

THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY  
AND GEOPOLITICS  
AS AN ACADEMIC  
AND RESEARCH DISCIPLINE  
IN THE BALTIC REGION:  
THE HISTORICAL  
CONTRIBUTION  
OF SAINT PETERSBURG  
UNIVERSITY

*N. V. Kaledin*<sup>1</sup>

*A. I. Chistobayev*<sup>1</sup>

*V. N. Kaledin*<sup>1</sup>

*A. B. Elatskov*<sup>1</sup>



*In this article, we address the little-researched and complicated problems of the genesis, periodisation, and development of political geography and geopolitics as academic and research disciplines across the Baltic region in general and the contribution of Saint Petersburg University in particular. The terms 'political geography,' 'geopolitics' and the corresponding academic disciplines, as well as the first concepts of political geography and geopolitics, emerged in the Baltic. The Russian and German schools of thought made a valuable contribution to these fields of research. Using the historical, structural-genetic, and activity-geospace approaches, we identify and analyse the major historical, research, and academic paradigms in the development of political geography. In doing so, we consider the case of Saint Petersburg University. These paradigms (state-descriptive, anthropogeographical, state-geopolitical, and activity-societal) differ in their methodological frameworks and thematic priorities. We demonstrate that the term 'political geography' and the science it denotes are of Russian origin, having been developed by German scientists during their academic service for Russia. Further, we analyse the contribution of German and Russian researches to the development of the Saint Petersburg school of political geographic and geopolitical thought and describe its current state.*

**Keywords:** Baltic region, school of thought, political geography, geopolitics, academic and research paradigm, educational programme

### Introduction

Recent years (2015—2019) have been rich in anniversaries and other reminders of the historical landmarks

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<sup>1</sup> Saint-Petersburg State University, 7—9, Universitetskaya emb., St. Petersburg, 199034, Russia.

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in the development of *political geography* and *geopolitics* — sister academic and research disciplines. This is a good time to address the periodisation of the genesis and development of these popular subject areas and the contribution of the Baltic region and Saint Petersburg State University to their evolution.

Let us begin with the dates memorable to political geography. Two hundred eighty years ago, in 1738, Georg Wolfgang Kraft, a German professor, who was working at the time at Saint Petersburg Imperial Academy of Sciences and the Academic University, introduced the term *politische Geographie* to refer to a new science in the structure of geography. His work on the matter appeared in German that year and the Russian version was published a year later [1, p. 464]. In 1745, his colleague Christian Nicolaus von Winsheim issued the very first textbook on political geography [2]. Almost 265 years ago, in 1754, in Hamburg, Anton Friedrich Büsching, Professor at the University of Göttingen, launched the publication of a multi-volume work on political geography of the world, which cemented him as the founder and the classic of political geography [3; 4, p. 24]. Two hundred fifty years ago, Immanuel Kant first taught a course in political geography ‘according to Büsching’ [4, p. 25; 5]. Two hundred years ago, Evdokim F. Zyablovsky, Professor at Saint Petersburg State University, provided the most comprehensive picture of the essential elements of this science [4, p. 26; 6, p. 182]. Thirty years later, in 1848, his colleague Prof. Konstantin I. Arsenyev issued a unique work on the political geography of Russia [7].

Of major importance for further development of international political geography and the emergence of geopolitics were the following academic events.

In 1897, 120 years ago, Friedrich Ratzel, Professor at Leipzig University published his *Politische Geographie*. Having appeared in Russian [8] a year later, this book marked the beginning of a new era in the development of political geography, which, in Ratzel’s own words, supplanted the earlier dominant ‘non-scientific’ political geography according to Büsching. Over a hundred years ago, in 1916, Ratzel’s follower, professor at Uppsala University and the University of Gothenburg Johan Rudolf Kjellén, who was later dubbed the father of geopolitics, issued one of his major books. Published in 1917, the German translation of the book achieved remarkable popularity [9]. Kjellén coined the term *geopolitics* as early as 1899. This year is the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the concept [10].

