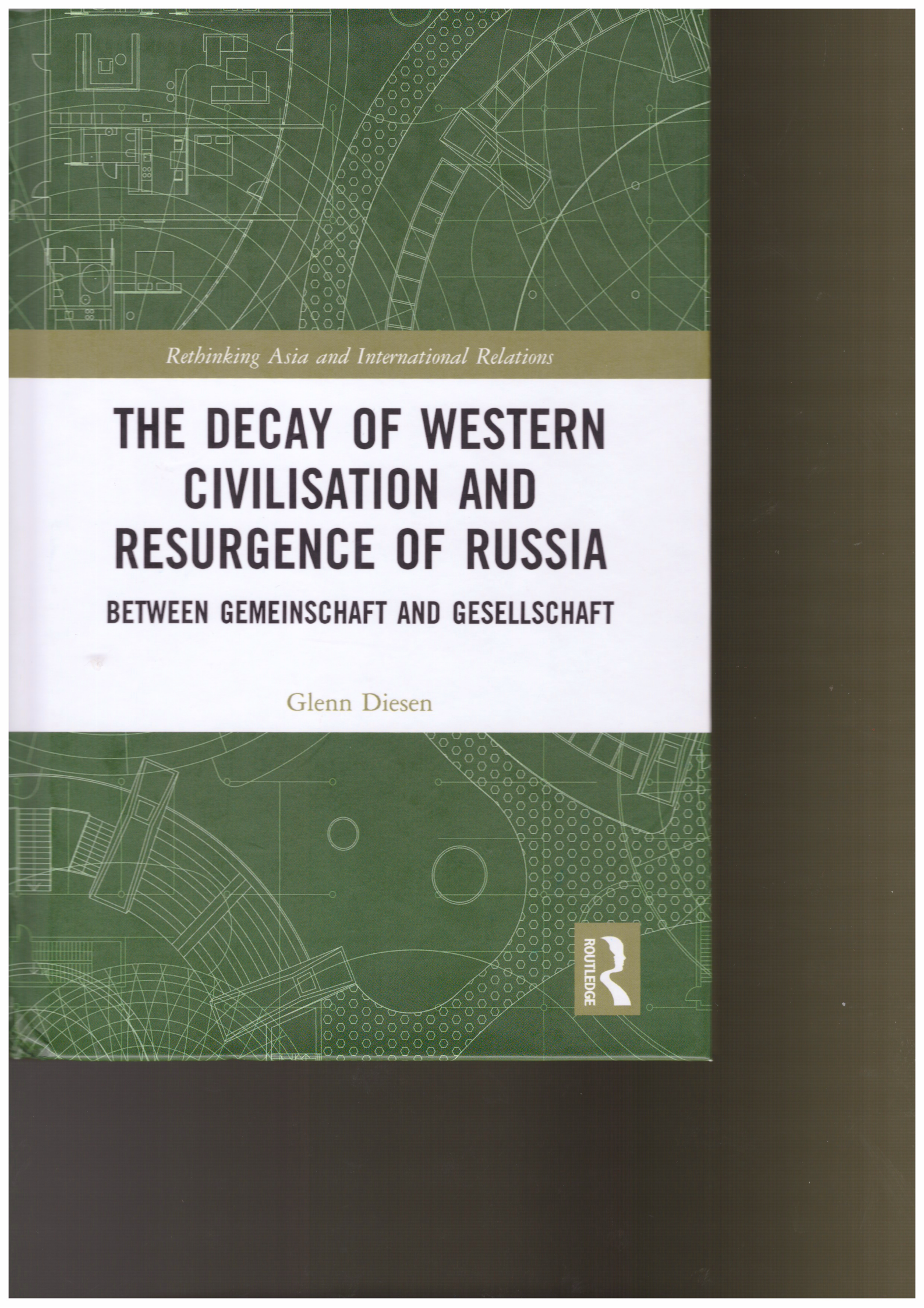


The background of the book cover is a green architectural drawing. It features a complex network of white lines, including straight lines, arcs, and circles. There are several rectangular shapes that look like building footprints or sections. A prominent feature is a large, curved structure on the right side, possibly a bridge or a large building. The drawing is dense and detailed, with many small circles and lines scattered throughout.

Rethinking Asia and International Relations

THE DECAY OF WESTERN CIVILISATION AND RESURGENCE OF RUSSIA

BETWEEN GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT

Glenn Diesen



'Dr Diesen's book is a rare specimen of intellectual courage, even bravery. It is also very well researched and a pleasure to read. Dealing with a difficult and ideologized subject, the author is able to stay analytical. One of the best works in political philosophy written in recent years. A must-read for those trying to understand where the world is moving.' – *Sergei A. Karaganov – Higher School of Economics, Moscow*

'In this exciting and original work, Diesen challenges much of the accepted thinking about global order and the dynamics of international politics today. Diesen provides a powerful critique of post-Cold War liberalism and explains how the rise of populism challenges dominant discourses. In this battle Russia appears to side with the insurgency, but the depth of Russia's commitment to global change is unclear. This book is essential reading in helping us understand the vital issues in this debate.' – *Richard Sakwa – University of Kent*

'The two main questions of our time are whether the liberal West survives and whether it learns to coexist with Russia. In this timely book, Glenn Diesen analyzes the West's ability to recover from the rise of populism and offers a sharp critique of the Western tendency to scapegoat Russia.' – *Andrei P. Tsygankov, San Francisco State University*

'Diesen's *The Decay of Western Civilization* is civilizational analysis on the scale of Spengler or Sorokin. One need not accept Diesen's thesis of decline to appreciate the grandeur of his vision.' – *Salvatore Babones, University of Sydney*

'A very unorthodox, controversial and thought-provoking book. A valuable source helping to understand complex dynamics of political and economic megatrends in the modern world.' – *Andrey Kortunov, Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council*

'In the 20th century, Russia was the model society for the world's communists, but for centuries before that, Russia was the go-to country for Europe's radical conservatives. We are now coming full circle. Diesen's book is of key interest as perhaps the best example of this to date.' – *Iver B. Neumann, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs*

The Decay of Western Civilisation and Resurgence of Russia

What explains the rise of populist movements across the West and their affinity towards Russia? UKIP's Brexit victory, Trump's triumph, and the successive elections and referendums in Europe were united by a repudiation of the liberal international order. These new political forces envision the struggle to reproduce and advance Western civilisation to be fought along a patriotism-cosmopolitanism or nationalism-globalism battlefield, in which Russia becomes a partner rather than an adversary. Armed with neomodernism and geoeconomics, Russia has inadvertently taken on a central role in the decay of Western civilisation.

