

Regional Studies in Russia and Current Methodological Approaches for Social/Historical/Ideological [Re]construction of International Relations and Regional Interaction in Eastern Eurasia

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Introductory Methodological Remarks: From Historicist Tradition to Explanation in Social Science

When a researcher begins to investigate a problem, he/she needs to separate what is specific to it and what is common to all scientific inquiries. A related question is to what extent this or that particular field can claim to operate within some distinctive empirical materials understood through explanatory methods unique to this particular field. Charles Reynolds, who raised these questions, outlined also two broad categories of phenomena encountered in international politics. These are non-national but consisted of national elements, and the relations between states proper.¹ In other words this problem can be defined as a level-of-analysis dilemma in international relations ('whole vs. parts'). Thus, international politics as an academic discipline is not concerned only with interactions between states, but with explanations derived from within the nation-state itself. This dualism of understanding international interaction as interstate relationship connected with social-political grouping within the state predisposed the emergence of the two schools of thought in international politics and regional studies. One stressed the necessity of 'scientific' theoretical explanation (also called 'disciplinary'), the second, often called traditional, insisted on historical (interpretivist) understanding.

¹ Charles Reynolds, *Theory and Explanation in International Politics* (London, 1973), p. 2.

Initially international relations as a discipline fixated on diplomatic history. Thus, the analytical focus of the writings was shifted to the description of the formal governmental interactions between nation-states. The use of this method raised the question of objectivity especially in relations to how the generalising attempts reflect major historical trends. The historicism as a method of analysis based on the understanding of the uniqueness for all human events, and thus most of the works within this tradition were biased to be descriptionist backward-looking diplomatic histories. In this approach methodological considerations were not so important, mostly because the methodology was substituted by the interpretivist generalisations of the current-events and in most cases also in specific areas.

The historical interpretation approach tends to examine empirical evidence without the formulation of a general theory but probably with some kind of generalisation explicitly or implicitly reflected. A historian is also involved in creating rational argument and in explanations, but not explicitly in theorisation.² The historical interpretations are theoretically unstructured, though they can include assumptions that are theoretical by nature. They are subjective interpretations based not on rigorous deductive arguments but on intuitive interpretations and they are not capable of being verified empirically. In this sense the explanation in history could be called relativistically non-scientific,³ since the value system in history in most cases is explicitly related to interpretation, and the historical evidence is a fact in the interpretation.

These initial considerations are important to understand which approach, must be chosen to analyse the division of the world into regions and (what is the most important) practical construction/reconstruction of the regions. It is also related to the coming fierce debate on the current definition of Area Studies with two polar positions one of which denies Area Studies mostly because of its culturalist/interpretivist bias arising from the illusive concept of 'area' and thus for the lack of 'theory', and another insisting on the great institutional value of Area Studies in

² Reynolds, *Theory and Explanation*.

³ Arguments, of course, are more sophisticated. See, for example: Alexei D. Voskressenski, *Russia and China: A Theory of Inter-State Relations* (London, 2003).

challenging disciplinary fields in producing the ‘real’ knowledge that can change very concepts used by the disciplines.⁴

Theoretical and Applied Aspects of Regional Dimensions of International Relations and Regional Studies

From the variety of theoretical approaches to research in international relations in Russia, considered one of most productive among the ‘macro-approaches’, is systemic analysis of social phenomena, because it is complex, i.e. it incorporates all together what is existing separately in other approaches.⁵ Besides this approach allows the solving of both theoretical and practical issues—to isolate key macro-regions of the world and to analyse at a regional level transformed general (universal) settings with reference to geographical/regional/territorial modifications. This level of the analysis simultaneously allows more adequately to approach a problem of country specifics, as it puts her in a context of regional perspectives.

However, it must be mentioned that systemic analysis can be effectuated within the two major above-mentioned approaches: historical and that of the social sciences (structural). As Charles Macdonald conveniently put it:

facts do not lend themselves to explanation. One has to build it. A hypothesis or model is an organised set of concepts that leads to an explanation of a local phenomenon; the concepts are in themselves not local but are derived from anthropology, logic, cognitive studies, sociology, psychology, linguistics and other fields of study. Therefore it is wrong to say that there could be a science of area studies. The

⁴ Arif Dirlik, ‘Globalism and the Politics of Place’, in Kris Olds et al. (eds.), *Globalisation and the Asia Pacific: Contested Territories* (London, 1999); C.J-H Macdonald, ‘What Is the Use of Area Studies?’, *IIAS Newsletter* 35 (2004), pp. 1, 4; Klaus Segbers, ‘Area Studies, Comparative Approaches: Is a Peaceful Co-Existence Possible? Or: Can or Should Area Studies Survive?’, Presentation for the 2004 Winter Symposium at Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, 8–10 December 2004 <<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~segbers>>, accessed 23 February 2006.

⁵ A.D. Bogaturov, N.A. Kosolapov, and M.A. Khrustalev, *Ocherki teorii i politicheskogo analiza mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii* (Moscow, 2002).

uniqueness of a group of human societies cannot be the foundation of a science because there is no science but of the general. Models and hypotheses can help you define the uniqueness of the societies you are dealing with, based on data provided by these societies, not on principles or concepts that only apply to them. A science of culture or, if you prefer, a rational and systematic investigation of cultures, is not the product of then cultures themselves.⁶

In addition, what is called area, region, place [ground], territory, space, landscape—i.e. ‘locus’—is important for Social Science⁷ because it helps to set boundaries within which commonalities can be investigated with manageable loss of competence in practical knowledge that can influence, refine or change the very concepts used by the disciplines.⁸

This ‘new’ Area Studies is now called ‘Comprehensive Regional Studies’, ‘Global Regional Studies’, ‘World Regional Studies’, ‘International Regional Studies’, ‘Civilisational Area Studies’ depending on which disciplinary field it originates from, or simply ‘Regional Studies’ as an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary field, marking the necessity of the new program of research, characterised by deep knowledge of area and region with the fusion of theory and models derived from disciplinary studies.⁹ As Norman Palmer conveniently wrote ‘the emerging new regionalism [...] embraces linkages between as well as within states as within regions, and with both a revived

⁶ Macdonald, ‘What Is the Use of Area Studies?’, p. 4.

⁷ Probably not within contemporary Europe where the very idea of the European Union is based on the negation of any country (nation-state) specifics within the newly unified European space. However, the EU unification is not projected beyond the EU borders and so very soon the limit of these ‘universal’ theories in explaining the process of transformation in regions other than EU will be obvious as well as already obvious the limit of the ‘transition’ theories. For the importance of the ‘space’ for interpretational works see: Dmitrii Zamiatin, *Metageografija: Prostranstvo obrazov i obrazy prostranstva* (Moscow, 2004).

⁸ For extended sophisticated arguments about the importance of the ‘place’, see: Dirlik, ‘Globalism’; Richard Higgott, ‘The Political Economy of Globalisation in East Asia: The Salience of “Region Building”’, in Olds et al. (eds.), *Globalisation and the Asia Pacific*. Both from the angle of the general theory of globalisation.

⁹ Aleksei D. Voskresenskii (ed.), *Mirovoe kompleksnoe regionovedenie i mezhdunarodnye otshosheniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 2005).

nationalism and a growing transnationalism'.¹⁰ That corresponds to the arguments of Arif Dirlik, according to whom:

The very conceptualisation of globalism is revealed upon closer examination to be a kind of spaceless and timeless operation, which rather than render it vacuous as a concept, ironically bolsters its pretensions to a new kind of universalism, rendering it a point of departure for all other spatialisations. It is not very surprising that anything less than the global should be mobilised in juxtaposition to it as its other, confounding the possibility of profound differences among the spatial, the local and the place-based. Thus it becomes possible to speak of the spatial, the local and the space-based in the same breath, forgetting that while the local derives its meaning from the global, spatial itself derives its meaning from the parallel from globality, and stands in the same oppositional relationship to the place-based as the global does to the local.¹¹

Thus, as Dirlik writes:

The recent attack on Area Studies in the United States illustrates the changing relationship between culture and knowledge [...]. Area Studies were themselves products of the post-Second World War mapping of the world to answer the needs of the US hegemony, that drew upon an earlier Orientalist culturalism to organise knowledge of the world. Such organisation of knowledge is no longer sufficient to sustain hegemony, as globalisation scrambles areas [...].

My point here is not to defend Area Studies, but rather to point out that to substitute globalisation or rational choice (or even cultural studies) is to replace one form of hegemony with another that is more appropriate to the times.¹²

So, the practical question that emerges in view of all these above-mentioned arguments is not to substitute one ideological concept with another, the process that can lead to another '9.11', and so not of the

¹⁰ Norman Palmer, *The New Regionalism in Asia and the Pacific* (Lexington, 1991), p. 3.

¹¹ Dirlik, 'Globalism', p. 41.

¹² Ibid. pp. 48–49.

complete rejection of Area Studies, as Klaus Segbers proposes,¹³ but of the rejuvenation and restructuring of the field into Regional Studies as a sub-field of International Relations (IR) and Political Science, a process similar to the appearance of International Political Economy and of Regionalism within it as a sub-field of International Relations.¹⁴ Indeed, the ‘outdated political cartography’ and ‘concepts that are able to handle multi-level games, changing rules, actors’ calculations and choices, meaningful comparisons’¹⁵ all can be addressed within Regional Studies that are not ‘claiming for uniqueness’ having ‘methodological weakness’ and ‘irrationality’¹⁶ but their own methodological and theoretical foundation¹⁷ though still in the process of intellectual conceptualisation and fierce interdisciplinary debate partially because of, as Segbers put it rightly, marginalisation of funding.¹⁸

In this connection, the necessity of analysing regional and subregional subsystems¹⁹ of international relations is connected with the new trends of modern international relations—globalisation, regionalisation and fragmentation connected to the uneven transformation of the world because of globalisation.²⁰ Our more refined current understanding of the process of globalisation, which consists of several cross-pollinated trends and phenomena (globalisation, regionalisation, fragmentation) is certainly connected to the necessity for the analysis of transformation and modification of general and universal laws at a

¹³ Indeed, he argues that it makes sense to have only American and European Area Studies, and also probably Middle Eastern because of its relevance to the international terrorism, as other regions and areas must be modelled according to American and European experience. Segbers, ‘Area Studies, Comparative Approaches’.