An equally important date was the centennial of the fundamental 1915 work written by the founder of Russian political philosophy, the Petrograd professor Veniamin P. Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky [11].

Remarkable dates were the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a series of groundbreaking works by German political geographers, which appeared in 1927—1928. One of them is the ‘catechism’ of German geopolitics, which was prepared by its founding fathers led by Prof. Karl Haushofer from the University of Munich [12; 13, p. 303].

These historical landmarks are closely connected to the countries and universities of the Baltic region, which became breeding grounds for political and geopolitical sciences, their *alma mater*, or *mestorazvitie*<sup>1</sup> in the terminology of Eurasianists. Researchers from the Baltic region states coined the terms *political geography* (the Academic University of Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia) and *geopolitics* (Uppsala University Sweden) and popularised the first key notions and concepts of political geography and geopolitics. The region is home to the oldest national schools of political geographical thought in Russia and Germany, which worked in close collaboration.

The ‘pioneering role’ of the region in the genesis of the two research areas has multiple causes, which cannot be reduced to the impact of the era of great geographical discoveries, which stimulated the development of geographical sciences (primarily, the anthropogeography) and social sciences. Of much greater importance were the intensifying struggle between the leading powers for the division and re-division of the world, the completion in the region among leading European powers — Germany and Russia, and the dynamics of territorially-driven political processes between these countries and in each of them, particularly, in the last third of the 19th/early 20th century. Other factors include the devastation of these countries by the First World War and the revolutions and the resultant emergence of a bipolar Europe and a bipolar world, which could not but affect the Baltic region.

During the genesis and development of political geography and geopolitics, the major role was played by university science. In particular, the Saint Petersburg University school of thought is the oldest in Russia and the Baltic region. Having gone through similar stages as other university schools of thought had done, it had its own distinctive features. The historical fates of the national and university schools of thought were very different. However, their pioneering contribution to international political geography and geopolitics remains unquestioned.

The methodological framework for our analysis of the genesis and evolution of the research areas shaping the academic political-geographical vision is a classification of the historical types of political geographical knowledge. We distinguish the following research or, more precisely, *research and academic, paradigms*: state-descriptive, anthropogeographical, state-geopolitical, and activity-societal [4, pp. 22—23]. Each of them, as we will show below differs from its counterparts in the research form, the methodological framework, the scope, the thematic priorities, the correlation between empirical and theoretical knowledge, and practical significance.

<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: this term is rendered into English as both ‘the place of development’ and ‘the place that develops’.



## The state-descriptive paradigm

This paradigm is associated with the emergence of political geography as a science providing comprehensive descriptions of countries. Its central methodological principle for selecting and systematising empirical material is the state-descriptive approach. This is explained by the fact that this information is located at the political (in Aristotle's understanding) or public level. The state-descriptive paradigm was a product of the social strand of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century geography. Relying on the principles of geographical determinism, state descriptions competed with cameralistic and political statistics.

The emergence of political geography in Saint Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire, in the 1730s—1740s was a logical development. It had both political and academic causes, which have a direct bearing on Peter the Great's reforms and the Europeanisation of Russia, particularly, in science and education. In 1724, he issued a decree founding the Imperial Academy of Sciences and the Academic University, which marked the beginning of the history of Saint Petersburg State University — the oldest higher education institution in Russia. Scientists from the Netherlands, England, France, and German states were invited to teach at these new establishments.

We demonstrated the pioneering role of Russia, represented by German scientists, in the genesis of political geography in our earlier works [4, pp. 23—28], having refuted the once dominant (and still occurring) idea that the 'founders' of political geography were Büsching, Kant, Tatishchev, Turgot, and Ratzel. In 1738 and 1739, the Academy published Kraft's *Kurze Anleitung zur Mathematischen und Natürlichen Geographie* (*Short introduction to mathematical and natural geography*), first in German and later in Russian. The work was meant as a student textbook [1, p. 464; 14]. This book was the first to mention the term *political geography* to refer to an area of geographical science [14, p. 2]. In 1745, the Academy published Winsheim's *Short political geography*, which considered a division of 'land' states by types of governance and provided descriptions of the largest ones [2].

