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with a few minor changes

Conclusion: if America is back, what kind of America is it?

America is back, we are told. But under the present circumstances, it looks more like Roger Federer, who in 2021 was back in Wimbledon, trying to be great again. He has been my favourite tennis player for a long time. But I confess: I did not bet a kopek on his winning Wimbledon 2021. Wise decision. At 39, the former No. 1 lost his quarterfinal match on Centre Court to 14th-seeded Hubert Hurkacz of Poland, who had never been past the third round at any Grand Slam event until this tournament. There is a natural law for human beings, as there is a historical law for empires. Both are born, develop, reach the apex of their health and power, then decline, and finally disappear.

At which point is America, given this reality encoded in humanity's historical evolution? An answer came when, at the moment of finalizing the writing of this conclusion, protest movements exploded in Cuba. Immediately American mainstream media, right-wing politicians and right-wing Cuban expats rushed to support the Cuban people who, it was claimed, were 'demanding freedom from the Communist dictatorship'. President Biden was also quick in publicly declaring his support. On 12 July 2021 the White House published his statement (emphasis added):

We stand with the Cuban people and their clarion call for *freedom* and relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic and from the *decades of repression* and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by *Cuba's authoritarian regime*. The Cuban people are bravely asserting *fundamental and universal rights*. Those rights, including the *right of peaceful protest* and the right to freely determine their own future, must be respected. The United States calls on the Cuban regime to hear their people and serve their needs at this vital moment rather than enriching themselves.

¹ Information used for this book has been updated to August 29, 2021. The complete list of references and a substantial bibliography can be found in the book.

As it is well known that the US has tried on several occasions to kill Fidel Castro and to invade the country, and moreover has imposed upon Cuba cruel embargos and sanctions for more than 60 years despite annual UN near-unanimous votes to rescind them, it is not possible to refrain from qualifying Biden's statement as hypocritical, demagogic and cynical. The US blames the Cuban government for the problems the country is presently facing, despite the fact that US sanctions have devastated the lives of the Cuban people. And in spite of this, Cuba, a small country of 11 million people, has succeeded in resisting for such a long time, developing in particular an efficient and globally respected health system. Cubans are experiencing serious difficulties, but they are not starving. The goal of sanctions is to make the living conditions of the people so desperate that they would finally rebel against the government and call upon the US to 'liberate them from the tyranny of a dictatorial regime'. One cannot but recall President Nixon telling his staff to impose sanctions on Chile in 1973, with the clear purpose of making the Chilean 'economy scream' in preparation for the regime change that followed. The US strategy has not changed, as sanctions are used for the same purpose against Iran, Venezuela, Syria as for a multitude of other countries, and but for unfortunate Chile, appear to have had contrary effect.

China is a particular case of the US addiction to imposing sanctions on countries who do not comply with its interests, the use of internal problems (that are real) in an attempt to destabilize the country and, most optimistically in its view, to produce a regime change. As we have seen, in Chapter 3, that the US targets China by interfering in three very sensitive regions: Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet.² This happens in the midst of a surge in anti-China propaganda embedded into the US Cold War mentality, with the usual mix of sanctions, military build-up in the China Seas, and support to subversive activities within China. Moreover, the US is trying to convince its allies in Europe and in Asia to unite against the purported existential threat represented by China. The same aggressive policy is also directed against Russia. Taking stock of the various policy initiatives taken by the US and its allies, some US columnists do not hesitate to qualify this war against China and Russia is a fight of

² Several US federal laws have been approved by the US Senate with an overwhelming majority concerning these three areas: The Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, The Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act, The Tibet Policy and Support Act.

the civilized nations to deter the non-civilized ones.³ It is therefore not surprising that China and Russia have formed a *de facto* alliance.

The US foreign policy of President Biden clearly demonstrates a shift towards the globalization of the NATO alliance.⁴ Thus, contrary to its original *raison d'être*, the containment of Soviet Russia, NATO is on track to become a global alliance for the perpetuation of the US empire. In chapter 3, I have shown that, based upon the first months of the Biden administration, there will be no changes in the US foreign policy despite the verbal announcements that the US foreign policy of President Trump will undergo a fundamental change: diplomacy is back. Unfortunately, the Biden administration has made it clear that the military build-up will continue, as well as the demonization of the enemy. But the contradictions between the declared US priority to diplomacy and the persistence of US sanctions, overt and covert military actions, and subversive activities against countries that do not comply with the interests of the establishment of the US Empire are becoming ever more evident to global publics and elites, who may finally start getting the bigger picture.

This zero-sum perspective on conducting international relations, based upon the opposition between WE with our values, and THEM against our values, is reminiscent of the famous 'WE against Them' of President George W. Bush, or his father's 4-word implicit threat, 'What We Say, Goes.' This is making the traditional US foreign policy even more sclerotic. The US is in reality beginning the first stages of an undeclared war against the existential threat China is representing for its liberal democracy and capitalism model.

³ George F. Will: 'Opinion: Civilized nations' efforts to deter Russia and China are starting to add up', *Washington Post*, July 16, 2021: 'It is, therefore, well to notice how, day by day, in all of the globe's time zones, *civilized nations* are, in word and deed, taking small but cumulatively consequential measures that serve deterrence'. George F. Will writes a twice-weekly column on politics and domestic and foreign affairs. He began his column with the *Post* in 1974, and he received the Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 1977. His latest book, *The Conservative Sensibility*, was released in June 2019.

