the war with Japan along with the Tsar's dreams of making Russia a great Eurasian power with China, Tibet and Persia under its control. The defeat also presented him with serious problems domestically as social discontent grew into the revolutionary movement of 1905 (Keep, 2019). Ferro (1990) contends that Nicholas II never took the initiative to restrict his power but, in 1905, pressure forced him to do exactly that by establishing the Duma. The Duma, along with the State Council, constituted the imperial Russian legislature from 1906. The Duma represented the lower house of the Russian parliament and constituted the first genuine attempt toward parliamentary governance in Russia, (the State Council was the upper house).

The outbreak of World War I (the Great War) in 1914 temporarily strengthened the monarchy as the Russian nation rallied around its commander-in-chief, but Tsar Nicholas II did little to maintain his people's confidence (Keep, 1990). The Tsar continued to undermine the Duma and voluntary patriotic organisations received little assistance in their efforts. The Tsar's disconnect caused the gulf between the ruling group and public opinion to grow wider. The concluding result was that World War I had a serious impact on Russian society and split the country in two: those that supported the Tsar and the war, and those that did not. Riots broke out in St Petersburg in 1917 and the Tsar was forced to abdicate by the Duma and the military (Keep, 1990). According to Mawdsley (2007), the Russian Civil War began in late 1917, though the spectre of Russian fighting Russian had lurked in the background since the Tsar was toppled. What really set off the final apocalyptic struggle was the seizure of power by the Bolshevik Party.

### *Socio-Economic Nationalism*

Following the 1917 revolution, four socialist republics were established on the territory of the former empire: the Russian and Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republics and the Ukrainian and Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republics. Together, these republics established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R) (Pipes & Dewdney, 2018). The separate peace by the Bolsheviks with the Germans turned Russia into an international outcast, but also legitimised the partition of the empire (Sumpf, 2014). The revolution by the Bolsheviks would have the most profound impact on Russia, the Russian nation and its identity. The Russian Civil War was not simply a conflict between Red

Communist and White Monarchist, rather, it involved an intertwining of military, social and political issues created or exacerbated by the Great War (Sumpf, 2014). This was also the start of socio-economic nationalism in Russia. It was as much a continuation of the Great War as it was a means to settle an irreparable ideological rift. The civil war unleashed tremendous violence and shaped Russian society through political and cultural mobilisation. Having finally rescued the nation from the warmongering of the monarchist and generals, the Bolsheviks turned the proletarian forces against Russia's elite (Sumpf, 2014).

In 1918, the U.S.S.R, under Lenin, implemented a policy of the separation of Church and state which meant that all Church property (monasteries, charitable and social works, and even liturgical items) was nationalised without compensation with those priests and nuns who refused to hand over Church property taken away to the Gulag and often executed (Das, 2016). This was in keeping with the Soviet Union's ideological objective of the elimination of religion as it pursued a Marxist-Leninist doctrine of militant state atheism (Guterman, 2013). Anderson (2016) notes that Marxism-Leninism saw the Church as a tool of the bourgeois to induce a false consciousness to divide and suppress the masses.

Around this time, Lenin also introduced the Soviet policy on nationalities based on a comprehensive state-sponsored programme of nation-building that would fulfil the nationalist aspirations of many non-Russians of the Soviet Union by celebrating ethnic diversity and thus preventing them from aspiring to real autonomy (Roberts, 2022). Russia is a multi-ethnic society with only 44% being ethnic Russians in 1913, which as Brass (1991) notes, tends to proceed unevenly benefiting some ethnic groups or regions more. The Soviet regime pushed through a policy of hiring preferences, educational mandates and political intervention in which the state deployed its power of coercion to discipline opponents (Suny & Martin, 2001).

Sullivan (2019) asserts that communism, as an ideological movement tends to be anti-nationalist. However, this does not seem to be representative of other communist governments as this was not the case with Vietnam or Cuba in the 1950's-1970's where communism and nationalism went hand in hand. Since the Soviet Union was highly diverse, a better term for "Soviet nationalism" would probably be "Soviet patriotism" or "Soviet socialist patriotism" (Sullivan, 2019). This terminology also better explains the relationship between communism and nationalism. Communism is a form of socialism that stressed

imperialism is the highest form of capitalism and capitalism ultimately creates a division of social classes and of developed and undeveloped countries (Dagger & Ball, 2019). The socio-economic model of analysis explains or reduces nationalist struggles to a particular stage of capitalism closely aligned to the principles of class struggle.

After Lenin died in 1924, Joseph Stalin emerged as the victor from the ensuing conflict between Party leaders, surprising most people. Stalin would become one of Russia's most influential leaders shaping the entire fabric of the modern Russian nation. Although Lenin founded the U.S.S.R, it would be Stalin who decisively strengthened and stabilised the socialist structure (Service, 2004). Stalin heavily persecuted the Russian Orthodox Church resulting in an estimated 80,000 ecclesiastical members deaths, leaving approximately 200-300 Churches compared to 50,000 pre-1917 (Trepanier, 2010). In 1929, the communists declared that: "A struggle against religion is a struggle for socialism". Stalin also launched the Great Terror, a state campaign to establish rapid industrialisation, agricultural collectivism, and a secret police state. Purges, show-trials and prison camps composed Stalin's Great Terror and became the norm destroying any political symbol other than the great leader (Trepanier, 2010). Stalin's ascension to power also brought about a change to the Soviet nationalities policy as centralisation was not compatible with self-government of nationalities (Seton-Watson, 1956). "The strong state action to protect the rights of a previous minority gave a beneficial appearance to the regime's nationalities policy, yet at the same time, this same state promoted a different group of policies that had a near genocidal effect on Kazakhs: forced settlement and collectivisation" (Suny & Martin, 2001 p224).

In 1939, World War II erupted in Europe when Hitler invaded Poland. Although Hitler and Stalin never met, the two countries Foreign Ministers signed the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact" – a non-aggression agreement between the two countries (Moorhouse, 2014). The pact also foresaw the division of Poland and the annexation of the Baltic States of Lithuania and Estonia by the Soviets (Bernd, 2014). However, in 1941, Hitler broke the pact launching operation Barbarossa invading the Soviet Union. The start of what the Russians refer to as the Great Patriotic War put an end to Stalin's persecution of the Church as he used nationalism to rally the Soviet state against Germany: a nationalism that included the Russian Orthodox Church (Trepanier, 2010). Stalin created the Council for Russian Orthodox

Church Affairs and it was the link between the government and the Church patriarch (Chumachenko, 2002). This proto-nationalism was an essential part of uniting and strengthening the nation towards the defeat of Nazi Germany.

After the fall of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union absorbed part of the German province of East Prussia (Kalingrad), and parts of Japan's empire (the Sakhalin and Kuril Islands). During this time, the Soviet Union consolidated its control over all of eastern and parts of central Europe seized from Germany, establishing their own sphere of influence (Davis, 2015). The Soviet Union, after emerging victorious from the Great Patriotic War, was flooded with a new sense of pride where people in the Soviet Union saw themselves as powerful and their communist system as the way of the future (Sullivan, 2019). This pride, especially the victory over Nazi Germany, still permeates Russian society and Russian identity to this very day with annual celebrations held every May to commemorate the great Soviet victory. The victory is treated as the crowning achievement of the Soviet state, which saved not just the Soviet Union and Europe, but the whole world from fascism (Gurganus, & Rumer, 2019). According to Lieven (2020), the Soviet Union's communist system derived tremendous legitimacy from its victory in WWII, however, it was never fully accepted in Eastern Europe and some of the Soviet republics.

In 1953, Stalin died and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev. Anderson (2016) asserts that the Stalinist political system heavily focused on the personality of Stalin rather than a traditional ideology and that Khrushchev set about a campaign of de-Stalinisation, removing Stalin's name from cities and his body from Red Square. Medvedkov and Wachtel (2019) note that Khrushchev's nationality policies reversed the repressive policies of Stalin and allowed many nationalities to return to their homelands within Russia. They add that Khrushchev abided by the nationality theory that suggested that all Soviet national groups would come closer together and eventually coalesce in a multi-ethnic society; the Russians, of course, being the dominant group.

The Church, since Stalin had revised his policy towards it in 1941, had enjoyed relative freedom and had grown substantially in congregation numbers. However, the possibility that the Church could become too powerful was a proposition that communist leaders, especially Khrushchev, was not going to allow to happen. Khrushchev followed policies similar to Stalin's aimed at the ultimate degradation of religion. One example is that

Khrushchev attacked the religious rites and practices of marriage establishing 'palaces of marriage' to lure young couples away from marrying in Churches (Anderson, 2016).

During Khrushchev's era, the space programme represented an important marker of Soviet claims to global superpower status and the achievements of Sputnik and cosmonaut Gagarin were a new dynamic of the Soviet Union which was no longer hobbled by the devastations of the Great Patriotic War (Andrews & Siddiqi, 2011). Space technology, and science in general, represented a powerful and easily understood measure of the future-orientated sensibility of a nation-state. The period from 1953-1964 was a critical one in the history of Russia. It was a period that witnessed the turn from preparations for a Third World War to a peaceful coexistence, a period of a sharp reduction in the armed forces of the Soviet Union; and a time when the President of the United States of America (U.S.), John F Kennedy, acknowledged that both countries were equals in military might (Khrushchev, 2000). Under Khrushchev's leadership, there was a cultural thaw, Russian writers who had been suppressed under Stalin began to publish again and western ideas began to penetrate universities and academies (Medvedkov & Wachtel, 2019).

In 1964, Leonid Brezhnev replaced Nikita Khrushchev as leader of the Soviet Union. In 1968, Brezhnev put forward the 'Brezhnev doctrine', a policy calling on the Soviet Union to intervene in the affairs of communist countries to strengthen communism (Glazer, 1971). Brezhnev tried to normalise internal and international relations, especially with the U.S., through a policy known as 'détente', but due to his doctrine, détente with the U.S. was never really something that could be fully achievable.

After Brezhnev's death in 1982, the Soviet Union had two leaders that were only in office for a short period due to health issues – Yuri Andropov (1982-84) and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-85). In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the new leader of the Soviet Union which began a process that would dramatically change the political, social, economic, geographical shape and, ultimately, the identity of the country that is still felt to this very day. Kelly (2016) states that Gorbachev fashioned a reform agenda '*perestroika*' that did two things: it consolidated his own personal hold on power and simultaneously dealt with the nation's problems. Part of the reforms was the embrace of '*glasnost*' (openness), changing the nation's information policy in order to pursue economic reform. Gorbachev had become convinced of the need to carry out economic reform measures and considered

disarmament and a winding down of Cold War confrontation in Europe necessary for such reforms (Bonnell, 2018).

In 1989, after weeks of protests, the East German government eased travel restrictions between East and West Berlin which the East Germans interpreted as freedom from communist control (Bonnell, 2016). This event started the beginning of the end for the U.S.S.R as the Iron Curtain that had been in place since the Second World War, started to disappear as Eastern European countries sought independence. Laruelle (2019) asserts that the deep upheavals in these countries, which had become independent in very different political contexts, were interpreted as a “reawakening” of the peoples once under Russian/Soviet domination. She adds that nationalism tended to fall within a binary schema: the nationalism of non-Russian peoples, insofar as it is democratic and anti-colonial being deemed healthy, and that of Russians, which was of an anti-Semitic and reactionary bent, and criticised as conservative, autocratic and imperialistic.

### *Cultural Nationalism*

The U.S.S.R legally ceased to exist on December 31, 1991 and Russia became an independent Federation. “The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in much more than a political crisis; it caused the collapse of Russia’s social foundations, creating a vacuum that any number of ideologies may have filled” (Davis, 2002, p1). Due to various historical factors, Russian emerged from the Soviet Union as an incomplete, under-articulated nation with a surprisingly low level of national consciousness. It lacked a mass-based nationalist movement, and had a blurred vision of its own political boundaries (Zevelev, 2016). As Vodovozov and Riasanovsky (2019) comment, the newly established Russian Federation, set off on a road to democracy and market economy without any clear conception how to complete such a transformation. However, “Russia did not adopt a global ideology to replace communism, neither did it become a liberal democracy, instead it adopted state, sovereignty, and a vital sphere as though they were an ideology. The interests of the state in what came to be seen as ‘vital sphere’ became paramount, and taken on an ideological form that now forms part of Russian nationalism” (Bishara, 2015, p2). Boris Yeltsin became the first elected president of the new Russian Federation. Davis (2002, p1) argues that “democracy emerged only because of the demise of communism not because Russians found any deep-rooted meaning in it”.

After 1991-1992, a new Russia began to define its identity from the ground up (Zevelev, 2016, p8). Following experimenting with other religions, Russians began to look to their own traditions and culture, something that better fitted the Russian soul – the Russian Orthodox Church (Davis, 2002). This is the start of cultural nationalism in Russia a theory that denotes the principle that the similarity of culture is the basic social bond of society (as noted in chapter 1). The Russian Orthodox Church is a fundamental part of what constitutes Russia’s cultural identity, and President Yeltsin signed a law that protected the Church from competition with other Christian faiths (Gordon, 1997). Russian nationalism began to rise with the spread of the Russian Orthodox Church’s influence in society and the diminishing of other alternative religious groups (Coyer, 2015).

The Russian government’s insistent focus on financial stabilisation and economic reform, to the apparent neglect of the public’s social needs, contributed to a growing political battle between the legislative and executive branch. In 1993, in an attempt to solve the growing political battle, a new constitution was established that gave the president vast powers allowing the appointment of the prime minister and the issuing of decrees that had the force of law as long as they did not contradict federal or constitutional law (Vodovozov & Riasanovsky, 2019). By 1999, however, there was palpable hostility in the air due to widespread corruption, economic collapse, and political and social problems.

Lo (2003) argues that during the first post-Soviet decade, conceptions of Russian identity revolved around two key questions: Where did Russia belong, physically, historically and culturally; and, what sort of role should Russia play? According to Tuminez (2000), the collapse of the Soviet Union has been marked by a widespread search for a “national idea” and although official attempts under Boris Yeltsin failed, questions underpinning this search have nonetheless persisted: who are the members of the Russian nation; what is Russia’s place in the world; and, how should Russia define itself as a great power?

In 1999, a series of explosions in apartment blocks across Russia would have a dramatic impact on the future direction of Russia and signal the rise of a new Russian leader who would seek to answer these questions of Russia’s identity. Vladimir Putin was Boris Yeltsin’s prime minister at the time and was a relatively obscure figure in Russian politics with little or no name recognition (Gessen, 2012). After the bombings, Putin appeared on Russian television, demonstrating nationalist undertones vowing to hold those responsible

to account and cementing his future place in Russian politics. Putin's attempt at uniting the country behind a common threat and creating a sense of fraternity is common within nationalist theory. Gessen (2012) states that the country was battered, traumatised, and disappointed after putting its faith in Boris Yeltsin. In December 1999, Yeltsin resigned and appointed Vladimir Putin as acting president until official elections were held, where Putin won 53 percent of the vote (Biography.com, 2014). The election of Vladimir Putin would usher in an entirely different direction for Russia.

The next section of this chapter will define contemporary Russian nationalism.

### **Contemporary Russian Nationalism**

At the turn of the century, Vladimir Putin delivered a manifesto focused on Russia's past, present and future struggles and providing a form of road map of what was required to return the country to great power status (Putin, 1999). Since his election to the presidency, Putin has eviscerated Russia's independent media, establishing control over the country's crucial television networks (Hansen-Green, 2017). President Putin has also used the security services, police and military to play more important and prominent roles. Putin also initiated reforms focused on three basic areas: state and Party institutions, the business world, and a wide range of federal and regional policies (Reddaway & Orttung, 2005). They add that the political strategy behind the reforms was a means to restore the cohesion of Russia's state institutions and establish Putin's control over them.

According to Zevelev (2016, p4), "for a century and a half, the debate over Russia identity, nation formation and Russia's future has focused primarily on Russia's relation to, and interaction with, the West". Charap and Colton (2017, p74) argue that, Vladimir Putin, in his first few years in power, subscribed, at least rhetorically, to the logic of convergence with the West. Putin made a number of compromises on key questions with the U.S. in the hope that they would start to act in a multilateral fashion he regarded U.S. unilateralism as the greatest threat to Russian stability (Gaddy & Hill, 2002). When the U.S. was attacked by Islamic Terrorists on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, Vladimir Putin was the first leader to call President George. W. Bush to offer condolences (O'Loughlin et al, 2004).

From 2003-2005, though, a series of events would take place that would shape the direction of Russian relations with the West and ultimately the future nationalist narrative

within the country. In early 2004, the European Union (EU) marked its biggest ever enlargement, accepting 10 new countries – Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Cyprus and Malta (Vucheva, 2009). Khazanov (2002) contends the Russian's perceive post-Communist developments as an advancement of Western Europe into the Eastern part of the continent. This perception seems to hold some truth when in that same year NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) was enlarged with the addition of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (NATO, 2004). NATO incorporated some of the eastern states that were formally Soviet republics, moving them even further away from Russia's sphere of influence and affecting Russia's near zones of influence and degrading its great power status (Bishara, 2015, p1-2). Having grudgingly accepted the Western incorporation of the Baltic states, Russia is resolved to keep the other post-Soviet states in its geopolitical sphere of influence (Rezvani, 2020).

Charap and Colton (2017, p74) argue that the coloured revolutions of 2003-05, especially Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004, truly started the unravelling of relations between Russia and the West as Vladimir Putin interpreted it as a sign that there would be no political accommodation of Russia by the West. According to Khazanov (2002), there has always been an anti-Western sentiment to Russian nationalism, but these events reinvigorated the discourse. Anti-Westernism is one way of regenerating Russian nationalism especially among hardliners in the military. Geopolitics as a form of identity has also emerged as a powerful theme in post-Soviet Russia (Svarin, 2016).

There are a number of different actors promoting a nationalist agenda such as non-state actors, para-state actors and, state actors and that this dissociation is critical in order to advance a comprehensive assessment of Russian nationalism (Laruelle, 2017). There are four broad directions that Russian nationalism took by ideological content: imperial nationalism; Eastern Slavic nationalism; ethnic Russian nationalism; and Rossiikii nationalism (Laruelle, 2019, p7). In the years following the coloured revolutions, Russia moved towards counter-revolutionary regional policy driven by the notion that revolutionary change had become a Western implement to undermine Russian interests (Charap & Colton, 2017, p77-78). They add that in response to the European Union's advancement East, Russia countered with its own initiative establishing the Eurasian Economic Zone (EEU). There exist old

cultural ties between Russia and the ex-Soviet states and Putin's move towards Eurasia marks a shift in contemporary Russian nationalism (examined in chapter 4).

Shaping Putin's narrative is a discourse about cultural and historical ties with Russian borderlands, as well as the vulnerabilities generated by the West's treatment of Russia in which he sees himself as the defender of Russian interests (Roberts, 2017). As Wiechnik (2019) notes, the break-up of the Soviet Union left islands of people who had some affinity for Russian culture and language living in countries such as Ukraine, Georgia, or the Baltic states; countries that were now not Russian. Those Russians living within the Russian borderlands are referred to by Moscow as compatriots. According to Wiechnik (2019), compatriots is a term used by Russia to identify citizens of the former Soviet Union who have historical ties to Russia but find themselves living outside the Russian Federation.

Hosking and Service (1998) note that there is tension between two rival forms of nationalism - ethnic Russian's '*Russkii*' and statist or territorial Russian's '*Rossiiskii*' - concluding that Russia will struggle to find a national identity because of this issue. The authorities under Yeltsin did their best to avoid mentioning *Russkii*, instead, they promulgated the term *Rossiyane* (a nation defining all people with Russian citizenship and who live in Russia) which is devoid of an ethnic essence, however, this has changed under Putin (Remizov, 2012). Laruelle (2016) argues that the term *Russkii*, does not imply a growing ethnicisation of the Russian state, rather, it may be that Russian society is developing a more acute sense of ethnic awareness. She instead uses the term *Russkii* in a contemporary context instead of Hosking and Service's historical context, thus aligning it to the theoretical perspective of Eurasianism. Eurasianism is an idea that affirms that Russia and its periphery occupy a median position between Europe and Asia that their specific features have to do with their culture being a mix born of the fusion of Slavic and Turko-Muslim peoples (Laruelle, 2008).

In addition to defining Russian nationalism, among the option for geostrategic orientation Piotrowski (2002) notes two historical schools of thought about Russia and Russians themselves – *Vilikorossy* (great Russians), and *Yevraziytsy* (Eurasianists) which are shown in figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 List of Historical Schools of Thought defining Russian Identity**

Historical Schools of Thought	Theoretical Orientation
Great Russians	The main goal of the state is to lay the foundations for the “rebirth of the great Russia”.
Eurasianists	Russia is a separate spatial subject, a real and mystical Eurasia or true heartland.

[Source: Piotrowski (2002). *Russia’s Security Policy*.

The preoccupation with the pre-revolutionary period, and the tendencies towards extremism, have been a dual legacy that has influenced Russian nationalist discourse since the early 1990’s (Hosking & Service, 1998). Russian nationalism includes both the current “imperial nationalism” and ethno-nationalism, however, Russian nationalism uses the same arguments enforced by the Russian ethnic group in support of the expression “Geography as destiny” (Emilia, 2017). As Feklyunina (2016) points out, from 2000 to the early 2010’s, Russia’s dominant identity was increasingly associated with the idea of a “Russian World” (*Russiky Mir*) – an imagined community based on the markers of the Russian language, culture, and a common glorious past.

The term “civilisation” has been part of the lexicon of all Russian presidents, but until 2012 it was used mostly in the singular (Malinova, 2020, p1). She adds that during Vladimir Putin’s re-election campaign in 2012, Russia became conceptualised in opposition to other civilisations as a “unique multi-ethnic civilisation that is fastened by the Russian cultural core”, which shows a shift towards imperial nationalism that has primordial roots. The Russian president’s rhetoric supports the “official nationality” correlated with the need to protect the Russian World and the territories belonging to the Russian Empire, defending the only true defender of the people (Emilia, 2017). As Malinova (2020) argues, there are various explanations for the proliferation of civilizational talk in Russian political discourse: as a substitute for the Marxist concept of socio-economic formation combined with Russian nationalism and, because of the development of statist aspirations by Putin.

The collapse of the Soviet Union created an ideological and identity crisis in Russia, and attempts to define Russians have bred a new form of nationalism that is not necessarily compatible with Western Ideals (Wiechnik, 2019). Russian identity has never been straightforward, but an identity may be emerging based on ideas, worldview, and identity based influences (Roberts, 2017). The reproduction or preservation of some imperial characteristics in the policies of post-Soviet Russia has led to what Pain (2016, p46) describes as the “imperial syndrome”. Laruelle (2019, p11) asserts that nations do not exist without an imaginary realm and that, in the case of Russia, the nation’s imaginary is of an imperial nature.

Traditionally, Russian nationalists have focused on the perceived need to maintain a large and strong state and have been less concerned with ethnic interests and racial purity (Kolsto, 2016, p1). Topics that were previously part of the nationalist movement’s agenda have been incorporated into the state’s discursive portfolio and in this joint construction, with bottom-up and top-down dynamics, the state has largely controlled nationalist mobilisation (Laruelle, 2019, p9-10). It is erroneous to see Russian nationalism only as a top-down product as nationalist slogans may also come from below. Nationalism from above and below should not be seen as two parallel phenomena that never intersect, instead, they are in constant dialogue with a wide array of mediating platforms and personalities between them (Laruelle, 2014). However, according to March (2018), “Russian nationalist groups are themselves so divided that it only makes sense to talk of Russian nationalism in the plural”. Broadly however, such groups can be regarded as belonging to a “hard-line nationalist” camp who wish to defend (ethnic) Russian cultural norms, language and religion and insist on Russia’s national uniqueness and independence (Tsygankov, 2009).

As Bushkovitch (2012) contends, for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, outside of its boundaries, Russia was an idea about socialism. Russia is not however, an idea, it is a specific country, with a particular place on the globe, a majority language and culture, and has a very concrete history. “The history of Russia has always been a relatively sad and tumultuous one wrought with wars, power struggles, and abrupt changes. These changes have often been forcibly thrust upon Russia, rather than evolving through gradual, measured methods as in most people’s histories” (Hosseini, 2005). Russia was an empire before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Russian people were not imbued with an enduring sense of

nationalism. Instead, Hosking and Service (1998, p161) suggest that the Russian Orthodox Church has always been the pivotal feature in defining the Russian nation.

In conclusion, since Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, Russian nationalism has been increasing as he has sought to promote a stronger Russia, restoring its previous great power status in international affairs, which points to a modernist framing of nationalism. As a state driven by its desire to return to its historical self-image, Russia's great power status has been crucial to the construction of the country's national identity (Grajewski, 2017; Zevelev, 2016). President Putin has co-opted the Russian Orthodox Church in efforts to rebuild Russian statehood and restore the country to great power status (Editorial Board, 2018). As Laruelle (2009) argues, to reconnect with society, the Kremlin thinks that it has no alternative but to draw on reservoirs of cultural consensus and symbolic evidence, which is an example of primordialism. Putin has embraced aspects of Russian Orthodox Christian imperial ideology, especially its conservative ideals, as Russian Orthodox thinkers have offered a theological cover to Moscow's imperial ambitions (Stroop, 2018). The combination of Russian nationalism and imperial consciousness is conducive to the development of a special phenomenon in Russia called 'imperial nationalism' which is statist in nature (Pain, 2016, p46). He adds that the term may sound odd to the Western academic tradition but, in the Russian setting, an imperial nationalism that supports imperial aspirations really does exist. It recently manifested itself after the 2014 annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation (discussed in chapter 4). This rich imperial imaginary provides a form of symbolic revenge over post-Soviet politics, its traumas, humiliations, and misunderstandings (Laruelle, 2019, p11). Russia, under Putin, is certainly appealing to the pre-modern past with invocations of Peter the Great, Ivan and the 988 Vladimir which, again, points towards primordialist framing.

The final section of this chapter will offer a brief overview and conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

Chinese and Russian nationalism share both similarities and differences. Neither nation had any sense of loyalty to the state, especially the Chinese who regarded themselves as the 'Middle Kingdom,' the centre of the universe. There is no doubt that the vast majority of Chinese people have a sense of connection through kinship, culture, language and shared memories creating an identity specific to the Chinese nation. The

Russian people also have a shared sense of connection through kinship, culture, language and shared memories, which has also created an identity specific to the Russian nation. The early periods of China and Russia's history point towards a primordialist framing of nationalism which is still a feature of how both countries define their national identity.

In the modern era, both nations suffered harsh experiences under communism: most obviously Mao's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution and Stalin's Great Terror campaign, which tried to eliminate many aspects of traditional nationalist thinking. On the other hand, socialism tied the modern nation together, regardless of ethnicity, and has been a significant factor in shaping the modern identity of the Chinese and Russian nation. In this context, Gellner's theory that nationalism is a modern concept, a political entity with defined geographical boundaries, assists in explaining the formation of the modern Chinese and Russian nations but falls short of explaining the historical connection of the community, which is best explained by primordialism and ethno-symbolism.

As this chapter has outlined, both Chinese and Russian contemporary nationalism consists of various trends and varieties of primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism that assist to frame the nationalist narrative. Neither country is a nation-state (even though China has a large Han population) but, rather, multi-ethnic nations. One argument is that contemporary nationalism is a means to unite the population around a common identity, which points towards a modernist framing. Unity has been the greatest concern of the generation that holds dear to the conviction that China's shameful defeat to Western and Japanese colonisers never be repeated (Yeoh, 2009). There is a similar sentiment within Russia. After the fall of the U.S.S.R, there was a real sense within Russia that there would eventually be closer ties with the U.S. and Europe. Unfortunately, in the early 2000's, the European Union and the NATO alliance increased their membership, which shifted the mood in Russia to one of concern that the West was yet again trying to contain Russia (Charap & Colton, 2017). One way to unite a population is around a common threat. Anti-Western sentiment has been a feature of both Chinese and Russian nationalism dating back to the 1800's. It is a feature that has emerged again, especially in Russian nationalism following the demise of the U.S.S.R.

As noted in chapter 1, geopolitics has now merged and become part of the contemporary nationalist narrative promoting the state as a living organism. Here, national

interests are part of a zero-sum game of competition in a world of competing civilizational blocks. A significant factor with Chinese and Russian nationalism is that of the state's involvement and influence on shaping nationalist discourse, which again, points towards a modernist framing. Both China and Russia are authoritarian governments that no longer prescribe to Marxist-Leninist communist ideology, however, China is still politically a communist state. During the post-Cold War period many regimes have sought alternative sources of legitimacy to fill the ideological void left by the demise of communism and nationalism, with its roots in geography and history, is a ready candidate. It is in this essence that contemporary nationalism provides an ideological means of legitimacy for both the Chinese and Russian leaders and a method by which to organise and rally the nation around a common goal, the attainment/re-establishment of great power status a major theme in what frames their national identities.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Chinese Foreign Policy**

The rise of China is one of the most significant changes to global affairs since the end of the Cold War and it is for that reason alone that understanding how China interacts with the international system has become so important to the study of modern foreign policy (Lanteigne, 2013). As Tiang Boon (2017, p1) notes, “there has been a discernible recalibration of Chinese foreign policy since the ascension of Xi Jinping to the top leadership positions in China”. China has become much more concerned with external affairs and with its influence on the outside world including its heightened desire for the ‘geopolitical strategic rights’ and national glory that are due to it as a major power (Shi, 2015). Ferdinand (2016) adds that a growing self-confidence within the regime over its economic achievements during the past decade has led to an increasing assurance that has flowed over into Chinese foreign policy and the rhetoric surrounding it.

Illustrating China’s boldness, in 2015, The Guardian newspaper (2015) reported that China had started construction of an airstrip on Fiery Cross Reef, one of the artificially constructed islands in the Spratly island chain. The PLA has also constructed a military airstrip on Woody Island (*Yongxing Dao*) in the Paracel islands (Bitzinger, 2015). What used to be partially submerged coral reefs are now fully-fledged islands hosting ports, airstrips and other military facilities (SpaceKnow, 2018). China has also increased the number of air and naval incursions into Japanese and Taiwanese airspace and territorial waters. China’s assertiveness is not just confined to the south and east China seas, China has sought to promote a stronger state and nation in their search to restore what they perceive to be their great power status.

Many regional issues, as well as relations with other great powers, suggest that nationalism has taken a greater role in Chinese foreign policy thinking (Lanteigne, 2013, p171). Although nationalism has been an important theme in Chinese political discourse for about a century according to Zhao (2014), it has never caused such alarm. Before now China’s authoritarianism and the tendency of authoritarian regimes to be more militarily assertive, together with the speed of China’s emergence as a major power, have been

important influences on those arguing the 'China threat' thesis (Harris, 2014, p170). China's increasingly muscular foreign policy behaviour in defence of its so-called 'core national interests' during the territorial disputes in the south and east China seas in 2012 has fed a roiling sense of anxiety in many political capitals about whether a virulent nationalism has emerged to drive China's foreign policy in a more irrational and inflexible direction (Zhao, 2013).

"It is vital to understand what is guiding Chinese foreign policy, why this is so, and what kind of power China is and will be in the future" (Weissmann, 2015, p151). According to Ni (2019), there are a number of ways in which public opinion can affect China's foreign policy despite the difficulties in conceptualising and measuring Chinese nationalism. Sun (2011) suggests that public opinion, or what is understood to be the will of the majority, or at least a substantial element of it, can be a very powerful determinant of a country's foreign policy. However, as Harris (2014, p43) notes, how far general public opinion influences foreign policy is not easy to determine and though public opinion has become more important in foreign policy making, it is difficult to assess its importance as it varies over time. According to Sun (2011), one must carefully examine the relationship between foreign policy and public opinion in order to determine the extent to which it influences foreign policy decisions or whether it is created (or, at least, shaped) by the government to advance a political or policy agenda. This is because, in a country like China, the government has the critical means to shape public opinion but the public has relatively limited means to express their political opinions (Sun, 2011). "China's authoritarian political system arguably better insulates foreign policy making from public opinion than liberal democracies" (Ni, 2019). From Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping, Chinese leaders have placed great emphasis on securing public approval and, whether the Chinese government actively inflames popular sentiment or is genuinely fettered by it, mapping the contours of public attitudes about foreign policy is an important task (Weiss, 2019, p679).

China's new, assertive, foreign policy raises a number of important questions.

- 1). To what extent is Chinese foreign policy driven by contemporary nationalism?
- 2). How influential is contemporary nationalism as a determinant of China's foreign policy?

### 3). Why would an authoritarian leader like President Xi address nationalist views?

The mainstream engagement with China's foreign policy reveals at least two problematic issues: the first relates to the application of Western standards for gauging the international behaviour of a non-Western actor and the second is the lack of suitable language to articulate and engage China's rise (Kavalski, 2016). Due to this twin predicament in the analysis of China's foreign policy, Beijing's international prominence has provoked a hoard of animal allegories such as 'cuddly panda' to 'fire-breathing dragon' to assist the understanding of its external outreach (Kavalski, 2016).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the impact that contemporary Chinese nationalism has on China's foreign policy. Ni (2019) asserts that "the argument is quite simple: China is becoming richer and more powerful and, as a result, its citizens more proud, reflecting a new confidence". This chapter will thus first investigate China's power structure. The goal is to understand the formulation *and implementation of Chinese foreign policy by examining the organisational roles of the main foreign policy actors*. This chapter prioritises these actors starting with President Xi Jinping, the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), Leading Small Groups (LSGs), the PLA, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). It will then examine China's insecurities and vulnerabilities establishing a framework for understanding the drivers of Chinese foreign policy which are vital elements in Chinese foreign policy strategic thinking. The chapter will then consider how nationalism influences Chinese foreign policy by investigating three case studies: the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and Taiwan. The goal is to gain a complete and precise understanding as to the impact contemporary nationalism has on the foreign policy of China.

Foreign policy is often an extension of domestic politics and structures and China's growth has certainly increased expectations at home of a tougher stance in international affairs (Ross & Bekkevold, 2016). This suggests that if the government does not take a tougher stance there could be potential for political unrest. Quek and Johnston (2018) are not convinced that the potential for domestic political unrest can fully explain China's increasingly assertive behaviour suggesting other factors may be at work. These include a reaction to the activities of other territorial contenders in the South and East China Seas that they perceive as challenging its definition of the status quo distribution of territory; an

increasingly intense security dilemma with the U.S.; organisational interests being pushed by China's military; and, a sensitivity to both elite and mass opinion.

It is necessary to examine the general power structure of the PRC in order to understand fully the foreign policy establishment and its structure (Lu, 2018). "To understand how decisions about China's foreign policy are made we need to look at the organisational structures that are designed to deal with foreign policy and the relationships between them" (Harris, 2014, p26). "Without accurately grasping the larger policy dynamics behind China's foreign policy, it is simply not possible to accurately understand and predict either its overall policy or its behaviour" (Weissmann, 2015, p151-152). Jakobson and Manuel (2016) assert that in understanding how the political system works, and therefore the formulation of foreign policy, there are three major vertical systems of interest: the Communist Party, the military and the government.

Given the Leninist nature of China's political system, analysts might focus on the content and levels of nationalism expressed by the members of the Party Central Committee whose support Chinese leaders need to acquire and hold power (Johnston, 2017). There can be insufficient attention given to the role that leaders beliefs can have on shaping state behaviour (Feng & He, 2017), that psychobiography literature can assist in the study of individuals of historical significance. The relationship between nationalism and political behaviour is important to study because, without this connection, the political consequences of nationalist opinion are hard to observe (Johnston, 2017). Brown (2016) contends that defining who the key players are in formulating, articulating and then implementing foreign policy in any country is a major issue.

The next section of the chapter investigates the policy actors involved in China's foreign policy process. The relevance for examining the policy actors involved in China's foreign policy is to gauge who is responsible for the formulation of foreign policy and how these policy actors fit together in its implementation. The first policy actor this chapter will examine is the President, Xi Jinping.

## **Actors involved in the Policy Process**

### *Xi Jinping – President of the People’s Republic of China*

In 2012, Xi Jinping became the General Secretary of the CCP and President of the People’s Republic of China. Xi assumed China’s top leadership role with the support of an inner circle of friends and protégés – individuals who serve as his hands, ears, mouth, and brain (Li, 2016). Xi has shown himself to be concerned with reasserting the leading role of the party with its emphasis upon the dominant role of the central leadership (Ferdinand, 2016). According to China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi (2020), strengthening the centralised, unified leadership and coordination over external affairs provides the fundamental political underpinning for China’s diplomatic work. Xi has introduced a new system by limiting collective leadership and marginalising the traditional institutions of governance, relying instead on a small group of close advisors and an array of LSGs to control policymaking (Blackwill & Campbell, 2016, p6).

Jakobson and Manuel (2016) note that Xi has taken charge of all foreign policy related decision-making bodies in what appears to be an attempt to improve coordination of the various stakeholders. However, in addition to his occupation of the traditional levers of the CCP General Secretary, State President and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), Xi sits atop an increased number of, and the most important, supra-ministry LSGs, vesting in him unrivalled institutional authority to assert control (Tiang Boon, 2017). Char and Bitzinger (2016) add that Xi has also manoeuvred against PLA leaders who had disobeyed civilian authority under the previous administration imposing authoritative civilian control over the military. Economy (2018) argues that Xi and his team are running the country very differently from their predecessors, moving away from a collective leadership to elevate Xi as the preeminent leader. Buckley (2016) notes that President Xi Jinping was given the title “core leader” at a party meeting in 2016. He adds that the title does not come with particular powers, but it gives president Xi Jinping special stature, alongside Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin. Xi has ended China’s carefully evolved collective and consensual leadership structure, marginalised the bureaucracy, and put himself at the centre of decision making on all consequential matters (Blackwill & Campbell, 2016, p3). At the National People’s Congress (NPC) 2021, the chairperson, Li

Zhanshu, urged members to rally even closer around the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core (Xinhua, 2021).

Over the course of his tenure as CCP General Secretary and president, Xi has accrued progressively more institutional and personal power (Economy, 2018). An example of this acquirement of power was, the NPC in 2018 authorised the transfer of the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) to the People's Armed Police (PAP), which comes under the command of the CMC. It is possible for a single Chinese leader to take an overwhelming role in international relations without the assistance of a much larger group (Lanteigne, 2013, p173). Another key feature of Xi's leadership is that he has abolished term limits and has established the imposition of the study of Xi Jinping thought. According to Thomas (2018), "international policy makers should study Xi's words because he, as CCP General Secretary and head of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, is pivotal in setting the overarching orientations and strategies of China's foreign policy". Xi has increased the use of his nationalist rhetoric as he attempts to frame the nationalist narrative towards China's foreign policy ambitions.

"Xi Jinping is the most powerful leader since Deng Xiaoping and, with sweeping actions and ambitious directives, he has essentially altered the formulation and implementation process of China's foreign policy" (Blackwill and Campbell, 2016, p3). So, why would President Xi care about public support given the nature of China's political system? Although Xi Jinping is not the source of authoritarianism in China, the concentration of power and control around him has created a "dictatorship". Xi must be seen to be strong, standing up for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity as he is the one, through his own rhetoric, that is responsible for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### *The Communist Party's Politburo Standing Committee*

As Hunter and Sexton (1999) note, the defining characteristic of the Chinese political system since 1949 has been the leading role played by the CCP. They add that the Party's role is not confined to government or politics, its ideological and administrative roles extend into almost all aspects of life including education, industry, commerce, and the military. At the top of the Communist Party pyramid is the NPC and under the NPC is the Central Committee with over 200 members. As Harris (2014, p27) notes, the Central Committee is

not normally an important decision-making body, but it elects the members of the Politburo (Political Bureau). He adds that the Politburo, made up of 25 members, is more significant, but most important in the foreign policy field is the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) which historically is made up of between 5-9 members (since 2012, there have been 7 members). According to Lu (2018), the PSC is the most important institution of political power in China. The PSC is at the apex of the Communist Party’s hierarchical pyramid as an elite subgroup of the larger Politburo (Ogden, 2019). The PSC is a small group of elite Party members that wield much of the political power in China (Dumbaugh & Martin, 2009). Very little information is available in the public domain about how personnel decisions are made at this topmost level, however, and that both the mysterious selection process and the enormous power of the PSC reflect the importance of what Chinese call “collective leadership” (Li, 2016).

The number of members of the PSC is always odd (Ogden, 2019). The PSC members are primarily selected based on their loyalty to the party and expertise in particular policy areas (Swaine, 2011). For the purpose of efficiently controlling and running the whole political system, the system is divided into six major functional sectors with each sector supervised by a member of the PSC. These sectors are: military affairs; legal affairs; administrative affairs (includes foreign affairs); propaganda affairs (cultural); united front affairs (one-country policy, Taiwan/Hong Kong); and mass organisation affairs (Lu, 2018). The members of the 19<sup>th</sup> PSC and their positions are as follows: see figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1 List of Politburo Standing Committee.**

NAME	PARTY POSITION	STATE POSITION
Xi Jinping	General Secretary of the Communist Party of China. Chair of the Central Military Commission of Communist Party of China.	President of the People’s Republic of China. Chair of the Central Military Commission of the People’s Republic of China.
Li Keqiang	Party Secretary of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China	Premier of the People’s Republic of China.