Another German, the theologian, geographer, and statistician Prof. Büsching, whose political geography, according to Ratzel, was dominant over all other political geographers until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century [15, p. 47], first used the term *political geography* not earlier than the mid-1750s [4, p. 23—28; 16, p. 24—25]. The appearance of the eleven-volume political geographical work, which for many decades became a foundation for reference materials and textbooks published across the world and thus in Russia, started in 1754, nine years after Winsheim's book was issued [ibid.]. In 1748, Büsching paid his first visit to the Imperial Academy in

Saint Petersburg to write a history of Russia in the German language. There, he collaborated with his German colleagues, the innovators of political geography [17].

The state-descriptive paradigm in political geography reached its zenith in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in competition with political statistics. This period is associated with the names of Carl Hermann, Evdokim Zyblovsky, and Konstantin Arsenyev, who worked at the Department of Geography and Statistics, which was established in 1819 at the Faculty of History of Saint Petersburg University [18, p. 35]. Zyblovsky distinguished four essential elements of political geography: 1) the internal division of parts of the world into states and the concept of the state and its acts; 2) the image of governance, differences in governance, administrative division; 3) a general account of the population of the world by its number, language, nature, faith, and education; 4) the patterns of ‘popular nourishment’, which cover all the known types of human economic activities [6, p. 182].

Arsenyev’s *Statistical Essays of Russia* was yet another pinnacle of the paradigm in question in Russian political geography. However, this work had purely national significance. The *Review* describes Russia using the then statistical precepts and Arsenyev’s ten agroclimatic and economic types of provinces, or ‘spaces’. This typology established him as a classic of economic geography. An equally important and interesting aspect from the perspective of the further development of political geography is his summation of knowledge on the territorial and political structure of the Russian state [7, pp. 1—160]. It includes: 1) a comprehensive evaluation of the established borders and the location of Russia in the world as compared to the British Empire; 2) the history of the spatial expansion of Russia illustrated with ample reference materials and statistics; 3) the development of the administrative division of Russia supplied with detailed reference materials and statistics. In effect, Arsenyev proposed a geopolitical vision of the radial structure of the power of the Russian Empire from the ‘centre — colonised periphery’ perspective. He considers colonial dominions as auxiliary forces of the radial power of the ‘great circle’ — a ‘major and great power lying in the Russian lands proper’ [7, p. 25—26].

### The anthropogeographical paradigm

The reasons behind the ensuing crisis and political geography falling into oblivion (although its state-descriptive paradigm dominated educational resources) are both the intense competition from statistics and the differentiation of geography, the emergence of its new structure. These novelties are usually traced back to the works of the German 19<sup>th</sup>-century geographers of the anthropogeographical school of thought: Carl Ritter

and Friedrich Ratzel. Anthropogeography and, in particular, special geography (the geography of individual countries, country studies) essentially linked social phenomena on the surface of the earth to natural factors. Within the new structure of geography, the object of the 'old' political geography was 'disassembled' to give rise to three new areas of country studies: population studies, state studies, and economic geography [19, pp. 49—50].

In Europe, the end of the transition to the anthropogeographic paradigm of political geography was marked by Ratzel's work of the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He argued, referring to his *Politische Geographie* of 1897, that he made the first attempt to make Büsching's geography, which was considered non-scientific and obsolete at the time, a scientific discipline [15, p. 47]. His new version was able to explain the development of and relations between states from a geographical perspective.

