

The Rise of Strongmen Leaders: A Threat to Global Security

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Declaration

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Abstract

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-Cold War future was one characterised by democratic liberalism, economic prosperity and a global liberal order. However, after decades of the spread and success of democratic liberalism, the world is seeing a global democratic recession. Instead of liberal democracy, the present and future is seemingly being characterised by growing illiberal democracy. A key element to the rise of these other political regimes and the global decline of democracy, is the rise of political Strongmen. Defined as elected leaders who use a political style characterised as populist, authoritarian and assertive, these Strongmen pose a risk to liberal democracy. This thesis examines the rise of these Strongmen, and specifically, how Strongman leadership threatens global security.

The thesis also made reference to Francis Fukuyama's famous argument *The End of History and Last Man* as his theory is commonly referenced in the examination of these leaders, as well as in the exploration of the current worldwide democratic decline. The use of Fukuyama's thesis sought not to critique his argument, but rather to show how the rise of these Strongmen and their political leadership, bears as an obstacle to the stable, prosperous, democratic future that Fukuyama foresaw.

Willing to go to extremes to protect their vote share, change the rules of the political game, preach politics of fear and resentment, and undermine democratic principles such as civil liberties and the separation of powers, the Strongman can be seen to not only threaten regional security but potentially increase geopolitical insecurity. The study chose to comparatively study Russia's Vladimir Putin, Recep Erdogan of Turkey and Viktor Orban of Hungary. These three leaders and their respective nations were chosen as following the end of the Cold War, they were considered most likely to democratically consolidate. Further, similarly all three leaders came to power through democratic elections and lastly, all three nations are influential global actors. The study examined the three leaders on four variables seen as intrinsic elements of Strongman leadership; the violation of human rights, the erosion of key democratic institutions, the violation of human rights, populist nationalism, and the violation of sovereignty and international law. These variables were chosen not only for their identification of Strongman leadership but were also analysed as the most likely to threaten global security and stability. Using these principles also aided in establishing the presence/ extent of Strongman leadership in each nation.

In conclusion, the study found that Strongman leadership does threaten global security through various facets. Specifically, through the four intrinsic variables, the Strongman's actions, policies and ideologies can lead to further geopolitical insecurity. Focusing on Russia, Hungary and Turkey and their respective leaders, showed how their leadership can create or exacerbate instability, and ultimately erode global security.

Opsomming

Na die einde van die Koue Oorlog en die ontbinding van die Sowjet Unie, waq die toekoms van die post Koue Oorlog gekenmerk deur demokratiese liberalisme, ekonomiese voorspoed en 'n internasionale toestand van liberale orde. Na dekades van die uitbreiding en sukses van demokratiese liberalisme, sien die wêreld egter tans die resessie van globale demokrasie. In plaas van liberale demokrasie, word die hede en toekoms oënskynlik deur groeiende onliberale demokrasie gekenmerk. 'n Kenmerkende element van hierdie en ander politieke regimes, asook die agteruitgang van globale demokrasie, is die opkoms van individuele politieke magsfigure. Hulle word gedefinieer as verkose leiers wat 'n politieke styl, gekenmerk deur populisme, magsbeheptheid en sekerheid ten toon stel, maar wat 'n bedreiging vir globale liberale demokrasie daarstel. Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek die opkoms van die magsfigure en in besonder, op watter wyse magsfiguur-leierskap globale sekerheid bedreig.

Die verhandeling verwys ook na die bekende argument van Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History and Last Man", omdat daar in die algemeen daarna verwys word wanneer hierdie leiers ondersoek word, sowel as die ondersoek van die wêreldwye agteruitgang van demokrasie. Die gebruik van Fukuyama se verhandeling, het nie ten doel om hom te kritiseer nie, maar eerder om aan te dui hoe die opkoms van hierdie magsfigure en hulle politiek leierskap 'n hindernis vir die stabiele, voorspoedige en demokratiese toekoms wat Fukuyama voorsien is.

Die magsfigure is bereid om tot uiterstes te gaan vir die beskerming van hulle kiesers aandeel, die wysiging van die reëls van die politieke spel, die prediking van politieke vrees en verwyte, asook die ondermyning van demokratiese beginsels, soos burgerlike vryhede en die skeiding van magte. As sulks kan hierdie magsfigure nie alleen as 'n bedreiging vir streeksveiligheid gesien word nie, maar ook 'n toename in geo-politiese onsekerheid te weegbring. Die studie het ten doel om 'n vergelykende studie van Rusland se Vladimir Putin, Turkye se Recep Erdogan en Hongarye se Viktor Orban, te doen. Hierdie drie leiers en hulle onderskeie nasies, post Koue Oorlog, was as onderwerp gekies, aangesien hulle as die mees waarskynlik beskou was om demokratiese konsolidasie te weeg te bring. Verder het al drie leiers deur demokratiese

verkiesings aan bewind gekom en aldrie lande is invloedryke wêreldmagte. Hierdie studie het die genoemde drie leiers ondersoek aan die hand van vier veranderlikes, wat as intrinsieke kenmerke van magsfiguur-leierskap gesien kan word; die aantasting van mense regte, aftakeling van demokratiese instansies, populistiese nasionalisme en die skending van soewereiniteit en Volkereg. Hierdie veranderlikes was nie net vir hulle indentifikasie van magsfiguur-leierskap gekies nie, maar is ook geanaliseer as die mees voor die handliggende bedreiging vir wêreld sekerheid en stabiliteit. Die toepassing van hierdie beginsels, het ook daartoe bygedra dat die aard en omvang van magsfiguur-leierskap in elke land vasgestel kon word.

Ter afsluiting, hierdie ondersoek het bevestig dat magsfiguur-leierskap inderdaad die wêreldorde in vele opsigte bedreig. In besonder, deur middel van die vier onderliggende veranderlikes, kan die magsfiguur-leiers se optredes, beleide en ideologieë verder tot geopolitiese onsekerheid aanleiding gee. Deur of Rusland, Hongarye en Turkye en hulle onderskeie leiers te fokus, word daar aangedui in watter mate hulle leierskap onstabiliteit en uiteindelik globale sekerheid, kan veroorsaak en vererger.

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Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party
CJEU	The Court of Justice of the European Union
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FN	France National Front
FSM	Italian Five Star Movement
HDP	Peoples Democratic Party
HSYK	High Council of Judges and Prosecutors
IRA	Internet Research Agency
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
PiS	Law and Justice Party
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PYD	Democratic Union Party
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organisation
YPG	Peoples Protection Units

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study and an Introduction to the Topic

Following the ‘third wave’ of democratization that saw dozens of countries around the globe rejecting their authoritarian regimes and calling for reform across the world, the belief was that liberal democracy and its associated capitalist economic system would become dominant (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:83; Diamond, 2019:17; Fukuyama, 2018). The argument was that liberal democracy offered the best political and economic system – it allowed citizens to freely choose their beliefs, while also ensuring higher living standards and reduced inequality. Such, the belief that liberal democracy was “the only game in town” swept throughout the west (Mainwaring & Bizarro, 2019:99).

However, currently there is evidence to suggest a growing mistrust in democracy, as the growth towards democratisation has since reversed itself with the total number of democratic countries having declined (Fukuyama, 2018). Worldwide liberal democracy is consistently being challenged by political leaders, citizens and movements, with many countries having seen their freedom decrease, reversing the post-Cold War trend of the expansion of democracy (Diamond, 2019:17). Democratic principles such as the rule of law, civil liberties, electoral rights and the value of plurality have been steadily declining. Elected leaders across the world have started using the power of elections to undermine democratic institutions and principles. Nations across the globe such as Thailand, Pakistan, Italy, Czech Republic, Poland as well as Kenya and Tanzania all form part of this trend (Freedom House, 2019). While in Europe, right-wing, populist political parties such as Jobbik in Hungary, Front National in France, Law and Justice (Pis) in Poland and Austria’s Freedom Party have all gained significant political popularity and power. In the United States (US), a country known as the protector of liberal democracy, under the leadership of a recently elected populist, the nation has seen a surge in the presence and support of ‘white supremacists’ and ‘alt-right’ movements (Hawley, 2017; Wendling, 2018).

Authors (Emmott, 2017; Grayling, 2018; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019; Mounk, 2018; Richards, 2017; Runciman, 2018) point to a set of specific reasons to explain the acceleration of the distrust and resulting decline of democracy. The first key issue identified by scholars is what Inglehart and Norris (2016) call the “cultural backlash thesis” as the surge for the distrust in democracy is a reaction to “progressive cultural change”. Scholars argue that many citizens feel anxiety over world integration as they see rising levels of immigration, changing cultural values and, as such, the sense of a decline in their national identity (Mounk, 2018; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019; Richards, 2017). Many citizens feel they have become

alienated in their own country as rising progressive, cosmopolitan, multicultural values erode their own ‘traditional’ values. Another element of this is, with the increasing number of refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers integrating themselves into societies, citizens feel they threaten their national identity as they represent the “possible destruction of the national groups historic identity and established ways of life” (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:131). Scholars argue this cultural fear develops out of concern over the cultural incompatibility of these ‘foreigners’ and the possible destruction of their national community. Their fears evolve from anxieties about immigrants who cannot speak the language and practice different cultural traditions that challenge their established community, or ethnic and religious groups which cannot integrate into the wider society (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

On explaining the rising mistrust of democracy across the globe, another central argument scholars highlight is the importance of positively perceived socioeconomic conditions and the resulting sustainability of a democratic regime (Richards, 2017; Gusterson, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Emmott, 2017). These authors argue that if citizens perceive their economic circumstances, development and opportunities positively the more likely democracy will endure. With the expansion of democracy following the end of the Cold War, many citizens expected an increase in their living standards and way of life. However, with growing social inequalities, increased long-term unemployment, poverty and poor economic development across developing and developed nations, many individuals have become increasingly disillusioned with democracy (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). According to these scholars, this anger and disillusionment, extending from a sense of socioeconomic disparity, is what is currently driving the growing mistrust of democracy (Emmott, 2017; Gusterson, 2017; Mishra, 2017; Richards, 2017). Inglehart and Norris (2016) argue that, with rising economic insecurity and social deprivation, it has made those who feel less secure, i.e., the unskilled, low wage workers, unemployed, family’s dependent on shrinking social benefits and poorer populations, inclined to support other regimes which may offer an alternative to their current situation.

Many authors tie the concern of rising socioeconomic issues to the rise of a powerful and dominant elite who have failed to provide for the worsening socioeconomic conditions (Ikenberry, 2018; Emmott, 2017; Mickey, Levitsky & Way, 2017; Colgan & Keohane, 2017; Mishra, 2017). Ikenberry (2018:3) comments, “Western publics have increasingly come to regard the liberal international order not as a source of stability and solidarity among like-minded states but as a global playground for the rich and the powerful.” These authors argue that more and more publics are coming to the realization that the liberal international order is

in crisis as the security once offered by liberal democracy no longer exists. Rather, these publics increasingly see the system as a “neoliberal project aimed at benefitting the likes of globetrotting capitalists” (Ikenberry, 2018:9). Tired of feeling overlooked and disadvantaged, citizens increasingly see democracy as a game rigged by the powerful and, as such, turn away from the established political parties and leaders. The result is the increased likelihood of citizens turning to the anti-established, populist and nationalistic voices of other parties and leaders (Ikenberry, 2018; Emmott, 2017; Mickey, Levitsky & Way, 2017).

With a growing mistrust in democracy across the globe and the resulting declining momentum of the liberal international order, the phenomena of electing a Strongman¹ into office has become a popular occurrence across the world. In both developing and developed worlds, East to West, nations like the United States, Russia, Brazil, Hungary, Turkey as well as states like Italy, Venezuela, the Philippines and China, have placed autocrats (who tend to have a proclivity to pay little attention to democratic norms and have strong illiberal populist tendencies) into the presidential seat.

The issue with this strengthening authoritarianism trend is its current and possible future implications for the geopolitical environment. With the rise of Strongman leadership across the globe and its implications, it can be argued that the global order that has prevailed since the end of World War Two is currently wearing away, lending itself to a period of uncharacteristic political instability (Bremmer, 2019:4; Haass, 2019:22).

As key geopolitical institutions become increasingly volatile and dysfunctional; the European Union (EU), the transatlantic affiliation, American political institutions, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the current liberal democratic order (Bremmer, 2019:3), resulting in greater uncertainty concerning possible political outcomes, the prospect of higher insecurity at a regional and a global level are far more probable. These institutions will not collapse tomorrow but while they become increasingly unstable, the possibility for negative consequences in the future arises. Critical to liberal democracy across the globe, the collapse of these institutions could be detrimental to democratic prosperity.

¹ Originated from the leadership styles associated with the fascists of the 21st century. The term has become synonymous with the meaning of a political style that is characterised as populist, authoritarian and assertive (Roxburgh, 2012). In essence, Strongmen are leaders who are willing to go to extremes to protect their vote share, change the rules of the political game as needed in order to protect their advantages, preach politics of fear and resentment, renounce free media if it does not function as an arm of the government and give little regard to civil liberties (Walker, 2018).

The liberal democratic order needs to concern itself with the global rise of Strongmen and their more assertive, muscular style of leadership, as this current phenomenon exposes the world to increased geopolitical insecurity. If the world begins to see value in authoritarian types of rule, the less likely democratic liberalism will succeed. It holds many risks for the future of human rights and international collaboration, and may give way to a more aggressive and autocratic world order. With the current G-Zero² world being characterised by a global governance vacuum, sooner or later this could give way to a new world order, one characterised by international fragmentation, the collapse of key global regimes and the breakdown of important global democratic institutions (Haass, 2019:30).

Currently the rule of Strongmen can be seen to be bringing about a variety of concerns that pose problems for a G-Zero world. In nations across the world, there has been an increase in illiberal democracy and thus a decline in liberal politics. With the election of Strongmen, the world has seen the growing trend of the allowance for far-right political parties and coalitions: challenging the ideas of tolerance and diversity. European populism is increasingly impacting Europe's capacity as a geopolitical player and its role of ensuring human rights are protected and advanced across the world. Nations like Italy and Hungary, at the heart of Europe, continue to contend with the EU and its democratic institutions. Both nations continually show little regard for civil liberties and democratic norms. President Recep Erdogan of Turkey continually pushes for deeper control, ignoring democratic values, and acting in whatever manner ensures a hold on political power. While Russia, under President Vladimir Putin, continually finds ways to ensure its subversion of the Western mode of democracy while assaulting democracy across Europe and the United States, ensuring autocracy is the rule of law at home.

Examining specific nations that have elected a Strongman into power, inference can be made on how their rule poses risks to geopolitical security. This study will assess to what extent three specific Strongman characteristics are present in each case in order to measure Strongman rule in that specific state. The chosen states are Turkey under President Recep Erdogan, Russia under President Vladimir Putin and Hungary under the leadership of Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Each country will be assessed on the extent of the presence of four aspects that have been identified as core characteristics of Strongman leadership. The extent of the existence of

² The term G-Zero was coined to refer to a world without global leadership and an emerging vacuum of power in international politics (Bremmer, 2019). Where the US was initially seen as the world's policeman after World War Two, their abdication of global leadership has resulted in a vacuum on a geopolitical space which will have many implications.

these four aspects can be used to measure Strongman rule. Further, these four aspects, if present, can show how Strongman leadership may contribute to geopolitical insecurity.

1.2. Literature Review

So secure in the legitimacy of liberal democracy, for decades liberal democracy has been constituted as “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” and the “final form of human government” (Fukuyama, 1992). Francis Fukuyama (1992) famously argued that the overthrow of communism and success of liberalism following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union as remarkable because it represented a revolution; “the state that emerges at the end of history is liberal, in so far as it recognises and protects through a system of law man’s universal right to freedom and democratic insofar as it exists only with the consent of the governed”. Fukuyama (1992) argued that what would develop was a global marketplace where ideas, capital and goods would flow freely while people would promote democratisation throughout their societies. Global ideas would be free to cross borders; as a result, a liberal conception would win over hearts and minds. As the champion of liberal democracy, Fukuyama argued that the West (the US) would set about transforming the rest of the world while ensuring that, at the same time, the world found the best ways to imitate the West. While Fukuyama (1992) argued that democracy was the best and final form of human governance, he did note that not all countries would succeed at emulating the model, however, they would have no alternative to trying.

However, more and more actors have come to realise that the world is drifting; the global order as we know it is changing and instead a more autocratic, aggressive, uncooperative form is taking shape (Bremmer, 2018a; Rose, 2019; Snyder, 2018). According to Francis Fukuyama (2018), the Western world has been so secure in the belief that democratic liberalism was the final form of governance, no plan for democratic backsliding has been put in place. Fukuyama (2018) argues that, even amongst authors who disagreed with his thesis, there was still a mutual consensus that established democracies would remain consolidated. Thus, most surprising is not the decline of democracies in “new would-be democracies” but the threats to democracy arising from established democracies across the West (Fukuyama, 2018). Having failed to envision or plan for a future where autocratic and illiberal leadership becomes the norm, scholars are becoming increasingly concerned over the risk to the security of geopolitics (Bremmer, 2018a; Snyder, 2018).

With growing disillusionment with liberal democracy, evidence suggests the public of various nations across the globe are demanding more authoritative leadership; Strongmen who are willing to move away from liberal democracy in order to ensure the representation and progress of ordinary people. However, many authors note that with the rise of these Strongman leaders, there is a serious risk to the endurance and status quo of liberal democracy (Albright, 2018; Bremmer, 2019; Burleigh, 2018; Diamond, 2019; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Kearns, 2018; Krastev, 2018; Mounk, 2018; Rose, 2019; Snyder, 2018).

A frequent reference regarding the embodiment of Strongman leadership is given to Russia's current leader, Vladimir Putin. Under the leadership of Putin, Haass (2019:27) argues that Russia has seen a leader who frequently shows a growing disposition to create disorder. Putin has enacted various policies that can be seen as representative of his rejection of the principal constraints associated with the liberal, democratic world order (Haass, 2019:27). Under Putin, Russia has promoted the use of force in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, undiscerning military intervention in Syria, and the hostile use of cyberwarfare to affect political outcomes in the US (Haass, 2019:27). According to Snyder (2018:19), what makes leadership like Vladimir Putin's so dangerous is that it follows a philosophy which regards "fascism as the politics of the world to come". For years, Putin's government has engaged in a relentless assault to undermine democracy and the rule of law across the Western world, creating geopolitical insecurity as he wishes to promote a climate more conducive to Russia's anti-democratic behaviour (Sampson, 2018:153).

In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, although elected democratically, has continued to manipulate the political system to remain in power. Following an attempted coup in 2016, Erdogan has only become stronger, "giving him carte blanche to move against whomever he chooses and to do so in the name of fighting treason" (Albright, 2018:149). Erdogan's clampdown on dissent has been ruthless and consistent, jailing an extraordinary number of journalists, academics and opponents (Cagaptay, 2017).

But the character of strongman is also making a comeback across Europe. From Hungary's Viktor Orban, "illiberal democracy" (Albright, 2018; Mounk, 2018) has spread within Europe, as political systems come with free elections but scarce regard for civil liberties. To many outside observers, Orban is a "xenophobic, anti-democratic nationalist with a cruel anti-refugee agenda" (Albright, 2018:171). With Hungary situated in Europe, the nation poses a "systemic threat" to democracy and the rule of law. Haass (2019), Albright (2018), Mounk (2018) and

Burleigh (2017) argue that the rise of a leader like Orban in the centre of Europe, is reflective of a far bigger issue at hand; the deterioration of the liberal order and the rise of the populist-right, increased Euroskepticism and EU disarray across Europe and the globe.

Although authors point to the risks of having such Strongmen in power (Albright, 2018; Bremmer, 2019; Burleigh, 2018; Diamond, 2019; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Kearns, 2018; Krastev, 2018; Mounk, 2018; Rose, 2019; Snyder, 2018), they have failed to paint a holistic picture. While these authors have focused on specific nation states and its illiberal democratic leader, focus is placed typically on America under Donald Trump and Russia under the guise of Vladimir Putin. Little attention has been given to nations outside these two global players, but, fundamentally, the literature fails to give a global perspective and highlight the interconnectedness between each of these Strongmen. By way of illustration, Madelaine Albright (2018) focuses on Russia, and the US under President Donald Trump, Michael Burleigh (2018) focuses on Russia and the US but also examines China under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, while Timothy Snyder (2018) focuses on Russia and America and the general decline of democracy in Europe. Other authors such as Diamond (2019), Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) and Kearns (2018) also place their focus on states such as Russia and America while giving brief mention to nations such as Turkey, Hungary, Poland and Europe as a whole.

Further, these scholars (Albright, 2018; Burleigh, 2018; Diamond, 2019; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Kearns, 2018; Snyder, 2018) continue to look at the regional effects of the rise of autocratic leaders, while few have examined how their style of leadership can impact geopolitics and lead to increased global insecurity. Another issue within the current available literature is the inclination for most academics to focus solely on the US and its leadership under Donald Trump, and instead ignore the power of nations such as Hungary and Turkey. For instance, Viktor Orban of Hungary has been eroding the country's democracy for years, but only very recently has more attention been paid to his leadership. Further, there is little literature and acknowledgement on nations like Brazil, Italy and Venezuela who have also elected Strongmen. Although this study will not examine these nations, these represent a status that can have far reaching global effects. Under financial stress, if Italy were to collapse, it would send shockwaves throughout the EU, while in Venezuela, under Nicolas Maduro, the country's crisis has been impacting the entirety of South America (Bremmer, 2019). In Brazil, the fourth largest democracy in the world, in October 2018 the people elected Jair Bolsonaro – a far-right populist. Bolsonaro openly defends the defunct military regime, police autonomy and the subjugation of human rights for more public safety (Hunter & Power, 2019:73-80).

Brazil's possible status as a declining democracy will also have significant contributions to geopolitical security and the global decline of democracy.

More research is needed in this every changing and important topic. Continued, in-depth research is needed in order to create a bigger picture that fully acknowledges the dangers of the rise of strongmen leadership and how it can lead to increased geopolitical security. Further, as pointed out by Fukuyama (2018), the world became far too secure in the US-led global, democratic order, and consequently, state-actors as well as none-state actors have failed to plan for a future where democracy and its core values are no longer the foundation by which the world is governed. While some authors argue it is too late to continue the global led order as we know it (Bremmer, 2019; Burleigh, 2017; Haass, 2019; Rose, 2019), it is vital that its current decline is acknowledged so that a different and less foreseeable future can be planned for.

1.3. Relevance of Research

In the decades since the end of the Cold War, it had been widely assumed that after the fall of communism, the Western model of free-market liberal democracy and free-trade would become “the world’s final form of human government” (Fukuyama, 1992). Now, at a moment when liberal democracy seems to be in decline across the West, and its general acceptance becomes less secure across the globe, it has become crucial to examine the variables that contribute to the decline of liberal democracy. An important factor in the examination of declining world democracy is the growing trend for nations to elect political “Strongmen”, who often follow a policy of illiberal democracy.

As the US turns inwards from its role as the linchpin of this order, Europe is troubled with populist nationalism and consistently growing Euroskepticism, and as Russia and China continue their move towards autocratic world leadership, understanding how strongmen influence this trend as well as the likelihood of geopolitical insecurity is critical. Examining the rule of Strongmen across various nations can show commonality in their rule and the risk it poses not only at a regional level but on a geopolitical level. Their leadership is full of potential risks for security on a regional and global scale, as well as the continuation of championing the liberal democratic order. Fundamentally, the goal of this study is to bring attention to the growing trend of the election of Strongman politicians into office and in doing so, the study anticipates showing how Strongmen pose possible risks to current geopolitical security.

1.4. Research Design & Methodology

The purpose of this section is to highlight and describe the idea and importance of research design and the process of research that will be conducted. Every research project has a logic that provides the framework for the research and guides the research strategy (Burnham, Lutz, Grant & Layton-Henry, 2008:39). Research design, the research questions, possible limitations, and the chapter outlines for the study will be discussed. This section will set out the priorities of the research and the process that will be undertaken in order to conduct the study.

In order to engage in meaningful and productive research, it is important that the researcher establishes a logical structure and strategy before the investigation can begin. Research design is thus an important initial step as it provides the framework for the creation and analysis of data according to the priorities set by the researcher (Burnham *et al.*, 2008:39). Therefore, in order to demonstrate the outcomes of the research, the research design specifies how the data will be collected, systematised and integrated into the study.

Qualitative data/research for this thesis will prove to be most useful as it will provide the means for collecting in-depth information. The qualitative research methodology is also most effective for this study as a large amount of theoretical information will need to be collected and analysed. The research study will draw on existing secondary data from newspaper articles, journals and academic books in order to provide evidence for the research question/s. This study will also make use of multiple sources as it is necessary for this study to focus on multiple perspectives. The study is built on existing secondary data in order to analyse the causal relationship that the research question sets out to answer concerning Strongman leadership and geopolitical insecurity. As the research question focuses on a current event that is continually changing, data will be collected throughout the research process in order to allow for alterations throughout the process. The study will be explanatory, descriptive and casual as it firstly aims to provide a better understanding of the rise of Strongman leadership and its core characteristics. It will seek to provide probable events with the rise of geopolitical insecurity, and, furthermore it aims to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the placement of a Strongman in office and increased geopolitical insecurity (Burnham *et al.*, 2008). Another reason for the use of qualitative data is that it generally allows for interpretation which, in this specific research case, will be most useful as the data studied as well as how it is interpreted can be subjective.

The comparative method of research will be most useful for this research study as the goal of comparative research is to identify similarities and differences between social entities while allowing the research to be reasoned in terms of variables. Ultimately this means that the distinctiveness of each case (in this case, Hungary, Russia, and Turkey) is less important than the case understood as a combination of values and specific variables (Burnham *et al.*, 2008:69). To understand fully the significant political consequences of placing a Strongman in presidential power and the possible resulting geopolitical insecurities, it will be most beneficial to compare nations, and in this way integrate old and new knowledge. Although each nation and their Strongman in power can be argued to be representative of a case-study, the research is part of a larger, comparative body of research. By using more than one state, it will provide the empirical basis for building and sustaining the research and its proposed argument (Burnham *et al.*, 2008:70). The comparative method centres on observing and comparing carefully selected cases on the basis of some variables being present, thus it is most useful for this specific study. A comparative study rests on the importance of choosing cases that are representative, thus the use of three different nations that specifically relate to the research question will allow for wider generalisations to be made as well as to enable the argument to be evidently justified (Burnham *et al.*, 2008:73). The careful selection of multiple cases will provide a much more robust test of a theory and can specify the conditions under which hypotheses and theories may or may not hold (Burnham *et al.*, 2008:65). The cases of Hungary, Russia and Turkey all pertain to the research question and embody several features that characterise how strongman leadership can lead to increased global insecurity.

1.4.1. Research Question

With a world once committed to a US-led global order and the institutions it was built upon, increasing interest and concern in the growing coalition of world leaders unwilling to uphold the global liberal order has become a critical event which several actors are attempting to understand. With the architecture of the world global order at risk and the rise of leaders across the globe who challenge the institutions and consensus they represent, more research has become a necessity.

By researching the link between Strongman leadership and the probability of increased geopolitical insecurity, the aim is to confirm or falsify this relationship, specifically through the examination of three nations who have recently elected and/or re-elected strongmen into power who tend to casually disrespect the norms and values of liberal democracy. Based on the issues that have been previously raised, the following research question is presented.

- *How does Strongman leadership threaten global security?*

Four variables³ will be used to assess/measure Strongman rule in three specific nations; Turkey, Russia and Hungary. Once this has been achieved, these variables and the extent to which they are present, can show how geopolitical stability is threatened. The four identified variables are:

- 1) The violation of human rights
- 2) The erosion of key democratic institutions
- 3) Populist Nationalism
- 4) The violation of sovereignty & international law

The aim of the research study is thus to analyse the process of a definite style of leadership present in a specific three states and how this leadership, present at a regional level, will apply to a geopolitical setting, and if it will increase geopolitical insecurity. Orban, Putin and Erdogan are all leaders who disparage the essential elements of democratic life and show a casual disrespect for the norms and values of liberal democracy itself (Ikenberry, 2018:2). By examining the Strongman style of leadership and casual disregard for liberal democracy, the study will thus determine what the impact of this is on the architecture of geopolitics and if it contributes to increased geopolitical insecurity.