This book explores the cooperation and competition between Western and Russian civilisation and the rise of anti-establishment political forces both contesting the international liberal order and expressing the desire for closer relations with Russia. Diesen proposes that Western civilisation has reached a critical juncture as modern society (gesellschaft) has overwhelmed and exhausted the traditional community (gemeinschaft) and shows the causes for the decay of Western civilisation and the subsequent impact on cooperation and conflict with Russia. The author also considers whether Russia's international conservatism is authentic and can negate the West's decadence, or if it is merely a shrewd strategy by a rival civilisation also in decay.

This volume will be of interest to scholars of international relations, political science, security studies, international political economy, and Russian studies.

Dr Glenn Diesen is Visiting Scholar at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow and Adjunct Research Fellow at Western Sydney University. Dr Diesen specialises in Russia's approach to European and Eurasian integration, and the dynamics between the two. This includes central topics such as ideology, energy and geoeconomics. He is the author of *EU and NATO Relations with Russia* (Routledge, 2015) and *Russia's Geoeconomic Strategy for a Greater Eurasia* (Routledge, 2017).

Rethinking Asia and International Relations

Series Editor – Emilian Kavalski,
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The Decay of Western Civilisation and Resurgence of Russia

Between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

Glenn Diesen

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To my wife Elena, and our children – Konstantin, Andre, and Maria

*Man, to the degree that he tries to shape his behaviour to the requirements of
civilisation, is unquestionably a cracked vessel. His nature is the scene of a
never-ending and never quite resolvable conflict between two very profound
impulses.*

George Kennan (1993: 17)



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Contents

Introduction 1

PART I

Theorising civilisations

13

1 Civilisations balanced between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* 15

2 The cyclical rise, decline, and rebirth of civilisations 33

PART II

Rise and fall of political liberalism

51

3 Western civilisation as an amalgam of political liberalism and nationhood 53

4 The postmodernist graveyard of Western civilisation 73

PART III

Rise and fall of economic liberalism

93

5 The rise of Western geoeconomics as the tool for *neo-gesellschaft* 95

6 Unconstrained economic liberalism: death of community and society 112

PART IV

Resurgence of Russia: neomodernism and geoeconomics 1297 The geography of Russia's *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* 131

8 Russia's Eurasian resurgence: neomodernism and geoeconomics 146

9 The rise of 'populists' in the West and their affinity towards Russia 164

Conclusion: cooperation and competition in the post-Western world 183

Bibliography 187*Index* 201**Introduction**

In recent times, almost all elections and referendums in the West have become a vote on preserving liberalism. Following Brexit and the triumph of Trump, the elections in Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, and across the continent became unprecedented challenges to the so-called international liberal order that Western civilisation is purportedly built upon. The potential impact is profound as liberalism has become the foundation for internal cohesion in a shared Western civilisation, and the external demarcation by excluding Russia and subsequently perpetuating the ideological binary divide of the Cold War. While the political establishment and media across the West oppose the new movements by attempting to limit the scope of acceptable political opposition, their efforts can at best only postpone the new trend by combating the symptoms rather than the disease. It is the internal contradictions within liberal democracy and *laissez-faire* capitalism that shake the foundation of Western civilisation and create a demand for illiberal alternatives.

Liberalism, the positioning of political and economic freedoms of the individual at the centre, is the greatest achievement and a cornerstone of Western civilisation. The people of the West heightened the intrinsic value of the individual, while incrementally attaining the right to live as they want in terms of their democratic and economic freedoms. The West has developed stable, civil, and dynamic societies. The perpetual need for change and rebirth to avoid stagnation is organised cordially through democratic structures and a dynamic economy. Yet, success has a tendency of producing hubris and a virtue taken to the extreme becomes a vice. All political and economic systems require development and rejuvenation, thus the conviction of having transcended history can condemn the West to live in an eternal present. Increasingly rational societies have toppled unelected and arbitrary feudal and religious structures. Albeit, they are replaced with a secular bureaucracy that does not account for the imperishable and irrational instincts embedded in human nature. Liberal democracy has incrementally mutated society into a hedonistic and nihilistic postmodernist construct that repudiates traditions, norms, societal structures, and the particularities of a civilisation as remnants of a bygone totalitarian past. Economic liberalism relentlessly enhances efficiency to the extent that public regulations, trade unions, cultural particularities, local communities, national identities, kinship, and even

the family unit are assessed by their declining rational utility in complex society. Unconstrained economic competition undercuts traditional social structures that facilitate indispensable human relationships at a rate that civilisation cannot withstand. As history demonstrates, all civilisations eventually outgrow the culture and systems that supported their existence.

