

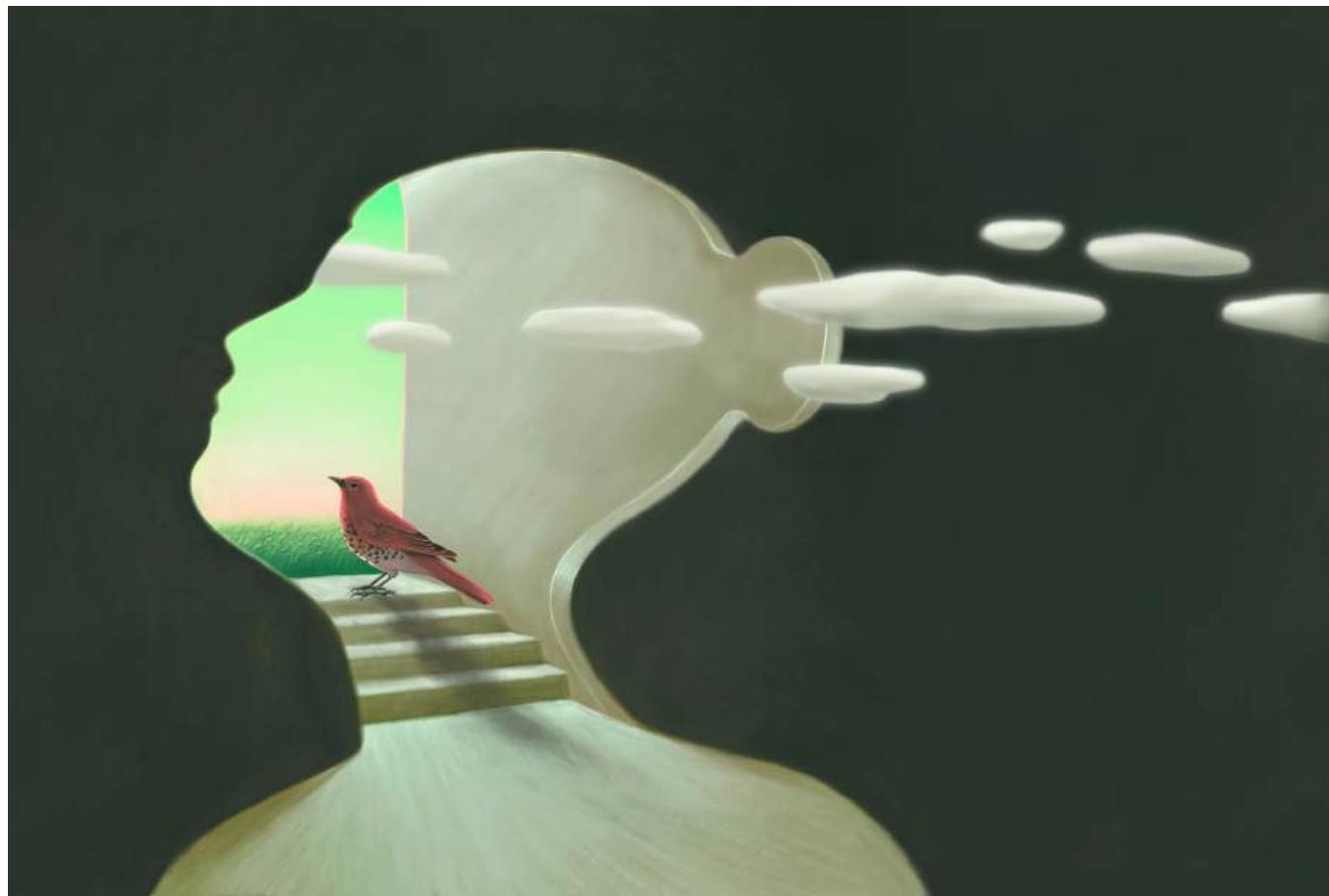
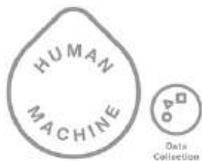
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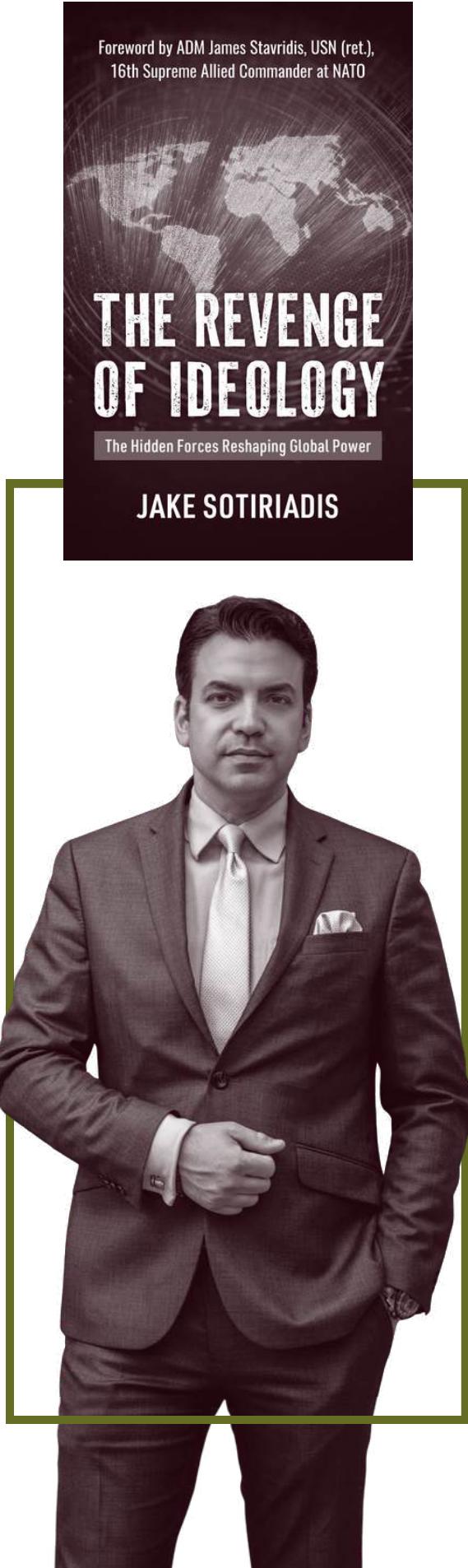
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THE REVENGE OF IDEOLOGY:

Why the World of Belief Will Shape What Comes Next

By Dr. Lavonne Leong





In the 1990s and even well into the 2000s, it was fashionable to imagine, with the fall of the Soviet Union, that the world might be at what historian Francis Fukuyama called “the end of history.” This represented a moment in time that the Western neoliberal democratic project had, through the meritocratic workings of history, anointed as the “Best Way,” a political process shifting toward a post-ideological final form of world government.

We all know how that’s turning out.

And yet, we are still somewhat stuck with a post-ideological framework, which explains national behavior through a lens of self-interest and markets, and interprets ideology as a decorative front to make self-interest palatable to the masses. Through the lens of post-ideology, the actions of many or even most of today’s politicians and world leaders can seem chaotic and unintelligible, or even insane. *Why would they do that?* When you stop being able to read the world, maybe it’s time for some new glasses.

Jake Sotiriadis’s new book, *The Revenge of Ideology: The Hidden Forces Reshaping Global Power*, offers a novel lens on our ever-changing geopolitical landscape. He provides a timely reminder that the course of human events is not determined by material and quantifiable capacities alone, but by the myths and stories that groups, nations, and cultures believe are the keys to their destiny. History, rude as ever, keeps running on stories and feelings – and the market-driven tenets of neoliberal democracy comprise just one more belief system.

Sotiriadis arrives to the subject with credentials both practical and theoretical. A career U.S. Air Force intelligence officer, he founded the Pentagon’s Strategic Foresight team and established the Center for Futures Intelligence at the National Intelligence University. Sotiriadis has advised leaders of all stripes. He also holds a Ph.D. in political science focused on geopolitical futures from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

That dual identity – operational strategist and scholar – shapes the texture of his new book, with lived experience under the theoretical scaffolding.

The central argument of *The Revenge of Ideology* is simple, and overdue: the West convinced itself that ideology died with the Cold War, leaving rational self-interest and markets as the dominant drivers of state behavior. But ideology – a word that carries a tinge of early 20th century dust – didn't die when the Cold War ended. Instead, it mutated, distributing itself through networks of identity, religion, nostalgia, and technology, transforming into new forms strong enough to reorder alliances and justify sacrifice to preserve a dreamed identity.

As Sotiriadis puts it: "Ideology is not merely abstract belief but a material force capable of reshaping how entire societies understand reality."

