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**UNDERSTANDING CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE:
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF CHINA'S APPROACH
TO SECURITY**

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF CHINA'S APPROACH TO SECURITY

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China's strategic behavior is rooted in and under the influence of the country's very own cultural and military-strategic traditions. What has for the last few decades are said to be indicative of a bellicose or purely defensive nature in the case of China's strategic culture is only one dimensionally drawn caricaturistic representation of the country's evident complexity. The alleged strategic posture and behavior of aggressiveness claimed of being seen in the Chinese strategic behavior for a number of years should be interpreted in line with a dialectic duality between China's philosophical tenets (constitutive of the defensive strand) and strategic principles and guidelines (constitutive of the realpolitik strand) that counteract. One case where these postulations seem to have founded their best reflections is the Sino-US relations. While the US, with its inadequate understanding of China's strategic culture, had come to experience a dissonance in its strategic engagements with a China rising in power, the latter was steadily developing and adapting its manner of strategic engagements with the US whilst getting assertive. China's use of the US' failings and gaps in judgments for its own benefit had resulted in heightened threat perceptions, especially, in their military-diplomatic affairs. Building on such a backdrop, the research question of this thesis, which aims at its macro-level to bring a critical understanding with respect to the impact of China's strategic culture over China's strategic security behavior in the context of international relations, is how does China's strategic culture affects its interactions with the United States in the context of the former's rise in prominence (from the 1990s until the end of the first decade of the 21st century)? To that end, this thesis takes the first generation of strategic culture theory as the approach to enquire about the above matters of concern and controversy.

Keywords: China's Strategic Culture, Security, Sino-US Relation

ÖZ

ÇİN STRATEJİK KÜLTÜRÜNÜ ANLAMAK: ÇİNİN GÜVENLİĞE YAKLAŞIMININ KRİTİKSEL BİR İNCELEMESİ

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Çin'in güvenliğe olan yaklaşımı ve bunlara takiben gelen stratejik davranışı, savunmayı ve reel politiği yansıtan, ülkenin kendisinden gelen kültürel ve askeri-stratejik geleneklerin tesiri altındadır. Son birkaç on yıldır Çin stratejik kültürünün doğasının sadece savaşçı yahut salt savunmacı olduğu yönündeki söylem ülkenin belirgin kompleksitesinin karikatürize edilmiş tek boyutlu bir temsilidir. Çin'in stratejik davranışı özelinde görüldüğü iddia edilen agresif stratejik davranış Çin'in felsefi öğretileri (savunma odaklı kolu meydana getiren) ve bu söz konusu öğretilerin tesirini indirgeyen stratejik prensiplerin ve esasların (realpolitik kolunu meydana getiren) bakarak diyalektik bir bağdaşımda yorumlanmalıdır. Bu varsayımların yansımalarının en iyi şekilde ortaya çıktığı söylenebilecek vakanın Çin-ABD ilişkileri olduğu söylenebilir. ABD'nin Çin'in stratejik kültürüne olan yetersiz kalan kavrayışı onu güçlenen bir Çin ile kurmaya çalıştığı stratejik girişimlerde uyumsuzluk sorunu çekmesine sebep olurken, Çin ABD ile stratejik girişimlerinde göstermiş olduğu tutumu geliştirmeye ve adapte edilebilir kılmakla kalmayıp kendinden emin duruşunu artarak devam ettirmiştir. Çin ABD'nin başarısızlıkları ve muhakemesindeki boşlukların yaratmış olduğu fırsatları özellikle askeri-diplomatik ilişkilerde kendi çıkarına yönelik kullanarak yükselen tehdit algılarına sebep olmuştur. Bu zemin üzerinde tez makro seviyede Çin stratejik kültürünün Çin'in uluslararası ilişkileri bağlamında ortaya koyduğu stratejik güvenlik davranışının üzerindeki etkisine yönelik eleştirel bir anlayış getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Buna yönelik yöneltilen soru ise Çin'in yükselişi bağlamında Çin stratejik kültürünün nasıl ABD ile olan etkileşimlerini (1990'dan 21. yüzyılın ilk on yılının sonuna kadar) etkilediği üzerinedir. Teorik olarak birinci stratejik kültür jenerasyonel çalışmalarının yaklaşımı seçilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çin'inin Stratejik Kültürü, Güvenlik, Çin-Amerika İlişkileri

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Murat Tekbař
Izmir, April 2022

TEXT OF OATH

I declare and honestly confirm that my study, titled “UNDERSTANDING CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF CHINA’S APPROACH TO SECURITY” and presented as a Master’s Thesis, has been written without applying to any assistance inconsistent with scientific ethics and traditions. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources are indicated in the text and listed in the list of references.

Murat Tekbaş

13 April 2022

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SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AD: Anno Domini (Before Christ)

BCE: Before the Common Era

BMD: Ballistic Missile Defense

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CMC: Central Military Commission

DCT: Defense Consultation Talks

DWP: Defense White Paper

GPS: Global Positioning System

KMT: Kuomintang

MAD: Mutually Assured Destruction

MMCA: Military Maritime Consultative Agreement

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NPT: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PRC: People's Republic of China

R&D: Research and Development

RMA: Revolution in Military Affairs

SDI: Strategic Defense Initiative

SLBM: Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles

UN: The United Nations

US: The United States

USSR: The United Soviet Socialist Republics

WWII: The Second World War

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the eyes of many, one of the most contested and attention-gravitating phenomenon that can be said to concern the post-Cold War period is the ascent of the People's Republic of China (PRC) into prominence as an actor of concern and controversy. The foremost reason underpinning this persuasion most often associated with Chinese state's ever-increasing capabilities and untapped potential to project observable competitive competence in what appears to be almost every sphere of interest in the context of today's world affairs. Indeed, if someone ever decides to thread the curvy paths of content-wise raging discussions dissecting almost anything with respect to China's perceived role and importance in and across almost all the sectors and levels of engagement (like a hotspot, spewing controversy and contestation in a capacity quite akin to that of a hyper-trend), then, that person might find: first, how much of an understatement that it would be to claim the otherwise, and second, the fact that the current circumstances did not happen out of a blue moon and there are ideational undercurrents responsible for the current situation.

The foremost item on this hypothetical list of undercurrents is the ever-proliferating inputs and insights provided by a myriad number of analysts, policymakers, scholars, and commentators of news outlets who can essentially be seen to have globally risen to this self-imposed quest-like task to make sense of what this China phenomenon might actually mean for the rest of the world. Although the ways in and through which this China issue has come to be seen, evaluated, and treated by these groups of keen observers do seem to have brought forth quite a number of varying interpretations (given how it is highly dependent on who makes them on and under what basis and ideological clout), we can still draw upon some distinguishing lines in between what appears to be three particular camps of persuasion. These are categorizable as per the contents of their underpinning rationale, descriptive accounts, and normative nature of their arguments. In a cursory investigation, these accounts can mainly be said to fall under one of the following three images associated with China: a peaceful and

defensive China, a bellicose and offensive China, and a China that can-go-in-either-way.

So, the first basically correspond to those who base their assumptions on liberal institutionalism. According to this particular approach, China's rise into prominence should basically be seen and treated as an auspicious occasion not only for the Chinese themselves but also for the Asia and the world at large. The underpinning rationale for this appears to be rather simple and straightforward, given how it (primarily based on economic terms) builds on the idea that further inclusion of historically disenfranchised groups of countries into the global neo-liberal club is never a bad thing, and instead should be seen as the very validation of the argument that the neo-liberal system is working. Therefore, everyone can be a winner as long as they are willing to take note of and comply with a few key perquisites (e.g., the Washington Consensus). Additionally, for China to protect its exponential economic ascent there is no other way than to continue to be a status-quo power. This can be argued to incentivize China to be content within the existing limitations of the international system. This understanding of China's rise in importance as something of a positive change (i.e., the peaceful rise of China¹), could have certain limits to it too. This as for one seems to be especially true at the very least when we start to come closer to a rather higher realm of concerns where the national security interests remain sacrosanct. Although for what it seems that there is a schism between those believing that even in the context of security China was, still is and will continue to be defensive, and the status-quo-prone that rely on use or display of force, the contemporary relevance of this division seems to be rather fading in popularity in the recent decades. This brings us to the second camp of argument which mostly converge on the portrayal of a rather negative picture.

The second group of observers and analysts converge on the perception that China's

¹ This rubric, which can also be seen in its other similarly connotated iterations such as 'China's peaceful development,' can be traced back to an official policy first introduced by the Chinese leader Hu Jintao as part of his overall attempts to assure the international community that China's rise in political, economic, and military power would only in line with peaceful and benign intentions. On how the Chinese leadership was trying to utilize this rubric to replace the word rise (given how it might be enabling a sense of wariness to take a root in the mainstream perspectives) as a way to, first, convey a particular image of China (with the emphasis being given over the country's historical legacy signifying a defensive-mindedness) that would not be a threat to international peace and security, and second, refute the 'China threat theory,' please see; Guo, S. (Ed.). (2006). *China's "peaceful rise" in the 21st century: Domestic and international conditions*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.; Hu, S. (2006). Revisiting Chinese Pacifism. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 32(4), 256-278.

economic and military ascent is a threat to the national interests and collective security of the Western powers (the United States in particular) and Asian-Pacific countries (in general). The lines of argument that seem to be commonly relied on in this persuasion (which commonly take an offensive realist stance) can be categorized in terms of their ideologic,² economic,³ and military-strategic⁴ emphases. Moreover, these perspectives also seem to have been referred in the analysis of historical events, particularly when China was perceived of attempting to use or display coercive and/or punitive military-strategic acts and/or shows of force. The members of this group appear to be sharing an inclination to see more of the negative and threatening aspects of China's buildup in aggregate capability (i.e., China threat theory). While having some merits to their arguments, this way of seeing things is also criticized for its own share of problems, most notably converging in their tendency to fan the flames of threat-perceptions that were already set against China itself.

As something of a borderline middle path, the final camp can be observed to consist of those who in one way or another find it inadequate to draw a hardline conclusion about the role that many appear to be readily surmising about the People's Republic of China to play and subsequent impact to project in the context of highly staked world affairs. Generally, the reason for this group's somewhat of a borderline ambiguousness in their position seems to be linked to the notion of futility of establishing rigid answers to rather complex and sophisticated questions inquiring about a social phenomenon that is influenced by a plethora of variables. In another way of putting it, in the face of questions concerning the strategic behavior of an actor—such as 'Is (or will) China (be) cooperative (benign, non-expansionist, peaceful, defensive, non-hegemonic) or confrontational (belligerent, conflict-prone, expansionist, hegemonic) in its approach to the matters pertaining to foreign policy and national security⁵—one's tendency to base his/her assertions on a perspective that sees the world through the lenses of a

² Mostly referring to those which underline the incompatible nature of Chinese authoritarian communist one-party rule with those of the Western democracies' principles, norms, and ways of life.

³ Mostly referring to the claims about exploitative nature of China's economic adventurism in the world markets, like a new scramble for Africa now spearheaded by China.

⁴ Referring to the threat-perception-maximizing claims that are most commonly known to underline China's rising defense budgets, reported or attempted purchases of foreign military hardware, successful or attempted espionage attempts to gain the military technologies of others states such the ones possessed by the United States, defense-and-offence-focused Research and Development (R&D) efforts, extensive modernization of Chinese military, and so on.

⁵ One thing that needs to be clarified in the context of national security is the multiple meanings that can be said to reside in the supposed intent and purpose of the wording related to energy security, economic security, ideological security, human security, military security (etc.).

purely 'either-or rationale' is and can only be a caricaturistic and one-dimensional approach to understanding the behavioral and attitude-wise underpinnings that can be cultivated with regard to the said-actor. Particularly in China context, this criticism can be summed up in the following way: the mainstream discourses are denying China the right to complexity and sophistication to display defensive and offensive strategic tendencies, something which may very well work in tandem with each other depending on the material and immaterial interests vis-à-vis encountered issue(s). Consequentially, we see those who find an adequate reasoning to base their characterizations of Chinese foreign and security policies into a dualistic (or a middle path) understanding, incorporating both the offensive (realpolitik) and defensive (Confucian/Mencius) strands into one as if they are the two sides of the same coin.

Although each of these three camps can be credited for the contributions that they offer to the general security literature on China however, since the mid-1990s, the second narrative foreshadowing the PRC as a looming strategic threat that is on the path of war has increasingly been gaining more and more ground. From the research point of view, even if one tries to go along with the most minimalistic models projecting assessments of China's military modernization, it is indeed difficult to rule out China as not being offensive. Another raised point is the very historical record reflecting conflictual events that China has shown that it possesses the capability to disrupt regional stability. Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-1996 in this context can easily be accounted as one of the foremost befitting instances. The People's Liberation Army's (PLA) then actions (such as the missiles launched under the excuse of testing, and troops getting deployed under the pretext of military exercises) as a way to intimidate and coerce Taiwan was perceived as an example of this capability. As expected, the situation in which Beijing did steadfast on the country's redlines has not only worked to shake the East Asia, but also enabled the United States to dispatch its aircraft carrier battle groups to the issue-ridden-strait as to deter the former's perceived aggression, thus, risking an armed conflict in the region. For international actors observing what was going on then, these crises were well defining moments in perceiving China under a distinctively negative light of 'a nuisance threat' (Blasko, Klapakis & Corbett 1996; Andrew Scobell 2003).

One consequence of this soaring wave of change in the popular perspective that had created a sense of urgency to re-assess China's rhetoric and behavior that has for so

long been defined as benign, defensive, non-expansionist, non-aggressive, and non-hegemonic. As a result, what is perceived is essentially an increasing tendency among international actors to portray China as highly belligerent or assertive. According to Andrew Scobell (2002; 2003, p.1), this soaring view of China's belligerent proclivities ever since its saber rattling with the United States over Taiwan is something that has more than often been seen as being linked to the "undue pressure of hawkish and hardline soldiers on moderate and mild-mannered statesmen."

So then, which one of these three lines of argumentations depicting a certain image of China in terms of the country's inclination to use force is the most accurate and representative of the reality? Is modern China has really become more and more belligerent and prone to conflict especially in comparison to the country's earlier image portraying a rather non-expansionist and defensive China? Then, how Chinese elite sees and treats the use of force as a foreign and security policy means? This thesis, for one, finds the reason for what appears to be an oversaturation with respect to almost everything related to China as being the direct result of an inadequately cultivated understanding about the intricacies of China's strategic culture, which essentially is driven by a *Dao of [contradictive] duality*.

For better and worse, strategy and culture share an inextricable relationship (Groysberg, Lee, Price & Cheng 2018). This surmised linkage can be argued to enjoy quite a preeminence in the context of international relations. The underpinning rationale is rather straightforward. Whereas strategy provides a formal frame of logic for a country's political ends in the context of its engagements and interactions with other polities, culture constitutes the subjective coloring of the frame, the means, the ways, and of the politically acceptable ends with what appears to be core and enduring set of values, beliefs, norms, and assumptions, all of which may work to influence the manner in which a country may come to behave strategically.⁶ This for one can be said to place culture at the crux of almost any type of social phenomena falling under the broad scholarship of International Relations (IR) academic discipline. One approach to study this surmised linkage between strategy and culture, especially with respect to the ways in which an actor's strategic behavior may come to unfold in the context of

⁶ In terms of describing what strategic behavior is, the author utilizes Colin S. Gray's definitional scheme, which describes it as "behavior relevant to the threat or use of force for political purposes." For further on this issue, see: Gray, C. S. (1999). Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back. *Review of international studies*, 25(1), 49-69.

international realm, can be argued to fall under the study of the subject of strategic culture. In this respect, the strategic culture concept's true value can be asserted to lie in how it can be utilized to understand and interpret different countries' different (culturally informed) approaches to the matters pertaining to conflict, war, peace, strategy, and the use of force.

Although the treatment of culture as a key variable in the field of modern security/strategic studies is relatively new in happening (i.e., The Cultural Turn), this idea viewing "strategic culture as the roots of and as well as the influences upon strategic behavior of a state" (Gray 1999, p. 2), however, was anything but new. The military thinkers, practitioners, historians, philosophers, and sages throughout the history as for one were apparently already attesting to such specificities and actively carrying similar ideas in their *magnum opuses* (e.g., *Sun Tzu's the Art of War*, *Confucius/Mencius' Analects*, *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, *Thucydides' The Peloponnesian War*). Evidently, the more extensive and richer a nation's civilizational past, intellectual and philosophical heritage, military-strategic traditions, and martial culture are, the more probable it is for that country's elite to become enculturated under the influence of a repertoire of ideas, values, beliefs, norms, symbols, myths, metaphors, history, identity. China, in this context, can therefore easily be accounted as one if not the best case in point for the very same reasons.

Indeed, China has for the longest time been known to claim its civilizational backdrop as pacifistic, and this line of argumentation for one is known to have founded echo not only in the country's famous "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence"⁷ but also in many other officially published texts and issued policy statements. The country's maxim of "peace and harmony" is always claimed of having a direct linkage to its historical Confucian culture. This historical, civilizational, cultural, intellectual, and philosophical legacy is argued to have been enjoying a certain niche even in China's overall security considerations and strategic behavior. In the Defense White Paper (DWP) of 1998, China's understanding of and approach to security are argued to be

⁷ First mentioned in the 1954 Sino-Indian Agreement, the five principles came to be adopted in a number of resolutions, statements, and other types of legal documents, including the Constitution of China itself. The aforesaid principles are as the following: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. For more on this issue, please see; Fifield, R. H. (1958). The five principles of peaceful co-existence. *American Journal of International Law*, 52(3), 504-510.; Jiabao, W. (2004). Carrying forward the five principles of peaceful coexistence in the promotion of peace and development. *Chinese J. Int'l L.*, 3, 363.

based on a pure defensive nature that is derived from the country's thousands of years long historical and cultural traditions; and the evidence of this conviction is said to be laid out on the basis of how throughout the history the Chinese people have always sought peace and continuation of their friendly relations with the other countries (Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Bhattacharya 2011; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2019). This dictum⁸ (first laid out in 1998 DWP and ever since continued to be echoed in those that came after, at the very least until 2010 DWP⁹) in the context of Chinese military-strategic affairs is often argued to have put into use as to provide a sense of justification with respect to how conflict-averse, non-expansionist, and non-belligerent that Chinese actually are, and how China is indeed highly prone to seek strategic mastery only after the enemy has struck (Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Bhattacharya 2011; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2019).¹⁰ Just like in the case of the 1998 Defense White Paper, the defensive nature of China's security considerations, including the reasons for the country's military buildup, has had also been emphasized in the 2010 Defense White Paper (Bhattacharya 2011; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2019). In the case of the latter, the primary stress was being given over how China continues to maintain its commitment to the new security concepts (such as mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, coordination) in its overall aim to further build a harmonious world in which a lasting peace and common

⁸ The underlying reason for categorizing this particular rhetoric under the rubric of a dictum can be said to reside in the fact of how it appears to be a highly repeating conception used by the successive Chinese leaderships as a way to self-portray themselves, and the country's orientation and its interest-woven intensions for the world outside to see. In the realm of security, the Chinese Defense White Papers are one of the foremost formal documents where such convictions remain enshrined. For further on this issue, please see; Scobell, A. (2002). *China and strategic culture*. Strategic Studies Institute.; Scobell, A. (2003). *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March*. Cambridge University Press.; Scobell, A. (2009). Is There a Civil-Military Gap in China's Peaceful Rise?. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, 39(2), 9.; Zhang, J. (2012). China's Defense White Papers: a critical appraisal. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(77), 881-898.; Graff, D. A., & Higham, R. (Eds.). (2012). *A military history of China*. University Press of Kentucky.; Cordesman, A. H., Hess, A., & Yarosh, N. S. (2013). Chinese military modernization and force development. *A Western Perspective*. Washington: Center for Strategic & International Studies.

⁹ The Chinese DWPs publicized between the years of 1998-2010 are also argued to be reflective of similar if not altogether the same convictions. For more on this issue, please see; Cordesman, A. H., Hess, A., & Yarosh, N. S. (2013). *Chinese military modernization and force development: a western perspective*. Rowman & Littlefield.; Fravel, M. T. (2019). Active Defense. In *Active Defense*. Princeton University Press.; Scobell, A. (2003). *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March*. Cambridge University Press.; Zhang, J. (2012). China's Defense White Papers: a critical appraisal. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(77), 881-898.

¹⁰ Due to the ideational and normative nature of the contents of these DWPs, a number of military experts are also said to find the Chinese DWPs perplexing and opaque in substance and value, especially when compared with the ones published by the other countries around the world. Further on this issue, please see; Zhang, J. (2012). China's Defense White Papers: a critical appraisal. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(77), 881-898.

prosperity could be achieved (Bhattacharya 2011; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2019).

China's history of Confucius traditions emphasizing peacefulness, defensiveness, and non-belligerence, however, cannot be said to negate the country's history of war and aggression. For what it seems, the empirical evidence reflects the notion of Chinese strategic culture as something that goes-in-both-ways. Meaning that, besides the period of the Spring and Autumn (770-476 BCE) and the Warring States Period (476-221 BCE),¹¹ the preceding historical accounts of the modern China can also be said to demonstrate how the Chinese state and its leadership could very well be inclined to display aggressiveness and offensiveness, even if such acts were by and large in line with Sun Tzu's dictums emphasizing an approach with minimum reliance on war-waging means (e.g., employing ruse instead of direct, blatant use of force as a strategy, and never getting entangled in a protracted, long drawn war). Indeed, for what it seemed China's military-strategic behavior in the Korean War of 1950-53, and as well as both against India in 1962 and Vietnam in 1979, while short in their corresponding time spans, were nonetheless bloody in the scope of violence that they caused. But still, China's foremost strategy was more than often in line with that of a tendency to seek non-military means to use against its perceived adversaries. In this respect, the instances can be argued to include China's transfer of nuclear technology and the related know-how, attempts to transfer its missiles via its territory to what it perceived of being the enemies of its perceived enemies, and as well as facilitation of overt and covert plethora of aids to what it perceived to be friendly towards itself (Scobell 2003; Sondhaus 2006).

China's [strategic] culture can be argued to have traditionally been based on a

¹¹ With warfare being a constant aspect of the then unfolding inter-state affairs, these two periods are argued to constitute a bedrock point upon and through which the then Chinese states and their elite had come to experience a particular transformation in their viewing of the nature of war, the composition of military forces, and the conduct of battle. This substantial change in both idea and practice of military warfare was essentially the result of, first, the emergence of a large and influential body of military-strategic literature (amongst which *Sun Zi's The Art of War* was also included), and second how these periods were characteristically under the influence of the great sages and philosophers (including the Confucius the First Sage and Mencius the Second Sage) promoting distinct viewpoints about oneself (referring to the state itself and the elite themselves) and one's relations with the world around (referring both the general public and other states). For more on this issue, please see; Loewe, M., & Shaughnessy, E. L. (Eds.). (1999). *The Cambridge history of ancient China: From the origins of civilization to 221 BC*. Cambridge University Press.; Feng, H. (2007). *Chinese strategic culture and foreign policy decision-making: Confucianism, leadership and war*. Routledge.; Graff, D. A., & Higham, R. (Eds.). (2012). *A military history of China*. University Press of Kentucky.

backdrop point in which the overall influence exerted by both Confucius (with his pacifist and philosophical ideational undercurrent) and Sun Tzu (with the influential dictums derived from his *magnum opus The Art of War*) that remain ever-present. This in return seems to enable somewhat of a duality of contradictions in substantiating Chinese strategic culture. This duality of contradictions, especially in the eyes of most of the Western observers, seems to have also founded reflection in the way of which China is portrayed too. Indeed, there is a stark contrast. While China is getting branded with qualities that are almost all anti-Western, it is also praised for its rapid economical ascent and capacity to provide an alternative model of growth with Chinese characteristics (i.e., the Beijing Consensus) in opposition to the age-old Washington Consensus. The Beijing Consensus (i.e., China model), following the concept's first-time-ever introduction by Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004, p.3) in an article he published by the same name, can be described as to prescribe a rather pragmatic approach to reforms whilst eschewing democratization; designate more of a powerful role to the state's control of the market, and condition the importance of universal human rights under the circumstantial setting of the locality. According to several Western critics, this overemphasis over the importance of the local circumstances laid out in the Beijing Consensus can be said to have enabled the Chinese leadership to reduce the virtual existence of human rights and the requirements of democracy into only that of a nominal significance whenever it might be deemed as necessary.¹² Amongst those (e.g., the Global South) who came to find themselves as the losers of the neo-liberal - winners-club, the promise of the Beijing Consensus was understood to have offered these least developed and developing countries to grow in the trajectories of their own choosing just like China once managed to do. The idea of a successful and attractive China model, however, can be said to have further incentivized a sense of panic feeding into a heightened threat perception against China's rise and the eventual role that many thought to play at the detriment of the interests of the Western powers, and most especially those upheld by the United States.¹³

¹² For more on this, please see; Wenwei, G. U. A. N. (2017). Beijing Consensus and Development Legitimacy: The Evolution of China's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Regime from a Law & Development Perspective. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, 12(1), 115-139.; Nathan, A. J. (2015). The problem with the China model. *China File*. <https://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/viewpoint/problem-china-model>; Chen, Y. J. (2018). China's Challenge to the International Human Rights Regime. *NYUJ Int'l L. & Pol.*, 51, 1179.

¹³ In a rather contrary perspective, however, we can also find those who view the Beijing Consensus under more of favourable and benign lightening, thus, dismissing the often-heard sirens of danger. For

As the US is the main international actor that is concerned by rise of any challenging power the question of how the US came to perceive the substantial emergence of China comes to the forefront. For one, the current Sino-US relations cannot be understood without looking back into the Cold War period, as it was the very existence of the Soviets that both China and the US could find reasons to create rapport with respect to each other despite their clear ideological and other differences. However, when the shared common enemy had come to drop out of the bigger picture permanently, and China's flight into the prominence in the post-Cold War period became nothing short of a remarkable success. The Sino-US relations were bounded to change eventually and so as the dynamics of this once strategically forged relationship. It could be argued that there exists a dual dimension to the interactions unfolding between China and the United States. In the domain of economy, on the one hand, due to the in-coming Chinese investments that the US economy and the American free market could revitalize itself, whereas on the other this also works in the favor of China in getting the largest number of American Treasury securities. The result of such intertwined trade dealings and increased volume of business interactions are once again reflective of a duality. For instance, the business with China can be said to brought forth a pro-Chinese lobby (i.e., interest group) in Washington D.C. supportive of further rapprochement between the two countries, while also creating counter waves of criticism in the form of anti-Chinese pressure groups addressing how and why close relationships with China would only work to further enable the atrocities committed by China (Bhattacharya 2011). In the domain of security, China's rapid military modernization and the country's increasing confidence in its readiness to project power can also be said to share a linkage with the idea that the American interests could be undermined. This possibility is reflected in the attitudes displayed by different American leaders towards China. For instance, while the Clinton administration was tended to place China under a possible strategic partnership (Frost 1997; Lampton 1997), during the era of George W. Bush however the predominant rhetoric was not based on a partnership but a strategic competition (Sutter 2003; Sutter 2006). During the Obama administration, China was rather treated as a foreign and security item of concern and controversy in need of careful handling (Sutter 2009).

further on this viewpoint, please see; Huang, Y. (2010). Debating China's economic growth: The Beijing consensus or the Washington consensus. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 24(2), 31-47.; Bell, D. A. (2016). The China Model. In *The China Model*. Princeton University Press.

Founded on such a premise, this thesis aims to conduct a critical qualitative analysis about the impact of China's strategic culture over the country's approach to the matters related to conflict, war, peace, strategy, and the use of force. As to provide further clarity to the conceptual and theoretical debate this paper takes China's rise in prominence in the context of the country's relations with the United States in a time frame that is set until the end of the first decade of the 21st century with military-diplomatic relations and security-wise understanding, approach, and considerations remaining the primary aspect of the said-relations. The theoretical perspective employed to analyze the topic and the related case is based on the approach of the first generation of the strategic-culture research. Conceptually, this study will directly adapt Colin S. Gray's (1999b, p. 51) definitional scheme, as it can be argued to capture what the term essentially means in its totality, and define strategic culture as in the following: "the persisting (though not eternal) socially transmitted ideas, attitudes, traditions, habits of mind, and preferred methods of operation that are more or less specific to a particularly geographically based security community that has had a necessarily unique historical experience."

The research question, that aims to bring a critical understanding with respect to the impact of China's strategic culture over China's strategic security behavior in the context of international relations, is how does China's strategic culture affects its interactions with the United States in the context of the former's rise in prominence?

The thesis assumes that both China's approach to security policy and its overall strategic behavior are rooted in and under the influence of the country's very own cultural and strategic traditions. Therefore, belligerent nature of China's strategic culture that is perceived in the last few decades is single dimensional representation of the country's existent complex strategic characteristic. Contrary to the general beliefs depicting only a singular Chinese strategic culture in the form of it being either defensive and benign (Mancall 1963; Mancall & Fairbank 1968; Mancall 1984; Mancall 1984; T. Zhang 2002; S. G. Zhang 1995; S. G. Zhang 2019) or offensive and bellicose (Johnston 1996; Johnston 1998), the Chinese strategic culture has always been in the possession of dual (seemingly contradictory) attributes, one defensive and one realpolitik, operating in tandem to each other (Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Sondhaus 2006; Dellios 1994a; Dellios 1994b). Therefore, the alleged posture of aggressiveness claimed of having been seen in the Chinese strategic in the recent years

should actually be evaluated in relation to increasing capabilities of the People's Liberation Army. The literature scrutinizing the modern China's strategic culture is making the point for existence of continuity in the country's strategic culture (Mancall 1963; Mancall & Fairbank 1968; Mancall 1984; Mancall 1984; S. G. Zhang 1995; S. G. Zhang 2019; Johnston 1996; Johnston 1998; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Sondhaus 2006; Dellios 1994a; Dellios 1994b; Graff & Higham 2012).¹⁴ This can be argued to be especially reflective in the trajectory of the unfolding Sino-US relations that are subsequently resulting in historically heightened threat perception on the part of the US. Trapped in this perception, the US seems to have found the answer to its economic stakes with China in a strategic engagement. What this strategic engagement, however, resulting is also some sort of a duality in the former's foreign and security policy vis-à-vis China. Indeed, whilst the US projecting a sense of wariness towards China's rise and its rapid military modernization by trying to match Chinese military growth, it also commits to maintain a strategic dialogue with the latter, something which China astutely uses for the furtherment of its own gains in general. These so-called threat-posing developments that the successive Chinese leaderships have come to be criticized for by the Westerners are essentially indicative of a distinctive Chinese approach to complex and sophisticated problems in a complex and sophisticated world. One place where we can evidentiare this argument is the Chinese strategic philosophy evidently carried in and through the introduced, developed, and refined strategic guidelines of the modern Chinese leaderships (Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao), something which remain deeply rooted in the strategic-cultural heritage derived from the country's extensive civilizational past and intellectual/philosophical inheritance.

Lastly, the general design of this research could be categorized under five major parts. Under the first heading (i.e., Chapter 1), after the mainstream perspectives and arguments with respect to China's rise in the context of world affairs are being introduced and explored briefly. The main emphasis of the discussion begins by underlining what it conceived to be a rampant inadequacy in the general understanding

¹⁴ In what appears to be a contrary point of view, we also find those claiming that Chinese strategic culture has experienced a breakaway in its continuum. For more on this issue, see; Zhang, T. (2002). Chinese strategic culture: Traditional and present features. *Comparative Strategy*, 21(2), 73-90.; Black, J. (2004). *Rethinking military history*. Routledge.; Bloomfield, A. (2012). Time to move on: Reconceptualizing the strategic culture debate. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 33(3), 437-461.

of China, and how this shares a direct linkage to China's actual strategic culture reflective of a duality of contradicting attributes (defensive and *realpolitik*). The trajectory of the discussion then leads to the discussion of the nuances of the Sino-US relations and how this also similar to the understanding of Chinese strategic culture, appears to have some sort of duality. In the second part (i.e., Chapter 2), the main line of discussion follows an in initial exploration of the strategy and culture, then tries to vindicate the idea of how strategy and culture do share an inextricable linkage. This, whilst being in abundance in historically acclaimed critical works and in the modern literature of security studies, finds its embodiment best under the study of the subject of strategic culture. The next part (i.e., Chapter 3) focuses on a discussion about the generational approaches to strategic culture (including what their definitional schemes, analytical constructs, and inherent challenges and shortcomings are) and in doing so defines and sets the parameters of strategic culture related to strategic culture in general, and Chinese strategic culture in particular. The fourth part (i.e., Chapter 4) concentrates on the analysis of the preeminent views on Chinese strategic culture discussed in relation to each other, China's understanding of and approach to security, and Sino-American relations. The final part (i.e., Chapter 5) contains the conclusionary remarks based on testing of hypothesis and overall analysis of findings of the thesis. Last but not least, almost all the materials in preparation of this thesis, especially those concerning China, are those of secondary sources.

CHAPTER 2

FROM STRATEGY, AND CULTURE TO STRATEGIC CULTURE

In retrospect, it would not be an overstatement to claim that both the terminological and conceptual debate about strategic culture has come a long way since its first point of emergence. Evidently, one of the foremost reasons that is, to say, responsible for paving the term and concept's developmental path since its initial conception, including its rise to fame, and later becoming part of a severe contestation scrutinizing about the apparent limits and prospects of the concept, can be attributed to the changing circumstances, and subsequently arising necessities of the time. If we indulge ourselves in the shorter version of this story (just to give a glimpse of what we are getting into, as it will be delved into substantial detail later on in this chapter) foretelling about the nuances and intricacies of the aforementioned, the term and concept strategic culture's debut into the forefront of scholarly debate can, partly, be seen as a response to the turbulent times reflective of a number of changes and conundrums afflicting the post-World War II security environment (i.e., Cold War), and partly, as the consequence of a surging dissonance mostly shared among a friction of scholars (and also some strategy thinkers and decision-makers sharing the same academic roots in their respective backgrounds),¹⁵ dissatisfied with most of their colleagues' popularized claims about what the latter typically asserts to be the truest measure of being 'scientific.'

This two coinciding points should be noted because it was precisely these particularities that, in many ways, characterized the spirit of timely scholarly endeavor, and of course, the resulting excessiveness in scientific community's over-reliance onto the rational actor models, which were basically deeply engrained into game theories, to explain prevailing foreign and security policy-related matters and subsequent interactions between the two superpowers of the time, namely the United States and

¹⁵ Colin S. Gray can be taken as one of the foremost examples of this case. In fact, he was actively serving in an advisory capacity to the Regan administration, mostly during the latter's preparation for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which later on came to be famously nicknamed as 'Star-Wars' program.

the Soviet Union. Thus, it was these circumstances that were pushing dissidents of the Behaviorist revolution in both scientific method and persuasion to look for new avenues that would be invaluable in understanding, describing, and explaining what appeared to be timely conundrums. And once again, if we remind ourselves the prevailing circumstances and necessities of the Cold War period, it should not be so hard to guess the nature of the most pressing issues, given how they were, essentially, pertained in the typical question of could it be that the very rules of this fragile game (i.e., nuclear deterrence) and the respective play styles of its contenders (emphasis given on the US and USSR) might have had never been ‘appropriately’ understood in the first place (referring the risk of Mutually Assured Destruction [MAD] and other supplementary concepts either given birth or became inspired through it). And after the term and concept’s deployment for the first time in the 1970s, the result was it finding quite a bit of favor and echo within the bureaucratic and military circles of strategic decision-making, and of course in the field of scholarly enquiry.

In many respects, the term and concept strategic culture can be argued to have such an origin story that is quite similar to the humble beginnings of many other terms and concepts that have come to occupy the respective academic literatures of Political Science and International Relations (IR) until now (Norheim-Martinsen 2011). Quintessentially, this may just beg the question of, then, what makes the concept strategic culture distinct, or even time worthy, to put an effort to instigate an enquiry about it in the first place, instead of choosing to go along with any other buttery-rich options (e.g., national characteristics, political culture, organizational culture, national styles of warfare, area/regional studies, civil-military culture/relations, and so forth) as to pave the path for one’s academic and intellectual ventures. Although the very answer to this question of worthiness can easily be expected to change depending on whose perspective and intrinsically peculiar orientation of worthiness is being entertained (given the issue of relativity), as per the usefulness of it, however, we can say that the general appeal of the concept as an analytical tool, at the very least for those who find themselves to be already enchanted by its inherent utility and dormant potential, can be argued to dwell in its capacity to incorporate a range of mostly vague ideational factors (e.g., history, norms, identity, values and ideas -inter alia) in given explanations and descriptions focusing on why, when, and how certain actors (e.g., states and non-state, institutions, elites) may just come to act the way they do based on

the issues related to use of force, and, in a far reaching extend, the matters of foreign and security policy (Norheim-Martinsen 2011). Arguably, however, it is also within this particular context that many –including both the ardent supporters and as well as the unrelenting critics of the concept— find what appears to be the strategic culture’s ‘Achilles Heel’, given how this particular concept constitutes diverging meanings to different people; or in Colin Gray’s remarks *par excellence*: ‘the ability of scholars to make a necessarily opaque concept like strategic culture even less penetrable is truly amazing’ (Gray 2006). Before continuing further on this road, that is to understand strategic culture concept, there appears to be a need to address this point of persuasion asserting what it claims to be the gravamen of this very concept and, arguably, the flawed intellectual undertaking that it represents. Then, should we really be worried about the utter confusion and discord that are mostly argued to be the case with the concept strategic culture by both supporters and critics alike? If so, does it mean that these scholars’ inability to agree on something and, thus, resulting ceaseless debate about what strategic culture means and amounts to is nothing more than an act of muddying its conceptual clarity? As it is the case with mostly each and every matter of concern and contestation, there can be found different aspects to the same issue, and these addressed questions are, for one, constitute no exception.

Some would indeed subscribe to the persuasion that unless we come to terms with common, working definitions, we may never assign a definite value to our terms, thus cannot hope to measure them scientifically (Rosenau 1980; Haglund 2004, pp. 480). No doubt that this is in and of itself a valid point, but still far, and far away from being the sole perspective and supreme truth on this matter. In fact, from a contrary point of persuasion, it can even be said that what is usually asserted to be an evident failure of academics in coming to terms with the meaning (i.e., definition) and applicability (i.e., method of analysis) of the term should be understood as neither surprising nor discouraging at its face value, but rather as an opportunity, meriting the purest conviction that we might be actually dealing with that of an intriguing concept, which can be utilized in many favorable ways, of course, if the analyst in question is careful enough in handling it (Haglund 2004, pp. 480). In another saying as to further the latter point, if strategic culture is to pursue the typical, evolutionary trajectory of political concepts (and it should not be forgotten that this particular concept may just be in its relative infancy, having been first employed under that particular name only in a report

submitted to RAND Corporation in 1977), then it is rather little to no wonder that the consequently arising debates about its definite meaning will be ceaseless, and to even a certain extent it can be expected to be prone, as in the case of nearly all concepts, to expansion (Synder 1977). Hence, ‘this resulting normalcy of conceptual discord and expansion, according to David G. Haglund, is not only caused by the typical vagueness of the concept that we try to pursue, but also related to the emerging effects of changing circumstances projected onto the words that we actively and readily use to describe and understand such conditions’ (Haglund 2004, pp. 481). In this respect, given the everchanging nature of one’s timely circumstances, we are indeed compelled to find necessary adjustments to the very manner in which we express them. And when someone delves into the literature, it becomes rather evident that what is trying to be meant via the word of adjustment, let’s say most of the time, seems to take one of the two following ways: one may come to either invent a new concept, or expand a familiar word or concept even further (Weldon 1953, pp. 26-27; Haglund 2004, pp. 481). According to T. D. Weldon, a political philosopher, the second method appears to be surfacing as the most preferred, partly, due to the fact that it evades more confusion than it creates, (as it seldom confuses anybody but political philosophers), and partly because the extended use has often come to be adopted without much dissonance as the natural course of events continues to unfold (Weldon 1953, pp. 26-27; Haglund 2004, pp. 481).