The purported rise of 'populism' on both the Left and the Right represents a growing disillusionment within Western societies at the grassroots level that has been harnessed by a variety of political forces. The relatively prosperous, tolerant, civilised, and peaceful West has accumulated unsustainable debt, become fervently divided, disengaged, and never runs out of enemies to bomb. The home of the Statue of Liberty incarcerates more people than any other nation, while technology-fuelled interconnectedness and personal wealth correlates with alarming rates of solitude and suicide. Unhinged individualism, disintegrating families, and the demise of Christianity have hollowed out spirituality, creative life, and the need for inter-personal connectivity in smaller communities. The seven deadly sins in Christianity: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride, are now largely glorified and promoted as an idyllic lifestyle by embracing immediate desires and gratification. The populace is destined to either search for meaning in a society that celebrates violence, dysfunctions, and anti-social behaviour, or distract themselves with drugs, alcohol, anti-depressants, vulgar entertainment, and an obsession with sex, shopping, and consumption. Historically, when a civilisation has been incapable or unwilling to defend and reproduce itself, the people attempt to revive the remnants of the community and even look towards competing civilisations at the periphery for assistance. The self-indulgence and excesses in the final years of Rome were similarly deceptive by giving the impression that the Roman Empire was at its height at a time when its culture was being decimated and subsequently dooming its civilisation to fail.

While the alternative philosophies and policies proposed by the rising political movements across the West may be inconsistent and flawed, their commonality is to represent Hegel's pendulum swing as a reaction to the excesses and intrinsic flaws in liberal democracy and free-market capitalism. With the demise of fascism and communism, only liberalism remained as an ideology of modernity. Francis Fukuyama (1992) argued in *The End of History and the Last Man* that liberal democracy and free-market capitalism remained as the sole ideological alternative. Yet, the victory of liberalism would produce its downfall by being embraced to its fullest extent. The hubris that swept the West after 'winning' the Cold War temporarily brushed over signs of decadence and strengthened ideological convictions about the existence of a single and universal model for political, social, and economic development. Liberal democracy and free-market capitalism are celebrated as dual pillars of the Western political philosophy that has subsequently become the foundation for the contemporary structures of globalisation. The West's embrace of Fukuyama's thesis is indicative of pernicious absolutism as liberalism transitioned from an ideology to an unchallenged truth. Ideology has subsequently become a burden by obstructing insight into the contradictions in human nature.

Recognised since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers, liberalism is characteristically a temporary political system that eventually turns against itself. Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle warned that democracy has a temporary and transitional inclination. The longer a democracy exists, the freer it would become, and it would eventually liberate people from the traditions, laws, and institutions that hold together the community and society. Human beings have organised themselves in hierarchies throughout time, which evolutionary biology has embedded into the nervous system (Peterson 2018). Subsequently, the populace is liberated from the constraints of traditional hierarchies that also endowed life with meaning and order. Liberalism has failed because it functioned too well. Narcissism and nihilism are inescapable when individuals are freed from authority and institutions, as they are only defined by themselves (Deneen 2018). Eventually, democracy turns on itself, as the rule of the majority is construed as a form of totalitarianism that disregards and oppresses the minority. Our contemporary postmodernist era largely reflects these bleak predictions as Western civilisation is on the path to 'liberate' itself by deconstructing both community and society (*gemeinschaft and gesellschaft*).

Unfettered free-market capitalism consumes itself by its excesses. Much like the challenge with liberal democracy, civilisation is sustained and advanced when the state preserves a balance between the traditional/irrational and the modern/rational. Under increasingly complex economic structures, people are dislodged from their traditional communities that sustained social capital. The reduced role of the state diminishes the ability to protect traditional structures from being deconstructed by excessive efficiency. Public ownership, protectionism, and regulation are no longer revered as guarantees for social stability, rather they are denounced for inefficiency or considered to be theft by corrupt bureaucrats. The Cold War dichotomy between capitalism and communism has polluted the discourse and prospects for middle-ground alternatives. States have traditionally risen to power on economic nationalism and geoeconomics, while the hegemon promoted free markets to integrate the world into an international system it controlled. Economic statecraft is an indispensable tool to preserve the traditional community that facilitates social needs and unity, while concurrently building competitiveness and power in international trade. Albeit, there is an inherent contradiction among these objectives that must be harmonised. The more advanced and complex an economic system becomes to ensure the state's survival in the international system, the more it will deconstruct the traditional community as the source of identity, spirituality, meaning, and solidarity. 'Creative destruction', the destruction of professions and industries that communities depend upon, is escalating as markets become increasingly global and new technologies are introduced with ever-greater frequency. This trend will further intensify as the world is entering a new industrial revolution centred on communication, automation, and robotics. At a time when the state retreats from markets, there is increasing need for state intervention to address the unprecedented extent of people being dislodged from their traditional lives, and the ever-fiercer socioeconomic rivalry with both allies and adversaries. As China and Russia have

released themselves from the constraints of communism and skilfully master economic statecraft, their influence over strategic markets, transportation corridors, and mechanisms for financial cooperation is escalating the shift of geoeconomic power from the West to the East.

The traditional political Right and Left appear to be largely incapable of addressing the mounting challenges as they remain ideologically and intellectually constrained by the political framework inherited from the Cold War. In the current state of polarisation and dismay, systemic incentives mount for new political movements to fill the vacuum. With the demise of classical conservatism, the political and economic philosophy of the Right advocates the virtues of free trade and globalism, while berating the loss of traditional values in vain as the former causes the latter. The Left is similarly constrained by a political philosophy committed to redistribution of wealth to unproductive groups at the expense of competitiveness of society. Concurrently, the Left remains ideologically committed to detest the defining ethno-cultural particularities of society as hierarchical, exclusive, and totalitarian. As liberal democracy and *laissez-faire* capitalism are heralded as representing the core of Western civilisation, the ideological commitment to these principles undermines the capacity to address the philosophical and geoeconomic quandary of the contradiction between the community and society.

Globalisation, loss of social capital, disenchantment with moral relativism, and a culture of excess has incentivised the rediscovery of religion, ideology, national identities, and reaffirmation of traditional values that could be expressed in unpredictable manners. A paradoxical development is unfolding as states are pursuing regional integration to develop a larger society that enhances their collective influence in the international system. Simultaneously, the efforts to re-connect with identities closer to the individual are producing internal division within states, to the extent that secessionist movements are prevailing. Brussels exemplifies this contradiction by being the capital of the world's most successful integration project in terms of geoeconomic power and development of a shared 'European' identity more suitable to complex societies. Yet, concurrently there are secessionist pressures to split Belgium into two separate countries due to the different identities, languages, and traditions.