Li Zhanshu	Party Secretary of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress	Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.
Wang Yang	Party Secretary of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.	Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. State Councilor, Foreign Minister.
Wang Huning	Top-ranked secretary of the Central Secretariat of the Communist Party of China.	
Zhao Leji	Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.	
Han Zheng	Deputy Party Secretary of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.	Vice Premier of People's Republic of China.

[Source: Li (2017). China's Politburo Standing Committee, 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress].

President Xi, as General Secretary of the CCP, has direct oversight over foreign policy and leads the PSC, with the premier as its deputy leader. As Mastro (2021) points out, Xi leads the PSC so there is a need to consider personal power and accountability, therefore, statements and actions by Xi, who is described as having more personal power and authority than any other post-Mao leader, takes precedence. The PSC has the ultimate decision making power on all matters, including foreign policy (Gan, 2018), and all sensitive foreign policy matters go directly through Xi.

### Leading Small Groups

Further complicating any attempt to understand the Chinese decision-making system is the existence of LSGs, or committees, to advise the leaders on how they should proceed on any given issue (Jakobson & Manuel, 2016). These panels, which rarely announce their meetings or disclose their full membership, comprise the country's most powerful and influential leaders (Huang, 2014). All of the major LSGs dealing with foreign or security decisions have a representative from the propaganda organs of the Party and are chaired by Xi Jinping (Jakobson & Manuel, 2016). Eder (2018) adds that several LSGs were established to strengthen Xi personally, and the CCP more broadly, and to take charge of foreign policymaking at the expense of the Foreign Ministry. Such groups not only formulate

and implement policy but also inform it, producing policy papers that are tailored for Xi that have greater influence than those dutifully prepared by the ministries.

### *The People's Liberation Army*

Clear and conclusive evidence of the precise role of the PLA in China's foreign policy formulation and implementation processes remains elusive and most of the available information relates to the formal organisational structures involved, and less to those internal and informal processes and activities that produce decisions and actions (Swaine, 2011). The PLA's fundamental task has been to assist the party and the government in creating a strong, prospering, secure China: one with a powerful economy (Brown, 2016). In their book *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking*, Saunders and Scobell (2015) assess the relationship between the PLA and China's civilian leadership, the CCP. "The central challenge in civil-military relations is for civilian leaders to build a capable, effective military that can defend the state against external enemies and internal rebellions, while simultaneously ensuring that the military remains responsive to civilian orders and does not use its control of the means of violence to threaten the civil order" (Saunders & Scobell, 2015, p2).

The level of influence the PLA exerts in the policymaking process can often be determined by its motivation, and its motivation to intervene during the policy making process is determined by three sets of dynamics: inward vs outward orientation; professionalization vs politicisation and unity vs inter-service rivalry (Chen, 2015). The PLA can potentially play on the increased sensitivity of the CCP leadership to public opinion and nationalist criticism indirectly shaping policy via media appearances and publications (Saunders & Scobell, 2015, p9). Duan (2017) has argued that some PLA senior officer's hawkish voices can be signs of the army's increasing ambitions to utilise China's hard power and expand Chinese interests forcefully. This nationalist approach to security is more concerned with gaining and developing modern military technologies (Harris, 2014, p75).

However, though the military has greatly increased its responsibilities and budgets, an examination of its representation in the formal channels of Chinese power casts substantial doubt on its influence in bureaucratic politics and decision-making in Beijing (Colley, 2019). He adds that an analysis of the most powerful decision-making body in China,

the PSC, reveals no military participation in this committee since 1997 and, according to Jacobson and Manuel (2016), the Party leadership upholds a decision-making process that keeps the military at arm's length from political decision-making.

Early into Xi Jinping's presidency, he launched an anti-corruption drive. Mai (2017) contends that since its beginning, more than 100 PLA officers at or above Corps-level, including the former CMC vice chairman have been investigated and punished for corruption. No institution has felt the effects of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive more than the PLA, and no Chinese leader since Mao Zedong has done more to reconfigure the relationship between the ruling communist party (long obsessed by its own survival) and the one institution that can perhaps guarantee it (Clover, 2018). He adds that the reforms, which include a cut of 300,000 troops, should mean a more professional, high-tech army. According to Yuen (2014), Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive resembles more a party-building campaign for amassing political power amidst China's fragmented power structure than a systematic remedy to cure corruption. However, the anti-corruption drive has allowed Xi Jinping to reposition himself as a populist leader domestically (Li, 2019).

Though the PLA have much less influence on political issues, it appears to have more influence on purely military issues (national security) than in the past, which are usually handled within the CMC or under its supervision (Saunders & Scobell, 2015, p22). Military professionalism has given the military greater expertise on national security issues such as Taiwan and China's territorial claims compared to their civilian governing counterparts. Saunders and Scobell (2015, p2) contend that despite the existence of civil-military tensions, the PLA remains a 'party-army' that is responsive to the orders from the Communist Party (via the Party's CMC) rather than from the Chinese state (e.g. the State Council and the National People's Congress). According to Char and Bitzinger (2016), as long as the civilian leadership maintains the development of a capable military force a high priority the army will remain a "party-army".

### *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Since its inception, the government of the PRC has operated under the Communist Party's centralised and unified direction (Hunter & Sexton, 1999). The MFA is a branch of the State Council headed by Wang Yi. The State Council is the highest executive and

administrative organ of the government of China composed of the premier, vice premiers, state councillors, and the secretary general. Some of the main responsibilities of the MFA involve implementing the state's diplomatic principles, policies and related laws and regulations, and safeguarding national sovereignty, security and interests on behalf of the state. They also include running diplomatic affairs on behalf of the state and the government and handling diplomatic activities between leaders of the Communist Party and the state with foreign leaders (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019).

The Foreign Minister of China is the face of the country's foreign policy but, according to Gan (2018), his actual say in foreign policy decision-making is much smaller than in many other countries. She adds that a wide range of Communist Party organs and government departments, as well as the military, may be involved in the process and that the MFA is not the most authoritative or influential actor in foreign policy formulation in China. However, Xi has also reduced the role of the State Council and the Foreign Ministry on important foreign policy decisions (Blackwill & Campbell, 2016, p6). At the 2018 NPC, Beijing announced a major reshuffle of government and party institutions upgrading four LSGs to Commissions with the goal of strengthening the authority of the Communist Party and improving policy coordination across departments (Legarda, 2018). Part of this drive to impose his vision of foreign policy means Xi Jinping exerting control over the MFA, as well as the relevant key players in the Chinese diplomatic field (Loh, 2018). Xi Jinping's reorganisation of the Central Foreign Affairs LSG to the institutionally more important Central Foreign Affairs Commission reflects Xi's ongoing desire to upgrade China's diplomatic apparatus (Loh, 2018).

In conclusion, the main policy actor involved in China's foreign policy is President Xi Jinping, He is the General Secretary of the CCP, leads the PSC, chairs the LSG's involved in foreign policy discussions and controls the PLA through the CMC. He has also reduced the role of the MFA to that of a mouthpiece that expresses his vision. This control and centralisation of China's foreign policy actors by Xi Jinping means that he has direct oversight over China's foreign policy.

The next section of this chapter will focus on the drivers of China's foreign policy by examining its foreign policy strategic thinking.

## **Foreign Policy Strategic Thinking**

China's behavioural patterns draw significant attention from scholars and its national interest has, accordingly, become an important starting point for explaining China's foreign policy (Ye, 2019). According to Jie (2018), China projects its power and secures its national interests in three ways: exercising might, spending money and expressing its own mind-set. She adds that each of these relates to the other although each has somewhat inhibited China's pursuit of an international order in its own vision. Whilst China faces no imminent threat from any source, it feels vulnerable in terms of international (particularly U.S.) intentions towards the country. China's perceptions of vulnerabilities range widely from those reflecting the general international environment to those affecting particular territories or territorial disputes and can be characterised into four areas (Harris, 2014, p70). First is the vulnerability of the PRC's political system under the leadership of the CCP. Secondly, a historical sense of vulnerability concerned with the unity of the state. Thirdly is a geographical sense of insecurity in China's neighbourhood – its maritime borders reflect China's traditional vulnerability to attack from the seas and its land borders relate largely to insecure regions. Fourthly is the specific vulnerability to U.S. dominance of the international system (Harris, 2014, p70-71). Adding to the perception of vulnerability, China also still shows a dual identity of self-superiority and self-inferiority which is very evident in its foreign policy (Weissmann, 2015). On the one hand, China has the mentality of being superior – the 'Middle Kingdom' – with the natural right of ruling the world. At the same time, China feels very insecure and weak and, under pressure from threats from within as well as from outside. It is in this environment that nationalism finds the political space as an ideology assisting with framing a narrative that will overcome China's vulnerability perceptions.

“Popular nationalist narratives such as the one based on China's past humiliations at the hands of encroaching foreign powers frame and colour contemporary Chinese foreign policy debates” (Ni, 2019). Lanteigne (2013, p171) asserts that China's foreign policy development is engaged in two distinct processes simultaneously: namely, expansion (increasing involvement in international organisations and growing its own institution process), and reconstruction (the reconstruction of China's foreign policy). For Kuhn (2016), there are eight drivers of Chinese foreign policy:

1. Complementary Development: The country has an over capacity in heavy industries such as steel, cement, aluminium, and if these can be transported and utilised by less developed countries, all benefit.
2. Domestic Economy: China is in the progress of its 14<sup>th</sup> 5-year plan (2021-2025) with the ambition of becoming a moderately prosperous society with trade and advanced technology an integral part of this plan.
3. Global Crisis: Technology has greatly enhanced standards of living but made the world more fragile. China's pro-active diplomacy enhances mechanisms for managing, averting or tempering global crises.
4. Global Responsibilities: As the world's second largest economy, China is a new global leader and therefore shoulders new global responsibilities.
5. Global Example: China does not seek to export its political system and every country should determine its own system of governance. To lead by example is a high-minded strategy that enhances China's credibility.
6. International Incidents: The more China interacts with other countries the better it will be able to contain international incidents. China, like all nations, has interests that conflict with those of others such as the South China Sea, cybersecurity, currency, and trade balance.
7. Core Interests: There are three categories of core interests 1) Political system. 2) Continued economic development. 3) National sovereignty and territorial integrity.
8. National Pride: China is proud of its 5000-year civilisation as well as its recent economic success. It is only natural that China would be pleased for other nations and people to appreciate the country's accomplishments.

The principal aim of China's foreign policy is the restoration and defence of Chinese territorial integrity (Hunter & Sexton, 1999). They add that, since the May 4 demonstrations of 1919, the recovery of lost territory and national pride has been a constant refrain of China's political movements. This is illustrated in the latest Chinese Defence White paper (2019), which asserts that the aim of China's foreign policy is the restoration and defence of China's territorial integrity as well as promotion of the national goal of economic development and China's security interests in the Asia-Pacific.

The next section, which is linked to China's foreign policy strategy, examines China's Peaceful Development.

### *Peaceful Development*

The PRC has not wavered from its overarching strategy of rising through peaceful development and the language of the five principles of peaceful co-existence continue to permeate Chinese foreign policy (Tiang Boon, 2017). These five principles are mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence (Weissmann, 2015, p154). Thomas (2018) notes that Xi retains the peaceful development strategy articulated by Hu Jintao in the mid-2000s, which derives from the CCP's basic line of peace and development in international relations that Deng Xiaoping introduced in 1985. President Xi asserts that "to pursue peaceful development, in keeping with the development trend of the times and China's fundamental interests, is a strategic choice made by the Communist Party which should enhance its strategic thinking and confidence, pursue mutually beneficial development featuring openness and cooperation and develop China by securing a peaceful international environment" (Xi, 2013). "The peaceful development strategy reflects the belief that China's economic development requires a peaceful external environment and cooperative relations with major powers" (Thomas, 2018).

According to the latest Chinese Defence White Paper (2019), China is committed to developing friendly cooperation with all countries based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence. The core idea behind the five principles, as interpreted by China today, is sovereignty – that is, one state has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of another state. While China still adheres to its declared 'peaceful development' policy aiming to maintain a stable external environment the manner in which it seeks to do so are very different (Zhang, 2015). He adds that the new aspects of China's peaceful development are: 1) to forcefully protect China's national interests with greater determination; 2) conditionality and reciprocity; and 3) a more proactive and coordinated approach to create and shape a stable external environment that serves China's domestic interests.

The Chinese diplomatic establishment has come to see the country as a leading global power with varied interests and responsibilities, shedding the conservative and low profile approach to foreign affairs (Chang-Liao, 2016). Feng and He (2017) contend that since Xi Jinping took up these positions of power, the old diplomatic tradition of 'keeping a low profile' or 'hiding strength and biding time' (*taoguang yanghui*), which originated from the Deng Xiaoping era, has been replaced by a policy of 'striving for achievement' (*fenfa youwei*). In his report to the NPC in 2017, President Xi Jinping declared, "socialism with Chinese characteristics has ushered in a new era" (People's Daily, 2017). Xi Jinping has introduced four new concepts into Chinese foreign policy: a new type of major country relations; major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics; a global Community of Common Destiny (CCD); and a new type of international relations (Xie, 2017). According to Zhang (2018), the CCD continues the discourse of China's peaceful rise; the key difference, however, is the move away from the low-profile diplomacy and towards a desire to play a more active role in global governance.

Zhang (2019) suggests that the Xi Jinping doctrine, conceived as the collective body of Xi's Thought on Diplomacy embodied in his remarks, writings, and instructions, offers an entry in to the deep currents of China's thought processes regarding international relations. "Xi is the first Chinese leader who speaks within, and to, this context of China as a truly global actor, is aware of its international role, and wants to state it more forcefully" (Brown, 2016). To achieve this, he has taken important steps in the direction of formulating a grand strategy for China. According to Stenslie and Gang (2016, p117), it is widely believed that the adoption of a grand strategy by the Chinese leadership is highly beneficial as it will have a unifying effect domestically and make China more appealing internationally, undermining notions of the 'China Threat' theory.

The next section examines the so-called 'China Dream'.

### *'China Dream'*

Key Chinese leaders and thinkers take as their starting point the idea that the Son of Heaven was not merely a king or an emperor, but also the symbol of the system of values that make the Chinese what they are (Zheng & Wu, 2014). It is this deep structure that gives shape to the Chinese civilisation and state. "During his tour of 'The Road toward Renewal'

exhibition at the National Museum of China in 2012, just two weeks after taking office, President Xi underscored the theme of China's rejuvenation calling it the greatest dream for the Chinese nation in modern history" (Xinhua, 2012). Kornberg and Faust (2005) note that all modern Chinese leaders have proclaimed an interest in restoring ancient boundaries (to those of the Middle Kingdom) that had been lost to foreign aggressors in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to President Xi, the great renewal of the Chinese nation has become the grandest dream of the Chinese people in modern times. "We call it the 'China Dream', with prosperity for the country, renewal for the nation and happiness for the people as its fundamental elements" (Xi, 2013). "History shows that the future and destiny of each one of us is closely linked to those of our country and nation and that one can only do well when one's country and nation do well" (Xi, 2012).

The essence of Xi's vision is for the great revival and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation referencing China's 5000 years of history and the country's 'indelible contribution' to world civilisation (Economy, 2018). As the first and most significant political slogan of the new administration, the idea of the China Dream symbolises Xi's vision for China's future and its place in the world (Zhang, 2014). The China Dream is an import emulating from the American dream. According to Xi (2012), the goals of the 'China dream' are to bringing about a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2021 and to eventually build China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious by 2049, when the PRC marks its centenary. Once this is complete, the dream of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will then be realised.

The idea of a 'China Dream' has become a major ideological campaign promoted in the media, policy and academic commentaries and in public areas across China (Kerr, 2015), thus attempting to frame the 'China Dream' in a banal context. At the 2021 NPC, Li Zhanshu called for the advancing toward realising the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation (Xinhua, 2021). The 'China Dream' refers to the collective aspiration of 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' and the personal dreams of the individual citizens of China to achieve productive, healthy and happy lives only attainable through 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' (Das, 2016). "To realise the 'China Dream', the nation must adhere to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Xi, 2013). Xi adds that China has followed this path for over 30 years and that history has shown that this is the correct path

suiting China's national conditions, a path that makes the people rich and the country strong. "As long as we close ranks and pursue this common dream with great determination, we can create enormous strength to achieve it and enjoy vast space for each one of us to fulfil our own dreams" (Xi, 2013). As this rhetoric suggests, the China Dream is rich in nationalistic symbolism.

The vision of the 'China Dream' is so comprehensive that different messages can fit under one roof. This premise is confirmed by Kerr (2015) who adds that even though the 'China Dream' is presented as a singular collective noun, there are many ways of experiencing and understanding this dream. Xi Jinping's language is redolent with symbols and appeals to ideas and emotions and there are several layers of meaning to the terms he uses. First, it is a negotiation between collective and individual aspirations. Secondly, the 'China Dream' is about confronting the future with confidence- patriotic optimism and, a sense of nationalistic pride (Kerr, 2015).

Although it is easy to dismiss such slogans as the 'China Dream' coming from the Chinese leadership as pure propaganda and empty talk, slogans do play an important role in organising thought and action on Chinese politics (Sorensen, 2015). To some extent, the 'China Dream' is meant to play the role of a societal glue to unite people (Wang, 2013). Kerr (2015) notes that the idea of the China Dream by itself is not very political – it is symbolic, emotive and psychological. He adds that the true politics of the 'China Dream' are located in its consequences - in its objectives and outcomes encapsulated in the term 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' and these terms are very political. Xi Jinping's policy statements imply that the overarching concern of China's foreign policy remains the creation of a 'more enabling international environment' for China's continued development.

The next section considers China's 'core interests'.

### *Core Interests*

China has three categories of core interests; its political system of one ruling party; continuing economic development; and national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Kuhn, 2016). National sovereignty and territorial integrity refer to Macao, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China, all of which China views as its own. During talks with both chief executives of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Macao Special Administrative

Region (MSAR), President Xi reiterated that Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and the Chinese mainland are linked by destiny, attaching them to the goal of realising the Chinese dream (Xi, 2013). Xi has also reiterated the importance of Taiwan being a “core interest” linking it to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Party will stand firm in safeguarding China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and will never allow the historical tragedy of national division to repeat itself (Xi, 2017).

According to Khan (2018) Xi has linked commercial and geopolitical considerations in an attempt to shore up China’s strength. Jie (2018) argues that Xi Jinping’s more proactive approach seeks to promote China’s core interests more forcefully while asserting China’s ‘rightful’ place in the global order. The notion of China’s core interests has recently become the principle of Chinese foreign policy as part of the China Dream (Zhou, 2019). “While pursuing peaceful development, we will never sacrifice our legitimate rights and interests, or China’s core interests” (Xi, 2013). Though there are different interpretations of the term ‘China’s core interests’, there is general agreement that these refer to the non-negotiable bottom lines of Chinese policy (Zhou, 2019).

“China has shown a greater degree of assertive nationalism in safeguarding what it considers to be its core interests” (Kim, 2018, p35). As Zhao (2013) contends, the communist state has become more willing to play to the popular nationalist gallery in pursuing them. This is not because China’s priorities for seeking economic growth have become less important, but because it has amassed considerable power and influence to express its past grievances and its desire to create a new regional order in a more overt manner (discussed in chapter 5).

The last section related to China’s foreign policy strategic thinking is the continuity behind its foreign policy.

### *Continuity*

According to Baggott-Carter (2019), Chinese foreign policy reflects more continuity than change under president Xi Jinping’s leadership. “Xi Jinping’s continuation of key strategies, like peace and development, suggests that he may not have changed China’s objectives so much as the means by which the CCP pursues them” (Thomas, 2018). Christensen (2015) asserts that China has no long-term foreign policy strategy just

objectives such as regime security, preserving territorial integrity and gaining prestige, power and respect on the international stage.

Though China has its vulnerabilities and insecurities, under Xi Jinping's leadership China does have a strategy based on rejuvenation, national unity and prosperity for the Chinese nation. Sorensen (2015) examines the 'China Dream' for clues as to how the Chinese leadership sees China's international role evolve. She concludes that although Chinese leaders generally promote the 'China Dream' as a continuation of China's peaceful development strategy, there are some innovative elements that point to a gradual development of both new thinking and a new approach to China's foreign policy strategy under Xi. This thought is echoed by Chang-Liao (2016) who notes that whilst a thread of continuity still runs through Chinese diplomacy, the new leadership under President Xi Jinping has also introduced adjustments and innovations. These adjustments have come in the form of a foreign policy reorientation towards Xi's "major-country diplomacy". China is in the process of changing from a regional power to a global power and during this transition China's national strategic interests are rapidly expanding worldwide (Xi, 2016). This progression of China's rise naturally leads China to assert itself as the power it sees itself as being historically, traditionally and socially.

### **Case Studies**

China's national interests are increasingly diverging with its international interests. In recent years, the Chinese government has made bold moves to encroach on Hong Kong's political system and crackdown on dissent after they pledged to preserve much of what makes Hong Kong unique when the former British colony was handed over more than two decades ago. In 2020, the Chinese government imposed a sweeping national security law which has resulted in the arrests of pro-democracy activists, lawmakers and journalists. They have also restricted voting rights; and curtailed the freedom of the press and free speech (Maizland, 2022). China has also arbitrarily detained more than a million Muslims, mainly Uyghurs, in re-education camps. A number of Western governments have described China's actions as genocide with the U.N human rights office believing that the violations could constitute crimes against humanity (Maizland, 2022).

As China's national interests become increasingly international, current geopolitical, economic and security matters are becoming subjects of concern for Chinese national security. The Asia-Pacific region, in particular, South East Asia has become a focus of major country competition, bringing uncertainties to regional security. According to the Chinese Defence White Paper (2019), the U.S. is strengthening its Asia-Pacific alliances and reinforcing military deployment and intervention, adding complexity to regional security. In terms of the South China Sea, U.S. actions there are undermining peace and stability and are intended to drive a wedge between regional countries (Xinhua, 2020).

In response to the changing dynamics in the region, the China Daily (2013) has reported that becoming a maritime power is an important task for China as the oceans and seas have increasingly important strategic status concerning global competition in the spheres of politics, economic development, military, science and technology. At the core of nationalist justifications for the expansion and development of the navy are the so-called "lessons of history" arguments presented in Chinese nationalist discourse. Here, Chinese scholars refer to Alfred Mahan's theory of sea power and use it to explain historical Chinese defeats (Amir, 2014).

China largely divides the South East Asian region into continental and maritime Southeast Asia (Scobell & Lin, 2018). Continental Southeast Asia includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam whilst maritime Southeast Asia includes Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Southeast Asia, with its close political, economic and cultural ties, is the most important developing region for China (Zhou, 2018). Ferdinand (2016) asserts that while China has pursued a more robust policy in the South China Sea aimed at territorial sovereignty, it has also launched an extremely ambitious long-term projects to expand land and maritime transport links between China and Europe, termed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

This chapter will now examine three case studies related to China's increasingly assertive foreign policy initiatives: the South China Sea (Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands), the East China Sea (Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands), and Taiwan. The aim, and relevance of these case studies is to determine if, and how, contemporary Chinese nationalism shapes China's foreign policy initiatives in these areas. Moreover, is China willing to use force to achieve its desired goals?

### South China Sea Case Study

The first case study this chapter will examine is China's foreign policy regarding the South China Sea. Around the coast of the South China Sea, a new wave of nationalism is creating new imagined communities with economic development and new media technologies, and desires for self-expression – the same driving forces behind anti-colonial nationalisms of the last century- propelling it (Hayton, 2014). Chinese nationalism is not a singular entity according to Carlson (2015), with the way in which it is framed with reference to China's Asian neighbours varying significantly.

For many of the world's largest economies, the South China Sea is an essential maritime crossroads for trade. Hayton (2014) contends that the sea is of importance to the wider world as hundreds of vessels, from the smallest fishing boats to the very largest of crude tankers fill the waterways. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that approximately 80 percent of global trade by volume and 70 percent by value is transported by sea. Of that volume, 60 percent of maritime trade passes through Asia with the South China Sea carrying roughly one-third of global shipping (UNCTAD, 2016), see figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2 List of top seven export countries through South China Sea.**

Country	U.S. Dollars (Billion)
China	\$874
South Korea	\$249
Singapore	\$214
Thailand	\$170
Vietnam	\$158
Japan	\$141
Hong Kong (HKSAR)	\$140

[Source: China Power, 2017].

China relies heavily on the South China Sea as around 40 percent of all its trade pass through these waters (Panda, 2017). Of the world's 9 largest container ports, seven are in China, see figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.3 List of world’s largest container ports.**

City/Country
Shanghai, China
Singapore, Singapore
Shenzhen, China
Ningbo, China
Guangzhou Harbour, China
Busan, South Korea
Hong Kong, China
Qingdao, China
Tianjin, China

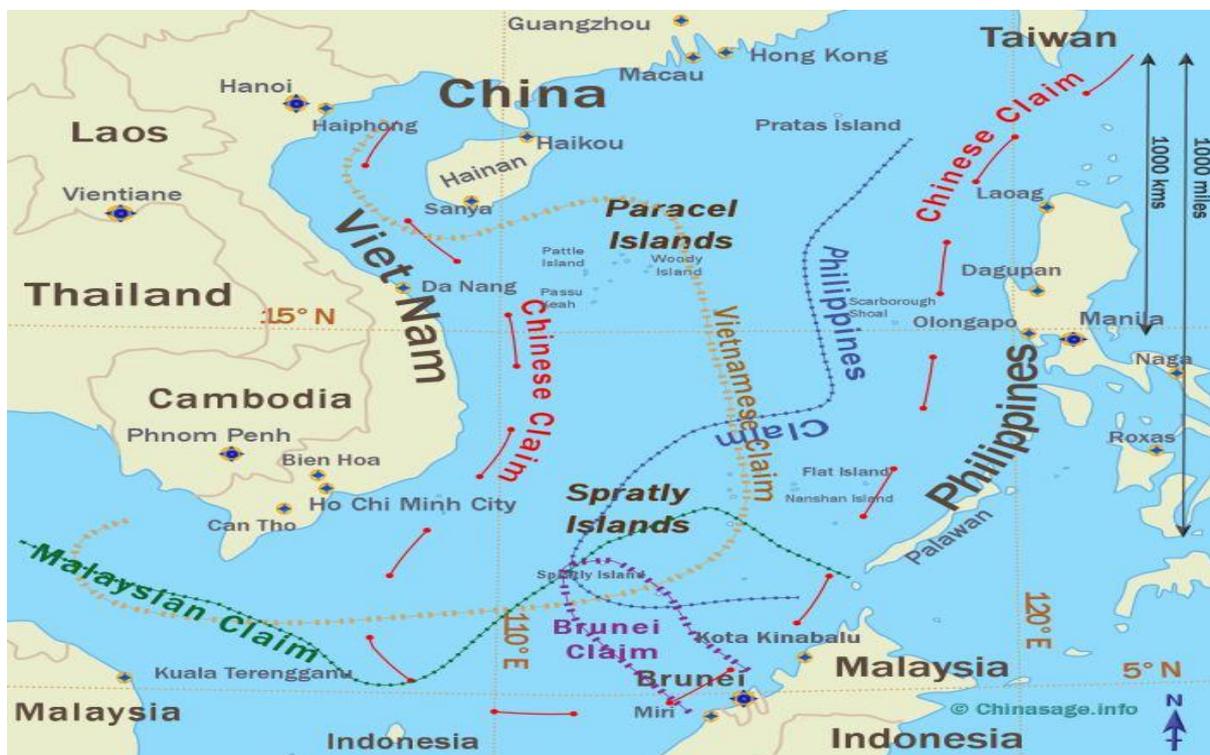
[Source: World Shipping Council, 2020].

The South China Morning Post (2019) notes that the South China Sea is a key commercial thoroughfare connecting Asia with Europe and Africa and its seabed is rich with natural resources which makes it a valuable territorial entity. The South China Sea is certainly connected closely to the China Dream. China is actively working towards shifting the established order in its nearby neighbourhood and the South China Sea, which can be seen as China’s front yard (Fels & Vu, 2016).

Relations with maritime Southeast Asia have primarily centred on two goals: promoting trade and investment in the region and enhancing China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea (Scobell & Lin, 2018). They add that China has three overarching interests in Southeast Asia. First, to promote and protect trade, investment, and other linkages to the region to support China’s economic growth. This includes protecting China’s sea lines of communication and developing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road further expanding political and economic cooperation. Secondly, to protect Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity including upholding Chinese claims to features in the South China Sea, enlarging these features, and increasing China’s maritime presence and capabilities. Thirdly, to maintain regional stability and promote regional solidarity and cooperation with China by minimising the unwanted influence of external actors (primarily the U.S.) and increasing China’s exchanges with the region.

The members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China have been engaged in discussions on a potential Code of Conduct (COC) to manage the South China Sea maritime and territorial disputes for over two decades (South China Sea Expert Working Group, 2020). The concept of a COC was first raised in the 1990's, and is designed to establish guidelines in the region. In 2002, China deviated from its long tradition of bilateral negotiations and instead worked with ASEAN to settle on the non-binding Declaration on the Conduct (DOC) of the Parties in the South China Sea. In the declaration, the parties promised "to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability including, among others, refraining from action of inhabiting the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, and other features and to handle their differences in a constructive manner" (Fletcher School, 2020). The DOC text applies vaguely to the whole of the South China Sea, not to any particular disputed area (Tonnesson, 2002). However, as Zhou (2017) argues, it is not an instrument designed to settle territorial disputes. Over two decades on, negotiations between ASEAN and China still continue due to unresolved issues regarding territorial claims, see figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4. Map of South China Sea**



[Source: Google Maps, 2022].

At the heart of the South China Sea disputes is the question of who exercises legitimate ownership over hundreds of small islands, atolls and reefs (Storey & Cheng-Yi, 2017). As Lanteigne (2013, p171) points out, Beijing claims in full the South China Sea as its historical waters but it has also been claimed in part by other regional actors. He adds that Beijing has refused to entertain any division of sovereignty, but has suggested that the other states may lease islands in the region for economic use. According to Brown (2016), a leadership highly aware of the new resources for legitimacy that nationalism and national pride gives has energised the South China Sea issue and that the defence of sovereignty and the restoration of national dignity are extremely important for the Chinese people. However, a rise in popular nationalist sentiment could push Chinese foreign policy towards a more “militant” posture (Jenner & Thuy, 2016).

In early 2009, Malaysia and Vietnam sent a joint submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to state their claims in the South China Sea (Fletcher School, 2020). In response to the Malaysian and Vietnamese submission, and in an effort to enhance their own claims, China introduced the “nine-dash line” to the UN Secretary General to define its sovereignty claims to the South China Sea. According to Zhen (2016), the line first appeared on a Chinese map as the 11-dash line in 1947 as the Republic of China (ROC) navy took control of some islands in the South China Sea that the Japanese occupied in the Second World War. When the CCP defeated the KMT forces, the communist government declared itself the sole legitimate representative of China and inherited all the nation’s maritime claims. Zhen (2016) notes that in the early 1950’s, the Chinese removed two “dashes” to bypass the Gulf of Tonkin as a gesture to communist comrades in North Vietnam. China’s nine-dash line is a geographical marker used to assert its claim stretching as far as 2,000 km from the Chinese mainland, reaching waters close to Indonesia and Malaysia (South China Morning Post, 2019).

There are generally four interpretations of what the line is: namely, as a demarcation of maritime borders, as sovereignty over islands, as historic rights, or as historic waters (Huang, Zhang and Tiezzi, 2016). However, as Tsirbas (2016) notes, because China has not precisely articulated, in terms familiar with maritime lawyers and diplomats, what its nine-dash line means, there is ambiguity, leaving plenty of room for interpretation. At one end of the spectrum, the nine-dash line is perceived as a maximalist claim to sovereignty and

control over all features within the nine-dash line. At the other end, the nine-dash line is perceived as a minimalist claim: China's attempt to assert jurisdiction over the area so it can benefit economically from any commercial ventures (Tsirbas, 2016). Regardless of whether China's claims are maximalist or minimalist, Cotillon (2017) suggests that China's claims over maritime territory situated within the line has allowed it to make assertive moves in the South China Sea, upsetting a number of its Asian neighbours such as Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei, who all have competing territorial claims.

One area within the South China Sea that has particular importance is the Spratly Islands. 21 of China's 39 maritime shipping routes pass by the Spratly Islands, a disputed group of islands claimed by China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam (Zhou, 2018). The Spratly Islands consist of hundreds of islands and reefs which are largely uninhabited but their strategic location in the middle of several major trade routes, the home of fishing grounds that supply the region, as well as the possibility of containing natural resources make the islands extremely valuable economically (Moss; Hoffman & Lipton, 2016).

The Paracel Islands are another group of disputed islands in the South China Sea; this time claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2013), the Paracel Islands are a group of about 130 small coral islands and reefs situated about 400km east of central Vietnam and about 350 km southeast of Hainan Island, China. The Paracel Islands comprise two separate island groups - the Amphitrite group to the east and the Crescent group in the west - and lie across an established shipping route between Guangzhou and Hong Kong in the north, and the Singapore Strait in the south (Bateman, 2018).

The Paracel Islands have an added significance as a case study; they assist in explaining if China would be willing to use force to secure its interests. According to Cotillon (2017), Vietnam's maritime territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea has been going on since 1974 when Vietnam accused China of the opportunistic takeover of the Paracel Islands after armed clashes that left 75 Vietnamese dead. "Historically, China has shown a willingness to use violence over territory to secure its current borders and to regain homeland areas" (Harris, 2014, p179). While the South China Sea is of great strategic importance to China, the Paracels are particularly significant as they provide a useful

forward operating base for the projection of Chinese power into the South China Sea, crucial for China's great power ambitions.

Over the past 25 years, since the mid-1990's, China's navy has been undergoing a transformation and modernisation to make it a much more capable force. A Congressional Research Report (2022) concluded that China's navy is now the largest of any country in East Asia, and within the last few years it has surpassed the U.S. Navy in numbers of battle force ships. The report adds that China's navy is a formidable military force within China's near seas region, and that China's naval ships, aircraft and weapons are now comparable in many respects to those of Western navies.

Xi-era China's most consequential move has been the massive expansion of its outposts in the Spratly and Paracel Islands (Chubb, 2019). The Council on Foreign Relations (2019) notes that, in recent years, satellite imagery has shown increased efforts by China to reclaim land in the South China Sea by physically increasing the size of islands or creating new islands altogether. China has constructed ports, military installations and airstrips, particularly in the Paracel and Spratly Islands where it has 20 and 7 outposts respectively (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). The South China Sea islands are inalienable parts of Chinese territory according to Beijing and China exercises its national sovereignty to build infrastructure and deploy necessary defensive capabilities on the islands and reefs in the South China Sea (Chinese Defence White Paper, 2019). China's artificial island building and infrastructure construction are increasing its potential power projection capabilities in the region (Council on Foreign Relations, 2017). China's actions in the South China Sea display realist tendencies, in which China is attempting to maximise its power (examined in chapter 5).

Exacerbating tensions, in 2014 China's Maritime Safety Administration announced that a drilling rig owned by the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) would be set up near the Paracel islands (Tiezzi, 2014). Vietnam vocally denounced the move as illegal and a serious violation of Vietnamese sovereignty, as well as control over its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Associated Press (2014) reported that Chinese ships rammed into, and fired water cannons at Vietnamese vessels trying to stop Beijing from deploying the oil and gas rig. Perlez (2014) asserts that a Chinese vessel rammed and sank a Vietnamese fishing boat in close proximity of the oil rig. She adds that the sinking further aggravated

diplomatic frictions between China and Vietnam leading to anti-Chinese riots that killed at least four people and injured over 100 prompting China to evacuate several thousand workers from Vietnam. China has also been harassing Filipino vessels and fisherman in the area, whilst elsewhere in the South China Sea the Associated Press (2014) also reported that the Philippines arrested 11 Chinese fisherman for illegal fishing, adding to the tensions.

In order to establish who has legitimate ownership, the Philippines took China to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2015 which was set up to resolve disputes among countries and other parties that revolve around international agreements. The Philippines wanted the court to rule on three aspects relating to neighbouring countries competing claims in the South China Sea (Westcott, 2016). First, should their claims in the region under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), be placed above China's historical claim? Secondly, the Philippines wanted a ruling to define geographical typography "islands, rocks, low-tide elevations, or submerged banks". Thirdly, the Philippines wanted the court to rule whether China had infringed on Philippines sovereignty. The overall outcome was that the Arbitration Tribunal ruled in favour of the Philippines and against the legitimacy of China's nine-dash line which Beijing routinely invokes as the demarcation of its claim over the South China Sea (Tharoor, 2016).

In China's defence, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (2016) contended that China has sovereignty over Nanhai Zhudao (the South China Sea Islands); China has internal waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, EEZs and continental shelf based on its sovereignty over Nanhai Zhudao; and China has historic rights in the South China Sea. For China, sovereignty claims over the four island groups in the South China Sea – the Pratas Islands, the Paracel Islands, Macclesfield Bank and the Spratly Islands – derive from its historic rights as the first country that discovered, named, and continuously used these islands for more than two centuries (Sinaga, 2015). According to Chinese state media, the activities of the Chinese people in the South China Sea date back over 2000 years ago. China, it is claimed, is the first country to have discovered, named, explored and exploited Nanhai Zhudao and relevant waters as well as the first to have exercised sovereignty and jurisdiction over them continuously, peacefully and effectively (Zhong, 2020).

Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi (2016), contended that "based on solid historical and legal ground, China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the

South China Sea would not be affected by the ruling of the Arbitral Tribunal". The tribunal on the South China Sea arbitration unilaterally initiated by the Philippines was not a United Nations (U.N) body and did not represent the position of the U.N. and the so-called ruling had no authority and credibility at all and, by not recognising or accepting it, China defends its own legitimate rights (Zhu, 2016). At the 10<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit Foreign Minister's Meeting in 2020, Wang Yi laid out three basic facts about the South China Sea issue from a Chinese perspective:

- China's sovereign rights over the South China Sea have solid historical and legal grounds;
- China follows a policy of pursuing amity and friendship with its neighbours;
- and, China is committed to observing international law. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 2020).

The ensuing increase in international tensions, combined with greater publicity from the new social media sector soon began attracting the attention of China's growing online population to the South China Sea (Chubb, 2018). Since releasing the ruling on the South China Sea, WeChat and other microblogs used daily by the majority of Chinese people have been flooded with two pictures. One is of a letter calling on veterans to enrol in the army again with the comment "if there is a war, I will be back to the front upon the call" (Luo, 2016). The other picture is a map of Chinese territory which marks out the nine-dash line with the caption "This is Chinese territory, not an inch of it can be lost". Another example of Chinese nationalistic sentiment towards the arbitration ruling is a picture, accompanied by an article in the Washington Post by Jessica Chen Weiss (2016), where a Chinese restaurant worker puts up a banner in Beijing declaring that the South China Sea is China's territory.

The nationalist narrative in China over the South China Sea islands is shaped by the perception that the U.S. is attempting to contain China as well as a belief that the smaller Southeast Asian claimant countries have wrongfully taken control over the islands (Lim, 2016). This narrative is a construct by China's leadership and can be explained by the modernist theory of political transformation. Political transformation, as noted in chapter 1, partly focuses on the role of elites and on the changing nature of warfare to account for the rise in nationalism.

According to Beijing, countries from outside the region conduct frequent close-in reconnaissance on China by air and sea, and illegally enter China's territorial waters and the waters and airspace near China's islands and reefs, undermining China's national security (The State Council Information Office, 2019). Foreign Minister Wang Yi (2021) has stated that "some countries outside the region desire to stir up trouble and have wilfully launched a large number of advanced warships and Warcraft into the South China Sea, deliberately inducing other countries outside the region to "show their powers" in the South China Sea and openly sow discord among the countries in the region". Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin comments that any attempt to meddle in China's internal affairs, undermine China's sovereignty, or tarnish China's image under various excuses is doomed to fail (Xinhua, 2020). The PLA air force reserves the right to conduct patrols in the South China Sea (Xinhua, 2017).

Yahuda (2014) notes, China's new assertiveness has arisen primarily from four related developments. First, its sense of a change of the balance of power in its favour. Secondly, the expansion of its national interests to include the maritime domain in its nearby seas and its trade routes. Thirdly, the growth of its military power to pursue its maritime claims more effectively. Finally, the heightening of nationalist sentiments among state officials as well as the population in general. China considers disputes over territorial issues with its neighbours as domestic issues instead of international issues and, therefore, China reverts to the language of the five principles of peaceful co-existence – especially "non-interference in internal affairs" and "non-intervention" – making it hard to discuss issues, let alone resolve them (Brown, 2016).

However, China's sovereignty claims derive not from legal and historical claims, but from the nationalist desires of an increasing realist stance that have intensified over the past few decades. China's leaders can bolster their nationalistic credentials at home in these disputes by exerting great pressure on other Southeast Asian claimant countries without running the risk of upheaval at home if anything should go astray (Carlson, 2015).

In conclusion, the South China Sea case study can be best explained by the modernist theory. China has constructed an economic, political and social narrative that the South China Sea is an integral part of the Chinese nation attaching it to China's national territory and sovereignty. By carefully managing the genuine risks that popular nationalism

poses, the party-state has integrated it into its assertive, but pragmatic, foreign policy (Chubb, 2018). However, “the more capable a government appears to be at shaping popular sentiment at will, the less a government can credibly claim to be constrained by such factors as public opinion” (Weiss, 2014, p224). Official state-led nationalism, combined with a more hawkish public opinion regarding national territory and sovereignty, has enabled President Xi Jinping to engage in a more adventurous foreign policy along China’s southern maritime frontier.