¹⁴ See, for example: Palmer, *The New Regionalism*; Olds et al. (eds.), *Globalisation and the Asia Pacific*; Ross Garnaut and Peter Drysdale (eds.), *Asia Pacific Regionalism: Readings in International Economic Relations* (Pymble, 1994).

¹⁵ Segbers, ‘Area Studies, Comparative Approaches’.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See for example: Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge, 2003); Alexei D. Voskressenski, *Russia and China*; Aleksei D. Voskresenskii (ed.) *Vostok/Zapad: regional'nye podsystemy i regional'nye problemy mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii* (Moscow, 2002); Aleksei D. Voskresenskii (ed.), *Politicheskie Sistemy i Politicheskie Kul'tury Vostoka* (Moscow, 2006).

¹⁸ Segbers, ‘Area Studies, Comparative Approaches’.

¹⁹ Called also Regional Security Complex in other terminology, proposed by: Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*.

²⁰ Voskresenskii (ed.), *Vostok/Zapad*.

regional level. However, the notion and the concept of region and, in this connection, concrete regional division of the world, all are debatable and contestable.

When the world was analysed in the categories of bipolar interaction or in Wallerstainean categories of interaction of two centres and two types of peripheries, the presence of regional and subregional subsystems did not cause doubts and discussions, as it was subordinated to the logic of a global problematique and the global division into two worlds (two hemispheres: East/West, of which the East was not the Orient [Asia] but former Soviet Union and its satellite states). After the disintegration of the bipolar structure of relations the situation became more complex and many pointed questions were raised by researchers, to which there are no unequivocal or quite certain answers.²¹ These questions are: if the bipolar system has disappeared, what has come instead of it? If we yet can not definitely tell what has come instead of the bipolar system, maybe it will be correct to assert that the world has broken up into compact territories ('*locuses*')—economic/political regions and subregions (mega and meso-areas or regional security complexes in another terminology), and so there are no universal/general laws of functioning of the international system, and there is only a combination of mega-regional and subregional levels of interaction?²² Or supercomplex and subcomplex boundaries?²³ What can be the criteria of world partitioning in conditions of this interim period? More concrete and specific questions have arisen in this connection: is Southern Asia (and also Central Asia to some extent) a region (i.e. whether it makes a distinct regional subsystem or not) or maybe is it a subregion (subregional subsystem)? What are the relations between Asia Pacific as a region and East, South, Northeast and Southeast Asia, not in a geographical sense, but from the point of view of the formation of a regional and subregional subsystem (supercomplex and subcomplex) of international relations? How do they correspond to other regional subsystems and civilisations (world-systems)? What is the relationship and the ratio between globalisation and regionalisation and whether the process of regionalisation reflects the fact that the planetary

²¹ Ibid.

²² IEDA Osamu, 'Regional Identities and Meso-Mega Area Dynamics in Slavic Eurasia: Focused on Eastern Europe', in MATSUZATO Kimitaka (ed.), *Emerging Meso-Areas in the Former Socialist Countries: Histories Revived or Improvised?* (Sapporo, 2005), pp. 19–41.

²³ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*.

international system has broken up into regional (subregional) subsystems, each of which actually forms an independent system? Or are all these are only subsystems, i.e. we need ‘simply’ update certain universal/general laws to political/geographical, historical/economic and cultural/civilizational specifics/particularities?

There are no unequivocal answers to the majority of these questions today. It is clear however, that system analysis (the systems theory) with a combination of other approaches gives the researcher a rich theoretical and methodological toolkit for uncovering adequate answers to many of these uneasy questions.

The basic characteristics of any system are: the interrelation of environment and system (external characteristic of the system), determining its internal characteristics and specifics; integrity—i.e. internal unity, basic impossibility to degrade the properties of the system to the sum of properties of its consisting elements; homeostasis i.e. observance of the certain dynamic balance guaranteeing maintenance of the parameters in a certain range; informational condition of the system, i.e. methods of an embodiment of information, essence of signals and ways of coding the messages transmitted by the system, also called semantics and semiotics of the system.²⁴

Another important characteristic of the system is its safety. The concept of safety has two parts—external, i.e. which determines the influence of an object on an environment, and internal—i.e. describing specifics of the resistibility of an object in relation to actions of an environment. Thus, the external safety is an ability of a system to cooperate with an environment so that there are no irreversible changes or infringements of major parameters describing an allowable condition of environment. Internal safety is a characteristic of the integrity of a system, i.e. an ability of the system to support the normal functioning in view of external and internal influences. This understanding implies that a goal of a system’s safety is the definition of threats that may allow the system to disintegrate with the purpose of acceptance of measures in order not to allow the disintegration process start.²⁵

²⁴ V.D. Mogilevskii, *Metodologiia sistem: Verbal'nyi podkhod* (Moscow, 1999).

²⁵ Mogilevskii, *Metodologiia sistem*; Iurii Plotinskii, *Modeli sotsial'nykh protsessov* (Moscow, 2001).

The system approach became a constituting part of IR theory from the mid-1950s. It is also obvious that theories of international relations, which incorporated to a certain extent the system approach were developed earlier than that period. However a wide circulation of the system theory in Social Sciences was connected with the works of the classical theorists in Political Science—T. Parsons and D. Easton, who described political system as a certain set of relations which are taking place in a continuous interaction with external environment through mechanisms of ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’ according to basic ideas of the cybernetics.

Simultaneously, researchers have defined that international relations has specificity—first of all by the character that they are social relations, so the international system and its subsystems are a type of social system. It means that they should be considered as complex self-adapting systems, which cannot be analysed by analogy with mechanical systems. These social systems, as a rule, belong to open and not-too-well-organised systems, i.e. in defining such systems, it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw a precise border between systems and also within them—between subsystems, and accordingly and on the contrary it is difficult to analyse the system in separation from the environment. The spatial borders of such systems demonstrate quite conditional and marginal character. The subsystems of Europe or Asia-Pacific region though differing by their environmental character, however, exist not only in a reality, but also have some spatial borders, though very often, as was mentioned, these borders are rather conditional. This norm is to some extent true for all regional international subsystems. They represent not only some analytical objects, but also concrete and real connections and relations between real-life social entities, interaction of which has certain features of system organisation. Another feature of the international system and its subsystems is connected with the notion of its basic elements consisting of social entities (including individuals), i.e. they are social systems of the special type with a weak degree of integration of elements and with a significant autonomy of consisting elements. The third feature is the notion of international relations as political relations, i.e. mainly as the interstate relations.

There are different approaches to international relations as a system (in this sense, as mentioned earlier, the system approach ‘incorporates’ the basic content that can be interpreted differently in other methodological

approaches). The most well known are: traditional-historical (international system consisting of diplomatic relations between the states in this or that historical period), historic-sociological (with an idea of social determination of concrete historical system of the international relations), structural (the historical systems of international relations are based on distinctions of structure), empiric-regional or, in other terminology, socio-natural (certain geographical regions, as systems (subsystems) are allocated within the framework of international, economic, political etc. relations), structural-diplomatic (the system is an understanding, assumptions, acquired skills, kinds of reaction, rules, norms and procedures acquired and used by the international actors in realisation of their various individual purposes within the framework of common practical activity) and realistic (various models of balance of forces or balance of power, i.e. international system without political subsystems, with two—five participants, which encompasses also certain rules, by which these participants play).

My paper is organised in such a way as to make it possible to analyse current different methodological approaches within the general systemic approach and to help attest which can act as a basis for the [re]construction of Eurasia.

A common procedure in all these approaches is to figure out a planetary system of international relations, i.e. some self-sufficient system of integrity allowing us to describe and to analyse international relations in general. In the 1990s some theorists, however, started to talk about the necessity of differentiating between general and specific/particular (i.e. regional or area) problems of international relations. This idea was connected with the increasing globalisation as a current dominant international trend, on the one hand, and regionalisation and regional fragmentation, on the other. Some theorists of international relations have started to point out that a number of international interactions have certain autonomy. They have paid attention to the fact that there are specific laws/rules/norms connected to the particularity/specificity (first of all geographical, territorial-economic, civilisational, cultural, ethno-psychological) in the process of functioning of different parts of the system, i.e. of subsystems. As conveniently explained by Palmer²⁶ the concept of regional systems, or subsystems, supercomplex and subcomplex in Buzan

²⁶ Palmer, *The New Regionalism*, p. 6.

and Wæver's terminology²⁷ is particularly useful for political analysis. These narrower (less universal and less general) laws/rules/norms/settings envision the functioning of the regional and subregional subsystems, i.e. they describe a set of specific international interactions with the understanding of the universal/general rules, but on another basis—common geographical, cultural, civilisational belongings (i.e. on the basis of the concrete 'locus').