1.4.2. Limitations

The issue with the use of comparative qualitative research designs is that many researchers argue they can only be used to generate hypotheses and theories. Thus, in order to truly determine if there is a relationship between Strongman leadership and increased geopolitical insecurity, further testing needs to be done through other forms of research design (Burnham *et al.*, 2008:64). Simply gaining data from only secondary desktop research provides for a limited foundation for the study and may lead to generalisation and subjectivity over the content. Consequently, although generalisations are made, there is no clear data to indicate such generalisations are accurate, and instead may seem to be oversimplifications.

Another limitation of the research design is that the use of internet sources and secondary data may bring authenticity into question. Academic reliability and validity may be at risk if inauthentic sources and data are used. Thus, utmost care must be taken to ensure authentic, reliable and valid data is collected and used in order to draw valid conclusions and arguments.

³ These four variables will be clarified through a literature review in Chapter Two.

This also leads to the issue of the sheer volume of information that is available for the research question. Careful attention will need to be utilised in order to ensure relevant, authentic and objective data is used and not simply the first data found.

1.5. Chapter Outline for Research Study

Chapter Two examines the theoretical frameworks, which serve as the foundation for this research study. Attention will be given to Francis Fukuyama's original thesis *The End of History and the Last Man*, as in light of the ascension of the political Strongman, this brings an obstacle to what Fukuyama perceived for our political and economic future. Essential terms related to geopolitics and the literature on democracy are conceptualised, as are the key terms crucial for this research study, such as Strongman leadership and its core characteristics.

Chapter Three will examine the three chosen states, Hungary, Russia and Turkey, and under their respective current leadership. Four variables identified as core characteristics of Strongman leadership will be assessed in each case study to measure the presence of Strongman rule. While examining these core variables, the chapter will also discuss why these variables can be argued to be problematic.

Chapter Four will offer a reflection on Fukuyama's thesis in light of the research gathered in Chapter Three. The aim of this is to not disagree or critique his original thesis but rather show that the rise of Strongmen across the globe may act as an obstacle to the achievement of his hypothesis. The chapter will then focus on the examination how these Strongmen, and more specifically, how their four core characteristics, may contribute to increased geopolitical insecurity.

Chapter Five will focus on the main findings of the study and provide an analysis. The research question will be answered, and accomplishments of the research will be reflected upon. Furthermore, possible improvements and avenues for further research are addressed. The goal is to make secondary parties more aware of the risk of Strongman leadership and its potential to increase geopolitical insecurities and renounce the liberal democratic order.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter serves as a general introduction to this research study. Moreover, it provides a technical outline of the methodology, research design, limitations as well as a chapter guide. The objective of this study is to investigate how Strongman leadership can contribute to increased geopolitical insecurity, when looking at three specific nations; Hungary, Turkey, and

Russia. The next chapter provides the foundations for this research study and will conceptualise the key terms within the field.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Conceptualising Key Terminology

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the theoretical foundations for this study as well as to conceptualise key terms and concepts that were briefly discussed in the previous chapter. Firstly, Francis Fukuyama's thesis *The End of History and the Last Man* will be discussed as it is often a focal point in research conducted by other scholars, specifically in their discussion of the global democratic decline. This will be followed by the conceptualisation of key terminology that will be critical for the advancement of this research. Key term geopolitical insecurity will be discussed, thereafter Strongman leadership will be conceptualised based on four key aspects that are found to be core characteristics of this style of leadership.

2.2. Francis Fukuyama – The End of History

Francis Fukuyama, an acclaimed American political philosopher, entered the global imagination when he prophesied that after the fall of communism, free-market liberalism had won out and would become the world's final form of governance. Fukuyama's initial argument, in its most simplistic form, argued that the end of the Cold War was "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalisation of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama, 1992). Proclaiming the "end of history", Fukuyama stated that, after the fall of communism, free-market liberal democracy had shown to be the most successful form of government and would become the world's "final form of human government". History had ended in the sense that civilisation had finally reached an answer to one of the key questions of the purpose of human civilisation, one that had spirited human curiosity for centuries. States would have to adopt the principles of liberal democracy and free market capitalism to keep up within an increasingly globalised world. Closed communist societies, such as the Soviet Union, had shown themselves to be too uncreative and unproductive to compete economically and militarily with liberal states. Their political regimes were also unstable, since no social form other than liberal democracy provided enough freedom and dignity for a contemporary society to remain stable (Fukuyama, 1992). For Fukuyama (1992:8), there are no fundamental contradictions in human life that cannot be resolved in the context of modern liberalism.

At the core of his argument, Fukuyama contended that there was/is no conceivable ideological rival to liberal democracy as there are powerful reasons for believing it is the ideal that will

govern the material world in the long run (Fukuyama, 1992). Accordingly, liberal democracy would undoubtedly triumph for there was no coherent alternative to it (Fukuyama, 1992). Communism had failed, Islamic theocracy had precious little support outside the Middle East and China's unique system of state capitalism under the banner of communism could hardly be emulated by countries that did not share its unusual history. Thus, Fukuyama contended that few people could be persuaded that there was a higher form of civilisation than that of liberal democracy found in Europe, the United States and other developed democracies. Henceforth, no other system of governance could emerge that would pose a challenge, and as such, the future it seemed belonged to liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992).

While there were also many authors to criticise Fukuyama and his thesis (Gat, 2007; Kagan, 2008; Barber, 1992), warning that liberal democracy might not triumph all over the world, these authors were as sure that it would remain stable in democratic heartlands of North America and Western Europe. The argument was that once a country was both affluent and democratic, and key democratic benchmarks were attained, the political system would prove to be incredibly stable (Fukuyama, 1992). Liberal democracy seemed immutable and it quickly took root in formerly autocratic countries from Eastern Europe to South America and was making rapid inroads across Asia and Africa. Democracy would reign victorious, for despite all its shortcomings, most citizens seemed deeply committed to this form of government (Fukuyama, 1992).

Fukuyama (1992; 2014) also argued that the post-Cold War world would be one of peace and prosperity as the world was still bound by a formal order, where borders between states would endure but no longer provide the power and incentive to provoke war and conflict. Fukuyama envisioned the spreading of the postmodern idea of the state, one in which values trump interests. It is important to note that Fukuyama understood that liberal democracy still had its limits, however, he argues that he did not see his task as answering "the challenges to liberalism promoted by every messiah around the world".

To qualify his argument, Fukuyama was adamant to point that the "end of history" did not mean all states would automatically become liberal societies or that international conflict would end. This is because not all states would recognise or welcome the *End of History*, in large part since liberalism threatens the power and status of illiberal elites. Fukuyama (1992:13-14) further highlighted two broad movements that might motivate enduring conflict: religious fundamentalism and nationalism. On the risk of nationalism, Fukuyama contended that

liberalism had discredited nationalism as “mild cultural nostalgia” and it was simply a response to liberalism failures. Fukuyama (1992:24) argues that “many proponents of liberal democracy do not understand the ways in which moderate nationalism can contribute to the success of democracy as a matter of practical politics”, as a strong national identity can positively reinforce democracy. For Fukuyama (1992:26), national identity can coexist with liberalism (if it is a form of tolerant nationalism) as democracy is the only form of government that is equipped to deal with a proliferating number of interest groups. Henceforth, the potential rise of destructive forms of nationalism and fundamentalism were unlikely to prevail, leading Fukuyama to justify why liberalism was likely to be permanent.

Until recently, Political Scientists had long ago thought that democracy had been set in stone, specifically in places like the United States, and Western Europe. So confident were academics in this assumption that few considered the conditions under which democratic consolidation might risk running in reverse (Tharoor, 2017:5). But recent events call this democratic self-confidence into question. Until recently most citizens of liberal democracy were satisfied with their governments and institutions, however, more and more citizens grow increasingly hostile and disillusioned with democracy, questioning its reliability. Post-war liberal consensus has come apart under the strain of nationalist populism and intensifying geopolitical competition as nations across the globe put Strongmen into power (Snyder, 2019:55). Many authors argue that global democracy is experiencing the worst setback since the 1930s and will only continue to retreat unless something is done (Inglehart, 2018; Mounk, 2019; Russel-Mead, 2018), while others fear the game is already over and that democratic dominance has ended for good (Inglehart, 2018:20).

Miller (2019) argues that if Fukuyama missed anything in his argument, it was the possibility of the “marriage of three of the potential challengers to the End of History he identified: the union of historical nostalgia with the forces of religious fundamentalism and nationalism” (Miller, 2019). These phenomena are driving a wide array of challenges, undermining the democratic liberal order. Democracies in several rich, consolidated and established nations now face authoritarian, xenophobic populist movements that threaten democracies’ long-term health (Russel-Mead, 2018:10). With frequent problematic political developments, society is increasingly finding the current political structure and ideas irrelevant (Inglehart, 2018:20).

This latest democratic setback could prove to be permanent as authoritarian populists are starting to develop an ideological alternative in the form of illiberal democracy, as autocrats

are offering citizens a standard of living that increasingly rivals that of the richest countries in the West (Mounk & Foa, 2018:35). Authoritarian states are starting to compete with liberal democracies, combining a strong state with relatively free market and reasonably secure property rights (Mounk & Foa, 2018:33). What we are seeing instead is the rise of illiberal democracy, or democracy without rights (Mounk, 2018:14), a working alternative to the liberal democracy that has been championed by the West since the end of the Cold War.

Liberal democracy it seems is being undermined as geopolitical and ideological rivals contend with the liberal order (Russell-Mead, 2018:15). The collective economic might of authoritarian powers now outweighs that of advanced liberal democracies, and it is probable that the future will be characterised as a renewed struggle for global ideological supremacy (Russell-Mead, 2018:15). With the return of antiliberal nationalism in both emergent and consolidated liberal democracies, as well as the emergence of leaders who violate the basic norms of liberal democracy, the stability of democracy and security is potentially at risk.

The use of Fukuyama's original essay *The End of History and the Last Man* is not to disagree or critique his thesis. Rather to highlight that current events are in contrast to the belief (held by many) that the future would be one of democracy, stability and security. It is rather a reflection on his thesis and that political events currently arising pose an obstacle to this perceived future.

The assessment of Strongman leadership and the fluctuations such leadership may bring towards geopolitics are an important contrast to what Fukuyama predicted and, thus, must be important to take note of. The turbulence of current geopolitics does not have to be read as a rebuttal of Fukuyama's original thesis, but it does bring into question whether democracy is the last form of human governance. Recently, Fukuyama has also come to doubt his own thesis on the *End of History*, agreeing that in recent years, the number of fallen democracies and retreat in virtually all regions of the world does conflict with his original argument (Fukuyama, 2014, 2018; Tharoor, 2017). With a growing clout of authoritarian states and political leaders, the backlash of right-wing nationalism and populism, liberal democracy seems to be in decline across the West, which has Fukuyama too, wondering about the prospects of liberal democracy. When Fukuyama first wrote his thesis, he did not have a sense or a theory about how democracies "could go backwards" as it gave evidence that it was the only credible political system (Tharoor, 2017). However, with recent geopolitical events, Fukuyama has come to realise that democracies can clearly deconsolidate and move backwards. Fukuyama has come

to recognise the current decline, “globalization really does seem to produce these internal tensions within democracies that these institutions have some trouble reconciling” (Tharoor, 2017). This, coupled with the slow erosion of democratic institutions, the weakening of democratic norms, and the ascension of political Strongmen, has Fukuyama concerned over the possibility of the weakening of liberal democracy.

2.3. Conceptualising Key Terminology

The objective in this section is to conceptualise the key terms that are essential to the study. The foundation that is built in the following sections is crucial, as it will provide the framework for presenting and analysing the research data in the following chapters. First, the term “Geopolitical Insecurity” will be conceptualised followed by a discussion of why this is an important theme in the current political climate. Each term will be defined in its own context before two are combined under one definition. This will offer a more holistic picture and better understanding of the concept. Secondly, the concept of ‘Strongman leadership’ will be examined, followed by an inspection of the key characteristics that can be commonly found in the ideology, rhetoric and actions of Strongmen across the world.

2.3.1. Geopolitical Insecurity

2.3.1.1. Geopolitics

In recent years there has been a debate between scholars about whether geopolitics is compatible in the changing world in which we live. Included within this debate is whether or not the world is reverting “to traditional power dynamics with untraditional players” or whether a “new geopolitics” is emerging based on the importance of soft power rather than traditional military hard power (Baylis, 2014:184). In its most simplistic form, some authors also use the geopolitical label to simply depict Great Power international relations in general, however, many scholars argue there are more layers and elements to the concept (Kelly, 2016:3).

Brian Blouet (2001:19) defines geopolitics as “policies that seek to establish national or imperial control over space and the resources, routeways, industrial capacity and population the territory contains”. For Kruger and Frost (2001), traditional geopolitics centres around the balance of power and inter-state conflict, rendering it largely irrelevant within the current globalised world. Kelly’s (2016:23) definition for geopolitics is “the study of the impact or influence of certain geographic features, positions and locations of regions, states, and resources, plus topography, climate, distance, state’s size and shape, demography, upon the states’ foreign policies and actions as an aid to statecraft. Thus, lending itself both to theory

and to policy”. For Kelly (2016), geopolitics should not be equated with ideas such as power politics, hegemonic dominance or economic instability but should rather only be “neutral” in definition, based upon its geographic heritage, that being states’ and regions’ unique spatial positions and locations as impacting upon their foreign relations. Tim Marshall (2015:x), in his examination of how geography has shaped the current political world as it is, broadly defines geopolitics as “the ways in which international affairs can be understood through geographical factors; not just physical landscape – the natural barriers of mountains or connections of river networks – but also climate, demographics, cultural regions and access to natural resources”. Marshall (2015:10) continues that these factors have an important impact on many different aspects of our civilisation, as geography “is clearly a fundamental part of the ‘why’ as well as the ‘what’ and in sum, one should see the connection between power and geography”.

Although Marshall (2015) and Kelly (2016) place a vast amount of emphasis on geography on influencing foreign policy and global influence, it can be argued that while geography has its place, its importance must not be overstated. Baylis (2014), Falk (2012) and Russell-Mead (2014) rather, maintain that if a nation wishes for certain actions and events to take place, it will ensure whatever it can to do so, no matter what geographical factors may influence or hinder their policies.

Although some scholars render geopolitics incompatible in today’s world system, many more take the position that traditional geopolitics remains as important as ever in the twenty-first century. An element critical today is that of “falling-dominoes” or “contagion patterns” in which one sort of action, riots, rebellion, military dictatorship or democracy, for instance, can flow across national frontiers (Kearns, 2018:126; Kelly, 2016:3; Zonis, Lefkowitz, Wilkin, & Yackley, 2011:215). Accordingly, within geopolitics, it is vital to recognise that outside forces have always had a profound influence on the stability and instability of states (Zonis *et al.*, 2010:216). Traditional geopolitics emphasises ideas such as the importance of preventing the emergence of a new hegemon, by thwarting any state from dominating Eurasia or/and preventing global hegemons from rising (Baylis, 2014:185). This thought process was echoed in the policy of containment of the Soviet Union during the Cold War and the idea that “who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who controls Eurasia controls the world” (Baylis, 2014:185). Traditional geopolitics can be seen in the strategies of both the US and China currently, seen by the US prioritising the Pacific while China places emphasis in relation to islands in the South and East China Seas. Baylis (2014:185) gives the example of the Syrian civil war as current geopolitics where outside powers sought to intervene both indirectly and

directly with a view of achieving a balance of power in a critical region of the world which suits their interests. While the US and Turkey provided support for the rebels, Russia and Iran in contrast aided the Assad regime.

While these authors argue old geopolitics is still embedded within policy and studies presently, those that take this position also point to the emergence of a “new geopolitics”. Richard Falk (2012) argues that the emerging “new geopolitics” rests less on the importance of military power and more on the importance of soft power, is more universalistic and less statist in the composition of actors providing global leadership and influencing policy. Falk (2012) argues this can be seen through the emergence of co-operative international groups such as the BRICS⁴ countries which expresses the shift in understanding of a more multi-polar world order structure. Parallel to this is the rise in importance of a wide variety of non-state actors; such as private sector actors and civil society representatives to establish their own institutional sphere in order to put forward their own alternative policy agendas.

Russell (2014:69) who also supports the notion of the return of geopolitics and the emergence of a new geopolitics, however, disagrees with Falk (2012) and sees its return as the resurgence in which rivalries between great world powers have returned to centre stage of international relations, characterised by old-fashioned power plays and anti-western sentiment. Russell (2014:70) argues that this new geopolitics sees the globalised world returning its focus to questions of territory, military power and global governance, negating global issues such as trade liberalisation, nuclear non-proliferation, human rights and climate change. Russell (2014:70) argues that geopolitics which takes this form not only diverts time and energy from important matters that concern the future betterment of the globe, but it becomes more and more difficult to promote and maintain a positive world order. A key point to Russell’s (2014:70) argument is that it was incorrect to have expected “old fashioned geopolitics to go away”. With the triumph of liberal capitalist democracy after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, the biggest issues in world politics was assumed to no longer concern boundaries, military bases, national self-determination, or spheres of influence. Instead, with liberal democracy at the helm, the world was likely to prosper, and issues of the past were unlikely (Russell, 2014:70). This then saw the focus shifted away from geopolitics towards development economics and non-proliferation. However, several nations never bought into the

⁴ BRICS is the acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

geopolitical settlement that followed the Cold War and, as such, there have been attempts to overturn it ever since, only reviving geopolitics.

In line with this argument is the view that the “new geopolitics” signifies the entering of a new phase of international affairs, leaving behind a brief history characterised by unbridled American dominance (Jones, 2017:1; Bremmer, 2018a). According to Jones (2017) and Bremmer (2018a), this new geopolitics has several distinct features, some unique to the current political flux. This new phase, according to these authors, can be described as a combination of a new Cold War between two major political powers, and a G-Zero world in which the sentiment is every country for themselves. This current geopolitics sees heightened relations between the states; a new ‘great game’ of competition that is prevalent with risk of confrontation and miscalculation. Further, idioms such as “American leadership” and “America first” no longer dominate the dynamics of a world that can now be characterised as a reality of asymmetric multi-polarity (Jones, 2017:2) combined with a lack of global governance only leading to uncharacteristic political instability (Bremmer, 2018b:4). A central feature of this new geopolitical flux is the active re-evaluation by major states of their security relationships with the United States. Major countries are questioning whether they can rely on the US to maintain inter-state security in their region and, if not, where new help could be found. Jones (2017:3) contends that this only amplifies the struggle over political and economic alignment across the world, which fundamentally affects the prospects of peace and development on a global scale, as there is less and less international collaboration (Bremmer, 2018b:3). Lastly, within this new geopolitics is also renewed geopolitical competition which differs depending on the state of play. Jones (2017:5) argues that in advanced economies, a deceptive game of “confront and conceal” is being played with cyber intrusions, disguised financial influence, and disinformation campaigns to disrupt internal politics. While in less advanced economies and unstable environments, old fashioned proxy warfare has re-emerged in order to gain control over politics or territory. In closing their argument, Jones (2017) and Bremmer (2018b) conclude that it only leaves the international landscape in a much more uncertain, tense and untrusting situation which will only reverberate insecurity across international relations.

For Ian Bremmer (2018a, 2018b), Bruce Jones (2017), Ivan Krastev (2017), Richard Falk (2012), Thomas Wright (2017) and Steve Richards (2017), geopolitics must be understood in the context of globalisation. Understood as the “cross-border flow of ideas, information, people, money, and services” (Bremmer, 2018b:8), the resulting interconnected world have positioned national leaders with the increasingly limited ability to protect the lives and

livelihoods of citizens. Under globalisation, politics has become forever changed, making governing a nation more difficult while creating an environment of increased uncertainty. These scholars argue that in the face of ever-changing realities, the world has seen the return and intensification of geopolitical competition as unprecedented interdependence has shifted the array of possible active measures. This economic, financial and technological interdependence means major powers may have leverage over, and be vulnerable to, their geopolitical rivals (Wright, 2017:172). These authors argue understanding the impact of globalisation in the context of geopolitics is important as while the resulting interdependence may encourage cooperation and decreased tensions, at the same time it can have the opposite effect – increased tensions and frictions. Globalisation's integration of the world has made nations more strategically exposed and has thus created a more geopolitically competitive world (Wright, 2017:284). Globalisation is fundamental in the understanding of geopolitics, for the stretching of social, political and economic activities across political frontiers gives rise to the ability of events, decisions and activities in one region to have significance in distant regions of the world. The growing magnitude of interconnectedness clearly impacts the pace, intensity and extensity of global interactions and, as such, with domestic and world politics becoming practically inseparable, geopolitics must be understood in this context. Simply, one nation's internal direction and external relations will impact key regional and global dynamics (Jones, 2017:3).

In summary, while each scholar seems to have their own definition of the concept "geopolitics", there is clear overlap. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, geopolitics will be conceptualised with a combination of understandings as it can be argued all viewpoints correspond with one another. At an expansive level, geopolitics concerns the actions of states within a global perspective; interactions that occur upon the regional and international stages with regards to realms of war and peace, alliance formations and balances of power, national security, and the contagion effects that flow across international borders. In its most simplistic conceptualisation, geopolitics concerns the current relations between nation states and their actions which affect not only a singular space, but more often than not, have a global impact.

2.3.1.2. Geopolitical Insecurity

Insecurities, possible threats and instability remain a key concern of geopolitical security. The world is increasingly characterised as unstable and unpredictable, leaving the security dynamics of the globe in flux (Larrabee, 2010:34). It is evident that military forces continue to be an important arbitrator of disputes, while conventional arms races continue in different

regions of the world. Nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons still exert a powerful influence on the security calculations of many states. Irrational, ambitious politicians remain head of some governments while the presence of diverse values and clear tensions prevent the emergence of global cooperation on a wide range of important issues (Baylis, 2014:186). At times of uncertainty and anxiety, individual and societal insecurity is increasingly evident as the forces of fragmentation destabilise traditional identities, complicating relationships between state and non-state actors.

In a world of continuing mistrust and uncertainty, geopolitical insecurity is likely to remain as political communities look after what they perceive to be their own perceived interests, sectional, religious, national, or regional security against threats from within and without (Baylis, 2014:186). Acknowledged previously, the actions of states do not function in isolation but rather have an influence on a global level. As such, in the creation of new challenges and unpredictability, the likelihood of geopolitical insecurity is extremely likely as states battle with increased anxiety and uncertainty. Ian Kerns (2018) argues that in today's political landscape, the nature of crisis facing states is not only internal weaknesses but, what mostly leaves them vulnerable stems from external threats, either a neighbouring country or a nation across the sea (2018:107-116). For Kearns (2018:126), in a world so globalised and interdependent, a central concern for nations in the current geopolitical world is the issue of geography as countries lend their primary focus to their defence of their neighbouring countries.

Larrabee (2010), Falk (2012), Baylis (2014), Bremmer (2018a, 2018b) and Russell (2014) argue that, in this context, there are clear implications for security across the globe. These authors argue several developments that can be seen to lead to an increased sense of geopolitical insecurity. Larrabee (2010:35) first notes that when nations wish to change the current security order, as they believe it does not sufficiently take into consideration its current status and interests, this can lead to insecurity as it leads to the unpredictability of what such a state may do to alter this. This nation often acts to challenge the global balance of power or may act in "self-proclaimed defensive actions" in order to maintain its sphere of influence (Larrabee, 2010:36). Baylis (2014) and Russell (2014) note that the disregard and trampling of international law is also a current feature of geopolitical insecurity as it highlights the willingness of nations to become "rogue states" in order to ensure the advancement of its own interests. Lastly, Larrabee (2010:44) points to the use of economic instruments and assertive policy in order to expand power and influence. More and more nations are using energy and

resources as a political weapon to erode another nations' independence. In summary, these actions create geopolitical insecurity by way of ensuring there is no trust or special relationships between nations, but rather every nation is focused on itself and gaining an edge over the other (Albright, 2018:218). For Bremmer (2018b:3), this international fragmentation could mean the irreparable damage of the current global regime and a resulting system that is far more erratic and anarchistic.

Ian Bremmer (2018b:5) points to several key elements that have emerged unrecognisable and sometimes dysfunctional that point to a geopolitical order characterised by insecurity. Firstly, for Bremmer (2019), he argues that the breakdown of long-standing political frameworks in advanced economies is causing greater uncertainty over what falls within the realm of probable political outcomes. Bremmer (2018b:5) gives the examples of the failure of mainstream parties and candidates in liberal democracies across the globe, the increasing populist message of centrist leaders in order to out-manoeuvre increasingly intransigent constituencies and the election of fringe candidates into office. For Bremmer (2018a), these events are characteristic of the radicalisation and disintegration of politics which makes traditionally stable countries struggle to deliver the type of governance required for markets to succeed. Problematically, for Bremmer (2018b:10) this also means the fraying of important values such as openness and integration and, therefore, the possibility for more autocratic, egotistical policies from important nations that have long been positive beacons for the world. Another element characteristic of the geopolitical insecurity is the unravelling of international alliances. Where alliances were once the backbone of the post-World War Two era, they are now characterised by mistrust, unreliability and hollowness, only further entrenching a sense of global insecurity (Bremmer, 2018a).

Lastly, an important factor highlighted by these authors (Baylis, 2014; Bremmer, 2018a; Russell, 2014), while the message of geopolitics is becoming increasingly self-seeking, this does not diminish the role of geopolitics. The reason for this is that some states believe the best way to advance their own security and prosperity is through either interfering in other states, creating regional or national alliances, or/and even possibly invading another nation. The issue with this type of geopolitics is that it centres on competition between regions which involves a "predisposition to follow narrowly defined national interests down the rabbit hole will only worsen and prolong the effects of a broken global governance system" (Bremmer, 2018b:15). Amid this vacuum, consumed by a shortage of trust and collaboration, rising alternatives and growing fragmentation, the world is becoming increasingly insecure and unstable.

2.3.2. “Strongman” Leadership

In modern society, the presence of ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse people surrounds the political culture of any context in complexity. Despite this heterogeneity in democracies across the globe, authors (Brown, 2014; Roxburgh, 2012; Prashad, 2018) have tended to put forward in broad agreement that a ‘strong’ leader is a positive thing. One who is strong enough to ensure positive public policy is formulated and put into practice, is successful in creating foreign policy and in securing constructive relationships with international states and organisations and ultimately ensures the prosperity of the state. Within a democracy, leadership is not everything, and only part of the story. However, it is important to understand as it can make a significant difference and ultimately affect the prosperity of a nation and its citizens (Brown, 2014; Zonis *et al.*, 2011:111).

Leadership has numerous dynamics and facets which are important to understand when examining a leader’s role in the welfare of a state. The basic understanding of democratic leadership and the role it is intended to play is characterised as featuring core values that the leader possesses and what the leader does for their citizens. Diamond (2015:35) argues that a good democracy is a function of a leader who “accords its citizens ample freedom, political equality and control over public policies and policymakers through the legitimate and lawful functioning of stable institutions”. Critically, a democratic leader governs a political system that ensures there are periodic free and fair elections, fair competition among political parties and candidates, the fundamental protection of civil liberties and the independence of key democratic institutions, such as the judiciary and the legal system (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Kapstein & Converse, 2008; Young, 2002; Schedler, 2001). Durable democratic institutions that ensure checks and balances are an essential element to democracy (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Kapstein & Converse, 2008; Young, 2002; Schedler, 2001) as they ensure legitimacy, accountability, transparency, all the while ensuring the power of the majority is constrained. Citizens’ ability to be represented as well as for the regime to be held accountable can only occur when there are the necessary institutions available. Inglehart and Welzel (2003:64) suggest that a political culture governed by a democratic leader is supportive of participation, liberty, self-expression and tolerance of diversity. Rothstein and Teorell (2008) argue that a democratic leader is one who abides by the value of political equality. This principle legitimises democracy as it gives citizens access to political power and ensures their voices are heard in political processes. Further, for a democratic leader, political equality refers to the principle of

impartiality; when a person executes their political power with fairness and objectivity. For Young (2002), Gibson (2011) and Diamond (2015), the central value of democracy and a democratic leader is inclusivity. This principle ensures that all those within a state are included in the political marketplace, no matter their ethnicity, religion or class.