### *East China Sea Case Study*

The second case study is China’s foreign policy regarding the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. Das (2016) contends that two intertwined territorial contentions remain unresolved between China and Japan in the East China Sea: maritime delimitation of this body of water and the question of territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. “The East China Sea dispute can be a good indicator that looks at the effects of nationalism and other related issues of mutual antipathy derived from history and set against a backdrop of ongoing changes in the geostrategic environment caused by China’s rise and Japan’s relative decline” (Kim, 2018, p32).

For almost four decades, China has disputed Japan’s sovereignty over several small rocky islands in the East China Sea (Wiegand, 2009). Referred to as the Senkaku Islands by the Japanese, and the Diaoyu Islands by the Chinese, they have recently come to international attention as both countries dispute who has sovereignty over the territory. Though the islands are closer to Japan than to China, they lie on the edge of China’s continental shelf (Viswanathan, 2015). The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are an uninhabited group of eight small islets. The islands cover about seven square kilometres in area and lie northeast of Taiwan, east of the Chinese mainland, and southwest of Japan’s Okinawa prefecture. The principal island (Diaoyu Dao) is 4.6km long and 1.85km wide, and securing international recognition of sovereign rights over the islands can be a basis to claim a substantial portion of the economically and strategically valuable surrounding waters. (Suganuma, 2000; Viswanathan, 2015; & Costa, 2018).

Historically, the tug-of-war over the sovereignty of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea can be traced back to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, while Japan’s defeat in

WWII and the ensuing Cold War geopolitics added complexity to claims over the islands (Dingli & Economy, 2019). Japan claims that it legally annexed the islands in 1895 after determining that they were uninhabited and unclaimed by any other country. China, on the other hand, argues that it has records demonstrating that the islands came under their control as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> Century; Japan's seizure in 1895 was, from Beijing's perspective illegal. The previous Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, Fu Ying (2012), reiterates this point, saying the Diaoyu Islands belong to China and that there are clear historical and legal grounds to China's sovereignty over the islands. Adding, as a matter of fact, that a look through historical evidence finds that before 1868, there were no Japanese records of the Diaoyu Islands being part of Japan. To make things more contentious, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands were supposed to go back to China after the defeat of Japan in the Pacific War, but under arrangements made by the U.S. in 1972, Japan still controls and administers the islands (Harris, 2014, p83).

However, China did not raise their ownership claim until after the discovery of oil resources in the waters around the islands in 1969 (Viswanathan, 2015). She adds that the islands have great economic and strategic importance due to their close proximity to shipping lanes, rich fishing grounds, potential oil and gas reserves, and their geographical location due to the rising major power competition. Economic interests alone do not drive the issue of the islands' sovereignty. The presumed oil and gas reserves in the East China Sea are certainly tempting for China and could help fuel its future economic development, but they do not explain the intensity of the emotions involved (Bendini, 2014).

An example of how intense the emotions are occurred in 2012 when the Japanese government attempted to purchase these islands from a private owner, moves that were interpreted by the Chinese as an attempt to 'nationalise' Japan's claims to them (Abbot, 2016). The Chinese considered this act to be a violation of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1978 whereby the leadership of both nations arrived at a consensus to leave the issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands to be resolved at a later point (Das, 2016). Japan's move to purchase the islands resulted in anti-Japanese demonstrations across major Chinese cities where hundreds of thousands of young people participated in massive rallies taking to the streets with violence, vandalism and arson (Chen, 2017). Weiss (2014, p189) suggests that the Chinese government was complicit in tolerating widespread anti-Japanese

demonstrations and of fanning popular anger through blanket media coverage. “The fact that anti-Japan demonstrations were allowed to take place indicates a tacit blessing from the state which recognised them as a safety valve to release the accumulated nationalist anger” (Sun, 2011).

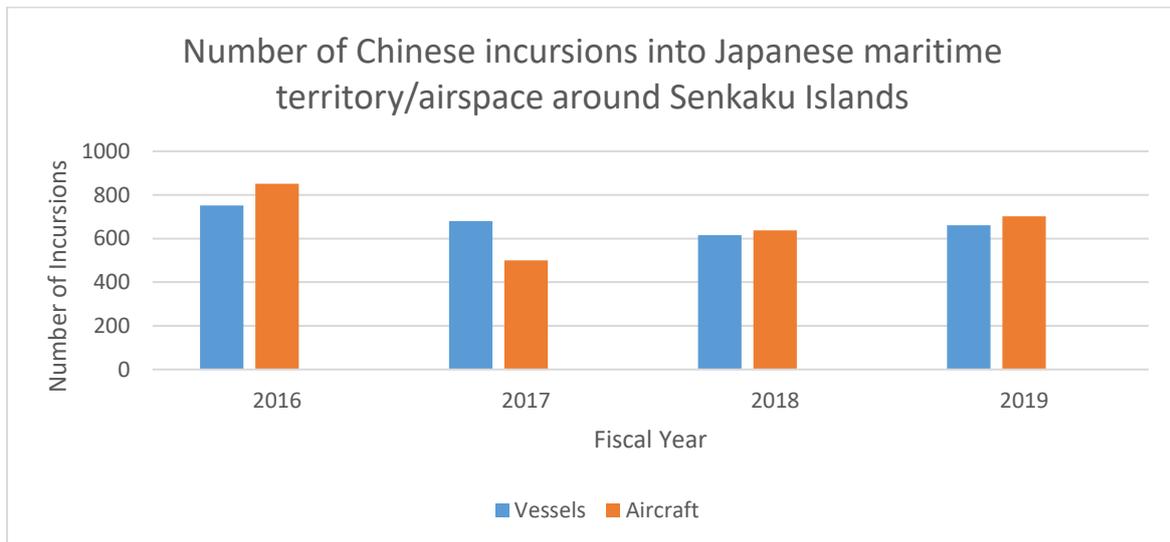
China also uses its military, and the blocking of exports and imports, to pressure Japan on political issues and firms like Toyota and Honda have had to shut down their facilities during protests (Blumenthal, 2018). These protests were unique in that they not only included some of the most violent actions and outspoken criticism of Japan, but the CCP responded in a different fashion by sending out warships and flying patrols (Abbot, 2016). This military response was a reaction to the massive anti-Japanese demonstrations in China’s major cities, which not only criticised the ‘unremorseful’ former enemy but also criticised the government’s ability to protect China’s core national interests and showed that the CCP can in fact protect the country’s national interests.

The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, according to China, have been an inherent territory of China since ancient times and China has indisputable sovereignty over the islands and the Chinese government has the unshakeable resolve and will to uphold the nation’s territorial integrity (Chinese Government White Paper, 2012). In China’s 2019 Defence White Paper, the Diaoyu Islands are described as inalienable parts of Chinese territory and China exercises its national sovereignty to conduct patrols in the waters around them. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, has reiterated this point more recently stating that Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands are an inherent part of China’s territory. He adds that China’s patrols and law-enforcement activities in the waters off Diaoyu Island are an exercise of its inherent rights (Xinhua, 2021). China’s actions in the East China Sea reflect a realist approach (discussed in chapter 5).

Das (2016) notes that the frequency of patrols by Chinese Coast Guard vessels near the islands has undoubtedly increased since Xi Jinping came to power (see Figure 3.4). China has aggravated tensions by increasing the presence of Chinese Coast Guard vessels in the contiguous zone of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (Mochizuki & Han, 2020). However, China’s previous Vice Foreign Minister, Fu Ying (2012), contends that because the Diaoyu islands are part of Chinese territory, Chinese maritime vessels, administrative ships and fishing boats, have the right to operate in these waters.

In late 2013, China unilaterally declared the establishment of an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) that includes the skies over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. According to the Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson, Geng Yonsheng, it is a necessary measure for China to protect state sovereignty and territorial airspace security (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, 2013). “China is firmly resolved and determined to safeguard its territorial sovereignty and will resolutely respond to Japan’s illegal actions that violate China’s sovereignty” (Xinhua, 2021). Chinese military aircraft have also frequently flown since 2012 near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and the Miyako Strait; the waterway between Miyako Island and Okinawa which Chinese strategists regard as a critical passageway through the first island chain (Burke & Heath et al, 2018). The ‘first island chain’ refers to the first major archipelagos off the east Asian continental mainland, including the Japanese archipelago, the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan and the northern Philippines. In the 1950’s, the U.S. came to regard the chain as an important barrier to contain China and other communist countries (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Nepal, 2013).

**Figure 3.5. Number of Chinese incursions into Japanese maritime territory/airspace around Senkaku Islands.**



[Source: Ministry of Defence Japan. 2020; Rand Report, Heath & Burke et al, 2018].

Though Japan still controls the disputed islands themselves, China’s new patrolling patterns have created a situation of overlapping administration of the territorial seas – a sovereign maritime space under international law (Chubb, 2019). The Miyako Strait guards

the entry and exit into the East China Sea from the Pacific Ocean and constitutes a principal entryway for the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) into the Pacific Ocean (Gady, 2019). At the 2021 NPC Congress, Chinese lawmakers passed legislation to strengthen the power of its maritime safety authorities that could target Japanese vessels navigating around the Diaoyu Islands (Xinhua, 2021).

The increase in interactions between Chinese and Japanese military aircraft near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is occurring against a backdrop of growing competition for influence between the two great powers and a hardening of Beijing's stance regarding its sovereignty claims (Burke & Heath et al, 2018). In the face of a complicated international situation, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has expressed the hope that Japan, as an independent country, will look at China's development in an objective and rational way instead of being misled by some countries holding a bias view against China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC (2021).

In conclusion, the East China Sea case study can be best explained by the modernist theory as China has constructed an economic, political and social narrative that the East China Sea is an integral part of the Chinese nation attaching it to China's national territory and sovereignty. China's overall strategy towards the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands has been one of escalation and de-escalation as it asserts itself as a regional power. "The territorial dispute over the East China Sea is the immediate political flashpoint and, together with other Japan-related issues, may prompt Chinese leaders to fan the fires of anti-Japanese nationalism as a move to back up the legitimacy of the CCP" (Beukel, 2011, p5). However, as Kim (2018) argues, it would be an exaggeration to treat the role of popular nationalism as the only factor determining China's foreign policy because there are other issues such as elite opinion, the personal preferences of top leaders, security dilemma dynamics and organisational interests, which influence China's coercive diplomacy on maritime issues. As Weiss (2014) suggests, it has become more tempting and tactically convenient for Beijing to resort to assertive nationalism. The rise of nationalism has emerged as one of the most potent forces that could lead to a major deterioration in the relationship between China and Japan. According to Kim (2018), China's increasingly overt nationalism is a reflection not just of the country's outward confidence, but also a signal that the public are developing a hawkish position regarding foreign policy. The intensifying competition has coincided with a

hardening of Chinese attitudes regarding the country's sovereignty claims (Burke & Heath et al, 2018), wrapped up in the rhetoric of the 'China Dream' and 'China's core interests'.

### Taiwan Case Study

The third case study is Taiwan. As noted in chapter 2, the CCP defeated the KMT in a vicious civil war, which resulted in the KMT having to flee to Taiwan again resulting in the separation of Taiwan from China (Cooper, 2020). In late 1949, the KMT established a separate nationalist state that claimed to be the legitimate government of China thus leading to one of the most important questions about China's sovereign boundaries, whether Taiwan and its adjacent islands are legitimate parts of China (Zha, 2005).

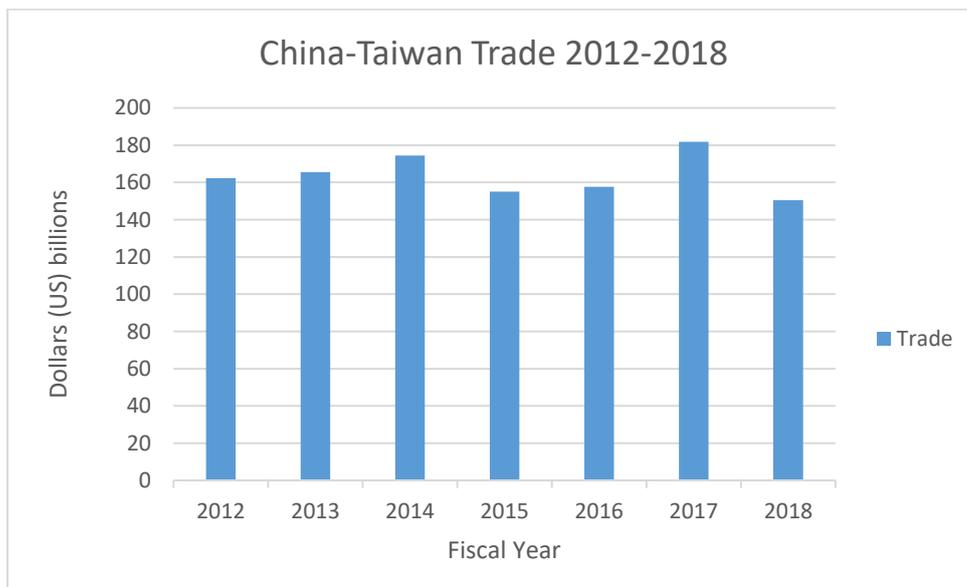
It is important to understand the official position of Beijing on the Taiwan issue so it can serve as a foundation for understanding the nature of the dispute (Wong, 2010). The Taiwan issue bears on China's reunification and long-term development (China's Military Strategy White Paper, 2015), and is directly linked to Chinese nationalism. The People's Daily reports that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to a community with a shared history (Zhong, 2019), thus linking the Taiwan issue to that of the primordial and ethno-symbolist concept of nationalism. One of the core elements of the concept of Chinese nationalism is that the Taiwan issue is only about domestic politics between the CCP and the KMT (Wong, 2010). "The Taiwan question is purely China's internal affair and it accepts no foreign interference in any form. China must and will be reunified" (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Zealand, 2021). The PRC views the island as a province while Taiwan's political leaders have differing views on the island's status and relations with the mainland.

In 1971, the U.N passed resolution 2758 which transferred the ROC's seat to the PRC and, since then, China has been using its growing international influence to block Taiwan's participation at the U.N. Though the PRC government in Beijing has never controlled Taiwan, it regards itself as speaking for the island (Horton, 2019). Only 14 out of 193 U.N. member states now recognise Taiwan: Belize, Eswatini, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Nicaragua, Palau, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines and Tuvalu (O'Connor, 2019).

In 1987, after decades of hostility, China and Taiwan embarked on a cautious reapproachment that started with cross-Strait family visits. In 1991, Taiwan renounced the use of force to retake the Chinese mainland, which was significant as it paved the way for unofficial talks (Reuters, 2008). In 1992, the representatives of the CCP and the KMT reached a consensus which states that there is only “one China”, but allows for different interpretations. Both parties agree that Taiwan belongs to China; the contention is which entity is China’s legitimate governing body (Albert, 2019). Both parties can agree on the “one country, two systems” formula of the 1992 consensus, but Beijing will never accept Taiwan’s independence which in their eyes is tantamount to Taiwan being “snatched away” by foreign powers as it once was (Sheng, 2001).

China’s key strategy appears to be one of attempting to lock the Taiwanese economy into the Chinese developmental trajectory (Deans, 2005). In 2010, China and Taiwan signed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) which cut tariffs on 539 Taiwanese exports to China and 267 Chinese products entering Taiwan (BBC, 2010). China is Taiwan’s largest trading partner, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the island’s total trade, with trade between the two equating to \$150.5 billion in 2018 (Albert, 2019).

**Figure 3.6 China-Taiwan Trade 2012-2018.**



[Source: Bureau of Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Republic of China, 2020].

(Totals include data from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao).

In 2014, , in talks with James Soong Chu-yu, (Chairman of Taiwan's People's First Party) President Xi noted that the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations is a choice made by the people of both sides of the Taiwan Strait (Xi, 2014). China has long sought to integrate the Taiwanese economy with its own, in part, in the hope that independence might come to be seen as an impossible or even as an undesirable goal (The Economist, 2019). In addressing the general picture of cross-Strait relations in the overall interests of the Chinese nation, the most important and fundamental thing to do is to maintain China's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Xi, 2013). This means that, although the mainland and Taiwan are yet to be reunited, they belong to the same China which is an indivisible whole (Xi, 2013). According to the People's Daily, the Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and core interests (Zhong, 2019). Because of the "one China" policy there are overlapping territorial claims between China and Taiwan in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. In the East China Sea, both China and Taiwan claim territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands whilst in the South China Sea they both claim the Paracel and Spratly Islands (Cooper, 2020).

In talks with a KMT Taiwanese delegation, President Xi expressed the view that forces and activities for 'Taiwan independence' remain a real threat to the peace of the Taiwan Strait and adding that it is therefore incumbent upon both the CCP and KMT to oppose and contain any rhetoric or move towards Taiwanese independence (Xi, 2013). The Taiwan independence, separatist, forces and their actions remain the gravest immediate threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the biggest barrier hindering the peaceful reunification of the country (The State Council Information Office, 2019). The announcement of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan is often met with harsh official responses applauded and echoed by an even more agitated public (Sun, 2011). Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, has stated that with regards to Taiwan-U.S. interactions, China's position is clear and consistent. We firmly oppose any form of official exchange between the U.S. and China's Taiwan region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC (2021). Chinese authorities have never allowed large-scale protest against Taiwan independence, using other means to demonstrate resolve (Weiss, 2014, p235). These include protests against actors such as the U.S. and Japan, who are often accused of helping to split Taiwan from China. The reason for not allowing protests against Taiwan directly is

that such protests might put the Chinese government in a position of having to take actions it would prefer to avoid such as war (Weiss, 2014).

“The volatility of the Taiwan “hot spot” and its unpredictable consequences for China’s overall foreign policy are enhanced by the fact that China often seems unable to control the actions of the leaders of Taiwan” (Sutter, 2012, p154). This is no more evident than with the election of the independence-orientated Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 2016. Since the election of the DPP, Xi Jinping has moved towards a strategy of ‘squeeze and freeze’ towards the Taiwanese. These actions involve restrictions on the numbers of mainland Chinese tourists allowed to visit Taiwan each year, conducting large-scale military exercises not far from the Taiwanese coastline and restricting Taiwan’s room for manoeuvre by offering formal diplomatic relations with past or present allies of Taiwan (Weili & Toomey, 2017). China’s resolve towards Taiwan is by no means directed at their compatriots in Taiwan, but at the interference of external forces (U.S), a small number of Taiwanese separatists (China Defence White Paper, 2019), and now includes president Tsai Ing-wen’s government.

There is ample evidence to suggest that China is preparing for unification with Taiwan. As Hille (2022) contends, over the past few years, Beijing has unleashed a range of initiatives such as a rail link between Fuzhou and Taipei and advice on social media on how Chinese citizens can purchase property in Taiwan, which resembles planning for post-unification Taiwan. To add to matters, Beijing has been flying what it calls “island encirclement” drills on and off since 2016 (Reuters, 2020). In early 2020, the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) Shenyang J-11 fighters and Xian H-6 bombers flew south of Taiwan through the Bashi Channel, which separates Taiwan from the northern Philippines, into the western Pacific, and then returned to Chinese airspace north of Taiwan through the Miyako Strait (Panda, 2020). BBC (2021) reported that in mid-April 2021, China flew its largest incursion into Taiwan’s air defence zone, with a total of 25 aircraft. This incident came a day after the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, had stated that the U.S. was concerned about China’s “increasingly assertive actions” towards Taiwan. In response, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged the U.S. to truly respect China’s core interests (CGTN, 2021).

To complicate matters further, Sutter (2012, p168) contends that the military balance in the Taiwan Strait is no longer “healthy” for Taiwan. China can array 1,300 ballistic missiles and hundreds of air, sea, and ground launched missiles at the island (Roblin, 2019). The newly commissioned Chinese aircraft carrier (Shandong) sailed through the Taiwan Strait for a second time in late December 2019 (Straits Times, 2019). The Chinese Defence White Paper (2019) states that by sailing ships and flying aircraft around Taiwan, the armed forces send a stern warning to the “Taiwanese independence” separatist forces. The Chinese military has resolve, confidence, and the capacity to frustrate any form of secessionist attempts at Taiwan independence and external forces trying to interfere in China’s internal affairs (Zhong, 2019). All of China’s actions towards Taiwan are a sign that China’s foreign policy towards the island reflect a shift towards an increasingly realist posture.

Because of the historical background, no leader in China will accept the independence of Taiwan because of both national interest and their own political survival (Sheng, 2001). Taiwan will never enjoy “absolute autonomy” since this implies the recognition of “two China’s” (Wong, 2010). Although China advocates for peaceful unification with Taiwan, it has never renounced the use of military force and continues to develop and deploy advanced military capabilities needed for a potential military campaign (U.S. Department of Defence, 2019). China has repeatedly said it will bring Taiwan under its authority by any means necessary, including by force (Kuo, 2020).

Also adding to the tensions in a speech in early 2019, Taiwan’s president Tsai Ing-wen rejected the 1992 consensus declaring the “one country, two systems” framework advanced by Beijing as unacceptable leaving open the possibility of future Taiwanese independence (Albert, 2019). During her re-election victory speech, Tsai Ing-wen asserted that: “we hope China can thoroughly understand the opinion and will expressed by Taiwanese people in this election and review their current policies” (Kuo, 2020).

China’s overall strategy towards Taiwan continues to incorporate elements of both persuasion and coercion to hinder the development of political attitudes in Taiwan favouring independence. Taiwan is deeply drawn into China’s economic orbit as its largest trade partner (see Figure 3.5), while its international status in terms of both legitimacy and influence continues to decline (Huang, 2017). He adds that the 1992 consensus that there is

only one China and that Taipei and Beijing agree to disagree on which government is its legitimate representative is still (in Beijing's mind) the foundation of cross-Strait relations, though Tsai Ing-wen's recent re-election may jeopardise this as she does not recognise the consensus. Instead of enticing people in Taiwan to draw closer to mainland China, President Xi's policies have pushed them further away as shown in a Taiwanese government survey that found that barely 1 percent of Taiwanese favoured unification "as soon as possible" (Myers & Horton, 2020). Taiwan is a balancing act for China. If China emphasises threats in its policy towards Taiwan, it produces negative Taiwanese public opinion about China; whilst if Beijing takes an accommodating line, it fears it might tempt more provocative actions from Taiwan's leaders, as well as domestic protests (Harris, 2014, p89).

While ordinary Chinese may not rank Taiwan at the top of their day-to-day concerns, emotions towards Taiwan run deep and would quickly come to the surface in times of crisis. With this potentiality in mind, Weiss (2014) notes that the Chinese government appears to have determined that tolerating street protests over Taiwan independence is not worth the risk since a majority of Chinese citizens favour taking a hard line on the Taiwan issue.

In conclusion, The Taiwan case study can be best explained by the modernist and ethno-symbolist theories. China has constructed an economic, political and social narrative that Taiwan is an integral part of the Chinese nation attaching it to China's national territory and sovereignty. However, China also draws on the myths and symbolism that centre around the "mandate of heaven" and the idea that there can be only one legitimate ruler of China, and that it is the CCP that is that legitimate governing body. Nationalism supports the CCP's high-priority goal of preventing Taiwan independence and restoring this and other territory taken from China by foreign powers when China was weak and vulnerable during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Sutter, 2012, p3). Sutter's assertion suggests that there is a link between realpolitik geopolitical thinking - territory/sovereignty - embedded into the structure of Chinese political thought and contemporary Chinese nationalism. Therefore, as Blackwill and Campbell (2016, p25) argue, "Xi Jinping's unbending stance on sovereignty and territorial integrity, combined with the real domestic political costs he will face if Taiwan makes moves towards independence, may lead him to react strongly and decisively to any Taiwanese policy designed to increase separation between China and Taiwan". In his speech at the 19<sup>th</sup> NPC, Xi reaffirmed his intention to defeat any form of a Taiwan independence

secessionist plot and included Taiwan in his vision of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Xi, 2017). China makes no promise to renounce the use of force and reserves the option of taking all necessary measures regarding to Taiwan (Chinese Defence White Paper, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

President Xi believes in China's exceptionalism seeing it as superior to the West. As this chapter has shown, political power is centralised in China within the Politburo Standing Committee which President Xi, as CCP General Secretary, leads. President Xi controls every aspect of China's foreign policy relying on advice from LSGs and a select few. Because Xi has now positioned himself to rule for life, he will construct a foreign policy that embraces diversionary aggression and initiates international conflicts in order to build the sort of public nationalism that makes it difficult for elites to challenge him (Baggott-Carter, 2019). This assertion emphasises the link that President Xi has with the state in promoting a top-down, bottom-up contemporary nationalism with Chinese characteristics. However, the theory that the CCP uses nationalism as a diversionary tactic does not explain the country's nationalist sentiment especially among the youth, nor the government's stance in achieving its desired goals.

When nationalist protests are perceived as a diversionary or venting strategy, foreign observers may misjudge the extent to which the government intends to stand firm (Weiss, 2014, p190). In a paper published by Mattingly and Yao (2020), *How Propaganda Manipulates Emotion to Fuel Nationalism*, they conducted a series of experiments exposing over 6,800 respondents in China to propaganda videos drawn from state-run newscasts, television dramas, and state-backed social media accounts, each containing nationalist messages favoured by the CCP. Their findings suggest that nationalist propaganda can manipulate emotions and anti-foreign sentiment, but does not necessarily divert attention away from domestic political grievances.

The government, at times, encourages nationalism or allows it to develop; at other times, it seeks to suppress nationalist urges since much of the associated implicit or explicit criticism equates to criticism of the government (Harris, 2014, p42). *However*, under President Xi's leadership, China has become more willing to follow the popular nationalist

calls to take a more confrontational position against Western powers (especially the U.S. and Japan) and to adopt tougher measures in maritime territorial disputes. This behaviour is partially because the government is increasingly responsive to public opinion due to the convergence of Chinese state nationalism and popular nationalism calling for a more muscular foreign policy (Zhao, 2013). Brown (2016) argues that nationalist rhetoric contends that China has been too compliant and weak with its claims over its border issues and that the government needs to do more to protect those claims. China's core national interests have recently become a central aspect of Chinese foreign policy as part of Xi's China Dream. China's core national interests, defined as 'the bottom-line of national survival', which are essentially non-negotiable in nature, have become a fashionable term appearing more frequently in the speeches of Chinese leaders and official publications (Zhao, 2013).

Xi's emphasis on national rejuvenation suggests a link between his China Dream doctrine and a grand strategy of becoming the world's dominant superpower with a super-strong economy and military (Stenslie & Gang, 2016, p121). In fact, Xi Jinping has taken important steps in the direction of formulating a grand strategy for China. Stenslie and Gang (2016, p131) contend that Xi's new strategy, in theory, could have a unifying effect domestically, something that is needed in an era where rapid growth is creating considerable national stress. "What is clear is that for Xi Jinping, appealing to nationalist sentiment and the trope of the party being the defender of the vision of a strong, rich China has become an increasingly powerful influence on China's foreign policy" (Brown, 2016).

The role and impact that contemporary Chinese nationalism has on China's foreign policy varies significantly as is evident in the way that China handles its relations and territorial disputes with other countries. Ni (2019) states that "Chinese nationalism can affect Beijing's foreign policy deliberations through: 1) framing narratives and debates; 2) restricting Beijing's foreign policy options; and 3) providing justifications for Chinese actions and/or advantages in negotiations".

The South China Sea case study highlighted that there was no populist nationalist pressure before the government's adoption of a more assertive foreign policy in the South China Sea. In fact, as pointed out, the rise of nationalism in the South China Sea was primarily a function of the state's assertive policy shift. The South China Sea case study supports the goal of building China into a maritime great power. The Senkaku/Diaoyu case

study emphasises the heightened sense of insecurity and competition in the region and the potential for it to affect contemporary Sino-Japanese relations. When Japan tried to nationalise the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands this brought about mass protests and forced the CCP to act to show the Chinese citizenry that it could protect the national interest. China's dispute with Japan over the islands is more complex than in the South China Sea as both countries have experienced a rise in nationalism, along with the deepening of competition for leadership between two traditional rivals and U.S. support for Japan. The Taiwan case study highlights how Taiwan is of great importance to China as it is the last territory yet to re-unite with the mainland and an integral part of the China Dream. To achieve this, China has attempted to box Taiwan in through trade and diplomacy, but the re-election of the pro-independence DPP may lead China to take a more proactive and militaristic stance.

In foreign affairs, Xi Jinping has pursued an activist, confident and, to some degree, more confrontational set of policies in line with his perception that China now has to perform its role as a rising superpower (Lim & Cibulka, 2019). Since 2012, China has become more assertive in proximate waters and the White Paper on Military Strategy released in 2015 underscores this determination to strengthen Chinese "strategic management of the sea". According to Chubb (2019), China's maritime policy under Xi Jinping contains three notable elements. First, is the goal of building China into a great maritime power. The second element addresses the tensions between advancing China's claims and avoiding military confrontation. The third element has been the indignant "no-acceptance, no-participation, no-recognition, no-implementation" response to the arbitration case brought on by the Philippines.

In conclusion, nationalist sentiments can put pressure on governments to adopt a tougher foreign policy stance, but the government can choose the degree to which it invokes this pressure either allowing nationalist protests or nipping them in the bud (Weiss, 2014, p219). In order to effectively translate its foreign policy into domestic successes, the CCP seeks to carefully manage and control the nature of political discourse in China through the use of state-controlled media in order to ensure that the reaction from Chinese society can itself be harnessed in such a way as to maximise the effectiveness of China's foreign strategies (Weili and Toomey, 2017). Due to its authoritarian control when the government

chooses to mount the effort, it can restrain both online and offline mobilisation through censorship and repression (Weiss, 2014, p223).

Using Chinese nationalism as a framework for making sense of China's foreign policy in relation to its territorial disputes leads one to recognise that there is a construction of an "us" vs "them" relationship by the Chinese government. China's ongoing incursions into the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits also heighten the chance of military escalation between China and the U.S. which assists in the framing of their "us vs them" narrative: this is of real concern. Conflict in either of these regions would not only have a devastating impact on China's ability to trade, as it would disrupt its maritime trade links, but it also constrains Xi Jinping's freedom of action leaving the Chinese leadership vulnerable. In 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump launched a trade war with China setting tariffs and other trade barriers on Chinese trade. Donald Trump's actions have also played into Beijing's hands allowing them to construct the narrative of "us" vs "them".

The very fact that the Beijing government continues pursuing its territorial claims is a manifestation of Chinese nationalism, in which the government uses nationalism as a type of political tool (Zha, 2005). Chinese nationalist discourse is apparent in all the country's key foreign policy concepts noted above including the China Dream, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, major power politics with Chinese characteristics and the community of shared destiny. As Lanteigne (2013, p171) notes, nationalism in foreign policy has been an issue for China since well before the communist era, but today Beijing is seeking to channel nationalist ideas into promoting the primacy of the CCP as being eminently capable of overseeing modern China's foreign interests. As Reeves (2018) argues, however, on critical examination, one can also see clear evidence of imperialist behaviour in the Xi Jinping administration's approach to its foreign relations since 2012. President Xi has revealed a strong inclination toward an offensive realist approach through his goals to return China to the top of the global power hierarchy and his emphasis on the role of military power in China's rise (Zhang, 2014) which is explored in greater depth in chapter 5.

# Chapter 4

## Russian Foreign Policy

“For half a millennium, Russian foreign policy has been characterised by soaring ambitions that have far exceeded the country’s capabilities” (Kotkin, 2016). In contrast to China’s rise, Russia has been in relative decline as a major power since the end of the Cold War. This decline in power, however, does not mean that the study of Russian foreign policy is less important or significant. According to Shiraev and Khudoley (2019), there are five reasons why the study of Russian foreign policy matters: 1) geopolitics – a country’s power in relation to its geographical space; 2) difference in policies – from Russia’s perspective, its strategic interests do not generally correspond with the strategic interests of the U.S. and their allies; 3) energy politics – Russia is one of the world’s biggest energy suppliers and competitors in the global market; 4) nuclear power – Russia remains a very strong military state with immense nuclear capabilities, and 5) soft power – Russia’s soft power is rooted in culture (including sports, music and the arts, and as a role model) and the Russian state media portrays a positive image of Russia as strong.

Over the past few years, the international community has witnessed a rise in Russian assertiveness in regards to its foreign policy as the country has returned once again to being an important global actor. Lo (2018) confirms this point adding that we are witnessing the re-emergence of a global Russia whose ambition and confidence are now at a post-Cold War high. However, as Gurganus and Rumer (2019) note, the question that arises is to what extent is this a fundamentally new phenomenon, or, is it a result of opportunism under Vladimir Putin towards transforming Russian foreign policy?

As Baldoni (2016) suggests, since he became president for a third term in 2012, Putin has chosen a foreign policy course that has widely been defined as starkly different to the one he pursued in his first two terms as president and from previous presidential administrations. However, it must be noted that Putin’s foreign policy change actually started in 2007 with his Munich speech and the war in Georgia in 2008. Under President Putin’s guidance and leadership, Russia has begun to assert itself diplomatically,

economically and militarily in the international arena. According to Mankoff and Oliker (2020), Russian foreign policy in recent years has become more assertive than it had been in the first two decades since the Russian Federation was established after the Cold War. They suggest that underpinning this greater assertiveness is a growing consensus among Russian analysts and officials that Russia should play a larger role in the world; one where Moscow is free to act according to its own interests. In the early 2010s, coloured revolutions were sweeping through parts of Europe and these were seen as a threat to Russia's national interests.

In 2014, Russian troops took control of Ukraine's Crimean region before formally annexing the peninsula after Crimeans voted to join the Russian Federation in a disputed referendum. Russia's seizure of Crimea from Ukraine was an illegal move that violated the territorial sovereignty/integrity of the former Soviet republic and initiated a war that has displaced nearly 2 million people and destroyed the country's infrastructure (Popovici, 2018). In 2015, Russia became involved in the Syrian conflict supporting President Bashar Al Assad's regime. Frolovskiy (2019) notes that Russia officially launched airstrikes in Syria in September 2015, playing first fiddle in directing a political settlement in Syria as an opportunity to assert Russia's status as a global power. Russia has also been quietly expanding its own political, economic and military influence in the Arctic (Ellyatt, 2019). The Russian government is reigniting its push into the Arctic region as it plans to build five new ice-breaker ships which will be used to further develop the northern sea routes across Russia's Arctic coast (Zolotova, 2020).

Russian nationalism, with a particular primordialist framing, has been on the rise since 2012 and seems to coincide with Russia's assertive foreign policy as Putin has sought to promote a stronger Russia. As noted previously, President Putin has compared himself to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian tsar Peter the Great, drawing a parallel between what he portrayed as their twin historic quest to win back Russian lands (Roth, 2022). According to Stent (2008), Russian foreign policy has experienced a revival that contains elements of both restoration and revolution. As has been demonstrated, and as Mankoff (2009) reiterates, Russia has attained its greatest power and glory in periods when the state was at its strongest. Isajiw (2016) argues that Russian foreign policy is heavily influenced by neo-nationalist rhetoric and sentiment and is central to the strategy of having Russia restore its

traditional role as a “great power”. In various speeches and, in particular, in many of his annual presidential addresses to the Federal Assembly, Putin has sought to project an image of Russia and its future (Gill, 2015). Russia, according to him, will now have to go it alone and should create its own model in world affairs invoking ‘Russia’s historical responsibility’ to defend its value-based approaches (Putin, 2013). “Russian nationalism certainly features strongly in the Kremlin’s national narrative with Putin praising Russian culture as the last bulwark of conservative Christian values against the decadence of Europe and the tide of multi-culturalism” (Ball, 2019).

As Brookings (2016) notes, however, few countries have been subject of myth-making on such a scale as Russia, surrounding it in a cloud of mysticism which has led to a host of falsehoods about the “Russian Soul”, the “Strong Leader”, and Russia’s timeless identity as a great power. Russia’s political system can best be classified as authoritarian and by increasing the centralisation of power, Putin has returned the state’s dominance over the economy and media and to the trend of relying on the state to manage the gulf between Russia and the more powerful West (Ambrosio, 2016; Kotkin, 2016).

Despite the centralisation of the foreign policy process, public discourse is far from irrelevant in the policy making, with publicly articulated nationalism informing Kremlin policy making (Laruelle, 2014). “An important aspect of Russian official rhetoric since 2013 has been a particular emphasis on the deep historical roots of animosity between Russia and the West” (Zevelev, 2016, p10) which has only been exacerbated recently. Nationalism has been used to explain everything from Russia’s intervention in Syria, to its unusually large numbers of hate crimes and the regime’s rush to host sporting mega-events such as the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and the 2018 Football World Cup (Arnold, 2016). However, as March (2018) contends, nationalism is one of the most poorly understood themes in the analysis of Russian foreign policy. Attempts to investigate nationalism and foreign policy specifically in depth are relatively few, with most either looking at nationalism as an offshoot of Russian foreign policy, or having an explicit domestic focus with little direct engagement with the foreign policy domain (March, 2018).

Though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a number of ‘Foreign Policy Concepts’ outlining a framework for Russian foreign policy (discussed in detail below), Gill (2015) argues that there has been no clear articulation of an ideology or vision that might

provide an intellectual rationale to underpin the foreign policy process. Like China, Russia's newly assertive foreign policy raises a number of important questions. How influential is contemporary nationalism as a determinant of Russia's foreign policy and to what extent is Russian foreign policy driven by it?

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the impact that contemporary Russian nationalism has on Russia's foreign policy. It will first investigate Russia's power structure with the goal being to understand the formulation of Russian foreign policy by examining the organisational roles of the main foreign policy actors: President Vladimir Putin, the Presidential Administration, the government and state-owned think-tanks, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Federal Security Service (FSB), Russian elites, the Russian Orthodox Church, and Russia's state energy companies. The chapter will then examine Russia's insecurities and vulnerabilities establishing a framework for understanding the drivers of Russian foreign policy, which are vital elements in Russian foreign policy strategic thinking and frames Russian strategic culture. It will then consider how nationalism influences Russian foreign policy by investigating three case studies: the Ukraine conflict, Russia's involvement in the Syrian Civil War and Russian expansion in the Arctic. The goal is to gain a complete and precise understanding as to the impact contemporary nationalism has on the foreign policy of Russia.

According to Brookings (2016), the (Western) moralist perspective treats Russian foreign policy as if domestic issues and considerations were of little relevance. In fact, there is a strong link between domestic issues and the type of foreign policy a country may pursue. Laruelle (2014) argues that externally – projected “national interests” are themselves always subjectively defined through the prism of domestic nationalism – a state can only agree such interests if national identity itself is defined. This raises the question as to the extent to which Russia's foreign policy reflects the country's attempt to define itself?

Trying to understand the inner workings of decision-making, however, is a challenging enterprise even in relatively transparent political systems and more so in Russia where there is such a strong culture of secrecy and informal networking (Brookings, 2016). There is, consequently, a substantial element of guesswork involved in trying to understand the mechanics of Russian foreign policy. One way of identifying who the main policy actors are is to look at the decision-making process itself. Brookings (2016) suggests that a way to

do this is to distinguish between different policy functions such as decision-making; ideational inspiration; implementation; and rationalisation. Sergunin (2008) contends that the decision-making process involves two types of actors – governmental (the presidency, numerous executive agencies, the Russian parliament, regional and local governments, etc.) and non-governmental (interest groups, political parties, religious organisations, think-tanks and, to a certain extent, the mass media).

The next section of this chapter will focus on the policy actors involved in the Russian foreign policy process. The relevance of examining the policy actors involved in Russia's foreign policy is to gauge who is responsible for the formulation of foreign policy and how these policy actors fit together in its implementation. The first policy actor this chapter will examine is the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin himself.

### **Actors involved in the Policy Process**

#### *Vladimir Putin - President of the Russian Federation*

In 2012, Vladimir Putin reassumed the presidency of the Russian Federation for a third term after serving a term as the prime minister under the Medvedev presidency. Since taking back control of the presidency, Putin has been re-asserting his leadership at every level. The President of Russia is part of the executive branch of government and, while Putin is far from being master of all he surveys, his personal influence is felt at every level of foreign policy (Brookings, 2016).

Article 80, 3<sup>rd</sup> provision of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that the President of the Russian Federation shall determine the guidelines of the internal and foreign policies of the state (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993). The Russian constitution of 1993 provides strong powers for the president and broad authority to issue decrees and directives that have the force of law without legislative review (Darlington, 2020). According to Baldoni (2016), control over foreign policy being in the hands of one leader has remained true in post-Soviet Russia, and it was legitimised by the Russian constitution in which articles 80 and 85 give the president authority.

Gel'man and Ryzhenkov (2011) note that in the early 2000s, the tremendous economic growth in Russia was accompanied by the large-scale recentralisation of governance and the rise of authoritarian tendencies which led to a major shift of Russia's

sub-national authoritarianism from a decentralised to a centralised party-based model. They add that these changes included the shift from local autonomy to the partial re-establishment of a hierarchical model of regional and urban governance; the “power vertical”. Even though the Constitution of the Russian Federation gave President Vladimir Putin the constitutional authority to make decisions, he created a power vertical to consolidate his authority over the Russian political landscape.