Ideology constructs reality. It tells nations what "winning" looks like, and provides emotional logic where spreadsheets fail. Sotiriadis introduces the concept of "Ideological Power Networks" (IPNs): systems of belief supported by institutions and narratives, self-reinforcing, self-justifying, and giving rise to new orders. This is ideology not as an afterthought, but a "response to modernity" that weaves itself into a material reality, a foundational and organizational framework from which all else issues. To anyone raised on linear models of geopolitics, this is an epistemological challenge.

Much of the book's power lies in its comparative evidence. Sotiriadis walks the reader through the recent histories of IPNs in Russia, China, and Turkey, with revelatory and unsettling conclusions.



- **Russia** becomes comprehensible not as an expanding autocracy, but as a civilization in the middle of a religious-imperial resurrection. The invasion of Ukraine, viewed through that lens, is not a failure of rational thinking or a dangerously deluded existential risk, but the reification of a different rational system.
- **China** is reframed as an ideological hybrid – Marxist in vocabulary, Confucian in hierarchy, nationalist in aspiration. In this reading, China does not merely want power; it seeks to demonstrate the moral superiority of its managed civilizational model over Western neoliberal disorder.
- **Turkey** under Erdogan pivots away from the clubby West to refocus on its historical sphere of influence, redefining itself as a Neo-Ottoman civilization – an ideological engine that explains its strategic defiance of NATO not as mystifying inconsistency, but as reinforcement of identity.

The lesson: failures of foresight happen not because analysts lack data, but because the wrong variables are labeled as noise.



Sotiriadis then turns to Western democracies, coining the phrase “hegemonic narcissism” to describe the West’s own insistence on ideological neutrality, or the belief that liberal rationalism is not a worldview, but *the* worldview. In his retelling, post-Cold War triumphalism produced a blindness that explains, in retrospect, why many analysts were “surprised” by populist movements, radicalization, or the endurance of authoritarian mythologies.

To anyone who lives or works outside the West, this point may be a big “well, *duh*” – but to those who live within the West’s formerly all-embracing reach, this is a wake-up call. Every creator of scenarios has a limited imagination, and ideology (even if we can see it, but especially if we cannot) defines the boundaries of what we consider possible and preferable. Sotiriadis makes clear that geopolitical futures scenarios constructed without ideology in mind don’t have the whole picture.

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The book has the urgency of a field report from the future, and the author writes like someone who has not only watched countries ignore signals until they bleed, but has been personally affected by the blast radius; the book is dedicated in part to a friend who was killed while deployed to Iraq.

The Revenge of Ideology pushes the field of futures and foresight toward cultural intelligence and emotional logic, asserting that if futurists and strategists truly want to anticipate geopolitical or holistic futures, they must decode belief systems with the same rigor they apply to technology and economics. Ideology is not atavistic noise; it manifests as infrastructure. IPNs, writes Sotiriadis, “don’t merely persuade; they configure the choices people can make, and the futures organizations can imagine.”

Using the lens of IPNs also renders the surreal-seeming first quarter of the 21st century into legibility, in a geopolitical sense. Nation-states, including the U.S. in the Global War on Terror that dominated the 2000s, will act in what seems like a self-defeating or irrational way, because they are operating within a different ideology – a wholly different logic, with different metrics for success, different mythologies, and different definitions of risk.

Like all frameworks that explain a lot, IPNs occasionally risk trying to explain everything. And while the book remains mostly state-centric; nonstate actors are briefly touched upon, and the ideological futures brewing online – crypto-anarchism, AI-spirituality, accelerationism, hyper-tribal digital identities, especially those that are actively working to destabilize the concept of the nation-state – deserve a speculative volume of their own.

These critiques reflect a wish for more, rather than a failure of execution. If the late 20th century was defined by markets, the 21st looks well on its way to being defined by myth.

“Those who continue to dismiss ideology as mere rhetoric will be blindsided again and again by events they cannot explain,” write Sotiriadis.

The Revenge of Ideology is worth a careful read by futurists and foresight professionals for its message that beyond our familiar post – 1950s analytic pillars – technology, economics, politics, economics, society – there are other generative strata that are shaping futures today. We ignore these at our peril.



Dr. Lavonne Leong is an award-winning futurist and former journalist. Based in Honolulu, she works in adaptive and transformational futures and foresight capacity building with organizations and communities around the world, including the UNDP, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the East-West Center. She is also the co-founder of the Journal of Futures Studies Community of Practice, a global network advancing cross-pollination in futures teaching and methods. Dr. Leong holds an MSc in Strategic Foresight from the University of Houston and a DPhil from the University of Oxford.