



# Advent of a new civilization project: Eurasia in – U.S. out?



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## ABSTRACT

International relations present the picture of integration and disintegration processes in vast territories stimulating different types of states' unions that have become the key points of international relations. Therefore the bulk of questions should be referred to the relationships between the states and the territory. This approach creates a geopolitical paradox revealing that the states' positions depend exactly on the territory and their geographical disposition, for instance, on distance from each other. So, the idea of shared territory and history allowed many European states to build up the European Union (EU). And now we are witnessing the same integration processes in the territory of ex-the USSR (Eurasian Economic Union), which is open for huge international actors like China, India and so on. It is of crucial importance to notify that these two international integration projects are in the territory of Eurasia. At the same time the majority of the EU member states are also connected with or even integrated into another international organization – NATO – with the United States (US) as the head and leader. It makes a clear division between the Atlantic macro-region and the Pacific macro-region underlying the role of the US in the contemporary international system. This role is unique but often hasty and irresponsible. Observation of the US's foreign politics through a geographical approach gives a perfect explanation of that. The US is simply geographically remote (despite the jet planes) from these two integration unions (from Eurasia) that allows them to feel the hegemon and influence the international processes there being at a distance. Therefore the main question nowadays is if the US can sustain their world leadership they have been claiming for, and that is what we aim to address in this article.

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze both the state of the art and the possible future development of the geopolitical strategy of the United States in the context of Eurasia's growth. In this connection, we'll concentrate on the following points: (1) a clear definition of what a civilization represents; (2) the features of North American civilization, having the US for its core, and its strategies in

the context of Eurasia's growth; (3) the prospects of Eurasian civilization project.

Nowadays it is time to reject the usual Western (Euro-Atlantic, American) orientation of history. World history includes the Atlantic West as well as China, India and so on. The contemporary international and globalization processes renounce Western pretensions to universality. This creates the atmosphere of geopolitical vacuum, which leads to different types of conflicts but gives new opportunities to many geopolitical actors. In this context Eurasian states are to establish a normative civilization project for the common Eurasian future. And the concept of a multipolar world system is considered as the base of the project. The idea of the

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common Eurasian civilization has a long history, although not always peaceful. It dates back to the Silk Road and Genghis Khan's Empire. Over thousands of years many tribes and peoples influenced each other in culture and science (mathematics, medicine, technology, etc.). Therefore Eurasian history is the history of great human civilizations and cultures; it is the history of trade, war and dialogue. The history of a dialogue for more than a thousand years moves Eurasian civilization project ahead. Now it is important to start a dialogue with each other, and respect different values and traditions. An intensive dialogue of nations and cultures is evident in Eurasian civilization area at the present time. Eurasia is diverse. The early civilizations of Eurasia (Chinese, Indian, Persian, Greek and Roman, which were later divided into Roman-German and Orthodox Byzantine civilizations) represent the idea that there is no universal way of development. Different civilizations have different ways of existence and historical timing.

The US claim world leadership in the second decade of the 21st century despite the economic and political growth of states outside North America, first of all, in Eurasian region (China, India, Russia, etc.) (Erşen, 2014, p. 187; Mostafa, 2013, pp. 160–161). It is assumed that it is the civilization approach in its aspect, which considers the civilization dynamics that provides the most fruitful context for relevant research. This approach makes it possible for us to transform the partial into the general and reveal both the still strong and the increasingly weak facets of North American civilization, an opponent for Eurasian civilization project.

Eurasia is not merely a geographical notion. The definition “Eurasia” is often used in geopolitics referring to post-Soviet states and Asia as well. Therefore, in geopolitical terms most of European states are not considered as the part of Eurasia. In this article Eurasia means a specific geopolitical arena and a civilization project, which comprises Russia and its allies (post-Soviet space), China and India. These countries have been developing political cooperation, a number of great transport and defense projects, and have got experience of international negotiations being the members of Eurasian Economic Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Armenia) or the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, the South African Republic). Considering large territories in a geopolitical context it is necessary to build on a civilization approach.

Modern geopolitical processes comprise tendencies that have prevailed in concrete, well-defined geographically regions, which implies taking into account the regions' many-faceted interactions. Therefore, in considering strategic roles of relative regions and territories it is a must to base the discourse not only on the analysis of currently topical news and issues (which provides of course vast empirical base for research) but also on taking cognizance of the so-called civilization (political, military, cultural, etc.) features of various regions and territories. Most methods and approaches have their limits if applied to geopolitics. But the civilization approach presents a reliable instrument for geopolitical research because it interconnects and unifies into a peculiar entity various cultural-historical communities and geopolitical spaces allowing us to take into account multifarious changes which areas, territories, regions undergo over long periods of time.

So, the main ideas of the article are: (1) the world has changed since the Atlantic (North American) civilization project has lost its attractiveness as a universal civilization project at the beginning of the 21st century; (2) new geopolitical actors with their own civilization projects have appeared (including Islamic State with its idea of World Caliphate); (3) Eurasia has solid bases for a successful civilization project; (4) North American civilization is not able to rival Eurasian civilization project.

## 2. Civilization: theoretical and methodological aspects

Human history can be studied through time, space and culture. Actually, history can be described as local communities' interconnections in the concrete territory (region) that create common cultural and mental meanings among neighboring peoples. These peoples have direct or indirect influence on each other in different spheres, seek for stronger cooperation and are ready for compromise. Summarily that means they share the same civilization. And the civilization approach is the best tool to study human communities' relations in the regional dimension.