According to Trenin (2019), the power vertical has been constructed on an authoritarian basis that is traditional for Russia. The phrase “power vertical” describes how Vladimir Putin has constructed a single pyramid of power eliminating any sources of formal and informal opposition to his rule (Weber, 2018). However, Inozemtsev (2011) notes that “Russia’s power vertical simply provides a mechanism for the relatively simple conversion of power into money and vice versa that at every level of the hierarchy a certain degree of bribery and clientele parochialism is not only tolerated but presupposed in exchange for unconditional loyalty”. President Putin has secured domination over the political scene by enforcing a power vertical, curtailing the autonomy of state institutions, and imposing the “virtualisation” of public politics (Kaczmarek, 2014).

Given the highly centralised nature of the Russian political system, Putin’s direct impact on foreign policy is considerable (Mankoff, 2009, p30). He is in a strong political position relative to his subordinates and has controlled the redistribution of political power and wealth within Russia far more effectively than his predecessors (Weber, 2018). Avdaliani (2019) contends that Vladimir Putin gained his authority by balancing several powerful groups of interests. Putin has been careful to operate within the broad elite consensus about Russia’s role in the world as one of its leading powers and has managed to neutralise opposition, giving himself substantial freedom to manoeuvre at the tactical level. However, in the process of creating the power vertical, President Putin has marginalised other policy actors that were usually involved in foreign policy. Duncan (2007) notes that Putin has greatly reduced the political influence of the oligarchs, with a number in exile or prison, whilst those that have cooperated with Putin have maintained or increased their economic empires. Wachtel and Vodovozov (2020) assert, though, whilst Putin did not, and could not, destroy the business elite, he made it clear that certain limits on their behaviour would be expected.

“It is commonplace today to speak not just of “the Putin system” or the quasi-ideology “Putinism”, but of “Putin’s Russia”, an association between leader and country as intimate as that between Stalin and the Soviet Union more than six decades ago” (Lo, 2018). As a result of Vladimir Putin’s control, Laruelle (2014) contends that foreign policy making is restricted to a very narrow circle of trusted advisors and the presidential administration, (see Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1 List of Vladimir Putin’s inner circle**

Name	Official Position held in Russia
Igor Sechin	Rosneft CEO (State-owned energy)
Nikolai Patrushev	Secretary of Security Council
Viktor Ivanov	Deputy Head of Presidential Staff
Viktor Cherkesov	Russian Security Services Official
Sergei Ivanov	Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on Environment and Transport
Dmitry Medvedev	Deputy Chairman of Security Council.

[Source: Belton, 2020. *“Putin’s People: How the KGB took back Russia and then took on the West”*].

Due to the centralisation of power by Putin, understanding his personality and character becomes of great relevance in assessing the impact of Russian nationalism on Russian foreign policy. A good way to study individuals is to use psychobiography literature. Applying Charles Hermann’s model of foreign policy change agents, the predominant leader remains the most relevant of all change agents affecting foreign policy (Hermann, 1990). According to Millon (2004), personality is what makes us who we are and that which makes us different from others and that personality may be defined as a complex pattern of deeply embedded psychological characteristics that are largely non-conscious and not easily altered, expressing themselves automatically in almost every facet of psychological functioning.

As Hill (2015, p43) notes, Putin’s view of foreign policy and his perceptions of Russia’s role abroad have been shaped by his past personal and professional experiences

and by the broader context in which he has operated in the U.S.S.R and post-Soviet Russia. In a working paper titled *The Political Personality of Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin*, Immelmann and Trenzeluk (2017) psychologically analyse Vladimir Putin using the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC). They conclude that Vladimir Putin's particular blend of personality patterns suggests a personality-based leadership style aptly characterised as that of an "expansionist hostile enforcer", with a foreign policy role orientation best described as that of a "deliberative high-dominance introvert" (see Immelmann & Trenzeluk, 2017 for personality statistics). Hill (2015) contends that Putin's character (which is different from his personality) is comprised of six identities he developed from his past personal and professional life: statist, history man, survivalist, outsider, free marketer, and case officer. These six identities, she argues, play a significant role in shaping Putin's foreign policy priorities and goals.

The next policy actor this chapter will examine is the Presidential Executive Office and the Security Council.

#### *Presidential Executive Office and the Security Council*

"The Presidential Executive Office (also known as the Presidential Administration) is a state body providing support for the president's work and monitoring the implementation of the president's decisions". The Presidential Executive Office analyses all information on socioeconomic, political and legal trends (both domestically and internationally) and supports the president's work including preparing draft laws for the president to submit to the State Duma as legislative initiatives (Presidential Executive Office, 2020). In relation to foreign policy, the Presidential Foreign Policy Directorate assists the president in setting the country's main foreign policy outlines and providing information, analytical and organisational support for the foreign policy and international relations activities of the President and the Presidential Executive Office (Presidential Executive Office, 2020).

According to Galeotti (2020), the Presidential Executive Office is a highly secretive institution so it is hard to be certain of its organisational code and culture. Russian foreign policy making is often described as having a "shadowy side" and the inner-workings of the Presidential administration are difficult to untangle (Kaczmarek, 2018). However, Galeotti (2020) notes that it performs crucial roles as the gatekeeper to President Putin, his primary

source of information, and the president’s voice in terms not only public discourse and presentation, but also the setting of goals and the establishment of limits within the executive.

The Security Council, according to the Presidential Executive Office (2020), also provides analysis and strategic planning regarding all security issues including those related to international affairs as well as the drafting of presidential decisions. Curtis (1996) asserts that the formation of the Security Council is the prerogative of the president and, by statute, the Security Council is a consultative rather than a decision-making body. Security Council meetings see an array of powerful figures within the security community and other arms of the government convene to discuss important issues (see Figure 4.2). However, in practice, the meetings tend to have overcrowded agendas and pre-scripted outcomes and are more about signalling policy decisions and resolving inter-agency disputes (Galeotti, 2020). The President of the Russian Federation chairs the Council and appoints its members.

**Figure 4.2 List of Security Council Members**

Name	Official Position held in Russia
Vladimir Putin	President of Russia, Chairman of Security Council
Dmitry Medvedev *	Deputy Chairman of Security Council
Mikhail Mishustin	Prime Minister of Russia
Valentina Matviyenko	Chairwomen of the Council of Federation
Sergei Naryshkin	Director of Foreign Intelligence Service
Vyacheslav Volodin	State Duma Speaker
Anton Vaino	Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office
Sergei Ivanov *	Special Presidential Representative for Environmental Protection, Ecology and Transport
Nikolai Patrushev *	Secretary of the Russian Federation Security Council
Sergei Shoigu	Defense Minister of Russia

Sergei Lavrov	Foreign Minister of Russia
Vladimir Kolokoltsev	Interior Minister of Russia
Alexander Bortnikov	Director of the Federal Security Services

[Source: Presidential Executive Office, 2020. *Security Council Members*. Those with an \* beside their names are also part of Vladimir Putin’s inner circle, (Belton, 2020).]

The Security Council Office is a separate department of the Presidential Executive Office and its status is that of a directorate. The members of the Security Council are effectively a list of Russia’s political elite, however, according to Galeotti (2020), the real power of the Security Council rests in the behind-the-scenes deliberations, debates, briefings, and bureaucratic struggles handled by its Secretary General Nikolai Patrushev who acts as the gatekeeper to President Vladimir Putin.

The next policy actors this chapter will examine are the government (Federal Assembly), and various state-owned think-tanks.

*The Government and State-owned Think-Tanks*

The Federal Assembly is the legislative branch of the Russian government and consists of both the State Duma and the Federation Council. The State Duma is the lower house of the Russian Federal Assembly. It is a legislative authority that consists of 450 members whose main tasks are the adoption of constitutional and federal laws, control over the activity of the Russian government, appointments to various positions (Central Bank, Accounts Chamber, High Commissioner on Human Rights) and issues of international parliamentary cooperation (Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2020).

The Federation Council is the upper house of the Russian Federal Assembly and decides on matters within its purview as per the Constitution of the Russian Federation. It is comprised of two representatives from every constituent entity of the Russian Federation, with one representing the legislative (representative) authority, and the other, the executive authority, as well as the representatives appointed by the president whose number shall not exceed 10 percent of the Federation Council members (Federation Council, 2020).

Curtis (1996) notes that the 1993 Constitution substantially reduced the parliament's foreign policy powers. Several institutions and organisations nominally in charge of Russian foreign policy decision-making (such as the State Duma and the Federation Council) lost their autonomy and influence in the 2000s and 2010s (Petrov & Gel'man, 2019). The State Duma retained broad responsibility for adopting laws on foreign policy, but the Constitution stipulated no specific foreign policy duties for the legislature (Curtis, 1996). As Shiraev and Khudoley (2019) note, the influence of the legislature on the executive branch is relatively minor. Indeed, the Russian legislature tends to approve most of the bills introduced by the powerful executive branch, highlighting President Putin's political power in Russia.

According to Perrier (2014), although considerations of an economic, political or security-related nature are taken into account by actors in the decision-making process, strategic decisions are also influenced by socially constructed knowledge. In the modern era, there is both a need and a demand for advice on a number of policy issues, and this is where think-tanks play a role. A think-tank is a group or organisation that researches various policy issues related to economic, social, environmental and international matters just to name a few. Barbashin and Graef (2019) argue that there are four state-sponsored think-tanks whose size, political contacts, and financial means allow them to dominate the think-tank scene in Russia: the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (SVOP), the Valdai Discussion Club, the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), and the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI). All these think-tanks are directly or indirectly dependent on the Russian state for financial support and are closely linked to the Presidential Administration and MID. Pallin and Oxenstierra, (2017) add that there is a need for more transparency when it comes to exactly how such cooperation takes place and on what terms which once again highlights the opaqueness of the Russian foreign policy process.

Although Russian foreign policy think-tanks by and large lack the opportunity to directly influence political decision-making, their thinking and evaluations do provide the Kremlin with alternative information that can acquire instrumental value in times of crisis (Barbashin & Graef, 2019). Pallin and Oxenstierra (2017) contend that think-tanks that convey the official Russian message tend to end up creating networks with experts, organisations and institutes in the West that are outside the mainstream, which can also have benefits in times of crisis. The Russian government is solely responsible for rubber

stamping foreign policy initiatives whereas the government think tanks are responsible for the gathering of information that may assist in making informed decisions on a particular foreign policy.

The next policy actor this chapter will examine is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) is the federal executive body responsible for drafting and implementing government policy and legal regulation in the field of foreign relations of the Russian Federation (Government of the Russian Federation, 2020). Sergei Lavrov is the minister that is responsible for the foreign affairs portfolio at the ministry although the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, actually oversees the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to Osborn and Stubbs (2017), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the leading, but not sole, government department involved in foreign policy making activity, with foreign policy procedure being a multifaceted complex process involving many parts of government. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to be rather more of an implementation actor in Russian foreign policy than a formulation one.

The next policy actor this chapter will examine is the Ministry of Defence.

### *The Ministry of Defence*

Westerlund (2021) asserts that the Russian military's willingness and ability to influence foreign policy decision making has varied over the ages. A growing economy in the 2000's provided Putin with the financial wherewithal necessary to pursue military reforms with the mostly successful implementation of them from 2008-2019 strengthening both the armed forces' combat capability as well as the political leadership's power over the military (Westerlund, 2021). However, the Defence Ministry has playing a more significant role in the foreign policy arena. According to Osborn and Stubbs (2017), the Minister of Defense is Sergei Shoigu, has frequently accompanied President Vladimir Putin on trips abroad indicating this increased role the department seems to be playing. The Defence Ministry's increased influence in foreign policy has coincided with its success in Georgia, Ukraine (Crimea) and Syria. The Defence Ministry's growing foreign policy muscle is most noticeable

when it comes to Syria. The available literature shows that the military's willingness to respect civilian foreign policy preferences have increased during the Putin era (especially from 2008-2019) and that military and civilian ideals have become more compatible. As Westerlund (2021) contends, Putin has brought the military perspective into close alignment with the political objectives in that the concepts of geopolitical security long associated with Russian military thinking now underpin state policy. However, according to Konyshv and Sengunin (2018, p169), "the military's role in Russian foreign policy is quite limited; the use of military force is seen as a last resort when other, non-military, means are exhausted". Regardless, as Osborn and Stubbs (2017) note, the military's increased role in foreign policy has given Russia's foreign policy a harder edge.

The next policy actor this chapter will examine the Federal Security Services (FSB)

### *The Federal Security Services*

The FSB is one of Russia's most closed government services. It is responsible for intelligence, aspects of internal policing and oversight of Russia's economics internally and externally. According to the Dossier Center (2020) the FSB over the past decade has taken control of many state institutions. The Defence and Interior Ministries, the Investigative Committee, the General Prosecutors Office and other agencies have, to some degree, all become dependent on the FSB. The FSB has displaced a variety of state institutions and exerts behind-the-scenes control of every source of power in Russia from economics to interior security, with every Financial-Industrial group that matters having representation inside the FSB (the Dossier Center, 2020). However, due to the lack of transparency that surrounds the FSB, it is very hard to pin down their exact role in the formulation or implementation of Russia's foreign policy. As the Dossier Center (2020) report suggests, the FSB is directly subordinate to the President of Russia who directs it not only through its leader, Alexander Bortnikov, but also through representatives of various units within the special service. These other representatives hold sway over the FSB and come from Putin's inner circle, see figure 4.1.

The next policy actor this chapter will examine are Russia's elites.

### *The Russian Elites*

According to Avdaliani (2019), close attention must be paid to the elites that govern the country and therefore control its foreign policy. Political power in Russia does not derive from the people, but rather from powerful security and military agencies that enable central government in Moscow to control large swathes of territory, often in hostile geographic conditions (Avdaliani, 2019). Most of the political elite originate in the government bureaucracy in Moscow or St Petersburg, or came to their positions of influence through personal ties to Vladimir Putin (Gorenberg, 2020).

As noted above, President Vladimir Putin has greatly reduced the political influence of the oligarchs. Duncan (2007) asserts that his moves against the oligarchs when he first came to power were partly motivated by the desire to restrict political debate, including on foreign policy, and the desire to restore state control over key industrial sectors. However, Putin has been careful to operate within the broad elite consensus about Russia's role in the world as one of its leading powers. Though Putin curtailed the old elite, those that did conform to his thinking received positions within various sections of government and the state apparatus. As shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, Vladimir Putin has surrounded himself with, and empowered, those from the intelligence, military and business elite. As Petrov and Gel'man (2019) argue, in the current Russian elite structure, state enterprise managers, executive branch officials and military/security officers are far more influential than the members of other sub-groups when it comes to foreign policy. However, they contend that a survey of Russian elites actually showed that, despite being members of the elite, respondents in all sub-groups generally found their ability to influence foreign policy decisions to be quite limited.

Oliker and Chivvis (2015) note that "neither elite nor public views on specific issues appear to drive Russian foreign policy, although the regime is very fearful of elite and public opposition to its actions". Duncan (2007) concludes that Vladimir Putin has greatly reduced the influence of the oligarchs and it must be noted, that under his leadership, the usage of the term 'oligarch' has mutated; since they lost most of their political influence, the term now tends to refer to wealthy business tycoons, but without the connotation of the political power and influence characteristic of the Boris Yeltsin era.

The next policy actor this chapter will examine is the Russian Orthodox Church.

### *The Russian Orthodox Church*

According to Lamoreaux and Flake (2018), the rise in political authoritarianism in Russia is matched by significant restrictions on religious freedoms in the country and both the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church benefit from the policies and practices of the other. “Little attention is given, however, to the role played by religion, either as a shaper of domestic politics or as a means of understanding President Putin’s international actions” (Coyer, 2015). Vladimir Putin’s moves in close coordination with the Russian Orthodox Church to sacralise the Russian identity has been a key factor and must be understood in order to understand Russia’s international behaviour (Coyer, 2015).

“Putin justifies Russia’s foreign policy through Christian faith and presents the country as a champion of conservative Christian values” (Henne, 2019). Perrier (2014) notes that the Russian Orthodox Church is one of the Foreign Ministry’s traditional representatives and is another institution that is responsible for promoting Russian interests abroad, aimed at protecting Orthodox communities in the world. “The Moscow Patriarchate, like the Russian government is actively concerned about developments outside of Russia and the potential implications these developments may have on the home front” (Blitt, 2011, p365). Strop (2018) has found that a struggle is playing out within the politics of Eastern Orthodoxy which pits the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church against Constantinople and its support for an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

“The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church enjoys the ear of Russia’s Foreign Ministry and plays a key role in both formulating and advancing Russian interests abroad” (Blitt, 2011, p365). According to Laruelle (2014, p273), “the Russian Orthodox Church plays a mediating role between the state and those who call for a nationalist agenda based on the promotion of conservative values as well as Cossack organisations, Russia’s traditional paramilitary militias”. Coyer (2015) asserts that “the close relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state is based upon a shared, theologically-informed vision of Russian exceptionalism”. This is not a new phenomenon as it harkens back to the days of the Tsars (as noted in chapter 2). Most of the Russian Orthodox Church’s efforts abroad are managed through its Department of External Church Relations (DECR), which

operates as a foreign ministry that hosts ambassadors, travels widely, and interacts with the U.N, the EU, and other international organisations (Blitt, 2011).

“The Russian Orthodox Church’s foreign policy objectives are multi-pronged and diverse, yet they share many similarities with the government of Russia’s foreign policy priorities” (Blitt, 2011, p266). This similarity, as Petro (2018) points out, is because the foreign policy agenda of the Russian Orthodox Church derives entirely from the Russian state.

The final policy actor that this chapter will examine is Russia’s state-owned energy companies.

### *Russian State-owned Energy Companies*

As noted below, Russia’s vast oil and gas industry provides it with energy security and is a critical component of its national security: both Gazprom and Rosneft are an integral part of this. According to Varol (2013), in his first presidential term, Putin focused on the strengthening of the state’s role in energy companies by consolidating the blocks of government shares. Putin has also placed in charge of Gazprom and Rosneft close friends and allies. Indeed, Igor Sechin, the CEO of Rosneft, is part of Putin’s inner circle see figure 4.1.

Thanks to Putin, Gazprom has grown tremendously and has even become a foreign policy actor for Moscow as Russia’s energy resources are critical to the country’s geopolitical influence and foreign policy strategy. Companies controlled by the Kremlin, such as Gazprom and Rosneft, are not only economic actors, but serve as important instruments of pressure in Russian foreign policy (Varol, 2013). He adds that as long as Moscow has the capability to control the economy, it allows the authorities to manipulate the amount of resources supplied, their transit routes, as well as their price. This is an important factor and gives insight into the exact role both Gazprom and Rosneft have regarding the formulation and implementation of Russian foreign policy. Both companies have always denied they have political agendas and they insist they are pursuing business interests, however, in recent years European officials and foreign policy experts have reached the conclusion that Gazprom, in particular, has been acting as a foreign policy instrument for the Russian government (Kantchev, 2022). This is also the case with Rosneft as well. Kantchev (2022)

states that Russia has long tried to increase its geopolitical reach through Rosneft as the company has pushed into countries such as Iraq, China, Cuba, Vietnam and Venezuela.

The main goals of Putin's government's energy policy are to make Russia's substantial energy resources and strong fuel-energy industry (notably Gazprom and Rosneft) a base for expanding Russian political power. As Aslund and Fisher (2020) note, both Gazprom and Rosneft prop up the Kremlin's domestic and foreign policy objectives and enrich Putin's circle of cronies.

In conclusion, the main policy actor involved in Russia's foreign policy is the President, Vladimir Putin. Putin has surrounded himself with a very small group of people that are ex-intelligence officials (known as his inner circle) that each have responsibilities but ultimately report to him. The government, government think tanks, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Russian elites, the Russian church and the Russian state energy companies are either a rubber stamp, provide policy ideas, a mouthpiece for Russia's foreign policy, an economic means, or a willing institutional actor that carries out orders. President Putin is really the central actor in Russia's foreign policy as all objectives are derived by him. In essence, Putin has become the state. He uses the FSB as a political tool to keep every aspect of Russia's institutions in check. The control and centralisation of Russia's foreign policy actors by Vladimir Putin means that he has direct oversight over the formulation and implementation of Russia's foreign policy.

The next section of this chapter will focus on Russian strategic thinking and how it frames Russia's foreign policy.

### **Foreign policy Strategic Thinking**

According to Mankoff (2009, p19), "the understanding of how the world works contained in foreign policy and national security concepts has important implications for the way Russian foreign policy is implemented". Due to the secrecy of Russian politics a large amount of thinking about Putin-era Russia has been operating on the basis of assumptions that are either unproven or simply incorrect (Rivera & Rivera, 2018). As Miller (2019, p150) notes, "properly diagnosing the drivers of Russian foreign policy is crucial if other countries are to devise effective strategies towards Russia". Lo (2018) contends that four sets of drivers shape Russia's international relations: 1) Putin's personal interpretation of the

national interests; 2) Ideology and notions of identity; 3) Russian strategic culture (geopolitical insecurities); and 4), improvisation in response to events.

As noted in chapter 2, there are two competing forms of nationalism in Russia: one calling for a “Greater Russia”, that is imperial and more inclusive in nature, and the other an ethnic nationalism which is more exclusive. “The structure of Russia’s modern-day strategic thinking is inextricably linked to Russia’s identity crisis experienced after the fall of the Soviet Union” (Perrier, 2014, p18). As Hill (2015, p49) asserts, President Putin is front and centre in interactions and decision-making. Although understanding Vladimir Putin’s personality and his domestic political goals are necessary, they are not sufficient for policymakers to decide how best to craft Russia policy, it is also essential to examine broader underlying trends (Zevelev, 2016, p1-2).

Over time, Russia has developed three distinct traditions or schools of foreign policy thinking – Westernism, Statist, and Civilisationalist (Tsygankov, 2016) – and it is these three schools that play a critical role in shaping Russia’s foreign policy position (see Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3 List of different schools/traditions of Foreign Policy Thinking**

School/Tradition of Foreign Policy Thinking	Perspective
Westernism	Based on Western traditions and principles
Statist	Concentration of economic controls and planning in the hands of a highly centralised government.
Civilisationalist	Linked to “Great Russia”. Either as a Eurasian civilisation or uniquely Slavic civilisation.

As noted in chapter 2, Russia’s perception is that the West does not respect Russia which has led to an air of anti-Westernism in the country. Because of this animosity this leaves really only two schools of thought on the framing of Russia’s foreign policy.

The next sections go on to look at those factors shaping Russia’s foreign policy strategic thinking.

### *Russia's geopolitical position and self-perceptions*

Russia borders the Baltic Sea in the west, the Black and the Caspian seas in the south, the Arctic Ocean in the north, and the Pacific Ocean in the east. It shares borders with five NATO countries (Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland), faces a sixth (Turkey) across the Black Sea, and is separated by the 53 mile wide Bering Strait from the United States. As Shiraev (2013) notes, the facts of Russia's location are an important geopolitical factor. According to Piotrowski (2002), for Russians, the basic problem following the disintegration of the Soviet Union has been the issue of identity; and their identity is tied to decisions about the geopolitical orientation of post-Soviet state policy.

Buffeted throughout its history by often turbulent developments in East Asia, Europe and the Middle East, Russia has often felt vulnerable (Kotkin, 2016). This type of thinking is still in existence today, with Trenin (2019) noting that modern Russia has many weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Russia has a dual perception of itself represented in two competing traditions of defining itself: one that views Russia as part of Europe, the other as a distinct Eurasian power (Koldunova, 2015). This dual perception is nothing new. As was pointed out in chapter 2, Russia has always had an identity complex dating back to the time of the Tsars, regarding whether they are Western in nature or a uniquely Eurasian power. It is this dual perception of itself that has given rise to two competing, almost contradictory, forms of nationalism.

In economic terms, Russia sees its wealth, defined almost universally in terms of abundant natural resources, as a tempting target for foreign powers to seize (Giles, 2017). Sim (2020) contends that "energy is the lifeblood of a modern civilisation, a commodity inextricably linked with water and food security, an input for almost all goods and services that has been correlated to military might, economic growth, and the well-being of citizens". The Russian Federation has been a petro-state for its entire legal existence, relying on energy resources to generate hard currency and project influence abroad (Weber, 2018).

The largest gas producing company in Russia, and the world, is Gazprom, which is owned by the Russian state (Tarver, 2020). He adds that 3 out of the top 5 largest natural gas companies are in fact state-owned, (see Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4 List of Top 5 Russian Energy Companies.**

List of Top 5 Companies	State-owned/Independent
Gazprom	State-owned
Novatek	Independent
Rosneft	State-owned
Lukoil	Independent
Surgutneftgas	State-owned

[Source: Tarver, (2020) “Russia’s 5 Biggest Natural Gas Companies”].

“Energy security is perceived to be a critical component of national security by countries diverse in culture, size and energy abundance” (Sim, 2020). To get its energy resources to global markets, gas from Russia enters Europe via pipelines through Belarus, Ukraine and the Baltic Sea (Brooks, 2017). This, however, raises questions about vulnerability. What if relations deteriorate with countries which the pipeline passes through? Shiryayevskaya and Khrennikova (2020) note that Russia is building a natural gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany called the Nord Stream 2. The plan is to bypass Ukraine and Poland, where tensions, especially with Ukraine, have heightened since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 (discussed in the Ukraine Case Study below).

According to the BP Statistical Review (2019), in 2018, Russia was the second largest natural gas producer and the third largest oil producer accounting for 17% and 12% of global output respectively (see BP Statistic Review 2019 for further energy statistics). Though having an abundance of natural energy resources is valuable and important, a significant drop in oil and gas revenue presents a major problem for the Russian economy and its political system (Barnes, 2013). When oil and gas prices fall, as they did over the last five years, the apparent strength of being one of the world’s key suppliers has instead become a sign of weakness (Butler, 2019).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, not only has Russia seen its territory diminished as a number of states became independent, but its great power status too. As a result, “Russia regards itself as an injured country, entitled to safeguard its geopolitical sphere of influence against foreign encroachment which it identifies as aggression” (Rezvani, 2020). According to Lucas (2014), Russia perceives that the West takes Russia for granted, swallows’

concessions and offers only snubs in return. He adds that Russia only abandoned the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe on the strict understanding that NATO would not expand to the former Warsaw Pact countries, yet this is exactly what happened.<sup>1</sup>

Viewed through the prism of Russian threat assessment, events of the previous two decades, including the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, the Arab Spring, Western intervention in Libya, and election protests at home in 2011, all represented a single trajectory: they gave rise to the perception that the West's habit of fostering and facilitating regime change by means of "colour revolutions", indiscriminately and with little regard for the consequences, might have Moscow as its eventual target. The fear that the West is considering bringing about regime change in Russia appears deep-rooted among a broad sector of the Russian security elite (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2), which has been accentuated in the past decade by the irresponsible interventions by the West (Giles, 2017).

#### *Russian Relations with the West*

Mankoff (2009) has argued that there is a need to recognising the continuities of modern Russia and the rapidly changing, often unpredictable, country that emerged from the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. The assertive, narrowly self-interested foreign policy that has characterised Russia during Putin's years actually began over a decade earlier (during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin) when the bulk of Russia's elites came to recognise integration with the West was neither possible nor desirable.

"Russia's contemporary, activist, foreign policy was launched well before Vladimir Putin became president by Yevgeny Primakov" (Gurganus & Rumer, 2019). Primakov, who was appointed Russian Foreign Minister in 1996, formulated the Primakov Doctrine according to which Russia would no longer follow the lead of Western powers, but would

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<sup>1</sup> The Warsaw Pact was a mutual defence treaty made up of Central and Eastern European countries intended to counter NATO. It included Albania (until 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (until 1990), Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union (Rosenberg, 2018).<sup>1</sup>

instead position itself as an independent centre of power on the world stage and contribute to the development of a multi-polar world. Attempts by Western powers to maintain their positions in the world, including by imposing their point of view on global processes and conducting a policy to contain alternative centres of power, was not conducive to Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016). According to Putin (2013), attempts to push supposedly more progressive development models onto other nations actually results in regression, barbarity and extensive bloodshed.

Russia's current Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov has commented that Russia will follow a different path than the West dictated by a situation where competition is becoming global and acquiring a civilizational dimension, that is, the subjects of competition now include values and development models (Lavrov, 2008). This view is reiterated by Putin (2013) who has stated that Russia will now have to go it alone, and should create its own model in world affairs, invoking Russia's historical responsibility to defend its value-based approaches. "Either we remain a sovereign nation, or we dissolve without a trace and lose our identity" (Putin, 2013). Zevelev (2016, p10) asserts that in President Vladimir Putin's discourse, the main threat to the Russian national identity is twofold: globalisation and a decadent West.

On December 31, 2015, President Putin signed *The Russian Federation's National Security Strategy* document which named the U.S. as a threat to Russia's security (Hetou, 2019). Russia's perceptions, relations and attitude of the West has led the country to craft a foreign policy reflective of Russia's core national interests which are discussed below.

#### *Core National Interests*

"What often determines Moscow's foreign policy choices is whether or not the West's international actions are perceived by Russian officials as accepting Russia as an equal and legitimate member of the world" (Tsygankov, 2016, p1). According to Putin (2013), Russians have always been proud of their nation striving for respect. This view is built around the premise that national sovereignty is closely linked to Russia's national identity.

Kuchins and Zevelev (2012) state that the parameters of Russia's national identity and its core foreign policy goals are rooted in five elements of Russian history:

- 1) Belief that Russia is a great power and should be treated as so.
- 2) Realism is the dominant paradigm regarding International Relations
- 3) From Peter the Great to Vladimir Putin, Russia continually faces challenges to “catch-up” to the economic, technological, and military achievements of its rivals.
- 4) Strategies concerning how to catch-up are based on, and continue to define, contested aspects of Russian national identity that link domestic economic and political order with foreign policy priorities and orientations.
- 5) How appropriate the Western model of Liberalism is for Russia, and substantially how closely Moscow should ally with the West.

Zevelev (2016) suggests that there is an essential link between the Russian historical legacies and narratives (primordial nationalism) and present-day government policies. National identity provides the interpretive framework through which foreign policy makers understand their role and the actions of other states, as well as how this discourse can be utilised as a tool to mobilise public support for foreign policy manoeuvres (Hansen-Green, 2017). From Vladimir Putin’s perspective, power and influence depend on whether the citizens of a given country consider themselves a nation, to what extent they identify with their own history, values and traditions, and whether they are united by common goals and responsibilities (Zevelev, 2016). Under Putin, the state has actively shaped the relationship between the interlocked spheres of official nationality, cultural nationalism and political nationalism and, according to Laruelle (2014), this official nationality sets the parameters for the cultural and political sphere within Russia.

There are many Russian perspectives on foreign policy. These end up reflected, at various times, in the foreign policy choices and directions of the Kremlin (Oliker, et al, 2009). “In recent years Russian foreign policy has been driven by two major objectives: recovering the country’s status as a great power in the global arena and regaining some level of influence in international affairs as in the period prior to the Soviet Union’s collapse” (Dragoi, 2015, p1). These objectives can be seen in Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2016), with a view to upholding the national interests of the Russian Federation and achieving its strategic

national priorities, the state's foreign policy activities shall be aimed at accomplishing the following main objectives:

- a) To ensure national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions.
- b) To create a favourable external environment that will allow Russia's economy and people to prosper.
- c) To consolidate the Russian Federation's position as a centre of influence.
- d) To strengthen Russia's position in global economic relations and prevent any discrimination against Russian goods by international or regional economic and financial organisations.
- e) To further promote efforts to strengthen international peace and ensure global security and stability with a view to establish fair, as well as equal partnership relations among states.
- f) To pursue neighbourly relations with adjacent states, and assist them in eliminating and preventing the emergence of hotbeds of tension and conflicts on their territory.
- g) To promote, within bilateral and multilateral frameworks, mutually beneficial and equal partnerships with foreign countries, inter-state associations, international organisations and within forums, guided by the principal of independence and sovereignty, a multidirectional approach to pursue national priorities on a non-confrontational basis.
- h) To ensure comprehensive, effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad.
- i) To strengthen Russia's role in international culture by promotion of the Russian language and historical legacy, and the cultural identity of people.
- j) To bolster the standing of Russian state media and communication tools in the global information space, and convey Russia's perspective.
- k) To facilitate the development of constructive dialogue and partnership with a view to promoting harmony and mutual enrichment among various cultures and civilisations.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016), the Russian Federation's foreign policy is aimed at creating a stable and sustainable system of international relations based

on the generally accepted norms of international law and the principles of equal rights, mutual respect and non-interference in the domestic affairs of states. There are flaws in Russia's Foreign Policy Concept as there are in all such documents, but it serves as both a marker of the country's evolving understanding of its international affairs and as a timely reminder of its intention to establish itself as an international centre and model (Monaghan, 2013). The first three objectives (a, b, and c) in the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept have been a feature since Russia started publishing these Concepts in 1993, highlighting the particular significance of those objectives.

As the 2016 Concept notes, the foreign policy priorities of the Russian Federation include developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and further strengthening integration structures within the CIS involving Russia. Established in 1991, there are 9 states that are members of the CIS including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The CIS is of great importance to Russia. Though this century is unlikely to see any ground invasion of Russia by a foreign enemy, nonetheless, the Kremlin is concerned with a more sophisticated kind of invasion that might take place if the CIS were to become Westernised (Baldoni, 2016).

Russia views as a key objective strengthening and expanding integration within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The EAEU was established in 2015 and is aimed at creating a shared economic space with a single customs union and integrating states into a cohesive economic entity. The EAEU is seen as being of significant importance as Russia must firmly assert itself among the five largest global economies (Putin, 2018). The member states include Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Avedissian (2019) contends that while the EAEU is the first economic union in the post-Soviet space, countries outside the region (such as Iran and Mongolia) are also being courted to join. She adds that the EAEU has been touted by Eurasian leaders as a counterpart to deep, European Union style integration. As Blank (2014) suggests, the EAEU and its component Customs Union comprise Vladimir Putin's "flagship" policies in which re-integrating the states of the former Soviet Union has been high on Russia's agenda almost since the moment the Soviet Union collapsed.

Another organisation that has been established to strengthen cooperation within the Eurasian region is the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The SCO was established as a multilateral association to ensure security and maintain stability across the vast Eurasian region and enhance trade, cultural and humanitarian cooperation (Alimov, 2020). The SCO currently comprises 8-member states (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan); has 4 observer states interested in membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and, also consists of 6 dialogue partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey) (United Nations, 2020). Over the past decade, Russia has attempted to ensure its national security, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and is involved in a number of regional organisations that are designed to create a more favourable external environment that will allow Russia to prosper.

### *Great Power Restoration*

Underlying President Putin's entire grand strategic approach has been a commitment to the restoration of Russia as a great power (Mankoff, 2009; Nitoiu, 2017; Zevelev, 2016). During the post-Cold War period, the U.S. and its Western allies no longer treated Russia as a great power (Ward, 2014). Russia was a great power for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the fall of the Soviet Union and, as Nitoiu (2017) contends, since Vladimir Putin took office for a third term in 2012 he has been on a quest to put Russia on the map again as a great power. There has certainly been a concerted effort by Russian leaders to re-establish Russia's great power status by recreating Russia's sphere of influence. This has involved an attempt to re-assert Russian leadership over the post-Soviet states and, especially, the ability and right to intervene economically and militarily in its "near abroad" (Ward, 2014).

There are three concepts that have played a major role in Moscow's foreign policy towards its neighbouring states: compatriots, the Russian world (*Russiky Mir*), and a greater Russian civilisation. As noted in chapter 2, compatriots is a term used by Russia to identify citizens of the former Soviet Union who have historical ties to Russia but find themselves living outside the Russian Federation since the break-up of the Soviet Union; the Russian World (*Russiky Mir*) refers to the unity of the Russian diaspora into a broad Russian civilisation (exclusive); and Greater Russian civilisation refers to a "distinct civilisation" of

rich traditions, with a multi-ethnic character comprising numerous cultures and faiths (inclusive).

The implicit geopolitical meaning, civilizational rhetoric and anti-Westernism of the *Russiky Mir* concept came to the fore when Russia was reconsidered recently as a “state-civilisation”. This rhetoric frames the vision of the Russian world as a distinctive civilisation, situated on a distinctive territory, ruled by a single political subject, and struggling with other civilisations for resources and influence (Suslov, 2017). The idea of the *Russiky Mir* can be used as justification for extraterritorial activities in Russia’s near abroad (Wiechnik, 2019), whilst nationalist rhetoric takes the form of the protection of Russian interests and citizens within Russia and its periphery (Isajiw, 2016).

Russia is not seeking to restore the old Soviet empire, however, even though its foreign policy seems to reflect a desire to keep its former territories under strong Kremlin influence. Putin remarked in an annual State of the Nation address to the Russian parliament in 2005 that the collapse of the Soviet empire was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Associated Press, 2005). However, Ball (2019) begs to differ, asserting that Russia’s foreign policy is centred on regaining and retaining the former Soviet sphere of influence and that nationalism is a tool to achieve this goal. Much has been made about this statement, but an equitable interpretation reveals a pining from the populace for a return to the great power of the Soviet Union, not a return to communism or totalitarianism (Laruelle, 2014).

According to Zevelev (2016, p16), Russian foreign policy stems more from domestic ideas about Russia’s identity than from existing conceptualisations of the world order that have developed in the theory and practice of International Relations (IR). He adds that the key domestic discourses that shape Russian national identity and may drive its foreign policy are a belief that Russia is a “great power”; a belief in the existence of a greater Russian civilisation that is different from that of the West; and the tensions between actual Russian Federation borders and the mental maps of “Russianness” that exists in the mind of many Russians. Russian state-media RT (2015), for example, reported that in an opinion poll conducted by the Levada Center, 68 percent of Russian citizens believe their motherland is a great power that plays a significant role in international politics.

Arnold (2016) suggests that President Putin and his administration recognise the leading role of the ethnic Russian people in framing the Russian state, but that ethnic nationalism could provoke separatism in a multi-ethnic country like Russia. Imperial nationalism offers a middle ground that allows President Putin to present the country as a great power and ties the desire for ethnic greatness to the greatness of the Russian state (Arnold, 2016).

The last section considers the continuity behind Russia's foreign policy.

### *Continuity*

"Since Vladimir Putin came to power in 1999, he has pursued two main goals: to preserve the unity of Russia and to restore its status as a great power in the global arena" (Trenin, 2019). As noted above, Russian foreign policy is a continuum that started with the Primakov Doctrine when it was recognised that Russia would no longer follow the lead of Western powers, but would instead position itself as an independent centre of power. An example of this positioning, Henley (2014) notes, is Putin's dream of a Eurasian Union, a vast trade and political bloc stretching from China to the edge of the EU that began to take shape in 2010. Longstanding beliefs about Russia's rights within its region are exacerbated by a consistent post-Soviet view that Western efforts at integration are a mechanism of controlling and weakening Russia.

Gurganus and Rumer (2019) suggest that "continuity with the Soviet era, and even earlier periods of Russian history, is a hallmark of the Kremlin's foreign policy and a toolkit it relies on to advance its goals". Russia's foreign policy is open, predictable, and characterised by consistency and continuity (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016).

### **Case Studies**

While Russian foreign policy is still guided by a blend of confidence and insecurity, this blend is evolving and creating another gap between the West and Russia (Monaghan, 2013). As Galstyan and Melkonyan (2017) note, for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's Foreign Policy Concept 2016 mentions the discrepancies in the world's development, the widening gap among the levels of states' welfare and the tough competition for resources. This has led to a resurgence in great power politics as major countries position themselves in the competitive race for resources.

The current, activist, Russian posture goes beyond the two previously articulated key elements of its foreign policy: Russia's claim to a sphere of privileged interests around its periphery and the refusal to accept the post-Cold War security order in Europe. Russia has expanded the geographical scale of its foreign policy with active outreach in parts of the world where a Russian presence has not been a factor for a number of years. "Russia has been actively supporting separatists in Ukraine, lending military support to dictators from Syria to Venezuela, and become engaged in building up and enhancing its control of the Arctic" (Gurganus & Rumer, 2019).

According to Rezvani (2020), "Russian relations with the Ukraine and Syria are theoretically important to the overall understanding of Russian foreign policy". The next section of this chapter will examine three case studies through the lens of Russia's foreign policy: first, the Ukraine; secondly, Russia's role in Syria; and lastly, Russia's Arctic ambitions.

### *The Ukraine Case Study*

"In its nearly three decades of independence, Ukraine has sought to forge its own path as a sovereign state while looking to align more closely with Western institutions including the EU and NATO" (Masters, 2020). However, throughout the post-Cold War period, Russia has expressed its disapproval when former states have decided to join or ally themselves with the EU or NATO. "Russia has deep cultural, economic, and political bonds with Ukraine and, in many ways, the Ukraine is central to Russia's identity and vision for itself in the world" (Masters, 2020).

Within Ukraine, there is a power struggle between two competing factions; one that wants to align within the EU, the other with Russia (Amadeo & Boyle, 2020). Despite a significant increase in Moscow's public diplomacy activities in Ukraine centred on the promotion of *Russiky Mir*, these efforts did not, and could not, fundamentally transform the psychological milieu in Moscow's relationship with Kiev (Feklyunina, 2016). As Pinkham (2017) contends, in 2013, there were concerns for President Putin in the form of the "Maidan Revolution" in Ukraine. Amadeo and Boyle (2020) note that after the overthrow of the pro-Russian president, which culminated in his flight to Russia, the pro-Western faction of Ukraine's parliament took over the government.

