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Dialectical prerequisites on Geopolitics and Geoeconomics in Globalization's Restructuration Era

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Abstract. In the current restructuring phase of globalization, the geopolitical analysis, combined with the derived concept of geoeconomics, seems to acquire a new, growing interest. Specifically, the scientific discipline of geopolitics synthesizes the different socioeconomic analytical tools, having as final goal to propose and implement a proper strategy (geostrategy) by focusing on increasing national power and broadening the control of a geographic territory. In this context, this article explores how the contemporary geopolitical and geoeconomic analysis can valorize a composite evolutionary-dialectical method to enhance their understanding. To this end, substantial points of analytical enrichment to geopolitics and geoeconomics seem to emerge in the globalization's restructuring era.

Keywords. Geopolitics and geoeconomics, Global crisis and restructuring, Geostrategy, Dialectics, Structural-evolutionary crisis.

JEL. B52, F69, F59.

1. Introduction

As scientific discipline, geopolitics was formed in the early 20th century and spread next into Central Europe during the interwar period (Lorot, 1995). The term geopolitics as scientific term was first applied by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén (1899), while the founder of geopolitical thought in Great Britain was Sir Halford Mackinder (1904; 1907), whose goal was to turn geography into a science that manages to bring together the natural and human sciences in order to enhance the "thinking imperially" idea. Mackinder also introduced the "Heartland" theory, which hypothesized that the core of global influence is located in a region of the world in Eurasia (the Heartland) because of its size, wealth of resources, and large population. Consequently, Nicholas Spykman (1942) counter-proposed the "Rimland" theory, suggesting that

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Eurasia's rimland, the coastal areas, constitutes the key to dominate the "world island" and eventually the whole world. In Germany, it was Friedrich Ratzel (1898) who first posed a geopolitical question for broadening the relationship between science and action. He established the school of classical political geography and defined the concept of "Lebensraum" which was used massively later by the national-socialist propaganda. Subsequently, the works of his "student" Karl Haushofer (1932) had great impact to the Nazi leadership which used Haushofer's ideas to justify German expansionism during the era of the National Socialist Party sovereignty. In the US, Alfred Thayer Mahan (1890) was the first that cultivated in his work the problem of geopolitics, specifying the need for a comprehensive geostrategic alliance between the United States and England to control the seas and which would provide defense against every hegemonic attempt in Europe and Asia.

After the Second World War, geopolitics spent several years in a state of a relative "theoretical hypnosis". Also, after the end of Cold War two central arguments were put forward to support the end of geopolitics (Tuathail, 1997). First, how supposedly the new phase of global development is now removing geographical constraints and distances. Second, that under the influence of globalization's dynamics, the establishment of increasingly integrated economic units -such as the European Union- leads individual states to practically lose several instruments of their national sovereignty and, therefore, their national self-determination.

Nevertheless, geopolitics and geoeconomics in our time seem to regain a new interest in the international scientific community. In the context of globalization, of course, modern geopolitics (Guiora, 2013; Newman, 2010) distinguishes itself from the classical pre-war geopolitics (Fettweis, 2015; Owens, 1999): it has structurally and conceptually revamped its analysis, is now more cautious against over-simplistic theoretical generalizations, and is increasingly trying to focus on the specific historical content of its subject.

In this way, geopolitics constitutes now a canvas which synthesizes partial socio-economic analytical tools, with the ultimate goal to propose and implement proper strategies (geostrategy) and focusing on increasing national power and broadening the control of a geographic territory (Carroué, 2002; Chauprade, 2001; Foucher, 1991; Gottmann, 1973). Geopolitics, of course, implies and presupposes the existence of international antagonisms in various interdependent fields: military power, economic power (the basis of geoeconomics), demographic power, cultural power, environmental and all other possible forms of national power (Dodds & Atkinson, 2000; Huntington, 1996; Kagan, 2003; Taylor, 1985; Thual, 1996). Ultimately, contemporary geopolitics poses as central subject the study of interactions between the geographical space and the dynamics caused by antagonisms (Claval, 1996; Lacoste, 1976, 2012; Lévy, 2008). Therefore, geopolitics approaches the particular "space" as an expression and deployment framework of socioeconomic power, including

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antagonisms in the control of strategic routes and networks, critical natural resources and also “symbolic” resources; geopolitics is conceptually articulated by interpreting all levels of space—from local to national to global (Krasner, 1983, 1999; Kunz, 2011; Mattli & Woods, 2009; Nye, 1990; Nye & Delorme, 1992; Pascallon, 2006).

With respect to geoeconomics in particular, according to Sparke (2018), geoeconomy and other deriving terms constitute attempts to make sense of how geopolitical struggles and strategies relate to globalizing capitalism, to its economic remaking of territory, and to the market imperatives and cross-border geographical imaginations of contemporary globalization. Thus, in his view, the result is a confusing constellation of concepts that raise big questions about how capitalist economic imperatives and international relations shape one another, and how the geography of capitalism simultaneously makes and mediates these reciprocal relations.

However, to what extent does modern geopolitical and geoeconomic thinking achieve a true evolutionary direction, avoiding the trappings of monolithicity, crypto-staticity and repetitiveness (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Uyarra, 2009; Zouboulakis, 2014)? To what extent can a dialectic perspective be used? And even deeper, how does dialectics relate to geopolitical thinking?

- According to Sen (1975), the term dialectics connotes the simultaneous operation of diametrically opposite forces, positive and negative, as the driving factor behind the evolution of civilization. In this way, certain diametrically opposite forces operate simultaneously in global geopolitics and international relations.

- According to Abdel-Malek (1977), several years earlier in the work entitled “Geopolitics and national movements: an essay on the dialectics of imperialism”, it is argued that it is possible to describe the dimension of specificity as the endogenous dimension, while the dimension of geopolitics—the world system of power— as the exogenous dimension. Both are at play within each of the two elements, and are thus interwoven in a highly complex dialectics.

- Tyner & Inwood (2014), in their work “Violence as fetish: geography, Marxism, and dialectics”, conclude with respect to a new comprehension of violence that the concept of violence must be grounded in a socio-spatial dialectic that has its roots grounded in historical-materialist understandings. So, they choose a methodological direction where violence can be treated dialectically to move beyond the geographically confined and thread-bare narratives of “us versus them” to the more important and potentially transformative questions that constitute the multiplicity of subjectivities that are dealt with violently.

