



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND PRC AS CIVILIZATION-STATES IN THE FORMATION OF A NEW WORLD ORDER AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the United States and the People's Republic of China as civilization-states shaping the emerging multipolar world order and global security architecture. Drawing on a civilizational approach, the study argues that the foreign policy behavior of both powers is rooted not only in material capabilities but also in deeply embedded historical, philosophical, and cultural foundations. The United States, as the leader of Western civilization, demonstrates patterns of expansionism, hegemonic stability, and competitive "zero-sum" logic, comparable to those of Ancient Rome. In contrast, China represents a continuous civilizational tradition emphasizing harmony, collectivism, soft power, and integration within existing international structures. The article examines official doctrines, strategic documents, and expert assessments from both sides to explain the growing strategic rivalry between Washington and Beijing. It concludes that current tensions stem primarily from divergent civilizational worldviews and security perceptions rather than from immediate hostile actions, making U.S.-China relations a key determinant of global stability in the new world order.

KEYWORDS: *United States, China, Civilization-State, Global Security, New World Order, Multipolarity, Strategic Rivalry, Foreign Policy.*

INTRODUCTION

Today, due to the sharp increase in turbulence in the system of international relations, the question arises of the prospects for its transformation, taking into account the rise of alternative centers of power of the USA, primarily China. It is clear that, taking into account the military, economic, and technological potential of the United States, as well as the rapid strengthening of the PRC in each of these spheres, which is rapidly catching up with Washington in a number of key indicators, both of these states will play a very important role both in the current system of international relations and in the emerging new world order, which, with a high probability, will be based on the ideas of multipolarity.

This means that in such a configuration, the system will largely depend not only on the relationship between the centers of power, in this case the US and China, but also on what foreign policy line they will generally pursue. In this regard, it is important not only to be able to predict their behavior in the international arena but also to identify the deep foundations from which it stems, which will allow for a more accurate understanding of the players' motivation and aspirations.

It seems that fundamentally, the behavior of great powers is largely shaped not only by specific geopolitical realities "at the moment," but also by some more abstract factors. First and foremost, belonging to a particular civilization.

In the case of the USA, we are talking about Western civilization, in the case of China - Chinese civilization itself.

MAIN PART

To begin, from a civilizational perspective, the United States of America can be considered as a state that has occupied one of

the dominant positions in the world for quite a long time. This will allow us to more clearly see the important patterns of their behavior and draw appropriate conclusions from it.

The USA, due to its potential remaining after the end of the Cold War, is also a clear center of power in the next world system. This country belongs to Western civilization and acts as its leader. In historical terms, the USA is a young state. However, considering its position in Western civilization, as well as its cultural origins, we can say that the United States is not a new phenomenon in history.

From a philosophical and historical point of view, Western civilization is largely nothing more than the result of the development of its foundation - the Roman Empire. It was ancient Rome that was the driving force behind the development of the West in the classical sense, shaped its civilizational foundations, and gave its main characteristics - expansionism, pragmatism, the cult of democracy and individualism under the dominance of private property, the archetype of the empire as an ideal of civilization and order.

Based on this, it can be argued that the United States, as a leading state of Western civilization (created on a Roman foundation), inherited some features of Roman civilization, including in terms of behavior in the international arena and foreign policy philosophy.

Upon closer examination, one can indeed find many similarities between the USA and Ancient Rome in virtually all spheres. They are quite significant in terms of their influence on the behavior of the state, and therefore deserve analysis. Let's draw the key parallels:



Ideological Foundation. It is known that the expansion of Ancient Rome stemmed from a special ideological basis: the spread of civilization and the maintenance of order in their territories in contrast to the "barbarism" of the surrounding world. Similar theses in modern form are also being broadcast by the modern United States, which declares as its historical mission the spread of democracy and the maintenance of "rules-based order" as a "world gendarme," as well as the fight against "authoritarian regimes." Both in ancient Rome and the USA, the influence of the ideology of exclusivity is noticeable.

