The Geopolitics of Ideology: Intellectual Tumult and the Slow Demise of a World Order

Dr. Dale Walton

Abstract

International political orders do not endure permanently but there is no reliable method by which the general health of an international system can be assessed at any given point in time. The collapse of an international political order can begin without clear, prolonged warning. This occurred at least twice in the twentieth century. First, a seemingly robust multipolar political system descended into three decades of war and crisis; by the latter 1940s, a bipolar system had emerged from the wreckage. Before its swift collapse, the bipolar Cold War system had appeared essentially stable for several decades. It was replaced by an American-dominated essentially neoliberal Post-Cold War order that now is at an advanced state of decay. This analysis explores the likelihood that political ideology will play a major role in the future reorganization of the international system, and the danger that ideological clashes will create an environment conducive to the outbreak of Great Powers’ war. At present, broadly neoliberal ideological assumptions dominate the global discussion of international political discourse. As a result, future Great Power war is treated as being

---

1Dr. C. Dale Walton is a Professor of International at Lindenwood University, Missouri, United States.
extremely unlikely, if not impossible. This article, however, contends that a variety of factors particularly technological and related social change, will likely result in a period of ideological foment and clashes of values. In turn, this will create an environment with certain broad and troubling similarities to that of the early twentieth century. The article argues that it would be highly desirable for states, particularly Great Powers, to consider these likely future developments carefully and work in concert to prevent the development of international conditions favorable to the outbreak of a Third World War.

Key Words: Geopolitics, Multi-polarity, Neoliberalism, Fascism, Illiberalism, Populism, Third World War/World War

Introduction

Individuals living in the very early twentieth century did not, with rare exception, realize that they soon would experience the collapse of a world order which, at the time, appeared extraordinarily stable. Only with the benefit of hindsight did the fissures in the old, multipolar world order become clear to all. This essay contends that the international system presently is undergoing a geopolitical shift in the most expansive sense of that term. Global political and economic conditions are undergoing a change as epochal as in the years of the first half of the twentieth century; technological change, and its impact on everyday life is even more swift and radical. Also, like the early twentieth century, this is a time of intense ideological foment as individuals seek to place these changing conditions in an intellectual framework and reveal a path to an amenable future.
Many of the developments of recent decades have been profoundly positive; the percentage of the global population living in near or absolute poverty, for example, has dropped precipitously. However, at least in wealthier countries, many socio-economic trends were strongly positive in the early twentieth century; increasing literacy, improvements in housing (including electrification) and sanitation, and so forth. Nonetheless, these encouraging developments did not prevent the World Wars. Indeed, in an indirect sense, they helped create fertile ground for cataclysmic events. Millions of citizens were angered or disgusted by changing and, for the less fortunate, seemingly merciless societies. They then became politically mobilized. Unfortunately, this provided daring ideologues of all varieties with extraordinary opportunities. This was particularly the case in the years following 1914 when the leaders tasked with guarding the existing world order, acting with hubris and short-sightedness, led the world’s most powerful states into a cataclysmic war. By doing so they discredited themselves and created fertile conditions for unscrupulous political adventurers.\(^2\)

As humanity enters the 2020s, global social, economic, and political conditions certainly do not precisely mirror those of the early 1900s. However, there is an unsettling general similarity in global conditions. Of course, one might believe that major warfare is a problem that has been solved. While one hopes such an analysis is accurate, it seems imprudent, to say the least, to casually wager the fates of millions on the mere assumption that the future will be “major war-free.” It is impossible, at least with existing data-

gathering and social science methods, to predict reliably the likelihood of a future interstate conflict resulting in fatalities reckoned in the tens or hundreds of millions. Yet, even a one percent probability of such a conflict should be given the horrific suffering that would result, a matter of intense concern on the part of policymakers worldwide. If the probability of catastrophic interstate warfare might plausibly be far higher than one percent, deployment of the overused term “international emergency” surely is warranted.