⁴ Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, *The Globalization of NATO*, Clarity Press, 2012.

The importance of values for the implementation of US foreign policy

Biden's foreign policy is based upon the primacy of values – which may seem paradoxical, given US actual actions. Values are not valid if they remain stuck in the stratosphere of ideology. In order to acquire real value, they must be implemented in reality, both at home and abroad. Now, for five centuries the European countries first, and then the US, have manifested the habit of *not* implementing those values abroad. While the US liberated Germany, Italy, Japan and South Korea from dictatorship at the end of WW2, the liberation was immediately followed by military occupation and the stationing of military bases. Moreover, that liberation was conditional: the liberated countries were not only to change to democracy and capitalism, but above all they had to become the allies of the Empire, obviously in a subordinate position. The manner in which Biden has called upon US allies to unite against China and Russia leaves no doubt about how the US sees its role in the world, and its relations with its allies -- in fact as its vassals. This is reminiscent of Jefferson's statement referred to in chapter 2: 'We are destined to be a barrier against the return of ignorance and barbarism. Old Europe will have to lean on our shoulders, and to hobble along by our side'.⁵

As for the implementation of values domestically, not only is the US a non-democracy, it is, more precisely, a plutocracy. There is sufficient empirical evidence indicating that European countries have been following the same pattern. It is true that President Biden has put forward several initiatives for improving the living conditions of the American people: the American Rescue Plan, healthcare, taxes (i.e. a taxation system more in tune with the fiscal capacity of the taxpayers), student debt, workers' rights, made in all of America, infrastructure and climate change, rural America, and the American middle class. Very commendable – if in fact they proceed from campaign rhetoric and even manage to achieve legal enactment! Two *caveats* with a negative prognosis. First, many of these initiatives go contrary to the traditional way the establishment has managed its relationship with the American people, giving priority to the interests of its component sectors, with the

⁵ Jefferson 1816. It is interesting to note that 'old Europe' has been used on 22 January 2003 by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, two centuries after Jefferson used it.

support of those who make their living by so doing, e.g., mainstream scholars, journalists, and think tanks. Second, and equally important, these values must also be implemented in the international arena, when in fact the US is already trying to engage the world in a new Cold War.⁶

It must be said that this type of behaviour does not find its origin with the US. After all, Americans came out of Europe, as Eve came out from Adam's rib. And they took with them the main features of the European culture. Certainly, it can be argued that the US has brought several features of the European culture close to perfection. Unfortunately, those it perfected were not the best ones. If the West really wants to develop a constructive relationship with the rest of the world, it must first look unflinchingly at the years of its troubled past. Especially if it wants to promote itself as a model that the rest of the world should embrace.

Western civilisation is indeed a great one. It developed through at least two and a half millennia to reach today's form: Greek philosophy, Roman law, Christianity, the scientific revolution, the passage from the slave and serf-based economy of the Middle Ages (using a form of slavery, the serfs of the glebe) to a new form of economy - market economy, the industrial revolution, the liberal revolution with its ideas of democracy, human rights, freedom and individual responsibility, and the socialist counter-revolution with its idea of collective responsibility. It is a great civilization, especially because of the ideas and values it has developed for itself and promoted to the rest of the world. It is much less great (to say the least) for its deeds.

⁶ President Biden delivered a self-congratulatory speech to commemorate his achievements during the first six months in office (The White House: Remarks by President Biden Before Cabinet Meeting to Mark Six Months in Office, 20 July 2021). But even *The Guardian*, that for several years has become a supporter of the US-led crusade against China and Russia, has been less optimistic (*The Guardian*: 'Joe Biden: six months on, cold, hard reality eclipses early euphoria', 18 July 2021).

The betrayal of values by Western countries' foreign policy

European countries first and then the US, have invaded the rest of the world since the discovery of the Americas. Since the beginning this has been done in the interests of the elites, who launched an unending series of aggression and conquest wars, including among themselves. Most people do not want to go to war. They want to live peacefully and have a reasonable income in order to lead a decent life. But the Western establishment (European first, then the American) out of greed devastated the Americas, committing one of the worst genocides ever through the centuries-long wars against indigenous peoples in the northern and southern hemispheres, and by organizing a large-scale trade of African slaves. In the US slavery lasted from 1619 (arrival of the first slaves) to the end of the civil war (1865), followed by a century of apartheid. Meanwhile, the Europeans (soon joined by Americans) were busy in submitting the whole of Africa, large parts of the Middle East and of Asia to the dictatorship and exploitation of the colonial powers. Many Western pundits take pride in referring to the fact that after independence their former colonies introduced several features of liberal democracy, e.g., India. But the West should not be too proud of this achievement. Just read the statement by Shashi Tharoor in his book significantly entitled *Inglorious Empire. What the British Did to India*: 'Indians can never afford to forget the conditions in which they found our country after two centuries of colonialism'.⁷

The era of colonialism and the struggle between Western (mainly European) countries for the conquest of the colonies ended with the apotheosis of the two world wars they themselves had started. The argument that WW2 was for the good cause notwithstanding, it led to tens of millions of deaths on battlefields and elsewhere, including the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Japanese and German people guilty of having not been able to oppose the rise of Nazi-fascism in their countries.