Cooperation and competition with Russia will inevitably be impacted by the West's decline. Pressure to restore internal solidarity within the West creates systemic incentives for the elites to reinvoke narratives of Russia as an imminent external threat. Moscow evidently has much to gain from discord to lessen the collective bargaining power of the West that is frequently used to marginalise Russia. Depicting Russia as the source of the West's systemic problems is politically expedient as the 'populists' challenging the status quo can be denounced as agents of the Kremlin. It is a very attractive and reasonable tactic as the new political movements across the Western political spectrum are indeed expressing much greater benevolence towards Russia. Portraying grassroots movement as an intricate ploy by the Kremlin to subvert Western democracy may be intellectually lazy and even blatant propaganda, but it has away over the masses who have

internalised anti-Russian imagery for over a century and are in desperate need for a meaningful frontier.

However, using Russia as an instrument to augment internal solidarity is problematic as the large neighbour in the east embodies the philosophy of the populists that divides the West. The benevolence towards Russia by 'populists' is symptomatic of the West's democratic-authoritarian binary divide of the world being replaced by a patriotism-cosmopolitanism or nationalism-globalism divide, which converts Moscow into an ally to preserve community and civilisation. Russia's appeal to the 'populists' is the bold and unapologetic commitment to preserve traditions, national culture, Christian heritage, national identity, and the family structure. The growing dismay in the West over a self-serving financial elite incites empathy for Russia's geoeconomic strategy for state intervention to develop strategic industries, transportation corridors, and mechanisms for cooperation with new international financial institutions to obtain autonomy from the Western-centric economic architecture.

Armed with a neomodernist political philosophy and geoeconomic strategy, Russia has inadvertently attained significant soft power by offering an alternative to the ailing international liberal order. The endurance of Russia's new magnetism in the West will however be contingent on the extent to which it can develop a reliable international conservative movement and remain a nation with an economy rather than become an economy with a nation. In other words, Russia is an important and divisive variable in the West by representing the intent to rejuvenate *gemeinschaft* (traditional community) that is under siege by excessive *gesellschaft* (complex society). The political vacuum produced by the West's growing impotence invites rival powers at the periphery. While Russia was denied a seat at the table following the Cold War, it is becoming increasingly aware of the opportunity to bring its own chair and restructure the order.

The purpose of this book is to examine the decay of Western civilisation and the impact on relations with Russia. The puzzle to be explored is that once the challenges of the ideological struggles of the 20th century were seemingly concluded, and the end of history celebrated, the foundations of a shared Western civilisation began to unravel. The West has become overextended, overly rational, and excessively universal, which impede the ability to reproduce the distinctive, traditional, and traditional. Without any external frontiers as remedy for rising nihilism, the West has discovered its own irredeemable flaws and began to follow the path of previous declining civilisations by no longer being willing to defend and reproduce itself.

From the early 1990s Russia was prematurely dismissed as a declining power with nothing to offer the world in terms of political philosophy and economic development. Defined as a non-relevant entity in international affairs and its domestic instability being the main source of security concern to the West, Russia was demoted to a peripheral object of security in a Western-centric world. Russia's role in international security was demoted to making domestic reforms to become more like the West. Liberal democracy and relative economic strength ruled supreme and Russia was not equipped with sufficient competitiveness and had no

alternatives. Russia's recovery and renewed assertiveness has prompted Western leaders to assure their population that Russia has nothing to offer the world in terms of values and ways to organise society. President Obama argued: 'their economy doesn't produce anything that anybody wants to buy except oil and gas and arms' (Conway 2016).

In recent years, Moscow has gradually begun to embrace an ideological alternative by ostensibly focusing on balancing two mutually contradictory necessities: the reproduction of the 'irrational' traditional community, and the development of 'rational' complex society based on efficiency and geoeconomic principles. Unlike the former Soviet revolutionary effort to challenge and radically alter the foundations of Western civilisation, Russia is positioning itself as the defender and champion of traditional European civilisation. Russia represents Toynbee's (1946: 30) 'external proletariat' that allies itself with the 'internal proletariat' in the West against what are scorned as revisionist postmodern elites detached from traditional community.

Western civilisation is in decline due to the inability of the unrestrained liberal order to preserve a balance between the traditional and modern to accommodate the rational and irrational in human nature. The contemporary contradictory gravitational pull towards tribalism and globalism epitomises the eternal civilisational struggle between community and society (*gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*). The science, economic structures, and natural laws introduced by the Enlightenment and Renaissance advanced humanity towards the modern. Yet, modernity came at the expense of the traditional, which caused a pendulum swing back manifested as the Counter-Enlightenment movement and Romanticism of the 19th and 20th centuries. The mounting conflict that reached its pinnacle with the Second World War, incentivised Western civilisation to incrementally abandon ethno-cultural particularities of civilisation and instead embrace universality civic ideals of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism. Yet, an internal crisis becomes evident due to the inherent faults in the absolutism of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism. A new pendulum swing towards the innate and irrational that has been neglected and deconstructed under excessively rational liberalism is waiting.

This book builds heavily on the philosophy developing throughout the 19th century that was eventually embraced by German and Italian fascists. Recognising that the philosophy of Heidegger and Nietzsche inspired the policies of Hitler does not imply endorsement of the latter. Instead, the study of Heidegger offers insight into the imperishable contradictions within humanity and civilisation, and the hazards it produces. Building on the philosophy of the 19th century is a response to the liberal authoritarianism that characterises and constrains contemporary intellectual debates in the West. The admirable pursuit of greater truths has degraded to absolutism, which is used with political expediency by equating recognition of fallible paradoxes within the human conditions with endorsement. Liberal authoritarianism subsequently narrows the scope of intellectual debate into the paradoxes and contradictions of Man. The uncompromising liberal insistence on rights at the heart of citizenship has

produced a neglect of responsibilities. The traditional is dismissed as outdated as there are no alternatives to modernisation. The need for liberal economics and complex economic structures encourages neglect of traditional culture and family values. The benefits of secularism are construed as invalidation of religion, which is imperative for meaning and can function as a moral compass. The emancipation of women imperils demographic reproduction and weakens the family unit. Tolerance for other cultures often results in cultural relativism and reduced willingness to defend one's own culture and civilisation. Critiquing liberalism and excessive rationality for eroding the shared meaning and purpose of civilisation can coexist with recognising the virtues and necessity of liberal principles. Last, arguing that Heidegger provides the antidote to nihilism as the prevalent challenge to Western civilisation does not equate to an endorsement of fascism.