As in the early twentieth century, it is all too easy to ignore systemic instabilities, trusting that dangers will be eliminated in the future and potential disasters thus averted. To assume that, an event will occur within a given time frame is, however, very different from assuming that it will occur near the end of that period. This essay does not assume that any catastrophic conflict may only occur well in the future, giving political leaders and others ample time to defuse potentially combustible interstate tensions. In say 1913, people had no particular reason to assume the world order was about to begin a horrifying long collapse. The psychological phenomena of normalcy bias incline humans to assume that even if devastating events might happen in the future, they will not soon occur—in essence, that the near future will be similar to the recent past.³

This assumption works well most of the time. Conditions that are considered “normal” by a particular person can endure for decades—even an entire lifetime. An individual, whose lifespan extended from 1955 to 2015, never experienced the devastation of a World War. One, who lived from 1895 to 1955 had a very

different experience in this regard. An optimistic observer may be inclined to conclude that this is because massive interstate wars will never happen again for some reason or a combination of reasons. And it conceivably might be true that destructive warfare on a massive scale is a phenomenon entirely belonged to the past.⁴

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and subsequently the Soviet Union seemingly provides powerful evidence for this proposition. Given its massive Soviet military and intelligence capability, Moscow was exceedingly well-prepared physically to meet any challenge to its international power. Yet, the Soviet Union chose to remain in its sickbed and die quietly; apparently vindicating the belief that something happened in the twentieth century that made great power warfare on a massive scale impossible in post-1945 years. However, there are serious reasons to presume that a new cycle of wild ideological imagination is underway and that this intellectual fecundity in turn will create a fertile environment for violence of every description, including warfare on a gargantuan scale. This work argues that states, the Great Powers in particular, should treat such possible developments as a plausible and extraordinarily serious threat to their national interests. Moreover, prudence requires that they seek to cooperate to prevent the further development of “powder keg” conditions likely to lead to a Third World War. As such, this will require the Great Powers to accept a considerable degree of global ideological diversity.

**Ideology and the Death of the Old Multipolar Order**

The First World War maltreated the global system fiercely, and led to the demise of some of its key players. Multi-polarity did not

---

collapse altogether, but the political landscape changed radically between 1914 and 1919. Huge multiethnic polities such as the Austrian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires collapsed, even though, at that point, the “Victorian model” of global imperialism appeared intact.

Strangely, the decaying multipolar system of the interwar years was inherently unstable and in many respects parallels today’s conditions. The unfinished business of the First World War provided ample fuel for ideological turmoil and military conflict. Victory in the Russian Civil War permitted Leninism to establish itself as a political philosophy with a firm state power base and consistent global influence. Benito Mussolini and the Italian thinkers orbiting around him drew on a variety of socialist, militarist, and other inspirations in “inventing” Fascism. The German Nazism emerged soon after as an especially twisted tributary of the fascist river. On the other hand, the collapse of long Qing Dynasty and subsequent events had left China also in a condition of grave weakness riven by internal ideological discord and the collapse of governing institutions. At that time, Japan’s political turmoil was less catastrophic, but its political system was transformed leaving political institutions little changed on the surface yet, thoroughly radicalized.

Great Powers which took pride in democratic rule, were beset by unhealthy intellectual contradictions in their governance. For the Americans, the most compelling issues were internal, centering on racism within the United States itself. For London and Paris, the challenge was effectively global with imperialist and democratic imperatives pulling in opposite directions. Increasing worldwide resistance to European imperialism presented a critical challenge to the long-term survival of the British and French Empires. Unsurprisingly, given human nature, policymakers in both
imperial capitals argued endlessly and considered plans for reforms. There were only few who squarely confronted the likelihood that the imperial governance was unsustainable, at least without the near-continuous use of ruthless violence. Yet, even leaving aside potential mass revolution by oppressed populations, domestic revulsion to events such as the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh/Amritsar Massacre, showed that many voters in the imperial core rejected vicious colonial policing. Indeed, already by May 1921, the British government had passed the Government of Ireland Act thus placing most of Ireland (aside from the six counties of Northern Ireland) on a short road to full independence.

