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Geopolitics, Geoeconomics, and Geoculture
The Interrelation of Dynamic Spheres in the History of Russia

The article considers ways to integrate dynamic models of basic spheres of international interactions—geopolitics, geoeconomics, and geoculture—for the purpose of applying them to Russia’s history and to the present situation. It demonstrates the complex dynamics of geocultural influences, which depend on the internal alignment of political forces and centers of symbolic production, as well as on the rhythms and waves of universal and local ideologies coming from the West, which is always the referent for Russia.

As a rule, discussions about international relations are conducted in the terms of geopolitics (security, strength, conflicts, coalitions) or geoeconomics (growth, development trade, investment, dependence, and others). Thinking in the terms of geoculture is much less frequent (prestige, exchange, cultural influence, similarity or difference in religious faiths). Everyone realizes that these spheres are closely interconnected, but at present this connection has not been explored systematically, on the theoretical level. We look at a number of theoretical models for each of these spheres, which, in my opinion, are


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the most constructive, in order to show, based on material of the history of Russia, the basic types of dynamic interaction among them.

**Models of the geopolitical dynamic**

The geopolitical dynamic includes regular patterns of change in military and political control over territories, the organization of military strength and the mobilization of resources for that purpose, and shifts in international power, influence, and prestige. G. Modelski’s conception of changing cycles of hegemony, which is used in this connection, is presented schematically in Figure 1. In this conception we are dealing with the level of “demand for order” (the Y axis), meaning the demand for control over the use of violence in the international system, and the level of the “supply of order” (the X axis), which is generally provided by the power-hegemon (a superpower or stable relations between a number of the stronger powers).

In a time of low demand and low supply, uncontrolled violence will begin (wars of conquest, dividing up of zones of influence, rising piracy, etc.). The
demand for order increases dramatically, but the supply of order does not keep pace with the demand, and it remains low. Often, systematic planning, consolidation, and testing of forces take place in decisive wars, although peaceful shifts in power structures are also possible, as in 1989–91 (Phase 1—“Global War”).

Based on the results of the systematic planning and testing of forces, the hegemon or the leading cluster of great powers are delineated, and the supply of order rises to its maximum while a high demand for order persists (Phase 2—“World Power”). As one generation is replaced by another, politicians and nations become accustomed to order as something they take for granted, the might and leadership of the great-power hegemon are no longer as highly prized, and the demand for order drops dramatically, while the supply of order remains high (Phase 3—“Delegitimization”). And finally, where the demand for order remains low, politicians, business, and the population reduce their spending on the maintenance of order, the priority of the great-power hegemon and/or the leading coalition drops dramatically, and this brings the system back to the initial state of a low demand for order along with a low supply of order (Phase 4—“Deconcentration”).

In Modelski’s conception, Phase 1 is the most important (“Global War”), because its result becomes fixed over the span of the other phases, until an especially severe crisis in Phase 4 (“Deconcentration”) leads to a new conflict and the rearrangement of the geopolitical map. Accordingly, we have to assume that the character of the internal cycles of politics in Russia differs substantially as a function of its synchronization or desynchronization with the external geopolitical cycle. The structuring of European and world history according to Modelski’s conception is shown in Figure 2.

The model of the alternation of hegemonies can be supplemented with the conception of the “Great Limitrophe” and “hard platforms,” after V.L. Tsymburskii (2000). Its basic postulates are:

- every civilization contains a hard nucleus consisting of a “platform,” which is relatively homogeneous ethnically, and a periphery;
- there are no impassible boundaries between the peripheries of neighboring civilizations; they form a limitrophe; and
- the chief content of conflicts is not a clash of civilizations (in S. Huntington’s terminology) but a struggle between platforms to control parts of the Limitrophe.

Tsymburskii’s conception is interesting and promising, but it has not been adequately worked out in theory. I will add to it with the following dynamic principles. Challenges on the part of the “hard platforms” lead to different responses by the peoples of the Limitrophe, and this results in the ethnocultural, religious, and geopolitical configuration.
Figure 2. The Creation and Destruction of the Main International Systems in Europe and the World, Seventeenth Through Twenty-First Centuries

Demand for order

Phase 1. Resolution of crisis: Winners against losers
1. Religious wars (1578–1648), including the Thirty Years War (1618–48), France, Holland, and Sweden against the Habsburgs
2. The War of the Spanish Succession 1701–12. England, Austria, and Holland against France and Spain. The Northern War: Russia against Sweden
3. The Seven Years War 1755–63. Prussia and England against Austria, France, and Russia
4. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars 1792–1815. England, Austria, Russia, and Prussia against France
5. The Crimean War 1854–56 and the Russo-Turkish War 1877–78. England and France against Russia, with the support of Austria and, later, Germany
6. World War I 1914–18. England, France, and Russia against Germany and Austria
7. World War II 1939–45. Soviet Union, England, and the United States against Germany, Italy, and Japan
8. The Kissinger–Nixon policy and “détente.” With the rapprochement of the United States and China, the Soviet Union has to make concessions. The United States restrains the Soviet Union in Cuba but withdraws from Vietnam. The Soviet Union loses China, Yugoslavia, and Albania, but holds on to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland
10. The American–Afghan and Second Iraq wars, the disintegration of Yugoslavia. At first, Russia supports and then opposes the leader, the United States. Russia maneuvers between the increasingly strong Euroatlantic and China. Plans by the United States to create a Democratic League (without Russia and China)