Human civilizations, if considered as a set of cultural, material and technological achievements (including, first of all, the military ones), have a marked feature – non-uniform, cyclic nature of their development. Only through juxtaposing and superimposing results of the systematic multifaceted analysis of various regions and territories we can obtain an adequate notion of a civilization under consideration. Different regions of the globe possess different dynamic parameters of their development, which is predetermined by concrete conditions of the regions and territories' interactions with nature and other human communities (countries, blocks of states and other geopolitical actors) along all the main civilization lines: economic, demographic, military, cultural. These interconnections and mutual influences, all kinds of exchanges in civilization assets, lead to either rise, development and prosperity, or to decline, degeneration and fall of civilizations.

It is exactly for this reason, simplifying the picture outlined above, that it is possible to state that culture “fills in” geopolitical regions and territories, and it is their combination (territory-plus-culture) that forms any civilization. Culture transfigures the space around it and broadens the human community's geopolitical habitat (Bodin, 2000, p. 297; Brodel, 2008, p. 34; Karsavin, 1993, pp. 160–163; Rickert, 1998, p. 55; Savitsky, 1997, pp. iii–iv; von Herder, 1968). Many geopolitical theories, for example, geoculture (Wallerstein, 1997) or ethnocentricity (Gumilev, 1989), reflect and incorporate within their respective gists the idea of the importance of territory from the point of view of preserving common cultural genotype that crucially influences the decision making processes. Territories that still preserve the most important elements of culture belonging to relevant communities prolong the existence of the civilizations they have created, each civilization carrying with it its creative potential that becomes either attractive or anathema. In this respect, it is North American civilization that stands out with its emphasis on the “American way of life.” It is this many-faceted image of North American civilization project that is currently on sale for the rest of the

world. And so far it has served as the main instrument making the project look attractive to study and imitate.

Regions that have been marked in the annals of history by the formations of early civilizations preserve their geopolitical vitality and importance even now. There are three such territories in the world: the Near and Middle East (in fact, Z. Brzezinski's notorious instability belt with Magrib cut out ([Brzezinski, 1997](#))), Indian subcontinent and China. With the passage of time, new hearths of civilizations began to emerge that appropriated many achievements of their predecessors (through trade, culture, wars, etc.). The new civilizations grew up in Europe and Minor Asia – West European (Roman-German) and Byzantine civilizations. These civilizations in their turn strongly influenced the processes of the birth and development of North American and Russian ones (“the younger civilizations, their geopolitical heirs”). These civilizations played the decisive role in the destinies of the world in the 20th century.

But nowadays we witness intensification of interconnections between different nations in different territories, and growth of regional multilateralism is the key point for the current and future international relations. The current peoples and states' interactions reflect a civilization shift from Western Atlantic zone (Europe and North America) to Eurasia as linkages between Russia, China and India are being strengthened. These states can be called as regional major powers and they form a new power triangle in the region and the world. The strategic partnership between Russia, China and India are cemented by the ideas of common economic, energy and even military security. These states do not agree with the unipolarity and support the idea of multipolarity with several power centers. These states have common security issues (Kashmir, Xinjiang, and North Caucasus). Therefore, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov describing the current interrelations in the region said that it is the shared values and approaches to international relations that help bring stability in Eurasia ([Baruah, 2004](#)). Nowadays these countries definitely need each other and that makes Eurasian multilateralism an actual practice.

These considerations stimulated scientists to search for reliable methods to describe the present-day world and interrelations between different nations and regions. These researches have grounds in a huge bulk of ideas, paradigms and schools. The civilization approach is mostly used in historical and international relations studies, geopolitics, anthropology and sociology. It explains why the civilization approach is interdisciplinary and complex. In the 18th century the civilization was considered as the sociological phenomena. In the 19th century the civilization was called the broaden culture of different peoples. In the 20th century the idea that the civilization means cultural development of the human community in the concrete territory started to prevail.

Most scientists proved that civilizations are territorial cultural entities. They are somehow developmental models. Therefore, the civilization approach helps to understand the most basic processes of development of human communities.

Civilization is the phenomenon that manifests itself in categories of time and territory. These categories are

traditionally used to distinguish one type of civilization from the others (civilization dynamics was brilliantly presented by [Spengler \(1922\)](#) and [Toynbee \(1974\)](#)). For example, the Eastern type of civilization means slow time running, ideological continuity, and collective values, but the Western type is characterized by fast time running, ideas of progress and personal values. And the values, ideas and culture can be a catalyst for the growth of civilizations.

A “civilization” is the term that allows tracing historical and cultural heredity of societies and the humanity as a whole. At the same time a “civilization” can be considered as the way of expansion. This expansion is defined mainly in terms of a vast infrastructure of various types including cultural and knowledge infrastructure that connects different parts of a civilization space within one entity. Therefore the term “civilization” is sometimes used in the study and practice of world politics to explain development of large territories with some common and similar features.