⁷ Just read the statement by Shashi Tharoor in his book significantly entitled *Inglorious Empire. What the British Did to India*, Tharoor 2016, p. 216. This is but one instance. The title of Walter Rodney's landmark work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, says it all with regard to that continent.

Then came the glorious time of decolonization -- unfortunately only in words, as many of the 'liberated' colonies were soon submitted to neo colonialism under the yoke of the so-called Washington Consensus, through which the Western countries continued to exploit their former colonies. The US was quick to step in, using the economic international organizations it set up to serve its economic and power interests (World Bank, International Monetary Fund). Both Europeans and Americans hypocritically hid their real motives under the pretence of helping these countries to develop their economy. Ha-Jo Chang quite rightly qualified these new colonizers as 'bad Samaritans'.⁸ Real emancipation from the colonial era became an impossible mission for the great majority of these countries. Only countries that had already started the transition to modernization, such as Japan and South Korea, were able to develop their economies thanks to a strategy based upon the leading role of their governments, which was permitted and even encouraged by the US, providing they accepted its dominant role, in order to project them as a developmental competitor to Asian Communism, much as occurred with Germany and the USSR in Europe.

During the immediate post-WW2 era, the US established an astonishing number of military bases in the liberated countries: 119 in Germany, 44 in Italy, 25 in the UK, 119 in Japan, 80 in South Korea. How can a country be free under such circumstances? Then came the time of the regional wars (warm and cold) with their deaths, mutilations, displacements and massacres: Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya—not counting more or less violent regime changes in Latin America, and elsewhere. Add to this the frequent use of sanctions, should the targeted countries not comply with the US dictates, most of the time with the willing or coerced support of its European and Asian allies. Moreover, during this era the US set up several secret armies in European countries during the Cold War, launched 13 illegal wars during and after the Cold War, attempted at least 81 meddlings in other countries' elections during and after the Cold War, and at least 59 attempts at regime change during and after the Cold War, while setting up numerous illegal prisons where torture of US enemies could be secretly practiced.

⁸ Chang, Ha-Joon 2008.

Then came the time of the blowbacks to the US foreign policy

Then came the time of the blowbacks or, as they are sometimes called, the historical nemesis that comes in the wake of hubris. Some countries developed enough power resources to be able to resist the dictates of the Empire. Already during the Trump Administration, the US witnessed several ‘blowbacks’. To begin with, North Korea resisted the explicit menace in the form of bombastic language that it would be ‘obliterated’ from the earth by the US military power, should it fail to comply with the US demand to de-nuclearize. Then, the attempted regime changes in Syria, Venezuela and Iran failed. Moreover, these countries have been supported by the existential enemies of the US: China and Russia. Even more worrying, not only Russia and China have been cementing their *de facto* alliance, but China and Iran have concluded a mega agreement covering a large number of strategic domains.

Two more important blowbacks came during the transition from the Trump to the Biden administrations. On 15 November 2020, 15 countries, led by China, signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world’s largest trade bloc, comprising 2.3 billion people and covering 30% of global trade. An influential mainstream think-tank did not hesitate to qualify this agreement as ‘a geopolitical win for China’.⁹ Then another important ‘blowback’ came, as Europe gave a clear message to the US on 30 December 2020 by signing an important trade and investment deal with China: the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI). A few days later, another mainstream think-tank qualified this deal as a Biden’s defeat.¹⁰ It is true that the approval of this agreement has since been suspended by the European parliament, very likely under pressure from the US. Nevertheless, the fundamental reasons that explain why the EU signed it will not vanish in the foreseeable future. France, Italy, and above all Germany, as well as other European countries, have clear economic interests in cooperating with China. This does not mean that they approve of China’s political system. In fact, contrary to the US, their analysis of the international situation is not based exclusively upon values but is closer to reality than that of the US that is stuck in its foreign policy that gives prominence to values. More worrying, the US establishment does not seem to understand the meaning of these ‘clear

⁹ Ward 2020; see also the *Financial Times*: Brunsden 2020 et al.

¹⁰ Barfield 2021.

messages' and has embarked on a crusade against China and Russia, while trying to gain the support of its European and Asian allies, albeit against their interests.

At the beginning of the Biden Administration, several additional clearer messages have been delivered to the US establishment. First at the Alaska meeting between American and Chinese top diplomats (19 March 2021), and second at the Geneva meeting between Biden and Putin (16 June 2021). During these meetings, top leaders of the two 'existential threats' made it very clear that they were not going to kowtow to the US. When accused of violating universal values, they both fought back, reminding the US of its troubled past, as well to its current violations of these same values, both at home and abroad.

Then, July 1, 2021, at the anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping made China's message even clearer. He started his speech by reminding the audience and the world that after the Opium War of 1840, China had been gradually reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society and suffered greater ravages than ever before. The country had endured intense humiliation, the people were subjected to great pain, and the Chinese civilization was plunged into darkness. Since that time, national rejuvenation has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation. Then, he implicitly referred to Mao's 1949 statement:

'Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation; we have stood up', and confirmed it: 'through tenacious struggle, the Party and the Chinese people showed the world that the Chinese people had stood up, and that the time in which the Chinese nation could be bullied and abused by others was gone forever'.