All in all, if we sum up the drawn upon points of considerations, two of the most substantial reasons underpinning the argued confusion and discord can be attributed to: first, somewhat partially, the concept strategic culture having been in its early stages of expansion given the fact of its relative infancy, and second, the considerably lengthy period of time which have had have been used to stretch its two ‘parental elements’ (i.e., strategy and culture) on the literary rack, and thus, cursing—or blessing, depending on who gives the final judgment— it with that of a legacy tantamount to utter conceptual confusion and dissonance.

2.1. A Complex Concept with Complex Parentals

For a number of reasons, some of which have already been presented in an introductory capacity early on in this chapter, the concept of strategic culture, and most of the attempts instigated by the students of strategic-cultural studies can be likened, although

somewhat in a rather crude capacity, to that of an act to ‘walk on unmarked minefields and pitfalls while being embraced by the bosom of a moonless night’ (Zaman 2009, pp. 69). So, for those who might be having a hard time to believe whether making such a fuss about what strategic culture means is tantamount to such trouble in the first place, it should be reminded that the truthfulness of the former put forth assertion stems from the apparent muddiness of the concept and the subsequent pitfalls that it is widely accepted to have long been riddled with; and these, for one, can be simply appreciated by delving into the ample foretaste of the debate about what the nominative half (i.e., culture) of our concept actually amounts to in the corresponding scholarly body of knowledge; for as Raymond Williams has noted, the word ranks as one of the two or three most difficult in the English language (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952; Sewell 1999; Haglund 2004, pp. 482). Furthermore, if this is not enough as to qualify what one may come to identify something akin to being troubling, then, that someone can include the modifier (i.e., strategic) part of our concept as to get a sense of why Alastair Iain Johnston must have complained about how ‘remarkably undefined’ our concept is, indeed (Johnston 1995, pp. 1; Haglund 2004). So, let us start with the first halve of our whole set (i.e., strategy) as it might just be the one filled with less troubling conundrums.

2.1.1. Understanding the First Parental Half: Strategy

In today’s world the essence of strategy can be found in and through the supposed variations of style by the multiplicity of audiences with militaristic side of this multilayered grand picture is being only one among many (Freedman 2015, pp. x). This, respectively, can be said to have resulted in an obvious abundance of meanings associated with the term strategy by giving rise to nearly no standardized, contemporary definition that could be embraced universally; thus, negatively affecting even the experts and scholars writing on and about national security and international affairs. One apparent instance evidencing this claim can be seen by looking at how “political scientists habitually use the phrase ‘grand strategy’ as to discuss what a number of historians do refer, instead, as a general framework for foreign policy (e.g., neo-isolationism, selective engagement, or primacy)” (Biddle 2015, pp. 1). However, it does not mean that there is, at least supposedly, a resemblance of commonality with regard to the specificities of such mess of a term and concept that we call strategy.

First, in retrospect, if we ever try look at from where exactly that the dawn of strategy has first ever come to be risen and subsequently developed, it is no wonder to see that a military origin provides a big-bang moment for the now-seen profusion of meanings and significations that we have thus so far been discussing with regard to strategy, given how it was fundamentally all about people's ostensive intentions to defeat their enemies at times of dire need; and 'given the relative ease with which military metaphors are taken up in other spheres of activity, including language of command, it is somewhat easy to see the underlying reason for why business and political leaders has in one way or another become so obsessed with the idea of strategy ever since it has had been introduced into their respective fields' (Ansoff 1965; Biddle 2015).¹⁶ In this respect, the first ever treaties-like records that appear to have had discussed the elements of strategy can be traced as far as back to China of 400-200 B.C., when and where Sun Tzu's now world-wide famous the *Art of War* came to be written in the form of thirteen chapters. In its seminal capacity, Sun Tzu's magnum opus has had received not only a critical acclaim by being the best work in the high realm of military strategy within the confinements of its own respective timely needs but also among those which would eventually follow its suit many centuries later. Contrary to the manner, and the form that its rather modern counterparts has had come to be written and narrated, however, Sun Tzu's the *Art of War* was basically a composition of poems and prose accounts (Horwath 2006).

Etymologically, however, the term "strategy" can, albeit indirectly, be traced back to Classic and Byzantine (330 A.D.) Greek word "*strategos*" (i.e., "general") (Horwath 2006; Annad 2020). Although the term is said to have a Greek heritage, according to Horwath (2006), no Greek has had ever directly or intentionally used the term as to imply what we, nowadays, do conceive of by simply uttering the term and concept of strategy. In fact, the word strategy, in the context of its initial iterations, was actually closer to what we now describe as 'tactics (Biddle 2015, pp. 1). Herein this context, if we ever try to look for somewhat of a pure Greek equivalent for our rather modernly

¹⁶Before 1960s, seeing any reference to strategy as a crucial element in the context of business communities were quite a rare occurrence, as the notion can be said to be first made famous by H. Igor Ansoff (1965). Moreover, it was after 1970s and by 2000 that the literature has begun to accommodate an increasing number of references to business strategy in an extent and frequency that was even exceeding that of its military counterpart. For more on this issue, see: Horwath, R. (2006). The origin of strategy. *Strategic Thinking Institute*, 1-5.: 1-5.; Biddle, T. D. (2015). Strategy and grand strategy: What students and practitioners need to know.; Freedman, L. (2015). *Strategy: A history*. Oxford University Press.

connotated word ‘strategy,’ says Horwath, its essence can be argued to have had been encapsulated in ‘*strategike episteme*’ (i.e., general’s knowledge) or ‘*strategon sophia*’ (i.e., general’s wisdom) (Horwath 2006). Amongst the body of well-known Latin works, we in fact can account for quite a famous piece written on military strategy by Frontius with a Greek title named ‘*Strategemata*,’ which was all about a comprehensive attempt aimed at describing a series of collections on and about ‘*strategema*’ (i.e., stratagems), or in its other familiar coinage: “the tricks of war” (Horwath 2006). In addition to that, there is also the term “*strategia*” (this time introduced by the Roman historians) which was basically used to refer territories residing at the hands of a military commander in ancient Athens and a member of the Council of War (i.e., *strategus*) (Horwath 2006). As a matter of fact, through the Middle Ages and into the modern era, the most prevalent reference pertinent to the word of strategy was usually expressed in and through the phrase-like saying of the “the art of war (Freedman 2015, pp. xii);” and it was only after the publication of Count Guibert’s ‘*La Strategique*,’ a French military thinker, that we have come to see somewhat the initial instances of an expansion going beyond the apparent limits of such a narrowly defined geographic meaning once entertained and associated with regard to the term and concept of strategy by the Roman historians (Horwath 2006).

As to open an important bracket here, it should be highlighted that the above retrospective and etymologic accounts are only part of a rather grand picture, and therefore should be seen as far from ever being enough to constitute the process of culmination which we can concur to project the evolutionary path that brought the current conception of strategy which we have thus so far been seeing and utilizing for several decades. Herein this context, having such a consideration in a way can be said to compel us to mention some other equally if not altogether even more influential military authors, theorists, and scholars, who were and still are critically acclaimed for their role in influencing and leading the general direction of the study of and understanding on and about strategy’s role both as a crucial element and approach in the high martial realm to this date.¹⁷ As such, a brief but precise gaze into the past,

¹⁷In this respect, we can expand the list by including (inter alia): Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), an Italian thinker, with his *The Prince*; Adam Heinrich von Buelow (1752-1807), a German writer, with his first ever attempt to describe strategy in terms of and with referral to bases and lines of communication; Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), a Prussian General, with his magnum opus named *On War*; Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779-1869), a French-Swiss officer who served as a general in the French and later in the Russian service, with his impactful piece of work titled *Summary of the Art of*

therefore, is a must to do since it basically allows us to enrich our understanding of the layers of complexity inherent within strategy and grand strategy. However, as to preserve the integrity of what is trying to be achieved via this initiated scrutiny concerning the words and their subsequent meanings, the part with a retrospective inquiry will be left for later.

So, if we skip the part concerning the exploration of strategy in retrospect at least for the sake of present purposes and focus on the question of what this gradual accumulation in and through such intellectual works did, at the very least accountably, bring forth, then, we might find a few consequences of significance that are in need of getting mentioned beforehand. First and foremost, with each insight and contribution that has had come to be included into the corresponding body of literature, it was a no-brainer to expect to see that ‘the sort of issues, which would eventually turn into some of the foremost sub-headings under the grand category of [grand] strategy (e.g., the value of alliances, the role of battle, the respective merits of force and guile, and so on) to become visible at the edges of both the practitioners’ and theoreticians’ scope of views’ (Freedman 2015, pp. xii). Secondly, given from where and when exactly that those highlighted contributors’ subsequently experience-driven ideas on and about strategy and warfare (or anything that falls in between) were actually originating out of, it was rather unsurprising to see why that the word strategy in the context of its rather modern connotations as we understand it today was essentially highly Eurocentric, and thereof only used, at least for a limited period of time, in Britain, France, and Germany of the 18th century. Consequently, such circumstances by and large, says Freedman (2015, pp. xii), were responsible in enabling a process in where and which the idea and practice of warfare as a craft, wisdom, and science (or art, depending on whose respective perspective is being referred and therefore entertained) to become engulfed with a belief that war could indeed benefit more from the application of reason, which was in many ways reflective of a Enlightenment optimism and a set of experiences both of which were highly pervasive in the overall intellectual heritage at that time of the Europe.’ Subsequently, these series of developments can also be said to have eventually mirrored “the demands of contemporary warfare, with

War; Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935), a British military officer, diplomat, archeologist, and writer, with his well-known *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*; and Sir Basil Liddell Hart (1895-1970), a British military officer, historian and theorist, with his famous piece of work called *Strategy*.

mass armies and cumbersome logistics chains” by simply making one’s decision to employ force to become compelled to follow a particularly strict set of steps of careful consideration, meticulous preparation, and sound theoretical guidance which constitute the makings of a sound and coherent strategy; or in Lawrence Freedman’s own words (pp. xii-xiii):

“Before, ends and means might be combined in the mind of the warrior leader, who would be responsible for both the formulation and execution of a strategy. Increasingly, these functions were separated. Governments set objectives they expected the generals to achieve. The generals acquired specialist staffs to devise campaign plans that others would implement.”

The second point of communality can be said to have an implicit relationship with what Lawrence Freedman has described in his account above. Since if and when we limit the scope of inquiry only to that of what is essentially military, then, we might identify what appears to be ‘a hierarchy of terms that define and delineate specific activities related to strategy, and essentially other terms and phrases (e.g., tactics, operations, and grand strategy) with each referring to a particular band of action and responsibility: starting with “tactics” (residing at the lowest step of this particular ladder) and moving upward and outward to “grand strategy” (residing at the highest step of this specific ladder)’ (Hart 1954; Biddle 2015, pp. 4-15). The underlying reason for such classifications can be argued to manifest out of a particular necessity that these terms must be comprehended and used consistently and accordingly by large groups of people (Bellamy 1985; Newell 1986; Newell 1988; Maxwell 1997, p. 1; Biddle 2015; Lissner 2018). Therefore, they are required to have official definitions, which can often be seen as codified into the formal body of documents and service doctrines, and as we shall see, this professed need for clarity and commonality of terms with regard to their ways and manner of usage and workability is not restricted to military sphere but also civilian-political sphere too (Hart 1954; Lissner 2018; Biddle 2015, pp. 4-15). So, tactics, by being the one that resides at the bottom of this ladder, in general can understood to describe how small units (platoons, companies, ships, and squadrons) are to be employed in a battle space (Bellamy 1985; Newell 1986; Newell 1988; Maxwell 1997; Biddle 2015 pp. 4-15). One step above, we see operations (and “operational art”), which are basically “concerned with the movement of large military units, including army divisions, naval task forces, and wings of aircraft (Bellamy 1985;

Newell 1986; Newell 1988; Maxwell 1997; Biddle 2015 pp. 4-15).” By moving up another notch, this time we see “theater strategy (i.e., military strategy) which concerns the direction of the largest military units in a battle space (comprising armies and army groups, naval fleets, and numbered of air forces), prescribing how military instruments per se are to achieve the goals set for them by grand strategy within a theater of war” (Bellamy 1985; Newell 1986; Newell 1988; Maxwell 1997; Biddle 2015, p. 5). Last but not least, at the highest step of this ladder we come across “grand strategy” which, according to Biddle (2015, p. 5), is mostly utilized and referred as a way to identify, articulate, and describe: first, the overall security objectives of a given political actor within the confinements of a particular moment in time; and second, the subsequent ways and manners in and through which such objectives can be expected to have realized by the actor in question via the combination of instruments of power (comprising economic, military, and diplomatic means) that are available for disposal to pursue the said-actor’s interest-driven objectives.¹⁸ In a similar vein, John Lewis Gaddis (1983), who is best known and hailed for his famous works on the Cold War and grand strategy, accounts grand strategy as: “the calculated relationship of means to large ends, as it is all about how one uses whatever one has to get to wherever it is one wants to go” (as cited in Lissner 2018, p. 62).

Although ideally each item should be seen and taken as equal in their worth and emphasis, both theater strategy and grand strategy in comparison, however, may often come to be observed to have been seen and valued as somewhat of a backbone piece in some specific contexts (Biddle 2015; Lissner 2018). One place where we can see this argument’s truest reflection is in fact a country’s corresponding [military] education system; or specifically: the course contents, ways of teaching, and inherent purposes and intensions embedded into those of faculty curriculums, which are being thought at senior staff colleges inside their respective countries’ professional military education systems, in where and which the would-be practitioners and experts have traditionally been thought almost anything and everything integral to the betterment of their art (Yarger 2010, p. 45; Biddle 2015, p. 6). Furthermore, it is also possible to see faculty members teaching at these institutes to cultivate a particularly similar manner of

¹⁸ There are also those who find connections between grand strategy and strategic culture on the basis of how the former constitutes an intricate relationship between culture, ideology and strategy. For more on this issue, please see; Sayle, T. A. (2011). Defining and teaching grand strategy. *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 3.

understanding on and about the ways of usage of the word strategy (Yarger 2010, p. 45; Biddle 2015, pp. 6-7; Robinson 2014, p. xiii). At the United States military's senior staff colleges, which are constitutive of a widely interconnected web of professional military education system, for instance, the word 'strategy' can be observed to carry roughly similar connotations in and across the expressions and comprehensions of almost all faculty members teaching at these colleges, given how they appear to be perceiving its essence as something that projects a particular combination of "intelligent identification, coordination of resources (i.e., ways and means) and their utilization for one's successful attainment of a specific objective (i.e., end)" (Biddle 2015, p. 7; Robinson 2014, p. xiii) Whilst seeing such similarities in one's way of understanding and expression might seem useful initially (as to draw some standard and workable lines), it may also pose the possibility of raising some disadvantages and difficulties to tackle too.

For one, one's proclivities to simply utter a calculated relationship between what appears to be the means and ends, even if such an assumption essentially comprises of optimally identifiable ends and means, is still something that may prove to be inadequate, nonetheless. Because first and foremost, the relationship that is thought to be shared in between the act of utilizing a particular resource (or a combination of several or all) and the act of realizing a political goal might not be so straightforward, easy to articulate, or uncomplicated to implement as it has had initially been thought to be the case (Yarger 2010, p. 45; Biddle 2015, p. 6). In this respect, in the U.S. case, for instance, such a descriptive but also simplistic account (mostly regarding how it appears to be used to draw a direct association and an easily comprehensible relationship between means, ways, and ends), however, might also prove to be highly deceptive, according to Yarger (2010, pp. 45-46) and Biddle (2015, p. 6), as most challenges standing on the path of creating a straightforward linkage between these three seem to be not only real but also never-ending and multilayered. In this respect, some of the consequent issues which can effortlessly be observed in extension to what is aforementioned seem to have long been manifesting in and through the ways and manners that strategy and grand strategy has come to be thought in academic and civilian circles.¹⁹ Instances that include some connotations of this problem in varying

¹⁹ But still, the fact of having an available, workable framework as a way to understand the supposed relationships shared in between one's means, ways, and ends, on the other hand, may also be argued to have at its worst a particular utility value, or at its best a catalyzer role for the furtherment of the

degrees seem to be mostly evident in and across majority of the perspectives on what constitutes grand strategy in academia, which Rebecca Friedman Lissner (2018) equates to that of an utter conceptual minefield with diverse manners of usages. and second, in what appears to be the most recent happening manifesting in the form of increasing criticisms directed at the course contents about and ways of teaching of strategy (mostly in terms of how they appear to be highly inadequate on the grounds of compatibility with the actual real-life scenarios, events, and crises) in the professional military education system of the United States (Biddle 2015).

In what appears to be a highly critical RAND study, authored by Linda Robinson et al. (2014), focusing mostly on the latter part of the aforementioned issues prevalent in the case of the U.S., the result of an extensive investigation seems to point out several indications which are argued of having a need for careful consideration if one's overarching aim is to find solutions for the alleged challenges troubling the U.S. military, and of course their subsequent relationship with the realm of civilian governance, for several years now. Most basically, it is being asserted (albeit somewhat contrary to a rather popular belief shared by many about the surmised role and function of the U.S.' military²⁰) that "the U.S. civilian policymakers do require to sustain an active dialogue with the military and other sources of information to inform the diagnosis of the situation, as well as to develop realistic policy objectives" (Biddle (2015, pp. 7). Furthermore, it is also being posited that 'an established and integrated civilian military process' is a must-to-have necessity, especially, if and when one minds the ways and manners that it could be utilized rigorously to identify some crucial but also often neglected elements (i.e., "identifying assumptions, risks, possible outcomes and second-order effects through soliciting diverse inputs, red-teaming, and table-top exercises") (Samuel Huntington, 1957; Biddle 2015, pp.7).²¹

discussions on and about strategy; since it basically allows the students of this complex and sophisticated practice to gain an initial traction to begin with their investigations. For further info onto this issue, see: Tami Davis Biddle 2015, pp. 5-6-7; and more about the underlying difficulties associated with grand strategy, see Sayle, T. A. (2011). Defining and teaching grand strategy. *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 3.

²⁰ Referring the belief that conceives the U.S. military in a rather limited and linear approach, which can be said to limit the overall role and function of U.S. military to the sole act of satisfying and realizing the objectives that are being set by the policymakers via finding adequate policy options.

²¹ For what is important, such a drawn-out argument can also be said to pose some crucial questions to tackle, especially on the basis of how one, if and when the need arises, should "identify civilian and military roles in a system that is formed by what Samuel Huntington describes as an "objective control of the military," which necessitates a delineation between civilian and military realms of professional competence; something that is quite opposite of subjective control of military (once again

Although the study published by Robinson et al. (2014) is primarily concerned with the U.S. case, in terms of the assumptions and matters of significance that have had been introduced and scrutinized by the authors, however, there appears to exist some points of value for us to consider mostly because of their applicability in general. So, the first item on this list is quite clear to grasp and view in a rather favorable light: on the path of creating a coherent strategy, it should be a given for both military and political leaders to cultivate an adequate level of comprehension with regard to one another's respective professional realms. Indeed, regarding the former, especially in the context of today's world, it is something quite an entry level requirement to expect a state's military leaders and their officers to have 'political acumen,' of course in addition to having enough stillness and taciturnity against the allures of political assertiveness that might come hand in hand from acquiring such a skill in the first place. In other words, it is somewhat of a must for today's military leaders and officers to be aware of and well-versed with regard to the characteristics and nature of the political environment that they are required to work within the confinements of, whilst having adequate willpower and resilience to stay away from ever getting tempted to behave in a way that can be considered as meddling and interfering into the realm of civilian governance and politics (Biddle 2015, pp. 7). Although some may find little to no value with this last argument (meaning how it basically advances a commonsensical idea that necessitates a certain delineation and separation between the realms of a state's military and its civilian governance) for carrying quite the semblance of a truism, it actually is only in appearance; because, in some parts of the world, as a matter of fact, this may prove to be quite a non-trivial challenge to turn a blind eye over, either by being an issue of their present self and prevailing context-bound circumstances, or a continuation of their country's persistent and influential part of preceding history, and [political, public, institutional, and thereof strategic] culture. But still, the fact that it corresponds to a must-to-overcome challenge do nevertheless remain true, mostly on the basis of how it constitutes the very keystone for any potential makings of a sound military-civil relations and the kinds of coherent strategy

defined by Samuel Huntington), which by and large can be said to involve placing legal and institutional restrictions on the military's autonomy. For further info on this issue, see; Huntington, S. P. (1957). *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 149, 29.; Huntington, S. P. (1956). Civilian control and the constitution. *American Political Science Review*, 50(3), 676-699.

that such relations can bring forth as a consequence (Biddle 2015, pp. 7).

The second point of value to consider is related to Robinson et al.'s (2014) argument on how "civilian authorities most of the time are unlikely to frame political objectives with enough clarity, specificity, and even timeliness." Indeed, contrary to what one would expect to see with regard to the relatively ordered ways of functioning and proceeding in military realm, in the civilian realm, it is somewhat of a normalcy to see objectives getting developed through a cumbersome, bureaucratic procedure (involving frequent iterations and spontaneous halting) in reaction to events, crises, possibilities, and perceived options. And granting that civilian authorities might expect to be presented with an appropriate screening of the problem and related military options²², which are drawn as a response to the encountered challenge or as part of an overall contingency plan, 'before' they commit themselves to those preferred objectives, it is or should rather be a given for military leaders and officials "to abandon the belief and expectation that they will always be able to build a strategy that is designed or tailored to meet a well-articulated political objective" (Biddle 2015, pp. 8). However, knowing that this challenge is one that is inherently related to the distinctiveness of characteristics, natures and ways of functioning existing at the very fabric of the two realms, it might still be a time-issue-and-context-dependent occurrence for an unavoidable clash to surface between the preferences and expectations of military leaders (with their methodic and systemic pursuit of clarity and specific goals) and political leaders (with their hunger for opportunistic, option seeking, flexible, and career-wise favorable possibilities), despite all the efforts and best of intentions that might have actively been put by the both sides into bridging this ubiquitous void dividing the two realms. Albeit such circumstances may seem more frustrating for the military side at a first look, it might have a particular silver lining too, as it pushes military leaders and officials to embrace the realities on the ground than to become shackled with their own idealized expectations and preferences with regard to the processes which appears to have long been existing outside of their firmly controlled and thought classrooms.

On the other side of the same coin, the overall situation pertinent to the civilian education appears to be not so different from its military counterpart, as it known to be riddled with its own respective problems for quite sometimes. One consequence of

²² Of course, depending on the issue at hand.

such failings can be seen in and through how civilians often appear to be highly negligent towards, first, the destructive realities that can be brought forth by the rushed and unconsidered usage of military instruments; and second, many of the interrelated challenges that can be expected to emerge after they put into use. In Robinson et al.'s (2014) study concerning the issues plaguing the United States, the non-existence of a compulsory military service is highlighted as one of the most impactful variables exacerbating the said-negligence-and-unawareness towards the aforementioned (i.e., just how much blunt an instrument military force can actually be) by affecting the American society. In fact, authors go quite afar by asserting that it marks a dividing fault-line between those who do have knowledge and experience with regard to military and those who do not have anything to speak of. According to the study, those who reside in the former category is observed to have an adequate level of insight into military operations and instruments as to comprehend the political ends that they serve, or the apparent restrictions that are inherently limiting their ability do so (Biddle 2015, pp. 8). A circumstance with such-a-breaking-point difference, at its best, can be said to further complicate the already complex and issue-ridden civil-military level dialogue, especially, in the context of a democratic polity; and since every venture is bound to have a variety of low-to-high-end stakes, which are contracted with an appropriate cost in the case one's attempt to realize his/her interest-riddled-goals turns out to be futile, such a dire complication, at its worst, might also help to bring a costly failure that is certain to knock one's door to be paid back in full of added interests in a way that demands one's national blood and treasure, which for all intents and purposes constitutes a matter of pressing cruciality for the interests and subsequent survival of any actor residing in the realm of international relations [ir].

In a system of anarchic nature, where one's survival does not equate a permanent state of existence but something that requires a constant struggle to maintain, it is indeed a matter of expectant quality for any political actor (whether they are the city-states or the empires of antiquity, the nation-states of modernity, or the non-state actors hailing out of contemporary period) operating within the confinements of the international realm to have a set of interests, which are in one way or another required to be realized, advanced and defended via one's disposable means and the utilization of available resources. If and when we try to link these observable matters [of ir] to what we priorly discussed with regard to strategy, then, interests can be suggested to have a connection

to ends, whereas resources can be related to one's ways and means (Biddle 2015, pp. 9). Additionally, if the resources in question do project an adequate level of collective both in quality and quantity, then, they can also be seen or deemed to have a particular utility value, which is often referred as 'instruments of power or leverage mechanisms,' that helps the actor who remain in possession of such things to sustain, or even thrive, itself in a highly competitive and dangerous realm of international system and subsequent affairs that unfold as part of and relation to it (Biddle 2015, pp. 9). According to Sir Michael Howard's (2010, pp. 1-6-10; as cited by Biddle 2015) observations coming from that of a similar vein:

"The objective of most states most of the time is always to maintain their independence, often to extend their influence, and sometimes to extend their dominion. The classical tools at their disposal have been three: armed force, wealth, and allies."

Furthermore, in the international realm, states with enough capability and resource may turn out to be willing enough to exert their influence on the overall structure and functioning of the international system as to hold a greater sway over the prevailing circumstances and consequent happenings (i.e., the international relations and affairs) by re-forming those in particular ways to suit their own set of interests. While this once upon a time was at its truest for Britain (i.e., the era of the Pax Britannica), in the aftermath of the World War II it has also proved to be true for the United States of America (i.e., the era of the Pax Americana); while now in present, we see more than one actor (e.g., China and Russia) with such overarching ambitions contending to leave their own imprints into the inner structure and functioning of the international system. Such grand advances, for one, were (and still are, and most probably will continue to be) not a quest that those with frail hearts, and also inadequate capabilities with that of an inability to expend considerable number of resources, can easily partake; as neither in the old nor new cases can we speak of something that remains in utter contrast to this point, which in fact can be argued to constitute somewhat of a commonality linking the-above-exemplars in their reliance to different forms of resources in their attempts to hold greater sway over the overall structure and functioning of the international system.

However, contrary to what seems to be an often echoed popular belief –which surmises

militaristic (or, in general, coercive) means, resources and capabilities as the foremost if not the sole determinant capable of turning the wheels of international system in line with one's uphold interests and intended outcomes— that we most often appear to be finding ourselves either readily getting exposed to or taking the initiative to do the same for others around us, the types of available means and resources which might have decided to be put into use in the extent of an actor's capacity to further its own ends is something not limited to one or two omnipotent, if one may say, collection of instruments, means and resources. Depending on the imperatives that one needs to be mindful of, it may be possible to observe different means getting utilized at the hands of different actors for achieving their own context-bound strategic goals, such as: the act of leveraging one's knowledge and education (just like the one that Britain has had done during the WWII by establishing an academic and scientific collective that allowed a great trust for the Allied forces to be formed as to beat the-then-Nazi-Germany into an eventual defeat) (Biddle 2015, pp. 9); the willingness to cultivate one's outer image and overall reputation as to project stability and predictability both in global and as well as domestic affairs that it has traditionally been a part of (e.g. Denmark, Canada and Singapore); or, one's commitment to develop strong relationships with its relatively larger and more powerful neighbors dwelling in the same region as it is (e.g., Singapore and Canada) (Biddle 2015, pp. 10).

Any adequate assessment of a political actor on the basis of what different types of instruments of power that it can wield has to account for several points of significance; amongst which, the availability of basic resources, and the said-actor's apparent state of advancement in social, economic, political, and scientific domains do correspond to only two items on this extensive list. While these are amongst some of the key factors that are crucial to consider, the inherently anarchic nature of the international system can be said to weigh even more greatly since the tools that are laid down before an actor to utilize has traditionally been known to be affected by the very pervasive nature of the system. Perhaps, it is because of such a nature that we found ourselves most often compelled to think of armed forces (or coercive means in more of general terms) as the most typical and ultimate insurances for the preservation and continuation of our [nation-states'] existences. But still, this can also be argued to attest to a rather partial and interpretive bit of a greater truth, which derives its empirical validity from

the appropriate context into which it might come to be placed accordingly.²³

As underlined before, one's indigenous military means in a rather micro, case-per se contextual setting may not prove to be the most feasible precursor for one's attainment of strategic and political goals, as there often exists different but more suitable ways to go about with it. In this respect, we can, for instance, take the example of post-WWII Japan and how it has had come to rely on its close relationship with the United States as a way to allow it to preserve not only its territorial integrity and regional interests but also instigate and fuel a much-needed process of domestic development, which allowed Japan to recuperate and elevate its vitality and competence in its once highly war-worn-and-damaged sectors, infrastructures, and other essential domains of crucial importance (e.g., education, economic and financial development, non-defense production, so and so on). In fact, it should not be an overstatement to claim that, at the very least in the beginning, no one was expecting that the time that it would take for Japan to demonstrate such triumphant end-result would actually be so close in the future. Only in a matter of a few decades we have come to see a decisive boon capable of elevating not only Japan's general wealth, but also allowing Japanese decision-makers to gain new available resources and other instruments of power with enough utility to determine the country's eventual fate. In a similar vein, the same exemplary situation, when gets to be tried in what one may identify to be a rather macro, systematic-per se contextual setting, may also provide further conviction. In another way of putting it, the primary reasons, which can be suspected of enabling many other unexpected success stories with regard to the once-war-torn-and-worn countries' emergence in relative relevance and importance in the post-WWII period, might also be argued to have a similar relation to a dense network of institutions whose purposes for creation were to: first, serve the interests of its creator (i.e., The USA); and second, extend and facilitate the international interactions of the states in a global scale. Regarding the significance of the latter point, the offered incentives for the all clients (i.e., nation-states), who would decide to become a part of this US-found-and-led system, was a series of advantages which could be sought and gained as long as one continued to remain a nod within these politically, economically, and legally interwoven frameworks (Biddle 2015, pp. 11). Therefore, a vital consequence for the interests of rather smaller and war-torn-and-worn powers of the time (e.g., Japan) was

²³ Meaning that it can go in both ways of being 'in-favor' and 'contradictory.'

the idea that if they could take advantage of such opportune circumstances by their compliance then the benefits-won would indeed be noteworthy. It is in against such an establishment (i.e., the US Hegemony) that many have for some time now been in cohort in perceiving that the newly arising status-quo challenging powers (i.e., China and Russia) are seeking to utilize their own available resources to hold an equal or a greater sway over the prevailing but weakened system in a direction of their own envisages. Herein this context whether we are talking about the current US-found-and-led system or the one that, at the very least according to the raised allegations of many, has for some time now been trying to be established by the status-quo challenging risings powers, it is a matter of given for the guarantor(s) of any one system's existence to be willing to invest and expend the necessary resources, amongst which coercive means are also included, as to preserve it. Therefore, "strategy, in the context of its applicability to that of the behavior of political actors, can and should 'never be considered wholly without reference to military power (Biddle 2015, pp. 11).

In defining strategy although the argued linkage between strategy and military force is a given to consider, one should also be mindful of the sine qua non moral component of one's own strategy, particularly, if it is going to include the armed forces' detachment. In his seminal article published in 2000, Richard K. Betts' (2000, pp. 5; as cited by Biddle 2015, pp. 11) defines strategy as:

“...the essential ingredient for making war either politically effective or morally tenable. It is the link between military means and political ends, the scheme for how to make one produce the other. Without strategy, there is no rationale for how force will achieve purposes worth the price in blood and treasure.”

This perceptive definition, for one, can be said to gain even more of a value especially when it gets to be evaluated in much more of a greater context, that is the modern international system in which a plethora of tools are known to exist in the arsenal of political actors for them to pursue and realize any number of politically desired ends. This supposed list of tools can be argued to include, while not being limited to (inter alia): “wealth and economic leverage, information and moral suasion, and diplomacy” (Biddle 2015, pp. 12). And given how these tools are in no way void of an inherent capacity for coercive employability, this might be one of the very underscoring reason

as to why we have for some time now been seeing a surge in even “the most contemporary authors’ willingness to employ the word strategy even if and when military power as a feasible tool at its best do seem to occupy only a far distant possibility amongst an actor’s perceivably acceptable, justifiable and available means for use.” Furthermore, even in such instances, it does not mean that the imperativeness of a context-appropriate strategy (and an adequately well-informed process of strategic decision-making that is responsible for carrying it to success) is no less of an essentiality when compared to those fall under the banner of military realm (Biddle 2015, pp. 12). Evidently, whenever a political actor may come to decide to employ one of its individual instruments of power, the said-actor is bound to satisfy one particular requirement (inter alia), and that is to have a sense of coherent logic that can be said to inform how the means will come to produce the desired ends; and most importantly, such a logical scheme by the virtue of its construction should also be enduring and resilient enough to resist those that would come to challenge and scrutinize it critically and analytically (against what one might think of as unpredictable events and barriers, and failures that might result from a lack of imagination and potential complications inherent to human communication and interactions).

Moving upwards in the step ladder of one’s strategic construct and its envisaged application as to target an enduring and vital problem makes the above-(and also yet to be-)defined challenges even more complex and critical; and one particular higher domain of strategic consideration here in this respect is no other than the grand strategy’s itself. In hindsight, it was in the 20th century that the phrase “grand strategy” made its first debut, and later has managed to enter the Cold War lexicon which came to be used by many successive generations of practitioners and studiers of strategy and security. In his highly sensational classic 1954 book called *Strategy*, the British historian and military analyst Sir Basil Liddell Hart, as the forefather who officially gave the phrase its first ever modern-time appearance, explained that: “as tactics is an application of strategy on a lower plane, so strategy is an application on a lower plane of grand strategy;” and the surmised role attributed to the latter [according to what he argues of being the case] “is to coordinate and direct all resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war” (Hart 1967, pp. 322). This might be one of the essential reasons as to why Sir Basil Liddell Hart and Samuel Eliot Morison (and also many others [Gray 2013; Biddle 2015; Silove 2018;

Balzacq & Krebs 2021)] who came to follow in their footsteps later) has come to perceive the phrases of “grand strategy” and “higher strategy” as interchangeable in terms of their surmised meanings. Moreover, one common characteristic that appears to be shared in and across the descriptive accounts of the successive generational works inquiring about the grand strategy is their evident echoing continuations of and reflections on what one may come to coin as the essence of the earlier generational works. Although the range of names that may come to be included in this hypothetical list are many in number and diverse in backgrounds, we can still point out to some of the more influential and well-known ones, at the very least briefly, as to substantiate this argument.

One well-known figure that we can account is no other than Colin S. Gray (a British-American who was a writer on geopolitics and professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies at the University of Reading, whilst being a Senior Associate to the National Institute for Public Policy²⁴). According to the definition provided in his book *The Strategy Bridge*, the compound term grand strategy can be defined as “the direction and use made of any or all of the assets of a security community, including its military instruments, for the purpose of policy as decided by politics” (Gray 2010, pp. 3; Biddle 2015). And the linkage in his conceptual scheme can be said to lie in his perception of how “all strategy is grand strategy” (Gray 2010; Layton, 2018). Similarly, both Paul Kennedy (who described grand strategy as a “complex and multi-layered thing, which is particularly demanding of and sensitive to the overall intelligent interaction of all of a nation’s [or polity’s] significant resources, on the path of what it basically envisages, appropriates and conditions as a desirable political end to achieve”) and Richard K. Betts (who defined strategies as “chains of relationships among means and ends that span several levels of analysis, from the maneuvers of units in specific engagements through larger campaigns, whole wars, grand strategies, and foreign policies”) can also be said to constitute one such instance of continuation.²⁵ Additionally, Peter Layton (2018, pp. 1), who builds on Gray’s explanations about the phrase in a similar vein, also argued: “Without a grand strategy that explains the ends, works the means and sets out the ways, lower-level strategies will be uncoordinated,

²⁴ Unfortunately, however, he, who was once known to be the figurehead of the first generation of strategic-cultural analysis, passed away in February 2020.

²⁵ The part in where a critical exploration and assessment of the classical and historically prior intellectual works (such as those of Carl von Clausewitz, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thucydides, and so and so on) is going to be given a space shall come later in the chapter.

work at odds with each other and be unlikely to succeed.”

Another common characteristic that came to be associated with the phrase grand strategy was the expanding idea of relevance and applicability associated with it not only in the limited context of wartime period but also in the peacetime period also. This change in vision, according to Biddle, was made possible with thanks to the accumulated contributions of the prominent authors working in the domain of international security;²⁶ one of whom, once again according to Biddle, was Edward Meade Earle, editor in the first (1943) edition of the classic text named *Makers of Modern Strategy*, providing a set of well-refined definitions on and about both strategy and as well as grand strategy in what appears to be in both descriptive and normative accounts (as cited by Biddle 2015, pp. 16):

“Strategy is the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation—or a coalition of nations—including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed. The highest type of strategy—sometimes called ‘grand strategy’—is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.”

Earle’s put forth descriptive and normative framework, which he built upon the context of international security, was constraining neither strategy nor grand strategy solely to a polity’s decision to wield military power only but expanding the conceptually compounded definitions and overall relevancies of the both terms to the idea and practice of war-making and peace-preservation. For this compounded definition of strategy (both in reference to its normal and grand forms) to be realizable, he can be seen to argue about the significance of at least three consecutive steps (to choose to draw from an array of finite resources knowingly, purposefully, and deterministically [1], to structure and coordinate those drawn upon resources [i.e., the first step] in the most optimum and feasible ways possible to make them practical and apparent as to match with one’s desired political endpoints [2], and to articulate [i.e., the first and

²⁶ Although the built-up body of knowledge is asserted to have an impact over the manner in and through which the term and concept of grand strategy has come to be assessed, it should not be interpreted in a way that the earlier generations were completely unaware about the existence of such a component and dimension (i.e., preservation of peace) attributable to that of the phrase grand strategy. One particular instance that can at the very least be mentioned in this respect is no other than the highly acclaimed author Sir Basil Liddell Hart.

second steps] in a legitimate way by the legitimate authorities that can enable them to garner popular support [3]). Ultimately, Earle distinguishes grand strategy in terms of its conceptualization as something that is made of an overarchingly ideal fabric (mostly constitutive of values, norms, identity orientations, cultural and customary appropriations, so and so on), thus much more difficult and demanding.