For instance, [Danilevsky \(2011\)](#) underlined that civilizations have impact on each other, and only a heterogeneous ethnic origin of people living in the concrete territory helps to create a civilization. Therefore, civilizations are to expand, borrow and share different cultural and ethnical elements within a civilization space. At the same time one culture can dominate other cultures and unite them into the *ecumene* ([Dowson, 1956](#)). Actually, studying the European Union's evolution, it is easy to draw a conclusion that it is a civilization approach that helps to build up and develop the European Union because this super-organization is based on the common cultural heritage and a long history of communications between different European peoples, although these communications were not always peaceful. The Eurasian Economic Union is also being formed according to civilizational lines that follow the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union's legacy. In studies and practice of world politics large territories create the architecture of world order, they are essential components of it. And a civilization approach helps to understand “inter-civilizational” encounters that shape world politics. Civilizations as cultural units (entities) can be part of International Relations Theory, for civilizational identities should be always taken into account ([Bowden, 2012](#); [Katzenstein, 2009](#)). So, the term “civilization” is mainly considered as a cultural entity or unit of a rather broad collective (sometimes it has a heterogeneous ethnic origin) in researches. However, unfortunately, a civilization approach does not have a long history in the study of world politics, but at the same time it has positive prospects.

The concept of civilization is especially important when we study world and local conflicts, political culture and ideological development of different territories. The contemporary political debates concern cooperation, cultural, political and economic dominance and conflicts, for instance, between Muslim and Western civilizations. Besides that, in the international politics there is the standard of civilization that allows to divide peoples into so-called “civilized” and “non-civilized” societies (this division allowed Western societies to expand and justify their own politics, norms, values and even hegemony). The word “civilization” is used by many political leaders nowadays (G. Bush, V. Putin, etc.). Therefore civilizational discourse can be often

embedded into the political field and political concerns. It is used to describe antagonism between different human communities or, vice versa, to explain mutual understanding and effective cooperation.

According to the civilization studies [Huntington \(1993\)](#) elaborated an interesting concept about the clash of civilizations, which is the key one in this article. The present-day conflicts are not conflicts between nations and states but they are conflicts between civilizations (regions, regional organizations, and international blocks). He argues that with the end of Cold War international politics moved out of its Western influence, and non-Western civilizations are becoming shapers of history. He sees a civilization as the highest cultural grouping of people. It is defined by religion, history, customs and etc. Huntington says that Western civilization consists of two models: European and North American civilizations. He predicts that the Chinese-based economy of Asia is emerging as a new epicenter for industry and finance. This situation leads to a new Cold War between antagonistic US and China. Differences in culture and ideas of these states are the source for the conflict. Huntington gives an idea that an international game played out of within Western civilization will increasingly be de-Westernized and become a game in which non-Western civilizations are actors, not objects.

There is the distinction between the approaches that argue that competing civilizations do exist and the approaches that focus on how the term “civilization” is used to connote and create global hierarchies. Many authors, especially cultural anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, do believe that humanity can be divided into different broad socio-political communities, cultural units with different cultural norms, standards, patterns of political development, so-called civilizational identities. At the same time another group of scholars underlines that the term “civilization” is used to distinguish the “civilized” peoples from the “uncivilized” ones ([Jackson, 2005](#)). For example, [Bowden \(2002\)](#) describes anti-terroristic activities after September 11, 2001 as the war between “civilization” and “barbarism” (p. 37). In this context the “barbarians” are the societies that are not in the sphere of political liberalism and they are not able to absorb ideas of human rights and democratic governance, and they are non-Western societies ([Jahn, 2005](#)). From this point of view the “uncivilized” societies can become “civilized” only if they join a “civilized” society (for instance, if they are members of authoritative international organizations). Unfortunately, world history is full of examples when “civilized” societies started imperialistic wars against “uncivilized” societies in the name of civilizing “barbarians.”

Authors quite often refer to the “standards of civilization,” which are represented by liberalism and market economy in the West. For instance, [Stivachtis \(2015\)](#) notices that practices related to “standards of civilization” exist and apply in the relations between states creating hierarchies among them. He argues that cultural differentiations between the Europeans and non-the Europeans (*non-Western space*) contributed to division of the world into two separate international systems with different civilization standards: the Soviet Union (Russia) and its allies and the West ([Stivachtis, 2015, pp. 130–142](#)).

So, scholars have different ideas about a civilization, and it is still rather difficult to explain it definitely. For instance, [Huntington \(1993, p. 22\)](#) underlines that a civilization is the broadest cultural identity, while [Melleuish \(2004, p. 234\)](#) argues that civilizations are internally pluralistic.

Historical examples prove that civilizations have complex background; they are heterogeneous and capable of development in many directions ([McMylor & Vorozhishcheva, 2010, p. 474](#)). What is more important is that civilizations can arise in different parts of the world and they don't necessarily follow the same way or pattern of development. That explains why clash of civilizations is possible in different periods of time and in different territories.

In this paper a “civilization” means a vast territory, combination of cultural identities and political, social, economic development. It defines an advanced state of society (according to development of culture, social norms, economy, and industry). We can speak of both the broadest cultural unity and the cultural entities within a civilization (it depends on a civilization), which contribute to its internal developmental dynamics, influence the transformation of a civilization and can lead to its fall. Cultural development of a civilization space can be considered as the basis for cooperation or collisions between peoples. Anyway, cultural variability always promotes cultural diffusion and favors a growing number of cultural centers.