While the post-1917 rise of aggressive totalitarian governments is critical to understanding how the Second World War came about, it is far too simplistic to frame that conflict simply was a struggle between “democracy” and “fascism.” Aside from the glaring fact that Stalin’s Soviet Union was a brutal totalitarian regime, the three major Axis Powers often lumped together in the fascist category varied significantly, in ideological terms. It is true that Rome, only a marginal Great Power, progressively, Nazified under German pressure and the Italian Social Republic declared in northern Italy in September 1943, following the surrender of Italy’s actual central government, was never more than a German-occupied puppet state. The Japanese Empire, however, always had ideologically little in common with its European partners; its intellectual trajectory was distinctive. Categorizing Tokyo as fascist was expedient for Allied wartime propaganda but the term confuses discussion of Imperial Japan’s ideology more than it clarifies.

Beyond the narrow question of what sort of regime should be considered fascistic (or for that matter democratic), there is a larger matter: the aforementioned landscape of ideologically
creative characteristic of the early and middle twentieth century. Simple binaries, fascists versus democrats or the subsequent Cold War between communists and a vague “free world” encouraged under the appreciation of the kaleidoscopic diversity of political movements. They jockeyed for a place in the minds of potential adherents during the early and middle twentieth century. Even movements that accepted a broad label such as Marxism varied wildly in their particulars. Specific political thinkers and parties propounded Stalinism, Trotskyism, Maoism, and so on, seemingly without end. In the decades following the Second World War, ruling parties in countries as disparate as Albania, Cuba, Ghana, and North Vietnam developed their own Marxist variants, purportedly tailored to their country’s specific needs. Similarly, believers in electoral democracy supported a broad range of socio-economic arrangements. “Socialist” notably was (and still remains) a word of such widely varied usage that both totalitarian parties and democratically oriented ones such as France’s Socialist Party, were comfortable applying it to themselves.

When the Cold War was ongoing, self-identified sophisticates tended to be dismissive of the importance of political philosophy in the superpower struggle. This certainly was the case with Western social scientists which, as a group tended to prefer explanations for the tension between Washington and Moscow that downplayed the importance of ideology. To emphasize the importance of ideological belief was perceived as crudely reductionist while stressing the importance of military-industrial complexes, trade and development planning, and similarly bureaucratic matters were thought more refined.

The events from the summer of 1989 to the Soviet Union’s dissolution in late 1991, however, had a curious effect on “sophisticated” opinion. The importance of ideological belief was
belatedly acknowledged. It was, after all, virtually unimaginable that the Politburo of Nikita Khrushchev or Leonid Brezhnev would have presided over the downfall of Soviet power without deploying immense violence. Clearly, political belief or perhaps more accurately a lack thereof, had played a pivotal role in the Soviet collapse. It was not that the Soviet leadership had abandoned their project, Gorbachev and other senior Party officials saw themselves as reformers and not anti-communists. As their empire crumbled, they addressed individual aspects of the crisis indecisively or improvisational. Desperately trying to craft some arguably successful outcome, most of the Soviet leaders clearly were unable until nearly the end to believe that their state might simply come unglued and collapse. They were both powerful leaders and passive observers who lacked the will to act with reckless conviction.

Cynical or craven though individual members of the *nomenklatura* might have been, this does not mean that most of them had altogether lost faith in the Soviet system. To assume that Soviet leaders somehow intellectually and emotionally processed that Leninism had demonstrably failed, is to presume facts for which the contemporary evidence appears quite thin.⁵ Rather, they were members of ruling elite whose once fanatical faith had corroded over the years. Their political worldview was still largely intact, yet, at the same time brittle and confused. Only when circumstances had finally made their previous ideological certitudes embarrassing, did the faith on which Soviet power was built truly collapsed.