- Lee *et al.*, (2018) argue that while the formal distinction between the geopolitical and geoeconomic provides some methodological clarity and analytical purchase, ultimately these logics of power must be grasped dialectically: specifically, as a unity-in-difference, in order to provide a full geopolitical economic explanation. They add that other political

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geographers provide rich discussions distinguishing geopolitics from geoeconomics but problematically fail to interrogate the dialectics between them and then needlessly argue for the priority of one over another. They conclude that Gramsci's insight into the dynamics between class relations and the production of territory across different scales can contribute to a theory of geopolitical economy and territory that avoids these pitfalls while building on some of the best ideas that the discussions by geographers have produced.

In this context, through the perspective of dialectical thinking, it seems that important points can emerge for the analytical renewal of geopolitics and geoeconomics within the study of modern world dynamics (Cerny, 1990, 2010; Cooper, Hughes, & Lombaerde, 2008; Cox, 1987, 1997; Cox & Schechter, 2002; Duffield, 2007). In particular, the question posed by this article is whether the dialectical perspective can be used as analytical condition in contemporary geopolitical and geoeconomic analysis and strategy: in which direction and aspects of geopolitics and geoeconomics can we dialectically focus during the current restructuring phase of globalization?

In order to achieve this aim, this article is structured upon the following steps: initially, we explore contemporary emerging trends in geopolitical and geoeconomic analysis that coexist with the current evolutionary-restructuring phase of globalization. Next, we analyze the need to develop an effective geostrategy in the light of a dialectical perspective. Then, we explore the fundamentals of the dialectic method, while finally, we present the conclusions of our research by structuring a set of analytical proposals.

2. Contemporary geopolitics and geoeconomics

2.1. The revival era of geopolitics and contemporary geoeconomy

Overall, geoeconomy studies the geoeconomic data of a geographic territory of national or international scale and which relate with the production/reproduction of spatial economic power. Specifically:

- As a distinct branch of geopolitics, the creation of geoeconomics is generally attributed to Edward Luttwak (1993) and Pascal Lorot (1995, 2001). Luttwak (1990, p. 17) suggested, in particular, that behind military conflicts and international trade the same logics are applied, arguing for the existence of a "zero-sum" game:

"The logic of conflict is 'zero-sum' since the gain of one side is the loss of the other, and vice versa. That is so in war, in geopolitical confrontations short of war, and in oligopolistic competition (as the market share of one oligopolist can only increase at the expense of another's); but not in a many-sided ('perfect').".

- Cowen & Smith (2009), in their work entitled "After geopolitics? From the geopolitical social to geoeconomics" argue that geopolitics can be understood as a means of acquiring territory towards a goal of accumulating wealth, while geoeconomics reverses the procedure, aiming directly at the accumulation of wealth through market control.

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To this end, they conclude that the acquisition or control of territory is not at all irrelevant but is a tactical option rather than a strategic necessity. And they explain how geopolitical calculation is always available when deemed necessary: insofar as there is a historical succession of sorts from geopolitical to geoeconomic logics of geographical power, therefore, this in no way represents a one-dimensional, irreversible, evolutionary necessity. Ultimately, in their perspective, the rise of geoeconomic calculation is highly uneven temporally as well as spatially, it is episodic, and it can never fully supplant geopolitics.

- Gasimli (2015) defines geoeconomics as the study of interrelations between economics, geography and politics in the infinite cone rising from the center of the planet Earth—apex, to the infinity of the universe—to the extent that this is possible. According to his approach geo-economics has three directions: a) “aironomics”, which covers the infinity of the universe from the surface of the Earth and where the Earth’s air, moon, and other achievable bodies and space itself are the analytical objects; b) surface studies include land and water surfaces; “undergroundonomics”, which studies resources underground.

- Jessop & Sum (2018), in their article “Geopolitics: Putting geopolitics in its place in cultural political economy”, argue that geopolitical economy studies the economic, economically relevant, and economically conditioned in terms of—critical—political economy.

Especially, in Luttwak’s (1998) geoeconomic perspective, nations are involved in antagonisms by, first, offering help or directly guiding private national actors and, second, by obstructing foreign trade interests. Specifically, nations support private entities by fostering Research & Development, by assisting foreign market penetration through investment, and by setting up protectionist policies for their domestic markets. He also notes that, as in the war, the “artillery” first conquers the ground by shooting, which can be then claimed by the “infantry”: the goal here is to conquer future industries by achieving technological superiority.

Nowadays, geoeconomics seems to progressively gain a prominent place in the field of geopolitical analysis. In this context, as early as in the end of Cold War, even Richard Nixon (1992, p.13) predicted that geoeconomic concerns could potentially replace classical geopolitics among US policymakers:

“Still others contend that, as the old war waned, the importance of economic power and ‘geoeconomics’ has surpassed military power and traditional geopolitics. America, they conclude, must beat its swords not into plowshares, but into microchips”.

Therefore, the “laws of geoeconomic gravity”, including economic sufficiency and the existence of advanced and differentiated transport infrastructure, is of critical importance to a nation’s true sovereignty; to this end, investment attractiveness and “soft power” capacity across major

areas (such as China's Belt and Road Initiative) are considered fundamental factors of geoeconomic power (Firzli, 2017a, 2017b).

2.2. The restructuring of globalization and contemporary theoretical challenges

In fact, a dense coevolutionary and codetermined network, which involves all of our world dynamics (economic, social, political, geostrategic, cultural, aesthetic, moral), lies now in the structural basis that defines reality (Gauchon, 2008; Strange, 1996) (Figure 1).

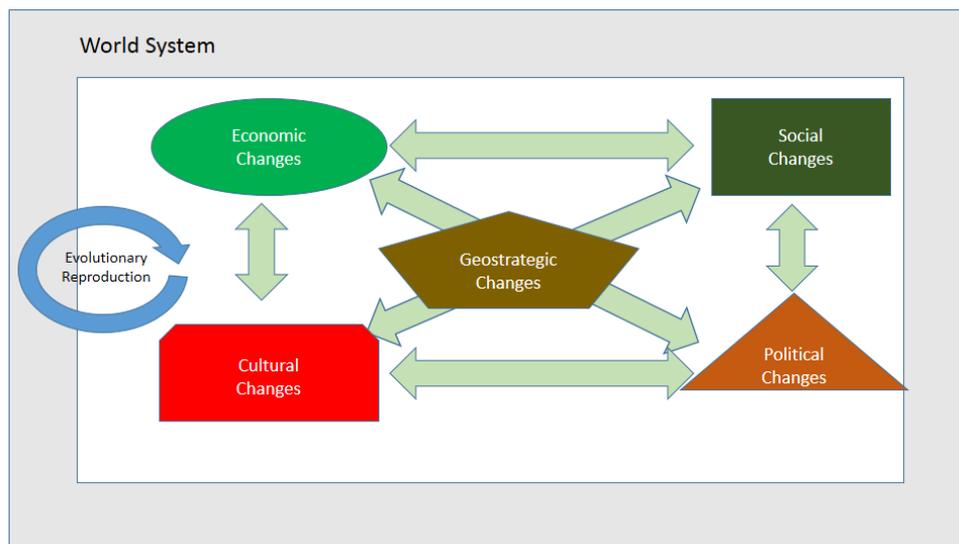


Figure 1. Evolutionary reproduction of the global geopolitical system

Social evolution is now tied up to the development of all economies and societies on the planet, while every moment within globalization drives to the strengthening, deepening and sensitization of these evolutionary linkages. In other words, globalization constitutes the complex and coevolutionary phase of global economy (Asghar, Ali, & Mamoon, 2017; Cantwell, Dunning, & Lundan, 2010; Freeman, 2019; Jaelani, 2016; Reich, 1992): and, of course, the phenomenon of global economy exists since the beginning of human history and did not appear in our days “all of a sudden”.