It is clear that 'region', is an ambiguous term, however it is less ambiguous and more satisfactory when compared to 'area' because it implicitly corresponds to the notion of 'boundaries'. The idea of area goes back to the idea of cultural areas or *Kulturkreis* put forward by Frobenius, Ratzel, Shurtz and Graebner.²⁸ The general idea was to divide the world into ecological zones matching cultural and social traits, however, later the world was subdivided into areas without explicit reference to any rigorously defined cultural areas. Though geographical identity is one essential characteristic of a 'region', there are others that are equally important: social and civilisational/cultural homogeneity, shared political attitudes and behaviour, political interdependence in the form of shared institutional membership, economic interdependence,²⁹ that enable a notion of a 'region' to be much more rigorously defined as a Social Science construction. As conveniently described by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver:

Distinguishing the regional from the unit level is not usually controversial. Units (of whatever kind) must have a fairly high degree of independent actor quality. Regions, almost however defined, must be composed of the geographically clustered sets of such units, and these clusters must be embedded in a larger system, which has a structure of its own. Regions have analytical, and even ontological, standing, but they do not have actor quality [...].

Distinguishing the regional from the global is less straightforward. The easy part is that a region must obviously be less than the whole,

²⁷ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*.

²⁸ Macdonald, 'What Is the Use of Area Studies?'

²⁹ Palmer, *The New Regionalism*, p. 7.

and usually much less. The tricky bit is actually specifying what falls on which side of the boundary.³⁰

The regional security complex framework, proposed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver,³¹ can address these basic shortcomings. However, the concrete definition of the regions and subregions (supercomplex and subcomplex) is dependent on the above-mentioned complexities of the region's characteristics.

The macro-division of the world in regional subsystems (subcomplexes, meso-areas) and regions proceeds from the definition of international political region as a territorial-economic and national-cultural complex (based on a specific uniformity of geographical, natural, economic, social-historical, national-cultural conditions serving as the basis for its allocation) of a regional set of phenomena of international life, incorporated into itself by the general structure of the system and its logic, in such a manner that this logic and the historical-geographical coordinates of its existence are cross-pollinated and interdependent.³²

If to proceed mainly from geographical parameters, it is possible to allocate geographical macro-regions—Asia, Africa, America, Europe, Australia and Oceania; meso-regions (middle regions): Central, Northern, Southern America, Europe, Australia and Oceania, Northeast, Southeast, Southern, Western and Central Asia, Northern (Arabian) Africa and Africa to the south of Sahara, and also—regions (subregions)—with division of America into Central, Northern and Southern, Europe into Northern, East, Western, Central and Southern, and Western, or more precisely—Southwestern, Asia—into Near and Far East. However, the concept of 'Near and Middle East' is wider, than Southwest Asia, as it includes not only sixteen states of Southwest Asia, but also Egypt and Sudan.³³

Proceeding from historical-cultural parameters, it is possible to allocate historical-cultural regions: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia), Indian (India, Nepal, Butan, Sri Lanka), Indo-Iranian (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan), Turkic, Arabian,

³⁰ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, p. 27.

³¹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*.

³² Voskresenskii (ed.), *Vostok/Zapad*.

³³ Voskresenskii (ed.), *Vostok/Zapad*; Viacheslav Belokrenitskii, 'Vostok cherez prizmu mirovykh demograficheskikh protsessov', *Oriens* 5 (1999), pp. 103–115.

Russian/Slavic (Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia or, in other interpretations twelve countries of the CIS), European, North American, Latin American, African regions are united by the appropriate regional integrity of such parameters as geopolitical traditions of belonging to a specific state formation process, current trend to integration (interstate integrational interaction), ethnolinguistic, ethnocultural or ethno-psychological unity. Cultural-religious macroregions usually are: Confucian-Buddhist, Indus, Muslim, Orthodox, Western-Christian, Latin American, African, and Pacific.

It is clear, that the separate countries can be divided into different regions within two or even three different regional clusters according to various parameters. Besides, other regions are constructed in view of cultural-geographical parameters of the states, which can be under construction on the basis of a principle of economic cooperation and joint system of security/common geopolitical considerations, and/or 'fastened' by historical conflicts, some disputable problems, traditional enmity, i.e. there are some other parameters besides geographical, geopolitical and economic that can ensure the possible division of the world into geoeconomic and geopolitical regions. In addition some 'historical' regions recently acquired new 'geoeconomic' features.

There are also some other principles of dividing the world into regions and subregions. Sometimes researchers divide Asia into Southern, Southeast and Eastern (thus excluding from it Oceania and Australia), Near and Middle East and states of Central Asia. Some researchers consider Afghanistan as a part of Near and Middle East, some as a part of Southern Asia, which encompasses seven states of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). According to the same logic of a combination of historical and geoeconomic parameters ten countries of Southeast Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mianmar [Burma], the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) form the Association of the States of Southeast Asia (ASEAN).

According to all these reasons, today it is possible to speak about Pan-American (Interamerican), European, African, Asian (The Greater Middle East and the Greater Eastern Asia) regional subsystems of the international relations and about international political regions divided appropriate to these subsystems of international relations, together with some more or less precisely determined subregional subsystems—Western/Central-European (as a part of European),

North-American and South-American (or Latin American) as parts of Pan-American (Inter-American), Near (Arabic and North African) East, Middle East (integrating into the Greater Middle East), East Asia, Southern Asia, Northeast and Southeast Asia (integrating into the Greater Eastern Asia) and Asian-Pacific region (as parts of Asian [sub]systems of the international relations), in which Near and Middle East and Asia-Pacific Region are grouped into subregional subsystems. These principles of division of the world also have formed the basis for appropriate allocation of the most important international political regions with their own regional norms and settings.

According to these rational principles of the division of the world, it is still not possible to merge geographical, cultural/religious and geopolitical/political parameters to speak about Eurasia and Eastern Eurasia (Eurasian Far East and Siberia) as a distinct geopolitical/cultural entity. However, due to globalisation the process of ‘fastening’ the continent of Eurasia which consists of one continent but different economic, geopolitical/political, ethno-religious entities has started, and because of that it will be interesting to explore different methodological approaches in view of their applicability to address challenges to regional identities in view of further globalisational trends, the influence of which are probably different on the Western and Eastern periphery of Eurasia.

Social/Historical/Ideological Approaches to the [Re]Construction of Eurasian Far East and Siberian Meso-Area

Historical Approaches

It is clear that difficulties arise in all historical explanations when interpretative conclusions are applied to empirical reality. Since no absolute standards exist even in scientific explanations, then historical argument is no different from other types of argument. It was argued by some historians that historical objectivity lies in the reconstruction of the totality of the past. However, the process of selectivity of the facts from historical records has no theoretical or objective justification except that it is made on the basis of a theoretical explanation that can be validated in its own terms. Since there is no criterion for the selectivity of the facts,

historical explanation presupposes an interpretation.³⁴ Following this argument, history becomes more creation than reconstruction. But, since the main assumption of this approach stresses the duality of historical evidence (fact/thought), then history becomes human creation, and thus differs from historian to historian, from generation to generation, from historical school to historical school, and from country to country.

However, if history is not fiction, then the facts must be attestable in some way outside the context of the argument. The historian cannot create facts in the sense that they must exist prior to his interpretation. So, we can argue that the particularity of the historical explanation lies in the interpretation of the facts, but the discovery of the facts that exist before interpretation is as important for the historian as the interpretation itself.

If we would argue that history is an interpretation, we cannot establish the criteria of objectivity for historical writing. If we agree that values are included in the interpretation and objectivity in writing consists of excluding certain values, we must establish the bases for such exclusion. The only basis in history for this is a convention among historians that depends on the time, the circumstances and, thus, varies from historical school to historical school (even within one country notwithstanding different, especially bordering countries) through time.

A 'Pure' Historicist Approach

(Diplomatic, Interstate, Trade, Cultural Contacts Interpretations)

Common sense precludes the notion derived from non-historical sources being verified by historical test and thus forms bias. Thus, the universal criteria for validity are non-existent in history (they cannot be established on a rational basis) and in this sense history is and will always be subjective. This idea is clearly illustrated by the set of historical interpretations of the interaction in the Eurasian territories (mainly in literature of the relationship between China and Russia, Russia and Japan,

³⁴ For an analysis of an extensive discussion in the literature, see: Voskressenski, *Russia and China*.