So, in imparting their collective wisdom, we can find some of the core requirements of and caveats to both the idea and practice of strategy and grand strategy, those of which a political actor (or polity) always needs to be careful and mindful of in the greater context of international realm. The first and foremost requirement of strategy (regarding both of its 'normal' and 'grand forms) is related to the imperative that it has to be "physically possible and economically feasible" (Biddle 2015, pp. 13). The reason for that is rather simple and straightforward. As any adherer of commonsense can clearly comprehend, strategy, both in the virtue of its practice and as well as the reality that it can be supposed to have been bounded by, is inescapably and indispensably all about "tradeoffs and opportunity costs;" given how come that there can be "no infinite of something" regardless of how much of an abundance or excess of wealth and/or capabilities that a polity might have managed to accumulate or muster over the years, this imperative therefore can be argued to condition one to decide carefully and wisely amongst what is limitedly available as a set of options (Biddle 2015, pp. 13). If and when the practitioner of strategy can manage to take the first step of tangible challenges without a slip, then, there it comes the next, arduous step of intangible difficulties. In another way of putting it, the second requirement of strategy is all about the social context in which the letter and spirit of what makes something acceptable or tolerable gets to be influenced by the cultural, moral, traditional, and historical proclivities that work in cohort: first, to enculture the very institutions and thereof people who will come to implement the strategy in particular; and second, to appropriate and soothe the idea of what is claimed of having been sought after by that very strategy as to not make it stand against the ideational proponents known to inform the societal and national sensibilities and red-lines to not cross in general. The consequence to fail to check and fulfill the second imperative can produce the primary reason for the unsustainability of the strategy trying to be implemented and furthered for one's desired political ends. The third core requirement on the other hand is the relevance of strategy vis-à-vis the (set of) problem(s) in question that the actor in

question aims to match and solve accordingly by its idea and practice of strategy. The fourth one, which is quite interconnected to the third item, can be said to involve one's necessity to: first, uphold a constant vigilance in (re-)assessing the targeted (set of) problematic situation(s) at hand, as it always a given possibility for one to encounter a potentially game-changing condition; and second, if and when such a change come to unfold, (re)form the relationship between means and ends in light of the changing timely circumstances as there exists the danger of the strategy previously imagined of becoming a mismatch with the reality on the ground. Incidentally, if we ever come to borrow the perceptive lenses forged by Carl von Clausewitz's ingenuity as to provide further clarifications over the latter part of the fourth imperative, the most befitting embodiment of the argument can be deemed to surface in and through the chaotic presence of unpredictability constantly at play and in effect in the confinements of a battlespace; something which Clausewitz considers to be ever-changing and unexpected "friction." As the historical precedence shows us in abundance, an actor's failure in any one of the above-mentioned requirements of strategy may spell at its best an overall failure with regard to what is trying to be achieved, or at its worst a total disaster with unbearable consequences (Biddle 2015, pp. 13). This, if we ever pay heed to what Earle warns us about, may even be truer for the considerations pertinent to the grand strategic domain, given the extend and scope of the stakes that must be considered.

Indeed, if there is anything that can be asserted to constitute not an uncommon occurrence in the realm of international relations (ir) in the first place, then, it might be the actors' very inclination to opt for the use of military power, albeit the other instruments residing at their disposal might have comparatively been better suited for the realization of one's projected political endpoints (Biddle 2015). Even more so, it would certainly be a lie to argue that there is no rationality informing such a decision, even if the one that can be said to exist might be a flawed one instead; as what makes it tempting for one to pursue such a course of action, despite the danger of potentially disastrous consequences, essentially lies in the nectareous prospect that it is more than often thought to promise: "straightforward gains received over a short period of time at an optimally minimum cost ratio" (Biddle 2015). In this respect, the realm of ir houses a great number of disastrously concluded occurrences, each coming with their own morals of the story (Biddle 2015). In some, we see the cautionary tales of: the

leaders and how come that their unchecked beliefs in their own greatness and foresightedness might result in their inclinations to wield force at the expense of diplomacy and political interaction; and the instances of what many may describe as “hasty, ill-conceived, or purely emotional” (but almost always armed with an appropriated sense of justification sugarcoating) decisions to use force (Biddle 2015). And in others, the tales depict how come that “actors’ decision to use force might essentially be based on a (set of) fallacious assumption(s) about: what they consider of being the reasons for and extent of their enemies’ will and determination;” and the idea that a quick victory on the battlefield would be much more painless way of resolving a problem (Biddle 2015). In many of these cases, there appears to be at the very least one or two drawable common characteristics, and they seem to be related to how: an actor’s “the-outcome-realized is only loosely aligned with the original-endpoint that was trying to be pursued since the very beginning; actors are mostly inadequate at judging what are their vital interests essentially (Biddle 2015). One exemplary perspective embodying the above-line of argumentation can be seen in Bernard Brodie’s, who was actively writing during the highs and lows of the Vietnam War, critical account about the U.S.’ identification of interests (Brodie 1973; pp. 2, 343-345; Biddle 2015):

“Vital interests, despite common assumptions to the contrary, have only a vague connection with objective fact. A sovereign nation determines for itself what its vital interests are (freedom to do so is what the term “sovereign” means) and its leaders accomplish this exacting task largely by using their highly fallible and inevitably biased human judgment to interpret the external political environment.”

All in all, if there is anything that can be said in high confidence, regarding the overall scope and purpose of enquiry that this sub-sub-chapter has tried to instigate and insinuate, then that should be how a brief look into the past in extension to one’s ideational/intangible conditionings do enable one to understand and see: first, the compounded layers over layers of complexity inherent in the term, concept, idea and practice of strategy; second, the evolution of the concept strategy over time in and through not only in the changing contexts of politics, socio-economics, and technology but also in their corresponding cultural contexts; and finally, history can be argued to provide a particular usefulness in allowing us to perceive some national proclivities

and tendencies in the strategic behavior of a state. Therefore, a polity's understanding and practice of strategy cannot be isolated from the historical, cultural, ideational, material and civilizational bedrock that it remains embedded into, and culture herein this context, can be said to constitute one, if not the foremost, coloring of this bedrock upon which the said-polity's strategic behavior finds understanding, acceptance, meaning, and even expression. Then, the question is what might culture be?

2.1.2. Understanding the Second Parental Half: Culture

Since its initial conception by Giovanni Andres, in 1781, under the name of '*coltura*' (*i.e.*, a Latin originative word corresponding to a number of etymological meanings, such as: cultivating, fostering, inhabiting, maintaining, tending to, cherishing, worshipping, decorating, adorning, so and so on), which he used to imply the conditions of human achievements preserved in and through the writing as the primary form of registering, the term culture has long been part of an ample expansion, if not constant growth, mostly due to it being stretched relentlessly on the conceptual rack as to make the term basically capable of accommodating all the forms of registering every single condition that is known to comprise of the humanity's attainments (Haglund 2004, pp 483; McNicoll 2007, pp. 412-413; Kartchner & Johnson 2009). Contrary to what one would expect to see, however, all these centuries worth of time that could have been used to come to terms with a working definition about culture appears to be only adding into the conceptual enigma that this term essentially is, rather than providing even a shred of clarity to it. In this respect, it would not be that of an overstatement to claim that even the simplest things about 'culture,' ranging from its meaning to key characteristics and even to nature, still continues to trouble and boggle the minds of many social scientists. In fact, so difficult has the definitional debate engulfing it been so far that some of the scholars were once known to advise their colleagues working on the subject to either refrain themselves from studying it by abandoning it altogether, or write fervently against it (Zaman 2009, pp. 59). So, what might be the underlying reasons for both the term and concept to possess such a notorious level of difficulty?

But still, something being too difficult does not necessarily call for an impossibility as there might be an actual leeway to bypass it. And according to the assertion provided by Valerie M. Hudson's assessment of this situation, the very fault line underpinning

the observed difficulties and complexities with regard to such attempts aimed at defining culture were arising not from the question of what to include in one's conceptual schemes, but rather what to exclude (Zaman 2009, pp. 59; Hudson 1997, pp.2). Reflective of her argument, in a study made by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (in 1952) as to determine the profusion and the conceptual extents of all the definitions of culture occupying the corresponding literature of social sciences, it was found out that the number of differing conceptual definitions of culture were already edging 164 in total, and displaying little to no descriptive prowess despite their somewhat similar and ambitiously over-encompassing conceptual frames (Apte 1994-2001; Spencer-Oatey 2012).

Similarly, Avruch (who entertains a retrospective manner of enquiry in his research as a way to draw upon some of the significant ways in which the term and concept of culture has come to be interpreted throughout the previous centuries) finds the main reason for much of the lamented complexity about this particular subject matter to be attributable to the surging numbers of different usages of the term culture, which were, he claims, rather popping up in profusion especially during the 19th century (Avruch 1998, pp. 6-7; Spencer-Oatey 2012). Furthermore, he also manages to track down three major, descriptive, seminal works (each arising reactionary to its predecessor) written about culture that were, and to a certain extent still are, proving to be highly influential in the very way and manner through which those working on the subject have been continuing to interpret and incorporate the term and concept of culture in their respective conceptual schemes. In this regard, the first one of these three, which had pioneered in Matthew Arnolds' *Culture and Anarchy* in 1867, supposes culture as a special intellectual or artistic endeavours or products, which we might in today's terms equate to that of 'high culture' as opposed to 'popular culture' (or 'folkways' in an earlier usage) (Avruch 1998; Spencer-Oatey 2012). Evidently, this manner of identification intrudes a quantitative limit over the very number of those who might have culture in any social group, while associating the rest with what it claims of being a potential source of anarchy. For its all intents and purposes, however, this sense of culture by nature and characteristic is mostly attributable to field of aesthetics rather than being applicable to social sciences (Avruch 1998; Spencer-Oatey 2012)

The second definition, which was introduced (partly as a reaction to the first definition) by Edward Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* in 1870, describes culture as in the manner

of a particular quality that can be possessed by all people in all social groups, who by virtue of their developmental phase can also be arranged alongside the steps of an evolutionary continuum (in Lewis Henry Morgan's scheme²⁷), ranging from 'savagery' (i.e., the stage of hunting-gathering) to 'barbarism (i.e., the stage of settled agriculture) and finally to 'civilization' (i.e., the stage of possessing an urban society with more advanced agriculture). Evidently, what is meant to be implied by Tylor's put forth definition appears to be based on how culture actually corresponds to a 'complex whole', encapsulating 'knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Spencer-Oatey 2012). In this regard, in a rather simple comparison that can be made between the two aforementioned definitions, the latter can easily be understood to oppose the former's views on the questions of what culture essentially means and whom it belongs to by his assertion that: all folks 'have' culture, which they come to acquire by virtue of membership in some social group (i.e., society), as this culture (i.e., formation of the complex whole) makes up an array of things extending from knowledge to habits to capabilities. In a number of ways, Tylorean view of culture proved to be highly successful in opening up new horizons not only in Anthropology, but also in the other fields of social research, including Political Science (Spencer-Oatey 2012).

As to open a bracket here, it should be noted that, after his seminal work was published, the overall popularity of Tylor's definition of culture has had begun to skyrocket, and in doing so, successfully left a deep imprint with that of a lasting impact (which still remains to be seen even today actually) especially in the scholarly field of Anthropology (Spencer-Oatey 2012). In many ways, however, this supposed tide of fame in making scholars interested in culture (mostly stemming from the extreme inclusivity of Tylor's definition) is known to affect not only Anthropologists, but also those of other intellectual pursuits (mostly from the other domains of contemporary social studies, one of which was being no other than Political Science), who were essentially sailing in search of something new (Spencer-Oatey 2012). And expectedly, the result was them getting easily hooked by the very idea of addressing culture as a buttry subject of interest and enquiry as to enrich their fields of study; and as per the scholarly enterprise of political science, this state of intrigue was indeed influential in

²⁷ See his *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (1877).

paving the essential circumstances from which ‘political culture’ would have eventually been given birth to later in the 1950s. While keeping all these in mind is indeed significant to thread the bigger picture leading up to the previously mentioned definitions of culture popping up in profusion, it should also not be overlooked that the greatest legacy of Tylor’s definition, according to many writing on this subject, dwells in his ‘complex whole’ formulation, which assess cultures as something akin to wholes–integrated systems (Spencer-Oatey 2012). Albeit some of the later to come anthropologists has had vehemently rejected the evolutionary part of Tylor’s definition and also the fact that how he actually oversimplified the world, his assessment nevertheless continues to offer great heuristic value for many even to this date.

The third major, and also the final descriptive account, noted by Avruch, about culture comes from a number of anthropological studies conducted by Franz Boas and his students in the 20th century, whose work in general was also inspired by the writings of Johann von Herder of the 18th century (Spencer-Oatey 2012). As underscored before in the very beginnings of this sub-sub-section, each three descriptive interpretations of culture emerges as a reactionary response to its precursor, and in this respect, whereas, on the one hand, Tylor’s efforts were partly led by his dismissal of Arnold’s definition of culture as to establish a scientific basis rather than that of an aesthetic one for the concept, on the other hand, however, Boas and his students were voicing their utter discord with Tylor’s descriptive interpretation of culture and against those who were subscribing to the Tylolean social evolutionism (Spencer-Oatey 2012). In a closer look, Boas appears to be rejecting the Tylolean view on two reasons; as for the first one, he puts his emphasis over ‘the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies’ and therefore does not agree with what is proposed as the universal character of a single culture by the evolutionists; and as for the second, he basically rejects what seems to be a number of value rulings that are prevailing in and of both Arnoldian and Tylolean perspectives on culture, as his claims oppose them, by asserting that one should just never try to differentiate high from low culture and also attempt to categorize cultures under valorizing rubrics such as savage, barbarian, or civilized (Spencer-Oatey 2012).

In line with what has come to be discussed so far, it should be quite clear that the mostly surmised part of the difficulty regarding the term and concept of culture lies in its multiple meanings, and distinct understandings that are associated with it. However,

what appears to compound matters even further is not only pertinent to how the prevailing complexities are in fact merely conceptual or semantic, but also related to how indeed all these employed usages and pursued understandings do remain associated to perceptive items conditioned by varying ideological, ideational and/or political elements in one form or another. Moreover, if and when we begin to move closer to the 20th century, the upheld interest towards culture as a primary research agenda and key variable becomes much more ostensive given the profusion of distinct manners of research and enquiry that has had come to be introduced and therefore entertained in and across different scholarly attempts, noticeably emerging in the human (or social) sciences.

So, the concept of culture having first originated in psychology and later finding its place in sociology, has also come to emerge and find attraction in the other disciplines too, with history being the first-ever to utilize it, and anthropology proving itself to be the most capable in applying it were only the foremost two amongst many (Haglund 2004; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 451; Anand 2020, pp. 2). Whilst the concept of culture was turning out to be the all-rage in the contexts of these disciplines, for what it seemed, the domain of politics and international relations were basically standing aloof if not totally blind to how much of an intellectual gold could be mined from such similar undertakings.²⁸ This however has proven to be open to change, and the gateways to that were gaped if not forcefully thrust through by the circumstances of the World War II security environment. The reason was simple. The committed atrocities, strategic outlooks and behaviors of the WWII Axis-powers (i.e., Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan) were basically necessitating the use of the concept of culture as to make sense of what was being observed. This suddenly found conviction with respect to the uses of the concept of culture however did mostly result in what

²⁸ Some of the underlying reasons for this argued aloofness can be said to share a direct relationship with how the studiers of it were for the longest time rather inclined to perceive culture: only in its big [C] variant and not small [c] variants; via the lenses of an inherently biased Enlightenment rationality; as something detrimental against the Enlightenment beliefs of constant progress and universal humanism; as something that is fading away vis-à-vis the homogenizing influences of modernization, globalization, and globally unfolding capitalist system; as something close to nothing in role, effect or importance vis-à-vis the crushing impact of power and primacy of security and survival considerations; under the effects of ideological conditionings, as acknowledging the existence of [c] variants also brings the question the other additionally, which requires an adequate understanding to be cultivated; as something basically non-scientific. For more on this issue, see; Valbjørn, M. (2008). Before, during and after the cultural turn: a 'Baedeker' to IR's cultural journey. *International Review of Sociology—Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, 18(1), 55-82.; Reus-Smit, C. (2017). Cultural diversity and international order. *International Organization*, 71(4), 851-885.

one might call as the highly diverse lenses via which culture has founded its multiplicity of (appropriated) meanings. For instance, there appeared those promoting the idea that culture should be seen and treated as ‘civilization’ whilst others contrapostulated that it should rather be seen and treated as ‘sophistication’ (Hofstede 1991; Anand 2020). There exist even particular perspectives talking about how necessary it is to distinguish between “public, strategic, organizational, military, civil, and popular cultures” (Gray 2009).

Amongst the plethora of definitions of culture, there appears to be several widely used and popularized ones.²⁹ In this respect, one of the pervasive definitions in the literature belongs to Clifford Geertz (1973, pp. 6). According to him, culture conceptually can be said to encapsulate: “historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.” According Haglund (2004) and Lantis (2002, pp. 92), it was due to the acknowledgement of the symbolic content of culture that Alastair Iain Johnston³⁰ has managed to seize upon what many across-the-board has thus far considered to be the most ambitious, sophisticated, and elegantly well-refined attempt aimed to define the term and concept of strategic culture. As a piece of fabric that is clearly snipped from a cloth woven by Geertz, Johnston (1995, pp. 36-37) defined strategic culture as something that consists in:

“...an integrated system of symbols (i.e., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors, etc.) that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious.”

Another popular definition of culture came to be articulated by Ann Swidler (1986, as cited in Lantis 2009, pp. 34), and according to her definitional scheme, culture can be said to encompass: “symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language,

²⁹ These definitions are selected in the context of their closeness to the concept of strategic culture.

³⁰ A. I. Johnston is one of the leading figures of the third generation of strategic-cultural analysis whose contributions can directly be credited for bringing about the infamous debate between, what he coined as, different generational studies of strategic culture in general, and in particular, back and forth contestation with Colin S. Gray of the self-proclaimed first-generation analyst (i.e., The Third-Generation leading figure A. I. Johnston versus the First-Generation leading figure C. S. Gray).

gossip, stories and rituals of daily life.” As per the third prevalent definition, we see the concept of culture getting described as “codes that enable individuals to make much out of little, given how (at the moment of action) culture provides the elements of grammar that define the situation whilst revealing the motives and setting forth a strategy for success” (Johnston 1995; Anand 2020, pp. 2-13). The fourth definitional scheme is given by Valerie Hudson, and according to her conceptualization culture can be said to correspond to an “evolving system of shared meanings that governs perceptions, communications, and actions, where the content and effect of culture has been brought about” (Hudson 1997; Hudson 2007; Lantis 2002; Anand 2020, pp. 2). The fifth one belongs to Roger M. Keesing, and his definition basically sees culture “as systems of cognition that relate peoples and communities to their ecology or environment in an evolutionary, symbiotic relationship” (Johnston 1998, pp. 33; Anand 2020, pp. 2).

Beside these definitions, we also see views defining the concept of culture as in a manner of “collective programming of the mind which work to distinguish the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede 2001, pp. 10; Anand 2020, pp. 3-13). In a way, this ideation appears to be equating “what culture is for a society to what personality is for an individual” (Hofstede 2001, pp. 10; Anand 2020, pp. 3-13) And personality in this case is defined as the ‘interactive aggregate of personal characteristics that can be thought to impact the individual’s responses to the environment (Anand 2020, pp. 3-13). Another definition, which can be said to continue this notion of programming, is provided by Raymond Williams. In what appears to be an interesting uptake on the concept of culture, he defines it as “one part of the three levels of programming of the human mind (the other two are being personality and nature, they are claimed to be operating at individual and universal levels respectively), operating at a societal level” (Gray 1999, pp. 5-6; Haglund 2004; Zaman 2009, pp. 3; Anand 2020, pp. 3). In William’s conceptualization, culture can be said to remain constitutive of “values that are pertinent to some sort of a timeless order, and this for one seems to be based on, or derived out of the influence of, the artefacts of intellectual and imaginative work in which human thought and experience are variously recorded, and this as for one can be said to allow a description of a specific way to life comes to find its expression in institutions and ordinary behavior” (Zaman 2009, pp. 3; Anand 2020, pp. 3). This definitional scheme put forth by William

was essentially extending the very conceptual borderline of culture towards a point that could include not only the ideas but also the institutional and behavioral aspects too (Gray 1999, pp. 5-6; Zaman 2009; Anand 2020, pp. 3).

In summation, the concept of culture has long been constituting different meanings to different people, and the most popularized views in the literature do remain indicative of this point, given how each definition of culture is rather distinct: “inherit conceptions, symbols, codes, cognitive scheme, collective programming, and the value-evidence-behavior composite in a social system” (Geertz 1973; Swidler 1986; Hofstede 1991; Johnston 1995; Hudson 1997; Johnston 1998 Hofstede 1991; Lantis 2002; Haglund 2004; Hudson 2007; Zaman 2009; Anand 2020, pp. 3). Although this multiplicity in and across the scholars’ definitional schemes is a huge headache in and of itself mostly because of the fissures and dissonances that it has been responsible for creating in the literature, it does not mean that the study of the subject of culture is a lesser pursuit to invest one’s overall time and efforts into. And this for one can be said to hold quite a particular truth in the domain of international relations. One avenue that seems to be echoing this line of persuasion is no other than those who have long been claiming to have founded a mutually constitutive relationship between an international actor’s surmised culture and its subsequently resulting forms of strategic behavior.

2.2. Towards a Point of Convergence: Strategic Culture

One framework worthy of mention, emerging out of the American psychological anthropology, has had been proposed by the ‘culture and personality school’³¹ and came to develop between 1920s and 1940s (Piker 1994; LeVine 2001; Zaman 2009). As per its particularities, those who subscribed to this school of thought were basically advocating the idea that culture can be separated into categories encompassing distinct personality patterns; and such patterns in turn were being thought to form the personalities of the individuals, and thereof the specific culture that they collectively bring about (Piker 1994; LeVine 2001; Zaman 2009). This particular approach has had proved to be successful in garnering popularity amongst the researchers who were pursuing matters of culture during both the Second World War and the Cold War, thus

³¹ This school’s backdrop was paved by and rooted into a series of intellectual exchanges (a majority of which was based on Freud’s findings and theories) between psychoanalysis and psychologically oriented American anthropology. For more on its origins, see; Piker, S. (1994). Classical culture and personality.

generating a broad-range of ‘national character studies’, which were mostly on and about the Axis powers of war-time period (Piker 1994; LeVine 2001; Zaman 2009).

Some of the other noteworthy studies emerging in those times were mostly provided by a number of sociologists and anthropologists, whose works was proving to be highly prominent in linking culture and forms of behavior (Lantis 2002; Haglund 2004; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Later in 1960s, by the further inclusion of political scientists (e.g., Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba) into this fray of a cauldron, we have had come to see the first attempts aimed to develop what became known as the concept of political culture, which meant to cover: the ‘subset of beliefs and values of a society that relate to the political system (Zaman 2009; Kertzer et al. 2014).’ In the views of Almond and Verba, the concept of political culture was encompassing ‘morality and the utility of force; the rights of individuals and/or groups; a commitment to values like democratic principles and institutions; and attitudes toward the role a country can play in global politics’ (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Kertzer et al. 2014). Towards the 1980s, the study of political culture has had started to levitate upward in popularity, especially among a number of researchers known as comparativists, whose foremost interest was based on looking at linkages between culture and politics (Zaman 2009). Throughout the time, albeit the concept of political culture managed to survive on the fringes of the area studies, it was in and of itself attracting little to no attention in what could be conceived of being the mainstream international relations scholarship (Zaman 2009).

So, the 1970s was the period in and through which the initially rising interest towards the concept of political culture was starting to fade away. But still, it was still during those times that the subject itself managed to leave a profound inheritance for the later scholars to take on board; and that was in fact no other than the subsequent birth and soon to come development of the concept of strategic culture (Haglund 2004; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). According to a number of authors (Scobell 2003; Haglund 2004; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012; Anand 2020), there exist traceable connections between political culture and strategic culture. In fact, it is even possible to view the concept of strategic culture as a descendent of direct lineage coming from the concept of political culture. Essentially, the crux of this argument stems from the latter’s clear presence within the academic circles since the early 1950s; and by drawing on the apparent instances of such works (e.g., Ruth Benedict, Nathan

Leites, so and so on), the aforesaid-works basically posits that the very idea of national style (i.e., a specific culture is expected to influence and encourage a specific style in thought and action) must have had derived from the concept of political culture (Haglund 2004; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012; Anand 2020).

From another perspective, however, saying that the scholars writing on the subject did only realize the significance of the supposed linkages between culture and the matters pertaining to a country's approach to war, peace, strategy and use of force not until the late 1970s and early 1980s would still be no less than making a grave error. In fact, one may just trace the long-standing, monumental footprints of such distinct understandings in and across the classic works of strategy and war, amongst which Thucydides' *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* do also famously reside, allowing us to execute an invaluable retrospect to look for what one may come to assert to have both the presence and essence of strategic culture (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2006; Zaman 2009; Singh 2016).

Broadly speaking, some of the key underpinnings of the above characterizations and overall persuasion can be easily distilled into several points of considerations as per each work of antiquity, and by doing so, we may display some of the basic linkages that this paper for one perceives to exist with relation to those of the proponents of strategic culture. In this regard, let us start with the first one. Laurie M. J. Bagby (1994), in what appears to be an interesting article named after '*The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relation*,' argues that Thucydides, in his world renown work *History of the Peloponnesian War*, do in fact illustrate a deep and clear appreciation towards the political and cultural differences among the city-states both before and during the Peloponnesian War. In the article, he simply proceeds to indicate how come that the 'national character (e.g., Spartan reticence and inwardness, and Athenian boldness and lust for glory) and the individual characters of the leaders (e.g., the abrasive personality of the Spartan general Pausanias, the statesmanship of Themistocles and Pericles, the personality of Alcibiades and Nicias)' did indeed play a critical role in and across Thucydides' accounts of the Peloponnesian War (Bagby 1994; Zaman 2009). Meaning, the fear that was most likely felt by the Spartans in the face of Athenians' rise in power, and thereof the initiation and conduct of the war between the two, must not be understood as something that has had come to be caused by the generally supposed distribution of power between Athens and Sparta, but rather

due to the other underlying causes comprising apparent differences both in national character and in the individual characteristics of the leaders as opposed to a categorical sameness (Bagby 1994; Johnston 1994; Zaman 2009).

In a similar vein, by belonging to the oldest Chinese and Indian civilizations respectively, both *the Art of War*, written by Sun Tzu, and *Arthashastra*, written by Kautilya, have long been credited and acclaimed as two of the finest works, embodying war and political discourses ever come to be passed down since the times of antiquity.³² In his magnum opus, *the Art of War*, which was written to counsel Chinese rulers, reigning during a period when warfare was constituting a constant and existential matter of concern for the Chinese states of the time (i.e., The Spring and Autumn Period), Sun Tzu³³ has had argued how the nature of war is that of an empirical one (i.e., knowing thyself and knowing thy enemy), and that being proficient in this intricate craft of waging war is the only path to ensure one's survival (especially, if one regards the time period when this piece of work has had come to be written and passed down, and that was the Spring and Autumn period, during which more than one hundred independent Chinese states were getting annihilated). Given the prevailing necessities and urgencies of those times, he perceives one's survival and success in the war as something that equals each other.³⁴ Therefore, in his opus, the emphasis that is being given over the notion of strategy is mostly based on deception, irregular warfare, espionage (so and so on), all of which can be argued to comprise of indirect means and ways of engagement.

In the case of Kautilya's opus, *Arthashastra*, what is argued to be 'the purpose of strategy is to conquer all other states and to overcome such an equilibrium as existed on the road to victory' (Singh 2016, pp. 1; Zaman 2006). He (being a statesman) basically identified and laid down key precepts that must be carried out by the states,

³² As per the purpose of this paper, both these famous works of antiquity are being accounted briefly in terms of their similarities in discourse and persuasion. Therefore, for those who like to indulge themselves with a detailed description of the supposed distinctions between the two, and as well about their linages to the strategic culture, you may one to see: Harjeet Singh, "Evolution of Strategic Culture Based on Sun Tzu and Kautilya: A Civilizational Connect." (2016).

³³ *Sunzi*, or in Wade-Giles romanization *Sun-tzu*, also spelled as *Sun Tzu*, refers to a title, meaning 'The Master,' speculated to correspond either to a Chinese military strategist, Taoist philosopher, and general of War in the 6th century BCE, or to amalgam of a persona comprised of sages, scholars and intellectuals of those times, whose accumulated wisdom and knowledge on the matters of state and of war has had long been distilled into what we come to know as "the Art of War, or in its other name the Thirteen Chapters.

³⁴ Or, in Sun Tzu's own words: 'while an angered man may again be happy, and a resentful man again be pleased, a state that has perished cannot be restored, nor can the dead be brought back to life.'

and their respective rulers. In this regard, he views: ‘states with that of an obligation to pursue self-interest, even more than glory; and the ruler, if wise indeed, would definitely seek his allies from among his neighbor’s neighbors; because the goal of that wise ruler would be no other than establishing an alliance system with the conqueror (i.e., himself) dwelling at the center, which would allow him to squeeze the enemy, however strong it maybe, between him and his allies; and by knowing that the alliance shall never be permanent, the wise ruler should also work within its own alliance by undertaking such works that would increase his own power and maneuver to strengthen his state’s position and prevent states from aligning against it (Singh 2016, pp. 1; Zaman 2006).’³⁵

So, if we try to recollect what has come to be discussed throughout the last few paragraphs in a few sentences, it should already be evident that: Kautilya (being a statesman), on the one hand, via his opus, shares his thoughts on the issues pertained to the administrative aspects of a state, inter-states relations (i.e., foreign policy) and employment of the army in a spectrum that ranges from the minor administrative and tactical levels to the grand strategic level; Sun Tzu (being either a war-time general, or an amalgam of several personas comprised of able-intellectual and scholars whose collectively comprised of body of wisdom and knowledge was passed on in the form of thirteen chapters), on the other hand, via his opus, warns the Chinese Emperors of the mostly shrouded intricacies of war-fighting in a range that stretches from the tactical level to the operational-strategic realms; and Thucydides (being a historian), finally, via his accounts of a specific period in Ancient Greek History, talks of the causes, effects, and happenings pertained to the Peloponnesian War, of which he is also an observant of, in terms that appears to reflect the distinct postures, characteristic views and proclivities, and particularities of the clashing parties and of their leaders (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2006; Zaman 2009; Singh 2016). Despite their diverging characteristics and scope of inquiries, however, these works can also be argued to share common threads that do exhibit a linkage to that of the purpose of this paper, which is understanding the strategic culture in general, and understanding the junction of the two halves that constitute strategic culture in particular. Herein, each one of these

³⁵ For more on Kautilya, see; Kangle, R. P. *The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra: A study*. No. 1-3. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1986.; Gautam, Pradeep K. "Relevance of Kautilya's Arthashastra." *Strategic Analysis* 37.1 (2013): 21-28.; Kangle, R. P. "The Kautilya Arthashastra, Part I, II and III." (1965).

writings can for one be seen to project a particular notion of war, which is affected by the cultural backgrounds that their respective writers are supposed to be rooted into and educated accordingly (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2006; Zaman 2009; Singh 2016). And in broad terms, strategic culture can be argued to correspond to that of an inherited body of political-military concepts that takes its basis from historical and social experiences and sources; and regarding that, classic military texts (which are in fact a product of unique lessons that has had come to be internalized through the successive generations of a society and its elites) can be seen to constitute only one of the primary ways that this process, namely enshrining a national political-military literary tradition for the later generations to familiarize themselves with, occurs (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2006; Zaman 2009; Singh 2016). In line with this rationale, it would indeed not be an overstatement to say that, given how they have been nourished within the pervasive contexts of these consistent contextual lessons, leaders become much more inclined to for a set of relatively stable ideas about ‘how the world works’ (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2006; Zaman 2009; Singh 2016). Therefore, the proponents of strategic culture in this respect may argued to have a certain degree of influence over the very ways and manners of how the leaders may come to interpret international events and what might their preferences be as a response to a probable matter and issue (e.g., most typical instances are being how come, and under what conditions, that one might decide to use force as extension to that of its security and foreign policy) (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2006; Zaman 2009; Singh 2016). In this context, it remains indeed supposable, for instance, for many practitioners working in the domain of strategic studies and security policy to expect ‘China’s classic texts on strategy to have an influence on the modern Chinese leadership thought in ways that may indicate present behavior and attitudes toward the use of force’ (Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Singh 2016, pp. 2).³⁶ Because, those who work on such matters (e.g., statesmen, policy-makers, strategy-thinkers, decision-makers, scholars, and so and so on) are no way immune to hold preconceptions, prejudices, presuppositions about the very ways and manners through which they expect their counterparts in other countries to think and thereof behave in a given situation, which points to the significance of the understanding culture in explaining national security behavior (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Moreover, in a closer look, these particularities do also

³⁶ Does culture affect behavior? This particularity was once known to be the very catalyzer of intense discussions unfolding between the first and the third generations of researchers.

appear to be finding echo and favor in other areas of research too, one of which is being essentially the ‘national ways of warfare; a niche area of study once known of having been highly valued by the (military) historians’ (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

First introduced by the British Army Officer Basil H. Liddell Hart to insinuate the idea that there exists a traditional ‘British Way in Warfare,’ the concept of ‘national ways of war’ dates back to 1930s (Mearsheimer 1988; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Regarding the reasons for its origination, the concept was actually carrying Liddell Hart’s own personal trauma about what his generation had to experience during the First World War (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). In terms of the traces that his line of rationale did leave behind, the very intellectual basis that would eventually result in him coining the rubric of ‘national ways of war’ can be argued to have had surfaced, first, in his informative article, ‘The Napoleonic Fallacy’ published in 1925, which he later transposed into what he asserted to be the case of a rather Clausewitzian fallacy (Hart 2008), as to ridicule the very notion of waging absolute war via decisive, direct engagements against the main force of one’s enemy on the battlefield³⁷ (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Conversely, Liddell Hart was promoting the idea of indirect approach to warfare, and as per the British case, he saw the solution to the horrors of the First World War lying within the Britain’s traditional approach to armed conflict, ‘which involved eschewing direct military intervention and instead applying economic pressure on the enemy through her navy and financing auxiliaries who would bear the brunt of the fighting on the land’ (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). The Western Front of 1914-18 was nothing short of a bloody catastrophe for every party involved in it, including Britain, and, according to Liddell Hart’s put forth perspective, the high casualty number and waste of resources affecting the Britain at that time was basically the result of an aberration, which was consequential to the Britain’s divergence from her own, characteristic way of warfare (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). This assertion of his first finds its voice and echo in a broader thesis made public in 1927, then transposed to that of a book form with more of a detail in 1929, and later updated into its final version under the name of *The British Way in Warfare*, published in 1932 (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Even though he have had not tried to produce any other work with that of a similar nature on this subject matter later in his life, his

³⁷ In fact, Basil H. Liddell Hart identifies this manner of conduct to be the shortest and quickest path to Valhalla.

approach to explain these inherently intricate conundrums –mostly shrouding the question of does one nation’s own characteristics (e.g., culture, tradition, customs, ideas, so and so on) affect his/her national security and foreign policy behavior (comprising preferences, attitude, behavior, expectations with regard to the use of force, so and so on) –nevertheless proved influential in paving a path for those who would built upon and expand beyond what he initially conceived of (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

One of the well-renown works that has had come to surface shortly after Liddell Hart’s death in 1970 was produced by the American military historian Russell Weigley (1977) on *The American Ways of War* (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). In a brief evaluation, his work can be said to provide an in-depth analysis on the way and manner through which the United States of America have long been fighting wars; and, after instigating an all-encompassing assessment of the respective policies and strategies that has come to be pursued and practiced by the U.S. in an extensive historical range, starting from the American War of Independence and coming all the way over to the Vietnam War, he argues of finding enough evidence and reason to become convince that there exists a characteristic American Way of War (Weigley 1977; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Regarding what he considers of being distinctly characteristic, Russell Weigley³⁸ asserts ‘attrition’ and ‘annihilation’ as the two deterministic features of the overall American strategy, recognizable both in the very way and manner that the Americans have historically been accustomed to fight their wars (Weigley 1977; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Broadly speaking, he notes how the American military, as a rather weak player during the years coinciding the American War of Independence, was initially practicing a strategy of attrition with that of an overarching goal to wear out her enemies, and later, starting from the Civil War and onward, how the American military (as well as her strategic thinkers) has had come to advocate on the behalf of total destruction of her enemies by any means necessary (Weigley 1977; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

In addition to Liddell Hart and Russell Weigley, a number of other informative works about the national styles of warfare³⁹ had also begun to surface. However, it was only

³⁸ According to R. Uz Zaman, Russell Weigley’s can be to said to have long been influenced by the works of the German military historian Hans Delbruck.

³⁹ Besides the British and American cases, there are also those who take Soviet and Chinese national ways of war as their primary subject of inquiry.

after the Vietnam War and the United States-Soviet Union confrontation of the Cold War that most of those who working in the field of security and strategy had begun to realize an apparent necessity to coin a coherent concept, which would be instrumental as to understand how and why the countries seem to think about violence and wage wars in different ways (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). In this respect, the very first step towards the establishment of such a concept can be traced back to a particularly informative article, which was written and published by Colin S. Gray in the journal *Foreign Policy* in the year of 1971, inquiring about ‘the rational-actor assumptions of much of the general theorizing on the influence of nuclear weapons on statecraft.’ In the study, Colin S. Gray touched upon a variety of concepts pertained to the United States’ nuclear doctrine and strategy (e.g., deterrence, limited war, arms control, disarmament, first and second strike, the MAD, so and so on); and his purpose in doing so was, supposedly, to entertain the idea of whether other nations do also identify these concepts in the same way and manner as the Americans’ themselves. Especially during the moments of intense crises, for instance, can we really be sure that the escalation ladder which is often assumed to reside within the mind of an American policy maker as to appropriate his/her posture, attitude, and probable behavior to match with the one that is expected to occupy the mind of the former’s counterpart. Besides the potential danger of creating a façade of control, or margin of safety within the mind of a policymaker, which might come to be negated easily by the very nature of an escalating conflict with those of grave consequences, it is also very possible to encounter a situation in which some of the steps of this escalation ladder might be missing altogether in the mind of one’s counterpart either since the very beginning of the conflict, or after a critical point in the conflict that leads to a turn of events. Contrary to the common-sense of the time, these questions pertained to the efficacy of mechanistic ‘action-reaction’ policy models were not limited to the matter of the nuclear realm, and in the same informative article, Colin S. Gray was basically touching upon this particularity, by indicating two inter-related points about: how the Vietnam War was in fact illustrating the very truthfulness of his counter-charge that both the methodology and as well as the thought processes of the American theorists were being highly dominated by the inappropriate economic models [1], and how come that the American strategic theory was highly ethnocentric. In his own drawn

upon conclusion⁴⁰, Gray (1971, pp. 126; as cited in Zaman 2009) noted that:

‘Attempts to apply American deterrence logic to all national components in the nuclear arms race are bound to result in miscalculation if the distinctiveness of each component is not fully recognized. Similarly, American theories of limited war, escalation, counterinsurgency and nation building are unlikely to achieve the desired ends unless adequate attention is paid to the local contexts.’