In particular, the present phase of global economy (that is, globalization) is featuring a continuous widening and deepening of systemic interdependence. Globalization is not limited to narrow economic phenomena (trade, productive, consumptive, investment or financial), nor to “superficial” social phenomena of univocal ideological, cultural, aesthetic and communicative interpretation. On the contrary, globalization orchestrates and assimilates the interwoven complexity between social, economic, political and cultural developments within the socioeconomic systems (Gilpin, 2000). Therefore, globalization becomes gradually an indivisible and densely woven socioeconomic reality, which tends to extend across our planet. Globalization increases incessantly all the actors’

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and structures' systemic engagement: on local, national and supranational level (Delapierre & Milelli, 1995; Fuchs, 2016; Michalet, 1985b; Peneder, 2017). As T. Friedman (1999) noted several years earlier, the traditional boundaries today between politics, culture, technology, economy, national security and ecology disappear. Oftentimes, you cannot interpret one without another and you cannot refer to the whole by not referring to all its constituents.

In this interpretive direction, we can argue that the ongoing restructuring phase of global crisis constitutes a distinct period in time where the balanced, healthy and unobstructed reproduction of the global-scale socioeconomic gameplay is in doubt: not sporadically and conjuncturally, but structurally and in systemic terms (Amable, 2017; Bhattacharya, Khanna, Schweizer, & Bijapurkar, 2017; Vlado, Deniozos, Chatzinikolaou, & Demertzis, 2018). An increasing number of "players" cannot accomplish their previous goals and fulfill their ambitions; their past "behaviors" cannot work in their fields of actions; and their efforts to interpret the present and predict the future lead to several mistargetings.

The current global crisis is an era when old problems seem to come back and get exacerbated, while new ones are emerging and spreading radically; in every corner of our planet, on an increasing number of cases, it seems impossible to find and implement viable and long-term solutions to these problems. Therefore, the global crisis seems a phase of simultaneous overturn of past certainties and reorientation of the global system as a whole (Doménech *et al.*, 2007; Grinin, Korotayev, & Tausch, 2016; Imran, Alam, & Beaumont, 2014) (Figure 2).

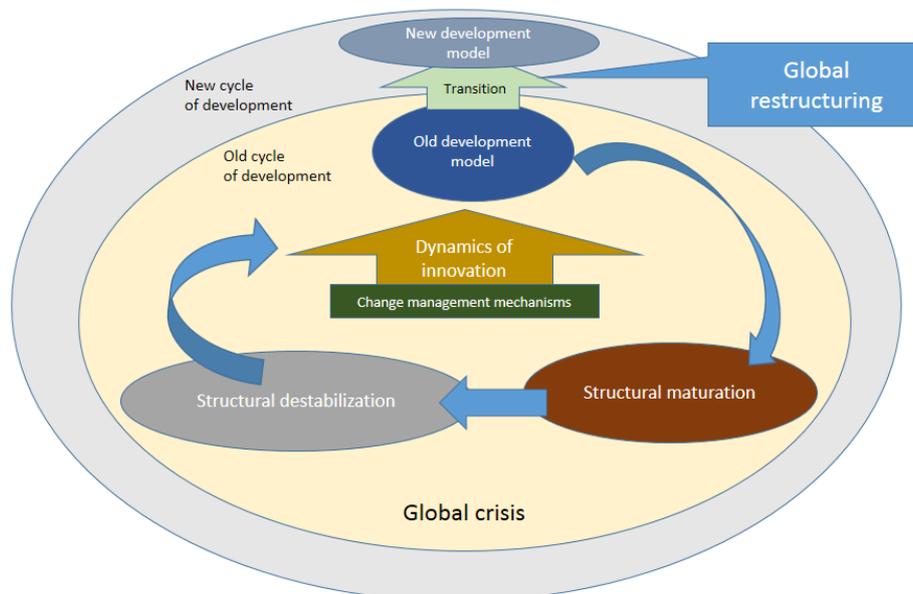


Figure 2. Global crisis and restructuring. Adjusted from Βλάδος (2017).

In this theoretical perspective, global crisis and restructuring nowadays seems to be the birth of multiannual structural maturation and incubation.

Like with every other evolutionary phase of global capitalism, the present crisis phase was the result of structural destabilization of the old development model (Adda, 2006; Aglietta, 2009; Amooore, 2002; Avant, Finnemore, & Sell, 2010; Michalet, 1985a; Pech & Adda, 2012), which was manifested drastically over the last ten years on a global scale.

On the surface of events, when the subprime mortgage market collapsed (Gorton, 2009; Jacobs, 2009) there was a long chain of events that initiated and spread across the world, at all levels of our socioeconomic symbiosis. However, this crisis did not fall out of nowhere; it was rooted on the structural maturation of globalization's previous development model (Boyer, 2013; Vlado, Deniozos, & Chatzinikolaou, 2018b): and, specifically, the maturity phase of globalization occurred during the past three decades (from the mid-80s to the mid-2000s). In this perspective, at the root of global crisis lies the dialectic between, on the one hand, the socioeconomic convergence and homogeneity (Cecilia de Burgh-Woodman, 2014; Palmer, 2004) and, on the other hand, the incessant reproduction of divergence and heterogeneity (Ciderova & Repasova, 2013; Scherer, Palazzo, & Seidl, 2013): this is ultimately the pivotal qualitative characteristic of globalization.

It becomes clear that all things change and evolve together. In this evolutionary context, the players, the structures and rules of globalization are tied up in a constant struggle for survival, prevalence and evolutionary redistribution of geopolitical power (Dalby, 2010; Elden, 2013; Terterov, Van Pool, & Nagorny, 2010) (Figure 3).