Therefore a civilization can be better described as a network of cultural centers, political, social and economic institutions. Besides those patterns of civilizational development can change in different historical periods. And nowadays we can witness the civilization shift from the Atlantic area to the Pacific one and the growth of favorable circumstances for a new civilization in Eurasia basing on multipolarity, a number of cultural and power centers and political institutions' network.

This paper proposes some observation of new civilizational trends and dynamics in Eurasia that have great potency. In other words, this paper should be regarded as the invitation to scholars to restart discussions on the contemporary civilizational development in different parts of our world.

So, the civilization approach means a historical, geopolitical and even philosophical outlook to analyze the concrete region, its origins, development, and strong and weak features. This research uses the civilization approach, which is a mixed-methods approach including a historical analysis (social, economic and political development throughout time) and a comparative analysis of the civilization components (ideological, military, political and economical ones).

The civilization and geopolitical approaches can be considered as related approaches that correlate to each other. However, the civilization approach, which is used in this paper, is more productive than a geopolitical one because it allows us not to confine the research to geopolitical aspects only (geography, political and economic ties between peoples, and security issues). The civilization approach involves the aspects of cultural relationships, historical processes, and mental and psychological features of the peoples in a vast territory. The civilization approach helps to speak of vast territories over a long period of time, speak of the civilization's origins, while the geopolitical



approach mainly concentrates on the current world order and system.

The idea of the civilization approach is to identify a geopolitical trend (a civilization dynamics) that can reveal the past, the current and the future processes in the concrete territory (the region). The internal and external factors define the trend. The internal factors are the regional actors, international blocks, and political, economic and military forces in the territory (for example, China, India, Russia, common projects including military sphere). They can be called the driving forces of Eurasian civilization's growth. The external factors are geopolitical actors that have impact on the territory within the framework of the regional geopolitical triangles, for one, China–Russia–the US and India–China–the US. These factors allow us to explain why, when and how the regional interconnections in Eurasia started to flourish and determine their increasing potency.

In this research the territory (the region) is a basic unit for analysis. Although the paper requires some generalizations, it does not ignore the diversity of nations that comprise Eurasian and North American civilizations. They are the arenas for exchanges of different types and extensive connectivity over time. Eurasia can be defined as a civilization (a geopolitical system) in which China, India and Russia are geopolitical sub-systems. North American civilization space as the leading part and the model of the contemporary Western civilization comprises North America, Canada and it even has a hold over the European Union's member-states. The civilization approach is the tool to investigate both the main civilization actors and their interactions that form the regional strong networks along several lines (political, economic, defensive system, etc.) creating the common geopolitical space. Since we know that North American civilization space is supported by NATO it is especially fruitful to focus on political, economic, societal, cultural and military interconnections that influence and shape Eurasian civilization space. Exploring the quantitative features of the territory (its space, natural resources, population) and its qualitative features (extensive and intensive interconnections, first of all, in politics, economy, defense) we are able to determine the form and content of North American and Eurasian civilization projects.

### 3. North American civilization: challenges and strategies

The term “American civilization” is often used to categorize the United States of America as a new civilization that has roots in Europe but presents a growing independent identity. That means that American civilization can be considered as the part of Western civilization. In this article Western civilization comprises European and North American civilizations, which are similar in many aspects but have got their own peculiarities (James, Grimshaw, & Hart, 1993). For instance, Lerner (1987) argues that America (the US) has its own civilization as the most effective democracy, which is distinct from the European civilization. Lialiaouti (2007, p. 3) even states that American civilization based on Americanism (American way of life) is incompatible with the “essence” of European civilization. American nation is considered as more conservative and more religious than

European one, and whereas Americans are predisposed to understand their lives in terms of individual responsibility and reject greater state regulation, Europeans take the opposite position; Europeans insist on international cooperation, whereas American leadership insist on the right to act independently (Berman, 2004; *The American-Western European Values Gap*, 2011). Geographically and culturally American/North American civilization comprises Canada and the US, and the US is the core of the civilization. At the same time Mexico culturally belongs to Latin American civilization area, and therefore, it is not included into the notion of American/North American civilization. Nowadays North American civilization tends to be a world hegemon that has many opportunities and power to influence European civilization area (which is presented mainly by the EU member-states). Therefore North American civilization is the part of Western civilization and now it is regarded even as its model (Haggman, 2011, p. 64).

The Americans “breathed a new meaning into the concept of Western civilization” due to communications with European immigrants and dealings with European nations. The North American civilization as a successor to the European heritage consists “in the ideas of liberty, individualism, liberal democracy, free markets, constitutionalism, and the rule of law.” The Americans refer to these ideas as “the American creed.” And the American creed became the essence of Western civilization as a whole” (Kurth, 2004, p. 5). These norms and values have been elaborated for ages and they clearly define Western (North American civilization), but they are not crucial to many peoples of Africa or Asia, for instance. Western (North American) hegemony makes non-Western societies feel hostility against the West. It creates the basis for a cultural conflict, first of all.