Colin S. Gray’s disapproval of the mainstream theories of strategy, which he accused of being ignorant of the differences in local contexts, did also find quite a bit of favor amongst the other security analysts (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Consequently, a niche literature based on the cultural explanations in the study of war started to be formed. One of the written pieces, named ‘War and the Clash of Ideas,’ that can be identified as part of this scholarly enterprise, was published by Adda B. Bozeman in the spring 1976 issue of *Orbis*. As per its content, Bozeman was attacking the then-held truer-than-thou-fact-like-notion that international violence was mostly the consequence of how ‘many of the newly independent states were economically underdeveloped and thus prone to instability leading to conflict’ (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). The gist of her assault was simply a ridicule of the fact that “no allowance was made for the possibility that war-related phenomena might be, perhaps even predominantly, related to the aspects of locally prevalent values, images, traditions and mental constructions” (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). She underpinned the significance of accepting culture or civilization as all that is fundamental and enduring about the ways of a group (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). According to her intellectual schemes, culture or civilization could also be understood to constitute, if one may say, a complex of collectivity that is comprised of values, institutions, and modes of thinking in a given society, which managed to survive, change, and remain meaningful and essential to the successive generations (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). And as to further reinforce her assumptions, Bozeman drew upon the discussions paved by Paul Verhaegen’s inquiry on the relation between the ‘basic psychology’ of an African people and the effects of ‘cultural transition’ on them (Sondhaus 2006;

⁴⁰ After many years Gray has once again emphasized the same relevance and importance that should be given to culture as a worthy pursuit in the context of US’s occupation of Iraq. For more, see: Gray, C. S. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.

Zaman 2009).⁴¹ And for Bozeman, such formulations were perfectly applicable to various countries all around the globe, as they would culminate a sound understanding about how come that the cultural or civilizational values have an influence over the notions about defeat, victory, and violence (among other things) in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, China, Southeast Asia, India (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Despite all the potential shortcomings,⁴² Bozeman's intellectual scheme was noteworthy for two reasons: her drawn upon conclusions were constituting a summary of the prevailing attitude of her time, and thereof signalling, what one might identify to be, the necessity for a proper and coherent understanding of culture and war. Or in her own way of putting it (pp. 102):

The challenge of understanding the multifaceted nature of modern warfare has not been met by the academic and political elites of the United States. This failure in the perception of reality has been aggravated by a widespread acquiescence in essentially irrational trends—the inclinations, namely, to dissociate values from facts, to treat values as if they were norms, and to assume that privately or locally preferred values are also globally valid norms. These intellectual developments have contributed not only to many recent foreign policy errors but also to widespread uncertainties about America's role in the world affairs. They also suggest that the United States has begun to resemble Don Quixote: like the Knight of the Mournful Countenance, it is fighting windmills and losing its bearings in the real world.

All in all, it was basically based on the backdrop of such emerging criticisms and ridicule of the mainstream theoretical views (prompting a timeless rational, ahistorical, non-culturalist, positivist framework for analyzing strategic choices that can be applicable to all states –without any consideration being given to their national histories, politics, culture, and other vessels of meaning, i.e. the Neo-Realist School of Theoretical Thought) that both the term and concept of strategic culture has had come to take its first appearance in the realm of security and strategic studies.

In retrospect, the first explicit reference to the term and concept of “strategic culture” can be traced back to a report, titled “*The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for*

⁴¹ According to Paul Verhaegen, these characteristics can be seen to constitute the very basic components of a culture that is not only dominant within the bush, but also within the ones that are supposedly the most Westernized Africans.

⁴² Even though Bozeman's assertion was hitting the bullseye, her failure to consider how those regions might have multiple competing and/or coexisting cultures that goes beyond the generic and broadly constructed classifications of hers (e.g., sub-Saharan culture, Chinese culture) could also be accounted as one of her shortcomings.

Limited Nuclear Operations,” which was written by Jack Snyder (1977) to RAND organization, during a period when many attempts were trying to describe the nuclear capacity, tactics and strategies of the USSR (i.e., Soviet limited nuclear warfare doctrine) on the basis of its cultural proclivities and as well as material elements (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Quintessentially, Snyder’s subsequent decision for choosing and promoting the rubric “strategic culture” in his report (which was actually comprising a part of his Master’s thesis) was prompted by his realization that the Soviets approached the key questions of strategy in the nuclear era from a point that was distinctive from the United States’ doctrine (as envisioned by the Schlesinger Doctrine) of fighting a limited nuclear war (Snyder 1990, pp. 3; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). According to the definition provided by Snyder (1977, pp. 8), strategic culture asserted to be “the sum total of ideas, conditional emotional responses and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have achieved through instruction and imitation and share with regard to nuclear strategy.” For one, “the national culture in the context of decision-making is socially and constitutively situated (through “instruction and imitation”) as to produce responses and patterns in the form of policy decisions within the nuclear, and military environment” (Zaman 2009; pp. 73). In another way of putting it, “Soviet strategic thought and behavior” was taking its origin from that of “a distinctly Soviet strategic culture” (Zaman 2009, pp. 73). In terms of its significance, Snyder’s intellectual scheme was hitting the bullseye in providing a coherent critique of the rational actor models of the time, given how he questioned and subsequently scrutinized the dominant assumptions about how the Soviets and the US would eventually share a mutual thinking with regards to the notion of nuclear strategy and doctrine (that among many other forms of truism was actually constituting the very founding pillar upon which the notion of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) was also situated upon) (Snyder 1977, pp. 4; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Moreover, in addition to pointing out what he considered to be the crucial flaws inherent in and across almost all the scholarly attempts that were employing the rational choice theory as a way to explain the Soviet leadership’s decision-making process, Snyder (1977, pp. 4) was also stipulating how come and why that the Soviet policymakers were not illustrating the sole identity and function of some sort of generic strategists, that is to say, only capable of subscribing to those of similar values carried and promoted by their American counterparts, but rather projecting the image of some ideologically educated and

culturally grounded politicians and bureaucrats who have long apparently been affected by a strategic culture, which is “in many ways unique in making them exhibit distinct stylistic predispositions in their past crisis behavior” (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

For one, this substantial shift of focality from “rational man to national man” was profoundly eye-opening and thereof started to be employed by various scholars, who was claiming to find plausible reasons to agree that factors such as historical experience, culture, political geography, amongst others, can and mostly do pose an impact either as constrains upon or enhancers of the strategic thinking prevailing inside a particular community. However, this intense rush of the “national man” resulting from the fever of the strategic culture was of course not without a prospect for problem; as it was also asserted to be the case by the very forefather of this gold fever: ‘[...] some of the early American literature on strategic culture was exaggerating the past US-Soviet differences, and exaggerating the likelihood that such differences would persist in the future (Synder 1990).’ Although these drawbacks would eventually push Snyder to decide to distance himself away from his very own creation, the subsequent proliferation of the works giving into the popularity of the concept of strategic culture was still yet to come to a halt, and this situation was leading up to the categorization of the literature into a number of groups (i.e., generations of strategic-cultural research). As per the intends and purposes that this paper tries to suffice, a well-informed discussion on the said classification of the literature constitutes an important step for any attempt to understand the evolution of the concept. Therefore, in the next chapter, what shall be seen is going encompass a deep dive into the following: an exploration of the generations of strategic-cultural research, resulting clashes between the generations (i.e., the Third versus the First) with respect to the drawn on definitions and analytical approach-wise constructions, inescapable problems dominating the strategic-cultural research agenda, and finally defining and setting the parameters for this thesis’s intended use of strategic culture, both in general and in China context.

CHAPTER 3

THE GENERATIONS OF STRATEGIC-CULTURAL RESEARCH

For one, it should be underlined that there exist a few ways to go around with this particular task of categorizing this niche literature. Amongst the ways to realize this, this thesis takes Alastair Iain Johnston's put forth categorization (1995, pp. 5) as the best alternative to go. In this respect, he, with an emphasis that is being given over more detailed descriptions, divided the whole body of research on strategic culture into what he coined to be the three generations. According to his design-wise schemes, the first generation of strategic culture research, which has had made its debut in the early 1980s, was mostly concentrated on security-policy analysts and Soviet-era specialists, as they tried to explain why the Soviets and Americans were supposedly thinking in and through different ways about strategy in the nuclear phase of human history (Johnston 1995; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Regarding their commonalities in both persuasion and approach, these works appeared to have attributed what they perceived to be the main differences to variations in deeply rooted historical experiences, political culture, and geography (Johnston 1995; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). The second generation of strategic culture researchers emerging in the mid of 1980s, on the other hand, can be seen to have Gramscian perspective as a common departure point amongst their respective researchers, which are mostly focused on the superpowers of the time (Johnston 1995; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Through their acknowledgement of a potential disjuncture between a symbolic strategic-cultural discourse and operational doctrines, this generation of researchers appears to have had placed great emphasis over the question of how one (i.e., strategy and policy makers) employs discourse to sustain hegemony of strategic elites indefinitely, and in return how these circumstances further allow supposed elites to implement their designs (Johnston 1995; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). And finally, the third generation of strategic culture research, which has had made its debut during 1990s, can be seen to enjoy more of a rigorousness in both conceptualization and methodology (Johnston 1995; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). The foremost reason for that can be seen to

profess itself in this generation of researchers purposefully narrowed dependent variables as to construct more reliable and valid empirical tests for the effects of strategic culture, and have discussed a range of case studies.

Albeit there exist some nuance-like issues inherent within the way that this categorization was constructed, Johnston's proposed classification can, nevertheless, be accounted as the most favored one in comparison to other ones attempting to do the same by a majority of writers working on this subject known as strategic culture. In this respect, according to Gray, even though what coined to be the different generations do overlap in their time of being written and emergence, the very apex of these generations' intellectual activities can be seen to concentrate between the late 1970s and 1990s (Gray 1999, pp. 129; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Furthermore, once again according to the perspective that the latter puts forth, all of the researchers associated with these generations of strategic culture research in reality do only add up to a small fraction of scholars: with the first generation having a research agenda focused on more Russian, and Soviet, USSR than the prevailing theories of that time recognized; with the second generation aiming to unlock the deep secrets enshrined within and behind the messages and languages of strategic individuals and communities; with the third generation carrying the overarching objective that is mostly fixated upon the "researchability" of the concept strategic culture Gray 1999, pp. 129; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

3.1. The First Generation

Many working on the subject takes Jack Snyder's work on Soviet limited nuclear war doctrine as the first literary work through which both the term and concept strategic culture given birth to and the required pathway towards the eventual debate about it has had come to be paved, thus, perceives his work as part of what is usually coined to be the first generation of strategic culture (Johnston 1995; Gray 1999; Morgan 2003; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Interestingly, however, he was not alone in his drawn upon conclusions. In fact, following the debut of his seminal work, several scholars also have had come to share similar reflections on what they considered to be a matter of difficulty in understanding Soviet strategic doctrine, given how Soviet views on and about strategy and nuclear war appeared to be rather contrasting one with that of its American counterpart. According to Fritz W. Ermarth (1978, pp. 138), the very idea

assuming that an arguable similarity (or even a possible convergence that was thought to be possible by the passage of time) between the aforementioned two views was, in fact, blocking the prospect of conducting a proper comparison that would be rather invaluable in deconstructing several misconceptions deeply embedded in the perspectives of the American strategy thinkers of the time. In the way of his own words, this was in a sense reflecting the pervasive ‘American cultural self-centeredness’ (Ermarth 1978, pp. 138). The foremost reason for it, according to his suggestion, could be traced back to the post-Second World War developments enabling the U.S.’ strategy (both intellectual and institutional) to be built-upon the natural sciences, which in many ways indeed were the primary culprits for soon to come invention and development of the modern-time weapons (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). And given the transnational nature of what could be accepted as a scientific truth in and of itself (mostly in the meaning of it being unbounded to a cultural determinism), the reigning logic of the time was thought to dictate that both American and Soviets would eventually come to appreciate the issue of keeping strategic peace on, let’s say, equitable and economical terms (Ermarth 1978; pp. 140; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Conversely, however, this belief in the so-called mutual understanding between the two sides was derived from a rather severe misconception. The things proved to be not exactly matching with the projected expectations of this one-way of thinking, because (as one of the substantial reasons) both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were approaching the twin challenges of the time (namely the creation of viable industrial societies and the management of nuclear weapons) in their rather differing and contrasting ways (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). According to R. Uz Zaman (2009) assertion, this, at least to a certain extent, was the result of the different political cultures of the two societies at their cores. On the one hand, the primary colors of the American society’s interwoven fabric were, and still are, those of legality, commercialism and democracy, which were in those times influencing the very trajectory that the Americans had long been treading as their approach to the arising challenges inherent in managing nuclear security matters. On the other hand, the Soviets were both the keeper and heir to a political tradition informed by a legacy of imperialism, bureaucracy, and autocracy, which were responsible for steering the Union’s way of handling and managing nuclear security problems in a different way (Ermarth 1978, pp. 155).

Similar to Ermarth's put forth effort in identifying these issues, Ken Booth, in his classic *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* published in 1979, was also sharing the former's grief about how the strategic studies have had long been getting obstructed within the fog of culture, which was in return interfering with the theory and practice of strategy (Booth 2014, pp. 9). His partial solution to this was by encouraging strategists to be more vigilant, given how their help in paying more careful attention onto the particularities of national idiosyncrasies and styles would be invaluable to guard oneself against the inability of seeing the world via the eyes of different national or ethnic groups (Booth 2014). In another way of putting it, it should be recognizing that 'an observer by him/herself cannot hope to completely remove his/her cultural predisposition, and therein the structure of of ideas and values which it passes onto him/her,' and therefore the very essence of this rubric named vigilance, according to Booth, was no other than 'cultural relativism' (Booth 2014, pp. 16; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). According to R. Uz Zaman's (2009, pp. 75) evaluation of Booth's persuasion in urging strategists to confirm with cultural relativism, the reason for such a calling was no other than for the betterment of the strategic studies: 'Defining cultural relativism as the approach whereby social and cultural phenomenon "are perceived and described in terms of scientific detachment as, ideally, from the perspective of participants in or adherents of a given culture," Booth held the conviction that strategic studies would benefit if it embraced cultural relativism. Such an act would mean that a more contextual approach would become a part of strategic studies and thereby reduce the methodological problems associated with ethnocentrism' (Booth 2017, pp. 16-140; Zaman 2009, pp. 75).

In his *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, Booth did not make a direct address to the assertions provided by Snyder but nonetheless the latter's concept strategic culture eventually gained an impactful component in and through Colin S. Gray's works. As a matter of consequence, Colin S. Gray's observations about American nuclear strategy, initially published in an article in *International Security* and subsequently in a book, were engraved with both the letter and spirit of Snyder's concept of strategic culture, suggesting that the United States too had actually a distinct strategic culture through which her very own nuclear strategy had long been getting implicated (Gray 1981; Gray 1986; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). According to Gray's definition, the American strategic culture could be understood as modes of thought and action with

regard to force, which is fed by the underlying ‘perception of national historical experience, and sustained through the aspirations for self-characterization (e.g., what am I, and how should I feel, think, and even behave as an American?), which were in many ways built upon what appeared to be constituting the distinctiveness of the American experiences (of geography, political philosophy, civic nature, and ‘way of life’) portraying an American citizen’ (Gray 1981, pp. 22; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 75). In light of these arguments, there appears to be merit, at least to a certain degree, in suggesting that particular economic, historical, and geopolitical circumstances may just be highly impactful in culminating the distinctiveness of what appears to be the American strategic culture (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). With hindsight, we might even have a chance, evidently, to trace these influences throughout the American military experiences, starting from the very beginnings of the Seven Years War of 1756-63 coming all the way to the end of the WWII and beyond, which did prove to be capable of producing, namely, the dominant national beliefs about being an American (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). In the context of America and what she appears believe, these so-called dominant national beliefs can be seen to have a quintessential characteristic in yielding the pervasive idea of ‘good’ causes tend to triumph and Americans only wage war in "good" causes (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). This manner of seeing things can be argued to pose quite an impact on the American psyche by making matters more difficult for the Americans to tackle and consequently come to appreciate that the U.S.’ self-proclaimed good causes to wage wars may just not be the purest both in form and intentions as they are mostly advocated to be in the first case. Idiosyncratic characteristics pertained in the enduring American ideas of justice essentially finds its own reflections as in the form of a belief that ‘Americans could achieve any target that is set for them and thus had nothing but victory to attain in the wars they fought; a sense of omnipotence derived from a history of successfully fought wars against native Americans, Mexico, Spain, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan; and a sense of unlimited economic resources coupled with technological prowess, which allowed the US to fight wars profligately in material terms and thus save American lives in pursuit of happiness’ (Gray 1981, pp. 26-27-29; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 75).

According to Gray’s (1999) suggestion, it was only after the 1945 that Americans have had started to relish the idea of upholding a guardian role in the realm of international

politics. In many respects, this self-tailored role of guardianship was reflective of how the Americans had begun to see themselves and their countries in a new light of exceptionalness as opposed to the rest, always ready to intervene on behalf of the great good and righteousness and rightfully so at the expense of the great evil lurking and waiting to engulf the world (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Objectively, this American reality, which has come to be shaped by 'historic engineering-pragmatic national style', might not be so adjunct for the essential development of a rather wise strategic thinking, that may have both the capacity and resilience to progress in the route of what Booth would be approving of under his rubric, namely, cultural relativism (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). And as that is mostly the case with the U.S., it being rich in machines, men, and logistic support of all kinds was making her to be more inclined to have a need of clever stratagems or of a careful balancing of likely political benefit vis-a-vis probable costs in material and human assets' (Gray 1981, pp. 29-30). So, the core of the argument was that a number of these idiosyncrasies were getting carried in and across the threshold of the nuclear revolution brought upon by the progress in technologic advancement to produce a very peculiar, American way to think, configure, and manage nuclear strategy (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Such an approach can be argued to possess the following key characteristics existing in the uphold belief at the time: 'nuclear wars could not be won because the massive human casualties accrued in the process would negate any meaningful concept of political or military victory; a belief in the American technological ingenuity to provide an effective nuclear deterrent even if the Soviets achieved a temporary advantage in numbers and yields of nuclear weapons; and an optimism that arms-control talks would ultimately make Soviet policymakers appreciate the merit in American views on deterrence and conflict management and thereby bring about a stabilizing effect on the whole nuclear issue' (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Quintessentially, all these characteristics were, in one way or another, reflecting and contributing to what Gray identifies to be the 'American way.' However, this put forth persuasion of his was not without its own cautionary tales. In this respect, we also see his given emphasis over the probable pitfalls and dangers of carrying the term and concept of strategic culture too far away from where it supposes to reside in the first place, especially without providing a space within which other factors of influence can also be assessed. So, what it means to pursue strategic-cultural analysis is all about a due scholarly attempt trying to discern both the shrouded and unclouded tendencies, rather than entangling

oneself with rigid determinants (Gray 1981, pp. 38-44). And as for Gray, the concept of strategic culture can be understood to have a contextual time-specificity (i.e., something that poses a semi-permanent influence on security policy by being capable of 'providing a milieu within which strategy is debated') as an independent determinant of strategic policy patterns (Gray 1981; Lantis 2002, pp. 35).

In consideration of the efforts propounded by Snyder, Booth, Ermarth, and Gray (and of course many others who followed the suit paved by the aforementioned), this group of thinkers later on has had come to be identified as the first generation of strategic culture theorists (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). In addition to being the initial contributors to the definition of both the term and concept of strategic culture and as well as the first disputers of the corresponding debate about strategic-cultural methodology and analysis, they were, as part of their overarching objective, also seeking to expose the hidden threats inherent in the simple act of thinking about strategy within the restraints of technical and rational approaches (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). By trying to implore their colleges in the field to cultivate much greater tolerance and acceptance towards the substantiality and prospects of cultural and strategic relativism as opposed to the previously subscribed persuasions mostly turning a blind eye over typically anything related to culture, the first generation of research can easily be appreciated in their pursuit to include culture as one of the major, if not primary, indicators in explaining the differences in strategic behavior (mostly those that are related to national nuclear strategy) (Poore 2003, pp. 280; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). But still, if there is any-law like permanence in the respective realm of the social sciences than that should be no other than the very actuality that there exists no perfection albeit it might have seen to be as such at a glance initially, and correspondingly, in many ways as one may come to put it, the term and concept of strategic culture is obviously not an exception to this very rule (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). Thus, it was the outcome of this inevitability that the first generation of research has had soon begun to attract the sharp clutches of their critics, and first and harshest ones to strike, interestingly, were no other than the very heirs of their intellectual legacy (i.e., second and third generations of strategic culture research) (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012).

The professed criticism voiced against the first generation of research was mostly pertained to the problematic and subjective nature of the operationalization of strategic

culture. As per some of the key reasons that the critics were accusing the first generation for making things complicated, we know at least several points in causing this utter contestation: the inherent tautology in the latter's strategic models that makes almost any attempt to separate independent variables from dependent variables in a reliable way close to a matter of impossibility; the definitional complexities riddling the concept of strategic culture, and how they were argued to be the direct result of narrowly and contextually incorporated historiographies and anthropology; the belief about the concept being fairly static, with a concentrated focus upon the enduring historical orientations with strong predictive capability which was argued to be leaving only the tiniest space for development of a cross-national study of the phenomenon (Lantis 2005, pp. 3; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012).

Interestingly, however, these conceptual and semantic discussions have had also worked to display how come even the promoters of strategic culture may become wary of the term and concept at one point (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). In fact, even the very forefather of the term, Jack Snyder was amongst the ones distancing themselves away from the concept. In his later published book *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*, he did neither refer to nor make use of the term strategic culture, and again later in one of his writings, he provided the reasoning behind his decision to do so, by asserting that: how he had initially intended the term and concept of strategic culture to explain the persistence of distinctive approaches in the face of 'changes in the circumstances that gave rise to it, through processes of socialization and institutionalization and thorough the role of strategic concepts in legitimizing these social arrangements' (Sondhaus 2006, pp.4; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). And furthermore, he even claimed the limits of how, why and towards what phenomenon exactly, the term and concept of strategic culture should be brought into utility, and this, according to what he suggested, was only pertained to the cases when and where: 'a distinctive approach to strategy appears to be engrained in training, institutions, and force posture,' or in another way of putting it, when actually 'strategic culture had taken on a life of its own, distinct from the social interests that helped give rise to it' (Snyder 1990; Zaman 2009, pp. 76) Beside these attempts to delimit his involvement with the term and concept of strategic culture, which one might indeed describe as ironic given the fact that what essentially he had tried to distance himself away was basically his own

conceptionally experimented and thereof birthed creature, however, what appears to be the most damaging blow launched by Snyder was that of his drawn upon conclusions about how culture should just be perceived as in the form and purpose of a residual label with a fixed utility and applicability that can only be used when all else seems to be failing (Synder 1990; Sondhaus 2006, pp. 4; Zaman 2009, pp. 76). Colin Gray, on the other hand, did not vocalized such a radical position, albeit he too observed that there might indeed be issues in the field. According to the latter's later to come work (in 1988), noting what he perceived to be the problems, the scholarly field of social sciences has had long been experiencing a lack of development, especially evidenced by its particularly inept and poorly fashioned, or therefore a lack of, methodology for identifying distinctive national cultures and styles (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). Broadly speaking, even though he accused the corresponding literature on what he described to be an 'academically unfashionable subject of national character' by saying that it was only anecdotal at its best, he believed that learning about the 'cultural thoughtways' of a nation was nevertheless crucial for cultivating and expending one's overall understanding about a country's behavior and supposed role in world politics (Gray 1988, pp. 42-43; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012).

3.2. The Second Generation

The so-called second generation of strategic culture research takes its point of departure from the premise that there exists a clear-cut difference between "what leaders think their rhetorical pronouncements say and mean, and the deeper motives for doing what they in fact do" (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). Bradley Klein, as one of the frontline researchers who has come to be associated with the second generation later, in an article of his which had been published in *Review of International Studies*, tried to work with this particular premise as to determine whether the rhetoric employed by the elites and policymakers were really corresponding with the intensions that they were supposedly pursuing (Klein 1988, pp 134; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). In his studies, one particular source of influence and inspiration was derived from the Gramscian concept of hegemony and its cast upon effects on strategic culture. Consequently, he has sought to pursue his research by applying the concept of hegemony into the context of international relations; and his brought upon conclusion was basically suggesting that

the general production of power relations of dominance in international relations were happening at two particular levels: territorially bounded states [1], and the singular hegemonic world order that stems out of these territorially bounded states [2] (Klein 1998, pp. 134-135; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). Besides Gramsci, Klein's work also appears to be heavily influenced by the writings of Robert W. Cox: first, regarding the parts about his attempts to integrate these two aforementioned levels of hegemony; and second, in terms of his eventually drawn upon conclusion, mainly suggesting how come and why the locus of our attention should just not be restrained to the study and research of a state's military capabilities and foreign policy bureaucracy, but also ought to be expanded to encompass other quintessential (i.e., social struggles) existing inside states (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012).

In this conceptual scheme of his, Klein uses the concept of strategic culture at two successive levels in a way to interconnect his overarching goal, which is to determine whether the rhetoric employed by the elites and policymakers do really correspond to the intensions that they supposed to be upholding.⁴³ In this respect, we first see him explaining the ways through which a modern hegemonic state (i.e., the United States) employs her internationally situated military capabilities as to project and sustain her leadership both within the close-to-home circle of allies (i.e., Western countries) and as well as with the rest of the globe (Klein 1998, pp. 134-135). Then, he begins explaining what he asserts to be the pervasive tactics of states by the help of which they try to legitimize their acts of coercion (i.e., use of force) inside their own domestic realms. It is quite clear to see that his assertions, both in purpose and implication, do try to establish correlations with the ways in which the national (internal) hegemonic social classes act, mostly, by drawing upon 'political ideologies and discourses that help define occasions as worthy of military involvement' (Klein 1998, pp. 134-135; Zaman 2009, pp. 77). According to Klein's (1998) argument, such instances of actions do more than often lead to a dichotomy to be seen especially between one's supposed rhetoric and put forth operational policies. It is precisely within these projected considerations of his own that we also come to find about how he appropriates, if one may say, attributed duty of the concept of strategic culture as part of his schemes; and

⁴³ For more, see: Ladis, N. (2003). Assessing Greek grand strategic thought and practice: Insights from the strategic culture approach.

apparently, that is to ‘historicize what has lain implicit in realist theories of hegemony’ and ‘render palpable the political production of hegemony articulated at a theoretical level by the Gramscian conception of hegemony’ (Klein 1998, pp. 136). Therefore, we can, in all its intents and purposes, evaluate the concept of strategic culture to be a tool of highest utility, residing at the hands of political hegemony pertained to the realm of strategic decision making, that encompasses ‘widely available orientations to violence and to the ways in which the state can legitimately use violence against putative enemies’ (Klein 1998, pp. 136; Sondhaus, 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 77). While keeping all these in mind, we should also underscore that Klein was trying to understand these particularizes in relation to the United States and the way that she has sought to project her social, cultural, and military power in a global scale. In relation to this contextual pavement, it now becomes more probable to perceive how come and why that the very utility inherent within the nuclear deterrence doctrine was indeed a terrific fit for the professed requirements of the United States during the Cold War. In detail, this doctrine has worked in conjoining two contradictory modes: one declaratory, and one operational. According to the assertion voiced by Klein, the declaratory part of this nuclear deterrence doctrine was being used in a rather instrumental way, by the American elites, to pave a cultural justification for the eventual usage of the other halve of it, namely the operational strategy; thus, making it serve the both purposes of suppressing, silencing, manipulating, or misleading putative challengers [1] and cultivating widespread support for aggressive foreign policy undertakings [2] (Klein 1998, pp. 138; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 78).

In another study similar to the one conducted by Klein, Imtiaz Ahmed scrutinizes how modern Indian elites have tread their respective way of creating a hegemonic state. Albeit he does neither mention the concept of strategic culture, nor try to identify himself as an adherer to any other generations of strategic culture study, the latter’s work nevertheless remains worthy to be discussed, as his study somehow manages to parallel both the spirit and letter of the former’s drawn-out conclusions. In this regard, Ahmed’s study, broadly speaking, focuses on the upper Hindu class hegemony in terms of how it has become established and achieved this status of its in modern India, and in doing so has transplanted its hegemonic objective to the international realm (Ahmed 1993; Zaman 2009). In Ahmed’s assertions with respect to both the national and international dimensions of the Indian state, the central theme appears to assume

India trying to assert her strong and great national aspirations in the image of what is believed to constitute the modern 'Western' state; and he, similar to Klein, draws upon the conclusion that in the 'politics' unfolding within the boundaries of national dimension (i.e., the politics of development and centralization), there appears to exist specific and distinctive policies that are purposefully found and organized by the Indian ruling elite class to attain hegemony first within the national level, and later at the international level (Zaman 2009). Moreover, instances embodying these conclusions, according to Ahmed, can be seen by looking at the 1971 Bangladesh war and the Indian intervention in the Sri Lankan conflict in 1987 (Ahmed 1993, pp. 215).

In a similar persuasion to those of Klein and Ahmed, Robert Luckham identifies an apparent 'armament culture' and a 'weapon fetishism' that he perceives to be a key determinant in the subsequent maintenance of a weapon culture that serves only to the hegemonic goals of Western interests (Zaman 2009). According to the provided clarifications by Stuart Poore about the arguments of Luckham, this influence of the armaments culture, supposedly, 'follows directly from the repressive apparatus of the state and from the consolidation around the armament complex of a class alliance,' which may be argued to have strategists, statesmen, soldiers, and arms manufacturers amongst its ranks (Zaman 2009). And given how such an alliance is most of the time expected to enjoy a close proximity to that of state power, it would not be a surprise to perceive a creeping effect looming over some of the key proponents of the state's itself (e.g., the ideological state apparatus, the media, and educational system) as a way to advocate on the behalf of its own values, thus reinforce its hold over authority (Zaman 2009). For Luckham, this theme of instrumentality receives quite an emphasis especially within the context of Western states, in which 'the armaments culture is able to rearrange symbols and meanings in order to harmonize opposites and to justify war through the symbols of peace' (e.g., National Rifle Association operating in the United States) (Zaman 2009, pp 78).

Despite its promising premise, however, the second generation of strategic culture research still could not escape the clutches of its harsh critics. Regarding the commentary provided by the latter, questions were mainly pointed 'as to whether elites were able to rise above strategic cultural constraints or become socialized within the myths that they were instrumental in creating' (Johnston 1995, pp. 40) In the face of this mounting criticism, the second generation has had become dispirited after a while

as they were undecided on this and were not able to solve the puzzle; and thereof, this legacy of troubling conundrum was now being passed onto those who would later be named under the rubric of the third generation of strategic-cultural research.

3.3. The Third Generation

According to Johnston's put forth classification, the third generation of scholars were comprised of those who were still employing the concept of strategic culture in the mid-1990s as part of their strategic-cultural research, in which most of the attention was given over the utility of cultural interpretations (Lantis 2002, pp. 96-97). For what distinguishes this group of works from their predecessors, the third generation of strategic-cultural research was coinciding the emergence of constructivist persuasion and going through a particular revival in the theoretical work that they come to expand over strategic culture, domestic structure, and organizational culture (Farrell 2002; Sondhaus 2002; Zaman 2009). In this respect, the timely considerations, which has had come to be revealed by the rise of constructivism in enabling a new and refreshed scholarly attention to grow over the concept and theory of strategic culture, is something all the more important to note, because in many ways, at least according to Theo Farrell (2002), the contemporary work that has had come to be channeled into strategic-cultural research could also be identified as a merger of two relevant streams of scholarship, which are namely culturalism (as derived from comparative politics, and sociological and anthropological studies) and constructivism (as derived from international relations theoretical studies) (Zaman 2009). So, this postulated merger of the two scholarly enterprises is argued to have made it possible for us to perceive actors and structures of interest under a different light, especially when compared to the viewpoints provided by the rationalist approaches that are known to prevail in and over the scholarly realm of the International Relations, by "[...] locating actors in a social structure that both constitutes those actors and is constituted by their interactions" (Farrell 2002, pp. 50; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

According to Johnston's intellectual scheme, this third generation of scholars was characterized as the ones who would mend the shortcomings and drawbacks of their predecessors, mostly pertaining the latter's supposed rigorous and eclectic approach to rather narrowly frame particular strategic decisions (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). Despite the different issues that they seem to have had decided to

concentrate on (e.g., organizational culture, military culture, political military culture and so on), however, what appears to be another common characteristic binding this group of scholars altogether was: their apparent attacks in unison against the bifurcations of realist theory, and as well as, their overall focus on cases in where structural definitions of interest could not provide an explanatory account for the enquired strategic choices of the actor(s) (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, Bloomfield 2012). At this point in discussion, we should underline two particularities that appears to constitute a vital difference that separates the third generation from the first one, and that is no other than the latter's purposeful exclusion of "behavior" as an element of strategic culture, and tendency to look for recent practices and experiences as the sources of cultural values (Johnston 1995, pp. 18-19). Similar to that of the latter point, according to a particular descriptive assessment which was made by Michael C. Desch (1998, pp. 142) about the research agenda of the third generation, there appears to exist four strands of cultural theorizing that are widely ostensible in almost all of the works written by the scholars of the third wave, and these are namely: organizational, political, strategic, and global strands of culture (Zaman 2009).

So, as to provide a critical and evaluative account for some of the common intellectual schemes that are apparently used to pave the characteristic arguments of the third-generation scholars, we shall begin with some of the major works accounted as part of this third wave. In this regard, let's take Elizabeth Kier's study (1995; as cited in Zaman 2009, pp 79), and how she argues the idea that different domestic political cultures are more probable to employ divergent methods of controlling their armed forces, and such methods in return can be expected to have been based on the political considerations within the domestic realm, contrary to the popular assumptions that perceive it to be the primary resultant of the external strategic concerns. Regarding the specificities of her study, Kier provides an extensive assessment about the relationship that she believed to exist between culture and military doctrine by taking interwar period of France as the primary case study to base and test her drawn upon assumptions (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Basically, her posture on the matter is that France's conversion to that of a defensive military doctrine between the WWI and WWII was the resultant of neither external structures nor inherent concerns about the timely balance of power, but the conflicting military and civilian sub-cultures which were apparently limiting the terms of conscription whilst "simultaneously inflating

military evaluations of the length of military training that was thought to be essential for establishing an effectively offensive, armed force (Kier 1995; as cited in Zaman 2009, pp. 79-80).” In this respect, Kier (1995) endorses the persuasion that organizational culture constitutes one of the culprits affecting a state’s strategic behavior via conditioning its strategic decision making processes. Thereof, with all these being considered, it is apparent that Kier had not perceived culture as responsible, like the first generation scholars did, in affecting behavior by determining values that paves strategic preferences, but rather seen it as capable of distorting the very governmental processes leading to the decision-related outcomes (Kier 1995, Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

In another major study that has had come to be provided by Jeffrey Legro (1994), it is argued that the different militaries do employ varying ways of fighting because of their distinct organizational cultures. As to test his put forth assertion, Legro instigates an extensive evaluation over what he considers as the underlying reasons in leading up to different levels of restraints amongst the WWII combatants, especially, when launching attacks on merchant ships via the utilization of submarines; or in executing unproportioned and rather indiscriminate bombings over the heads of the enemy soldiers; or in their decision to employ poison gases despite the overwhelming horrors that it was known to carry in the aftermath of its wake (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). So, he observes that whenever some specific instruments of warfare were perceived to have compatibility with that of the reigning war-fighting culture of a state’s armed forces, then that state in question apparently becomes much more inclined to suppose the types of the aforementioned actions as her most appropriate options to alongside with, despite the latter path’s inherent risk to escalate the ongoing conflict even further (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). And contrarywise, when a state evaluates a specific type of warfare as something that goes against her military culture, then that state becomes much more propelled to exert self-limitations even during situations in which her enemy seems to display provocative behaviors (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009). Moreover, Legro’s writings on the notion of organizational culture was seemingly, at least to a certain degree if one does not account for some of the professed differences, going alongside with the one that was being endorsed by Yitzhak Klein (1991, pp. 5), who was actually writing well before even the third wave a thing, in his article named after ‘A Theory of Strategic Culture,’ putting forth the idea that “strategic culture

should be defined as the set of attitudes and beliefs held by a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it” (as cited in Zaman 2009, pp. 79). Unfortunately, however, the latter’s all hold forth efforts turned out to be a standalone instance only, as for some reason he did not decide to continue to build upon what he has had come to pave initially (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009).

In another study that focuses on the culture’s role and ability to explain “why military organizations choose certain structures and strategies and thereby help states generate military power,” Theo Farrell can be seen to take previous premises up a notch by subscribing to the persuasion that culture is responsible for (re-)shaping preference formation of military organizations by informing organizational members in ways that compel them to think about “who they are, what is and can be possible, and what they might or should do (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 79).” And according to a shared perspective that was maintained by Peter Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, and Thomas Berger, the fundamental reason for the distinct domestic political attitudes towards the use of force can be related to how the states are rather similarly situated in the international system (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 79). Amongst some of the third generation studies that appear to share a similar vein, one common argument supposes the role and ability of global norms and how they are indeed affecting the ways in which the great powers may come to act with regard to the matters of international politics, by making them decide on, for instance: which categories of destructive weapons to (not) use, and why one should decide (or not) to even join certain alliances (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 79).

So, one of the most significant, and even arguably the archetypical, works that can be cited as the heart-piece of the third wave of strategic-cultural research is no other than the work that has had come to be published by Alastair Iain Johnston, titled as *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). In an overall manner of consideration, he can be seen to hold the argument that domestic strategic cultures (rather than the international systemic needs) are the ones best suited to explain a state’s grand strategy (Johnston 1998; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Regarding the case-related particularities of his work, which can also easily be deduced by looking at the title of his work, Johnston appears to initiate an investigative enquiry over the presence and

character of Chinese strategic culture, whilst trying to understand and explain what he considers to be the casual linkages to the use of military force against external threats. As for the definition of strategic culture, he postulates it to be “an integrated system of symbols (e.g., metaphors, analogies, languages, argumentation structures, so and so on) which acts to establish pervasive and long lasting strategic preferences by formulating concept of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with an aura of factuality that strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious” (Johnston 1995; Johnston 1998; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). In comparison to the previously mentioned conceptions of Kier and Legro, Johnston’s ideation can be distinguished by grasping essentially how come that he conceives of cultural-behavior as a linkage to grand strategic preferences (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). In another way of putting it, Johnston can be understood to have distanced himself and his work from the process-oriented relationships, which were seemingly constituting a central component for the intellectual and methodological schemes of both Legro and Kier, by purposefully re-connecting with the value-driven linkages mostly endorsed and utilized by the earlier theorists of the time, or in their other renowned rubric: the first generation of strategic-cultural research (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Against the very probability of getting his work polluted by what he in fact accused and criticized of the first wave of doing (mostly regarding their methodological overdetermination, and partly related to their characteristically under-deterministic scientific inquiries) however, Johnston appears to have had taken counter-measures too, and one of those was basically pertained to no other than his decision to employ the statistical analysis of nearly three hundred case studies (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). According to a certain assessment that has had come to be made by Morgan (2003; Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009, pp. 80) about this specificity in Johnston’s study, the whole reasoning about the latter’s persuasion was argued to be based on “measuring tendencies toward certain behaviors rather than be forced to attribute any particular outcome to the effects of culture.” Furthermore, as a way to avoid the tautological and variable-related pitfalls, of which he was actually criticizing most of the works written by the first wave scholars, and subsequently enhance the prowess of his semantic and theoretical schemes, Johnston has had observed how the earlier theorists defining strategic culture, the independent variable in their studies, as some pattern of strategic behavior (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman

2009; Bloomfield 2012). According to his hold forth postulations: first, this was nothing but the very same phenomenon that they were actively trying to measure as their dependent variable, and second, their shared common attempts were making it essentially impossible to explain “how come that such a relatively unchanging influence as culture could account for substantial variance in strategic behavior, whilst the outcome being measured” (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). As to not make himself fall into what he considered to be a well of conceptual and theoretical falsehood, Johnston have decided to construct a definition of strategic culture comprising solely attitudes, and avoid such imperceptive elements of strategic culture (e.g., habits, traditions, or other expressions of behavior) that he accused most of the earlier scholars –i.e., the first generation— of employing (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012).

