International relations scenarios and the cyclical patterns of Russian strategic challenges

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Summary. The report presents the findings of studies into the long-term dynamics of strategic evolution in a number of countries (Russia as an example), as well as five scenarios of international relations up to the year 2080.

1. Strategies and force majeure circumstances in history

Human haughty arrogance is sometimes vindicated by the fact that their individual fates become a success. However, it is hard to fail to note that against the background of fundamental evolutionary processes our lives do frequently appear to be shaky bungalows hit by tsunami. Highly refined as the policies or politics are, they are bound to be wiped off the scene of life owing to most ruthless force majeure circumstances of insuperable force. That said, one cannot but wonder at the mind-boggling set of the accomplished successful strategies in behavior involving individuals, peoples, and organizations. Some of them consider their achievements to be a stroke of luck; some were wise in realizing how things stand, and were live with lightning in meeting their objectives in most thoughtful way.

The circumstances of insuperable force prove unpredictable and unyielding to control. Yet history makers would vary in their ability to take into account the force majeure-laden risks. The core component of this riskology is the awareness of: 1) the cyclical nature of historical evolution of the relevant social systems; 2) their “dependence on the once chosen way”; 3) the spectrum of eventual paths of evolution.

Of paramount importance is the need to identify the long-term dynamics of the order of the day – a concentrated manifestation of the fact that a ruling elite became aware of strategic challenges faced by a country or, in a broader sense, by a civilization viewed as a socionatural system.

It is no coincidence that A. Toynbee once observed about the key reason behind the collapse of many an empire, which is the inadequate perception of pragmatic reality of life by their ascendant elites.

For all the specific nature of challenges emerging in different eras, in the course of their inventory we can find virtually the whole spectrum of challenges that exist either through history, or arise from time to time, just sometimes, or one-time only. The challenges per se stand as tensions (conflicts) owing to the external or internal dynamics of a socionatural system. It is the governing subsystems, including the self-organization
mechanics, that would provide answers to the cited problems. These are timely and effective answers, but sometimes inadequate or unsuccessful.

The subject of perception and estimation of challenges, and efforts to form the strategy of providing an appropriate answer to it, will always represent a fusion (network). The evolution of a historical subject, and of social systems at large, is in effect the formation, reformation and disintegration of diverse coalitions.

In terms of dynamics a coalition represents the interdependent activity subsets to be combined as a result of human decisions and further unfolding of what can be described as circumstantial logic.

The networks are designed to perceive the effects of benefits provided by joint activity (synergy).

We resort to strategies either in response to the external environment alternations, or in order to forestall them. However, these responses are stipulated by a set of rules (restrictions), say, like in game of chess. By far the most important class of restrictions is given in theoretical studies as archetypes. The archetype is a structural principle of the collective unconscious, the a priori pre-empirical form of behavior. The archetype represents the probing characteristics of the social matter and is manifested in human behavior, mode of thinking, decisions made, and attitude to the pragmatic reality of life. Strategies are the process of search for the paths of transition from one structure of fusions (system states) to another. In this doing, the strategies may correspond to the civilization archetypes, or contradict them. As a rule, the former type strategies prove more successful. All the systems tend to a situation where negligible changes are more likely to come than the large-scale ones, while a total disintegration of a subject is less likely than disintegration of its parts taken separately. Besides, the scale of evolutionary changes will depend on the scope of fusions involved in a change (variation). Accordingly, there can arise the dimensionalities of fusions that would be perceived within the limits of a teacher’s audience alone, whereas there are fusions fraught with risk of a global cataclysm.

What is known as the specific nature of a civilization is a set of regulations (archetypes) that would prevent one from roaming throughout the space of decisions and trajectories (paths), and would assign – acceptable in the given system – a corridor of innovative imaginations specific to representatives of this or that civilization.

Strategic decisions are aimed at getting the systems transformed into a qualitatively new state. Targeted as the subject of the strategic decisions can be either internal or external parameters of a system, yet they are always dependent on preferences of those who make decisions, their efficiency in perceiving and interpreting the interests of the present-day and anticipated fusion.