North American civilization project having for its core the US can be regarded as the youngest of all civilizations, which has a very rapid civilization dynamics. The US entered the 20th century as a world leader and proved its leadership at the end of the century. But nowadays new power centers are rapidly emerging. It is exactly for these reasons that the US today needs to take a strategic respite, to embark on the policy of a strategic pause so as to introduce major structural reforms that are long overdue (the US needs “American Perestroika”). It is of paramount importance for the US's foreign policy makers to take into account the above-mentioned considerations because it is exactly at this time on the global geopolitical clock that the US is standing on the threshold of inexorable major “Change.” It is the one word slogan, by the way, of B. Obama's 2008 presidential campaign that was defined by two slogans: “Change we can believe in” and “Hope” (Blake, 2012).

There is no denying of the growth of the Middle East region's influence where the “Arab spring” has turned into the “Arab winter of the US's discontent.” On the other end of Eurasia is the Chinese region, which has reached the status of the fastest growing world economic region even amidst global recession. It is also worth noticing here that many recognized members of the Nuclear club are in Eurasia plus two “candidates of nuclear sciences,” pathetically besieged with UN sanctions (North Korea and Ayatollahs' Radical Iran). In view of the US's great distance (in fact, on the

opposite side of the globe with respect to the crucial geopolitical theatre – the Persian Gulf) from Eurasian civilization area, the US's stance in Eurasia as a whole has become very precarious for realization of any major geopolitical project.

So if in 1941 Henry Luce, the “Emperor of the Luce's Times incorporated media empire,” prophetically announced the advent of an American Age (Luce, 1941) (the event postponed for half a century until 1991 by the Soviet Union), it is high time now to recollect one of the most famous quotes from the notorious Mao's “Quotation book”: “...in the year 2001, or the beginning of the 21st century, China will have undergone an even greater change. It will have become a powerful socialist industrial country. And that is as it should be. China is a land with an area of 9,600,000 square kilometers and a population of 600 million people, and she ought to have made a greater contribution to humanity” (Mao, 2000).

There exist only two strategies for retaining the type of geopolitical stance the US now enjoys in the context of Eurasia's growth. The first one is to stage a gradual grand geopolitical retreat from all advanced positions that are highly vulnerable (the US's bases in the territories of the former Soviet Union – in the Baltic States and Central Asia first and foremost as well as in Afghanistan), stimulating Moscow to embark on the policy of “Russian Rekonkista.” This policy is sure to appear according to Russian civilization dynamics anyway with the US's stimulating it, acquiescing to it or not. This retreat may imitate the one carried out by the US in the seventies of the last century under the leadership of Henry Kissinger, the retreat that trapped the Brezhnev's Soviet Union into blind belief of its almost omnipotence. At that time many geopolitical actors (China, the Moslem World first of all, even India after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) started an active cooperation with the US. This new retreat should again frighten every geopolitical actor outside the domain controlled by the Shanghai Six into clinging to the US and its traditional allies. The retreat should be so dramatic that even ayatollahs and mullahs in Tehran should, in terms of real politics, regard the US as some sort of “beloved infidel.” This retreat would provide desperately needed time for major structural reforms of the US economy aimed at turning it again into a profitable one. So, the first scenario is to renounce all the major projects in the sphere of international relations and embark on the road of major structural reforms.

The second scenario is to strain or to “overstrain” all available recourses with the aim of at least retaining all existing geopolitical positions in the hope that the strain on resources of the geopolitical opponents will be even greater and the adversaries will collapse first. In this context the question of relative importance of the two major directions of protection of American power (Western Europe and East Asia geopolitical areas) has always been topical and is again high on the US's geopolitical agenda.

Since the end of the World War II the simmering tensions throughout Eurasia were overlaid by global confrontation nicknamed the Cold War between the two “young civilizations”: Russian in the form of the USSR and North American one. In this confrontation it was the Russians whose resources were substantially depleted by the civil-

ization's heavy involvement in both World Wars that immensely enriched the US, by a string of revolutions, Stalin's great terror, and total elimination of private property's catalytic effect on economy. But this geopolitical catastrophe did not ruin Russian civilization. Since the global financial crises of 2008 it has become increasingly obvious that North American civilization's grand victory in the Cold War was in fact a Pyrrhic one and was achieved through implementation on the global scale of several projects that began to backfire with increasingly damaging effect. The main problem for the US consists in that the US, in the course of the Cold War confrontation, failed to take into account that any decisions inevitably exert quick effect on all aspects of day-to-day life of American citizens. No wonder that the decisions that looked like strategically correct turned out to be ill-conceived and counterproductive or at the very least stand in urgent need of being corrected.

Let's consider just two major steps undertaken by the US during the final stages of the Cold War.

First, the US made a premature and ill-planned big leap into the postindustrial and information technologies development phase. On this way the US forgot that the law of diminishing returns (the law of decreasing profitability of investments) applies also to this phase. The consequences of the leap have been made dramatically worse by haphazard transfer of very expensive in terms of energy basic heavy industries (metallurgy in the first place) not only to Brazil and India, but mostly to People's Republic of China. They are the very countries that have recently joined the BRICS, the new (economic now) geopolitical entity that started to hover rather ominously and challengingly over American technological supremacy. And it is these countries that, first and foremost, represent immense populations.