3.4. The Clash of the Generations: Johnston versus Gray

Even though A. I. Johnston can be seen to have channeled all his efforts to make his methodology essentially watertight, critics nevertheless still came to find problems with his study and deemed it as short of being a total success (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Alan Bloomfield 2012). So, as per the particularities of his study, Johnston claimed to have found out not one but two strategic cultures prevailing in China: the first one being symbolic, idealized system of values that is purposefully employed in the hands of Chinese elite to rationalize their actions, and the second one essentially being an operational set of ranked preferences that Johnston was conceived to have long been motivating the strategic choices of the Chinese elite (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). According to what appears to be a commonly shared critical account amongst the mentioned critics of his persuasion and methodology, this second connotation that Johnston posited as an operational strategic culture, i.e. “para-bellum model/strategic culture,” was argued to have little to no distinguishability from realpolitik accounts, and also the dynastic-cycle model to which he compares it to in his study (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Amongst all the introduced critical accounts of the time, however, the most famous to-and-fro was no other than the literary debate that has come to be launched by the contra-posture of Colin S. Gray (as to defend himself and his peers in what has come to be identified as the first generation of strategic-cultural research) against what Alastair I. Johnston accused of him and others being methodologically flawed (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman

2009; Bloomfield 2012).

With regard to their opposing positions, Johnston can be seen to have thrown quite a number of critically loaded arguments onto the ways of the first-generation scholars in general, and Colin S. Gray in particular: first, for invoking and perceiving “all but only the kitchen sink as the constitutive elements, characteristics, and variables of strategic culture, and thereof making even the most simplistic act of establishing something about the concept, and theory thereof, of strategic culture highly difficult without coining culture in tandem to it, and second, for discreetly endorsing the idea that one may just identify any unique and persistent national strategic culture as a way to explain all strategic choices of the actor(s) in question, thereby making the whole undertaking dangerously deterministic (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). And on the other side of the ring of clashing views, we see Gray in providing a “belated development of first-generation enquiry,” whilst questioning Johnston overemphasis on and underlying reasoning about how come and why that there should be a difference between strategic culture and behavior in the first place (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). All the particularities informing Gray’s line of argument, especially in his opposition to Johnston, can be easily appreciated by looking at how the former do indeed perceive strategic culture “both as a shaping context for behavior and itself as a constituent of behavior;” or in his own way of wording it: “as a context out there that surrounds, and gives meaning to, strategic behavior, as the total warp and woof of matters strategic that are thoroughly woven together, or as both” (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). For one, Gray’s depiction of the idea that “the behavior of a security community is affected by culturally shaped or ‘encultured’ people, organizations, weapons, and procedure” may seem commonsensical at its face value, but when being considered thoroughly, it can also be understood to project quite a difficult challenge for anyone to refute against (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Thereby, if being looked through such perceptive lenses, it indeed becomes plausible to conceive Johnston as the one who is being at fault here; partly, because of his one-sided conception of “culture” as something that is distinct in and across all the conflicting explanations that arguably shapes strategic choice; and mostly, because of a visible negligence in his decision to provide no conceptual space that could account for the very simple actuality of how human beings cannot help but be cultural agents in the end (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman

2009; Bloomfield 2012). Regarding the specificities of his postulations, Gray has had come to speak at a conference at the University of Reading, in the United Kingdom, as to further clarify his position on and about this matter, by indicating that whenever someone comes to refer to, for instance, Russian strategic culture, what that someone is actually invoking should be understood in the way and manner that there exists a “Russian way” in both thinking (about the threat or use of force for political purposes) and acting strategically (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). In this context, this notion of “acting strategically” can be argued to possess a certain presupposition that goes hand in hand with the belief that there exists a “Russian way of war,” which is pertained to a distinct product of Russia’s history and geography, something that can be interpreted for the sake of guidance by Russians (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). When all these are being considered, says Gray, it should become rather feasible for someone to appreciate the elementary idea that “a security community is much more likely to think and behave in ways that are influenced by what it has taught itself about itself and its relevant contexts, and this education rests mainly upon interpretation of history and history’s geography” (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012).

As to open up a bracket here, it should also be underlined that Johnston’s subsequent critical assessment of the first generation of scholars, which was based on his idea of what should be constitutive of strategic culture, was, nonetheless, an invaluable input into the overall progression of the agenda of strategic-cultural research (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). For one, his indications about the inherent dangers of some researchers entertaining so much determinism in his/her semantic and theoretical schemes and claims for the explanatory value of the concept of strategic culture was certainly significant for the growth of the whole scholarly domain of strategic-cultural research (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). His points, with regard to the all intends and purposes that they served, were also praiseworthy in coining the very probability that: a security community may just consist of not one but several strategic cultures; cultures do in fact changes throughout the passage of time; and strategic culture might be more of “a litany of canonical, idealized beliefs than a set of attitudes, perspectives, and preferences that are operational as real guides to action” (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). In fact, even Gray was concluding that Johnston had have partial truth to his hold forth

assertions about how the concept of strategic culture was indeed comprise of virtually everything but the kitchen sink, and thereby making any undertaking, whether simple or sophisticated, to have a hellish difficulty as its very default setting (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012).

Finally, Gray has also managed to entice the scholarly attention in general to some of the problems which was seemingly troubling this niche literature and thereof the writings about strategic culture, argued to have false distinctions about the concept and the realist theories of international relations (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). According to Michael C. Desch (1998, pp. 142), writing in the journal *International Security*, it was basically a matter to wonder about whether the cultural theories were actually trying to supplement the realist school of thought (including all of its theoretical bifurcations) or threatening to replace them (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Others, e.g. David M. Jones and Mike L. Smith, who have come to favor this critical evaluation made by Desch of the literature began to launch their own respective attacks by noting how “the constructivism of strategic and security culture, stripped of its verbiage, were basically turning into those of classical realist conclusions” (Bloomfield 2012). These critics, however, did not go unnoticed by Gray (2003, pp. 292), as he invoked that there were, still are, and will continue to be no unencultured realists; or as brilliantly argued by Rashed Uz Zaman (2009, pp. 81-82) as part of his own put forth assessment of Gray’s (2003, pp. 293) critical perspective on this matter: “Security communities might tend to act in similar ways at times but that does not mean that they adhere to a universal theory of strategic behavior. The field of strategic studies operated under this false assumption of homogenous rational actors influenced by rational choices. But, as Colin Gray points out, one may be North Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, Bosnian Serbian, Indian, North Korean, Iraqi, or Iranian, but one performs realist calculations in a way that fits one’s values, not the logic of some general theory of deterrence” (Bloomfield 2012).

With all the things are being considered, it should be already clear that all these contra-arguments floating to-and-fro between the clashing views of Johnston and Gray is the most prominent and, arguably, the most polarized debate in the whole strategic culture literature. Therefore, it should be a given to indulge ourselves with the very intricacies of the two studies and the nuances of the inherent perspectives that they are threading the concept and theory of strategic culture with, and that brings us to the next sub-sub-

section of this paper, which is basically based on an attempt that tries to explore “Johnston’s positivism” and “Gray’s interpretivism” in handling strategic culture respectively (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012).

3.4.1. Johnston’s Positivist Approach to Strategic Culture

Previously, we gone through, although in a rather introductory capacity, some of the key contra-postulations raised by Johnston against whom he has had come to identify as the first generation scholars of strategic-cultural research, and, by doing so, scratched the very surface of the former’s critical accounts accusing the latter as the advocators of such models that were both under-deterministic (referring to those that did not include enough information as to determine whether a particular outcome was likely or not) and also over-deterministic (regarding the models assuming that a state’s strategic culture could explain all instances of its strategic behavior when in fact there might be other causes to them) at the same time (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Additionally, we also come to know about, at least according to the former’s critical perspective, some of the intricate issues (e.g., being tautological in nature and construct) afflicting the latter’s models; mostly because of how in fact a majority of these models were “defining strategic culture, ostensibly an independent variable (i.e., something which caused outcomes), in ways to encapsulate patterns of strategic behavior, despite them also treating strategic behavior usually as a dependent variable (i.e., an outcome)” (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). These nuances are important to note mostly because the former’s unique way of threading the concept and theory of strategic culture, as we shall see below, can be argued to have had highly been informed by how to mend these shortcomings occupying the strategic-cultural research.

So, regarding Johnston’s positivist conceptualization of strategic culture, it is rather evident that he treats strategic culture like an “ideational explanatory variable that caused strategic behavior,” and in doing so omits behavior from his hold forth definition (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012). Essentially, he appears to have drawn upon such a conceptual definition, mostly, because of his intention to “measure the casual effect of a state’s strategic culture relative to the contributions made by material variables (e.g., geography, relative power) to strategic outcomes,” and, partly, to solve what Alan Bloomfield (2012) identifies to be a “conceptually too-

coherent problem.” According to Alan Bloomfield’s (2012) assessment of such specificities: “strategic culture has long been conceptualized too coherently, as something which contains no contradictory elements, and complicated most of the tasks with that of a goal to explain occasional instances of aberrant strategic behavior.” Johnston’s approach, in this regard, can be understood to have bypassed this too-coherent problem, says Bloomfield (2012), mostly because of the former’s recognition of: first, the possibility in which we are likely to encounter an instance of aberrant strategic behavior that goes against the normal pattern of strategic behavior displayed by the actor in question, and second, the probability of how such deviation “can be explained by observing the degree to which one’s own strategic-cultural preferences were overridden by the force of other variables.” In another way of putting it, Japan’s unconditional surrender in 1945, for example, can be assessed as a coinciding point to the preceding argument postulating that a state, basically, may have come to be forced to act aberrantly in comparison to its normally expected pattern of behavior, and ordinary preferences thereof (Sondhaus 2006; Zaman 2009; Bloomfield 2012).

Furthermore, Johnston’s (1998) approach to, basically, understand strategic culture in the context of China was mostly credited to possess two qualities, i.e. rigorousness and falsifiability, that, according to some, his predecessors did not have (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). As per its methodology, he, first, appears to have analyzed a variety of classical Chinese literary works, most of which were written on strategy, and thereafter coded them to identify what he argued to have been reflecting key Chinese cultural preferences (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). Next, he goes on to instigate what appears to be an extensive examination in which he covered approximately 300 cases of Chinese strategic decision-making from the Ming Dynasty period as to find out, in rather statistical terms, whether the tendencies of Chinese strategy-makers do make them favor some particular types of strategic behavior over other, let’s say more probable alternatives (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). His approach and methodology were allowing him to not get entangled with a particular issue, pertinent mostly to strategic culture being depicted both as a cause and as well as an effect, and thus dodge the tautological position that the first-generation scholars were usually criticized for (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). All in all, with all these are being accounted for, Johnston’s approach to resolve some of the gravamens of strategic-cultural research has had come to be found refreshing by both those writing as part of

this niche field and as well as those acting as keen critics of this subject matter, which is strategic culture. Besides the apparent merit, however, his somewhat refreshing take on strategic culture should be by no means understood as free of some of the key issues that were, and to a certain extent still are, persistent within this scholarly undertaking, which requires keen attention and a careful examination thereof.

So, we know that Johnston's approach to understand strategic culture in the context of China relied on ancient cultural texts as to determine the content, i.e. the values and preferences, of China's strategic culture (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). Although his decision to build such an extensive model to determine the content of Chinese strategic culture is, for one, an effective and clever way to identify and draw upon the historically rich background that feeds into what we might describe as tangible and intangible sources of Chinese elite's strategic culture, however, such an approach, at least according to Alan Bloomfield's (2012) suggestion, carries the risk of afflicting the said-model with that of an excessive-continuity problem. One instance of this particular argument can be seen by looking at how in fact Johnston (1998) identifies China's strategic culture as constantly realist-like over two thousand years; or, in his own way of putting it into words: [...] parbellum assumptions have persisted across different state systems in Chinese history – from the anarchical Warring States period, to the hierarchical imperial Chinese system, to the increasingly interdependent post-Cold War period.

In another instance, we also see Johnston (1998) arguing about how the Chairman Mao's put forth strategic assumptions (i.e., an inclination for pre-emption, the ubiquitous nature of conflict, the utility of overwhelming force, so and so on) were apparently in line with such a pattern, especially, if one accounts for how Mao was actually encultured with the very cultural context (i.e., Chinese strategic culture) that he was conditioned to appropriate himself within, accordingly (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 443). Additionally, if we continue with that of a careful examination about and over the significance of culture's effect on strategic decision-making, i.e. mostly regarding the very identity of a state and how actually its perceptions of other states' identities affects the way that it chooses both of its allies and as well as its enemies, we might at the very least come to appreciate what Bloomfield describes as the "too-much-continuity problem" (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 44). In a similar note, Stephen Walt (2013) has also asserted that states balance against

threats, among which material variables do only constitute one besides many (e.g., ideological, political, and cultural) reasons. And this insight, for one, can be useful for us to comprehend, for instance, why and how come that “China’s alliance relationships under Mao’s leadership was broadly informed by a Marxist/Leninist interpretation of international politics (which do mostly comprise of extremely negative assumptions about capitalist states), and not a purely parbellum/realist interpretation, at least for the next 15 years following the end of the Second World War;” therefore, making it much more easier to appreciate the critics’ evaluation of Johnston’s approach and model as stagnate and monolithic, especially if one pays mind to the corresponding realities of the time (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 444-445).

In hindsight, the respective historical context, for one, shows us that in 1949, after the Soviet’s intensive support to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as to make them triumphant in their unfolding civil war against the Nationalist Party (or in its other name: Kuomintang –KMT), the Chinese political elite under Chairman Mao’s guidance has had begun to uphold a rather ideologically infused strategic postulation with that of an overt “lean to one side” (i.e., Communism) (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 444). Subsequently, China has had come to demonstrate its eagerness to become a key participant in a series of events with high stakes for the all interested parties, among which we can include its: very costly resistance against what one may easily call out to be much better equipped US-led joint forces during Korean War (1950-53); attempt to bring the Non-Aligned Movement into the anti-capitalist camp at Bandung in 1955; adoption of a supportive attitude towards a number of Marxist liberation movements, which has had become increasingly overt in display following the Chairman Mao’s famous “East wind now prevails over the West wind” speech in 1957 (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 444). All these happenings, in many ways, can be argued to highlight the significant role of ideational variables, if not the whole spectrum of intangibles, in culminating opportune circumstances in which a probable actor of international politics, in this instance Chinese political elite, may come to find compelling reasons to act in ways that might be described as contradictory to what some would call “intrinsically commonsensical (i.e., void of materially grounded facts and realities)” (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 444).

As it is mostly the fate of the most of social phenomena, the relations depictive of such a closely knitted association between the two Communist giants proved to have

nothing akin to perpetuity, and there were indeed adequate reasons in bringing this about. Whilst some of them were partly informed by and related to what Johnston described as the parabellum/realist tradition, others could be traced to those inherent within the “Chinese elite’s negatively connotated perceptions about the direction that the Soviet ideological ‘revisionism’ was paving as an extensive path, which starting with Khrushchev’s acclamation of the so-called ‘many roads to socialism’ in 1955; continuing to deepen with Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin in 1956; getting worse off even further in the aftermath of Khrushchev’s denouncement of a core Marxist/Leninist assumption about the inevitability of conflict between communism and capitalism in 1957; eventually, collapsing into a debris of failure with Soviet political elite’s decision to withdraw its advisors and financial support from China after 1960, and further deterioration of relations by the re-escalation of border problems in 1969 (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 444).

So, it should be already evident that Chinese strategic decision-making (especially with regards to highly-important question of whom to choose as your friend and/or foe) between the years of 1945 and 1960 was, for one, appears to have had been influenced ‘primarily’ by the country’s Marxist/Leninist ideology, and Chinese decision-makers’ upheld perceptions about others’ compliance with the tenets of the said-ideology (Alan Bloomfield 2012, pp. 444-445). This period, regarding its significance as an exemplary time frame, brings upon two issues that can be argued to have had been inherent within both Johnston’s own work and as well as other positivist models in general. The first problem, on the one hand, according to Bloomfield (2012, pp. 445), can be seen to lie in the models that share a founding basis with the assumptions that surmise about the existence of a millennia-long strategic-cultural continuity, just like as in the case of Chinese case, despite their apparent and evident struggle to deal with these sorts of mostly decades-long time frames and trends of strategic policy- and decision-making:

A closer consideration of strategic policy shifts by the Qing dynasty in the half-century before its collapse in 1911 – from the practice of playing off the ‘foreign barbarians’ against one another, to the ‘self-strengthening movement’, then the ill-considered support of the Boxers as anti-Western proxies – also suggests a more complex pattern support of the Boxers as anti-Western proxies – also suggests a more complex pattern of strategic policy-making in which Qing officials alternated between soft-balancing, engagement and confrontational strategies.

The second issue with strategic-cultural models, on the other hand, can be attributed to their overtly positivist constructions, which can be said to make them anything but immune to some of the issue associable with what the first-generation models have long been harshly criticized for, and that is no other than them having variables that are also notoriously difficult to operationalize (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). According to Bloomfield (2012, pp. 445), this could arguably be said of models that: [...]treat strategic culture as just one independent variable among many which interact to cause strategic decision-making. Specifically, we must ask: should we try to assign definitive, quantitative values to things like preferences and ideas? Generally speaking, we can quantitatively measure material variables – we can define the range and accuracy of a surface-to-air missile or determine how frequent severe storms usually are in a particular sea – and then it is possible to compare the weight or impact of these material variables to one another more or less directly. But it is far from clear whether ideas can be definitively assigned weights in the same way, or whether they can be compared directly to material variables (Bloomfield 2012).

So, it would not be an overstatement at the very least to surmise that Johnston's positivist way in handling the concept of strategic culture, although feasible and plausible in some certain aspects, is nonetheless an issue-ridden approach; and, in many ways, far away from having a clear-cut supremacy over other alternative approaches that have long been aiming to do the same in their own respective ways, which is constructing a model and framework with that of an adequate capacity to accommodate the concept of strategic culture (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). Coincidentally, this brings us to Colin S. Gray's interpretivist approach, which is based on the fundamental assumption that ideas and/or values do guide interpretation of myriad number of material variables that influences strategic decision-making. And compared to Johnston's positivist approach, Gray's interpretivism can be seen to differ on a particular notion, endorsing the perspective that: "the ideas and preferences that make up a strategic culture cannot be so easily overridden in this formulation because they operate prior to, or affect, the whole rational process" (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). In another way of putting it, both the ideas and as well as preferences may come to act as in the ways and manner of intervening variables that attach substantially varying, coinciding, and/or even contesting meanings, of course

depending on the appropriate context so to speak, to material independent variables.

3.4.2. Gray's Interpretivist Approach to Strategic Culture

So, as far as this part of the story is concerned, in 1999 Colin S. Gray, a key representative and prominent defender of the first generation strategic-cultural research, did launch an enduring critical account against and about the above-mentioned specificities that has had come to be championed by A. I. Johnston with regard to the study of strategic culture. In many ways, the former's intention in doing so, at least supposedly, was: first, to err and caution those who might have come to find themselves in the dark denizens of strategic-cultural research looking for sound guidance on how to thread this somewhat treacherous and unforgiving path that is the study of strategic culture; and second, to issue a rejoinder warning them off of a particular "intellectual wasteland" that he explicitly accused the latter of conjuring up due to what he considered to be the case of a misguided undertaking on the subject matter (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). On this basis, as to cultivate a clear understanding and appreciation about the characteristics of Gray's views and content of his contra-postulations, we should first and foremost inquire about how come and why that Gray have favored a context-dependent conceptualization in the study of strategic culture, whilst remaining a harsh critic of the positivist philosophical position (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). In this respect, in the first part of his contestation, which is mostly semantically rooted, Gray offers a definitional scheme that tries to incorporate behavior alongside ideas as a way to encapsulate: the persisting (but not eternal) socially transmitted ideas, attitudes, traditions and habits of mind and preferred methods of operation [so, behavioral patterns] that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community that has had a necessarily unique historical experience (Bloomfield 2012).

And as to further support and enhance his contesting views on the matter, i.e. strategic culture ought to be studied and defined contextually, Gray appears to have delved into a careful examination over the etymology of the word "context" (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). This somewhat semantic venture of his, for one, can be argued to have provided an adequate reasoning in informing what he has had come to put forth as his conclusionary remarks with regard to the profound question of why "culture should be conceptualized as "something out there [...], or that which surrounds" an

actor, meaning that in one sense it is akin to environmental pressures that push actors in certain directions” (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012). Albeit this working definition offered by Gray do remain plausible to consider, it can also be said to accommodate, or limited to, only one of the possible avenues that can be explored for the etymologic roots of the word “context;” given how inquired word can also be interpreted in a way that is meant to carry the meaning of something “which weaves together (derived from the Latin roots of the word *contexture*, meaning: to weave together), which in return can be said to imply something that exists within an actor” (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 445-446) One implication of exploring such an avenue, as something that is also known to be acknowledged by Gray, arguably brings forth the forethought that “strategic culture should be approached both as a shaping context for behavior and itself as a constituent of that behavior” (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 445-446).

On the other hand, the latter part of Gray’s definition on strategic culture, at least in comparison to the initial part that is mentioned in the paragraph above, can be argued to signify less of a controversy: “strategic culture exists as ideas/preferences which drive strategic policy and behavior; and apparently, ‘the domain of strategic behavior [...] is shaped by the strategic attitudes’ in the heads of policy makers” (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 446). In this respect, it should be underlined that the first part of Gray’s definition, i.e. that strategic culture is something that is also out there surrounding an actor (which also implies that it is a shaping context for behavior), is actually what makes his semantic and conceptual inquiry into strategic culture to have a fallout with that of Johnston’s very own, thereby creating this infamous controversy and contestation between the two-sides. According to Bloomfield’s (2012) uptake on the nuances of this last point, this particularity is argued to be suggestive of an intellectual undercurrent informing Gray’s conviction with regard to the notion of how “context do provide an inclusion of (or is being the product of) all the factors which cause strategic decision-making more broadly.” In fact, if looked careful and close enough, we might be able to track down the traces of such an ideational undercurrent in his other works too, e.g. *Modern Strategy* (a book in which he provides an extensive discussion over the nature, constituents and characteristics of strategy), in which Gray appears to be sharing quite a detailed account depictive of his views and postulations on how come that “beliefs and behaviors of the human and organizational agents of

culture(s) can be best understood via the use of seven non-exclusive, dimension-like categories that he came up with;” clearly signifying how that these categories, or “dimensions” in another way of putting it, says Bloomfield (2012), can fundamentally be seen to correspond a series of independent variables of both tangible (e.g., geography, logistic capability, economic heft, technology, so and so on) and as well as intangible (strategic doctrines, politics, morals, ethics, ideologies, so and so on) nature. According to Bloomfield’s (2012, pp. 446-447) evaluation, these above characteristics and considerations can be asserted to constitute a surmisable notion that “the ideas which drive strategic decision-making (the ‘latter half’ of the definition) are themselves caused by all sorts of other environmental variables (the ‘first part’ of the definition).”

Now it should indeed be more clear for us to comprehend several points of considerations and contestations with regards to Gray’s hold forth conclusions and their subsequent consequences in the said-clash of views: e.g., why Gray did conclude that “strategic culture . . . [emerges] from the kind of mixed stew of ingredients,” or the underpinning reasons leading up to Johnston’s professed contestation against and surmisable frustration about the methodological aspect of strategic-cultural research and analysis (which is directly associable to Gray’s drawn upon conclusions how “strategic culture ...[emerges] from the kind of mixed stew of ingredients”), and so and so on (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 446). One particular consequence of these considerations, however, can and should be inquired about separately, and that is no-other than that of tautological nature of the constructed strategic-cultural models; as even Gray’s himself have had come to embrace this said-problem with open arms by highlighting that: “a critic would be correct in observing that if a strategic culture is everywhere it is, in a practicably researchable sense, nowhere” [...] and that “the unity of cultural influence and policy action denies the existence of the boundaries needed for the study of cause and effect” [...], whilst even going as far as to state that “the methodologically appalling truth that there can be no such conceptual space because all strategic behavior is effected by human beings who cannot help but be cultural agents” (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 446). These last three statements, says Bloomfield (2012, pp. 446), are suggestive of a possibility in which ‘Gray appears to be perceiving with regard to the culture’s effect on decision-making and how indeed it is so strongly deterministic that it virtually rules out the very potential and possibility of human

agency.’ Bloomfield’s (2012, pp. 446) own interpretation of Gray’s perspective and persuasion, in a way, is and can apparently be based on the latter’s assertion of, for instance, that “Germans are Germans and [...] have certain strategic cultural tendencies [...] Germans cannot help but behave except under the constraints of Germanic strategic culture.” Indeed, the latter’s claims based on such a line of logic is something that cannot help but compel the critics of such accounts, among which A. I. Johnston’s contra-postulations and critical accounts are also included, to ask several tricky questions if nothing else about “what really causes which” (Bloomfield 2012, 446).

So, Gray was actually aware of the inherent tautological tendencies of his strategic-cultural research model, and thereof the unavoidability of its too-coherent disposition; but, what is interesting with regard to this ostensive awareness of his is him attempting to come up with that of a solution to amend the apparent drawbacks and shortcomings of his arguments and overall interpretivist strategic-cultural model (Bloomfield 2012, 446). This, for one, can arguably be seen by looking at one particular assertion held up by Gray with regard to how come that Britain’s “overwhelmingly maritime strategic culture” has historically been informing the country’s (and of course also its strategic decision-making elite’s) to practice preferences, such as subsidizing proxies, amphibious raids, naval blockades (etc.), which are primarily comprised of indirect strategies of national defense (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 446). As a matter of fact, this indeed seems to be the case since maintaining the Royal Navy’s status of the time as the world’s premier service was considered to be a matter of foremost importance for the strategic policy considerations of then British strategic-decisionmakers, which can also be clearly validated by looking at the very manner in which the lion’s share of the British defense vote has had come to be allocated and spent respectively throughout the first half of the 20th century (Bloomfield 2012, 446). Interestingly, however, Gray also provided some ostensive recognition with regard to what he considered to be a series of inconsistencies and extraordinary instances in which British strategic behavior appears to have found itself not once but twice obliged to display, or rather play out, what one may come to describe as uncharacteristic wartime-practices and engagements, grounded outside of what one might surmise out to be off of the sphere of British strategic culture; and that is being no other than the very major continental military role that the British has had come to assume under and during the timely

circumstances of both the World War I and World War II through the deployment of large armies for the purpose of attritional and confrontational combat against its enemies (Bloomfield 2012, pp 447). As also conceded by Gray, even though this [Britain's strategic culture], on the one side of the coin, does supposedly provide little to no explanatory value in terms of shedding some light onto the question of why such inconsistent, and strategically extraordinary mode of behavior has had been manifested itself not once but also twice (something so contrary to what one would come to expect to see as part of neither Britain's strategic culture nor British national way of warfare), this [Britain's strategic culture], on the other, can be nevertheless argued to have provided us with that of an insight into somewhat another essential question, that is: why Britain has had indeed come to revert so rapidly back to its old, culturally preferred, traditional strategic mode of conduct and engagement after the World Wars (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447).

Although such ostensibly hold forth ambition and attempts to amend the drawbacks and shortcomings of above characterizations seems to be the resultant of a genuine undertaking, Gray's struggle to upheld this kind of a position was still an 'untenable and inconsistent' one, mostly because of his preferred approach to deal with the paramount challenge of conceptualizing strategic culture (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447). In another way of putting it as to simplify the previous assertion: if we try to reason with Gray's approach by accepting the notion that strategic culture is indeed a 'context,' then we also ought to wonder and inquire about and over a particular conundrum, and that, at least in this [Gray's own study] case, is related to the question of "where the pressure that forced Britain to act contrary to its strategic culture came from?" (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447). And, we should also remind ourselves that in Gray's put forth approach to conceptualization of strategic culture there evidently exist no conceptually open space to entertain even the very simplistic thought of a potentially unaccounted source of pressure that might have emerged externally with regards to the specificities of the case above; mostly because of the fact that all such contenders are already considered to be a part of Gray's strategic-cultural context (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447). According to some of the endearing critical accounts that voice discontent against Gray's interpretivist approach, such particularities, for one, is and can be argued constitute a relative advantage for A. I. Johnston's own respective approach to conceptualizing strategic culture, providing that it could at the very least

potentially have a chance to explain what we consider to be the instances of strategically extraordinary discrepancies (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447). In a way, the reason for such attribution of comparative value to Johnston's approach by the critics of Gray's strategic-cultural model is rather easy to grasp, indeed, given the actuality that the former's very way and manner of conceptualizing strategic culture do offer only one independent variable producing strategic behavior, which allows conceptual space to remain free for other probable variables to override it in case a need manifest (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447).

In conclusion, with such a strategic-cultural model based on and incorporated into "the context" we can argue to be left with that of theory suggestive of a supposition that: states sometimes do appear to have followed their strategic-cultural preferences whilst at some other times they do not, and most importantly we do not have a single clue or way as to predict 'when which will occur,' or understand the underlying conditions for 'why does it occur' (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447). Besides that, the issue of being too-coherent, which is another gravamen of this contextual strategic-cultural model, is still a matter of unsolvable actuality with this contextual strategic-cultural model, and Gray's apparent and mostly post hoc attempts aimed to resolve this quagmire of a problem through his British case study do constitute a matter of monolithic formulation if nothing else that tries to explain away a crucial inconsistency (Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447). Particularly, this last point is something that has had also been scrutinized by A. I. Johnston in one of his later works, noting that: "a tautology is essentially still a tautology, regardless of the fact that it might (or not) be wrapped up in some sort of a holistic faux anti-positivism (Johnston 1995; Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447)." According to Bloomfield's (2012, pp. 447) evaluation of this matter, one's decision to use this kind of a contextual strategic-cultural model may simply mean that "we are, in effect, left with little more than a weak-path-dependent assumption of the sort 'things have gone that way for a while, and they will probably continue to do so unless something changes; and by and large we do possess no theoretical guidance with regard to what may precipitate such a case of change in the first place.'" In this context, now it should indeed be clear enough to see and grasp the underlying rationale that the critics of Gray's contextual strategic-cultural model do uphold in positing that his formulation is essentially too-coherent (due to its weakness in adequately explaining inconsistent and deviant cases and instances of strategic behavior) and too-

much-continuity dependent (mostly because of the fact that we are left with almost no probable way to circumnavigate around the issue of how, when, and/or why one's strategic policy may have come to change in the first place) (Sondhaus 2006; Bloomfield 2012, pp. 447).

3.5. Beyond the Trinity: A Fourth Generation?

Whilst the third versus first generational debate was yet to be resolved, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, we have also come to see the fledgling of attempts criticizing the earlier generational strategic-cultural models' overemphasis of excessive homogeneity and continuity in strategic culture. In extension to Johnston's generational rubric, scholars like Alan Bloomfield came to be categorized under the "fourth-generational strategic cultural research." According to this perspective, in a nation there is bound to be more than one strategic culture in the form of strategic sub-cultures. And as these strategic sub-cultures are expected to compete, some sort of dents or points of abbreviation in a nation's ongoing decision-making processes are expected. In another way of putting it, the way of a particular strategic sub-culture's ascent to dominance in influencing a nation's foreign and security policy can only be possible if it could come to offer a useful answer to the challenges popping out of the strategic environment that the nation in question do remain as a part of. When compared to the prior generational waves, however, the majority of studies do appear to have continued to rely on either the first or the third generational studies.

3.6. Challenges with Strategic-Cultural Analysis

So, whilst the methodological debate concerning strategic-cultural analysis is still yet to cease, the scholarly attention and produced work on the subject of strategic culture continues to expand gradually, as more and more research questions seem to be popping up with regard to the nature and characteristics of strategic culture day by day. Amongst the ones that cropped up, one particular question, for instance, is based on the distinct sources of strategic culture, as most of which are notably include: "geography, climate and resources; history and experience; political structure; the nature of organizations involved in defense; myths and symbols; key texts that inform actors of appropriate strategic action; and transnational norms, generational change and the role of technology." And as per some of the "key elements that are repetitively

cited: elites, political institutions, and public opinion constitute the most commonly referred proponents of what researchers working on the subject identify to be the keepers of the strategic culture.” (Howlett 2005, pp. 4; Lantis 2006, pp. 106-109; Zaman 2009, pp. 82). In fact, according to a particular study, it is argued that even popular culture and civil society may come to be included into the list of what constitutes the keepers of strategic culture, given how both missionary activities and business entrepreneurs have gone along with their own respective ways of garnering popular ideologies of social progress as to justify and legitimate the British Imperialism in the 19th century Africa (Zaman 2009, pp. 82). Similarly, but this time in the U.S., we can easily see, for example, how “the business groups and as well as political party leaders (mostly Republican in affiliation) were heavily drawing upon the popularized “science of geopolitics” as a way to advocate on the behalf of the further expansion of U.S. navy and projection of U.S. capital into Asia” (Zaman 2009, pp. 82). And if we get close enough to take another look at the latter, we can appreciate the foremost reasons lying beneath rather easily, which is the overarching goal of: reinvigorating the American economy at the beginning of the 20th century; creating a new socially unifying national identity that would portray the post-1865 might of the United States as to make it possible to accommodate the social dislocation put forth by the twin prongs of industrialization and immigration (Zaman 2009, pp. 82). Professedly, it was these circumstances led by a pursuit of outwards expansion that allowed the United States to encounter those who she would begin to consider as her “other,” whilst gaining the ability to identify herself in response (Farrell 2005; Zaman 2009, pp. 2).

The second most reappearing question in the literature seems to concentrate on the question of “whether strategic culture is unitary in nature.” In an interesting article written by Williamson Murray, it is noted that the military organizations are not immune to possessing separate and distinct sub-cultures that are heavily influenced by their respective traditions and the specific missions that they by and large tasked to perform (Murray 1999, pp. 27-42; Zaman 2009, pp. 82). As to give some solid basis to his claims, Murray discusses the German military, amongst others, by noting how they actually, as per their military style, appear to project a serious national attitude about warfare, which he associates with the countless attempts that was carried out to invade German states throughout their histories (Murray 1999, pp. 27-42; Zaman 2009,

pp. 82). From a critical perspective, however, the German navy if considered in the span of the two consecutive world wars, it can also be asserted how innately incompetent German armed services were actually, which is basically equal to say that the professed effect of national culture on the development of an armed service culture should not be overestimated (Murray 1999, pp. 27-42; Zaman 2009, pp. 82). In a similar vein, Colin S. Gray do also note that those working on the subject should not turn blind eye over a particularly crucial and devious actuality, which is the necessity of accounting for public culture, strategic culture, and military (organizational) culture (Gray 2006, pp. 12-13; Zaman 2009, pp. 82). In this respect, any particular notion that appears to describe strategic culture as a unitary whole should be questioned carefully, as it would be rather plausible and even, if one may say, wise to consider strategic culture as an “umbrella concept,” with that of a great capacity to encapsulate multiple cultural identities, which continue to remain at play in one way or another, because, it is rather expected to observe a distinguishable strategic culture in practice to function as a “holding company over a number of subsidiary military and other related cultures” (Gray 2006, pp. 19; Zaman 2009, pp. 82).

The third question , which can be associated with the corresponding social science literature of strategic culture, draws attention to the fact that a focus on the beliefs of policy and military elites, albeit it allows us to gaze into the subject, do nevertheless constitute a “thin constructivism,” granted how it is seemingly lacking to explore the broad spectrum of agents existing in civil society, whose engagement with the acts of producing and enacting the norms of war are indeed pervasive and prevailing in the respective contexts that they serve (Farrell 2005, pp. 13; Zaman 2009, pp. 83). According to Theo Farrell, such an approach is argued to have a rather limited capacity to illuminate the relationship that one tries to observe between identity and the supposed purpose of the polity (in his case study, that is the American Empire) “or the role of the force reproducing the both” (Farrell 2005, pp. 13; Zaman 2009, pp. 83). In an extension to this vein, he draws the conclusion that such coined problems do only prompt how much that a move towards a “thicker constructivism” is actually needed; especially, “one that is better to follow scripts and codes for action “all the way down” to the identities that sustain them” (Farrell 2005, pp. 13; Zaman 2009, pp. 83). In a similar vein, Stuart Poore too is also known to call researchers

working on strategic culture to consider adopting a “context all the way down” approach for the betterment of research in this somewhat niche field of scholarly inquiry” (Poore 2003, pp. 282; Zaman 2009, pp. 83).

The fourth research question, or a problem depending on whom names it, has had come to be identified by Michael Desch for the researchers of strategic culture research. This problem/question is argued to have given birth by the very pre-supposition that every case is unique, or in another saying, “*sui generis*,” given the inherent tendency of the researchers working in this field to focus on what they perceive to be the distinct particularities of single cases rather than trying to look for common cultural traits in and across several cases (Desch 1998, pp. 152; Zaman 2009; 83). Under these circumstances most of the attempts that aim to frame generalizations within the context of strategic studies can be argued to possess a high-level of difficulty, mostly because of the manner through which the cultural factors are often being used in and across the works focusing single cases. According to Desch, these particulars can be accounted as the foremost enablers of the produced results that challenge the “unit homogeneity assumption, which holds that cases have enough meaningful similarities to be comparable,” because such an approach do result in a few, if there are any, systemic elements (Desch 1998, pp. 152; Zaman 2009, pp. 83). In default of such systemic elements, one’s ability of foresight do coincidingly decrease, and with the resultant lack of predictions, the validation of conceptual claims become rather unfeasible. In a critical view put forth by John Duffield about Desch’s accusations, the former rejects the arguments made by the latter on two particularities. First, he posits that “many elements of culture can vary systematically along well-defined dimensions and thus lend themselves to cross-case measurement and comparison” (Desch 1998, pp. 152-153; Duffield 1999, pp. 158; Zaman 2009, pp. 83). In a way he makes it assertible that there in fact exists “no innate reason that can block *sui generis* cultures from delivering results as long as they do have observable behavioral implications” (Zaman 2009, pp. 83). Second, he underpins the idea of “what matters is that other characteristics of the units under consideration be similar across study cases,” as opposed to that of the latter’s argument about how “*sui generis* cases in the study of strategic culture cancel out unit homogeneity” (Duffield 1999, pp. 158; Zaman

2009, pp. 83).

Despite all these questions and, what one may come to identify as, pitfalls of the strategic-cultural analysis, the concept of strategic culture, and related issues, do continue to receive favor and echo in and across ample number of books, monographs, and researches. Despite its alluring quality, however, one cannot solely rely on the concept of strategic culture; or, in Colin S. Gray's own way of putting it: "Sun Tzu's excellent formula, reinforced by a Jominian spirit, will encourage the fallacious conviction that in understanding culture we have stumbled across the answer to the correct great principle for our strategic dilemmas" (Gray 2006, pp. 6; Zaman 2009, pp. 84). In a similar vein, we see Joseph Rothschild with his "emphasis is being given over the essentiality of understanding the power of culture as to explain the ways and manners through which countries and their armed forces do act," whilst warning that we should "also guard against tilting excessively in the opposite direction, of becoming intellectually mesmerized by culture and thus failing to appreciate that the patterns and traits of many societies and of their military establishments are probably quite rational for them, given their historical experiences and demographic-geographic situations" (Rothschild 1987, pp. 70; Zaman 2009, pp. 84).