Although the term is open to more than one interpretation, from a general understanding, a “strong” leader, according to Brown (2014:27), is commonly taken to imply an individual concentrating power in his hands and exercising it authoritatively. However, this becomes problematic when the more power and authority one person accumulates, the more that leader is likely to believe in his unrivalled judgement and indispensability. Leaders who amass this authority will set themselves apart from other elected politicians, creating the grounds to consent to the idea that one leader can be elevated far above others (Brown, 2014:93; Roxburgh, 2012; Prashad, 2018).

Although these Strongmen are being found across the globe in different nations with very different histories and cultures, for all their differences, authors find consensus on clear links that connect these figures into what can be understood as the “Strongman mould”. Thus, by placing these leaders into a specific category of leadership, one can identify their similar traits and why this type of leadership can be problematic. Ivan Krastev (2017) defines the Strongman as one who uses a more confrontational style of politics, in which charismatic leadership matters more than policy. Albright (2018), Kearns (2018) and Temelkuran (2019) note that these leaders nudge followers away from the consensus of support for democratic norms; whether the country has always been or is recently democratic. Access to high office is not seen as a temporary privilege but as a means of imposing their own desires for as long as they can through the powers of government. Strongmen politicians tend to represent a specific group in their society, traditionally it is the majority and display no interest in cooperation outside the specific groups they purport to speak for and represent.

Paul Lendvai (2017: 10) begins his description of the Strongman regime as perfectly summarised by Max Weber’s well-known definition “power is the opportunity, within a social relationship, to have your own will prevail even against resistance” as “ruling should mean the opportunity for an order of a particular content to be obeyed by the assigned person”. Continuing, Lendvai (2017) prescribes a few key aspects that pertain to the power and political ideology of the Strongman. Lendvai (2017:19) argues that this type of leader is often admired by supporters but feared by opponents as it is not through oppression that these leaders need

their regime to depend upon, but rather it is the assembly of a great number of devotees. Further, the Strongman is someone who almost automatically believes in the veracity of whatever he considers to be politically useful to him (Lendvai, 2017:52). Lastly for Lendvai (2017:187) the most important feature is the unparalleled concentration of power and the way the power is executed as the state becomes synonymous with its leader and his political, social and economic power. For the assertion of power has priority over the constitutional state and any existing, important issues.

In his examination of the top political risks for the world in 2019, Ian Bremmer (2019) argues that these Strongmen leaders will cumulatively have an increasingly disruptive effect on the international order. Bremmer (2019a:18) explains that this coalition of world leaders are authentic nationalists, unwilling to uphold the current global liberal order, who challenge institutions and the consensus they represent. Referred to as “the coalition of the unwilling” (Bremmer, 2019a:18) for the reason that they will not form an actual alliance, Bremmer argues that in the aggregate, this coalition will speed the erosion of the international system. These Strongmen are referred to as malcontents, as Bremmer (2019a) reasons all these leaders are unpredictable and have a penchant for the unexpected. The most worrisome characteristic of these Strongmen, Bremmer argues (2019a), is that all these coalition members have outsized egos which means that the need to feed the political base – not the greater good – will play outsized roles in their decision making.

Madeline Albright (2018:5) equates the strongman with clear autocratic tendencies, and what she argues as fascism in its earliest stirrings. She argues that a strongmen politician can be identified as an “apprentice autocrat copying repressive tactics that have been used before”. Around the globe, these early stirrings can be seen through the identification of strongmen politicians. Albright (2018:40) describes these men as leaders of autocratic temperament, too sure of the superiority of their own judgement who will attempt to railroad a policy against the wishes of most of their colleagues (Brown, 2014:40). And, in the process, they systematically degrade political discourse through the disregard for facts and the honest truth, while proving simple and satisfying answers to tangled questions (Albright, 2018:250). They solicit cheers by speaking casually and with pumped up machismo laden rhetoric of daring nationalism and using violence to blow enemies away (Albright, 2018: 253).

When we awaken each morning, we see around the globe what appears to be fascism early stirrings: the discrediting of mainstream politicians, the emergence of leaders

who seek to divide rather than unite, the pursuit of political victory at all costs, and the invocation of national greatness by people who seem to possess only a warped concept of what greatness means. Most often the signposts that should warn us are disguised: the altered constitution that passes for reform, the attacks on free press justified by security, the dehumanisation of others marked as a defence of virtue, or the drawing out of a democratic system so that all is erased but the label. (Albright, 2018:118)

As noted in the above quote, Albright (2018:9) further argues that the current form of leadership can even be likened to the facets of fascism. As often fascism concerns itself less with specific policies and more with finding a pathway to power; the tactics of leadership. Fascist chiefs are remembered best for their charisma, and through various methods, each establishes an emotional link to the crowd and most often brings unpleasant feelings to the surface. “This is how the tentacles of fascism spread inside a democracy” (Albright, 2018:10). For Albright (2018:20), why this current political leadership is of such concern is because it can be likened to the twentieth-century fascism in which magnetic leaders⁵ exploited widespread dissatisfaction and were able to gain immense power.

For Robert Kagan (2019), the Strongman signifies the return of authoritarianism as an ideological and strategic force, emerging as the greatest challenge facing the liberal democratic world. Its re-emergence is seen as a geopolitical force as strong nations across the globe are championing anti-liberalism as an alternative to wavering liberal hegemony. Kagan (2019) argues that the world is least prepared for these leaders and their authoritarianism ideology as the liberal order has never considered authoritarianism as a distinct worldview that offers a real alternative to liberalism. For Kagan (2019), these Strongman are fundamentally in antagonism to the liberal democratic system championed by the west. Their anti-liberal critique is not just an excuse for Strongman rule, it is a full-blown indictment of what many regard as the failings of liberal society, therefore the Strongman simply wishes to defend their own unique cause and perspective against the proponents of the liberal empire.

2.3.2.1. Four Defining Characteristics of the Strongman

The next section will focus on four characteristics/traits that can be identified at the core of the Strongman’s policies, actions and ideologies. These four characteristics, namely the violation of human rights, erosion of democratic institutions, nationalistic populism and breaking

⁵ Albright (2018) specifically refers to Adolf Hitler and Andrea Mussolini in her reference to the fascist leaders of the twentieth century.

sovereignty and international law, were identified as the core tenants as they were most reflective of the essence of this type of leadership. These four traits highlight the Strongman's political style and give understanding to why their sudden ascension across the globe is of importance to research.

2.3.2.1.1. Violation of Human Rights

Strongmen are likely to use creeping authoritarianism which in some way or another will violate the human rights of its citizens. Many Strongmen will give permission to the police and the military to use unnecessary violence towards anyone who voices their disagreement with the regime. This is often seen in the brutality of the police towards citizens during riots and citizen protests. Naim and Toro (2018:135) argue that states under Strongman leadership ensure heavy-handed policing and repressive violence in order to control opponents and anyone who shows resistance to the regime. Naim and Toro (2018) continue, stating that in the face of mass protests or opposition, the government is more likely to respond with thousands of arrests, torture, brutal beatings and killings of protestors as well as the assassination of opponents and critics.

For their desire to control the state, authors (Burleigh, 2017; Mounk, 2018) argue that the Strongmen will curtail several political freedoms, specifically showing a disregard for individual rights. The Strongman follows a hierarchical democracy; which allows popularly elected leaders to enact the will of the people as they interpret it, without having to make allowances for the rights or interests of obstinate minorities. The political instincts of the Strongman are to radicalise rather than moderate while their hateful invective of either/or woman, gays and minorities sees open bigotry and xenophobia towards minority groups (Albright, 2018:57). Thus, when the Strongman targets a specific group, it poses a fundamental challenge to the respect for individual rights. Through this type of leadership, the broad protection of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, press, and association collapse.

2.3.2.1.2. Undermining Key Democratic Institutions

For Albright (2018), Kearns (2018) and Lendvai (2017), a key defining characteristic of the Strongman as a political leader is their renunciation of key democratic principles. This is argued to first be perceived in their dismissal of important democratic institutions which are critical in ensuring a fair and liberal society. Albright (2018) argues this can easily be seen in their reference to mainstream media and political journalists as the enemy. Albright (2018) reasons that during an election period or once in office, these leaders attack the press or use their power

to muzzle the free flow of information. For Albright (2018) and Mounk (2018) this is problematic as the media plays a vital role in informing citizens about public affairs and monitoring the actions of government at all levels, it enables conversation on public affairs and enables the people to hold those in office to account. Free media and political journalists are critical institutions of democracy and by labelling these organizations as the enemy, it takes away the public's trust, disaffecting an important facet of democracy (Mounk, 2018).

Albright (2018), Kearns (2018) and Lendvai (2017) argue that this is often taken one step further by the Strongman through the process of controlling information through disinformation campaigns. These leaders will do whatever it takes to make their regime look good in the public eye, ensuring media is manipulated into propagandists for the regime (Lendvai, 2017:119). These leaders have shown the ability to use phony websites and social media in order to construct echo chambers of support for conspiracy theories, false narratives, and ignorant views on important topics. Each year, more and more states employ squads of opinion shapers to flood online sites (Albright, 2018:114). Repeated often, these deception tactics can start to sound plausible to the average citizen (Albright, 2018:11). What makes this so effective and yet very problematic is that the average citizen has no reliable way to determine whether their source of information is legitimate and thus can believe in falsehoods. Therefore, the advantage of free press is diminished as society battles to discern falsehoods from the truth, destroying faith in essential contributors to democracy.

Aided in the attack of democratic institutions, these leaders have been noted to speak harshly about the institutions and principles that make up the foundation of open government and ensure those in power are held accountable and cannot overextend their power (Albright, 2018:5). Ikenberry (2018:2) argues that these leaders pose a challenge to the liberal order because "it comes with a casual disrespect for the norms and values of liberal democracy itself". These politicians have a habit of questioning the legitimacy of federal judges, showing little regard for the rule of law or the constitution, attacking the idea of the separation of powers, guaranteeing efforts to limit the legislative powers of elected parliaments, dismantling institutional checks and balances and the pervasive influence of corruption (Kearns, 2018:209). Rule of law checks and balances, and a sophisticated state apparatus help ensure that policy is of high quality and that the business of government is accomplished, even if political leadership is less than inspiring. Rule of law and division of power ensure that stability is maintained, and power struggles do not get out of hand. "A government of laws and not of men" (Zonis *et al.*, 2011:132). Henceforth when these institutions become disregarded by the Strongman, there is

very little else to hold him accountable and ensure the persistence of democratic values. While these institutions may stand in the way of the strongman receiving complete control and power over the state, over time they come to regard these institutions as an “illegitimate perversion of the people’s will” (Mounk, 2018:46).

Bremmer (2019:4) strongly agrees with these sentiments and argues that the Strongman across the globe has weaponised the divisions between those that support their regime and those who oppose it, transforming governing institutions into political battlegrounds, weakening the long-term functionality of representative democracy, and persuading a larger percentage of citizens that the system is “rigged” against them.

2.3.2.1.3. The Imitation of Populist Nationalism

A core identifying feature of the Strongman is that one can often find traces of populism throughout their rhetoric, action and ideology (Albright, 2018; Bremmer, 2019a; Mounk, 2018; Lendvai, 2017; Kearns, 2018). Cas Mudde (2017:30), a scholar focused on populism, begins his contextualization of populism noting that the issue with an ideology like populism is that it is “thin-centred” which means it does not possess the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency such as “full” ideologies such as Marxism or Liberalism. Mudde (2017:30) argues this leads to contestation between scholars of whether a leader and their political strategy may be defined as populist. None the less, Mudde (2017) concludes that with the rise of the Strongmen, it is easy to identify the elements of populism within their campaign for power and thereafter their use of their power once they are elected.

A problematic characteristic found in common in these strongman leaders and central to populism, is their propensity to centre their campaigns around the view that previous politicians had been “co-opted to the socially privilege sphere” and consequently had no interest in “changing the social hierarchy” and merely wanted to be part of the “political caste” (Mounk, 2018; Mudde, 2017:29). Scholars point to these leaders calling for the superiority of the people to be restored, while emphasizing the need to remind the elites about from whom they derive their power. The strongman claims to represent the rightful source of legitimate power – the people, while the political elite remain self-serving, undemocratic opponents and the “real people” need to be organised against them (Fitzgibbon & Guerra, 2010; Wilson, 2017). Thus, the leader becomes a voice for the real people, a spokesman against the self-interested politicians and economically powerful elite (Mudde, 2017:29; Mounk, 2018:40). The Strongman will argue that the people suffer because they are governed by apathetic, corrupt

political elites “whose moral fibre had been rotted” and, as such, promises to be “the voice of the silent masses” (Cagapay, 2017:73). This deep suspicion and resentment towards the existing establishment is rubbed raw by the strongman, nurturing their anger and their need to seek revenge (Albright, 2018:252; Inglehart & Norris, 2016:6).

This rhetoric becomes further problematically characterised by the “us versus them” narrative. These leaders take on the proclivity to malign immigrants, all the while nurturing a paranoid bigotry of “outsiders” or any “other” that is not part of the “real people” that have been identified (Mudde, 2017:28-30). The “people” the strongman promises to represent are often confined to specific group in a society; a homogenous people, thus often excluding people from other countries and other cultures (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). The strongman argues that they are experiencing a disintegration of their identity; that multiculturalism is not working and is instead leading to the growth of parallel, alien societies (Murray, 2018:137). Further, it is argued by these leaders that the established politicians have a misguided fetish for diversity; an explanation for why the establishment has been unable to deliver on their outsized problems (Mounk, 2018:8) and such the discourse soon becomes one of bigotry, xenophobia and hate (Albright, 2018:119). Scholars identify that those deemed as foreigners, members perceived to be on the margin of society and those who are not identified as part of the collective “common people” are identified as “other”, since they do not belong to the community (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:348). These leaders draw an explicit and direct line between issues faced in their nation and the influx of immigrants or any individual that is different from the majority (Kearns, 2018:78). It is argued that these minorities, immigrants and refugees who hold different cultural backgrounds, are a threat to the security and way of life of the “real people” and “are overrunning us and threatening our civilisation”. This culminates in what Mounk (2018) describes as the Strongman posing an in-group – united around a shared ethnicity, religion, social class – against an outgroup whose interests can be rightfully disregarded and thus has the right to “claiming a moral monopoly of representation”.

Abts and Rummens (2007:421) furthermore, note that the identification of the real people may see the populist party or figure choosing to ignore or remove the constitution, parliament, and opponents in their pursuit of representing the “will of the people”. This can further lead to the continuous de-legitimisation of opponents, and suppression of any possible political divergence in order to ensure the survival of the populist regime and the endurance of the image of the “people-as-one”.

Kurt Weyland (2017:57) argues that populism is often used by the Strongman as a political strategy revolving around an individual politician, giving rise to a “personalistic dictatorship” where power is concentrated in the hands of a single individual. Specifically, it rests upon “personalistic” leadership that “seeks to boost its autonomy and power; and contests, pushes aside, or dominates other types of actors, such as elite factions and organised political parties.” Weyland (2017:65) argues that these leaders are dangerous because, in their quest for power, they will adjust to contextual opportunities and constraints by avoiding commitment to any discourse, worldview or ideology. By not tying their political fate to any ideocratic vision, the Strongman becomes an uncertain and unpredictable force and pursues the most aggressive and risky policies without considering the long-term consequences (Weyland, 2017:66). Weyland (2017) summarises the issue of this leadership as “populism in power stretches toward an extreme and unfettered strong-man rule”.

There is no doubt that national leaders have a duty to serve the best interests of their countries, however, strongmen politicians diverge in how the interests of their nation are best advanced. Albright (2018) and Lendvai (2017) contend that with the current rise of Strongmen leaders, there is a clear nationalistic streak through their political ideology. These scholars argue that these leaders tend to view the world with the belief that the globe is a battlefield in which every country is intent on dominating every other; where nations compete like real estate developers to ruin rivals and squeeze every penny of profit out of deals (Albright, 2018:6). These leaders ignore the stake that all countries have in the fates of others and rather see the globe functioning as a competitive struggle for advantage over all the nations across the world. The Strongman promises to act as a “heroic representative of the spirit of the nation” (Lendvai, 2017:120), to defend their state against all those that wish to undermine its dominance and sovereignty. Muller (2019: 350) argues that leaders described as nationalist are better understood as populist poseurs who have won support by drawing on the rhetoric and imagery of nationalism, responding to deep nationalist yearnings among ordinary people who crave to have their national identity recognised and confirmed.

For Appiah (2019:25) and Rose (2019), nationalism’s largely unpredicted resurgence is sobering and “has come back with a vengeance”. The authors argue the current forms of nationalism used by the Strongman does not give rise to respect for other nationals but explodes instead into hostility and xenophobia. Rose (2019:8) contends that while states function as sovereign political structures, nations become about unified social groups and such the claims of the nation are less clear, often coming with ugly echoes of what has driven some of the

greatest crimes in history. For these scholars, the term nationalism has become a dangerous, divisive, illiberal impulse that should be treated with scepticism and disdain (Appiah, 2019; Rose, 2019; Tamir, 2019:48). Cederman (2019:61) and Snyder (2019:59) note that this current nationalism seen from these leaders tends to double down on some combination of manipulation chauvinism and repression, with the belief that state borders should coincide with national communities as a core source of political legitimacy.

This nationalism also extends into economic and foreign policy. The strongman will advocate for protectionism, ignoring global institutional competition rules, no longer providing aid to foreign countries, the limitation of free movement of both goods and peoples across borders and will automatically take measures that primarily hit foreign investors and multinational concerns (Kearns, 2018:158; Lendvai, 2017:120). These leaders also often show either no understanding of, or no allegiance to, international organisations and what used to be described as shared values of the transatlantic space. These leaders can come across as ethnonationalist according to Cederman (2019:64), as they are typically hostile to international organisations that favour minority rights, multi-ethnic governance and compromise. In their eyes, calls for power sharing contradict their ethnic group's rightful dominance. They view the protection of human rights and the rule of law, as well as humanitarian interventions, such as peacekeeping operations, as direct threats to their ethnonationalist agendas (Cederman, 2019:64). In a more transparent sense these views can come across as “un-American” or “un-European” as they go against the idea of a liberal democratic society for all those who live in it (Kearns, 2018:4). The attitude posed is often emblematic of a wider dismissal of multilateralism and multilateral institutions in which the ideas of integration are obsolete and detrimental (Lendvai, 2017:120).

2.3.2.1.4. Violation of Sovereignty and International Law

Cohen (2019:139) argues that a key variable that shrouds the Strongman is their erratic foreign policy, diplomacy and attitude towards global institutions and laws. The Strongman views the world in darkly narrow, zero-sum terms and, as such, will follow sporadic policy, as long as it ensures their survival and the prosperity of their nation. This leaves the Strongman grasping for any opportunity that will allow him to consolidate his grip on power at home, while overseeing opportunistic expansion abroad. Authors (Haass, 2019; Oliker, 2018) argue that the Strongman often shows his willingness to disrupt the status quo, whether it is using force, military intervention, invasion or aggressive cyberwarfare in nations across the globe. With strong nationalistic tendencies, the Strongman will often abstain from any form of multilateral agreements and international treaties and will even go as far as breaking the sovereignty of

nations in order to ensure personal expansion of power (Albright, 2017; Chertoff & Rasmussen, 2019; Posen, 2018a, 2018b; Sampson, 2018:38-40).

2.4. Conclusion

Chapter Two has discussed the theoretical foundations and concepts that are critical to gaining a better understanding of this thesis and why this research is important. Francis Fukuyama's thesis is used to bring awareness that the stability and security once envisioned may be under threat.

Understanding Geopolitics and Geopolitical insecurity is important as each concept is defined very differently by numerous authors. As shown, authors tend to focus on very different elements of geopolitics and, by showcasing different understandings, a more complete picture is given into the understanding of geopolitics. This thesis will use the conceptualisation of geopolitics to mean the study and understanding of international relationships and the atmosphere between different states in a globalised and competitive world.

In the examination of the definition of Strongman leadership, this thesis will examine these four aspects and assess to what extent they are present in the countries chosen. The first being the erosion of principal democratic institutions, secondly the disregard for human rights, shown by the intolerance towards certain groups/religions or people or/and their mistreatment. The third characteristic is that of populist nationalism, shown by ideology, rhetoric and action through the election process and once in power. The fourth characteristic is that of the violation of international laws and sovereignty of other states in order to achieve the goals of the nation. These characteristics are identified as the most centric of the Strongman as well as the most likely to create or lead to geopolitical insecurity. To follow is a table that highlights the four defining characteristics of the Strongman. In order to measure the presence of Strongman rule, at least several of the occurring indications of each characteristic must be present.

Aspect	Indication it is present
1. The Erosion of democratic institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The failure to separate the three branches of government (the legislative, the executive and the judicial) • The violation of free and fair elections • The muzzling of independent media
2. The violation of human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of violence and brutality against protestors and opposition • The assassination of opponents • The inability to use social media freely or voice one's own opinion • Inability to criticise the current political regime • The attack of a specific minority group and possibly undermining their civil liberties
3. Populist Nationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argues against the political elite and promises to act as a voice of the "real people" • Uses "us vs them" narrative, often leading to xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants, refugees and 'outsiders' • Proposes protectionist policies and is against international cooperation
4. Break Sovereignty and International Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will disobey international law and signed treaties • The illegal invasion of other states • The use of hybrid-warfare: cyberwarfare, disinformation, and/or military force in other states to advance own agenda • Diminish a system of global alliances while supporting other Strongmen

Table 1. Measuring the Presence of Strongman Rule – Based on Four Defining Characteristics

Compiled by author for use in this study. Assembled with reference to the following authors:
Albright, 2018; Banos, 2017; Bremmer, 2019a; Lendvai, 2017; Kagan, 2018; Kearns, 2018;
Krastev, 2017; Mounk, 2018; Temelkuran, 2019.

Chapter Three: The Rise of the Strongman – Russia, Hungary and Turkey

3.1. Introduction

The following chapter seeks to explore three nations, namely Russia, Hungary and Turkey and the leadership of Vladimir Putin, Viktor Orban and Recep Erdogan respectively. Each state will be examined under four previously identified Strongman leadership characteristics in order to determine the presence of Strongman leadership. Each nation and their leaders will be examined regarding whether their actions have violated key democratic institutions, eroded human rights and civil liberties, whether the leader espouses nationalistic populism and lastly, whether the leader has broken international law and sovereignty.

3.2. Russia – President Vladimir Putin

In March 2000, Vladimir Putin won the first of what would be four presidential elections, gave the impression that even the most difficult problems could be resolved, and set about rebuilding the Russian state (Glasser, 2019:14). Putin believed that in order to restore Russia's standing as a global power, Russia needed to be built on a foundation of strong, effective government and centralised leadership (Eltschaninoff, 2018). Although Putin fundamentally believes in the prosperity of the Russian people and the Russian state, the nation's state of democracy is questionable. Examining the leadership of Vladimir Putin, who has been at the forefront of Russian politics for twenty years, this section will attempt to determine to what extent he embodies the characteristics of the political Strongman.

3.2.1. Erosion of Democratic Institutions

Durable democratic institutions are important in the functioning of a liberal democracy as they ensure legitimacy, accountability, transparency and that the power of the majority is restrained. Specifically, the Judicial and Legislative branches help ensure horizontal accountability – office holders behave lawfully and appropriately, that the law is fairly and consistently applied to all and all political actors are held liable for their actions (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Diamond, 2015; Kapstein & Converse, 2008; Schedler, 2001). Strongman leaders have repeatedly shown their rejection of these institutions and their principles, following policies and actions to undermine the checks and balances that may hold them in contempt. Vladimir Putin's actions towards Russia's democratic institutions will be studied in order to determine if his policies have led to their weakening.

3.2.1.1. Complete Control of the Media

In Russia, the media acts as a powerful political tool used to influence citizens through propaganda, assert state control, prevent opposition from gaining momentum and to regulate the information received by citizens (Eltchaninoff, 2018; Isikoff & Corn, 2018; Nance, 2016). Nance (2018:65) and Sakwa (2008) refer to Russia's democracy as a "Sovereign Democracy", which "is a political system which ensures effective management of all public affairs" and, as such, media intervention is a central element. Examining the research conducted by other authors, evidence points to the actions undertaken by Putin in order to curtail the freedom of the media (Bindman, 2013; Isikoff & Corn, 2018; Nance, 2018). By limiting the freedom of the media, Putin has been able to assert more authority over what information citizens receive, shaping political opinion and limiting public access to opposition parties. Putin's strategy towards the media is reflective of a broader policy – concentrating various powerful resources into the hands of a federal elite loyal to Putin (Bindman, 2013; Eltchaninoff, 2018).

The entirety of the Russian state media, including numerous agencies, magazines and newspapers, have come under control of Putin and the Kremlin. Russian state media now produces more than 80% of all television in the nation. Putin co-ordinates state disinformation campaigns, giving clear-cut instructions on what to expose, who to attack, and what narrative will work best (Nance, 2018:128). Free independent media companies that go against Putin in any way often become targets of the state, either being forced to terminate or purchased and turned into state allied media.

Mass media inside Russian borders is under complete control of the state; citizens' social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as internet usage, are consistently monitored (Nance, 2018; Roxburgh, 2012). Roskomnadzor, the Kremlin agency, controls all access to the internet, giving the Russian state the power to monitor, limit, block or cut off anyone who incites dissent or even criticises the Kremlin (Nance, 2018:134; Roxburgh, 2012). A law approved in 2014 by Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, requires domestic and foreign companies to store the personal data of Russian citizens on servers in Russia. Those who refuse can be fined or prevented from operating in the country (Bennetts, 2019).

3.2.1.2. The Vertical of Power

One of Putin's earliest decisions as president was to start creating what he termed the "vertical of power" – the gathering of all political power to the centre, and effectively into his own hands (Roxburgh, 2012). For Putin, Russia's difficulties were due to the lack of central control and

previously weak leadership. Just six days after his inauguration – Putin announced that Russia’s 89 regions would be placed under control of seven ‘super governors’ who were personally chosen by the president. Five of the enforcers turned out to be men who had had careers in the secret service and armed forces. This was followed by reform in the upper chamber of parliament (the federation council/the senate). Previously elected regional governors were replaced by nominated representatives, allowing the Kremlin to fill the council with ‘friendly’ senators (Partlett, 2013:37).

Through the appointment of trusted colleagues from various aspects of his life, Putin could ensure he centralised power. Many of them were also given directorships in state companies, enmeshing the country’s political and business structures in a vast web that centred around Putin himself. Old colleagues and KGB⁶ associates were placed in key political positions (Roxburgh, 2012). In doing this, Putin ensured all representatives were subject to pressure from the Kremlin. In addition to this, Putin pushed laws that permitted the president to remove governors under certain circumstances and he eliminated the direct popular election of governors, in effect taking on the power to appoint and dismiss regional leaders (Herspring, 2009:154-155). Today, scholars (Kendall-Taylor *et al.*, 2017) estimate that Putin has a circle of 20-30 trusted advisors with close ties to the security and military services, ensuring that the real power resides with an inner circle of just half a dozen individuals. The appointment of Putin’s associates to key jobs is reflective of his failure to adhere to the principles of the separation of powers and a fair and just system. It has also ensured his effective removal of channels for possible opposition against his political leadership. By centralising power around him, Putin has removed horizontal accountability, and has ensured there are very few limits placed on his political power.

3.2.1.3. The Erosion of Free, Fair and Competitive Elections

Under the leadership of Putin, the existence of free and fair elections comprising of several competitive opponents has often come into question. Scholars also suggest that despite democratic elections, Putin has systematically turned elections into a process in which the public is given a chance to validate decisions already made in the Kremlin (Glasser, 2019:15; Herspring, 2009:168). For instance, the creation of the political party Rodina is popularly believed to have been created by Putin advisor Vladislav Surkov, in an effort to erode the voting

⁶ Translated in English as Committee for State Security, was the main security agency for the Soviet Union from 1954 until its break-up in 1991.

base of the communist party. Surkov supposedly established Rodina⁷ to make Putin's United Russia party look moderate next to the ultranationalist coalition of the right and left (Nance, 2018:82). This would ensure more public support and legitimisation for Putin's campaign. After Putin finished his two presidential terms in 2008, newly elected President Dmitri Medvedev was chosen personally by Putin and argued to be his political puppet (Herspring, 2009). According to one poll, 67 percent of Russians believed Medvedev would continue to "act under the control of Putin" and his inner circle (Herspring, 2009:170). This is indicative of Putin's centralising of power across Russia's political domain and his ability to influence political events even after conceding power.