of international interaction in Central Asia etc.).³⁵ A monograph³⁶ was

³⁵ See, for example: V.A. Aleksandrov, *Rossiia na dal'nevostochnykh rubezhakh: Vtoraia polovina XVII v.* (Khabarovsk, 1984); S.V. Bakhrushin, *Ocherki po istorii kolonizatsii Sibiri v XVI i XVII vv.* (Moscow, 1927); Max Beloff, *Soviet Policy in the Far East, 1944–1951* (London, 1953); E. Belov, 'Tsarskaia Rossiia i Zapadnaia Mongoliia v 1912–1915 gg.', *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka* 1 (1996), pp. 96–105; E.L. Besprozvannykh, *Ekspansionistskaia politika dinastii Tsin v Tsentral'noi Azii XVII–XVIII veka* (Saratov, 1990); O.B. Borisov and B.T. Koloskov, *Soviet-Chinese Relations, 1945–1970*, edited with an introductory essay by Vladimir Petrov (Bloomington, 1975); Luke T. Chang, *China's Boundary Treaties and Frontier Disputes: A Manuscript* (Dobbs Ferry, 1982); S.L. Tikhvinsky (ed.), *Chapters from the History of Russo-Chinese Relations, 17th – 19th Centuries*, trans. V. Schneierson (Moscow, 1985); Tien-fong Cheng, *A History of Sino-Russian Relations* (Washington, D.C., 1957); M.A. Chepelkin and N.A. D'iakova, *Istoricheskii ocherk formirovaniia gosudarstvennykh granits Rossiiskoi imperii, 2-aia polovina XVII – nachalo XX vv.* (Moscow, 1992); K.E. Cherevko, *Zarozhdenie Russko-Iaponskikh Otnoshenii* (Moscow, 1999); Sh.B. Chimitdorzhiev, *Rossiia i Mongoliia* (Moscow, 1987); Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine (eds.), *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York, 1993); Basil Dmytryshyn, E.A.P. Crownhart-Vaughan, and Thomas Vaughan (eds. and trans.), *Russia's Conquest of Siberia, 1558–1700: A Documentary Record* (Portland, OR, 1985); Andrew D.W. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republic Sinkiang, 1911–1949* (Cambridge, 1986); Sherman Garnett, 'Russian Power in the New Eurasia', *Comparative Strategy* 15:1 (1996), pp. 31–40; B.P. Gurevich, *Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia v Tsentral'noi Azii v XVII – pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Moscow, 1979; 2nd rev. edn., 1983); Milan Hauner, *What Is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (Boston, 1990); YOSHIDA Kinichi, *Kindai Roshin Kankeishi* [History of the Modern Russo-Chinese Relations] (Tokyo, 1974); Amir Khisamutdinov, *The Russian Far East: Historical Essays* (Honolulu, 1993); Stephen Kotkin and David Wolff (eds.), *Rediscovering Russia and Asia: Siberia and the Russian Far East* (Armonk, NY, 1995); L.N. Kutakov, *Rossiia i Iaponiia* (Moscow, 1988); V.L. Larin, *Kitai i Dal'nii Vostok Rossii v pervoi polovine 90-kh: problemy regional' nogo vzaimodeistviia* (Vladivostok, 1998); MA Ruheng and MA Da Zheng (eds.), *Qingdaidi Bianjiang Zhengce* [Qing Dynasty's Border Policy] (Beijing, 1994); MANABE Shigetada, *Nichiro Kankeishi: 1697–1875* [History of Japanese-Russian Relations: 1697–1875] (Tokyo, 1978); V.S. Miasnikov, *The Ch'ing Empire and the Russian State in the 17th Century*, trans. Vic Schneierson (Moscow, 1985); V.S. Miasnikov, *Dogovornymi stat'iami utverdili: diplomaticheskaiia istoriia russko-kitaiskoi granitsy XVII–XX vv.* (Moscow, 1996); A.L. Narochnitskii, *Kolonial'naia politika kapitalisticheskikh derzhav na Dal'nem Vostoke, 1860–1895* (Moscow, 1956); Nauchno-isseledovatel'skii Sovet po voprosam natsional'noi bezopasnosti Iaponii, *Vekhi na puti k zakliucheniiu mirnogo dogovora mezhdu Iaponiiei i Rossiiei: 88 voprosov ot grazhdan Rossii* (Moscow, 2000); V. Pavliatenko, 'Rossiiskii Dal'nii Vostok v sisteme otnoshenii Rossii so stranami SVA', *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka* 4, (1995), pp. 11–20; R.K.I. Quedsted, *Sino-Russian Relations: A Short History* (Sydney, 1984); V.V. Alad'in (ed.), *Rossiia i Iaponiia: propushchennye vekhi na puti k mirnomu dogovoru* (Moscow, 2001);

dedicated to the analysis of Russian, Chinese and Central Asian interpretations of the historical reconstruction of Eurasia during the last ten to fifteen years.³⁷ According to this monograph two types of approaches within a historicist tradition were identified. The first, the confrontational approach, is based on the rejection of the opponent's arguments and stresses border lines (actual, confessional, religious, civilisational) and the civilisational clash along these lines. The second, the non-confrontational one, stresses the possibility of civilisational amalgamation and a compromise along border lines. Consequently, the development of neighboring territories and contact between the empires was considered as an 'aggression' and 'expansion' or as the colonisation of 'economic territories' according to the first and the second approach. It is obvious today, however, that further intensive research on the history of Eurasia based on only one of these two interpretations is impossible.³⁸ The creative methodological potential of these two isolated interpretations has been exhausted. However, it must be understood that the historiography of borders within regions and of relationships between neighboring countries always raises sensitive and controversial problems intimately tied to questions of sovereignty and legitimacy³⁹ and to the understanding of these notions, which are subject to rethinking now due to the globalisational changes in the world. It is obvious that political will

John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford, CA, 1994); TAKANO Akira, *Nihon to Rosia: Ryokoku Kosho no Genryu* [Japan and Russia: Initial Negotiations between Both Countries] (Tokyo, 1971); HAMASHITA Takeshi, 'The Future of Northeast Asia: Southeast Asia?', in Kotkin and Wolff (eds.), *Rediscovering Russia and Asia*, pp. 312–322; Wayne S. Vucinich (ed.), *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples* (Stanford, CA, 1972); Allen S. Whiting, *Siberian Development and East Asia: Threat or Promise?* (Stanford, CA, 1981). For more literature, see: Alexei D. Voskressenski, *Russia, China and Eurasia: A Bibliographic Profile of Selected International Literature* (New York, 1998).

³⁶ Alexei D. Voskressenski, *The Difficult Border: Current Russian and Chinese Concepts of Sino-Russian Relations and Frontier Problems* (Commack, NY, 1996).

³⁷ I do think that the basic arguments presented in this monograph can be extended also to the Russian and Japanese literature on the history of the Russo-Japanese relations (see, for example: Alad'in (ed.), *Rossiiia i Iaponiia*; Nauchno-issledovatel'skii Sovet, *Vekhi na puti*).

³⁸ Voskressenski, *The Difficult Border*.

³⁹ See, for example, among others on this subject: Victor A. Shnirelman, 'Myths of Decent: Views of the Remote Past, As Reflected in School Textbooks in Contemporary Russia', *Public Archaeology* 3 (2003), pp. 33–51.

and economic necessity are not enough to resolve all of the problems created by ideological biases. It is important now to push forward with the rethinking of the mutual history of different countries that constitute modern Eurasia. The current historiographical concepts in the region still lag behind the unprecedented social and political changes. The more fruitful approach today is an attempt to combine different historical interpretations into a kind of a balanced approach or to analyse it within structural paradigms.

A Search for Balanced Approach within a Historicist Tradition: 'Interactions in the Borderlands' as an Interim Theory

A clear attempt to proceed along these lines is to interpret the relations between states within Eurasia as an interaction in the borderlands. Some of the first attempts of this kind were books by Owen Lattimore, however even he cannot avoid the historical-interpretivist bias. This concept was also further developed by Alfred Rieber,⁴⁰ an American specialist on Russian Asian politics. One of the most recent attempts was made in the book by Voskressenski.⁴¹ It was argued in these writings that it is not only the 'aggression' and 'expansion' or the 'territorial acquisition', and the 'colonising' or 'economic' activities in the region which matters so much. It seems more important to discuss the general laws of interaction between these two civilisations, Asian and Western (or more precisely Asian and non-Asian), Confucian and Christian, for which it seems hardly possible to apply the simple dichotomy of 'equity or inequity'. In their basic dimensions, such laws have been determined by the retrospectively observable communication between an economically and socially dynamic capitalist empire and its decrepit semi-feudal counterpart. Empires were engaged in interaction within territories that formally did not belong to anybody but were vitally important in terms of state and national interests. This resulted in the situation becoming so tense that even more suffering was brought upon the indigenous peoples of those territories which were either at the stage of corruption of their tribal systems (such as in Southern Siberia, Transbaikalia, Northern Manchuria,

⁴⁰ Alfred J. Rieber, 'Persistent Factors in Russian Foreign Policy: An Interpretive Essay', in Hugh Ragsdale (ed. and trans.), *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge, 1993), pp. 315–359.

⁴¹ Voskressenski, *The Difficult Border*.

Amuria, or the Maritime territory) or at various stages of nomadic feudalism (such as in Mongolia, the Dzungar Khanate, Western and Eastern Turkistan, or the Kazakh khanates). The objective mechanism of the formation of borders during this period was such that it is only in a relative sense that the contemporary concepts of morality and ethics could be applied to these past developments. The latter cannot be considered in isolation from the social phenomena and cruel habits of that epoch. This approach can be accepted within a historicist tradition because it predisposes the necessities of different interpretations and did not argue that one of these brings more 'truth' than another.

Culturalist, Civilisational, Geopolitical Approaches

The culturalist approach was a distinctive attempt to answer the criticism of historicism for its interpretationist character. I would say that it could provide two major modifications within the culturalist approach: culturalist-historicist and culturalist-structuralist, representing the departure to the sphere of 'pure' humanitarian or 'pure'⁴² Social Science tradition.

Culturalist-historicist Approach

The cultural-historicist approach represents an attempt to describe culturalist phenomena within humanitarian (interpretivists) tradition basing the analysis on the argument that culture as a phenomenon cannot be explained within science, i.e. that we cannot explain irrational phenomena within rational frameworks. Culturalist-historicist tradition is best represented by some publications of Vladimir S. Miasnikov. In his article 'Ethno-cultural Aspects of Interaction between Russia and China and their influence upon the Soviet-Chinese relations'⁴³ and some later works⁴⁴ he argues that the contacts of states of the same, say European, civilisation are not similar to the contacts within different civilisations, and that traditions of culture that in many ways predetermine the political

⁴² In a relative sense, and certainly more as a goal.