Second, in struggling with the USSR as a geopolitical opponent the US brought into full play the extremely powerful instrument – the financial one. This instrument was effectively used to stem the growth of the USSR's influence in Western Europe in the immediate aftermath of the World War II (senator Marshall's Plan). This instrument is closely linked to the energy problem (to the problem of keeping down crude oil prices only slightly higher than extraction of crude oil, and the cost of transporting it to the US, Western Europe and Japan). The solution to the cheap energy supply problem was sought and temporarily found in the construction of the American financial pyramid having for its “base” billions of dollars in oil revenues of the oil-rich states predominantly of the Middle Eastern origin (billions of dollars that immediately turned into “virtual money”). It is very lucky for the US that the donors to the American financial pyramid have not realized so far that the US today (the US of Obama's unfulfilled “Change” and “Hope”; “5 Failed Obama Campaign Slogans,” 2012) is in fact a bankrupt state. The first evidence of America's financial bankruptcy came from George Bush-Junior himself. Soon after his spectacular routing and occupation of Iraq he aired an idea of selling major American ports to “...our reliable friends and allies – the United Arab Emirates” (“Port Insecurity?,” 2006), but he was quickly snubbed by both the Republican and the Democratic leaders. The initiative was snipped into the bud and remained unnoticed

by the world public opinion and traditionally introverted American public opinion.

The very existence of the “American way of life” and the “American Dream” critically depends on the continued uninterrupted functioning of the pyramid. Relatively low oil and gas prices are due exactly to the accessibility for the US of the oil and gas fields with low extraction costs, mainly in the Persian Gulf area. This is the crucial geopolitical region that, being geographically next door to Russian civilization hearth, in almost all other respect until very recently was almost entirely incorporated (financially first of all) into North American civilization project. Gross miscalculation consists in that the US recklessly exhausted its gold and hard currency reserves and assets. The US did not take into account that these days the oil card game just cannot be played as it used to. With the passage of time, the game dramatically changed its basic rules.

First of all, global proved oil reserves dwindled significantly since the inception of the oil bonanza for the western world in early 1950s; many once famous oil-producing areas have become depleted. The move toward the global shelf proved to be slow and very expensive. Second, new breakthrough and, on top of that, low-energy-consuming technologies for oil extraction under severe conditions both on land and sea are slow in coming and turned out to be fraught with ecological catastrophes (BP's oil-drilling rig conflagration in the Gulf of Mexico).

One modern solution to the problem of cheap energy supply is a large-scale extraction of oil from deposits of shale, which abounds in the US. This way to renewed energy prosperity is bound to meet severe ecological challenges, for it is well-known that extraction of shale gas is radioactive. But it seems that, in fact, this geopolitically motivated scheme “to reduce Europe's vulnerability to Russian-supplied gas” (Bryen, 2014) will result in nuclear casualties even without a nuclear war. This “*antres nous-le deluge*” ideology currently taking hold of the US elite is yet another ominous sign of desperation.

Besides that, North American economy is crippled by overpriced labor force losing its competitiveness vis-à-vis increasingly more educated and infinitely more motivated low-cost labor force of People's Republic of China and India (Russia's strong army of well-educated industrial workers and engineers is also much in evidence) and of other NIC (New Industrialized Countries). Economies of the BRICS countries and NIC of the Asian-Pacific region, the oil-producing states in the Middle East and elsewhere found it impossible to further increase the global output. The rate of proved oil reserves is overestimated, while the relevant forecasts remain vague. Under these conditions it is practically impossible to maintain North American civilization as a universal civilization (unipolar global civilization) that fits everybody.

#### 4. Eurasian growth: struggle of civilizations

The term “Eurasian civilization” (with Russia as its core) has a long history since the nineteenth century. Sometimes it is also called Christian Orthodox or Russian civilization. The idea of Eurasia and Eurasian civilization underlines that Russia has got its own successful way only if

it cooperates with Asian countries and some European states (Belarus and Ukraine, first of all; although these states are sometimes excluded from Eurasian civilization by some authors). It states that Russia represents a distinctive civilizational pattern (Grier, 2015, p. 71).

Eurasia is regarded as a mixture of peoples and languages. At the same time these peoples have much in common. For instance, Trubetskoy (1920) underlined that the Russians have much in common with the Turkic peoples (Turanians), and the idea of brotherhood and collectivity is common to Eurasian peoples (Trubetskoy, 1920). Eurasia started as a civilization area after Genghis Khan had created his empire (the largest one in human history) that was later transformed into Moskovskoye tsartstvo and the Russian empire. For example, Beckwith (2009) writes a lot about these historical origins of Eurasian civilization.

The debates about Eurasian civilization were reopened in the 1990s. Haggman (2011) states that there are several features that distinguish Eurasian civilization from the others: a special Eurasian culture, which is the basis for the Russian culture; an ideology based on Christian Orthodox religion in a culture; and the fate of Russia decided by its geostrategic location and as a bridge between Europe and Asia (pp. 67–68).

Community and conservatism, loyalty to the authorities and traditions are the elements of Eurasian civilization. Since Eurasian civilization is a new “old” phenomenon we should underline that on the one hand, Eurasian civilization comprises European cultural elements; on the other hand, it also bases on Asian cultural elements. Eurasian civilization has been growing as a space of cultural plurality. It gives Eurasian civilization a lot of chances for development, since it tries to avoid conflicts with other civilizations; it is able to admit any pattern of life.