Opposition leaders and parties have often been intimidated and threatened at the request of Putin. If an opposition party or opponent does run for office, Putin ensures extremely limited availability to state resources and state media in order to campaign to the Russian people. In 2016, Putin prevented a possible opposition party – Peoples Freedom Party – from registering based on a technicality (Eltchaninoff, 2016). Putin also recently created the All-Russian National Front, a political party which consisted of numerous state and public organisations in order to maximise the pro-government vote (Besemeres, 2018).

The legitimacy of elections has also been questioned by Russian citizens and international organisations. In early December 2011, Russia held nationwide parliamentary elections. According to election monitors, there was blatant cheating, including the brazen stuffing of ballot boxes. A video, which quickly went viral, surfaced of an election chairman's marking off a stack of ballots (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:35). Independent election observers were also reportedly harassed and received several cyberattacks on their websites during the election cycle.

3.2.2. The Violation of Human Rights

In the creation of his own interpretation and version of democracy, Putin has demanded the prerogative to reinterpret in his own way the notions of human rights or freedom of expression (Eltchaninoff, 2018:81). Examining Putin's actions regarding those who have openly critiqued his leadership, as well as the actions he undertook in Chechnya, can give evidence to the question of his position with regard to citizens' rights and liberties.

⁷ Rodina or Motherland-National Patriotic Union is a nationalist political party in Russia and was a coalition of thirty nationalist groups that was established in August 2003 (Herspring, 2009:168).

3.2.2.1. Political Murder

Argued by Biden, Jr and Carpenter (2018:46), Herspring (2009), Nance (2018) and Isikoff and Corn (2018), Russia has often made use of problematic policies towards those that have openly criticised or antagonised Putin. Evidence points to the willingness of Putin to ask his comrades to harass and murder opposition politicians and journalists, stepping up efforts to eliminate and silence anyone who opposes his leadership.

Journalists who oppose the Putin regime, or openly criticise its actions, are often a target for assassination. In 2006, Russia's most prominent journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, was murdered outside her Moscow apartment. She had been a Putin critic and persistent chronicler of Russia's human rights abuses in the war-torn Russian Republic of Chechnya (Bindman, 2013:1957; Nance, 2018:57; Isikoff & Corn, 2018:20). A few weeks later, Alexander Litvinenko, a former officer of Russia domestic intelligence service, died of heart failure after digesting radioactive poison. According to Litvinenko, it was Putin who had ordered his assassination after Litvinenko had grown more critical of the corruption of Russian Law enforcement. Working with British intelligence to expose Russian corruption, Litvinenko was murdered for what Putin saw as betrayal to the Russian regime (Herspring, 2009; Nance, 2018:114-116).

Natalya Estemirova was abducted and murdered on July 15, 2009, after having covered the human right abuses in Chechnya, including kidnapping, torture and executions by the Russian government (Nance, 2018:117). On March 4, 2018, former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were found poisoned after ingesting a military grade nerve agent (Nance, 2018). Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was gunned down and murdered crossing a bridge one block from the Kremlin in February 2015, with the usual patrols and cameras unavailable on the night in question (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:57; Herspring, 2009; Nance, 2018). These political murders are evidence of the lengths Putin is willing to go to in order to secure his political power and what he believes is the protection of the Russian state (Nance, 2018:120).

Recently, in July 2019, in the run up to Moscow City Council elections, Russian electoral authorities took the decision to bar independent and opposition candidates from running. With protests prompted, the Moscow police cracked down hard on those who turned up, leading to the arrest of nearly 1,400 people, while anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny, who had urged people to attend the protests, had been jailed for 30 days in the run-up. This was the most arrests at a Russian protest in more than a decade, signalling that the Kremlin had decided to extend its repression, limiting any possibility of space for liberalisation (Bremmer, 2019b).

3.2.2.2. Chechnya

Russia's abuse of human rights is most evident in the case of Chechnya and the violations committed against civilians. What started as a military operation in December 1994, the Russian army aimed at crushing the secessionist regime that had been ruling the North Caucasian Autonomous Republic of Chechnya since late 1991. Based on countless evidence, Russia was said to have conducted grave human rights violations against Chechen civilians during the two wars between 1994-1996 and 1999-2000 (Bindman, 2013; Cornell, 1999; Kumar, 2000). Evidence suggests Putin gave his security officials the right to indiscriminately bomb civilian areas, follow through with extrajudicial executions, torture, massacres, and the spreading of land mines (Bindman, 2013; Cornell, 1999; Evangelista, 2002:64; Eltchaninoff, 2018; Kumar, 2000; Roxburgh, 2012).

Unwilling to reach a power-sharing agreement and the desire for Chechnya to remain part of the federation, Russia bombarded the Chechen capital of Grozny, subjecting the city to relentless bombing raids, and killing thousands of citizens (Eltchaninoff, 2018; Jonson, 2001). For instance, on October 21st, Russian missile strike on a market in Grozny killed over 100 civilians. Citizens of Chechnya were driven away, or disappeared into internment camps and mass graves, while frequent guerrilla attacks, assassinations and abductions continued (Bindman, 2013; Cornell, 1999; Evangelista, 2002:64; Kumar, 2000; Roxburgh, 2012).

Since 2005, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has issued more than 100 rulings against Russia, however, Russian press, supported by Putin and his government, have continually attempted to frame the court's work in establishing the human rights violations in Chechnya as flawed or motivated by some form of anti-Russian bias (Bindman, 2013; Mendelson, 2002). Russian justice minister Aleksandr Kononov even told reporters "there are serious reasons to doubt the impartiality and full objectivity of the European court" (Bindman, 1963, 2013). Russia has also gone as far as ensuring the "securitization of information on Chechnya" (Mendelson, 2002:64), restricting any reporting of events and even telling journalists and media agencies that events must be portrayed in a specific way (Bindman, 2013). Putin's disregard for the lives of Chechnyan civilians and his refusal to acknowledge the events that took place, is reflective of his wider dismissal of human rights and humanitarian law. Further, it shows his casual disrespect for human rights in order to maintain his political power and rebuild Russia's position as a regional power through destabilising other nations (Abresch, 2005:742; Studzinska, 2015:36).

3.2.3. Nationalistic Populism

Putin and his United Russia party have consistently extolled virtues of strong, divisive leadership, openly shown a disdain for established institutions, and expressed a deep mistrust of perceived experts and elites. Putin has built the political regime around him, personalising the Russian system so much so that its stability is contingent on Putin's own popularity (Kendall-Taylor *et al.*, 2017; Mamonova, 2019). Examining the leadership style of President Vladimir Putin, there is evidence to suggest that he has followed the “populist playbook” in cementing his powerful position as Russia's leader.

Throughout his tenure as the President of Russia, Putin has strongly spoken about the national interests of the state and its citizens as well as showing a nostalgia for past glories. Populist nationalistic leaders promise to return the nation to ‘greatness’ and Putin's nationalism embraces a deep-seated desire to restore Russia to the greatness of its Soviet years, especially through the exercise of state power (Eltchaninoff, 2015; Herspring, 2009; Mamonova, 2019:564). Putin often evokes feelings of patriotism as he promises to restore Russia to its “former glory” and status as a great power player (Roxburgh, 2012). His rhetoric is instructive and promising, “Patriotism is a source of courage, staunchness and strength of our people. If we lose patriotism and national pride and dignity, which relate to it, we will lose ourselves as a nation capable of great achievements” (Herspring, 2009:157). As such, he postulates that any action against him or his political policies is “national treachery” and an attack against the future of Russia (Eltchaninoff, 2018:63).

Putin's rhetoric and leadership often calls for the populist unity between the ‘people’ (Mamonova, 2019:562). Since his rise to power, Putin has referred to Russian citizens as the silent majority – those people whose interests have been overlooked in favour of the economic and political elite. Before Putin's election in March 2000, Putin spoke about outlawing the elites, or in Russia's case, the oligarchs: “Those people who fuse power and capital – there will be no oligarchs of this kind as a class” (Roxburgh, 2012). When addressing the ‘real people’, Putin blamed Russia's poor economic and political environment on the actions of the oligarchs, arguing it was their lack of understanding the true Russian people that had left ordinary Russians in financial predicaments with no access or means to change it. Asserting that the system has been rigged against them, Putin managed to rise to national leadership through this populist, divisive technique (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz, 2016). Putin has also ensured that his image is that of one of ‘the people’. He has established himself as the image of an ordinary Russian man who built his own path to the presidency through sheer focus, hard work, and an

undying commitment to the Soviet Union and then the new Mother Russia (Herspring, 2009; Sakwa, 2008).

What makes Putin part of the list of populist predecessor Strongmen is his long, slow and steady approach to dismantling democracy. Putin has gained his power through consistent democratic elections, while using widespread discontent to gradually undermine institutional constraints, marginalise the opposition and erode civil society. He has deliberately installed loyalists in key positions of power, has neutralised the media by ensuring it is state owned or owned by friendly oligarchs and enforcing censorship. Populist leaders often first come to power through democratic elections and subsequently harness the widespread discontent that got them elected to gradually undermine institutional constraints on their rule, erode democratic institutions, erode civil society and marginalise the opposition (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz, 2016).

3.2.4. Break Sovereignty & International Law

Consolidating his grip on power at home, President Vladimir Putin has overseen an opportunistic expansion of influence operations, specifically targeting vulnerable states on Russia's border. Hoping to restore Russia to its former glory, Putin argues that in order to re-establish Russia's sphere of influence, it must co-ordinate a nationalist, conservative movement that encroaches on military, political, economic and informational domains of former Soviet countries and beyond (Biden, Jr & Carpenter, 2018; Olikier, 2018; McFaul, 2018a). In the examination of Putin and Russia's actions, specifically in its use of information warfare across nations, the invasion of the Ukraine in 2014 and its involvement in the US 2016 presidential election, evidence will suggest whether Putin has broken international law and the principle of sovereignty.

3.2.4.1. International Interference

Putin and the Kremlin's disruptive efforts centre around a vast array of tactics, penetrating government, business, and media networks all over the world (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:44). These tactics range from covert and overt support for anti-establishment political parties spanning from the far left to the far right, funding front groups, interfering in elections and referendums and making donations and investments into key economic sectors to build political influence over time (Albright, 2017; Cohen, 2018; Sampson, 2018:38). The Russian government has made use of cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and financial influence to meddle in the internal affairs of at least 24 European countries and North America since 2004 (Albright, 2017; Nance, 2018; Sampson, 2018:38). In post-communist East European member states of

the EU such as Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, Russia has financed and organised internet discussion outlets to cast doubt on the value of EU membership, suggesting that the EU is unsafe and does not offer the prosperity it markets (Biden, Jr & Carpenter, 2018; Snyder, 2018:100). In Sweden, Russia flooded the nation with fake news and disinformation, attempting to smear the government, all in the desire to discredit NATO and keep Sweden from formerly joining the alliance (Nance, 2018:216). In France, Putin has formed a burgeoning relationship with the right-wing party National Front, led by Marine Le Pen. So much so that a Russian bank with close ties to the Kremlin loaned the party a reported sum of \$9.8 million (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:53). Although these actions are not direct challenges to international law and sovereignty, they do interfere in the affairs of sovereign states and hope to influence events towards anti-liberal, autocratic destinations. These actions reflect Putin's deliberately established system of clandestine interventions in democratic processes far from Russia's borders.

3.2.4.2. Invasion of Ukraine & the Annexation of the Crimea

The independent Ukrainian state was seen as a barrier to Putin's desire to create a "Slavic Union" and restoring Russian hegemony (Larrabee, 2010:38) and, as such, Putin openly argued that the invasion and annexation of Ukrainian territory by Russia was a "necessary condition" to which they were rightfully deserving (Eltchaninoff, 2018:76; Snyder, 2018:97). Beginning in 2013, at a time when Ukraine was in negotiations with the EU over the terms of an association agreement, Putin feared this would lead to the Ukraine moving out of Russia's influencing orbit and align itself with the West. After discussion with Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich, Putin convinced him to abandon the agreement, leading to the sudden declaration that Ukraine would no longer be signing the agreement. This severely angered the Ukrainian people, erupting in civil unrest and political instability (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:45; Nance, 2018; Polyakova & Haddad, 2019:118).

With the rise of protests and mass unrest in Ukraine, Yanukovich abruptly fleeing Kiev and opposition forces taking over, Putin believed the United States had mounted a coup to overthrow his ally and impose an anti-Putin government on Russia's border. Determined to reassert Russian dominance, Putin saw an inopportune moment for the Russian invasion and dismemberment of the Ukrainian state (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:45; Polyakova & Haddad, 2019; Snyder, 2018:135). Russia's main goal became centred on the "disintegration of the Ukrainian state", tactically done through discrediting both Yanukovich and the opposition by violence, while invading southern Ukraine and destabilising the state. Russia officially invaded the

Ukraine on the 24th of February, sending some ten thousand Russian special forces northward through the Crimean Peninsula, officially engaging in the illegal invasion of the Ukraine (Kearns, 2018; Polyakova & Haddad, 2019). By the night of the 26th, Russian soldiers had seized the regional parliament building and on the 28th, the Russian parliament endorsed the incorporation of Ukrainian territory into the Russian federation (Snyder, 2018:138-139). On March 16, the Ukrainian citizens of Crimea took part in an electoral farce that the Russian occupiers called a referendum, giving them the option to either vote for the annexation of Crimea by Russia or to restore the autonomy of the Crimean authorities (who had just been installed by Russia and requested annexation by Russia). In a ceremony in Moscow, Putin accepted what he called the wishes of the Crimean people and officially extended the boundaries of the Russian Federation (Kearns, 2018; Polyakova & Haddad, 2019).

Currently, Putin has been adamant in his and Russia's implausible deniability, claiming the invasion must be understood as the righteous rebellion of an oppressed people against an overpowering global conspiracy (Albright, 2017:166; Nance, 2018:53). Putin also justifies his actions on the basis that he has every reason to assume the policy of containment continues today (Eltchaninoff, 2018:76).

The invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces violated basic consensual principles of international law, the United Nations charter, every treaty signed between independent Ukraine and Russia, as well as a number of assurances that Russia had offered Ukraine about the protection of its frontiers (Snyder, 2018:142). Russia's breaking of sovereignty of the Ukrainian state and the illegal annexation of the Crimea has also fermented a slow-burning war that has killed 13,000 Ukrainians and displaced 1.5 million (Polyakova & Haddad, 2019:112). Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea wholly violated international law, broke the inter-state consensus that had guaranteed European stability since the end of Nazism while simultaneously undermining international human rights.

3.2.4.3. Interference in the US 2016 Presidential Election

To safeguard Russia and its kleptocratic system, as well as continue to secure a future of soviet hegemony, Putin decided to attack what it perceives as the greatest external threat to its survival: Western democracy. By attacking the West, the Kremlin and Putin can consolidate power at home, shift attention away from corruption and economic malaise, activate nationalist passions to stifle internal dissent, and keep western democracies on the defensive and preoccupied with internal divisions. Through its meddling in the US 2016 Presidential election,

Vladimir Putin was able to exert untrammelled influence over western democracies, disrupting US politics and discrediting the US democratic process (Biden, Jr & Carpenter, 2018:45; Cohen, 2018:2).

A report delivered by special counsel Robert Mueller to the Department of Justice to investigate “any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump” (Kotkin, 2019:62; Mueller, 2019) is indicative of Russia’s willingness to unlawfully influence the foreign affairs of other nations. In the first volume, evidence is scrutinised on the possibility of criminal conspiracy between Trump’s political campaign and the Russian government. The report states that Russia did indeed interfere in the 2016 US presidential election “in sweeping and systematic fashion” (Mueller, 2019) through spreading disinformation over social media and disseminating illegally obtained emails from opponent Hilary Clinton and her senior advisors. The Mueller report clearly establishes that the Russian government believed it would benefit from a Trump led American presidency and, as such, worked to secure that outcome (Kotkin, 2019:63; Mueller, 2019).

Russian intelligence organisations, under the instructions of Putin, used a variety of strategies to influence American citizens and the democratic political process in the run up and during the 2016 presidential election. The Russian intelligence community made use of kompromat – compromising information usually obtained through furtive means – as a weapon throughout American politics in order to affect the outcome of the election (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:141). They hacked emails, used online platforms such as WikiLeaks to disseminate damaging material of opponent Hilary Clinton, and they impersonated Americans on social media (Cohen, 2018; Isikoff & Corn, 2018:135). Russian media was also clearly given instructions to show Trump in a positive way while Hilary Clinton was portrayed negatively. Hacked political material was weaponised by Russia to ensure Hilary Clinton was seen as a “war hawk and a bought and sold phony” while becoming synonymous with the term “crooked Hilary” (Nance, 2018:12; Isikoff & Corn, 2018:136). Putin also made use of Russian linked hackers to probe computers of state election systems, particularly, voter registration databases during the election. Reports came from all over the nation; Illinois, Arizona and Florida indicating the probability that Russians could fiddle with the national vote count (Nance, 2018:12; Isikoff & Corn, 2018:136).

In 2015 and 2016, during the lead up to the presidential campaign, Russia based their attack on America through social media, using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Google to expose

American citizens to Russian propaganda (Cohen, 2018: 2; Isikoff & Corn, 2018:135; Snyder, 2018:227). According to a New York Times investigation, in 2015 hundreds of young Russians were employed in a “troll farm” in St Petersburg known as the Internet Research Agency (IRA), where the staff on the “foreign desk” were responsible for meddling in other countries’ elections. In the run up to the US presidential election of 2016, a staff member reportedly trained to incite Americans further tried to “rock the boat”. The Employee noted that “our goal wasn’t to turn the Americans towards Russia. Our task was to set Americans against their own government: to provoke unrest and discontent” (Sampson, 2018:45). According to research conducted, the messages employees were to disseminate were spelled out by management: promote Vladimir Putin, ridicule Russian opposition leaders, deride the European Union, insult Barack Obama, smear Ukraine’s new president, Petro Poroshenko and promote Donald Trump (Isikoff & Corn, 2018:57). These internet trolls were used to promote the Kremlin’s narrative, specifically a massive covert influence campaign aimed at disrupting the US political system and electing Donald Trump as the president of the United States (Isikoff & Corn, 2018; Biden, Jr & Carpenter, 2018:50; McFaul, 2018b:83).

Putin’s covert and overt operations to influence the American presidential election is reflective of Putin’s indifference towards the sovereignty of nations. Operating with impunity, not only did he break international law, but he showed disregard towards the democratic principle of citizens being free to elect their own government and in doing so, undermined America’s democratic legitimacy.

3.2.5. Reflection of Vladimir Putin

Examining the four key characteristics of a political Strongman, evidence suggests President Vladimir Putin is emblematic of such a description. Over his two-decade rule of Russia, Putin has used a ‘macho’ style of leadership, using authoritative and nationalistic policies in order to return Russia to a great power state, all the while reasserting state control and cementing his hold on power. Putin’s actions are reflective of his own form of Russian democracy, in which despite the presence of democratic procedures and institutions, he has used his position as the executive of the state to undermine the rule of law, amass power over all spheres in Russian society and erode Russian citizens’ civil liberties and human rights. Putin’s foreign policy is most indicative of his Strongman status as he uses his vision for Russia as a reason to erode international law and the liberal democratic order. His invasion of the Ukraine in 2014, hand in the US 2016 election and aggressive use of cyberwarfare all over the world all represent a rejection of the principal constraints associated with the liberal, democratic world order.

Fundamentally, the question of Russia's policy of foreign meddling, is its impact on the discreditation of the entire democratic process (Biden, Jr & Carpenter, 2018; Oliker, 2018; McFaul, 2018a; Haass, 2019). What warrants the most concern is the accumulating evidence of Putin's aggressively revisionist, inevitably zero-sum vision of the world in which Russia's national revival is done so only at the expense of other states.

3.3. Hungary and Prime Minister Viktor Orban

In Hungary, liberal democracy was a much more recent – and rather more brittle – transplant. Yet, despite this, throughout the 1990s, political scientists and academics were sure of its prospects (Bozoki, 2015; Kendall-Taylor & Frantz, 2016; Lendvai, 2017; Muller, 2014). According to their theories, Hungary had all the attributes that favoured a democratic transition; it had experienced democratic rule in the past; its totalitarian legacy was more moderate than many other Eastern European countries; old communist elites had acquiesced to the new regime in a negotiated settlement; and the country bordered several stable democracies. Hungary was “the most likely case”: if democracy did not make it there, it would have difficulty making it in all other post-communist countries as well (Mounk, 2018:9). The prediction seemed to hold up well enough throughout the 1990s; the economy in Hungary grew, the government peacefully changed hands and it had a lively civil society which featured an independent critical media, NGO's and one of the best universities in Central Europe. It was agreeable that Hungary's democracy could be said to be consolidating.

However, with the rise of strongman leadership across the globe, one of the most alarming developments has been the change of the political landscape in eastern Europe. Hungary, one of the region's poster children for post-communist democratisation, has also fallen prey to the fundamental shift of politics despite the previous hope and belief in its consolidating democracy. This section will examine the leadership of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and his nationalist party Fidesz in order to determine whether it is through his authority that the prospect of Hungary's liberal democratic future is now in question.

3.3.1. Erosion of Democratic Institutions

With the victory of the Fidesz party, under Viktor Orban's leadership, in the April 2010 elections with a 53 percent victory, this translated into a two-thirds majority in Parliament (Bozoki, 2012:16). Orban has claimed that the 2010 parliamentary elections in Hungary constituted a “revolution at the voting booths” and that Hungarians had endorsed what he has described as his “Christian and national” vision of an “illiberal democracy” (Albright,

2017:172; Kirchick, 2019:13; Mounk, 2018:10; Muller, 2019:37). In order to replace what he saw as a troubled history under liberal democracy, with his own form of illiberal democracy, Orbán openly stated that the first step would be a fundamental restructuring of the political system in order to enact his plan (Albright, 2017:173). This next section will examine the policies Orbán undertook in order to realise his illiberal democracy, to determine whether there was a clear erosion of democratic institutions.

3.3.1.1. The End of the Separation of Powers

In February 2011, Orbán announced the drafting of a new constitution called the ‘Fundamental Law of Hungary’ and within two months this new constitution had been adopted in a fast-tracked procedure with the votes of the governing party. The new constitution was passed through parliament in only nine days, without any previous national debate, political or legal discussion and without plebiscite (Margulies, 2018:7; Scheppele, 2015:30).

In lightning speed, Orbán and his Fidesz party ensured steps were taken to halt and undermine those institutions which could possibly prevent him from undertaking his campaign for an illiberal democratic Hungary. The main target for the Fidesz campaign was to destroy the central authorities of the separation of powers and the constitutional court which since 1989 had always acted independently towards whichever government was in power. The first step altered was the selection procedure for the justices of the constitutional court (Margulies, 2018:7-8). Previously, an all-party parliamentary committee had proposed candidates who were then accepted or rejected in a parliamentary vote. Now, it is the governing faction that can nominate a candidate which is then submitted for a parliamentary vote. Their appointment then becomes a decision of parliament – a parliament in which Fidesz holds the majority (Scheppele, 2015:29-30).

In order to achieve a pro-government majority on the court bench as quickly as possible, Orbán increased the number of justices from eleven to fifteen. As one position became vacant, Fidesz was able to immediately appoint five new justices, all men with close ties to Orbán and his Fidesz partners. Orbán’s first choice for constitutional judge after his 2010 election caused considerable surprise when István Stumpf, a man who had known Orbán since his student days and had no experience of legal practice, was chosen. In recent years, Orbán has continued the practice of choosing men close to him and his political parties for places on the benches of the constitutional court (Krastev & Van Til, 2015; Lendvai, 2017:160-163). Orbán’s destruction of the separation of powers and those bodies that exist to act independently to the government,

reflects his failure to act in good governance and impartiality. Impartiality helps prevent the misuse of public authority, however, through actions undertaken such as those of Orbán's, he removes any channels that may prevent him from enacting his illiberal, authoritative policies, thus he undermines the legitimacy of the separation of powers and in doing so undermines Hungary's democracy.

Beyond the constitutional court, Orbán made quick decisions to ensure the judiciary, the civil service, the media and the financial sector fell under the control of Fidesz party-cadres or personal allies (Bozoki, 2012). A new regulation abolished the Supreme Court and renamed it the Kuria. This was done to ease the removal of the court's independent president, and then replace him with a pro-Fidesz justice as the head of the new body. The courts were then liquidated of their administrative autonomy and in its place the National Judiciary Office was created and anchored in the new constitution (Lendvai, 2017:162; Bozoki, 2012). Through the placement of loyalists in all leading positions in 'independent institutions' Orbán could ensure there would be little dissent to his authority, allowing him to continue enacting his steps towards creating an illiberal democracy.

The end of separation of powers in Hungary under the Orbán regime between 2010 and 2014 has essentially been in effect an "unconstitutional coup under the cover of constitutionality, with constitutional means" (Scheppele, 2006). Fidesz has used its constitutional majority to rewrite the rules of the game: Orbán's tinkering with the country's electoral system has turned his plurality to a supermajority (Krastev, 2018:50). Orbán and his Fidesz party have followed a "highly centralised, illiberal democracy which systematically undermines the structures of checks and balances, which intimidates or directly controls the media, which weakens civil society, and which makes it very likely that Fidesz will elections in the foreseeable future" (Lendvai, 2017:106).

3.3.1.2. Weakening the Opposition

When it comes to political opposition and fair election campaigns, Orbán has also undermined the opposition to ensure his political advantage. Fidesz has adopted the use of government resources for election activities, undermining competitors' ability to compete on an equal basis. Scheppele (2014) notes that during the 2014 election, the Fidesz government had an undue advantage in the whole election process, from writing the rules to conducting the campaign. Just a year before the election, a new election law was passed tailor-made solely for the benefit of Fidesz. The Fidesz majority radically reduced the number of MPs from the next parliament

onwards from 386 to 199, and redrew constituency boundaries. This gerrymandering was determined exclusively by Fidesz officials. What this policy did was that by redistributing the seats in such a way, a left-wing alliance would have needed 300,000 more votes than Fidesz to win a majority (Lendvai, 2017:199). The governing party also abolished the previous two-round system in the individual constituencies, thus forcing the divided left-wing opposition parties to rally an uneasy relationship behind a common candidate in order to have any success in winning a single constituency.

Fidesz also passed a new Law on Election Procedure, which regulates media access during the campaign period. The law only allocates 600 minutes total for all parties and it requires that these minutes be divided equally. For instance, during the 2014 election, there were 12 national lists contesting in the April election which only entitled each party 50-60 minutes to be used over fifty days. That equates to only one minute per day on television (Scheppele, 2014). This law evidently was designed to ensure unequal access to the media for opposition parties, thus limiting the access of other parties to citizens.

Orban and his Fidesz government have also gone about weakening the media and the free press. State news agency and public broadcasting have all become government mouthpieces. Government-friendly cronies have strategically acquired private media outlets in order to further eliminate any possible critical voices (Bozoki, 2012:17; Bozoki, 2015:20; Lendvai, 2017; Lamour & Varga, 2017; Scheppele, 2014). When it comes to campaigning through newspapers and billboards, Fidesz also benefits over other political parties. Fidesz has a large group of party-friendly newspapers, owned by their oligarch allies. This contrasts with the opposition party Unity Alliance who had to make use of sympathetic smaller, poorer newspapers. Thus, in the run-up to the election, Fidesz managed to secure advertisements in both Fidesz-friendly media as well as in the opposition papers as they could not afford to turn down paying adverts (Scheppele, 2014). News media is a “critical component of democratic accountability”, however it must be free and open to all political actors and opponents (Mickey, Levitsky & Way, 2017:26). Orban’s actions have secured the position of his Fidesz party while ensuring no other political party has been able to amass any political or social power.