3.7. Defining and Setting the Parameters of Strategic Culture Concept

So, based on the presented discussion if there is any one thing that can be inferred about the strategic-cultural research, then, it should be no other than how it came about as a critique against the already existing theoretical frameworks relying on the rational choice theory, and gradually evolved in stages when the criticisms directed within were resulting in "diachronic and synchronic tensions" (Echevarria 2013), thus triggering paradigmatic shifts in the conceptual and analytical constructs that allowed new ones to arise in contradiction to those that came prior (i.e., the generations of strategic-cultural research).

Indeed, at a macroscopic level, the very essence of the concept builds on the idea that each country's inherent and distinct characteristics and aspects of their national cultures are bound to find some sort of reflection, albeit in a varying degree, in their decision-making processes in handling foreign and security related matters. However,

as the employment of the concept has begun to gain further attraction, the emerging differences in analysts' upheld perspectives became even more prevalent. This allowed the literature to expend from a point in which the concept was seen and treated mostly as a way to explain the cross-national-cultural differences in nuclear strategic styles of the superpowers of the Cold War (i.e., the U.S. and the USSR) to a point where it started to encompass other major powers (like China) and the cultural dimensions of foreign policy and national security in general. However, the unceasing introspections did only work in deepening the generational fissures. This, in a nutshell, resulted in the first generation's cultural determinism, the second generation's skepticism, the third generation's obsession with positivist rigor and self-imposed distancing from the reality itself, and the fourth generation's promotion of competitive sub-cultures in response to what they consider to be the monolithic and contiguous approaches of the earlier generations.

The problems associated with the conceptualization of strategic culture is, however, not solely limited to the concept's "loose thesis-antithesis-synthesis-like progression" (Echevarria 2013), and the subsequently resulting "self-restricting generational schisms" (Duffield, Farrell, Price & Desch 1999). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the parental elements of the concept (i.e., strategy and culture) can also be accounted for some of the inherent problems and convolutions (on both ontological and epistemological levels) pertaining to the scholars' failed attempts to come up with a commonly agreed workable conceptual definition of strategic culture.

Although there are four generational strands in total, the preeminent generational discussion that seems to occupy the literature both then and now is still the one that has had been fought between the first versus the third generations (e.g., Gray's 'interpretivist context' versus Johnston's 'positivist causation'). On the one hand, those who subscribe to the former conceptualize strategic culture as a behavior-shaping context and views the concept as something that has ideational and behavioral dimensions. Arguably, this makes "the concept strategic culture constitutive with respect to behavior" (Anand 2020, pp. 12). The studies that align themselves with this perspective most of the time appear to have taken one or a combination of the following three as to substantiate their [strategic]culture-as-context: "history, identity, and (national) character" (Haglund 2004). The latter group, on the other hand, perceives strategic culture composed of ideas only, and depicts it as something that

shares a cause-effect relationship with strategic behavior, something which they deem to require a positivist approach to explain. The studies that favor this strand more than often concentrates on cognition and choose (just like in the case of the former) one or a combination, of the following three as a way to corroborate their search for causality: “symbolism, myth, and metaphor” (Haglund 2004). This clash of views depictive of a “conceptual tug-of-war” can also be seen as “an extension to the age-old fought between the camps of those who value understanding over explanation (and vice-versa)” (Anand 2020, pp. 9-10).

This study, for one, aligns itself with the former group conceptualizing strategic culture as context, and in doing so orients itself in a trajectory that aims to cultivate an accurate understanding with respect to how China’s strategic culture impacts the said-country’s approach to matters pertaining to conflict, war and peace in general, and in particular, that Chinese elite’s perception of the efficacy of use of force, both of which are bound to be highly constitutive of the ways that China’s foreign and national security policies have been getting formulated and practiced both in domestic and international settings. Strategic culture concept, therefore, at the very least in the boundaries of this research, should be understood as an actor’s sum of core and steadfast assumptions pertaining to the matters of the role of war (both in interstate and intrastate settings) in human affairs and the efficacy of applying force held by political and military elites in a country (Scobell 2002, p. 2). In this respect, the definitional scheme is being directly borrowed from Colin S. Gray (1999b, p. 51): “the persisting (though not eternal) socially transmitted ideas, attitudes, traditions, habits of mind, and preferred methods of operation that are more or less specific to a particularly geographically based security community that has had a necessarily unique historical experience.” As these assumptions, for one, are bound to be informed and conditioned by a polity’s history, (national) culture (encompassing philosophical and intellectual heritage), and preconceptions of its own and as well others’ identity-infused images, it is a given for them to be varied depending on which country is making the viewing. Moreover, these can also be said to color the prevalent perspective of a country’s elite regarding what they think of the nature of another country’s strategic culture. According to Andrew Scobell (2002, p. 2) and Allen Whiting (1989), this preconceived image of a country’s strategic culture relies on a “stereotypical understanding of the strategic disposition of another nation, state, or people that is derived from a selective interpretation of history,

traditions, and self-image.” Then, what about China?

The assertions provided are deemed as applicable to China case for two reasons. For one, the literature as we shall see acknowledges the centrality of the subject of national cultures as a key dimension in strategy, and in doing so its capacity to cast an impact, albeit varying in degree, on a country’s inclination to utilize coercive means for foreign and security policy interests (Lattimore & Lattimore 1945; Mancall & Fairbank 1968; Dreyer, Kierman & Fairbank 1974; Mancall 1984; Katzenstein 1996; Farrell 1998; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003). And, in China context, the prevalent contention is that the role of culture is a key component to consider for one’s attempts to understand China’s military and security affairs, as Chinese international relations have been heavily influenced by an ancient and enduring civilizational backdrop; one that is so humongous that it constitutes a political as well as cultural and geographic conglomerate with a pedigree encompassing the longest (around 3.000 years of) continuous (written) history of any country in the world (Lattimore & Lattimore 1945; Mancall & Fairbank 1968; Dreyer, Kierman & Fairbank 1974; Mancall 1984; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003).

The second reason is similarly linked to a particularly prevalent viewpoint, but this time mainly prompted by Chinese scholars, analysts, and policymakers (Andrew Scobell 2002; Andrew Scobell 2003). According to the common points put forth in their perspectives, the modern Chinese past and present policy and behavior are bound to be informed by a characteristically traditional Chinese philosophy of international relations. One key Chinese military personale known to be supportive of this notion, which finds undeniable linkages between a country’s culture and strategy, is the Lieutenant General Li Jijun (1997), the former vice president of the Academy of Military Sciences. In one account, he argued (as cited in Scobell 2002, pp. 1) the following:

“Culture is the root and foundation of strategy. Strategic thinking, in the process of its evolutionary history, flows into the mainstream of a country or a nation’ s culture. Each country or nation’ s strategic culture cannot but bear the imprint of cultural traditions, which in a subconscious and complex way, prescribes and defines strategy making.”

The Lieutenant General Li Jijun's perspective should be seen and treated as a key insight by virtue of the station and duty that he was assigned to perform at the (Chinese) Academy of Military Sciences, which is the top research institute of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Regarding its officially stated function and purpose, the AMS conducts research on the matters pertaining to national defense, armed force R&D, and military operations. However, it is also reported to have been involved in the following activities: providing summations and reports to the country's civil and military leadership; ghost-writing speeches for the members of the PLA's highest echelons; drafting vital military-strategic documents such as China's Defense White Papers; conducting evaluations on issues such as other countries' militaries, and their strategies and doctrines (so and so on...) (Gill & Mulvelon 2002).

In Chinese elites' viewpoint, this idea portraying culture and strategic behavior of an actor as something that shares an interlocked and inseparable linkage, however, is not seen nor treated as the sole ownership of China but something that also all the other countries do remain in the possession and under the influence of (Scobell 2002). This in a way can be said to incentivize China to base its perception of other countries on what it assumes to be the latter's (strategic) cultural proclivities. And as these assumptions are bound to inform and condition one's own interpretations about what is conceived of being the strategic cultural images of other countries, it is a given to see the assumed images of the strategic cultures of other countries to constitute a key dimension for China's assessments of what and who is (and as well as might prove to be) an imminent and potential threat both in the domestic and the international domains. As a case in point, the China-US, carrying an over-century-long accumulated historical memory and cultural baggage, can be accounted as one of the most befitting instances amongst many (Scobell 2002).

CHAPTER 4

CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE IN CONTEXT

China has been a political, cultural and as well as a geographic entity ever since the times of antiquity. Building on the existence of such an extensive background, a considerable number of Western and Chinese scholars have come to argue in their studies that “a distinctive traditional Chinese philosophy dating thousands of years back may as well as be responsible for shaping the country’s approach to international relations, and in conditioning its attitude towards the matters pertaining to warfare” (Scobell 2002). For such accounts, *Sun Tzu’s The Art of War* was treated as the foremost evidential text (Fairbank 1974, pp. 4).⁴⁴ According to Historian Shu Guang Zhang (1995, pp. 28-29), this inferred influence of the Chinese classics over the country’s elite with respect to how and under what terms did they understand warfare could be very well exemplified by China’s supreme leader Mao Zedong’s obsession with instances derived from ancient Chinese warfare in which a weaker army was claimed of being victorious in its clash against relatively much more of a strong army (e.g., the Battle of Chenggao in 203 BCE). The arguments claiming a continuity in China’s strategic outlook and behavior extending from the country’s imperial era into its communist era has worked in further enabling convictions about how China might indeed be in the possession of a unique strategic culture. According to Lawrence Sondhaus (2006, pp. 98), although on the surface what might seem to have continued across successive Chinese regimes can be explained via a *realpolitik* perspective to a certain extent, it does not mean that the underlying particularities (which are mostly cultural) with respect to China’s foreign and security policy, and how China views the rest of world are completely explicable via the realist theory. Another influential personage amongst those who seem to have founded similar convictions whilst

⁴⁴ Whilst Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* was the most referred, it was in fact not the only one. Amongst many Chinese classics written on the topics of warfare, statecraft, strategy and tactics, and peace and war, for instance, we can account the other six texts of the Seven Military Classics (the seventh one being Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*).

enquiring on 'China's alleged uniqueness' in terms of the country's approach to warfare is John King Fairbank (1974). According to Fairbank's drawn upon conclusion on the said matters, there exists "specific habits of mind and action" which remains identifiably evident in the Chinese traditional view of what constitutes Chinese attitudes toward the use of force. Most noticeably emerging in the country's overall proclivity, Fairbank (1974, pp. 25-26) describes Chinese approach to and understanding of warfare as the one that: "disesteems violence and heroism; emphasizes the civilian over the military; displays preference for defensive and attritional warfare over offensive warfare with the goal of annihilating the enemy; and conceptualizes warfare in a limited and punitive capacity rather than that of global and expansionist adventurism." But not everyone that has studied China's alleged uniqueness in national character and approach to warfare shares the same convictions.

For one, Alastair Ian Johnston, in his study on imperial and communist periods of China (1995; 1996), basically repudiate the aforesaid arguments prompting the notion that there is a timeless Chinese traditional wisdom which continues to be still in effect. By citing evidence, he draws upon what he identifies to be representative of China's consistent realpolitik tendencies evident across Chinese strategic preferences and behavior. According to his viewpoint, these are best suited to be studied via the theoretical lenses of "cultural realism." He acknowledges the existence of two seemingly contradictive strategic cultures (Confucian-Mencian one & Parabellum-Realpolitik one) as way to explain the record of Chinese strategic behavior in relation to the country's supposed cultural values. According to him, whereas the former one reflects the idealistic pacifist and defensive sentiments, the latter constitutes the viewpoint via which the world is being seen in realistic terms and considerations that enable an inclination to employ offensive use of force. Following a detailed analysis of the Seven Military Classics of the Ancient China,⁴⁵ Johnston concluded that the former was only constitutive of a symbolic value with no real qualifying impact so to speak of, as six out of the seven aforesaid military classics were in fact promoting an offensive inclination (Parabellum realism/Realpolitik strategic culture), whilst only one of the seven military classics was promotive of a defensive inclination (Confucian-

⁴⁵ These classics, albeit written during different periods, were compiled under the Song Dynasty. After their canonization, the texts have begun to be used for the military examinations. The name of these seven are as the following: Jiang Ziya's (Taigong) Six Secret Teachings, The Methods of the Sima (i.e., Sima Rangju Art of War), Sun Tzu's (Sun Zi) The Art of War, Wu Qi's Wuzi, Wei Liaozi, Three Strategies of Huan Shigong, and Questions and Replies between Tang Taizong and Li Weigong.

Mencian strategic culture). As for the reason, according to Johnston's speculations (1995), at one point in time (which he considers this point in time to be Ming Dynasty of 1368-1644) Confucian-Mencian principles in the military-strategic texts had been diminished to no more than that of a literary value or a linguistic custom of only a nominal importance.

Although Johnston's study of China has come to be treated as one of the most critically acclaimed works to date in the field, there were still those unconvinced for the former's dismissal of the ideational influences almost completely. Tiejun Zhang (2002) for one, whilst declaring his disagreement with Johnston, argued to have founded Fairbanks' arguments on how Confucian beliefs had a considerable impact over the country's traditional strategic culture to be more convincing instead. According to T. Zhang (2002), China was, at the very least starting from the birth of Chinese Empire (221 BCE) and continuing until the country's subjugation under the British Empire after its defeat in the Opium War (1839-1842), a self-sufficient continental power with almost no actual threat existing outside of the Empire.⁴⁶ All these particularities, says T. Zhang (2002, pp. 73-74), were basically enabling China to enjoy a certain sense of luxury with respect to the country's strategic understanding of the world, which was essentially driven by a "cultural moralism" rather than Johnston's "cultural realism."

There were also those who saw culturalist explanations rooted in ancient times as mostly inadequate. According to their put forth rationale, the notions such as unity, homogeneity, and continuity with respect to China's strategic culture was an over exaggeration, especially, if one tries to be mindful of the country's evidently diverse historical experiences, geography, and ethnicity. This perspective, according to them, was as much as unconvincing as the idea of a consistent Western way of war which was first introduced by Victor Davis Hanson (2009). Jeremy Black (2004), as one famous prolific writer, is amongst those who find the attempts to establish a strong linkage between the historical literature, the details of their writers, and the alleged practices in general as highly implausible, especially in the context of countries such as China. Moreover, he (2004, pp. 1229) points to the questionability of how many

⁴⁶ Although Japan is known for instigating a series of pillages and military expeditions onto the Chinese soil in different points in time throughout China's ancient and imperial history, in the eyes of Chinese emperor, and his officials and military these were treated as nothing but a minor nuisance. For more, see; Graff, D. A., & Higham, R. (Eds.). (2012). *A military history of China*. University Press of Kentucky.

seem to have been readily accepting that there could only be one Chinese way of war, and in the same parallels only one Chinese strategic culture impacting the country's approach to the matters pertaining to conflict, war and peace, strategy, and use of force.

In what seems to be an echo of this critique, Andrew Scobell (2002; 2003) asserts two strands constitutive of a dialectic duality in China's strategic culture that work in tandem to each other, which he identifies to be a defensive Confucian-Mencian strand and an offensive realpolitik strand (which Johnston attributes to cultural realism). According to his remarks, the former strand is argued of having been influential specifically on the basis of how come that the Chinese elite is self-perceiving and self-reorienting the country's strategic behavior under the lightening of the Confucian-Mencian strand. And when this former strand comes to conjoint with the latter strand of the Chinese strategic culture, the resulting dialectic interactions between the defensive and offensive traditions are argued of having been responsible for the creation of what he coins to be a "cult of defense." This, he posits, enables Confucian-Mencian strand to often be used to justify the offensive realpolitik strand driven strategic behavior of the country.⁴⁷ This research finds Scobell's put forth rationale as highly plausible. If there is any abundance of something that can be traced throughout the history, then, it should be no other than how indeed many leaders claiming their actions having justifiable causes with purest convictions and motives did exist. And in the context of China, this argument seems to hold quite a bit of truth and as for the evidence we can easily take the Great Wall of China, which is arguably the biggest defensive construction ever created by a civilization, and how it remains prevalent both in the minds and the arguments of many (both Chinese and other) in continuing the image of a defensive China. Moreover, another piece of argumentation that seems to have frequently been relied on (as evidence that China is nothing like the Western imperial powers who liked to conquer, colonize with that of an expansionist adventurism) is no other than the peaceful 15th century voyages conducted by Zheng He to the South Asian and East African coasts. According to Scobell's studies of Chinese strategic culture (2002, pp. 4; 2003), Chinese leaders are convinced of their country's beingness, peacefulness and defensiveness, and perceive these qualities as being directly insourced by the very heritage of Chinese civilizational, intellectual, and

⁴⁷ It should be reminded that this study for one takes a similar path to the one which is carved by Andrew Scobell in its attempt to conceptualize strategic culture in the context of China.

philosophical virtues. But at the same time, these perceptive lenses can also be described as the ones responsible for predisposing China to readily employ force in the face of crises that the Chinese elite may indeed very well conceive as direct transgressions (The Chinese military-strategic notion of active defense for instance can be said to promote such an ideation). This, according to Scobell, is the reason why we are observing an evident fissure between the accounts of Chinese elite's self-perception of their country and the danger-foretelling accounts endorsed by the outsiders with respect to China.

Another point of contestation in the context of Chinese strategic culture can be said to concentrate on the question of continuity. In this respect, T. Zhang (2002), contrary to the commonly upheld perspective by the other scholars, argues to have founded only certain elements of Chinese traditional strategic culture getting reflected into the Communist China. As per the underpinning reason, he attributes this situation to the fundamental changes in both domestic and international settings that China has had been surrounded with. Thus, this prevalent notion depicting Chinese strategic culture as being mainly conflict-averse was essentially derived from the country's timely requirements to orient itself in line with that of a defensive realist stance in and through which material preferences were reigning supreme over the cultural and ideational components of the country's strategic culture (Zhang 2002, pp. 73). Even though T. Zhang's perspective on the issue of continuity at the very least on the surface level may as well as be deemed plausible, when put against A. I. Johnston's arguments, however, the latter seems to be more persuasive. As aforementioned, Johnston (1996, pp. 217), by explicating the durable quality of the traditional Chinese strategic culture in and across varying structural contexts, managed to display how the traditional Chinese strategic culture, for one, has had founded echo in the communist era, and specifically in the manner of thinking that was being upheld by Mao Zedong. Indeed, Johnston's contribution was basically on the side of providing an adequate understanding with respect to the roots of and influence over Mao's famous theory of contradictions, mostly on the basis of how this theory was not only fed by the traditional Chinese notion of the *dao* of [contradictive] dualism but also based on Marxist-Leninist thought. This brought about, Johnston says (1996, pp. 229-230), a certain inclination in Mao's worldview to see the path to resolution of a conflict as only passing through the conflict itself. Moreover, Johnston (1996, pp. 246-248),

whilst acknowledging Mao's evident awareness of the critically acclaimed Western military texts and their authors, and therefore the high probability in the way of which the supreme Chinese leader must have had at one point come under the influence of the viewpoints of such works, points out to the evidence that even if there was such an influence in the first place, Mao was already well-read in Sun Tzu and the other ancient Chinese military-strategic texts (e.g., *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*) way before his apparent first time exposure to either Clausewitzian or Leninist-Marxist thought.

Another significant aspect to consider is the dual role of the earlier Chinese leaders, acting in both civil and military capacity. According to Sondhaus (2006, pp. 100), the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) decision to establish the Red Army as of 1927 (which ultimately got renamed as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1945), two decades before the CCP has had triumphed in taking control of the state was essentially allowing the CCP leadership to never be frightened of a possibility in which the PLA could come to emerge as an imminent rival for political power. Indeed, this was highly related to how the leadership positions of both the CCP and the PLA was shared by the same famous personages active during the Long March of 1934-1935, and Mao Zedong (of course amongst others) was the very embodiment of this factuality, acting "both as a field commander and the Chinese equivalent of a high-level Soviet army political commissar" (Sondhaus 2006, pp. 100). According to S. G. Zhang (1995, pp. 14-15), the role played by Mao was quite substantial for several reasons. He politically indoctrinated the army and in doing so solidified the very image of the role that was expected from the army to play, which was a gun under control of the party and not the other way around (Scobell 2003). Mao also laid down the philosophical and intellectual backdrop upon which the Red Army's cause was getting justified. According to Sondhaus (2006, pp. 101), this intellectual and philosophical backdrop was cut off of the fabric of "a Chinese just war theory dating back to Confucius," and at the hands of Mao was used to define "an unjust war as one waged by oppressors and a just war as one waged by the oppressed against their oppressors (i.e., the foreign imperialists and all oppressors of peasants and workers)." Building on such notions, Mao viewed all strategies and tactics as justifiable as long as the war itself could be deemed as just (Johnston 1996, pp. 232; Scobell 2002, pp. 10-11; Sondhaus 2006, pp. 101). "The absolute flexibility" being the crown jewel of Mao's central concepts was

actually a derivement of the traditional Chinese strategic culture that had deep roots in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. This notion, for one, can be said to find its direct reflection in the Chinese military-strategic concept "active defense," which prompts the idea that the use of force either defensive or offensive is always an employable option against both domestic and international political threats. A certain paradoxical quality of this concept is that its tendency to color almost every strategic behavior as being purely defensive in its nature even if the act itself may seem otherwise. While scholars such as Andrew Scobell (2002, pp. 8; 2003) interpret this concept as evidence of an inviolable sense of security that Chinese elite sees with respect to their country's territorial integrity, others like by A. I. Johnston (1996, pp. 249) dismiss it on the grounds of having mostly symbolic value for propaganda purposes.

The empirical data, covering the instances of China's deployment of military force between the years of 1949 and 1985, shows for one how China in the face of 8 (out of 11) crises were inclined to employ some sort of limited use of force (Sondhaus 2006, pp. 101). One common characteristic of these conflicts is that they unfolded alongside China's borders. According to Johnston (1996, pp. 252) and Scobell (2002, pp. 12-14; 2003), China's decision to use force in response to all these crises can be said to share a direct linkage with the country's historical sensitivity towards any matter involving territorial integrity. According to Scobell (2002, pp. 22-23), these 8 instances of China's limited use of force were not to achieve a crushing victory over its adversary but rather for the sake of either achieving a political endpoint or to send a warning/message of deterrence or compellence. This, at the very least according to what Scobell (2002, pp. 22-23) argues to be the case, can be treated as evidence of China's inclination to take risks that are carefully calculated, thus incentivizing China to rely on more on both the use and posturing of force, which can very well be said to inform the Western viewpoint in how offense-prone China certainly is. Similarly, S. G. Zhang (2019), in extension to his analysis of a series of conflictual circumstances⁴⁸ that China had come to find himself surrounded with, also argued how Chinese are in the possession of proclivities that appropriate the notion of force usage as a significant aspect of their overall approach to crisis management. This, according to

⁴⁸ The bulk of his analysis can be said to concentrate on Sino-American confrontations, and those including: the civil war of 1949, the Korean War of 1950-1953, Indochina crisis of 1954 (subsequent to the France's collapse of control), the first and second ever Taiwan Strait crisis of 1954-1955 and of 1958.

what he argued to be the case, was especially true in the contexts of Chinese brinkmanship in Taiwan strait crises and Chinese intervention during the Korean War, as they could very well be seen as being reflective of an apparent Chinese calculative tendency to perceive short-term aggressive strategic behaviors as a means of overall deterrence.

One important implication of the instances discussed above was their confirmation of the validity of Mao's strategies. Indeed, it was only in the duration of five years that he managed to: end the civil war as he banished the Nationalists out of the Chinese mainland, emerge triumphant in securing the continuation of the communist regime in the North Korea with his decision to intervene in the Korean War, and even deter the United States during the Indochina crisis (Johnston 1996, pp. 245). However, the very crown jewel of all Mao's accomplishments, at least in terms of treatment that was being shown by the multiplicity of audiences, was no other than his acclaimed brilliance in the Korean War, symbolizing a moment in which the successive records of Western victories over China (starting from the First Opium War of 1839-1842) was now no more. This, according to S. G. Zhang (1995, pp. 248-249), can be seen indicative of how the role of war do indeed occupy a credible position in China's strategic calculations against what the Chinese elite considers a threat to the country's regime and its territorial integrity. One important point that seems to be acknowledged by Zhang is how these series of crises that came to unfold between Communist China and the United States were essentially providing a sense of confirmation with respect to Ken Booth's ideas on ethnocentrism and strategy. According to this perspective, although the intensions and attempts to understand each other were already there in open, they were anything, but accurate conceptions upheld with respect to each other. As such "culture-bound" misunderstandings continued to be over-relied on, both Chinese and Americans were founding themselves not only unable to understand what the other's interests and threat perceptions accounting but also the "differences in decision-making, communication, crisis behavior, and cost-benefit calculations" (Sondhaus 2006, pp. 102).

Following the banishment of the government of the Republic of China to Formosa (now Taiwan) from the mainland China, Mao had come to turn his eyes towards what he perceived of being a key imperative that China was indeed missing for the longest time: a powerful navy that could and would be able in defending China's coast against

imperialist intensions (Schram & Schram 1989; Zhang 1992, pp. 68). According to Johnston (1996, pp. 258), however, although the absence of a powerful navy capable of defending the Chinese mainland was indeed an evident Chinese vulnerability, this was also constitutive of a liability that could not be fixed in the shortest time possible. This problem can be seen in sharing a direct linkage to the one instance where China could not rely on the use of force in the face of the US deployment of the US Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait in 1950, during which Mao was perceived of having an intension to invade Taiwan (Schram & Schram 1989; Johnston 1996, pp. 258). Lacking an able navy would indeed work to bar Communist China from seeking its strategic goals more assertively at sea. And according to Johnston (1996, pp. 258), this could very well be seen as one of the underlying reasons in terms of why we had come to observe China heavily entertaining a circumspect approach even in the most pressing issues (such as a threat against what China considers to be a high-value territorial security), which he argued of being mostly explicable via the lenses of Johnston's cultural realpolitik. According to Sondhaus (2006, pp. 102), in the early 21st century, for what it seemed, China's intensions were not to build a navy capable of commanding the sea but to have one that would be strong enough to deny the waters of the East Asia to the United States. As for one, this restricted objective, according to Scobell (2002, pp. 17), could very well be linked to the prevailing prejudices in the geopolitical views endorsed by the influential Chinese personages. In this respect, he provides the example of the one highly acclaimed Chinese military scholar, Peng Huaidong, arguing how China has traditionally been in the possession of a "continental culture that emphasized moral self-cultivation," something which can be said to remain in stark contrast with those of the "Western nations' maritime cultures known to stress courage, strength, and technology" (Scobell 2002, pp. 17; 2003). At the end, it was only after Mao's death in 1976 that China navy came to see some significant development. For one, this failure, says Sondhaus (2006), could very well be connected to his campaigns of Great Leap Forward⁴⁹ and Cultural Revolution.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Mao Zedong's catastrophically failed socio-economic project (1958-1962) to shift the Chinese state from being an agrarian economy to being an industrialized communist state economy via the formations of people's communes.

⁵⁰ Mao Zedong's turmoil inciting sociopolitical movement (also known for its other name: the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) that came to unfold between 1966 and (Mao's death in) 1976. The primary motive was to preserve the communist ideals and elements of the society by purging what was thought of being erosive and corruptive capitalist and as well as anti-communist traditional Chinese notions derived from its dynastic imperial period. The outcome was the halting economic

After Mao's death in 1976, under Deng Xiaoping's paramount leadership (1981-1997), Chinese society has had finally begun to show substantial industrialization and economic growth. During this period, he essentially allowed capitalist free-market elements to be incorporated into the Chinese socio-economic domain whilst still managing to preserve the CCP's iron claw holding onto the political monopoly tightly. Also, during this period, the PLA has had come to experience a repositioning in terms of the overall emphasis now being given to technical competence over ideological commitments (Ripley 2002; Scobell 2003; Fravel 2019). This in a way, according to Sondhaus (2006), can be argued to have enabled a process in and through which the PLA personnel were getting more professional instead of being more political, in many ways similar to those of the Western developed states. According to Ripley (2002, pp. 131), this move away from ideological convictions, which once seen and treated as the primary measure of a Chinese official's overall merit and meritorious achievements,⁵¹ could very well be observed in the PLA's initial hesitance to employ lethal application force against the university student's somewhat peaceful activism at the Tiananmen Square in 1989, which he argues as being evidenced by Deng's arrest of some officers under the pretext of "perceived disloyalty to the party." According to Andrew Scobell (2002, pp. v), Deng's modernization process, which did also encompass the armed forces, was not substantial of a change well-enough to trigger a breakaway moment in the continuum of China's traditional strategic culture (or cause its nature to become more bellicose or aggressive) albeit what the 1980s-onward was indeed showing an aggregate increase in China's combat capabilities.

Deng, like Mao and many other political authorities which had played a role during the Long March, has also come to hold direct military command whilst having a key position in the party. As aforementioned, this generation of Chinese leaders, therefore, are usually seen and treated in their dual (military and civilian) capacities. According

activity, and the destruction of historical and as well as cultural materials, and the replacement of the latter with the infamous Red Little Book.

⁵¹ Incidentally, whilst different in the carried substance and the teachings promoted, this Chinese overreliance on particular materials as to measure an official's achievements and of merit seems to have, at least to a degree, a sense of characteristic continuation to it, especially, if we look back at the period in which how come such practices were also pervasive in the imperial dynasties of the Ancient China with only difference this time is it being the Red Little Book and not the Seven Military Classics of the Ancient China. To read more on this, see; Graff, D. A., & Higham, R. (Eds.). (2012). *A military history of China*. University Press of Kentucky.

to Ripley, however, by the time the century was approaching to a point of closure, this simultaneously shared chairs of authority between the leaderships of the PLA and the Communist Party in a dual capacity was also becoming obsolete in practice. The reason was rather simple. In addition to the PLA leadership's emergence as an independent voice in the makings of strategy and security policy (a byproduct of Deng's period of reformation), the generational torch-passing can also be asserted to be responsible in severing the linkages of then new senior officers who were now sharing no literal linkage to the period of revolutionary struggles preceding the year 1949. According to Sondhaus (2006, pp. 103), this split in the leaderships of the PLA and the Communist Party, however, did not mean that there was now a change in the strategic and security-wise guiding principles conditioning the PLA. Meaning that the PLA was still under the influence of the same Chinese strategic culture as once filtered and conditioned via the influential works of Mao. Indeed, according to both Ripley (2002, pp. 132) and Andrew Scobell (2002, pp. 11), the PLA was and still is more likely to take a hard stance against anything that it might conceive of being disruptive of China's territorial integrity and as well as against the issues which can be observed to involve China's territorial lines and those what are thought of being their extensions, such as Taiwan.

Throughout the Chinese history, as argued by Fairbank (1974), if there is anything that can be spoken as of a constant, then, it might be the very Chinese (Confucius-Mencian) notion that appropriates the country's territorial integrity as being sacred. When these aforesaid cultural particularities come to conjoin with the Chinese over-referenced notion of national unification (which can be asserted to share direct linkages with the century of humiliation, division, and of foreign domination [1839-1949]) the reason for why the Communist Chinese leadership has traditionally been treating the issue of Taiwanese independence as a temporary mishap should rather be easy to grasp. According to Scobell (2002, pp. 11; 2003), Taiwan is argued of having an "uncompromisable and non-negotiable status in the security calculus of the Chinese leadership which is otherwise known for its highly pragmatic approach to almost any other matter." Similarly, S.G. Zhang (1992, pp. 269) also argues that China in no way would consider a situation in which it decides to invade Taiwan as an act of aggression nor as a case of international conflict because ever since the government of the Republic of China has had made their escape to the island under the US protection "the

Chinese leadership has come to view the Taiwan question as something of a still-on-going aspect of the Chinese Civil War.” S. G. Zhang (1992, pp. 269) claims to find the evidence of this belief in how during the 1950s any matter related to Taiwan was designed to the East China Military Command to handle (and not the Chinese foreign ministry), which is indicative of how the question of Taiwan was conceived of being a military (and not a diplomatic) problem.

Since its start, the question of Taiwan is one, if not the foremost, problem that can be argued to have come to dominate the relations between the United States and China. Although after the Sino-US relations were established the Taiwan-US relations has somewhat become blurred in the process, it does not mean that the US at any point has wavered its commitments to Taiwan in deterring China’s potential invasion of the island. Ever since the Deng Xiaoping, the US seems to reflect a dual image of admiration that the Chinese tries to emulate after, and also a threat that the Chinese are always tries to be wary of. According to Scobell (2002, pp. 16), the Communist China’s perception of the US as a security threat was under the lightening of “a broader one” rather than that of “a directly military one.” The reason for that, says Scobell, was directly linked to the nature and dynamics of the relations. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two sides, what the US strategized was actually to undermine China through a peaceful evolution of the relations. For what it seemed, this strategy comprised of two steps. While the US was trying to incentivize the Communist China to be become more deeply integrated to the world economy, the former was also actively trying to forge comprehensive trade relations (most of which were actually military-strategic ones) with the latter too. The reason, according to Scobell (2002, pp. 16), could be summed up in how the US was actually trying to entrap the Communist China in a situation that if Beijing ever come to disrupt this peacefully evolving relations, then, it would be in the detriment of its own interests. This strategy was also covering the issue of Taiwan. According to Sondhaus (2006, pp. 103-104), any sort of wonder that might have initially been felt towards the US by the post-Mao officials and scholars is now countered by a strong contempt that seems to engulf not only the US but also the West in large. This, according to Sondhaus (2006, pp. 103-104) and Scobell (2002, pp. 17), is argued of having a direct linkage with how Chinese are rather inclined to perceive their own strategic behavior as one of ethical and pacific, defensive and status quo oriented, and most importantly human

centered; something which according to the same Chinese perspectives do remain in stark contrast to an American strategic culture and the characteristic Western way of war that by their nature are argued to have been based on a realist and expansionist understanding that is driven by technology. Incidentally, this idea prescribing a negative image to technology was mostly preeminent in Mao's treatment of the nuclear weapons. Although his initial views on the nuclear weapons were described as the mere instances of "paper tigers," according to S. G. Zhang (1992, pp. 281), in time Mao's dismissive treatment has come to change towards a point that "the atomic bomb was now being treated as a real tiger." This, for one, says S. G. Zhang (1992, pp. 281) could be said to share a relationship with the Chinese heightened threat perception towards the US, and a distant possibility in which China might have come to be bullied by the US and other nuclear Western powers. Such notions had worked, and China has begun to develop its nuclear capacity in 1955. Following the first-ever successful testing of its atomic bomb in 1964, China had joined the club of countries with nuclear weapons. At that year, China was also the first-ever to pledge to a no-first use of its nuclear weapons, of course, as long as no one attempted to try their own nuclear weapons on China. According to Scobell (2002, pp. 9; 2003), such a commitment was in line with the Chinese core philosophical tenets, underpinning the country's strategic behavior and the manner in which it sees, treats and appropriates the concept of security.

4.1. Dissecting China's Understanding of and Approach to Security

According to Andrew Scobell (2003, pp. 27), there can be traced, at the very least identifiably, three core philosophical tenets responsible for informing the Chinese self-perception of its military tradition as being purely defensive and peaceful, and six strategic guiding principles counteracting against these three philosophical tenets responsible for informing Chinese leadership's understanding of and approach to general, external and as well as domestic security, mostly with respect to finding justifications for the country's decision to use of force.

In case of the former, the core tenets can basically be said to converge (in what appears to be a mutually re-enforcing manner) on the basis of how China: is composed of peace-loving people (1), is anything but aggressive or prone to expansionism (2), and is only compelled to use force if and when the encountered situation requires self-

defense (3). These identifications for one seem to be in consistence with that of a Confucian-Mencian understanding that is known for highlighting the importance of “pacifistic and defense-minded civilizational virtues.” But it is also a matter of actuality that such benignly put forth convictions do not negate a Chinese history in and through which war and thereof the use of force both in and out of the country was something rampantly over-relied on. These dual visages of China however can also be seen in the case of other countries too; just like how the US also has for the longest time possible claimed and portrayed itself to be a paragon of democracy and champion of freedom destined to bring, spread, and defend such invaluable virtues through what he claimed of being only peaceful means, by which if we define the means in a way to enable them to encompass those that are also coercive and forceful too. So, it is a matter of given for almost each and every country to uphold a belief that they are innately benign and can only be compelled to employ force when there is no alternative (Builder 1989, pp. 6; Scobell 2003). This particular conviction, however, appears to be deeply rooted in the Chinese understanding in an extent that can essentially be said to make it more or less inviolable (Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Dellios 1994a; Dellios 1994b).

In the case of latter six security-wise guiding principles counteracting against the aforesaid philosophical core tenets in a way to justify China’s decision to employ force, Scobell (2003, pp. 28) splits them under three major categories: two for the broad realm of security policy (comprising both external and internal), two for confronting foreign threat, and final two for addressing domestic threat. Whereas in the first category the set of principles are “a strong reverence for national unification (1), and a heightened sense of threat perception (2), in the second category they found reflection in the ideations of how “China only fights just wars (1) and stays loyal to its own strategic concept of active defense (2).” And under the final category, they basically correspond to how China “deeply fears internal chaos (1) and overemphasize the primacy of community over that of an individual (2).” Although to what degree that these ideas do remain preeminent within the Chinese society is something hard to determine, but still, at the very least according to what is being argued to be the case according to Chanda (1995, pp. 24) and Scobell (2003, pp. 28), the Chinese self-perception based on the aforementioned core tenets is argued to have heavily been rooted in the general psyche of most of the elite and as well as ordinary people.

According to Scobell (2002; 2003), the overall basis underpinning his arguments can be seen in and across the writings published throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and as well as from the interviews that was conducted in the 1990s.

4.1.1. Philosophical Core Tenets

The first one of these three dictum-like tenets that can be said to have traditionally been feeding into China's self-perception of its military tradition is no other than the notion of how "the Chinese think of peace as highly precious." Although (as mentioned before) this corresponds to quite a common notion not so unique to China but shared in abundance across many societies and countries around the world (given how everyone seem inclined to depict themselves as the most peaceful), the extreme extent to which this has been getting highlighted by the Chinese, however, appears to have intended to draw a line of distinction between China and the rest of the world. In another way of putting it, the Chinese leadership have traditionally been self-perceiving their country's strategic traditions under a civilizational lightening with its dominant colors being completely and distinctly benign and pacifistic. One of the most apparent official articulations of this belief can be traced in China's Defense White Paper published in 1998. According to this report (Information Office of the State Council 1998; Scobell 2003; Latham 2007), the nature of China's national defense policy is argued to have originated out of the country's cultural traditions and overall history that are based on the ancient Chinese civilization that goes several thousands of years back. Ancient Chinese civilization, as put forth by its sages, has always inclined to associate itself with benevolent gentlemen and befriend good neighbors. According to this report, if there is any steadfast truth that can be extracted from the general Chinese historical experiences, then, it should be China's obvious search for a long-lasting peace in the world and as well as for the country's relations with its neighbors.