Internal Policy and State Structure. Both the USA and Ancient Rome began their development as confederate states, where the system of power and state structure was based on the principle of separation of powers and a complex system of checks and balances. Both states, formed on the ideals of republicanism and democracy, considered their own models of government to be the best. In both cases, a bipartisan internal political system emerged with trends toward populism and large political clans, as well as sharp political polarization.

Foreign Policy Toolkit. Like Ancient Rome, the United States is building its foreign policy in an aggressive manner, striving to encompass the entire system of international relations within its sphere of influence. Both states are expansionist in nature and use similar methods, forming a broad network of "unions" ("socii" in the case of Rome and US allies within NATO and other alliances).

Furthermore, the ancient Romans and modern Americans place significant emphasis on "soft power": countries and peoples entering the framework of Roman or American systems (Pax Romana and Pax Americana) undergo a process of "absorbing" culture to varying degrees - Romanization and Americanization, respectively. Moreover, Rome and the USA, at a certain stage, became drivers of the globalization process, allowing them to direct social and cultural development on a global scale.

Position in the system of international relations. Both states, at the peak of their development, occupied the same place in the corresponding systems of international relations. Their peak period (in the case of the USA - the era immediately after the end of the Cold War) represented a single-polar system with a single superpower maintaining peace and order in its own understanding of these terms. In essence, this represents what the American researcher R. Gilpin called "hegemonic stability."¹ Accordingly, Rome and the USA have similar patterns of behavior and development within the system (for example, harsh suppression of any alternative development centers), and at a certain point, they began to face similar problems.

Thus, considering the civilizational connection between Ancient Rome and the USA, the common patterns of behavior and development, the similar ideology and position in the

world, one can draw some conclusions about the characteristics of the United States arising from this connection. As a leader of Western civilization, the USA is characterized by expansionism, political and social individualism, a linear and progressive approach to development, a competitive view of the world, including international relations.

Chinese civilization is another center of power on the planet. Located in the East, it is based on completely different principles than the West. Sometimes they are completely opposite to each other, which leads to completely different behavior and worldview.

Unlike the USA, the modern PRC is a direct continuation of the ancient Chinese civilization. Beijing's actions in the field of foreign policy largely stem from Chinese philosophy, and therefore, fundamentally, its approaches and set of means for achieving foreign policy goals largely inherit those formed in ancient China. From this perspective, the Chinese demonstrate consistency - despite various historical transformations, the main distinctive features and characteristics of the Chinese foreign policy style have been preserved for centuries. The role of the PRC as one of the civilizational states and a center of power is such that it suggests some similarities with the Roman Empire, although there are very deep differences between these two centers that do not allow for direct comparison. This can be revealed and demonstrated through the analysis of China's civilizational characteristics.

Self-Identification as a Great Civilization. Ancient China developed in conditions of coexistence with peoples who were noticeably inferior to it in terms of development. Along with constant raids on Chinese lands, this led to the formation of the "Chinese and Barbarians" dichotomy, according to which China is the center of all civilization and order in a chaotic world, and therefore represents a unique phenomenon in world history with a special status and historical mission.

A special philosophy regarding the environment. These same factors, among other things, led to the establishment in Chinese civilization of a special view of relations with surrounding peoples. China's goal was also to expand the reach of civilization, but this did not involve crude expansion or subjugation of its neighbors. Instead, China sought to "harmonize" the political space around itself through a system of "nominal vassalage," while the military aspect of foreign policy was not as high a priority as it was for Ancient Rome².

Another feature follows from this - China's active use of "soft power" in foreign affairs. The philosophical foundation of his behavior was based on the concept of "benevolence" ("de"), which the Chinese emperor, receiving it from Heaven, must extend both to his immediate subjects and to the whole world³.

Collectivism. Unlike European countries and the USA, China does not exhibit pronounced individualism. Since in the

¹ История Германии. Учебное пособие: В 3 т. Т. 2. От создания Германской империи до начала XXI века // Отв. ред. Ю.В.Галактионов. М., 2008. С. 335, 343.