Phase 2. An international system with a great power, world leader at the head
1. The Westphalian system and France at the time of the rise of Holland and Sweden 1648–1701. Russia (Muscovy) outside of the system
2. The Utrecht–Rastadt system, France loses colonies but remains the strongest on the continent. The increasing strength of England and Austria 1713–55. France and England restrain Russia by means of the Hannover Alliance and revanchism by Sweden
3. The Paris system. France as the continental leader, 1763–90. Russia an outsider at first
4. The Holy Alliance, Russia with Austria as Prussia rises, 1815–30
5. The Paris–Berlin system. England and Germany-Prussia, partly utilize Russia (against Turkey) and partly restrain Russia
6. The Versailles system and the United States, with England, 1918–39. Soviet Russia is an outsider
7. The Yalta–Potsdam system. The United States and the Soviet Union divide up Europe and the world, 1945–62
8. The Helsinki system as a reinforcement of a stalemate situation, 1975–89. United States and the Soviet Union are still the undisputed leaders
9. The Brussels–Washington system and the United States
10. The future is a relatively stable equilibrium
Phase 4. Crisis and conflict: Great power pretender against leader
1. Strengthened France and Holland against the Habsburgs, beginning of the seventeenth century
2. England and Austria against France, beginning of the eighteenth century. Russia against Sweden
3. An increasingly stronger Prussia against Austria and France, middle of the eighteenth century
4. General European attempts to restore the monarchy in France fall through at first. France, having conquered almost all of Europe, against England, beginning of the nineteenth century
5. Russia attempts to resolve the “Eastern Question,” and in this way acts against the interests of England, middle of the nineteenth century
6. Germany against the Entente, beginning of the twentieth century. Germany questions the colonial division of the world by England and France
7. Germany against England and the Soviet Union, 1930s to 1940s
8. The Soviet Union against the United States, 1960s. The standoff in Cuba, Vietnam, and Czechoslovakia
9. The Soviet Union attempts to “restore the world’s progress toward socialism” by way of the Afghan War. Central Europe and the Baltic countries against the Soviet Union, end of the 1980s
10. Islamic fundamentalism against the United States, beginning of the twenty-first century; an increasingly stronger China, a new alienation between Russia and the West

Supply of order
The responses of the peoples of the Limitrophe to the challenges of the weakening of the “platform” reduce, in general, to three variants. First, they can attach themselves to a different platform if there is not much danger they will be subjected to subordination and cultural assimilation, and the geocultural prestige of the new platform is high (the Baltic countries, Central Europe, and Georgia); second, they can maneuver in a way that brings them benefits from both platforms; if the platform is far away, there are greater internal and external obstacles to being annexed (Ukraine, Azerbaijan, the countries of Central Asia). Finally, they can attempt to set up their own “axis” (Poland, Ukraine).

The responses of the peoples of the Limitrophe to the challenges of strengthening of the platform (e.g., of Russia, Turkey, Europe, or China) are completely different. First, if there is cultural kinship, the platform enjoys geocultural prestige, and the danger of assimilation is small, annexation is probable (Georgia and Armenia were annexed to Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century). If, on the other hand, there is a high danger of subjugation, the peoples will look to a different platform for protection or map out their own identity (the Lamaism of the Mongols against Chinese expansionism).

The platforms’ strategies in regard to the peoples of the Limitrophe are:

• to annex weak neighbors, or, if they lack the strength to do so, to turn them into buffers;
• to weaken the peoples who are related to the people of a hostile platform (Western Europe against the Orthodox Serbian Slavs); and
• to support peoples who are close and/or not too strong and are opposed to the hostile platform or its allies (Western Europe supports Poland, the Baltic countries, and Georgia, while Russia supports Abkhazia and the Transdnestria).

In Modelski’s conception, he was talking about the international system in general, while in the theory of the Limitrophe it is more specifically about relations between the “hard platforms” and the intermediate peoples. But what determines military success and a change in the size of controlled territories for one society over large intervals of time? The answer to such questions is given in R. Collins’s theory of geopolitical dynamics (Kollinz 2000). The theory includes the following five principles (in the briefest of formulations).

The principle of resource advantage: the powers that are vaster, more populated, and wealthy have a tendency to expand, by peaceful or military means, at the expense of neighbors that are smaller, less populated, and poorer.

The principle of peripheral advantage: powers that have the peripheral advantage, that is, dangerous borders that are shorter in length, are, other things being equal, inclined to expand at the expense of central powers that are surrounded by probable adversaries.
The principle of fragmentation of the middle: central powers, if they do not ensure the security of their borders by allies, are not able to acquire a resource advantage over their neighbors who have the peripheral advantage, and with the passage of time they are inclined toward fragmentation (disintegration or loss of their provinces).

The principle of decisive wars: simplification of the geopolitical situation through the conquest (or imposition of control) of the entire habitable globe by two or three major peripheral powers leads to “decisive wars” (or to an intensive, primarily peaceful standoff, with an arms race). Either outcome of these campaigns leads to a power vacuum that will then be filled either by the victor or (in the case of exhaustion of the former adversaries) by a new, ascending nearby power.

The principle of super expansion: a power’s extreme expansion as a consequence of rising alienation on the part of distant subjugated peoples and the increasing logistical burden of exercising control leads to its disintegration or the loss of its peripheral territories.