Depending on the algorithms and due regard for the interests of members of a network, the decisions could be either selfish or mutually beneficial. If game players follow a line dictated by selfish motives, interests of the other players could be infringed. Their response is likely to block not only the bringing in of benefits but the implementation of the decisions that have already been taken. It should be noted that such a situation is characteristic of the modern global sociodynamics. A special class of decisions concerns symbolic stories (topics) associated with the players’ self-identification manifested in religion, science, art, and collective (mass) consciousness.

Not infrequently, the choice of an evolutionary path would be made as an attempt of a fusion leader to divine the trend of evolutionary processes. Only afterwards the leader would try and substantiate it in order to make choice. The problem will be to what extent the conscious choice of the soughtafter path would comply with the inherent trends of a system, what efforts would have to be made to get the system to reach the target path and target state, and whether the external environment tempo and that of the system under discussion could coincide. We do know a great many attempts to force evolution of a
society, contrary to natural laws of development. Therefore the studies into the special features of each civilization are crucially important today since there have been conceived theories which try to substantiate the world unification of different civilizations. In the meantime, some global players’ technological, economic and political potential is likely to provoke their selfish, rather than mutually beneficial, behavior.

2. The strategic matrix model

Drawing on Academician A. Kolmogorov’s modified dynamical-field estimator, and using the successive approximations method, we have identified nine key factors of historical evolution, which are the population, territory, natural resources, economics, science and education, culture and religion, armed forces, foreign policy (geopolitical positioning), and management factor (see the plot). Each of the nine factors will be considered in keeping with the four-digit topological scale of fuzzy sets whose numerical values are over the range from 1 to 10 (Figure 2). Roughly speaking, where available statistics is not enough to adequately make the comparability analysis of different ages for millennia, then the relative variable of each factor in a system, with regard to other factors that existed at the same historical period, would yield quite a specific, comparable cliometric outcome.

This set of variables has evolved from the bottom-end metamodel of strategic management. It should also be kept in mind that the variables-based matrix of history as a nonequilibrium socionatural system will have both the relatively consistent and more dynamic in behavior variables. Both these types will represent the civilization-related peculiarity of different systems. The specified parameters can be correlated with an ancient Chinese multiple-factor model. In their turn, all the factors are represented via a system of indicators. Based on this model we devised the “Russia in Space and Time” program complex enabling one to simulate the things in all perspectives, by using an unlimited data array, the past and the future of a country. At present the cited complex is being adapted to the specific character of the main civilization systems and leading countries of the world (USA, EU, China, India, Japan, etc.).

If the scope of a matrix becomes increased or reduced, this means that the total vector of evolution tends to develop or destroy a system (civilization). Accordingly, when a transition to a new state of the socionatural system is a success (the strategy implementation is successful), then our system is harmonized or extended. If the transition is a failure, the system becomes chaotic, oversimplified, archaic and more barbaric in character. It must be said that the system enters these transitional states from time to time; that is the comparatively stable states would alternate with excesses in dynamics and periods of appreciable imbalance. It is also noteworthy that not only quantitative characteristics of the matrix will undergo certain periodic changes, but the qualitative leaps of its development as well. If we succeed in tracing the recurrence of the cited states, this does warrant making conclusions, first about the cyclical nature of the system’s evolution and about the corridor of future evolutions.

3. The major outcome of the Russian history strategic simulation

In the course of its recent two millennia Russia, being a civilization system, has been demonstrating cyclical fluctuations in its relative integral power, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Judging by its disaggregative format, the country offers quite a dramatic, complex, multivectoral, multidirectional pattern of the dynamics of social system (Figure 4).
By following up the historical dynamics of Russia from the early 1 century A. D., we can see that in the new era there can be traced in it five scaleful superlong strategic cycles, each about four-hundred years long.

Of course, historical characters, eventful social life or freak of chance are all unique in their unpredictability, but subsequent upon making the events free from the nuances of time, place and the characters we can clearly discern typical configurations of the challenges and pseudo-challenges facing the ascendant elites of a country.

