The Role of the United States in Current World Politics

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Abstract

In discussions of the power of the United States attention is often focused on the military might of the superpower. It spends about 40% of the annual global military expenditures, and this fact undoubtedly has a lot to do with its global position. Another and more important element is its organizational capacity, both in military terms and in the creation of global norms of conduct in various fields. This aspect of the US power can be understood from the perspective of the concept of the"West". The "West" is an amoeba like coalition of states whose resources the US is able to organize for its support in differing operations, whether then military or economic. The West is thus not a direction of compass; it can be found in Western Europe, but as well in Western Asia, or Western Pacific; any state can be seen as part of the West, but no state is necessarily always a member of these coalitions. What the US is doing with these coalitions, and how successful is it in collecting them, is an indication of its changing - and diminishing - global role. A "rebalance to Asia", where Asia means most of all East Asia and secondarily South Asia, has been a feature of the Obama administration since 2012. At the same time other actors, not least Turkey and Russia, but on a longer perspective also China and India, are becoming active in the Western part of the Eurasian continent. This has interesting implications on how international politics in the Middle East and Europe are conducted, and will be conducted from now on.

Key Words: United States Foreign Policy, International Affairs, West-East Conceptions

Özet

Amerika Birleşik Devletlerinin gücüne ilişkin tartışmaların odağını genel olarak bu ülkenin askeri gücüne dönük tartışmalar oluşturmaktadır. Küresel askeri harcamaalrın kabaca %40'ına yakını Amerika tarafından yapılırken, hiç kuşkusuz Amerika'nın küresel pozisyonuyla askeri harcamaları arasında bir bağlantı vardır. Bir başka alan ise organizasyonel kapasite olarak adlandırabileceğimiz askeri olduğu kadar küresel normların oluşturulmasını da içeren diğer alanlarıda kapsamaktadır. Bu alanlar ise "Batı" kavramı düşünülerek anlaşılabilir. Batı Amerika'nın askeri ya da ekonomik organizasyon kapasitesi bağlamında, tıpkı gönüllüler koalisyonu gibi kendi kendini yaratan ve yayılan bir kavrama dönüşmektedir. Bu anlamıylada Batı sadece bir Batı Avrupa, Batı Pasifik gibi coğrafik yönlendirme olmaktan ziyade herhangi bir yerde ve herhangi bir ülkeyi içerebilen bir olguya dönüşmektedir. Bu çerçevede Amerika'nın küresel rolündeki değişiklik böylesi ülke gruplarını organize edebilme yeteneğindeki değişimler üzerinden ölçülebilir. Asya'nın Doğu ve Batı Asya olarak alınabileceği Asya'ya yönelim stratejisi 2012'den bu yana Obama'nın dış politikasının en önemli unsurlarından bir tanesidir. Bu çerçevede Türkiye ve Rusya dışında Çin ve Hindistan gibi aktörlerde ABD'nin Batılı Avrasyalı aktörleri olarak ortaya çıkmaya başlamıştır. Bu da geniş anlamda uluslararası politika'nın Orta Doğu ve Avrupa'da nasıl değiştiğini ve değişeceğini uzun dönemlde belirleyecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerikan Dış Politikası, Dünya Siyaseti, Batı-Doğu Kavramları

In international scholarly debates there is hardly any doubt that the relative position of the United States in the world system is considered to be in a general decline, even though its absolute military and economic might is still slowly growing. It is the world around it that is changing rapidly. There is a big difference, e.g., in Zbigniew Brzezinski's optimism in 1997 [27] and his pessimism in 2016[28]. John Mearsheimer argues for offshore balancing, distancing the United States of the onshore conflicts it is engaged with.3 The decline of the US world position is a kind of truism, and it would be difficult to add anything new on this general perception. What follows is a small discussion on the possible analytical concepts with which the phenomenon can be understood and interpreted, but not a discussion on the existence of the phenomenon itself. My focus will not be, however, mainly on the United States itself, because so much attention is already poured on it, and the custom tends to distort the real picture. The world has nearly 200 state actors, also others than big powers, and their behavior merits close observation, because that can tell us a lot of the practical functioning of the structure of American leadership. There are also other kind of mighty actors from large companies to citizen level networks, but they will be left outside of discussion here.