3.3.2. Violation of Human Rights

The concern over a leader like Viktor Orban’s Strongman leadership is that he is representative of a growing revolt against mainstream politics and liberal values. The illiberal democracy that Orban speaks of raises serious concerns about democratic rights and civil liberties of a nation’s

citizens (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:3; Krastev, 2018:49). Although Orban speaks of a society that centres around the supposed needs of the community and respecting the will of the majority, some actions bring this into contestation. This section will examine whether the policies of Orban and his Fidesz government give evidence of the negation of human rights and civil liberties.

3.3.2.1. Closing the Border – Keeping out the ‘Enemy’

Viktor Orban’s violation of human rights is most evident in his and his Fidesz government’s brutal treatment of migrants and asylum seekers. Orban’s European Union is characterised by the collapse of the internal state border (enabling the mobility of Hungarian diasporas) and the creation of an iron wall on the margins of Europe to protect the European-Christian civilisation from the threat of the diasporas of a Muslim-Orient (Lamour & Varga, 2017:5). In February 2017, at the state of the nation address, Viktor Orban offered his vision for the country in the coming year, claiming that Hungary would only let in “true refugees: Germans, Dutch, French, and Italians” (Schaeffer, 2017) and thus promised to seal the Hungarian Serbian/Croatian border to prevent the flow of non-European migrants. The Hungarian government’s disregard for the rights of refugees presages its disregard for the rights of its own citizens.

Hungary has taken a very hard line against the illegal entry of refugees and migrants into the state. They have used water cannons and tear gas on crowds of migrants at the border and have also gone so far as to put up a 175km razor wire on the border fence in Serbia and Croatia to keep migrants and refugees out. Budapest authorities made it clear that they would prosecute any migrants found to have entered the country illegally, forcing any found migrants into closed migrant camps (Kearns, 2018:130-132; Lendvai, 2017:289; Scheppele, 2015). Hungary under Orban has chosen to portray the migrant crisis across Europe as an opportunity for outsiders to invade and has even refused to participate in an EU backed quota scheme that allocated a proportionate number of refugees to individual member states (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:152).

Since 2015, the Hungarian parliament has passed/declared a state of migration emergency in order to cope with the thousands of refugees crossing the Hungarian border (Scheppele, 2015). With the state of emergency enacted, it has allowed Hungary to promote a severe military and widen police powers, giving the police and military the ability to “use force” and “restrict personal liberty” (Scheppele, 2015). The law permits soldiers to be sent to the borders fully armed and has given them the authority to use dogs, rubber bullets, tear gas and nets to apprehend migrants entering illegally. If soldiers believe their own lives are endangered, they

have been given permission to use deadly force against migrants. The emergency has also allowed the government to follow their own process when it comes to handling refugees that enter the country. Refugees are usually detained until their asylum applications are processed — and almost invariably rejected — and then expelled back along the route from which they came (Scheppelle, 2015). Since the Hungarian government has criminalised migrants, government can also detain them against their will.

These actions taken against refugees must be condemned as illegal, deeply inhuman and in violation of international law. Orban shows a clear disregard for the rights and liberties of these migrants simply because they do not originate from Hungary. Orban dehumanises and demonises the refugees without substantiation, rejecting that any actions taken against them is against human rights and instead arguing that refugees represent a security issue and a “Trojan horse for terrorism” (Lendvai, 2017:214).

3.3.2.2. Political Incarceration – The Roma People

While the government has created a new variation of a neoliberal regime, it did so while using strategies such as increasing employment through state funded public work, reducing social welfare expenditure, creating new identity politics, while economically and socially suppressing large populations not viewed as compatible with the government’s politics. Prominent among these disadvantaged individuals are the ethnically distinguished Roman people (Kocze, 2015:92) who have become excluded from Hungary’s ‘democracy’. Without mainstream political representation by political parties and the lack of state support in ensuring representation and fair treatment, Roma people have been continually excluded from mainstream politics. Instead of state redistribution, democratic participation and social responsibility, the government has left the Roma people marginalised and excluded. Orban has argued that their marginalisation and exclusion is a result of their own problems with morality and cultural traditions, suggesting that the problems they face today need to be addressed and solved by Romani themselves (Kocze, 2015:92; Kertesi & Kezdi, 2011; Sigona & Trehan, 2009).

In the ultra-right wing, pro-government newspaper Magyar Hirlap, which has close ties with the Orban government and is said to express the views of the Prime minister and Fidesz, writers have explicitly supported the extermination of the Roma people quoting that “a significant part are unfit for coexistence” (Kocze, 2015:97; Subert, 2019:3). These comments were neither criticised by the prime minister nor by Fidesz politicians. Romani face higher vulnerability and

uncertainty compared to non-Roma in the labour market, they have a lower level of income (often due to the absence of work protection), Roma children are segregated from Hungarian education and are often turned away from health and housing benefits (Kocze, 2012; Kocze, 2015:92; Kertesi & Kezdi, 2011).

In a democracy, a key principle is affording every citizen and group political equality, ensuring they have the same rights and legal protections, as well as access to justice and power, as the larger majority in a nation (Diamond, 2015:40). Orban's government, however, has completely negated this principle and has instead continued to create exclusionary social and economic patterns that ultimately lead to a dispossessed Roma population, politically and socially.

3.3.2.3. Authority over Everyday Life

In his creation of Hungary's illiberal democracy, Orban has turned the country into a surveillance state that continually limits the rights of Hungarian citizens. The Orban government has not only extended its rule to all sectors of the new 'party state', but has also been controlling more and more of the society, fundamentally eroding the democratic rights and liberties of its citizens. Since its re-election in 2014, Fidesz has progressively exercised a "dictatorship over everyday life" (Ludtke, 2016:847), with increasing penetration into the everyday life of all citizens.

It has built an extensive system of state corporatism through state-controlled organisations for all public employees, with mandatory memberships in professional corporations. In addition, the state-directed social movements have been organised into a large pseudo civil society organisation, the Civic Unity Forum (CÖF). Unions were forced to merge with an emerging corporate structure and limits were placed on union rights, curtailing the rights of workers to call for a strike. It has also taken several steps to prevent people from expressing dissatisfaction in a formal fashion: it made the labour code stricter, which hurt workers and abolished traditional forms of dialogue between employers and employees (Bozoki, 2015:23).

The government has also passed new legislation which has ensured public education is managed and controlled by central government. Local government and foundation schools have been nationalised, and a significant number of schools were placed under the leadership of churches. Through these new laws, the government has also been homogenising the curriculum, giving rise to the antiliberal traditions of communism and Catholicism (Bozoki, 2015:25).

The government has also gone into the religious sphere of citizens' lives as Catholicism has been a powerful influence on Fidesz and Orban in Hungary. The two seek to preserve religious and traditional beliefs in what they view as an increasingly liberal and secular world (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:142). It went as far as deciding which religions could be regarded as established, with Islam being denied status. Orban has also created what Attila Agh (2016) calls a "cultural dictatorship". The Orban government has established the Hungarian Academy of the Artists (MMA) which has taken complete control of the cultural sector of Hungarian society, becoming what authors have coined as the state's ideological arm (Agh, 2016; Bozoki, 2015). In many towns, relatives of the Fidesz circle have become directors of theatres and cultural programmes and those that aimed to decrease cultural inequality were terminated. The government also stopped the activities of the Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary for three years, halting one of the most successful branches of cultural life in Hungary – film production (Bozoki, 2015:25).

Through the control of employment, removing the ability to protest and oppose the government, the taking control of all cultural elements as well as through the nationalisation of education, Orban has evidently limited the Hungarian citizens' civil liberties and human rights. He has removed their freedom of expression, association and assembly in order to secure his public authority.

3.3.3. Orban's Nationalistic Populism

Orban's rhetoric and policies throughout his political career are representative of his nationalistic populism, which he has used to create his illiberal democracy and entrench his personalistic power within Hungary. Orban's populism can be classified as "national populism" as he prioritises the culture and interests of the nation, promising to give a voice to a people who feel they have been neglected (Cederman, 2019; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:1; Kearns, 2018; Muller, 2019). For Orban, what he envisions for Hungary is unity, however, the togetherness he envisions is defined by heritage, not borderlines. For Orban, a person raised of Magyar origin living in Serbia or Romania is more authentically Hungarian than a Roma or Turk born and raised in Hungary (Albright, 2017:172). He urges citizens to protect themselves from threats to their collective identity and appeals unceasingly to ethnic pride based on shared identity, common history, values and religion.

Viktor Orban's right-wing populist discourse is mixed with an agenda of anti-immigration and ethnic regionalism, promoting the heartland and the idealised conception of the community –

‘the people’ (Taggert, 2004:271). Orban speaks strongly about ethnonationalism, a belief in the creation of an ethnically homogenous nation state, “Hungary for Hungarians” (Schaeffer, 2017). The ‘us vs them’ narrative is a key component of populist discourse and can be seen throughout Orban’s political rhetoric. Orban has consistently given discourse on the threatening ‘other’ to Hungarians national identity, identifying mass migration and its resulting multiculturalism as the end of the Hungarian nation state.

National populism across Europe has been propelled by an intense public angst over immigration and ethnic change (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:36; Kearns, 2018). The narrative focuses less on the detail of policy and far more on claims about national decline and destruction, which they link not only to immigration and “hyper ethnic change” but also to what they see as culturally incompatible Muslims and refugees (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:37). Viktor Orban primarily gives a narrative rooted in fears of destruction, presenting refugees as “a Muslim invasion force” who present an imminent risk to Hungary’s distinctiveness, national values and ways of life. Orban continually argues that through the expansion of the rights of minority groups and promoting multiculturalism, Hungary’s religious values and traditional family life is under threat; “migration will destroy us” (Lamour & Varga, 2017:8). Instead of the term racist and its implication, Orban’s national populism is seen as nativist, referring to the belief that a country (in this case Hungary) should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group, and that any others are threatening (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:76; Lamour & Varga, 2017:8). This can be seen in Orban’s attempts to ensure Hungary’s ethnic homogeneity, and his persistent resistance to the intake of refugees following the on-going refugee crisis in Europe (Lamour & Varga, 2017:4-6). Orban’s othering of migrants and those who are not “Hungarian” has led to increased intolerance, islamophobia, racism and xenophobia across Hungarian society (Lendvai, 2017:307). A stable, fair and cooperative society is one where every citizen, no matter their political and social beliefs, is accepted and tolerated, however, Orban’s actions have allowed for the creation of the tyranny of the majority, where intolerance towards minority groups has become normalised and accepted.

Based on unity against the enemies of the nation and messages based on the notion of national unification, Orban has managed to successfully suspend liberal institutions, principles and relevant practices in order to build up his illiberal/autocratic system, using the refugee crisis as social cement for communal and national cohesion – as a unifying bogeyman (Lendvai, 2017:296). By defining the Hungarian ‘people’ not as a group of individuals or social classes or as political community, but instead as representative of a selective ethnonational category

(Bozoki, 2015:14), Orbán has been allowed to dismantle democracy in order to protect the aspirations of the majority.

National populists feed on deep dissatisfaction, and further weaken the bonds between mainstream politics and the people. This de-alignment is making political systems across the west far more volatile, fragmented and unpredictable (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018:1; Kearns, 2018). Orbán makes use of the refugee crisis across Europe to cultivate strong, irrational fears about the possible destruction of the national group's historic identity and established ways of life. Orbán continually attacks the core foundations of the global liberal order, culturally liberal politicians, transnational organisation, and global finance, arguing that by encouraging mass immigration and support for refugees, these groups only want to erode the nation and Hungarian national identity. This type of nationalist populism cultivates strong fears amongst ordinary citizens and ensures support for both Orbán and his political party Fidesz. Also, by creating an irrational, highly emotional fear among citizens it gives populists, like Orbán, the ability to then dismantle democracy's checks and balances and pass through quick legislation with the argument that it is all to ensure the protection of Hungarians and their national identity.

Orbán's populism is seen in his belief and rhetoric that by maximising power and centralising government around him and through tight-fisted leadership he can assure order and bring prosperity to the Hungarian people and protect them from the 'aliens' – the enemies of Hungary. Throughout his tenure as the Strongman of Hungary, Orbán has asked for total loyalty and devotion in order to forge a spiritual community that will protect the interests of all 'Hungarians'. This can be seen in Orbán's 'holistic nationalism' which typically holds that the nation has a close and ethnically pure foundation and is thus wrapped in authoritarian policies (Albright, 2017; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2013:59).

Combining all the elements of Viktor Orbán's nationalistic populism, it is evident it lends itself to be problematic. These elements pose numerous threats to the state of liberal democracy, specifically the rights and freedoms of groups within Hungarian society. Orbán's populism has allowed him to amass huge public authority which he has used to dismantle Hungary's democracy, centre his personalistic authority and diminish the positive aspects that liberal democracy affords citizens.

3.3.4. Break Sovereignty & International Law

Under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, Hungary has often openly come into conflict with the Constitutional Court, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission of the

Counsel of Europe. Although Hungary under Orban has not broken the principles of Sovereignty, as Russia has in its illegal occupation of the Ukraine, the country's repeated conflicts with the bodies of the EU indicate a larger issue at hand. This section will determine the foundation of these conflicts and if they lend themselves as evidence to Orban's failure to uphold international law.

3.3.4.1. Failure to Adhere to the EU Criteria & Rule of Law

As enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, "the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities" (European Union, 2019:17). Member states of the EU are thus accustomed to conducting themselves according to the values of pluralism, tolerance, justice, non-discrimination, solidarity and equality; making these values an integral element of European way of life. These values also help ensure that European citizens enjoy political rights and civil liberties, that human dignity is respected and protected, and all citizens are seen equal before the law (European Union, 2019).

The concern of the Hungarian case is that it raises serious challenges for the European Union and its governing institutions. Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, is often accused of promoting a form of 'illiberal democracy', where governance is rooted in the popular support of a majority of the country's citizens, but without a strong guarantee of minority rights and the rule of law. However, it is not only liberal principles that are being trampled on, but also the notion of popular sovereignty and the international laws and treaties it has agreed to live by. Individual steps taken by Fidesz and Orban are thus formulated in such a way as to evade uncompromising legal sanctions. Thus, with The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and European Parliament having limited legal instruments at their disposal to remedy democratic backsliding and cases of quasi-authoritarianism actions, the Hungarian government as continually undermined the expression of popular sovereignty and thus the characteristically democratic quality of the Hungarian political system. Orban and his government's actions continually undermine the very principles prescribed by the EU, it subverts the rights of minorities and continually stretches the meaning of the rule of law, and by subverting the principles of liberal democracy, it goes directly against the mandate of the European Union and its other member states (Albright, 2017:173; Lendvai, 2017:293; Kearns, 2018; Krastev, 2018:49).

To highlight Hungary's failure to live by the laws and values that underpin the EU, in September 2018, members of the European Parliament voted to censure the Hungarian government for eroding democracy and failing to uphold fundamental European values (Gall, 2019). The measure to trigger Article 7 sanctions procedures garnered the necessary majority needed to pass; voting to launch political sanctions on Hungary and Orban's government. Orban's governing of Hungary puts the values of the EU and its institutions at risk and thus breaks the very international order it agreed to be a part of.

The European Commission and the EU have also continually disagreed with Hungary over its brutal treatment of refugees and failure to offer them any refuge. In July 2019, The European Commission filed a case against Hungary at the CJEU over the "Stop Soros" law, which makes it a crime to help asylum seekers and enforces new restrictions on the right to claim asylum. "The Hungarian legislation curtails asylum applicants' right to communicate with and be assisted by relevant national, international and non-governmental organisations by criminalising support to asylum applications", the Commission said (Aljazeera, 2019). It added that it believed Hungary was in breach of EU asylum laws as well as the bloc's charter of fundamental rights, failing to abide to both EU and international law.

3.3.5. Reflection of Viktor Orban

Under the leadership of Viktor Orban, Hungary has witnessed the gradual undermining of its hard-won democracy (Kirchick, 2019:13). Examining the above data, evidence indicates that Orban embodies the core characteristics of a Strongman leader. Using nationalistic populism, Orban has managed to win sweeping electoral victories, all while demonising the political opposition and the liberal democratic world order, scapegoating minorities, muzzling the independent media, building a kleptocratic system that rewards cronies and undermining institutional checks and balances (Krastev, 2018:49; Mounk, 2018:2). Through these actions, Orban has abused the principles of good governance and impartiality, abusing his public authority for his own gains and undermining the legitimacy of Hungarian public office. Although coming to power democratically in both 2014 and 2018, Orban has used his personalistic power to turn Hungary's political landscape into a de facto presidential and centralised government, with him as its sole and its head. He has suspended liberal democratic institutions, principles and practices in order to create his own illiberal/autocratic system. Despite being a member of the EU, Orban continues to defy the principles to which Hungary lawfully agreed to adhere. This in itself is problematic as it shows Orban's willingness to disregard previous binding agreements and what effects it may later have on the nation and its

citizens. Altogether, Orbán's actions demonstrate his willingness to follow through with any policies in order to maintain his power grip on Hungary.

3.4. Turkey and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

When Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in late 2002, there were high hopes about the growth of democratic governance and positive economic reforms as Erdogan looked to create “the new Turkey” (Genc, 2019:26). Erdogan hoped to forge an economically self-reliant country, while securing European integration and achieving a liberal consensus through ‘demilitarization and normalisation’. Erdogan came to be seen as a bridge between the establishment and “the organisational power and dynamic voting base of Islamists” (Genc, 2019:30), as he signified an Islamist movement compatible with the liberal democratic order. This section will examine Erdogan's policies and presidential rule since his accession to power in order to determine whether or not he can be described as a Strongman political leader.

3.4.1. Erosion of Democratic Institutions

In 2004, Erdogan pledged to curtail the military's long-standing dominance of politics, winning him mass support amongst liberals and Turkish citizens across the political spectrum. However, Turkey's military tutelage was not replaced by democracy; rather by AKP patrimony and autocracy (Genc, 2019:30; Waldman & Caliskan, 2017). This section will examine key democratic institutions; the separation of powers, free press and the presence of a functioning opposition, and Erdogan's actions towards them in order to determine if he follows a key characteristic of the Strongman.

3.4.1.1. Undermining Checks and Balances

In the July general election of 2007, Erdogan and the AKP won 47 percent of the vote. With a strong standing in the election, curtailing of the military and massive economic growth in Turkey, it can be argued that Erdogan saw these successes and popular support as an opportunity to attack the checks and balances of the Turkish political system (Cagaptay, 2017:205). In September 2010, Turkey held a referendum to decide whether or not to carry out 26 proposed amendments to the military-drafted constitution instituted in the aftermath of a 1980 coup. Although the referendum came to be seen primarily as a vote of confidence in the Erdogan government, opponents maintained that progressive amendments were unlikely to be executed while judicial reforms were dangerous as they could possibly give the ruling government far-reaching powers over the court. However, following the passing of the

referendum, the amendments made to the constitution soon demonstrated Erdogan and the AKP's willingness to undermine democracy.

The changes made to the judicial system following the passing of the referendum quickly demonstrated the potentially destructive impact Erdogan was willing to make to Turkey's democracy (Cagaptay, 2018:121; Cinar & Sirin, 2017:135; Wallander, 2018:77). The first included increasing the number of judges in the constitutional court, which saw more AKP loyalists placed within. The High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), which provides peer oversight to judges and prosecutors, was amended so that its membership doubled in size, and it continued to be led by the AKP justice minister. By placing AKP loyalists within the judicial branch of government, Erdogan could ensure that there would be few who would oppose his policies or prosecute him for autocratic activities. This effectively handed control of the most powerful court in Turkey to Erdogan and the AKP, extinguishing any possible formal opposition to his rule. Undermining the Judicial system would thus ultimately erode any formal checks on his use of executive power going forward. Erdogan soon parted ways with liberals and became increasingly inclined to autocratic policies, and he thus soon started making moves towards establishing a presidential system, which would present fewer obstacles to his exercise of power.

Following the July 2016 coup attempt, which was widely blamed on military officers and civilians frustrated with Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian rule, Erdogan described the failed coup as a "gift from God" because it allowed him to cleanse the army and widen his response to crush any remaining opposition (Kirisci & Sloat, 2019:10). Erdogan was able to formally consolidate his de facto presidential rule in April 2017 when Turkish citizens voted in a disputed constitutional referendum on a set of measures which changed the political system to a presidential structure. This allowed for the elimination of the office of prime minister and enabled the president to serve as the head of the ruling party (Cinar & Sirin, 2017:135; Kirisci & Sloat, 2019:10). The president was given new powers; the right to issue decrees, propose the national budget, appoint senior officials and cabinet members as well as appoint members of the high court. After Erdogan won snap elections in 2018 and amid the post-coup state of emergency, the government further cracked down on democratic institutions and channels for possible opposition. Erdogan appointed his former chief of staff as the defence minister, thus he can manage all military promotions, the police have been given heavy arms and brought under close government control. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has lost its influence over the creation and implementation of foreign policy and Erdogan has formed his own team at the

presidential palace, gaining the power to appoint personnel of his own choosing (Kirisici & Sloat, 2019:10).

Erdogan made sure to create his secure grip over power by creating his own group of state elite, outsourcing many social responsibilities of the state to the AKP, Islamic charities and individual politicians. When Erdogan privatised massive amounts of state property, he ensured AKP and pro-Erdogan supporters became propertied and acquired massive amounts of economic power. The AKP also spearheaded the shift of vast amounts of land and capital to supportive business elites, fostering corruption and undermining social justice and democracy. Erdogan's government has ensured the creation of intricate networks with favoured companies that cover a wide range of different sectors including energy, communication, the media and mining. The government has also frequently taken control or influenced the management of mega companies involved in media and communication in order to take control of a central democratic centre piece (Cagaptay, 2017; Somer, 2016:493).

Through the creation of his own kleptocracy and securing all government positions with loyalists, Erdogan has been able to extend government oversight and erode the ability of the high courts to block governmental legislation. These actions have diminished vertical and horizontal accountability, hampered government transparency and by stretching the constitutional powers of his office as well as his personal influence over state and party institutions, Erdogan has secured the concentration of power into his hands.

3.4.1.2. Taming the Media

Once Erdogan established his grip over the three branches of government, his next target became the media and business community. By attacking the media and securing control over the business community, Erdogan could further silence any opposition to his rule, minimize the possibility of dissent, while using the media to promote the government's political line. Fundamentally, the concern over his actions is his complete removal of channels that safeguard accountability.

Popular television networks as well as large independent or/and anti-government newspapers such as Aksam, Star and Vatan were seized by pro-government watchdogs who afterwards installed Erdogan-approved management and ownership (Cagaptay, 2018:122). Further evidence of Erdogan's need to silence any opposition, was his acquisition of the media firm Dogan Yayin, a conglomerate owned by Turkish billionaire Aydin Dogan who had long supported secular, liberal views, often criticising the AKP and Islamist fanatics. After a \$2.5

billion fine and an excruciating and politically motivated tax audit, calling for the boycott of the Dogan-owned media, Dogan had no option but to sell some of his media companies in order to continue his business operations (Cagaptay, 2018:124-125; Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Tas, 2015:786). In the successful subjugation of Dogan and his media corporation, Erdogan was able to have a lasting effect on the broader media and business community. This signalled to the entire business community that any organisation, family or person who supported secular, liberal causes or ideas and showed open antagonism to Erdogan and the AKP would come under similar investigation. Erdogan has also ensured the creation and expansion of privately and publicly owned pro-government media. By corporatising the nature of Turkish Press and its increasing polarisation along party lines, Erdogan has managed to use the power of the media to affect election results and contribute to political polarisation (Somer, 2016:495; Tas, 2015:783).

The government has also blocked social media websites such as Twitter and Wikipedia, and has even prosecuted citizens for their media postings, becoming distinguished as the world's top jailer of journalists (Cinar & Sirini, 2017:137; Kirisci & Sloat, 2019:11; Somer, 2016:495; Tas, 2015:783). Besides journalists being detained, numerous media organisations such as tv channels, news agencies, magazines, newspapers and radio channels have been closed, silenced or have even had their licenses revoked.

By placing the bulk of the media into the hands of owners friendly to his agenda, Erdogan has also managed to prevent any media support for his opposition and has ensured his ability to manipulate and instrumentalise the industry. Today, the Turkish media cannot discuss, criticise or satirise Erdogan nor bring attention to any corruption allegations of his government (Cagaptay, 2018:123-124; Waldman & Caliskan, 2017:88). Through this process, Erdogan has been able to ensure the gradual surrendering of the business community and the silence of any opposition to his rule. These actions are thus reflective of further actions taken by Erdogan to block any institution that may challenge his authority or hold him accountable.

3.4.1.3. Weakening of the Opposition

AKP rule in Turkey today resembles a dominant-party political system, one set on carrying out its own revolution. Erdogan and his ruling AKP have ensured little to no opposition by portraying his opponents as traitors and collaborators of external forces seeking to undermine Turkey's prosperity and stability (Kirisci & Sloat, 2019:11). Through government control of the media, opposition political parties have also struggled to provide a compelling alternative.

Prior to the general elections of 2015, opposition parties accused Erdogan of breaching constitutional rules against partisan activity and complained about the inability to use state media as they were granted limited access (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Kirisci & Sloat, 2019:12). In the 2017 referendum, international bodies criticised the government's use of state resources and their actions to deny opposition a level field of coverage and the ability to campaign freely. The pro-Kurdish party People's Democratic Party (HDP), following the coup, co-leaders, parliamentarians and elected mayors of the party were arrested on false terrorism charges, done so the AKP could ensure its majority while the HDP saw its votes fall (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Kirisci & Sloat, 2019:11). The HDP has also seen growing attacks on its opposition activities in the course of election campaigns (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016). Throughout the election campaign of 2015, HDP experienced 176 attacks, ranging from bomb detonations, mob attacks and outbreaks on HDP pre-election rallies. Security forces also detained several party members of the opposition HDP weeks before the November elections in four different cities without any pretext.

With politicised state institutions, uneven access to the media and uneven access to state resources, Erdogan has severely skewed the playing field in favour of the AKP, eroding electoral fairness. Free and fair elections constituting of a pluralistic political system are critical to democratic rule and constitute a key democratic institution. A fair and pluralistic political system helps ensure that the ruling party and its leader can be held accountable. Further, allowing more political parties within a system ensures every citizen can vote for a political party they believe represents their political ideas. An active opposition also ensures the ruling party can be held accountable for its actions. In undermining the opposition of Turkey's political system, Erdogan has further eroded another channel which may offer any opposition or accountability to his rule.

3.4.2. Violation of Human Rights

Under the AKP government and Erdogan's rule, the trajectory of the nation has polarised society socially and politically, to create what Cagaptay (2017:193) calls "the crisis of modern Turkey". With the erosion of core democratic institutions as identified above, many observers are left concerned over the possibility of the failure of Erdogan to safeguard citizens' fundamental rights. Henceforth, this section will examine if Erdogan's leadership has led to the violation of Turkish citizens' human rights and civil liberties.

3.4.2.1. Islamic Social Engineering

With democratic institutions under Erdogan's personal rule, Erdogan has been able to mould Turkish society into a more religious, Islamic society. Besides the construction of 9000 mosques over a ten-year period, Erdogan has taken overt steps towards the Islamisation of Turkish society, most notably through education policy, taking any opportunity to dismantle secularist education. An example is the issuing of a policy which suggests mandatory courses on Islam be taught to all students as young as six in public schools (Cagaptay, 2018:129; Somer, 2016:487). As a result, children of other faiths or no faiths are forced to take courses in Sunni Islam in publicly funded schools. Religiously focused programmes replaced extracurricular activities involving arts and athletics across publicly funded secular schools. Secular schools were also forced to provide elective courses on the Qur'an and the teachings of the prophet Muhammed. Erdogan has also gone after academics who have opposed his Islamification of education. A larger number of teachers were fired, while numerous educational establishments, universities and secular academic courses have been terminated and/or closed (Cagaptay, 2017:337; Cinar & Sirin, 2017:134).

Under Islamic social engineering (Somer, 2016:487), women's rights have increasingly been disregarded and remodelled. Women's rights have been repurposed as family rights, shifting the focus away from the woman as an individual and instead ensuring her traditional role as a mother and a wife (Cagaptay, 2017:188; Cinar & Sirin, 2017:133). Women have also lost the right to choose to have an abortion or to have a caesarean birth; it is only in medical emergencies that a woman may have a caesarean (Tas, 2015:782). Removing this choice from a woman is reflective of Erdogan's wider dismissal of woman's rights. Erdogan's attitude towards woman can be seen in statements he has made such as, "You cannot put women and men on an equal footing. It is against nature", and, "In the workplace, you cannot treat a man and a pregnant woman in the same way", including that the "delicate nature" of women prevents them from doing the same work that men are capable of (Wagner, 2016: 47).