In its turn, each superlong four-hundred year wave would comprise five intervals of about eighty years each.

Interestingly, this particular variable of the long strategic cycle was obtained by not only rather conservative physical estimations of sociodynamics that takes into account the size of a territory, population, economics, climate, social system stability, but also the well-known demographic viewpoint concerning the law of three successive generations, as well as empirical correlation of the frequency of the state-formation events in Russian history. Some of the evolutionary periods account for the greatest amplitude in fluctuations of all the social system variables (parameters). This means the rise in crisis-related phenomena and the fact that attempts to solve problems are becoming more intensified. Such crisis-related intervals will get different cycles separated. These are long and superlong strategic cycles.

Preliminary analyses of strategic cycles observed in the USA, China and France indicated that they tend to show a sixty-year pace. Thus, throughout many centuries we can see that Russia is intrinsically and consistently notable for quite different cycles in the way it had to accept the challenges and to respond to them. The spurt-type evolution of Russia, which its several heroic generations had to endure and were destined to live through their “fatal hour”, can be accounted for the accumulation – within 2 to 3 smaller cycles – of appreciable lag and backwardness in technological and institutional evolution as compared to the countries that had economic, military and cultural links with Russia. Weakening of Russia because of lag in the setting up of the “order of the day” and in fashioning the development strategy will, as a rule, provoke the external players for a series of diverse attempts to subdue the weakened and strategically disoriented player. And anyone knows what next. Once again, by paying the heaviest price for the enormous and heroic efforts, the country is restoring its civilization status. Thus, there is one most important civilization feature in archetypes and design of the fusions of the subjects in Russia, which is vividly expressed not only in theory, but also in popular sayings. So, a relatively protracted pace of strategic evolution here is referred to as “Slow and steady wins the race”.

In a sense, the country is regularly settling the accounts of the generations of the ascendant elites who has got conceited about their grandeur, who are ignoring painstaking and tireless efforts to be made for bringing the system targets in accordance with its potentialities. Moreover, those people would allow severe deviations from the natural course of events. Nature and the course of things are facing the management system with problems, challenges, while the managers who are supposed to adequately accept them, give priorities and mobilize resources, would not rise to the occasion.

The most recent Russian cycle of eighty-year long spanned a period from 1917 till 1989 (Figure 9).

Since there can be no rigid determinancy of further evolution, Russia has several paths the eventual evolution could follow, of which only one will inevitably become the dominant one in the years to come. These paths vary in their driving social forces, in methods of interaction with external environment, their potentials, and the effects of their development.
Superficially this fundamental set of paths presents itself as proactive search for the “national idea”, as a struggle of two or more scenarios of further development, the uncertainly of political preferences on the part of the electorate, rivalry between different economic sections and structures, regional differences, inertia of foreign policy lacking a steady position with regard to the clear-cut notion of “vital interests”, etc. It is this very fundamental set that allows a number of analysts to visualize most fantastic scenes of the nearest future, and to put forward rash recommendations. Some of them are shown in the charts. Some of them are asking a straight-forward question of whether Russia is going to become a battlefield in the year 2015…

What we just enumerate here will represent the basic features of all initial phases of the long cycles. As much specific to the past was the time-limit of this phase of yawing in an array of the evolution-oriented models.

Based on what we’ve discovered as the total duration of a strategic cycle of Russia’s development (approximately 80 years), it is most confidently expected that the culmination of its social energetics is going to fall on the years between 2020 and 2040, while the relaxation phase following this new transformation wave will occur from 2060 till 2070. Furthermore, the current cycle of the superlong wave of four hundred years will involve the more scopeful social, technological, scientific and cultural positive developments. A historical analog of the forthcoming rise in the social energetics of Russia could be the period of the reigning Ryurikovichi dynasty crisis and the foundation of the new, Romanovs dynasty. In this very period we can also see the stabilization of the government, the strengthening of religious principles and a fairly harmonious development of Russia in the years 1620 to 1640s.