In Russia, the transition to the new paradigm was completed on the eve of World War I when Veniamin P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky published *On the powerful territorial possession in relation to Russia: Essay on political geography*, [11]. In 1915, in acknowledging the absence of scientific political geography in Russia, he made an exception of the 'splendid treatises' published in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century by three professors affiliated with Saint Petersburg University. These were the works by Vladimir I. Lamansky on the triune nature of the historical-cultural and territorial-political structure of Eurasia and the place of the Russian-Eurasian Middle World in it, by Aleksandr I. Voyekov's on the anthropo-political and geographical zoning of the most intensively occupied part of the world, and by Pyotr P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky on the patterns and features of colonisation movement in Russia and the world [4, p. 29].

This list should be extended to include two more contributions by prominent university figures of the time. The first one is the essentially anthropo-geopolitical civilizational (in today's terminology) concept of local cultural-historical types, which was proposed by Nikolai Ya. Danilevsky in his 1869 book *Russia and Europe* [20]. The second one is Leo Metchnikoff's most important work *Civilisation and great historical rivers*, which he wrote when living as an émigré. In that work, he presented a principally geopolitical concept of the connection between the development of civilization and the largest river and sea basins [21]. The year 2019 is the anniversary of the two outstanding works.

Combining these ideas with a critical perception of the views of international anthropogeographers allowed Semenov-Tyan-Shansky to develop a logically sound concept of the science with a clear historical-geopolitical and Russian-centred 'bias'. He presented this concept, which he deemed necessary for Russia and other states to understand their goals, in the book *On the powerful territorial possession in relation to Russia: Essay on political geography* [11, p. 33].

Veniamin P. Semenov Tyan-Shansky viewed political geography as the ‘ultimate’ synthetic and multi-tier knowledge, as the geography of the ‘territorial and spiritual dominions of human communities, and as ‘the country-specific studies of territorial dominion’ [22, p. 40, 117]. Moreover, he introduced the factor of human activities (the development of productive forces) into the deterministic geographical principle of Ratzel’s political geography. He perceived human activities as an important intermediate link in the establishment of territorial dominion. He distinguished between the Mediterranean, patchy, and trans-continental historical forms of ‘great power territorial dominion’, all of them being the products of environmental, historical, economic, and cultural factors affecting the territory. His analysis of the ‘trans-continental’ form of Russia’s territorial-political power, its advantages, disadvantages, and prospects relied on the constructive idea of historical and emerging ‘cultural-economic colonisation grounds’ as ‘generators and upholders of territorial-political power’ [11, p. 18].

These principles underpin Veniamin P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky’s final work *The district and the country* [22]. At the time a professor at the Department of Country Studies of the Faculty of Geography of Leningrad State University, he gradually abandoned in the changed circumstances the problems of political geography. Although the USSR paid little heed to this concept, the territorial power of the country developed very much in line with it.

A variant of the anthropogeographic paradigm is *Eurasianism* — a historical-philosophical and political-geographical concept of Russia’s special *mestorazvitie* and historical mission, of a ‘Russian world’ characterised by a unique (Eurasian) historical-cultural unity rooted in the geographical and ethnographic territorial integrity. This concept was developed in Europe in the 1920s—1930s by Russian émigré researchers under the spiritual leadership of the geographer and historian Pyotr N. Savitski. Among the advocates of Eurasianism were prominent university figures, including the professor of Petrograd University, historian and religion scholar Lev P. Karsavin [23].

The 1960s—1980s marked the final page of the Russian anthropogeographic paradigm of political geography. It was the ethno-geopolitical concept devised by Lev N. Gumilev, Professor at Leningrad State University, a prominent Russian ethnologist, historian, and geographer. Closely linked to Eurasianism, his ideas on the genesis and development of ethnic groups gave a new ethnocentric perspective on the ever-changing territorial-political and cultural-historical communities [24].

### The state-geopolitical paradigm

The dramatic territorial-political changes that concluded World War I and the socialist revolution in Russia caused the anthropogeographic paradigm of political geography proposed by Ratzel and Veniamin P. Se-



menov-Tyan-Shansky to transform into a narrower state-geopolitical paradigm. Initially, it had diverse academic forms, which, nevertheless, shared a common conceptual core. This commonality was fortunately described in one of the last definitions of political geography given by Veniamin P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky. He called it ‘the examination of spatial relations of territorial powers of individual human communities-states’ [22, p. 168]. However, examinations of these relations relied on a wide variety of methodological frameworks.