² Непомин О.Ф. Внешнеполитическая доктрина традиционного Китая // Восточный курьер. №3-4. Т. 2021. С. 4.

³ Васильев Л.С. Культы, религии, традиции в Китае. М.: Восточная литература, 2001. С. 112.



Chinese worldview, great importance is attached to hierarchy and relationships between people, it can be said that the opposite approach - collectivism - prevails. This is reflected not only in public life but also in politics - China traditionally approaches international affairs as participation in a well-established system, where each element has its own special significance and role, which contrasts with the West's inherent desire for direct dominance. Similar ideas are voiced in the strategic documents of modern China - the Global Civilization Initiative⁴ and the Global Security Initiative⁵.

China's Vision and Action

Chinese political scientists assess the dynamics and prospects of relations between the US and the PRC differently. Conventionally, they can be divided into several schools, the main ones being "optimistic" and "pessimistic," while today most experts maintain moderately optimistic positions.

Thus, the president of the Chinese University of Foreign Affairs, Wang Fan, in 2018 (that is, during the first US presidency of D. Trump and the "trade war" between the US and China)⁶ expressed the opinion that the development trends of the global system are generally favorable for China. He believed that reducing the potential gap between the United States and China creates an additional "space for maneuvering" for Beijing, especially given the gradual weakening of Washington. At the same time, it is argued that a clash between great powers in modern conditions is unlikely.

Another Chinese expert, Liu Jianfei, expressed the opinion⁷ that relations with the USA are irreplaceable in the context of implementing the Chinese concept of "the common destiny of humanity," at the same time characterizing the need to "achieve cooperation" with the United States in the implementation of this foreign policy project as "a difficult moment of Chinese diplomacy in the new era." In addition, in modern conditions, large countries, according to Liu Jianfei, are not inclined to conflict due to the need to maintain strategic balance.

At the same time, due to the gradual change in the US's position towards China, the possibility of rivalry is increasingly being voiced among Chinese political scientists. However, they often interfere in attempts to formulate a way to avoid confrontation between the two countries.

⁴ *Things to Know About China's Global Civilization Initiative* // Xinhua. April 2, 2024 // URL: <https://english.news.cn/20240402/3f78dd8f8e68479199bfb3cc32a4ff81/c.html> (accessed 02.01.2026)

⁵ Full Text: *The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper* // Xinhua. February 21, 2023 // URL: <https://english.news.cn/20230221/75375646823e4060832c760e00a1e19/c.html> (accessed 02.01.2026)

⁶ Wang Fan. *Recognizing and Maintaining the Period of Strategic Opportunity for Development* // *China International Studies*. 2018. November/December. №73. P. 26-41.

⁷ 刘建飞, *新时代中国外交战略中的中美关系, 美国研究*. 2018. №2. P. 9-18 [Liu Jianfei. *Sino-US Relations in China's Diplomatic Strategy in the New Era* // *The Chinese Journal of American Studies*. 2018. №2. P. 9-18 (in Chin.)].

For example, Ten Jianqun⁸, Director of the Institute of America at the Chinese Academy of International Affairs, believes that the United States tried to "regulate" China's development, and after the futility of such an approach became clear, began to view Beijing as a strategic rival, which demonstrates Washington's overestimation of its capabilities in foreign policy. At the same time, China will pursue a policy of avoiding rivalry, which, according to the researcher, may lead to a change in US policy and their return to mutually beneficial cooperation. The expert also points out that in order to prevent the collapse of relations between the two powers into confrontation in the PRC, it is necessary to form a "new thinking."

It is also emphasized that China has no intention of destroying the existing world order, but rather seeks to integrate more deeply into it. This idea is expressed, in particular, by Shao Yuqun⁹, an expert at the Center for American Studies at the Shanghai Institute of International Studies. Regarding the United States, he expresses the opinion that, although the idea that China's engagement policy has failed has gradually become established in Washington, there is still no full consensus among American elites on the need to pursue a tough anti-Chinese policy.