The Maidan Revolution began as a response to the Ukrainian president's refusal to sign an EU association agreement. Traynor and Grytsenko (2013) note that the signing of a trade pact and political association agreement had been years in the making between the EU and Ukraine and would bring the two closer. However, this would have precluded the country from membership in the Russian-led EAEU (John Hopkins University, 2020). Russia's opposition to Ukraine's association agreement with the EU became explicit and assertive when Russia imposed restrictions on Ukrainian exports and warned that signing the agreement would be "suicidal" for the Ukraine (Gardner, 2014). This disapproval with post-Cold War states like Ukraine highlights the importance of geopolitics as an integral part of Russia's projection of its sphere of influence. These threats on Kiev made the Ukrainian president announce a surprise reversal which sparked the whole Euromaidan movement (John Hopkins University, 2020).

Such a development was concerning for President Putin for a number of reasons. First, in 2012, he faced similar demonstrations against his re-election for a third presidential term and the fear was that the coloured revolutions sweeping through parts of Eastern Europe would spill over into Russia and disrupt the political stability of the Putin regime. Barry (2011) reports that tens of thousands of Russian's took to the streets in Moscow shouting "Putin is a thief" and "Russia without Putin". Therefore, Putin's personal interpretation was that the Maidan Revolution taking place in the Ukraine was a threat to Russia's national interests. Laruelle (2016) asserts that the Maidan created deep divisions within nationalist movements in Russia with the so-called 'national democrats' expressing solidarity with the Maidan. She contends that this minority supports the Ukrainian nationalist, Svoboda, movement in its struggle for national liberation, some of whom have neo-Nazi sympathies. On the other side of the spectrum are majority movements that can be defined as statist and/or imperialist and share the Kremlin's view that the Maidan revolution was a neo-fascist coup organised with the support of the U.S. (Laruelle, 2016, p117).

Secondly, the revolution in Ukraine in 2013-2014 was perceived in Moscow as a coup d'état organised by the West in a territory that is a vital part of Moscow's exclusive zone of interests and responsibility and that is crucial for Russia's national identity (Zevelev, 2016, p13). This thought is echoed by Klimentyev (2014); Wright (2018) who both argue that, from

a Russian perspective, Crimea's status was changed not by Russia but by the unconstitutional and illegal armed coup, actively supported by Western governments. This represented an ideological and a national identity threat to Russia.

As a result, President Putin was compelled to act. Masters (2020) contends that Ukraine became a battleground in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and began arming and abetting separatists in the Donbas region in the country's southeast. According to Hale (2014) "the Crimea hits the 'sweet spot' for Russian nationalism: a territory with an ethnic Russian majority that would not integrate many non-Russians into the Russian Federation". *Crimea* Russian state-media RT reported that a vast majority of Russians (86%) support Moscow's reabsorption of Crimea according to a Levada Center poll (Tickle, 2021). Indeed, by seizing the Crimea, Russia violated the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances which gave assurances of the inviolability of Ukraine's borders in exchange for the country's denuclearisation and campaigned for the preservation of internal Soviet-era borders (Laruelle, 2014, p274). However, according to Aridici (2019), rather than an external territory, Ukraine is conceived of as a "little brother" and by framing the Ukraine as a little brother, Russia is able to link the two countries together as part of its strategic culture.

Yudina (2015) suggests that a number of Russian nationalists are fighting in the Ukraine from a variety of different organisations such as the Cossacks, the Russian National Unity (RNE), the National Liberation Movement (NOD), the Eurasian Youth Union, and the Russian Imperial Movement. Some of these groups are more like Private Military Contractors (PMCs) than nationalist organisations. The PMCs play an actively offensive role in the conflict and are used as a force multiplier to achieve objectives for both government and Russian-aligned private interests while minimising both political and military costs (John Hopkins University, 2020). The PMCs have an opaque relationship with the Russian state characterised by partial recognition and hazy contracting (Bukkvoll & Ostensen, 2018). President Putin has noted that PMC's are a way of implementing national interests without the direct involvement of the state (John Hopkins University, 2020).

After the annexation of Crimea, the time had come for nationalists to reconcile with a regime some had for years denounced and to celebrate the statesmanlike stature of Vladimir Putin (Laruelle, 2016). In his address to the Federal Assembly in 2014, Putin declared that Crimea is where our people live and Crimea and Sevastopol are of invaluable

civilizational, and even sacral, importance to Russia (Putin, 2014). As Popovici (2018) argues, Putin justified the aggression, in part, by asserting that Crimea is comprised of ethnic Russians. This is very similar rhetoric to that used by Adolf Hitler when he annexed the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia in 1936 claiming that the majority, which were ethnic German, were being persecuted. This example shows a shift in Russian nationalism from an inclusive discourse to an exclusive one based on ethnic similarity and highlights the struggle between the two competing forms of nationalism within Russian politics.

Russia became the first European country since the end of World War II to forcefully expand its own territory by unceremoniously annexing an area (Crimea), that legitimately belonged to another European country (Ukraine) with the broad support, even enthusiasm, of the overwhelming majority of its population (Spiegeleire, 2015). According to Umland (2020), “the excitement generated by the military operation to seize Crimea transcended social classes and political affiliations uniting Russians as few events in living memory have done”. Russia’s annexation of Crimea returned post-Soviet Russia to a narrative of imperial glory associated with the medieval state of Kievan Rus (Pinkham, 2017).

Historically, the Crimean Peninsula has been of significant importance for Russian leaders ever since Russian Tsarina Catherine the Great annexed it from the Ottoman Empire in 1783 (Popovici, 2018). She adds that its possession has given Russia military leverage not only in the Black Sea, but the greater Mediterranean region. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Black Sea region remained geo-strategically significant and instrumental in shaping Russia’s concept of its “near abroad”. As a sign of its importance to Russia, in 1997, the Ukraine-Russian Friendship Treaty allowed Russia to lease the Sevastopol base, where its Black Sea fleet was based, for 20 years, a term extended until 2042 in 2010 (Taucas, 2017). However, when the Maidan Revolution happened, Russia’s presence in Crimea was threatened and they had to act. Russia sees the Black Sea as vital to its geostrategic strategy. It helps to project Russian power and influence in the Mediterranean and its economic and trade links with key European markets and make southern Europe more dependent on Russian oil and gas (Stronski, 2021).

According to Karelska and Umland (2020), ever since the outbreak of hostilities in early 2014, the undeclared war between Russia and Ukraine has also had a religious dimension. This has led to the Russian Orthodox Church splitting and the newly formation of

the new Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Just under one-third of Russia's Orthodox Church's 36,000 parishes are to be found in Ukraine and their status is now in question (Liik, et al, 2019). As noted above, a struggle is playing out within the politics of Eastern Orthodoxy which pits the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church against Constantinople and its support for an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In 2019, the Patriarch of Constantinople bestowed autocephalous (self-governing) status on the newly formed Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The split between the Russian and Ukrainian churches greatly diminishes the power of the Russian Orthodox one and drives an irreversible wedge between the two (Liik, et al, 2019).

As noted in chapter 2, Russia and the Ukraine are connected through kinship and an imagined community that dates back to the consolidation of Eastern Slavic tribes and the start of the medieval state of Kievan Rus in the 9<sup>th</sup> century which is why there is a primordial attachment between the two, especially from Putin's perspective. Both the Patriarch of Moscow and President Vladimir Putin have argued that the Russian Orthodox Church preserves the national consciousness of both Russians and Ukrainians and that the main objective of the autocephaly of Ukraine's Orthodox Church is to divide the peoples of Russia and Ukraine (Liik, et al, 2019). The split between the two Churches is a geopolitical rift too; it undermines Moscow's attempts to keep Kiev within its political orbit and to re-establish influence across the former Soviet Union (Editorial Board, 2018).

In conclusion, Teper (2015) asserts that close examination and analysis of the Kremlin's framing of Russia's annexation of Crimea reveals that it was aimed at reunifying the Russian nation in one state. The Kremlin's framing of the annexation of Crimea aligns with President Putin's vision of his historical quest to win back what he perceives to be Russian lands as he attempts to associate himself with past Russian Tsars such as Ivan and Peter the Great. Since the Ukraine crisis, Russian state media have intensified the pro-Kremlin and nationalistic tone of their broadcasts (BBC, 2020). State-controlled media have pushed the idea that the "return" of Crimea to Russia was the greatest moment in Russian history since the victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 – the lodestone of post-war Russian identity (Pinkham, 2017). Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, has noted that all Kiev's efforts to return Crimea to Ukraine are illegitimate and cannot be

perceived as anything other than a threat of aggression against two regions of the Russian Federation (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2021).

President Putin has co-opted the Russian Orthodox Church in efforts to rebuild Russian statehood and restore the country to great power status and the Ukraine is of particular importance. Putin's personal interpretation is that the Ukraine is vital to Russia's national interests and this is one of the key drivers shaping the country's foreign policy towards the Ukraine. As noted in chapter 2, geopolitics as a form of identity has emerged as a powerful theme and the Ukraine is connected to this notion of Russia's national identity. The Ukrainian crisis has affected the landscape of Russian nationalism by fragmenting the 'national democrat' scene and strengthening nostalgic aspirations for the recreation of Soviet great-power, of Russia's imperial mission, and the Eurasian project (Laruelle, 2016).

Through their involvement in Ukraine, Russia has not only shown that it is willing to use force to protect its strategic aims but, as Dragoi (2015) contends, it has also demonstrated its will to reshape the geopolitical map of Europe. "The events in Ukraine demonstrate that Russia's relations with the West and the former Soviet Republics are not separate issues" (Zevelev, 2016, p4). Russia's actions in Ukraine reflect a shift towards an increasingly realist foreign policy (discussed in chapter 5). According to Amadeo and Boyle (2020), President Putin knows that NATO will not protect Ukraine since it is not a member of the organisation. Finally, as Barbashin and Graef (2019) contend, Russia's post-Crimean foreign policy does not exist in a vacuum, its ramifications are colliding with regional and global trends that are effectively destabilising the post-Cold War international order and creating uncertainties that are defining the contemporary international moment.

### *Syria Case Study*

Russia's intervention in Syria began on September 30, 2015, when the Russian Federation formally entered the Syrian civil war. President Bashar al-Assad's rule was increasingly under threat at the time and Russia had been supporting the regime in one way or another since 2011, including through the provision of advanced weapons systems (Lucas, 2014). As Oligie (2019) suggests, Russia believed that the West was behind the Syrian conflict in the first place because they wanted to change the Syrian regime. This indicates that Russia's intervention may have been driven by improvisation in response to

events. To justify the intervention, Miller (2020) argues that President Putin pointed a finger at the U.S. who was no stranger to Middle East Wars, most of which Russia opposed. The intervention in Syria by the Russian military was initiated at the request of the Syrian government who sought aid to combat rebel groups (Hermansson et al, 2020); the fact that Russia was invited in by the Syrian government legitimised the Russian intervention under international law. According to Baczynska et al (2015), Russia initially sent two tank landing ships and additional cargo aircraft and deployed a small number of naval infantry forces to secure airfield and port facilities in Latakia, a stronghold of President Bashar al-Assad. Though the exact numbers of Russian troops sent to Syria is murky, a Russian Defense Ministry video said that more than 63,000 Russian military personnel had “received combat experience” in Syria since 2015 (BBC, 2018).

It may also be the case, according to Allison (2013, p801), that the close association between the U.S.S.R and Syria has some continuing resonance in the mind-set of Russia’s current security and foreign policy leadership which generated a sense of solidarity. However, according to Bishara (2015), Russia’s intervention in Syria is not a reward for Bashar al-Assad for his supportive stance over the years for Russian foreign policy. Rather, Russia has other considerations such as an imagined sphere of influence that covers a wider area and to do with the U.S. administration reeling from developments over the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq. Russia’s support for the Assad regime is also driven by Putin’s interpretation of national interests. Russia has argued that fighting jihadist forces abroad in Syria serves a domestic security concern – Russian estimates in 2014 and 2015 indicated that between 1500 and 2500 Russian citizens from the Caucasus and elsewhere were fighting for the IS in Syria and Iraq, as well as 7000 nationals from other countries in the CIS (John Hopkins University, 2020).

“Russian officials have frequently justified their position in the Syria crisis as a bulwark of international and regional order against the threat of state collapse, chaos and the spread of transnational Islamist networks” (Allison, 2013, p809). Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, has asserted that Russia reaffirms its readiness to cooperate on Syria with all interested countries when it comes to combating terrorism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2021). While Moscow has officially stated that its campaign in Syria was against the IS, firsthand reports and geolocation of

satellite images, videos, and photographs established that more than 80 % of airstrikes were against the Syrian opposition rebels challenging the Assad regime (Lucas, 2015). This example seems to confirm the point above that Russia's intervention is driven largely by Putin's interpretation of Russia's national interests. As Petkova (2020) notes, the fall of Bashar al-Assad would threaten Russia's interests and eliminate a regional ally. Russia's purpose for intervening was to inject itself into a crucial geopolitical battleground and to force Washington – which, at the time, sought to isolate Moscow diplomatically – to realise the Russia would not be overlooked (Galeotti, 2018).

The friendliness of the Assad regime in Syria and their need for military assistance provided the Russian Federation with a highly permissive environment for the use of Russian PMCs in the country (John Hopkins University, 2020). According to Skryabin (2018), Russia uses shadow PMCs in the conflict parallel to the deployment of its own armed forces. He adds that it is critical to view the use of PMCs as a product of the greater nationalist discourse currently being constructed by Russian authorities which stipulates that the Russian individual, as a member of his nation, has a duty to defend and fight for the nation to preserve its new identity. Russia's nationalist ideology and notions of identity, as well as Russia's strategic culture, seem to play a role in framing Russia's foreign policy narrative towards Syria. "Images of, and much of Putin's rhetoric around, the war is aimed at Russians' longing for the return of the superpower" (Bishara, 2015, p13). This point seems to be confirmed by Lukyanov (2016) who argues that President Putin's military activity in Syria is inclined towards restoring Russia's former superpower status because he can no longer trust the West to be honest partners who respect Russia and its wellbeing.

There is also a narrative at work here with Russian officials arguing the chaos and break-down of state structures could feed back to Russia (Allison, 2013, p809). Therefore, according to Skryabin (2018), Syria's role in the new nationalist narrative occupies that of a battleground between Russia and the West, as well as with radical Islam, and has two primary reasons First, it legitimises the power and policies of the state by portraying them as necessary components of Russia's drive to renewed great power status. Secondly, it involves the hijacking of individual agency and the imposition of a duty to serve the nation.

According to Oligie (2019), when specific attention is paid to the scholarly explanations as to why Russia's military involvement is aimed at keeping Bashar al-Assad in power, six motives for Russia's actions are apparent:

- Geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic interests and sphere of influence in the Middle East which Russia has to protect from Western encroachment;
- Conservative orientation of Russia's ruling elite responsible;
- Russia intervened in Syria to uphold the UN laws on non-intervention and state sovereignty and to prevent the UN from setting a precedent where the West can interfere in the domestic conflict of an anti-Western regime;
- Russia's abhorrence of Islamist fundamentalism and Jihadist ideology meaning it wanted to prevent Syria from becoming an Islamic fundamentalist and Jihadist stronghold;
- Realism as an ideology prompted Russia to intervene in Syria as it prioritises the use of power in the form of military force against Western opposition in order to protect its national interests and preserve its survival in an unfriendly international system;
- And, the need to apply the self-help principle for self-defence and self-preservation.

Russia's military intervention in Syria's civil war took many by surprise and raised questions about the potential for similar actions in other conflicts outside of post-Soviet Eurasia (Charap, Treyger and Geist, 2019). The intervention in Syria shows that Russia is resolved to safeguard its geopolitical interests outside the post-Soviet space as well as inside it (Rezvani, 2020). As mentioned in chapter 2, geopolitics has merged and become part of the contemporary nationalist narrative and, in relation to Syria, the re-establishment of great power status is attached to the nationalist narrative of a Greater Russia. However, it must be noted that the efforts of President Bashar al-Assad's regime to prevail through the unconstrained use of force in this brutal struggle for power have also exposed deeply entrenched fault-lines among Middle Eastern governments and in the global community of states (Allison, 2013, p795). Far from stabilising the region, Russia's intervention has had the opposite effect. According to Miller (2020), "Syria's civil war has spilled across the region,

affecting not only neighbouring Lebanon and Turkey, but also Libya. He adds that there is now a new arc of conflict crossing the Eastern Mediterranean”.

In conclusion, the primary goal of the military intervention in Syria was to preserve the regime of Bashar al-Assad and oppose terrorist (IS) and opposition forces (John Hopkins University, 2020). According to Petkova (2020), Russia’s intervention did just that. It stopped the advance of the opposition which was backed by the West, Turkey and the Gulf states, and effectively preserved the regime in Damascus. However, as noted above, and as Bishara (2015) argues, saving the Assad regime was a means of self-assertion and another step towards Russia’s goal of re-establishing itself as a great power, this time, with significant influence in the Middle Eastern region. By intervening in Syria directly, President Putin sought to restore Russia to its former status as a superpower and, a neo-imperialist Russian identity (Oligie, 2019; and Skryabin, 2018). In a broader sense, Russia used the window of opportunity created by the departure of the U.S. to re-establish itself as a major power in the region. Russia’s intervention in Syria reflects a more realist foreign policy stance (discussed in chapter 5). The military intervention has allowed for the solidification of military basing for power projection in the region including the 2017 expansion of the naval facility in Tartus, the operation of Khmeimim Air Base in Latakia, as well as the use of Shayrat Air Base in Homs (John Hopkins University, 2020).

### Arctic Case Study

The Arctic has long been a region locked away from the rest of the world due to its extremely harsh conditions, only accessible to a few nations. However, as Saul (2020) contends, the Arctic has been warming at a rapid pace over the last three decades to a point where the ice is now becoming thin enough for commercial shipping and resource exploitation. Due to climate change, the Arctic landscape is undergoing profound transformations which has led not only to multilateral governance efforts, but also unilateral pursuits (Hansen-Magnusson, 2018). Why this is of particular importance is because, as Laruelle (2009, p1) notes, “the Arctic is often presented in the light of the new Eldorado set to become the booming economic frontier of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”.

The Arctic region has a very complex geological history and is comprised of two main tectonic plates, the North-American plate and the Eurasia plate, as well as a micro-plate

(Cameron, 2020). According to a team of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) scientists, the Arctic circle encompasses about 6% of the earth's surface, an area of more than 21 million km<sup>2</sup>, of which almost 8 million km<sup>2</sup> is onshore and more than 7 million km<sup>2</sup> is on continental shelves under less than 500 metres of water (USGS, 2008). The Russian interest in the Arctic has deep historical roots that extend all the way back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the conquest of Siberia driven by the never-ending quest for more resources and secure trade routes (Rumer et al, 2021). "Geographically speaking, almost 20% of Russian territory is considered to be Arctic or sub-Arctic" (Laruelle, 2009, p1). Russia's coastline accounts for 53% of the Arctic Ocean coastline and the country's population in the region totals roughly 2 million people – around half of the total number of people living in the Arctic. The fact that there are 2 million people that are Russian living there means that the Arctic is Russian in many ways (Ellyatt, 2019).

President Putin sees the Arctic as being of considerable national interest thus framing his Arctic policy. Putin has put his signature to a new Russian Arctic policy in which the main focus is security, economic development, and energy resources (Coffey, 2020). The Arctic is a strategically important region for Russia both in terms of economic development and providing national security (RT, 2017). For Russia, the establishment of a homogeneous identity of an 'Arctic state' adds to Russia's legitimacy in the region and is important for ensuring a leading place for Russia in the competition for the Arctic's exploration. (Khrushcheva & Poberezhskaya, 2016). From a security point of view, Russia wants to reassert its territorial sovereignty along the borders of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF), established in 2013 which includes all the territories of Russia's Far North close to the Arctic Ocean, or connected to it for economic reasons (Laruelle, 2020, p5).

From an economic point of view, the Arctic is home to large stockpiles of proven, yet unexploited, oil and gas reserves, the majority of which are thought to be located in Russia (Coffey, 2020). According to Ellyatt (2019), it is estimated that there could be trillions of dollars' worth (as much as \$35 trillion) of untapped gas and oil reserves. The extensive Arctic continental shelves may constitute the geographically largest, unexplored, prospective area for petroleum remaining on earth (USGS, 2008). This makes the Arctic a considerable place for economic opportunity and could lead to potential conflict if countries squabble over the ownership of resources. Domestically, Russia's ambition is to consolidate

the spatial unity of the country by reviving the economic development of the Far North which represents 11% of Russia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 22% of its exports (Laruelle, 2020). According to Tayloe (2015), nationalism, a deteriorating demographic profile and severe economic challenges have pushed Russia to undertake measures to counter the West in the Arctic.

One measure that Russia has undertaken is that nations surrounding the Arctic are currently submitting claims to extend their EEZs. The Russian Federation is one of the claimants that wishes to extend their EEZ into the Arctic Ocean (Cameron, 2020). "While Russia participates in the Arctic Council – together with Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the U.S. – the institution is not endowed with sufficient influence to resolve legal conflicts" (Laruelle, 2009, p1). The UNCLOS defines how a country can extend their EEZ by proving that the area meets certain requirements. The Russian Federation has identified an area of the Arctic (Lomonsov Ridge and Alpha-Mendeleev Ridge) that meets the requirements and has produced scientific evidence to support its claim (Cameron, 2020).

Substantial budgetary increases have also boosted Russian military and economic activity in the region with major projects and infrastructure focus on natural resource development and the protection of its maritime passage – the Northern Sea Route (NSR) (Melino & Conley, 2020). Russian state-media RT (2018) reports that an additional 686 km of railroad will soon link Russia's Arctic regions. The Railroad will provide logistics for the NSR to boost commerce between Europe and Asia and Russian energy projects in the region. It is thought that with the melting of the ice, the NSR could become another main shipping route. The NSR extends from the Bering Strait in the east to the Kara Gate in the west, covering approximately 5600 kilometres (Melino & Conley, 2020), and would save ships having to transit through piracy prone areas such as South East Asia and the Horn of Africa. Since seasonal variations and floating ice will remain a problem, the Arctic routes cannot provide the degree of punctuality and reliability required and thus sending ships through the NSR is not advantageous compared to more traditional routes (Tunsjo, 2020).

President Putin approved a new version of Russia's maritime doctrine in 2015. This included both naval and civilian components and emphasised the priority of the North Atlantic and Arctic where NATO activities and international competition for natural

resources and sea routes continue to grow requiring Russia's adequate response (Konyshev & Sengunin, 2018). In recent years, Russia has refurbished Soviet-era airbases and constructed new bases along the NSR, and Air Defence forces and anti-aircraft defence systems are prioritised among the new military infrastructure. In 2014, Lt Gen. Mikhail Mizintsev, head of the National Defence Management Centre, announced a major expansion in Russian military capability in the Arctic region, with plan to build 13 airfields, an air-ground firing range, as well as ten radar and vectoring posts (Tayloe, 2015). Russia has also modernised its Northern Fleet which is tasked with preserving, defending and promoting Russia's interests in the Arctic region (Tunsjo, 2020).

According to Melino and Conley (2020), "Russia's military presence in the Arctic seeks to achieve three objectives: enhance homeland defence, specifically a forward line of defence against foreign incursion as the Arctic attracts increased international investment; secure Russia's economic future; and, to create a staging ground to project power, primarily in the North Atlantic".

The Arctic is connected to Russia's national interests and is an integral part of Russia's identity narrative. "The Arctic resonates with Russians and they have so many of their resources in that region including oil and gas, fisheries and minerals" (Ellyatt, 2019). However, according to Tunsjo (2020), scholars and policy-makers who are focused on the overhyped challenges and opportunities related to petroleum, shipping routes, military competition, mining and fisheries in the new Arctic may be overlooking the real challenges to the region: Russia's military modernisation and the country's re-emergence as a great power in Europe and the North Atlantic.

In conclusion, Russia has expanded its control over its Arctic territories and the unique infrastructure it has built in the region is unmatched by any other country according to Russian Defense Minister, Sergey Shoigu (RT, 2017). President Putin treats the Arctic region with a high level of national importance (Coffey, 2020). This might be because, in the Arctic, all of Russia's neighbours are NATO member states (Trenin, 2014). However, as Melino and Conley (2020) contend, the Arctic is a pillar of Russia's return to great power status. Russia's pursuit of great power status has led it to claim nearly half the Arctic in an attempt to garner prestige and establish itself as an energy superpower (Tayloe, 2015). "By drawing on historical aspirations, Russia's pursuit of great power status in the Arctic

encompasses multi-dimensional motivations and engages multi-level audiences” (Grajewski, 2017, p141).

According to Coffey (2020), the Arctic is a low-risk way to promote Russian nationalism and, as Russian nationalism is on the rise, Putin’s approach to the Arctic is popular among the population. Russia’s policy towards the Arctic reflects a more realist approach in which Russia is attempting to assert its interest more forcefully (discussed in chapter 5). The Arctic remains an important item on the Russian political agenda, and it is likely that its prominence will only increase over time (Khrushcheva & Poberezhskaya, 2016). The Arctic is an area that allows Russia to flex its muscles without occurring any significant geopolitical risk and the average Russian to “rally around the flag” (Coffey, 2020). “The Arctic is increasingly significant to Russia for more than resources, it has important economic, defensive and transport value, and has a symbolic and nationalistic value to Russia” (Ellyatt, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Over its history, Russia has attained its greatest power and glory in periods when the state was at its strongest (Mankoff, 2009). As Loftus (2019) contends, President Putin has consolidated a specific national identity which is best explained using primordialist and modernist theory as it possesses both domestic and international features based on past myths, conservatism and sovereignty, and has allowed Russia to regain a positive national self-esteem and re-establish itself as an important international actor. According to Zevelev (2016, p16-17), “it is possible to identify several “big ideas” in Russian intellectual history that have been adopted by the Kremlin as a foundation of its worldview”. These include: a belief in Russian exceptionalism; a denial of the European nature of the Russian civilisation; a portrayal of the West as evil; and, a conviction that Russia has a special civilizational and spiritual mission among the neighbouring peoples of Eurasia.

Russian foreign policy under President Putin has been in response to challenges emerging from his grand strategy of returning Russia to the great power ranks (Weber, 2018). This is connected to Russian strategic culture that is defined by Russia’s geopolitical insecurities and perception of the West. According to Kolsto (2016, p12), Vladimir Putin did not heavily rely on Russian nationalism for political support during his first two presidential

terms or his time as prime minister. However, when tens of thousands of demonstrators poured onto Moscow's streets in 2012, this forced the Kremlin to seek out new bases of public support which led to a far more prominent role for Russian nationalism in connection to Vladimir Putin's leadership. Zevelev (2016, p2) suggests that, "contrary to widespread belief, Vladimir Putin does not shape the national discourse, the national discourses shape Vladimir Putin". Putin is a survivalist, set out to ensure that Russia can protect itself against all external threats and is prepared to deploy all the necessary reserves to defend the state (Hill, 2015, p48).

Putin's foreign policy is influenced by belief systems from the Tsarist and Soviet past. For example, as Lo (2018) argues, the triad of tenets that underpinned the rule of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) – autocracy, Orthodoxy and nation-mindedness – are as influential today as they were in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Firstly, the increasingly authoritarian Putin is Tsar in all but name. Secondly, the "moral-spiritual values" of the Russian Orthodox Church propagates has become ubiquitous, not least as keynotes in the governments major foreign policy statements, and that "nation-mindedness" is reflected in resurgent historical narratives. Lastly, the patriotic education of the young and the popular mobilisation which has become a mass political and cultural phenomenon is an example that Putin is using the modernism theory in framing Russian nationalism.

"With a nationalist foreign policy, one would expect ideational tendencies reflecting the principles of national prioritisation, independent sovereignty, in particular evidence of messianism, exclusionism or chauvinism, inasmuch as the interests of the core nation are seen as pre-eminent" (March, 2018, p81). In all three case studies, these ideational tendencies are evident through Putin's rhetoric and actions.

According to Kolsto (2016, p6), in regards to the two dominant brands of nationalism in Russia – imperial nationalism and ethno-nationalism – the annexation of Crimea allowed President Putin to ride two horses. Since the population of the peninsula is primarily ethnic Russian, it was possible to present this act both as an ingathering of Russian lands in a strong Russian state and as a defence of ethnic Russians abroad. "President Putin deliberately inculcates nationalism as a means to increase the state power of Russia and thus its capacity to engage in military actions in Eurasia and Eastern Europe in order to implement his grand strategy" (Arakelyan, 2015, p13). The protection of Russian citizens

was the central point of Vladimir Putin's speech when he announced the annexation of Crimea provides an example to this point.

As noted above, Russia's intervention in Syria to save the Assad regime is a means of self-assertion and another step toward the goal of re-establishing itself as a great power, consistent with nationalism being framed using the modernist paradigm. The military intervention has allowed not only for the solidification of military basing for power projection (an important factor) in the region, but for Russia to have a seat at the head of any future diplomatic solution. As Lukyanov (2016) comments, by acting in Ukraine and Syria, Russia has made clear its intention to restore its status as a major international player (discussed further in chapter 5).

The Arctic is of particular importance to President Putin. A number of Russian state-owned energy companies extract natural resources in the Arctic region and this is a valuable commodity economically for Russia. The Arctic is also important because it is connected to Russia's notions of national identity. Zevelev (2016, p11) suggests that Russia's global role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is seen as an entitlement. However, as Tayloe (2015, p3) argues, "President Putin's bellicose foreign policy and hyper nationalist rhetoric is intended to reassure a domestic audience of the state's performance legitimacy and underscore his commitment to restoring Russia's great power status". In many instances, the tactics used by Russia have been eerily similar to the U.S.S.R. (Lovotti & Ambrosetti et al, 2020). The current Russian foreign policy should not be read as one that is based on a global ideology as in the Soviet era. Instead, Moscow's foreign policy is based on primordial attachments to Russia's historic past that rests on state capitalism and which speaks to nationalist sentiment built on the rejection of Western exploitation.

## Chapter 5

# Great Power Politics

With the collapse of communism, the U.S. emerged dominating the world order with a number of political commentators arguing that the world was becoming unipolar, thus implying that there was only one great power – the U.S. (Mearsheimer, 2014). Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, however, economic globalisation has not only accelerated the process of economic integration, but also competition among countries, especially between the great powers (Angang & Honghua, 2002). As noted in previous chapters, the rise of China to great power status and Russia's attempt to re-establish itself as a great power has increased global tensions. As Mearsheimer (2014, p2) points out, great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power; on the contrary, they face a constant incentive to change it in their favour. For Waltz (2010) great powers determine the course of international history.

Vladimir Putin's Russia and Xi Jinping's China are driven by a mix of resentment, insecurity and ambition. Both seek redress for what they regard as past wrongs and humiliations and feel threatened by the physical proximity of the U.S. (Lynch III, 2020). Deng (2007) argues that what unites Russia and China is their substantial and lasting common interests in the post-Cold War period, with both of them finding themselves in outlier positions *vis-à-vis* the U.S. led order. In fact, according to Lo (2018), it is hard to imagine a warmer political relationship in recent times than that of the Russian and Chinese presidents.

“The growing and unmistakable convergence between Moscow and Beijing is among the most important trends reshaping the web of great power ties” (Chhabra et al, 2020). According to O'Hanlon and Twardowski (2019), together, China and Russia dominate Eurasia and their strengths complement each other. One is a huge land mass with nuclear weapons and hydrocarbons, but has a modest and shrinking population. The other is an economic powerhouse and second in conventional military power by most metrics. Both countries think of themselves as major global players that should be respected. For China and Russia,

being a great power is now intrinsically linked to each country's national identity. China has thrown off the shackles of humiliation which previously framed their national identity, whilst Russia has tried to re-establish itself as a great power as it frames and shapes a national identity after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

As noted in chapter 2, geopolitics as a form of identity has emerged as a powerful theme. Here, national interests are part of a zero-sum game of competition in a world of competing civilizational blocs. Great powers fear and always compete with each other to maximise their share of world power (Mearsheimer, 2014, p2). China is now in a position where it has major influence in global affairs and is active in regional and global institutions and Russia has re-established itself as a major player in global affairs and is similarly active.

Both China and Russia, this thesis has shown already, have been more assertive in challenging the international status-quo since 2012, embracing the modernist perspective to define their national identity and attaching it to that of great power status. For several years now, geopolitical competition between the major powers has been intensifying. Russia's attack on U.S. democracy; cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure including power grids; Chinese political interference, including pressure on U.S. companies, especially in the media sector; the mass theft of intellectual property; the collection of private data by foreign powers; the strategic use of corruption to build networks of support; and the backing for authoritarian movements in countries that were, until several years ago, stable democracies, may seem like isolated or disconnected incidents (Wright, 2018). However, "they are not isolated incidents, they are deeply embedded in the logic of the emerging great power competition" (Wright, 2018). This notion seemed to be confirmed at the CCP Congress in 2017 when President Xi left no doubt that he regards China's illiberal concepts of political and economic order as superior to the so-called Western models, and that he seeks to export "Chinese wisdoms" to the world as a "contribution to mankind".

This chapter explores the issue of China and Russia's great power status and begins by asking the question: are China and Russia really great powers? It will answer that question by considering what defines a great power before examining the link between nationalism and great power ambitions, thus establishing a framework to evaluate the link between Chinese and Russian nationalism and great power status. The chapter will then investigate great power competition and the great power framework to provide a clear

understanding of great power politics. Following on from this, there is a discussion of the relationship between China and Russia and the degree to which China and Russia are revisionist rather than status quo powers. Does nationalism lead to revisionism in the case of China and Russia? The chapter concludes by investigating China and Russia's alternative model to international relations and what this means for the future.

### Great Power Definition

In International Relations theory, great power politics refers to the pursuit of material power by powerful states in the international system so as to achieve security (Abebe, 2009). As the principal actors in the global system, states tend to worry about who is stronger or less influential and what power tends to be (Swaroop, 2019). What makes some countries more powerful than others is an important question for the study and practice of international relations. Because both China and Russia have pursued great power status this has raised a number of questions. None is more important than what sort of great powers will they be, status quo or revisionist? To begin to this answer this question, it is important to first determine whether or not if China and Russia are indeed great powers.

According to Bull (2012), when we speak of great powers we imply three things. First, that there are two or more powers that are comparable in status. Second, that the members of this club are all in the front ranks in terms of military strength. Third, that great powers are powers recognised by others to have, and conceived by their own leaders and peoples to have, special rights and duties.

As Friedmann (2014) explains, at the end of the Cold War a new discourse emerged as part of various attempts to articulate a role for major powers in the new international order. He adds that with a widespread belief in a new order of shared prosperity, common values and a decreasing importance of power politics, emphasis shifted towards understanding major powers roles in protecting, entrenching, spreading and representing the values and rules of the new order. Furthermore, great powers assert the right, and are accorded the right, to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole (Bull, 2012). Great powers then are the leading nations in world affairs and the most relevant function performed by the great powers is related to the establishment and preservation of some international order (Cesa, 2012). Great powers

contribute to international order in two main ways: by managing their relations with one another and by exploiting their preponderance in such a way as to impart a degree of central direction to the affairs of international society as a whole (Bull, 2012).

According to Kennedy (1987), the relative strengths of leading nations in world affairs never remains constant. Great powers differ from other countries by being more powerful, but they also differ from one another economically or militarily (Katz, 2018). As Cesa (2012) contends, great powers do not achieve and keep their rank by scoring high on a single item such as extensive territory or formidable economic resources. He adds that one might be tempted to argue that the military potential of a state is the single most important indicator of great power status as many definitions of this refer to military capabilities. However, this would be too one dimensional as an indicator of great power status as there are a number of states with powerful militaries that are not great powers. How then should great power status be measured?

Naufal (2015) argues that there are four common attributes that great powers have that date back to the Roman Empire: military power; economic power; technological advances; and political stability. Power is typically defined as the ability of a country to shape world politics in line with its interests, but measuring this ability systematically is impossible because doing so would require parsing each country's interest in, and influence over, a potentially infinite number of international events (Nye, 1990). Beckley (2018, p7) suggests that scholars need a sound way to measure power, because the balance of power plays a central role as the motor of world politics and policymakers need an accurate way to gauge the power of nations as vital decisions rest on estimates of relative power. To this effect, power is usually measured in terms of soft power or hard power. According to Nye (2009, p63), soft power can rest on such resources as the attraction of one's ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the expressed preferences of others. He adds that the ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with tangible power resources such as culture and ideology. Hard power, on the other hand, can rest on inducements ("carrots") or threats ("sticks") by using economic or military tools to get others to do what you want.

According to Levy (2014), the aim is to minimise rather than eliminate subjectivity by providing theoretical criteria that are operationally useful yet sufficiently flexible to guide an

interpretation of a rich body of historical evidence in identifying the great powers. These theoretical criteria act as indicators in defining great powers and include perceptions of them by other states; their role in international organisations and financial institutions; their military power projection beyond borders and military capabilities; total population; resources and production; fuel consumption and production; and their role in resolving international security issues. According to Davidson (2006, p28), defining power entails choices among alternative conceptions. One way to measure the power of any given state is to examine its gross resources. Many scholars and analysts measure power in terms of resources with most measuring resources in gross rather than in net terms (Beckley, 2018, p14). Gross indicators are measured using GDP, military spending, size of military, population, urban population, natural resources, and energy consumption.

Chinese military spending has been increasing substantially year on year since 2012, whilst Russia’s military spending has remained constant over the same period with significant increases for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 (Sipri, 2012). Figure 5.1 below shows Chinese and Russian military spending from 2012-2020 current.

**Figure 5.1. Chinese and Russian Military Expenditure 2012-2020 current.**

Year	China military expenditure in US\$ millions	Russian Military expenditure in US\$ millions
2012	153138	61622
2013	165589	64626
2014	178806	69261
2015	192843	74649
2016	203944	80027
2017	216487	64848
2018	229168	62404
2019	240333	65201
2020	244934	66838
2020-current	252304	61713

[Source] Sipri (2021). *Military Expenditure by country. US\$ Millions. (2019)*

As a result of China's continued investment in its military, Childs and Barrie (2021) contend that sustained investment in the PLA has considerably enhanced China's military capabilities. According to the IISS (2020), Russia's conventional military capabilities are at their highest since the end of the Soviet Union. However, having a capable army does not solely qualify as great power status. As Heath (2018) contends, China's military has an increasingly impressive high-tech arsenal, but its ability to use these weapons and equipment remains unclear.

Experience of fighting and winning wars is a key component of the military capability of great power, and both China and Russia have been involved in a number of wars and skirmishes in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. China's involvement has had mixed results, however. The Korean War, the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, along with Sino-Soviet skirmishes, are a few examples of China's involvement in military conflicts. According to Heath (2018), the last major conflict that the PLA fought was over 40 years ago, when a seasoned Vietnamese military defeated a Chinese invasion in 1979. Since then, China has had no experience fighting wars. The few combat veterans that the PLA have in its ranks will retire in the next few years which means the military will have no personnel at all with combat experience. Russia, on the other hand, has been involved in a number of wars, also with mixed results. The Second World War (Great Patriotic War), the Cold War, Afghanistan War, the War with Georgia and the Syrian conflict are a few examples of Russia's involvement in military conflict.

Another aspect of a country's military power capabilities is whether or not it has a nuclear arsenal. There are only a handful of states that possess such capabilities, and not all can be defined as great powers. North Korea has between 30-40 nuclear warheads according to The Arms Control Association (2020) but applying both the gross and net indicators above, North Korea is not defined as a great power. The Arms Control Association (2020) contends that China has an estimated 320 nuclear warheads, Russia has approximately 6,375 nuclear warheads, and the U.S., by comparison, has 5,800. As these figures point out, Russia and the U.S. possess far more nuclear warheads than any other state.

With regards to population, China is the most populated country in the world. China has a population of 1.402 billion and Russia 144,104, 080 million (World Bank, 2020).

However, as Walt (2008) suggests, great power status cannot be maintained by population size alone; a certain economic capability is also necessary. The question that then arises is: do China and Russia have this economic capability? Both China and Russia certainly have vast amounts of natural resources which they export globally generating them capital. Figure 5.2 below shows a list of the top 7 leading countries' natural resources based on an estimated economic value by *Statista* as of 2019.

**Figure 5.2. Top 7 Countries natural resources based on economic value.**

Rank	Country	Value in USD	Resources
1	Russia	\$75 Trillion	Coal, natural gas, oil, gold, timber, rare earth metals
2	USA	\$45 Trillion	Oil, coal, natural gas, timber, gold, copper
3	Saudi Arabia	\$34.4 Trillion	Oil, timber
4	Canada	\$33.2 Trillion	Oil, uranium, timber, natural gas, phosphate
5	Iran	\$27.3 Trillion	Oil, natural gas
6	China	\$23 Trillion	Coal, timber, rare earth metals
7	Brazil	\$21.8 Trillion	Gold, uranium, iron, timber, oil

[Source] Statista (2021). *Leading Countries worldwide based on natural resource Value as of 2019.*

The deepened economic interdependence generated by globalisation has undoubtedly offered China an extraordinary opportunity to emerge as a leading global economy (Zhen & Paul, 2020). According to the World Bank (2020), figures for China show that its GDP for 2020 was US\$ 14.723 trillion, and has been constantly increasing since the mid-1990s. With regards to Russia, earlier high energy prices have assisted its economy, but with the lack of reforms it has stagnated (Gurganus & Rumer, 2019). As the World Bank (2020) highlights, figures for Russia's GDP for the year 2020 show that it was US\$ 1.483 trillion and it has been stagnating since 2008.