Of course, this is not the first time the theme of American decline has risen into discussion; the previous time this happened was in the 1980s, when the theory of hegemonic change and the concept of imperial overreach enjoyed widespread attention.4 In the background for that discussion were American pessimism caused by the lost Vietnam War, the various Oil Crises, US domestic economic difficulties, and the rapid rise of Japan to the number two position in world economy. That discussion was conceptually simpler than what the situation nowadays is, because it dealt more specifically with the military and economic dimensions of great power games, and it ended in the Ronald Reagan period economic and ideological optimism, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the internet revolution that reinvigorated the US economy and created a number of new American global companies. Nowadays the discussion is conceptually more complicated, because it involves not only unending wars, the US economy (which is not that bad), but also the American national debt issue, internal American political polarization, the whole developing world as challengers in addition to China5 and Russia.6

Moreover, the issue is larger, dealing with the totality of the world system created by the United States, not narrowly the country itself. Of course, also this time a reinvigoration of the United States is possible, and the next US president may well try to "make America great again", but that would not essentially change the situation. The United States as it stands is already great, but so are also many other states in the rest of the world. This is what causes the difference.

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[27] Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997) The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives, New York: Basic Books.

[28] Zbigniew Brzezinski (2016) Toward a Global Realignment, in The American Interest, **http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/04/17/toward-a-global- realignment/**

3 John J. Mearsheimer (2011) Imperial by Design, The National Interest, 111, 16-34. http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/recent.html

4 Robert Gilpin (1981) War and Change in World Politics, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; David A. Lake (1984) Beneath the Commerce of Nations: A Theory of International Economic Structures, in International Studies Quarterly 28, 143-170: Paul M. Kennedy (1989) The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000, Vintage: New York; Inoguchi Takashi (1991) Japan's International Relations, Pinter: London.

5 Yan Xuetong (2014) From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement, in The Chinese Journal of International Politics, 153–184.

6 Nicu Popescu (2014) Eurasian Union: The Real, the Imaginary and the Likely, Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, **http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/CP_132.pdf**

In discussions of the power of the United States attention is often focused on the military might of the superpower, because on that sector its supreme position is the clearest. It spends about 40% of the annual global military expenditures, and this fact undoubtedly has a lot to do with its global position. In economic terms its relative decline is more marked, as since 2014 China has been declared to have eclipsed the United States in terms of GDP size - and is continuously declared to be doing that, as there are so many ways to calculate these comparisons. However, these kind of state level comparisons are not perfectly illuminating of its general position, because military and economic power are only crude indicators of national power, similar with population size, land area, geopolitical position, general level of education, etc. The political position of the United States in the world system, in the sense that the position enables it to organize the activities of the other nearly 200 states, as well as regulate to some extent the various private sector international actors, is the most interesting aspect here. It is also the most difficult to analyze, because it cannot easily be presented in numerical figures. Politics is a psychological and organizational phenomenon. Amitav Acharya in his The End of American World Order presents a list of names for the situation, such as ”the West”, ”the Atlantic World”, ”Pax Democratica”, ”Pax Americana”, ”free world”, ”the American system”, ”Americanled liberal hegemony”, ”liberal hegemonic order”, and ”American-led liberal world order”.7[29] He himself prefers ”American World Order”, modelled after John King Fairbank’s concept of the ”Chinese World Order”8 – which is a subtle reference to the presupposed decline, as a historically earlier model for naming is used. This list of names is rather miscellaneous; some of them appear to refer to economics, some to ideology, some to an alliance structure, while some to geography, and their geographical scope is unclear, but definitely not the same. This indicates the difficulty of conceptualizing the situation, but that is a problem of the phenomenon, not that of the names. The phenomenon simply is difficult to measure in any clearcut way, and the elements change continuously over time.

Another way to try to conceptualize the situation more metaphorically so that we would not be tied up with specific ideological meanings would be to understand it as a kind feudal system, 9 because it represents in its general form of administration a medieval kingdom, not in any sense limited to Europe. Because of the slowness of historical communication systems – the fastest ones being horse, camel, smoke signs etc. – a medieval king was not able to rule all of his kingdom directly. The polity was divided into a number of fiefs, where various kinds of vassals, military commanders, dukes and barons ruled domestically as they pleased, but the king took care of overall control of the situation as well as foreign policy, including issues of war and peace. Most of the economic and military power lied in the fiefs, which made them relatively independent in their own affairs. If we apply the metaphor to the American empire, considering the position of the United States as the king, the grand vassals would be states like Britain, Canada, Japan, Germany, France, Australia, South Korea, Turkey, Israel, and perhaps even China, at least for the time being. The Chinese government tends to be critical of the United States when it interferes in Chinese domestic affairs or somewhere in the geopolitical vicinity of China, but on the world scale China has allowed the United States to rule quite often as it pleases, which can be seen, e.g., in the restrained way it has been exercising its veto in the UN

7 Amitav Acharya (2014) The End of American World Order, Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, Kindle edition, loc. 912.

