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The Return of State vs State Competition

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THE RETURN OF STATE VS STATE COMPETITION

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2021

THE RETURN OF STATE VS STATE COMPETITION

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THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis outlines a theoretically informed case study analysis of the United States' recent actions (US) regarding the United Kingdom's (UK) relationship with the Chinese telecommunications company, Huawei. There have been multiple US concerns regarding Huawei's activities in the UK and their potential implications for US national security. These concerns arise because it is a state-owned enterprise with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Because of its ties with the CCP, the US expressed fears that China will use Huawei's telecommunications technology to infiltrate and spy on countries that use their products. This is especially concerning as the UK is part of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance. However, there may be broader implications for US national security in this case. China has been using geoeconomics to assert its influence on other countries and sway these other country's decision-making process in China's favor. Since the UK is considering implementing Huawei's 5G into its critical infrastructure, there are potential concerns that China could use Huawei to assert influence over the UK. Due to the UK possibly utilizing Huawei's 5G network, this event may have more in-depth security and strategic implications for the US and affect the UK's relationship with the US.

Keywords: Geoeconomics, Huawei

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Section 1 | General Description of the Area of Study and Proposed Research

Design

Introduction

The current relationship between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the US is tense; there are several specific challenges in the relationship, from territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) to the continued fallout from Covid-19. These challenges emerge from a broader context of changed US perceptions of China since its emergence as a rising power on the international stage. China's economy is growing at a rapid pace and "has been among the world's fastest-growing economies, with real annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaging 9.5% through 2018" (Morrison, 2019, p.2). The World Bank also described this pace as "the fastest sustained expansion by a major economy in history" (Morrison, 2019, p. 2). This economic growth has allowed China to invest in military power, constructing its first aircraft carrier in 2012. The PRC has announced it intends to construct more aircraft carriers in addition to a carrier purchased from Ukraine. According to China military expert Michael Chase, the new carriers signify "China's desire to become powerful and influential in their region" (Bodeen, 2019). These carriers are the leading edge of a more expansive military build-up; furthermore, China's carriers' expansion signifies that China is investing in all of its military branches, not just its army.

China's investment into its different military branches may have more significant implications than just increasing security in its region; the more significant implication is that China is challenging US supremacy in Asia. China has seen an estimated increase in defense spending from about US \$10 billion in 1991 to US \$215 billion in 2016, leading to China being ranked second in defense spending globally (Graaf & Bastiaan, 2018, p. 119). The fear of US

officials over this development is reflected in the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) findings. They state, "without a significant realignment of resources, the US government and intelligence community will fail to achieve the outcomes required to enable continued US competition with China globally for decades to come" (2020, p.8). US concerns, as stated by the HPSCI, indicate that the US must switch its focus from fighting terrorist organizations to engaging in a great power competition with a near-peer competitor, which the PRC is rapidly becoming with its technological advancements, developing military capabilities, and growing economy.

All of these advancements have allowed China to become a credible threat to US national security; meanwhile, China is becoming increasingly assertive in its region. There have been disputes regarding the SCS with many countries that share this vital maritime route for food, trade, and resources. The SCS spans 1,351,00 square miles and is rich in oil and gas, as well as stocks of fish, and as much as \$5 trillion of trade passes through it annually (Cristiani, 2019, P. 200). China has been aggressive in making territorial claims in the SCS around the so-called "9-dashed line", connecting historical, nationalist claims of sovereignty with resource grabs and regional power projection (Heydarian et al., 2021). The US has noted China's efforts to build and militarize outposts in the SCS, which endanger free trade flow, threaten other nations' sovereignty, and undermines regional stability (U.S. White House, 2017, P.46). With the development of China's military branches, it is worrisome to imagine how China plans to project its power further afield in the future.

China's growing power has become the U.S.' primary geopolitical concern as the Iraq and Afghanistan's conflicts concluded. Washington's unchallenged dominance slipped away as it was preoccupied with fighting terrorist organizations in the Middle East (Dilanian, 2020, p.4). With

the US committed to the War on Terror (WoT), many countries achieved geopolitical objectives or expanded their spheres of influence; but, the most concerning country for military officials and policymakers in the US is China (Dilanian, 2020). China has used the past two decades to transform itself into a nation capable of supplanting the US as the world's leading power (Dilanian, 2020). Crucially, this incorporates aspects of national power beyond the military advancements and regional power projection noted above. China has begun to challenge the US by manipulating the very liberal international order (LIO) the US has worked to establish. The LIO is the post–World War II consensus among the victorious powers (excluding the Soviet Union and later mainland China) on security, trade, and internal political arrangements (Anton, Sandel, & Zigler, 2017, para. 6). Theorists of the liberal international order understand it as an "open and rule-based international order," an order that is "enshrined in institutions such as the United Nations and norms such as multilateralism (Kundnani, 2017, p.1)." With the LIO's creation, institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European integration culminating in the European Union (EU), and other later entrants such as the World Bank were created (Anton, Sandel, & Zigler, 2017).

LIO promotes peace, prosperity, security, and human rights, but is manipulated by the PRC to push its political agenda on other countries. One aspect of this has been growing Chinese influence inside the LIO's institutions (Cheng-Chia & Yang, 2020) and the creation of alternatives such as AIIB, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and many more organizations. Although China uses any means to increase its influence and power, its use of economic tools to achieve its goals is a prominent geopolitical strategy. More importantly, China uses its rapidly growing economy as a geopolitical weapon by investing in other countries'

critical sectors, such as ports, energy, technology, and agriculture (Chatzky, 2019). As a result, Chinese investment into another country's critical infrastructure is causing apprehension because such investment is increasingly being *weaponized*.

Thus, Chinese investment is synonymous with Blackwill and Harris's conceptualization of the growing use of 'geoeconomics,' or "the use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests and produce beneficial geopolitical results" (Blackwill and Harris, 2017, p.20). In essence, geoeconomics involves country A using economic instruments to sway country B's policies usually through investments. Country A intends to sway country B's policies by investing in country B or using other various economic instruments. Then, Country A will use these economic instruments to reward or punish country B, depending on country B's actions (Blackwill and Harris, 2017). China also frequently uses what Farrell and Newman (2019) have coined as weaponized interdependence. Weaponized interdependence is when countries A and B are part of the same network due to globalization. Country A has a majority of the power in this network and weaponizes it against country B by either gathering key information from them or cutting them from the network altogether. The goal of weaponized interdependence is similar to geoeconomics in that both give one country the geopolitical advantage. China's use of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence has left the US deeply uneasy about China's interest in investing in other countries' critical infrastructure.

The Case Under Study

Given concerns that China is trying to reshape the world to its liking, the UK's January 28, 2020 decision to have Huawei build its 5G network concerned the US. In response to the UK's decision, the US launched a public effort to pressure the UK into changing it. This pressure often publicly centered around cyber espionage, drawing on concerns that since Huawei is a

state-owned enterprise (SOE - a legal entity that is created by a government in order to partake in commercial activities on the government's behalf (Kenton, 2020, para. 1), it could be used in a geopolitical intelligence context. Therefore, the US claimed that Huawei would build the UK's new 5G network with a 'backdoor'— meaning authorized and unauthorized users can get around standard security measures and gain high-level user access on a computer system, network, or software application (Malwarebytes, ND, para. 3). The implication is that Chinese intelligence services would siphon important information from the UK. This is potentially important to the US given the 'Five Eyes' relationship with the UK and working relations with Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ- the UK's equivalent of the National Security Agency or NSA).

Since the UK did not succumb to the US's pressure, the US went even further with its actions by placing sanctions on Huawei. The sanctions would block companies worldwide from using American-made machinery and software to design or produce chips for Huawei and its entities (Swanson, 2020, para. 2). In this context, on July 14, 2020, the UK announced they would no longer be working with Huawei. The UK claims this decision was impacted by finding a severe flaw in Huawei's product, as the Huawei Cyber Security Evaluation Centre Oversight Board (HCSEC) found flaws the company neglected to fix. The flaws that were found by the oversight board have to do with Huawei's engineering processes, and the claim was someone with the knowledge of them could use them to harm the UK's telecommunications network (2020). Still, given the timing, there is a suggestion that the UK's decision may have been more influenced by the US's mounting pressure.

This thesis aims to reveal what caused the US to take such drastic actions against Huawei, especially since Huawei had signed a business transaction with the UK government. It

is quite possible that the US government felt strongly about cyber espionage, and the fear that Chinese intelligence services may have used Huawei to spy on the UK. However, the US concern was not assuaged by some important facts on the ground in the UK. For instance, Huawei had been in Britain for 20 years, during which time it helped build the 3G and 4G networks (Reuters Staff, 2020, para. 2). Huawei was not the only telecommunications company responsible for building and operating the UK's networks; the UK uses two telecommunications companies to protect its critical infrastructure. They also have the aforementioned HCSEC that monitors Huawei products. This oversight committee consists of individuals who worked for GCHQ. As one can see, the UK took many precautions when using Huawei products and services.

Two major allies with a deep intelligence relationship seemed to take different approaches to this issue. This thesis uses a qualitative case study approach with a puzzle-generated research question to explore the hypothesis that US apprehensions about Huawei do not center around cyber espionage alone. Instead, it explores whether US apprehensions stem from an application of concepts around weaponized interdependence and geoeconomic fears in the context of great power competition, which is why it escalated pressure on the UK to the point that the UK drastically changed course. It will also examine other possibilities of what prompted the UK to terminate its deal with Huawei to include US domestic politics, circumstances surrounding Covid-19, and Hong Kong's situation given British historical ties with its former colony as well as wider human rights concerns in China. All of these factors may or may not have played a role in the UK's ultimate decision. However, the thesis will emphasize US pressure stemming from its concerns over Chinese geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence being the leading causes.

Puzzle

This thesis used a puzzle-based approach to generate a research question; this research design helps formulate a research question and build theory (Day & Koivu, 2018). As indicated above, the biggest animating puzzle here is why the US was so profoundly concerned with security issues with Huawei in the UK if the UK was comparatively unconcerned about them? The mystery intensified as the UK abruptly pulled out of the deal under US pressure, leading to a profound question of "what changed?" We should emphasize the embarrassing and costly nature of this volte-face for the UK. As noted above, the US has stated its fears that the CCP would use Huawei to conduct cyber espionage against the UK. However, these warnings about possible cyber espionage from the US fell on deaf ears in the UK for months, yet suddenly terminated the contract.

The UK has experience implementing security processes and practices with Huawei, using an oversight committee to conduct research. An oversight committee overlooks brand-new products that Huawei wishes to release in the UK to ensure they do not pose a security risk before being sold to the public. It seems that the UK took the necessary precautions to ensure that Huawei's products and services did not pose a threat to the UK's national security interests. Besides these precautions, Huawei is not vital or even *necessary* for China to conduct cyberespionage since China has numerous military and civilian agencies that already conduct this sort of espionage. It is essential to note that this was all known and under discussion at the UK's highest levels before the sudden change of heart. Plus, there will be actual costs; this decision will delay Britain's 5G service rollout by two to three years and cost billions of dollars (Ellen Nakashima, 2020). Again, this is a puzzling scenario.

It seems the UK bowed to mounting US pressure at some level; nevertheless the question remains as to *why* is the US so concerned with Huawei? It is certainly possible that the US was *more* concerned with cybersecurity issues with Huawei than the UK; the UK had interests in the affordability and speed of Huawei's 5G services that the US does not share. Still, we should also consider the broader context and its importance, namely China's increasing use of its rapidly expanding economy, investments, and companies as a geopolitical tool to achieve favorable outcomes is deeply concerning to the US. Geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence may have convinced the US to pressure the UK into opting out of its contract with Huawei. The US might have feared that the PRC would use Huawei to sway the UK's policymaking in the PRC's favor, causing the US to increase pressure on the UK to abandon the deal. Could the US have been so worried about such a steadfast ally being swayed by influences of Chinese weaponized interdependence and geoeconomics? This is the hypothesis this thesis seeks to explore.

Research Questions

By picking through the puzzling aspects of this issue, the researcher produced a research question and some sub-questions that can help us interrogate this puzzle and seek answers, especially around the potential for a more in-depth explanation of geoeconomics and US-China competition. The following primary research question was designed, a related secondary question and some sub-questions that help explore alternative explanatory variables.

Core Question

- Did current US-China relations and China's usage of geoeconomics cause the US's concerns over the UK-Huawei 5G business agreement?

Secondary Question

- Why did the UK make the final decision to terminate its 5G contract with Huawei? How much did US pressure relate to this decision?

Explanatory Sub-Questions

- Why did the US state concern about cyber vulnerabilities, but the UK initially did not?
- How far can US domestic political factors explain these events?
- Were there further domestic political factors in the UK that influenced its decision, such as?
 - Its own concerns about China's geopolitical direction?
 - The Covid-19 situation?
 - Hong Kong's situation, a former British colony and dependent territory with deep ties to the UK, and wider human rights concerns in China?

Overview of the Study and Hypothesis

The Public Concern: Chinese cyber capabilities and Cybersecurity Fears

There is not much public knowledge about China's cyber capabilities; however, there are clues as to what prompts them to use them. CCP strategic planners, dating back to Mao, emphasized controlling information and subduing technologically superior opponents (Fonseca, Green, & Crowther, 2019). There is the belief that current CCP strategic planners follow the same doctrine as when Mao was alive, using older doctrines to meet new strategic and technological realities (Fonseca, Green, & Crowther, 2019, p. 9). Even though there is little public knowledge on China's cyber capabilities, there is the belief that they are substantial. China's cyber capabilities render it a tier-1 cyber operator whose competencies are comparable to that of Russia and other large nation-states (Fonseca, Green, & Crowther, 2019, p.14).

China uses its' cyber capabilities to exert influence over allies and adversaries (Fonseca, Green, & Crowther, 2019). Even though many groups conduct cyber operations within China, they only have one particular goal: improving China's overall strategic position (Fonseca, Green, & Crowther, 2019). Therefore, there is a direct, practical element involving UK and US national security questions regarding Huawei's use in 5G networks. US fears regarding Huawei's involvement in the UK's telecommunications comes from the aspect of cyber espionage, which would have allowed Chinese intelligence services to intercept sensitive communications between the US and the UK. Since the US and UK intelligence agencies work closely together, keeping in constant communications, US concerns about cyber espionage in the Huawei case are justifiable.

As noted, the UK did not initially seem to share those fears and did not heed the US's warning about cybersecurity issues concerning Huawei. First, only three companies have the capabilities to build and operate a 5G network; they are Nokia, Ericsson, and Huawei. Out of

these three companies, Huawei is the most affordable. Warnings from the US may have been ignored by the UK simply because the UK needs to build a 5G network, and Huawei's 5G is the most affordable. Second, the UK might not have been concerned with Huawei due to familiarity; Huawei built and operated 3G and 4G networks in the UK. Plus, Huawei operated for twenty years in the UK too. The UK might feel it posed a cybersecurity risk, but an acceptable one in a context where cheaper 5G was necessary for the UK, meaning that the reward was greater than the risk when it came to using Huawei's services.

However, we might even go deeper here and explore the possibility the UK was simply not worried about cybersecurity risks with Huawei *because there was little to no risk*. The UK took many precautions to ensure that Huawei did not threaten the UK's critical infrastructure. The UK employed Huawei and another telecommunication company to develop the UK's 5G network; it had an oversight committee with cybersecurity and signals intelligence (SIGINT) experience to monitor new Huawei products. It seems that the UK was not apprehensive about Huawei's services and products due to all the precautions the UK has taken. These security measures suggest that while these direct kind of cybersecurity concerns around espionage may have been an issue for the US, we should seek to look a little deeper.

A Deeper Explanation? Great Power Dynamics, Geoeconomic Fears, and Weaponized Interdependence

US concerns about Huawei may stem from something more profound than just cyber espionage in the UK itself. As noted above, China's influence and power have been increasing globally, allowing China to increasingly challenge the LIO the US created in the aftermath of WWII. The LIO is based upon open markets, free trade, liberal institutions, and human rights;

some of these characteristics within the LIO that the US established are in jeopardy as China manipulates the liberal world to suit its needs. China has made numerous agreements, projects, and organizations that the US was not even invited to be a part of, which has been perceived as a threat by US officials. In this context, some experts have asserted that a great power competition between the US and China is materializing. Some even see similarities in what happened when the Cold War took place between the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). While a Cold War scenario between the US and PRC may never materialize, strong indicators point to increasing competition between both countries.