Research design

A deductive approach is taken to answer the research question of *how to explain the causes for the decay of Western civilisation and the subsequent impact on cooperation and conflict with Russia?* The strengths and weaknesses of civilisations are argued here to be contingent on their ability to balance and harmonise *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society). Community represents the traditional, spiritual, irrational, and inter-personal organisation of human interactions, which contradicts the development of rational, efficient, contractual-based human interfaces found in large-scale industrial society. As argued by Huntington (1993a), civilisations base their internal cohesion on an internal cultural make-up and community as the foundation for organising large civilisations as meta-strategic power entities. In the era of geoeconomics, rational and calculative international rivalry is increasingly pursued with economic statecraft. This tends to lead to economic determinism as efficiency becomes the sole objective, while the preservation of culture and traditions is neglected and belittled as obsolete ideas from a bygone era. Civilisation thus consumes itself as the decay of community also erodes the foundation for society.

To answer the research question, the first two chapters conceptualise civilisations, theorise the sources of their ascendance and decline, and interactions with other civilisations such as Russia at the periphery. Second, the following four chapters are devoted to exploring the rise and decline of Western civilisation based on the theoretical framework from the first two chapters. Last, the final three chapters assess Russia as the West's 'other' that emerges as a neomodernist and geoeconomic challenger. The book assesses the extent to which Moscow is acting in accordance with the systemic incentives to assert its civilizational influence in the West with neomodernism and geoeconomics.

Chapter 1 conceptualises civilisations through the prism of the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* (community/society) dichotomy. A neoclassical realist theoretical framework is outlined to survey the strengths and the weaknesses of civilisations

based on the balance between community and society. It will be argued that the challenges of civilisations are defined by the internal struggle of Man, who gravitates in opposite directions between the rational and irrational. Over thousands of years, primitive Man developed instincts to survive in nature, which manifested themselves in dependence on the community for security and a sense of meaning. The community represents the irrational – smaller, distinctive, and homogenous groups based on shared kinship, spirituality, and inter-personal ties. The relatively recent emergence of rational Man enabled the pursuit of greater efficiency and thus the construction of a larger and more complex society, which is based on more diverse, universal, and impersonal contract-based interactions. Civilisation gravitates in opposing directions: towards complex society for the advancement of the humanity and to compete against rival civilisation, and towards the innate and spiritual that provides meaning and a sense of belonging. Liberalism is argued to be paradoxical by peacefully organising renewal, while also undermining civilisation when there is excessive focus on rights, rationality, and efficiency as it hollows out the community.

Chapter 2 outlines a theory on the cyclical rise and fall of civilisations through the prism of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. The theme of recurring birth, rise, decline, and death of civilisations reemerges in most religions and folklores relating to genesis. These patterns are also reiterated in the empirical study of civilisations by most of the leading scholars on this topic. Based on this material, a four-stage seasonal civilisational theory is outlined. Spring/adolescence denotes the initial simplistic state of civilisation, with community and culture not being corrupted by society. Summer/maturity signifies civilisational advancement as society develops, yet the balance between community and society is harmonised. A large and consolidated community sets the necessary foundation for the construction of complex economic structures of society. Autumn/decay indicates the progression of society at the peril of the community. Yet, expansionism and frontiers can function as a temporary remedy to growing nihilism by providing meaning and expectations of a better future. Winter/death suggests the demise or invasion of civilisation, which is followed by rebirth. Civilisation is unwilling or incapable to defend its culture. A split subsequently develops between a cosmopolitan elite who is detached from community and benefits from complex society, and an internal proletariat seeking to replenish the community as they suffer most from the demise of the traditional and gain less from complex society. The latter looks outwards to civilisations at the peripheral in search for allies against the elite, and as an agent for the rebirth of the community.

Chapter 3 surveys modern Western civilisation as an amalgam of political liberalism and nationhood. The rise and greatness of Western civilisation derives from its political pluralism, which facilitated the balance between political structures founded on traditional structures based on the community, and the liberal and rational ideals of liberating Man from the arbitrary authority. Modern Western civilisation reappeared through the construction of the nation-state as a process of ethno-cultural homogenisation that allowed the state to harness and embody the shared particularities of the community. A strong balance developed

between responsibilities towards the community and the elevation of the rights of the individual, which laid the foundations for the development of increasingly complex societies. The weakness of modern Western civilisation is the tendency to construe ever-increasing liberalism and rationality as advancement, which eventually imperils the arbitrary authority embedded in its culture and existence. The artificial dichotomy between ethno-cultural and civic nationalism represented the initial loss of balance, setting the stage for excessive civic nationalism and a pending counter-reaction.

Chapter 4 analyses the postmodernist graveyard of Western civilisation. Postmodernism depicts narratives, truths, institutions, and hierarchies that sustains civilisation as mere social constructions to attain oppressive power. Political postmodernism produces devastating nihilism by discarding traditional identities, cultures, nations, religions, the family units, genders, and civilisation itself as arbitrary and totalitarian social structures. Tolerance and equality as prominent virtues in Western civilisations degrade into vices. Tolerance is corrupted by being translated into an embrace of cultural and moral relativism, while the success and superiority of bourgeois cultural and moral practices is dismissed as oppression. Similarly, equal opportunity is replaced with equal outcome as superior performance by some sub-groups in society is interpreted as evidence of systemic and institutional discrimination. Diversity and Aristotle's 'equality of unequals' converts the 'melting pot' into a 'salad bowl', and subsequently reverses the homogenisation of the state-building process. In its place emerges a factitious and divisive society divided into sub-groups that are defined by their privilege or victimhood. Identity politics incentivises competition for victimhood status as a political currency, while the rivalry between identity groups replicates the anarchy in the international system. The decline of identity and loyalty to the state in favour of responsibilities towards sub-groups undermines the rule of law, legitimacy of government, and democratic rule of the majority as perceived forms of totalitarianism.