However, "all gross indicators are ultimately one dimensional as they only measure the size of a country's resources, not how effectively a country uses them" (Beckley, 2018, p17). These indicators systematically exaggerate the wealth and military capabilities of poor,

populous countries because they tally resources without deducting the costs countries pay to police, protect and serve their people. If solely measuring power in terms of gross indicators, both China and Russia would be defined as superpowers, however, this is not an accurate definition. As Davidson (2006, p28) also contends, a problem with this basic definition is that a state must not merely possess adequate resources, but it must also mobilise these resources in order to use them in international politics. Therefore, only measuring gross resources can be problematic as it does not give a full picture of a state's true capability only its gross capacity.

A nation's power stems not from its gross resources, but from its net resources (Beckley, 2018). According to Cesa (2012), in assessing the power of any given state at any given time we must look at the space that it occupies and within it is active; the quantity and the quality of implements and combatants, and finally the organisation of the armed forces, the quality of the military and civilian leadership in war and peace, and the way in which citizens react to the test of war. There are three main cost that erode a country's power resources: production costs, welfare costs, and security costs. A country with a large population might produce vast output and field a large army, but also may bear massive welfare and security burdens that drain its wealth and bog down its military, leaving it with few resources for power projection abroad (Beckley, 2018, p9 & 14).

The process of establishing a country's power capabilities involves creating a balance sheet for each country: assets go on one side of the ledger, liabilities go on the other, and net resources are calculated by subtracting the latter from the former (Beckley, 2018, p9). The Lowy Institute 2020 Asia Power Index measures power in two ways that are more closely aligned to net resource measurement, by distinguishing between resource-based determinants and influence-based determinants of power, (see Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3. Resource-based determinants and Influence-based determinants of power.**

<b>Resource-Based Determinants</b>	<b>Influence-based Determinants</b>
Economic capability	Economic relationships
Military capability	Defence networks
Resilience	Diplomatic influence
Future resources	Cultural influence

[Source] Lemahieu, H. & Leng, A. (2020). *Lowy Institute Asia Power Index Key Findings 2020*.

Resource-based determinants are things of value whilst influenced-based determinants are based on relationships built, and ability to influence others, through dialogue instead of hard military might. Capabilities are but one measure of national and international power and not the most important one as influence has been determined a more significant indicator of power. As Larson (2015) notes, both China and Russia have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, an important status maker, and a position where they have a considerable amount of influence.

When Beckley's three costs, and the Lowy Institutes power index are taken into consideration, the U.S. is the most powerful state in the Asian region, (see figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4. Lowy Institute Asia Power Index Rankings.**

Rank	Country
1	USA
2	China
3	Japan
4	India
5	Russia

[Source] Lemahieu, H. & Leng, A. (2020). *Lowy Institute Asia Power Index Key Findings 2020*.

Sergunin and Karabeshkin (2015) suggest that it has become commonplace to claim that in the post-Cold War era key international players often prefer to exercise soft rather than hard power. They add that those who have adopted the soft power concept, including economic, socio-cultural, institutional and legal instruments, believe that these mechanisms are more efficacious than military strength or direct political and economic pressure. Both China and Russia utilise various mechanisms that enhance their soft power capabilities whether it be through trade, establishment or involvement in international institutions, or through their state media companies that reach a wider international audience. In this way, both countries have the ability to shape the preferences of other nations without having to use coercion.

In conclusion, there are a number of factors that define a great power such as their hard and soft power capabilities, and these factors cannot be simply measured in terms of gross resources, net resources also must be considered. A great power must possess both relative self-sufficiency with respect to security, including invulnerability against attack by secondary states, and the ability to project military power beyond its borders in pursuit of its own interests (Levy, 2014). China has certainly strengthened its military and economic power and assumed more active postures in its region whilst Russia, which declined substantially at the end of the Cold War, has also demonstrated some capacity to assert itself, partly due to the wealth generated by oil and gas price increases (Zhen & Paul, 2020).

Shambaugh (2014) argues that China is the world's most important rising power by many measures. It is now the world's undisputed second leading power after that of the U.S. and in some categories has already overtaken it. Gurganus and Rumer (2019) contend that over the past several years, the international community has witnessed the return of Russia as an important global actor too. Despite some of Russia's woes such as a stagnating economy; costly military adventures; and too little investment in health care leading to high mortality rates, Russia is clearly a great power (Courtney & Shatz, 2020). They add that its vast landmass links two of the world's largest economies, China and the EU. Russia is the second largest producer of natural gas and third in oil production and it is a nuclear weapons superpower.

A great power then can be defined as a state that has a significantly large population with a resource rich territory, that possesses the economic, political and military capacity and capability to project either hard or soft power to influence other states in international affairs. However, to complicate matters, Waltz (2008) argues that there are no set or defined characteristics of a great power and that these characteristics are often empirical or, self-evident to the assessor. This means that granting status to a state is completely subjective in nature (Gallagher, 2020). Comparing their relative power capabilities to that of the U.S., both China and Russia are not as powerful as the U.S., but when applying the metrics above the thesis contends that both China and Russia's status can in fact be defined as that of a great power.

The next section of the chapter will investigate the connection between nationalism and great power status and behaviour.

### *The Link between Great Power Ambitions and Nationalism*

Is there a connection between great power ambitions and nationalism? In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many European citizens of great powers (for example, Britain, France and Germany) had convinced themselves of the cultural, economic and military supremacy of their respective nations (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2020). “In each of the European great powers, nationalism was underpinned by different attitudes, themes and events, and was fuelled by a sense of historical destiny and, therefore, closely tied to the history and development of each nation” (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2020).

Mearsheimer (2014, p288-289) argues that when Otto Von Bismarck took over the reins of the government of Prussia in late 1862, there was no unified German state but instead an assortment of German speaking political entities. Over the course of the next decade, Von Bismarck used nationalism to establish a unified German state provoking and winning three wars in the process. Nationalism then can be linked to great power ambition and can be framed in a variety of ways.

First, nationalism can first unite a population towards a common goal. This is exactly what we see with both China and Russia, as noted in chapters 3 and 4, with both countries using nationalism to unite their citizens around a common goal. For China, it is the “China Dream” and the emergence of the country, to what they perceive is its ‘rightful’ place as a great power. For Russia, it is conservative Russian Orthodox values and the re-establishment of its great power status.

Secondly, nationalism can be used as a tool by the state to amass large armies and conquer or expand territory. Napoleon Bonaparte used nationalism during the French Revolutionary Wars to amass large armies to take on the other European great powers. As Darwin (2013) explains, there were three main schools of thought that explained why European great powers seemed so willing to amass new territory: (1) territorial expansion was seen as nationalistic economics; (2) territorial expansion appeased domestic population by shifting inabilities/inefficiency of a particular great power; and (3) unavoidable rivalry between great powers.

As Davidson (2006, p22) contends, rising power translates into opportunity for expanded foreign policy goals, and nationalism provides the demand for such expansion.

The race for privilege draws great powers into over-expanding into unprofitable regions and, more importantly, militarised competition which, in turn, leads to economic nationalism (Lake, 2018). “Growth and prosperity are traditionally interpreted as a sign of destiny, whilst other nations and empires, in contrast, were dismissed as either being inferior or because they were rivals” (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2020).

Both China and Russia have certainly sought to expand their territories, becoming more emboldened, and using a variety of methods from island building to land seizure to acquire new territory. If applying the Darwin’s three schools of thought to both China and Russia’s new foreign policy assertiveness, there are some parallels that can be drawn. First, both China’s land building program and nine-dash line claim, and Russia’s claims in the Arctic region, are examples of nationalistic economics because securing their respective claims in the South China Sea and Arctic would benefit the Chinese and Russian economies immensely.

Economic and military competitions are linked, with each driving the other (Lake, 2018). China’s involvement in the South China Sea and Russia’s annexation of Crimea are examples of not only appeasing a domestic population and shifting the focus away from the governments’ domestic policies, or legitimacy issues, but also of the link between economic and military competition, which corresponds with early 20<sup>th</sup> Century nationalism of the great powers such as Germany. China’s South China Sea policy is presented by the CCP as a core Chinese interest where the state uses, to a significant degree, nationalistic discourse to rally sentiment among the Chinese population. The annexation of Crimea was a direct result of Ukraine’s move towards closer integration with the West and aligning with the EU, which raised problems within Russia.

Thirdly, nationalism is linked to great power ambitions as it promotes “greatness” of a certain civilisation over another, and this produces great power rivalry leading to competition. Nationalism requires the construction of differences between populations of different states and it is these differences that allow for the construction of ‘enemies’, ‘threat’, and ‘danger’ (Flint, 2012). Davidson (2006) notes that French nationalists demanded an aggressive foreign policy appropriate to their view of French greatness, in which the revolutionary government of 1793 was only too happy to acquiesce.

Regarding China, a tightly controlled nationalist narrative, emphasising China's past greatness and a hundred years of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers, is framed in such a way that it places the CCP in an indispensable role in returning the nation to greatness when China was unified imperial power, thus linking China's greatness back to imperial power (Zaagman, 2019). According to Ho (2014), Chinese exceptionalism, as understood by the Chinese themselves, represents a nationalistic discourse concerning what it means to be Chinese by stressing what is "good" and "great" about China. Every Chinese leader, with broad public support, has vowed to make China great again (Erickson, 2019).

According to Tuminez (2000), the linkage between greatness and imperial power emerged as a dominant theme in Russian political discourse in the eighteenth century, at the dawn of Russian national consciousness (as noted in chapter 2). Imperialism can be a vehicle for a national mission and the innovation of great power ideas and myths creates a socialisation process. The same is true today in Russia: President Putin has framed a national narrative that asserts that part of Russia's identity is tied to that of being a great power. However, Russia has a problem when framing its identity as that of great power since it lost half of its population and 25% of its territory with the collapse of the Soviet Union and is failing to overcome that loss.

As examined above, there are a number of links between nationalism and great power ambitions but, at the heart of the matter, great powers use nationalism as an intense form of patriotism to rally support and unify a population behind a common national goal and national greatness.

The next section of this chapter will investigate great power competition and provide a framework for analysis.

### *Great Power Competition and a Framework for Analysis*

In the wake of China's increased assertiveness abroad and Russia's interventions in Ukraine, Syria and the U.S. elections, great power competition has captured the attention of policymakers and analysts (Chhabra, et al 2020). Great power competition is one of the oldest and most important topics in the field of political science (Hanania, 2020). According to Mastro (2020), great power competition is a term used to describe when two countries have amassed enough military, political and economic power such that they can compete

with one another globally, or in key strategic areas. Calculations about power dominate states' thinking and states compete for power amongst themselves (Mearsheimer, 2014). Because of the competition that has existed between great powers, a framework was developed as a method to study great power politics in hope of predicting the actions of great powers. As Mastro (2020) argues, the great power competition framework is useful because it describes what countries want. "The great power framework shares the basic assumptions of the realist paradigm of international politics but focuses explicitly on the small number of leading actors in the international system" (Levy, 2014, p8).

With China's rise to great power status, and Russia's attempts to re-establish its status, the competition between today's great powers is again intensifying as it did over one hundred years ago prior to World War I. "Historically, great power competition has been driven primarily by exclusion, or the fears of exclusion, from each power's international economic zone, including its domestic market" (Lake, 2018). According to Brands (2018), clashing interests and clashing ideologies have long driven the leading powers in the system to compete with one another.

As Sinkkonen and Gaens (2020) note, it has become commonplace of late to argue that the world has entered an era of great power competition in which the U.S. and China, the world's two most powerful states in the system, are posited to be at the epicentre of this contest. The renewal of great power competition was acknowledged in the Obama Administration's 2015 National Military Strategy and was placed at the centre of the Trump Administration's 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) and 2018 National Defence Strategy (NDS), which formally re-orientated U.S. national security and U.S. Defence strategy toward an explicit, primary, focus on great power competition with China and Russia (U.S. Congressional Report, 2021). This view was reiterated by the then U.S. Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper (2020), who remarked that we are now in an era of great power competition, with our principal challengers being China, then Russia, and that the U.S must move away from low-intensity conflict and prepare once again for high-intensity warfare.

As Mearsheimer (2014, p30-31) notes, great powers are always searching for opportunities to gain more power. His theory derives from five assumptions about the international system: (1) the international system is anarchic, which does not mean that the it is chaotic, but that there is no ordering principal, the system comprises of independent

states that have no central authority above them; (2) great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability which gives them the ability to possibly destroy each other; (3) states can never be certain about other states' intentions; (4) survival is the primary goal of great powers; and (5) great powers are rational actors, they are aware of their external environment and think strategically how to survive in it. None of these assumptions alone mandates that states behave competitively, but taken together they depict a world in which states have considerable reason and incentive to think and sometimes behave aggressively (Mearsheimer, 2014). Mearsheimer's characterisation above constitutes an offensive realist approach to IR. From his offensive realist theory, three general patterns of behaviour result and, from this, one can analyse what a great power's motivations might be: fear; self-help; and power maximisation. These three general behaviour patterns will determine if a state will either pursue a balancing strategy, a strategy of incremental gains to shore up security, or seek hegemony.

A central element to realist theory is the balance of power concept. According to Waltz (2008), the balance of power concept assumes that the desire for survival supplies the basic motivation of states, indicates the responses that the constraints of the system encourage, and describes the expected outcome. To maximise their share of power, states look for opportunities to alter the balance of power by acquiring additional increments of power at the expense of rivals, employing a variety of economic, diplomatic and military means (Mearsheimer, 2014). Realism emphasises a nations' importance in the international distribution of power and, due to the competitive nature of states, a power transition theory has emerged. The power transition theory deals with the conditions under which such transitions cause great wars. However, as Kroenig (2020) contends, the theory largely takes the rise of one power and the decline of another as a given and does not conduct any investigation as to why power transitions occur in the first place.

As Brands (2018, p97) argues, as great power rivalry unfolds in the coming years it appears certain that the nature of the contending democratic and authoritarian systems will influence their competitive virtues and vices. Nationalism affects the balance of power, the conduct of war, the likelihood of war, and the probability that threatened states will balance against their adversaries, not bandwagon with them (Mearsheimer, 2011, p3). Historically great power competition has usually played out in nationalistic ways, pitting one power

against another in a battle for either economic, ideological, political or military supremacy, or all of the above, thus establishing a link between nationalism and great power politics. This was the case for Germany prior to World War I. There was a growing sense of nationalism, increased militarism, imperial rivalry and competition for power and influence which led Germany to war in an effort to defend or extend its national interests.

The next section of this chapter is designed to investigate revisionist and status quo powers.

### *Revisionist vs Status quo Powers*

Students and scholars of IR, as well as practitioners of foreign and security policy, have at different junctures in history concerned themselves with the phenomenon of “revisionist states” (Atland, 2021). According to Mearsheimer (2014, p2), there are no status quo powers in the international system as great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power; on the contrary, they face constant incentives to change it in their favour. The anarchic nature of the international system forces states to seek autonomy, which often leads them to seek influence over others (Davidson, 2006, p2). Revisionist states are often contrasted with status quo states who strive to preserve things as they are, including the system that they are part of and their place within it.

Davidson (2006, p12) argues there are two main ways to define revisionism and status quo seeking in the classical and neo-classical IR literature. The first way is to identify revisionist and status quo states on the basis of whether they seek power or security and is best associated with Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau (1978) asserts political realism is about states seeking ever more power as it is human nature to act in this way. The second way is to identify revisionists through the things that they seek that they do not presently enjoy such as territory, status, markets, ideology, and the creation or change of international laws and institutions. Revisionist states have often been categorised as those that are seeking to maximise their share of power in the international environment. If a state seeks to convert others to its ideology and/or to get other states to reject an ideology that they currently hold, then it can be considered as a revisionist (Davidson, 2006, p13). This definition, he adds, makes it much easier to categorise states than the power versus security maximising definition.

As Davidson (2006) argues, the domestic and international pressures a state is subject to, and the opportunities it faces, combine to determine whether the state will or will not become revisionist. In a report, *The Twilight of the Liberal World Order* (2017), Robert Kagan argued that if China and Russia were to accomplish their aims of establishing hegemony in their desired spheres of influence, the world would return to the condition it was in at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with competing great powers clashing over intersecting spheres of interest. An argument could be made that this is already starting to happen. Both countries are contesting global 'rules of the road' such as freedom of navigation and non-aggression, and using tools ranging from inducement to intimidation to military coercion to make the international environment more receptive to their ambitions. From the Western Pacific to Eastern Europe, both China and Russia are seeking to carve out privileged spheres of influence and dominate their strategic peripheries (Brands, 2018, p62).

Brands (2018, p62) argues that "the leading revisionists are autocracies that practise a distinctly authoritarian version of capitalism and see the advancement of liberal ideas as an existential threat to their legitimacy and power". Rising states must face domestic or international pressures in order to consider revisionism, but they will only adopt revisionist goals if they believe that they have the opportunity to achieve them (Davidson, 2006, p2). As Kagan (2018) notes, status quo powers can hope to resist a state seeking to revise the international order by demonstrating to it the impossibility of succeeding in that aim. However, attempts can often lead to war when the revisionist power is strong and determined enough as was the case with Germany pre-WWII.

The next section this chapter will examine is Chinese nationalism and great power politics

### **Chinese Nationalism and Great Power Politics**

Since 2012, China's foreign policy has taken on nationalistic undertones and become more assertive as President Xi Jinping has sought to make China a leading power. After his inauguration Xi clearly advocated his own slogan of the "Chinese Dream" for realising the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and pursued the policies for expanding the "core interests" which appealed to growing nationalism among the party and society (Iida, 2020). China wants to restore its former status as a great power but, at the same time, preserve its

culture and norms without assimilating Western liberal values (Larson, 2015). Karmazin and Hynek (2020) point out that the China Dream is built on the well-established discourse of national humiliation and that it envisions a “China Century” and calls for the rejuvenation of the whole nation and the re-establishing of China’s status in the world.

China, it is contended, has come of age as a great power and never been stronger or more feted in recent memory, however, on the other hand, China is as insecure as it was during the Mao years in the late 1960s (Khan, 2018). It is in this paradox that the strategy of President Xi Jinping is rooted. According to Lake (2018), the debate about China’s rise has focused largely on whether it is, or will be, a revisionist power, and examining China’s actions and strategies for signals about its future intentions are important. China’s Foreign Minister, Wang Yi (2020) notes that the Central Committee, with Xi Jinping at its core, attaches great importance to China’s foreign relations, and sees them as part of the overarching strategy to rejuvenate the Chinese nation and advance major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

China has drifted away from the tradition of “keeping a low profile” so it can “strive for achievement”. Xi Jinping has concluded that it is time for China to behave like a major country in all dimensions of international affairs; constructing more norms and discourse; making more initiatives; taking more responsibilities; exercising more influence; and providing more public goods (Wang, 2019). Xi’s major country diplomacy is a clear departure from his predecessor’s ‘low profile’ and largely reactive diplomacy, and could therefore be considered a paradigm shift. Major country diplomacy is a new direction for Chinese foreign policy which seeks a greater leadership role for China as a great power in the international community (Iida, 2020). Kato (2019) contends that Chinese scholars have long defined ‘major power diplomacy’ as ‘diplomacy with the U.S., Russia, and, in some instances, Japan. He adds that major power diplomacy under Xi Jinping has changed course, whereby China now practises diplomacy as a major power. According to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (2020), China has stood up, grown prosperous and is now becoming strong. China has never been so close to fulfilling the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation and never been so close to the centre of the world stage.

According to Kroenig (2020), China is now the world’s second largest economy, and many economist predict that the country could surpass the U.S. within the decade. He adds

that China's state-led capitalism model of economic growth is proving more appealing to many around the world compared to the U.S. template of free markets and open politics. As Jones (2020) contends, China has shed its old strategy of "peaceful rise" in favour of a more assertive, more nationalistic, and more ideological approach. As part of this "striving for achievement", China has been asserting itself politically on the world stage with President Xi presenting himself as a champion of free trade, clean energy, and respect for global norms (Kroenig, 2020). President Xi has extolled China's authoritarian capitalism as the path to prosperity and power and has described democracy as a flawed alternative (Brands, 2018, p66).

Great eras produce great ideas and, according to some, socialism with Chinese characteristics has proudly entered a new era (Yi, 2020). At the heart of the socialism with Chinese characteristics idea is the 'Beijing Consensus', which is a Western term, not a Chinese term. According to Turin (2010), the Beijing Consensus recognises the need for a unique approach to development according to each nation's unique challenges, unlike the Washington Consensus which prescribes the same strict and homogeneous reforms to nearly all developing countries. The Beijing Consensus is based upon three overarching ideals of Chinese development: innovation; the pursuit of dynamic goals and a rejection of per capita GDP; and self-determination.

Whereas the Beijing Consensus consists of three main ideals, the Washington Consensus is based around ten policy recommendations (Turin, 2010): fiscal discipline; restructuring Public/Social expenditure priorities; tax reform; liberalising interest rates; competitive exchange rates; trade liberalisation; liberalisation of inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); privatisation; deregulation; and property rights. The Washington Consensus was the result of the Bretton Woods Agreement. In the mid-1940s, a number of allied countries meet at the Bretton Woods Conference which envisioned new rules to prevent the "beggar thy neighbour" policies that had led to the great depression (Pickford, 2019). The conference also established the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and pegged the U.S. dollar to that of the gold standard.

The Beijing Consensus's third ideal of self-determination is where nationalism attaches itself as an ideology to the political sphere and is especially prominent in authoritarian regimes. According to Karmazin and Hynek (2020), nationalism is a key

ideological tool as it can combine with other modes of legitimisation, including those based on traditional (Confucian) rhetoric or economic performance, as is the case with China. In the pursuit of stability, political support, or private gains, the government will always be tempted to create economic policies and, in turn, exclusive economic zones that favour its nationals (Lake, 2018). This conflicts with the Washington Consensus, thus creating competition.

“Chinese leaders see democratic values as part of a Western tradition that delegitimises and de-stabilises regimes that espouse alternative ideas such as socialism and Asian-style developmental authoritarianism” (Brands, 2018, p68). In response to the growing nature of competition amongst the major powers, major countries around the world are readjusting their security and military organisational structures and developing new types of combat forces to seize the strategic commanding heights in military competition (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2019). It does not come as a surprise that the re-orientation of China’s foreign policy has been accompanied by an increase of nationalist rhetoric at all levels of Chinese society. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, recently commented that China is no longer what it was 120 years ago and the Chinese people are not to be trifled with. Once they are provoked to anger, things can get very tough (Hua, 2021). President Xi has, on numerous occasions, used nationalist language. In a speech ending China’s annual session of parliament in 2018, he reiterated his previous warnings to Taiwan against any attempt at further separating itself from the Chinese mainland and also promised a “new era” of international military and economic supremacy for China (Xi, 2018).

Chinese exceptionalism, with its emphasis on China’s greatness and goodness as a nation, has given Chinese policy makers substantial traction in the manner in which they choose to frame China’s interactions with the outside world (Ho, 2014). China’s heightened nationalistic foreign policy is a product of its desire to become a leading global actor in international affairs, but raises questions as to what sort of power China will be? According to Rezvani (2020) it is very simplistic, and analytically unproductive, to accuse a country of aggression without offering an explanation or, at least, a plausible narrative that facilitates understanding its political behaviour. For realists, power is the centrepiece of foreign policy (Swaroop, 2019) and China’s power has been growing at a steady rate over the past few

decades. The realist approach to IR suggests that as China's power grows their foreign policy will become more assertive.

According to Yahuda (2014), China's new assertiveness has arisen primarily from four related developments. First, its sense the balance of power is changing in its favour. Secondly, the expansion of its national interests to include the maritime domain in its nearby seas and its trade routes. Thirdly, the growth of its military power to pursue its maritime claims more effectively. Finally, the heightening of nationalist sentiment among officials as well as the population in general. The next section of this chapter will revisit the previous case studies investigated in chapter 3 (the South China Sea, the East China Sea and, Taiwan). The relevance of this is to examine if nationalism is in fact the central driver of China's foreign policy, or, can their assertive foreign policy shift be explained using the realist approach to the study of IR.

### *South China Sea*

The South China Sea is undoubtedly connected to the revival and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as a great power; a discourse that has been constructed by the CCP as part of China's 'identity' linked to its territorial sovereignty and as a way to unite the country and legitimise the regime. China's South China Sea policy shows that the Sea is one of China's "core interests" and is actually a security issue for China. They identify it as their own backyard, an integral part of China; one which is essential to project power and counter China's perceived vulnerabilities. As was argued in Chapter 3, the rise of nationalism in the South China Sea was primarily a function of the state's assertive policy shift towards an offensive realist position (discussed later in the chapter).

Why China is no longer committed to 'peaceful rise' is clearer if one looks through the realist lens. As Swaroop (2019) argues, China was weaker under Deng Xiaoping and now that China is no longer weak, realists understand that a more powerful China will eventually want to modify any features that are not in its interests. They are currently re-balancing in the South China Sea to counter decades of U.S military supremacy. Balancing is a strategy for survival, a way of attempting to maintain a state's autonomous way of life (Waltz, 2008). One way that China has been achieving this goal is to build artificial islands in the South China Sea, as has been noted earlier. China's assertive foreign policy in the South China Sea

supports the goal of building the country into a maritime great power and learning from the “lessons of history”.

As China’s power has risen, so too has the expansion of its national interests to include the maritime domain in its nearby seas and trade routes. As explored in chapter 3, approximately one-third of global shipping passes through the South China Sea and China relies heavily on it as these waters are essential to its export driven economy. In an attempt to strengthen its great power status, China has been exhibiting assertive behaviour by defining its control over an increasing number of territories that are in its national interest; not only those of traditional importance such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, but also some disputed territories such as the South China Sea and East China Sea (Ye, 2019).

One example of China’s expansion of national interests in its maritime domain is the expansion of their fisheries. As a consequence of the insatiable demand for seafood, the Chinese fishing fleet has become the largest in Asia. It operates on all the seas in Asia; often in direct competition with fleets from other countries. On several occasions, navies from a number of ASEAN states have used force to expel Chinese fishing vessels, triggering nationalistic protests in China and outrage among the Chinese blogging community (Holslag, 2010). Acts of fishery patriotism, like those that take place in the South China Sea, often ignite territorial tensions, as many of the incidents occur in disputed waters.

Satellite imagery shows that a large number of Chinese fishing vessels actually spend a great deal of time at anchor suggesting that these boats are not making a living from fishing; instead they are doing something else (Poling, 2019). He adds that most of the fishing boats are at least part-time members of China’s official maritime militia, an organisation that is playing an increasingly visible role in China’s assertion of maritime claims. As a matter of fact, China’s 2013 Defense White Paper, noted in chapter 3, enhanced the role of the maritime militia in asserting sovereignty.

These incidents, in a sense, provide a testing ground for China to test the reactions of neighbouring countries and, as Holslag (2010) suggests, are the main cause of tension and conflict between China and its ASEAN neighbours. However, as noted, China reverts to the language of the five principles when any outside mediator attempts to bring a resolution, or

when an international body rules against them, as was the case with the Philippines Arbitral Tribunal court case, making it near impossible to resolve maritime territorial disputes.

As China's economic power has grown, so too, has its military capabilities. Since the South China Sea has become one of China's core national interest, this has placed significant strategic importance on the body of water. The South China Sea is strategically important because it not only allows China to expand its economic and political reach, but allows it to develop force projection capabilities by building artificial islands. An indicator of its importance is that considerably less escapes China's notice in the South China Sea today than in the past, judging by how fast Chinese maritime forces react to events there (Chang, 2021).

As was also noted in chapter 3, China has built artificial islands in the South China Sea which host ports, airstrips, and other military facilities. However, China claims that it has not militarised the South China Sea (Mastro, 2020). In 2015, Xi made a public statement at the White House promising not to "militarise" the artificial islands China had been building in the South China Sea (Mastro, 2021). Unfortunately, President Xi never defined what he meant by "militarisation" and China's activities at the time were vague. Chang (2021) points out that China deploys a wide range of technologies for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activities in the South China Sea. These include: high frequency direction finding; satellites; land-based radar; sea-based radar; and, air-based radar. According to Mastro (2020), China has deployed to the South China Sea the exact types of weapons systems the PLA would need to exert control over it. What the 2015 meeting between President Obama and President Xi highlighted was a distrust in Xi Jinping to cooperate in finding a solution to the competing territorial claims.

China's response to criticism of its growing military capabilities in the South China Sea is to claim that none of the activities, statements or behaviours that concern other countries are actually happening (Mastro, 2020). This was evident with the Court of Arbitration ruling in the favour of the Philippine's which China has refused to recognise. China instead argues that its intentions in the South China Sea are purely defensive (Mastro, 2020). States, above all else, seek security and the anarchical structure of the international system forces great powers to pay particular attention to the prevailing balance of power (Waltz, 2008). The PRC seeks to use the South China Sea to establish a defensive barrier

against any future aggressor namely, the U.S. The U.S has been sending hundreds of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions to the South China Sea every year all of which cause friction bilateral (Jalil, 2019). Therefore, China's actions could be explained as a defensive action in response to U.S. moves in the region, and signal China's underlying feelings of weakness and vulnerability (Sandy, 2018).

However, Mastro (2020) argues three points against China's actions being defensive in nature. First, the South China Sea is not China's to defend. Secondly, China's claim it is not expanding to gain territory but, rather, fighting not to lose it, is dangerous because it encourages risk-acceptance behaviour. Finally, China wants foreign powers out of the first island chain in order to create a defensive buffer. Just like defensive realism, offensive realism sees great powers as concerned with power and/or survival (Mearsheimer, 2014) and rising great powers tend to be revisionist instead of status quo seeking. According to Sandy (2018), the relationship between newly assertive policies and media framing only further highlights the assertion that Chinese actions are driven by offensive motives: to balance regional power in China's favour. As noted in chapter 3, China's nine-dash line represents a maximalist claim to sovereignty and control over all features within the South China Sea and could be interpreted as an example of offensive realism. According to this concept, the PRC seeks to establish regional hegemony and use the South China Sea to project power out into the Pacific Ocean.

Poh and Li (2017) note that, in order to back up rhetoric with action, China has invested substantial resources to build up both its "carrots" and "sticks" aspects of its diplomacy: The carrots are represented by its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The sticks aspect of diplomacy is represented by its military build-up in South China Sea and its naval modernisation. What has become most pronounced in President Xi Jinping's tenure is the quiet but persistent use of force (Khan, 2018) including ramming fishing boats; building artificial islands against international law; using economic coercion to get ASEAN states more sympathetic towards China's interests; and, air and sea incursions into sovereign states territory.

These actions, and China's overall foreign policy in the South China Sea, can be best explained using the realist paradigm. As China's power has grown, so too has its national interests which, in some cases, have become core interests. These core interests are non-

negotiable in China's view and constitute part of China's territorial integrity which they feel they must protect and this has led them to become more revisionist. However, as Amir (2014) notes, China's extensive sovereignty claims derive not from legal or historical claims, but from the nationalist desires that have been on the increase.

One of the effects that China's assertive foreign policy in the region is a rise in anti-Chinese sentiment among neighbouring Asian states which, in turn, has increased the domestic nationalist tone within China. China is using state-media organs, as well as domestic and global social media platforms, to increasingly push disinformation in order to influence public opinion or obscure truth (Roberts, 2020). As noted in Chapter 3, by carefully managing the genuine risks that popular nationalism poses, the CCP has integrated it into its assertive, but pragmatic foreign policy regarding the South China Sea. Taking advantage of a more hawkish public opinion when it comes to territorial integrity and sovereignty, Xi has used state-led nationalism to pursue China's interest more robustly. According to Mastro (2021), China will be unlikely to make the necessary compromises over its expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea to facilitate a viable diplomatic solution. She adds that China's leaders hope that political, economic and military power will convince other countries to accommodate China's position without a fight.

### *East China Sea*

Investigation of China's East China Sea policy finds that there are two territorial contentions that remain unresolved between China and Japan. The first is the maritime delimitation of this body of water and the second is the question of territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. While China and Japan continue to share common interests in keeping regional stability as a necessary condition for their lucrative economic cooperation, the shifting power dynamics have encouraged both sides to redefine their status in East Asia. As Kim (2018, p31) notes, "the relationship between China and Japan has been one of the most influential and occasionally destabilising factors that has shaped the security environment in East Asia". More recently, both sides' renewed nationalism and their increasingly geostrategic rivalry, accompanied by changes in the regional status quo, have become powerful wildcards reinforcing the security concerns between the two states. Although the competition involves many issues and spans political, economic, and security

domains, the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands remains a focal point between the two (Burke & Heath et al, 2018).

The dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands can be understood in the context of a broader shift in the Sino-Japanese balance of power. For many decades, Japan was the major power in the region but, as China's power has grown, so too has its position and status in the region and the international system. The growing tensions between China and Japan are ultimately due to a deepening of competition for leadership between two traditional rivals (Burke and Heath et al, 2018).

As China's relative power has grown, its national interests have expanded to include the East China Sea. Although, according to China, the East China Sea has been an inherent territory of China since ancient times, they have never been in the position they are now in to attempt to assert their authority. The East China Sea is important for a number of reasons: commercial trade routes, natural resources, and rich grounds for fisheries. Securing international recognition of sovereign rights over the islands in the East China Sea is a basis to claim a substantial portion of the economically and strategically valuable surrounding waters.

As China's oil and gas consumption has grown, this has put pressure on the Chinese government to find new supplies to meet the country's domestic needs. According to the U.S Energy Information Administration (2014), studies identifying potentially abundant oil and natural gas deposits have made the East China Sea a source of contention between China and Japan, the two largest energy consumers in Asia. This need for energy has led China to start oil and gas drilling projects in the disputed waters. In recent years, China has accelerated its development activities of natural resources in the East China Sea; the Japanese government has confirmed that there are 16 structures in total on the Chinese side of the geographical equidistance line between China and Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2021).

The East China Sea is also of value for China's fishery industry. China is not only the world's biggest seafood exporter, but the country's population accounts for more than a third of all fish consumption worldwide (Urbina, 2020). An example of this insatiable appetite for seafood is that China has also been sending its fishing vessels into North Korean

waters in the East China Sea to fish, going against UN sanctions which prohibit North Korea from selling its fishing rights (Urbina, 2020). As Sibley (2015) contends, China's relationship with North Korea has brought into question their motives. However, economic nationalism is only one aspect that drives China's foreign policy in the East China Sea.

The exponential growth of China's military capabilities has been matched by a steep rise in the lethality, accuracy, range and quality of its weapons systems (Blaxland, 2021). China's growth in military capabilities has allowed the country to be in a position where it is able to flex its muscle to protect what it perceives to be in its national interest. The East China Sea is strategically important due to its geographical location and the rising great power competition.

The East China Sea, and the Miyako Strait in particular, provides the principal entryway for the PLAN into the Pacific Ocean. As was noted in chapter 3, Chinese military aircraft have been flown with increasing frequency near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and the Miyako Strait where China has established its own Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). The higher rate of activity has spurred Japan to adjust deployments and increase its acquisitions to keep pace with the growing Chinese presence and defend what Japan views as its airspace (Burke & Heath et al, 2018). Japan's 2020 Defense White Paper stated that China has "relentlessly continued attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion in the sea area around the Senkaku Islands (Mochizuki and Han, 2020). This seemed to be the case at the 2021 NPC Congress, where Chinese law makers passed legislation to strengthen the power of its maritime safety authorities that could target Japanese vessels navigating around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Another example of China's growing military capabilities and assertiveness is that in April 2020 the Chinese aircraft carrier, Liaoning, and five other warships sailed between Japan's Okinawa main island and Miyako Island before traversing into the East China Sea (Ichihashi & Burke, 2020).

If examining China's foreign policy from a defensive realist perspective, it could be analysed that China only seeks security and to maintain the status quo and balance of power. From this perspective, it is the U.S that has increased its interference in the region. China interprets the U.S presence in the East China Sea as interference in their area of influence. Under the garb of "freedom of navigation" operations, the U.S. sends planes and ships into the area to keep access to key shipping and air routes (Jalil, 2019). If solely looking

through a defensive realist lens, China's actions in the East China Sea are purely defensive in nature.

However, when examining China's foreign policy in the East China Sea from an offensive realist perspective, it could be interpreted that China is increasingly looking like a revisionist power that seeks hegemony in the region. China perceives that U.S intentions are the containment of China, similar to the policy that the U.S. pursued against the USSR during the Cold War. However, as China's relative power has grown this has emboldened the country to pursue more robust policies in the region in an effort to maximise their power which has brought it into direct competition with Japan. As Alenezi (2020) contends, offensive realism maintains that the balance of power in the international system constantly changes. She adds that this change encourages the revisionist great power to pursue the regional hegemony so as to secure its survival.

There has existed a rivalry between China and Japan for centuries that was only exacerbated by the horrors of the Second World War inflicted on the Chinese at the hands of the Japanese (as was noted in Chapter 2). This has been a central factor in China's grievance with Japan and has framed the relationship between the two nations since the conflict ended. Like the South China Sea, the East China Sea is also wrapped up in the rhetoric of 'China Dream' and 'China's core interest'. The animosity and nationalist sentiment between the two countries emerged in 2012 when Japan attempted to 'nationalise' the disputed islands through purchasing them. This led to mass protests by the Chinese population against the Japanese which culminated in violence and arson against Japanese businesses. As pointed out in chapter 3, the fact that the protests were allowed to take place to begin with meant that the government was complicit in its support for the protests which the Chinese leadership used to back up the legitimacy of the CCP. As Weiss (2014) notes, it has become tempting and tactically convenient for Beijing to resort to assertive nationalism.

Although China's actions in the East China Sea reflect a realist approach to international relations, realism does not fully explain their assertiveness. "The politics of nationalism, intertwined with a heightened sense of insecurity due to the shifting power balance, could not only affect contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, but also reshape the overall security order in the East China Sea" (Kim, 2018, p34). Great powers do not compete

with each other as if international politics were merely an economic marketplace, political competition among states is a much more dangerous business than mere economic intercourse as political competition can lead to war (Mearsheimer, 2014). In Japan, China faces a more powerful rival than any other Asian state and one that has the U.S. as a protector, bound by treaty to come to Japan's aid if its territory is attacked (Graham-Harrison, 2017).

### Taiwan

An examination of China's foreign policy towards Taiwan over the past few years reveals it has increased its nationalistic rhetoric towards the island nation. As Hughes (1997) notes, for China, Taiwan is next in line to be reunified with the mainland and is of great importance to the politics of Chinese nationalism. Reunification with Taiwan represents the key remaining component of the ambition of national reunification and bringing to an end the 'century of shame and humiliation' that the Chinese people suffered at the hands of Western and Japanese imperialism (Deans, 2005). To solve the Taiwan question and achieve complete reunification is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation and essential to realising national rejuvenation (Chinese Defence White Paper, 2019).

Xi has increasingly emphasised strengthening the strategic framework of the "one-China principle" in cross-Strait relations which has been the foundation of the status quo. However, the aim, according to Huang (2017), is to box Taiwan in toward the goal of eventual reunification incorporated into Xi's grand goals for China expressed in his China Dream. As DeLuce and Dilanian (2021) contend, China's political leadership sees reunification with Taiwan as a core objective, and Beijing's actions and statements have grown more assertive. As China's power has risen, so too, has its ambitions towards Taiwan, which represent a realist approach. China, as is the case in the South China Sea, is not only attempting to shift the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait in their favour by taking a more aggressive and revisionist stance towards the island nation. China is also pursuing a campaign to undermine Taiwan by isolating and delegitimising an ideological threat to the communist regime (Brands, 2018, p77). As a result, Sutter (2012) suggests that the military balance in the Taiwan Strait is no longer healthy for Taiwan.

Taiwan is an imperative part of China's national interest. Taiwan is regarded by the Chinese as a breakaway province and China has also long identified Taiwan as one of its core interests. As a result, China has used its influence to block any participation by Taiwan in international institutions, denying Taiwan a voice, and, ultimately, an identity. Apart from being the last province to be re-unified with the mainland, Taiwan also represents a growing population and vibrant economy. As examined in chapter 3, China is Taiwan's largest trading partner. This economic arrangement is to the benefit of China as they can lock the Taiwanese economy into the Chinese development trajectory.

Taiwan has a dynamic capitalist economy that is largely driven by industrial manufacturing, and especially exports of electronics, machinery, and petrochemicals (Forbes, 2021). MacDonald (2021) notes that Taiwan is a manufacturer of semiconductors, or chips, that are used in everything from smartphones and electric vehicles to washing machines and toasters and, is home to one of the world's leading chip-makers, the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC). Considering the centrality of semiconductors to the modern economy, control over their production has become a major geo-economic factor (MacDonald, 2021).