The increasing competition does not just stem from the fact that China is developing militarily and economically, but rather because of its *actions* in international affairs. As previously noted, China has displayed increasing aggression to its neighbors when it comes to the SCS, building military outposts to stake its claims while using its navy and coast guard to harass its neighbors with whom it shares the sea (Economy, 2019, p.8). China's actions in the SCS are worrisome since many countries in Asia rely heavily on the SCS for vital resources. Also, China not inviting the US to many of its organizations and projects are intriguing; China is building an institutional architecture that excludes the US (Layne, 2018, p.100). After all, the US joining all these Chinese-led organizations and projects would undoubtedly benefit all the countries involved, including China, unless China is threatened by the possibility that its power would be challenged by no one else other than the US. The leader of China has made indirect threats aimed at the US. In 2013, General Secretary Xi called on the CCP to prepare for a "long-term period of cooperation and conflict" between two competing systems and declared that "capitalism is bound to die out and socialism is bound to win (White House, 2020, p.4)." General Secretary Xi's comments are especially concerning when considering China's BRI project.

The BRI is an enormous undertaking where China aims to connect with over seventy countries through trade and infrastructure. Dilanian suggests that "China has sought to expand its economic and political influence through its "One Belt, One Road" Initiative" (2020, p.5). This brings in the prospect that China could deploy 'geoeconomics' through the BRI. The US is not the only country to be concerned by this project. A 2020 European Union (EU) report displays concern about Chinese business and investment activity in Africa and the Western Balkans (European Union, 2020, p.4). The EU report says, "even though Chinese investment has contributed to the growth of many economies, the result may be high-level indebtedness and transfer of control over strategic assets and resources (European Union, 2020).

In sum, many analysts have noted that China uses its newfound status to shape regional and global institutions in ways that better suit its interests and meet its objectives (Economy, 2019, p.187). In some cases, China supports traditional norms, while in others supplanting them (Economy, 2019). The use of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence by China is worrying because they use economic coercion to shape world affairs in their favor. Moreover, China might also use geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence to prevent countries from taking action against it if China violates international law. How can China be held accountable in the world if countries are wary of taking action against them? This is why China's rise seems to be concerning for US officials and members of academia alike, and this wider concern has informed the US deep fears about the relationship of the telecommunications firm Huawei with the UK.

China's actions and its leader's remarks are indicators that have worried the US over the UK-Huawei deal, especially with vulnerabilities created by globalization. Globalization has played a role in an unbalanced distribution of power in certain industries, allowing more

powerful countries to coerce or influence weaker countries by controlling certain commodities and networks (Farrell & Newman, 2019). The UK is not a weak country; instead, it is not farfetched that China makes the UK interdependent on its telecommunication services and uses that interdependence to influence policymakers in the UK. Weaponized interdependence and geoeconomics may have played a role in the US dissuading the UK from its deal with Huawei. That is not to say that direct cybersecurity is not a valid reason why the US was concerned about the deal; it may not have been the US's *primary* concern.

Other Explanatory Factors

This thesis explores three other major, intertwining areas of explanation— US and UK domestic politics and the impact of current crises around Covid-19 and China's aggressive behavior in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, the SCS, and beyond. Regarding US domestic politics, President Trump may have attempted to use China as a platform for reelection when it comes to US domestic politics. The Trump campaign has continuously deployed a narrative that China threatens the US's national security and its future, stating he was the most qualified presidential candidate in the 2021 election to deal with this emerging threat. As we have already begun to see, China has been a security concern of the US for quite some time, which goes well beyond the Trump administration. Nevertheless, the Trump narrative emphasizes that he is the "first" to tackle this threat seriously, and it was a cornerstone of his campaign in 2016 and 2020. Trump's tough stance on China may have meant Huawei was becoming a scapegoat, demonstrating his "toughness" on China in comparison to others. This might have also impacted Biden in turn to be tougher on China as the Biden administration has adopted some of Trump's policies involving China and Huawei.

There was also a wider backdrop and a monumental unforeseen event possibly linked to this case. The outbreak of Covid-19 might have hardened attitudes in London and Washington over China in general and the Huawei case in particular. China did not immediately notify the World Health Organization (WHO) about this outbreak. The virus's case clusters did not begin to emerge in Wuhan hospitals until mid-December 2019, but the WHO would not be officially notified of the epidemic until December 31, 2019 (Dilanian, 2020, p.11). The current pandemic and Huawei's ties to the CCP, the CCP's perceived lack of honesty during the initial spread of Covid-19 may have negatively impacted the UK-Huawei 5G deal. As a result of the CCP's perceived lack of honesty about the Covid-19 outbreak, more hard-line voices within the UK government may have used the outbreak as an opportunity to nullify the UK's 5G deal with Huawei. Pressure from some of these more hard-line voices in the UK government may have prompted Boris Johnson to reject the agreement with Huawei, with US pressure increasing this window.

The coronavirus pandemic came amidst both rising US concerns about China's actions on a systemic level and several other specific challenges that may have further changed minds and hardened attitudes in domestic political circles in the US and UK. One such variable is the ongoing Hong Kong protests and China's reaction. The most recent protests in Hong Kong originally started due to a bill proposed by the PRC; they proposed a bill that would have affected Hong Kong had it not been suspended. The proposed extradition bill would have allowed China to extradite suspects from Hong Kong to mainland China (Kuo & Yu, 2019), raising concerns about the "one country, two systems" promises of the handover from the UK to China. The concerns from the UK and the US stems from the PRC's heavy handed tactics towards protestors in Hong Kong, the UK is especially concerned due to the fact Hong Kong is a

former protectorate of the UK. Both countries make their dissatisfaction about China's response publicly known.

In addition to the Hong Kong riots, there are other infractions on human rights that China has committed, and is responsible for the illegal internment of the Uighur population in the Xinjiang province. China has had issues of terrorism involving the Xinjiang province but is accused of systematically targeting the entire Uighur population including through internment in camps against their will. The outside world does not know much about what goes on in these camps; however, there is speculation that the Uighurs are experiencing reeducation, repression, and forced sterilization, among many other human rights abuses. Many governments worldwide recognize the violation of human rights that the Uighur population endures from the CCP. Chinese actions in Hong Kong, the SCS, and against the Uighurs may have prompted the UK to terminate its deal with Huawei. After all, Hong Kong was a former protectorate of the UK for numerous years. The fact that China uses physical force to quell rioting from native Hong Kongers may have forced the UK government to pressure Boris Johnson into canceling the 5G deal with Huawei. Additionally, China's aggressive nature in the SCS might have impacted the Huawei deal since many countries use the SCS for important reasons. Finally, the human rights violations occurring against the Uighur population may have caused the UK not to be associated with China.

Hypothesis

While all the factors above will be under examination via the research questions, this project expects to find that more comprehensive competitive US-China relations and the growing geoeconomics factor within this is especially crucial in explaining US pressure on the UK over Huawei specifically. It also expects to find that this pressure was the key factor to the UK's final

decision. At the deepest level, the US is concerned about the possibility of China trying to sever its most critical ally from the LIO. Experts have noted that this is a core tactic China could use in the 21st century. Due to China's inability to challenge the US directly, it will resort to stripping away allies from the US, including the UK. However, even if the prospects are not that serious, the prospect of Chinese influence in UK politics, in line with the logic of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence, is of huge importance to the US. Ultimately, Huawei's ties to the CCP may have worried the US most about the UK-Huawei deal. The US pressured the UK to kill the agreement because the PRC may influence the UK's policymakers; in turn, the UK succumbed to the pressure and nullified its 5G deal with Huawei. The annulment of the UK-Huawei deal may be the tip of the iceberg; this case may be but one signal of a growing great power competition that goes beyond specific security concerns and US and UK domestic politics. Thus, even though this is a singular case study, it is this global context that is most crucial to understanding the case. This case provides a test to understand if geoeconomics fears are driving US actions with a crucial ally in the LIO.

Research Design and Methodology

When choosing this specific case study, I aimed for a unique study that will have future US national security implications. Geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence are fascinating and extremely timely concepts, and appear deeply relevant to the fact that the UK signed a telecommunications contract with Huawei, which the US opposed. It is crucial to determine whether the US was concerned that China may use Huawei to exercise geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence on the UK and possible ramifications this agreement may have on US national security. As for future US national security implications, geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence will become more prominent in the future. Countries will increasingly resort to using geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence in order to further their geopolitical objectives (Farrell & Newman, 2019, p.43). This case study has wider ramifications as well as being important in and of itself.

This thesis explores its hypothesis through a qualitative singular case study, using within-case analysis of the UK's decision and US pressure *but crucially situating that pressure and decision in a much wider context*. Using historical narrative and elements of process tracing, mainly through primary and secondary document analysis, it seeks to explain the US' pressure on the UK to abandon the use of Huawei in its 5G network as being part of a more significant effort of the US to counter China's growing weaponized interdependence and geoeconomic influence and (as a secondary question) the impact this had on the UK's final decision. This is a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help understand social life by studying targeted populations or places (Crossman, 2020). Qualitative research seeks to explain the outcomes in individual cases and allows researchers to focus on the in-depth

distinctiveness of particular cases (Lowndes, Marsh, & Stoker, 2010, p. 255-256). In this particular thesis, the researcher hopes to discover what concerned the US regarding the UK's decision to use Huawei, and what inspired the US to put such pressure on the British government, with the hypothesis that geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence anxieties played a prominent, underrecognized role in US pressure. This pressure, in turn, drove the UK's decision to abandon Huawei.

Qualitative research is appropriate here since international relations can be complicated, especially when explaining a complex phenomenon. The case study under examination in this thesis is ongoing and constantly evolving. It is important to note that when this thesis started, the UK's decision seemed like a done deal, only for that to change. The tools used are those appropriate to a within-case analysis: historical narrative and process tracing through primary and secondary document analysis. Within-case analysis aims to understand and describe the phenomenon under study (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010, p.2). Furthermore, within-case analysis is instrumental in the case of a single case research design. Within-case analysis enables researchers to be thoroughly immersed in the data within a single case study (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010, p.2). Process tracing and historical narrative are vital tools that this thesis utilizes. Process tracing is an indispensable tool for theory testing and theory development not only because it generates numerous observations within a case, but because these observations can be linked in particular ways to constitute an explanation of the case (George & Bennett, 2007, p.207).

This thesis looks at explanatory variables as being causal mechanisms, suggesting how and why events are causally linked (Johnson & Ahn, 2017). We can infer that there are causal relationships in any given event. This thesis relies heavily on the usage of causal inference to

infer that geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence played a role in this case study. Even though causal inference is crucial to this thesis, there are limitations to it. The limitations to causal inference are that the data gathered for this kind of research relies on a theory; data gathered based on this theory risks bias, and the strength of the causal relationship cannot be measured (Gitbook, n.d.). I use a chronological timeline of events in this case study, which consists of the most critical actions of the UK and US. It then delves into this timeline's details with its posited explanatory variables to see if they act or *interact* as causal mechanisms allowing us to understand events. The core method for research and evidence gathering was primary and secondary document analysis. I used document analysis to reveal and/or infer these causal, explanatory links between geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence concerns tied to wider competitive concerns in the US, the UK's decision in this context, and other aspects that perhaps impacted US pressure and UK decision making. The use of primary and secondary documents will be discussed in more detail and give some examples of the documents that informed this thesis' findings.

Primary and Secondary Document Analysis in this Case Study

Primary and secondary document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material (Bowen, 2009, p.27). Document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009, p.27). Bowen lists the advantages as an efficient method, availability, cost-effectiveness, lack of obtrusiveness and reactivity, stability, exactness, and coverage (2009, p.31). Documents can also come from multiple sources, allowing the researcher to gain perspective from different sources. However, like any other form of gathering data, there are limitations to document analysis, that

being insufficient detail, low retrievability, and biased selectivity (Bowen, 2009, p.31-32).

Document analysis was the sole source where all the data was gathered, with explanations of primary and secondary sources found below.

- *Primary Sources*

All the documents used for this thesis are unclassified, but some are primary sources, especially from the US and UK governments. Primary sources are vital because they are documents that can reflect an actor's position and do not necessarily analyze them (Lowndes, Marsh, & Stoker, 2010). All of the primary documents used in this thesis are government-based. UK government sources underlined how the UK viewed Huawei, including around security concerns. For example, investigations conducted by the HPSCI (2012), UK Intelligence and Security Committee (2013), and, in the US, the HPSCI (2020) are vital to the analysis and helped reveal the puzzle over differing US and UK threat perceptions. These investigations examined Huawei's structure, personnel, funding, and ties to the CCP. Another report is from an oversight committee of former GCHQ members who inspected Huawei's new products to be released in the UK. This oversight identifies the problems with new Huawei products and makes recommendations for fixing them. I also used primary documents regarding Hong Kong, and Covid-19.

US primary documents are essential because this paper focuses on the national security of the US; more importantly, these documents help create a picture of relations between the US and China. Reports from different US government entities are used by this thesis to get an overall view of how US government and military officials view China. Documents from the White

House, Department of Defense, and Department of State are just some that I used to see if a great power competition is developing between the US and China. Not only were US documents used to view US-China relations, but also how US government officials view Huawei. An official US government investigation into Huawei and ZTE is used to see why the US worried about the UK-Huawei business agreement; suffice to say, this official investigation clarifies what US officials fear from Huawei as a telecommunications company with ties to the CCP. Without these documents, I would not have gained insight into the bigger implications that the UK-Huawei deal posed.

These reports are an excellent resource for a deeper view of how the US and UK view Huawei. However, these documents are not free from larger contexts surrounding this issue. No official government documents were used from the Chinese perspective; such documents exist but can be problematic because China is an authoritarian country that distorts or denies the truth altogether. More importantly, the focus is on the US and UK's decision-making, with the researcher hoping to demonstrate that US pressure may have prompted the UK government to quash its 5G deal with Huawei. The US and UK governments tend to be more transparent to the public, which is another reason primary documents were chosen from both these countries. However, even sources gathered from the US and UK governments cannot be taken entirely at face value. Even in democratic societies, different parties or officials representing these parties may have different agendas. Besides, government statements are not entirely transparent when expressing a government's stance on a particular issue, especially when it comes to sensitive issues. A key consideration here is the UK's needs and aims to build a 5G network overcoming security worries, and the US potentially overplaying security concerns over Huawei in a complex global and domestic political context.

The figure below summarizes the primary documents used. It describes how the sources were helpful and what the sources lacked. Blue boxes describe how the sources were helpful, and orange boxes depict the shortcomings of the sources:

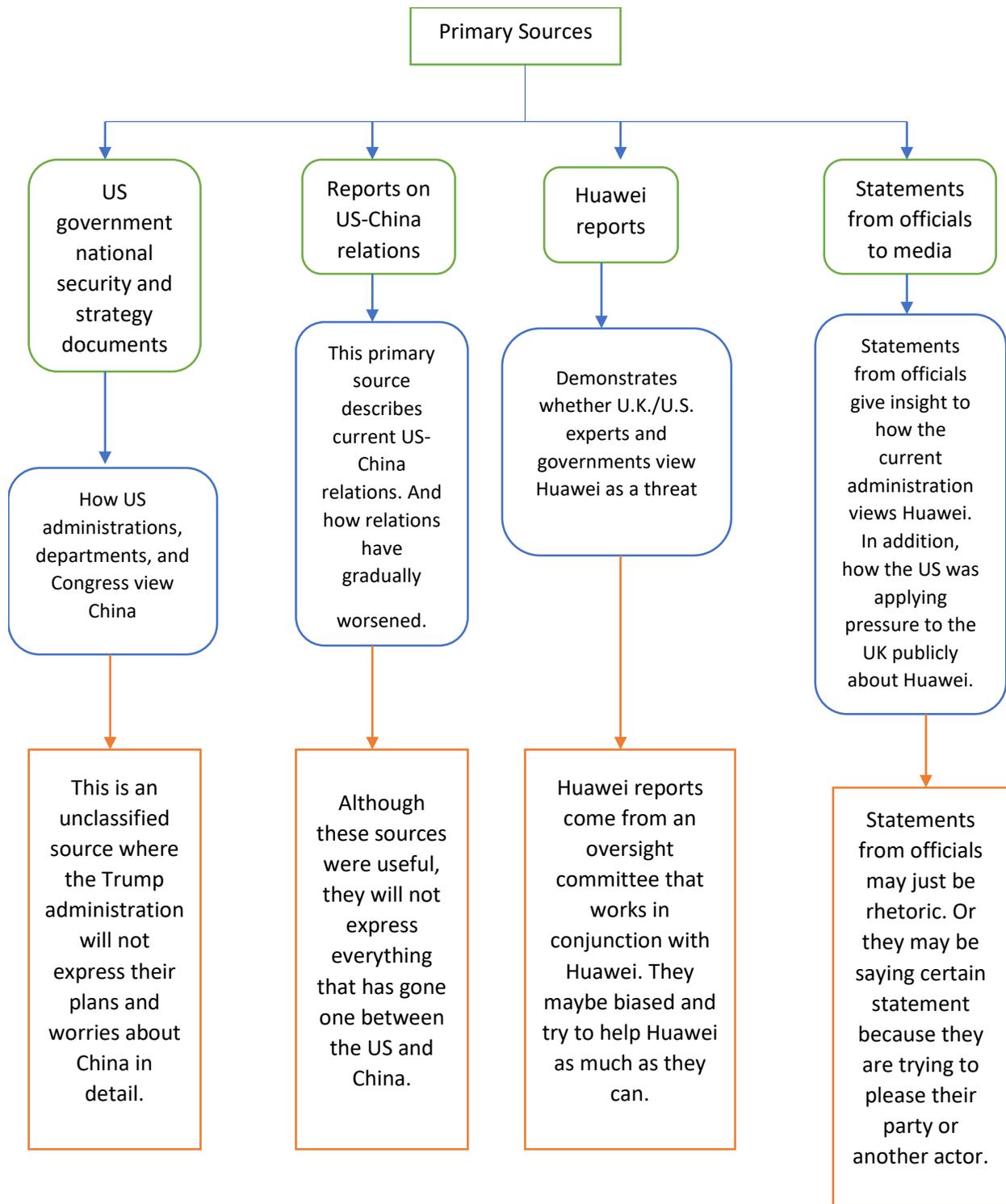


Figure 1: A taxonomy of primary sources.

