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Концептуализация геоэкономики в  
конструктивистской парадигме

Conceptualization of geoeconomics in the  
constructivist paradigm

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**Аннотация.** В исследовании авторы выделяют три подхода к пониманию сущности геоэкономики: географический, инструментальный и дискурсивный. В рамках первого подхода геоэкономика трактуется как научная дисциплина, изучающая экономические аспекты глобального географического пространства. В рамках второго – как стратегия, предполагающая использование экономических ресурсов во внешнеполитических целях. Третий подход подразумевает под геоэкономикой мировоззрение или способ видения мира, при котором значение и приоритет приобретают экономические цели и средства внешнеполитической деятельности. Авторы приходят к выводу, что неореализм и неолиберализм связаны с инструментальным подходом, тогда как конструктивизм – с дискурсивным. С конструктивистской точки зрения геоэкономика как дискурс наделяет акторов экономическими интересами и обязывает их применять экономические инструменты международно-политического влияния.

**Ключевые слова:** геоэкономика, теории международных отношений, конструктивизм, методология исследований международной политики, международно-политическое мировоззрение

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**Abstract.** In the study the authors identify three approaches to understanding the essence of geoeconomics: geographical, instrumental and discursive. Within the first approach geoeconomics is interpreted as a scientific discipline that studies the economic aspects of global geographic space. Within the second as a strategy that involves the use of economic resources for foreign policy purposes. The third approach implies geoeconomics as a worldview or a way of seeing the world, in which economic goals and means of foreign policy activity acquire significance and priority. The authors come to the conclusion that neorealism and neoliberalism are associated with an instrumental approach, while constructivism is associated with a discursive one. From a constructivist point of view geoeconomics as a discourse endows actors with economic interests and obliges them to use economic instruments of international political influence.

**Keywords:** geoeconomics, IR theories, constructivism, methodology of international politics research, international political worldview

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**Introduction.** Currently, the overwhelming number of studies concerning the connections between foreign policy and economic activity are carried out in line with geo-economic theory, which serves as the main methodological basis for them. The central principle of geoeconomics is the primacy of the economy in relation to other foreign policy factors, the power function of the economy [1, p. 359; 2, p. 335]. The first works on geoeconomics appeared at the turn of the 1980s – 1990s. Many authors then wrote about the changing role of economic resources.

Not much time has passed since the term “geoeconomics” was introduced into circulation, but academic interest in the new research area has noticeably weakened. However, about 10 years ago there was a kind of revival of geoeconomics that continues to this day. According to R. Blackwill and D. Harris, the revival of geoeconomics is explained by three factors: the increased role of economic instruments of foreign policy, the spread of state capitalism and the increasing complexity of world markets [3, p. 33-48].

As part of this revival, scholars have posed many new questions and initiated new directions related to geoeconomics as an integral part of the science of international relations. At the same time, there remains a need to conceptualize geoeconomics through the prism of basic approaches in the study of international relations. Based on this, an attempt to outline the basic principles of constructivist geoeconomics seems quite relevant.

**Materials and research methods.** The empirical basis of the study consists of reports from international governmental and non-governmental organizations, materials from leading Russian and foreign media, official documents of strategic planning of individual states, etc.

The study used both the provisions of constructivism (A. Wendt [4] and others), and the provisions of the geoeconomic and geofinancial theories of E. Luttwak [5] and F.B. Rocci [6], as well as S. Strange’s ideas about the inevitable integration of political and economic studies of international relations [7]. However, content analysis, case study analysis and classification method were used.

**Literature review.** There is a fairly wide body of scientific literature devoted to certain aspects of geoeconomics. Some publications discuss the theoretical and categorical aspects of geoeconomics (M. Wigell, A. Vihma, M. Mattlin, Z. Sholvin [8; 9; 10], etc.). In others, the emphasis is on country cases, they analyze the geo-economics of individual states and responses to the challenges of the geo-economic space (M. Beeson, T. Gerke, Y.P. Dus, H. Yoshimatsu, K. Crawford [11; 12; 13; 14] and etc.). It is much less common to find works whose authors analyze individual geo-economic processes from the point of view of the main approaches to the study of international relations, for example, from the point of view of constructivism (M. Babich, D. Morrissey [15, 16], etc.). There are very few works in which geoeconomics is conceptualized from the positions of neorealism, neoliberalism or constructivism, in which attempts are made to compare methodological foundations (K. Pfeiffer [17]).

**Research results and their discussion.** There is currently no single and general definition of geoeconomics. How researchers understand it depends on the approach they choose. Three such approaches can be distinguished: geographical, instrumental and discursive.