Kjellén, who was a follower of Ratzel, coined the term *geopolitics* this area of political-geographical knowledge. This new area became the key to the new paradigm of political geography. It gradually developed into an independent interdisciplinary research field, which was evolving in Europe within geographical and biodeterministic frameworks.

A follow-up to Ratzel’s political geography, the ‘Western’ branch of the state-geopolitical paradigm was represented by ‘classical’ geopolitics striving to approach the political practices of the leading states (Germany, the UK, the US, and others). This strand of research was led by the followers of Ratzel and Kjellén, German geopoliticians, particularly, Karl Haushofer, and the founding father of British and, to an even greater extent, American geopolitics Halford John Mackinder.

A very different, Marxism-Leninism-driven methodological framework for studying the territorial-political system emerged in the USSR. It interpreted socio-political processes, including territorial-political ones, through the prism of an anti-capitalist class ideology. The key features of the new state-geopolitical, political-geographical knowledge, which developed within that framework at Leningrad University are as follows (for more detail, see [4]).

For decades, political geography and geopolitics were denied the status of research and academic disciplines (Soviet encyclopaedias and reference books did not mention the terms from the 1930s until the 1960s). This led political geographical and geopolitical problems to migrate to other sciences: military geography, social sciences, Oriental studies, and, primarily, the economic geography of foreign countries. Turning into ‘auxiliary’ knowledge, they got ‘dissolved’ within these disciplines. The USSR was studied in terms of its administrative structure and changes in its international standing.

University-affiliated authors had a monopoly on publishing research literature and educational resources. Their primary focus was on five state-geopolitical topics: the political map of the world, the typology of countries, the geography of intra-imperialist competition, the politicisation of economic-geographical descriptions of countries, and the criticism of Western political geography and geopolitics. At Leningrad University, these problems were studied in the Faculty of Geography and the Faculty of Oriental Studies and at the Research Institute for Geography and Economics.

The political map of the world evolved into the object of a research and academic discipline in the works of the first head of the Department of Economic Geography Prof. Vladimir E. Dehn and the research fellows of the Research Institute for Geography and Economics of Leningrad State University (see [25; 26]). It was featured in references on the economic geography of capitalist countries, which were continuously reprinted from the 1920s. Among their authors were professors from the Department: V. E. Dehn, G. A. Mebus, M. B. Wolf, and V. S. Klupt [27]. The geopolitical context of their contributions was praised by the classic of German geopolitics Haushofer [12, p. 42].

Later geopolitical interpretations of political geography, Semenov-Tyan-Shansky's studies into the historical forms of the territorial-political and spiritual power of states [22] and his 1940s publication on changes in the borders and the geopolitical standing of the USSR at the beginning of World War II went along the same line. In a more comprehensive conceptual form, the problem of the political map of the world was developed in the 1950s—early 1970s in the educational materials authored by B. N. Semevsky. He focused on the historical stages of the development of the world map, the formation of the world socialist system, and the dissolution of the colonial system [28]. Semevsky made a major contribution to political geography and geopolitics coming to the fore at the Department of Economic Geography, particularly, in its optional courses.

Typologies of the countries of the world and intra-imperialist competition were examined from the perspective of bipolarity and struggle between the socialist and capitalist systems, much in line with the 1934 resolutions of the Comintern. Countries were grouped according to their system affiliation, the degree of capitalism, and colonial development. These issues were considered from a conspicuously anti-capitalist perspective in the 1920s—1930s works of I. B. Bogdanchikov, I. G. Bolshakov, V. M. Volpe, and A. G. Mileykovskogo and from a milder position in the educational materials authored by B. N. Semevsky [28].

The politicised economic-geographical description of capitalist countries included reviews of their colonies, the development of territories and the effect of territorial changes on the geography of industrial production and agriculture, the social (class) makeup of the population, capital flows, national political systems, the general crisis of capitalism, etc. [29].