Figure 1 is a taxonomy of primary sources. It describes how the sources were useful and what the sources lacked.

Blue boxes describe how the sources were useful, and orange boxes depict the shortcomings of the source.

- *Secondary Sources*

Secondary documents serve a different purpose in this thesis by adding a layer of interpretation and analysis (Primary Sources: A Research Guide: Primary vs. Secondary). This thesis is situated in deeper debates, and hence academic journals, news articles, and books are crucial, not least in providing insight into US-China relations. Blackwill and Harris's work on geoeconomics was vital to this research because it introduces geoeconomics and how some governments apply it worldwide. Some academic articles discuss the shift in power or lack thereof and whether the US is growing weak or can still hold power against China's resurgence. It is essential to understand the modern relations between the US and China to comprehend how relations went from amicable to strained. Understanding the modern relations between both countries is vital to this case study because of the great power competition this thesis emphasizes. Modern relations demonstrate how China went from a country barely accepted into the LIO created by the US to China challenging the US for supremacy over the LIO. Without modern relations between both countries being included, it would be hard to paint a picture of increasing tensions between the US and China.

Tensions between the US and China in this case study center around the topics of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence. Blackwill and Harris' chapter on China goes in-depth with the various geoeconomics tools that China employs in its region. Moreover, this chapter gives specific examples of when the authors believed China used geoeconomics to achieve favorable geopolitical outcomes. Meanwhile, Farrell and Newman's influential article on weaponized interdependence, and a subsequent book, talks about vulnerabilities created by globalization and how countries exploit these vulnerabilities to control other countries (Farrell &

Newman, 2019, p.1). Weaponized interdependence is vital to framing this case study due to the events that are taking place; Huawei is an SOE with connections to the CCP.

Besides SOEs being owned and operated by the government, countries should be concerned with SOEs' employees. An additional academic article that proved insightful into the kind of individuals that SOEs employs is written by Hong Yu. Hong Yu argues that, “leaders of large SOEs are usually members of the Chinese Communist Party and are high-ranking officials” (2019, p.347). As a result of SOEs being members of the CCP, they hold obligations to the party. The SOEs' top managers are obliged to align their decision-making and performance with Party directives and the state's policy priorities (Yu, 2019). The government also handpicks managers to work in SOEs, the state appoints managers whose interests align with the party-state (Yu, 2019). Therefore, countries should be apprehensive about Huawei's ties with the CCP and China using Huawei to spy on countries that use its products. Another topic that also played an essential role in creating this thesis was international relations (I.R.)

Broader contextual factors in I.R. were studied to give the researcher better insight into the dynamics of US-China relations, especially when it came to state power. Most academic documents used for this study range from the early 2000s to the current date. Starrs (2013) and Beckley (2012), argue that the US was still quite powerful and need not worry about China were read. The researcher also read academic articles similar to Layne's viewpoint, who argues the US's power was diminishing while China's power was increasing. These articles looked at different aspects when it came to discussing power. Some articles discussed the more traditional powers that a nation-state has, like economic or military power. Overall, these various academic articles discussing various power topics were researched to provide insight into academia's thoughts on US growing or diminishing power. These articles helped me formulate my opinion

on whether or not the US was succumbing to China; they helped me get a clearer picture of whether there is an ongoing great power competition, which is the crucial context affecting the UK case.

Secondary documents in this thesis helped the case study by looking at three explanatory variables that may have affected the UK-Huawei deal, helping avoid confirmation or selection bias by exploring more than one avenue for variables in this case study. It is a possibility that US domestic politics was the motivating factor for the increased US pressure on Huawei and hence the UK, resulting in the UK's deal being voided. For example, secondary articles gave the researcher insight into the Trump administration's mindset and motivation to see if the past administration truly affected the deal. As previously mentioned, primary sources were beneficial when the researcher looked at the other two variables of Hong Kong and Covid-19, but online news articles describing both factors were also used.

The figure below summarizes the secondary documents used.

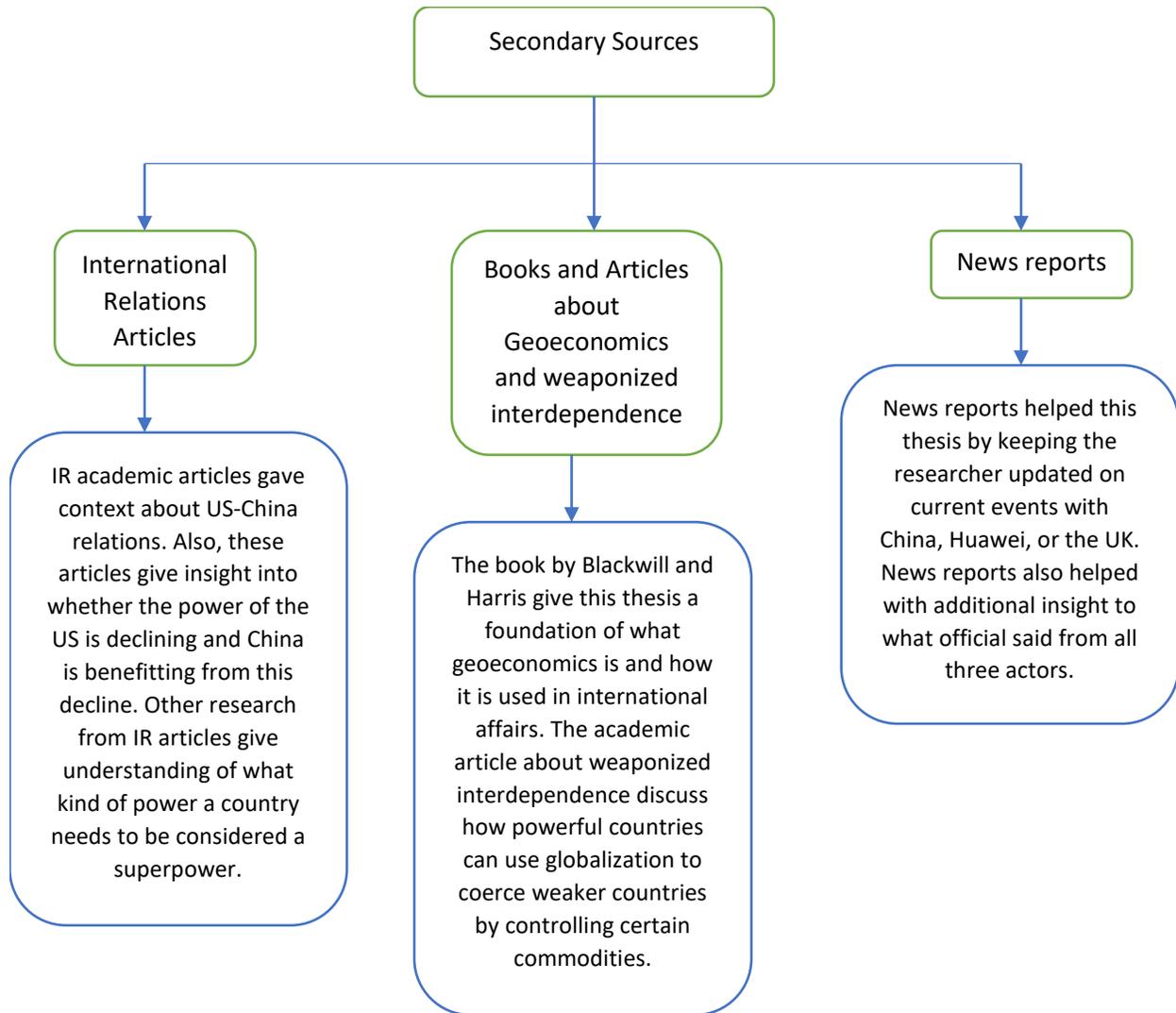


Figure 2 is a taxonomy of secondary sources. Green boxes are for the kind of secondary sources that were used and blue boxes describe how the sources were useful.

The Case Study

1. Introduction

On January 28, 2020, the UK and Huawei struck a deal where Huawei would build UK's 5G infrastructure. Even though this business transaction made complete sense from the UK perspective, the US was unhappy with the UK's decision. US President Donald Trump voiced US displeasure in a personal phone call to the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on February 24, 2020, expressing betrayal. (Keane, 2021). The betrayal expressed by US President Trump was the result of concerns about the telecommunications company. Members of the US government voiced apprehensions over the business transaction, such as senator Tom Cotton from Arkansas, who proposed to pass a bill that prevents the US from sharing intelligence with countries who use Huawei. Eventually, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) deemed Huawei and ZTE as threats to national security on June 30, 2020 (Keane, 2021). Not only did the US deem Huawei a threat, but there were also talks about the US putting sanctions on Huawei. After the UK terminated the deal on July 14, 2020 (Keane, 2021), the UK went even further by proposing to strip Huawei from its telecommunications network altogether. As a result, the US placed sanctions on Huawei, crippling its future business aspirations. I now explore this US pressure from an explanatory perspective, starting with direct cyber concerns, and following with an examination of US versus China competition and geoeconomics. I then apply these findings to the case, before briefly exploring other factors.

2. The Direct Risks and the (First) Public Concern: Huawei, the UK, and Cybersecurity

This section will explore the 'direct' cybersecurity aspects of this case. Firstly, I will briefly discuss what 5G is and why is it so important. This portion of the case study will also examine

the possible reasons why the UK chose Huawei as a 5G vendor. After an explanation of why the UK specifically chose Huawei, the next portion will focus on how the UK's decision and the US's reaction to this decision. Had the UK gone through with the deal and the US kept its promise about not sharing intelligence, the most crucial intelligence group that both countries are a part of would have been in jeopardy. Lastly, this section will discuss all the UK's precautions when it came to choosing Huawei as a possible 5G vendor.

What is 5G? How it works and how it differs from 4G

It is essential to layout what 5G is, to understand the implications of the issue in the UK and for the US. 5G is a revolutionary telecommunications technology that can change the world and is a vast improvement over the 4G network people use in their everyday lives. One particular area that 5G will improve on is speed. 5G aims to deliver data rates 10 to 100 times faster than the current 4G networks. This speed includes both the rate mobile users can download data to their devices and the latency, or lag, they experience between sending and receiving information (Childers, 2019). With speed like this, certain areas of telecommunications will advance.

There may also be new applications utilized as a result of the increased speed through 5G services. Data rates as fast as 5G will enable new applications that are just not possible today, such as virtual reality apps or autonomous driving cars (Childers, 2019). The use of a 5G network has many benefits, even though installing the new network will require new towers that are somewhat similar to cell towers. These new towers are much smaller and require less power than traditional cell towers, and can be placed atop buildings and light poles (Childers, 2019). The 5G cell towers have a massive number of smaller antennas that can simultaneously serve many different users, increasing the data rate (Childers, 2019). Huawei is not the only company that has created 5G; however, it is more affordable than Ericsson and Nokia's 5G.

Why Choose Huawei?

Not only is Huawei's 5G affordable, but it also seems to be very popular among various countries throughout the world. Huawei's website claims that they have 50 contracts for 5G worldwide (Huawei, 2019). Huawei 5G contracts are not only limited to developing countries; countries like France, Germany, and Brazil have been contemplating Huawei's services as a 5G vendor, even with the US's current sanctions and policies towards Huawei. According to *The Economist*, there is an additional reason why countries prefer to use Huawei. In light of recent events, many countries are still open to using Huawei as a 5G vendor not just because their 5G is affordable but also because their 5G is more advanced (Economist, 2019, para. 8). It seems that all else being equal many countries will employ Huawei to build and operate their 5G infrastructure. Many countries are interested in improving their telecommunications by advancing their telecommunications network, which still holds true for the UK. A report by the Future Communications Challenge Group states why 5G is important to the UK as a country:

5G will provide revolutionary new technologies to manage a seamless evolution in network, mobile and wireless services to deliver significant opportunities for new business models, enhanced lifestyles and increased productivity. It is intended to support an exponential increase in mobile data demand and expectations, significant video communications growth, the full realisation of the IoT (internet of things) and the varying needs of different vertical industries, such as Creative Industries, Retail, Transport and Health as part of a much broader UK digital economy (2017).

The report makes the case that 5G is a necessity for the UK when it comes to economic prosperity; it also gives the impression that all UK sectors will benefit in their own ways. In addition to the benefits that 5G has to offer, one part of the report clarifies that getting 5G is essential to keep up with other countries in terms of technology. Suffice to say, 5G is vital to the UK infrastructure, and the UK will continue to pursue another 5G vendor even if the business transaction with Huawei did not work out.

The UK's familiarity with Huawei must have also played a part in the decision to choose Huawei as a 5G vendor. Huawei has operated for over twenty years in the UK, providing devices and services, not to forget that Huawei also built and operated the UK's 3G and 4G networks. Most notably, Huawei and the UK have a unique history. The UK gave Huawei a foothold into the European market because the UK is a country that Huawei started to conduct business with outside of China. In essence, Huawei may owe its success in the European telecommunications market to the UK. The UK decided to go with Huawei as a 5G vendor is due to need, familiarity, affordability, and Huawei's superior 5G technology. However, even though the UK may have viewed Huawei as the perfect fit for itself, the US felt *very* differently.

The US, Cybersecurity, and Huawei

The US is at the forefront of banning Huawei in part because it seems to believe China will use this SOE to spy on those countries that use Huawei's products. Many countries do share some concerns with the US, including the UK. The UK had shown similar concerns after signing a contract with the company and conducting an official parliamentary investigation. Two concerns are mentioned as to why this parliamentary investigation was conducted. One is the relationship that SOEs have with the state, and, relatedly, the possibility of cyberattacks. Most

concerns surround Huawei's perceived relations with China; 20% of detected cyberattacks against the UK comes from a foe with sophisticated cyber capabilities (UK Parliament, n.d.). There is a good reason the UK suspects China of these cyberattacks - China is suspected of being one of the foremost perpetrators of state-sponsored attacks focused on espionage and information acquisition (UK Parliament, n.d.). Theoretically, the Chinese state may exploit any vulnerabilities in Huawei's equipment (UK parliament, n.d.). China might use these vulnerabilities to access the British telecommunications network, providing them with an attractive espionage opportunity (UK parliament, n.d.). There may be more concerning matters about Huawei than it is just being used for espionage.