The first approach can be called geographical, since it focuses on the economic aspects of geographic space and interprets geoeconomics as a scientific discipline. This approach has much in common with the geopolitical views held by such American and European authors as A.T. Mahan, H.D. Mackinder, F. Ratzel, R. Kjellen, and K. Haushofer. In other words, it is closely related to political and economic geographies, which study the influence of geographical factors and features on the organization of politics or economics, respectively.

Thus, Z. Scholvin and A. Malamud argue that the geographical features of South America, for example, physical barriers that make economic integration an expensive undertaking, limit Brazil’s sphere of influence in the region [18]. M. Aaltola and others consider how the new geography of global flows penetrating the space of sovereign states makes traditional political paradigms of power and security obsolete [19, p. 29-60]. Geographical conditions, as explained by J. Kapyula and H. Mikkola, encourage states to cooperate in the

Arctic, since open confrontation would jeopardize the achievement of the economic goals of each of them [20].

The second approach is instrumental. With this approach, geoeconomics is understood as a strategy for using economic resources for political purposes. This approach originates in the works of E. Luttwak, who introduced the term “geoeconomics” into scientific circulation. In his 1990 article “From Geopolitics to Geoeconomics: The Logic of Conflict, the Grammar of Commerce,” the ideas of which later formed the basis of the book [21], he argues that states will henceforth compete with each other not so much in the military as in the economic arena. He writes that in the new geo-economic era, states will continue to pursue hostile goals, but not by military, but by economic means; their priority will be, for example, not rearmament, but the search for places to allocate capital, not the creation of military bases, but penetration into foreign markets [22, p. 18].

Adhering to an instrumental approach, R. Youngs considered geoeconomics a strategy in which the emphasis is on economic means and the priority of economic security over its other forms [23, p. 14]. The instrumental approach is used by authors who study, for example, the use of their economic resources by various states to achieve political results that are beneficial to them [24]. For example, they analyze China’s financial transactions, designed to strengthen its political influence in the world [25], the new industrial policy of the EU, aimed at gaining greater autonomy, ensuring independence from external actors and strengthening protection from various geo-economic threats [26], prospects for Russia’s transformation against the backdrop of climate warming wheat and other grain crops into an instrument of international pressure [27]. The instrumental approach is mainly used by authors working within neorealist and neoliberal methodological frameworks.

The third approach can be called discursive; it is the one that is closely related to the constructivist paradigm. From a constructivist point of view, geoeconomics is a concept that rethinks the understanding of political space. For constructivists, geoeconomics is, first of all, a discourse that shapes and reproduces the worldview of security strategists and foreign policy decision makers [28; 29]. According to M. Domosh, geoeconomics does not describe the situation, but conjures up a number of ideas and meanings through which the description can occur; it has to do not with economic spatial strategies, but with a way of seeing the world in which such strategies come to be seen as plausible and desirable [30, p. 945]. Through the geo-economic vision, the states that make up the political space are understood as geo-economic actors who seek to control markets, not territories, and whose security depends not so much on protecting the territory, but on adapting to new economic realities [31, p. 25], in particular to strengthening financial integration.

For constructivists, geoeconomics is a concept of securitization that legitimizes emergency measures by constructing dangerous threats from standard risks. As D. Morrissey writes, the US grand strategy in the Middle East is based on the discursive identification of the Persian Gulf region as an unstable but key geo-economic space. The constant positioning of this region as a kind of key to the effective functioning and effective regulation of the global economy, as D. Morrissey argues, legitimizes arguments in favor of external military intervention and military presence on its territory [32, p. 874-879; 33].

Modern researchers dealing with geo-economic problems in the constructivist paradigm proceed from two assumptions. First, the economic integration of the world has created cross-border connections that enable states to exploit economic and other networks that simply did not exist before. Secondly, in such a situation, the power of states does not disappear, but, on the contrary, is revived through their use of previously inaccessible channels created by globalized networks [15, p. 207].

It follows that the term “geoeconomics” does not describe the struggle of states with each other using economic means, but the increasing “securitization of economic policy and the economization of strategic policy” [34, p. 4]. States, finding themselves in a world of cross-border economic connections and opportunities, began to consider themselves actors who could

use these connections and opportunities as a kind of weapon, an instrument of international pressure. The instrumentalization of economic assets, in turn, has blurred the traditionally strict separation between economic and security policy: coercion in the name of national security is increasingly carried out through economic networks, while the pursuit of economic goals entails increasingly security consequences [35, p. 119].

**Conclusion.** Thus, with the neorealist and neoliberal approach, geoeconomics is interpreted instrumentally, i.e. as a strategy for using economic resources for political purposes. From a constructivist point of view, geoeconomics is a worldview or a way of seeing the world in which economic goals and means of foreign policy activity acquire significance and priority. At the same time, participants in international relations are interpreted by actors whose security is no longer linked so much to the protection of territory from military aggression, but rather to control over economic processes, actors who are not only able, but also obligated to use economic instruments of international political influence.

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