Now Eurasia is regarded as a civilization led by Russia to challenge American and European (Western) dominance, and it is strengthened by the ideology of Russian-Asian greatness (Laruelle, 2012). At the same time it is a cross-road of Eastern and Western cultures. Eurasian civilization is also the main topic of discussions among Russian, Kazakhstan, and Chinese researchers and politicians (Cheng, 2014, pp. 277–289; Sultanov, 2014, pp. 97–110). In Russia a number of scholars study Eurasian civilization, its origins and features (Lukyanov, 2014, pp. 290–303; Podberezkin & Podberezkina, 2014, pp. 46–60). Sometimes these discussions acquire political sense when experts try to resolve the question if Russia belongs to Western or Eurasian civilization. The majority of them write about the conflict between the US and Russia, and, therefore, between North American and Eurasian civilizations. For instance, Kühnhardt (2014) speaks about different identities – Atlantic (Western) and Eurasian that influence the current conflict between the US and Russia.

Besides that, many experts argue that Eurasian Economic Union is a model of a new Eurasian civilizational type highlighted in cooperation and states' sovereignty (Krupnov, 2012). According to Eurasian Economic Union's documents Eurasia was formed as a space of mutual development and multipolarity (“*Treaty of Eurasian Economic Union*,” 2014). And neo-Eurasianism now deals with the design of a Eurasian commonwealth (Hoffmann, 2010, p. 121).

According to [Huntington \(1993\)](#) the growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West. On the one hand, it is at a peak of power. At the same time, “a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations.” The efforts of the West to promote its values of democracy as universal values advance its military and economic interests engender countering responses from other civilizations. Differences in culture always create differences over policy issues and lead to mutual misunderstanding and struggle between civilizations ([Huntington, 1993, pp. 26–29](#)). In this context the clash of civilizations is evident. And in the future there will be a “world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others” ([Huntington, 1993, p. 49](#)).

The greatest philosophers thought of a universal human civilization. However, a universal civilization is an ideal and it cannot be realized at present time. A universal civilization does not exist but there are civilizations, different civilization identities that evolve, cooperate or collide with each other. The world “clash” means not only a violent confrontation, it also means a disagreement, argument or just differences. So, we can see different kinds of clashes, but the most part of them can be overcome by inter-civilization exchanges and dialogues. Anyway, the construction of integration communities can be considered as the example of formation or re-establishment of civilizations. Therefore the positions of great powers cannot be avoided in civilization studies. Since Eurasian civilization has started to evolve it will definitely have to meet different obstacles including, first of all, cultural, political and economic conflicts with North American civilization.

Every meaningful geopolitical actor needs as many allies as possible, and the US is not the exception. This is confirmed by many topical facts. In the first place, it is worth noting the fiasco of America-led Crusade after 09.11.2001. Second, the American military machine is marked by strange imbalances ([Mazurak, 2014; Schwartz, 1998](#)). Therefore, it is impossible for the US to maintain leadership in international politics without their allies' support. At present, already effective counter-balance is presented by India, China and a Eurasian giant – Russia. At the present time we can witness an evolving Eurasian missile shield. It has been constructed by negotiations between Russia, China, India and even Iran. These negotiations should be considered as the collective Eurasian defense system. This budding military Eurasian integration is a key subplot of the New Great Game that runs parallel to the Chinese-led New Silk Road Project ([Escobar, 2015](#)). “Former US security Zbigniew Brzezinski warned US elites against the formation of a Eurasian coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America's primacy. According to Brzezinski such a Eurasian alliance would arise as a ‘Chinese-Russian-Iranian coalition’ with Beijing as its focal point” ([Nazemroya, 2015](#)). Here it should be underlined that Russia, as it follows from the recent high-level statements from the Kremlin, no longer finds itself under obligation to hold on to the policy of self-restraint that Russia was obliged to pursue after the collapse of the USSR and during the presidency of Boris Eltsin. The tendency for consolidation of Eurasia is very much in evidence and continues to go from strength to strength.

Asymmetrical triangle, the US–China–India, with the US dominating it has been for a long time the main element of international relations. But the triangle has undergone very serious transformations. The paramount task for the US to maintain an increasingly delicate and shift-prone balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region is the reason why the US is standing for broadening multi-partite cooperation between Japan, the Philippines, and India so as to set up a counter-balance to the growing influence of People's Republic of China.

Nevertheless, cooperation between India and China is also growing within the framework of the BRICS. The current trajectory of international relations favors this type of cooperation and does not contribute to the US-led Asian geopolitical unequal alliances. India, the country that the US very reluctantly now calls the world's most populace democracy and recognizes as the dominant power on the Indian subcontinent, strives to acquire rocket and nuclear potential dwarfing that of Pakistan, the US's most important ally in the Indian Ocean Basin. So the US tries to counter India's pretensions to regional nuclear super-power status through encouraging activities of the US-dominated minor geopolitical actors in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. However, the problem of sort of keeping India of the “right” military and geopolitical size so that to counter-balance China, but not to crush Pakistan has no solutions acceptable to the US. India is sure to grow “out of size,” which, taking into account India's traditionally very strong military and political ties with Russia (India's main provider of arms), makes the US's aims in the Indian ocean area doomed to failure.