There is a good reason to believe that there are intellectual and ideological crisis more eminent and cataclysmic than those which afflicted the latter Soviet Union. Having discounted the role of ideology during the Cold War itself, Western elites quickly adopted an almost entirely opposite perspective. In fact, the Soviet collapse had demonstrated definitively that not only was ideology central to global politics but a very particular forming of economic and political neoliberalism had triumphed proving itself to be not only correct but historically inevitable.

Thus, what is often referred as the “Washington Consensus,” came to be the predominant lens through which global elites assessed international politics. The term was coined in 1989, by the British economist John Williamson to refer to a list of the typical prescriptive conditions that international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund would attempt to impose on countries experiencing financial crisis. The phrase however, soon slipped well beyond this constrained usage, and came to be used as shorthand for the economic and political neoliberalism characteristic of the 1990s and early twenty-first century.

For a brief time, the Washington Consensus enjoyed enormous momentum globally. The title of Francis Fukuyama’s famous 1989 article *The End of History?*, minus its question mark was appropriated as a sort of an unofficial mission statement for the Washington Consensus. History came to a close and a specific vision of liberalism and free markets had triumphed. The only task remaining was to organize the world accordingly. Marx believed he had discovered the great truths of history and explicated them but he had been wrong. Path to global peace, prosperity, and liberty is only claimed to have been discovered since the highest levels of the global elites, billionaires, major Western politicians, and similar folk
had (unwittingly, in most cases) embarked on a utopian endeavor. This is feared to end in grief under prevalent circumstances.\textsuperscript{6}

**The Decline of the Washington Consensus and the Rise of the Populists**

In historical terms, the Washington Consensus’ reign was quite brief. During the 1990s, even in Washington itself a minority doubted the intellectual premise underlying the Consensus. At the time, however, they were largely regarded as backward-looking pessimists; incapable of appreciating how fundamentally global politics had shifted.

The effort to create a stable global *Pax Americana* in which a benevolent United States would oversee the transition to a vaguely imagined era of global peace turned out to be a tragic fiasco. US military power proved unable even to accomplish comparatively modest goals such as stabilizing Somalia and ensuring solid democratic governance in Haiti. Larger strategic projects such as the decision to expand NATO set the stage for dangerous future confrontations. Russia, not unreasonably saw NATO expansion as an aggressive gesture that took advantage of Moscow’s temporary weakness.\textsuperscript{7} At the same time, potentially critical geopolitical problems such as questions regarding control of the South China Sea were left to fester (In fact, if Washington had been less preoccupied with appearing stern toward China in the


years following the Tiananmen Square massacre, it might have been able to serve as a diplomatic broker whose assistance and gentle prodding might have been quite useful in resolving various territorial disputes over waters off the Asian Rimland).

The United States in short proved an inept hegemon even in the salubrious conditions of the 1990s. In the period following the 9/11 attacks matters worsened as Washington first took on an open-ended mission to convert Afghanistan into a stable democracy. It even more disastrously commenced a similar quest in Iraq in 2003. In a cruel irony these efforts unleashed chaos throughout a wide swathe of Central and Southwest Asia while concurrently destroy the United States’ reputation as the guardian of international stability.

As the United States was inadvertently undermining its global power, cracks in the Washington Consensus grew deeper in the European Union, Latin America, and elsewhere. The backlash took different forms depending on local circumstances. The most straightforward reaction occurred in countries such as Venezuela and Argentina where the citizenry elected hard left governments which straightforwardly rejected many of the key economic ideas associated with neoliberalism. In Britain, voters became increasingly dissatisfied with governance by European technocrats shielded from democratic accountability and with their own elected leaders’ willingness to surrender power to Brussels. Speaking globally, illusions that had appeared plausible in the 1990s that the world’s countries would increasingly and permanently embrace neoliberal economic and trade policy and those international organizations of various descriptions increasingly would exercise

---


The “Davos hyper-elite,” which imprudently assumed that history was approaching a happy conclusion is intellectually flailing today. Much like its Soviet counterpart circa 1990 it is desperately seeking to understand precisely what is occurring and how it can be reversed. These anxious efforts on the whole, have demonstrated little imagination. Insofar, even a coherent story has been constructed; it closely mirrors the notion of false class consciousness. Ironically, a favorite crutch of the old Marxist left is used when it needed to explain the curious enthusiasm of Western workers for free elections and markets.