These three events constitute an epochal change in the relations between the US and China and Russia. They are visible and audible manifestations of the 'silent transformations' that have changed the balance of power since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in fact had already started to be visible and audible at the end of WW2, as explained in Chapter 3. Mao's statement was certainly at that time a cry of hope for a better future more than a reality. In fact, the bullying of China went on for several decades after 1949. But Xi Jinping's

statement stands, without doubt, as a very serious warning to China's enemies, and above all the US: It was China's 'Yes, we can!'

Xi Jinping's statement should be taken very seriously, and not as a simple variation in Chinese rhetoric. The first event that showed the reality of this statement occurred in August 2021, a few weeks after Xi Jinping's speech: the chaotic and humiliating withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan. As explained above,¹¹ Afghanistan is one of the dimensions of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), i.e. China's grand strategy, through which China 'is encircling the world', as the influential *Financial Times* had already asserted in 2017.¹² One of the most important components of the BRI, the China-Pakistan corridor, connects the Road Belt (from Kashgar - Xinjiang Autonomous region) to the Maritime Road in Gwadar, a port city on the southwestern coast of Pakistan, thus avoiding the Malacca Strait and the US navy. For several years China has been negotiating with the Taliban, offering to build what Afghanistan desperately needs: roads, railways, electricity, medical care, telecommunications and education. In exchange China asks the Taliban to control the transfer of jihadists to Xinjiang where they act as US proxies destabilizing this province situated on the BRI. Put more plainly, China is planning for Afghanistan to become a *de facto* part of the China Pakistan corridor: the US out, China in.

It is my view that the loss of Afghanistan has been exaggerated by all the components of the US establishment. One can understand their reaction, given the shock of the humiliation delivered by a 'bunch of peasants' wanting to retake control of their underdeveloped country—and this after 20 years of war with the most sophisticated weaponry, billions of USD of American taxpayers' money, and devastating consequences for Afghan civilians. Yet, Afghanistan is only one piece of the puzzle of the Asian chessboard on which China and the US are competing.

A more significant consequence is the impact that this defeat may have on the morale of the US establishment and its allies. Already China has warned Taiwan not to count on the faithfulness of the US to its allies when it considers that its national interests are no longer at

¹¹ Chapter 3, Section: *The Belt and Road Initiative: encircling the world*.

¹² Hancock, (2017).

stake.¹³ Even more particularly worrying for the American people and the rest of the world is the possibility that the US establishment might succumb (again) to the temptation of using even more military means in order to recover confidence in the US ability to impose its will. As this book has suggested on several occasions, doing otherwise would entail a radical revision of the way the US sees the world and its role within this world, towards a more cooperative attitude toward the countries it considers as its existential threats: China and Russia. But is the US establishment ready to at least explore this path? The problem for the US is that not only is China back, but it has been back for a couple of decades since its accession to the WTO, without the US recognizing its rise as a world power. China, it is not likely to be intimidated. So, yes, China can!

Yes, China can!

That China can, is first confirmed by how China has implemented its strategy for making Mao's statement come true. China has been successful, thanks to a long series of actions, when it had a reasonable chance to succeed, and non-actions, waiting for the 'silent transformations' to change the 'situation potential' to its advantage, both nationally and internationally. By doing so it succeeded in trapping the US into a fixed position from which it seems unable to escape, i.e., continuing to implement a foreign policy based upon the threat, and eventually the actual use of economic and military resources. During the same period of time, China has given the impression of being all the time on the move, evolving from one stage to the other: from the economy to the military, technology, investments abroad, training of talents, and the diffusion of Chinese culture; from copying the West to innovating autonomously; from opening up its economy to the world to protecting its national market from predatory capitalists; from pursuing bilateral agreements to establishing new multilateral organizations; from asserting local interests (the China Seas, Taiwan) to developing global interests in Eurasia, Africa, Latin America, and the Arctic; from criticizing traditional enemies (e.g. Japan and India) to negotiating with them, and so on. Thereby,

¹³ All the commentators have inevitably referred to the humiliating evacuation of the US embassy in Saigon in 1975.

China has confirmed the analysis François Jullien and André Chieng's assessment of the essence of strategy:

the essence of strategy is on the one hand to gradually trap the competitor into a fixed position [i.e. from which it cannot escape] upon which the strategist can act, and on the other hand to constantly change its position in order to make its own strategy incomprehensible to the competitor' ... and when it starts to understand it, it is too late.¹⁴

Not being able to take stock of one's mistakes is clearly the foolish habit of the US establishment. As the Chinese calligrapher Lei Pingyang would say: 'foolishness is like bamboo, empty inside but unshakable (*chǔn zhě ruòzhú: zhōngkōng ér bù dǎo*).'

That China really can, is further attested to by the analysis of official documents, especially those written by the US military agencies, that shows that today the US is not ready to envisage its relations with the rest of the world, and more particularly with China and Russia, in a constructive and cooperative way. These countries are considered as *revisionist powers* that constitute the central challenge to US prosperity and security. These documents regard it as increasingly clear that China and Russia want to shape a world consistent with what is regarded as *their authoritarian model*. The consequence that is put forward is the need to accelerate modernization programmes of the US military resources by investing more money in a sustained effort 'to solidify our competitive advantage'. In particular, this requires, among other measures, the modernization of key capabilities as it concerns nuclear forces; space and cyberspace as warfighting domains; artificial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and missile defence.