Collins’s theory thus makes it possible to draw conclusions concerning military successes and changes in power or territories on the basis of the dynamics of the following interconnected variables: the relative size of the geopolitical resources (population and wealth), the ratio of peripherality to centrality (the length and percentage of dangerous borders compared to safe borders), and the size of the logistical burden of exercising control (see Figure 3).

A well-known direct consequence of military victories is a rise in the state’s prestige, both domestically and externally, the legitimacy of the regime and its ruling authority. Accordingly, a rise in prestige increases domestic stability. This latter variable is extremely important to us, because low levels of it express sociopolitical crisis. Where there is a crisis (the level of stability is extremely low), the country is more vulnerable externally. The threat to its surroundings is increased, and this leads to the creation of coalitions of restraint and suppression, and, accordingly, increased vulnerability. It is true, of course, that vulnerability also depends on its peripherality (the longer its dangerous borders are the less peripheral the country is and the more vulnerable it is). And the vulnerability itself, obviously, erects obstacles to military successes (see the corresponding supplement to Collins’s model in Figure 4).

A synthesis of models

How are these models that are so different from one another connected among themselves? First, we compare the particular Limitrophe conception with the more general theory of geopolitical dynamics. It is not hard to discern basic
correspondences. The “hard platforms” of Tsymburskii are always quite vast territories, always peripheral, comparatively highly developed and wealthy, densely populated peoples that are either ethnoculturally quite homogeneous (like ethnic Russians, the Han Chinese, the Japanese, Turks, Indians, Arabs, and Persians) or bound by a common history and shared symbols and values (like the Western Europeans).

According to the first two of Collins’s principles, the powers over such territories always have a geopolitical advantage over their neighbors who are more widely scattered, more central, less populated, and less wealthy regions, that is, the countries of the Limitrophe as defined by Tsymburskii. From time to time, the powers of the “platforms” take over geopolitically central (blocked) Limitrophic regions and annex them, or they impose unequal alliances of patron and client on these small countries. The instability of such results is accounted for by the presence of other “platforms,” on the other side of the Limitrophic regions, that also lay claim to them. The divisions of the Limitrophic regions and countries (Poland, Ukraine, Moldavia, and Romania, Finland and Karelia, the Balkans, the Caucasus, etc.) always fall under the third principle, the “fragmentation of the geopolitical heart.”

When “hard platforms” enter into direct conflict with each other, the likelihood of “decisive wars” dramatically increases, in accordance with Collins’s fourth principle (the most outstanding examples are the War of 1812, World War II, and the cold war).

As a rule, the kind of power (one that has put together its own “platform”) that suffers defeat and sustains major territorial losses simultaneously finds itself in a central position in accordance with Collins’s second principle, and
Platforms attempt to extend their control over accessible portions of the Limitrophe geopolitically (by military conquest, annexation, patronage, alliance), geoeconomically (expansion of markets, the purchase of assets, investment), and/or geoculturally (by sending diplomatic missions, taking in pilgrims and students, disseminating their culture, awarding grants, etc.). As a rule, these channels have a tendency to be mutually complementary, and reliable control includes all three types of domination. As we can see, Tsymburskii’s model, in effect, has the status of the application of Collins’s general theory to the specific geographical and cultural demographic situation of Eurasia.

How can we reconcile Modelski’s schema with the conceptions of Collins and Tsymburskii that we have integrated above? Obviously, the discussion should not to refer to world hegemony (Modelski has more interest in naval hegemony in the world’s oceans) but instead to the establishment and disintegration of geopolitical orders in the Limitrophe (see Figure 5).

**Models of the geoeconomic dynamic**

The term “geoeconomics,” like the terms “history,” “geography,” and “geopolitics,” designates both a branch of cognition and the reality it studies. Later we will speak of geoeconomics specifically as reality, by which is meant the sphere of interactions between communities of differing size and character, relating to
Figure 5. The Phase Model of the Cycle of Change of Hegemony and Order in Regard to the Regions of the Limitrophe

Demand for order

Phase 1
Resolution of conflict between platforms that are competing for the Limitrophe and the great powers that are leading in them, by military or peaceful means

Phase 2
Stable order:
Either the hegemony of a platform headed by the great power that has won a conflict (or an alliance of great powers) on a vast portion of the Limitrophe, or else the formation of buffer zones in it, when the great powers of the platforms act as guarantors of their inviolability

Phase 3
Delegitimization:
Weakening of the great power hegemon or the great power guarantors of their order, loss of the belief of the elites and nations of the Limitrophe as to the rightness of being subordinate to the hegemon or order

Phase 4
Deconcentration:
Challenge from a competing platform, decline or loss of the will to power, of the ability to defend their order, in the case of the great power hegemon or the great power guarantors

Supply of order
control over economic resources, plus the fact that these interactions, control, or the resources themselves cross the boundaries of territorial political rule.

It is also necessary to be more precise about the relation between geopolitics and geoeconomics. Sometimes, researchers include geoeconomics completely in geopolitics, with reference to the Swedish and German classics (Tsymbur-skii), and sometimes, on the contrary, they include geopolitics completely, as a theme of “hegemony,” in the geoeconomic sphere of the life of world systems (I. Wallerstein, C. Chase-Dunn, and others), and sometimes they attempt to assert that geopolitics is obsolete and to replace it with geoeconomics (E. Luttwak, E. Kochetov, and A. Neklessa).