As China's power has risen, the country has invested heavily in its military capabilities to assert its claims. China considers its claim to Taiwan to be a domestic issue and that international actors such as the U.S. should stay out of their affairs. Taiwan has become an important arena for Beijing's propaganda and disinformation efforts (Roberts, 2020). China has dedicated substantial money, manpower and resources to developing its cyber capabilities which include a mix of dedicated personnel, advanced equipment, and cyber-attack methodologies (Green, 2015). Roberts (2020) argues that China's disinformation strategy is led by key government actors, including the PLA, the State Council and its Taiwan Affairs Office.

China has continued to further military modernisation with a concentration on strengthening military capabilities for local conflicts that could arise over Taiwan (Sibley, 2015). China has invested in new naval ships, warplanes, cyber and space weapons and a massive arsenal of ballistic and cruise missiles designed to undercut the U.S. military's sea and air power in the Taiwan Strait (DeLuce & Dilanian, 2021). They add that China's growing military prowess, coupled with its aggressive rhetoric, is turning Taiwan into a potential

flashpoint between Beijing and Washington. As noted in chapter 3, China flew its largest incursion of air force planes into Taiwan's air defence zone in mid-April 2021. These actions by China are clearly aggressive and designed to either scare or provoke Taiwan into declaring independence and, therefore, give the mainland the excuse they need to legitimise an invasion in the eyes of the Chinese population.

Examining China's foreign policy from a defensive realist perspective, China seeks security and to maintain the status quo and balance of power. The issue of Taiwan creates a security dilemma for China as the U.S., over the past few decades, has continued to sell advanced weapons to the island nation (Jalil, 2019). China considers these developments to encourage Taiwan's independence. According to the BBC (2021), Beijing is becoming increasingly concerned that Taiwan's government is moving the island towards a formal declaration of independence and wants to warn President Tsai Ing-wen against taking such steps.

Another argument that the Chinese make, stemming from the defensive realist paradigm, is that many Chinese policymakers and military leaders believe that reunification with Taiwan is critical to the successful defence of Chinese interest in the region (Blazevic, 2010). However, as he notes, the strategies that the Chinese government has engaged in may emanate from defensive realist desires to survive, but such strategies can be misconstrued as power maximisation.

Examining China's foreign policy towards Taiwan from an offensive realist perspective, they are revisionist in that they seek hegemony in the region. The Chinese government views Taiwanese nationalism with much trepidation as it believes it may lose the island due to the inhabitants there increasingly thinking of the island as a sovereign body (Blazevic, 2010). Therefore, as President Xi (2013) has reiterated, any separatist activity is certain to be met with resolute opposition from the Chinese people. This type of rhetoric is definitely not defensive in nature, quite the contrary; it sounds very aggressive (offensive realist), if not a veiled threat China has also not ruled out the use of force to achieve reunification with Taiwan.

China has shown on numerous occasions that it has been willing to use force to achieve certain objectives and this goes hand and hand with offensive realism. The fact that

Taiwan is one of the highest ranked national issues, if not the highest tied as it is to the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”, means that the use of force or the threat of it is even greater than that associated with other territorial conflicts. As already noted, China has been flying air incursions into Taiwanese airspace and these are only increasing. It is clear that if China were to invade Taiwan this would dramatically alter the balance of power in the region as China would become capable of projecting power deep into the Pacific Ocean creating a new security dilemma. The realist perspectives argue that mainland China and Taiwan are two strategic competitors, competing with each other through either balance of power or balance of threat (Yeung, 2019). However, he adds that the realist perspective cannot fully explain why the mainland still escalates its military actions towards Taiwan when the island no longer constitutes any tangible threat.

Nationalistic rhetoric and discourse has become a feature of Xi Jinping’s presidency. The Taiwan issue is a core interest for China: it is wrapped up in the nationalist rhetoric of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers and is part of the China Dream. As a core interest, Taiwan is non-negotiable and has appeared more frequently in the speeches of Chinese leaders and official publications. The People’s Daily (2019) reported that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to the same shared community. Since the end of China’s civil war there have been two countries that identify themselves as China, the PRC and the ROC. However, there can only be one legitimate China in the eyes of the CCP. As noted previously, because of the historical background, no Chinese leader will accept Taiwanese independence because of what it means to the national interest. The rise in nationalism towards Taiwan supports the CCP’s high priority goal of preventing Taiwanese independence and restoring what it perceives to be lost territory.

As MacDonald (2021) suggests, any Chinese move to re-unify Taiwan with the mainland would have implications well beyond the structure of East Asian geopolitics; it would also directly affect the global economy and jeopardise the U.S. supply chain. Maybe this is why, in response, the U.S., which has increasingly backed Taiwan’s autonomy amid the threat posed by China’s perceived expansionism, has escalated its response, including naval patrols in international waters to contest China’s claims over regional waters (Shinkman, 2021). As Porter and Mazarr (2021) note, the U.S. argument is that a successful Chinese invasion of Taiwan, especially if unrestricted by Washington, would wreck the U.S.

strategic position in Asia, with its favourable balance of power, and lead the PRC to further military adventurism.

China's rising power and regional influence, ambitions to gain control of the island, and threats to resolve the issue in military terms may lead to a growing risk of conflict (Porter & Mazarr, 2021). Departing from the strategy of peacefully developing cross-strait relations, President Xi has stated that he is not willing to pass the "Taiwan issue" on to the next generation (Yeung, 2019). This rhetoric from the Chinese is a display of offensive realism. Shinkman (2021) asserts that China has recently issued a new, more provocative warning to Taiwan saying its military "won't stand a chance" if China chose to invade. In fact, a former Defence Department official, David Ochmanek, who helps run war games for the Pentagon at the RAND Corp think-tank notes that in simulated combat in which China invades Taiwan, the results are sobering with the U.S losing (DeLuce & Dilanian, 2021).

#### China Nationalism and Great Power Politics Conclusion

In conclusion, China's rise marks the first time since the creation of a global system that an illiberal power has the reach, capacity, and ambition to re-shape the rules of the international order (Jones, 2020). In his book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (2014) Mearsheimer argued that if China continued to grow economically, it would attempt to dominate Asia the way that the U.S. dominates the Western Hemisphere. One way that China has attempted to dominate Asia is through economic trade agreements. As Katz (2018) suggests, China exercises influence internationally is through its large-scale bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements with countries throughout the world.

Chinese state-media Xinhua reports that, over the years, Washington has spared no effort to slander China on issues such as Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and grossly interfere in China's internal affairs under the guise of human rights and democracy (Gao, 2021). Three issues – the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and Taiwan – China regards as central to their national interests. China's interests in the South China Sea are articulated in their nine-dash line claim which represents a maximalist claim to the sea. China relies heavily on these waters for the export of goods to the global economy and they are also resource rich with fish stocks and natural gas reserves which China exploits for its own economic interests.

China also considers the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea as part of their sovereign territory. Again, like the South China Sea, these waters are strategic as a large amount of Chinese trade passes through and they are also resource rich with natural gas and fisheries. Add in the fact of China's growing need for energy and food, and it becomes evident that the East China Sea is a significant part of China's core interest. As noted, Taiwan ranks among the highest of China's core interests. Taiwan represents an alternative democratic system of governance and a threat to the legitimacy of the CCP. Since the end of China's civil war both countries identify themselves as China. The rise in nationalism towards Taiwan is orchestrated by the CCP through nationalist discourse which attaches the Taiwan issue to the "China Dream" and "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation".

According to Beckley (2018, p11), China's rise is based largely on gross indicators that ignore costs. He adds that when cost are accounted for, the U.S. still leads China by a considerable amount in economic and military terms. Regardless of the gap between China and the U.S., China is attempting to re-balance the balance of power in the South China Sea and East China Sea regions. As China has grown stronger, it feels a need to safeguard its national interests. What makes the PLA a challenge for the U.S. is not its size or relative capabilities in absolute terms, but its concentration in a relatively narrow field: anti-access/area denial, missile and electronic technology designed to raise the costs of military intervention anywhere close to China itself (Palmer, 2021).

"Beijing has employed its state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as agents of corporate espionage, technology acquisition and Chinese state influence" (Brands, 2018, p88). He adds that China is engaged in a structured effort to infiltrate democratic systems and is employing Russian tactics of the use of 'Troll Farms' and bot-driven computational propaganda to pollute online discourse, particularly in Asia. China's propaganda and international posture aim to highlight Western weaknesses for the purpose of eroding Western self-confidence (Jones, 2020).

A resurgent China has become a formidable economic and technological competitor; continues to consolidate control over the South China Sea, one of the world's most vital maritime junctures; and, is increasingly leveraging national level political dysfunction in Washington to portray the U.S. as an unpredictable ally and an unreliable steward of globalisation (Wyne, 2019). The changing patterns in China's foreign behaviour may

demonstrate the fact that it is not only driven by the growth of relative power, but also influenced by other factors too (Ye, 2019).

According to Taplin (2020), anti-China sentiment among China's largest trading partners is up dramatically. A full 71% of Germans, 73% of Americans and 75% of South Koreans surveyed by Pew Research in 2020, had a negative impression of China. In turn, anti-Chinese rhetoric has also had an impact on the Chinese population who feel victimised by foreign powers once again. As Wong (2020) reported, the COVID-19 outbreak has triggered a new Cold War and is seen as the perfect opportunity for actualising some long-standing ideological fixations to uphold China's interests on the international stage. In the past decade, the usage of social media and the internet has increased dramatically and now maritime disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea have become a topic of coverage. Many state-run newspapers and news outlets have been calling for a tougher stance by China (Gargiulo, 2020). However, Zhang (2014) contends that Xi's stated goal of a great revival is not based on nationalistic fervour, instead, it reflects the realistic ambition of a rising power.

One argument that has been made is that because China has increasingly engaged and integrated with the international community this does not warrant aggressive (offensive realist) behaviour (Jalil, 2019). The rationale here is that aggression, competition and expansion to maximise power through primacy and preponderance are counter-productive as they will heighten the security dilemma and lead to counter-balancing behaviour and thereby thwart China's efforts to increase its security (Lobell, 2017).

An example that highlights how China's foreign policy could reflect the defensive realist paradigm, Jyalita (2021) contends, is that China's preference for bilateral negotiations are aligned with international law to resolve disputes over land or sea with 12 neighbouring countries. In her opinion, this reflects China wanting to maintain the status quo. However, as noted in chapter 3, China refuses to recognise the Philippines's claim that was brought to the Court of Arbitration and any bilateral negotiations are stalled by China, which seems to discredit the view that China's foreign policy is defensive realist in nature. China's 2019 Defense White Paper, which reaffirmed China's commitment to peaceful development, could be interpreted as another example of how China's foreign policy reflects the defensive realist paradigm. However, once again, official Chinese statements and rhetoric seem to

dispute this notion of a peaceful rise and President Xi himself has mentioned that the time for biding one's time is over and that China must take its rightful place as a major country in the international system which reflects the offensive realist model.

The test of offensive realist theory would be to determine whether or not China displays revisionist tendencies, acts aggressively towards its neighbours and shows power maximising behaviour (Jalil, 2019). The rationale is that the more powerful and the stronger the state, the less likely it will be a target since weaker powers will be dissuaded from challenging it (Lobell, 2017). Offensive realists dismiss the balance of power theory as they do not recognise balances, only strong vs weak states. China itself is unsure about U.S. intentions in the region. As Lobell (2017) notes, uncertainty about the intentions of other states combined with the anarchical nature of the international system compels great powers to adopt competitive, offensive, revisionist, and expansionist policies whenever the benefits exceed the costs.

Defensive and offensive realism, however, only take into account the structural level, not the individual state level. Given the nature of China's authoritarian political system, and President Xi's centralisation of power, neoclassical realism provides another framework with which to analyse the nature of China's foreign policy. Neoclassical realism is a combination of classical realism and neorealism and contends that foreign policy is affected by both independent (the international power structure) and intervening (domestic) variables.

Regarding the independent variable, since realists consider the international system to be anarchical in nature, this can affect how a country pursues its foreign policy. As China's relative power has grown this has enabled it to pursue a more robust foreign policy and China sees it as in its interest to maintain its security, if not increase it. Some may argue that realism does not provide the tools to evaluate how leaders evaluate going to war in the face of economic costs. However, as has been argued in previous chapters, the communist regime puts a lot of emphasis on its own survival and China's goals and ambitions are ultimately linked to this survival. In fact, survival is at the centre of the regime and the way it conducts its policies from its domestic to foreign relations or its trade policies all reflects a realist mentality. Examining the intervening variable, as noted in chapters 3 and 4, domestic constituencies matter. In China's case, the government has been pushing the "China Dream" and "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" narrative since shortly after Xi assumed

the presidency. This has created a common goal, straight from the nationalist playbook, in an attempt to unify the populace. Xi, though, has also created grand expectations that the government will need to deliver or run the risk of losing legitimacy, but this could also come at a cost internationally for China as their grand expectations seem to be revisionist in nature as they are attempting to alter the balance of power in their region. As Larson (2015) argues, China's future policies will depend on how it defines its identity relative to the U.S. and other powers, and how others respond to China's self-definition.

The chapter now moves to look at Russian nationalism and great power politics

### **Russian Nationalism and Great Power Politics**

Since 2012, Russia's foreign policy has taken on nationalistic undertones and become more assertive as President Vladimir Putin has sought to restore Russia to a leading power in international relations. As noted in chapter 4, the structure of Russia's modern-day strategic thinking is linked to Russia's identity crisis experienced after the fall of the Soviet Union and the loss of their great power status. Like China, Russia's actions are consistent with the SIT. Russia's identity is linked to that of re-establishing its former status as a great power but, at the same time, preserving its culture and norms without assimilating Western liberal values.

Putin has framed the national idea in terms of security and militarisation, both domestically and internationally, which has blended together a cultivation of militant and anti-Western patriotism, Soviet nostalgia, and religious orthodoxy (Borshchevskaya, 2020). According to Russian strategic narratives, and as noted in the previous chapter, Russia is defending its traditional great power status and values and true European civilisation (Karmazin & Hynek, 2020).

It is important to take into consideration the Russian Federation's geopolitical vision and self-imagery in any analysis and understanding of its military intervention in its near abroad (Rezvani, 2020). The idea of the Russiky Mir (Russian world) can be used as a justification for extraterritorial activities in Russia's near abroad (Wiechnik, 2019). This was exactly what occurred when Russia decided to annex the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine. According to Dragoi (2015), Russia's foreign policy initiatives undertaken after the Vilnius Summit (cumulating in the annexation of Crimea) should be perceived in the context of its

efforts to rebuild itself as a geopolitical power. This is exactly what Russia has done. With its strong military capabilities, Eurasian geographical location, capable leadership, conservative nationalism and resuscitation of old Cold-War relationships, Russia has once again become a major player in international affairs (Adelman, 2017).

It is important to note that the assertive foreign policy that has characterised Russia since 2012 actually began in the 1990s when some Russian elites recognised that integration with the West was neither achievable nor desirable. Elites were divided on this, in fact, Putin early in his presidency and Medvedev in his presidency had made an effort to cooperate with the west up until 2014. After that it left Russia with only one option: to forge a new path. As explained in chapter 4, and as Brands (2020, p68) reiterates, “President Putin has described the Western style of liberalism as a decadent and morally corrupt philosophy that would throw Russia into degeneracy and upheaval”. In his speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club’s annual meeting in 2014, Putin argued that the Western system of order threatened Russian interests and he urged the development of a new world order that is more friendly to Russian interests (Radin & Reach, 2017).

In its desire to challenge the West, and quest to overcome the problems of the Soviet collapse, Russia has seized territory in Chechnya and Crimea; aided disintegration elements in the EU; and continued to support Bashar al-Assad’s rule in Syria (Wyne, 2019). Kroenig (2020) adds that Putin is interfering in Western politics, including the 2016 U.S. presidential election, with the objective of discrediting democracy and weakening the NATO alliance. Just like China, Russia’s propaganda and international posture aim to highlight Western weakness for the purpose of eroding Western self-confidence (Jones, 2020).

Fuelled by petrodollars, President Putin has made modernisation of the Russian military a top priority and has built a formidable force that is a real threat to its Baltic neighbours (Kroenig, 2020). The Russian military has undergone an overhaul to make the army more professional and modern and replaced its old equipment that languished after the Soviet days (Epatko, 2017). According to Jones (2020), Russia has thrown a hugely disproportionate amount of its GDP into retaining and/or regaining a globally competitive nuclear and conventional military capacity. It has also adopted a strategy of probing, risk-taking, and provoking designed to weaken the unity of NATO.

As Wong (2020) points out, the Russian Federation is also the second largest arms exporter country internationally (only behind the U.S.) and, as with any major arms exporting country, international arms sales serve a seminal important and pivotal role in the conduct and influence of foreign policy by the country in question. He adds that Russia sees its arms exports as an effective instrument for advancing its national interests, both politically and economically.

Across Eurasia, authoritarian states increasingly band together to resist liberal values and pro-democracy initiatives. Groups such as the SCO or the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) increasingly resemble a “league of authoritarian gentleman” (Lewis, 2016). As noted, President Putin has made no secret of his disdain for Western institutions and the decadence of the EU. He has repeatedly touted his model of “sovereign democracy” as an improvement over the political chaos, economic privation and geopolitical weakness of the 1990s (Brands, 2020). Russian state-media, RT, report that the Moscow Consensus version is a “managed” or “sovereign democracy” that was initially the brainchild of Putin’s advisor, Vladislav Surkov, who coined the term in a speech in 2006. It concedes the need for popular votes, but gives the state a special role as a guarantor of stability and prosperity (Aris, 2020).

Like Beijing, Moscow has three overarching ideals of Russian development: 1) innovation; 2) the pursuit of dynamic goals/rejection of per capita GDP; and 3), self-determination.

It is misleading to suggest, however, that Russia exports a political model in the way that Western states promote democracy, instead, authoritarian states pursue their strategic objectives in ways that support allied regimes, which often happen to be authoritarian (Lewis, 2016). He adds that in the post-Soviet world it is more accurate to talk about a kind of “Moscow Consensus”, a shared view among elites of how post-Soviet states should be governed and what a modern state should look like. Through the Moscow Consensus the role of Russia is seemingly shaping to be that of a regional stability provider (Cau, 2018).

As Aridici (2019) states, and as examined in chapter 4, Russian foreign policy, especially towards the Ukraine and in the Arctic, can be best understood as an articulation of civilizational, or imperial, nationalism which relies on the myth of cultural superiority.

When seeking to explain Russian behaviour in the world today, McFaul (2020) argues that Vladimir Putin, his ideas, and the political institutions empowering him must be factored into the equation. As noted previously, President Putin's idea of Russia is that of a conservative orthodox nation that is a great power. It was noted in chapter 1 how Benedict Anderson contended, this is an "imagined" identity one that has been constructed. In President Putin's case, this constructed identity of Russia as a great power is attached to Russia's foreign policy and, in some cases, drives the direction of it.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2016) states that the world is currently going through fundamental changes related to the emergence of a multipolar international system. Global power and development potential is becoming decentralised and is shifting towards the Asia-Pacific region, eroding the global economic and political dominance of the traditional Western powers. Given this sense of change, or maybe just opportunism, it does not come as a surprise that Russia's foreign policy has been accompanied by an increase in nationalist rhetoric at various levels of Russian society.

Since his return to a third term in 2012, President Putin's rule has been characterised by an increase in authoritarian tendencies and a reversal of the Kremlin's official ideology (Lewis, 2020). He adds that this ideological reorientation is founded in conservative values; hostility towards the West and the liberal international order; veneration of a particular narrative of Russian history; and the promotion of Russia's position at the apex of a civilizational rebalance. "The conviction of Russia's uniqueness, both in the past as well as the present, is widespread among Russian conservative intellectuals and enjoys the support of President Putin" (Skladanowski, 2019, p423). The person who is accredited for the concept of the Russian civilization and its uniqueness is Aleksandr Dugin. Putin, as we have seen, has praised Russian culture as the last bulwark of conservative Christian values against the decadence of Europe.

The idea of the autonomy of Russian culture leads Russian conservative discourse to the opinion that Russia has created its original, independent civilisation (Skladanowski, 2019). Ever since the annexation of Crimea, making Russia 'great again' has become a new ideology for Putin; one in which state propaganda has spread the idea that Putin is the only one who can restore the greatness of Russia (Zygar, 2018).

In recent years, Russia's foreign policy has been driven by two major objectives: recovering the country's status as a great power in the global arena and regaining some level of influence in international affairs as was the case prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union (Dragoi, 2015). As Michnik (2021) points out, Russia's goals from the perspective of a great power rivalry have three objectives: to force the U.S. to acknowledge the legitimacy of its aims and status as an equal great power; to challenge NATO's southern flank in the Levant and the Eastern Mediterranean by acquiring (or re-establishing) military bases in Syria and actively seeking to establish bases in Egypt and Libya; and, to reinforce its working partnership with Iran and improve relations with Turkey, keeping Ankara at odds with some of the other NATO members. Russia sees NATO as a threat, however, NATO does not see itself as a threat to Russia.

The next section of this chapter will analyse the previous case studies investigated in chapter 4 (the Ukraine, Syria and, the Arctic). The relevance of this is to investigate if nationalism is, in fact, the central driver of Russia's foreign policy or, can their assertive foreign policy shift be explained using the realist approach to the study of IR.

### *Ukraine*

Investigation of Russia's foreign policy towards the Ukraine shows that over the past few years it has increased its nationalistic rhetoric towards the country. Russia has always seen the Ukraine as part of the traditional motherland and, therefore, a vital national interest. Indeed, in 2014, Vladimir Putin mentioned that Crimea was primordial land and the capital of Ukraine, Kiev, was "the mother" of all Russian cities (Gargiulo, 2020). Rather than an external territory, Ukraine is conceived of as a "little brother". As noted in chapters 2 and 4, there is a great historical and cultural bond between Russia and Ukraine that dates back to the founding of the Kievan Rus Empire in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was also one of the few remaining former Soviet states in the Russian sphere of influence, providing a buffer between Russia and its NATO adversaries (Gargiulo, 2020). Ukraine and Russia have been long economic partners. With over 1/3 of Russian natural gas exports flowing through Russian owned pipelines in the Ukraine (Pifer, 2019). This is of particular importance to Russia's national interest as natural gas exports make up a substantial part of the country's GDP.

Russia has been facing an existential threat for many years in the form of NATO and its enlargement into the former Soviet states has worried Russian policy makers for decades as it threatens Russian interests. As noted previously, the revolution in Ukraine in 2013-2014 was perceived in Moscow as a coup d'état organised by the West, in a territory that is a vital part of Moscow's exclusive zone of interests and responsibility and that is crucial for Russia's national identity.

Another reason the Russians perceive Ukraine as part of Russia's national interests is that they lease a naval base in Sevastopol, on the Crimean peninsula, which is home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet. The importance of the Black Sea region to Russian security has risen over the past decade to become the central theatre of national defence and power projection (Weber, 2017). According to Flanagan et al, (2020), the Black Sea region is a central locus of the competition between Russia and the West for the future of Europe. They add that the Kremlin is seeking to establish a sphere of privileged influence over neighbouring countries in the region and to limit their integration into Euro-Atlantic structures such as NATO. Russia's approach to the Black Sea builds on a centuries-old history of confrontation with Europe's major powers and on Russia's long geopolitical rivalry with Turkey (Stronski, 2021).

According to Atland (2021), east of Crimea, Russia has, since 2014, been in control of both sides of the Kerch Strait making it easier for it to impose restrictions on commercial shipping traffic between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. This is an important export route for Ukrainian coal, steel and agricultural products. Prior to the Crimean annexation, Ukraine and Russia shared sovereignty over the sea; however, in the wake of the annexation, President Putin has claimed that the Sea of Azov was inherently Russian (Gricius, 2019). As an example of Russia's control, Russia's Defence Ministry closed off navigation in parts of the Black Sea to foreign military and official ships from mid-April 2021 until the end of October (The Moscow Times, 2021). According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (2021), these actions by the Russian Federation constituted yet another attempt to usurp Ukraine's sovereign rights as a coastal state. In response, a U.S Department of State spokesperson, Ned Price (2021), stated that the U.S. reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and that the U.S. does not, and will never, recognise Russia's purported annexation of Crimea.

In response to Russia's actions in Crimea, the U.S. State Department has already sought to support Ukraine with \$10 million in foreign military financing dedicated to naval resources in the wake of the November 2018 Kerch Strait incident and it also sold Ukraine two excess defense article Coast Guard vessels earlier in 2018. In 2020, the U.S. Congress also approved a \$250 million aid package for Ukraine (Binnendijk, 2020). The U.S. State Department spokesperson has stated that the U.S. expresses its deep concern over Russia's plans to block foreign naval ships and state vessels in parts of the Black Sea, including by occupied Crimea and the Kerch Strait (Price, 2021). However, the Russians perceive that the U.S response in the region is unwarranted. According to Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergey Ryabkov, there is absolutely nothing that requires the U.S. presence near his country's Black Sea coastline (Tickle, 2021).

The Russian military has also been modernising its Black Sea fleet. The modernisation of the fleet has recently placed emphasis on new sea-based missile capabilities, increasing the risks to NATO infrastructure, equipment, and populations in the Black Sea region (Binnendijk, 2020). Gricius (2019) notes that Russian actions in the Sea of Azov are part of a psychological operation to convince the Ukrainian people that Russia has the right to act with impunity in its "near abroad".

If examining Russia's foreign policy from a defensive realist perspective, it could be interpreted that Russia seeks security and to maintain the status quo and the balance of power in the region. As Waltz (2008) points out, the core of the defensive realist perspective is that states merely aim to survive and, above all else, they seek security. Could it be that President Putin has felt that the security of Russia was threatened? Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S and its NATO allies have moved even closer to Russian borders adding new NATO members.

From a defensive realist perspective, Russia's foreign policy in Ukraine could be seen as defensive in nature. There was a real perception within Russia that the Ukraine was moving towards closer solidarity with, if not actually becoming a member of, the E.U. If this was to happen it would have changed the status quo in the region, becoming much less favourable for Russia. Some Russians even speculated that Ukrainian President Poroshenko and his allies might abrogate the extended lease for Russia's naval base in Sevastopol (McFaul, 2020). This would have had serious implications not only on Russia's ability to

operate its Black Sea Fleet, but its ability to project power in the region which threatens their security. Another reason that President Putin's actions could be seen as defensive in nature is that Slavs practising democracy and looking west rather than adhering to Putin's system of government and looking east was unacceptable (McFaul, 2020). He adds that if Slavs succeeded in consolidating democracy in Ukraine, Putin's theory about the Slavic need for a strong, autocratic ruler with orthodox conservative values would be weakened. Putin's fear is that a weakening of his orthodox conservative theory could lead to a coloured revolution within Russia, ending his control of power.

There are serious problems with interpreting Putin's actions as defensive realism as making new claims to territory cannot be defensive if pre-emptive. Because Russia is attempting to re-establish itself as a great power, realist theory suggests that, as with China, Russia's foreign policy will become more assertive. Russia's assertive foreign policy towards the Ukraine is actually best analysed from an offensive realist perspective: its actions in Ukraine are revisionist as Russia seeks to become the hegemonic power in the region. Offensive realism expects great powers to maximise benefits at the expense of smaller ones. In the case of Russian sabre-rattling in its neighbourhood, offensive realists shift the emphasis to Russia's legitimate 'rights' to safeguard its national interest in its near abroad (Feinstein & Pirro, 2021). As Wiechnik (2019) argues, the idea of the "Russiky Mir" can be used as justification for extraterritorial activities in Russia's near abroad. This is the exact argument that was made by President Putin for justification of the annexation of Crimea.

However, if President Putin's actions in Ukraine are indeed driven by offensive realism, then why did he only invade Crimea and not the whole of the Ukraine? Some possible answers could be that Putin only wanted Crimea; that Putin was unsure how the international community would react; Putin did not want to jeopardise the Russian gas pipelines that flowed through Ukraine which would upset the Russian economy; or, that Putin was unsure how invading the whole of Ukraine would be interpreted domestically when many Russians have extended family in Ukraine. As Mearsheimer (2014) argues, great powers are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals with hegemony as their final goal. By seizing Crimea, Russia did not gain much power over its rivals, it just secured the interests that they already had in the region. If Putin had invaded

the whole of the Ukraine, though, he would have gained considerable power over his Western rivals.

If President Putin had defined his foreign policy agenda through a realist lens, his individual impact on Russian foreign policy would be difficult to distinguish from realist theory explanations. Putin's behaviour has not always correlated with realist perceptions. He has embraced and propagated illiberal, conservative nationalism to advance his definition of national interests (McFaul, 2020).

Since the Ukraine crisis, Russian state media have intensified the pro-Kremlin and nationalistic tone in their broadcasts, adulation for President Putin and rejection of Western influence and attacks on Kremlin critics (BBC, 2020). As Hall (2021) notes, the rhetoric from Moscow is increasingly bellicose. Nationalist ideologues on Russian state television are calling for a full Russian annexation of the Donbas region where Russia continues to interfere, or even a wider invasion. He adds that Putin expressed the view to German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, that Russia could intervene to save the Donbas's pro-Russian population from a Srebrenica-like massacre, even though there is no such evidence its residents face such dangers.

As has been noted above, evidence suggest that nationalism is manufactured and controlled by the state as a response to concerns about a coloured revolution taking place within Russia as was the case within the Ukraine. Putin has sought to promote a strong Russia, one that stands up to Western liberalism. Nationalism is connected directly to Russia's great power ambitions and the Ukraine is central to not only Russia's national and strategic interests, but also to the framing of the Russian national identity.

In conclusion, when Russia perceived that the Ukraine was moving towards western integration they invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea due to its strategic value. Since then, the Russian Federation has been administering the region. However, in order for Russia to set the stage for regional hegemony they must provide the argument for its rightful ownership of the Crimea. The Ukraine was a cornerstone of the former Soviet Union. Behind only Russia, it was the second most populated and powerful of the fifteen Soviet republics; home to much of the Soviet Union's agricultural production, defence industries, and military, including the Black Sea Fleet (Masters, 2020). Because of these close ties, Russia

considers the Ukraine's sovereignty to be limited as it is part of their national interest due to economic and political bonds but also the strong cultural ones too.

In Russia's attempt to assert its rightful ownership, the EU highlighted a number of steps that Russia has taken in eastern Ukraine such as holding illegitimate elections, and the distribution of Russian passports to local Ukrainian citizens. Taken together, these measures are aimed at the de facto integration of Ukraine's non-government controlled areas (Dickinson, 2021).

Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, noted that Russia's view is that the EU's policy towards Russia is linked to Moscow's implementation of the Minsk Agreements which provide for a direct dialogue between Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk (Lavrov, 2021). The Minsk Agreements were designed to bring about a ceasefire in the region but, as Dettmer (2021) reports, fighting between the Ukrainians and Russian-backed rebels in Ukraine's Donbas region still goes on unabated. Officially, Russia denies being party to the conflict, however, the evidence of Russian involvement is overwhelming (Dickinson, 2021). The Kremlin has sought to maintain a veil of plausible deniability by deploying limited numbers of conventional troops alongside hybrid forces of mercenaries, volunteers, and local collaborators (Dettmer, 2021).

According to Brunson (2019), the Russian President was the only one smiling when the Minsk Agreements were finalised in 2015. Russia's looming regional presence, European eagerness to make a deal with the continent's largest army, and the U.S. reluctance to ever fight that army have left Kiev with the Minsk Agreement as the only solution. The Minsk Agreements are unlikely to work, though, as they are based on two irreconcilable interpretations of Ukraine's sovereignty: is Ukraine a sovereign country as the Ukrainian government insist, or should their sovereignty be conditional as Russia insists (Brunson, 2019). It seems that there is no room for manoeuvre for the Ukraine: a senior Kremlin official, Dmitry Kozak, issuing an ominous warning that a full-scale conflict in Ukraine would likely mean "the beginning of the end" for the country (Dettmer, 2021).

### Syria

Russia is undergoing a major reconstruction in its foreign policy priorities cementing its presence in the Middle East, beginning gradually in its calculated involvement in the

Syrian conflict (Baroud, 2021). As Rumer (2019) suggests, the intervention took place against the backdrop of a U.S. pulling back from the Middle East and growing uncertainty about its future role there. Russia's diplomatic, economic and military presence in the Middle East should be understood not only in terms of a response to power vacuums and the weakness of external actors in the region, but also in the context of a more proactive domestically driven Kremlin approach towards international affairs as it attempts to re-establish itself as a great power and remake the international order (Michnik, 2021).

Through its intervention in Syria, Russia has also succeeded in diverting attention away from their destabilising of the Ukraine, making it impossible for the West to continue to isolate the Kremlin (Stent, 2016). As Michnik (2021) argues, with Russia's intervention in Syria providing successful support to the Assad regime, against all Western pressure, Russia has strengthened itself in the regional great power competition. This thought is echoed by Khodarenok (2020) who reports for RT that by deploying troops to the Middle East, Russia has successfully maintained the balance of power in the region with the permanent establishment of two Russian military bases in Syria.

At the global level, Russia is the power which has most prominently provided the diplomatic shield for the Syrian state and bolstered it with arms supplies (Allison, 2013). The obvious question is why would Russia go to this much trouble to help Syria? Trenin (2014) suggests that keeping Assad in power serves a number of Russian national interests. First, a U.S. intervention would have reversed the trend towards retrenchment initiated by the Obama administration; a trend that Moscow considers positive. Obama's doctrine of retrenchment called for a reduction in U.S. military spending and overseas commitments and avoidance of further military conflicts (especially those which heralded a long engagement) (Wozniak, 2015). Secondly, Russia sees it as being in its interest to avert regime change which could have disastrous implications for countries on Russia's post-Soviet periphery. The concern here is that Islamic extremism might take root in Russia's periphery and destabilise the country and the region. Thirdly, Syria has, for decades, been a client of the Russian defence industry. Russia's state-owned arms company, Rosoboronexport, has made enormous profits from its support of the Assad government (Fakih, 2018).

For Russia, Syria is a core pillar of a global Russian strategy designed to re-establish it as one of the world's great powers (Birrell, 2019) and is consistent with the new Russian nationalist narrative that Putin promotes. Because of its geographical location, having a coastline on the eastern Mediterranean and being a gateway to the Middle East, Syria is not only of significant importance to Russia's national interest, but to framing the nationalist narrative centered around great power status. As Birrell (2019) argues, the port of Tartus, located on the West coast of Syria, holds immense geopolitical and commercial value for Russia providing it with direct access to the Mediterranean Sea and presents an opportunity to establish important economic trade links with the Middle East and Europe. She adds that the port also acts as an important arms trade route between Russia and the Middle East.

Russian national interests, however, are contested by the West and Russia's reasons for intervening are entirely different and serve their national interests in other ways. Western policy makers and think-tanks perceive that Russia has engaged in a broad, sophisticated, well-resourced and surprisingly effective campaign to expand its global reach. These objectives include undermining the U.S. position as leader of the liberal international order and the cohesion of the West; the promotion of specific Russian military and energy interests and, as a push back against the U.S. in areas of traditional U.S. influence (Grafov, 2019). This thought seems to be confirmed by Polyakova (2018) who states that Putin's true geopolitical victory has been the successful undermining of U.S. interests in the Middle East while establishing Russia as a major power broker across the region.

Russia's military intervention in Syria represents an important moment in the Kremlin's foreign policy as it is the first time that President Putin has deployed Russian troops outside the post-Soviet sphere, but also plays into the Russian nationalist narrative. As Russia has reasserted itself as a major player in the Middle East, it has also grown its military capabilities by a considerable margin in the region. In 2017, a deal was struck between Syria and Russia which allows Russia the use of the naval facility free of charge for 49 years and to keep a dozen warships including nuclear powered vessels (Dettmer, 2021).

As noted in chapter 4, Russia has been using PMCs alongside Russian conventional troops to press its agenda in Syria. The Russian news agency TASS (2021), reports Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu's remarks that Russian service members have tested more than 320 types of weapons during the Syrian operation. Also, the Russian Defense Ministry

reports that the crews of Tu-22m3 long-range bombers based out of Hmeymim Air Base in Syria have begun to fulfil the tasks of mastering the airspace in the maritime zone of the Mediterranean Sea (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 2021).

If examining Russia's foreign policy in Syria through a defensive realist lens, it could be interpreted that Russia is seeking to counter the balance of power in the region. As Waltz (2008) mentions, the structure of the international system forces great powers to pay particular attention to the balance of power. For decades, the U.S has had a presence in the Middle East actively pursuing its interests whether it be economic or diplomatic, or as part of their counter-terrorism operations. Traditional U.S. interests in the region have centred on ensuring the free flow of natural resources and maintaining relationships with key allies and protecting them from threats, in part to ensure access for U.S. military operations (Mueller et al, 2017). However, Russia views the U.S. presence in the region as destabilising and a threat to their security. When ideological differences exist between two countries, political leaders in one country are likely to regard the ideological and political orientation of the other country as a challenge and even a threat to their own political program (Li, 2012). The Syria conflict represents a platform for Russia in countering U.S dominance and power in the region (Grafov, 2019).

This platform for allowing Russia to challenge the U.S was brought about by a reversal of U.S. policy. In 2011, U.S troops pulled out of Iraq and, as Carafano (2012) claims, this would have complex and far-reaching implications for the stability in the country and the wider region. Taking advantage of the deteriorating internal situation in Syria, Islamic extremists used large tracts of non-government controlled areas to launch attacks against various targets of the Syrian regime. As noted previously, the Russian military was invited to Syria to help the Assad government defeat Islamic terrorists: Russia itself has a perception that Islamic extremist on their periphery pose a significant threat to their security. However, these actions by Russia in Syria do not reflect defensive realism and cannot be interpreted as such. Russia is attempting to displace the U.S and become the dominant power in the region.

When examining Russia's foreign policy in Syria from an offensive realist perspective, this assertion above is clearer as Russia's actions are revisionist: they are seeking to change the balance of power and establish hegemony in the region. From this perspective, it can be

argued that the U.S. withdrawal from the region presented Russia with an opportunity to assert itself in an attempt to establish regional hegemony. Russia's actions and, more so, the benefits that it has received from the Syrian regime for its help, suggest an attempt at power maximisation in the region. The navy base at Tartus, as pointed out, allows Russia a considerable capability to project power out into the greater Mediterranean region. The Syrian conflict can be seen as a confrontation for regional hegemony with the U.S. (Didier, 2017).

One argument suggests that Russian behaviour on the international stage relating to the Syrian crisis reflects instrumental concerns about political legitimacy and state cohesion within Russia and its neighbourhood (Allison, 2013). The rise in Russian nationalism seems to correspond with these concerns. President Putin has, on numerous occasions, referred to Russian identity as being tied to great power status and, with regards to Syria's role in the new nationalist narrative, it occupies that of a battleground between Russian conservatism and Western liberalism.

In conclusion, the fall of Assad would have threatened Russia's interests and eliminated a regional ally (Petkova, 2020). Through its intervention in Syria, Russia was able to stem the tide against the Assad regime; reverse the course of the Syrian Civil War; and strengthen the Russian nationalist narrative of it being a great power able to stand up to other great powers. In doing so, and thus saving an old client, Russia has signalled to other Middle Eastern regimes that it is a reliable partner (Rumer, 2019). He adds that the geopolitical realignment and instability in the region has opened opportunities up for Russia to rebuild some old relationships and to construct new ones. Russia has been perceived by many regional actors as a mediator and an alternative weapons supplier to the U.S., the United Kingdom (UK) and France (Michnik, 2021). In its pivot to the Middle East, Russia has created a new balance of power dynamic among states in the Middle East, especially Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia (Paul, 2018). Syria was an exemplary proving ground for Russia's military in its first large-scale operations since Russia's war with Georgia in 2008 and the military operations went more smoothly than most analysts, Russian or foreign, expected, demonstrating that Russia can intervene beyond its borders with relative ease (Miller, 2020). The Russian armed forces have been transformed by their experience in Syria and

present a far greater problem for Western militaries than they did five years ago (Hamilton et al, 2020).

As a result of the power vacuum created by the Arab Spring, Russia's engagement has highlighted the limits of the U.S. and European approaches to the region and its reassertion as a regional hegemon also challenges Euro-Atlantic cohesion (Didier, 2017). It thus fits into Russia's nationalist narrative of great power status. A political shift is taking place in the Middle East with the U.S. shifting away from the region and Russia back to it, and if trends continue, it could only be a matter of time before a major paradigm shift occurs were Russia is the major power in the region (Baroud, 2021).

### Arctic

The Russian interest in the Arctic has deep historical roots tied to Russian nationalism that extend all the way back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the conquest of Siberia driven by the never-ending quest for more resources and secure trade routes (Rumer et al, 2021). The Arctic has been shown to be extremely important to the current Russian leadership: economic activities there account for approximately 20 percent of exports and more than 10 percent of total Russian GDP (Rotnam, 2021). Geographically speaking, almost 20% of Russian territory is considered to be Arctic or sub-Arctic (Laruelle, 2009). Russia's coastline accounts for 53% of the Arctic Ocean coastline and the country's population in the region totals roughly 2 million people- that's around half of the people living in the Arctic worldwide.

Putin's nationalist rhetoric frames the Arctic as being of significant importance for the establishment of a homogeneous identity for Russia tied to that of an Arctic state. Such rhetoric also assists Putin in his strategic aims as he realises the Arctic is important for ensuring a leading place for Russia in the competition for resources there. According to Rotnam (2021), an ambitious plan to develop the Arctic until 2035 is well underway. This plan includes additional railroads which will link Russia's Arctic region and provide logistics to its NSR. As Russia formally takes over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2021 from Iceland, leaders must recognise that Russia yearns to be viewed as a major power in the Arctic (Rotnam, 2021).