¹⁴ Chieng, 2006, p. 210, Jullien 1995, Ch. 1.

A history of threats: From the Indians to the Chinese

Clearly, this returns us to the beginning of this book, i.e., to the Indian threat and the fear it produced: *the savage Indians are attacking us!* This threat and the related fear have been followed by a long list of other fears caused by countries that did not conform to the US model and the interests of its establishment: the Mexicans, Latin Americans, Bolsheviks, Germans, Japanese, North Koreans, Vietnamese, Syrians, Libyans, and finally Chinese and Russians. In fact, the essence of the fear is not that these countries intend to harm what is now called the Homeland and the American people, but rather that these countries want to put an end to the world America made and to downgrade it from the position of No. 1 that it has enjoyed since the end of WW2.

Today the US is not what it was between the end of WW2 and the end of the 20th century. Then, the balance of power in terms of economic, military and cultural resources was largely in favour of the US. But today the US has lost large parts of its economic, military and cultural (i.e., values) advantage.

It seems that the Biden administration has not understood that it is the economy economic and not military values, that will decide the alignment of secondary powers with the superpowers. This is another law of history that the US establishment should have learned from its own historical experience. It was the extraordinary development of US economy that attracted countries into the US orbit, *volens nolens*. while its military resources served mainly to force the liberated countries, as well as the recalcitrant ones, to remain in the US Empire. Most of the time, cultural resources have been used as a 'window dressing attraction'; it is clear that they alone would not have been able to attract secondary powers. Indeed, their very appeal is more likely to have been due to the US economic and military standing.

Today, China's attraction is a confirmation of this historical law: despite its weaker cultural resources, and the negative evaluation of its political system by liberal democratic countries, its power of attraction based upon its booming economy speaks volumes. Here, as shown in this book, the US is declining on almost all accounts, (both in absolute and relative

terms) while China is increasing its power resources at a pace that has been recognized, with fear, by outstanding official US circles.

The consequence is that the US and its allies are distraught. They continue to define their problem as an existential fight between democracy and autocracy, ignoring the fact that today the US is not what it was between the end of WW2 and the end of the 20th century when the balance of power in terms of economic, military and cultural resources largely favoured the US. But today, the US has lost large parts of its economic, military and cultural (i.e., values) advantages. We have seen what has happened between the time when the US could advertise itself as a dream model and impose its will, and this present time when it is experiencing serious difficulties in imposing choices upon others, whether by economic and military actions and/or by cultural attraction.

Why does the US fear to be domestically destabilized and internationally dethroned by interferences from China and Russia? Is it because the US' establishment has lost its faith in the superiority of its model? Or maybe is it because the US establishment has at last realized that it has not been able to satisfy its own citizens and has failed to convince them of the benefits of democracy, at least the type of democracy it has practiced for a long time? But was it a real democracy? Or is it because those in charge of developing capitalism have diverted it from industrial capitalism, that creates real wealth, to financial capitalism, that creates, out of greed, the astonishing enrichment of a small minority of speculators, as brilliantly sustained by Michael Hudson?¹⁵ Given this reality, one can have little hope of seeing non-democratic countries enthusiastically embracing liberal democracy and capitalism.

Then comes the even more worrying question: will China be satisfied to have put an end to the world America made, or will it want to replace the US as the new hegemonic power? But is this even possible? Can this really serve as a US catalyst for fear?

Again, Chinese history and culture suggest that China never had an imperial strategy such as that of the Western powers, who dreamt of conquering the world and imposing their rule. Contrary to the West's clear manifestation of its intent, China has never invaded or

¹⁵ Hudson 2003 and 2005.

colonized America, Africa, the Middle East, and large parts of Asia. It could have done so well before the discovery of the Americas by the West. Already during the 14th and the first half of the 15th centuries China had the economy, the military, and the technological resources to project its power all over the world as the West has done.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Chinese Empire has always remained limited to the periphery of the 'Chinese space'. Even when China had the technological capacity to conquer the world, it did not. Even when its vessels were much bigger and better performing than the feeble caravels Christopher Columbus used to discover the Americas, China limited its excursions abroad to establishing cultural and trade relations, and in any case, they were not motivated by the will to conquer foreign countries.¹⁷

Moreover, today's situation is quite different. After the discovery of the Americas Western powers had developed, especially since the Industrial Revolution, such a formidable economic and military strength that no other country has been able to resist them. Driven by economic interests, and by the missionary dream to diffuse its culture in all its dimensions (political, economic, social, and religious) the West has dominated the world for several centuries. But should China today try to impose its will on the rest of the world, it would face a formidable opposition, first of all from the US and its allies, but then also from regional powers, as no one wants to be the vassal of anybody else. Certainly, if China does succeed in putting an end to the international system as dominated by the US, it will weaken the US, but it will not be able to destroy America's power resources, especially if the US renounced behaving as if it were the master of the world because of the superiority of its culture, and instead adopted a more cooperative stance.