8 ibid. loc. 145.

9 I have taken the term from Johan Galtung’s (1971) 'Feudal Systems, Structural Violence and the Structural Theory of Revolutions', Proceedings of the IPRA Third Conference, Assen: van Gorcum, though I use it in a different sense. See also Tapani Hietaniemi et al. (1997) Feodalismi. Uuden ajan käsite, keskiajan ilmiö, maailmanhistorian kategoria. Vastapaino: Tampere.

Security Council.10 This structure was established during the Cold War, and during that period China was a major US ally from 1972 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Until very recently it has not in any way challenged the American leadership. A large number of smaller countries from Finland and Norway to Singapore and the Philippines are also essential elements of the structure, even though not at the grand vassal status. Just like medieval vassals, also modern day nation states guard their domestic autonomy, have their own projects, sometimes act against the wishes of the ruler, and sometimes outright oppose him in lesser issues, but when a demand for the unity of the empire becomes preponderant, they tend to join the ranks. The system demands constant persuasion, rewarding, bribing, disciplining and punishing, but as long as all this can be administered, the United States can command an overwhelming part of the military, economic and political resources of the world.[30]

In addition to the inter-state structure itself, international organizations form the venue of the system, and this takes the modern situation outside of the simple feudal metaphor. There is a large amount of them. The United Nations, its Security Council, NATO, G20, G7, World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), East Asia Summit (EAS), Asia Pacific Cooperation (APEC), European Union, Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), etc. are some of the principal ones. Some of them are regional, some are global in their scope. The United States is a member of most of them, and likewise most of them have been created by the United States, though of course in cooperation with other states. Even the establishment of the United Nations was negotiated in the United States, and its main institutions are located there. Some of them were created by other states, such as the EAS in 2005, but after the United States joined it in 2011, it has dominated the agenda. It can thus embrace or invade organizations not originally made by it. However, the United States is not a member in all of them, such as the EU or ASEM. This does not change the situation, because many of its grand vassals are dominating members in these organizations, and that determines their general policies.11 The feudal structure can thus be seen as dominating via member states, and the organizational structure can be considered as secondary in the system. The agendas of these organizations are usually set up by the United States, though various individual items can be added by other states. The legal and customary norms of the world system are created within them, funding is allocated to various undertakings, and various administrative tasks are carried through by them. International organizations form the bureaucracy of the American empire.

Everything does not always work. There are various post- World War II organizations created by the US that no longer are functional, such as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (1954) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) (1955), which were rejected outright by India and Indonesia, criticized by many others, and faded away long ago. This phenomenon of unsuccessful organizations has been increasing lately. Progress of the WTO has stalled, as the Doha Round, started in 2001, has not been able to come to a conclusion. The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), launched in 1994, has been frozen since 2005. In both cases the reason is the heightened demands for justice as seen from their point of view of many rapidly developing countries. The Six Party Talks over North Korean nuclear programme ran from 2003 to 2009, but it was simply terminated by North Korea, and that was it. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which pointedly excluded China, was a series of trade negotiations initiated by a group of small Pacific countries in 2005. It was taken over by the United States

10 https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/102-tables-andcharts/32810-changing-patterns-in-the-use-of-the-veto-in-the-security-council.html

11 Davis B. Bobrow, The US and ASEM: why the hegemon didn't bark, The Pacific Review (12: 1, 1999 103-128); Davis B. Bobrow, Hegemony Management: the US in the Asia-Pacific, The Pacific Review (12: 2, 1999, 173-197).

in 2008, and its negotiations came to a fruitful conclusion in 2016. However, ratification of the treaty looks impossible at the moment because of the criticism heaped on it during the US presidential election campaigning in 2016. [31]