The criticism of Western political geography and geopolitics was a persistent research area at Leningrad State University in the 1920s—1970s. However, the study of the works of Western geopoliticians by Dehn (he visited Germany in 1928) and his colleagues had dire consequences: they were accused of counter-revolutionary activities in a special NKVD report and other documents. Dehn's article analysing and developing Kjellén's geopolitical ideas was first published in the *Izvestiya* of the Russian Geographical Society only 69 years later (for more detail, see [13; 30; 31]).



Later, in the 1960s—1970s, the Marxism-Leninism-driven criticism of Western political geography and geopolitics was developed in the lectures and research works of B.N. Semevsky [32; 33]. He approved of political geography as part of the subsystem of sciences studying the effect of superstructure phenomena on industrial production and economic zoning. Although, at the time, he could not but refer to geopolitics as a ‘reactionary science’, he was the first Soviet geographer to provide a comprehensive picture of Western geopolitical concepts. He revived the long-lost interest in the two sciences at Leningrad University. However, they were approached from a peculiar objective-historical perspective.

The development of geopolitical ideas went beyond the confines of economic geography. The 1925 concept of great surges (supercycles) in the world economy, which was devised by Nikolai D. Kondratiev, a graduate and doctoral student of Petrograd University, achieved international recognition. Note that the concept was given a geopolitical interpretation [34]. However, Kondratiev’s ideas connecting dramatic military and political changes to ascendant phases are more compatible with the next historical paradigm.

### The activity-societal paradigm

It was no surprise that the politicisation trend in economic geography became particularly pronounced after World War II. The expansion of the socialist camp and the dissolution of the colonial system extended the scope of political geography and geopolitics and led to the ‘ripening’ of the new, activity-societal paradigm, which has been pursued at Leningrad/Saint Petersburg State University since the late 1970s.

The paradigm suggests that not only the states but also other activities of society should be studied from the perspective of their territorial-political aspects. The agents in the focus of the paradigm are parties, ethnic groups, religious denominations, etc. Studies along this line concern the economic, social, ethnic, and cultural spheres and their integrated manifestations, for instance, political-geographical zones. In the 1980s, political-geographical country studies replaced state-focused geopolitics to become the core of the new paradigm, which examined the territorial aspects of political landscapes in different countries, regions, and centres (electoral geography), regional socio-political and cultural-political differences, political-geographical zoning, the methodology for political-geographical descriptions of countries and regions, etc. [4, pp. 48—49].

Just as in the previous case, the driver of the new paradigm was the Department of Economic Geography of Leningrad/Saint Petersburg State University. A major contribution to both research and practical politics

was made by Prof. Sergey B. Lavrov, who headed the Department for over twenty years. His efforts and successful collaborations with Moscow colleagues led political geography to become independent from economic geography, thus turning into a full-fledged socio-geographical science in the USSR. His principal achievements were as follows:

1) he launched a series of lectures on political geography for students of economic geography in the mid-1980s to establish this science as a relevant and practically significant area of socio-geographical sciences; the results of his efforts were growing interest in political geography from undergraduate and postgraduate students and an increase in the number of research publications;

2) the staff and doctoral students of the Department of Economic geography defended the first dissertations in political geography before the Dissertation Committee headed by Lavrov (A. L. Belov defended a dissertation on Canada, V. V. Lavrukhin on France, V. A. Lachinsky and K. E. Aksyonov on the US, A. N. Zhuravlev on the Pskov region [that was one of the first works on Russian political geography]. M. Yu. Elsukov on geopolitics, A. B. Elatskov on Russian geopolitical thought [4, p. 44—55]);

3) in 1986, Lavrov organised the first All-Union Conference on the Problems of Political Geography in Baku. The conference proceedings [35] were the first Soviet publication in which geopolitics received a positive evaluation;

4) he edited the volumes of *Political geography today*, which brought together contributions from scientists from across different universities, as well as one of the first Russian monographs on the history and theory of political geography [4; 36; 37];