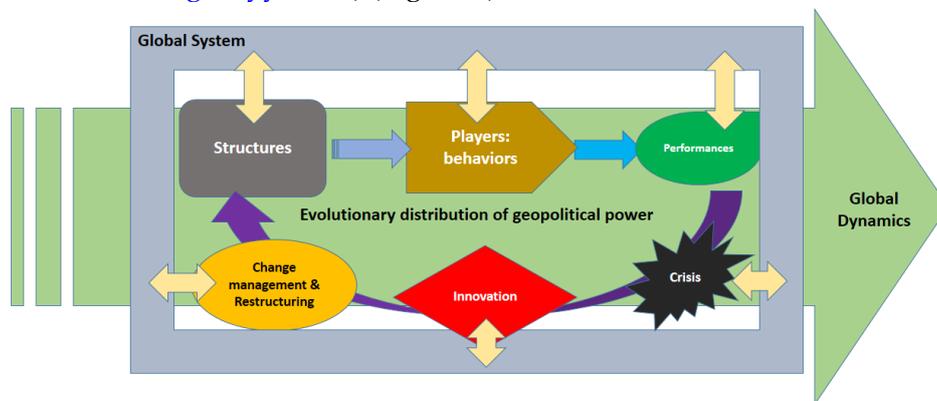


Figure 3. Structures, behaviors, performances and restructuring in the global geopolitical system. Adjusted from Βλάδος (2017).

In particular, within this global dynamics:

1. Structures define the players' limits of behaviors, while these behaviors define each player's performances and, therefore, the dynamics of survival and reproduction.

2. In case the players' performances fall drastically and massively, putting into risk their survival and individual development, then the whole system is led to a crisis.

3. The global system then seeks for and achieves under circumstances the necessary innovation -in broad socioeconomic and institutional terms (Vlado & Chatzinikolaou, 2019)- as an exit out of the crisis; this in

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turn drives toward the restructuring of “structures” through a successful change management that opens a new cycle of development.

4. To this uninterrupted process, every link in the “crisis chain” determines and is reversely determined by the dynamic global system.

Therefore, the current reality is necessarily shaping a completely new environment for the contemporary geoeconomic thinking (Blackwill & Harris, 2016; Kurecic, 2015; Lenz, 2009; Mercille, 2008; Munoz, 2017; Scekcic, Draskovic, & Delibasic, 2016):

- Specifically, Leonard (2015) puts forward the questions

“What can the world’s states do to prevent geopolitics from unravelling the globalization of the world economy and its systems of governance and what are the main risks to industry/business and what can they do to mitigate them?” The author replies by proposing five thoughts: “1. States must develop their rules of the road for economic warfare. When governments use the infrastructure of the global economy to pursue political goals, they challenge the universality of the system and make it more likely that other powers will hedge against it ... 2. States must find the right economic role and pursue new forms of engagement. States need to find the right balance between “laissez-faire” and “intervention” to pursue strategic goals ... 3. Staying attuned to the “survival of the biggest” and the pooling of the weak. When a small country becomes too reliant on the regional powerhouse, its ability to pivot and maintain options for itself – economically and strategically – becomes limited ... 4. Businesses can keep their eye on the global prize but play by new rules in the interim. Business needs to pursue open globalization if it is to mitigate the risks posed by geo-economic competition and variables ... 5. A focus on key regional players and sub-global politics rather than worldwide institutions is necessary. Civil society needs to be more pragmatic about where it looks for solutions to global problems.”

- In parallel, according to World Economic Forum *et al.*, (2015, pp.4-11):

“Geo-economics is both the antithesis and the greatest triumph of economic globalization. It is the overwhelming dependence of all countries on the global economy, which makes the threat of shutting them out so effective. And after two decades of coming together, many countries are focusing on the challenges of interdependence as well as on its benefits ... map out the challenge of geoeconomics for companies, governments and campaign groups. It highlights the powerful trends reshaping the world, which are changing the rules for competition between countries and even the arenas in which these frictions play out”.

Ultimately, it seems that exiting the global system’s crisis requires a powerful leap of innovation. This must be built up and implemented at all levels in order for our world to enter the path of a new, stable model of global development (Onaran & Galanis, 2014; Perrons, 2012). And behind this necessity of drastic innovation, the problem of how the prerequisite new change management methodologies and mechanisms can arise

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emerges, along with a deeper and completely new geostrategic perspective that will allow and make possible the exit from the crisis (Vlados, Deniozos, & Chatzinikolaou, 2018a).

3. The issue of effective geostrategic articulation and dialectics

Nowadays, there is also a deriving variety of geostrategic definitions, which generally attribute to geostrategy the role of applied geopolitical and geoeconomic analysis:

- Grygiel (2006) states that geostrategy constitutes the geographic direction of a state's foreign policy and, more precisely, it describes where a state concentrates its efforts by projecting military power and directing diplomatic activity. It is argued that the underlying assumption of geostrategy is that states have limited resources and because of that they must focus politically and militarily on specific areas of the world. In this context, geostrategy describes this foreign policy thrust of a state and does not consider motivation or decision-making processes. It is concluded that a state's geostrategy is not necessarily motivated by geographic or geopolitical factors and that a state may project power to a location because of ideological reasons, interest groups, or simply the whim of its leader.

- Sparke (2013) argues that geopolitics and geoeconomics can be analyzed as geographical representations of international relations that reflect the tensions of uneven development; in his view, this happens in ways that tend to abstract particular territorial problems or ideals out of the processes of historical-geographical transformation that produce them.

- Wigell & Vihma (2016) note that economic forms of power projection are better included in the separate category of geoeconomics, whereby a typology emerges with two ideal-typical geostrategies, that is, geopolitics and geoeconomics. According to the authors, geoeconomics is about advancing geostrategic goals, but not mutually beneficial trade relations; therefore, geoeconomics can be defined as "the geostrategic use of economic power".

- Inspired by the work of Harvey (1985), Sparke (2018) suggests that the external dialectic of geopolitics and geoeconomics can be understood as an over-determined expression of the internal uneven development dialectic in capitalism between spatial fixity and spatial expansion. And he adds that geoeconomics can be treated as the analysis of the relays between these internal and external dialectics. According to the author, to treat geopolitics and geoeconomics dialectically can highlight how as distinct geostrategic discourses they share common drivers in capitalist tendencies and contradictions; they tie together geostrategic discourse and practice in ways that reflect influential capitalist imperatives. These imperatives can help make the discourses and practices materially

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consequential. However, he notices that beyond a crude base-superstructure account of ideological formations associated with particular eras or world regions, a dialectical approach simultaneously can help to avoid two pitfalls that have undermined preceding theses about how geopolitics and geoeconomics relate to one another. He concludes that like a Scylla and Charybdis that imperil the analytical way-finding of geopolitical economy, these pitfalls involve, first, historically narrating geopolitics and geoeconomics into discontinuous eras and, second, geographically imagining them as strategic guides for distinct spaces of statecraft.