Erdogan's Islamic social engineering of society goes against freedom of expression, association and assembly as he diminishes their ability to form and express their own political and religious beliefs. Erdogan forces families of secular beliefs into a religious teaching which they may not agree with, removing the ability of people to formulate their own religious beliefs. Further, by forcing religion into political beliefs Erdogan has undermined the rights of woman and their freedoms.

3.4.2.2. Freedom of Political Opinion and Expression

The ability of the Turkish people to freely express themselves and their opposition to the government is also consistently obstructed by the Turkish government. At rallies and demonstrations, police often use disproportionate force with the use of water cannons, tear gas, beatings, forced dispersal and unjust arrest (Cinar & Sirin, 2017:138; Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Tas, 2015:782). In the summer of 2013, the government's commercial plan for Gezi Park, the only green space in Taksim Square, saw demonstrations ignite across the country. Erdogan reacted to the Gezi protestors with a heavy-handed crackdown on the protests and by organising counter demonstrations. Erdogan gave the police the green light to make use of police tanks, armed police jeeps and gas bombs against demonstrators which left several dead and thousands injured. The large-scale protests alone are representative of the increasing opposition to Erdogan's government by the Turkish citizens. Citizens evidently felt that government was becoming increasingly authoritative and oppressive, and feared for their rights and freedoms under Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian government.

After the Gezi protests, Erdogan ensured any further opposition activities were delegitimised, taking away the right of citizens to protest government activities. Activists found guilty in the participation of anti-government protests are often arrested and detained and brutally treated by police forces. The AKP-controlled parliament has also expanded the authority of the riot police during protests, including the right to open lethal fire at protestors, extend legal detention periods and limit the scope of court approval for police searches, detainments and wiretapping (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; D'Elia, 2016:190; Tas, 2015:782). This brutal repression by Erdogan and his police forces goes against the rights of citizens to express their political opinion and to protest peacefully against government. These actions show Erdogan following a further course of action which ensures the silencing of civil society and any possible challenge to his autocratic, undemocratic rule

Many journalists, academics, students and human rights defenders have been imprisoned with criminal charges or have seen the government apply legal pressure through defamation suits. The arrest of journalists and sentencing to jail along with large figure fines charged, these practices have established a deep culture of censorship and self-censorship (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016). The actions of the AKP government and Erdogan have also seen substantial curtailing of freedom of expression. Restrictions on social media as well as government surveillance and censorship over the internet constitute a major roll-back of freedom of expression in Turkey,

minimising citizens' ability to openly express themselves and their opposition to an increasingly autocratic government.

3.4.2.3. The Kurdish Minority

The Kurdish issues have been a central economic, political and social issue in Turkey for decades, specifically Kurdish minority rights. The Kurdish population, a minority in Turkey, continue to be suppressed militarily, culturally and economically (D'Elia, 2016:186). Over the course of Erdogan's rule, more than a million people have been forcibly replaced and more than 40,000 people have died in conflict, creating what authors have deemed an act of war against the Kurds (Cinar & Sirin, 2017:138; D'Elia, 2016:186; Phillips, 2017:41). In July 2013, Kurdish politicians were given more than six years in prison for belonging to an illegal organisation. At present, Erdogan continually targets the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), making the eradication of the PKK a national policy, promising to cleanse the country of PKK supporters and the party's elements (D'Elia, 2016:186-190). In January 2016, more than fourteen hundred academics signed a "peace petition" calling for the end to Turkey's deliberate massacre and deportation of Kurdish people" (Phillips, 2017:41). Erdogan referred to the peace petition as a "betrayal". He called its dignitaries "darkest of the dark" and a "fifth column" for terrorists" (Phillips, 2017:41).

Erdogan's attack of the Kurdish minority is unjustified and in violation of liberal democratic principles. Democracy is a system "that must grant unimpaired opportunities for all full citizens" (Dahl, 1989) and ensure "every citizen and group has the same rights and legal protections as well as access to justice and to power" (Diamond, 2015: 40). Thus, Erdogan's refusal to acknowledge the Kurdish population as equal, has contributed to an unstable and uncooperative society.

3.4.3. Erdogan's Nationalistic Populism

Before his election, the Turkish state failed to include the majority of society under its poorly developed and poorly managed formal umbrella of social protection and welfare. There was general dissatisfaction with the availability and quality of social services such as housing, health care and education (Somer, 2016:489). Erdogan thus pulled the archetypal populist narrative by promising to restore prosperity and to bring about democracy for the Turkish people. He tapped feelings of inadequacy, alienation and frustration. He appealed to the pride of Turks, asserting Turkish nationalism (Phillips, 2017:9). Erdogan and his AKP party once in government implemented a new model that saw the significant improvement of the quality of

services, social welfare provision and poverty reduction. However, although Erdogan improved the lives of many Turkish citizens from the beginning of his leadership, the model failed to create and secure citizenship rights and instead created a typical ‘top-down’ manner by state elites to citizens instead of citizen mobilisation (Dorlach, 2015; Eder, 2014; Somer, 2016:490). Services were also distributed in a discriminatory fashion in order to punish opponents and reward supporters.

Legitimised through a crisis-driven narrative, Erdogan has been able to democratically centralise his strong personalised rule over Turkey (Tas, 2015:777) and subsequently, in any further crisis, Erdogan has responded with further authoritarian measures to strengthen his grip on the state. After the failed 2016 coup, Erdogan used the crisis and the façade of populist rhetoric to deal lethal blows to human rights, curtail freedoms, silence the press, ram through constitutional changes, manipulate elections, and facilitate backsliding into electoral autocracy. This is also tied to populist discourse which often calls for root-and-branch political reforms – but it does not suggest a coherent blueprint for what policies the people’s revolution should advance (Norris & Inglehart, 2019:68). As such, Erdogan and the AKP’s policies made in office have often not represented or resembled those promised during elections campaigns.

Populists also reject pluralism and claim to be the exclusive and moral representatives of the people and their interests. Recep Erdogan has often called his opponents unpatriotic and implied they were guided by foreign interests. He has also described those who oppose his government as illegitimate, immoral and enemies of the people (Stuenkel, 2018:765). Further any actions or wrongdoing that occur within Turkey, Erdogan blames “foreigners” and “outsiders” (Tas, 2015:784). He has also argued that protests have been organised and compensated by unnamed foreign agents or were organised assaults at the behest of the Western and Jewish world (Tas, 2015:784). Erdogan deemed the Gezi protestors as anarchists and vandals, painted Kurds as terrorists, and Gulen’s followers as blood sucking vampires. In Erdogan’s discourse all opposition figures are dehumanised, demonised, and excluded from the Turkish nation (Cagaptay, 2017; Cinar & Savin, 2014; Somer, 2016:487).

Behind the populist façade of Erdogan and the AKP there has evidently been a far more troubling set of authoritarian values. Erdogan has made use of the populist playbook to justify his policies, erosion of democracy and his attack on minority groups across Turkey. He has knocked-down safeguards on executive power by claiming he alone reflects the authentic voice

of ordinary people, and has attacked democracy through gradual degradation, despite claiming to be democracy's best friend.

3.4.4. Break Sovereignty and International Law

Although Erdogan espouses a “zero problems with neighbours” policy, Turkey has found itself in conflict with several neighbours in the region, specifically as bilateral relations between Russia, Iran, Syria, Iraq and Armenia all sit in crisis (Cagaptay, 2017:28; Phillips, 2017:329). Its failure to adhere to democratic principles and civil liberties as well as Erdogan's increasing authoritarian policies, the EU has also removed itself in accession talks with the possibility of Turkey joining the union. The next section will examine Turkey's involvement with the Iraq and Syrian civil war, as well as the EU's decision to halt accession talks in order to determine if Erdogan shows a disregard for international law and the principle of national sovereignty.

3.4.4.1. Iraq & Turkey Subjugation

Excluded from post-war arrangement following the Iraqi civil war, Turkey's hostility towards Iraqi Kurdistan had a destabilising effect, leading Turkey to attempting to influence events through subterfuge and add to the bloodshed. A Turkish Red Crescent convoy was stopped at a checkpoint in 2003. The contents were marked as humanitarian supplies, however the bags contained weapons, ammunition, and flags of the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF). The humanitarian workers were Turkish special forces infiltrating northern Iraq to assist the ITF and assassinate KRG⁸ politicians (Bekdil, 2015:2; Phillips, 2017:90).

Turkey's unauthorised involvement in Iraq has only continued. Turkey has maintained armoured battalions at various regions while as of May 2016, approximately three thousand Turkish personnel were in Iraqi Kurdistan, having the third largest force of foreign soldiers after Iran and the US (Phillips, 2017:91). Bagdad strongly objected to Turkey's deployments, calling them a “violation of sovereignty” and “Turkish forces entered Iraqi territory without a request or authorisation from federal authorities” (Phillips, 2017:92). Erdogan dismissed Iraqi authorities' concerns about Iraq's sovereignty, responding with “you are not at my level, you are not my equivalent. You should know that we will go our own way” (Kouskouvelis, 2013:52). Turkey's continued involvement and entry into Iraq is clearly against the principles of sovereignty and international law as the state's involvement was given no authorisation by any international body or by Iraq. Further, Erdogan's refusal to remove Turkey's forces from

⁸ The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is the official ruling body of the autonomous Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq (Phillips, 2017:90). Thus, KRG politicians were critical members of the ruling body of Kurdistan.

the country shows his disregard for both the authority of another nation and the principle of sovereignty.

3.4.4.2. Syria & Turkey Illegal Occupation

The PKK was a pan-Kurdish liberation and human rights movement rooted in Turkey and Syria where clan groupings stretched across the border. According to PKK chief Abdullah Ocalan, most Syrian Kurds are immigrants who fled to Syria from the oppression and violence of the Turkish government (Cagaptay, 2017:186). Over years of steady interaction and bilateral relations, Erdogan and Syria's Bashar al 'Assad developed a close personal relationship, helping Turkey and Syria deepen and institutionalise their cooperation. However, rapprochement between the two nations ended abruptly with the onset of Syria's civil war (Aras, 2011; Kouskouvelis, 2013:53; Totten, 2018). Erdogan consistently tried to dissuade Assad from further aggression. Growing increasingly exasperated, he admonished Assad and likened him to Moammar al-Qaddafi of Libya, telling him to remove himself from power. Erdogan's criticism of Syria was repeatedly broadcast on state media, enraging Syrians and unravelling years of confidence and trust between the two nations (Aras, 2011; Phillips, 2017:122).

The battle for Kobani, a medium sized city on the Turkey-Syrian border and inhabited mostly by Kurds, was a turning point for Turkey and its involvement in the civil war. The Peoples Protection Units (YPG) of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) fought bravely but were no match for ISIS and their tactics. Ankara turned a blind eye to the slaughter and moreover it actively obstructed Kobani's rescue by blocking Kurds who tried to cross the border to help fellow Kurds on the battlefield. Concerned by the risk of empowering ISIS, the US decided to give support to the YPG. Erdogan, however, tried dissuading the US from supporting the YPG as he held deep suspicions over Syrian Kurds because of their ties to the PKK (Phillips, 2019:127; Spyer, 2018).

In July 2015, following a bomb exploding and killing thirty-three Kurds, two young hotheads killed two policemen they accused of complicity. Erdogan exploited the situation and launched an intense air campaign against the PKK in Kurdish communities in Iraqi Kurdistan and along the Turkey-Iraq border. Hundreds of mayors were removed from their posts. Further members of the PKK, local politicians, human rights defenders, and civil society were jailed. While western leaders defended Turkey's right to fight terrorism, they were increasingly concerned that Erdogan was targeting civilians in violation of international humanitarian law (Phillips,

2017:71). Turkish officials denied that civilians were affected in its counter-terrorism clampdown. However, a video captured the killing of ten Kurdish civilians in Cizre by Turkish troops on January 20, 2016. However, Turkey only continued its front against Syria and the Kurds. Turkish Special Forces, fighters and tanks launched “Operation Euphrates Shield” invading and occupying Syria in August 2016. Erdogan said the cross-border tactic was to fight ISIS, but it was really targeting the YPG. Opening another front in its war against the Kurds, Turkish forces crossed the border gate, attacking civilians in Kobani on September 2, 2016 (Cagaptay, 2017:257-258; Orton, 2017, 2018; McCabe, 2019; Phillips, 2017:130; Totten, 2018).

3.4.4.3. Failure to Adhere to the Copenhagen Criteria

The EU recognises the principle of democracy as a fundamental principle for the Union and as a common principle to member states. The principle of democracy, as a common value of the Union, should be respected not only within in its borders but also in the context of the Union’s external relations, particularly, the common foreign and security policy and in the development and cooperation policy with third countries (D’Elia, 2016:184). It involves the extending of peace, stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law across Europe (Huizinga, 2016:10; Philips, 2017:33).

Turkey became a candidate for EU membership at the Helenski summit in December 1999 and accession negotiations with Turkey continued until recently (Altunisik, 2016:173; Phillips, 2017:22). Europe initially felt positive towards Turkey and its membership of the EU as Erdogan had initially shown himself as a moderate Muslim, inclined to democratic principles and good economic policies that saw the advancement of Turkish economy and its citizens. However, with Erdogan’s increasing regression away from meeting the Copenhagen criteria to which candidate countries must adhere, the EU has moved away from possible Turkey accession. Turkey’s suspension towards EU membership is indicative of the serious concerns international bodies have towards Erdogan’s increasingly authoritative rule and disregard for liberal democracy. Citing the illiberal state of democracy, deteriorating human rights and committed human right violations as well as the increasing violation of international law and sovereignty, The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Raad al-Hussein, found Turkey completely disobeying the EU’s political conditionality (Phillips, 2017:130).

3.4.5. Reflection of Recep Erdogan

Examining the four characteristics in relation to Turkish leader Recep Erdogan, the evidence indicates he strongly embodies the Strongman leader. However, Turkey is still a democratic state, a republic with institutions that work within a democratic structure. There is a parliament, a presidency and a judiciary and regular elections which has seen Erdogan and his AKP be elected into power four times, through landslide victories (Waldman & Calsitan, 2017:86). However, as shown above, the democratic structure and weak liberal institutions serve as a face for an increasingly authoritarian-minded government, which seeks to dominate all aspects of government and civil society. Coming to power on centre-right appeal, Erdogan quickly abandoned this platform and instead moved to secure his absolute control over executive power. Erdogan's Turkey under his Strongman policies is ruled with little separation of powers, cronyism and corruption, the lack of press scrutiny, and the erosion of human rights. Through the concentration of power in one man's hands, Erdogan continually uses his power to dictate the direction of the state. Through his subversion of democratic institutions, specifically the judiciary, his attack on the freedom of expression, association and assembly of citizens, dismantling the rights of women and minorities, as well as the disregard for international laws and state sovereignty, Erdogan has successfully moulded Turkey into an autocratic, illiberal democracy.

3.5. Comparing Putin, Orban and Erdogan and Their Leadership

Comparing the three leaders, there are many similarities in how they have approached their leadership mandate. Examining their policies towards democracy, all three leaders have followed actions and policies that have led to the dismantling of democracy and the centralisation of power into their hands. Similarity can be seen in their use of democratic means to come to power, creating a sense of legitimacy, however, once in office, they were quick to amend the constitution and curtail any possible limits and separation of power that could hold them to account. Putin, Orban and Erdogan have also similarly endorsed the suppression of independent media, the forging of a close elite group and the prisoning of journalists in order to entrench their political rule and illiberal democracy.

Although manifesting in different ways, such as Erdogan targeting the Kurdish population, Orban the Roma people and Putin towards the citizens of Chechnya, the actions taken by these leaders towards these groups show their similar violation of human rights. All three have ensured the creation of a 'surveillance state', limiting the ability of citizens to critique the regime, while also following more repressive actions such as the murder of those in opposition,

the jailing of citizens and journalists, as well as the mistreatment of those deemed as ‘other’. Comparing the actions of Putin, Orban and Erdogan with regards to the human rights of their citizens, these three leaders once again show similarities in their disregard for the protection and security of civil liberties and political freedoms.

An important comparison, however, is that of Orban and Erdogan compared to Putin and their respective nationalism. Orban and Erdogan have specifically targeted minority groups in their nationalism – Orban’s rejection of immigrants and Erdogan’s dismissal of the Kurds – advocating for a unification of only those that are considered part of the ‘real people’. However, Putin’s nationalism is less xenophobic, nor does he make use of identity politics. Instead he sees all those part of the Russian society as the ‘real people’ hoping to unite the entire nation, despite cultural, ethnic or religious differences. Thus, one could argue that Orban and Erdogan’s nationalistic populism, compared to Putin, is problematic to a greater extent for it is often more exclusionary, xenophobic and discriminatory.

The foreign policy and actions undertaken by Putin, Orban and Erdogan are reflective of their willingness to erode international law and break sovereignty in order to further their political cause and legitimacy. Comparing the policies of these leaders, differences can be seen in their respective approach to the disregard for international law and breaking of sovereignty. Orban is yet to directly violate sovereignty as he has not encroached on another state. Unlike Putin and his actions in the Ukraine, and Turkey’s illegal involvement in Syria and Iraq, Orban has not involved Hungary in nations who have not requested it. Orban’s most notable rejection of international law has been his refusal of supporting an EU backed quota scheme and rejecting the EU Copenhagen criteria to which it agreed. Putin, however, takes it one step further than both Erdogan and Orban as he used a variety of methods – hybrid warfare⁹ – to influence other nations. His influence in the US elections specifically highlights his violation of international law.

3.6. Conclusion

Examining the rule of Vladimir Putin of Russia, Viktor Orban of Hungary and Recep Erdogan of Turkey, these men display evidence of extensive Strongman leadership. Although their actions differ in context, these three leaders not only express the four core characteristics, but

⁹ Hybrid warfare, first termed by US military theorist Frank Hoffman, was defined in order to bridge the gap between the original, linear characterisation of warfare and current warfare in the context of the 21st century (Fridman, 2018). Simply defined, hybrid warfare is a military strategy which uses a blend of techniques such as conventional capabilities, cyberwarfare, irregular tactics and terrorist acts.

their policies and actions are reflective of each truly embodying the Strongman mould. Each leader has used this assertive, nationalistic, authoritative ‘macho’ style of leadership to cement their political power and create their own form of illiberal democracy. Through the concentration of power in one man’s hands, these leaders have continually used their power to dictate the direction of the state.

Having shown that these leaders embody these four characteristics, Chapter Four will link the findings of Chapter Three to Francis Fukuyama’s thesis *The End of History*. The evidence gathered in Chapter Three sits in conflict with Fukuyama’s thesis, indicating the importance of acknowledging the rise of these political Strongmen. This will then be followed by the possible implications for geopolitical security Strongman leadership can create in reference to the four core characteristics, specifically in relation to the rule of Putin, Orban and Erdogan.

Chapter Four: The End of History and Implications for Geopolitical Security

4.1. Introduction

Building on from the previous chapter, Chapter Four will first offer a reflection on Francis Fukuyama's *End of History* thesis. With the rise of the political Strongmen across the globe and their growing form of illiberal democracy, it brings into question the stable, democratic future that was previously imagined. Reflecting on Fukuyama's thesis is not to critique nor object with his original argument, but rather to highlight that the rise of these Strongmen may act as an obstacle to the achievement of his hypothesis. Following this reflection, Chapter Four will centre on these Strongmen, specifically in reference to Putin, Erdogan and Orban, and how their policies and actions may contribute to increased geopolitical insecurity. Comparing these three leaders shows that their similar views and actions towards democratic institutions, human rights, as well as their use of nationalistic populism and their tendency to break sovereignty and international law will pose a risk to global political security.

4.2. The End of History – A Reflection of Fukuyama in light of the Strongman Rise

Acknowledged in Chapter Two, this study refers to Francis Fukuyama's fundamental *End of History* thesis, in which after decades of geopolitical turbulence, following the end of the Cold War, free-market capitalism had finally triumphed and would become the final form of human governance (Fukuyama, 1992). The end of communism portended a new era of stability and growth, in which, for Fukuyama, liberal democracy had shown to be 'the only coherent political aspiration' and would become universalised as the "final form of human government" (Fukuyama, 1992: xi). It is important to note that for Fukuyama, this end did not mean 'termination' but rather target or objective; that a liberal state linked to a market economy was the plausible outcome (Fukuyama, 2018). Fukuyama argued that, "There is no ideological rival to liberal democracy. There is no alternate, comprehensive set of political and economic ideas poised as a rival to liberal democracy with universal aspirations and global appeal" (Miller, 2019:1; Fukuyama, 1992). In summary, Fukuyama believed that free-market liberalism showed itself to be the best and most sustainable political and social model (Emmott, 2017:208). This new era would be one of development and prosperity as the 'Washington consensus' provided the toolkit for both economic success and the protection of human rights and political freedoms – the user manual on how to democratise (Luce, 2017; Moyo, 2018).

What made Fukuyama's thesis so important was that it provided a sense of security and created the image of a stable future after decades of political turmoil. It gave a sense of permission to believe in a positive, cooperative, and prosperous future, one that would bring "peace and prosperity in our time" (King, 2017:8). He highlighted that liberal democracy provided both economic prosperity while promising to ensure the protection of human rights, central aspects the entire globe was looking for. It also provided a sense of confidence and insurance, in that he argued that once a democracy was consolidated, the chance of its reversal was nearly non-existent (Mounk, 2018:4).

At the time, Fukuyama's thesis was convincing for various reasons. One reason is that as human beings we cannot help but believe in progress. Liberal democracy seemed like the progressive step that made the most sense (Krastev, 2017). Another answer is simply that the enemy in the Cold War had been defeated. Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe quickly became members of the EU, the Russian empire crumbled, Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia became independent states – and Russia itself was converted into a free-market capitalist society. With the Soviet Union defeated and soviet communism's reach around the world rapidly shrinking – democracy and free market capitalism had self-evidently triumphed (King, 2017:31). Further, more and more nations signed up for the western model. The western model seemed to have defeated all comers, thus it made sense for everyone to sign up to its political and economic model.

When the "third wave of global democratisation" began in 1974, only about 30 percent of the world's independent states met the criteria of electoral democracy (Diamond, 2015:141). In the subsequent three decades, democracy had a remarkable global ascension as the number of democracies essentially held steady or expanded every year from 1975 until 2007, until the world reached nearly 120 democracies (Freedom House, 2019; Fukuyama, 2018:3). This was paralleled by a similarly stable and substantial expansion in levels of civil liberties and political rights.

However, as previously examined in Chapter Three, the current rise of the political Strongman across the globe contrasts with what Fukuyama conjectured. The rise of leaders like Recep Erdogan, Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin – just a few of the many Strongmen currently in office around the world – do not fit into Fukuyama's thesis and thus this current phenomenon is important to take notice of. The rise of these Strongmen and current instability across geopolitics does not have to be read as a critique or objection of Fukuyama's thesis, however

their prominence suddenly, combined with their form of illiberal democracy, contrasts with the belief that the future would be one of democracy, stability and security.

Instead, the global surge towards democracy has rather gone into what Larry Diamond calls a “global recession” (2015), in which the aggregate number of democracies fell from their peak in virtually all regions of the world. The trend of democracy ascending has since reversed itself, as the total number of democracies have since declined, while several of what seemed like successful democracies during the 90s slid backward towards a more authoritarian government, including Hungary, Turkey, Thailand and Poland (Fukuyama, 2018:5). Authoritarian states, led by China and Russia, have become more aggressive and self-confident, a model for countries wishing to turn away from the Washington consensus (Fukuyama, 2014:399). The concern for geopolitical security is that a lack of democracy can lead to instability of the nation, the lack of human rights and the protection of civil liberties (Glasser, 2019:16).

This mild but protracted democratic recession is of concern for several reasons. First, there has been a significant accelerating rate of democratic breakdown, second, the quality/stability of democracy has been declining in a number of important emerging-market countries, third, authoritarianism has been deepening, and fourth, established democracies increasingly seem to be performing poorly and lack the will to promote democracy effectively (Diamond, 2015:144; Luce, 2017; Mounk, 2018:138). According to Freedom House, 2018 was the 13th consecutive year in which global freedom declined, hinting that global democracy is in retreat across the world (Freedom House, 2019:1; Walt, 2019:28). The reversal spanned a variety of countries across various regions, from longstanding democracies like the US to consolidated authoritarian regimes like Russia and China. Although the overall decline is shallow compared with the gains of the late 20th century, the pattern is consistent and of concern, hinting that global democracy is in retreat across the world.

While it may be understandable that new would-be democracies are struggling to consolidate their liberal democracy, what is/was far more unexpected was that threats to democracy would arise from within established democracies themselves. For instance, Hungary had been one of the first countries in Eastern Europe to overthrow its communist regime, thereafter it joined NATO and the EU, establishing itself as a consolidated liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 2018). While although Fukuyama faced intense criticism for his thesis, those who argued that liberal democracy might not triumph around the world were just as sure that it would remain stable in democratic heartlands of North America and Western Europe (Mounk, 2018:4).

But there is evidence to suggest the decline of democratic efficacy, energy and self-confidence (Cornish & Donaldson, 2018:13; Diamond, 2015:152; Emmott, 2017; Mounk, 2018). Citizens are less committed to democracy and more open to authoritarian alternatives than they once were. With increased geopolitical anxiety and worsening economic conditions, many people are becoming less concerned about how government came to power and a lot more about whether the government can provide jobs, education and health care (Moyo, 2018:112). With this reality, Fukuyama perhaps side-lined the consideration that increased geopolitical uncertainty and economic volatility may lead to a rebuttal of the current economic and political model. With increased political instability, slowing economic growth, failed wars and a financial crisis, many people are highlighting what they believe are the fundamental weaknesses with Western democracy and market capitalism (Cornish & Donaldson, 2018:15; Emmott, 2017; Moyo, 2018:120). Henceforth, as discontent stretches across the world, people are becoming increasingly sceptical of the ability of democratic governments to act effectively and respond to the people's aspirations, leading to more and more citizens turning against democracy.

The rise of the political Strongman signals that liberal democracy is currently facing a backlash in the present era of geopolitical, economic, and technological upheaval. Although these Strongmen may reject several foundational principles of liberal democracy, they have offered a different type of political governance that many people find value in. With the current turbulent environment, citizens are increasingly emphasising their desire for a strong leader who will unite the nation and bring back political stability and economic prosperity. The rise of these illiberal Strongmen has thus allowed for the deepening of authoritarianism as more authoritarian states are becoming resourceful, sophisticated and successful, questioning whether democracy needs to be prioritised in the quest for economic growth (Moyo, 2018:118). Citizens are thus increasingly showing support for leaders that promise to bring a broader set of values back into the agenda; to reassert the primacy of the nation over distant and accountable international organisation, to reassert cherished and rooted national identities, secure economic prosperity and infrastructure and to ensure the popular will reigns supreme (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Mounk, 2018:131).

The rise of nationalistic populist Strongmen across the globe gives evidence to alternative models flourishing, offering formidable challenges to free-market liberal democracy. The Western model of liberal democracy has seemingly lost its global credibility, as many citizens and political leaders turn to their own alternative form of democracy (Cornish & Donaldson, 2018:15; Frankopan, 2018:143). For instance, many nations and citizens point to the success of the political and economic model of China (Frankopan, 2018:148; Moyo, 2018:118). Thus, although democracy is de-emphasised and political rights are superseded, citizens do not have to worry about employment, income inequality, infrastructure, or social challenges.

This brings another concern to the forefront. Perhaps Fukuyama overestimated people's deep commitment to the fundamental values of liberal democracy. Instead, this evidence suggests citizens have built up loyalty to their political system based on the economic rewards. This suggests liberal democracy has only been dominant because it delivered good economic results and geopolitical success. Thus, now that economic growth is in decline and there are increasing socioeconomic inequalities, people are turning towards political and economic alternatives, irrespective of whether they value civil liberties or not. Thus, as liberal democracies have become unsuccessful at improving their citizens' living standards, movements and leaders that disavow liberalism are emerging all over the globe.