The attitude towards peaceful coexistence and cooperation is clearly visible in the position of the PRC's direct leadership, which remains stable and consistent for many years even in changing international conditions. Thus, in 2013, Xi Jinping proposed to the USA and China to build "relations of a new type," which would be based on cooperation and "seeking common ground while maintaining disagreements,"¹⁰ that is, equal relations without unhealthy competition and confrontation. At that time, China's proposal was essentially ignored.

With the rise of the Biden administration, China continued its course towards minimizing risks in relations with Washington. In November 2024, during a meeting with US President Xi Jinping in Peru, he stated that "the rivalry of major powers should not be the backdrop of an era," and the development of relations between the two states is linked to the shared destiny of all humanity¹¹.

⁸ 滕建群, *美国对华“战略竞争”探析, 当代世界*. 2018. №12. P. 23-27 [Teng Jianqun. *Analysis of American «Strategic Competition» with China* // *Contemporary World*. 2018. №12. P. 23-27 (in Chin.)].

⁹ 邵育群, *“对华接触失败论”之后是什么? , 国际关系研究*. 2018. №1. P. 35-41 [Shao Yuqun. *What Would Be the Next after the Failure of the Argument to Contact with China?* // *Journal of International Relations*. 2018. №1. P. 35-41 (in Chin.)].

¹⁰ Си Цзиньпин призвал к созданию с США отношений между крупными державами нового типа // *Жэньминь жибао*. 15.04.2013 // URL: <http://russian.people.com.cn/31521/8206746.html>

¹¹ Соперничество крупных держав не должно быть фоном эпохи, заявил Си Цзиньпин // *РИА Новости*. 17.11.2024 // URL: <https://ria.ru/20241117/sopernichestvo-1984213622.html>



U.S. Vision and Action

Now we can analyze the position of the United States. It differs significantly from the Chinese approach, representing a rather clear application of the realistic approach to international relations. This is combined with the gradual transition from the policy of "involving China" in the American-centric system to the formation of the image of a "strategic enemy" in the person of Beijing. Today, it is precisely the idea of restraint and competition with the PRC that dominates in American politics.

As already noted, China attempted to build a new type of relationship with the United States as early as 2013. These attempts failed to produce the desired result, although relations between the two countries were not yet overtly strained. However, even then, it was clear that US strategic goals vis-à-vis China did not envision completely peaceful coexistence.

Thus, as early as 2005, the American political scientist J. Mearsheimer expressed doubts about China's intentions in declaring the course towards "peaceful elevation." In an article for "The Australian," the expert predicted that¹² if economic development trends persist in the coming decades, US-China relations could transition to a "intense security competition" format with the risk of military action, as the strengthening China will likely attempt to establish its own hegemony in its native region.

In 2015 (that is, two years after Xi Jinping's proposal), a senior researcher at the Hudson Institute (activities deemed undesirable in Russia) E. Krepinevich wrote an article for "Foreign Affairs" titled "How to Curb China"¹³. In it, an American expert claim that China's peace-loving policy is merely a cover, while in reality, the PRC is a "revisionist power" with expansionist goals. This, according to the author, forces the US to plan containment measures, including military ones - it should be prepared to limit the actions of the Chinese Navy, as well as be able to support allies in the event of a military conflict in the Pacific region.

In 2020, American political scientist R. Kaplan, in an article for the Foreign Affairs journal,¹⁴ stated that the competition between the US and China is not, in essence, a consequence of ideological disagreements, and that in American politics, a common view of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party regarding China has developed. According to it, the PRC poses a clear threat to the position of the United States.

¹² Mearsheimer J. *The Rise of China Will Not Be Peaceful at All // The Australian*. November 18, 2005 // URL: <https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Australian-November-18-2005.pdf> (accessed 01.01.2026).

¹³ Krepinevich A. *How to Deter China: The Case for Archipelagic Defence // Foreign Affairs*. February 16, 2015 // URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-02-16/how-deter-china> (accessed 01.01.2026).