5) as the president of the Russian Geographical Society, Lavrov organised the ‘Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Problems of Russia’ international research conference in 1994 [38];

6) in the late 1980s—early 1990s, he was a people’s deputy of the USSR. His political activities both benefitted from his political-geographical and geopolitical expertise (Lavrov specialised in ethnopolitical regional conflicts and electoral processes) and contributed to the applied function of political geography;

7) Lavrov revived interest in Eurasianism from academia and a wide audience and examined the potential of neo-Eurasianism in understanding the geopolitical prospects of new Russia;

8) he studied the political-geographical aspects of the global problems of humanity;

9) Lavrov published the first Russian textbook on economic, social, and political geography. The publication contained a large section on the



geopolitical worldview. It investigated geopolitical ideas of humanity, the political map of the world, and the typology of countries from a new conceptual perspective [39].

Dramatic social and territorial-political changes in the world and the USSR caused geopolitics to evolve from ideology-driven criticism of Western geopolitics to its objective scientific perception and studies into the history of both Western geopolitics (K. E. Aksenov, M. Yu. Elsukov) and Russian geopolitical thought (A. B. Elatskov).

Alongside economic geography, Saint Petersburg introduced courses in political geography and geopolitics into bachelor and master programmes in history, conflict studies, political science, international relations, regional studies, journalism, and public relations. Major contributions to political geography and geopolitics were made by experts from the Faculty of International Relations and Oriental studies: Vatanayar S. Yagya (the political geography of developing countries and Africa), Nikolai M. Mezhevich (the political geography of the post-Soviet space and the Baltic region), Yuri V. Kosov (the problems of the Eurasian region), Evgeny I. Zelenev (the geopolitics of the Arab-Islamic world, Asian countries, the history of geopolitics), Aleksandr A. Sotnichenko (the geopolitics of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey), and others.

The expanding scope of the science and new methodological principles built up its theoretical component and resulted in a better understanding of its object and central concepts. Particularly, in relying on an activity-geospace approach, Nikolai V. Kaledin from the Department of Regional Politics and Political Geography developed a theoretical concept of political geography as a science of geopolitical relations and geopolitical self-organisation of society [4]. It is closely related to Kaledin's other concept — that of the political map of the world as a global geopolitical system with pronounced historical stages of self-organisation (geopolitical periods and eras) [39]. Using a similar methodological framework, Aleksei B. Elatskov examines the theory and methodology of geopolitics in its geographical interpretation. His findings were published in the very first Russian monograph on the theory of geopolitics [40].

The major conclusions of our study area as follows:

1) Russia, represented by Saint Petersburg University and the countries of the Baltic region, made a principal contribution to the evolution of political geography and geopolitics;

2) there were four major paradigms in the development of the two sciences;

3) Russia's oldest school of political geographical and geopolitical thought emerged at Saint Petersburg State University, its most prominent members being V. P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky, V. E. Dehn, B. N. Semevsky, and S. B. Lavrov (see fig.).