Likewise, its sister organization, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), started between the US and EU in 2013, is in serious trouble. All these newer failures are indicators that the power of the United States to initiate and carry to successful fruition of new international organizations has weakened; not because it itself has become weaker, but because other states have become so much stronger that they forcefully drive their own agendas during the negotiations. This situation has reached even the traditional nucleus organization of NATO, where Turkey clearly is driven by its own agenda in Syria, and the mission of the organization in Europe itself has been seriously questioned after the realization that NATO would be more or less unable to defend the Baltic states against a Russian invasion, and might be even more unable to defend Finland, if it wanted to join the organization one day.12 Russia has filled the Kaliningrad enclave with both conventional and nuclear missiles, as well as artillery, capable of defending against NATO attempts to transport troops and supplies to the eastern and northern Baltic Sea. If NATO's fifth article cannot be trusted any more, the organization itself becomes questionable, and if the United States needs militarily more from its allies than it is willing to give, they will find the alliance less appealing. Another thing that is changing is understanding of the concept of the West. This may be a more fundamental change than what is taking place with NATO, but also much slower and less easy to notice. Already in 2008 Fabienne Darling-Wolf noticed a tendency by US authors to limit their discussion of the concept of the West only to the United States, or in other words, to equate the West and the United States. An extension of this tendency is the admittance of Britain within the concept, but there was a clearly observable lack of interest and attention to anything outside of this narrow sphere.13 This of course was rather surprising for a French observer. [32]

A similar observation concerning the English language sphere has been made also more recently by Marko Lehti.14 The United States and Europe have slowly been drifting apart since the end of the Cold War 25 years ago, but it must be emphasized that the movement is not rapid, and has not yet advanced very far. There appears, nevertheless, to be a mutual tendency to forget, or to pay less attention to, what is taking place at the other side of the Atlantic, or even at the other side of the English Channel. Brexit is likely to increase this tendency over the coming years, just like problems with NATO or TTIP also do it. From an American perspective Europe may be slowly fusing together with the concept of the mystical and misty East – and this certainly does not help with the maintenance of the administrative structure of the American world empire.

What is happening in the geopolitical peripheries of imperial formations is as important as what is happening in the centre, because movements there are indicative of the cohesiveness of the whole structure. The smaller states are sometimes subsumed under the concept of buffer states, implying that they serve as passive cushions between empires preventing for a time the break-out of hostilities between them. They are thought to follow a policy of neutrality, trying to

12 David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson (2015) Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank. Wargaming the Defence of the Baltics. RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf

13 Fabienne Darling-Wolf (2008) 'Getting Over Our "Illusion d'Optique": From Globalization to Mondialisation (Through French Rap)', in Communication Theory, vol. 18, Issue 2, pp. 187-209

14 Marko Lehti (2016) 'Rappion viehätys ja sivilisaatioajattelun paluu 2000-luvulla', in Jukka Jouhki & Henna-Riikka Pennanen (eds.) Länsi: Käsite, kertomus ja maailmankuva, Helsinki: SKS, 41-62.

15 Rudolf Kjellén (1919) *Valtio elinmuotona. Politiikan käsikirja*, Hämeenlinna: Arvi A. Karisto, p. 95.

balance between the empires, but the life of buffer states is often believed to be nasty, brutish and short, destined to be subjugated before long by either of the empires. There are of course lots of historical examples of the disappearance of small states, but so there are also examples of collapses of empires. Size is not decisive here. Development of the buffer state concept is usually associated with classical continental European geopolitical theory, but if one actually reads it, such as Rudolf Kjellén's Staten som livsform, the concept turns out to be more varied. A smaller state between empires that is unified and has a high degree of domestic cohesion preventing foreign utilization of domestic fault lines, can be situated in a rather favourable position. Empires imply large markets, which means that states in between are situated on the paths of trade flows, reaping benefits from the situation.15 Even if the empires themselves would not trade with each other, they might both offer access to their economies for a neutral country between them on favourable terms between them in order to win its favour.

Switzerland is the example par excellance of this kind of neutral state between empires, independent and rich for centuries. When we think of Finland, Sweden and Austria, which during the Cold War kept themselves neutral and enriched themselves by trading to all directions, after the Cold War ended all three rather quickly joined the EU in 1995 and in this sense moved towards the American empire, but even during the height of the unipolar moment of US supremacy at the turn of the millennium they were not willing to join NATO, even though they became Partnership for Peace members – but so did also Russia. At the same time they have also maintained a fairly high defence posture.16 Neutrality between empires is in many ways an attractive position.