If we are talking about geopolitics and geoeconomics as realities, then we can clearly see two closely interconnected and at times almost merging spheres (the struggle for [the control of] straits or oil, interference in the state’s monopoly over the collection of taxes), but nonetheless spheres that are autonomous from one another, in which particular “objective logics” are in effect (dynamic patterns). The boundary is explicitly indicated in the definition: everything related to control over economic resources within the framework of the existing structures of territorial rule is geoeconomics. Everything related to the struggle for this territorial control itself is geopolitics.

The geoeconomic dynamic includes patterns of the development of markets and the accumulation and concentration of capital among countries, shifts of the centers of business activity, changes in the mechanisms of exchange, and the redistribution of material and financial resources, shifts in the systemic statuses of countries in the world, and so on.

**Patterns of the development of markets**

Collins singles out the following general characteristics of the dynamics of markets over the entire span of world history (Collins 1999, p. 172).

*The dependence of markets on types of property ownership.* Every form of market exchange is based on a particular type of property ownership. In order to be exchanged, a thing has to be given over, and the exchange itself consists of the transfer of ownership rights. The actual types of property ownership are established and maintained by political, rule-of-law regimes; they experience transformations of varying degrees of depth in the case of conquests, revolutions, crises, and sociocultural and political changes.

*The unequally closed character of markets.* Only in books about liberal economics are markets completely open and do they offer equal opportunities to all who so desire. In reality, participation in the market is always stratified as a function either of distance or political control (this is especially true in the case of sellers: not everyone finds it advantageous to make a deal, not everyone is
given access, different fees are charged for the right to sell). Generally, complete information about the terms of trade is not known to everyone. The basic strategy is to attempt unceasingly to set up noncompetitive niches or monopolies. This is why there is always a tendency for economic inequality to be established.

The tendency toward the expansion of markets. In spite of temporary slumps and contractions, over a long period of time markets expand in space. This expansion is often accompanied by increased limitations on access to the market, especially for producers and sellers.

The superstructuring of markets. A well-developed market of some product item generally gives rise to a superstructural market with respect to the means and conditions of the exchange itself. Future and long-range exchanges themselves become commodities. Pyramids of markets emerge that are built upon each other. Money, debts, mortgages, shares, purchase rights, and licenses become derivative tools in the corresponding markets.

The instability of markets. By their very nature, markets are not stable, they are susceptible to short-term fluctuations and to severe crises over long periods of time. Generally, deep crises lead to the destruction of the main forms of exchanges, the transformation of social structures, and a change in forms of ownership.

We must also focus on the close interconnection between types of property ownership, the sociopolitical system, and items of exchange. The customary markets of the exchange of goods and services for money are dominant in the extent to which ruling authority is kept separate from property ownership, and the autonomy of the individual is protected; in other words, they are the most customary markets under capitalism and democracy.

The rhythms and stages of development of today’s world economy

The geoeconomic dynamic that is important to Russia consists of the basic rhythms and stages of world economic development (the European economy, then the world economy). These rhythms and stages have their own causes, which are sometimes even linked to the Russian dynamic, but an analysis of these causes would go beyond the limits of the present study.

Among the numerous models of geoeconomic rhythms, those that have become the most popular in world system analysis and economic history (J. Schumpeter, F. Braudel, A. Frank, I. Wallerstein, T. Hopkins, C. Chase-Dunn, T. Hall, and others) are the so-called Kondratiev cycles [also spelled Kondratieff]. Each such cycle lasts for an average of forty-five to sixty years and consists of two phases:

- an upward wave (the A phase), consisting of the expansion and process of creation of major monopolies; and
• a downward wave (the B phase), consisting of a decline, the emergence of new competitors in the market.

Trends over centuries (“logistics”) were first delineated by R. Cameron. They cover a period of 150–300 years and, in Wallerstein’s opinion, are linked to “cycles of hegemony” (see Modelski’s conception above). The evolution of the capitalist world economy represents an alternation of periods of rivalry and hegemony of the states of the nucleus to exercise control over the world system. The hegemon state (the strongest in the nucleus of the world economy) dictates the principles, procedures, and rules of behavior that are common to all of the other actors and the entire international system. In this case, there is no complete political control over the surrounding entities (as characterizes a center of a world empire); on the other hand, there is the ability (financial, political, military, ideological) to compel the other states to comply with the general rules. The following link can be traced between the cycles of hegemony and the Kondratiev cycles:

• the A1 phase—a period of ascending hegemony and fierce conflicts between the pretenders (the “Deconcentration Phase” and the beginning of the “Global War Phase,” in Modelski’s terms);
• the B1 phase—the achievement of victory in the struggle for hegemony; the new hegemon overtakes the other states (the victory of the new coalition in the “Global War” and the establishment of the “World Power Phase”);
• the A2 phase—the maturity (and structural fixation) of the hegemony; the members of the coalition build up economic potential (the “World Power Phase”); and
• the B2 phase—the gradual decline of the hegemony and the emergence of new pretenders to hegemony (the “Delegitimization Phase”).