The UK therefore might have faced some adverse side effects if it decided to use Huawei's 5G network. Perhaps the amount of cyberattacks increases when the UK installs Huawei's 5G network. One type of cyberattack that may become more frequent if Huawei's 5G network was installed is a denial-of-service attack. A denial-of-service attack is an intentional cyberattack carried out on networks, websites, and online resources to restrict access to its legitimate users and can last from a few hours to many months (Frankenfield, 2020m para. 1). For over a decade, Chinese hackers have launched countless cyberattacks intended to harass, disrupt, or paralyze Taiwan's financial, transportation, shipping, military, and other networks (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.101). China could execute these kinds of cyberattacks against the UK; the only difference is that a Chinese state-operated enterprise constructed the 5G network for the UK. US fears over a possible backdoor embedded in the 5G network that Huawei intended on installing could have happened as well. Malwarebytes website declares, "backdoors can also be installed by software or hardware makers as a deliberate means of gaining access to their technology after the fact" (n.d., para. 4). It seems plausible that a company places a

backdoor in their technology to spy on whoever uses that piece of technology. Unlike other cyber threats that make themselves known to the user, backdoors are known for being discreet; backdoors exist for a select group of people in the know to gain easy access to a system or application (Malwarebytes, n.d., para. 5).

In addition to backdoors being discreet and being known to only a few individuals, there are some instances where backdoors were deliberately placed in technology. In 2014, developers working on a spinoff of Google's Android operating system (called Replicant) discovered a backdoor on Samsung mobile devices, including Samsung's Galaxy series of phones (Malwarebytes, n.d., para.33). The backdoor allegedly allowed Samsung or anyone else who knew about its remote access to all of the files stored on affected devices (Malwarebytes, n.d.). Regarding cyber threats or cyberattacks, it is entirely possible that the PRC may have weaponized Huawei against the UK. Thus, Chinese hackers could know the network's vulnerabilities and have a much easier time manipulating it, allowing China to use geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence against the UK with devastating results.

These fears seemed to strongly motivate the US strongly into pressuring the UK. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated this about cybersecurity concerning Huawei "if the CCP wanted to get information from technology in the possession of Huawei, Huawei would most certainly provide them with the information" (Drezner, Newman, & Farrell, 2021, p. 154). Indeed, if the UK had decided to use Huawei's 5G network, the relationship between the US and UK could have deteriorated. President Trump made his intentions clear about China in his 2017 NSS. China is gaining a strategic foothold in Europe by expanding its unfair trade practices and investing in key industries, sensitive technologies, and infrastructure (U.S. White House, 2017, p.47). This administration held the belief that the PRC will use Huawei as an instrument to spy

on countries. The US has also threatened to withhold intelligence from allies who sign up for 5G equipment from China's SOE Huawei (Bremmer, 2019, p.21). Washington will not hesitate to force European allies to choose between the US and China (Bremmer, 2019). The issuance of this ultimatum might have affected the relations of the US and the UK if the Trump administration had acted on its promise. Additionally, this kind of action would have significantly affected the alliance that the US and the UK are a part of the Five Eyes Alliance.

Potential Impact on Five Eyes

The Five Eyes Alliance consists of the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Its creation served a specific purpose throughout WWII, decrypting German and Japanese diplomatic cables (PFluke, 2019, p.303). After the war concluded, an official alliance was formed between the US and the UK. At the end of WW II, both countries continued their intelligence-sharing efforts by signing the British-US Communication Agreement (BRUSA), later renamed UKUSA (PFluke, 2019). At the time, the alliance between the US and UK foresaw the growing threat of the USSR. The UK-US alliance initially focused all its intelligence-gathering efforts on the Soviet Union (PFluke, 2019). New members were added throughout the years, which allowed the alliance to collect and disseminate even more raw intelligence. Canada joined the alliance in 1948, while New Zealand and Australia joined later in 1956 (PFluke, 2019).

The creation and expansion of the alliance led to a globalized intelligence-sharing entity that could gather intelligence outside of the US' reach (PFluke, 2019). This alliance still functions today and continues to focus on gathering SIGINT. The agreement includes all intelligence gathered, produced, or disseminated dealing with foreign communications (PFluke, 2019, P.303). Five Eyes have been around for quite some time, and for the past sixty years, have

operated a global surveillance network with the purpose of “mastering the internet” and spying on the world’s communications (PFluke, 2019, P.304). Out of all the intelligence alliances the US has been a part of, this one is perhaps the most important. It is considered the oldest and most prominent intelligence alliance globally (PFluke, 2019, P.305). NATO and Interpol work on a need-to-know basis or use a barter system to share intelligence (PFluke, 2019, P.305), while the Five Eyes Alliance share intelligence amongst each other freely (PFluke, 2019). Members of the Five Eyes are also allowed to share intelligence with countries that do not have a membership, granted a nation’s safety is at stake or all agree to share with a third-party nation. (PFluke, 2019). Thus, the membership does not solely benefit the members of this alliance, but other countries too.

The responsibility of intelligence gathering is distributed evenly among members; Five Eyes practice burden-sharing among their members by breaking the world into smaller areas and assigning each country to a different section based on proximity and collection abilities (PFluke, 2019, P.305). Burden sharing is advantageous for all the five countries that make up the alliance. Burden-sharing ensures that the Five Eyes Alliance is not just a set of principles but a formal cooperative agreement (PFluke, 2019). Out of all the members who make up the alliance, the US and the UK are the closest. A senior member of British intelligence commented on the relations between the US NSA and the UK’s GCHQ:

When you get a GCHQ pass, it gives you access to the NSA too. You can walk into the NSA and find GCHQ staff holding senior management positions, and vice versa.

When the NSA has a piece of intelligence, it will very often ask GCHQ for a second opinion. There have been ups and

downs over the years, of course. However, in general, the NSA and GCHQ are extremely close allies. They rely on each other (PFluke, 2019, P.305).

Even though the intelligence is shared equally among the five countries, the US has closer ties with the UK than any other member. On top of the agreement to share intelligence, the Five Eyes also conduct other actions like participating in joint global operations and developing new collection and analysis technologies (PFluke, 2019, P.305). One new piece of technology created by Five Eyes is Echelon, a crucial worldwide surveillance program (PFluke, 2019). Collaboration between the alliance members resulted in Echelon's creation, a global spying network run by the NSA at Fort Meade, operated in conjunction with the other member's SIGINT intelligence agencies (PFluke, 2019, p.306). Echelon is a collection of intercept stations posted worldwide that captures communications data, processing and scanning the data for specific words that determine whether those communications are flagged (PFluke, 2019, p.306). The Echelon program is even more integral to national security, given all the threats out there in the world today. For sixty years, this alliance has safeguarded the world from different threats and could have been undone because of the current US administration's proclamation.

A final benefit of this alliance is that the members have a "no-spy pact," in which members agree not to spy on each other, even if it is not officially mentioned in their agreement (PFluke, 2019, p.305). One of the beneficiaries of the alliance is the US because it is not tasked with monitoring communications worldwide; even if the US has the most sophisticated SIGINT intelligence agency globally, the NSA resources are finite. Due to the Five Eyes' existence, the US shares the burden of gathering and analyzing foreign communications intelligence, meaning that the US keeps up to date on threats worldwide (PFluke, 2019). Each country gets its section

of the globe to conduct intelligence on, depending on their national security priorities and their proximity to other nations (PFluke, 2019, p.305). In summary, the Five Eyes Alliance gives countries who are members of this alliance several advantages: burden-sharing and the worldwide surveillance program Echelon. Burden sharing between the countries allows them to intercept more communications from territories that remain a threat to national security (PFluke, 2019, p.306).

If the Trump administration would have acted on its ultimatum, refusing to share intelligence with countries that use Huawei products, then the oldest and most prominent intelligence-sharing alliance could have been disbanded if the UK decided to use Huawei's 5G network. This decision would have been detrimental to relations between both countries. All the benefits that they gain from Five Eyes may cease to exist. First and foremost, the UK might have pulled out of the alliance if the US decided to stop sharing intelligence since the Five Eyes alliance is predicated on sharing SIGINT between all the members. If the UK left, the region they are responsible for gathering SIGINT would have to be given to another member, most likely the US. The UK monitors Europe and Western Russia (PFluke, 2019). The US will most likely be forced to overextend its resources to monitor a region previously monitored by the UK. Another concerning factor is that other members may follow the example of the UK's departure. Their departure attributed to the fact that New Zealand, Australia, and Canada were former dominions of the UK, which means they have a long history of working together. Even with five members, the alliance is overwhelmed as it is. Losing any member or members would have been severely detrimental and would have had adverse effects.

A second concern is an interagency partnership that the NSA and GCHQ have. With a potential split between the US and the UK, the NSA and GCHQ's interagency partnership might

have come to an abrupt end. GCHQ employees may no longer hold positions at NSA; the same goes for the NSA employees who work at GCHQ. Vacant positions would need to be filled by both of these agencies. They also may be forced to change their security protocols given that an agency from a different country is familiar with their inner workings. Not only would intelligence sharing be affected for Five Eyes, but GCHQ and NSA would have also probably stopped sharing intelligence as well. These are potentially huge ramifications, and it makes it quite mindboggling as to why the UK went as far as it did in the Huawei deal. This maybe explained in part, though, by its efforts to mitigate these direct cybersecurity risks.

UK Efforts to Mitigate Risk

The Huawei Cyber Security Evaluation Centre Oversight Board is a group that monitors Huawei products before being released in the UK (Cabinet office, 2019). The oversight board consists of former GCHQ members who have extensive knowledge and expertise in cybersecurity. Former GCHQ members work in conjunction with Huawei to ensure that Huawei products do not pose a national security risk to the UK's telecommunications. Their annual report is a security analysis about products Huawei has produced that have flaws and pose a cybersecurity risk (Cabinet office, 2019). The flaws and cybersecurity result from the technology used to make or support these products, which cannot be used until Huawei has fixed these problems. Huawei has vowed to resolve product issues by investing billions of dollars, but they have not provided a specific plan. As we will see in more detail in the case study, the oversight board stated they cannot give their complete confidence to the UK government about Huawei products until Huawei remedies the current issues. However, this oversight board had no pressing need to recommend that Huawei posed a national security risk to the UK; all the issues this oversight board found were minor and could be easily fixed.

Another UK report underlines that the UK government was not *deeply* concerned about Huawei is the *Foreign involvement in the critical national infrastructure* report, published in 2013. This finding is interesting because it comes after eight years of the UK having business agreements with Huawei. By this time, Huawei had helped the UK build its 3G network and was working on or finished building its 4G network. This report also tried to determine the ties between Huawei and the CCP and whether or not Huawei currently posed a national security risk to the UK. This report did show some concern about Huawei; yet, Huawei would operate in the UK for at least another six years after this report was published. Furthermore, no genuine concern about Huawei would be brought up until 2020.

As the above paragraphs demonstrate, the UK took many precautions to ensure that Huawei did not pose a national security risk to the UK. Both the UK and Huawei worked in conjunction by establishing an oversight board meant to safeguard the UK's critical infrastructure from cyberespionage or any cyber threat that Huawei technology and services might pose. So, the UK and Huawei worked in unison to guarantee that Huawei was safe to use in the UK. Beyond the UK and Huawei working together, the UK government launched an official investigation to determine the threat Huawei could pose to the UK's critical infrastructure and its possible ties to the CCP. It is safe to say; the official investigation launched by the UK government did not find an imminent threat that Huawei posed and did not fear for the UK's national security; because the UK still pursued a 5G deal with Huawei in 2020 even with the official investigation of Huawei's involvement in the UK's critical infrastructure in 2013. To sum it up, the UK took a number of precautions to ensure that Huawei was more or less safe to use.

Going Deeper into the issue?

We have reached a strange point here, where we have a mix of potentially serious cybersecurity concerns from the US and the UK, but the UK seemingly decided it could handle them. Why did the US not share this assessment, and increase its pressure on the UK? There remains a question over competing priorities – did the UK consider Huawei a cheaper, necessary gamble, and did the US decide it couldn't allow the UK to take that gamble?! However, to understand this fully, we have to go deeper and explore the geoeconomic and weaponized interdependence factors that worried the US about the UK's 5G deal, all in the much deeper but crucial context of increased US China competition bearing down on and affecting this case.

3. The Deeper Context to this Case Study: Geoeconomics and Great Power Competition

Introduction

In this section of the case study, I will contextualize the case study. To understand the US' pressure on the UK, we must understand a much wider global context of significantly increased US-China competition in line with realist ideas of a return of great power competition (GPC). Moreover, specifically, we need to look at the role of geoeconomics within that great power competition that is ongoing between the US and China. This portion of the case study will discuss great power competition and the I.R. theory associated with great power competition: realism. This section will discuss how US officials view the world and all the competition that the US is experiencing with revisionist countries, especially China. After the section on realism, the following few paragraphs address China's meteoric rise, some things it has done that can be perceived as a challenge to US hegemony, current events will be discussed between the US and China, and current relations between President Donald Trump and Chairman Xi Jinping. Finally, this section will go into great detail about what geoeconomics precisely is, some circumstances that have allowed geoeconomics to reappear, and China's use of geoeconomics on specific

countries in this competitive context. This provides the crucial context ahead of analyzing the case from a perspective informed by concepts around great power competition, weaponized interdependence, and geoeconomics.

Realism and the Return of Great Power Competition

The 2017 NSS declared that great power competition is making a resurgence; it discusses its resurgence, competition with specific countries, areas these countries compete with the US, and these specific countries' goals. Countries competing with US interests abroad are mentioned in the 2017 NSS: China, Russia, and Iran. Three main sets of challengers—the revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue state Iran are actively competing against the US and our allies and partners (U.S. White House, 2017, p.25). This government document goes even further and lists the areas China, Russia, and Iran are competing with the US. The areas of competition where these three countries compete with the US are political, economic, military arenas, technology, and information (U.S. White House, 2017). The US believes that the goals of all three of these countries are to shift regional balances of power in their favor (U.S. White House, 2017). Aside from US officials being adamant that a great power competition is brewing, the PRC believes in the same thing as well.

Implications for a possible great power competition does not simply come from US academics and government officials, but from the Chinese perspective. Strong elements in the CCP consider the most problematic aspects of the liberal order as US alliances and global military presence, American ideological hostility towards China's political system, and the US's determination to undermine China's rise (Denmark, 2020, p. 59). Denmark discusses the two

mindsets of CCP leadership; one school of thought argues that the existing order is acceptable but needs reform under China's lead, and the second prefers a coalition with other countries to modify the order (2020, p.54). It is intriguing to see that Chinese scholars and government officials see the US as an object impeding China's progress either as an ascending power or trying to reform the LIO. According to Denmark, there are two reasons that China seeks to reform the LIO and all its policies. China wants foreign policies to adapt to its domestic ones, and China wants to be an exception in the LIO (2020). What this means is that China more or less wants to hold the same status that it enjoyed when it was dubbed the Middle Kingdom; this means that China wants to make the rules but not necessarily be accountable to them. Thus, China intends to shape the world to its liking, but the US is the one obstacle preventing them from accomplishing this feat.

One I.R. theory that helps explain the competition materializing between the US and these three countries is realism, which is the I.R. theory that fits the description of a power struggle between two states. Realism is a view of international politics that stresses its competitive and conflictual side, emphasizing the state, its military, and its interests (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017). Realists consider the international arena's principal actors to be states concerned with security and act to pursue national interests and struggle for power (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017). Moreover, with a power struggle, states hope to increase their security to deter potential aggressors (some realists believe at another state's expense) (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017).

Realism was a prevalent I.R. theory for most of the 20th century because its popularity was due to significant events such as both World Wars and the Cold War. A change happened once the USSR collapsed, and the world was relatively peaceful considering that there was only

one superpower left and (it was thought) a lower possible threat of nuclear war. Following the collapse of the USSR and great power competition seen as no longer being relevant, realism lost credibility and attractiveness. The 2017 NSS stresses that great power competition has made a comeback, and this is probably due to events, such as Russia's annexation of Crimea, China's aggressiveness in Asia, and Iran's increasing influence in the Middle East. Not only are these countries increasing their influence in their region, but they are also competing with US interests as well. All these actions by various nation-states counter the liberal view of how the world would be once the Cold War ended. Initially, the liberal view envisioned a world where there was peace, economic prosperity, promotion of human rights, and countries working together to solve issues.