Now that the unipolar moment is way past, and the world situation is becoming increasingly multipolar, the number of countries starting to move within the space between empires is also increasing, indicating a loosened grip of the United States, and also that of the European Union. They do this by emphasizing their national sovereignty, which implies that they are not bound by any foreign imperial powers. Hungary, an EU country and a NATO member state, is a typical player of this game, with the prime minister Viktor Orbán regularly admonishing the EU for infringements of Hungarian sovereignty, while Hungary simultaneously enjoys large flows of EU subsidies.17 At the same time Orbán is on good terms with Russia, and Hungary is able to buy Russian gas with lowered prices. It is easy to find states that have started to operate in the middle space between empires in this way. The Russian state sponsored propaganda journals like Sputnik News and RT (Russia Today) write a lot of these states, and in an approving manner. This does not imply that these states would have become allies of Russia. What they do is that they accentuate their national sovereignty in the neutral space within empires, and extract benefits from all possible directions.[33]

Turkey is another example. Turkish-Russian relations went cold after Turkey's air force shot down a Russian military fighter in Syria in 24 November 2015, but after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan apologized in June the relationship started to heal. Then President Putin's special envoy, the geopolitician Alexandr Dugin visited Ankara on the eve of the mysterious military

16 Tuomas Forsberg (2013): The rise of Nordic defence cooperation: a return to regionalism? International Affairs 89: 5, pp. 1161–1181; Petteri Paulaharju (2016) Suomi: läntinen Pohjoismaa vai pohjoismainen länsimaa? Pohjoismainen turvallisuusrakennelma suomalaisessa turvallisuusnarratiivissa vuosina 1995-2012. Pro gradu. Jyväskylän
yliopisto, valtio-oppi.

17 Tim McNamara (2014) Is Hungary's Viktor Orban a miniature Vladimir Putin?, Policy Review, **http://www.policyreview.eu/is-hungarys-viktor-orban-a-miniature-vladimirputin/** 18 Ulusa Kanal (14 Jul 2016) Putin'in Özel Temsilcisi Alexandr Dugin, Ankara'da https://youtu.be/QNQo6dHOG4U

19 Katehon (15 Jul 2016) Alexander Dugin Gave a Press Conference in Ankara, http://katehon.com/news/alexander-dugin-gave-press-conference-ankara

coup attempt in 14 July 2016, giving also a press conference,18 where he stated that "Turkey and Russia have the same enemy - first of all it is US hegemony and radical islamic terrorism as its instrument".19 Turkey and Russia are now warm friends, and even Russian gas will start streaming through Turkey in the future.20 Yet, Turkey is still a member of NATO, continues membership negotiations with the EU, and the president conducts his domestic policies as he sees fit. Turkey's leadership is exploiting the middle space to the full. This could hardly have happened during the strictly bipolar Cold War, nor during the American unipolar moment. This is a phenomenon of the current multipolar constellation. Turkey is also waging its own independent war in Syria, but whether this implies a project for recreating a part of the Ottoman empire and changing Turkey's the status from that of a medium sized peripheral state into an empire of its own right, which would fit well with the Duginist project for Russia,21 remains to be seen.[34]

Very similar movements can be observed in Asia. One of the more dramatic examples is the actions of the new president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, both domestically and in terms of foreign policy. He gave a very interesting interview to the Russian RT journal, where he praised both the Russian and Chinese leaders, announcing that he is moving closer to them, while heavily attacking the United States, a former colonizer and present moral critic of the Philippines. Also he strongly declared that the Philippines is a sovereign state, and that he wants to have relationships with a lot of countries, not only with a few ones. Yet, he did not imply ending the alliance with the United States, only increasing his space of maneuvering.22 As a result, the trade, aid and investment relationship between China and the Philippines is booming now.23 It would be very difficult for the next US president to change the situation, but the situation might turn even more difficult for the United States if he does not try, as it would have repercussions on the USASEAN relationship.24

Another state that has a long history of balancing between big powers is of course North Korea. It is probably the most sovereign state in the world. It is also extremely repressive, militarized, and totalitarian, but that may be a necessity for a small state trying to act independently surrounded by China, the United States, Russia, Japan, and its much stronger southern neighbour. Its ability to carry on with its nuclear, missile and satellite programmes despite continuous and gradually deepening international sanctions organized by the United States, South Korea and Japan, and to some extent, though reluctantly, 25 accepted also by China and Russia, would not be possible without the arrival of the multipolar era. As North Korea's relations with the rest of the world are being gradually strangled by the UN sanctions and South Korean diplomatic offensive, China still continues to be the main export and import market for North Korea. China apparently does this in order to prevent it from collapsing and thus keep possible American influence away from its borders. Korean unification on current South Korean terms would not be acceptable to China.26[35]