The mechanism of the geocultural dynamic

The influence of the effects of a country’s geopolitical prestige and geoeconomic status on its cultural attractiveness is perfectly obvious (philosophical and scientific ideas, literature, arts, music, cuisine, fashion, etc.). From the standpoint of “geopolitics → geoculture” this chiefly relates to the influence of the powerful leader’s culture on the elites and the population of the junior allies after achieving victory over a common, dangerous enemy. From the standpoint of “geoeconomics → geoculture,” this involves the influence of the culture of wealthy and flourishing countries of the nucleus on the elites and population of the nucleus’s semiperiphery, and also on the comprador elite of the periphery.
Besides its geopolitical and geoeconomic leadership, what makes a country’s culture attractive to other countries? Note that this leadership does not always lead to geocultural expansionism. The mighty empires of the Austrian Habsburgs, the Grand Moguls, the Ottomans, the Manchus, and many Arab caliphates did not do so much to extend their cultural influence beyond the limits of their own imperial borders. It is not correct to overly exaggerate the geocultural importance of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The very wealthy countries of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are not so renowned for their cultural achievements. Almost the only serious things that Japan exports are anime and one or two popular writers. France and Great Britain, on the other hand, not to mention Italy, although they have not been geopolitical hegemons for quite a long time now, nor leaders in the world economy, retain their geocultural leadership in many spheres. What is going on here? It will help to look at the conception of civilizational centers as zones of cultural prestige (Collins 2002). The chief factors in the formation of such centers are:

- the possession of a sufficient economic foundation to accommodate a concentration of cultural producers (based either on state and dynastic orders in centers of empires or the rising bourgeoisie’s prestigious consumption in cities that are centers of world economies);
- the intersection of two or more social networks in these centers, with the corresponding cultural traditions; a fruitful combination of these that opens up new horizons of creative endeavor;
- the gathering of a variety of forms of competitiveness, vigorous and emotionally charged rituals of the recognition of new cultural masterpieces, which brings new generations of aspirants who want to succeed; and the institutional establishment of these institutions and practices;
- the existence and secure resource possession of strategies of cultural missionary work (“performance tours” in the broad sense) and patronage, as well as teaching for incoming students and pilgrims; and
- the institution of extended network relations with other cultural centers in the same part of the world or elsewhere, active reception and original reworking of all novelty developments, as well as all kinds of exotic material.

Readers can check out the existence and degree of prominence of these factors in the case of any modern cultural center of world significance, such as Paris, London, Milan, Moscow, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and so
In addition to universal centers like these are also concentrated centers of especially vigorous and attractive intellectual (Oxford, Cambridge, Boston, Princeton), musical (Vienna, Salzburg), and artistic (Venice, Amsterdam) creative endeavor.

The content of the ideas, values, and symbols generated in foreign and national centers of cultural endeavor depends largely on autonomous processes in the nodes and networks of creative generators, and only indirectly, through a two-step mechanism, on macrohistorical events (Kollinz 2002). The influence of these factors on the emergence of the actors’ ideologies (those of politically influential groups) in a particular country, for example, in Russia, is even more complex and mediated: much depends on the established intersection of intellectual and political networks, on who has learned from whom, in what circles someone has acquired certain convictions, where he has traveled to on a pilgrimage, and to whom, whether there are sufficiently active groups and channels for the propagation of new ideas, the extent to which they are accepted by particular strata of the population, and so on.

Cultural processes are also characterized by cyclicity and waves. At times we observe a predominance of universalist ideologies in the centers of geocultural prestige (religious tolerance, enlightenment, republicanism, progressivism, Marxism, liberalism, democracy). For some reason they are replaced by localist ideologies (religious intolerance, nationally oriented romanticism, Spenglerism, racism, ideas of the “clash of civilizations,” etc.). Especially important to Russia, as well, is the cyclical dynamic of ideologies in the referent Western countries (universalism–localism, left-wing social democracy versus right-wing liberalism). Owing to the plethora of random factors of differing magnitude it is doubtful that models will appear that can account for and predict the geocultural and cultural dynamic over the span of two or more generations, except, perhaps, for indicators with “greater granularity.”

What remains is a step-by-step analysis of approximately the following schema (see Skocpol 1994). The alignment of political forces consists of actors united with creative groups that take in, rework, promote, and legitimate ideas that are important to these actors. Each of these political ideological actors has its own “menu” of ideas (sociopolitical conceptions, values, slogans, etc.). On the one hand, the choice is based on accessibility (network channels are important here!), and acceptability to the leaders and potential support groups; on the other hand, the choice is made according to the logic of the ideological struggle and alliance with other groups that have already made, or are making, their ideological choice. What shows up on these “menus” will now depend on the configuration of coalitional and conflict processes in the nodes of ideological creativity in the national and most referent foreign centers of cultural prestige. One significant integral variable is the potential of
ideological consolidation, the correspondence between the inherited cultural stereotypes and attitudes of the most essential social groups, and the set of symbols (sacred things or places, ideas, and values) that give legitimate force to mobilization and state service.

The geoeconomics of Russia: Cross-cutting invariants

The specific character of Russia’s geoeconomic situation consists primarily of its proximity to the rapidly developing European world economy and its possession of its own abundant natural resources (from furs and timber to oil and gas). This conditions the structure of its trade (raw materials in exchange for industrial products and food) and its financial dependency, which, overall, accounts for its chronic backwardness and relapses into catch-up development.