⁴³ V.S. Miasnikov, 'Ethno-Cultural Aspects of Interaction between Russia and China and Their Influence upon the Soviet-Chinese Relations', *Sino-Soviet Affairs* 15:4 (1991/1992), pp. 87–103.

⁴⁴ V.S. Miasnikov, 'Rossiia i Kitai: Kontakty Gosudarstv i Tsivilizatsii', *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 2 (1996), pp. 72–80.

culture of any society, have their impact upon all levels of foreign political process, thus implying the necessity to use methods of ‘comparative culturology’. According to Vladimir S. Miasnikov⁴⁵ political culture in Russia was based on the norms of Christian morality and European tradition, that implied equality for all sovereign states; meanwhile, China’s political culture was based on the Confucian principles of political hierarchy and the Sinocentrist perception of the world.

Vladimir S. Miasnikov stresses that the European and Russian political tradition was primarily aimed at the building of horizontal ties among various states. He believes that:

In 17th–19th centuries Russia and China were the two feudal powers quite comparable in terms of their political, economic and cultural dimensions. Thus the Russian side tended to see their political communication as a contact between the equal actors of international relations, i.e. along the horizontal line. Chinese political culture actually excluded equality from China’s relations with any country of the world. China was willing to build all its international ties along the vertical line.⁴⁶

Thus, according to Miasnikov’s⁴⁷ explanations, the establishment of relations between the two countries formed a kind of ‘system of coordinates’ where the European tradition (one civilisation) made the horizontal line, and the Chinese (Asian) tradition (another civilisation) made the vertical line. And so the actual interaction resulted in the vector of development—the third line that embodies the elements of both approaches.⁴⁸ Since Russia for centuries was engaged in relations with the nations mediating between Russia and China (Mongols, Manchu, Uigurs, Kazakhs, Kirghizes as well as same nationalities living along the Amur river and the Maritime territories) Russians (and Russia as a state) can adapt their experience of communications with China to China itself. This explained the relative advantage of Russia’s relations with China

⁴⁵ Miasnikov, ‘Rossiia i Kitai’.

⁴⁶ Miasnikov, ‘Ethno-Cultural Aspects’, p. 88.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 88–89.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 89.

compared to Westerners relations with China. The aberrations from this ‘ideal’ line can be explained by the fact that notwithstanding the centuries-long experience, Russian diplomats still tended to see relations with China on the basis of European law and tradition. The theoretical understanding of their incongruence came relatively late (in the 19th century) because of the ‘formational similarity,’ i.e. the typological similarity of the forms of state and social organisation and the ‘closeness’ of China’s foreign policy for the foreigners. According to Miasnikov,⁴⁹ the Chinese empire partly accepted parity in the relations, i.e. the Western tradition, only when it was defeated by the Western powers—Britain, France, and United States. The ‘ethno-cultural analysis’ (in the words of Miasnikov, or culturalist-historicist as I would call it) brings two conclusions:

- cultural specifics have a profound influence upon the foreign policy of the state over time.
- social and economic parameters of the state are not sufficient for the analysis of the international relations without the analysis of the cultural and civilisational parameters.⁵⁰

However these conclusions raised another set of questions and without answering at least two of these the analysis seems incomplete:

- the Western pre-Westphalian tradition also implied the hierarchical model of relations between the states and so it is possibly not intrinsic to Chinese culture *per se*, but simply to a certain level of social development.
- without rigorous definitions of civilisations and the parameters of civilisations, the culturalist reference of Russia and China as representing different civilisations is not enough to explain the peculiarity of their relations.

Civilisational and Geopolitical Approaches

Civilisational approaches became popular in Eurasia in the 1990s and were initially based on the ideas elaborated by A. Fergusson, who understood civilisation as a new stage in human development related to the idea of the necessity to curb social contradictions that can be

⁴⁹ Miasnikov, ‘Ethno-Cultural Aspects’.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

detrimental to social integrity. Since Fergusson many tried to elaborate on the civilisational approach including Morgan, Spangler, Engels, Hegel, Toynbee, ‘eurasianists’ (‘evraziitsi’) in Russia and the most current attempts by L. Gumilev (theory of ‘ethnogenesis’),⁵¹ S. Sanderson (‘civilisations as world systems’)⁵² and S. Huntington (‘conflict of civilisation’).⁵³ It is clear that all mentioned authors developed a civilisational approach according to their, sometimes polar, understandings. The clearest opposition within the current civilisational approach is the dichotomy conflict/dialogue of civilisations (Huntington vs. Khatami). Notwithstanding differences within different colors of civilisational approach all currently migrate to a structural understanding of civilisation that implies the understanding of civilisation as a ‘societal system’ i.e. the ‘system that on the highest, societal level integrates functional entirety of social structures, objects, social ties, and relationships between individual and groups of individuals’.⁵⁴ This structural understanding of civilisation means that:

1. Every structure has its own function.
2. All structures constitute a system.
3. A system constantly regenerates societal characteristics of its structures as well as individuals.
4. A system (civilisation) can be divided by sub-civilizational parts (sub-systems).
5. Since all are societal systems they a priori cannot be rigorously defined and conceptualised.
6. Civilisation consists of four main parts that influences ‘civilisational identity’; these are religion, language, spatial ties, and ties of time. Of these four the two last ones are the most important and ‘system-constituting’ ties.

⁵¹ Lev N. Gumilev, *Ritmy Evrazii* (Moscow, 1993); Bruno Naarden, “‘I am a genius, but not more than that’”: Lev Gumilev (1912–1992), *Ethnogenesis, the Russian Past and World History*, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, NF 44:1 (1996), pp. 54–82.

⁵² Stephen K. Sanderson (ed.), *Civilizations and World Systems: Studying World-historical Change* (Walnut Creek, CA, 1995).

⁵³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996); V.A. Kolosov and N.S. Mironenko, *Geopolitika i politicheskaia geografiia* (Moscow, 2001).

⁵⁴ I.B. Orlova, *Evraziiskaia tsivilizatsiia: Sotsial'no-istoricheskaia retrospektiva i perspektiva* (Moscow, 1998); B.S. Erasov, *Sravnitel'noe izuchenie tsivilizatsii* (Moscow, 1998).

Based on this structural understanding of the concept of civilisation, notwithstanding differences within concrete interpretations, we can formulate the basic principles of the ‘civilisational approach’:

1. The dynamic of cultural-historical systems i.e. civilisations is not a linear process.
2. Current civilisations cannot be grouped according to hierarchical principles.
3. Each civilisation has its own stages/cycles of growth and has its own logic of development.
4. There is no ‘universal’ world civilisation.
5. The formation of civilisations is going according to the natural-historical laws; that means that ‘civilisation’ can not be ‘artificially introduced’ (‘imported’) to a different social/cultural milieu, however this does not reject the idea of continuity in the formation of different, hereditary civilisations.

Geopolitical approaches methodologically tend to explain the international phenomena according to the same principles as within the civilisational approach but with the stress not on the cultural but on the military-political (strategic or geostrategic) dimension of international relations.⁵⁵ There are two distinct trends within geopolitical research in Eurasia: one tends to concentrate mainly on geographical correlation between the centers of world power, and another on the influence of geographical, historical and political factors on the geostrategic potential of the states.⁵⁶ In this sense territory is a ‘geopolitical resource’ for the geopolitists and thus the political-geographic positioning of the concrete state (area) is dependent on its relationship with another states (areas) on three levels: local (immediate neighbors), macro-regional and global.

Geopolitists are interested in searching the parameters of political-geographical positioning of the state (exits to the sea, positioning on/around/near the commercial routes; enclave, semi-enclave or island positioning; number of neighbors, system of communications with the neighbors, character and intensity of the relationships with the outside world; qualitative characteristics of the territory and the specifics of the state territory—its size and morphology [‘distribution’]).⁵⁷ Thus, they

⁵⁵ N.A. Nartov, *Geopolitika* (Moscow, 1999).

⁵⁶ A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki: geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii* (Moscow, 1997).

⁵⁷ Nartov, *Geopolitika*.

tend to analyse ‘endemic fields’ (the territory controlled by the state for a long time and thus with its strongest sovereignty), ‘frontier/border field’ (controlled by the state but not completely assimilated and because of that contested by other states), ‘cross-pollinated field’ (i.e. contested by two or more states) and ‘total field’ (completely controlled by the state).⁵⁸

So, for geopolitists the key problem for the reconstruction of Eurasia is not the search for its cultural or civilisational identity but of national/regional security and the means for its defense. In this sense, methodologically the ‘only’ difference between geopolitical and cultural/civilisational explanations is that all are interested mainly in international/regional interaction but geopolitists try to find correlation between this dimension and space-territorial and geographical characteristics, and culturalists/civilisationalists between international/regional interaction and cultural/civilisational ones.

It is clear that since cultural/civilisational/geopolitical approaches are all heavily marked by interpretivist bias i.e. they stress the necessity of a structural understanding but really argue for the historical interpretation under the disguise of a social structure, they are used as ideological tool and ideological weapon in the struggle of different ideologies pretending to be ‘neutral’ and ‘scientific’.

Culturalist-structuralist Approach

The culturalist-structuralist agenda would imply the understanding of culture as a matrix of life through its structural dimension, i.e. lead further out of interpretivism to the domain of social ‘science’. One of the most clear theoretical attempts of such kind is a cultural theory by Thompson and Wildavsky.⁵⁹ According to this theory people tend to derive a great many of their perceptions about each other from their preferences with regard to dimensions of social life: group and grid. The group dimension is responsible for the strength or weakness of the boundaries of the group that people live in. The grid-dimension determines the degree to which the individual is determined by the rules made by other individuals. The

⁵⁸ Konstantin Pleshakov, *Geo-ideologicheskaja paradigma: Vzaimodejstvie geopolitiki i ideologii na primere otnoshenii mezhdru SSSR, SShA i KNR v kontinental’noi Vostochnoi Azii, 1949–1991 gg.* (Nauchnye doklady 21; Moscow, 1994), pp. 5–15.