The world's situation has therefore changed, and countries oppose the LIO and US interests, which plays into the I.R. theory of realism. Realism coincides with great power competition, making realism relevant to this case study. After being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition has returned, with China and Russia reasserting their influence regionally and globally (U.S. White House, 2017, p.27). The 2017 NSS says that China and Russia pose a threat to US interests by "contesting U.S. geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor" (U.S. White House 2017). In other words, China is competing with the US militarily, economically, and any other way that China can. Militarily, China is modernizing and expanding its armed forces; economically, China started the BRI project and established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and wants to establish the Renminbi as a reserve currency. China is manipulating the liberal world order to empower itself and increase its influence in the world. This past decade, China created new institutions that could constitute a parallel "shadow" international order outside Pax Americana's

framework, which consists of the AIIB, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, and the BRICS (Layne, Christopher, 2018, p.100). Whilst we will discuss this further below, when it comes to challenging the US, China often resorts to geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence. Denmark notes that “China makes effective use of its economic power as a tool of geopolitical statecraft, leveraging its economic relationships and potential in new and innovative ways (2020, P. 46).

The U.S.’ China Strategy and the Rise of Competition

We can note the impact of China’s rise and their implications in a series of recent historical events in which China was integrated into the liberal system established by the US after the Second World War, and how it has begun to challenge them. This context is *crucial* to understand, as it places our case study in the UK in a much wider set of conditions. There are two different theories as to why the US brought China into its liberal system. One belief was that China could also prosper like most of the LIO nations, specifically China’s economy. An alternative belief was that the US brought China into the fold so that it is easier for the US to rebuke them if China oversteps its boundaries. Either way, this integration of China into the liberal world order contributed to its ascension on the world stage. As Graaff and Apeldoorn (2018) mention:

China’s rise has been seen as an opportunity and a threat by U.S. Policymakers. The opportunity seen by U.S. lawmakers was to invest capital into the biggest ‘emerging market’ while simultaneously integrating China’s market

into the liberal world with the intentions of keeping it subordinate to the U.S. (p. 124-125).

With China's integration into the liberal world order that the US established, the US hoped to do more than punish China. Once viewed by democracies as a formidable consumer and feisty competitor, China has grown and changed over the last decade to become an economic and national security adversary (Magnus, 2021, para. 1). The liberalization of China did not take place as the US had hoped; as an alternative, China continues to violate humans rights, prohibits citizens from speaking out against the government, employs unfair trade practices, and is still an authoritarian, one-party communist state. China expanded its power at the expense of others' sovereignty in two ways (U.S. White House, 2017). Firstly, China gathers and exploits data on an unrivaled scale and spreads features of its authoritarian system, including corruption and the use of surveillance (U.S. White House, 2017). Secondly, China's alternative way of expanding its influence is through military means, which it uses to be more involved in international affairs. A 2020 DoD report examines China's military use; the PRC recognized that its armed forces should take a more active role in advancing its foreign policy, highlighting the increasingly global character that Beijing ascribes to its military power (p.4). This DoD report causes concern about how China uses its military; but, most of the PRC's advancements should also draw concern since China is doing this at the US' expense. Part of China's military modernization and economic expansion is due to its access to the US innovation economy, including America's world-class universities (U.S. White House, 2017). A recent report from the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) notes (2020):

Beijing has sought to expand its economic and political influence through its “One Belt, One Road” Initiative and

the large-scale cooption of media outlets worldwide.

Militarily, China has embarked on a massive modernization drive - creating a “blue water” navy, investing heavily in hypersonic weapons, developing its fifth-generation fighter, militarizing a series of atolls and islets in the South China Sea to strengthen its claims in the region, and building its first overseas military base in Djibouti. Perhaps most consequential in the decades to come will be China’s investment of resources, technology, and will into the creation of a post-modern authoritarian state in which the country’s population is monitored around the clock through their phones and an ever-growing network of surveillance cameras equipped with facial-recognition technology (p.5-6).

Most of these actions took place while the US was preoccupied with the WoT; the US dedicated a vast majority of its resources and attention to terrorism that allowed other threats to have grown. Out of all the dangers that exist in the world, China was the most concerning for the House Permanent Select Committee. One finding from the report is that the IC must adapt to the current threat that a nation-state poses to the US's national security because the IC is accustomed to fighting terrorism. The US must then study and understand China to compete and combat threats to US national security effectively. Failure to adapt to China as a threat might result in China supplanting the US in the future (Dilanian, 2020). China's inclusion in the liberal world

order may have done more harm than good. For example, China may be competing with the US by launching a massive project that spans Asia, Africa, and Europe.

In 2013, China started a project known by many names, but we will refer to it as the BRI for simplification. The BRI is an immense initiative spanning over three continents to boost trade between the different countries and improve low socioeconomic countries' infrastructure. The project's scope is not limited to overland trade routes; trade is being encouraged through shipping lanes. The BRI project sets itself to be perceived as a good opportunity for all the participating countries, but the US is not the only one to view the BRI as an opportunity for China to spread its economic influence. The European Union (EU) shows concern about Chinese business strategy and investment in third-world countries. An official EU document says that Chinese investments contribute to many receiving economies (EU, 2020, p.4). Additionally, the EU document also adds that "Chinese investments frequently neglect socio-economic and financial sustainability" (EU, 2020). Moreover, the EU document discusses the possible adverse effects of Chinese investment in third-world countries, "Chinese investments in third world countries may result in high-level indebtedness and transfer of control over strategic assets and resources" (EU, 2020). This sort of debt-trap diplomacy that is being conducted by the PRC so these countries can afford these expensive projects may also be used to aid the PRC's agenda. Some believe that Beijing might curtail the activities of (or even assume control over) other states' critical infrastructure (ports, railways, and so on) to influence their policy or curtail enemy maneuvers in time of a major crisis (Drezner, Newman & Farrell, 2021, p.228).

The BRI is not the only project from China that challenges the LIO. China seeks to rival the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, institutions established by the US. In 2010, China petitioned to expand its power in the IMF and the World Bank (Layne, 2018).

China needed approval from these organizations, and although they agreed, approval was also required by the US Congress (Layne, 2018). Congress would not act until 2016; by then, China was frustrated and established a financial institution called the AIIB (Layne, 2018). The US protested AIIB's creation and urged its allies not to get involved because they perceived it as a threat. Their plea failed when the UK was the first country to become a member of the AIIB. After they joined China's newly built financial institution, many countries followed suit. According to Layne, "the AIIB is a direct challenge to the primacy of both of these Bretton Woods legacy institutions" (2018, p. 103).

Both the BRI and the AIIB are not the only actions taken by China that are worrisome. In conjunction with the AIIB, the BRI falls in line with the theory that the Chinese and their defined projects are designed to establish China's Yuan or renminbi as the third reserve currency in the world. China's motivations to establish the renminbi as a reserve currency may be a threat to US hegemony. There are only two forms of reserve currency: the dollar and the Euro. Experts are confident that the dollar's status as a reserve currency gives the US leverage for global economic matters because it allows the US to create rules for the international economic order (Layne, 2018, p. 93). Countries worldwide depend on the US to take specific actions when economic regression affects the international economy. The world's economic hegemony is responsible for boosting the international economy during downturns by purchasing other nations' goods, supplying liquidity for the global economy, and acting as the lender of last resort (Layne, 2018). There are also many countries, companies, and banks that use the dollar. Widespread use of American currency by various countries allows economic sanctions by the US to be extremely useful, especially for countries that engage in illegal activities, human rights violations, and those that support terrorist organizations. Many different banks, businesses, and countries avoid doing

business with countries with an economic sanction on them by the US. If the Renminbi becomes a reserve currency, the US's privileges, along with its economic standing in the world, may suffer. China uses other means of gaining influence globally rather than directly challenging the established US liberal order.

Thus, even before the BRI, China's attempts to build economic influence were growing; nevertheless, the BRI is on another scale entirely. It includes sixty nations in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, encompassing up to 70 percent of the global population and 55 percent of the world's GDP (Economy, 2019, p.191). The BRI will boost trade among the various countries involved and improve countries' infrastructure involved in the project. Chinese officials initially described the initiative as an infrastructure plan to connect China to other parts of the world through ports, railroads, highways, and energy infrastructure (Economy, 2019). The BRI also helps China with significant production overcapacity in steel, cement, and coal (Economy, 2019). Before the PRC undertook the BRI, the US proposed the New Silk Road Initiative. Elizabeth Economy (2019) views China's action to undertake this project as a direct action against the US:

It also served as a clear rebuttal to the United States, which, in 2011, had proposed its own New Silk Road initiative.

The Chinese vision quickly eclipsed its US counterpart, with commitments of tens of billions of dollars to the plan, compared with the \$15 million earmarked by the US administration (as a contribution to a larger World Bank project) (p.191).

Other than just developing ports, railroads, highways, and energy infrastructure, the BRI will connect countries in the project through other means. Countries in the project will also connect through telecommunications, culture, and the development of financial and free trade accords. Elizabeth Economy suggests that “this project will help China’s slowing economy by increasing its currency in global trade and investment” (2019, p.191). China’s currency in heavy circulation because of the BRI, helps the PRC circumvent their problem of trying to get the Renminbi as a third reserve currency. BRI’s development and China’s investments in energy and transit helps internationalize the renminbi while eroding US’ monetary dominance (Drezner, Farrell & Newman, 2021, p.299). Many countries have shown interest in the Chinese initiative and its promise of significant trade and investment opportunities (Economy, 2019, p.194). Theoretically, all the countries in the project will connect to China through trade, investment, culture, finance, and potentially even security (Economy, 2019, p.195). Even though China has received much praise for this project, and many countries are participating, some of China’s neighbors and allies are concerned with China being more involved in their region. While India fears China may use the BRI to engage in economic penetration or naval encirclement, Pakistan’s concern is the lack of transparency in negotiations, Chinese laborers taking jobs, and terms of repayment (Economy, 2019).

Competition Intensifies: The Xi Regime and the Trump Administration

The US began to take a tougher line with China under the Obama administration; yet, China has responded with more toughness of its own, and the Trump administration escalated competition further still. Current leadership actions of the CCP have been stricter than the previous regimes' leadership and more invasive. CCP leadership embraced a process of institutional change that seeks to reverse many of the political, social, and economic changes that emerged from thirty years of liberalizing reform (Economy, 2019, p.5). The current leadership is undoing all the institutional changes made by past leadership, reversing all the progress China has made domestically. Under the guidance of this current leadership, the PRC plans to change its plans for international relations. The Chinese have also shed the low-profile foreign policy advanced by Deng Xiaoping in favor of bold initiatives to reshape the global order (Economy, 2019). All the present changes can be attributable to the Chinese leadership of the CCP.

Currently, Xi Jinping has emerged as a singular, authoritarian leader of China and has implemented many changes domestically and internationally. Xi Jinping has accrued more power by leading the most important committees and commissions overseeing government policy (Economy, 2019). He demands loyalty from high-ranking military and party officials while eliminating political rivals through an anti-corruption campaign (Economy, 2019). Xi Jinping even adopted the moniker of “core” leader, signifying his ultimate authority within a traditionally collective leadership (Economy, 2019, p.11). What is also concerning is that Xi Jinping wants to challenge the international order—wanting China to have a more prominent role internationally, challenging US hegemony. Xi seeks a uniquely Chinese model he believes will become a standard for other countries disenchanted with the American and European models of democracy (Economy, 2019 p.12). Xi Jinping will use any means necessary to challenge the current world

order, except his primary tactic of increasing China's influence on the international stage is economic coercion. Countries should be wary of Chinese SOEs (CSOEs) due to the current leadership agenda and that CSOEs can execute economic coercion.

It is this context that Donald Trump ascended to the Presidency in 2016, making China a key campaign focus, resulting in increased competition between both countries. Trump launched a trade war to close the gap in the trade deficit with China, which he claimed was caused by unfair Chinese trading practices (Reporters, 2020, para. 6). With his proclamation about closing the trade deficit gap, Trump kept his promise to act, even though the trade deficit continues to grow larger. Now the US and China have engaged in a trade war where they imposed additional tariffs on goods imported from each other (Reporters, 2020). Additional tariffs on goods mean that buyers in the opposing country would need to pay higher import taxes to bring their purchases into the country (Reporters, 2020).

In addition to the trade war, Trump also put sanctions on the telecommunications company Huawei. The Trump administration banned suppliers from selling chips made using US technology to the firm without a special license (Horwitz & Jin, 2020, para. 2). Trump's ban has led to closing potential loopholes in its May sanctions that could have let Huawei access the tech via third parties (Horwitz & Jin, 2020). These sanctions could potentially cripple the telecommunications company and future business transactions. If Huawei cannot source chipsets due to the expanded curbs, its handset business will likely disappear (Horwitz & Jin, 2020, para. 6). Trump went further by signing the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), establishes a multifaceted US strategy to increase US security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region (Panda, 2019, para. 2). Like Obama, Trump seems to be curbing China's growing economic and military power in the region of Asia. Economically, ARIA will authorize \$1.5

billion in spending for a range of US programs in East and Southeast Asia (Panda, 2019, para. 3). Furthermore, ARIA will “develop a long-term strategic vision and a comprehensive, multifaceted, and principled US policy for the Indo-Pacific region” (Panda, 2019). This initiative also supports the countries in Asia to curb China’s aggressiveness in the South China Sea. ARIA devotes attention to the maritime commons in Asia and the South China Sea; it calls on the US to support the ASEAN nations as they adopt a code of conduct in the SCS with China (Panda, 2019, para. 10). Since the Cold War, the world has not seen a great power competition, where the US and the USSR vied for power. The “Cold War” was plagued with proxy wars, where both countries were trying to increase their influence. Both countries tried to achieve favorable geopolitical goals, undermining each other at every possible turn. In all of this increased competition, we see the role of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence as the geopolitical tools of choice China uses to undermine US interests.

What is Geoeconomics?

Geoeconomics is an alternative to military action, which is seen as costly and unpopular. Democracies are focused on welfare rather than glory, and they dislike high casualties (Nye, 2004, p.19). Non-democratic countries also see war as distasteful, but their motivation for avoiding conflict differs from those of democratic countries. Even non-democratic countries that feel fewer prevalent moral constraints on using force have to consider its effects on their economic objectives (Nye, 2004, p.20). For non-democratic countries, war risks deterring investors who control capital flows in a globalized economy (Nye, 2004). What kind of power is

gloeconomics precisely? Geoeconomics results in a power that can influence others' behavior to gain satisfactory outcomes (Nye, 2004, p.2). Although geoeconomics uses sanctions and can punish a country, it does not fit neatly into hard or soft power concepts. A country's hard power is based on coercion, primarily a function of its military or economic might (Walker & Ludwig, 2018). Coercion through economic may refer to sanctions, for example. Soft power refers to culture, political values, and foreign policies, according to Joseph Nye (2004, p.11).

Geoeconomics can more or less achieve the same geopolitical results as military action, allowing countries with decent economies or valuable resources to compete with the US since most countries do not boast the US's military capabilities. Nevertheless the US is not exempt from practicing geoeconomics in its own way; the US uses sanctions, aid, and many other tools to either encourage a country's action or dissuade it from its current course. Some examples of the US using its economic prowess to influence another country's decision-making are relevant in the cases of Iran and Brazil. In Iran's case, the US leveraged the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) against Iran; SWIFT deals with financial transactions and is used by most countries and companies worldwide. SWIFT sanctions were placed on Iran to encourage them to stop developing their nuclear weapons program. The US sanctions on Iran prevent Iran from using SWIFT for monetary means, significantly affecting Iran's economy. Another example of the US using geoeconomics in order to gain a favorable geopolitical outcome includes Brazil. In Brazil's case, the US offered Brazil billions of dollars to encourage the government not to choose Huawei as a telecommunications vendor. Indeed, the scenario with Brazil is similar to the UK's case. Thus, Geoeconomics is not used exclusively by countries like China and Russia; even the US uses its economy for its own gain.

Nevertheless, geoeconomics goes well beyond traditional economic sanctions or cultural and political sway. While economic sanctions solely punish a country, geoeconomics can be used to punish or reward a country; therefore, geoeconomics may be more akin to *sharp* power. Authoritarian influence efforts are "sharp" in the sense that they penetrate the political and information environments in targeted countries (Walker & Ludwig, 2018). Geoeconomics uses tools such as trade policy, investment policy, economic and financial sanctions, cyber, aid, financial and monetary policy, and energy and commodities (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.49). Geoeconomics is about controlling a particular commodity used to coerce or influence a country's policymaking, and is also related to the concept of 'weaponized interdependence' (Farrell & Newman, 2019). In 2019, Farrell and Newman released an academic article discussing the global supply chain's imbalances due to globalization. The term coined by Farrell and Newman to describe this imbalance and its use as a weapon of sorts is weaponized interdependence. Farrell and Newman wrote this about weaponized interdependence; "if states have appropriate domestic institutions, they can weaponize networks to gather information or choke off economic, and information flows, discover and exploit vulnerabilities, compel policy change, and deter unwanted actions" (2019, p.45). In essence, more powerful countries that control specific nodes in the global supply chain use these nodes as a weapon to help them attain specific geopolitical outcomes, similar to geoeconomics.

