

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

Modern Trends in Geoeconomic Studies in Russia

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Abstract—In this article, the author describes the main development directions of geoeconomic studies in the Russian Federation. We analyzed publications on geoeconomics within the context of social geography, international relations, economics, and sociology. As a distinct scientific discipline, founded on scientific disciplines, such as geography of the world economy, world economy, geopolitics, and others, geography forms its own theory, methodology, and methods. A definition of geoeconomics, as well as its object and subject, different to that in humanities, is proposed. In addition, the paper identifies five levels of geoeconomic studies and determines the levels of geographical analysis used by national experts in their geoeconomic studies.

Keywords: geoeconomics, national geoeconomic studies, globalized world economic space, geography of the world economy

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INTRODUCTION

The study of works of national experts on the issues of geoeconomics enables us to give a clear answer to an important question: what is the proper theoretical and methodological specific of scientific research in social geography? The relationship between the concepts of geoeconomics and geopolitics, especially as there is no unified position regarding this issue in national science, is of particular interest. The views of geographers and “humanities” are far apart.

Analysis of relevant publications will clearly identify the areas of geoeconomic studies conducted in the Russian Federation.

This will provide an opportunity to establish their theoretical and methodological specifics and find out which geographic features were studied and which were not. It is worthwhile to note that works on the geopolitical subject, which were quite numerous at the turn of the century, are the most comprehensive [4, 8, 10, 15, 22–25, 30, 33].

In this article, the author describes the main development directions of geoeconomic studies in the Russian Federation. For this purpose, publications on geoeconomics in the context of geography, international relations, and economics were analyzed.

STUDY OBJECTS

The first person among national economic geographers who used the term “geoeconomics” was E.B. Alaev [1, p.171]. He believed that it “can be used for spatial economic systems” [1, p. 171]. In his view, the economic field of a certain territory (or geotory)—

geoeconomic field—is a geographical interpretation of economic space (geoeconomic space) [1, p. 258]. However, an analysis of articles in leading national scientific journals on geography (*Bulletin of the Russian Geographical Society*, *Proceedings of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Mathematical Series)*, and *Bulletin of the Moscow State University, Series 5 Geography*) showed that none of Russian geographers used the term proposed by Alaev in their scientific researches.

In the late 1970s, long before the geoeconomic publications of E.G. Kochetov and A.I. Neklessa, economic geographer Alaev had actually formed a number of categories, which would start to develop as early as the 1990s. He argued that a special general interdisciplinary scientific methodology was being compiled—“*geospatial paradigm*” (italicized by us—S.L.) [1].

An overview of the known Russian scientific publications on geoeconomics [5, 7–9, 13, 14, 16–22, 26–27, 36–41, 43–47, 49, 50] suggests that, in terms of geoeconomics, studies were mainly dedicated to the foreign trade strategy of the Russian Federation and specific countries or private geoeconomic problems and abstract geoeconomic categories.

First of all, let us look at the main geoeconomic publications of national economic geographers.

In addition to a number of articles [7–9, 13, 22, 27] and the monograph of M.G. Nikitina [36], there are

¹ It should be mentioned that in the past 10–15 years, only a few theses related to the geoeconomic subject have been defended in geographical science [5, 28, 37, 38, 42, 50]. In a number of works, these issues were touched indirectly (see (Gromov, 2004; Pilipenko, 2004; Grechko, 2005; Tkachenko, 2005; Fedorchenko, 2005; Lachininskii, 2007), etc.

no other geographical works on the subject of geoeconomics in the Russian Federation. In these publications, geographers and social scientists have not disclosed in detail the problem of studying the specifics, as well as the actual theory and methodology, of national researches.

In her doctoral dissertation, Nikitina for the first time examined the influence of geoeconomic factors on the territorial and sectoral restructuring of Ukraine's national economy.