In acknowledgement of the growing international competition for natural resources and sea routes in the Arctic, President Putin approved a new version of Russia's Maritime Doctrine emphasising the need for an adequate Russian response. This response has been to grow Russia's military capabilities in the region. Russia is amassing unprecedented military might in the Arctic and testing its newest weapons in a bid to secure its northern coast and open up a key shipping route from Asia to Europe (Paton Walsh, 2021).

Substantial Russian budget increases for the military and the modernisation of its Northern Fleet has assisted in enhancing Russia's military capabilities in the Arctic. Satellite images detail the stark and continuous build-up of Russian military bases and hardware on the country's Arctic coastline, together with underground storage facilities designed for the storage of high tech weapons such as the Poseidon, a stealth torpedo powered by a nuclear reactor designed to sneak past coastal defences (Paton Walsh, 2021). The Russian military hardware also includes bombers and MiG31BM jets, and new radar systems close to the coast of Alaska (Paton Walsh, 2021).

Examining Russia's foreign policy from a defensive realist perspective, Russia is seeking to maintain the status quo and the balance of power in the Arctic. As noted in the previous chapter, all of Russia's neighbour's in the Arctic are NATO member states. From this perspective it can be contended that the U.S. and NATO are driving Russian reactions. Indeed, Admiral Alexander Moiseyev from the Russian Navy has accused NATO forces and the U.S. of military actions in the Arctic that increase the risk of conflict (Rainsford, 2021). However, if Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic was a reflection of defensive realism, then why are they making new claims in the Arctic as well as building new bases at a pace that out-matches other Arctic countries?

Another perspective would suggest that as Western countries make geopolitical gains eastward, it decreases Russia's power and ability to pursue its interests, at the very least, thus ensuring that Russian behaviour constitutes and reflects an offensive realist policy (Feinstein & Pirro, 2021). Examining Russia's foreign policy from an offensive realist perspective, Russia is seeking to become the hegemonic power in the region implying that their actions are revisionist in nature. From a U.S. point of view, it is the Russians that are initiating an Arctic build-up and NATO is simply responding to Russia's assertive behaviour. Satellite images have also shown the slow methodical strengthening of Russian airfields and

'trefoil' bases at several locations along Russia's Arctic coastline (Paton Walsh, 2021). He adds that the U.S. has voiced concerns that Russia's military bases along its coastline in the Arctic could be used to establish de facto control over areas in the Arctic that are further afield. However, realism does not fully explain the nationalist sentiment that permeates Russia's Arctic policy.

Russia's great power status has been crucial to the construction of the country's national identity and interests in the Arctic and on the world stage (Grajewski, 2017). However, as Khrushcheva and Poberezhskaya (2016) argue, national identity is context-dependent and constantly evolving. They add that the forceful national discourse on positioning itself as the "Arctic great power" correlates with strong public support for a more assertive Arctic policy. "By drawing upon early Russian exploration and Stalin's 'Red Arctic' propaganda, Russian President Vladimir Putin personally identifies with Russia's Arctic ambitions and seeks to exploit the Arctic narrative of man conquering nature as a distinctive feature of modern Russian nationalism" (Melino & Conley, 2020). The Arctic is a low-risk way in which to promote Russian nationalism and to get the average citizen to rally around the flag. Putin's bellicose foreign policy and the hyper nationalist rhetoric is intended to reassure the Russian public of the state's performance and commitment to restoring Russia's great power status.

In conclusion, there are increased levels of Russian military activity in the Arctic. As Yalowitz and Virginia (2020) recognise the new Arctic Ocean sea routes such as the NSR above Russia are opening with accompanying strategic issues, with the vast Arctic energy and raw materials resources yet to be exploited, which attaches a considerable amount of importance on the region. Tempting as it may be to view the Arctic through the prism of great power competition - which undoubtedly would fit with Russia's quest for recognition as a great power - there is little to suggest that its military posture in the Arctic is a fundamentally new undertaking (Rumer et al, 2021). Instead, it signals the return to a version of its Cold War era posture centred on long standing missions of protecting its Ballistic Missile Submarine Fleet and operations in the North Atlantic (Rumer et al, 2021).

"The ambitions in the Arctic do not stand alone, but form part of Russia's general foreign and security policy which are coloured by the political system President Putin has built up since his assumption of power" (Staun, 2015, p 12).

## Russian Nationalism and Great Power politics Conclusion

Russian power has grown significantly under President Putin's leadership. Russia is no longer the country it was at the end of the Cold War when it was left struggling to define itself. Through his centralisation of power and tight control of the media Putin has attempted to create a Russian identity tied to past glories and greatness and highlight Russian exceptionalism and its distinctive culture. Part of this identity is tied to Russian great power status. Ethnic Russian nationalism has been growing since the fall of the Soviet Union, along with attempts by the Putin regime to commandeer it and frame it as an imperial nationalism. "Imperial nationalism offers a middle ground so Putin can present the country as a great power and its desire for ethnic greatness to the greatness of the Russian state" (Arnold, 2016).

President Putin has often expressed his desire for Russian glory and that Russia should reclaim its major global position and challenge the U.S. As Russia's power has risen the country has sought to re-establish itself as a great power, however, in doing so, it finds itself coming into direct conflict with the Western international order. Through their annexation in Crimea, to their intervention in Syria, Russia is attempting to alter the balance of power in a number of regions. According to Walt (2018), in an anarchic world, Russia has little choice but to compete with the U.S. lest it fall behind and become vulnerable to U.S. predations.

Russia was not defeated in the Cold War, it chose to give up its empire and set new boundaries and relationships with newly independent neighbours of its own accord. According to Kagan (2018), there was no equivalent of the Versailles Treaty and so there can be no Weimar Russia. Therefore, Russian revisionism is thus an attempt to renegotiate by force a peace it freely made. He adds that a trinity of revisionist drives govern Russia's behaviour. First, Moscow seeks to revise agreements with other former Soviet states. Second, it is revising the very meaning of "Russia" and "Russian". Third, President Putin seeks to revise the international order fundamentally.

In some instances, Russia has framed its actions, whether it be in the Ukraine, Syria or the Arctic as, a response to, or defence of, its national interest. RT reports that Russia's ability to project power has grown and that its home-grown defence industry has become a

world leader in advanced weaponry. Its development of the S-400 defensive system launcher has sparked fears in the U.S. that the country's capabilities are pulling ahead (Gavin, 2021). According to Karmazin and Hynek (2020), President Putin's regime has strengthened the country's military while shoring up its own power by preserving the socio-domestic consensus and exploiting nostalgia for Soviet-era Russian greatness and orthodox religion.

Realism is the dominant paradigm in international relations in Russia. Due to its geographical location and size, Russia has always felt vulnerable and has often displayed a kind of defensive aggressiveness which, at times, could be interpreted as revisionist in nature. The country shares borders with five NATO countries and faces a sixth. This has created a "threat perception" within Russia that NATO is attempting to undermine Russian sovereignty. Therefore, its identity is tied to that of geopolitical orientation. However, as Feinstein and Pirro (2021) contend, it is not completely Russia's fault for being realist as post-Cold War U.S. policy helped maintain U.S.-Russia foreign affairs in zero-sum terms. However, power maximisation can be overcome through defensive realism's promotion of ambiguous strategies as seen through the government's initiation of an evolution of military doctrine known as "active defence" (Blazevic, 2010).

From a realist perspective, in an anarchic world we must assume that all potential competitor states are revisionist and want to change the status quo (Mearsheimer, 2014). Russia's revisionism is that of a "guerrilla great power", relying on the consolidation of its influence domestically and regionally in the so-called Russian world and its near abroad (Karmazin & Hynek, 2020). They add that Russian revisionism is chiefly derived from President Putin's personal charisma and cult and relies on almost complete domestic control, local socio-political support in key territories and a strategy based on actions below the threshold of an open confrontation. By establishing itself as a regional hegemon, Russia can put pressure on weaker states to join forces with Russia as the primary way to remain independent of Western influence.

However, as Feinstein and Pirro (2021) contend, while many offensive realists explain Putin's actions in purely power-seeking terms, many of his actions seem unexplained by realist theory. For example, why poison former spies in the UK? Why invade Eastern Ukraine and Crimea and not all of Ukraine? Realism fails to understand the importance of

the strategic use of norms to achieve forms of power beyond material power which includes structural power (Alsaadi, 2017).

Russia, over the past few years, has been very vocal about its distain for Western institutions, especially NATO, and what they perceive to be its encroachment on Russian interests. However, just like China, Russia's future policies will depend on how it defines its identity relative to the U.S. and other powers and how others respond to Russia's self-definition.

## **Conclusion**

The extent to which both Chinese and Russian foreign policy has been influenced by nationalism varies depending on the foreign policy in question. Both countries have foreign policy objectives that are part of their core interests and this raises the importance and significance of particular policy issues such as Taiwan and the Ukraine which have very strong nationalist attachments. China and Russia, as has been noted, use the attainment or re-establishment of great power status in the framing of their nationalist argument tying it to their national identity and, in this regard, nationalism is of considerable importance as a driver of their foreign policy, particularly relating to these two issues.

China's foreign policy in the South China Sea is best explained using the offensive realist paradigm and highlights the importance of nationalism as China attempts to control the narrative and frame the discourse around its actions in the South China Sea. It justifies them as upholding or reasserting their historical rights. As Yahuda (2014) contended, China's assertive foreign policy has arisen from four related developments: a sense of a change in the balance of power in its favour; the expansion of its national interests to include its maritime domain; the growth of its military power to pursue its maritime claims more effectively; and, a heightening of nationalist sentiment among state officials and the population in general. China's actions display all the signs of a revisionist power as it attempts to alter the balance of power the South China Sea.

China's foreign policy in the East China Sea is best described using the offensive realist paradigm and demonstrates how the CCP uses nationalism to expand its foreign policy interests. As noted, the East China Sea, and the Miyako Strait in particular, provides the principal entryway for the PLAN into the Pacific Ocean. China's military growth and its

attempt to attain great power status makes the East China Sea an important foreign policy issue. Because of the historical animosity between China and Japan, the CCP must be very careful as to how it uses nationalism to justify its interests as incidents can quickly spiral out of control due to heightened emotions. China's actions in the East China Sea suggest that it is pursuing a policy intended to alter the status quo in the region and can, therefore, be labelled as revisionist.

Furthermore, the offensive realist perspective best describes China's foreign policy regarding Taiwan as it underscores how China's overall strategy towards the island incorporates elements of both persuasion and coercion to hinder the development of political attitudes in Taiwan favouring independence. China's foreign policy towards Taiwan is very much represented in nationalist terms. China has never denounced the use of force when it comes to reunifying the island with the mainland. If China attempts to reunify the island with the mainland, then this will represent a revisionist challenge to the current situation in which the country has to annex Taiwan to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Russia's foreign policy towards the Ukraine can also be viewed as in keeping with the realist paradigm. However, nationalism is a central driver of Russia's foreign policy as the Ukraine is an integral part of not only Russia's history and national identity but of its perceived geo-strategic sphere of influence too. The annexation of Crimea showed the importance of nationalism's influence on Russia's foreign policy. Russia's Ukraine policy strengthened nostalgic aspirations for the recreation of the former Soviet Empire (attached to great power status) and, of Russia's imperial mission. Through its annexation of Crimea, Russia has altered the balance of power in the Black Sea region and is using further tactics to deny the Ukraine the ability to safely navigate this region. This is a clear display of revisionism by the Russian Federation and also a clear signal of an offensive realist foreign policy as they ultimately seek hegemony in their sphere of influence.

Russia's intervention in the Syrian Civil war fits the offensive realist perspective. Russia's intervention demonstrates that Putin visualises Russia's role in the Middle East as vital to Russia's great power status. In fact, Putin used nationalism to frame his intervention in terms of a neo-imperialist Russian identity seeking to restore its former status. Although the primary goal was to preserve the Assad regime, it was the rewards for doing so that are

of most value to Russia. Russia now has the ability to project its military power into the Mediterranean Sea. Again, Russia's Syria policy strengthened nostalgic aspirations for the recreation of the former Soviet Empire, and of Russia's imperial mission. Russia's actions demonstrate that the country is a revisionist challenge to the U.S. which is scaling back its activities in the region which is leaving a vacuum for Russia to step into.

Finally, Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic can be best viewed in terms of offensive realism with Russian foreign policy there driven largely by nationalistic ambitions. The Arctic is an integral part of Russia and frames part of Russian nationalist discourse. Putin has portrayed the Arctic as being inherently mostly Russian territory tying it to primordial nationalism. He has committed a vast number of resources to building and upgrading infrastructure, focussing on natural resource development and the modernisation of Russian military forces and bases throughout the region. The Arctic is, therefore, central to Russia's great power ambitions as it gives it the ability to project power and open new trade routes. Russia's actions, however, in this case constitute a status quo approach: the country has not seized any territory and is involved in the Arctic Council. What Russia's actions do constitute is a defensive realist approach highlighting the woes of Russian strategic culture – especially geopolitical insecurity.

The CCP's historical narrative starts with the 19<sup>th</sup> century "century of humiliation" which points to a modernist framing. Russia, under Putin, is appealing to a pre-modern past with invocations of Peter, Ivan and the 988 Vladimir, which points to a primordialist framing. Davidson (2006) contends that revisionist powers seek to change the distribution of goods, whereas, status quo powers seek to maintain the distribution of goods. He adds that if externally oriented groups, such as nationalists, dominate the government, rising states are likely to become revisionist. Overall, both China and Russia can be labelled as revisionist great powers as they seek to change the distribution of goods which, again, is an example of them pursuing offensive realist foreign policies. Chinese and Russian foreign policies are driven by nationalistic ambitions of status. The problem that this raises is that great power ambitions are closely linked to material capabilities and, according to Thies and Nieman (2017), if materialist theories (realism) of competition are right, then increased power will lead both China and Russia into conflict with the U.S.

## Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the impact of contemporary nationalism on revisionist great powers and whether or not it increases their threat to the international order by using a qualitative case study approach. The case study approach provided a way of investigating a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, in this case, Chinese and Russian foreign policy.

Over the past decade, there has been a resurgence of nationalism as a cultural, political and social ideology and economic system that encourages competition over cooperation. As was investigated in chapter 1, nationalism is linked to the formation of the modern state and, though there are a variety of different forms of nationalism, each defining the nation in their own way, they all share a common core ideal – the sovereignty of the nation. According to Benedict Anderson, the nation is an imagined political community which is seen as both inherently limited and sovereign. The nationalist principle requires the marriage of polity and culture: a state becomes the protector of a culture, and one gains citizenship by virtue of participating in a culture, rather than by virtue of lineage, residency, property or anything else (Gellner, 1997). Both China and Russia display clear signs of nationalism through their rhetoric and foreign policy actions whereby Putin and Xi see themselves as the protectors of culture and the sovereignty of their respective nations.

As noted in chapter one, according to Edward Carr, the modern history of international relations divides into three overlapping periods marked by widely different views of the nation as a political entity as well as different ideas and concepts of nationalism. Through an examination of a number of different nationalist perspectives including primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism this thesis has argued that contemporary nationalism has evolved to become more than just an exercise for nation-building (marking a fourth era) but a political doctrine/ideology, used not only to replace thin-centred ideologies that are usually associated with authoritarian regimes, but also thick ideologies such as Marxist-Leninist communism. Chinese and Russian contemporary nationalism has become the unseen metaphorical glue, that now binds a country together and helps to establish a distinctive national identity. Contemporary nationalism is

encompassed in folk culture (primordial nationalism), everyday habits and routines grounded in common sense, landscapes, body politics and social norms (ethno-symbolist perspective) and is banal in nature promoting the greatness of the nation (modernist perspective). However, like all doctrines/ideologies or political tools, nationalism is able to be manipulated, or controlled, by authoritarian regimes, and this is evident with both China and Russia.

Chinese nationalism, as employed by President Xi Jinping, promotes a multi-cultural society based on Confucian values that boasts a 5000-year-old history. As highlighted in chapter 2, China views itself as the Middle Kingdom and this self-perception is very important in how the country frames its national identity, which is primordial in nature. Contemporary Chinese nationalism displays elements of popular nationalism, but is essentially state-led and top-down illustrating the fact that it is a construct of the state and fits the modernist paradigm. The modernist theory of nationalism is emphasised by the tight control of the population and political sphere in authoritarian systems. The Chinese state uses nationalism through educational curricula, social media, state-owned media and newspapers to shape public discourse and the nationalist narrative. Lacking organic legitimacy, the Chinese government works to manufacture it by fanning nationalism and hostility towards the U.S. and its democratic allies, including through educational curricula that stress China's historical victimisation at the hands of the rapacious foreign powers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; all of which points towards a modernist framing of nationalism.

President Xi Jinping has linked great power status to the Chinese national identity and this is a central component of how contemporary Chinese nationalism is framed. The authoritarian nature of the Chinese political system has enabled contemporary Chinese nationalism to assume a *realpolitik*, geopolitical, content based on territory and sovereignty which is embedded into the structure of Chinese political thought. As a result, China's attainment of great power status not only frames and dictates how the country sees itself, but, more importantly, how Xi wants the world to see China.

Russian nationalism, for President Vladimir Putin, is a way of promoting a multi-ethnic Eurasian civilisation combined with Russian Christian Orthodoxy that is imperial in nature. As shown in chapter 2, in line with Blackburn's (2020) argument, ethno-nationalism

is rejected and Russia is imagined to be a unique, harmonious multi-ethnic space in which Russians lead without repressing others. Russia's multinationalism is remembered in myths of peaceful interactions between Russians and indigenous ethnic groups across the imperial and Soviet past. Contemporary Russian nationalism has been accompanied by state civilisation narratives that have elements of primordialism containing three distinct features: that Russia is a unique civilisation; a distinctive type of civic patriotism has been encouraged; and a certain cultural unity has been encouraged provided by Russian language and culture as well as "traditional, conservative values" (Blackburn, 2020).

The centralisation of political power under Vladimir Putin has enabled him, through his control of the media and Russian elites, to shape the nationalist narrative within the country allowing him to frame contemporary Russian discourse and demonstrating that it is a construct from the top-down and is state-led: it is thus best associated with the modernist paradigm noted in chapter 1. Ever since the street protests in 2012 that accompanied President Putin being sworn into office for a third term, contemporary Russian nationalism has been increasingly harnessed by the state to promote Russia's identity as being tied to the attainment of great power status and nationalist narratives of "a meddling West" and an "ever encroaching NATO" trying to undermine Russian strength, once again emphasising that Russian nationalism is a modernist concept.

Like Xi, Putin also links great power status to the Russian national identity. Vladimir Putin has noted that the greatest catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was the demise of the Soviet Union, which stripped the country of its power status overnight. As with China, there is an element of realpolitik geopolitical content based on territory and sovereignty embedded into the structure of Russian political thought. As a result, great power status frames and dictates how Russia not only sees itself but, more importantly, how Putin wants the world to see Russia.

In the vast literature on Chinese nationalism the distinction between the nation and the state is rarely made and consequently, nationalism usually appears to be loyalty to the state rather than identification with the nation. The literature on Russian nationalism has the same parallel assumption of loyalty to the state rather than identification with the nation: a seemingly common feature of authoritarian system and which is consistent with the theory that nationalism is a modern concept. Indeed, both the Chinese and Russian

leaders give every indication that they view their authoritarianism as a superior model for organising society highlighting the relationship between authoritarian regimes and nationalism.

Chapter 1 noted that nationalism has the effect of removing differences within a country and replacing them with a common, hegemonic order of political values. This is exactly what Presidents Xi and Putin have done within their respective countries. Nationalism can be applied as a political ideology to accompany the thin-centredness of authoritarian systems and can be used as a political tool to provide legitimacy and unite the population around a common national goal or purpose. This was particularly evident in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as the European great powers used nationalism for these exact purposes as they pursued a policy of imperial expansion. In authoritarian or totalitarian regimes state-sponsored nationalism helps to increase social cohesion and the inclination of citizens to identify with that state but, that nationalism is impotent until connected to specific interests of the state and national security (Arakelyan, 2015).

In both China and Russia's case, the association of great power status to national identity, combined with their Westphalian mentality of territorial integrity and sovereignty has connected nationalism to specific state interests and national security framed as "core interests". China and Russia's connection of great power status to that of their core national interests, and as a part of national identity, ultimately frames their nationalist narrative and seems to give weight to this thesis's hypothesis. Are China and Russia using nationalism as a political tool so as to construct a narrative in which "great power" is attached to their national identities in the pursuit of national unity, regime legitimisation, territorial expansion and the overthrow of the existing liberal international order?

Largely driven by domestic politics, a state's foreign policy serves its national interests and, as Brand (2018) remarks, few foreign policy interests are more fundamental than the need to protect a country's internal arrangements – its way of life – from external interference. According to Walt (2017), if you want to understand the foreign policy of a great power a good place to start is to look at the great wars it has fought as the experience of past wars is central to most national identities. For Russia, the Great Patriotic War and for – China the Opium Wars and WWII are illustrative of this. China was left with bitter memories of the Opium Wars and WWII; so much so, that it frames their sense of national

identity to this day. The sense of grievance and animosity that China holds occasionally surfaces and is on display through their foreign policy assertiveness and the nationalistic rhetoric that accompanies it. Russia was left with an immense sense of patriotic pride after WWII feeling that they had single-handedly turned the war in the allies' favour and that it was Russia who defeated the tyranny of the Nazis. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union Russia was left with an identity crisis. These self-perceptions have assisted in shaping how both countries not only view the world, but how they interact with it.

As this thesis has demonstrated, President Xi and a small group of actors – the PSC, leading small groups, the PLA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State-run media – control and determine the foreign policy process and narrative in China. Popular nationalist narratives such as the one based on China's past humiliations at the hands of foreign powers frame and colour Chinese foreign policy debates. There are eight drivers of Chinese foreign policy: complementary development; domestic economy; global crisis; global responsibilities; global example; international incidents; core interests; and, national pride. It is the final two drivers (core interests and national pride) that are of considerable importance and pose the greatest risk of propelling China's foreign policy towards conflict. The principal aim of China's foreign policy is the restoration and defence of Chinese territorial integrity. President Xi has framed this as "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" which is closely tied to the "China Dream" and has become a major ideological campaign. In order for him to achieve this, he has moved away from the prior policy of "bide one's time" to a policy of "major country diplomacy".

The growth of China has increased expectations at home for a tougher stance in international affairs. This, in turn, has led to a more belligerent nationalistic foreign policy by China as they seek to secure their "core interests" incorporated into Xi's China Dream which can also be seen in terms of the neo-realist paradigms of defensive and offensive realism. As part of the China Dream, the country seeks to promote the national goal of economic development and to secure their security interests in the Asia-Pacific. To explore this idea further, this thesis applied a case study analysis of China's foreign policy in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and towards Taiwan.

The case study investigation of China's foreign policy in the South China Sea found that the sea is of considerable importance economically and geo-strategically for China and

is framed as one of its core interests. The South China Sea, as the country's Defence Minister contends, is inherently Chinese territory and China has historical rights to these waters which are represented in China's nine-dash line. To improve its ability to assert its authority, China has been developing its military capacity in the sea by building new military installations on existing and reclaimed islands. China and a number of the ASEAN countries (Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam), plus Taiwan, all lay claim to some or all of the islands and features in the South China Sea. China's actions have, therefore, raised a number of concerns not only from the neighbouring ASEAN countries, but from the U.S as well.

The recent Court of Arbitration case brought by the Philippines ruled against China and its nine-dash line claim in 2016 which angered the Chinese population who responded with nationalistic fervour as they believe this is inherently Chinese territory. There is little evidence to suggest that there was mounting nationalist pressure for the government to act in this manner. In fact, the rise of contemporary Chinese nationalism in the South China Sea was primarily a function of the state's assertive policy shift which has enabled President Xi to engage in a more adventurous foreign policy along China's southern maritime frontier without facing too many consequences from China's domestic population as there is no historical sense of grievance in this region. This suggests that Chinese nationalism fits the modernist paradigm and is a tool for the government to gain public support and achieve certain political goals. China's foreign policy in the South China Sea also mirrors an offensive realist approach and the CCP uses nationalism as a political tool to justify their dissatisfaction with the status quo in the region.

The East China Sea case study also found that the sea is of considerable importance economically and geo-strategically for China and is framed as another of its core interests. The CCP perceive these islands to have been inherently China's territory since ancient times. Chinese nationalism on this issue is partly attached to the primordial perspective which sees China as having indisputable sovereignty. However, China did not raise its ownership claims to the islands until after the discovery of oil resources in 1969 which also signifies that China's nationalist rhetoric and how it frames its foreign policy towards the islands stems from a modernist perspective. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are also claimed by Japan which sees them as part of its territory. The result of both countries laying claim to the islands is

the central cause of friction and, again, is related to an unresolved territorial dispute of who is the rightful owner of the islands.

With China's East China Sea policy there is an added factor: the sense of grievance and animosity that China holds towards Japan (examined in chapter 2). This was clearly on display when, in 2012, the Japanese government attempted to purchase the islands from a private owner; moves that were interpreted by the Chinese as an attempt by Tokyo to nationalise them. The Chinese government used blanket media coverage to manipulate and fan popular anger which led to anti-Japanese demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of young people across major Chinese cities leading to violence, vandalism and arson. Due to this animosity towards Japan, however, the CCP has to manage nationalistic sentiment very carefully or it could have the potential to spiral out of control. The control that the government has on managing nationalistic sentiment once again confirms that Chinese nationalism, regarding the East Sea, fits the concept that nationalism is a modern principle and is used as a political, economic and social tool.

The impact of contemporary Chinese nationalism on the country's foreign policy in the East China Sea demonstrates that the CCP uses nationalism as a tool not only to allow the population, especially the youth, to occasionally vent frustration, but to back up the regimes legitimacy. This is partly due to the intensifying competition between China and Japan that has coincided with a hawkish public opinion and a hardening of Chinese attitudes regarding the country's sovereignty claims, but also because it has become more tempting and tactically convenient for the government to resort to assertive nationalism.

A case study analysis of China's foreign policy regarding Taiwan found that the island is of considerable importance not only economically and geo-strategically, but as a part of China's national identity all wrapped up in the rhetoric of Xi's China Dream. Taiwan is one of China's most important core interests and is often defined in Chinese nationalist rhetoric in primordial and modernist terms. Indeed, for China to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" Taiwan must be reunified with the mainland according to President Xi. The CCP considers Taiwan to be an internal affair that warrants no foreign interference in any form. To the Chinese on the mainland, the Taiwan issue is a very emotional one because it touches on the bitter memory of 150 years of humiliation by the West and Japan. Both parties agree that Taiwan belongs to China, the contention has always been which entity is

China's legitimate governing body. As a result of both countries agreeing to disagree the "one country, two systems" consensus was adopted. However, according to Beijing, the one country, two systems consensus is under siege by the Taiwanese independence separatist forces who remain the gravest threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the biggest obstacle in achieving the peaceful reunification of the country.

What has become of real concern recently is the number of air incursions into Taiwanese airspace and the nationalistic rhetoric which accompanies China's actions. This also represents a clear indication that, China's policy towards Taiwan is driven by offensive realism too. The impact that contemporary Chinese nationalism has on the country's Taiwan policy is purely state manufactured and orchestrated to justify the CCP's actions towards the island. However, the majority of Chinese citizens favour reunification and this is why the Chinese government, for a number of reasons, has never allowed large-scale protests against Taiwan, as it does with Japan. First, because of the nationalistic passions it might stir up, not just on the mainland, but within Taiwan itself. Secondly, because the Chinese authorities have chosen other means such as protesting at a third party (the U.S. or Japan) to demonstrate their resolve. Thirdly, China's leaders have always seemed unable to control the actions of the leaders of Taiwan and protesting the island could have the reverse effect. The Taiwan issue remains the most explosive of nationalist issues for the CCP. Emotions towards Taiwan run deep and would quickly come to the surface in a time of crisis. The CCP therefore uses nationalism to support the government's high-priority of preventing Taiwan independence and restoring this territory taken from China. China's behaviour indicates that it seeks not only to alter the status quo, but to, secure regime legitimacy. China makes no secret that it wants to revise the current situation regarding Taiwan and has left open the possibility of doing it by force.

As has been shown, President Putin and a group of actors including – his inner circle, the Presidential Executive Office and the Security Council, government think-tanks, Russian elites, the Russian Orthodox church and the state-run media – control and determine the foreign policy process and narrative in Russia. In the mid-1990's, Russian elites recognised that integration with the West was neither achievable nor desirable and that nationalist narratives of the West 'interfering' assisted in shaping Russia's foreign policy discourse. The factors of Putin's personal interpretation of national interests; ideology and notions of

identity; and Russian strategic culture are of considerable importance and pose the greatest risk of pushing Russia's foreign policy towards one that could generate conflict. This is because they reflect a competitive, realist vision of how Russia sees its place in the world and have nationalistic underpinnings. The principal aim of Russia's foreign policy is the restoration of its great power status which, as pointed out, is a central component of the construct of Russia's national identity. President Putin, since 2012, has embraced a type of imperial nationalism that sees Russia as a unique multi-ethnic civilisation.

Putin's use of nationalism has led to a tougher stance in international affairs. He has stated that Russia should create its own model in world affairs noting that Russia has a historical responsibility to defend its value-based approaches. This, in turn, has led to a more belligerent and, in some instances, a more nationalistic foreign policy in which Russia seeks to secure its "core interests" in their near abroad. To explore this further the thesis considered three case studies of Russia's foreign policy: the Ukraine, Syria and, the Arctic.

The Ukraine case study found that the country is of considerable importance economically and geo-strategically to Russia, but is considered one of its core interests. As has been shown, the Ukraine has an important place in Russian national history and Russia's national identity and is closely connected to the country often being referred to as "a little brother". The Ukraine's moves towards closer integration with the EU angered Russia leaving Moscow feeling insecure in its hegemonic position in the Black Sea and stirring up nationalistic sentiment which resulted in the invasion and subsequent annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Though the Black Sea may not be geo-strategically important to the West, it is of geopolitical interest to Russia (Rezvani, 2020) and is also a central part of what frames Russian identity, with strong historical Russian ties tracing back to the region for centuries.

Russia's annexation of the Crimea was presented by the government and state-media in unprecedented, national irredentist, terminology which pushed the idea that the "return" of Crimea was the greatest moment in Russian history since the victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 and, was aimed at reunifying the Russian nation in one state. The role of the impact of contemporary Russian nationalism on Russia's Ukraine policy demonstrates that the crisis has affected the landscape of Russian nationalism by strengthening nostalgic aspirations for the recreation of the Soviet great-power and, of Russia's imperial mission.

Russia's foreign policy towards Ukraine also demonstrates that the country's relations with the West and the former Soviet Republics are not separate issues. Russia's actions can also be seen in terms of defensive realism given its geopolitical insecurities. In fact, Russia's annexation of the Crimea, demonstrates not only an offensive realist approach but shows that nationalism was a central driver which Putin indicated through his rhetoric and moves aligning with Russia's imperial mission. Great powers, according to offensive realists, are never content with the status quo; the ultimate goal of a great power is hegemony and Russia has made no secret about how it feels about interference in its near abroad. This also demonstrates that Russia, if it sees fit, will revise the status quo to improve its interests and national security.

The analysis of Russia's foreign policy in Syria found that Russia believed that the West was behind the Syrian conflict as they wanted to bring about regime change indicating that Russia's response may have been driven by improvisation in response to events. There are a number of reasons why Russia intervened in Syria. First, they were invited by the Syrian regime. Second, Syria purchases large quantities of military weapons from Russia which brings in a considerable amount of revenue for the state. Third, opportunism, this is an attempt to re-establish its great power status as the U.S. presence declines.

Russian officials have frequently justified their position in Syria as a bulwark of international and regional order against the threat of state collapse, chaos and the spread of transnational Islamist networks. However, satellite images and on-the-ground accounts dispute this assertion claiming that Russia is instead targeting Syrian opposition rebels challenging the Assad regime. The role of contemporary Russian nationalism in framing the country's Syria policy reveals that notions of identity seem to play a constructive part, in the sense, that much of Putin's rhetoric around the war is connected to Russia's longing for the return to great power status and to playing a greater role on the international stage. Syria certainly provides the latter for Russia. As has been noted, the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals and to take advantage of situations when the benefits outweigh the costs. In Russia's case, it took advantage of the U.S. pull-back from the region and the opportunity being to become the hegemon power demonstrating that Russia is a revisionist power.

Applying a case study analysis of Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic revealed that the region is of considerable economic and geo-strategic importance to Russia for a number of reasons. First, the country has invested heavily in major projects and infrastructure with a focus on natural resource development. From a security point of view, Russia wants to reassert its territorial sovereignty along its borders of the AZRF. In 2015, President Putin approved a new version of Russia's maritime doctrine resulting in substantial budget rises to keep pace with, and counter, NATO activities in the region. To improve its ability to assert its interests, Russia has modernised and built up its military capabilities in the region to protect its interest and secure its maritime passage the NSR. Second, President Putin sees the Arctic as being of considerable national interest and framing it as an essential part of what it is to be Russian through nationalistic rhetoric. This should be of no surprise considering that there are over 2 million Russians living in the Arctic and that 20% of the domain is considered to be Russian territory.

Analysing Russia's military presence in the Arctic showed that Russia seeks three objectives: to enhance homeland defence; to secure its economic future; and to create a staging ground to project power, primarily in the North Atlantic. This last objective is where the impact of contemporary Russian nationalism diverges on their Arctic foreign policy with its connection to national identity and the attainment of great power status. Putin's approach and framing of the Arctic as an integral part of the Russian identity is a low-risk way to promote contemporary Russian nationalism and, is popular among the population, inspiring a "rally around the flag mentality". Putin's policy in the Arctic is identifiable with the realist approach as it is mostly based on Russia's material capabilities. Russia's foreign policy, at first glance seems to reflect a defensive realist approach although the nationalist rhetoric and Putin's desire to attain great power status is actually more in keeping with offensive realism approach driven by Russian nationalism.

The hypothesis of the thesis was that both China and Russia use nationalism as a political tool, so as to construct a narrative in which "great power" status is attached to their national identities in the pursuit of national unity, regime legitimisation, territorial expansion and the overthrow of the existing liberal international order. To test this hypothesis this research applied a case study analysis of Chinese and Russian foreign policy and reached a number of findings.

First, as has been shown, both countries attach great power status to their national identities and use their great power ambitions as an attempt to unite the populace behind a common goal. China has framed its China Dream in such a way that it is supposed to unite the nation behind the goal of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”. Vladimir Putin has framed Russian nationalism to counter the West and unite the country around a uniquely multi-ethnic identity based on a common language, myths and symbolism whereby he portrays Russia as the last bulwark of conservative values against a decadent West.

Secondly, both the Chinese and Russian government use nationalism as a tool to legitimise their respective regimes. Appealing to nationalist sentiments both the CCP and the Russian governments construct the nationalist narrative in such a way that they are the only ones that can defend the vision of a strong country: this is a powerful driver of their respective foreign policies. Lacking the organic legitimacy that democracy provides, China and Russia manufacture nationalism and selectively apply nationalistic rhetoric and propaganda when it serves their national interests, as was demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4, and helps to legitimise their regimes through their foreign policy.

Thirdly, both the Chinese and Russian leaders have used contemporary nationalism selectively in their respective foreign policies in combination with a variety of economic, military and political tools to either acquire territory or to build or strengthen existing alliances. With regards to territory, both countries have used contemporary nationalism (as propagated by the state) to frame the nationalist narrative around particular territorial issues in order to legitimise their regimes, assert their authority and justify the potential use of force. As Davidson (2006) contends, rising power translates into opportunity for expanded foreign policy goals and nationalism can provide the demand for such expansion.

These three examples seem to give weight to this thesis’s hypothesis that China and Russia are using nationalism as a political tool, so as to construct a narrative in which “great power” is attached to their national identities in the pursuit of national unity, regime legitimisation, territorial expansion and the overthrow of the existing liberal international order.

In their overall foreign policy orientation, China and Russia are broadly like-minded. Indeed, their interests and agendas often align. This is particularly so with regard to,

challenging U.S. primacy and their antipathy to what they see as Western revisionist efforts to impose a “liberal” character on the rules-based international order (Hill, 2021). Chinese and Russian leaders fully understand, according to Brands (2018), that the U.S. perceives autocratic regimes to be illegitimate and threatening, so they believe that the U.S. and other democratic powers will never leave them alone. This perception by both countries adds to the nationalistic sentiments and fuels their foreign policy assertiveness.

Both countries have harnessed nationalism not only to reinforce regime legitimacy, but to try to returning their nations to greatness. This could prove to be a double-edged sword though. Yes, they have returned their nations to greatness, but the price of this could potentially be conflict. As Beehner and Collins (2020) note, one of the triggers for a great power war could be China’s or Russia’s embrace of some historical claim to a disputed territory or population it once controlled based on a nationalist agenda which could lead to conflict with other great powers, particularly the U.S.

As of late, Western security anxieties concerning China and Russia have become focused on their capacity to encourage and manipulate the internal discontent and division within Western democracy, thereby undermining the legitimacy of Western democratic systems (Lieven, 2020). The former U.S. Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, has referred to China and Russia as revisionist states that are both seeking to establish “a world consistent with their authoritarian models” (Eckel, 2018). This is a thought that is echoed by Brands (2018) who states that after a period of historically low geopolitical tensions, revisionist powers – namely China and Russia – are increasingly testing the liberal international order created and led by the U.S. Seen from China and Russia’s perspective though, high levels of concern with security and autonomy translate into a demand for revisionism as Davidson (2006) argues. As this thesis has demonstrated, China and Russia are deeply concerned with the liberal international order led by the U.S. as they believe that this international order is, ultimately, a threat to their security and autonomy.

In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), Paul Kennedy argues that economic growth, usually driven by technological or organisational breakthroughs, enables a society to build a strong military which becomes the basis for expanding international influence, frequently in the form of empire. Over the years, both the Chinese and Russian states have become more repressive and more militantly nationalistic, tightening their grip

over society and the economy at home, while engaging in increasingly aggressive behaviour on the international stage (Lynch III, 2020). They are also subject to U.S. sanctions of various types due to their assertive regional activities (O'Hanlon & Twardowski, 2019).

Historical evidence suggests that China and Russia's military modernisation will lead to a more nationalistic foreign policy, as was seen in the lead up to WWII and, this is exactly what is taking place presently. As Mearsheimer (2014) remarks, great powers do not seem to remain status quo powers unless they are the hegemonic power to begin with. China and Russia both argue that their foreign policy actions are for the protection of their national interests which are being frequently undermined by the West.

Rising states must face domestic or international pressures in order to consider revisionism but they will only actually adopt revisionist goals if they believe that they have the opportunity to achieve them (Davidson, 2006). As has been demonstrated, China and Russia's foreign policies indeed suggest that they are revisionist powers. According to Davidson (2006), there are two main alternatives for defining revisionism and status quo seeking in the classical and neo-classical realist literature. The first alternative is to identify revisionist and status quo states on the basis of whether they seek power or security. The second alternative is to define revisionist powers by the values they seek which they do not presently enjoy such as territory, status, markets, ideology and, the creation or change of international law and institutions (Davidson, 2006).

In Conclusion, nationalism is not a key component of any realist theory and, yet most realists appear to believe that it has been an especially powerful force in international politics (Mearsheimer, 2011 p1). Realists argue that states make decisions based on power and interests. However, historians of great power conflict might reply that ideology, in this instance nationalism inevitably influences how those interests are defined (Brands, 2018). According to Mearsheimer (2011) the emergence of nationalism as a potent force over the past two centuries has had a significant effect on aspects of international politics central to realism's intellectual agenda. As has been examined and pointed out throughout this thesis, China and Russia are using nationalism as a political tool, so as to construct a narrative in which "great power" is attached to their national identities in the pursuit of national unity, regime legitimisation, territorial expansion and the overthrow of the existing liberal international order.

The final section outlines the limitations of the study and makes some recommendations for further research.

### *Limitations of the Study*

One of the main limitations of study is that my grasp of both the Chinese and Russian language is insufficient for surveying sophisticated discourses on foreign policy and national identity, in these languages and thus I have had to rely extensively on secondary sources for translation. Related to the above, and made worse due to Covid-19, it was not possible for me to undertake fieldwork in either country including the conducting of interviews with academics and foreign policy practitioners. Due to time limitations other case studies that could have been investigated such as Ladakh or South Tibet (China) and Georgia (Russia) were excluded.

### *Further Research Recommendations*

(1). Further research could investigate more in depth the connection between authoritarianism and contemporary nationalism by including case studies of other states. The competition between authoritarianism and democracy powerfully shapes the strategies that both China and Russia are employing to reshape global politics. Exploring the connection between nationalism and authoritarianism elsewhere would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

(2). More foreign policy case studies for both China and Russia could be examined. These might encompass China's foreign policy towards India or Australia and Russia's foreign policy towards the Baltic and Scandinavian states to see if contemporary nationalism influences policy decisions.

(3) Additional research could investigate other rising powers. Do their leaders view contemporary nationalism as being associated with the attainment of great power status and, if so, what is its impact on their foreign policy? Are they also offensive realist and revisionist in their orientation towards the prevailing international order?

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