Some of the interpretative approaches to globalization in the context of “conventional” economic, political and management science remain still quite fragmentary and discontinuous. On the contrary, as we can see also from the branch of geostrategy, the questions that globalization put forth do not cease to become increasingly complex and acute. It seems that their “quality” exceeds our perceptual abilities. This difficulty lies not only in terms of practice and action, but rather, in terms of perception, understanding and theoretical interpretation of everything that happens around us. Because without a coherent and comprehensive theoretical conception and approach of the socioeconomic phenomena that decisively shape our daily lives, our decisions necessarily remain merely reflective, with myopic, short-lived, sporadic and ultimately ineffective application.

In geoeconomic issues, in particular, it seems that an effective evolutionary geostrategic perspective is missing. More precisely, according to the following discussion on the geoeconomics theme, we can see that a sufficiently coherent view of the phenomenon is still absent:

- Cowen & Smith (2009, p. 38) argue that

“This Luttwakian vision of ‘geoeconomics’, while intriguing, relies on three problematic assumptions. First, the transition to a globalized geoeconomic world is not a matter of some natural evolution in economic affairs, but a case of active assembly, albeit fomented by very real scalar shifts in economic relations. Second, the geographical unevenness and radical incompleteness of this geoeconomic transition becomes clear when, in addition to finance and trade, one considers the constitutive globalization of production, and when the territorial implications of geoeconomic power are viewed at multiple scales. Third, geoeconomic calculation announced itself much earlier than the 1990s. Geoeconomics was central to postwar neoliberal critiques of Keynesianism, on the one hand, and to postwar critiques of imperialism in the 1960s and 1970s, on the other ... From the latter came a broader 1980s economic geography critique of capitalist restructuring at the global scale. The term itself seems to have been first used not by Luttwak but by French economic geographer Jacques Boudeville (1966) ... who conceived 1960s liberal growth pole theory in terms of “geoeconomics”, which he posited as an explicit alternative to geopolitics. This third historical critique is picked up here.”

- Vihma (2018, p.1) states that

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“There is a new wave of interest in the interplay between commerce and strategy, and ‘geoeconomics’ is again becoming a key concept in policy analysis. In the academia, however, since the emergence of the concept in the early 1990s, geoeconomic analysis has mostly been viewed through very critical lenses. Analysts have portrayed geoeconomics as simplified neorealism, as a neoliberal discourse, and as a securitisation project. This criticism of geoeconomics relies on an incomplete view of IR realism, as well as some oversimplifications of Luttwak, who introduced the term in 1990. This article underscores the relative property of Luttwak’s argument, in which economic means are gaining in importance in relation to military power, and countries are increasingly, but not always, turning to logic of conflict and geoeconomic policies. Luttwak also underscores the role of domestic politics and ideologies in determining whether a country engages in geoeconomic behaviour or not. The article suggests that strategic geoeconomic theory-building, inspired by but not limited to Luttwak, has much to contribute to our contemporary understanding of IR and geography, for example, in the analysis of strategy and the different power capabilities of states.”

• Moisis (2018, p.22) responds accordingly, stating that

“In his article, Antto Vihma seeks to develop a geoeconomic approach that draws from Edward N. Luttwak’s conception of inter-state competition, and suggests that a more nuanced reading of Luttwak provides a way forward. In this essay, I first tease out and discuss Vihma’s arguments, before calling for the need to develop geopolitical analysis of contemporary geoeconomic processes. This kind of geopolitical analysis focuses on the political imaginaries that frame the world in terms of economic expansion, new kinds of inter-spatial competition, connectivity and pace or global integration and connectivity. These imaginaries have become increasingly salient in state-centric political debates on national interests, national security, and national identity.”

• Subsequently, Vihma (2018b, p. 47) responds that

“Several scholars define geoeconomics in remarkably broad terms, covering an array of things: borderless economic zones, strategic economic instruments of foreign policy, both neoliberalism and economic nationalism, and so forth. Something is surely gained, but also lost, in developing the concept of geoeconomics towards this all-encompassing direction. The risk is that the concept becomes overly extensive and loses its analytical power.”

• Scholvin & Wigell (2018, p. 73) argue that

“Geoeconomics has become highly relevant for foreign policy practices and national security strategies, wherefore it has also started to receive increasing attention from academics. Unfortunately, there is no widely shared definition of geoeconomics. The term is often only used as a catchword that generates an audience for policy-oriented, semi-scientific outlets. This article addresses this weakness of the state of the art. The authors suggest that geoeconomics, as a foreign policy strategy, refers to the application of economic means of power by states so as to realize strategic objectives. As an analytical framework,

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geoeconomics relates to international relations realism. Yet it transcends international relationship realism, as it is focused on geographical features that are inherent in foreign policy and international relations.”

In practice, for our part, we appreciate that what is needed is an even deeper evolutionary and structural geoeconomic perception of the current restructuring phase of globalization (Figure 4).

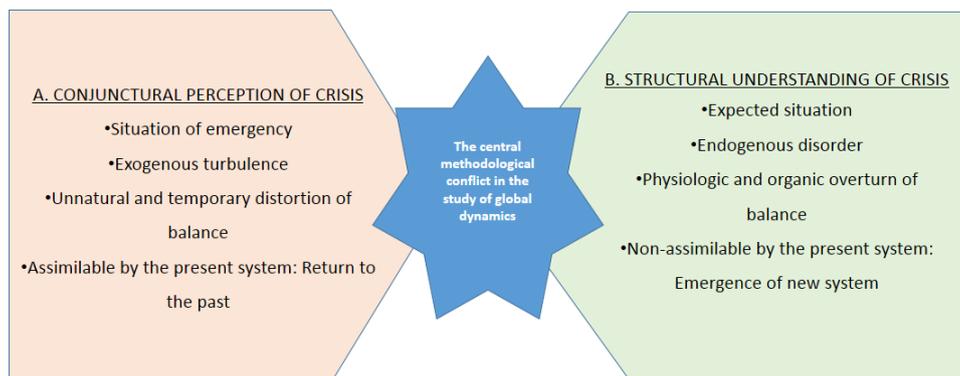


Figure 4. *Central methodological conflict in the study of global dynamics. Adjusted from Βλάχος (2017).*

4. Some essential methodological prerequisites for a dialectic apprehension of contemporary geopolitics, geoeconomics and geostrategy

By studying the dynamics of globalization and the related geostrategic factors, we have reached the conclusion that it would be very difficult for anyone to perceive the contemporary geopolitical reality if has not been previously familiar with dialectics. For this reason, we propose the utilization of some evolutionary conceptions-methodological elements offered by dialectical philosophy in socioeconomic discussion (Bukharin, 1931; Creaven, 2013; Jordan, 1967; Lenin, 1915; Magala, 1975; Marx, 1847; Pederson, 2015; Sanchez-Palencia, 2012; Thomas, 2009). In this way, we propose to enrich contemporary geopolitical and geoeconomic analysis through the lenses of dialectics, in the following nine directions which we think can act as analytical prerequisites for the “dialectization” of contemporary geopolitical and geostrategic thinking.