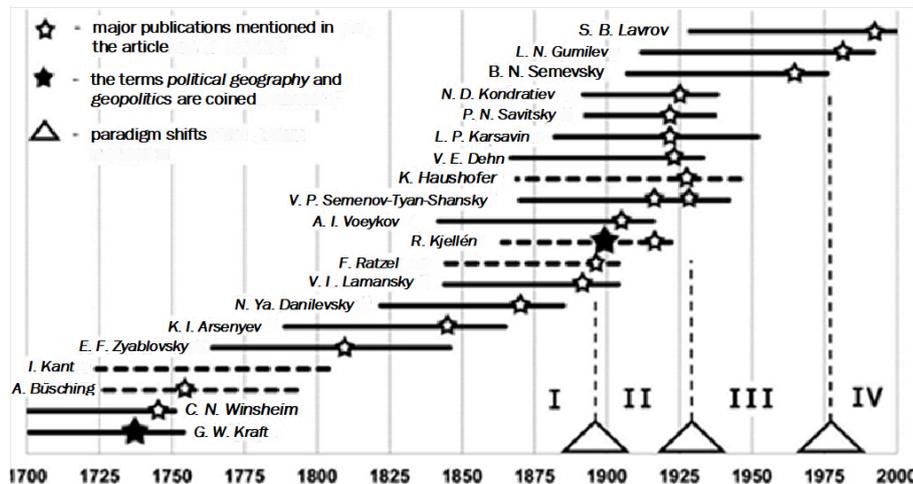


Fig. Members of the Saint Petersburg University research and academic school of political geographical and geopolitical thought and key members of university schools of the Baltic region. Dominant paradigms: *I* — state-descriptive; *II* — anthropogeographic; *III* — state-geopolitical; *IV* — activity-societal

A landmark in the preservation and development of the traditions of the school was the establishment of the Department of Regional Politics and Political Geography by Lavrov's students and followers in 2002. This new division was the first in the country to specialise in political geography and geopolitics as both research and academic disciplines. The staff of the Department teach allied disciplines in various faculties of the university. A logical continuation was the creation and launch of the first national master programme in political geography and geopolitics, which is popular with holders of various, including non-geographical, degrees.

The most recent achievements of the staff testifying to the viability of the school of political geographical and geopolitical school, include:

- A. B. Elatskov's monograph *General geopolitics: theory and methodology as interpreted in geography* [40];

- digital atlases *The political landscapes of the Leningrad region*, *The geopolitical atlas of the Islamic world*, *The conflict potential of the post-Soviet space*, *The conflict potential of the urban space of Saint Petersburg*, etc., which were prepared by the Department's master students under the supervision of K. E. Aksonov (some of the atlases are available on the website of the Association of Russian Social Geographers at <http://argorussia.ru>);

- the national textbook *Geography of the world. Volume 1. Political geography and geopolitics* for bachelor and master programmes. The publication was prepared by Lavrov's students and followers [41].



The politico-geographical interests of the Department span studies into the history and theory of science (including the development of the activity-geospace concept of political geography and geopolitics), the political map of the world, the typology of countries, political-geographical country studies (Europe, the post-Soviet space, including Ukraine, Transcaucasia, Central Asia, unrecognised states), limology, electoral geography, political regional studies, including the transformation of territorial-political system of the post-Soviet space, the history, theory, and ideology of geopolitics, and the problems of federalism, secessionism, and separatism. All these research areas have become traditional to the Department. Graduate and postgraduate students are taking an active part in the research.

The expertise of the staff has applied relevance. They are often recruited to monitor electoral and geopolitical processes across the post-Soviet space, particularly, within the Department's collaborations with the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly and the Centre for Socio-Economic and Geopolitical Studies, which was established by the graduates of the department. Political geographical and geopolitical issues are addressed in undergraduate essays and dissertations, as well as doctoral and post-doctoral theses. The experts of the department carry out research both individually and as part of research teams. Their studies are supported by the university, the Russian Foundation for the Humanities, the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, and agreements with the Presidential Administration of Russia.

A growing need for political-geographical and geopolitical expertise in today's globalising world translates into a social mandate for basic and applied research and educational programmes, which facilitate the further development of the Saint Petersburg University school of political-geographical and geopolitical thought.

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#### The authors

*Dr Nikolai V. Kaledin*, Associate Professor, Department of Regional Policy and Political Geography, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia.

E-mail: n.kaledin@spbu.ru

*Prof. Anatoly I. Chistobayev*, Department of Regional Policy and Political Geography, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia.

E-mail: chistobaev40@mail.ru

*Dr Vladimir N. Kaledin*, Senior Lecturer, Department of Regional Studies and International Tourism, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia.

E-mail: geoinfo@ya.ru

*Dr Aleksey B. Elatskov*, Associate Professor, Department of Regional Policy and Political Geography, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia.

E-mail: elatskov@mail.ru

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