The narrative in essence is that vicious and obtuse (yet, paradoxically brilliantly cunning) populists have tricked voters into rejecting the benevolent rule of a globalized neoliberal elite whose wise measures are beneficial for virtually everyone. In this telling, history was moving forward on an ascendant arc, but populists learned how to use the dark side of human nature—particularly xenophobic, racist, sexist, and similar impulses—to dupe voters into seeing a cruel and dangerous world. Beset by hallucinatory demons voters gave power to populists who are destabilizing the world and demolishing the accomplishments of more than a quarter century.

This analysis contains elements of truth. Certainly, many neoliberal economic policies encourage relatively free flow of capital and goods and the related globalization of supply chains. They have been conspicuously most essential in creating
circumstances that allowed hundreds of millions of people to rise from absolute or near-absolute poverty into the global middle class.\textsuperscript{10} However, many of the leaders widely labeled as populists indeed do to a greater or lesser degree, cultivate electoral advantage by sowing anger and fear. The reaction against neoliberalism contains many dangerous elements and these do present a danger to prosperity and democracy globally.

The eagerness of many neoliberals to paint their opponents as little more than a collection of troglodytes still provides a clue concerning the weaknesses in their analysis. In the United States and Europe\textsuperscript{11} many of the most respected media outlets regularly assert that Western democracy is being strangled. Warnings implying that the European and American right is increasingly dominated by near if not out rightly by the fascists who have been ubiquitous in recent years.\textsuperscript{12} Monstrous historical events particularly the Holocaust are invoked with some commentators even implying grotesquely that elected governments in Europe and North America are morally quite similar to a regime that


intentionally rounded up millions of innocents so as to enslave and murder them.

This is an ideological derangement not serious analysis. However, glaring ethical flaws of figures such as Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, they are not fascists. In a few EU countries, such as Hungary and Poland, right populists in power might plausibly be accused of trying to reshape their countries into electoral democracies that nonetheless are decidedly illiberal. Even this is more generically authoritarian than specifically fascistic, a point that far too many commentators ignore. The term fascism is inappropriately but carefully used to closely associate it with the totalitarian government.

The distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism has been critical to sound ideological analysis since the 1920s. Actual fascists enthusiastically embrace totalitarianism in an unambiguous sense of that word. As Richard Pipes notes, Mussolini himself explicitly embraced totalitarianism crafting Italian fascism into a governing philosophy that “politicized everything ‘human’ as well as ‘spiritual’: ‘Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.”

There is a dearth of evidence that even the most unappetizing major populist right officeholders in Western countries harbor any intent to establish governments of totalitarian character. A substantial percentage of such figures exhibit illiberal tendencies and some no doubt would happily establish a straightforwardly authoritarian regime, if given the opportunity. Indeed, a distressing number of formally democratic countries

exhibit strong illiberal tendencies. Unfortunately, that trend is likely to accelerate in coming years.

It is simplistic and inaccurate to throw highly varied local movements in dozens of countries into a barrel marked “fascism.” It would be similarly ill-advised to toss the globe’s various left populist movements together into one marked “communism.” Neoliberal elites almost invariably have avoided the latter error most likely because of a combination of two factors. First, although memories of the Cold War era are fading, Western elites in particular tend to recoil at any analysis with the flavor of McCarthyite anticommunism. They crudely paint every movement of the populist left as a reincarnation of Leninism. It would be immensely embarrassing to them. Second, left populists tend to be viewed as less menacing than right populists partly because they have not yet enjoyed much electoral success in the most prominent Western democracies. If figures far on the left become heads of government in major Western countries, however, this relative indulgence of the populist left is likely to decline substantially. Elite observers would not be unfair to accuse such leaders of being communists. Their criticisms would be similar to those on Trump: such leaders are dismissive of the rights of political minorities, dangerous to global economic stability, and so forth. And, just as with Trump, such accusations probably would not be entirely baseless.