⁵⁹ Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory* (Boulder, CO, 1990).

theory assumes that the peoples' perceptions are determined by a specific combination of the grid/group dimensions and consequently grid/group indicators that predetermine preferences for a certain way of structuring social life. This coherent set of values and opinions are called cultural biases (hierarchical, fatalistic, individualistic, and egalitarian). If not the time nor the place to elaborate the cultural theory and its applicability to the reconstruction of Eurasia and the Eurasian Far East and Siberian meso-area, I must stress only that if a researcher were to be successful in explaining Chinese perceptions of Russians and Central Asians and *vice versa* from the point of view of the influences of the cultural biases established by the cultural theory through a certain period of time (it is clear that it would be not easy to do so through the historical perspective), he or she would be able to foster the discussion of the subject matter to an absolutely new structural level. The impact of this theory on the reconstruction of the Eurasian identity is still to come but it has already been implemented to explain the relationships between European Community and the Commonwealth of the Independent States.⁶⁰

Institutionalist Approaches

'Institutionalist' Approach

One of the first 'institutionalist' attempts was a book by Brunnert and Hagelstrom⁶¹ that 'structured' the 'political organisation' of the Chinese state according to the different types of its institutions. However, though an initial level analysis was presented, the book was more a dictionary than an analytical study. Simultaneously the productivity of this approach predetermines the constant use of this 'dictionary' by researchers in Russia through the generations and the translation of Brunnert and Hagelstrom's work into English. Lately BANNO Masataka⁶² among others used this type of approach as a methodological framework to analyse China's relations with the West through the analysis of the

⁶⁰ Marina Strezhneva, *Evropeiskii Soiuz i SNG: sravnitel'nyi analiz institutov* (Moscow, 1999).

⁶¹ I.S. Brunnert and V.V. Gagel'strom, *Sovremennaia politicheskaia organizatsiia Kitaia* (Peking, 1910); H.S. Brunnert and V.V. Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, rev. N.Th. Kolessoff, trans. A. Beltchenko and E.E. Moran (Shanghai, 1912).

⁶² BANNO Masataka, *China and the West, 1858–1861: The Origins of the Tsungli Yamen* (Cambridge, MA, 1964).

Zongliyamen as an institution. Though his book generally is written as a historical study, Chapter 7 ‘The Tsungli Yamen’ (sections ‘Establishment of Tsungli Yamen’ and ‘Institutional Feature of the Yamen’) are written through a pure ‘institutionalist’ angle.⁶³ The institutionalist approach as an attempt to structure understanding of relations by tying it to ‘institutions’ was another clear attempt (comparing to culturalism) to answer a critique for the interpretivist character of the historicist tradition on the basis of social science methodology. In practice the application of this methodology resulted in the fusion of institutionalist and historicist traditions.

One of the relatively recent attempts of this kind was a book by Khafisova published in Kazakhstan⁶⁴ and defended lately as part of an habilitation process in Russia.⁶⁵ Khafisova narrowed her understanding to the relations of China with her Central Asian neighbors, however an understanding is distinctive enough to constitute a separate approach. Khafisova structured the relations into three main spheres, each of which is separately analysed: political culture, diplomatic institutions, and culture (spiritual not material). In the political culture section the historical experience of sending and receiving embassies to China from the Central Asian states and from China to these states are analysed. Practically this section is partly the analysis of Chinese and Central Asian political culture, partly an understanding of the functioning of the embassy and border administration as institutions within different political cultures of China and Central Asia (a mixture of culturalist and institutionalist approaches). Among the diplomatic institutions, Khafizova analyses ‘tribute-gift’ (*dan’-podarki*) dichotomy from the institutional point of view as a part of the process of diplomatic relations, the ‘titleship’ (*titulovanye, titulatura*) as a diplomatic institution (including the award of military rank as part of it), ‘hostageship’ (*zalozhnichestvo*) as an institution of diplomatic leverage, ‘vassalage’ (the dichotomy ‘suzerain-vassal’) as an institution. In the section on culture and diplomacy, Khafisova views culture as an institution within which a harmonisation of international relations phenomena is achieved,

⁶³ Banno, *China and the West*.

⁶⁴ Klara Khafizova, *Kitaiskaia diplomatiia v Tsentral’noi Azii, XIV–XIX vv* (Almaty, 1995).

⁶⁵ Klara Khafizova, *Kitaiskaia Diplomatiia v Tsentral’noi Azii, XIV–XIX vv* (Moscow, 1995). Outline of the Dissertation for the Degree ‘Doctor of History’.

consequently the shift between hierarchical and other models of relations is considered within the rise and fall of Confucianism as a cultural phenomenon. Religion as well as language generally in the study is seen as part of the culture and simultaneously as a tool that can institutionalise certain types of relations between states.

‘Diplomatic Stereotype’ Approach

Within the institutional approach, it appears important also to make an attempt at studying the influence of diplomatic and propaganda stereotypes (as institutions) on the interstate relations, or, rather, on the foreign policy-making with regard to the counterpart country. To this end, it is necessary to understand the correlation between the diplomatic and propaganda stereotypes and, therefore, the contents of these insufficiently developed notions, as well as to make a distinction between the notions of stereotype and image.

A note should be made that the categories of image and stereotype, though being used by researchers in a number of social and humanitarian disciplines—such as philosophy, ethnography, philology, political science, history, psychology, et al.—are not, however, solidly affirmed.⁶⁶ So far, social sciences—probably, with the only exception for psychology—have not yet developed a paradigm-type interpretation of the image-forming mechanism in human consciousness.⁶⁷ Psychology is known to have discovered that individual behavior depends on the system of personality-orienting images, i.e. some individual guidelines that developed under the influence of certain social conditions and purpose-oriented action of upbringing. It is widely known that individual experience and knowledge are not sufficient to make judgement about all phenomena that face the individual and in relation to which he must take a certain position in the course of his life-related functioning. A way of compensating for the insufficiency of one’s own experience is to borrow assessments, attitudes and views that are passed over generations and become a tradition and thus a stereotype for the given ‘civilisational

⁶⁶ B.F. Porshnev, *Sotsial’naia psikhologiya i istoriya* (2nd edn., Moscow, 1979).

⁶⁷ Natal’ia Novgorodskaia, ‘Stanovlenie i modifikatsii diplomaticheskogo stereotipa Russkogo gosudarstva v imperii Tsin v XVII – ser. XIX vv.’, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Candidate of Science in History (Institute of the Far Eastern Studies, Moscow, 1987).

community'. This takes place through the borrowing of certain philosophy-religious and ethical norms as well as through the absorption of social paradigms at the everyday-life level. These norms and stereotypes, functioning within the same ethnic community for decades but normally within a certain historical epoch, concentrate psychological features typical of the given community and expressed, in particular, in stable tastes, perceptions of reality, behavioral stereotypes, etc.⁶⁸ These ethno-psychological features unquestionably take shape on the basis of the initial landscape community in whose area the given ethos has developed. The aggregate of the stereotypes, typical of the given ethos, represents the common level of consciousness of which a part is formed in a purpose-oriented way through upbringing and education, and the other and evidently the larger part is formed in an elemental way, i.e. is weakly if ever controlled by the mind.

Unlike an image, a stereotype in this tradition is understood as a structured perception by human consciousness of some phenomenon in reality.⁶⁹ Like an image, this structured perception bears substantial elements of assessment constructions, but is more specific and oriented to the sphere of behavioral expression. According to Natal'ia Novgorodskaia,⁷⁰ in 'stereotypes', subjects and phenomena of the material world are reflected at the common level of consciousness, while in 'images' they are reflected at the higher level of conceptualisation. This assumption seems quite disputable because in Novgorodskaia's definitions both the 'image' and 'stereotype' can emerge equally at the common and conceptual levels of consciousness and will differ only in the extent of their structuring and expression of behavioral orientation.⁷¹ In addition, according to my view and contrary to Novgorodskaia's,⁷² an 'image', being less structured, is a notion broader than that of a diplomatic stereotype.

The image of another country is a perception paradigm, i.e. the whole range of perceptions about another country that exists in the given social and ethnic continuum. According to Natal'ia Novgorodskaia, this category is simultaneously social and historical. Countries' images vary in different

⁶⁸ Novgorodskaia, *Stanovlenie i modifikatsii*.

⁶⁹ Iu.V. Bromlei, *Etnos i etnografiia* (Moscow, 1973), p. 94.

⁷⁰ Novgorodskaia, *Stanovlenie i modifikatsii*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 25–27.

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 27.

historical epochs, and they also differ depending on the social strata we are dealing with. The structured paradigm of perception of another country, shared by the given country's elite that takes part in foreign-policy decision-making, forms a 'diplomatic stereotype'.⁷³ The latter is conceptualised in the course of purpose-oriented study of that other country and suggests the formation of certain norms that are taken into account in foreign-policy decision-making with regard to that other country. Novgorodskaja⁷⁴ notes correctly that the 'definition of "diplomatic" suggests that such study is selective and aimed at acquisition of knowledge and ideas that are used for foreign policy-making with regard to the counterpart country'. Also, according to Novgorodskaja, it appears that the notion of diplomatic stereotype is somehow broader than the notion of foreign-policy stereotype as it does not encompass only the sphere of foreign policy but also that of the other country's geo-policy and domestic policy in the spheres that appear important to the counterpart country. In other words, the area of diplomatic stereotype includes all perceptions that are important in terms of strategy making in relations with that other country. Certain components of diplomatic stereotype are quite close to a propaganda stereotype, which, however, is different from a diplomatic stereotype by its purpose-oriented infiltration in mass consciousness. This takes place comprehensively, i.e. consciously, through reflection of certain political or financial interests of the elite, as well as unconsciously, through expression of elementally understood differences between the two ethno-social communities.