With the rise of Strongmen like Orban, Putin and Erdogan, where these populists have accessed government, a subsequent erosion of liberal democratic principles has been followed (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:350). Authoritarian countries are openly challenging global rules and ideas about freedom and making the case that their socio-political systems work better than liberal democracy. These Strongmen pose a "substantial negative effect on democratic quality" (Huber & Schimpf, 2017:146 as they "increasingly reject liberal values" (Cederman, 2019:61).

Even if one disagrees with Francis Fukuyama's thesis, there is still evidence that highlights that, despite its shortcomings, democracy inherently has important tenants that other regimes do not offer. Democracy stresses the intrinsic importance of transparency, civil liberty, rule of law, horizontal accountability, and minority rights. It guarantees fundamental rights and civil liberties – freedom to pursue one's legitimate interests, to hold political, social and cultural beliefs, and to be able to express them without interference from the state (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:350; Mounk & Fao, 2018). High-minded defenders of liberal democracy argue that there is something uniquely legitimate about the political system. Its democratic element,

they claim, ensures citizens' equality, while its liberal element ensures citizens' freedom. As such, the genius of liberal democracy is that it can honour both these values simultaneously. It allows each citizen access in the public sphere while giving them the ability to have a private life; "only liberal democracy can fulfil some of the deepest and most universal human aspirations" (Mounk, 2018:129-130).

Thus, in conclusion, the use of Fukuyama's original essay *The End of History and the Last Man* is not to disagree with or critique his thesis. It is rather a reflection on his thesis and posits that political events currently arising pose an obstacle to this perceived future. Rather, to highlight that current events, specifically the rise of political Strongmen, are incompatible with a future that was believed to be marked by democracy, stability and security. The turbulence of current geopolitics does not have to be read as a rebuttal of Fukuyama's original thesis, however, an assessment of Strongman leadership and the fluctuations such leadership may bring towards geopolitics are an important contrast to what Fukuyama predicted. The next section will examine more specifically the possible outcomes these Strongmen could have on geopolitical security – the ramifications of their tendency to erode democratic institutions, to violate human rights, promote nationalistic populism and break the principle of sovereignty and international law.

4.3. The Strongman's Ramifications for Geopolitical Security

Although the rise of the Strongman and their illiberal democracy offers an alternative to democracy, their actions, policies and leadership style indicate that they pose a risk to geopolitical security. In an increasingly connected and globalised world, what appears to be local in nature is in fact global in impact as most elements contain global dimensions (Kaldor, 2001). These rising and existing Strongmen across the globe and their leadership style has the potential of negative ramifications for global security. The actions undertaken by leaders such as Putin, Orban and Erdogan towards democratic institutions, human rights and international law, as well as their nationalistic populism will likely have a far-reaching impact. As noted in Chapter Three, in a regional capacity these leaders have not only undermined their nations' democracy but have also created an environment of hostility and insecurity. Reflecting on Chapter Three, the next section will examine how these Strongmen's ability to create regional instability could possibly lead to geopolitical instability and insecurity.

4.3.1. A New Global Order

US Hegemony or “the American century” was born amid the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War (King, 2017:215; Zakaria, 2019:10). Following the collapse of communism, it seemed the West’s model of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism, supported by a clear set of US-sponsored international rules, would spread across the globe. Under the guise of the Washington Consensus, it laid the foundations for recommendations on how nations should interact with one another on the premise of creating wealth and championing liberal democracy (Banos, 2017:92; Rose, 2019:11). In the advocating of the Washington Consensus, the foundation of international law was said to be based on the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression towards others, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, equality and mutual benefit, peaceful co-existence, respect for human rights and basic freedoms and national self-determination (Banos, 2017; King, 2017; Rose, 2019:11).

However, politically and economically, the West’s vision has seemed to reach its limits, as geopolitical and ideological rivals undermine the foundations of the liberal world order (Frankopan, 2018:52; Kazan & Park, 2019; Russell-Mead, 2018:15). Mounting opposition from emerging superpowers, increasing resistance to globalisation and the core tenants of liberal democracy from emerging political movements, and the rise of political Strongmen across the world, could lead to the creation of a new world order. This rebalancing of power with Strongmen at the helm could have potential implications for global security, as nations like Russia, Hungary and Turkey forge their own political orthodoxy (Banos, 2017:121; Frankopan, 2018:147; Weiss, 2019:92).

Evidence suggests that the new world order, one not championed by a liberal consensus, could potentially lead to a more insecure geopolitical future. This argument extends from the Strongman’s tendency to reject the international rules-based system, as previously noted by Putin, Erdogan and Orban’s dismissal of international law, treaties and the core principle of sovereignty. While the new world order will still be based on a foundation of rules, scholars argue that with Strongmen becoming more prominent and powerful, the resulting new norm will be characterised by geopolitical competition, doubts about security commitments to allies, challenges to the fundamentals of the global trading regime and the abandoning of the promotion of freedom and democracy; these will become the defining features of a new foreign policy (Daalder & Lindsay, 2018:72; Haass, 2019:30; Kazan & Park, 2019). As Orban, Putin and Erdogan have shown, there will be little regard for democratic institutions and tenants,

civil rights and political freedoms will be restrained while international law and the principle of sovereignty will hold little value. This could have the potential of escalating rivalries and thus create unstable implications for global security (Frankopan, 2018:144).

This new global order could also potentially see the end of important international institutions and treaties, such as the Trans-Atlantic partnership, the EU, the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund. International institutions are important as they provide the framework within which countries can happily engage with each other and, help co-ordinate the actions of different countries in order to set stable expectations (Blackwill & Harris, 2016:74; Frankopan, 2018:237). Treaties and international institutions also help to foster security as they provide frameworks through which countries interact, creating cooperation, helping to foster mutual understanding and stability (Haass, 2019:30; Frankopan, 2018:222; King, 2017:225). They also help foster global security as through their creating of cooperation they help to ensure a global response to the creation of solutions for global problems.

Many global issues and threats such as climate change, the refugee crisis, growing terrorism and rising socioeconomic inequalities require the harmonizing of domestic and foreign policies and the willingness of countries to work together. Therefore, without established and agreed upon institutions, the way in which states interact with each other could potentially be characterised as strained and difficult. Future security threats demand a more pluralistic response that can be best accomplished by combining resources (Drozdiak, 2017:91; Frankopan, 2018:74). Prosperity and well-being may depend on global solutions. However, under the guise of leaders like Orban, Putin and Erdogan, many politicians and governments are taking steps to diminish co-operation with each other, disengaging from bilateral agreements and international co-operation. Instead these leaders erode confidence in international institutions and perceptions of stability as they “operate on a tornado of impulses” (Frankopan, 2018:157). As the Strongman is more likely to choose aggression and isolationism over collaboration and cooperation, the world could possibly descend into further conflict as frictions are elevated (Haass, 2019:30; Kazan & Park, 2019; King, 2017:244).

A world order led by Russia under Vladimir Putin, with the support of Turkey’s Erdogan and Hungary’s Orban, would possibly be one characterised by competition over cooperation, protectionism rather than free trade, authoritarianism rather than democracy. Henceforth, evidence suggests that the possible thawing of the liberal democratic world order could be problematic to geopolitical security (Mounk, 2018:114).

An extension of this new global order and how it could potentially lead to increased geopolitical security is that the Strongman's disregard for democratic norms is contributing to a growing sense of license among autocrats worldwide (Diamond, 2019:20). As more Strongmen come to power and are able to enact their policies, their 'successful run' at authoritarianism is making it easier for it to thrive elsewhere. Albright (2018:246) argues that herd mentality is powerful within international affairs and if one leader can follow a specific form of leadership, other leaders around the world are likely to observe and mimic. Thus, with growing assertiveness, disregard for international law yet few consequences and increased economic success, more leaders are turning towards the 'Strongman playbook'. Strongmen such as Putin, Orban and Erdogan look to others for help in endorsing their regime, favouring one's authoritarian adversaries over democratic allies (Albright, 2018:246; Mounk, 2018:2). Nudging followers away from the consensus and support for democratic norms, these leaders portray an image that this type of illiberal, autocratic leadership is acceptable (Lendvai, 2017:198). Once where a nation may have consistently held another nation and its leadership in discontent, once in power, the strongman may reverse this decision and instead seek to build a trusting, cooperative relationship (Kearns, 2018:4). For instance, despite the actions of some states towards the negation of human rights and democracy, Russia under Putin has increasingly used its power status to shield other authoritarian states from international demands to protect human rights and block interventions that would force governments to end abuses (Weiss, 2019:95). By allowing nations to continue with their erosion of human rights and political freedoms of its citizens without consequences, it signals to other authoritarian states and Strongman leaders that their actions are acceptable. This then can potentially lead to the possibility of an increased scale across the globe of human rights abuses as autocratic states are not fearful of harmful consequences. Henceforth, this could have serious implications for geopolitical security as more states negate human rights.

When these actions come from democratic countries that have before been strong advocates of democracy, this reversal can have a harmful effect (Albright, 2018:218), particularly in countries where there are already few checks on executive power. The issue with a leader showing these characteristics, especially in a free, liberal and democratic society, is that it signals to other leaders all over the world with these autocratic tendencies are acceptable. If one leader can argue that the press always lies, or the democratic institutions are erroneous, it becomes difficult to fault another across the globe when they make the same claim (Albright, 2018:5; Nance, 2018).

For example, on the invasion of the Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea, leaders across the globe praised Russia's decision. The leader of the Hungarian fascist party Jobbik praised Putin and Greece's Golden Dawn praised Russia for defending Ukraine from "ravens of international usury" and France's Front National lauded Putin's courageous position against the international lobby (Snyder, 2018:149). With Putin's actions, and the endorsement he received from other nations, the impression is given that breaking international laws and sovereignty is acceptable.

Together, these Strongmen are creating an alliance of nations led by strong authoritarian leaders who will increasingly pose a risk to the liberal, democratic world order as democratic states fail to stand up to this alliance or prove to be more successful (Lendvai, 2017:214; Nance, 2018). The current world order has not completely eroded but is spearheaded by the rise of Strongmen into political power. The possibility of a new global order emerges – one that appears to create significant geopolitical insecurity. While the Washington Consensus may be faulted, it did help foster a global environment of cooperation and consideration between states, while helping to promote the principles of liberal democracy. A stable world order requires a stable distribution of power and broad acceptance of the rules that govern the conduct of international relations (Haass, 2019:22). However, what the Strongmen champion poses a risk to increased geopolitical insecurity as their policies and ideologies are often centred on conflict, isolationism and protectionism. Instead, they foster a world of unbalanced power and the formulation of their own rules. Further, as more and more nations create a coalition of Strongmen, it will become increasingly difficult to not only stand up to them but also to foster democracy and stability (Kazan & Park, 2019). In a world of 'complex interdependence' (Rose, 2019:19), nations cannot fully operate in isolation and such attitudes that fail to acknowledge this and instead foster relationships based on self-interest can only create instability.

4.3.2. European Uncertainty

Unity between the nations across the EU is withering away while the future stability of the continent is clouded with uncertainty. With growing uncertainty, and the more internally divided Europe is, the more it will find itself at the risk of greater threats and vulnerabilities (Kearns, 2018:107; Polyakova & Haddad, 2019:112; Wright, 2017:62). Insecurity surrounding the refugee crisis, the rise of populist, right-wing challenger parties and the increasing illiberal democracy found across the continent pose significant threats to geopolitical security. With Europe and the cohesion of the Union in a critical situation, evidence suggests that the EU may face possible collapse. While the Strongman is not the sole nor leading cause of Europe's

current failings, their ascension across Europe and their leadership style are likely to create further instability. In reference specifically to Putin, Erdogan and Orban, these Strongmen's dismissal of the EU and its institutions, willingness to breach sovereignty and neglect international law, as well as their tendency to oppose the entry of refugees and migrants, can entrench further insecurity in the region. Europe and the European Union play a fundamental global role, both politically and economically. Henceforth, with the possibility of European collapse and the rise of other instability issues on the continent, this would have a substantial effect on geopolitical security (Gillingham, 2018).

4.3.2.1. European Union Instability

The growing phenomenon of political Strongmen and the resulting growing illiberalism present an increasing dilemma for the EU. Strongmen across Europe are also in strong opposition to the principles that underpin the foundation of the Union. In their hope to defend their national independence and sovereignty, these leaders repeatedly ignore the Union and the very principles they agreed to abide to. Orban has repeatedly ignored the EU's refugee quota scheme and its democratic criteria, while compared to Erdogan, although Turkey is not officially a member, his continual negation of democratic principles is evidence of his refusal to adhere to the institution's foundation values. While Russia under Putin has no desire to join the EU, he continually openly rejects the viability of the institution, going as far as to encroach on the sovereignty of European nations in order to influence and foster instability in the region.

The EU has traditionally functioned by making other countries work better than they would have done on their own – by stopping them imposing trade barriers against each other, subsidising industries, devaluing currencies against those of their neighbours, or being deliberately laxer on specific issues (Drozdiak, 2017:213; Emmott, 2017:124; Gillingham, 2018). The Union also exists to ensure the values of liberalism, social democracy and integration are fostered not only in Europe but across the continent and the world. As a post-war institution, it was established to make it harder for nationalists to subvert the rights of neighbours and of citizens within nations. The denunciation of these values by Strongmen, directly threatens the democratic laws and foundations of the EU, posing a risk to its institutional power, status and its ability to help ensure co-operation between nations (Albright, 2018:97; Emmott, 2017:124; Lendvai, 2017:201).

A power like the European Union can export stability to its surrounding neighbours, but once it becomes a hostile state, now only does it now export this stability, but it also destabilises the

entire region (Drozdiak, 2017:213; Emmott, 2017:125; Kearns, 2018:3-5; Wright, 2017:96). Evidence suggests that an unstable EU will likely lead to increased conflict, as unity between nations is no longer fostered – if the transatlantic relationship is badly damaged, a host of economic and security interests will be at risk (Gillingham, 2018). The rejection of organisations that seek to build and sustain the liberal, rules-based order is highly problematic; “were the EU to collapse, the pressure and restraint currently being applied, albeit weakly, to countries violating its values would disappear and the residual commitment to those values in some governments may well disappear” (Kearns, 2018:214).

For instance, Hungary’s illiberalism fostered under Orban’s leadership particularly undermines the EU and is in clear breach of the values on which it was founded (Frankopan, 2018:49; King, 2017:29). Hungary shows disdain of the Union’s democratic accession criteria, as it increasingly ignores the very laws it agreed to abide by once it was admitted as a member state. If a one-member state radically deviates from the EU’s criteria and constitutional traditions, and undermines the rule of law, this poses a significant risk to the health of the EU. If Hungary can benefit from EU membership while following its own form of government, it allows other nations, whether members or not, to feel emboldened to do the same (Bugaric, 2014:25). The deviation of the Orban government has not only disrupted EU actions in many arenas, but it has also developed contaminating effects on other member states, representing a danger for democratic and liberal cohesion of the EU (Agh, 2016:286; Lendvai, 2017:54).

Through the rise of illiberalism, the continuing conflict with Brussels and probing the limits of the EU’s power, the ramifications of the Strongmen’s actions could help foster EU fragmentation (Krastev, 2018:56). While the EU loses its credibility, not only are restraints on illiberal authoritarianism being removed, but it is being legitimised, giving it a massive boost across Europe and the world (Kearns, 2018:214). Leaders like Orban, Putin and Erdogan, along with rising European Strongmen, weaken the broader European convergence project. By asserting more national sovereignty and clawing back power from Brussels, Europe is undoubtedly heading towards a more fragmented future, or a long, slow collapse (Kagan, 2019:119; Kearns, 2018; Krastev, 2018:56).

The concern over European collapse is the volatility and insecurity it will likely create, as it is difficult to imagine a resulting liberal, open, tolerant and cooperative Europe. It will likely lead to difficulty in building consensus on key policy issues, including central issues such as migration, terrorism, climate change, trade and the rule of law (Drozdiak, 2017:81). The

Transatlantic relationship would likely be damaged, which can lead to a host of European economic and security threats as states increasingly fail to cooperate (Kearns, 2018). The chaos of collapse would undermine the validity and credibility of the values and institutions that have been the foundation of the EU. They would be subject to harsher scrutiny while the cessation of cooperation would serve as a rebuke to all those claiming that international cooperation is essential to future progress. “The collapse of the EU would therefore be a historic defeat not only for the idea of European integration and cooperation but for a Europe of pluralistic governing institutions, serving a society built on the primacy of individual freedom” (Kearns, 2018:208). Without a democratic body like the EU monitoring the actions of Strongmen, it will become easier for nations to revert to illiberal forms of democracy. The current pressure and restraint being applied to countries violating its liberal democratic values would disappear and the residual commitment to those values in some governments may well disappear as well. For example, Hungary’s mistreatment of refugees and the Roma people would likely continue without consequence while Erdogan would be able to continue his mistreatment of human rights.

Putin also represents a security risk to the survival of the EU. Under his “Axis of Autocracy”¹⁰ strategy (Nance, 2018:195) Putin seeks to place all the world’s assets under his and Russia’s power, and his policy interventions, spy assassinations and cyberattacks across Europe highlight this. All resources short of open warfare, Putin has shown his willingness to use any means necessary in order to restore Russia’s power, world standing and influence. Hence, it is plausible to consider that he would not hesitate to go further in order to secure Russian hegemony. Putin’s willingness to follow these policies create a large degree of geopolitical uncertainty across the globe as state and non-state actors struggle to forecast what he may do next.

4.3.2.2. Breakdown of Relations between Turkey and the EU

The geopolitical position of Turkey, in addition to its role as a link between East and West, makes Ankara a big player on several fronts: Western Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. It plays a central role both in the North-South and in the East-West. Its geographical position makes it an important bridge between Europe and Asia, and, as

¹⁰ Putin’s “Axis of Autocracy” strategy as defined by Nance (2018:195) centres around the strategic grouping of authoritarian states in which to establish a rival bloc of mounting geopolitical resistance to the West and democratic principles and values. Behind the strategy lies the desire to alter the balance of power and profoundly reshape global affairs towards a more authoritarian dynamic.

such, it plays a critical role in the security across the European and Asian continent (D'Elia, 2016:183).

A geopolitical risk rising out of Erdogan's Strongman nationalistic, conservative politics, is the possibility of the complete breakdown of the relationship between Turkey and the European Union. There are compelling reasons as to why Turkey and the EU should cooperate and ensure their continued diplomatic support; the EU accounts for half of Turkey's total trade, while Turkey is the EU's fourth largest trade partner (Kearns, 2018:170). Turkey is also a key player within NATO and in the efforts to deal with the Syrian civil war. The EU also needs cooperation with Turkey for a variety of economic and political reasons, including security collaboration and continued participation in the customs union. Most critically, it needs Turkey to shoulder the burden of the ongoing refugee crisis (Kearns, 2018:170; Kreppel & Ciddi, 2017). The relationship is already charged with tensions as both Erdogan and EU politicians see political advantage in confrontation (Cagaptay, 2017:186). For Erdogan, it allows him to claim the EU has no interest in curating a close-relationship and thus Turkey need therefore pay little notice to what the EU says on matters of democracy and economic reform (Cagaptay, 2017:186; Kearns, 2018:170-171). If the relationship between these two bodies were to collapse, it would have far reaching effects as both are critical players on the continent and on a global scale. It would impact the entire Northern hemisphere and act as a symbolic message for the acceptance of the breakdown of relations between critical global players. It would deeply damage the EU's standing and its perception of effectiveness as a democratic institution critical to the functioning of democracy across the continent (Gillingham, 2018).

A key element of this relationship is the central role both states play in the current refugee crisis and thus the ensuing creation of a Turkey-EU migrant deal. Both nations are critical in alleviating the current migrant crisis which is impacting the entire European continent as well as the Middle East (Cagaptay, 2017:186; Green & Keleman, 2016). The European Union needs Turkey to willingly accept migrants and refugees as other European nations close their borders, while Turkey needs monetary and material resources from the EU in order to take in a vast number. While under Erdogan, Turkey is unlikely to accept the arrival of more refugees as amid deepening economic malaise, frustration with government policy and Erdogan's illiberal policies to retain power, resentment towards the refugees has been growing. If the Turkey-EU migrant deal does break down, migrant and refugee flows to the EU will likely expand, which will elevate the crisis and could lead to the closing of borders inside of Europe (Green & Keleman, 2016; Kearns, 2018:174; Kreppel & Ciddi, 2017). Further, a continued and

heightened migration crisis could further fuel the nationalist populist and xenophobic views of political parties and leaders across the globe.

4.3.2.3. The Refugee Crisis

A central geopolitical concern currently is the large-scale migrant crisis across Europe. With millions of refugees attempting to enter European states across the continent, the EU has been a critical institution in ensuring the safe housing and protection of refugees (Murray, 2018:123). However, with the rise of Strongmen such as Orban and Erdogan across Europe, the ease with which the EU has been able to deal with an already difficult situation has become more strained. With the rise of nationalistic populism, the call of these leaders to close borders and refuse the entry of these refugees has become a problem felt across Europe. As noted previously, Hungary has taken a very hard line against the illegal entry of refugees and migrants into the state. Orban has tightened security and given police far more power in their control of refugees, even refusing to allow them entry. This is despite the EU calling for Orban to allow them entry, as a matter of protecting human rights (Kearns, 2018:130; King, 2017:29; Lendvai, 2017:289; Scheppele, 2015; Schaeffer, 2017). Every member and non-member of the EU is a critical player in ensuring the elevation of this issue, however, these Strongmen politicians are refusing to abide by the EU's rules, only further exasperating what scholars are calling a humanitarian crisis (Brandt & McKenzie, 2017; Glover, 2019:308; Murray, 2018).

The migrant crisis has had a destabilising effect across the European continent and runs the risk of creating further instability on a geopolitical scale. Large flows of displaced people into these neighbouring states causes real strains as “the sheer scale of the refugee crisis poses unparalleled humanitarian, economic, and political challenges in an already fragile region” (Brandt & McKenzie, 2017). Firstly, there is a considerable burden of care associated with extensive refugee resettlement as sometimes the logistical and organisational challenges of housing, feeding and processing refugees can exceed the arrival countries' capabilities (Glover, 2019:314). Refugees also need to be integrated into society through housing and employment and states that have struggled with the vast numbers have seen the creation of large refugee camps and informal settlements.

Although political Strongmen are not the cause of the refugee crisis, identity politics and their use of nationalistic populism may worsen the situation or create further negative feedback loops. They often express the crisis through polarising debates about national identity and the place of Islam in Europe. They use the crisis to fuel mistrust between governments and societies

across Europe. But most problematically, their strong anti-immigrant sentiment paralyses efforts to reform the EU and create effective migration policies that can help alleviate the issue. Co-operation between EU nations and non-members is needed for the creation and implementation of well-run, legal migration routes, reformed asylum procedures and proper treatment of refugees. Without joint initiatives, the crisis is only likely to worsen and create further geopolitical instability.

4.3.2.4. The Rise of Challenger Parties

Although already present and of concern to the consolidation of liberal democracy across the globe, the rise of these Strongman leaders has evidently generated further support for radical right-wing parties. Specifically across Europe, there has been a considerable increase and success of antiliberal populist far-right movements, parties and leaders – the Italian Five Star Movement (FSM), France’s National Front, Finland’s Finns Party, Poland’s Law and Justice Party (PiS), Spain’s Podemos and Geert Wilder’s Freedom Party of the Netherlands, are just a few of the upcoming parties that speak the language of the Strongman (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:343; Emmott, 2017:124; Judis, 2016).

These parties and leaders have several problematic things in common; they often espouse nationalistic populism, condemn the traditional institutions of representative democracy, campaign for discontinued EU membership, are hostile to immigration, reject constitutional checks on the will of the majority and emphasise national sovereignty over internationalism (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:346; Emmott, 2017:123; Freedom House, 2019:2; Franzosi, Marone, & Salvati, 2015:110; Hobolt & Tilley, 2016: 972; Judis, 2016). As they increasingly receive a substantial proportion of votes, they represent a new type of party politics across the globe. These populist parties consistently pursue and champion policies and initiatives that clash with fundamental tenants of liberal democracy (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013:346). Under the banner of the Strongman, across the world these parties and leaders have consistently threatened the sanctity of individual rights and the principle of the division of powers.

As seen by Orban and Erdogan’s nationalistic populism and their treatment of minority groups, a major concern extending from the rise of these challenger parties and the championing of illiberal democracy, is the often-resulting nationalistic xenophobia (Krastev, 2018:52). Their nationalism and xenophobia is often exclusionary, making political space for the allowance of the “tyranny of the majority” (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016:976). Often associated with the radical right, they bring social anxieties to the forefront, playing on people’s fears. They often attack

Islam and immigration, creating a base of Islamophobia in order to sow fear and mistrust (Krastev, 2018:55; Murray, 2018:137; Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, Nikisianis, Kioupkiolis, & Siomos, 2017:428). These leaders consistently speak out against multiculturalism, arguing that it only creates parallel societies and undermines national identity (Murray, 2018:137). This also ties into the issue of the current refugee crisis as these populists push their citizens to believe closed borders are best. They spark demographic panic, creating the narrative that their national culture is under threat of vanishing. With this political imagination, cultural and ethnic diversity is seen as an existential threat, and opposition to this threat forms the core of the new illiberalism (Frankopan, 2018:49; Krastev, 2018:52). This nationalistic, xenophobic rhetoric is in violation of the principles of liberal democracy which claims every person is equal before the law (Judis, 2016).

These challenger parties – who are often the voice of the Strongman – support vindictive approaches to immigration which are resulting in human right abuses that in turn offer excuses for more aggressive policies towards migrants and refugees elsewhere in the world. These leaders appeal to national values in democracies, threatening the protection of individual rights as a universal value, which allows authoritarian states to justify much more egregious human rights violations. And by unilaterally assailing international institutions like the UN or the International Criminal Court without putting forward serious alternatives, antiliberal governments weaken the capacity of the international systems to constrain the behaviour of authoritarian powers (Freedom House, 2019:3).

These challenger parties also make it more difficult to reach agreements on political issues and have diminished the stability of governments as stable coalitions. These Eurosceptic, nationalistic, populist parties are increasingly being enabled, holding more decision making power and political influence, the likely result being the subversion of Europe's ability to function. They undermine the EU's ability to manage day to day affairs, and most importantly the clarity of its message among the European public, investors and the wider world. These parties are also at odds with the structures and process of European integration and the European Union. They propose a new era of political fragmentation, volatility and geopolitical insecurity (Taggart, 2004:279).

European uncertainty and instability will have significant implications for geopolitical security. As both the continent and the European Union function on a global scale, current predicaments can lead to further instability and insecurity. As alliances unravel and European disunity is

forged, the role the EU has played in the protection of human rights, advancement of liberal democracy and defender of international law and co-operation, will likely give way. This will evidently only give space for the rise of challenger parties, a worsening refugee crisis and more uncertainty, only creating further geopolitical insecurity.

4.3.3. The Rise of Identity Politics

Modern democracy is built on the recognition that everyone is inherently equal, such a central value that underlines liberal democracy is that of inclusion (Diamond, 2015; Fukuyama, 2014, 2018; Gibson, 2011; Young, 2002). The legitimacy of democracy as well as why it is considered the best feasible political system is based on the degree to which all citizens are afforded tolerance, participation and human equality (Diamond, 2015:35; Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009:18; Fukuyama, 2014, 2018; Held, 2015:59). Inclusion helps to foster a system of compromise, conciliation and negotiation through which rivals can come to agreements to live in relative peace (Young, 2002). It helps create a system that fundamentally ensures the rights of political minorities are primarily respected, preventing the tyranny of the majority. Inclusivity can help create geopolitical security and stability as it simply requires people who differ through a variety of identities “put up with” one another in order to ensure a stable, fair and cooperative community (Gibson & Gouws, 2003: 3). Lastly, inclusion is an important element as it refers to the ability of the regime to include and recognise all social differences and cultures to create an equitable, fair society. Critically, it ensure cultural minorities are protected indirectly “by guaranteeing basic civil and political rights to all individuals regardless of group membership” (Chua, 2018:179).