Extremely important to Russia, in addition to times of rise and decline in the European and world economy, are the levels of demand for and prices on export goods (from timber and hemp, pig iron, and grain to today’s gas, oil, and, again, timber), as well as Western countries’ willingness to extend credit, invest, and share technologies. In this regard, much is linked to the instability of markets (see above) and to onetime macroevents. For example, when grain from North America came [on the market] the demand for it and its prices went down; when composite materials came [on the market], the demand for and prices on metal went down. With the coming of an excess of free capital in the Netherlands, England, France, Germany, and the United States, the supply of credits and investment in different projects has increased in other countries and, when conditions are favorable, in Russia.

At present we can discern no signs of theoretical modeling of such events. The only reliable (but not especially inspiring) generalization is that world markets, like any other markets, are not stable. For this reason, no readiness to offer cheap loans, no high prices on export goods, commodities, and, especially, raw materials, and no growth of them can be stable and long term.

The deep-seated causes of the “chief Russian dispute”

The standoff between Slavophilism (later, great-power “patriotism”) and Westernism (Voltaireanism, Hegelianism, Marxism, or liberalism) has been mocked many times and declared obsolete and nonsensical, but despite all of these superficial journalistic or powerful intellectual attacks, it persists and reproduces itself through the generations with only a slight change in emphases and terminology. The geocultural influence of Europe (and of the West as a whole) on Russia cannot be overrated. Moreover, it is not just in Westernism that it can be discerned, in “the choice of freedom and democ-
racy.” A careful analysis of Slavophile, *samobytnicheskie* [roughly, populist or exceptionalist], Eurasian, patriotic, and nationalistic views, and so on, attests to the no less referent character of the European and Western tradition in these anti-Westernist views. This is reflected primarily in the unconscious perception of Europe (and, in time, the United States as well) as the point of departure, the chief opponent, the sole cultural competitor, from which Russia is fundamentally different (for the better, of course).

In the vast amount of analytical and journalistic writing in this country it is possible to find very detailed, thoroughly thought out, and deeply heartfelt comparisons of Russia as a culture and civilization with, for example, Turkey, the Arab world, India, China, Brazil, and Mexico. But even if such comparisons do exist (and has the reader ever come across any?), they are very exotic in nature—one might even say marginal.

The theme of “Russia and Europe” (which is also the revealing title of N. Danilevskii’s Slavophile manifesto [see Danilevskii 1991]) remains the central and in fact almost the only theme in matters of our country’s cultural sense of identity. It is a trait manifested everywhere, from the traditional Eurocentrism of school and college textbooks in almost all academic disciplines to the amusing habit of leaders in Siberia who measure their taiga-covered land areas in so many “Belgiums” and “Netherlands” (but, for some reason, not in “Syrias,” “Kenyas,” or “Ecuadors”).

The basic social structure is thus the firmly established relation of Western Europe’s geocultural domination over Russia. The followers and proponents of this dominating culture are Russia’s Westernizers, whose reflexive self-awareness begins with P. Chaadaev, and whose general mindset and practice goes as far back as Andrei Kurbskii, the False Dmitrii and the first Romanovs and, most clearly of all, Peter the Great. The dominance of Europe in the country’s culture is by no means a unique situation, but in the case of Russia it is made more complex by its contrast with the country’s huge territory, which, without question, has for us enormous symbolic significance of power and might and conditions its identity, its sense of “specialness” and “greatness,” constituting the essential, meaningful root of Slavophilism—the back-to-the-soil movement—Eurasianism—great-power patriotism.

Another important aspect is this: by and large, the Europeans do not recognize Russia as a part of Europe or Russia’s citizens as Europeans. This is covered up by an affectation of political correctness and by genuinely strong and many-sided cultural relations, especially in intellectual, literary, artistic, and musical spheres. However, a deep-seated rejection can be discerned nonetheless, from visa procedures to the fact that European women do not want to marry Russian men.3

Thus, there are deep-seated and self-sustaining causes of the cultural split
between Westernism and back-to-the-soil nationalism (great-power patriotism). The focus of the discussion should not be on how correct (close to the truth) a given view is, since worldview and sense of identity are not really susceptible to epistemological criteria. It is much more important to recognize that this standoff, the “chief Russian dispute,” has been fundamentally, structurally conditioned by these three factors.4

As long as Russia maintains its vast territory and its great armed forces with their mighty weaponry, as long as Europeans do not recognize Russia as a part of Europe with equal rights, and as long as, moreover, a tradition of science and education that is purely Western persists in Russia (primarily German, both originally and up to the present), the cultural split will also persist: the ideological standoff between Westernism, on the one hand, and back-to-the-soil nationalism and great-power patriotism.

The influence of geopolitics and geoconomics on Russian cultural and ideological fluctuations

Along with the persistence of the split itself, there have also been well-known times of ebbs and flows: a rise in the popularity of Westernism, followed by disillusion with it and a rise in sentiments of back-to-the-soil nationalism and great-power patriotism, of Russia’s “special path.” What accounts for this dynamic?