Unfortunately, the US has neither done so nor seems unlikely to do so. Today China faces US propaganda that demonizes its foreign policy and its leaders, starting with Xi Jinping. Moreover, the Trump administration launched a trade war against China supported by a variety of sanctions that the Biden administration does not seem to want to abandon.

¹⁶Sun, Jayaram and Kassiri 2017.

¹⁷ Nevertheless, for excursion to Europe and America, see the analysis of the expedition of the eunuch admiral Zheng He by Levathes 1994, Menzies 2003 and 2008.

Finally, the US is continuing its strategy of promoting subversive activities implemented by its self-defining nongovernmental organizations, in fact organizations funded by the US government. History shows that all forms of power (democratic, authoritarian or totalitarian) protect themselves against subversion by all means, even illegally if necessary.

The importance and limits of ideology as a guide to US foreign policy

To explain the difficulties that the US and China have experienced for a long time in establishing relationships based upon cooperation, mutual understanding and respect, I have foregrounded the influence of the ideologies the US and China have developed through time (Chapter 2). The competition between the US and China derives from the very special role ideology plays in forging the implementation of both countries' foreign policies. Chinese culture is particularly flexible and has changed through time under pressure from the West. Moreover, China does not decide with whom to cooperate, according to the nature of whichever country's political, economic and cultural system. Implementing the principles of sovereignty and of non-intervention into a country's internal affairs, China does not seek to impose changes in the internal organization of a country as a precondition for establishing cooperation. Rather, the idea of mutual benefits guides the choice, hence the slogan: 'win-win'.

Despite its appearance of openness, the US in fact has a more rigid culture. It tends to establish cooperation with countries that share its values, as the Biden foreign policy clearly shows. Of course, there are exceptions based upon the geopolitical evaluation made by US administrations. The US empire has often cooperated, and it is still cooperating today, with authoritarian countries, such as Saudi Arabia, and has even replaced democratically elected governments with dictatorships, such as in Iran in 1953 and in Chile in 1973. Moreover, it has accepted to cooperate with non-democratic countries on matters such as climate change and terrorism. But in all these cases the cooperation does not mean an acceptance of those countries' political organizations, nor that the cooperation will last forever. The criterion is the US evaluation of its geopolitical interests. For example, after the attack on the Twin

Towers in New York and the development of Islamist resistance that followed the US assaults on Iraq and Afghanistan, the US accepted to cooperate with Russia and China, which similarly faced Islamist movements. But as soon as the US evaluated that the geopolitical situation had changed, the US ceased to regard these countries as partners in this struggle. For example, as the competition with China had reached new heights, the US not only changed its policy towards terrorist attacks in Xinjiang but even started to support separatist Islamist movements in Xinjiang that are accused of cooperating with terrorist groups.¹⁸

The US ideology as reconstructed in Chapter 2 constitutes a formidable and coherent set of interrelated beliefs. It has become a way of thinking such that, when it is embedded into the human mind, it is practically impossible not to follow by analysing the world and giving meaning to one's position and action inside that world. Only the grip of an ideology that considers the US to be the exceptional, virtuous, indispensable Republic chosen by God to lead the world towards the end of history, can explain the vigour, determination and even the sincere sense of justice (based upon US values) that has accompanied the US expansion over vast territories occupied by other peoples. That ideology has been the major driver of the US foreign policy, albeit undoubtedly amplified by economic interests, the development of political power, and messianic and religious motives that have tended over time to reinforce each other.

This ideology has been used throughout history as the guide and a permanent justification of US foreign policy that in fact has operated since the foundation of the American republic, and still operates today. If one looks at the implementation of this ideology since the foundation of the US republic, one cannot help considering that this ideology has become a formidable Weapon of Mass Destruction.

It has destroyed the capacity of the American establishment to conceive of any other world in which the US could play a different role. By implementing that ideology, the US has

¹⁸ The US even deleted one of the latter from the list of terrorist organizations it had established for a long time. The goal is to deploy destabilizing activities within China's territories, as we have seen in Chapter 3 – a clear violation of the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention within a foreign country.

thought it to be its duty and its right (in practice of God's imperative) to embark on a long series of mass destructions all over the world, many of which could hardly be justified by an existential threat of an enemy ready to defeat and destroy the 'people chosen by God' and with it the values it claimed to defend.¹⁹ On the contrary, by doing so the US has invariably ended up justifying its own operations of mass destruction (and those of its allies), even as it condemns alleged mass destructions perpetrated by its enemies, hardly approximating its own in scale.²⁰ This corresponds to the well-known use of double standards exhibited by both the US and the EU.

Thanks to this ideology, the US has been able to achieve remarkable power results, at least until recently. It is also because of the US two-century long success story, both at home and abroad, that this ideology has left the US mired in the nostalgia of its purported 'glorious past' despite its numerous betrayals of those values, both at home and abroad. When a culture gets to the point that it has the absolute certitude of having gotten everything right (values) and sees no need to change, it is a dead culture or in the process of dying.