As the political environment continues to corrode in numerous democratic states, it is becoming increasingly clear that the neoliberal global vision of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century will not endure. Insofar as the term “Consensus” ever was applicable, it does not exist any longer. The Washington “Consensus” is now a little more than an intellectual bunker in which a relatively handful of wealthy and influential but nonetheless, deluded people shelter. They dare not leave it because they do not understand, much less know how to reverse, the populist movements that are transforming the neoliberal environment they prize. Thus, they sit forlornly, reassuring each other (with false bravado) that the storm soon will pass. It will not.

The analysis in this article focuses mainly on post-Cold War affluent countries in Europe and North America because these countries have endeavored to serve as the engines driving global neoliberal reform forward. The populist turn in the West, therefore, deeply undermines the effort to ensure neoliberalism’s dominance of the “global ideological imagination.” The dangers that resurgent populism might present to domestic tranquility and regional peace, may be most acute, however, for non-Western countries with longstanding religious and or ethnic animosities. Indeed, one of the inherent weaknesses of the global neoliberal projects is its relative indifference to local conditions outside of Europe and North America.

Conditions in South Asia present a particularly concerning example. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) certainly have leveraged exclusionary populist themes for electoral advantage and indeed were doing this long before the recent populist wave in the West. Broadly speaking, the BJP might reasonably be defined as a populist party of the right, although it should be noted that Western-based left/right labels fit
awkwardly when applied to countries with a very different political and cultural history. Regardless of definitional particulars, however, certain BJP policies such as removing the special autonomous status previously enjoyed by the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir and potentially deporting large numbers of Indian-born Muslims unable to definitively prove their citizenship status are extremely dangerous. Such efforts not only may endanger India’s domestic peace, but also raise tensions with Pakistan and other countries endangering international peace and encouraging the further rise of popular extremism in South Asia and beyond. While minority populations face particular jeopardy, it is not difficult to imagine how a “cycle of outrages” may take hold in which India and Pakistan were to respond to perceived serial provocations with increasingly risky rhetoric and behavior.

Such a dynamic could spin out of control with nuclear warfare being a disturbingly plausible ultimate outcome. Of course, such a horrific turn of events would impact the entire world profoundly perhaps even opening a long era of extreme populism, de-globalization of trade and governance, and frequent interstate war. While the rise of neoliberalism is inextricably linked to the Cold War and its outcome in the multipolar world of the twenty-first century, any number of powerful actors will possess the capability to bring an end to the age of neoliberal hope for global peace and prosperity.

**Whistling Past a Thousand Graveyards**

For as long as they have possessed a mythic/historical imagination, humans have attempted to understand ongoing political circumstances by looking at the past for guidance. Looking backward allows for reflection on enduring aspects of human motivation and behavior. The past is a spectacularly renewable
resource—so long as it is remembered, there is always more of it from which to draw.

Making appropriate intellectual use of the past, however, is a tricky endeavor. First, there are simple questions of fact—that is, whether persons and events are remembered accurately. For some, such as historians, anthropologists, and other scholars attempting to reconstruct the past maximizing historical accuracy is a critical consideration. For those simply trying to make use of the past to inform their strategic thinking, however, historical exactitude sometimes is a secondary issue; a generally accurate record may provide good instruction, so long as unintentional inaccuracies do not misshape the overall lesson. In a few cases, careful factual accounting even might be irrelevant. The Iliad is factually fanciful, but nonetheless has served as a strategic teaching tool for millennia; the text is a powerful myth which sharpens a careful reader’s appreciation of myriad strategic realities, not a “history” of the Trojan War in the modern sense of that term.16