A. The dynamic and confrontational approach of phenomena...

Everything alter and flow, as Heraclitus (Graham, 2009; Roy, 2018) used to say 3,000 years ago. And he was absolutely right. As time goes by, everything changes—and that is exactly the point in the dynamic approach of every phenomenon. This perspective of things is of paramount importance for us. To begin with, we have to understand that nothing relevant to whichever socioeconomic system in its entirety, in any country or even related to the entire global dynamics as a whole, cannot remain unaltered in time. In all kinds and levels of socioeconomic reality there is

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nothing definitively consolidated and finalized once and for all. The only stable fact in our world is the constant change; the evolution of all situations. Even more, the situations of things themselves in their depth, are nothing more but silent constant evolutions, existing only as a façade of steady systems in their perpetual existence.

Therefore, and in relation to any situation which occurs today as a “stable equilibrium” in economy and society, we should be aware that it contains as well, from the very first time it existed, those ingredients which will lead to its evolutionary transcendence. Every apparently undisturbed balance is always, by design, doomed to succumb one day to the imbalance caused by the new opposing forces which, sooner or later, will arise, mature, and finally impose themselves. In reality, under every temporary balance there lies just a temporary silent underground conflict.

B. Every equilibrium is always temporary...

When on an object (either it is a simple physical object or any socioeconomic situation) act forces which balance and mutually negate one another, then, and only then, this object finds itself in a situation of temporary balance. Everyplace, though, incurs a constant conflict; under the “serene surface” everything move and convert. The balance which appears in any level of reality, sooner or later, gets unsettled and tumbled—and when restored will necessarily step on a new basis. However, this new balance will be once disturbed and will ultimately be replaced by a newer balance, which will frame the even newer balance.

And as the today’s status quo is nothing more than the outcome of yesterday’s conflicts, in the same way tomorrow will necessarily be the figment of today’s conflicts; but also that tomorrow cannot last forever. Everything flows, all balances someday are overrun— apart from the change itself.

Hence, we have to deal with—in the current globalization’s crisis, regarding all organizations—balances always temporary, always variable, and always fluid due to their deeper nature. Nothing is finished, in this dialectic flow, nothing is forever.

So, everything changes and transforms as time goes by. That is why there can be no truly reliable examination of the phenomena in the absence of their dialectic approach and its deeper meaning—that is, without the study of their constant conflict and alteration through time, and the constant turnover of the existing balances they compose.

C. Change and evolution...

Eventually, no one can either prevent reality to evolve, or resuscitate the past. Of course, we need at this point some specifications to conceive more accurately the true essence of the concept of evolution.

- To begin with, we should insist on the fact that every alteration is not necessarily evolution. Evolution is only the alteration which bears inside the force of quality transformation; meaning the deeper and more

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crucial changes of the forces composing it. That is why we should always try not to equate impromptu the emerging superficial changes with the deep evolutions, not to emulate the circumstantial transitions with the structural transformations. This, for sure, most of the times, is not easy in theory, but it is eventually really important when trying to grasp the valid conception of globalization and crisis.

- The second thing we have to clarify has to do with the main content of the notion of evolution, which often gets suppressed. In the core of socioeconomic phenomena, evolution always leads to destruction and creation at the same time (Schumpeter, 1942); it leads to the eradication of some obsolete “stems” of the past and to their replacement with new ones “full of life”.

- One third necessary clarification concerns the more specific way through which evolution unfolds through time; evolution never develops on a straight line. From time to time, though, it gives the impression that it is docile, that it just rediscovers and restores elements of the past, and that it just repeats itself cyclically and flatly. But, this is always an illusion. That alleged repeat of reality shows that it is always in depth a game of ascent. The evolution game is always played in a “higher quality level” compared to yesterday, in a higher quality level of reality. We should perceive it as an irregular in pace (never relatively accelerated and never delayed) spiral course upwards—of course, “what is up and what is down” always remains a huge idealistic and philosophical question—and not as a repeated, flat, quiet circular orbit.

- We reach, thus, a fourth necessary clarification. We should always insist on the need to realize the irreversible nature of evolution. None “renowned past” can be repeated unaltered, none answer of yesterday is sufficient to fully reply today’s questions. So, whatever existed yesterday cannot return unaltered today.

D. The dialectic development of all socioeconomic forms in the context of global dynamics...

Using the term “socioeconomic form” we should never mean something elusive and vague. The term socioeconomic form is not an elusive word and void in content—it is exactly the opposite. Every collective social subject, every policy and action-maker is implemented historically in a socioeconomic form, which does not stop (cannot stop) evolving dialectically. Behind the change of every socioeconomic form lies steadily the sense of dialectic evolution. This path of thought of dialectic evolution was thoroughly perceived and molded by George Hegel (1807; 1812; 1837) (Figure 5).

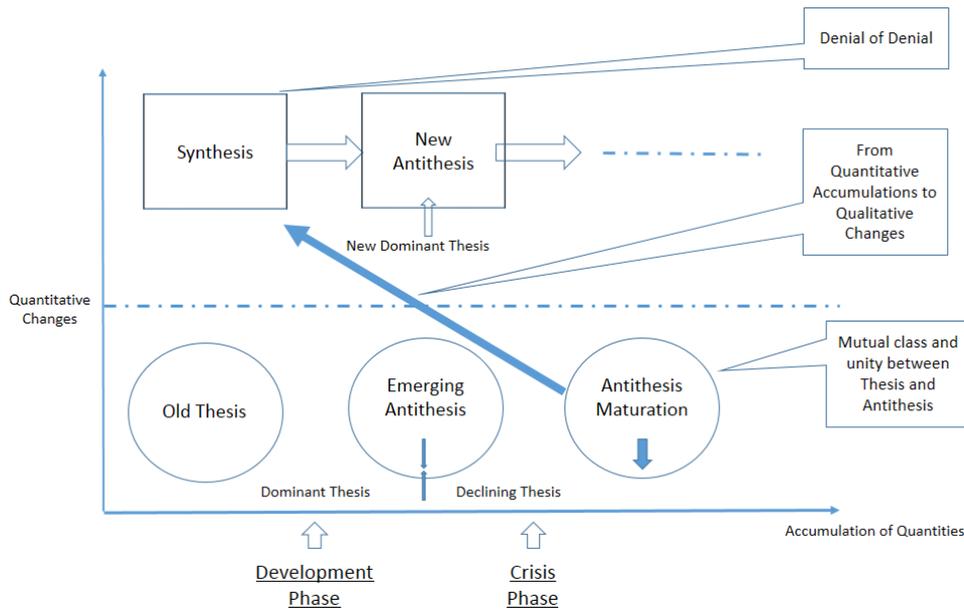


Figure 5. The main schema of Hegel's dialectical model of Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis. Reproduced from Βλάδος (2017).