In another main line of argumentation, this ideation seems to have founded reflection in how China has continuously followed a foreign policy of peace that remained in parallel with the charter of the United Nations (UN) and as well as its own creation of "the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" (Scobell 2003, pp. 29). These five principles, as initially modeled by Zhou Enlai⁵² in the 1950s, stands for a mutual

⁵² A famous Chinese political personage who was the first premier of the PRC serving from 1949 to

respect for: “sovereignty and territorial integrity, nonaggression, noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence” (Scobell 2003, pp. 29). According to an interview noted by Scobell (2003, pp. 29-30), the ancient principle of “trying peaceful means before resorting to force” has always been seen and treated as a substantial influence affecting the post-1949 China, especially, with respect to the perceptive ways that Mao and his generation of senior officers were understanding and approaching security. According to this interviewee, this surmised influence was finding direct reflection in China’s security, and more broadly foreign policy goals, most visibly during those moments when and where China was deeming it to be an imperative to “send strong warnings to, or protest against, or engage with an actor prior to employing armed forces” (Scobell 2003, pp. 30). Moreover, this notion of Chinese love peace can also be seen to have founded reflection, at least according to the common Chinese arguments, in Beijing’s policy (referring to how China has been employing nonmilitary means ever since 1979) towards the issue of Taiwanese reunification with the mainland China. Although this shift in Chinese policy (from liberation by force to liberation by peaceful unification) was somewhat commendable, for many however it was still perceived of having only tactical (rather than strategic) value, as Beijing has never denounced the possibility of deploying force if the situation deemed as necessary.

The second one of the three tenets feeding into the Chinese self-perception is the very ideation that “China has never been an aggressive or expansionist state.” This ideation can be seen to have been getting linked with how China has never fought an aggressive and expansionist war or, by the same token, threatened another country in the totality of its history for that purpose. This belief for one can be seen in the post-1949 China in terms of how Beijing has recurrently pronounced that China shall never seek hegemony nor become a part of the erosive power politics in any form. Scobell (2003, pp. 30) notes how Deng in one of his assertions (given during 1980s) described “China’s one of the main quests for the decade of supporting peace as being firmly linked to opposing hegemony.” Although what initially meant by the utterance of hegemony was also metaphorically indicative of the Soviet domination, since the end of the Cold War, however, this point of emphasis has come to take the US domination

1976 (his death). He can be accounted for his support to Mao Zedong and aid in the rise of the Communist Party. He was known for his key positions in the party’s formulation of foreign policy and the development of Chinese economy.

as its target of emphasis instead. Incidentally, the rubric of hegemony in Chinese political thought (*ba*) can be said to carry quite a different connotation. Rooted in a Confucian-Mencian understanding, the term hegemony can be asserted to possess a duality of contrasting meanings: *Badao* (which refers to the rule of force, something is seen and treated under a heavily negative lightening) and *wangdao* (which essentially means kingly way or benevolent rule is used to reaffirm the path that a ruler/actor by its virtue should come to take) (Zhang 2002, pp. 76; Scobell 2003, pp. 30; Dellios 1994a; Dellios 1994b). This duality of meanings inherent in the Chinese understanding of the term hegemony can also be said to correspond to the clashing notions of what makes something “legitimate” or “illegitimate” (Zhang 2002, pp. 76). Meaning that, in time although what the Chinese essentially came to perceive as an undesirable hegemonic power has changed (from the Soviets to the US), the threat perception towards the very existence of such a domineering actor was nevertheless ever-present due to it being based on the Chinese Confucius-Mencian understanding of hegemony as *bao*. Another point of argumentation that seems to be getting treated as being evidential of Chinese disinclination to expansionism and aggression can be said to have based on how almost all the instances of military action (approximate claims said to encompass 3700-to-4000) throughout the thousands of years of Chinese history (which came to a closure with the fall of Qing in 1911) were essentially for the purpose of either ending civil wars or to establish the territorial integrity of the country. From such perceptive lenses, it should rather be easy for us to understand the reason as to why the Chinese has been viewing the whole 8 instances of military actions (that we had already mentioned at the beginnings of this chapter) that came to happen in the post-1949 as the ones waged for the sole purpose of self-defense and nothing more. Or, as signified in Mao Zedong’s own words: “We do not desire one inch of foreign soil” (as cited in Scobell 2003, pp. 31). Last but not least, Zheng He’s voyages of the Ming Dynasty corresponds to another main line of argumentation that is used to reaffirm the Chinese non-aggressive and non-expansionist military-strategic traditions. Zheng He’s non-colonial, peaceful and non-exploitative expeditions are often put against the ones made by those of the Western adventurers (e.g., Christopher Columbus and Vasco Da Gama).

The third and final philosophical tenet shares a direct linkage with the Chinese constant emphasis on how they are always in the pursuit of self-defense and not pre-emptive

acts of aggression. This tenet can be said to find a firm reflection in the notion of how China has traditionally been in the possession of a distinctly defensive strategic culture which is derived from a purely defensive nature. According to Scobell (2002; 2003), one perfect illustration of this is the Great Wall of China and how it has frequently been used as to reaffirm what the influential Chinese personages claim to be a natural orientation of the Chinese people in being defensive-minded and over-concerned with their country's territorial integrity. According to Scobell (2003), Chinese scholars in their attempt to further reinforce the prevalence of this Chinese self-perception has begun (mostly during the 1990s) to refer to the works of some influential scholars and sinologists, amongst whom the works published by Fairbank and Mark Mancall were the primarily noted ones. An additional argument was also based on the notion of how the Western and Chinese strategic cultures were essentially distinct in character, nature and features. Whilst this idealization was resulting in a Chinese appropriation of its own strategic culture (as having the complete defensiveness in every sense of the word), it was also prompting an ideation with respect to the Western strategic culture in terms of how it was nothing but offensive, aggressive, expansionist, and hegemonic. The main lines of argumentations that have heavily relied on as to vindicate this point converge on how China's strategic posture does include a pledge to no first use of nuclear weapons and has come to undertake military reforms over the past two decades.⁵³ One illustrative instance of this perspective was no other than Mao's following words: "if someone does not attack us, we shall not attack them; however, if someone attacks us, then, we shall certainly attack them back" (as cited in Scobell 2003, pp. 31-32). The places that came to echo Mao's this particular saying was ranging from the country's Defense White Paper of 1998 to a key People's Daily⁵⁴ editorial publication of 1978, and from the times of the Cultural Revolution (during which it was sloganized by the PLA troops) to the 1989 massacre of Tiananmen Square (Scobell 2002; 2003, pp. 32). In fact, even now, at the very least to a certain extent, it is still somehow possible to see similar iterations having the same point of origin to be shared preeminently in the Chinese public fora and in the speeches given by the

⁵³ Two of the most referred points that appears to be shared across the Chinese accounts of the time can be based on how China has successfully managed to cut its troops by 1 million, and strictly limited its defense-related aggregate expenditures to a minimum level required to preserve national security.

⁵⁴ The People's Daily is the official news-outlet of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

influential Chinese personages.

4.1.2. The Six Guiding Principles of Security

The first set of the six guiding principles, which fall under the broad domain of general security, are “the efforts to achieve national unification or preserve territorial integrity, and the siege mentality that is produced by the heightened threat perceptions prevalent amongst the Chinese leaders” (Scobell 2003, pp. 32). For what it seems to be case, the first guiding principle of the two corresponds to a fundamental value that cannot be compromised under any circumstance. Although the reason for such sensitivity can partly be understood in the context of Chinese historical experiences (of division, exploitation, and foreign invasion), it might also be argued to share a relationship with how the PRC leadership in the reform era was having a lack of other inviolable principles (Jijun 1997; Cumings 1999, pp. 166; Scobell 2002; 2003, pp. 32-33). The second principle of the two is basically related to how Chinese leadership sees looming and imminent threats everywhere. This, for one, brings forth somewhat of a paranoia that conditions the Chinese leadership to be always wary of potential and imminent (even if they are implausible) threats both at domestic and as well as international environments. Such a sensitivity can be said to reinforce the already existing militaristic features and inclinations of the Chinese leadership. And when these gets to be compounded with the Chinese leadership’s already pessimistic and negatively connotated views of the post-Cold War security environment and its prevailing conundrums, the outcome comes in the form of even further heightened threat perception. According to Scobell (2003), this kind of a mindset for one might have propelled the Chinese authorities of the Mao era to promote innocuous phrases like “China has friends all over the world,” which is something if read in reverse can also be seen as indicative of the Chinese insecurities. Apart from a few somewhat loyal friends (e.g., the North Korea and Pakistan), the prevalent perception viewing threats and enemies being everywhere was a matter of persistence affecting not only Mao era, but also Deng’s era and the period after him (Jijun 1997; Scobell 2002; 2003). One preeminently traditional view defines the greatest of all the alarming threats as the one that can become manifest by the conjoint and collaborative efforts between domestic-disturbance-causing and external-aggression-displaying hostile forces. The reason for the existence of such a viewpoint can be said to share a direct linkage with how simple that it (the combined threat) might have brought the downfall of the communist party

regime all together if given the chance. In this context, this might very well be the reason as to why we have seen Deng and other senior leaders had been perceiving the protests of 1989 via such catastrophic lenses. According to Scobell (2002; 2003, pp. 34), one thing that can be said to have a particular preeminence since the last decade of the 20th century is what Chinese consider to be the three sources of security threat against the party regime due them having domestic and international linkages: peaceful evolution, bourgeois liberalization, and social instability.

The second set of the six guiding principles, but this time in the context of external security, counteracting against the three core philosophical tenets in a way that can be said to legitimize and justify the use of force for the external security purposes are based on the concepts of “just or righteous war” and “active defense.” Regarding the former one, the roots of this conception can be traced back to Confucian analects. Its modern time application both in spirit and letter, however, was only after Mao’s absorption of this concept into his own intellectual schemes (Johnston 1995, pp. 231-232-247; Scobell 2003). In terms of their most basic specificities in the Chinese context, the just wars correspond to those that can be deemed to have legitimate and good purposes. As thereof, they are the ones which are waged by the oppressed against their oppressors. This can be said to propel the Chinese leadership to find a justifiable reason with respect to almost any case that the country decides to employ force, even if it is to strike first (e.g., the Chinese military intervention in Korean War in 1950, China’s employment of force against Vietnam in 1978, so and so on). For what seems to be a common perspective amongst the military scholars, the just war concept, and its theoretical derivation in Chinese context, is most often argued to have a central position in the traditional Chinese understanding of and approach to warfare (Dellios 1994a; Jijun 1997; Ross 1997; Ross 2002; Zhang 2002 Johnston 1995; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003). The second one of this set of security guiding principles is a relatively new conception that has come to find a central place in the general Chinese strategic thought: “active defense.” Although the concept’s appearance in and across both the oral and written materials given away by the Chinese thinkers and the Western researchers is frequent and abundant (Jijun 1997; Zhang 2002; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Fravel 2019), however, there are also those who dismiss its influence on the grounds of it having only nominal value if one does not account for its propagational

uses (Johnston 1995, pp. 63-249-250).⁵⁵ In the modern Chinese strategic thought, this conception of active defense, in what appears to be in the capacity of a continuum, can be seen amongst the key guiding principles of Mao era, Deng era, and the period that came after, including the first decade of the 21st century (Godwin 1999; Fravel 2019). Furthermore, the idea can also be seen in how it has come to be enshrined in and across the Chinese Defense White Papers of 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2010. The same thing was also constitutive of a common component in and across the speeches given by the influential Chinese personages (Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Fravel 2019). In these accounts, the main line of emphasis was being given over the persuasion of how in Chinese military matters there had been only guiding principle of strategic defense and not even one guiding principle for strategic offensives (Jijun 1997; Goodwin 1999; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Fravel 2019). The modality of defense, however, was never thought to be constitutive of static and passive characteristics, but instead it was perceived as something that was ought to be guided by the strategic principle of active defense (Jijun 1997; Goodwin 1999; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Fravel 2019). According to an account of Senior Colonel Wang Naiming (1997, pp. 37), the idea of active defense should be understood in an extension to the defensive nature of the Chinese military strategy, strategic thought, and military-strategic traditions. However, he also describes it on the basis of how it does not fixate the Chinese strategic practices to that of a constant passiveness, but instead require them to be always active (Naiming 1997). This concept therefore can be argued to have a duality, which is comprised of two contradictive attributes: defense and offense. This duality, according to Naiming (1997, pp. 37), is constitutive of an organic integration between defense and offence: as the former sets the goals (which are always argued to be defensive by their nature), the latter (by offering activeness and dynamism) can be argued to make it possible to achieve the goals set by the former; and when the conditions are ripened enough, the strategic defense can even led to counterattack or even relied on to instigate offense. For what it seems, this notion of organic integration can also be said to lie in direct parallels with the ancient Chinese idea of absolute flexibility that has its roots in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (Dellios 1994a; Jujin 1997; Johnston 1995, pp. 102; Zhang 2002; Scobell 2003, pp. 35; Fravel 2019).

The last set of the six guiding principles of security that can be asserted to have

⁵⁵ This research for one finds the convictions of the former camp to be more persuasive.

traditionally been predisposing Chinese state to become inclined to deploy force, but this time in a domestic context, are “a fear of turmoil and instability, and an underlying perceptive importance that is attributed to the collective rather than the individual itself” (Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003, pp. 36). A cycle-like constant internal strife has traditionally been known for being one of the most enduring and distinct characteristics of the general Chinese historical experience. Coming from such a background, the Chinese leadership’s overemphasis of domestic security can easily be said to constitute a ubiquitous component of the overall Chinese strategic culture. Incidentally, this overemphasis can also be argued to have even more exacerbated ever since the establishment of the Communist Chinese state, mostly because of the inherent fear associated with the survival of the party and therefore the regime. According to Scobell (2003, pp. 36), this is one of the commonly referred points by Chinese researchers to distinguish themselves (i.e., the Chinese traditional thinking of security) from those of the western concepts that, according to what is claimed by the latter to, overemphasize the notion of an external threat over an internal one. The notion of force in a domestic context is most often defined as non-lethal by the Chinese authorities. One reason, according to Scobell (2003, pp. 36) can be traced in and through the machinations of control⁵⁶ put into force under Mao and as well as Deng eras. But still, when the setups of countermeasures prove to be ineffective, and Chinese officials come to determine that the country (or a portion of it) has fallen into chaos (or standing at the edge of falling into chaos), then there is virtually no barrier that could and would bar their decision to rely on lethal force, something which for the worst reasons was exemplified by the Tiananmen square in 1989. The latter guiding principle of this last set is based on how in Chinese culture (as also in many other cultures) the interests and wellbeing of a community are always seen and getting treated better than those of an individual when the two becomes pitted against each other in terms of importance. This, as highlighted by Scobell (2003), can be said to transform into an inclination in the way that the Chinese authorities come to handle those who might have been convinced of being in the detriment of the collective. And this in Chinese context can easily be said to find reflection in the practices that overemphasize the uses of being punitive over

⁵⁶ According to Scobell, an individual’s daily live had been designed to operate in and through the work unit that he/she was a part of. This unit, he says, could encircle almost all the aspects of the said-individual’s daily livelihood (extending from factory to office, from commune to school, and so and so on).

the efficacy of practices aiming to be reintegrative and rehabilitative.⁵⁷ One implication of the converged effects of these two guiding principles is the Chinese authorities' apparent proclivity to depict virtually any seemingly resistive element existing as part of the collective under the rubric of the "enemies of the people."

All in all, these (referring to the three core Chinese philosophical tenets which are counteracted by the six guiding principles for Chinese broad, external and domestic security) can indeed be seen responsible for creating what Scobell (2002; 2003) identifies to be a cult of defense, which works to enable somewhat of a distinct Chinese rationale that sees, treats and appropriates every instance of strategic behavior under a lightening of being wholly peaceful, benign, non-expansionist, non-hegemonic, conflict-averse, defensive and not inclined to take the preemptive. This for one can be said to create an interesting ideation that appears to have been equating the idea of defense with the idea of offense. Meaning that if and when China ever decides to deploy force (regardless of the reality on ground for those observing the situation) it should be understood that Beijing will always be inclined to perceive it as an instance of or in extension to the country's evident need for self-defense. This for one is directly embodied in the active defense ideation, in a capacity that is blurring, if not altogether erasing, the line of distinction between what is thought of being offensive and defensive. Implication-wise, such a peculiar way in and through which China has come to thread its relations with its neighbors in a greater and multifaceted security environment that the former believes it to be riddled by a series of never ending threats, uncertainties, treacheries and conspiracies set against its very own being (i.e., the Chinese heightened threat perception) might very well be responsible for some (if not the all) of the apprehensiveness shared amongst quite considerable number of the Westerners' in their viewing of Chinese role as a rising power and its surmised impact over the world affairs. Moreover, when such specificities get to be compounded with China's continuing attempts to modernize its military and aggregate capabilities, especially in the timeframe that spreads until the end of the first decade of the 21st century, it is little to no surprise to see how insecure, wary and uncertain that the both China and the US were towards each other, especially, in the broad context of their

⁵⁷ In the rare cases where and when we might see the official utterances of a rehabilitating policy has claimed of being exercised, it might not be as in the way of the argument goes, given how this notion of rehabilitation can easily abused under certain pretexts.

foreign relations and security engagements.

4.2. The Sino-US Military-Diplomatic Relations

In retrospect, it is most often argued that the Kissinger-Nixon cooperative efforts were the very reason why the China-US relations in the early 1970s has begun to change for the better (and as well as for the worse). Although this was not a total metamorphosis in the nature and overall dynamics of the relationship, it was nevertheless constitutive of a milestone, given how the way in which ‘the relations had departed from position of hostile military confrontation and moved towards a position of military restraint and cautious accommodation of tacit cooperation (Barnett 1977). Since then, however, if there is any way to describe the general state of affairs shared between the two, it should be how they seem to have perpetuated a state of constant to and fro in their relations with respect to each other (Xiang 1981). Whilst this seems to be the truth with regard to these matters, it does not mean that there was no willingness shown even during the periods of imminent conflict and stress. Indeed, if we ever try to find another enduring quality with respect to the relationship between the two, then it must be no other than how they almost all the time had actively tried to limit the erosion of the relations by maintaining somewhat of a positively drawn façade (Oksenberg 1982).

One particular domain of concern that seemed to cause quite a bit of headache for both sides was no other than military-strategic relations, mostly because of their diverging stances both in opinion and practice with respect to issues such as: arms sales and purchases, Taiwan, the North Korea, the proliferation of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (so and so on). Despite their ostensive divergence, however, there were also times that saw key success stories such as the Sino-US nuclear agreement of 1985.⁵⁸ The importance of this agreement was coming from the simple fact that this was the first American bilateral trade pact with a country that was both a superpower and a communist country (Zhao 2005). Whilst the steps were taken to forge further close cooperative relations between the two, there were also those who were raising critical viewpoints with respect to what they claimed of being China’s detrimental record of aiding non-nuclear states in ways of nuclear technology and the related know-how that could very well work in the latter’s development of its own nuclear

⁵⁸ The agreement was basically providing authorization for the facilitation of the sales of nuclear reactors, low-enriched uranium, and major reactor components to China.

military-strategic capabilities. Despite the mounting concerns, however, the bilateral trade deals continued to be spearheaded. In fact, it was only in the duration of two years since the first agreement that the new ones readily followed. The content of these agreements was covering: “a \$22 million large-caliber artillery modernization program, a \$8 million MK-46 Mod 2 torpedo sale, a \$62 million AN/TPQ-37 artillery locating radar sale, and a \$500 million F-8 interceptor avionics modernization program” (Shafer, Kelley & Gold 1995, pp. 13). But still, although this military-diplomatic momentum was often being colored under the lightening of a cooperative good faith, that would be naïve to believe it to be so. For what it was (Scobell 2003; Fravel 2019), whilst the Americans were curious to gain firsthand insight into and inside knowledge of the PLA’s workings via the signed military contracts authorizing the facilitation of sales of American military-strategic hardware, the Chinese (and of course the PLA in extension) were seeking to gain American military-strategic hardware. Unfortunate for the US-side was the PLA’s continuation in being opaque with respect to the latter’s lack of information, intent and other mutual trust enhancing intel sharing with the former. Moreover, the Chinese decision to outsource other countries with important military-strategic hardware (e.g., 1987 Silkworm anti-ship missile sales to Iran, and 1988 CSS-2 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile sales to Saudi Arabia), albeit publicly rejected by Chinese authorities, has had worked to slow down and sour the military-diplomatic relations (Scobell 2003).

This somewhat regressing military-to-military relations, however, had come to a hold in the dawn of the massacres instigated at the Tiananmen Square against what was essentially a peaceful demonstration of civil disobedience. The indiscriminate killings said-to be done against the Chinese university students gathered around the square resulted in the suspension of all activities with the PLA (e.g., arms sales, technology transfer, and so and so on) (Scobell 2003; Yuan 2003). While this decision at the beginning was evaluated as the correct decision, the resulting Chinese close-to-blackout-like lack of transparency and the American’s inability to gather further intel on possible Chinese clandestine selling of the military-strategic hardware to who knows where had pushed the Americans re-consider their decision on the matter (Yuan 2003). Following this soul-search, we had seen Clinton administration’s decision to expand the relations between the two countries to even include once severed military-to-military activities (Yuan 2003). Despite the obvious backlash, Clinton

administration has continued to consider the Chinese as a potential strategic partner in the span of almost a decade. The most probable reason informing the former's decision can be said to have based on the US motives to reduce the PLA's opaqueness and incentivize the CCP leadership to be more in agreement with and conflict-averse against their American counterparts (Yuan 2003).

The US being the wariest of an unchecked China rising in its aggregate capabilities has had passed come to pass a law (1995) sanctioning Pentagon from aiding the PLA in the latter's defense conversion (Gansler 1996). But the military diplomatic relations have had continued to be strong nevertheless, although what we had seen during this time span was also including some diplomatic tensions between the two sides over Taiwan, something which the Chinese is known for never flinching away. One other substantial happening of this period was the Chinese defense minister General Chi Haotian's decision to visit the United States in 1996 (Ross 200). The outcome of this was the two sides mutually agreement to start a process through which a series of ship visits (in 1997⁵⁹ and 1998⁶⁰) could be made for the reasons of restoring military exchanges, multilateral dialogue, and for the adoption of confidence building measures (Ross 2000). What was interesting of this period in terms of the unfolding military-diplomatic interactions is the fact that these were happening during when there were pressing charges claiming Chinese espionage activities against the US military (Ross 2000).

One point indicative of Chinese strategic culture's contradictive duality during this period of 1990s was China's simultaneous actions which were essentially seen by many as being jaw-dropping. Basically, China, whilst putting effort to continue its good military-diplomatic relations with the US, which was then in a worldwide jubilee to create a global regime that would be key to limit and control the proliferation of threat-inducing military technologies such as missiles (i.e., Missile Technology Control Regime) and nuclear weapons (i.e., Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons -NPT), was also actively involved in the facilitation of the transfer of nuclear technology to Pakistan. Moreover, China was also responsible for the sales of missiles (which were restricted under the Missile Technology Regime) not only to Pakistan but

⁵⁹ The result of this visit was the first ever Sino-US Defense Consultation Talks (DCT).

⁶⁰ The significance of this was the signed Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) between Washington and Beijing.

Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, and the North Korea too (Bhattacharya 2011, pp. 103).

China's facilitation of aid to other countries as aforementioned is not solely limited to Pakistan. Iran in this respect is often said to have had bought "two sub-critical training reactors and one small electromagnetic isotope separator (a calutron)" (in 1985) in its overall goal to develop nuclear capacity. Following a cooperation agreement of 10 years (in 1990), China offered its assistance and helped to establish a research reactor which became operational in 1994 in Iran. Albeit the Iranian authorities claimed that it was getting built for the sole purpose of civilian use of electricity, the critics who were wary of this seemingly benign picture were pointing their index finger to the very possibility of how the nuclear technology and the related know-how might have had been getting spread far and wide by China. Indeed, for many the danger was real, and an idea of technology leakage could very well spin this situation out of control if the receiver ever came to decide to invest on the development of its own nuclear war-waging capabilities. This perceived threat, in addition to some financial concerns that came to erupt between Beijing and Tehran, resulted in an agreement between the US and China to cease the latter's remaining time of promised assistance (Bhattacharya 2011). Moreover, the North Korea's achievement in developing its own nuclear capacity in war-making was also linked to China's most likely transfer of nuclear technology and the related know-how. Even though later on in time China has had come to recognize the South Korea (1992), it still seemed to possess a certain reluctance that disdained Beijing from taking precise actions that could very well work to destabilize the North Korea's already fragile situation. However, it should not be get confused with a naivete, compelling China to be mindful of its relationship with the North Korea. According to quite a number of observers, the reason was rather based on China's strategic interests, and although China was acting in line with that of a responsibility-and-burden-sharing image in facilitating six-party negotiations, Chinese diplomats' role in the gathering was criticized for having anything but the slightest bit of intensions to solve the root cause of the problem (Bhattacharya 2011).

All in all, while the US was getting spearheaded by Nixon-Kissinger in attempting to engage with China, China was also following its own strategic interest. And for what it seems, but this time through the lenses of Chinese strategic culture, China's strategic behavior vis-à-vis its engagements with the US in this period was in line with the Sun Tzu's dictum of grasping victory via one's astute maneuver and smart employment of

deception (which we also know of being enshrined in Mao's concept of People's War) (Schram & Schram 1989; Bhattacharya 2011). By barring its perceived enemy (the US) from gaining access to the critical insight into itself (the Chinese military-strategic dealings and affairs), which Sun Tzu argues to be one of the key imperatives for anyone's path to certain victory, China was essentially successful in creating a game-table which was heavily disadvantages for the United States. Indeed, China was the one with the most gains even though it was the very intentions that the United States instead was so desperately trying to realize; and herein this context, those military dealings promising and facilitating further transfer of technology and technical know-how were actually the US's intended ruse to lure *the Red Dragon* out of the latter's dark and opaque cave if one may put it as for what it was and still is. In the case of China's well utilized supply of intel resourced out the US via what appears to be espionage once again can be said to attest to Sun Tzu's dictum about how critically advantages of the use of spies may indeed for the one who knows how, and highly detrimental for the one who remains negligent to such ways. According to Kan (2006), George Tenet, the former Director of US Central Intelligence, had reported (in 1999) that US's highly classified nuclear weapons information was in some way managed to be obtained by China. According to the same report, it was speculated that this information could have very well been responsible for China's observed acceleration in its program to weaponize nuclear power, including the one that was aiming to create a neutron bomb. Additionally, according to a certain report that came to be published by 1998 Cox Committee, highly classified technical information with respect to the advanced nuclear miniature warhead deployed on the Trident II SLBM may very well be leaked to China from Los Alamos (Johnston et al. 1999; Kan 2006; Bhattacharya 2011). Based on such a backdrop, all these happenings can be said to have fed into the US's threat perception with respect to China, and the resulting national security concerns provided the incentives for the Americans' re-assessment of their China policy. One direct implication of this change in perspective and strategic attitude came to enable a paradigmatic shift regarding the American way of handling China. As such, the notion of a strategic partnership which was highly entertained under the Clinton administration came to change into a notion of strategic competitor when the torch was handed down onto the Bush administration.

4.3. China's Military Modernization Program

Based on an offensive realist stance, Prof. John Mearsheimer (2013) once argued that China, regardless of its regime staying as the same or changing towards somewhat of a hybrid form of democracy at one point in the future, have an increased likelihood to dominate Asia just like as in the case of how the US has had once done the same thing to the Western hemisphere. Indeed, for many, the question, as put forth by Mearsheimer, was how come and why a strong and competent China would ever come to accept and tolerate an active US military presence creeping around in the former's sphere of influence? Would it not be much more preferable for China's overall security considerations if it decided to kick the US military out of the Asia altogether? Moreover, the US is characteristically known for its intolerance of a potential peer competitor. This, says Mearsheimer (2013), would inevitably result in an attempt by the US to contain China, just like how it had behaved against the Soviets in the duration of the Cold War. He was also seeing a likely possibility for other East Asian countries (e.g., Russia, India, South Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, Japan, and so and so on) to flock into the US-spearheaded balancing coalition as a way to check and control China's rise as an emergent giant.

For what it is, the merit evident in Mearsheimer's arguments is hard to dispute against.⁶¹ The Americans were and still are using everything within their disposal to further their military relations with the countries dwelling in the Chinese sphere of influence. China, in what appears to be in a mirroring way, is also trying to further its

⁶¹ This sense of validity however can also be said to open new avenues in one's inquisitive mind indeed. Although Mearsheimer's arguments are apparently more concerned with the Chinese side of the situation (regarding its strategic behavior and the possible outcomes that might follow), they can also be argued to conjure a certain prospect for speculation, mostly with respect to how the US's strategic culture too affect the country's foreign and security behavior with others. At least for what it seems to be the case, indeed, his and a number of other authors' lines of argumentations, even if they are not addressing the subject of strategic culture in the context of the United States explicitly, appear to have been converging on the points that are highly coloring of the US's strategic culture as something that is rooted in and under the influence of an offensive realist strand, especially in the context of how the post-Cold War US's hegemonic moment is fading away, the competition is steadily emerging (i.e., China) and traumatic events (e.g., 9/11 attacks) in addition to other detrimental circumstances are propelling the US to behave in certain ways, most particularly when its strategic interests get to be challenged. This, however, does not necessitate the notion (which is criticized in this paper) that an actor's strategic culture is and can only be a pure derivation of only one thing, as if there is no possibility for another somewhat contradictory strategic-cultural strand to ever exist and operate in tandem to the other strand. Moreover, there is even the issue of continuity to address before attempting to make such an overarching claim too. But at the very least, in terms of the empirical data shown in the literature, one cannot keep himself from guessing, nevertheless. As this study does not concern itself with the study of strategic culture in the context of US, no certain conclusionary remarks can be talked whatsoever.

relations with the countries that remain not only at its periphery but also beyond, and in the process of doing so actively trying to gain military bases in foreign soils of the countries that it continues and deepens its relations with. In parallel to these developments, China has also started to rapidly invest into the modernization of its military. This, for one, provided China with that of an enlarged avenue to project its power and competence. China was also actively trying to fill the gaps left behind by the Western powers, especially, during those moments of tensions caused by the Westerners' overbearing or professedly concern lacking attitudes displayed towards the regional actors. All these in one way or another were causing worry for the Americans. Although these do provide evidence on how multifaceted the issues and relations between the two sides continue to be, one key aspect of the interactions can nonetheless be said to have been based on the trajectory of the Sino-US military relations, and this necessitates an enquiry on the PLA's post-1991 military modernization and the reformation of its command-and-control structure, albeit all there can be seen is essentially a compilation of some small pieces of information that could be salvaged from China's intentional opacity.

So, if we reverse the clock back to the year 1991, then, we can see how come that the end of the Gulf War and the America's blatant display of its various high-tech military-strategic capabilities were a catalyzer for the emergent Chinese willingness to jump into an extensive and costly process of rapid military modernization. The Communists victory against their Nationalist-counterparts in the Chinese Civil War with only that of a low-tech peasant army was a phenomenal victory, nonetheless. However, the time has changed and so the circumstances of the international security environment. A China with the largest army in the world was nothing substantial anymore, especially, if and when it was juxtaposed in relation to the high-tech military capabilities known to be possessed by the other powers, such as the United States. According to Baocun and Mulvenon (2000), this has brought about a Chinese self-awareness with respect to how there was an evident need for an extensive change, and the resulted point was China's realization of how the future warfare would come to encompass both technology and information at the core of its craft and practices. This perception has incentivized the Chinese to accept an originally Soviet theorized concept called 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA). Broadly speaking, the concept of RMA can be said to assert that in particular periods of the human history, there did come a (series

of) point(s) in (and through) which freshly cooked up new tactics, strategies, military doctrines, and technologies had flourished in profusion. These worked to change the very idea, practice and the conduct of the warfare irrecoverably. Coming from such an ideational background, the Chinese top officials has had decided to incorporate the RMA into the country's general military strategy ever since 1993 (Baocun & Mulvenon 2000; Panda 2009; Bhattacharya 2011; Fravel 2019).

To that end, China has not only come to purchase foreign military-strategic hardware and advanced weaponry (e.g., Russian Sovremenny class destroyers, Su-27 and Su-30 aircraft, Kilo class diesel-electric submarines, and so and so on...), in addition to building and developing upon and investing into its own high-tech capabilities (e.g., J-10 fighter jets, Jin class nuclear submarines, which were capable of launching nuclear warheads across the Pacific, so and so on), but also speculated by others (meaning mostly the US) to have stolen other countries' highly classified tech-intensive military secrets (Bhattacharya 2011; Chansoria 2011; Bitzinger 2015; Gilli & Gilli 2018). The technology intensive components that came to be introduced into the army did include, whilst being not limited to, the following: "special operations forces, army aviation (helicopters), electronic war-waging units, long range precision strike capability, unmanned aerial vehicles, surveillance and reconnaissance systems and mobile command-and-control units" (Bhattacharya 2011, pp. 105). In the case of the navy, the tech-intensive elements were mostly the CJ-10 naval cruise missile system of 2009 (Bhattacharya 2011, pp. 105). Regarding the alleged espionages by the Chinese agents, two particular instances in the duration of this timeframe can be argued to have caused quite a bit of uproar. The first one of the two allegations has emerged in the aftermath of a visit made by Robert Gates⁶² to China in 2011, whom confirmed that China was conducting a series of testing on its J-20 stealth fighter jet, thereby triggering quite a bit speculation that came to find certain resemblances in design and capacity as an air superiority fighter with its American counterpart Lockheed Martin's Raptor (which was until then the world's sole operational stealth fighter aircraft that could very well be used to penetrate the enemy's radar system without getting noticed) (Gilli & Gilli 2018). The second instance of the two is related to China's testing of its Luyong II guided missile destroyers, whose weapons system were (at the very least according to the speculations) deemed to be quite similar to that of the United States

⁶² The former United States secretary of defense who held the office between 2006 and 2011.

Navy's Aegis battle management system, a technology which is renowned for its capacity in allowing simultaneous attacks against multiple targets, ranging from those on the land to those that are in and underneath the water (Bhattacharya 2011; Gili & Gili 2018). During the first decade of the 21st century, China was also speculated to have around 100 to 400 nuclear weapons, and approximately 1400 missiles were said to be (just in case) gazing at Taipei, Taiwan (Hughes 2009). In terms of its military-industrial establishments, China has managed to build its own indigenous aeronautics industry,⁶³ and in doing so created a plethora of domestic suppliers that could satisfy most of the needs of the PLA. Although in terms of the needs of the air force China was mostly relying on insourcing, for the general military equipment, hardware, and essential minerals (e.g., uranium) China was still somewhat reliant on the foreign supply chains, mostly coming out of France, Russia, Israel, Germany (amongst others), and the African countries (for the vital minerals) (Van de Looy & de Haan 2006; Bhattacharya 2011). Last but not least, this timeframe also came to see a substantial development in Chinese space-age technology. Since the US's successful anti-satellite (ASAT) testing in 1985, there were virtually no further attempts in this field, at least not until China has entered the picture (in 2007) with its own launch of a ground missile against one of its own 4-foot wide weather satellites and successfully destroying it in the process (Bhattacharya 2011). From that point on, the situation was a show of capabilities as whatever one side did it was getting followed by its counterpart. For one, such updates in the eyes of many were working to raise questions with respect to China. And in the context of the US concerns, this was basically resulting in an apprehension on the basis of how China might be viewing these demonstrations in the context of Asia-Pacific military relations (including the acts of balancing, deterrence, and stability). The evidence of this viewpoint in the case of the former was professed in it asking for enhanced transparency in the bilateral relations. However, what appears to be an interesting point is that while the US was calling bilateral transparency, it was also using backdoor channels to request (or pressure, something which depends on how you put it) others in the region (e.g., Japan, Australia, South Korea, and so and so on) to deliver same or similar demarches.⁶⁴

⁶³ Some of the most renowned names of China's indigenous aeronautics industry are as the following: Norinco, Aviation Industry Corporation of China, Harbin Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation, China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, China State Shipbuilding Corporation.

⁶⁴ WikiLeaks Cable has quite an extensive archive containing confidential intel vindicative of this point.

So, if there is any one thing that can be said in extension to the info presented above, then, it might be the very point that the first decade of the 21st century was signaling a budding rivalry of some sort in the Sino-US relations, and one key aspect of this rivalry was related to the unfolding military relations between the two. Albeit China's main emphasis was always put on its self-claimed benign intentions for a peaceful rise and practice of benevolence towards all, China was nevertheless observed to be highly involved with the matters pertaining to the importance of technology (e.g., Ballistic Missile Defense [BMD], satellites, and so forth) especially in the context of future wars. The turn of the 21st century was indicative of a world that would become highly dependent on the dual-used technologic items⁶⁵ (whether they were highly relied on spy satellites, Global Positioning System [GPS], life easing computer-driven communications systems, or space-age-technology) and this simple fact was something that China had comprehended way earlier, precisely, at the beginnings of the 1990s. But what was initially thought to be the case with respect to China (referring to how it would be quite a taxing, costly and long process for China to transform itself and its military technologically) was once again proven wrong by the Chinese efforts.

Although conventional war machines were and still are considered important for a country to possess as part of its general arsenal, the quantity and quality of what is actually being possessed was for the longest time (at least what was thought to be the case with Sino-US military relations) deemed as the line of demarcation between what is thought to constitute the strong and the weak. And the America's military with its multiplicity of tech-intensive means was always treated as the strong side of this binary. Despite being referred as the weak one, China (in addition to developing conventional means of warfare) has come to direct its focus on irregular and new applications of technology and in the process of doing so proved that it could very well hit the bullseye of the US vulnerabilities via cybernetics. Since 2002, tons of reports are for one noting the Chinese officials' complicity in and foreknowledge (or even facilitation) of the myriad Chinese hackings, some of which were argued to include the most difficult of codes at the time, and either speculated or known to have targeted Google and the other American businesses, Dalai Lama, Pentagon, the American and its Western-allies governments' computers, and so forth (Rogin 2007; Tkacik 2008;

⁶⁵ The term in its most referred meaning corresponds to the items (including technology and software) that possess practical uses in both civil and military domains.

Grose 2010; Vascellaro & Gorman 2010; Klimburg 2011; Ball 2011; Craig & Shackelford 2013; Howlett IV 2016).⁶⁶ In one of the most sensational reveals made by researchers, what appeared to be a peculiar electronic spy network called GhostNet was sharing some traceable linkages with the Chinese Politburo (Deibert et al. 2009). And the shocking part was how this GhostNet had managed to infiltrate around 1200 computers in over 100 countries, a majority of which were belonging embassies, media outlets, non-governmental groups (NGOs), foreign ministries of both Western and Asian origin, and the office of Dalai Lama (Deibert et al. 2009). In 2005, Pentagon officials logged an approximated number of 79.000 hacking attempts (Fritz 2008). Around 1300 of these were realized and some of them were directed at the computers belonging the US military's 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions (Bhattacharya 2011). In a report submitted to the US-China Economic and Security Review Committee in 2010, the origin of these hacking attempts was argued to have sometimes vague but otherwise clear traces linking them back to Chinese state (Slane 2010). Such activities were obviously a headache not only for the US but others who were also getting targeted too, and China by being aware of its own methods' weaknesses and strengths (something which the others were intentionally kept in dark) were actively investing into building and developing technology-intensive elements as means of waging or defending against the very possibility of a future war. And one way to make it happen was to cripple what China was perceiving of a threat to its overall security via the use of technological means, amongst which cyber-means were getting the treatment of a crown jewel. The military-strategic deployments of this period for some people (Bhattacharya 2011) were indicative of how China was planning to engage in a brief but decisive war and until its capabilities were at the very least mature enough to match the leading military powers of the world, it would continue with its employment of ruse and astute maneuver (espionage and hacking) as the *Sun Tzu's* dictums suggest (Rios 2009; Geers 2010; Ota 2014). Although we cannot say anything for certain regarding whether there will be a decisive war or not, we can at least point out to the apparent connections between China's understanding of and approach to security and its military-strategic culture and traditions, which were embodied by the Chinese strategic culture (O'Dowd & Waldron 1991; Holmes 2001).