The research of A.F. Nikol'skii, in which the phenomenon of the geoeconomic reproduction process is examined, is of great interest. He went further than others and, within the limits of "traditional economic geography," attempted to develop its own geoeconomic theory as a theory of the geoeconomic reproduction process, as well as its analysis methods and management principles. In particular, he pointed out, "... we offer to proceed not only from the experience and concepts of geopolitics, international economics, and global studies, but also equally rely on the traditions of earlier ("geographical") political economics (V. Petti, F. Kene, and A. Smit) and the national district school of economic geography, which give primary importance in socioeconomic development to subnational and infraregional relations, rather than foreign economic ones, and have been putting forward the idea of territorial production complexes as a basis for optimal (sustainable) socioeconomic development since the times of V. Petti (1940, p. 130)" [38].

As for other dissertation researches on geoeconomics, they are heavily abused by new terminology and do not make a weighty contribution to the development of this direction (e.g., see [50]).

Among scientific publications, we should highlight the works of S.V. Lavrov [22–25], Yu.N. Gladkii [8, 9], M.G. Nikitina [7, 9, 36, 37], A.F. Nikol'skii [38], D.N. Zamyatin [12, 13], etc. Concerning the debatable topic regarding the relationship between geopolitics and geoeconomics, Lavrov wrote that "in the context of neoclassical geopolitics, a new powerful branch has appeared—geoeconomics—which is perhaps the most significant discovery of the period 1980s–1990s" [22, p. 2]. In turn, Gladkii points out that "having many nodal points of contact, but differing in various paradigms of development, geopolitics and geoeconomics are often opposed to each other" [8]. This view is contrary to the views of classics of geoeconomics K. Savone and P. Zhan, who determine geoeconomics as "economic geopolitics" [11], but we should remember that the economic and political goals of a state often do not coincide.

Gladkii and Nikitina claim that "a geoeconomy acts as a symbiosis of national economies and state institutions and an intertwining of national and supranational economic state structures" [9, p. 5] and is a geographical subdiscipline. They believe that "this area of scientific knowledge, the object of which is studying the formation peculiarities of transnational

economic geosystems, including the nature of state use of spatial (geographical) factors of international importance in defining and achieving economic and social goals" ([9], p. 6). According to Nikol'skii, "...it is wrong to restrict the subject of geoeconomic analysis to one foreign component" [38]. In addition, the concept geosystem is a "natural and geographical unity of all possible categories from the planetary geosystem (geographic envelope) to the elementary one (physiogeographical facies)" [1].

With respect to geoeconomics, we can say that its most important objects are not only the national economy or state development strategy, which are in the field of economics, but also important issues, such as the formation of specific transnational (geoeconomic) regions, global manufacturing, service and financial chains and cross-border networks, global and regional centers of innovation, development and impact of global and regional cities, and the development of geoeconomical integration of regions and countries.

Thus, we can say that the object of geoeconomics is the globalized world economic space as a whole, within which cross-border geoeconomic systems are formed at different levels. We think that it is proper to offer the following definition of geoeconomics: *science, which studies the peculiarities of the institutional environment formation and elements of the world globalized economic space, as well as the processes of formation of cross-border geoeconomic systems at different levels.*

Geoeconomics, as a distinct school, which is founded on science disciplines, such as geography of the world economy, world economy, geopolitics, and other disciplines, forms its own theory, methodology, and methods.

As the most illustrative example, we can present the studies of D.N. Zamyatin, who forms the original sociocultural trend of modern geoeconomic research at the intersection of geography, sociology, and cultural studies. He believes that "traditional economic geography is far from systematic analysis of the institutional specifics of economic spaces and their images" [12, p. 168]. He further writes that "...in geoeconomic works space is studied, in particular, as a plastic medium for the target formation of various economic concepts, guidelines, and actions" [12].

This researcher defines geoeconomics as a "domain, responsible for studying spatial (geographical) images as economic transactions" [12, p. 169]. In another article, Zamyatin notes, "Geoeconomics is one of the most dynamic areas of humanities. It is here that we can obviously see the effect of the transition from analysis of traditional geographical spaces with ordinary tools of economic research to modeling of highly efficient geoeconomic images...networks and systems of cultural and geographical images, revealing the geoeconomic profile of the modern world, define the subject of geoeconomics" [13, 16].