In all those periods the social system proved to be in a state of dynamic imbalance. However, the system, country, civilization cannot disappear. Subject to changes are political regimes, formats of relationship between the center and regions, technological structures, flags and other state symbols. Yet in socio-natural sense the system once again recovers from crises, from the interrupted evolutionary process of some subsystems and consistent process of the others to attain a more stable functioning. And all this only for one reason: along with the changes in generations, to manifest itself in a surge of public stormy actions and mutinies.

4. Forecast scenarios of international relations

By far the most important element of the strategic matrix model is the factor of geopolitical positioning. Its estimation is supposed to analyze the perspectives of changing external environment for a given system (civilization). From the global standpoint the whole set of interactions between the key strategic players (both the governmental and nongovernmental, but capable of representing main civilization archetypes) may be viewed as a set of their efforts to form an effective fusion of activities, interests and subjects. To make the wording more precise, here “effective” is given according to the players’ perceptions that are far from coinciding with one another, and this fusion, probably, would be motivated both on selfish and mutually beneficial basis.

Once these suppositions have been superimposed on the present-day arrangement of potentialities and on the practically substantiated strategies of leading fusions of global players, we can have five long-term scenarios of the international relations evolution in the XXI century. These are: the “hard globalization”, “soft globalization”, “regionalization” of “positive” and “negative” options, and the “chaos” scenario. Each of the cited scenarios will be optional. Yet the practical development of a situation if likely to have features specific to several scenarios.
4.1. **Hard globalization scenario**

Hard globalization scenario is based on the supposition that the main centers of the Euroatlantic association economic power (the USA and EU) would come out as a unified fusion when the international relations system and world economic system are getting transformed.

In fact, this scenario will stand for the construction of the one-pole model with a rigid hierarchy among its main players. The outcome of this model implementation may be as follows. Based on economic and noneconomic methods, fixation of Western monopoly on the development of high-tech manufacture and on deriving rent income, while the countries of the rest of the world would be assigned to play a supporting role and perform a function of donors, the payers of various rent receipts that long ago were called tribute. Depending on specific character of a country’s potentiality, they will be supposed to supply raw materials, additional labor resources, to accept deployment of dangerous industries and restrictions on production activity, to provide for nature reserves in order to maintain the required world natural balance, etc.

In the event the present scenario is implemented, it is quite likely that the Western community would launch a coordinated policy against the Chinese economic miracle, and would regulate competition with other nonwestern economic centers in trying to limit the development of various national economics in the high-tech sphere.

In the military field, the gap between the USA and Western countries on the one hand, and countries of the rest of the world on the other in what is called military technology, will be sharply expanded. There is every likelihood that there will be lifted the remaining restrictions to use military force in order to ensure the interests of the USA and the North Atlantic community as a whole.

A system created on the model of rigid hierarchy by virtue of specific features of its functioning, would require that political and economic activity of all subjects of international relations be standardized. In all likelihood, this could provoke stagnation in the development of not only the system of international relations, but of the world economics at large.

Yet another risk factor in implementing the present scenario will be brought about by the West’s aspiration to resolve many a difficult problem in keeping with position-strength policy.

Implementation of the rigid globalization scenario becomes feasible notably against the background of crisis-driven development of international situation. To maintain its leadership, it is most likely that the United States will have to bolster a constant tension in the world using the system of “controllable conflicts”.

The central failure of such a scenario is as follows: even though it can – in short-term perspective – bring about a certain stabilization in international situation, nevertheless the critical mass of discontent in the nonwestern world is likely to grow. At a certain stage this could cause a collapse of unforeseeable consequences in the world.

4.2. **Soft globalization scenario**

This scenario is based on the assumption that relative military strength of the USA is likely to gradually decline. If world developments take this course, the European Union is likely to adopt a position of one of the leading economic centers of the world, and to approach the USA in terms of military technologies.

It is the European Union, not China, which is most likely to rank the second world pole of force.
After studying into prospects for the formation of major centers of force it has become evident that only EU and China, and under more favorable conditions – Japan, India and Russia will be able to pursue independent geopolitical strategy.