This is the reason why the policy of Clinton's, Bush's and Obama's administrations in the region did not undergo any change at all. And despite this fact, the US spends on defense five times more than China and 16 times more than India. At the same time the US assumes that the growing power of People's Republic of China will soon be perceived as a menace by all Asian countries (including Russia). Nevertheless, certain aspects of consolidation taking place in the region have nothing to do with “mild” confrontation with China. Volume of trade between India and China grew from pathetic 3 billion in 2000 to 61.7 billion in 2010 ([Singh, 2012, p. 1](#)).

Under conditions when the US's positions in Asia are steadily weakening, it is China and India that are sure to gain from the process. It is easy to predict that in the future the asymmetry in the US's “geopolitical intercourse” with China and India will be diminished. In the long run, China will dominate the East-Asia-Pacific region, acquiescing to India's dominant role on the Indian Subcontinent and in the Indian Ocean region.

Russia also has rather bright prospects for the growth of its influence in the region considering the relationships between Russia, China and the US, which have formed a special triangle in Eurasia. During the Cold War this triangle was under the obvious confrontation between the USSR and the US, which were the only dominant powers in it. But since the 1970s China has become an equal partner in the triangle. The tragedy of September 11, 2001 added very much to the importance of the triangle. However, we see the tendency of the US to dominate it, which both China



and Russia resist. China, on top of that, voices concern over the US's attempts to establish military basis in Central Asia region and, of course, a long-standing issue between the US and China – Taiwan – is sure to stay. The US cannot any longer exercise the same influence in the region. It is now under the geopolitical weight of such giants as China and India, which are indifferent to North American civilization project (although it was constructed as a universal one).

North American civilization project has been historically formed and had been developing for decades during almost the whole of the 20th century as an attractive alternative one to other civilization projects and as a promising force to counter global pretensions of the Third Reich and of the Empire of the Rising Sun, and to counter the communist giants (the USSR and the People's Republic of China). But after the tectonic geopolitical changes in the aftermath of the USSR's collapse the idea of the struggle against world terrorism has become the "staple food" of North American civilization project. So, North American civilization project was repositioned as the one, opposing the imminent coming of the Global Caliphate. Nevertheless, it is not attractive anymore to the agglomeration of other geopolitical actors.

The main factor here is the appearance of new-old big players – China and Russia. At present, these countries are geopolitical "introverts" mostly concerned with internal reforms and restructurings and regarding the US and the West in general as the only available "schools of modern technologies" and markets for their natural resources exports, industrial and agricultural products. At the same time European civilization project, which after a spectacular revival in the form of the European Union relapsed into the financial crises, has no chance of acquiring great attractiveness. Therefore the modern world is not unified by the one dominant civilization power. The struggle of civilizations is still on the agenda. But it is Eurasian civilization project that is considered as a new real alternative to North American (Western) project.

## 5. Conclusion

It follows that in the interim it is the second-rate geopolitical actors that will try to come into play hoping to gain various advantages in the vacuum and to enhance their geopolitical status. It is sure to lead to numerous local conflicts, formation and disintegration of geopolitically strange bedfellows on the pattern of the two Balkan wars that presaged the World War I.

Thus, gradually their asset is a multipolar world order in which the traditional geopolitical leaders steadily retain there privileged positions. However, if regional leadership of certain states is accompanied by their functional leadership in various spheres then these states become capable of presenting civilization projects of their own. The cultural component of these projects may become the leitmotif of the global development for some time. Functional dimension of leadership (by which the highest achievements in certain areas of human endeavor from sport to technology are to be understood) is conducive to establishing and strengthening a multipolar geopolitical system. It is so

because within the framework of the functional leadership there is an evident increase in the number of culturally attractive participants. Eurasia is an omnipotent example of giving possibilities to a number of geopolitical actors to create their own civilization projects that offer new points of growth for many countries. China, India and Russia are the states that have been rebuilding their civilization projects and have started active cooperation with each other in different spheres to combine their efforts in a big geopolitical game (the common Eurasian civilization project). This confirms importance of Eurasian partnership and opens a new page in Eurasian history. Therefore, nowadays in the world we see the advent of Eurasian civilization project, which is defined by strong coordination between partners and their rejection of unipolar world.

Let us draw some conclusions:

- (1) Eurasia has been growing as a new civilization project, an alternative to unipolar globalization (North American civilization).
- (2) Eurasian civilization project rejects unipolarism and it has become a platform for cooperation of different nations, cultures and states.
- (3) It comprises the largest Eurasian geopolitical actors (China, India, and Russia) that form a new geopolitical triangle in Eurasia without the US, which loses its influence on the two geopolitical triangles in the region (the US–China–India and the US–China–Russia triangles).
- (4) Eurasian civilization project has distinctive features:
  - European and Asian diversity;
  - The common characteristics of Eurasian power centers: traditional values, collective responsibility, self-restraint, loyalty to the past and the future, similar historical timing (developmental dynamics).
- (5) Eurasian civilization project is supported by immense human and natural resources, and vast lands. Its power centers are interconnected by the common defense system, transport routes (projects of Trans Asian railway and the Northern Sea route are very important here), economic and political cooperation.
- (6) Eurasian civilization project manifests multipolarity and multilateralism.

So, it is obviously a new civilization project in human history since its participants are culturally different and reject the idea of one state's world leadership. However, there is still a question if the United States is able to join an equitable cooperation in Eurasia and admit a multipolar world system. Anyway, whatever the US chooses it has to share world leadership with its geopolitical opponents, first of all, with Eurasian geopolitical rivals.

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