Circumstances allowing the reemergence of geoeconomics

Geoeconomics is a strategy that has been around for quite some time and is making a fierce comeback. According to Blackwill and Harris, "geoeconomics *reemerged* as a tool for countries to improve their geopolitical goals" (2017, p. 33-34, my emphasis). Blackwill and Harris do not compare geoeconomics to the neo-colonialism concept per se; however,

gloeconomics might have been something a developed nation might have exercised on an underdeveloped nation. Neo-colonialism is the control of less-developed countries by developed countries through indirect means (Halperin, 2020). Halperin's use of the word "indirect" refers to capitalistic means. Neocolonialism is understood as further development of capitalism that enables capitalist powers (both nations and corporations) to dominate subject nations through international capitalism (Halperin, 2020).

Geoeconomics can be understood as a modern version of neo-colonialism. As mentioned above, one strategy of neo-colonialism is when a developed country uses its economy or companies as a weapon of influence. According to *World Atlas*, one country was particularly guilty of practicing neo-colonialism even after its former colonies earned their freedom in the 20th century. While France granted independence to all of its African colonies, it continued to play an economic and political role in their internal affairs and would not hesitate in protecting its interests in these countries using unconventional ways (Kiprop, 2017, para. 3). In this sense, we could understand geoeconomics as a strategy of neo-colonialism, that is being used more effectively in today's world.

There are three specific conditions that have led to geoeconomics' resurgence. First, today's rising powers are increasingly drawn to economic instruments as their primary means of projecting influence and conducting geopolitical combat in the twenty-first century (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.33-34). The allure of geoeconomics is because many rising powers do not bolster a well-trained or technologically superior military. As the possibility of challenging the US grows remote, most countries seek to blunt the US' ability to exercise unilateral dominance in a given regional context (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.35). As a tool, geoeconomics gives countries the ability to challenge the US, so many countries resort to using it as a foreign policy tool.

A second-factor that geoeconomics owes its reemergence to is states having more resources at their disposal than ever before (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.36). Right now, the world has accumulated more wealth than any previous time in history; vast amounts of wealth allows governments more flexibility regarding how they intend to accomplish their geopolitical goals. The concentration of such wealth and large levers of economic influence in state hands offers governments new sources of power and foreign policy instruments (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

The final factor that has led to the re-emergence of geoeconomics is today's global markets. Today's global markets are "deeper, faster, more leveraged, and more integrated than ever before, today's global markets exert more influence over a nation's foreign policy choices and outcomes, compelling more attention to economic forces along the way" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.37). As a foreign policy tool, geoeconomics could become more prevalent in the future, and China is not the only country to use it for attaining geopolitical goals. The Russian Federation was also suspected of using geoeconomics against Ukraine after entertaining the idea of joining NATO and the EU. (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.46). Blackwill and Harris also propose that China and Russia use geoeconomics to prop up other authoritarian regimes. Russia and China rank as the most important business partners and financing sources for some of the world's most brutal autocrats, typically in ways that strengthen these regimes' domestic political strength (2017, p.46). Based on the evidence used from Russia and China, geoeconomics seems to be used by authoritarian regimes to prop each other up and achieve desirable geopolitical outcomes.

With geoeconomics used as a tool to attain favorable geopolitical outcomes, countries use geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence to compete with another country's competing interests. This competition between countries for increased influence worldwide can be linked to

the 'return' of great power competition, which encourages us to turn for theoretical and analytical insights from the I.R. theory of realism. The reemergence of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence cannot be discussed outside of the context of increased competition between the world's major powers. Like geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence, some circumstances allow realism to reemerge; this is why key concepts and theoretical aspects defines realism. More importantly, it discusses how realism is essential to this case study. Now we have established this context, let's show some evidential, pertinent examples of China's use of geoeconomics especially, in a range of examples that show the reach and sharp power China has.

Examples of China's Geoeconomic Power

We can see China's exercise of effective geoeconomics in several examples, namely North Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, and, I will argue, Italy. China practices geoeconomics in these countries for different reasons while using various tools for each one. The geoeconomic tools available to China are trade policy, investment policy, economic and financial sanctions, cyber, aid, financial and monetary policy, and energy and commodities (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.49).

- *North Korea*

China and North Korea have had close relations since the Korean war. UN militaries defeated the North Korean military and pushed them past the Yalu river into China. Since the UN militaries were close to the Korean and Chinese border, China intervened, which resulted in UN militaries being pushed to the 38th parallel. The war ended in a stalemate, with the 38th parallel being the border between North and South Korea. Since the Korean War, China has been an ally and avid supporter of North Korea, lending political and economic support to North

Korean leaders: Kim Il-sung (estimated 1948–1994), Kim Jong-il (roughly 1994–2011), and Kim Jong-un (Albert, 2019)

Although relations between the two countries have been amicable, there has recently been tension due to North Korea's developing nuclear weapons program. North Korea's developing nuclear program is problematic because China does not want the US's attention on Asia; moreover, China uses North Korea as a buffer state between itself and a key US ally, South Korea. If anything were to happen to North Korea's regime, China would lose an ally and possibly have the US military on its southern border. China uses geoeconomics in North Korea for a variety of beneficial reasons, including to modernize it, keep the economy afloat, and supply the country with food. China has moved beyond its long-standing reliance on economic aid to North Korea and toward a fuller battery of energy, trade and investment, and monetary tools to keep North Korea inline and prevent the US from intervening (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.94). In short, the Chinese geoeconomic policy toward North Korea supports an overarching geopolitical strategy of buffering against any intensified foreign presence in the region (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.103). It is theorized that China does have the ultimate goal of applying geoeconomics to North Korea. According to Blackwill and Harris (2017):

Ultimately, China's plans to expand trade investment and infrastructure around its North Korean border are at the core of a geopolitical strategy aimed at buffering against the US pivot to Asia and bolstering China's regional influence—strategic objectives that China's UN obligations are unlikely to change (p.106).

In North Korea's case, China uses geoeconomics to prop up North Korea as a country since it suffers from harsh sanctions. Moreover, it is clear that even though China is doing things that benefit North Korea, China has a clear objective in mind when doing so.

- *Taiwan*

China's use of geoeconomics with Taiwan reside in reuniting both countries following their broken relations due to the civil war that erupted between Nationalists (led by Chiang Kai-shek) and Communists (led by Mao Zedong) after WWII. The Chinese Civil War lasted from 1945 to 1949, resulting in the nationalists losing and relocating to Taiwan (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). Taiwan broke away from China in 1949 due to tension created through the Chinese Civil War, but China intended to reunite with the country. US relations are complex with both countries due to the US's different political parties and policies. Both US political parties recognize China as the singular sovereign nation under the One China Policy; still, the US comes to Taiwan's defense when there is an escalation between China and Taiwan. The US has sent the Navy's 7th fleet to the Taiwan Strait numerous times to ease tensions between China and Taiwan. Apart from the US defending Taiwan from China, the US also sells arms to Taiwan so that the country can defend itself in case China does attack. Nevertheless, Taiwan has never succumbed to China's military pressure, and China's tactic of trying to strong-arm Taiwan has failed.

Increasingly, China has been pressuring Taiwan through geoeconomics to politically and economically isolate Taiwan from the rest of the world. China does this by rewarding countries who deny Taiwan as an independent country while punishing those who still recognize it as an independent nation. China's leading asset manager has openly predicated investment on Taiwan's disavowal (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.56). Their use of geoeconomics to have

Taiwan disavowed as a country has proven effective with Costa Rica and has left Taiwan with only one formal ally in Africa, Swaziland (Watts, 2007, para. 1-2). An alternative geoeconomic tool was used to convince countries in Africa not to recognize Taiwan as a state independent of China. Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa likewise comes only on recognition of Beijing's one-China policy (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). The FDI in various African countries has convinced some countries to acknowledge the one-China policy. Within five years of China's first investments in Africa, the number of African states recognizing Taiwan fell from thirteen to only four (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). These are just a few examples of how the PRC uses geoeconomics against Taiwan.

There are consequences for recognizing Taiwan as an independent country as well. Beijing has begun hinting at a willingness to use sanctions against countries it views as engaging in measures that reinforce Taiwan's de facto independence status (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.96). Economic sanctions may not be the only consequence that China imposes on a country for recognizing Taiwan. One expert believes that China will take more extreme measures to ensure that countries are hesitant to acknowledge Taiwan. James Reilly, a China expert at the University of Sydney, believes that "possible future scenarios could include export, import, financial, or investment sanctions and the deliberate slowing or withholding of business (Reilly, 2012, p.125)."

Furthermore, there is a supposed strategy for forcing Taiwan back to China. Beijing is taking a two-prong approach, picking off Taiwan's remaining international allies (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Isolation seems to be China's strategy when it comes to applying pressure on Taiwan by using geoeconomics, forcing Taiwan to reunite with China by using means that are

not aggressive. China's use of geoeconomics on Taiwan is a long-term strategic objective that may or may not prove fruitful in the future.

- *Japan*

Japan and China have a complicated history because, during WWII, millions of Chinese lives were lost due to the Japanese Imperial Army's invasion. Additionally, relations were further strained between China and Japan during the Cold War, as the US reconstructed Japan after WWII to be democratic and an open free market economy. Since the US invested a lot in Japan and ensured it would not be influenced by communist ideology, Japan was a vital ally in Asia's Cold War. Japan was more of an economic than a security partner during the Cold War because Japan did not have a standing army; their US-inspired constitution prevented them from having one. (Schaller, 2010, p.156). Nevertheless, Japan was a pivot of US-led containment in East Asia (Schaller, 2010). In 1949, containment of communism was important with China's emergence as a communist country after the Chinese Civil War; as a newly emerged communist country, China naturally aligned with the USSR. Japan aligned with the US, and the US attempted to use Japan to prevent the spread of communism in Asia. Given the events that have happened in the past involving Japan and China, relations between them are rocky.

Relations would be strained once again between China and Japan, due to the US's pivot to Asia. China garnered the US's attention around 2008 because its growing military and economic power concerned the US. In a similar fashion to the Cold War, the US bolstered security in Asia by renewing and starting new alliances with different Asian countries. The intentions of the US making alliances was one of containment to curb China's growing power. One country that would be instrumental in curbing China's expanding power was Japan because it is the only country in Asia capable of being used as a counterbalance in the US's pivot to Asia.

Ever since the end of WWII, Japan has taken a neutral and peaceful approach to world affairs; its posture changed with the US's pivot to Asia. Japan has taken a more aggressive approach in curbing China's power, which is reflected in their 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines. The 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines introduce 'dynamic deterrence' as one of the Japanese forces' primary roles (Dian, 2013). The role of the Japanese Self Defense Role is defined in the 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (2013):

The Japanese Self Defense Forces should exercise dynamic deterrence through continuous steady-state ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance), information gathering, military exercises, and demonstration of operational effectiveness and readiness through actual military operations, such as international cooperation or disaster relief (P.9).

The newly defined role of the Japanese Self Defense Forces would be problematic for Japan and China's relations, stressing relations between both countries for two reasons. First, Japan's Self Defense Forces are taking an active role in deterring China from being aggressive in Asia. Second, the Japanese Imperial Army's transgressions towards China in the Second World War could make China apprehensive. After all, Japan and China are the most significant powers in Asia, with a complex fraught history. In addition to the Japanese Self Defense Force's new role, the close alliance Japan and the US share also seems problematic for China.

Post-Cold War, Japan was brought into the US' Asian hub and spokes security system. The US military remains based in Okinawa (Cha, 2017). The continued presence of the US military in Okinawa has increased tensions between China and Japan. Moreover, Japan recently

revoked an article in its constitution prohibiting Japan from having a standing army. Article nine in Japan's constitution was repealed, which does not bode well for relations between both countries. The article that Japan revoked allows Japan to have a standing army again, which China may perceive as a threat.

Nevertheless, the PRC uses geoeconomics on Japan in order to accomplish its geopolitical objectives. First, China is protecting its territorial claims to the Diaoyu/Senkaku island chain while also pressuring Japan geoeconomically to weaken the strength of Tokyo's alliance with Washington (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Territorial disputes between China and Japan have been over the Diaoyu/Senkaku island chain. Controversy over this island chain is due to potential oil and natural gas reserves, are near major shipping routes, and are surrounded by rich fishing areas (CFR, 2020). Beijing has used regulation of commodity trade flows to influence the Diaoyu/Senkaku territorial disputes. For example, in 2010, a Chinese fishing trawler crashed into Japanese coast guard boats, leading to the Chinese captain's arrest in Japan (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p. 107). It appears Japan wanted to detain and charge him for crashing into the two Japanese coast guard boats.

China was dissatisfied with the arrest and retaliated to free the captain of the fishing trawler halting shipments of rare earth oxides, salts, and metals to Japan, hurting Japan severely (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.107). The halting of rare natural resources affected Japan, because they could not manufacture electrical components required by US and European companies (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). China's geoeconomic move, one with significant implications for the global supply chain, ultimately contributed to Tokyo's decision to release the fishing captain (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.107). This would not be the only time China exercised

gloeconomics to gain an advantage over Japan; one tool that has proved beneficial is China's vast array of natural resources.

Scarce in natural resources, Japan has long been dependent on imported energy and raw materials (The World Factbook: Japan 2018). China has taken advantage of Japan's lack of natural resources and used it against them by enticing companies to relocate to China through territorial disputes. China used gloeconomics to convince Japan to relocate some of its companies to China in a separate incident. Nevertheless, the results from this outcome differed, and both countries benefitted. Japanese companies, such as Hitachi Metals and Toyota, relocated their plants to China because China offered a low-cost supply of rare earths in exchange for companies relocating their production centers and technology to China (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.107-108). Even though both countries profited from this gloeconomics use, China accomplished its goal of expanding its rare earths industry. Because of both companies' relocation to China, Beijing's strategic objective of growing its domestic rare earths industry was accomplished (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

- *Italy*

Aside from China practicing gloeconomics on countries within its sphere of influence, one western European country may also be susceptible to China's gloeconomics. Italy recently agreed on a business transaction with China concerning the BRI. Chinese investors signed twenty-nine separate deals amounting to \$2.8 billion worth of projects agreeing to invest in port infrastructure in Trieste, Genoa, and Palermo (Chatzky, 2019, para. 3). Italy is the only western European country to strike such a deal with China. As a result, Italy's signature marks a turning point—it is the first Group of Seven (G7) nations and the largest EU member to accept BRI funds (Chatzky, 2019). This agreement between both countries seems beneficial; business

investment from the Chinese boosts Italy's lagging economy while giving Chinese goods faster access to Europe (Chatzky, 2019). Although the business transaction seems like a good agreement, there is some skepticism about Italy's business transaction with China. The belief is that China intends to cause division among EU members (Macaes, 2019). With this division, “China intends to use it to its advantage by building strong bilateral economic relations with members and improving access to markets and technology without fearing repercussions from the US” (Macaes, 2019, para. 18). Chinese investment in Italy has drawn concern from some members of the Italian government. The now-former interior minister, Matteo Salvini, questioned the deal and successfully pushed for a watered-down version that limits Chinese involvement in telecommunications and other sensitive areas (Chatzky, 2019, para. 6). Chinese investment into specific sectors of a country has drawn concerns resulting in many European countries becoming increasingly worried about Chinese investment in critical sectors such as ports, energy, technology, and agriculture (Chatzky, 2019). Chinese investment into critical infrastructure should be concerning since China uses geoeconomics to gain favorable outcomes in other regions of the world.

4. Final Analysis: Application of the Competitive Context and Geoeconomic Concerns to the UK Case

This fourth section of the thesis will discuss three aspects, which are evidence of US competitive and geoeconomic concerns, final analysis, other factors and conclusion. The first section talks about how the US sees China and how the US must be ready to compete with it, including geoeconomic concerns. The final analysis ties the cumulative research provided in this thesis and presents new research to strengthen the overall argument. The other factors section mentions how the other variables this thesis covered may have played an indirect role in the UK's final decision. Conclusion sums up everything this thesis has done and talks about future areas of possible research.