Would it not have been better to consider an encounter with other civilizations instead of a clash? Would it not be better to take advantages of the resources every culture possesses and work towards a cross-fertilization between cultures, instead of imposing one's culture on the rest of the world as a condition for developing cooperation, inevitably in a subordinate position, as the history of the West very well demonstrates? Joseph Chan has shown that while Confucianism may possess some values that are not compatible with those of other cultures (e.g. liberal democracy), it is also holds many that not only are compatible, but can improve the implementation of the values of the encountering culture.²¹

¹⁹ Ganser 2016 and 2020, Blum 2013-14. For example, the napalm bombing of 67 Japanese towns (spring of 1945), followed by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 1945), which according to former Secretary of State McNamara would have ended by the condemnation of the US for war crimes, should the US have been defeated in World War II (McNamara 2009). Then followed a long series of attempted and very often succeeded mass destructions: Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Iran, to quote just a few.

²⁰ These resources are equated by Joseph Nye (2004 and 2011) with 'hard power' (comprising economic and military resources) and 'soft power' (comprising cultural resources). I have criticized elsewhere this absurd typology, that in fact constitutes an intellectual fraud (Urio, 2018, pp. 36-43).

²¹ Chan 2014, and Chapter 2 in this book.

Nevertheless, ideology and values are not enough to provide the means of power. Without science and technology, economic and military means, the US would not have been able to become the world power it has been for a long time. Similarly, nor would China have been able to become strong enough to resist the dictates of the US empire. The decline of the US is not only due to the sclerosis of its ideology, but also to the decline of its power resources. The traditional foreign policy that served so well the realization of the interests of the US establishment, cannot be implemented any more. The balance of power resources has undergone a dramatic change since at least the end of the Cold War.²² Today, it is clear that the US government lacks not only the means to unilaterally impose its will in the international system, but it also lacks the administrative and economic means to satisfy the needs of its own citizens, especially in health, education, and infrastructure. Unless one considers that the economic means are there but are diverted in favour of the upper 1% so strongly denounced by Joseph Stiglitz.

Is the US capable of adapting its ideology and foreign policy to the new multi-polar world?

Considering the probability of the persistence of China's political and economic system into the foreseeable future and its growing power in the international arena, has the US the capacity to revise its national interests and to reorient its foreign policy accordingly? In this respect, the fundamental question is: is the US ready to abandon its traditional messianic posture based upon the indisputable superiority of the Western model? To abandon its strategy of meddling in other countries' internal affairs, of seeking regime changes, as well as other types of aggressions both verbal and factual for the purpose of curtailing their perceived 'threats' to US national interests. This will only be possible if one accepts the right of 'national sovereignty' as the fundamental guiding principle orienting states' behaviour in an international system based upon mutual understanding and respect.²³

²² This is a beautiful demonstration of the validity of the analysis of power Max Weber put forward a century ago. Charisma, tradition and respect of legality are not enough to obtain acceptance of the decisions taken by the government, both nationally and internationally.²² For Weber, governments need administrative and economic means, to which we can add military means to impose one's will in the international arena.

²³ See in this sense the article by Stephen M. Walt of Harvard University, significantly entitled: 'Countries Should Mind Their Own Business' (Walt 2020).

Or will the US inevitably lead the world not to peace and prosperity but to an armed conflict with China, which could turn nuclear with devastating consequences for humanity? Has the US leadership the capacity to understand the fundamental change in contemporary warfare as explained by Andrei Martyanov? The US has been able to develop the Jeffersonian dream of world expansion while protected by two vast oceans. Even the formidable Nazi army did not represent an existential threat to America. It was not even able to conquer the UK separated from continental Europe by only 21 miles. But today the US homeland must face the possibility of missile strikes on its Atlantic coasts by Russia and on its Pacific coast by China – or even North Korea. None of these countries is so foolish as to risk a nuclear war with the US, but should a conventional conflict evolve to a nuclear war, it is clear that China and Russia will have the means to strike back.

Certainly, from the point of view of Western values, one may regret and strongly criticize China's evolution towards an increasingly authoritarian state. But in doing so, we forget that we have done our part of pushing China in this direction, and were we not pushing so hard, China might not have felt it necessary to protect itself by such means. No wonder China developed its power resources following Mao and Zhu Enlai's four modernizations: agriculture, economy, science and technology, and defence. Napoleon is famous for having forecasted: 'When China wakes, she will shake the world'. In fact, she did not wake, the West woke her, and what a rude awakening!

The US and the West wanted a liberal democratic China imbedded into global capitalism, obviously in a dependant position. We forget the time we took from the first idea of democracy that appeared in Ancient Greece to the time when the West started to implement the features of a very partial liberal democracy in the 18th and 19th centuries. We have taken a lot of time, but we are impatient to see other countries and cultures to adopt our values and societal organization. We tend to impose our historical time upon others. We claim that we have democracy now, and we do not understand why other countries are not willing to adopt democracy immediately? We also tend to forget our frequent violations of our own values, both at home and abroad. The West has integrated the other countries in its globalizations, the British first, then the American, in a position of inferiority. Why doesn't it accept that a great civilization such as the Chinese cannot indefinitely accept this type of subordinate

relationship? Is the West ready to make its culture evolve? Neither the US nor the European countries seem to be ready to go in this direction. Indeed, history shows that this type of behaviour is today not only very difficult to implement but is also followed by blowbacks that harm the real interests of the American people.