- Everything starts from a state of balance (always temporary, as we mentioned) which is called Thesis. This usually appears as the firm state, as the absolutely dominant reality. So, it launches its “reign” through a phase of development. Then everything “flourishes”.

- However, inside this Thesis emerges, sooner or later, the Antithesis to it. The balance starts to unsettle and gradually the “everlasting reign illusion” gets lost. Each Thesis always hides inside the seed of its Antithesis; it is just a matter of time for this Antithesis to emerge, to be emancipated and to be seen as a force to be reckoned with.

Evolution never stops here, though. Through quantity accumulation, the growth of sizes, the enhancement of forces, the Antithesis itself does not stop to deepen, to build up, and to age. By this way, the Antithesis will manifest itself for the first time as a simple difference. Then will gradually escalate, to finally end up in direct conflict with the Thesis. Deep down, this constant growth of Antithesis is born, defined and headed by the existence of Thesis.

That is why Antitheses can never exist separately. In fact, without Thesis, its Antithesis has no meaning and content; and respectively without Antithesis, a Thesis cannot exist. These two are undividedly and tightly tied in their gradually increasing conflict; in their escalated fight. A fight which contains elements of competition and cooperation at the same time (“co-opetition” in Brandenburger terms; Asaro, 2011; Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996). Even if this fight usually projects the face of conflict, behind this projection a silent contract of consistency and, in depth, of co-creation does not cease to exist.

So this is how the mutual unity and class of Antithesis becomes manifested. Ultimately, the inner cause of every evolution lies in this

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endogenous contradiction of phenomena. That is to say the contradiction which is born in their interior. Next, the phase of crisis takes over and, inevitably, sometime the situation reaches a breaking point. “Nothing is right” anymore. Deep down, the accumulated quantity of the phenomenon, that is the escalation of the size, the degree, the intensity, the rhythm of the manifestation of the phenomenon, is the one which leads silently to the revolution of its quality. After all, every time that quantitative changes overcome some boundaries, then that is exactly the moment when the deeper structural balance of the phenomenon gets violated—that is when the quality of the phenomenon starts to change.

Then, the quality—that is to say all its basic elements—its fundamental characteristics, what we name its Substance, has no other way but to change. That is exactly when a “new quality” emerges and a new boundary is established which will embrace the continuity of quantitative accumulation in the non-stop evolution of the phenomenon. Then the inner balance of the phenomenon—that is the relevant structural stability of the phenomenon or the action factor—proves that it has surpassed for good its yesterday’s boundaries. In other words, the balance in the frame of its old quality has definitely expired. There a qualitative leap occurs; a qualitative turnover in the growth of the phenomenon happens. And, deep down, the change in the quality of the phenomenon means its definitive transformation to something new. A completely new situation emerges here; a situation of qualitative accumulation which was borne gradually and silently. That is how something new comes through something old, surpassing and destroying it. And even deeper, that is how the continuity and discontinuity through the evolution of phenomena cannot but remain always tightly tied to one another.

Finally, in the background, the escalated change of the content of the phenomenon leads to the radical alteration of its form. As a matter of fact, while the content of a socioeconomic institution, factor or phenomenon changes continually and gradually, its form, on the other hand, has the tendency to preserve and defend itself, until in some point of accumulation, suddenly and abruptly, it rebels and overflows, thus the phenomenon gets transformed:

- Here a new era of balance is always born, built on a completely new qualitative base, which provides a new platform of quantitative accumulation of the phenomenon, which in the dialectic terminology is called Synthesis.
- That is exactly how the denial of denial occurs: The previous conflict loses its point of existence and a new conflict is built in its Thesis.
- The dialectic evolution will be continued, of course, by new Antitheses, by different level of phenomena, by different types of conflicts, by different players, by a different deeper strategy. The gradual further development of the content will always lead to new types and then to others and so forth; none of the socioeconomic types escape this fate.

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Evermore, the quantities of accumulation lie behind the quality revolutions of the phenomena; therefore, we owe to study their unity, not only the quantitative but also the qualitative side of the evolution of each phenomenon; these two sides are always unbreakably tied to one another. Studying only the one side (either quantitative or qualitative) while ignoring the other, is always, deeply unscientific and steadily misleading.

E. The “nothing really changes” and the historical claim...

All those who claim that some historically distinct and structural different situations are, supposedly, one and the same thing, overrule the dialectic principles. Those who believe that the today’s globalization crisis has nothing different in relation to the state of global economy in the beginning of the 20th century ignore the dialectic evolution of things; they believe that globalization today brings nothing new and, thus, there is no point in using its concept.

However, history never repeats itself; and when it seems so, it is nothing more than an elusive force. The game of globalization remains open and every easy conspiracy theory cannot be nothing more but pointless and misleading. So, everything changes in socioeconomic terms, whether we like it or not, and sometimes in a complete radical way. No matter how advanced our theoretical processing is, the evolution of reality comes, sooner or later, at least partially to surprise us.

Nothing can be taken as definitely defined and steady forever in economy and society. Even if you wish to remain apparently the same—to simply look the same—you must constantly change. Otherwise, you deteriorate in comparative terms. The essential fact here is not if things indeed change—they certainly change and evolve in their core. The crucial question is what changes, how it changes, to what direction, in which depth, with what pace and why.

F. The continuous overthrow of past balances and the solid connection of socioeconomic forces and phenomena...

Even deeper, whatever happens today in economy and society does not balance on its own and in the absence of movement and co-action from the other factors—from the forces of its environment. Behind every status quo, constant conflicts among “hostile” and “allied” forces are hiding. All forces are deeply co-dependent and closely interwoven, always tightly linked to each other.

There are divergent and convergent, synergic and clashing forces, which act together incessantly and are leveled temporarily even when we do not realize their deeper and silent conflict. When some of these correlated groups of forces are relatively strengthened and prevail over the rest, then the balance is unsettled and movement and alteration come forward.