The major events of the twentieth century, such as the two World Wars and the Cold War, are anything but obscure, having been recorded by a huge number of observers. These events are known to us in a manner which, for instance, Julius Caesar’s conquests in Gaul cannot be. By modern standards, the details of the latter were barely recorded by contemporaries. Tens of thousands of pages of records produced by any one of the hundreds of divisions that fought in the Second World War dwarf the modest surviving descriptions of Caesar’s imperial adventures. No matter how intently they study, scholars cannot recover that

which has been lost irretrievably. Even the finest scholars of Rome must extrapolate from a small number of documents that sometimes are of questionable accuracy in key respects. This lack of available data inspires humility. Any self-professed expert who claimed to know in detail and with certainty, every significant fact relating to the Gallic Wars would thereby expose himself/herself as a fraud, a fool, or both. Trustworthy people do not claim to know the unknowable.

More recent major events do not impose the same discipline upon their students, yet the enormity of the records relevant to the great happenings of the twentieth century ensure that no one individual human can read and process them all. A mountain range of material relating to the Cold War already is available (much, of course, still remain classified). The prevailing understanding of these events is an amalgam of the work of a vast number of individuals, each focused on a tiny piece of the overall subject or if they are addressing matters broadly, picking a relatively few details which they will convey to their readers.

In historical terms, the Cold War ended only very recently. It might be possible to discuss Caesar’s politics without passion, but the Cold War’s ideological battles are too closely related to those of today to permit truly disinterested analysis. Chronologically, the Cold War is too near at hand and too obviously connected to the present moment to place much trust in our ability to comprehend its lessons fully. Yet, even before the final Soviet collapse, the sheer quantity of available information combined with the confidence that comes from having lived through recent events, tempted even quite thoughtful observers into an unwarranted belief that they fully understood the Cold War and its lessons.
It was, in retrospect, deeply unwise of the global political elite—not to mention a vast army of scholars, journalists, and others—to treat the West’s Cold War victory as the lodestar for a new global political order. Of course, in the immediate Post-Cold War period, leaders had to respond to the circumstances of the moment and even more perilously plan for the future. This, however, is true of leaders at all times in all places. The absence of humility that marked the response of the Western elite to the outcome of the Cold War ultimately was a choice. Leaders who prided themselves on their supposed sober judgment, chose to extrapolate a self-flattering, crude “political theory of everything” from recent events, and made policy accordingly. Past imprudence is now being paid in irregular installments, but no one knows the full amount of the bill.

The left and right populism of today will continue to develop and grow in coming years. In turn, representatives of the incumbent but fading neoliberal elite—fearful of being unceremoniously dumped on history’s roadside as Hillary Clinton was by US voters in 2016—will become increasingly desperate in their effort to contain the “populist virus.” Though, loudly proclaiming their commitment to liberalism, they, like the populists, are not reliable guardians of liberty. In recent years, they have shown a disturbing readiness to cast aside longstanding norms, embrace dubious conspiracy theories, and otherwise engage in behaviors largely indistinguishable from those of the populists whom they so bitterly resent. (Many questions relating to Russian interference in the 2016 US election remain unanswered but the eagerness of so much of the Western elite to embrace all manner of improbable conspiracy theories and casually claim that
Russia is attempting to destroy democracy globally does not reflect well on them).\(^{17}\)

**Conclusion: A Fragile World**

One of the most striking aspects of the unfolding crisis is its very obviousness—to *not* see that the global order has entered a period in which the arrangements of the characteristics of the post-Cold War world are collapsing. They cannot be repaired. Whatever a global order solidifies in the future, will be radically unlike that of today.

What precisely will be the ideological disposition of the world’s great and medium powers cannot be known. Decaying liberal democratic systems certainly will not all be succeeded by unashamedly authoritarian regimes of the right or left—although the readiness of elected governments, including those in North America and Europe, to comprehensively monitor their citizens and menace those they find suspect, is disconcerting. What the Chinese, Russian, and other presently authoritarian governments will look like in a decade or two is even more mysterious.