The tragedy of the American foreign policy

The tragedy of the Western and specifically American imperial foreign policy and the mounting aversion to it all over the world (including by some US allies) is that the world still needs the US -- not as an exceptional and indispensable nation, nor as a hegemon that considers the rest of the world as a territory to be conquered, entrusted with the right and even the duty to lead humankind toward an end of history based upon a parochial and provincial 'manifest destiny'.

Americans, I mean the American people, possess a lot of qualities, that probably existed already before they left Europe and were later cemented by the struggle they were forced to go through in order to survive during the troubled history of their new fatherland?²⁴ Unfortunately, they have not been served well by their establishment. Given the ideology mentioned above, when did it go wrong? Was it during the four decades of the neoliberal revolution that increased the already existing inequalities, the rate of poverty, the unequal access to services such as health and education? Or was it during the post WW2 era of unending wars starting with Korea? Or was it at the beginning of the 20th century when an extraordinary propaganda campaign was orchestrated by the establishment to convince the American males to enlist into the US army to join the Europeans in 'their' WW1? In a war the majority of Americans did not see as an American war? Or was it during the era of the Robber Barons in the last decades of the 19th century when unscrupulous industrialists and financiers made fortunes exploiting workers? Was it the rush to enrich oneself by all means,

²⁴ Howard Zinn, significantly entitled *A People's History of the United States* (Zinn 1999). See also Sjurson 2021.

as happened right at the beginning of the US' long march toward China, when several Americans made fortunes in the opium trade?

Or was it already embedded into the ideology that took form at the beginning of the exemplary Republic I analysed in Chapter 2? I have sustained there that the internal rift between ordinary Americans and the elite (today, the establishment) was already present at the moment of the Declaration of independence. We have here another dimension of the rift between WE and the OTHER. Those who signed this historical document were members of the upper class, and above all proprietors of plantations, where slavery was legally practiced. And here we find one of the main features of the motives of the American elite. The exploitation of the cotton fields needed a cheap manpower, that ideally was to last forever, thanks to the racial laws that forbade intercourse between Blacks and Whites. Not only the lords of the plantations exploited a manpower deprived of all rights, but the financiers of the North made fortunes by investing in slave trade needed by the agriculture of the South. And it has never changed since. Fortunately, today there is a new generation of politicians, intellectuals and investigative journalists who try to awake the country from its lost dream. But will the establishment surrender, given its extraordinary power to write and impose its narration of the US past, present and future?

Will the US be able to accept to act within a multipolar world, seeking cooperation in all domains? For it is by accepting that it is possible to cooperate with countries that are organized upon different values and principles without interfering in their domestic affairs, and by implementing a real democracy at home, that the US will be able to persuade these countries of the superiority of the Western Model.

To conclude, for Americans who may still today be opposed to changing the US foreign policy as suggested in this book, here is a message upon which they may reflect. In a remarkable article published in 1997, at the time when the United Kingdom (UK) returned its Hong Kong colony to China from which it had stolen it by force in the XIX Century, Sir Percy Craddock evaluates the devastating mistakes made by the last UK Governor, Chris Patten (1992-1997).²⁵ Patten tried to unilaterally impose to China the liberal

²⁵ I have analysed the Hong Kong case in Ch 3 of this book. Sir Percy Craddock is the British diplomat, a sinologist and a fine connoisseur of China, who negotiated the 1984 agreement between China and the UK by which China accepted a transition period of 50 years between 1997 (year when the UK was obliged by international law to return Hong Kong to China) and 2047. During this period, the former colony would retain

democratization of Hong Kong, while knowing that after 2047 China would have no legal obligations whatsoever to comply with the UK dictates:

‘Was it an example of nostalgia in action, an attempted reversion to times when Britain was in a position to impose solutions? Was the failure to read Chinese intentions just another example of that besetting sin of British foreign policy, the incapacity to put ourselves in the shoes of the other side, which has manifested itself in our European as much as our eastern dilemmas? (...) All who look beyond the headlines will wonder why Britain, with its long and rich experience of China, should reserve its biggest mistake for the last act of the play’.²⁶

Clearly, there are several similarities between the UK policy towards Hong Kong and the US policy towards China. Both are based primarily on values, that moreover have been used to hiding or justifying economic and power objectives. Just replace Britain with America in the above Cradock ‘s quotation. It goes like this:

‘Is it an example of nostalgia in action, an attempted reversion to times when America was in a position to impose solutions? Was the failure to read Chinese intentions just another example of that besetting sin of US foreign policy, the incapacity to put itself in the shoes of the other side, which has manifested itself in its European as much as its eastern dilemmas? All who look beyond the headlines will wonder why America, with its long and rich experience of China, should reserve its biggest mistake for the last act of the play’.

In the 1990s Hong Kong should have turned democratic instantaneously by the magic hand of the UK, as China should today do the same under the magical hand of the US. Finally, I am sure the world will appreciate it if the final act of the US foreign policy will not be war against China, which would be a catastrophe not only for the American people, but also for all humanity.

its capitalist economy and would implement the major liberal freedoms of speech, association (political parties and interest groups), press, peaceful manifestations in the public domain, as well as very limited democratic procedures for the choice of members of the local government and parliament. The Chinese made it very clear that they were not read to go any further.

²⁶ Cradock 1997.