However, with the rise of political Strongmen, and their nationalistic, populist illiberal democracy, democracy is transforming into an engine of “zero-sum political tribalism” (Chua, 2018:12). Under the leadership of Strongmen, political dynamics are increasingly becoming more insular, defensive and built upon an ‘us-versus-them’ narrative. The principle of equality is increasingly being undermined as minority groups become frequently marginalised and excluded (Fukuyama, 2018:74). Rather, the world is seeing “a rebellion against a multi-ethnic democracy that recognizes all individuals as truly equal” (Mounk, 2018:201).

Liberal democracy does not organise itself around a series of proliferating identity groups inaccessible to outsiders. Identity claims are problematic as they are usually non-negotiable –

they claim their rights to social recognition based on race, ethnicity, or gender which are fixed, unchangeable characteristics (Fukuyama, 2018:122). Claiming superiority of a national identity can lead to violence and intolerance once it becomes associated with an exclusive, ethnically based sense of belonging (Chua, 2018:35). Examining history¹¹, evidence suggests that the use of ethno-nationalism led to the persecution of people who were not part of the ‘group’, as the group became increasingly aggressive towards those who did not fit their identity. The problem was that ethno-nationalism often took a narrow, ethnically based, intolerant, aggressive and illiberal form. This only led to the further creation of a violent and chaotic society as one group quickly turned nationalism into militant assertion of the rights of the nation (Fukuyama, 2014:428-433).

Today, the rise of identity politics and the use of this aggressive ethno-nationalism seems to be on the rise. As Strongmen retreat into ever narrower identities, the possibility of deliberation and collective action by society becomes threatened. Strongmen across the globe are increasingly becoming advocates of tribal politics; exclusionary nationalism that rejects the ideal of a multi-ethnic democracy (Chua, 2018:5; Mounk, 2018:201). Nationalism can be a troubling ideology as it promotes casual loyalty to a country over deeper commitments to justice and humanity. Currently, Strongmen have claimed the mantle of nationalism, promising to defend the interests of the majority against immigrant minorities and marginalised groups (Chua, 2018; Wimmer, 2019:27).

Previously in this study it was discussed how Turkey and Hungary specifically showed the danger of the use of ethno-nationalism. Hungary, under Orban’s leadership, increasingly attacks refugees, migrants and non-Christian Hungarians. Paying little heed to the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East and the resulting refugee crisis, Orban instead declares “the masses arriving from other civilisations endanger our way of life, our culture, our customs and our Christian traditions” (Albright, 2018:184). Orban has built a fortified barrier along his country’s southern border to keep out Syrian refugees and other migrants and his government has pushed through a law criminalising any individual or organisation that aided undocumented migrants. Instead of finding solutions to the crisis and fostering peace, Orban’s ethno-nationalism is instead worsening the refugee crisis. Forcing migrants into detention camps, firing water cannons and teargas at refugees and creating a razor wire along its border has only

¹¹Syria offers an extreme example of this scenario. Much of the government (presidency, cabinet, bureaucracy) was dominated by Alawites who made up just 12% of the population. This eventually led to the current ongoing civil war since 2011 as many Sunni Arab majority were willing to fight against what they regard as alien rule (Wimmer, 2019:33).

created further violence and instability in Europe. His policies against migrants and blocking of sensible reforms of the EU's immigration and asylum system has only led to further instability across the EU's borders. Orban's nationalism also poses a threat to the European Union as Hungary continues to act as a hostile member state actively seeking to undermine it (Kelemen, 2015).

Erdogan's ethno-nationalism and refusal to recognise the Kurdish minority may seem a regional security threat, however, it does in fact pose a threat on a geopolitical level. In 2014, Erdogan abandoned his negotiations with the PKK and began a policy of outright conflict with both Turkish and Syrian Kurds. He has sought to delegitimise all Kurdish political activity by associating it with the PKK, arresting large numbers of Kurdish activists and politicians. The Turkish Kurds have endured relentless assaults from Erdogan and his government for years, including a renewed military campaign against the PKK. In return, Erdogan's refusal to acknowledge the independence of the Kurdish population has only led to increased Kurdish revolts and insurgency (Barkey, 2019:108). This conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish government has only led to increased instability and insecurity as the conflict stretches across the whole Middle East. With Kurds stretched across Iraq and Syria, the whole region has become subject to the on-going conflict.

Hence, the identity politics that these Strongmen champion can create geopolitical insecurity as it will most likely lead to polarisation, growing lack of consensus, instability and possible violence. If minority groups in a society do not have institutionalised channels of participation, this can generate instability and disorder as they attempt to find ways for their political freedoms to be heard (Fukuyama, 2014:410). Research suggests that when ethnic groups lack these channels, they are especially likely to seek it through violence (Cederman, 2019:64). It is also not just a lack of political power that can motivate ethnic groups to take up arms against nationalism; economic, social and cultural inequality can too. Inequality along ethnic lines increases the risk of rebellion (Cederman, 2019:64) and because it is easier to mobilise people along ethnic lines, it is more likely to lead to violent conflict. This ethnic nationalism could bring a return to the ills that accompanied its past ascendance: major violent upheavals both within and among countries. Should it continue, it risks fuelling destabilising civil unrest in multi-ethnic states across the world (Cederman, 2019:62).

4.3.4. The Emergence of Hybrid Warfare

Although hybrid warfare is not a new phenomenon, the Strongman shows an increased propensity for its use. The concern for the advent of hybrid warfare for geopolitical security is that it creates more uncertainty as various tools can be used that do not fall into the more traditional use of lethal military technology (Cornish & Donaldson, 2017:19). With its increasing use by nations led by Strongmen, hybrid warfare has emerged as an increasing threat on a geopolitical scale (Wither, 2016:76; Wright, 2017:203). In an already complex geopolitical environment, the growth of hybrid warfare makes it more difficult to be confident of future security trends and forthcoming events.

Nations such as Turkey, Hungary and Russia show they are willing to go beyond the usual lines of warfare in order to achieve their goals. Russia under Putin has acted against the West in the Arctic, through restricting the supply of energy to other nations, by taking advantage of the instability caused by the migrant crisis in Europe and by making it difficult to achieve a durable solution in Syria (Diamond, 2019:21; Fridman, 2019). Russia's invasion of the Ukraine and subsequent annexation of Crimea can best be described as hybrid warfare as not only was military force used but the Kremlin made use of cyber-attacks and coercive information operations (Fridman, 2019; Wright, 2017:76). Russia's use of hybrid warfare has become increasingly difficult to foresee or prevent, as the variety of methods it uses are often concealed and difficult to discern (Gillingham, 2018). Wright (2017:201) identifies cyberwarfare as "an unambiguous national security threat" as it is a difficult tool to foresee and prevent.

Conventional strategy and deterrence will no longer suffice in the prevention of conflict between and within nations, as Strongman led nations become increasingly volatile in their ambition and conviction. As the origins of confrontation become increasingly diverse, strategic challenges are more likely to arise in many more places – further increasing a geopolitical environment characterised by instability and unrest (Cornish & Donaldson, 2017:37; Wright, 2017:194). Substituting twentieth-century mass warfare for cyber-attacks and cybercrime may reduce the number of battlefield casualties but it nevertheless leads to heightened mistrust between the world superpowers, and it threatens personal privacy, intellectual property and national security (King, 2017:178).

Russia's pioneering use of social media and technology as a weapon reflects the understanding of the powerful art of spreading disinformation. The impact within the current globalised and technologically driven world is far larger as the target audience becomes larger and more

accessible (Albright, 2017:164; Fridman, 2019). Russia's cyberwarfare has penetrated democratic institutions, helped movements across the political spectrum, inflamed public opinion and ignited conflict while distorting the political environment, and in doing so has influenced instability and insecurity (Diamond, 2019:21-22).

Through Russia's involvement and meddling in the US 2016 presidential election, Russia conducted a cyber assault on US democracy, demonstrating for other potential adversaries that it could be done (Kotkin, 2019:67). By using disinformation campaigns and cyberwarfare in the US, Russia was able to polarise society. This polarisation only leads to further dysfunction as polarisation often leads to gridlock, which in turn erodes public institutions and public trust (Mickey *et al.*, 2017:26). It also created a sense of vulnerability on a geopolitical level as, by showing its capability in attacking an advanced and developed nation such as the US, it was able to show nations all over the world its power and willingness to reject the status quo of sovereign law (Biden, Jr & Carpenter, 2018:52).

4.3.5. Deteriorating Economic Conditions

A core concern for geopolitical security is the possibility of exacerbated economic conflict and Strongmen leadership fomenting an economic downward spiral that will be felt by the entire globe. Economic warfare merits particular attention, undertaken for financial interests and fought using financial tools – such confrontations are growing, and all countries are participant, whether or not they choose to be (Banos, 2017:303). The result of open-economy macroeconomics is that countries operate in an environment of “international economic integration” and such countries cannot maintain complete independent economic policies (Rodrik, 2000:180). Hence, it is impossible to separate the economic from the geopolitical (Wright, 2017:174).

Often characterised by erratic foreign policy and a unilateral view towards diplomacy and global institutions, the Strongman often follows economic policies that solely benefit their nation, without regard for the possible far-reaching consequences (Cohen, 2019:139; Haass, 2019; Moyo, 2018:8; Olikar, 2018). Strongmen leaders are often viewed as policymakers who feel the need to satisfy the electorate to remain in office, implementing the populist policies they used in order to get elected. They tend to favour short term policy responses which often ignore the costs and consequences, and follow a policy of coercive geo-economics against other nations (Blackwill & Harris, 2016:50). These politicians are pivoting towards lesser political and economic models that offer quick wins but are guaranteed over the long term to reduce

global economic growth, increase poverty, and spur more political and social unrest (Moyo, 2018:91).

4.3.5.1. Protectionism & Isolationism

The Strongmen of leading nations are pivoting towards greater isolationism, abandoning globalisation and returning to an era of mercantilism and protectionism (Wright, 2017:253). They are moving towards protecting local industries through higher trade tariffs, and their labour markets, along with increased immigration control, in attempts to boost domestic employment (Moyo, 2018: 83). History has shown that when developed countries start on a path of protectionist policies that lead to greater isolationism, other countries are forced to follow suit. Under an isolationist approach, policy makers limit global trade, cap cross-border capital flows and curb immigration. These protectionist policies often lead to economic weakness, job loss and slow economic growth (Irwin, 2017; Moyo, 2018:84).

Protectionist policies, for example discriminatory trade measures on other nations, threaten long-term economic prospects. Bad policy leads to the misallocation of scarce resources which not only has a negative effect on GDP in the long-run, but it kills off economic growth and foments political instability, which only further discourages much-needed investment. As this worsens economic growth, additional bad policy decisions aimed at short term gain will only worsen the cycle. These strongmen pursue misguided solutions that attempt to save society from chaos but only create further instability (Moyo, 2018: 88; Wright, 2018:253).

Hence, although protectionist policies may appear to protect jobs in an economic down cycle, they are rather short-sighted decisions as in the long run, these policies not only harm the nation's economy but can diminish growth globally as well. Economists Rudiger Dornbusch and Sebastian Edwards (1991:9) argue that the issue with populist governments is they seem to be “stuck on the same bad economic script”. Historically, countries that have followed populist economic policies run higher government budget deficits; end up with larger government debts; default on these debts more frequently; and under certain circumstances, run higher rates of inflation (Wilkin, 2018:155). “Populist policies do ultimately fail; and when they fail it is always at a frightening cost to the very groups who were supposed to be favoured” (Dornbusch & Edwards, 1991:10; Moyo, 2018:155).

These states led by Strongmen are also increasingly airing disagreements with foreign policies in economic terms. As this occurs, economic and security tensions risk reinforcing each other, as growing security tensions embolden more aggressive behaviour (Blackwill & Harris,

2016:47). Threatening trade wars and protectionist policies will have a detrimental impact on financial markets and economic stability (Emmott, 2017:123; Irwin, 2017). A trade war would be collective policy failure – tariffs not only lead to more expensive products and more limited choices, but they also prevent trade from playing its essential role in boosting productivity and spreading new technologies (Frankopan, 2018:162). Economic contraction can foster political and social unrest and breakdown in social cohesion (Moyo, 2018:6). A lack of economic success does far more than just diminish living standards; it promotes disaffected and impoverished populations and fuels destabilising anger (Moyo, 2018: 8). Essentially, a lack of success is a precursor for worsening living conditions and unrest. Economic growth resolves intractable challenges for several reasons. It enables a government to fund and enhance public goods – education, healthcare and security. It is a precursor to private investment and innovation that acts as a springboard for improved living standards and progress. Thus, not only will protectionist policies have a long-term negative effect on other nations, but soon the effects will be felt in the local nation.

Under pressure to show results, evidence suggests Strongmen around the world are pivoting towards inferior political and economic models. The role of economic phenomena in shaping geopolitical outcomes is influential, and such unilateral economic decisions will only promote geopolitical insecurity. Unilateral actions “are not only against international rules and regulations, but also damage legitimate international trade” (Frankopan, 2018:162), affairs between states would be characterised by antagonistic interstate relations, found with new and bitter politics of trade (Blackwill & Harris, 2016:21; Kearns, 2018:214). The single market would unravel while other economic agreements are all likely to breakdown as states become increasingly isolationist. These models will only lead to the diminution of global trade and the collapse of cross-border capital flows, mounting constraints on the movement of labour and deglobalisation, ultimately leading to further deteriorating living standards and greater geopolitical unrest (King, 2017:244; Moyo, 2018:107).

For example, Russia has often used coercive tactics on the Ukraine to pressure the nation away from signing an association agreement with the EU. In July 2012, Russia stopped imports from Ukraine’s main confectionary producer and intensified customs checks on Ukrainian goods at the border, which reportedly led to some \$500 million in losses for Ukraine (Blackhill & Harris, 2016:50). Russia has also followed discriminatory policies with EU countries that do not sympathise with its narrative of the Ukrainian issue. A year after Russia’s August 2014 ban on EU dairy products, European producers saw a 25 percent reduction in dairy prices resulting

from the decrease in demand for their products. While dealing a significant blow to the Ukraine economy, Moscow's geo-economic policy served to remind Ukraine, and others in the region, of the consequences of decreasing ties to Russia in favour of the European Union; second to reinforce Russia's role as an economic hegemon. When Turkey refused to release an American prisoner, the US issued sanctions which had an impact on the world beyond. The Turkish lire slumped to a record low for a few days, while currencies across the Caucasus slid as a result. The crisis even reached India where the rupee fell to record lows against the dollar (Frankopan, 2018:163). This shows how one Strongman leader and his economic retaliation could lead to further destabilising effects for another nation (Blackhill & Harris, 2016:50).

As noted previously in the examination of worldwide democratic decline, how citizens view their economic conditions is critical to the stability of the political regime. Hence, if nations under these Strongman decide to follow more protectionist and isolationist policies, the likely result will be further political unrest globally. Also, in the current world of "international economic integration" (Rodrik, 2000:177), as already discussed, states do not act in isolation. But rather what policies they decide to follow is likely to have a contagion effect, effecting developed and non-developed states in either positive or negative ways. The current system is buckling under the weight of new forces. Countries have increasingly turned to a host of market-distorting practices that are largely impervious to existing rules, including currency manipulation, the deliberate nonenforcement of intellectual property rights, and contemptuous regulatory regimes. (Frankopan, 2018:245).

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine whether or not the rise of Strongmen leaders would have consequences for geopolitical security. With the rise of a possible new global order, increased use of hybrid warfare, European instability, the use of identity politics as well as the possibility of worsening economic conditions, evidence would suggest that the Strongman does exacerbate geopolitical insecurity. Ramifications of the Strongman's ideologies and policies tend to indicate a more unstable and ambiguous result, only creating more insecurity and uncertainty. While their actions may not directly create instability, they are likely to create ramifications that could then lead to increased insecurity. Operating in an interdependent world, the leadership style of the Strongman will hence not only have a regional effect but can influence security on a global scale. Specifically focusing on leaders Putin, Orban and Erdogan, these Strongmen and their policies will generate consequences towards geopolitical security. By following problematic policies and ideologies, specifically their tendency to reject

democratic institutions, disregard human rights, promote nationalistic populism and their growing propensity to reject international law, institutions and the principle of sovereignty, these Strongmen can create increased geopolitical insecurity.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

Subsequent to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the consensus between scholars was that liberal democracy officially reigned triumphant. Liberal democracy was championed as the best form of governance for it offered unrivalled human freedom and economic prosperity. Despite its shortcomings and inherent weaknesses, liberal democracy came to be believed as the ‘final form of human governance’.

However, over the past decade, there has been increasing evidence around the globe of several democratic countries becoming increasingly authoritarian, while those that were argued to be consolidated have seen a growing distrust in this form of governance. This has been aided by growing populist, nationalistic movements, campaigns and political parties across long established democracies. The rise of increasing authoritarianism and illiberal movements has given rise to a democratic setback seen across the world. The most interesting element of this situation was the free and fair election by societies of political Strongmen who openly voiced illiberal, autocratic policies and ideology. Since the election of Donald Trump in the United States, Britain’s decision to leave the United Kingdom, and the success of challenger parties across Europe in recent elections, these events have raised the alarm across the Western world of the possible erosion of global liberal democracy. In this environment of concern, this research endeavoured to explore and understand a central element – the rise of the political Strongmen. Specifically, in the context of an interdependent world, it sought to determine whether Strongman leadership could contribute to increased geopolitical insecurity.

This chapter serves to evaluate the research question and highlight the key findings that were established through the aims and objectives of this thesis. Furthermore, this chapter will offer an evaluation of the possible contributions this research will have in further studies as well as other avenues of research that may offer more insight into this study or/and be an important contribution to this growing development.

5.2. Evaluation of the Research Question and Main Findings

This research sought to assess how the rise of political Strongmen, with reference to three specific nations, Russia, Hungary and Turkey and their respective leader, threatens geopolitical security. In assessing the core characteristics of the Strongman leadership, inference could be made on how a consequence of this style of political leadership is the rise of geopolitical instability.

The research referred to Francis Fukuyama's essential thesis *The End of History* in order to demonstrate that the current trend of electing these Strongmen may act as an obstacle to achieving the future he characterised as stable and secure through the global governance of liberal democracy. Rather, the Strongman positions himself in contrast, as his leadership style and policies often contradict with the values of liberal democracy. The research viewed the rise of the Strongman as significant as they have often come into power in nations considered to be consolidated democracies. The Western world was so secure in the belief of the triumph of democratic liberalism, that no plan or solutions were envisioned in the event of democratic backsliding, especially in nations where democracy was deemed consolidated.

The research examined the link between Strongman leadership and the probability of increased geopolitical insecurity, as a regional understanding of the effect these leaders have is most often already available. The research emphasised that in the current globalised world, characterised by growing interconnectivity between nations has resulted in a growing association between risks, thus instability in one country will often influence or trigger insecurity in another region. Nations cannot be viewed in isolation and such the researched inferred that the insecurity created by one leader will often influence instability on a wide scale.

The research chose to examine and compare Russia, Turkey and Hungary as all three nations are critical players on a global level. Each nation is often an important piece in international policy, geo-economics, and geopolitics. Further, each state had the prospect of consolidating their democracy before their citizens made the democratic choice to elect a Strongman into office. The decision to examine the presence of Strongman rule in each nation was chosen in an attempt to provide more evidence of the policies, practices and ideologies these leaders followed. It also allowed for more evidence to be collected in order to establish if their leadership does threaten global security. The decision to focus on human rights, key democratic institutions and international law were chosen as three of the four key variables as they are based on their central role in liberal democracy as core tenants. When present in a society, they are often linked to the creation and fostering of stability and security within a nation. Populist Nationalism was chosen as the fourth feature as many of its defining features clash with the fundamental principles of liberal democracy. Examining Vladimir Putin, Recep Erdogan and Viktor Orban against these variables allowed for extensive research into each leaders' governance of their respective nations. It also highlighted the extent to which these three leaders could be described as Strongmen.

Although very different nations, with varying histories, communities and ideologies, Russia, Turkey and Hungary were chosen for comparison as, despite these differences, the Strongman was shown to manifest in very similar ways. The similarities between how Putin, Orban and Erdogan embody the Strongman can show how the study presents itself as offering a general theory. Thus, despite the circumstances in which a Strongman may arise, their leadership style and policies will often manifest in very similar ways. Thus, if another three nations and their leaders were used and the same four characteristics were examined, similar evidence would come forward on how Strongmen fit into the four characteristics.

Using the four variables as a base and the examination of each country under the direction of a Strongman, the research then established how Strongman rule could threaten geopolitical security. The main implications found were first, the erosion of the liberal world order and the current international rules-based system. The present era under the direction of these Strongmen can instead be defined by deteriorating relations between traditional allies and the development of an alternative international architecture. With rising Strongmen across continents, and their inclination to support one another, this could potentially lead to an increasingly polarised, uncertain environment that will have significant implications for geopolitical security. The liberal order showed itself as one that fostered co-operation and the elevation of global problems through global solutions, while the new order would potentially be characterised by aggression, protectionism and fragmentation. Further, the main concern of the erosion of the liberal order is the possibility of the global decline of the protection of human rights, civil liberties and political freedoms.

European instability and uncertainty arose as another possible implication of Strongman leadership. As evidenced, the possible collapse of the European Union could lead to further insecurity as the continent would possibly fail to address its rising political, social and economic dilemmas. EU instability, breakdown of Turkey and EU relations, the refugee crisis and the rise of challenger parties all act as considerable threats to the stability of the region. Instrumental on a regional and global level, the instability of the EU will likely produce insecurity on a geopolitical level. While Strongmen are not directly responsible for some of these issues, the research indicates that they can potentially aggravate the situation or trigger other instability dilemmas.

The research also suggested that a central element of further insecurity is the Strongman's use of identity politics. What makes identity politics concerning to security and stability is that it

often centres around a certain group making superiority claims over another. The danger from this claim is that it often extends to rhetoric and feelings of xenophobia and ethno-nationalism. From this, often resulting is the erosion of the principles of tolerance and political equality. Highlighted by Turkey and Hungary's actions towards their respective minority groups, identity politics can lead to the creation of ethnically based intolerance and aggression, which if heightened can lead to political violence and civil unrest.

Another concern that can arise out of Strongman leadership is the increased use and resulting uncertainty of hybrid warfare. An easily accessible tool for all social and political actors, hybrid warfare poses significant risks to geopolitical security. The ability of nations to make use of a variety of tools antagonistically against other nations, makes hybrid warfare difficult not only to envisage but also to prevent. Through means such as cyberattacks, propaganda warfare and disinformation campaigns, hybrid warfare has not only increased the ease with which states can get into conflict with one another but has also created numerous ways in which this can happen. Unsure how one nation might attack the other, or the impact an incursion could have, hybrid warfare can help foster an environment of insecurity and uncertainty.

The last concern that arose was that of a possible worsening of falling economic conditions. In their attempt to appease their electorate and promote an image of legitimacy, these Strongmen often implement populist protectionist and isolationist policies. Their inclination to favour short-term policy responses often ignores the future costs; although these policies may offer quick economic gains, over the long term, they are more likely to reduce global economic growth. Protectionist and isolationist policies can shrink the economy, slow down growth, diminish living standards, and enlarge budget deficits which will only create further negative economic costs for citizens. Economic prosperity and how citizens view their economic conditions is fundamental in creating a sense of stability and security. Henceforth, if citizens become increasingly concerned over their economic circumstances, it may lead to an increased environment of instability and insecurity.

5.3. Limits of the Study

The first limit or critique of the study is the decision to evaluate Russia, Hungary and Turkey. All three nations are extremely different in their histories, ideologies and national identities. Thus, using very different nations in a comparative study could lead to over generalisations and simplifications, possibly leading to the issue of correlation and causality. By placing all three nations in the same 'box' it is possible to assume that, because the nations manifested

similarities, there is a clear correlation. However, having first identified four specific Strongman characteristics, this limitation was overcome. The four characteristics were chosen as a base so that if other nations – who have elected Strongman – were used, the study would also be successful. For example, if one were to examine Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, Narendra Modi of India and Donald Trump of the US, a similar study could be conducted using the four variables and could also be compared. For future research, in order to limit this weakness, nations with Strongman leaders with similar histories or development status could be chosen, focusing on nations that perhaps were all considered consolidated democracies, Western and developed. This could provide for a better comparison on the effects of the Strongman leader and how their leadership can impact geopolitical security.

Another limit to the study extends from the argument that Russia, Turkey and Hungary were never considered full-fledged, consolidated democracies. Russia after the Cold War had the intention of democratisation, but this never fully materialised. With history of military rule and a religious government, Turkey was also never considered a consolidated democracy. While although Hungary showed promise of becoming a consolidated democracy, democracy was never given the opportunity to become entrenched within its political system. Thus, as previously noted, many scholars were unconvinced that liberal democracy would become the ruling political system, specifically in nations that did not have a history of a consolidated democracy. This limit, however, was overcome as the study aimed not to show that liberal democracy would be the final form of human governance, but rather provides evidence of a Strongman in power and how, despite regional effects, a Strongman can create geopolitical insecurity.

Lastly, a limitation of the study is that the threat to global security and increase of geopolitical security can be considered more of a forecast, instead of being based on concrete evidence. The possibility of a new global order, the collapse of the European Union, disintegrating Turkey and EU relations, increased protectionist and isolationist policies and worsening economic conditions are all events that have the possibility of occurring under the guise of Strongmen, but have not happened yet. This limit was overcome as the research made clear inferences based on understanding history, current events and the likelihood of what would happen if such events were to take place.

5.4. Conclusion & Avenues for Future Study

There is plenty of space within the question to garner more understanding of why citizens are choosing to vote for these Strongman leaders, despite their often-autocratic policies and ideologies. Understanding human behaviour in political science is always important as it can shed more light on why certain political trends may be taking place. Also, it creates more space for research to be done to find practical solutions that can be implemented across societies all over the globe. By understanding this phenomena, policy makers and scholars can use the knowledge to create and propose solutions in order to prevent increased geopolitical insecurity.

There are also several nations of importance that were not covered in this study that would make for important case-studies to further understand this topic. Countries like Brazil, the Philippines, Thailand and the Czech Republic have all elected Strongmen into office recently. An examination of different, unique nations will give more insight into the election of these leaders and why they may pose a threat to geopolitical security. Another case-study that would pose interesting questions and needs more research is China under Xi-Jinping. China is becoming an increasingly prominent state as it increasingly becomes an economic and political rival. The rise of China poses a systematic question about the West's future but also brings to the forefront that democracy is not a requirement of economic success. Research could determine if the Chinese political and economic model under the nation's Strongman would be a regime option for other states all over the world.

An interesting point of departure could be further examination into the weaknesses of democracy in the light of scholars assuming it is the best form of governance. Authors have suggested that when populist, nationalistic campaigns become prominent and successful, they often function as a warning sign of a political crisis. Thus, this 'political crisis' could be an important element of research. Chua (2018:8), for instance, notes that gaps in democracy are often what have ignited and galvanised group conflict. Further, it can be argued that democracy was seen as the best form of governance because it offered the best form of economic participation. However, with worsening economic conditions and the effects felt by the 2008 global financial crash, societies where people fear for their safety or some struggle to survive, idealistic principles offered by liberal democracy will often ring hollow (Chua, 2018:8).

Another avenue of research that will be critical in the current geopolitical climate is that of the influencing role of communication technologies, the internet and social media, data collection and artificial intelligence. These elements have undoubtedly reshaped the geopolitical field and

the way nations conduct their politics and economics (Kagan, 2019:13). Thus, the effect this technology could have on the future of liberal democracy and the way states are governed could be an interesting and important topic of study. For instance, Larry Diamond mentions the possible growth of “postmodern totalitarianism” (2019) in that individuals will appear to be free and to go about their daily lives but in fact the state will control and sensor everything they see, while keeping track of everything they say and do. Technology will have implications for civil rights and liberties, it transcends borders, making it more difficult to monitor and control and could thus have a critical impact on the geopolitical space.

As these Strongmen lead the world into an era of illiberal hegemony, it is yet difficult to know what the exact consequences are going to be. However, acknowledging the policies, ideologies and principles these leaders implement is important in order to not only understand the complexity of this development but also how it is influencing politics. While the future is becoming increasingly difficult to foresee and plan for, the implications these Strongmen will have on geopolitical security and geopolitics will be an interesting development to continually examine.

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