Table 1. Theoretical and methodological approaches in the framework of national economic, social, and political geography in geoeconomics

Author	Attitude to geography	The object of science	The subject of science	Methods of science
Yu.N. Gladkii	Interdisciplinary field, geographical subdiscipline	Transnational economic geosystems	Features of formation of transnational economic geosystems	Geoeconomic analysis
A.F. Nikol'skii	Interdisciplinary area	Geoeconomic reproduction process		Methods of energy production and resource cycles, geoeconomic analysis, energy approach
M.G. Nikitina	Interdisciplinary area, geographical subdiscipline	Transnational economic geosystems	Spatial (geographical) images as economic transactions	Geoeconomic analysis
D.N. Zamyatin	The humanities	Geospatial images		Mapping of geoeconomic images
O.A. Lysak	It is included in the system of geographical sciences and is the closest to geography of the world economy	Geoeconomic space		

According to some authors' opinions, "the development basis of geoeconomic processes is the world economy, the main entities of which are national economies and multinational companies. The category of space connects geoeconomics and geography of the world economy. *In fact, there are no differences between the objects of both disciplines* (italicized—S.L.)" [27, p. 10].

To date, the largest collection of publications on the theoretical and methodological issues of geography of the world economy accounts for geographical science [3, 6, 29, 31, 32, 48].

METHODS

We consider in a generalized form the theoretical and methodological approaches, which are present in the national economy and social and political geography (see Table 1).

These positions suggest that in the context of national economic and social geography there is no consensus regarding the object and subject of geoeconomics and its place in sciences. This considerably complicates our work.

As noted above, *the subject of geoeconomics is the globalized world economy as a whole, within which cross-border geoeconomic systems are formed at different levels*. Geoeconomics does not create any new geoeconomic space, as pointed out by many authors (see, e.g., O.A. Lysak, E.G. Kochetov, etc.), but rather examines the latest transformations of the global economy at different levels—sectoral, territorial, civilization, system, and others. In this context, we share the approach of E.V. Sapir.

Thus, *we consider that the subject of geoeconomics is the peculiarities of the institutional environment and the*

elements of the world globalized economic space, as well as the processes of formation of cross-border geoeconomic systems at different levels.

It is also necessary to distinguish five levels of geoeconomic studies (subject areas) that may be regarded as the directions of current geoeconomic trends in our science:

—formation of specific transnational (geoeconomic) regions as a reference frame for the globalized world economic space;

—formation and development of global manufacturing, service and financial chains, and cross-border networks as key elements of the globalized world economic space;

—development of global and regional innovation centers as points of growth for the globalized world economic space;

—development and influence of global and regional cities as key points of growth for the globalized world economic space;

—development of geoeconomic integration of regions and countries contributing to the further evolution of the globalized world economic space.

Thus, we conclude that geoeconomics is in fact "new geography of the world economy" and undoubtedly belongs to the system of geographical sciences, but, in contrast to other geographical disciplines, it is characterized by broad interdisciplinary links with related sciences—global economics, geopolitics and geostrategy, political science, sociology, etc.

Let us consider the views of geoeconomics, presented in economics, sociology, and political science. The greatest number of publications on geoeconomics belongs to E.G. Kochetov [16–21]. His views are based on an original interpretation of traditional Rus-

sian economic ideas. Unfortunately, he actually ignores the territorial (spatial) aspect, replacing it with other “nongeographical concepts.” In contrasted to E.G. Kochetov, other economists, in particular V.Yu. Rogov, emphasize the importance of the geographical aspect, “The complexity of the real spatial economic processes and the process of functioning of economic systems is that they occur under concrete geographical and cultural conditions...” [43]. The same author takes a different view regarding the correlation between the concepts of geopolitics and geoeconomics, emphasizing the spatial (geographical) nature of these sciences; in particular, he points out that “the geopolitical and geoeconomic doctrines are based on the crucial role of the state in the interstate competition for control over “their” space, including the economic one” [43].