Regardless of how specific regimes change and adapt to international conditions, however, we should not expect the ideological tension simply to dissipate. Many issues that today are largely or entirely speculative are likely to come to the fore. For instance, hundreds of millions worldwide will be surely enraged if their governments allow “unnatural” manipulations of the genome, but hundreds of millions of others will be similarly angered if they do not. Similarly, as the robotic and AI revolutions mature, there is a very real possibility that the employment prospects of billions of

workers will be negatively impacted. The twenty-first century could be the greatest century in humanity’s history. It is an age in which absolute poverty, slavery and other forced labor, and a dozen of other grave evils are expected to be aggressively addressed. The road to that magnificent outcome, however, is a most dangerous and uncertain one, full of perils both known and as yet undiscovered.

The ultimate task for the global leaders of today and tomorrow is to navigate between a troubled present and a future which will permit humanity to flourish to an unprecedented degree. To do so, the ability to discern the difference between appropriate expectations regarding the domestic and international behavior of states and misguided dangerous demands for global ideological conformity will be required. Unfortunately, there is no clear line between these two categories. Clearly, however, those leaders and thinkers who chose to draw grand sweeping lessons from the outcome of the Cold War and acted on that analysis to force a final historical victory for liberal democracy, have caused grave damage. It is now necessary to, with an attitude of humility and caution, analyze and learn from these errors and use that knowledge to defuse the conditions that might lead the world’s peoples into a Third World War.

All signs currently point towards the transition towards their plan for a One World Order, but expect a bumpy road ahead! Geopolitical Harbingers. Certainly by the closing decades of the 19th century, geopolitical theory was splitting into two camps: Global Seaborne Hegemon theory of US admiral Albert Thayer Mahan, and Pan-Asian Landward Hegemon theory championed by British academic and director of the London School of Economics, Sir Halford Mackinder. This is because they fundamentally and firstly underline the collapse of 20th century ideology as a defacto driving force in geopolitics. Previous mega-change on the global geopolitical chessboard has always featured, usually at an intense level, a clash of ideologies. Geopolitics of Multipolar World - Free ebook download as PDF File (.pdf), Text File (.txt) or read book online for free. That we sometimes take globalization as an objective process is the result of a huge manipulation with public opinion and the fruit of a total information war. Therefore, the picture of global processes we described is an affirmation of the real state of affairs just in part. In such a description, there is a significant share of a normative and imperitive volitional (ideological) wish that everything should be quite so, which means, it is based upon wrenches and, to some extent, striving to represent our wishful thinking as reality. Geopolitics was born in the late nineteenth century and disappeared from universities with the end of the Second World War. IR as a separate academic discipline was born during the interwar period. Despite the fact that both IR and geopolitics deal with common issues and share many common assumptions, IR theory never directly mentions geopolitics or its prominent figures. Since its formal inception as a concept in 1899, geopolitics has enjoyed a contested and controversial intellectual history. It is thus not an easy attempt to outline the intellectual history of geopolitical thinking. As geographer Dodds puts it Critical geopolitics thus highlights agency (the capacity to act politically) and the constitutive role of language in geopolitical practice, and conceptualizes geopolitics as culturally embedded spatial practices both representational and material of statecraft. Geopolitics is thus understood as a set of socially constructed, rather than naturally given, practices and ideas through which the international political economy is realized geographically. The origins of critical geopolitics can be traced back to the work of John Agnew, Simon Dalby, an In reality, a multipolar world has not yet arisen; instead, the new design of the world order is rather different: it is multilateralism, based on interests and not on geopolitical state actors or power blocs that constantly need to balance each other. Kortunov has defined multilateralism as a network of corresponding regimes based on and interwoven by political, economic, and cultural ties. In addition, as Kortunov stated, an additional cause for the breakup of the Concert of Europe was associated with the slow but steady shift from autocratic-feudal state systems to constitutional monarchies and democratic societies at the end of the 19th century. Awakened national themes, agitation, and polarised public opinion destabilised the autocratic systems from within.