¹⁴ Kaplan D. *The Ideology Delusion: America's Competition with China Is Not About Doctrine // Foreign Affairs*. September 4, 2020 // URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-09-04/ideology-delusion> (accessed 01.01.2025).

¹⁵ *National Security Strategy // Washington, DC: White House*. December 8, 2017. P. 2 // URL:

<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> (accessed 01.01.2025).

With the coming to power of the D. Trump administration in 2017, the US took an openly hostile position towards China not at the level of expert assessments, but quite formally. Thus, the 2017 US National Security Strategy states that "China and Russia are challenging American power, influence, and interests, attempting to undermine US security and prosperity,"¹⁵ as well as that "China has expanded its power through the sovereignty of other countries"¹⁶.

The full picture reflecting the US's view of the rising China is seen in the analysis of the National Security Strategy and another document - the National Defense Strategy. Under the administration of D. Trump, its new edition was published in 2018. One of the main themes of the document is formulated as follows: "Interstate strategic rivalry, and not terrorism, is now the main problem of US national security"¹⁷. Within the framework of this logic, it says the following about the PRC: "China uses military modernization, influence projection operations, and predatory economic tools to force neighboring countries to rebuild the Indo-Pacific region to its advantage"¹⁸.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The US did not limit itself to declarations and formulations in strategic documents. As early as 2018, D. Trump announced the introduction of 25% tariffs on a number of goods from China, initiating a so-called trade war between Washington and Beijing, which responded with similar measures. In addition, the US announced restrictions on one of China's largest technology companies, Huawei, as well as SMIC, a microchip manufacturing company. All of this aligned with the logic of the need to curb China's technological and economic development as a potential competitor to the US, even in the absence of hostile actions from the Chinese side. With the rise of J. Biden to power in the United States, it initially seemed that tensions between the two countries had subsided. Thus, a number of contacts were carried out, including negotiations between the leaders of the USA and China in San Francisco (2023) and Lima (2024). The parties made rather accurate statements, for example, Biden said that "the United States and China must ensure that their competition does not escalate into conflict"¹⁹. Xi Jinping, in turn, reiterated the thesis that China is not seeking to change the existing international order. At the same time, economic and technological competition between countries has not ceased. In the military sphere, tensions intensified after the creation of the AUKUS military bloc in

<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> (accessed 01.01.2025).

¹⁶ *Ibid*. P. 25.

¹⁷ *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy // US Department of Defense*. May 18, 2020. P. 1 // URL: <https://media.defense.gov/2020/May/18/2002302061/-1/-1/2018-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-SUMMARY.PDF> (accessed 01.01.2025).

¹⁸ *Ibid*. P. 2.

¹⁹ Байден: США и Китай должны гарантировать, что их конкуренция не перерастет в конфликт // ТАСС. 15.10.2023 // URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/19293983>



2021. Moreover, in 2022, relations between China and the USA became even more strained after the provocative visit of US House Speaker N. Pelosi to Taiwan.

From the point of view of strategic documents, the former attitude towards confrontation has also been preserved. The National Security Strategy, published in 2022, stated: "We will modernize and strengthen our armed forces so that they are ready for the era of strategic rivalry with great powers²⁰." Naturally, the US considers China to be one of the key powers in this context. At the same time, the National Defense Strategy (2022) further strengthened this thesis: "The Ministry of Defense will act decisively to maintain and strengthen strategic restraint against the PRC, which is the main challenge in the sphere of responsibility of the Ministry of Defense²¹."

CONCLUSION

Thus, it is evident that the US consciously chose a course of confrontation with China as a rising power, viewing the strengthening of the PRC as a threat to its own position. Based on the presented comparison, it can be seen that this is not a reaction to any clearly unfriendly actions by Beijing itself. Therefore, Washington's aggressive policy can be explained both by its desire to protect its dominant position in the system of international relations and by the civilizational characteristics of the USA described above. In this case, these actions can be summarized as manifestations of Western political expansionism and hegemonism (in the form of suppressing alternative centers of development) and an excessively competitive worldview based on the "zero-sum game" formula.

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