Because the geoeconomic publications of Kochetov are the most numerous in modern economics, we consider them in more detail. In one of his earlier publications, this author pointed out that “geoeconomics is a political system of views (concept), according to which state policies are defined by economic factors and the use of high geoeconomic technologies on the geoeconomic atlas of the world (including its national parts) through the integration of their national economies and business entities in the global chains (cores) of reproduction in order to participate in the formation and usage of the world income” [16].

This researcher believes that “geoeconomics should be considered jointly with three aspects: firstly, as a theoretical concept that reflects the interpretation of the global world through a system of new economic concepts; secondly, as a system of economic relations that determine the unity of the global economic space, extended beyond the national framework; thirdly, as a belief system (concept), according to which the foreign policy of a state is determined by geoeconomic factors, i.e., manipulations on the geoeconomic atlas of the world through the inclusion of national economies and their economic entities into the world internationalized reproductive cores (cycles) in order to participate in the formation and distribution of world income on the basis of high geoeconomic technologies” [16, p. 66].

In this statement, the author contradicts his main thesis that “geoeconomics as the latest scientific direction and branch of scientific knowledge...” or as a theoretical concept is a branch of scientific knowledge. In addition, his views that geoeconomics can be understood as “a system of economic relations that determine the unity of the global economical space, extended beyond the national framework” do not fully take into account the spatial aspect of economic relations. It is necessary to consider all relations arising in the economy. It is appropriate here to cite major sociologist M.O. Mnatsakanyan, “The denial of the role and importance of national states in the modern world

is the denial of small, weak, and dependent states in terms of sophistication and arrogance” [34, p. 140].

Sapir notes that the geoeconomic approach (genesis) should be understood “as a dimensional reflection of the modern world system jointly with economic, political, international and legal, information, cultural, ethnonational, and other components of global development” [44]. At the same time, the thesis of this author regarding “a new understanding of social division of labor as intercorporate, replacing international division of labor,” is debatable. It points out that “in the new division of labor not political and administrative boundaries, but economical ones, divide major geoeconomic players” [44]. However, while there is a system of states and international laws, it is premature to declare anything about the subversion of political and administrative boundaries. Even TNCs, which have become the first global players across national boundaries, continue to have a “national registration” and be subjected to national laws. In addition, in some cases, such as American TNCs, they enjoy significant public support when operating in the global geoeconomic space. For example, political scientist G.I. Musikhin points out that “modern capitalism is subjected to a powerful process of “hybridization” (but not unification)” [35, p. 93]. However, the merit of Sapir in the development of geoeconomics is very noticeable. In particular, she has managed to form a general “subject field of geoeconomics” [47].

The views of Neklessa on the place and role of geoeconomics, which he considers from sociological positions, are of great interest. “Geoeconomics (by Neklessa) is understood as a spatial localization of economic activity types in the global context and as a new formula of global division of labor related to this phenomenon, as well as the merging of politics and economics in the sphere of international relations and a system of strategic (global) interactions forming on this basis” [39]. This researcher believes that “geoeconomics is a direction of social sciences emerged in the middle of the 20th century at the intersection of economics and political science.” Such humanitarian determinism is not constructive, and we find it to be a very superficial view on the nature of geoeconomics.

In turn, political scientists V.V. Lapkin and V.I. Pantin determine geoeconomics as a branch of scientific knowledge “at the intersection of political science, economics, and geography” [26, p 42]. In this regard, A.I. Treivish writes, “Communication compression of space and time also increases the evolutionary diversity of the world. Its pieces are “beyond the road curve” according to the concept of uniform development or in “adjacent valleys” according to the hypothesis of multiplicity of its ways, making it difficult to develop common models” [6, p.13]. He further writes that “...selection and comprehensive study of areas and multistorey taxonomy of the terrestrial space is the prerogative of geography” [6, p.35].