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20 Sputnik (6 Dec 2016) Erdogan Signs Bill to Ratify Turkish Stream Gas Pipeline Project, https://sputniknews.com/business/201612061048209162-erdogan-signs-turkish-stream/

21 John B. Dunlop (2003) Aleksandr Dugin's Foundations of Geopolitics, http://www.4pt.su/en/content/aleksandr-dugin's-foundations-geopolitics

22 RT Documentary (29 Nov 2016) Exclusive interview with Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, https://youtu.be/b7WeLgKWvyA

23 People's Daily (24 November 2016) China-Philippines ties, cooperation in new development period, http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/1124/c90000-9146663.html

24 Kavi Chongkittavorn (27 Nov 2016) Trump's response to Duterte's game-changer in Asia, East Asia Forum, http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/11/27/trumps-response-todutertes-game-changer-in-asia/

25 Ji Dagyum (18 Nov 2016) Chinese experts cast doubt on North Korea sanctions. Different long-term goals between China, U.S, South Korea have delayed UN Resolution. NK News, https://www.nknews.org/2016/11/chinese-experts-cast-doubt-on-northkorea-sanctions/

There is movement not only away from the United States controlled alliances, but also within the ostensibly solid Russia-China bilateral relationship. Russia and Japan have during the last couple of year sought a deeper relationship with each other, both of them hedging against China, while Japan has simultaneously created operational space for itself in respect to the United States. The leaders of both countries have met several times during the past years, and Japan has not placed any sanctions against Russia because of its occupation of Crimea and war in Ukraine, unlike the EU and the US. Prime minister Abe Shinzo has also announced that he would like to see Japan as Russia's gateway to Asia, instead of, or in addition to, China.27 Various kinds of scientific and energy related agreements have been made between the states recently, and Putin is planned to visit Japan in December 2016. As a Russian commentator put it, the fact that Japan and Russia are suddenly getting surprisingly well along with each other, means that "the stark fact that US alliances can no longer be considered 'ironclad' has now been laid bare".28

What does all this mean for the role of the United States in current world politics? If even grand vassals like Japan start moving independently, looking for new partners from directions that were not possible during the bipolar period and the unipolar moment, it necessarily creates cracks in the administrative structure of the American world empire. At the same time European are restless or already moving on their own at the other end of the landmass. As the American made structure loosens up, more states will be willing to follow the path taken by Japan, North Korea, the Philippines, Turkey, Hungary and others, namely asserting national sovereignty and sending prime ministers and presidents travelling to seldom visited capitals. The two processes nourish each other – but that does not necessarily mean a rapidly escalating process. This kind of movements tend to create also tensions and conflicts, which make the free space of movement narrower. Much depends of course on the United States, whether its new leadership after 20 January 2017 decides to concentrate on US domestic affairs and let the empire gradually unravel, or actively try to regain it. Amitav Acharya's rather optimistic idea of a relatively multiplex world, rather than a multipolar world, might be the result in the former case. By the metaphor of multiplex Acharya means a number of different shows going on in the world simultaneously, apparently around regional big powers, the United States being only one among them, just like there can be several different movies running in a modern cinema complex. 29 He predicts that "the decline of the American World Order might even be good – both for America and for the rest of the world,"30 and rests his optimism on the idea regionalism and regional interdependence being able to form a new structure of world management. [36]

Maybe. The United States could also try to hold on its empire by instigating a large scale conflict, but the benefits of that kind of action, even if it would be possible, are doubtful. At the moment there probably are no other states capable of trying to create any kind of world hegemony, so that Acharya's regionalist world model could be a viable possibility. If so, then the metaphorical role of the United States could be that of an aging cowboy contemplating

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26 Andrei Lankov (2016) Tigers and Bears: Saying the Unthinkable about Unification, No publishing place: NK News.

27 Emily Tamkin (6 Dec 2016) Putin and Abe Are Hoping to Forge Closer Russia-Japan Ties, Foreign Policy, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/12/06/putin-and-abe-are-hoping-to-forgecloser-russia-japan-ties/

28 Artyom Lukin (2 Dec 2016) What does the Trump and Putin relationship mean for Asia? East Asia Forum, http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/12/02/53330/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter2016-12-04

29 Acharya (2014), loc 227.

30 ibid. loc. 207.

retirement, and preparing for a pensioner's life in a log cabin on the edge the North American prairies. Could this possibly be an attractive role for the new US leadership - which appears to be of rather advanced age?

MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ 1883
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