Tsymburskii once made an interesting observation when he linked these waves to his own cycle of “the abduction of Europe” and Asian interludes after a Russia that was aggressive and too expansionist had been driven back to its former boundaries. For example, the Asian interlude from 1870 to 1905 (from the expeditions of N. Przheval’skii, the conquest of Central Asia, and the annexation of Northern China until it was stopped by its defeat by Japan in 1905) was reflected in a very curious way in the Russian culture of that period:

On the cultural plane, Mandelstam wrote perspicaciously, concerning this time, that it was a “domestic period of Russian culture,” which “went on under the aegis of the intelligentsia and populism,” a time of “falling away from the grand interests of Europe, of rejection of the grand bosom [of Europe], which was perceived as virtual heresy.” He dated the start of this era “to Apollon Grigor’ev,” which for us means: from the Crimean War. It was a time of Gorchakovian concentration of Russia and a Pobedonostsevian hatred toward Europe; a time when the populists proclaimed the “non-capitalist path,” Dostoevsky called upon Russians to find a new destiny for themselves in Asia, and Tolstoy shocked the Orthodox Church community with his preaching of a kind of “Buddhaized” Christianity. (Tsymburskii)
It cannot be said that this pattern now rests in peace in the past. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the fact that the former satellites in Central Europe and the Baltic countries have joined the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), can be seen, structurally, as a win for the West and a geopolitical retreat for Russia. Russians’ massive disillusionment with the reforms of the 1990s, which had been perceived as “Westernist reforms,” along with the obvious insult of “not being accepted” by Europe, by the circle of “the developed civilized countries,” was accompanied by the patriotic upsurge at the time of the second Chechen War. But, of course, the North Caucasus is a kind of “internal Asia” in the European part of Russia. Accordingly, this war can be qualified as a kind of third “Eurasian interlude,” a sign of its alienation from Europe and the West.

Then, at the beginning of the new century, the onset of the celebrated and largely virtual “rising up from the knees,” a surge of exuberance, and the propaganda of “sovereign democracy” in conjunction with the Kremlin’s increased active involvement in the East (the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization). Toward the end of the decade, a new war in the Caucasus (this time with Georgia) occurred, along with not very successful attempts to create a military bloc within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In this case, then, geoculture largely follows geopolitics, which is what should have been expected. The geoeconomic factor is also very strong, and its effect in general has been sufficiently well understood at the level of journalistic commentary. During the period of Western loans, humanitarian aid, and hopes for Western investments and entry into the world market (the end of the 1980s and the first years of the 1990s), moods of Westernism prevailed even in the mass consciousness. In the 1990s a dramatic turnaround in people’s moods occurred, culminating in the ultimate point of frustration, the default of 1998. The next decade with the high price of export oil, the settlement of foreign debts, substantial hard currency accumulations, and an annually rising level of consumption have been marked by a massive surge of great-power patriotism, the return of imperial and Soviet symbols, and anti-Americanism as quintessential anti-Westernism. The effect of these general patterns of the influence of geopolitics and geoeconomics on the geoculture of Russia is perfectly obvious. But what can be said, strictly speaking, of the specific character of Russia’s geocultural dynamic, in the sphere of sociopolitical ideas, at any rate?

The complex structure of geocultural influence

In consideration of the fact that for Russia, the countries of Western Europe and the United States are of special reference, it is useful to look at the following basic aspects:
• the West’s own dynamic of ideologies and sociopolitical thought, including external geocultural influences, from Russia among others (suffice it to recall the role and authority of M. Bakunin, G. Plekhanov, L. Trotsky, and V. Lenin);
• the alignment and interrelationship of Russia’s political actors (movements and parties) and the intellectual groups that generate ideological products, and the character and orientation of the creative endeavors of the latter;
• the changing receptivity of different groups in this country to different Western ideologies; their reception and their joining with inherited ideas (which are often earlier borrowings from the West itself), reworking, and dissemination;
• attempts to implement new ideas, the socially significant results and the various ideological treatments of it; and
• the establishment of an attitude to the kind of range of ideas, corresponding to a change in receptivity to new waves of ideas from the West, a change in orientations of their own creative endeavors in the intellectual groups and networks of Russia.

Here we see, essentially, the framework of a major research program. Now, however, it is only possible to indicate key variable beginning hypotheses regarding their dynamic interconnection:

1. *The potential of ideological consolidation*. This hypothesis entails a correspondence between inherited cultural stereotypes, attitudes of the most significant social groups, and sets of symbols (holy places and things, ideas, and values) that legitimate mobilization and state service. It is obvious that this factor has a powerful influence on the level of state success.

2. *The predominance of universalist ideologies* in centers of geocultural prestige (religious tolerance, enlightenment, republicanism, progressivism, Marxism, liberalism, and democracy) strengthens the Westernist tilt in Russia in the attitudes and behavior of the ruling group, the service class [slightly pejorative], and the educated public. It is perfectly possible for this to serve as the basis for carrying out institutional reforms. The geopolitical alienation of Russia from the West, and a corresponding anti-Western position on the part of the ruling group, strengthens radical protest movements under the latest “universal human” slogans (“constitution,” “liberation of labor,” “open society,” etc.), which delegitimizes the regime and brings a crisis closer.

3. *The predominance of localist ideologies* in centers of geocultural
prestige (religious intolerance, nationalistically oriented romanticism, Spenglerianism, racism, the ideas of “the clash of civilizations,” etc.) strengthens the ideas of the “special path” in Russia, ideas of “great powerism,” back-to-the-soil nationalism, sense of uniqueness, and so on. The result is the regime’s entrenched conservatism, rejection of reforms, and siege mentality.

4. *The cyclical dynamic of ideologies* in the referent Western countries (universalism versus localism, left-wing social democracy versus right-wing liberalism) has a complicated effect on the political and ideological aspect of the process of crises in Russia. On the one hand, the Westernist movements pick up on the current dominating ideologies of the West, while their opponents map out their own counter-ideologies which also generally have their roots in the West, for example, German romanticism for the Slavophiles and Marxism for the communists and antiliberals); on the other hand, the striving to attract the masses to their side transforms the ideologies oriented toward achieving success in the direction of the stereotypes established earlier, a mixture of the more archaic ideologies with the symbols of self-identity that are generally linked to mythologized historical triumphs.