Chapter 5 addresses the socioeconomic rise of Western society to global primacy for five centuries. While Western Europe and the US were initially prioritised preserving the community and culture, rivalry in the international system compelled the adoption of more complex societies to be competitive. Consistent with the economic nationalist policies of Friedrich List, leading Western powers were elevated to greatness with state intervention to assert control over strategic industries, maritime transportation corridors, and mechanisms for international financial cooperation. Fears about the erosion of communism and rising nihilism was a dominant key topic in the 1800s, however, expansionism and establishment of frontiers and settler societies provided a temporary remedy. The Cold War confrontation mitigated political animosity from rival socioeconomic policies among Western powers as the US benefitted from and therefore allowed economic power to shift from the core to European and East Asian frontlines. Furthermore, the ideological undercurrents of the Cold War negated the social upheavals from growing 'creative destruction'.

Chapter 6 surveys the consequences of unconstrained economic liberalism on the community and society. Free-market capitalism has taken on a new radical

form since the controlled capitalism prior to the 1980s, while new technologies and complex value-chains in the global market place further diminish the role of the state. Traditional inter-personal organisations of human interactions are dismantled by 'creative destruction' as entire skillsets, trades, and industries vanish. The reliance on increased mobility of a global workforce that can sustain cultural identities with their original homeland culminates in extreme individualism as families are geographically dispersed and traditional society is dislocated. The loss of skilled work, growing wealth disparity, unsustainable public and private debt, loss of civility, and estrangement and polarisation of society is indicative of the failure of Western governments to respond to the structural economic changes. Responding with mass immigration to replace the dying population unwilling to reproduce itself is indicative of the West becoming an economy with a nation rather than vice versa. Simultaneously, Western societies are becoming less competitive. Former communist adversaries such as China and Russia are embracing economic statecraft, and the geoeconomic rivalry between Western powers, previously restrained by the Cold War, has resurfaced and upsets internal cohesion. The US and Europe drift apart, while the concentration of power in Germany and the geoeconomic decline of the EU is fragmenting the continent. Excessive protectionism and autarchy is unviable as relative economic power becomes increasingly important to determine the primacy or subordination of states. Yet, the ensuing structural economic changes necessitate more government intervention to preserve societal cohesion and international security. There is increasing pressure on governments to support manufacturing and innovations by actively re-educating and directing excess labour and capital into high-skilled and high-wage professions.

Chapter 7 assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Russian civilisation. Russia's geography greatly impacts its balance between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, as a European identity embraces modernity and an Eastern/Slavophil identity gravitates towards the traditional and spiritual. The vast Eurasian geography makes Russia inclined to be a *gemeinschaft*-based civilisation. Yet, Russia's cooperation and conflict with the West throughout history has promoted rapid modernisation resulting in the destructive purging of the traditional. While the Eurasian geography can be a great source for balancing the mutually dependent traditional community and complex society, the swift and destructive pendulum shifts between the rational and irrational has been the principal problem for Russia in modern history. The historical preference for spiritual society above the morally corrupt European manufacturing societies was reversed following Russia's inadequate performance in the Crimean War. The radical and rapid economic modernisation from the early 1890s made Russia the fastest growing major economy, albeit at the expense of the spirituality and kinship of the community. The dramatic pendulum swing and shift to communism in 1917 was destined to fail as it crippled Russian economic statecraft, while the ethno-cultural and religious distinctiveness was purged in the attempt to transcend the past and establish a new Man.

Chapter 8 explores Russia's nascent Eurasian revival, which supports neomodernism and competitive geoeconomics. The postmodernist influence of

the international system under Western stewardship is perceived to have weakened the modern rules-based system as legality is decoupled from legitimacy. With relative power shifting from the West to the East, both political and economic philosophy are undergoing change. Rising powers such as Russia, China, India, Brazil, and Iran display increased willingness and capability to challenge the existing geoeconomic architecture and political culture. Neomodernism responds to the failures of postmodernism, without returning to modernism. Russian Neomodernism, much like rising Chinese neo-Confucianism, embraces modernisation but rejects that modernisation is not a linear process by dismantling the traditional. Consistent with the European philosophies of the 19th century, it is believed that modernisation must be balanced by strengthened culture and traditions to address the innate and imperishable in human nature, and to maintain a distinctive identity in a globalising world. Eurasian geoeconomics remove Russia from the periphery of Europe, where Russia is vulnerable to the West's collective bargaining power that marginalises Russian autonomy and influence. Repositioned to the heart of Eurasia, Russia can skew the symmetry within economic interdependence by reducing its reliance on any one state or region, while concurrently increasing dependence by others on Russia.

Chapter 9 surveys the rise of 'populists' in the West and their affinity towards Russia. Russia is conceptualised as Toynbee's (1946) 'external proletariat' to the West. Russia's aspirations to be a *gemeinschaft*-based civilisation creates a tremendous attractiveness for the 'internal proletariat', who are undergoing an identity crisis and civilisational struggle. The West is increasingly divided between a cosmopolitan elite detached from the community that benefits from complex economic structures, and an 'internal proletariat' seeking to revive the traditional. The internal and external proletariat find common cause in opposing the excesses of the elites. The rise of Trump, the Brexit campaign under UKIP, Le Pen in France, Orban, in Hungary, Kaczyński in Poland, Babis in the Czech Republic, Kurz in Austria, the AfD in Germany, and numerous other right-wing conservative movements across the West share many commonalities. These movements unapologetically reject globalism to the extent it undermines nationhood and traditions, and most of these movements express a remarkable degree of empathy towards Russia and the belief that they have a common cause.