In its relations with Russia, China is, for the time being, the least interested in its further weakening. Yet we cannot rule out aggravation of contradictions between both the countries as they show greater economic might and military potential.

The present period could be characterized as a strategic pause, where none of potential geopolitical rivals of the USA is not yet ready to challenge its military and political hegemony, although there is growing a discontent with American domination.

Open struggle against the US autocracy in the nearest future can be started solely on hypothetical basis provided a coalition of several potential centers of force is formed (e. g. EU and Russia; Russia and China). Such a scenario could be implemented only if toughness of Washington’s foreign policy exceeds a certain level.

On the whole, according to the moderate globalization scenario new vistas will open up for China to independently establish itself as a center of economic and military power to match those of the USA and EU. Along with its allies and partners from the CIS countries, Russia – in implementing this scenario – also can strengthen its position among the world economic and military leaders. This might come true only if it can take the role of the consolidating center of integration processes in the post-Soviet territories.

The analysis of variations in the key figures of state power is indicative of the fact that once the moderate globalization scenario has been implemented, Russia is bound to retain control over its territorial and natural resources. However, to this end it has to substantially improve growth indicators in management, foreign policy, science and education.

4.3. The enhanced regional role scenario

The enhanced regional role scenario will be based on the assumption that the overriding trend in furthering the system of international relations will become the formation of the competitive trade-and-economic areas. The largest of them are going to be the North-American and Asia-Pacific areas, as well as the EU. As their economic might becomes increasingly equalized, competitiveness between them is bound to step up. They will struggle for new markets, disputed territories and natural resources. The rationale behind the implementation of such a scenario is the exacerbation of trade wars and inefficiency of the WTO mechanics.

On the whole, the feasibility of its implementation is not very great, since it tends to set up self-sustained and closed economic systems whose interaction on the interunit level is restricted, which contradicts the modern trends in the development of the world economy.

That said, the likelihood of implementation of this scenario is not high, but we cannot completely eliminate this possibility.

In this case Russia will have to form its own area of economic influence in the post-Soviet territory. If this country fails to do that, it would become either the arena of free expansion on the part of regional opposing groups, or would join one of them. Therefore, within the framework of this scenario we are actually considering two scenarios involving positive and negative regionalization.

4.3.1. Positive regionalization

The implementation of this scenario may include the events as follows: enhanced dynamics of unification of Russia and Belorusia into a unified Union state; the GDP rise to reach the
year 1990 level, formation of efficient supranational agencies within the framework of the European Economic Area (EEA). According to this scenario, after the year 2009 there will come a deepening of trade contradictions between the USA, EU, China, Russia along with its partners under EEA. As a result, by 2011 to 2016 this will lead to alternations in the WTO functioning format – a shift from the interstate economic regulation to largely the interbloc one.

Further on, integration processes will be enhanced inside the major economic regional groups (SST, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ES, China-centered free-trade area in EEA, ATR in the post-Soviet territories), with the globalization structures’ influence showing a decline.

In Figure 6 one can see the transformation of the key figures illustrating the might of the state in accordance with the positive regionalization scenario. Once this scenario is implemented, there is a likelihood of a substantial growth exceeding, by all the main indicators, the moderate globalization scenario.

### 4.3.2 Negative regionalization

Risks associated with implementation of the enhanced regional role scenario are fairly high, so it is likely to take the course of the negative regionalization line. The negative regionalization scenario could follow a variation of probable events which resembles the rigid globalization scenario in many ways. Thus, it involves a refusal on the part of European CIS countries to carry out integration plans together with Russia; assertion of the largely pro-Western orientation of Ukraine in the years 2005-2006 and a refusal of Belorusia to create the Union state with Russia in 2007-2008.

Moreover, “peace-keepers from the NATO” are expected to be brought in this period onto the territories of Abkhazia and Nagorny Karabakh under a cover of settling conflicts in these regions, which would ultimately devoid Russia’s key factors in influencing the development of the situation in trans-Caucasus. And the final phase in transforming the European part of the post-Soviet territories could be integration of Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan into the NATO.