Table 2. Theoretical and methodological approaches of national economists and sociologists

	The object of science	The subject of science	Methods of science	Attitude to geopolitics and geographical space
E.G. Kochetov (<i>economics</i>)	World global system	Functioning of the supranational economic system (population), consisting of cross-border systems in different areas	Geogenesis (three-network methodology), geoeconomic atlas	The geoeconomic space has replaced the geopolitical and military—strategic space
E.V. Sapir (<i>economics</i>)	Geoeconomic regions		Geogenesis (three-dimensional map of the modern world system)	
V. Yu. Rogov (<i>economics</i>)	Large economic and social systems		Geoeconomic planning	The geopolitical and geoeconomic doctrines are based on the critical role of the state in the interstate competition for control over “their” space, including the economic one
A.I. Neklessa (<i>economics and sociology</i>)	Types of economic activity in the global context. Geoeconomic world order	The spatial localization of economic activity types in the global context and the related phenomenon of a new formula of global division of labor		Occurred simultaneously with geopolitics. Have a different subject field

According to Neklessa, geoeconomics examines five subjects: “geographical imperative,” “power and its actual instruments,” “policy and strategy to increase the competitiveness of a state in the age of globalization,” “spatial localization in a new global universe of different economic activity types,” and “the formation of strategic interactions and foundations of global governance” [39]. Four of the five subject fields of geoeconomics (by Neklessa) “speak geographic or polywidespread language”.

As for the “*geographical imperative*,” then it is a category adopted from traditional geopolitics, which in its broadest sense is a background for only geoeconomics. However, if we start from the fact that the “geographical imperative” is primarily an organic relationship between economy and space, in this case, we are talking about the most important category of geoeconomics.

“*Power and its current tools*” are defined by the potential of its territory—a country or a large region. Geoeconomic conflicts that arise in a global context are nothing more than a reaction of various territorial units to the transformation of the “old geographical division of labor” and formation of “new geoeconomic division.”

“*The policy and strategy of state competitiveness growth in the age of globalization*” is a joint research field of geography of the world economy that is confirmed by the studies of N.S. Mironenko and I.V. Pilipenko. In particular, Pilipenko observed the develop-

ment of clusters and new industrial areas as an important mechanism for increasing the competitiveness of a state in a globalizing world.

“*Spatial localization in the new global universe of different types of economic activity*” is a new wing of socioeconomic geography and is included in scientific knowledge under the definition of “new economic geography” by P. Krugman. Obviously, it is presented in the World Bank Report “New Insight into Economic Geography,” released in 2009. Finally, we have come to the main (fifth) subject field of geoeconomics (by Neklessa)—“*formation of a system of strategic interactions and foundations of global governance*.” It is here that interdisciplinary knowledge should be formed and in-depth investigations should be carried out jointly by geographers, economists, political scientists, cultural specialists, sociologists, and philosophers. In fact, this field provides an innovative leap forward towards the understanding of the nature and mechanisms of functioning of the globalized world economic space.

The views of economists and sociologists are presented in Table 2.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we note that today in national science there is no unanimous opinion concerning the geographical level at which geoeconomic studies can be carried out. As our research shows, the majority of col-

leagues conduct research at the country level and, less often, at the world or regional levels. As for the level of cities and districts, we have not identified such studies, although in geographic science there are the well-known geoeconomic publications of A.G. Druzhinin at the level of cities of southern Russia and the publications of N.A. Sluki on the issues of world cities.

Analysis of national scientific publications on geoeconomics claims that it can be argued that in general a small number of Russian geographers work in the context of this science. The main emphasis in the researches of Russian experts in geoeconomics is made on the role of the government in the implementation of its foreign trade strategy. Particular attention is paid to the geoeconomic aspects of development of the Russian Federation. An important theoretical and methodological characteristic of national studies in geoeconomics is the emphasis on the competition among different countries in world commodity markets and on the state's role in the consolidation of national Russian companies in world commodity markets, which are leading in the country's foreign trade.

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