It will be concluded in this book that with ever-increasing efficiency at the expense of the traditional and spiritual, civilisations are burdened by their own greatness. The former mutual dependence and linkages between culture and economy have unravelled. Managing an increasingly complex society becomes even more convoluted when the values of society encourage unconstrained appetite for self-indulgence and neglects responsibility. The extraordinary historical resilience of the West, especially the US, should not be ignored. Yet, the current instabilities are different as the seemingly irreconcilable differences and tensions are stirring from within. Liberalism in the US was a founding principle rather than a partisan issue, and the crisis of liberalism can unravel the shared identity. While the internal cohesion in the West weakens, the geoeconomic rise of the East is reversing the foundations for the West's past 500 years of global

primacy. Furthermore, the push for ending Western-centric globalisation is largely construed by Eurasian powers as defending their own culture from modernism and the West. The stakes are raised for all sides. Russia benefits from preserving its defining distinctiveness and may get the opportunity to finally reach a post-Cold War political settlement by eliminating the new dividing lines in Europe. Yet, with declining internal solidarity in the West, increasingly more chaotic and unpredictable behaviour will present formidable threats. The Western elites will only harden their positions as they conflate societal security with xenophobia, and common cause with Russia as the surrender of liberal democratic values. The greatest unpredictability may, however, emerge from the new populist political forces. As the instinctive, primordial, and irrational components of human nature are destined to remain ill articulated and obscure, unsavoury, and morally disreputable political forces may lead to the revival of distinctive culture, kinship, and traditions.

Part I

Theorising civilisations

people, the citizens of Europe do not share our Euro-enthusiasm. Disillusioned with the great visions of the future, they demand that we cope with the present reality better than we have been doing until now.

Summers, Obama's former economic advisor and chief economist for the World Bank, advocated embracing 'responsible nationalism' to counter the rise of populism following Brexit and the rise of Trump. The ability to make meaningful changes to policy is however doubtful as the opposition to the radical liberal philosophy is not deemed to be legitimate, and represents a mere bump in the road that can be transcended.

Conclusion

As Western societies continue to polarise, new 'populist' political groups combatting their own cosmopolitan elites are gradually discovering and establishing a common cause with Russia. Moscow can position itself in a leadership position of an international conservative movement, due to its bold ambition to replenish its *gemeinschaft*-based civilisation by championing social conservatism and economic nationalism. Russia's attractiveness in the West will be contingent upon clearly establishing itself as a unified state with a dynamic economy, as a model for the West where there are increasingly economies with states. Yet, Russia also suffers from a fragmented community and less competitive society; a principled international conservative movement could denigrate into philosophical cover for an opportunistic and kleptocratic elite.

Conclusion

Cooperation and competition in the post-Western world

The crisis in the Enlightenment project, liberalism, and subsequently Western civilisation is caused by their success rather than their failure. Success led to excesses as the advancement of humanity is measured by ever-increasing rationality and radical individualism that eventually eviscerate the culture that sustains civilisation. A revolt is subsequently unfolding to defend and reproduce Western civilisation. The populists can be conceptualised as classical conservatives that seek to rejuvenate what is lost rather than conserve what still exists. While their instincts push them towards rebalancing the modern and traditional, the ability to articulate and implement a cohesive policy is unlikely. With Russia being seen as an ally to embrace, the question to be asked is: what is the intention and ability to wield its newfound influence?

Liberalism and rationalism are key components of Western civilisation, which have through political pluralism coexisted with the equally important aspects of Western civilisation such as culture, tradition, religion, family, and other distinct institutions. Liberalism is a virtue by freeing the individual from arbitrary authority. Yet, excessive liberalism becomes a vice by liberating the individual from the arbitrary authority of the family, community, religion, the nation-state, and other hierarchical relationships that human beings require for meaning and to organise society. Rationality is similarly a virtue by liberating Man from premodern superstition and elevating the potential of humanity. Albeit, human beings are not completely rational creatures, and excessive rationality corrupts the understanding of human advancement by construing it as the gradual elimination of the irrational. This culminates in growing animosity towards common spirituality, religion, and culture that humans instinctively depend upon. Hence, Western civilisation prospered by embracing liberalism and rationalism, yet condemned itself to decay by self-identifying solely by these values.

Western civilisation flourished with the Enlightenment project and liberal advancements of society, which was balanced by the homogenous ethno-cultural nation-state. Similarly, the benefits of economic liberalism could be enjoyed after establishing geoeconomic dominance by using state intervention to assert control over strategic industries, transportation corridors, and mechanisms for international economic and financial cooperation. Western civilisation advanced due to a balance between conservatism and liberalism. The German rationalisation

movement of the economy after the First World War radically altered the organisation of the state and society, which was implemented by the collective West after the Second World War. Political pluralism then began its descent, which intensified further when classical conservatism unravelled in the 1980s. In its place, a bipartisan commitment to neoliberalism policies, unfettered capitalism, and civic identities was established. The demise of communism as the 'end of history' became the victory for liberalism as the last modernist ideology standing. In victory came defeat as liberalism transitioned from an ideology to an uncontested truth, which further radicalised unfettered liberalism under the auspices of globalisation. The protection of traditional values and culture has since become an empty slogan, and economic protectionism naughty words. The postmodernist deconstruction of social structures that provided meaning and order unavoidably fuelled nihilism as a domineering threat, while eroding the foundation for competitiveness in international affairs.