It is when Westernist moods in the ruling and intellectual elites become stronger (the times at the beginning of the reign of Catherine II, Alexander I, and Alexander II, the thaw, and perestroika) that domestic politics and ideology are the most susceptible to the current phases in the ideological dynamic of the referent Western countries: universalism versus localism and renovation versus conservatism.

It is when the Western ideology that has been accepted is in keeping with the interests and orientation of the strategies of Russia’s influential forces that such borrowing can be relatively successful and become firmly fixed in the culture (the ideas of the “improvement of morals” under Catherine II, the symbol of “nationality,” which is a calque of the French *nationalité*, and the Marxist principles of social justice starting in the 1880s, and the constitutionalism and republicanism at the beginning and end of the twentieth century).

When the Western ideology that has been accepted is not in keeping with the interests and orientation of the strategies of Russia’s influential forces, it is either rejected and discredited and made into a boogie man (although under the new conditions it may be accepted once more under new names), or it is subjected to radical transformation. Among the symbolic systems and doctrines that have been rejected by Russia’s ruling elites and masses, at any rate, we can list Catholicism (Popery), Protestantism, freemasonry, aestheticism, feminism, toleration, and multiculturalism. Unfortunately, freedom and democracy fall into this category.
A rising popularity of universalist and renovative ideologies in the West leads to the strengthening of progressivist and liberal mindsets among the Russian intelligentsia. This can foster a mood of reform among the ruling groups (the thaw and perestroika, the support for openness and tolerance under Yeltsin). Under conditions of a standoff between authoritarian rule and the radicalization of the opposition, these same circumstances lead to mounting repression (Catherine II against N. Novikov and A. Radishlychev, Nicholas I against the Decembrists and Petrashevites, Alexander III against the members of the People’s Will movement, J. Stalin against the Esperantists, the “cosmopolites,” and “kowtowers to the West,” and L. Brezhnev and Iu. Andropov against the dissidents).

A rise in the popularity of left-wing, protest ideas (Protestant, Jacobin, socialist, social democratic, and national liberation ideas) can influence in different ways, depending on the ideological self-identity of Russia’s authoritarian regime. What is likely in the case of an autocratic, state favoring sense of identity is an inclination to ally with the political opponents of left-wing movements (to aspire to the role of “gendarme”); what is likely in the case of a “populist” sense of identity are attempts to spread influence to international left-wing movements (the creation of the Third Internationale, support for the “international workers movement,” etc.).

A rise in the popularity of localist and conservative ideologies including authoritarian and totalitarian ideologies in Europe, which, as a rule, are continental (German nationalist romanticism, Spenglerianism, fascism, reactionary and racist, isolationist currents) leads to the emergence of counterparts in Russia, based specifically on “soil” and “special path” (the Slavophilism and Byzantinism of M. Leontiev, the state-favoring doctrines of I. Il’in, Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism, and ethnic Russian fascism).

Thus, geopolitics, geoeconomics, and geoculture are all very tightly connected, and, moreover, the basic structures of these mutual influences have essentially been made clear via the constructive models that have been presented. On the other hand, each of them is an autonomous dynamic sphere that cannot be reduced to anything else, and has its own logical patterns. Taking this complexity into account will make it possible to develop the theory of international relations on a new level, as a complex of dynamic conceptions that take in data and models from a broad spectrum of the social sciences.

Notes

1. Such communities, or geoeconomic actors, can include, for example, empires, national states, urban and provincial elites, international organizations, power, class,
and estate, production, trade, and financial groups, institutions, centers, coalitions, and so on.

2. The broad and long-term popularity of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Bunin, Pasternak, Schnittke, and Tarkovsky are, nonetheless, isolated cases in comparison with the world renown of many tens of French, English, and German writers, Italian and Austrian composers, Italian and French filmmakers, and so on.

3. Generally, brides can come from a great variety of places; what is important is their appearance, adaptability, and housekeeping skills, and moreover, according to these parameters, Russian and Ukrainian brides are fully competitive. Yet foreign bridegrooms can only come from a country of equal or higher prestige. In this regard, unfortunately, Russian bridegrooms are losers. “Emigration for marriage remains almost an exclusively female phenomenon. Dating agencies and marriage agencies do not work with Russian male clients who would like to emigrate” (Kononova n.d.). “In our country we have many businesswomen who are willing to give up their business and their country to move to the European Union and the United States,” says Sokolov (the director of a marriage agency). “All of our female clients are interested in places like Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia,” he notes. “No one wants to marry a man who lives in Latin America or Africa” (as quoted in Kononova n.d.).

4. S. Tsirel’ notes: “The dispute between Westernists and the Slavophiles (back-to-the-soil nationalists, etc.) has continued for about two centuries at least, and despite all of Russia’s twists and turns in the twentieth century, no end to it is in sight. The duration and the fierceness of this dispute prompts us to think that each side has the right to claim its own portion of the truth” (as quoted in Blekher and Liubarskii 2003, p. 355).

5. Unfortunately, much less attention is focused on what is going on in all other countries, including those that belong culturally to the West: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

References