There is no doubt that a diplomatic stereotype suggests the existence of certain perceptions about the people of the counterpart country, i.e. includes a certain part of an ethnic stereotype. At the same time, these categories are unquestionably of different significance. The ethnic stereotype category's essence has been conveniently defined by Russian researcher I.S. Kon⁷⁵: 'Ethnic stereotypes, embodying perceptions, typical of common consciousness, about one's own and other peoples do not merely sum up certain information but express emotional attitude to the object. History of inter-ethnic relations is somehow condensed there'.

⁷³ Ibid. pp. 27–28.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 28.

⁷⁵ I. Kon, 'Natsional'nyi kharakter: mif ili real'nost'?', *Inostrannaia literatura* 9 (1968), pp. 216–219, at p. 216.

Within an ethnic stereotype, shape is given to perceptions about national character, material and life culture, and public consciousness of alien people, while a diplomatic stereotype evidently includes that part of an ethnic stereotype which encompasses ethno-psychological aspects, i.e. is basically related to national character.⁷⁶ The ethno-psychological factor renders a direct influence on the course of political developments. Also, it renders an influence on foreign-policy activities, as the factor of personality directly interferes in the objective course of interstate relations, and that factor of personality in turn is finally and to a certain extent determined by the given type of national character.⁷⁷

According to Novgorodskaja, 'the diplomatic stereotype of a counterpart country can be seen as image that takes shape as a result of reflection of the other country's activities in her domestic and foreign policy, that reflection taking place in the mind of the people having dominating positions in their own country'.⁷⁸ However, I believe that it is possible to offer an 'extending' modification of this definition. Thus, the diplomatic stereotype can be presented as a structured image of a counterpart country that takes shape as a result of reflection of the other country's activities of strategic and geo-political importance in her domestic and foreign policy, that reflection taking place in the minds of a part of the elite dealing with decision-making in the sphere of foreign policy and national security in their own country.

As noted before, the diplomatic stereotype is not only a social but also a historical category, i.e. its formation and modification have been substantially influenced by the given historical situation. So, evolution of the diplomatic stereotype is directly connected with evolution of social systems and public consciousness. Quite naturally, the diplomatic stereotype in traditional societies (feudal, in formational terms) was different from the diplomatic stereotype taking shape in industrial and post-industrial societies, though its major components evidently remained unchanged. At the earliest stage in formation of traditional societies, a diplomatic stereotype remained at the level of common perceptions about the alien state, though in the ruler's and his counselors' case this common

⁷⁶ Novgorodskaja, *Stanovlenie i modifikatsii*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 29.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 30.

perception was much more structured as it determined a rational foreign-policy decision to be taken.

A diplomatic stereotype seems to be a purely theoretical category, however, this is not the case. Its practical function is connected with the mechanism of foreign-policy decision-making and the construction of the regions. Without the notion of a diplomatic stereotype, it is hardly possible to elaborate stable foreign and regional policies, and impossible to take rational foreign policy and political decisions. Emergence, formation and modifications of the diplomatic stereotype are all connected with the development of information about the other state within a region (defined as the territory broader than the territory of the nation-state). Initially, such a basis exists in the form of some 'opinion' about the other nations and other states, and then necessary data are accumulated, the most needed data are summed up and analysed, while a certain part of those is recorded to be passed on to the subsequent generations of persons involved in decision-making.⁷⁹ A certain aspect of knowledge within the diplomatic stereotype is communicated directly over generations in the form of an oral quintessence of foreign-policy experience. Naturally, as information data-pools were making progress, the oral aspect diminished, but such communication of experience, to some extent, exists nowadays as well as a 'perception'.

Further research within this approach, even using the historical-analytical mode of analysis, will be very productive since it will lead the discussion of the subject further out of simple historical interpretations, however, further research within a structural route is still to come.

Structuralist Approaches

Multi-factor Equilibrium Approach

The concept of multi-factor equilibrium⁸⁰ is based on a general assumption that the 'system' is composed of independent political entities that are nation-states. This system is in anarchical equilibrium only in the sense that it has no political controller (world government) that can ensure the imposition of universal order and in which the political power and

⁷⁹ Novgorodskaja, *Stanovlenie i modifikatsii*.

⁸⁰ Voskressenski, *Russia and China*.

authority are overwhelmingly vested. States therefore, are generally equilibrating among themselves.

In this approach, the realist balance-of-power is considered as a particular case that can be realised under specific circumstances and during specific periods of time. The states generally are not equilibrating 'power', or they are equilibrating something other than 'power'. They seek to secure the best attainable position in multi-factor equilibrium, ideally at minimum cost and with the minimum of attention. The best attainable position is achieved through the complex correlation of factors and the readjustment of interests. Thus, the multi-factor equilibrium approach can work as a metatheoretical framework (a kind of general theory) and as a qualitative⁸¹ middle-range⁸² approach, because the international system is considered a system composed of subsystems which may themselves be considered consequently as a system. To understand the system, we must understand how the units are interacting. To understand how the units are interacting, we must understand what the external factors are that are influencing the units and what the internal factors below the level of the units are, which are important to an understanding of the relationship between the units. In other words, it is necessary to understand both exogenous and endogenous determinants of state behaviour in their complex cross-pollination.⁸³

The multi-factor equilibrium approach tries to concentrate mainly on the points of historical development that were significant in shaping the relationship between states and thus followed the influence rendered by a number of factors within external and internal clusters on the course and outcomes of the bilateral relations. Internal factors for analytical purpose are further subdivided into objective (economic, political, demographic, geographic and cultural) and subjective factors (human, societal, state and

⁸¹ The word 'qualitative' is used here: 'to refer to an interest in presence or absence of specific characteristics or specific configuration of characteristics pursued by means of systematic comparison of multiple cases', that is not in the sense of 'qualitative methods used at the micro level', but as the case 'situated between the extremes of analysing a single case with the help of one central explanatory variable. [...] and an attempt to cover all existing political systems on a global scale with as many variables as possible'. Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingeman (eds.), *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 49–50.

⁸² That is, 'bound both in time and space'. Ibid. p. 765.

⁸³ Voskressenski, *Russia and China*.

national, as well as individual, group, and government interests) within a multi-factor equilibration. The fine-tuning of the equilibration according to the proposed explanation usually occurs at the level of readjustment interests (government v. societal, elite v. societal, national v. human and so on). In other words, the system adjustment in the first instance is seen as a changing correlation between human interest and societal and state components of national interest. If the readjustment at this level does not occur, a readjustment at the level of internal objective factors (political, economic, demographic, cultural or even geopolitical/geographic) is expected. If the readjustment at the level of internal objective factors is not congruent with the readjustment of interests (or *vice versa*), a change is expected. This change can be effectuated within a unit (state) but it will influence other unit(s) and consequently will influence external clusters. At the same time, the unit will receive feedback from another unit or will be influenced by external factors corresponding (and correlated) to the changes, which occurred in the first unit. A reverse process can simultaneously occur as well.⁸⁴

In real life, the situation is much more complex and the influence of some factors, of one particular factor, or the inter-combination of a group of factors, varies throughout history. The multi-factor equilibrium approach tries to concentrate on the events that seem important in explaining the changes, that is, on the events of strategic importance in a broad sense, and to show the historical evolutionary dynamics of the factors interwoven. To undertake this comprehensive study a historical-analytical mode of analysis is usually adopted. This mode within a multi-factor equilibrium approach only means the understanding of the development of the relationship in its historical complexity. This broad definition of the historical-analytical mode of analysis enables us to see how the analytical framework works in conditions as near as possible to the complexity of the real relationship, that is, it creates the possibility to assess it empirically.

The multi-factor equilibrium approach aims to trace and explain both continuity and change in inter-state relations, especially in view of possible future scenarios with the objective of providing a methodological framework for understanding the history of Eurasia. The analytical framework adopted in the multi-factor equilibrium approach is derived

⁸⁴ Ibid. ch. 1.

from General Systems Theory and its various modifications applied to international relations. With these methodological assumptions in mind, an attempt was made to de-link 'theory' from the empirical evidence, to de-construct system into sub-systems, to appraise an integrative framework itself as an analytical construction, and then to assess it empirically in reconstructing the past, understanding the current developments and to a certain extent trying to explore possible correlations of factors.

The multi-factor equilibrium approach aims to show what is behind the changes in inter-state relationships (especially in Eurasia) and how those changes were and are initiated. Another question that can be raised in this connection is to what extent the elaborate framework for analysis can be applied to the study of the larger or different international phenomena. A multi-factor equilibrium vision can work as an explanatory and problem-solving integrative theoretical framework for analysing relationships within regions and between states which believe in the importance of the historical past and distinct cultural heritage in their current daily lives (for example Russia, China, the states of the Asia-Pacific, the Central Asian states etc.). Since it adopts an analytic discourse, it could be applied also as a general construction, and in international relations it can be seen simultaneously as a general and a more sophisticated version of what is called systems theoretic (or 'scientific') realism. A multi-factor equilibrium approach is therefore an attempt to narrow general systemic propositions to fit a middle-range analytic qualitative framework, addressing both exogenous and endogenous determinants of the unit, and based on a realist vision, with an incorporation of an evolutionary dimension.