Evidence of US Competitive and Geoeconomic Concerns

From the US perspective, the *House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence* has a 2012 report that looked into Huawei and ZTE. Careful analysis shows the findings from this investigative report concerned US policymakers. When conducting this investigation, US policymakers interviewed Huawei officials about their relationship with the CCP, wanting Huawei officials to prove that Huawei did not have close ties to the. Suffice to say, US policymakers felt that the documents provided by Huawei officials were forged. US policymakers believed that the Huawei officials were not honest about the company's relationship. As a result, these undisclosed sources with knowledge about Huawei's relationship with the CCP claimed that Huawei officials were not honest when answering US policymakers' questions about Huawei and the CCP's relationship.

As opposed to, *purely* discussing the accurate scale of Huawei's cyberthreat, official documents from the US and EU give wider contextual but deeply relevant dynamics about the

competition between the US and China. For example, the *2017 National Security Strategy* was a document from the Trump administration, discussing the current national security concerns that the US faces globally. The *2017 NSS* talks about the main problems that the US faces and how the US plans to counter these different national security concerns in different parts of the world, with China being a primary concern. The *White House: United States Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China* report discusses China's military, BRI project, economic capabilities, and many other related topics. Although this report helped give the researcher insight into the White Houses' thoughts on China, the most valuable part was the section about economic coercion. According to the White House report, economic coercion is something the PRC employs to advance its objectives during periods of political tensions with other countries (White House, 2020, p.17). Economic coercion may be a different term; yet, the White House report gives examples about economic coercion very similar to geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence.

Another helpful report was a DoS report, which covered essential topics such as Hong Kong, human rights violations against the Uighurs, the BRI project, and predatory economic practices. This report provided helpful insight into DoS's thoughts on China and its actions. One report that was also helpful, but from a different perspective, was the *EU-China Strategic Outlook: Commission and HR/VP contribution to the European Council*. Essentially, this EU report talked about working together with China and being cognizant of some of China's questionable practices. These questionable practices revolved around the BRI and how some countries could not afford the massive projects China is building.

Additionally, *2017 NSS* talks about how the former administration would deal with these concerns during his term. Many threats are mentioned in this national security strategy, such as

Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, terrorism, and other threats. Out of all the threats mentioned, this strategy explicitly says that great power competition is reemerging; the country engaged in a great power competition with the US is China. China is also discussed throughout the document frequently. There is an array of topics and regions that this strategy covers, discussing how it plans to deal with all these threats and how it will help the various regions of the world with specific problems.

The NSS assertions are underlined in the *2020 House Intelligence Committee report*, and this report was developed by asking various professionals in the IC about developing threats. Out of all the threats that the US faces daily, most professionals believe that China is the most prominent threat the US will have to contend with in the future. There are three key takeaways from this document when it comes to the US being able to compete with China effectively. First, many within the IC believe that the US needs to adapt its strategy to compete with China; the US has solely concentrated on battling terrorism for the last decade or so. Many within the IC feel that they need to change their strategy to compete with a nation-state like China. Second, the US needs a better understanding of how China possibly thinks, so the US can have an effective strategy and understand what China hopes to accomplish. Finally, the document states that if the US fails to allocate resources and change its focus to China, the future may belong to China, which is crucial because it displays the urgency that professionals in the IC feel towards China. Professionals in the IC feel that China poses a credible threat and that the IC must prepare to contend with China to compete with it. If the IC fails to adapt to the new threat, the future will belong to China and US values, influence, and power will be nonexistent. The *2020 House Intelligence Committee report* displays a need for escalation in competition on behalf of the US with China.

Final analysis

The UK-Huawei case was just a small piece of a much larger jigsaw puzzle. From my perspective, there is something much more significant that is going on in international relations today than the US nitpicking at what telecommunications vendor the UK chose for 5G. From everything I have gathered from researching Huawei for this case study, I believe that the UK made a reasonable choice when it chose Huawei for a 5G vendor. Huawei was affordable, technologically superior in 5G equipment, and the UK was familiar with the company; plus, the UK took many precautions when utilizing Huawei's devices and services. In tandem, the UK and Huawei created an oversight board comprised of former GCHQ members to certify that none of Huawei devices or services posed a threat to the UK's critical infrastructure. This oversight board operated for five years or so and not once found a glaring issue that they declared would be an imminent threat to the UK's national security. All the issues they make known to the public in their reports are minor issues that can be easily remedied. Before the UK decided to null its deal with Huawei, the UK government launched an official investigation to see if Huawei posed a threat in 2013. It is safe to assume that this official investigation did not yield anything significant, given that Huawei would operate for another seven years in the UK. On top of all the precautions the UK took, there is still the GCHQ. The GCHQ specializes in cybersecurity and SIGINT, and I strongly feel that they also kept a watchful eye on Huawei to safeguard the UK from Huawei giving any valuable information to the PRC. I can confidently say that the UK took every precaution necessary, and their cybersecurity abilities are equal to the US's. Huawei also tried defending itself and acquiescing to the US's demands in order to calm US doubts.

Huawei has not stood idly by as US accusations have led to sanctions and being banned from multiple networks worldwide; Huawei's Chief Security Officer in the US is trying to refute

the accusations made by the US. Now even though Huawei's chief security officer in the US is defending Huawei, one must not forget that he works for the telecommunications company, and everything he says should be met with healthy skepticism. Andy Purdy has been the Chief security officer for Huawei since 2012, and oversees Huawei USA's cybersecurity assurance strategy and system and supports the global security system adopted by all the company's business groups and departments (The Open Group). Before working for Huawei, Purdy worked in different positions in the US; his hire was meant to ease US policymakers' minds because he has extensive cybersecurity knowledge and is a US citizen.

Mr. Purdy has been in numerous interviews and has brought up some excellent points about Huawei's heavy scrutinization by the US. He claims that Huawei is the most scrutinized company globally and that backdoors were found since Huawei equipment was torn apart in search of vulnerabilities (Doffman, 2019). He acknowledges the fact that there were some vulnerabilities found in Huawei's equipment and that he was glad that these vulnerabilities were discovered. We have found some important things to fix, which is a good thing (Doffman, 2019). Moreover, the next issue that Mr. Purdy alludes to is the backdoors that the US was concerned about when the UK-Huawei 5G business deal seemed to be a done deal. Backdoors being embedded in Huawei's equipment in order for Chinese intelligence services to steal vital information was the basis for US apprehensions. Purdy stated that testing for backdoors was already happening when it came to Huawei products, and already takes place in the UK and Canada (Doffman, 2019). Purdy must be referring to the special oversight board that the UK uses to guarantee that Huawei products do not pose a national security risk to the UK's infrastructure

The next portion of Purdy's argument is that Huawei has a clean security track record and that Huawei has never had glaring cybersecurity issues. Firstly, Huawei's spotless track record is

discussed by Mr. Purdy and another representative of Huawei. The other employee declared that "in Huawei's thirty years of proven security track record, we never had a single incident related to security" (Doffman, 2019). This representative from Huawei, who is defending them, transitions from Huawei's impeccable security track record to one of Huawei's competitors and sheds some light on the competitor's recent cybersecurity issue. She mentioned in the Forbes interview, "not too long ago, one of our competitors had a major incident causing the network to go down in several countries" (Doffman, 2019). At this moment, she is referring to Ericsson, another company that also has 5G capabilities. Ericsson had a "global network issue" in which Ericsson's software failed, causing millions of customers worldwide to lose service, including on UK network O2, part of Telefonica (Doffman, 2019).

All the points that Purdy and the other Huawei employee have made are compelling. Why is Huawei the most scrutinized telecommunications company globally, especially when Ericsson had a global network issue worldwide? If Huawei's problem is cybersecurity, how come Ericsson was not heavily criticized for a worldwide network issue? After all, I am confident that a global network issue can be considered a cybersecurity concern; furthermore, Ericsson continues to operate in the UK, while the UK decided to terminate its 5G contract with Huawei. It is interesting to wonder if other telecommunications companies' products would also have problems if they were closely monitored like Huawei. Another interesting point to Mr. Purdy's comments is how Huawei is willing to meet US officials to ease their minds and for Huawei to be allowed to operate in the US as a telecommunications company.

Concluding the interview, Mr. Purdy offers to meet with US officials to ease their apprehensions about Huawei and possibly allow Huawei to operate in the US. Purdy adds that

Huawei would like to have open discussions with US policymakers in order to allow Huawei to operate (2019):

We want to talk with the US government about proven mechanisms to address risk, so, for example, Nokia and Ericsson operate in the United States under national security agreements, which are essentially risk mitigation agreements. We want to talk to the US about entering into a risk mitigation agreement that would allow us to do business in the US" (Doffman).

In this final part of Purdy's argument, he suggests that Huawei and US policymakers hold an open discussion with one another; this proposed discussion would probably focus on how Huawei could ease the minds of policymakers in the US. He brings up a good point in this part of the argument stating, "we want to talk to the US about entering into a risk mitigation agreement that would allow us to do business in the US" (Doffman, 2019). Huawei is prepared to meet the US's standards for telecommunications companies to conduct business in the US. Why has the US not held open discussions with Huawei to inform them how they could improve their cybersecurity? Is the issue actually cybersecurity, or is there something more to this predicament? One would be under the impression that Purdy might believe that there is something else going on here, other than concern about Huawei's cybersecurity. Huawei Chief Security Officer Andy Purdy said he believes the United Kingdom's decision was not related to US officials' claims that Huawei is linked to the Chinese government (Duffy, 2020). Mr. Purdy indicates Huawei is in the middle of something going on between the PRC and the US government. Trying to hurt China by hurting Huawei is unjustified and the US and China need to

start having talks. Despite their vast differences, some significant issues in the world need to be addressed by those two governments (Duffy, 2020). Huawei would go even further than rebutting US allegations towards them, and offered to take action to appease US demands.

Huawei announced its commitment to Network Equipment Security Assurance Scheme (NESAS). Two organizations, GSMA and 3GPP, developed NESAS. GSMA and 3GPP jointly developed NESAS, the global system for mobile communications association and industry group for technical specifications (Huawei, 2020). NESAS is an industry-wide security assurance framework to facilitate improvements in security levels across the mobile industry (Huawei, 2020). This scheme will set the mobile industry's basic security standards, which each telecommunications company must meet. NESAS defines security requirements and an assessment framework for secure product development and product lifecycle processes, as well as security test cases for the security evaluation of network equipment (GSMA, 2020, P.3). With NESAS, two objectives will be accomplished; the first is the transparency that vendors must demonstrate; the second is that NESAS will choose the security testing facility. NESAS will give mobile network operators visibility over equipment vendors' security capabilities before purchase and reduce the operators' security testing efforts, as testing is outsourced to accredited security test laboratories that meet the NESAS requirements (Huawei, 2020). Not only does NESAS benefit mobile network operators, but also equipment vendors. In turn, Equipment vendors can use NESAS to evidence how security is integrated into their design, development, implementation, and maintenance processes and demonstrate compliance with security requirements to various stakeholders (Huawei, 2020). It seems that Huawei's commitment to NESAS will be beneficial and prove that their network does not pose a cybersecurity risk. Huawei believes that an effective and transparent R&D process and security standards will

overcome many cybersecurity challenges, reducing all risks to an acceptable level (Huawei, 2020). Purdy's comments and Huawei's willingness to meet US cybersecurity standards are intriguing; at the very least, it seems that something bigger is going on, as Mr. Purdy has hinted at. What is more thought-provoking is that two other US allies are in the same predicament as the UK; yet, the US has not pressured them like the US did to the UK.

An ally of the US who is considering Huawei as a 5G vendor is Germany. The German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* reported that "America no longer requires Germany to ban China's Huawei Group when 5G is introduced," and is "highly satisfied" with the security arrangements proposed by Germany's Federal Network Agency (Doffman, 2019). The US allowing Germany to use Huawei as a 5G vendor is significant because it means the US has confidence in the country's cyber security capabilities. In other words, the US has more trust in Germany's Federal Network Agency when the US works exclusively with the UK's GCHQ when it comes to cybersecurity or SIGINT. Also, the US did not publicly shame Germany, as severely as the UK, for considering Huawei as a 5G vendor. To be clear, Germany has not yet decided to this exact date about who will build their 5G infrastructure, but Huawei is still in consideration.

The other US ally that is having Huawei build and operate its 5G infrastructure is South Korea. South Korea is an ally of the US who has ignored the US's pressure about Huawei.

Patrick Tucker articulates this about South Korea resisting US pressure:

As of mid-October 2020, the Korean government continued to resist US pressure to remove Huawei equipment from its networks, repeating the similar messaging from several

months earlier. Korea's three major telecoms operators had dismissed the exclusion of Huawei from 5G networks in May (p.26).

Huawei is still building South Korea's 5G infrastructure despite the UK and many other countries deeming it a threat and sanctions placed on Huawei by the US. South Korea did yield to US wishes in that they agreed not to have Huawei equipment involved in communications with United States Forces Korea. This means that any communications between South Korea and US military forces will not have any Huawei equipment involved in it. Additionally, some other countries searching for a 5G vendor still consider Huawei a viable option, countries such as Germany, France, and Brazil. Despite accusations and possible threats to cybersecurity, Huawei continues to get contracts from countries around the world for 5G. One daunting question that must be asked is why did the US not publicly criticize South Korea's decision to use Huawei as a 5G vendor?

I believe that the US did not publicly criticize South Korea's decision because it is not a key ally like the UK. The US was also concerned about all the actions China has conducted to increase its power and influence globally. China will pursue its objectives using all elements of national power including to coordinate military, economic informational, social and political tools in the pursuit of its objectives (Denmark, 2020, p. 45-46). China's form of government allows it to focus all its resources on any objective it intends to achieve without being reprimanded for its actions domestically while internationally, few countries are willing to reprimand China. Moreover, out of all the geopolitical tools at its disposal, China prefers economic coercion as its primary geopolitical tool, using geoeconomics and weaponized

interdependence. Geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence are heavily favored by China since military force is costly, unpopular, and geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence can achieve results similar to military force at a lesser cost.

China's usage of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence in places like North Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Italy must have worried US officials. Plus, SOEs have close ties to the CCP and are tasked with carrying out party objectives must have also factored into US anxieties. If Huawei had built the UK's 5G infrastructure, they might have used geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence on the UK, specifically the choke point and panopticon effects. The panopticon effect gives the CCP the ability to gather information on adversaries and allies via Huawei (Drezner, Farrell, & Newman, 2021). Concerning the choke point effect, Huawei's telecommunications network may not work at any given moment (Drezner, Farrell, & Newman, 2021). These scenarios have been written in Farrell and Newman's book "The Uses and Abuses of Weaponized Interdependence." Pertaining to the panopticon effect, the possibility of China gathering massive amounts of data on foreign countries would be problematic.

The PRC could use the panopticon effect by putting a backdoor in Huawei's 5G network because there is evidence to indicate that Huawei and its employees have close ties to the CCP. Thus, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Huawei builds a 5G network with a possible backdoor installed and ready for Chinese intelligence services to use to siphon information from any targeted country that uses Huawei's services. Furthermore, with such a backdoor, there is no limit to what kind of information Chinese intelligence services gather, ranging from military, business, or individual data. With Huawei having multiple contracts worldwide, they can do the same thing the US did when the NSA created the PRISM. Under the PRISM program, the US government had substantial legal authority to compel the production of records and information

regarding non-US individuals from technology companies (Farrell & Newman, 2019, p. 72).

Moreover, since Huawei is an SOE and the way China's legal system works, the CCP would not need to jump through any legal hurdles to gather any kind of information. Besides the panopticon effect, the PRC could have used the choke point effect in conjunction with the panopticon effect.

The PRC could have used 5G telecommunications as a stranglehold on any country that Huawei is instrumental in building its 5G infrastructure. If the PRC had an issue with another country that uses Huawei's 5G services, this other country might experience its 5G network working poorly. Huawei's 5G working poorly means that 5G services may work extremely slow or even be down altogether. Huawei's telecommunications services working improperly due to PRC interference would not be unheard of since this sort of action has been performed before in history. Leading up to World War I (WWI), Great Britain was an industry leader when it came to telecommunications; many countries relied on Great Britain for its telecommunications services. Subsequently, when WWI broke out, one of the countries that relied on Great Britain for telecommunications was Germany. Britain's "information hegemony" allowed it to cut Germany off from all global telecommunications in WWI, which forced Berlin to route traffic over British-owned lines susceptible to British monitoring, later proving decisive in Germany's defeat (Doshi & McGuinness, 2021, para. 5). Both the panopticon and choke point are two ways that the PRC may have utilized Huawei once Huawei is embedded in another countries' critical infrastructure. Both effects would allow the PRC to practice weaponized interdependence and geoeconomics, using Huawei as a conduit for economic coercion.