⁶⁶ All these were rejected, dismissed, or reduced to the mere status of a slender by the Chinese officials talking on such matters.

Another important point to consider, as mentioned earlier, is the command-and-control structure of the PLA as it for one can allow us to cultivate a better understanding with respect to the complex particularities of China. In this respect, the supreme Chinese Leader Mao Zedong should be the one that comes to mind in the first place with his own dictum stating that: “the party must always in control of the gun and not the other way around” (Scobell 2003, pp. 6). Those who studied the Chinese experiences with modern statecraft often argue that the Long March was essentially responsible for the establishment of the party’s command-and-control over the military. Therefore, at one-point researchers were often inclined to define the Chinese leadership in a dual understanding reflective of both civil and military capacities (Dreyer 1985; Pye 1981). But with the torch getting passed to a new generation of party officials (like Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao) with no connections to the military experiences of the previous generation of Chinese heroes renowned for their simultaneous roles as civil and military leaders (like Mao and Deng), the leaderships of the Politburo and the PLA have started to be seen under more distinctly separate lights.⁶⁷ However, this distinction in the civil and military leaderships does not mean that the PLA has become uninfluential in steering the wheels of Chinese politics at both domestic and international settings. In fact, the PLA as an institution was seen and treated by the scholars (especially those who were writing in the timeframe extending from the 1990s to the first decade of the 21st century) as the one with more bellicose and hawkish tendencies in comparison to the Chinese civilian political leadership (Kenneth 1995; Shambaugh 1996; Bernstein & Munro 1997; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Scobell 2009; Bhattacharya 2011).

The People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) place in the command-and-control lies under the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Contrary to what one would expect to be case, the Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China (or in its other name, Chinese National Defense Ministry), which continues with its operations under the State Council, does not hold authority over the PLA, as the former’s primary function is to serve as liaison body representing the CMC and PLA when the situation requires to have dealings with the foreign militaries in the forms of either cooperation or exchange. This in a way can be said to

⁶⁷ This was mostly, as mentioned before, caused by Deng’s reforms, which allowed the military officials to gain a professional outlook as something distinct from those of the party leaders.

make National Defense Ministry even less powerful in terms of its exercisable authority than the CMC. Although according to this design it can be said that the PLA is enjoying (at least seemingly) some sort of independence from the Chinese state's direct control, historically, however, there were never ever a military officer ascending to the chair of the CMC, something which had always been hold onto by the supreme leader whomever he might at that time be.⁶⁸ Therefore, the civilian political control over the PLA can be asserted to (once again according to this design) constitute a paramount command-and-control, which makes the latter basically unable to voice its opinion especially in the domain of international relations. The evidence of this argument was seen during a number of international incidents (e.g., 1999 accidental bombing of Chinese embassy in 1999 or 2001 Hainan Island incident) where and when Chinese front was talking in a single voice voicing the wrongs done onto itself, the US military was stating its position even before anything could come out of the White House (Xinbo 2008; Bhattacharya 2011).

Although for the reasons aforesaid it seems as if there is little to no space for the PLA to maneuver itself in being able to exert influence over the strategy and decision making and formulation processes, the reality itself might be more complex than it gives away. In the viewpoint of Mao, the essence of revolutionary warfare was said to be waged by both the army and the population working simultaneously (i.e., the People's War). However, as the time and prevailing circumstances has proven to be changing, this dictum had also come to leave its place to new ones, such as the "Local, Limited War under High Technology Conditions," which came to be set under the post-Deng period, one that did not have any leader with a prior-military experience such the previous generation of the party leaders (Scobell 2003; Fravel 2019). Herein this context, it is an imperative to understand that this new military-strategic-dictum compelling the path to be taken militarily and strategically is one that requires expertise in one's understanding of and approach to security, which in return can be said to provide a definite demarcation between those who knows about the ways of the army, technology, and military-strategic practices and those who basically do not. Based on such a logic, it means that at one point or even throughout the whole process

⁶⁸ This can be said for even those who participated in the Long March. In fact, Mao was known for emphasizing a separation between the party and the military even for senior officials of his generation. Therefore, in the aftermath of the PRC's establishment, the leaders had to choose between either becoming a civilian leader or remaining as a military one. This understanding of and approach to leadership had been passed down across the later to come successive generations of leaderships too.

the PLA must have the major say in strategy formation and foreign-security policy decisions, albeit the design of the command-and-control does reflect a puppet-puppeteer relationship, respectively, getting played between the PLA and the party leadership. One direct implication of this is how it complicates matters for those (the Westerners in general, and the Americans in particular) who would like to have a sense of understanding and predictability⁶⁹ in their interactions with China especially on the matters of high risk and tension such as military to military affairs. In a way this might even be one, if not the foremost, of the reasons as to why we have long been seeing a confused general understanding on what to make of the dual signs coming constantly out of China.

4.4. Implications of the Modernization of the PLA

This apparent confusion with respect to the question of how to interpret the kind of dual signs that have been getting out of China, however, is not unique nor characteristic solely to the Chinese state as one might readily find it to be the case. In fact, the same issues if asked to a Chinese official might even come to be pronounced in similar convictions, something which can be evidenced with how the United States had its own confusingly up (good, cooperative) and down (bad, aggressive) moments towards China. For what it is, China's economy and market potential is one of its foremost attractive points, and when these come to be compounded with the Chinese state's self-proclaimed peaceful intentions, it basically limits the image of China to one of a caricature, one dimensional sketch with no room for complexity, and when the Chinese state (as expected) cannot continue to sustain such an image for a variety of reasons, amongst which the right to be a rising power and attainment of security can also be accounted as such, its image turns into a fiendish threat that is if not checked nor controlled a looming danger to all. And on the other side of the coin, we are also seeing an America with its military presence creeping around in the Pacific and while doing so basically criticizing the former on the grounds of: first, for wanting to attain a satisfactory level of security, and second, its unreasonableness for an emergent rising power to want to seek further military buildup in places that are far beyond its borders. If there is any one word that can be said to qualify these points, then, that should be

⁶⁹ What is trying to be meant by the utterance of predictability herein this context is not in the sense of a Delphic capacity, but rather having a sense of expectableness on what to see or encounter.

how 'ironic' they are. And such critical remarks seem to have been shared amongst at least a fraction of the Western scholars, sympathizing with China's point of view regarding its rise to power (Peerenboom 2007; Devermont et al. 2019). But still, if we go back to the international relations and the reality upon which it has been founded, then, the position of the United States as the only remaining superpower of the Cold War can also be argued to have its own reasons for behaving in such ways too; and that is mostly related to its primary intention to remain unchallenged by any other country, especially, if it is an emergent red giant.

In the context of how the United States was trying its best to make its definitely dying out unilateral moment of shine last longer and the Chinese state was trying its best to reach a satisfactory level of security via its ascent in power, the Obama administration believed to have founded a mutual resolution to these problems via a policy of 'strategic reassurance' that could be practiced vis-à-vis China (Kagan & Blumenthal 2009; Blumenthal 2009; Kagan 2010). The basic idea was that if the US has assured China that the former would certainly not try to block the latter's rise in prominence, then, reciprocally the latter would be much more inclined to work with the international community on important global issues (Kagan & Blumenthal 2009; Blumenthal 2009; Kagan 2010). While utopic in goal, in practice unfortunately it did not come to pass, and the apparent reason at the time was a certain fallout of Sino-US relations over the latter's decision to facilitate a major sale of weapons to Taiwan in early 2010, which came to be 'reciprocated' by the former's one-sided cut back of its military contracts with the latter. For what it seemed at the time, the Americans were sharing increased concerns with respect to how China was: pressuring its neighbors over the issues related to the South China Sea; doing nothing for the North Korea's blatant aggression towards the South Korea even though the eventual outcome was civilians getting killed; imposing embargo on Japan over a collision between a Chinese fishing trawler and two Japanese Coast Guard patrol boats around the Senkaku Islands.

Based on such a backdrop, if there is any one thing that can be said to describe Sino-US relations, then, it must be the very mutual suspicion prevailing in the perceptive lenses that they rely on to understand each other's military intensions. The Chinese Defense White Paper of 2010, while reaffirming the Chinese state's peaceful intensions and defensive nature of its military-strategic orientation, also provides insight regarding how it was wary and fearful of the intensions of the US and other

countries. This, for one, can be seen in the direct extract from the Chinese Defense White Paper of 2010 given below (as cited in Cordesman et al. 2013, pp. 16):

“International military competition remains fierce. Major powers are stepping up the realignment of their security and military strategies, accelerating military reform, and vigorously developing new and more sophisticated military technologies. Some powers have worked out strategies for outer space, cyber space and the Polar Regions, developed means for prompt global strikes, accelerated development of missile defense systems, enhanced cyber operations capabilities to occupy new strategic commanding heights. Some developing countries maintain the push towards strengthening their armed forces and press on with military modernization [...] Suspicion about China, interference and countering moves against China from the outside are on the increase. The United States, in defiance of the three Sino-US joint communiques, continues to sell weapons to Taiwan, severely impeding Sino-US relations and impairing the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations.”

Another wariness present in the report was the voiced concerns with respect to how the US was reinforcing its regional military alliances and increasing its involvement in regional security affairs (Bhattacharya 2011; Cordesman et al. 2013). From what could be seen, the military budgets of the two was also reflective of their suspicions with regard to each other as if they were rushing to prepare themselves. According to Bhattacharya (2011, pp. 110), “both the US and China have increased their military budgets –China, from 532.1 billion yuan in 2010 to 601.1 billion yuan in 2011, and the US proposed a \$553 billion budget for 2012, up \$22 billion from 2010.”

Although these trends reflective of their differences and mutual distrust were somewhat semi-persistent in the Sino-US relations, it did not mean that neither the US nor China could very well allow military tensions to spin out of control in a way that may come to damage their military-diplomatic relations especially during those times of high volatility. Indeed, even during those times in which a complete fallout in relations were seemingly nigh, both China and the US in some way or another has managed to continue with at very least via low level military contacts. In Chinese leadership’s viewpoint, security issues were almost all the time inseparable from any other issue matter whatsoever, and therefore as long as an issue matter had to be seen under a strategic lightening, then, it must be considered in extension to the China’s overall security (Cordesman et al. 2013). One indicative point could be seen in how the PLA officers were almost all the time accompanying the Chinese civil officials to

the regional and international gatherings of any kind. Such visits were not intending to facilitate definite resolutions to years long problems of mistrust and suspicion but rather aiming to mitigate the risks and misunderstandings that could totally change or even derail the military-to-military relations between two sides. According to Bhattacharya (2011, p. 111), at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the interest-wise demarcations blocking a further betterment of the Sino-US military relations could be summed up as in the following: “arms sales to Taiwan, military reconnaissance in what China considers to be its exclusive economic zone, and US laws restraining exchanges and technical cooperation between the countries. The US, however, views the South China Sea as international waters, and it also views China’s military technological advance with suspicion; it therefore uses China’s crushing of dissidents (in addition to the other encountered problems) to block technology exchange and other Chinese core interests that can be satisfied by the US.”

But what all these essentially mean for our general attempt to cultivate an adequate understanding of Chinese strategic culture in terms of its impact on the country’s strategic behavior? To this end, in the next sub-chapter, a brief combined evaluation is initiated to sum up what has come to be scrutinized until now.

4.5. Chinese Strategic Culture: A Combined Evaluation

So, at this point in the discussion it should already be clear that strategic culture pertains to a country’s and its elite distinctive style of dealing with and thinking about the encountered and envisioned problems in pursuit of national security. One place where we may find the intellectual and spiritual modality of an actor’s ‘living strategic culture’⁷⁰ is its strategic philosophy (Dellios 1994a, p.1). Strategic philosophy of an actor remains, first, embedded in a country’s and as well as its people’s enduring principles and, second, concerned with distinctive approaches that are applied to the problems of a nation’s security. In the context of China, it is particularly evident that Chinese strategic philosophy carries steadfast elements (e.g., deterrence, psychological warfare, reliance on astute maneuvers, employ of stratagems and espionage, and so forth) which are prevalent across different timeframes and circumstances. Although these elements are by no means solely unique to the Chinese,

⁷⁰ Because it is not static but dynamic. Meaning that it is always open to change and reformulations. However, it does not mean that every change can create a breakaway point in an actor’s strategic culture.

they have nonetheless come to be moulded into a distinctive Chinese approach (Mancall 1963; Mancall & Fairbank 1968; Mancall 1984; Mancall 1984; Dellios 1994a; Dellios 1994b; T. Zhang 2002; S. G. Zhang 1995; Graff & Higham 2012; S. G. Zhang 2019; Burke et al. 2020).

Chinese strategic culture found in the modern Chinese strategic philosophy owes more to its heritage derived from the country's past (e.g., thoughts of Sun Tzu, Confucius/Mencius, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao) in comparison to the other philosophical traditions that Chinese has come to borrow from the modern world (e.g., the Russian military theorem of Revolution in Military Affairs, Leninism, Marxism, Communism, so and so on) (Graff & Higham 2012). Fung Yu-Lan (1966, p. 28; 2013), a highly reputable scholar studying the matters pertaining to the essence and history of Chinese philosophy, seems to share a similar conviction regarding this particularity: 'every philosophy possesses something that is permanent and almost all philosophies hold something universal, and this constitutes a specificity that shines at its truest in Chinese case [...] As even if there are some alien things somehow became integral to the Chinese strategic and philosophical manner of thinking and practice, they have almost all the time founded relevance and applicability only after various Chinese characteristics become incorporated [...] And this gives China's approach to strategy a sense of distinctiveness.' Indeed, based on the discussion that has been provided on and about the Chinese (distinctive) approach to the matters pertaining to war, peace, security and strategy in general, and with respect to the security-and-strategy-wise aspects of its relations with the United States, one place where we can find these postulations truest reflection is no other than China's defense policies. At their core, they can be said to rest on some form of iterations or variants of the Chinese strategic doctrine of people's war⁷¹ that share deep roots with Mao's military-strategic concept 'active defense' (Dellios 1994a; S. G. Zhang 1995; Naiming 1997; T. Zhang 2002; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Graff & Higham 2012; Zhang 2012; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; S. G. Zhang 2019; Burke et al. 2020).

The chosen timeframe (which starts from China's rise in prominence in 1990s and continues until the end of the first decade of the 21st century) that this thesis takes as

⁷¹ These so-called iterations and variants can be said to have arisen due to different elements incorporated into the into at different times, circumstances and problems encountered.

to provide an appropriate context for the general and particular purposes of this study (understanding Chinese strategic culture and Sino-US military-diplomatic relations respectively), for one, can be said to evidenciate how Mao's key strategic concept of active defense in its essence has constituted the roots of and influence over the modern Chinese state's strategic behavior in the country's security-defense-and-strategy-wise thinking of and dealings with the world outside. This is a particular characteristic of Chinese strategic culture that in many ways has endured even in an age when China has arisen as a powerful nuclear-armed Communist state (with Chinese characteristics) possessing high-tech intensive military-strategic means readily at its disposal. But still, it does not mean that there no dynamism or development to the manner in which the Chinese has come to think of and deal with other international actors and concern-posing issues encountered.

As underlined previously, strategic culture is a living dimension of an actor's strategic behavior. In the context of China, this so-called living dimension can be seen to have accommodated a set of changing emphases and additional elements incorporated into the Chinese defense policies depending on the needs of the time. We can trace such developments, if one may ever say so, in a number of strategic guidelines articulated during different Chinese leaders: Mao's famous (traditional) *People's War (Defending the Motherland in 1956; Resist in the North, Open in the South in 1960; Lure the Enemy in Deep in 1964)* to Deng's *People's War Under Modern Conditions* (in 1977) and *Local Wars Under Modern Conditions* (in 1985), and Jiang's *Local Wars Under Modern High-Tech Conditions* (in 1993) and *Local War Under Modern Informatized Conditions* (in 1999) to Hu's promulgation of *Local Wars Under Informatized Conditions* and development and refinement of the concepts and capabilities to respond to the threats from technologically more powerful enemies (in 2004) (Naiming 1997; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Graff & Higham 2012; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). As every shoot of a tree must share an undisturbed connection to its roots for it to live on and thrive, it is no accident for all these strategic guidelines to rest on some iterated notion of Mao's active defense.

The importance of these so-called strategic guiding principles can be said to reside in how they in many respects allow the development and maintenance of the key strategic concept active defense as a doable strategy over the years (Naiming, 1997; Scobell

2002; Scobell 2003; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Despite their differing names, specific issues that they try to address, and specific context from which they emerge, we can still draw upon a number of commonalities existing in and across these principles. For one, they are at the level of military strategy (Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Second, they basically constitute developmental phases in which the next military thought, military doctrine, and operational concepts are getting refined (Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Third, these guiding principles are formulated by the Chinese leaderships of the time and therefore follows the strategic guidelines laid down by those leaderships (Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Fourth, these strategic guidelines (in connection to the third point) work to qualify China's military strategy in the overarching context of what is (then) thought to be a (perceived) threat against People's Republic of China and its overall interests (Finkelstein 2000; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Fifth, these so-called perception of threats and pursuit interests are bounded or directly informed by the strategic environment (of both imminent and distant geographic proximities) that China conceive to have surrounded (Zhang 2012; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Sixth, these phases of development and refinement are almost all the time sensitive to the changing and evolving nature of warfare (Zhang 2012; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Seventh, albeit these military strategic guiding principles (which encompass the PLA's strategy and the overall envisioned direction of the force construction and operations of the Chinese military) are issued by the Central Military Commission, they follow the guidance laid down by the Chinese leadership of the time (Finkelstein 2000; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Then what about their underlying differences? By way of background, this requires a brief and chronologically oriented scrutiny on China's defense policies at different periods.

If we start with the supreme leader of the PRC, the People's War principles were basically the prevailing norm with respect to any matter of understanding pertaining to war, peace, security and strategy. It was prevalent starting from the creation of the PRC and continued to maintain its influence through the early 1980s (Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020).⁷² During Mao's reign, there was one major set of

⁷² Based on this, it might indeed be no mere coincidence that Deng's strategic guideline (i.e., *People's*

strategic guidelines and two minor revisions (Naiming, 1997; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; Finkelstein 2000; Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). His laid down trajectory for the PLA was to prepare the latter to fight “imminent war, major war, and nuclear war, employing active defense in the form of guerilla warfare against an invading alien force to set the conditions for a PLA counteroffensive (Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020, p. 4).”

The next phase of development and refinement, which was introduced by Deng under the rubric of *People’s War Under Modern Conditions* towards the end of 1970s, was basically an attempt to adjust the Chinese key strategic concept active defense as a way to make it able to focus on winning early battles closer to China’s borders (Zhang 2012; Cordesman et al. 2013; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). His intention was basically to facilitate more of an instantaneous transition to an offensive stance and operation-wise readiness by relying on China’s recently acquired nuclear means. Moreover, by relying on China’s nuclear military capabilities, he was focusing on the posture of deterrence against an invading force as to make the latter disinclined from ever crossing the nuclear threshold (Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Later, under Deng’s Open Door Policy, the overall characteristic of Deng’s reign in the early 1980s was seen and treated as the period of ‘peace and development’ which was responsible in leading to a lessened threat perception towards an outside power’s potential invasion. In 1985, Deng also laid down another strategic guideline (i.e., *Local Wars Under Modern Conditions*) for the Chinese military. Under this guideline, the Chinese military was directed to concentrate on becoming more swift, mobile, and lethal. In a way, this was a departure point from Mao’s People’s War focusing on a war of attrition and protraction, strategized to be waged by leading the enemy’s army into the depths of the Chinese land and make them bleed out by the simultaneous utilization of the Chinese army and the country’s enormous population in a guerilla fighting manner of engagement (Godwin 1992; Graff & Higham 2012; Godwin 2016; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). This change in strategizing, as a matter of consequence, had opened a period in which the total number of active Chinese troops had sharply reduced (Scobell 2003; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al.

War Under Modern Conditions) was also named after Mao’s ‘*People’s War*’ albeit the one put forth by the former was in possession of some additional elements.

2020).

In Jiang's period of reign, the next major development and refinement of the strategic guidelines came with the introduction of *Local Wars Under Modern High-Tech Conditions* in 1993. As per its importance, this guideline was underlining the principle of "three attacks, three defenses (i.e., attacking enemy stealth, cruise missiles, and helicopters, while defending against precision strikes, electronic warfare, and reconnaissance) (Burke et al. 2020, p. 4).⁷³ One important happening of this period in terms of its impact over the process of development and refinement of the Chinese defense policy was the eruption of the first Gulf War. In the face of the US' blatant display of high-tech-intensive military capabilities, Jiang was basically standing on the front seat and watching how the networked precision strike capabilities were essentially representing a 'revolution in military affairs' (RMA). This insight was basically a fear inducing awakening given how it was mirroring the simple truth that China was highly inadequate to tackle and deal with such a situation in which a powerful enemy (i.e., the United States) may ever decide to utilize such similar means against itself in case of a potential conflict (e.g., a possible clash against the US over Taiwan). For the Chinese leadership, this basically provided the required incentives to instigate a wave of rapid modernization process. To that end, during this period China was basically driven by research and development, creation of new military-strategic sectors as to complement the needs of the PLA, acquisition of more advanced high-tech-intensive military-strategic means and systems of almost every kind for the key parts of the country's military (e.g., the PLA Second Artillery, The PLA Air Force, and the PLA Navy), and attempts that were aimed at extending air and maritime defensive perimeters beyond China's immediate coastal line (Scobell 2003; Graff & Higham 2012; Godwin 2016; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). In 1999, Jiang's instigated another phase of development and refinement of the country's defense policy via a new strategic guidance that was once again building on the Chinese key strategic concept active defense: *Local War Under Modern Informatized Conditions* (Scobell 2003; Graff & Higham 2012; Godwin 2016; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). Following his approval of several new doctrinal publications

⁷³ Given how this period was also coinciding China's rise in power in general and military-strategic capabilities in particular, we can surmise about the reason as to why Jiang's put forth emphasis was highly concentrating over the various employments of China's military-strategic means as part of the country's overall defense policy.

(e.g., The New Generation Operations Regulations), the emphasis given over the PLA's developmental trajectory on the basis of its military-strategic capabilities and concepts had begun to accommodate a conjoint utilization of different parts of the Chinese military from the oldest to newest, ranging from air, sea, space, land, and even electronic/virtual domains (Mulvenon & Finkelstein 2002; Scobell 2003; Godwin 2016; Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020).

In Hu's period of reign, Jiang's strategic guideline (i.e., *Local War Under Modern Informatized Conditions*) informing China's defense policy had become promulgated, and the principles of it had refined furthermore (Fravel 2016; Fravel 2019; Burke et al. 2020). In this respect, the main line of emphasis was now being given over the concepts and capabilities to respond to perceived threats that could possibly arise from a technologically superior enemy. In 2005, Hu came to be credited for being responsible in enabling the PLA to gain worldwide renown in 'the domain of system-of-systems operations concentrating on conjoint units with integrated command networks allowing key node strikes against the combat networks and systems of an advanced enemy (i.e., the US)' (Burke et al. 2020, p. 5). This period's one particular characteristic was China's evolved perspective on what constitutes a modern battle space. Since 2000s, in addition to the age-old physical domains of war (political, economic, diplomatic), the intangible domain of cybernetics has come to receive quite a crown-jewel-like treatment at the hands of Chinese. Indeed, given this domain's inherent prospects (such as its capacity to even up the playing field by reducing the different actors' different level of aggregate capabilities in real life next to nothing, provide opportune moments to disrupt a foe's information network, and steal key information that can make one's foe to make it lose its comparative advantage, so and so forth) it remains understandable.

All in all, these developments and refinements that has come to be made in China's defense policies should be understood and evaluated in extension to the Chinese cultural proclivities to realize 'inviolability' and regain the country's once overly enjoyed 'rightful place under the heavens' (Dellios 1994a; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003). In the Western terms, the latter notion can be said to correspond in its closest connotation to that of 'destiny' or 'rightful place;' the one that was once humiliatingly stripped away from China (Dellios 1994a, p. 2). Whereas the notion of inviolability provides the defensive aspect of China's strategic culture, the desire to regain this so-

called 'rightful place' pushes China's strategic culture to be realpolitik-oriented and (depending on the circumstances) even offensive (Dellios 1994a; Scobell 2002; Scobell 2003; T. Zhang 2002; S. G. Zhang 1995; Graff & Higham 2012). This can be best described as a *Dao* of contradictions, something which shares deep roots in the cultural and philosophical heritage of China. However, the rubric of contradiction should not be confused with an effective dissonance. On the contrary, if there is any one thing that can be deduced from all the provided discussion until now (at least within the set limitations of this thesis), then, it should be how China's distinctive manner of dealings (which take their basis from the Chinese philosophical notion of absolute flexibility) with the outside world in general and the US in particular since the end of the Cold War are proving to be highly successful in tackling a complex actor's complex problems encountered in the domain of international relations. We are seeing the direct evidence of this argument in the Chinese strategic philosophy evidently carried in and through the introduced, developed, and refined strategic guidelines of the modern Chinese leaderships (Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao). On the other hand, the US' manner of strategic engagement (when different American administrations are considered) with China was characteristically and paradigmatically in discord. When compared to its American counterpart, China's practiced manner of strategic engagement with the US was constitutive of a carefully woven series of steps with little to no visible deviances. For what seems to be the root cause of all the threat-perceptions that appear to be coloring the Western perspectives is how China has gradually come to shed its once famously adhered policy of keeping a low-profile, something which was first coined by Deng in 1990 (via his saying of 'hide your strength and bide your time'), and steadily moved towards a point in which the successive Chinese leaderships have gotten more and more confident and assertive in the pursuit of their interests (Yan 2014). Things-like the rapid-modernization of the PLA, rising accumulation and incorporation of high-tech-intensive military means and systems into different units of Chinese military, complaints about China's astute maneuvers, strategic opaqueness, use of stratagems, attempted and realized espionage against the Western government and companies (and so forth) are only the symptoms of a precondition inflicted upon China by the others, that is the Chinese being for the longest time getting caricatured as part of either the purest (mostly because of the admiration felt towards the Chinese civilizational heritage) or the fiendish depictions (mostly resulting out of ideological differences and demonization) without leaving no

room to acknowledge Chinese complexity in strategic behavior.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In its essence, the relationship shared between strategy and culture is one of a mutually constitutive one, and the nature of this linkage appears to be holding quite a bit of sway in the greater context of international relations. It is evident that a polity's understanding of and approach to strategy are bound to be conditioned with its historical, cultural, political, geographical, material, and civilizational bedrock; and culture herein this context, provides the one, if not the primary, distinct coloring of the frame, content, and socially transmitted ideational, symbolic, behavioral (inter alia) elements that remain integral to the overall constitutional capacity of this conditioning. This so-called conditioning is one of context as it enables the said-polity's potential strategic behavior to find understanding, acceptance, meaning, and even expression. And in the greater context of international relations, this mutually constitutive relationship between strategy and culture can be argued to fall under the rubric of strategic culture.

In this respect, as a concept, the promise of strategic culture can be said to lie in how it can be utilized to understand and interpret different countries' different approaches to the matters pertaining to conflict, war, peace, strategy, and the use of force. Such an idea, viewing the subject of strategic culture as the roots of and the influence over strategic behavior of a country, however, seems to be anything but new, and can be evidenced by gazing over how indeed a plethora of thinkers and practitioners with a concern regarding the matters of international conflict and security throughout the history were apparently already aware of such nuances and actively carrying similar ideas in their works. Evidently, the more extensive and richer a country's civilizational past and strategic tradition(s) are, the more probable it is for that country's strategic behavior to come under the influence of culturally produced, learned, internalized, reformed, and conditioned repertoire of culturally transmitted ideas, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and behaviors. Moreover, due to its ever-encompassing capacity to incorporate intangible and tangible sources of a country's strategic behavior, the

concept of strategic culture can also be seen to have a niche place amongst the emerging criticisms directed against the mainstream theoretical views (prompting a timeless rational, ahistorical, non-culturalist, positivist framework for analyzing strategic choices that can be applicable to all states –without any consideration being given to their national histories, politics, culture, and other vessels of meaning, i.e. the Neo-Realist School of Theoretical Thought) known to dominate the field of IR academic discipline.

Despite its inherent utility, however, almost anything with respect to the study of strategic culture falls under a literature that is if anything one place of a severe contestation, with little to no concurred definitional or analytical construct that can easily be drawn upon for and by one's intended strategic-cultural research. The evidence to this argument can be seen in how it came about as a critique against the already existing theoretical frameworks relying on the rational choice theory, and gradually evolved in stages when the criticisms directed within were resulting in diachronic and synchronic tensions, thus triggering paradigmatic shifts in the conceptual and analytical constructs that allowed new ones to arise in contradiction to those that came prior (i.e., the generations of strategic-cultural research). The current state of the literature on the strategic-cultural research, therefore, can (in a nutshell) be said to reflect the following: the first generation's cultural determinism, the second generation's skepticism, the third generation's obsession with positivist rigor and self-imposed distancing from the reality itself, and the fourth generation's promotion of competitive sub-cultures in response to what they consider to be the monolithic and contiguous approaches of the earlier generations. This thesis for one acknowledges the utility of the concept of strategic culture and defines it in the following manner: an actor's sum of its core and steadfast assumptions pertaining to the matters of the role of war (both in interstate and intrastate settings) in human affairs and the efficacy of applying force held by political and military elites in a country. This thesis therefore takes its intellectual underpinnings and analytical construct from the first generation's strategic-cultural research.

China in relation to the above extended context can easily be accounted as one of the best cases to study. And there are at the very least two, mutually reinforcing reasons for it. The first one is, or can be said to have a linkage to, the fact that China constitutes an example par excellence with its ancient civilizational history and rich strategic

traditions dating over thousands of years back, whereas the second reason can be said to be related to how Chinese strategic culture constitutes the roots of and the influence over the country's strategic behavior. What constitutes the modern and contemporary China's actual strategic culture, however, contrary to the popular belief, is neither a pure defensive nor ready-to-strike offensive one. In fact, it is rather based on what one might coin as a *Dao* of contradictive duality, carrying both defensive and realpolitik attributes in the body of one strategic culture. Regarding the former attribute, we see it as being rooted in and under the influence of three core philosophical dictum-like tenets (which finds repeating iterations via the utterances of Confucian-Mencian cultural understanding, and Sun Tzu's dictum-like tenets provided in his magnum opus *The Art of War*) responsible for informing the Chinese self-perception of its military tradition as being purely defensive and peaceful (i.e., defensive & peaceful strand of the Chinese strategic culture). In this respect, these core philosophical tenets can be summed up on the basis of how China values peace over anything, inclined to be always overly defensive rather than being aggressive and offensive, and relies on the use of force only in the case of self-defense. Regarding the latter attribute, we find it as being rooted in and under the influence of six strategic guiding principles (essentially counteracting against the aforesaid three philosophical tenets) responsible for informing Chinese leadership's understanding of and approach to general, external and as well as domestic security, mostly with respect to finding justifications for the country's decisions to use force vis-à-vis what it perceived to be the realities on the ground (i.e., the realpolitik strand of Chinese strategic culture). These six counteracting guiding principles for security are based on the Chinese notions of the primacy of and the concern over: national unification and territorial integrity; a threat-ridden external domain; fighting only just wars; remaining loyal to the country's own strategic concept called active defense; a threat-ridden internal domain; and the importance of the community over that of the individual.

The prevailing misconceptions about the true nature and features of Chinese strategic culture which remain reflective of this contradictive duality (as aforementioned) are propelling a caricaturistic and one-dimensional image of China's surmised role and projected impact in the context of world affairs. This, for one, appears to be mostly responsible for placing China under the lightening of either an overly positive and benignly oriented one or an overly negative and threat-posing one. However, there

exists a third way of gazing and that is based on the understanding of how China can go-in-either-way. This thesis, for one, finds the third approach in viewing the conundrums of China to be the most accurate one to go with, especially in the greater context of understanding Chinese strategic culture and its effects on the country's understanding of and approach to security in its linkage to the Sino-US relations.

The contemporary Sino-US relations' point of origin can be traced back to the Kissinger-Nixon cooperative efforts in exploiting the fissures that were getting wide-open in the Sino-Soviet relations. Although not completely revolutionary, this trajectory of change in the Sino-US relations was still substantial enough in allowing the relations to depart from a position of ostensive military-hostility and move towards a position of military restraint and cautious accommodation of tacit cooperation. Ever since then, the general trajectory of the Sino-US relations has come to experience its own ups and downs, but never a complete breakdown in interactions. In fact, if there could be said to exist one certain semi-constant trait inherent to these interactions, then, it must be the determination of both sides to limit the erosion of the unfolding relations even at times of high volatility. One particular domain at where high volatilities have managed to remain reflective of this semi-persistent trait was no other than the unfolding military diplomatic relations between the two. The reasons for such dissonance were basically converging on the characteristic differences regarding how the two sides were viewing and approaching to the issues from their own interest-woven perspectives, such as: arms sales and purchases, transformation of technology (including the nuclear know-how), the issue of Taiwan, the North Korea, the proliferation of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (and so forth).

For better *and* worse, all these happenings were indicative of an apparent expansion and acceleration in the overall Sino-US interactions. At no stage of their relations, however, there existed naïve convictions but only underlying interest-based intensions, which were most of the time either accompanied or triggered by the major happenings in the realm of world affairs. As per their interest-based intensions, the US on the one hand was mostly concerned with: purging the relations with China of the risks of misunderstandings; incentivizing China to become less likely to put a conflictual front and more cooperative alignment in its relations with the West in general and the US in particular; making use of China's economy and market potential; and most primarily gaining insight into the inner workings of the Chinese military in general and that of

PLA in particular via the forged military-diplomatic relations, military-to-military dealings, and transfer of technologies. On the other hand, China's essential interest-based concerns were more or less centered around its internal and external security, which were mostly seeking to preserve and realize: the Communist party regime and its ideals while promoting and deepening social cohesion against the imperialistic divisive notions exemplified by the Tiananmen Square happenings, and the country's territorial integrity and its long-awaited dream of a national unification with Taiwan. In the greater picture, as aforesaid, there were major happenings capable enough to affect the manner in which the relations were involving. The most impactful ones were no other than the dissolution of the USSR (which was once allowing Sino-US relations to get further consolidated against what they were considering to be a common enemy) and the Gulf War's signification of how the high-tech-intensive military-strategic means may very well change the trajectory of a war, and US in this regard was the very embodiment of Chinese fears in terms of how tech-intensive military-strategic means were essentially something that the Chinese must be wary of. However, this wariness also worked to propel China to seek to incorporate any tech-intensive military-strategic means into its aggregate capabilities, which brought about a rapid military modernization of the Chinese military in general, and the capabilities of the PLA in particular (i.e., Revolution in Military Affairs). From the perspective of the US and its Western allies, however, the trajectory of Chinese military modernization was started to be seen and treated as a potential threat.

Since the 1990s, China's ascent in prominence is basically hard to dispute against, and looking at the ample number of studies offering an abundance of empirical evidence, there is little to no doubt that China's rise in prominence is nothing sort of a miracle nor the outcome of an accident. China's ambition is evident and to a certain degree can be attributed to the origins of its strategic culture, which can be said to constitute the roots of and influence over the country's strategic behavior. Meaning that if China wants to perpetuate itself in line with those of its internal and external security considerations, then it must be able to defend itself, even if this act of defense is something that has to encompass being simultaneously offensive too (i.e., Chinese strategic concept of active defense). The rising China's main antagonist is not one originating out of Asia but positioned across the Pacific Ocean: The United States. In the time frame that this enquiry is based on, which takes its start with the beginnings

of China's rise and continues until the end of the first decade of the 21st century, it was quite apparent that the American's military-strategic capabilities were better than the ones possessed by China. Whilst in the eyes of many the possibility in which China would be catching up to the US's then already possessed state-of-art defense and offense maximizing technologies has once thought to be an impossibility (at the very least within a short span of time), the former's speed in and approach to developing its own tech-intensive military means were proving to be how much of a huge headache that it could still cause for the latter. China in its goal to further accelerate its rise in the context of world affairs as a great power, and regain what was once held close but lost in time under a century of humiliation, came to focus on new and irregular applications of technology that could be used to match and neutralize the very comparative advantage of the US in the domain of security: the technology-driven military power. China on its path to realize such ends came to rely on the astute maneuver and the employment of decoys and ruses, and as well a strategic opaqueness in barring its enemies from gaining critical insight into the Chinese military's inner-workings in general, and those of the PLA. Moreover, just like Sun Tzu advises one to prioritize non-military means that can work to tire out, deplete the resources of, and disrupt or even mislead the focus of one's enemy (via strategic and manipulative maneuvers), we have also come to see China's general reliance on ways that were seemingly peaceful but nevertheless damaging for the general interests of the Americans, examples can be said to include China's acts of: transferring high-tech-intensive elements of weaponry (including the nuclear know-how) and hardware, cyberattacks and constant hackings, realized and attempted espionages, stealing confidential civil and military intel that Chinese state could very well come to utilize for the betterment and furtherment of its own interests (which Chines eventually come to build and develop their space-age technology, stealth fighter jets, ballistic missiles with extended riches).

All these were, however, in line with China's strategic culture (based on the rich civilizational, intellectual, and philosophical heritage coming from Confucian traditions and Sun Tzu's dictums in his magnum opus) and allowing Beijing to deploy an image of peace-loving and non-offensive stance for the country's realpolitik-driven political endpoints to be realized. Consequently, when this peace-loving image has had come to be compared with respect to China's accumulation of offensive military-

strategic hardware, the resulting fallout in opinion, at least in a nutshell, has had begun to depict a caricaturistic and one dimensional China under an either-or rationale, denying country any right to complexity in strategic outlook and behavior, something which can be argued to be reflective of such viewpoints with their inadequate understanding with respect to China's strategic-cultural approach to security. Evidence of this point was essentially visible in the manner through which the Americans were desperately trying to instigate and continue strategic engagements with China. Whereas for the Clinton administration this was a strategic partnership, for the Bush administration it was a strategic competition. And finally, for the Obama administration it was a strategic reassurance. This paradigmatic dissonance across different American administrations, however, were basically playing into Beijing's hands, thus laying down a groundwork upon which China's rise was getting even more accelerated. In a way, what Americans were actually afraid of happening was essentially befalling onto their very heads in a seemingly self-fulfilling prophetic capacity, thus, feeding into a heightened threat perception that sees and treats China as a looming threat to all in general and the US in particular. This appears to be especially true if and when considered in the context of China's rapid modernization of its army (i.e., the PLA). Evidently, the acquisition of technology-intensive military means of both combative and non-combative nature, and the manner in which they have put into use by the Chinese (especially with respect to the United States), can be said to confirm the validity of the priorly introduced hypothesis arguing about the existence of a contradictive duality in both the nature and characteristic of Chinese strategic culture affecting the country's strategic behavior. This so-called contradictive duality, however, should not be mistaken with a state of discord. On the contrary, China's distinctive manner of dealings (which take their basis from the Chinese philosophical notion of absolute flexibility) with the outside world in general and the US in particular since the end of the Cold War are proving to be highly successful in tackling a complex actor's complex problems encountered in the domain of international relations. We are seeing the direct evidence of this argument in the Chinese strategic philosophy evidently carried in and through the introduced, developed, and refined strategic guidelines of the modern Chinese leaderships (Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao) which remain deeply rooted in the strategic-cultural civilizational and philosophical inheritance of the past.

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