Disintegration of the post-Soviet territories by the years 2009-2010 will result in the complete breaking-up of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the disbandment of the Commonwealth of Independent States. At the same time, it is expected that the zone of responsibility of “peace-keeping NATO forces in trans-Caucasus” is expanded to include South Osetia, while Belorusia, Moldova and Armenia are expected to enlarge the list of NATO countries.

In 2011-2016 Russia is likely to lose its sovereign control of the country’s oil and gas complex. It is going to be managed and headed by transnationals from the USA and Western Europe.

It is going to be part of the process to turn Russia into a loosely-bound confederation due to activities of separatist groupings in the national autonomies, and due to weakening of central power.

By 2016 to 2026 there would be favored the bringing of foreign troops in the territories of Russia characterized by unstable sociopolitical situations.

Owing to a complicated internal political situation, the West, backed by China, would demand that Russian nuclear weapons be placed under control of international forces, and to be scrapped under their supervision.

Russia will be made to agree to transfer to Japan control over Sakhalin and the Kuril islands. Russian national autonomies in the North Caucasus will find themselves under international protectorate. Sovereignty of the country is going to be infringed in other aspects as well.
In terms of these geopolitical transformations Russia will, in effect, lose the status of one of the world centers of development.

At the turn of 2070’s and 2080’s, the outline of Russia’s territory will, in many respects, coincide with its borders of the early XVI century (i.e. without Siberia and Far East, and with only a small strip of the coastline, at the shore of the Finnish Gulf, at the St. Petersburg locality.

In the South, the state border will go along the existing administrative borders with the national autonomies. Russia’s status by the years 2078-2080 will be stabilized at the level of a third-rate European country of weak economy oriented to maintain transport communications responsible for delivering the Siberian and Far-East natural resources to Western Europe.

4.4. The “Chaos” scenario

In essence, this particular scenario combines a few scenarios of catastrophic development likely to be provoked by a variety of factors. By way of example let us consider the possibility of terrorist activity (terrorist attacks against the nuclear and chemical industry plants, terrorists have a free access to the production of weapons of mass destruction) being intensified on such a scale that economics of the largest centers of the world would get collapsed. The terrorist network would stretch to many a country.

Other factors set to provoke development of events like that could be natural anomalies (when the worst scenarios of greenhouse effect come to life, out-of-space catastrophe, a series of disastrous earthquakes and eruptions of volcanoes, etc.), the worldwide financial collapse, and a large-scale military conflict.

It is totally impossible to forecast how, following this scenario, the configuration of the main centers of economic and military might would be altered.

The behavior of each factor in the strategic matrix has a spectrum of its own. As an example to illustrate the case please see in the supplement the charts related to the behavior of such factors as “territory”, “population”, “economics”, “management” and “foreign policy”.

On the whole, the integral indicator of Russia’s might dynamics will achieve its greatest values in the positive regionalization scenario (up to six-units level by the year 2080). An insignificant growth is also observed in implementing the “moderate globalization” scenario. Negative dynamics will demonstrate the values of this indicator for the remaining three scenarios. With regard to the “Chaos” scenario it would make 3.5 units, while for the “negative regionalization” and “rigid globalization” scenarios it tends to 2.5.

Conclusions

The simulation complex “Strategic Matrix” provides opportunities for assessments of the scenarios of future development of international relations.

Those predictions construct the analytical field supporting strategic decision making process.
Figure 1. The strategic matrix model

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<tr>
<th>STATE STATUS</th>
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Figure 2. Basic scale for assessment
Figure 3. Integral status (4 factors + 3 scenarios)

Figure 4. Integral status (9 factors)
Figure 5. Integral: Past and Future

Figure 6. The strategic matrix model
Figure 7. Enneagram of state power

Figure 8. Russia 1917 - 1989
Figure 9. Russia 1917 - 1989

Figure 10. Patterns of integral power
Figure 11. Interests US vs EU

Figure 12. Coalition 1 (hard globalization)
Figure 13. Soft globalization