There are possible threats Huawei may have posed to the UK's critical infrastructure had they been allowed to build it. Nevertheless, with all the security cautions the UK took, it seems the UK was relatively safe. Plus, the UK is not the only country that decided to use Huawei as a

5G vendor; however, it was the most publicly criticized by the US. In addition, the UK eventually reversed its deal with Huawei, saying that Huawei poses a threat. With these variables, I believe that the US was concerned about something more than cybersecurity. US concerns were over a great power competition heating up between China and the US, Huawei was just caught in the middle of this competition. The great power competition is evident throughout this paper with the CCP's rhetoric and actions in international relations.

A great power competition in the 21st century will be different compared to ones in the past. Denmark wrote this about geopolitical competition in the twenty-first century it is far more complex with the spread of nuclear weapons and the interlinkage of national economies, considerably raising the potential costs of outright conflict between major powers (2020, p. 74). Due to the complexities of geopolitical competition, Denmark further elaborates about traditional military power that was a staple during the Cold War. As a result of these complex dynamics, military power is no longer the only relevant measurement of national power (Denmark, 2020, P. 75). Hence, there are other ways for countries to conduct competition in the 21st century, which according to Patrick Tucker is through technology. Geopolitical competition in the twenty-first century has centered on technological dominance; with technology, China intends to raise the technological prowess of the Chinese domestic industry and aims to increase its political reach (Tucker, 2021, p.9-10). Since a great power competition is occurring between the US and China, and it is a competition that the world has not experienced before, it seems like the UK-Huawei deal was a part of the competition. US apprehensions were over the possibility of the US losing a vital ally that it would need to stop China from reforming the LIO and posing a threat to US hegemony. Knowing that a united transatlantic alliance would provide great advantages to the

US and allies and partners in the struggle over the LIO, the PRC wields its economic power to divide Europe and the UK from the US (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2020, p. 21).

In conclusion, there is a great power competition happening between China and the US right now; China intends to change the LIO to fit its political agendas. China aims to change the LIO by accepting norms that align with its interests while disregarding others that do not. The only object in the way of China's ascent and its ability to change the world is the US; this is why the PRC uses all means available to achieve geopolitical goals that it favors. Since war is no longer an acceptable means of a state increasing its influence and power, China resorts to geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence. Thus, US pressures on the UK over the Huawei deal was not just about weaponized interdependence and geoeconomics; but also, about a great power competition between the US and China.

5. Other Factors

The research clearly states that the other variables that were not the deciding factor when it came to the UK making its final decision on Huawei, but they may have added to the decision. The first thing that will be addressed in this section is the secondary question "why did the UK make the final decision to terminate its 5G contract with Huawei, and how much did US pressure relate to this decision?" One cannot say for certain why the UK decided to terminate its contract with Huawei. In the course of conducting research for this thesis, I did not find any government documents or news articles that alluded to the UK's ultimate decision on the matter.

Nevertheless, I genuinely believe that the UK decided against going through with its business transaction because of mounting US pressure. There are two main reasons why I believe that US pressure played a prominent role in the UK's final decision to cancel the Huawei 5G deal. First,

the Trump administration publicly denounced the UK's deal and even expressed feelings of betrayal from its closest ally. For quite some time, the news was primarily occupied by the UK's deal and how the past US administration viewed the deal, which was highly negative on the US's part. The pressure went even further as some members of the US government expressed withholding intelligence with countries that use Huawei's 5G. The US threatening not to share intelligence might have worried the UK because both countries work closely together on intelligence-related matters. Second, and most importantly, the US talked about possibly placing sanctions on Huawei. Eventually, the US placed sanctions on Huawei, seen by many who have knowledge of telecommunications as a devastating blow. The sanctions were devastating because the US prevented US companies or companies that use US machinery to make semiconductors from selling semiconductors to Huawei. Semiconductors are vital to Huawei's electronics, and without these semiconductors, Huawei's future business deals will suffer without them. Additionally, there is the belief that China may try and create its own semiconductors, which may take years to develop. So I believe that pressure from the Trump administration, the threat of sanctions and sanctions being placed on Huawei discouraged the UK from doing further business with Huawei.

Next, each explanatory question will be discussed, beginning with, "why did the US state concern about cyber vulnerabilities but the UK initially did not?" As has been stated numerous times through out this thesis, my impression of this scenario is that the US really was not overly concerned about cyber vulnerabilities, but rather China using Huawei to execute geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence. If there were concerns about cyber vulnerabilities it is because China is suspected of committing cyber-attacks and cyber espionage on a large scale. When it came to the UK not being worried about cyber vulnerabilities, they took many precautions to

ensure that the risk of cyber vulnerabilities with Huawei were minimized. They minimized this risk by having an oversight committee working with Huawei to ensure their products did not pose a risk to the UK's infrastructure. Also, the UK's defense against cybersecurity should be comparable to the US's. My belief is that the UK did everything to protect itself from cyber vulnerabilities when it came to Huawei; therefore, they were not worried about Huawei posing a cybersecurity risk.

As for US domestic political factors, I believe they played a role in how much pressure was applied to the UK. Furthermore, my belief is that Trump did want to take a tough stance on China to improve his chances for re-election. However, I think the events that happened with the US, UK, and Huawei go beyond just US domestic politics. Many government reports from different US government agencies depict China, its growing capabilities, and actions in international affairs as a threat to US interests. Thus, I am not under the impression that US domestic politics was solely responsible for the events that took place. China is seen as a credible threat that worries many US government agencies. In addition, the current Biden administration is also taking a firm stance on China and Huawei. Essentially, the current administration adopted many of Trump's policies towards China and Huawei. Biden's actions lead me to believe that the issue with China and Huawei goes beyond US domestic politics.

The final question that I asked in this thesis is if some other factors may have influenced the UK's decision. The other factors that I mention are the UK being concerned about China's geopolitical direction, Covid-19, and Hong Kong, among other human rights abuses. I did not read UK government reports about the UK's feelings towards China's geopolitical direction. Most of the UK government reports that I did read discussed Huawei and Hong Kong. However, from what I read from UK reports, it did not seem that the UK was overly concerned about

China's geopolitical direction. Covid and Hong Kong may have factored into the UK's ultimate decision, helping them make the decision easier, but they were not the deciding factors.

All these other variables may have played a role in the UK's decision to cut ties with Huawei and make it seem as if the UK was cutting ties with Huawei for others reasons. This means that these other variables were not the source of the UK's decision; instead, they added to what was already happening, convincing UK policymakers to cut ties with Huawei.

Conclusion

The UK-Huawei case is definitely an intriguing event that recently occurred, and, as this thesis strongly indicates, there are more significant implications surrounding this case. Those more significant implications are that this one case clearly indicates a geopolitical competition between the US and China. This is not to say that US concerns over cyberespionage were not justified, just that the US was more apprehensive about something much more significant than cyber espionage. The more considerable worries stem around China's rhetoric about the US and its actions in international relations. Part of those actions in international relations includes China creating multilateral organizations and projects that the US was not even invited to most of them.

Additionally, China's action in international relations includes its usage of geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence. As this thesis has argued, geoeconomics and weaponized interdependence worried the US about the UK-Huawei deal, forcing the US to pressure the UK to reverse its 5G deal with Huawei. The significance of this case may give insight into the escalating geopolitical competition between the US and China, needing further research on the topic.

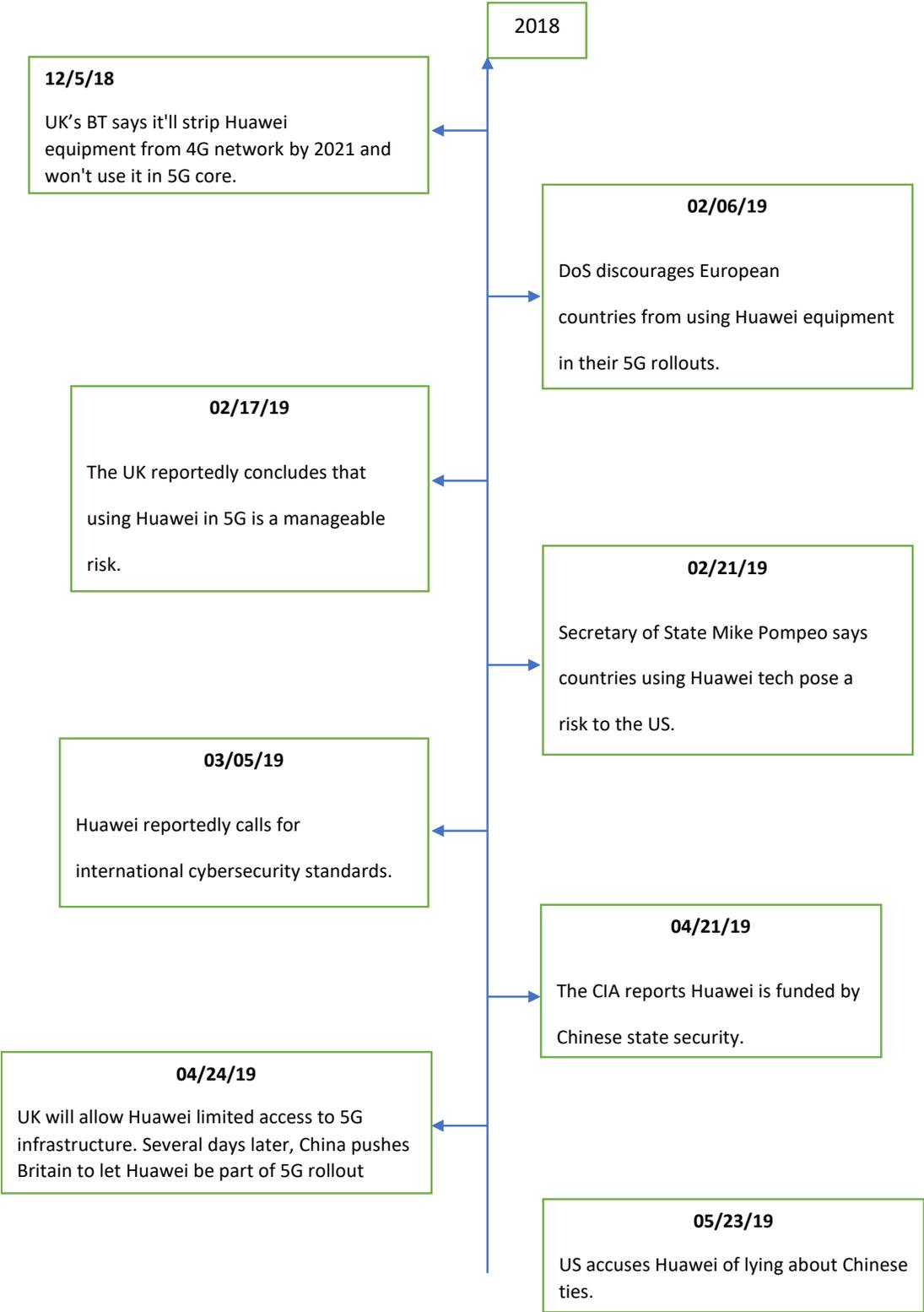
Some other factors that need to be researched in the future are countries contemplating Huawei as a 5G vendor, such as France, Germany, and Brazil. What must be researched with these different countries is whether or not the US will apply pressure to these countries like the US did with the UK. Furthermore, another area of research that must be delved deeper into is the UK's decision-making when it came to, as this is an essential part of the event. Another thought-provoking area is if the US used weaponized interdependence to convince countries not to use Huawei as a 5G vendor.

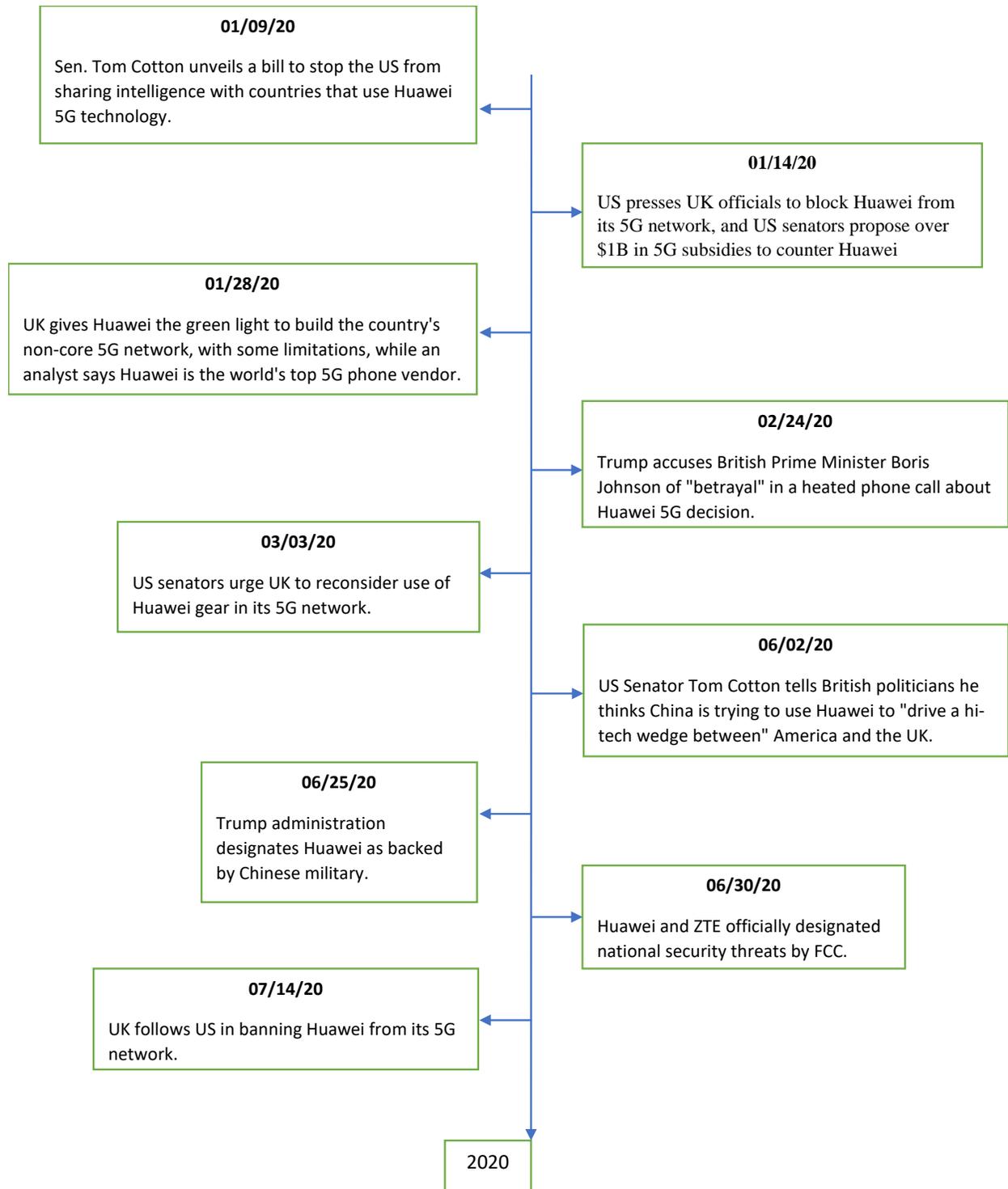
Some other areas of research that this thesis needs to expand on are the relationship between UK policymakers and those who work in UK intelligence agencies and whether or not the US had another possible reason to discourage the UK from its initial business transaction. Regard the UK's policymakers and intelligence agencies, it will be interesting to see whether they both agree on the decision to cut ties with Huawei? It is possible that they both felt differently about Huawei and the threat that it may have posed. For other motivations that the US was concerned about Huawei, they may have been anxious because Huawei may have made it more difficult for the US to spy on the UK. The prospect of the US being worried about this issue is extremely interesting and would make for some intriguing future research.

Finally, some countries are allowing Huawei to build its 5G infrastructure regardless of sanctions and condemnation by the US. One thing that must be researched is that the countries that allowed Huawei to build their 5G infrastructure will they experience more cyberattacks as the US assumed or not? All these areas of research are other areas that must be looked further into to get a better picture.

Annex A: Timeline of Events

Time line of events





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Curriculum Vita

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