Unconstrained neo-liberalism has decimated classical conservatism to the point there is little to conserve, which gives rise to a new populist political class determined to recreate the past. The family unit cannot be restored by revoking the emancipation of women, and ethno-cultural homogeneity should not be replenished by repression and ethnic cleansing. Western civilisation is therefore at a crossroads as the status quo is untenable, while efforts to bring back a lost past has been the mission of some of the worst regimes in history. The traditional ethos on the liberal Left has been to tear down physical and conceptual walls that divide 'us' and 'them' to promote justice, which has manifested in the flawed morality of globalism and cosmopolitanism. The traditional ethos of the conservative right has been to maintain walls to preserve in-group loyalty, traditions, and respect for authority, which has manifested itself in the morality of nationalism and patriotism.

Understanding the challenges of civilisation requires a renewed exploration of the imperishable and contradictory impulses of human beings that was central in 19th-century European philosophy. These important lessons were replaced by the pernicious ideological modernist absolutism of the 20th century in an attempt to create a new Man liberated from his past. Political and socio-economic policies to advance a rational, calculative, and liberal society must be built on a foundation that recognises the evolutionary 'irrational' instincts that human beings relied on for survival for thousands of years and are represented by the community. Rather than aspiring for an equilibrium between the instinctive and rational, modernist, and postmodern ideology has fostered absolutist extremes that incentivised the mobilisation of an equally radical counter-position. Much like unfettered free trade produces an inclination towards socialism, so will purely civic identities give rise to excessively ethno-cultural identities. In the past the excesses of the Enlightenment produced the counter-Enlightenment movement, while today liberal authoritarianism and postmodernism are fuelling a new class of populists seeking to rediscover romantic nationalism and economic nationalism.

The populist movements sweeping across the West are symptomatic of communities decimated from excessive political and economic liberalism, and declining competitiveness of societies as the socioeconomic foundations for the

West's primacy for the past 500 years is ending. While populist groups instinctively recognise the real crisis in Western civilisation, they do not necessarily have the appropriate response. How do political leaders reach out to what the voters intuitively desire and need, by only employing a language committed solely to the rational? The innate, instinctive, and irrational component of Man is obscure and not easily articulated, which leaves a vacuum that can be easily filled by demagogic and morally disreputable actors. Efforts by the elites to demonise populist movements as inherently xenophobic will inadvertently give a powerful political platform to destabilising and dangerous bigots. When only fascists appear to be willing to defend physical and virtual borders, much of the population will instinctively gravitate towards the fascists.

The West will undergo a turbulent and unpredictable period as it addresses its identity crisis and socioeconomic decline. Sorokin (1941) predicted that the West would undergo a civilisation shift as the sensate era was ending, which organised society on the principle that only the rational and material world is real. The rise of populists introduces the opportunity to return to Sorokin's idealistic/integral culture that harmonises the ideational/spiritual and the sensate/material. However, the populists could also advance ethno-cultural and religious fundamentalism (ideational), or continue down the path of excessive materialism and nihilism (sensate), due to the lack of philosophical depth and the lure a radical counter-positions.

Portraying the modernist position of Russia as being shrewdly strategic in order to become a leader for a new ideology and an international conservative movement discounts the domestic problems and historical continuity that are behind Moscow's motivations. The emergence of Putin as a global brand and 'a symbol of an ideological and political alternative to the liberal world order ... should surely flatter the Russian leader, whose ambitions have never gone so far (Lukyanov 2016). Nonetheless, Russia's response to its domestic challenges has inadvertently made Moscow tap into some very powerful undercurrents raging in the West.

Russia needs to respond to new opportunities and threats in relations with the West. The new political forces emerging can present an opportunity to normalise relations and finally reach a mutually acceptable post-Cold War settlement by ending the division of Europe. For example, Trump's election elevated hopes about redefining relations with the US. Trump expressed great reluctance to finance a global empire, criticised divisive Cold War institutions like NATO as obsolete, and appeared ready to strike a great power bargain with Moscow. Yet, the rise of the populists also brings threats due to unpredictability and instability. The romantic nationalists tend to lack a clear and cohesive philosophical alternative to the elites. It is easy to lose control over the masses as radical and morally questionable political forces can easily corrupt the populist base due to the difficulties of articulating the innate and primordial instincts of Man. It is paradoxical to frame a rational approach to the irrational in human nature that cannot be control. As Haidt argued: 'it's as though some people have a button on their foreheads, and when the button is pushed, they suddenly become intensely

focused on defending their in-group, kicking out foreigners and non-conformists, and stamping out dissidents within the group' (Haidt 2016). The populists recognise the need to tear down the existing order, although they are not always clear about what should replace it. Trump's disorderly and inconsistent foreign policy is indicative of the disorder that follows when the former global hegemon comes to terms with its new role in the world. Furthermore, the establishment will fight the populists and consider an equal partnership with Russia to be a betrayal of liberal democratic values. The sabotage of the Trump administration by the intelligence services and military suggests that the deep state that underpins the establishment has enough autonomy to be considered a fourth branch of power.

The main question that should be asked in the West is how Russia will exercise its new influence as an aspiring *gemeinschaft*-based civilisation? What are Russia's intentions? Will Western decadence result in completely eviscerating the West as a civilisation as Balfour (1908: 58–59) warned, or does Russia intend to assist in rejuvenating the traditional and spiritual in the West? Furthermore, what are Russia's capabilities? Efforts through history to modernise were extremely destructive towards the community, with communism's efforts to industrialise without capitalism especially leading to a purge of nationhood and spirituality. Russia's societal problems are today in many ways worse than the West. Yet, there are indications of Russia moving in the right direction by addressing the root problem rather than succumbing to democratic messianism. Russia's ability to develop a 21st-century Eurasian character will be important to answer these questions. Eurasianism must embrace the opposing impulses of human nature by recognising that the Russian character was not the product of market activity, yet concurrently use the Eurasian geographical expanse to take control over key instruments of geoeconomic power. Russian Eurasianism, much like Chinese neo-Confucianism, would also need to harmonise differences rather than promote global conformity. This entails transitioning Europe from the heart of a Western-centric world peaching liberal democratic universalism, to a distinct civilisation at the inner Western periphery of a Greater Eurasia.

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