This state of constant overturn of the existing balances, which is expressed as a non-stop movement and alteration of a whole system of factors and forces, makes us perceive them eventually in their unity. The

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forces when studied individually, outside their unity, outside their unifying frame, and outside their historic definition, lose their true essence. One such transgression will help us, eventually, understand the forces hiding behind socioeconomic phenomena which occupy us in their unbreakable union, in their special historical frame—not as divided, isolated or independent forces, but as a solid system of linked forces with specific reference in time and space. That is, as indelible and unified historic entities.

G. The co-evolution of the individual dimensions of every socioeconomic system...

This way, nothing relevant to the course of organizations in globalization can be tangible as absolute, isolated and independent phenomenon in its motion. The understanding of contemporary reality demands an ever-increasing co-evolutionary perspective. The evolution of all socioeconomic dimensions concerning every insertion and development —of whichever organization—in globalization is always bestowed on the basis of their unbreakable connection and correlation—in their systemic unity. When something changes in a system's part, it drags down the rest of its components to change, to a greater or lesser extent. Every change, to some degree, leads to chain reactions, which we cannot bypass indifferently.

In other words, we must not forget, not for a moment, that every confrontational balance in every organization or socioeconomic system is always molded in an unbreakable system of forces, factors and correlations. In a dense net of co-specifications and co-evolution. All apply together, necessarily. Thus, deep down, every socioeconomic system is an organic whole, an undivided set of co-defined and co-evolving parts, forces and factors. Nothing inside this, no dimension, is independent and detached from the rest. All together function and co-evolve, as far as this specific procedure of insertion and constant reintegration of each organic socioeconomic whole in the globalization is concerned.

H. No temporary balance is autonomous and disconnected from the others...

Therefore, we have to avoid every interpretation which exclusively focuses on the subtotal while loses the interpretation of the total—every interpretation of this kind is doomed to fail. The “fragmentary” is by nature misleading. That is to say, it always proves out to be inadequate and dead end, when you try to examine the specific problems of adjustment, individually and in terms of self-sufficiency.

All socioeconomic junctions together compose a united and unbreakable net of evolving factors/interpretative dimensions. To understand the true point and perspective of each special interpretative dimension, of each explanatory link, of each analytic junction, you have to try to understand the whole chain, the construction and dynamic of evolution of the whole.

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That is why the literature of globalization crisis nowadays lies in a crucial interdisciplinary theoretical-interpretative crossroads.

To conclude, if we do not try to understand the reality of a socioeconomic system's adjustment in globalization as a complete group of forces and factors, it is as if we have lost from the beginning the chance to realize all the dimensions of this adjustment. There are no partially reliable approaches and partial truths in the absence of a socioeconomic theoretical frame in understanding all the phenomena connected with globalization and its current crisis.

I. The narrow co-evolutionary relation of the different socioeconomic systems and organizations, of every kind, in globalization's crisis...

We have to understand that every integration procedure of a socioeconomic system in globalization's dynamics is materialized in a simultaneous dense network of movements and repositions. The course in globalization is not at all a self-centered game. Numerous socioeconomic systems and organizations align together, define and redefine incessantly, at the same time, this game and its rules.

This way, it is never only one socioeconomic formation or only one organization which is called upon to adjust, instantly and forever, in globalization. All socioeconomic formations and all individual organizations adjust/readjust constantly in it. All together co-adjust, transforming evolutionary their position in this global dynamics. The evolution in globalization's dynamics, thus, is a simultaneous and multilateral procedure connecting with an organic way different social systems and individual organizations which co-evolve; that is, systems evolving and growing together, like "living organisms", with rivalries and co-operations, with allies and hostilities, with common and different interests.

So they gradually create a number of parts, elements and forces which are more and more connected and co-dependent through the evolution of the wider global environment. The partially different systems and players are unified evolutionary, the one goes inside the other and change together. All the socioeconomic systems and action-factors together create the evolving socioeconomic net of globalization; a net thicker and thicker, which keeps getting stronger in its connections. Every turbulence on this global net, in one of its parts, is inevitably transferred to the rest of its parts, disturbing, rearranging and retransforming them all, in a greater or lesser degree. And these turbulences, rearrangements and changes, later in time, return and change the total system of globalization itself.

5. Conclusions and proposals

In fact, following a direction of dialectical understanding of contemporary geopolitics and geoeconomics, we can avoid several frequent analytical "myopias" and misunderstandings, and in particular:

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- The wrong impression of simple “conjuncture” of contemporary geopolitical power shifts;
- The persistence in one-dimensional approaches that are unable to perceive thoroughly and synthetically the geopolitical evolution;
- The occasional and fragmented approach of some geopolitical phenomena, outside of a comprehensive systemic approach.

The pursuit of a state to achieve and maintain a privileged position in the global economy is a goal of geoeconomic strategy, following the geopolitical analysis of the components of power redistribution in the geographical, political and economic spheres. The geoeconomic analysis through dialectics is the framework that studies and predicts and describes the redistribution of power and, more generally, the systems of imbalanced power distribution in the international space. Geopolitics refers to the “is” while geostrategy constitutes the “must be”. So when it comes to the geoeconomic perception of geopolitics, we explore the relationship between the economic power of the geographical area and the “artificial” space in which the liquidity and intensity of economic transactions make it increasingly difficult to identify territorial borders.

Our previous findings also help us to better understand the concept of the current crisis of globalization, its structural, historical and evolutionary perspective, where its deeper subversive content can be traced. More generally, the exploration of the current structural crisis and the restructuring of globalization (Guttmann, 2015; Yokokawa, 2013), in socio-economic terms, we always expect to be based on the following assumptions:

1. The crisis refers always to complex, organic-type systems: A simple system, a simple “machine”, never comes into crisis; it simply presents a “corrective malfunction” (Venette, 2003).
2. The crisis always bears a necessarily restructuring content: The post-crisis situation cannot be assimilated to the previous state of affairs.
3. The crisis has always an urgent character: it must be dealt with as quickly as possible because the overall systemic stability and viability of the system is at imminent risk and any delay often bears drastic structural consequences.
4. The crisis rarely destroys directly the affected system: It reduces, however, drastically—and often in a rapidly deteriorating way—its operational effectiveness in achieving its previously defined goals (Mitroff & Silvers, 2010).
5. The crisis has always an evolving character: it is not limited to certain functions. It extends—either explicitly or implicitly—through “metastases” on all sides of the system-organism; and
6. The crisis is, ultimately, a “physiological phase” in the evolution of each organism/system: It can lead to death or create the necessary conditions for renewal, eliminating its inadequate, diseased or dead “cells”. It is not a pleasant phase, but it is an evolutionary phase: The treatment of it always requires a radically renewed way of

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understanding and a completely new way of adapting to its evolutionary dynamics.

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