In the methodological sense, the multi-factor equilibrium approach is integrative because it shares its epistemology with Systems Theory trying to leave behind values or opinions prevailing in the existing literature. At the same time, it does not separate completely subject and object; it does not exclude subjective and inter-subjective phenomena, implicit values and normative commitment. This approach tends to work in favour of stabilisation, but it is not a traditional theory in the sense that it does not tend to work in favour of stabilising prevailing structures of relationships,

and consequently, does not have a priori conservative effects, as all traditional theories do.⁸⁵

Meso-Mega Area Dynamics Approach

The emergence of the Meso-Mega area dynamics approach was related to the fact that the mega area of the northern half of Eurasia, the former Soviet Union and the East European regions, has changed its face dramatically since the collapse of the communist regimes due to massive political and economic changes. Eurasia greatly deviates from the common understanding, that is, Asia and Europe as the whole continent. The new nations and states in the area, though more than ten years have passed since the systemic changes happened, are still called ‘transition’ economies. Though this naming does not help us to perceive and describe the diversity within the area, it clearly suggests that the peoples in the area still share an identity based on common political, economic and historical experiences. Within the Meso-Mega area dynamics approach this bond is called the institutional identity. However, the ‘disciplinary’ naming is not sufficient, because the diversity within the mega area has developed more and more clearly. Thus it is useful to consider not only ‘the region’s “migration”’ but also the regions’ ‘migration’, or emerging Meso-areas.⁸⁶ The ‘disciplinary’ naming can suggest only a set of possibilities in post-communist development; that is, market economy and parliamentary democracy. In reality, various regions or sub-regions came into existence in the mega area, such as Central Asia, Caucasia, South Eastern Europe, Central Eastern Europe, the Russian Far East, Eastern and Western Siberia. So far, no systematic frames exist in order to categorise and analyse these regions and Eurasia. Thus the purpose of the Meso-Mega area dynamics approach is to create concretely a new methodological terminology to analyse the emerging regions, or Meso-areas; changing regions both in regional perceptions and in political and economic institutions.⁸⁷ In this approach Meso-area (the key concept) is defined by regional integration,

⁸⁵ For the elaboration of the theory and the historical explanation based on a structural theory, see: Voskressenski, *Russia and China*. An explanation of the most current development in Eastern Eurasia based on the multi-factor equilibrium theory, see: Aleksei D. Voskresenskii, *Rossiisko-kitaiskoe strategicheskoe vzaimodeistvie i mirovaia politika* (Moscow, 2004).

⁸⁶ Ieda, ‘Regional Identities’.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

institutional identity, self-identity, and external identity. Then, the notions of Meso- and Mega-area were invented in order to understand systematically the changing and reorganised Eurasia in a general setting.

A Meso-area is a changing part of a Mega-area in its regional perceptions and institutions. According to IEDA Osamu, this change happens when the Mega-area diminishes its centripetal forces and/or is challenged by an external momentum, such as an economic-political integration by a neighbouring region, a cultural influence, an economic expansion, or an impact of globalisation. A Meso-area is, therefore, a product of the relatively weakening Mega-area. At the same time, it premises that the Mega-area still sustains the centripetal force sufficiently to keep the Meso-areas in its visible or invisible hands. In other words, Meso-areas balance between the centripetal force of the Mega-area and the external momentum.⁸⁸

The centripetal force on a Meso-area is embodied by factors such as political and economic institutions, experiences, patterns of behaviour, and ecosystems. These form the institutional identity of the Meso-area, which is shared by the other Meso-areas in the same Mega-area. This identity is called, within this approach, *Sein*. In contrast, a common external momentum functions as *Sollen* in a Meso-area. A Meso-area is a field where the momenta of the two different dimensions, *Sein* and *Sollen* meet and interact with each other, and this meeting and interacting provides dynamism to the Meso-area. Due to the dynamism, the Meso-area's spatial borders are variable. As seen above, Meso-areas are a regional notion to be defined substantially (that is, institutional identities) on the one hand, and also a perceptual notion to be identified by the peoples in the related regions, especially including the neighbouring peoples (that is, perceptual identities). Therefore, essential for a Meso-area is how the people recognise their own region firstly (self-identity), then, secondly, how its external or neighbouring regions recognise it (external identity). External regional identities are not necessarily coincident with the institutional identity of the Meso-area or with the regional self-identity, either. The essential difference between the imperialist regional identity and the post-communist one is interactivity between the external and self perceptions in making the post-communist regional identity, and a working interactivity between the external and

⁸⁸ Ieda, 'Regional Identities'.

self-identities is fundamental for the formation of Meso-areas. A regional identity is an interactive product of self- and external perceptions, mutually influencing each other's construction of regional identity, and a regional identity is re-makable when any side of the perceptions begins to change with or without new developments in the institutional realities.⁸⁹

Taking the factors above into consideration, it seems possible to redefine the regions in a general setting, in contrast to the world areas reinforced by the unilateral perceptions in the 20th century. This regional definition, according to the Meso-Mega area dynamics approach, is based on the dynamics of the Triadic identities⁹⁰, that is, deviation, interaction, and amalgamation among self-, external, and institutional identities.

Ieda further generalises, saying that, a Mega-area emerges when a Meso-area is emerging in it. Therefore, a Mega-area is a companion notion of Meso-area. At the same time, a pair of Meso- and Mega-areas must be complemented by the emergence of another Mega-area, which has external momentum on the Meso-area. The former can be called Mega-area 'exit Mega-area', and the latter 'entry Mega-area'. In other words, an emerging Meso-area is accompanied by a pair formation of Mega-areas. These Mega-areas work just as the plus-minus electrodes in the Triadic dynamics of Meso-areas, and their functions—that is, the institutional and external identities in the Meso-area—can be convertible from each perspective of the Mega-areas. From the viewpoint of the exit Mega-area the institutional identity is less and less substantial or more and more reminiscent in the process from the Initial to the High Triad of the dynamics of Meso-areas. This process, however, seems the opposite of the perspective of the entry Mega-area; that is, the institutional identity of the exit Mega-area seems an external identity for the entry Mega-area, and the external identity for the exit Mega-area functions as no other than the institutional identity for the entry Mega-area. In this reversed perspective, the institutional identity of the entry Mega-area becomes more and more substantial, or less and less normative along with the diminishing momentum of the exit Mega-area. This reversibility is all the more important when the exit and entry Mega-areas may convert their positions on the way of the winding Triadic dynamics. In brief, in this approach the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ IEDA Osamu hypothetically formulates the Triadic dynamics. See: Ibid. pp. 30–33.

exit and entry Mega-areas are understood not as discrete categories but a transferable notion.

Conclusion

In explaining the process of interactions in Eurasia a complex analytical model is needed to avoid an interpretivist bias because no ‘professional convention’ exists in Eurasia and in the world on how to interpret the history of Eurasia avoiding ideological and interpretivist bias. This model/models must be broad and flexible enough to be applied as a general construction, like different modifications of the systems approach or general cultural model. It can be tested using a historical-analytical mode of analysis, or elaborated as only an explanatory model, but it must be appraised by itself. However, to do that there is no need to completely reject Area Studies. They must be transformed into Regional Studies where systems theory and regional security complex frameworks can provide enough methodological and theoretical tools to create general constructions applied to regional reality and to be tested by an historical-analytical mode of analysis.

The ‘interaction in borderlands’ concept can satisfy the analysis within the interpretivist historical tradition, but to proceed further researchers in the field need further methodological innovations. Some steps in this direction are ‘diplomatic stereotype’ and ‘institutionalist’ approaches.

Three types of new regional approaches within the structuralist paradigm were elaborated during the last ten years that can address the enormous changes in Eurasia. These three types of approaches analyse from three different disciplinary angles (cultural, that of the international relations and that of international political economy) the same set of regional problems. The culturalist-structuralist model is elaborated but was applied only to Western Eurasian regional and inter-regional interaction.⁹¹ The multi-factor equilibrium approach is an attempt to elaborate a political science (international relations) model and to explain (or recreate) the history of interaction and current relationships in Eurasia

⁹¹ Strezhneva, *Evropeiskii Soyuz i SNG*.

using this model as a framework for analysis.⁹² There are several explanations of Eastern Eurasian trends based on this approach that have already appeared in the literature.⁹³ The Meso-Mega area dynamics approach is an attempt to create a model based on the analysis primarily of the international political economy phenomena with the incorporation of other (primarily, regional-political) phenomena.⁹⁴ The interpretation of historical developments based on this model will probably appear in the future.

All these new structuralist approaches are within both regional and disciplinary studies and the new program of research, which is characterised by deep knowledge of area and region with the fusion of theory and complex models derived from disciplinary studies. The multi-factor equilibrium approach (already) and the Meso-Mega area dynamics approach (not yet) can be tested using an historical mode of analysis. However, an historical type of analysis also predisposes the appearance of the interpretivist bias. To what extent that type of testing will be prone to ideological coloring will become apparent in the future work in the field.

⁹² Voskressenski, *Russia and China*; Voskresenskii, *Rossisko-Kitaiskoe*.

⁹³ Voskresenskii (ed.), *Vostok/Zapad*; Voskressenski, *Russia and China*; Voskresenskii, *Rossisko-Kitaiskoe*; Voskresenskii (ed.), *Mirovoe Kompleksnoe*; Voskresenskii (ed.), *Politicheskie Sistemy*.

⁹⁴ Ieda, 'Regional Identities'.